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DEFENCE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

The official journal of the
NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence

Russia's 21st century information war.

Moving past the 'Funnel' Model of Counterterrorism Communication.

Assessing a century of British military Information Operations.

Memetic warfare.

The constitutive narratives of Daesh.

Method for minimizing the negative consequences of n^{th} order effects in StratCom.

The Narrative and Social Media.

Public Diplomacy and NATO.



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INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to welcome you to the first edition of 'Defence Strategic Communications' Journal. This is a peer reviewed journal published by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga, Latvia. The Centre was established in 2014 by seven partner nations: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Germany, Poland, the United Kingdom and Italy. Our role is to bring academic rigor to the study of Defence Strategic Communications and assist NATO in its various missions in this important area. The aim of establishing this journal was to bring together military, academic, business and governmental knowledge.

The journal's publication is the culmination of a busy first year for the Centre. Our team have already undertaken significant studies in Russian Information Warfare; Daesh propaganda, the growing use and importance of Social Media, a review of ISAF Strategic Communication in Afghanistan, and an audit of NATO member nation's Strategic Communication preparedness. We have delivered capacity building training in Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia and assisted our respective sponsor governments in their own awareness of the complex communication issues that now confront us all. During the summer the COE trained 20 students from 11 different NATO nations in the Behavioural Dynamics Institute Advanced Target Audience Analysis methodology.

Next year we have a similarly busy programme with various projects such as: developing the Riga manual which will show how NATO can protect itself from subversive leverage, researching the early signals of a *hybrid warfare scenario* in order to develop *early-warning-measures*, continuing our research on Russian information campaigns against the Euro-athlantic values, further analysis DAESH information activities and further trends in social media.

Most of our publications are available free of charge, on our website (www.stratcomcoe.org) and notifications of future events are published on our Twitter feed (@stratcomcoe) and Facebook. I offer the thanks of the COE to all the authors whose work appears in this edition and to the review board and editorial team. I encourage readers to join in the conversation by submitting articles for the next edition.

Janis Sarts
Director, NATO StratCom COE

FOREWORD

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the journal “Defence Strategic Communications”, a new initiative from the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Latvia. As the UK’s longest serving Defence Strategic Communicator it is a privilege to be Chairman of the Editorial Board and I would like to thank my board colleagues for their support, hard work, advice, and help in preparing this issue. As the COE Director, Janis Sarts, says in his introduction the NATO StratCom COE has come at a critical time; our Strategic Communication (StratCom) efforts in Afghanistan were mixed, we face a new generation hybrid warfare from the east, and in the Middle East Daesh/ISIL use propaganda and communication to deadly effect. No one in NATO can afford to ignore the importance and latent power of communication. Unfortunately StratCom is still misunderstood. Some see it as a euphemism for ‘Public Relations on Steroids’, others simply see it as the more efficient organization of cross-government or cross-alliance public affairs activities. Whilst the latter is important, to believe either of these in their totality is to not understand what StratCom really is. I have also often been at the receiving end of senior officials asking me to sprinkle ‘StratCom Fairy Dust’ on specific problems. I don’t subscribe to the idea that good StratCom can make poor policy look good nor do I believe that good policy automatically generates good StratCom. I do believe, however, that poor StratCom can be ruinous to good policy.

So what is StratCom? To answer this I ask you to focus not on the word ‘communication’ but on the word ‘strategic’. This does not mean that it is simply communication of strategy nor should it imply that it is communication that takes place only at strategic levels. What it means is that communication must be part of strategy – indeed in today’s information environment I argue that understanding audiences and their [likely] behaviours (which for me is the core of good StratCom) and knowing when and how to use all means of communication – from the softest, soft power to the hardest, kinetic power – is the key to solving future complex problems. StratCom is all that we do and all that we don’t. StratCom is the presence of words, deeds, images and it is their absence and knowing when each is appropriate and to which audiences. In 2013 the UK deployed substantial resources to the far side of the world to assist the Philippines in recovering from Typhon Hayan. The messages that the UK government sent was that it has interests in the Asia-Pacific region; it may be a small nation in Europe but it can and will exert influence globally. Regional hegemon, China, meanwhile, donated less money to the international effort than the Ikea furniture company. Given China’s size,

geographic position, and its interests in disputed waters in the region the response was lamentable. Typhon Hayan was a victory for UK Strategic Communication and an abject failure for Chinese public diplomacy. Good StratCom, underpinned by empirical understanding of audiences and problems, leads to evidence based policy making. That is why a deep understanding of StratCom is vital to senior leaders and policy makers and the absence of that knowledge in, for example, Afghanistan has been so problematic to the coalition operations.

This inaugural edition of the journal has cast its net deliberately wide. We cover academic theory, social media, Russian information warfare, Daesh/ISIL propaganda, NATO public diplomacy and narratives. All have relevance to the subject and help us collectively build our knowledge and understanding of the complexity of StratCom and its need. I offer my thanks to the many authors who contributed articles, my apologies to those who were not accepted on this occasion, my congratulations to those who passed a rigorous peer review process, and my encouragement to all readers to send us your thoughts, comments. and future articles for publication.

Dr. Steve Tatham
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EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor in Chief, Dr. Steve Tatham was the UK's military's longest serving Defence Communicator, variously working at Strategic and Operational levels in Media, Information and Psychological Operations. He is the co-author of 'Behavioural Conflict' and holds a Ph.D. in the use of behaviourally led Target Audience Analysis and Strategic Communication to mitigate future conflicts. He is Director of Operations at IOTA-Gobal, the specialist military division of Strategic Communications Laboratories Limited.

Mr. Matt Armstrong, MA, is an author, advisor, and lecturer on public diplomacy and international media. Mr. Armstrong serves as the Board Secretary of the Public Diplomacy Council. The Public Diplomacy Council is a nonprofit organization committed to the importance of the academic study, professional practice, and responsible advocacy of public diplomacy. He is also a member of the board for the Lodestone Trust, a land conservation trust providing an enduring venue for the research and development of programs in outdoor group therapy for military service-related post-traumatic stress disorder patients under professional supervision; identifying, mentoring, and enabling outstanding entrepreneurs; and, restoring or preserving wilderness and wildlife habitat. Mr. Armstrong earned a B.A. in International Relations and a Master of Public Diplomacy from the University of Southern California. He also studied European security and the Middle East at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Dr. Emma Louise Briant is a Lecturer in Journalism Studies at University of Sheffield. She completed her PhD at the University of Glasgow in 2011 looking at Anglo-American relations and counter-terrorism propaganda strategies after 9/11 before undertaking post-doctoral work examining UK media reporting of refugees. Emma's research interests are in the areas of propaganda, influence and censorship in the US and UK, migration, counter-terrorism, and governmental adaptation to a changing media environment. Emma is author of 'Propaganda and Counter-terrorism: Strategies for Global Change', co-author of 'Bad News for Refugees' and has authored a number of academic articles and reports - see www.emma-briant.co.uk - for more information.

Dr. Nerijus Maliukevicius is the leading Lithuanian expert in information warfare, intercultural communication, and conflict management as well as Russian studies. He works as scientific researcher in the Institute of International Relations and Political Science (Vilnius University). His PhD thesis was about the potential

and spread of Russian informational geopolitics in Lithuania. He is the author of two books about Russian information warfare strategies.

Thomas Elkjer Nissen, MA, has from 2001 worked at the Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC) as a Military Analyst responsible for Strategic Communication (StratCom), Cyber-Warfare, Information Operations (Info Ops), and Psychological Operations (PsyOps). In that capacity he conducts research, teaches and advises in the above fields of work. He has acted as a course director and developer of courses and seminars at the RDDC as well as acted as a high level advisor both nationally and within NATO.

Dr. Žaneta Ozoliņa is a Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science, University of Latvia. Her research interests focus on European integration, Transatlantic security, strategic communication, and regional cooperation. Žaneta Ozoliņa is the author of more than 90 scholarly articles and editor of several books, including such as “Latvia-Russia-X” (2007), “Rethinking Security” (2010), “Gender and Human Security: a View from the Baltic Sea Region” (2015). She was a chairwoman of the Strategic Analysis Commission under the Auspices of the President of Latvia (2004-2008) and a member of the European Research Area Board (European Commission) (2008-2012). She was engaged in different international projects commissioned by the European Parliament, the European Commission, NATO and other international bodies. She chairs the Foreign Affairs Council of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is a member of the ECFR Council and the Baltic Development Forum.

Dr. Agu Uudelepp is the Head of Estonian Public Broadcasting Council. He has been acting in the field of communication of Estonia since 1994. He started as an intern in Actual Camera and worked for seven years in the News Department of Estonian Radio. He then worked as a public relations officer of the government, gaining confidence and becoming convinced that it is possible to help a client look better even in the worst situations. In addition to the practical side, Agu Uudelepp has always been in touch with theory. His Master’s thesis was on the development of attitudes whereas the Doctoral thesis was on the topic of propaganda, providing a sense how the contemporary people feel and understand information. He has been working as an educator and trainer for about 13 years, constantly remaining aware of the latest trends and developments.

Prof. J. Michael Waller has been a scholar-practitioner in public diplomacy, political warfare, psychological operations and information operations in support of US foreign and military policy for more than 25 years. He was a member of the staff of the US House of Representatives and the US Senate, served on the White House

Task Force on Central America, was an operative for members of the White House Active Measures Working Group, and has been a consultant to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the US Information Agency, the US Agency for International Development, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the US Army, and the US Special Operations Command. In 2006 he received a citation from the Director of the FBI for “exceptional service in the public interest.” He has designed and conducted specialized training courses for the US military and civilian agencies.

Dr. Natascha Zowislo-Grünwald is Professor of Corporate Communication at the University of the Armed Forces in Munich, Germany. She received her MA degree from The School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of the Johns Hopkins University in Washington, DC and pursued her academic career by adding a doctoral degree from the University of Mannheim and a post-doctoral degree from the University of Bayreuth, Germany. She worked as communications manager for international companies in the banking and consulting sector. Her current research focuses on communication management in the political and business environment as well as on security communication.

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LATEST PUBLICATIONS BY NATO STRATCOM COE



RUSSIA'S 21ST CENTURY INFORMATION WAR: WORKING TO UNDERMINE AND DESTABILIZE POPULATIONS

Timothy Thomas

For many months now Russia has engaged its domestic and international audiences in a massive information campaign. The goal of the campaign is to persuade and influence local and foreign populations that Russian territorial claims in Ukraine are based on legitimate responses to world events. This media offensive has used both old and new forms of persuasion to strategically communicate its goals. This article discusses the components of Russia's information war offensive to influence Western and domestic opinion. Russia is accomplishing this information war both at home and abroad through a number of methods that will be described in the paper.

These include the use of deception, deflection of responsibility, outright lies, and the creation of an alternative reality. There is no Russian equivalent for strategic communications, so a definition of information war from a Russian perspective is offered in its place.

NATO defines strategic communications in the following manner:

Strategic Communication is the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities—Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations, and Psychological Operations, as appropriate—in support of Alliance policies, operations, and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims.¹

Russia, on the other hand, does not appear to use the term strategic communications itself. In fact, it is difficult to find a term that properly fits Russia's information and propaganda campaigns being utilized in Ukraine and Europe. For that reason, analysts have developed their own terminology to describe Russian actions. One of the best recommendations was that of Lithuanian Professor Nerijus Maliukevicius, a political scientist at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University. He assessed the Russian use of contemporary media as 'information geopolitics'.²

1 PO(2009)0141, NATO Strategic Communication Policy, 29 September 2009.

2 Agnia Grigas, 'Anatomy of Russia's Information Warfare in the Baltic States', Delfi.It (in English), 29 December 2014 online <http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/foreign-affairs/anatomy-of-russias-information-warfare-in-the-baltic-states.d?id=66767990>

The term is useful in that it does define what appears to be the mission of Russia's propagandists—to use media to assist in the attainment of geopolitical goals. However, it is important not to impose a foreign term such as information geopolitics on Russia's information campaign. It is much better to find a Russian term that may more correctly reveals exactly what the Kremlin's propagandists are doing.

One Russian definition that approximates the purpose of information geopolitics is the Russian military's understanding of 'information war' (IW). The term was defined and discussed in detail in the Russian Ministry of Defence's (MOD) 2011 *Conceptual Views on the Activities of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in Information Space*. IW was defined as the ability to, among other things, undermine political, economic, and social systems; carry out mass psychological campaigns against the population of a State in order to destabilize society and the government; and force a State to make decisions in the interests of their opponents.³ The words 'undermine', 'destabilize', and 'force' stand in stark contrast to NATO's strategic communications concept of 'coordinated and appropriate use'. Due to its pure Russian domestic roots, the definition of IW will be used as the benchmark against which to consider Russian actions in the analysis below.

Based on the massive information campaign utilized to date, Russia's leaders appear to believe there is a real cognitive war underway in the ether and media for the hearts and minds of its citizens at home and abroad. They have focused their efforts on controlling the populace's access to information ever since the fall of the Soviet Union, a development many blame on Western information-psychological operations. Russia is accomplishing its IW activities abroad (in the Baltics, Scandinavia, Europe, and Ukraine) through a series of concepts and methods (described in detail below) that include the use of deception (Internet trolls), home-grown concepts (reflexive control, cognitive weapons), outright lies (there are no Russian forces in Ukraine), the creation of a new reality (through TV and virtual messaging), and responses to its own insecurity issues (reflected in their use of conspiracy theories, warnings about the impact of colour revolutions, and statements of being surrounded and victimized). There is little doubt that Russia's approach has had some success in undermining, destabilizing, and forcing public opinion to question the interpretation of facts on the ground, especially in the absence of information to counter such an all-out, integrated approach that can utilize fabricated truth. At home, Russia's IW effort is focused on repeating themes of historical sensitivity, such as border issues, Russian citizens living abroad (and desiring self-determination vis a vis their country of residence), countering supposed Nazism and fascism, and so on.

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 3 'Conceptual Views Regarding the Activities of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in Information Space', (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, 2011). Online https://ccdcoc.org/strategies/Russian_Federation_unofficial_translation.pdf

The Kremlin's primary propaganda objective, in the end, is to secure its hold on power. One key component of this strategy is to disorganize or paralyze Western society through the control and organization of media input. The plan is assisted by one of lauded strengths of Western democracy: the media's willingness to seek hard evidence and listen to both sides of an argument before coming to a conclusion. Russia views this as a weakness, and Russian IW specialists can take advantage of this by inserting fabricated or prejudicial information into Western analysis and blocking access to evidence, thereby affecting if not controlling international media output. This is more effective in the information age, when reporters are seeking quick answers and 'breaking news' to beat other media with lead story lines. They sometimes do not check sources as thoroughly as they should.

DECEPTION

Trolls

An Internet troll is a person who often chooses to remain anonymous, while posting statements that are designed to persuade or influence thinking or emotions through the use of half-truths or deceptive information. A troll's point of view is often open to interpretation and seldom relies on an abundance of facts or sound research. Russia has used Internet trolls for some time. In June 2014, Ukrainian journalist Maria Popova wrote about trolls creating Internet propaganda for the Kremlin. The propaganda was noteworthy for both the number of posts generated in order to make a psychological statement encouraging people to agree with a fabricated majority, as well as the range of topics discussed pointing out everything bad about the US and Europe and everything good in Russia. In July 2014, Latvian journalist Sarmīte Ēlerte published a lengthy article on the role of Russian trolls. The manipulation of public opinion in Europe was seen as a particular goal of the effort. As one study noted, 'the domestic policy administration of the Russian president controls the works of so-called trolls and bloggers', whose jobs include 'to publish and disseminate commissioned articles, to establish fake accounts on social networks so as to distribute commissioned information, as well as to disseminate spam and persecute opponents on the Internet'.⁴ Several journalists in other countries have also examined Russia's use of Internet trolls.

In the fall of 2014, *New York Times* investigative reporter Adrian Chen was looking into an organization, known as the Internet Research Agency in St. Petersburg, Russia. The organization purportedly had been posting propaganda supporting the Kremlin's

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 4 Sarmīte Ēlerte, 'Kremla troļļi' (18 July 2014) (in Latvian) online in ir.lv <http://www.irlv.lv/2014/7/18/kremla-trolli>

point of view online using fake identities in order to create the illusion that Russian activities had the support of a massive following. People working there were referred to as ‘trolls’. As Chen noted, the word became popular in the 1990s as Internet users took on pseudonyms to harass individuals, groups, or their opinions. He found out that a troll farm in the Ural Mountains had been in existence since 2008.⁵

Chen discussed a meeting he had with one of the trolls, Ludmila Savchuk, who had since left the organization. In February she had made a clandestine video of the office and leaked it to a reporter for *Moi Raion*, a local paper. She offered a short yet telling description to Chen of several of the many topics she was to discuss at the Agency: disparaging comments about Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Ukrainian Army atrocities; optimistic comments about the financial crisis in Russia; and suggestions that opposition leaders had set up the murder of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov in March. Content was created for every popular social network, whether it be VKontakte, LiveJournal, Twitter, Instagram, or the comment section of Russian news outlets. Savchuk’s goal was to shut the organization down, since she believed that this information war was creating a dark atmosphere in Russia.⁶

On 18 August 2015, the Russian language online paper, *Kommersant*, discussed the outcome of a court case involving the same Ludmila Savchuk. She had filed a lawsuit in March or April claiming that she had not been paid. The court ruled in her favour, and she was owed one month of back pay. The main victory in the case, in the opinion of human rights activists, was ‘an officially obtained company dossier, the disclosure of its activities, and the admission of distress caused to Ms. Savchuk’.⁷ In effect, the article noted, trolls create a simulacrum of public opinion in favour of government policies and actions, which may be totally made up.⁸ The Kremlin denied any involvement with the Agency.

Reflexive control

Another deceptive method is the use of the theory of reflexive control (RC), which can be used against either human-mental or computer-based decision-making processors. The theory is similar to the US concept of perception management or the Chinese concept of a stratagem, except that it attempts to

5 Adrian Chen, ‘The Agency’, (7 June 2015) in the New York Times Magazine, 56-67. Online http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/magazine/the-agency.html?_r=0

6 Ibid.

7 No author or title provided, Kommersant Online, 18 August 2015. (in Russian) [КОММЕРСАНТЪ.РУ](http://kommersant.ru)

8 Ibid.

control more than managing a subject. The concept of RC has existed much longer than the Russian concept of IW and the NATO concept of Information Operations; in fact, it appeared in Soviet military literature 30 years ago. At that time, V. A. Lefebvre, who was working within the context and logic of a reflexive game, defined reflexive control as ‘a process by which one enemy transmits the reasons or bases for making decisions to another’.⁹ RC is defined as a means of conveying to a partner or an opponent information that is specially prepared to incline him to voluntarily make the predetermined decision desired by the initiator of the action. It can involve the use of a false pretext to get a specific response from a third party and thereby elicit a justification for further planned actions.

A recent example of a counteraction to RC would be the action taken by Estonia’s President Toomas Hendrik Ilves. He published an article on Russian views of RC on his Facebook page. Ilves apparently wanted to ensure that his electorate and military planners were aware of the concept and would be on the lookout for Russian attempts to draw them into a conflict through some pretext.

Even though the theory was developed long ago in Russia, it finds a variety of uses today. For example, Adrian Chen continued his discussions in St. Petersburg with Katarina Aistova, with whom he met after interviewing Savchuk. He found Aistova while looking through the Anonymous International leak.¹⁰ She admitted to being harassed by critics of the Internet Research Agency and agreed to an interview only if her brother could come with her for protection. The interview took place and both sides departed. A few days later a headline published by Russia’s *Federal News Agency* (purportedly a pro-Kremlin news site), read ‘*What Does a New York Times Journalist Have in Common with a Nazi from St. Petersburg?*’ The story detailed a meeting in St. Petersburg between Chen and a neo-Nazi, identified as Alexei Maximov, who had been introduced to Chen as Katarina’s brother, which apparently he was not. The article did not mention Katarina, but it noted that the meeting with Maximov was a request for the latter’s help in creating a provocation against Russia.¹¹ The setup was designed to control the Russian population’s decision-making process—a classic RC operation. There are other examples in the Russian press regarding the use of RC during network-centric warfare, when using information weapons, or when applying deterrence theory or 21st century tactics. RC can be used in many arenas.

9 Vladimir E. Lepsky, ‘Refleksivnoe upravlenie v polisubektnikh i mnogoagentnikh sistemakh (Reflexive Control in Multi-object and Multi-agent Systems)’, an article given to the author.

10 Anonymous International (in Russian, Shaltai Boltai, the equivalent of Humpty Dumpty) is a well-known hacker group in Russia that has claimed responsibility for a series of high-profile leaks.

11 Chen Op.Cit.

The above-mentioned Ministry of Defense definition of information war included this phrase: ‘forcing a State to make decisions in the interests of their opponents’.¹² This statement lines up well with the definition of RC, but few have noticed that RC is indeed a key component of IW. The Soviet and Russian Armed Forces have long studied the use of reflexive control theory, particularly at the tactical and operational levels, both for deception and disinformation purposes and to potentially control the enemy’s decision-making processes. The foremost reflexive control theorists in the military sector include V. V. Druzhinin, M. D. Ionov, D. S. Kontorov, S. Leonenko, and Major General N.I. Turko, a former instructor at the Russian Federation’s General Staff Academy, among several others.

Turko mentioned reflexive control as a method for achieving geopolitical superiority and as a means for arms control negotiations. With regard to RC’s geopolitical significance, some twenty years ago he and a colleague described a new containment theory under development that portrayed new means for coping with confrontation between new large-scale geopolitical groupings.¹³ It should thus come as no surprise that RC would be used in Ukraine.

Russia’s use of RC in Ukraine appears to be extensive. In 2013 an interesting article on the concept of RC appeared in *Military Thought*. It discussed several RC issues that appear to be in use in the Russian/Ukraine conflict today. Air force operational art and tactics specialist (LTG, rtd) V. L. Makhnin noted that going from the appearance of cooperation to that of conflict can break the will of the adversary’s military and political leaders. This is known as strangling the enemy in a ‘friendly embrace’.¹⁴ One is reminded of the Putin-Poroshenko September 2014 Minsk truce, which was followed by a Russian military invasion of Ukraine, resulting in the seizure of an additional 200 square miles of territory. Was Poroshenko strangled in the ‘friendly embrace’? Not surprisingly, only hours after the February 2015 Minsk agreement separatist forces took Debaltseve. The same ‘friendly embrace’ repeated itself.

Makhnin stated that simulacrum,¹⁵ analogies, and other forms of influence are introduced into the reflexive process to control perceptions. For example, analogies can be used to discuss subjects that cannot be observed. In military art, analogy is a cognitive approach

12 ‘Conceptual Views on the Activities of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in Information Space’, (Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, 2011)

13 See N. I. Turko and S. A. Modestov, ‘Refleksivnoe upravlenie razvitiem strategicheskikh sil gosudarstva kak mekhanizm sovremennoi geopolitiki (Reflexive Control in the Development of Strategic Forces of States as a Mechanism of Geopolitics)’, report at the conference on ‘Systems Analysis on the Threshold of the 21st Century: Theory and Practice’, Moscow, February 1996, p. 366.

14 V. L. Makhnin, ‘Reflexive Processes in Military Art: The Historico-Gnoseological Aspect’, *Military Thought* 2 (2013), 40.

15 An image or representation of reality. See <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/simulacrum>

that helps one develop concepts and a new way to achieve specific results. One is reminded of the Russian media's use of the fascist and Nazi analogy in reference to people fighting in Maidan Square against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, an analogy drawn to elicit support from the Russian population. Russians well remember the Nazi onslaught in World War II, and so this analogy touches a raw nerve. Analogies can reflexively serve as a strong unifying force. Putin often uses analogies against the international community. He stated on several occasions that Russia's incursion into Crimea was little different from NATO's incursion into Kosovo. He forgot to add, of course, that Russia consumed Crimea while NATO left Kosovo. The most stunning use of a simulacrum was the image Russia used of a young boy hung on a cross—which was a virtual image and never really happened. Russian propagandists stated that the Ukrainians had put him there.

Andrei Malgin, writing in the *Moscow Times*, noted that, according to Putin's propaganda, Russia must save Crimea (and now Ukraine) from fascism and from the followers of Stepan Bandera¹⁶ (supporting this claim, Putin signed a law on 5 May introducing criminal liability for rehabilitating or glorifying Nazism or spreading false information about the Soviet Union's role in World War II).¹⁷ Thus, while not mentioning RC, he makes the same argument as Makhnin. Russians appeared convinced that Crimeans could no longer speak Russian based on statements from Kiev, even though there was only one Ukrainian-language school on the peninsula and all the rest were Russian. Putin, Malgin writes, has also fallen victim to the lies of TV, radio, and print media. Brainwashed Russian people now have in their heads 'a little national leader with the same hang-ups, fears, suppressed desires, and prejudices'.¹⁸ Hopefully, he notes, the difference between this propaganda and objective reality will become so great that it collapses under its own weight.

Russian Andrei Pugovkin, a member of Saint Petersburg's Union of Scientists, noted that one should 'not believe Russian state propaganda. They are lies. Exceptions only confirm the rule'.¹⁹ He warned against considering *Ekho Moskvy*, TV channel RTVi, and *Euronews* as independent. The first is owned by Gazprom, the second is owned by the former head of the military channel *Zvezda* (who favours Putin), and the third has a fifth of its shares owned by Russia.²⁰

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16 Andrei Malgin, 'Russia is Following in Nazi Germany's Footsteps', (13 March 2014), in The Moscow Times online <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/russia-is-following-in-nazi-germanys-footsteps/496059.html> Bandera (1909-1959) was a leader of the Ukrainian nationalist and independence movement. He is revered by the current Ukrainian nationalist movement and certain far-right organizations.

17 Moscow, RAPS, 25 August 2014.

18 Malgin

19 Konstantinas Ameliuskas, 'Advice for Russians of Lithuania: Vladimir Putin To Use You as Meat of Cannons', (August 2014) in Vilnius Delfi, 27. Translated from Lithuanian.

20 Ibid.

Another RC tactic is to blame an opponent for actions that Russian forces are performing. For example, *The Moscow Times Online* has printed parts of a letter from Russian intellectuals requesting that Channel One TV acknowledge its ‘falsifications’ in its reporting on Ukraine. The authors of these TV accounts, the letter adds, are to be blamed for young Russian men, swayed by their reporting, traveling to Ukraine and dying for a trumped-up cause.²¹

Cognitive Weapons

There has been discussion by some in Russia of the concept of a ‘cognitive weapon’, which is defined as ‘the introduction into an enemy country’s intellectual environment of false scientific theories, paradigms, concepts, and strategies that influence its state administration in the direction of weakening significant national defense potentials’.²² It was noted in one article on the topic that information-psychological effects target society first, attempting to recode the mass consciousness to turn patriotism into collaborationism. After this, attention turns to elites and their decision-making at the national level. The goal is to weaken the state-administrative and defensive potential of a country. This specialized method is termed the cognitive weapon. Targets can include material objects, the financial-economic systems, and other areas of potential power.

DEFLECT/AVOID RESPONSIBILITY

Malaysia Airlines Flight 17

Immediately after MH17 was shot down, a recording was released of two Russian-backed separatists discussing the downing of what was thought to be another Ukrainian transport plane. Several had been shot down in recent weeks at the time. The immediate implication for everyone was that the separatists had mistakenly caused the catastrophe. This idea was later backed up with a photo of a Russian Buk air defence weapon departing the area and missing one of its missiles. But within hours of the crash, Russian TV began to offer conflicting views of what had happened, several of which contradicted one another. There were reports that a Ukrainian fighter had hit the plane or a surface-to-air-missile had done the damage. Later there were even photos offered as evidence in the case of the fighter jet, all of which turned out to be hoaxes. Sources in Russia had to quickly edit website versions of the fighter attacks, as the information provided was clearly wrong. There were also several ludicrous statements about the plane from Russia, such as that the plane was loaded with dead bodies and purposely flown overhead.

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21 Anna Dolgov, no title given, *The Moscow Times Online* (in English), 24 October 2014

22 S. S. Sulakshin, ‘Cognitive Weapons—A New Generation of Information Weapon’, *Journal of the Academy of Military Science*, No. 1 (2014), 57-65.

On 28 July 2015 Russia said it would veto a UN Security Council resolution that would set up a tribunal for prosecuting those responsible for the MH17 catastrophe. Russia stated that it had ‘serious questions regarding the degree to which it is full and correct’.²³ Many saw this move by Russia as an indication that the nation’s leaders are worried about what the commission might find and reveal about responsibility. On 12 August 2015 the *BBC Online* noted that fragments of a suspected Russian missile system were found at the crash site. Damage to the aircraft indicated that high-energy objects, consistent with a Buk-type missile, were involved, but the origin of those fragments has not yet been determined. The Joint Investigation Team set up long ago to investigate the incident is composed of representatives of the Netherlands, Ukraine, Belgium, Malaysia, and Australia.

Russian Soldiers in Ukraine

For the past year NATO satellite images, journalists on the scene, bloggers, and photo posts of items such as soldier gravesites have lent strong evidence to the belief that Russian forces are in Eastern Ukraine. Russia has denied all of these charges. These denials may be based on the way it has chosen to describe its forces there (men on vacation, soldiers there of their own free will, etc.), which provides a cover of sort for their presence. Or it may be that Russia will admit its presence at a time of its choosing, as it did with its forces in Crimea. In any case it is hard to deny their presence.

In the meantime the evidence works strongly against them. A 28 August 2014 NATO report released satellite imagery showing Russian combat forces inside Ukrainian territory.²⁴ Numerous Facebook pages provided by Russian soldiers serving in Ukraine showed not only vehicles and troop unit designations but also, through the correlation of specific geographic reference points in the photos, exactly where they were located. A March 2015 report indicated that sources of information regarding Russian presence include social media, reporters on the ground, Ukrainian media, satellite imagery, and information provided by the US or NATO.²⁵ Some of the reporting is precise. For example, in August 2015 Kiev reported that the 12th Special Command of Reserves of the Russian Armed Forces Southern Military District is supervising the first and second army corps in Ukraine.²⁶

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23 Interfax (in English), 28 July 2015.

24 SHAPE Public Affairs Office, ‘NATO Releases Satellite Imagery Showing Russian Combat Troops inside Ukraine’, online at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_112193.htm

25 Mark Urban, ‘How Many Russians are Fighting in Ukraine?’ (10 March 2015), in BBC News online at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31794523>.

26 As reported by Interfax (in English), 27 August 2015.

HIGH ANXIETY IN MOSCOW: FEAR OF SEVERAL THINGS FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC

Conspiracies

One of the interesting aspects of Russian foreign and domestic policy is that the leadership sees conspiracies everywhere, whether real or fabricated. Whenever there is failure, the Kremlin spokesmen blame the West and its 'hostile' policies. This siege mentality seems to be hidden deep in the psyche of the current Russian leadership and plays out in its propaganda to its domestic audience in particular. Russia maintains a historical sensitivity to any border issue and, along with Putin's sense of national humiliation (due to the dissolution of the USSR), these issues feed the leadership's sense of insecurity. Recently this fear of internal enemies has resulted in the expulsion of nongovernmental agencies of all types from Moscow. Russia does not see these groups as anything more than agents of foreign influence, which they desire to eliminate from the country. High anxiety extends to the population, where Internet laws that encourage self-censorship are in place, thereby causing people to be afraid to step out of line unintentionally. One high-ranking military figure went so far as to state that the attack on the World Trade Center in New York in September 2011 was a conspiracy developed by the West to enable US manoeuvring for resources in the Middle East. In fact, the general noted, the attack was staged and never actually took place, believing images from the Pentagon's ground cameras were simulacra.

Colour revolutions

There is little doubt that the Russian leadership sees the potential for so-called 'colour revolutions' to develop, and the leadership is instituting specific policies to help counter such events from ever evolving²⁷. A 24 June 2015 report noted that the General Staff Military Academy has been tasked with 'devising methodological schemes in this delicate sphere' in order to prevent them.²⁸ This involves devising asymmetrical operations, conducted to neutralise enemy advantages while subjecting him to damage using minimal expenditures, and other measures to strengthen Russia's political system. The effort involves the integrated effort of specialists from several of the largest civilian educational institutions in the country. The goal is to prevent a repeat of events that transpired in 1991 (demise of the Soviet Union) and 1993 (constitutional crisis). Counters include blocking

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27 A colour revolution is a non-violent means of protest that on occasion has a label attached to it, such as the rose revolution in Georgia and the orange revolution in Ukraine.

28 Anton Mardasov, 'A "Color Counterrevolution" Has Been Entrusted to the General Staff', Svobodnaya Pressa, 24 June 2015.

Internet activity and combating ‘the formation of a revolutionary-romantic stereotype within society’.²⁹ Military figures such as retired Colonel General Leonid Ivashov note that colour revolutions ‘are plotted according to rules associated with the art-of-war and, therefore, have to be combated by corresponding means’.³⁰ Blaming the West for colour revolutions (yet another conspiracy theory from a Russian), Ivashov noted the following:

It is generally accepted that “color revolutions’ are organized by Western countries’ special services, whose agenda includes organizing coups d’état and operations for destroying states. Moreover, these operations for subverting objectionable ruling regimes’ potential are of a tested and scientifically-rehearsed nature. And the complex of measures that the Americans call “soft power” results in achieving the same kind of effect as if the state had been subjected to attacks and according to all the rules of classic warfare.³¹

Several publications have carried articles on the need to be on the watch for colour revolutions. In 2014, for example, *Military Thought* carried an article on the political engineering of colour revolution and how to keep them in check.³² The article discussed four scenarios, which were named the classic orange colour strategy; the elite-led conspiracy; the march on Rome (Mussolini style); and the revolution in tow (elites exploit the outcome of riots). One factor leading to a colour revolution which needs special monitoring is value reversals among young people in regard to ethical, socio-economic, political, and religious and psychological factors.³³

DEVELOPING A NEW REALITY

It Began in Ukraine

The Kremlin’s focus on information is based on the belief that the West is continually trying (and able, according to many Russians) to change the thinking of Russia’s own citizens. As a result, the Kremlin’s propaganda effort is of vital importance to the Kremlin in an age where its citizens can access other ways of thinking online. The creation of a ‘virtual or new reality’ is thus of extreme

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29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 An N. Belsky and O. V. Klimenko, ‘Political Engineering of Color Revolutions: Ways to Keep Them in Check’, *Military Thought*, No. 9 2014, pp. 3-11.

importance to maintain the loyalty of citizens. Russia's view of reality is what now matters. Dmitry Kiselev, one of Russia's most vociferous proponents of Russian propaganda on TV, once stated that 'objectivity is a myth that is being imposed on us'.³⁴ Russia seems to be doing all it can to create a new reality for its citizens.

Moscow made it seem that everyone involved with the Maidan protest was a fascist or neo-Nazi (of whom there were few), and these images began to replace objective reality. The Kremlin's spin doctors were able to recreate in the minds of many Russian citizens some of the horrors associated with specific groups in Ukraine during the Second World War. The cast of characters who supported this campaign included spin doctors on TV, among whom Kiselev topped the list, and key government officials, from deputy ministers to the President himself.

The line of thought was continually offensive, blaming Ukraine for the carnage in Maidan, requesting action from Ukraine to stop the conflict, calling names (fascists, Nazis, Banderas, etc.), and utilizing age-old propaganda lines of reasoning. The familiar 'cocktail of patriotism, chauvinism, imperialism' included sporting the orange-and-black ribbons of St. George, which are most closely associated with the Soviet victory over the Nazis and favoured by Russian nationalists. The creation of such ultra-nationalists with Soviet imperial ambitions helped create the neo-Soviet man as 'the latest Putin avatar'.³⁵ Peter Pomeranzyev, Britain's expert on Russian propaganda, notes that Putin's ideologies are a unique 'fusion of despotism and postmodernism, in which no truth is certain'.³⁶

Money

To help create Russia's new reality, spending on TV broadcasting has increased dramatically to shape foreign audience opinions. On 3 July 2015 the Russian Duma approved a \$121 million increase in funding for Channel One and VGTRK, two of the main TV companies in Russia.³⁷ The company's main audiences are Russians abroad and the domestic population. International broadcast company RT and the TASS news agency had received budget increases of \$95.5 million and \$17 Million, respectively.³⁸ The goal of the increased funding is to better offset a perceived information war that is being conducted against Russia.

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34 See, for example, <http://www.vocativ.com/world/russia/sputnik-russian-propaganda/>

35 Matthew Kaminski, 'Putin's Neo-Soviet Men', *The Wall Street Journal*, 27 March 2014, p. A17.

36 Ibid.

37 No author provided, 'State Dum Passes Amendments to 2015 Budget', *Interfax* (in English), 3 July 2015.

38 No author or title provided, *Vedomosti Online*, 8 April 2015.

Self-Determination

A key method used by Putin to justify present-day land grabs and invoke a new reality is the concept of self-determination. Putin promises to protect Russians residing outside its borders and assist them if necessary when fighting the reality created about them. This includes provoking ethnic Russian enclaves to mobilize and complain about their treatment, in some cases aided by the introduction of Russian agents who stir up trouble. In some cases the use of psychological pressure, such as issuing ultimatums, is undertaken. With Russia's backing, these citizens appear to serve as a self-developed catalyst for Russian intervention if necessary or if the opportunity (as with Crimea) appears. Putin and his forces are thus developing a new reality abroad of their own making, one that he is able to exploit.

Propaganda's Methodology for Instituting IW

One article that offered a methodology for how Russian propaganda was carried out was by Vladimir Ryzhkov. Writing in *Moscow Times* on 25 March 2014, Ryzhkov, a State Duma deputy from 1993 to 2007 and now a political analyst, described in detail a conversation he had with a former KGB officer. The officer, who served in Afghanistan from the 1980s, outlined his experience with the Soviet principles of an information campaign. It appears that all of these principles could be applied to the current crisis in Ukraine.

Ryzhkov outlined how independent information is losing out to mass propaganda in Russia, where the main objective in regard to Ukraine was to mobilize the population in support of an expansionist campaign. The methods are as follows:

- It is necessary to convince the general population that the government is acting correctly and that the enemy is guilty of fomenting the crisis (Maidan protesters are to blame, the new government is linked to fascists, extremists, the US, and the West in general, who are the aggressors).
- The Kremlin created myths about the terrible persecutions of the Russian-speaking population (the spin doctors created a virtual reality that appeared to find the right balance between truth and fiction).
- The enemy must be demonized (Right Sector leader Dmitry Yarosh was used for this, as well as the presentation of the moderate forces as neo-Nazis, and the exposure of negative background information about Ukraine's new leaders).
- The authorities disguise aggressive actions as humanitarian (the need to protect defenceless Russians).

- The Kremlin attributes its methods to the enemy (the US is trying to take over Ukraine, so we must defend our ancestral territories)
- Authorities must be presented as legal and legitimate (Crimeans have a right to self-determination, which was denied to residents of Chechnya and Kosovo)
- War propaganda depends on a totalitarian approach (Russia cracked down on *Dozhd TV* and *Lenta.ru*)³⁹

Other Russian Voices

Michael Khodarkovsky, who grew up in the Soviet Union but now teaches history in the US, offered a critique on the Putin regime's propaganda style. He noted that any lack of loyalty to the regime will be punishable in some form, such as was witnessed earlier with the erasure of dissidents from history. Today, for example, the works of Antony Beever and John Keegan, two well-known Western military writers, have reportedly been removed from the bookshelves of libraries in Sverdlovsk Oblast due to their 'mistaken' understanding of events in World War II. It is no mistake, Khodarkovsky adds, that Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky has vocally protested against a host of individuals and groups, to include regime critics, Russian liberals, gays, and some modern artists and writers. He has falsified history at will, noting that 'history is a matter of interpretation and mass propaganda'.⁴⁰ Through a different interpretation of history that is supported by a nation's leaders, a new reality can easily be created, as has been the case in Russia.

Another critic of Russian propaganda is Andre Illarionov. At one time he served as Putin's economic advisor. He noted in a speech to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in May 2014 that the Kremlin propaganda machine had described the situation in Ukraine as the Fourth World War. He noted that the Russian Defence Ministry stated that the military operation to occupy and annex Crimea actually started on 20 February 2014, four days before then President Yanukovich ran from the Ukraine: the reality the Kremlin had created, however, was that Crimea began only after Yanukovich had departed Kiev.

Illarionov suggested that the information campaign has three distinct goals: put Ukraine under Putin's control or destroy it as a sovereign state; unite the largest divided nation of the world, Russians (ethnic Russians, Russian-speaking people, compatriots and their off-spring who ever lived on Soviet territory or

39 Vladimir Ryzhkov, 'The Kremlin's War Propaganda', (25 March 2014), in The Moscow Times online at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/the-kremlins-war-propaganda/496779.html>

40 Michael Khodarkovsky, 'Putin Creates a Fantasyland', in The Wall Street Journal, 19 August 2015.

territory of the Russian empire); and break up the Western Alliance. Illarionov goes on to note that an important part of Russia's counterstrategy to Western complaints over Crimea is information, disinformation, and propaganda warfare.

To date (May 2014) Illarionov believed that a significant part of the Russian population, part of the Ukrainian population, and some of the population of other, usually post-Soviet, countries had already fallen victim to the Kremlin's propaganda war. In Illarionov's opinion, Russia's unlimited use of such methods cannot be countered by Western propaganda, since freedom of information and speech must be preserved in Western nations at any cost.⁴¹

CONCLUSIONS

One of the first conclusions to be drawn is that along with Russia's version of strategic communications (called IW here) comes a combination of propaganda, deception, and an intent to destabilize adversary societies. In this respect, strategic communications or the equivalent Russian term differ markedly from Western communications. RC, lies, surrogates, and simulacrum, among other methods, are imbedded in the messaging and stand in stark contrast to the West's desire to find 'appropriate uses' for strategic communications. Russia uses its techniques to alter the landscape of objectivity and transform it into a new reality of its own making, one often quite unintelligible to an uninformed outsider. Russia uses this methodology against foreign and domestic audiences. Domestically it has worked well, but less so internationally, after some early spectacular successes. A 5 August 2015 Pew Research Center survey found that 26 countries had an unfavourable opinion of Russia, while 10 had a favourable rating, with most (6) of the latter found in Africa, the others being Vietnam, India, China, and South Korea.⁴²

Second, Russian IW is a strategic weapon that the Kremlin believes it must wield to soothe its fear of conspiracies and colour revolutions, and thereby protect its interests and power base. Persuasion and influence are needed to control hearts and minds, since, to the leadership, adversaries and threats are everywhere and are to be blamed for the majority of Russia's troubles. Conspiracies are used to explain internal shortcomings and colour revolutions incite fears in the leadership that a new ideology could take root in the population. Some Russian citizens, on the other hand, sense the tension that the Kremlin has created between Putin's Crimean acquisition

41 Andrei Illarionov, 'Fourth World War' Speech given to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Economics and Security in Vilnius 31 May 2014, (last accessed on 26 August 2015) online at <http://aillarionov.livejournal.com/696630.html>

42 Bruce Stokes, 'Russia, Putin held in Low Regard Around the World', (5 August 2015) in Pew Research Center online at <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/08/05/russia-putin-held-in-low-regard-around-the-world/>

and the imposition of sanctions and economic hardships. Everyone feels economic hardships to a degree. Russia was wrong in taking Crimea and now it must deal with the consequences of its moves. Meanwhile the Kremlin continues to blame others for the decisions it made. Relying on warnings of conspiracies and colour revolutions indicates a strong sense of insecurity among those in power and their desire to hang on to control.

Finally, it is clear that Russia's propagandists are well equipped with a host of methods to continue to persuade and influence in the digital age. The budget was raised to enable propagandists to work with faster, more modern equipment at a better level of digital clarity and to spread their messages more easily abroad. Old techniques of manipulation were found to work well when integrated with information-age technology. Well financed and manipulated imagery that serves Moscow's interests results in the mobilization of Russian minorities abroad, further motivating them to seek self-determination and make demands of the governments where they reside. If demands are not met, a casus belli is presented to the Kremlin to assist and free the oppressed—and maybe take territory while they are at it.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

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ASSESSING AGAINST AND MOVING PAST THE “FUNNEL” MODEL OF COUNTERTERRORISM COMMUNICATION

Christopher Paul and Elizabeth L. Petrun Sayers

Many countries have embarked on a wide range of efforts designed to diminish extremist violence. One prominent category of such activities is counterterrorism communication, which includes various forms of engagement focused on diminishing the appeal of violent extremist ideology and disrupting paths to radicalization, with the ultimate goal of reducing support for, and incidence of, terrorist violence.¹ In the past decade, terrorists and acts of terrorism have proliferated. Through numerous forms of media, terrorists are embracing new opportunities to spread the psychological impact of terrorism throughout the world, to provoke outrage, and to rally supporters and recruits. Terrorism today involves not only violence, but also theatre, where attention is paid to script preparation, sets, props, role-playing, minute-by-minute stage management, and flashy YouTube videos.² To respond to this evolving reality, counterterrorism communication adds nuance to the traditional, or kinetic, approach of detaining and killing terrorists to thwart their efforts. In addition to detaining, killing, and physically constraining their ability to arrive at and attack targets, mixed approaches also seek to limit terrorists' access to conventional mass media, reduce and censor news coverage of terrorist acts and their perpetrators, and minimize the terrorists' capacity for and the effects of media manipulation.³

The transition from a kinetic to mixed approach should be applauded. A mixed approach defends against active terrorists, while also acting to diminish the creation of new terrorists and diminishing the notoriety or other benefits they gain from publicizing their acts. For example, The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, otherwise

1 See, for example, the discussion in Alex P. Schmid, 'Radicalisation, de-Radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review', International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (2013).

2 Gabriel Weimann, and Katharina Von Knop, 'Applying the notion of noise to countering online terrorism', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (2008), 883-902.

3 Ibid.

known as ISIS or Daesh, uses every available media channel to recruit fighters, intimidate enemies, and promote its claim to have established a caliphate.⁴ To date, dozens of Twitter accounts spread the group's messages, in addition to YouTube videos, JustPaste (to publish battle summaries), SoundCloud (to release audio reports), and other mobile applications like Instagram and WhatsApp (to spread graphics and videos).⁵ Effective responses to this diverse media arsenal can target radicalized group attitudes, beliefs, norms, or social identities to move whole groups or particular subgroups onto less violent paths.⁶ Persuasive appeals can be delivered through interpersonal channels (e.g. via covert infiltrators) or through media and direct communication with group members. Even if these efforts fail to affect a group as a whole, deepening internal disputes can create discussion and debate over how violence will be used.

Counterterrorism communication also holds the promise of reaching individuals prior to radicalization. Interrupting the terrorists' recruiting efforts and seeking to affect the characteristics that make some individuals vulnerable to radicalization or recruitment has the potential to slow or stop this process.⁷ While many models of radicalization exist, most suggest several stages where individuals move from pre-radicalization, to radicalization, to mobilization (i.e. committing themselves to violence).⁸ Counterterrorism communication aimed at individuals in these intermediate stages could, for example, work to diminish the credibility of terrorist group leaders, document manipulative strategies used by groups in recruiting, and discredit violent action as an effective means of instituting change.

Although these efforts are laudable in intent, questions remain about how well they are working. Given that we don't currently have much of an answer to that question,⁹ how could we know how well such efforts are working, and how might better assessment help us adjust, improve, and refocus these efforts? This article reiterates the

4 The New York Times, 30 Aug. 2014.

5 Ibid.

6 Justin Reedy, John Gastil, and Michael Gabbay, 'Terrorism and small groups: An analytical framework for group disruption', *Small group Research* 44 (2013), 599-626.

7 Numerous scholars and observers have advocated for such a transition; see for example: Victor G. Garcia, Jr, *Strategic influence: A framework to counter violent extremist ideology* (Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2013); Michael Pizzuto, *Alter-messaging: The credible, sustainable counterterrorism strategy* (Goshen, IN, 2013) in Centre on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation Online http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/2013May2_Pizzuto_Final1.pdf; or Daniel P. Aldrich, 'First steps towards hearts and minds? USAID's countering violent extremism policies in Africa', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26 (2014), 523-54.

8 Michael King, and Donald M. Taylor, 'The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23 (2011), 602-622.

9 See, for example, John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, 'Rehabilitating the terrorists?: Challenges in assessing the effectiveness of de-radicalization programs', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22 (2010), 267-291.; and Peter Romaniuk and Naureen Chowdhury Fink, *From input to impact: Evaluating terrorism prevention programs*. (Centre on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, 2012).

importance of evaluating and assessing counterterrorism communication, discusses the utility of the ‘funnel’ model common in counterterrorism communication, offers criticism of the funnel model, asserts the importance of a clear theory of change to conducting evaluation in this area, and provides directions for using theory and evaluation in future counterterrorism communication.

The ‘Funnel’ Model for Counterterrorism Communication

A not-uncommon implicit model for counterterrorism communication is what we’ll call the ‘funnel’ model.¹⁰ The funnel model, depicted in Figure 1, divides the potential audience¹¹ into four (or more) nested segments. The largest is the general population, which is neither radicalized, nor mobilized. Below this is the segment of that larger population that is also neither radicalized nor mobilized but is ‘vulnerable’ to radicalization. Below this is the segment of the vulnerable population that has actually been radicalized, though still not mobilized. The last segment is the very small proportion of any population that is both radicalized and mobilized to actively support or commit acts of terrorism (the output of the funnel).

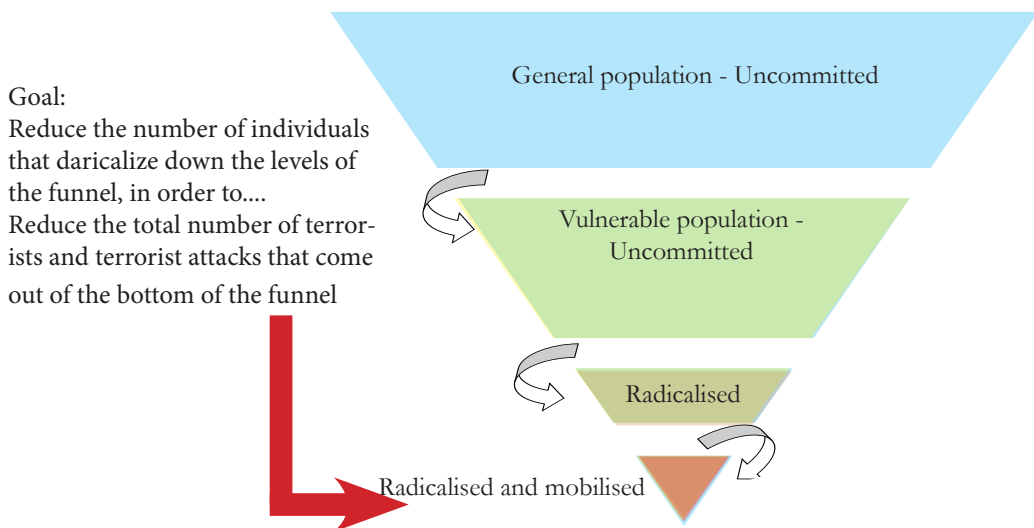


Figure 1 The ‘Funnel’ Model Implicit in Counterterrorism Communication Efforts

10 Many European counter-radicalization efforts include general preventative initiatives that assume the funnel model: see James Brandon and Lorenzo Vidino, *European experiences in counterradicalization* (West Point, NY, 2013) In Combating Terrorism Center at West Point Online <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/european-experiences-in-counterradicalization>; Another example of the funnel model is implicit in the model used in Victor G. Garcia, Jr, ‘Strategic influence: A framework to counter violent extremist ideology’, *Army War College* (2013).; An explicit funnel (same shape, similar progression) appears in Figure 1 of Stevan Weine, ‘Building resilience to violent extremism in Muslim diaspora communities in the United States’, *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways Toward Terrorism and Genocide* 5 (2012), 60-73.

11 This article draws from interdisciplinary works, and thus relies on descriptions of populations using terms including: audiences, groups, publics, and stakeholders. In order to retain authenticity to various approaches terminology from sources was preserved.

The funnel model is similar to audience segmentation frameworks typical in public relations, organizational communication, and public health. In public relations, Grunig's situational theory of publics is highly regarded and well tested. Grunig's theory differentiates between latent, aware, and active publics.¹² Latent publics have low problem recognition, but their level of involvement could still be moderate to high. Communication can be particularly important for latent groups who are ready to change their attitude(s) or behaviour(s) once they realize a problem. Individuals in the aware category recognize a problem, but are less likely to engage in activities to solve the problem due to high constraint recognition. Active publics have low constraint recognition, and high problem recognition and involvement suggesting they engage in seeking and sharing information about a problem.

Following a similar funnel or pyramid, organizational communication scholars segment audiences into 'stakeholder' groups, where groups may be organized into categories of those who have formal power to make changes (e.g. a powerful job and money), others who can block change, those are affected by change, and finally individuals who are needed to facilitate and carry out change.¹³ Using this perspective, the first step to reaching stakeholders is to identify concerns harboured by each group, followed by their expected position on a proposition or proposed change.

To address public health issues, a population in question is segmented according to groups who exhibit symptoms of certain attitudes and behaviours. For example, at a broad level (i.e. the largest population), would be a group where some detrimental behaviours, like a nutrient poor diet, will be present in some members, but it is difficult to tell who exactly is at risk.¹⁴ Level two constitutes vulnerable subgroups believed to have higher risks of poor nutrition. Level three would be comprised of individuals exhibiting attitudes and behaviours consistent with poor nutrition, but who have not yet changed their attitudes or behaviours. Using this approach, intervention strategies targeted to level one members are low in intensity and generalized while level three members need tailored messaging to persuade them to take action to locate and cook more healthful foods.

Using a segmentation strategy is a common approach in counterterrorism communication, although it may not be explicitly acknowledged in campaign materials. According to this implicit theory, the goal of counterterrorism communication is ultimately to reduce the number of individuals who radicalize from each layer further

12 James E. Grunig, 'Sierra club study shows who become activists', *Public Relations Review* 15 (1989), 3-24.

13 David Straus, *How to Make Collaboration Work*, (San Francisco, 2002).

14 Stevan Weine, 'Building resilience to violent extremism in Muslim diaspora communities in the United States', in *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways Toward Terrorism and Genocide* 5 (2012), 60-73.

‘down’ the funnel, thus reducing the total number of terror supporters and attacks that come out at the bottom of the funnel. The full extent of the funnel model’s use is difficult to quantify. Current counterterrorism efforts are a mixed bag of those that do not share their theoretical underpinnings, use variations of this model, use the model under a different name, or simply use an atheoretical approach that happens to resemble this process. However, the authors have encountered a sufficient number of efforts either explicitly or implicitly using this or a similar model to be concerned.

Problems with the Funnel Model

The funnel model assumes that segmentation between groups is possible. However, proper segmentation requires enough information, backed by research, to accurately sort individuals into radicalization levels. Estimates made without explicit description and systematic procedures can result in program implementation failure (e.g. preparing tested and appealing campaign messages, but they are received by the wrong group). Selecting indicators for each population group is not clear-cut, which can result in misclassification in the funnel. However, for the model to work populations should be similar with respect to variables (and value measurements) determining the attitudes and behaviours targeted by counterterrorism communication.¹⁵

Aside from classifying population members into a homogenous group, which is necessary for segmentation, this approach also assumes that reducing the size of a vulnerable segment or layer would subsequently reduce the size of the segment below in the future. This could also be called the ‘epidemiological’ assumption, an assumption often implicit when counterterrorism thinking builds from a public health mind set, applying the same sorts of approaches that help reduce a population’s vulnerability to the spread of diseases.¹⁶ However, there is no good reason to accept this assumption. Radicalization is not sufficiently well understood, but is unlikely to follow logics similar to those for the spread of infectious diseases.

A counterterrorism communication effort could reduce the size of a given segment, but individuals within that segment could have some critical difference that makes them both more likely to radicalize and less likely to be deterred by the influence

15 Michael D. Slater, ‘Theory and method in health audience segmentation’, *Journal of Health Communication* 1 (1996), 267-283.

16 Morris W. Foster, and Jesse W. Butler, ‘Cancer, HIV, and Terrorism: Translating public health models for prevention and control to counter-terrorism’, *Routledge* 1 (2008), 81-94. The article makes exactly this assumption at the outset, but then goes on to recommend further research on the ‘translational pipeline’ for terrorism and other forms of formative research about the processes of becoming a terrorist in line with what I recommend here.; Stevan Weine, ‘Building resilience to violent extremism in Muslim diaspora communities in the United States’, *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways Toward Terrorism and Genocide* 5 (2012), 60-73. also suggests drawing on public health models that have proven successful in combating drug abuse, drunk driving, pandemic flu, or HIV/AIDS for developing counterterrorism programs.

effort. For example, an effort might reduce the ‘vulnerable’ segment by 50% but find that the same number of individuals continue to radicalize, because the individuals in the vulnerable segment that were most amenable to the counter radicalization message were the ones who were least likely to radicalize because they were actually part of some different but not recognized segment.¹⁷

A related challenge concerns the relative proportions of the population in each segment. The widest parts of the funnel consists of the general population and the ‘vulnerable’ segment, with proportionately few ‘radicalized’ and very, very few ‘radicalized and mobilized’ individuals. Understanding this relatively *rare occurrence* (being both radicalized and mobilized) requires a different mind-set and different analytical approaches.¹⁸ It may also require different approaches to influence if there is indeed a correlation between general levels of radicalization in a population and the levels of mobilization to actively support or conduct terrorist activity. If these assumptions are flawed, it is entirely possible that efforts targeted at segments in the wider portions of the funnel might be effective at affecting attitudes and behaviours in that segment, without having any impact at all on the output at the bottom of the funnel.

A consistent critique of segmentation efforts like the funnel model is that the amount of research needed to construct a data-driven set of segments is expensive and time consuming.¹⁹ Additionally, although the benefit to a context-specific enumeration is added precision, the more localized or geographically bounded a model is, the less transferrable it is between regions, countries, and local communities. Researchers have conducted large-scale data collection efforts, fuelled by national probability samples, to strategically segment selected populations, but this is the gold standard rather than the norm.

Finally, observations also suggest communication directed by similar models are often situated outside the prevue of other relevant behaviour change theories. Both public health and health communication efforts rely on a variety of theories to drive

17 Peter S. Henne, Jonathan Kennedy, John P. Sawyer, and Gary A. Ackerman, ‘Leveraging advances in qualitative methodology to analyze radicalization’ in Hriar, Cabayan, Valerie Sitterle, and Matt Yandura (eds.), *Looking back, looking forward: Perspectives on terrorism and responses to it*, (Washington, D.C., 2013) pp. 104-113, note some of the challenges in studying radicalization and counterradicalization and offer some promising methodological suggestions for better foundation research in this area.

18 Anthony Richards, ‘The problem with “radicalization”: The remit of “prevent” and the need to refocus on terrorism in the UK’, *International Affairs* 87 (2011), 143-152. Richards persuasively argues for reduced focus on preventing radicalization and increased focus on preventing actually becoming a terrorist; regarding statistics for rare events, see Gary King and Langche Zeng, ‘Logistic regression in rare events data’, *Political Analysis* 9 (2001), 137-163.

19 Michael D. Slater, ‘Theory and method in health audience segmentation’, *Journal of Health Communication* 1 (1996), 267-283.

change in attitudes and behaviours about myriad issues including alcohol or tobacco consumption interventions to persuading women to receive annual mammograms or pap smears from their doctors. Counterterrorism communication efforts should also integrate elements from behaviour change theories to improve campaign strategies. Theories from existing research suggest mechanisms for segmenting audiences, and provide guidance on how to tailor messages to best persuade different audiences. Not drawing on additional theory diminishes the potential of the funnel model, and ultimately the goal of reducing radicalized and mobilized individuals.

The Importance of a Theory of Change

A theory of change is the underlying logic for how campaign designers believe that their intervention will lead to desired results. A theory of change can include logic, assumptions, beliefs, or findings from previous experiences. The theory of change implicit in the funnel model is that interventions targeted at each of the segment layers reduces the number of individuals who move down the radicalization and mobilization funnel, ultimately reducing the number of terrorist supporters or recruits who come out the bottom of the funnel.

The main benefit of articulating a theory of change is that it allows assumptions to be turned into hypotheses.²⁰ These hypotheses can then be tested explicitly as part of an assessment process, with any failed hypotheses replaced in subsequent efforts until a validated, logical chain connects activities with objectives and objectives are met. So, if a counterterrorism communication campaign uses the funnel model and explicitly states the theory of change, it opens itself to validation (or criticism). Clearly stating the theory of change implies clear predictions, which can then be targeted for observation or measurement. If everything works as predicted, well and good, the theory of change is validated. If, however, something doesn't work as predicted, it provides an opportunity to revise the theory or the implementation until it does work.

Theories of change are specific to specific programs, but can and should draw on broader theory in the social and behavioural sciences. The existing literature on attitudinal and behaviour change offers numerous theories. Changing attitudes and behaviours requires communication interventions delivered to the right audience at the right time. Theory guided approaches bolster communication efforts by guiding practitioners to the types of variables that are most likely to elicit change. Theories can help direct and structure the ultimate goal of an intervention, its target population(s),

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 20 Christopher Paul, 'Foundations for assessment: The hierarchy of evaluation and the importance of articulating a theory of change', *IOSphere* 9 (2013), 1-7.

message content, and timing among other options. Change may target an activity, program, line of effort, or operation. The communication literature offers many theories that are relevant to public communication campaigns, including agenda setting,²¹ diffusion of innovations,²² the elaboration likelihood model (ELM),²³ the extended parallel process model,²⁴ the health belief model,²⁵ an integrative theory of behaviour change,²⁶ message framing,²⁷ social cognitive theory,²⁸ theory of planned behaviour,²⁹ and the transtheoretical model.³⁰

Counterterrorism communication research draws on some available theory, but still lacks breadth and depth. For example, message framing and social network analysis are common approaches in available literature.³¹ Social network analysis is helpful for identifying core members of terrorist groups, how groups are connected, and how groups change. Framing studies catalogue public narrative about terrorism and describe how messages are packaged to audiences. However, these studies lack insight into audience processing of messages including mental comprehension, interpretive perceptions, cognitive connection, and emotional reactions. Additional theories including the health belief model, theory of planned behaviour, and/or social cognitive theory could all be applied to future counterterrorism communication efforts. Whatever the underlying foundation of theory, each program or campaign should have its own explicit theory of change for how its communication or other interventions will lead to desired outcomes.

21 Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the agenda: The mass media and public opinion* (Malden, MA, 2004).

22 Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th edition. (New York, NY, 2003).

23 Richard Petty, and John T. Cacioppo, *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*. (New York, 1986).

24 Kim Witte, 'Fear control and danger control: A test of the extended parallel process model', *Communication Monographs* 61 (1994), 113-134.

25 Marshall H. Becker, *The health belief model and personal health behavior*. (San Francisco, 1974).

26 Martin Fishbein, and Marco C. Yzer, 'Using theory to design effective health behavior interventions', *Communication Theory* 13 (2003), 164-183.

27 Robert M. Entman, and Andrew Rojecki, 'Freezing out the public: Elite and media framing of the U.S. anti-nuclear movement', *Political Communication* 10 (1993), 155-173.

28 Albert Bandura, *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1986).

29 Icek Zjzen, 'The theory of planned behavior', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50 (1991), 179-211.

30 James O. Prochaska, and Wayne F. Velicer, 'The transtheoretical model of health behavior change', *American Journal of Health Promotion* 12 (1997), 38-48.

31 Julei Fu, Duoyong Sun, Jian Chai, Jin Xiao, and Shouyang Wang, 'The "six-element" analysis method for the research on the characteristics of terrorist activities', *Annals Of Operations Research* 234 (2013), 17-35.

Scott Helfstein, and Dominick Wright, 'Covert or convenient? Evolution of terror attack networks', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55 (2011), 785-813.; Stephen D. Reese, 'The framing project: A bridging model for media research revisited', *Journal of Communication* 57 (2007), 148-154.

The Value of Assessment

Assessment or evaluation is fundamentally a judgment of merit against criteria or standards.³² But for what purpose? To what end do we make these judgments of merit? When everything about a program or activity is working exactly as planned, assessment does little beyond confirming success. Where something about the program's execution, assumptions, or outcomes is not working as intended is where assessment proves its value. Not only can well designed assessment help those responsible for an effort recognize that there is a problem, it can help them diagnose what is causing the problem (be it a mistaken assumption, an execution failure, or something else), and help them identify how to fix that problem going forward.

Across a wide range of sectors including defence, industry, and academic evaluation research, assessment objectives appear to align with one or more of three broad goals: to improve planning, to improve effectiveness and efficiency, or to enforce accountability. These three broad motivations for assessment) roughly correspond to three primary types of evaluation: formative, process, and summative.

Formative evaluation occurs primarily during the planning stage, prior to the execution of an effort or intervention, and includes activities designed to develop and test messages, determine baseline values, analyse audience and network characteristics, and specify the logic by which program activities are designed to generate influence, including barriers to attitudinal and behavioural change. Formative evaluation can be used to prepare for interventions targeted to any population in the funnel. Formative efforts tend to employ qualitative research methods, including focus groups, interviews, and ethnographic observations. Formative efforts should guide intervention strategy prior to launching communication to targeted groups. For example, qualitative inquiries into terrorism narratives available in public media can provide initial understanding of how populations make sense of violence and terrorist groups.

Process evaluation determines whether a program has been or is being implemented as designed, assesses output measures (such as reach and exposure), and provides feedback to program implementers to inform course adjustments. Constant monitoring during counterterrorism communication will allow for corrections in real time and meet emerging needs among populations. Process evaluation could, for example, assess the extent to which campaign messages are actually communicated and reaching intended audiences. Another common arm of messaging for the general

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32 Peter H. Rossi, Mark W. Lipsey, and Howard E. Freeman, *Evaluation: A systematic approach*. (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2004).

population could be delivering reliable and accurate information about extremism, conflict, and diaspora challenges, which may not otherwise be available in highly censored environments.³³

Summative evaluation, including ‘outcome’ and ‘impact’ evaluation, is the post-intervention analysis to determine whether the program achieved its desired outcomes or impact. Usually summative evaluations include comparisons of quantitative data collected prior to and post intervention efforts. Summative evaluations could be conducted for several or all funnel populations, from a broad objective of creating awareness of a problem (the general population) to changing attitudes and behaviours about violence (most important for the radicalized and radicalized/mobilized populations). Quantitative summative evaluation is the most powerful way of measuring campaign success, and can provide valuable insight to the total amount of attitudinal or behaviour changes demonstrated in a population.

A common critique of communication campaigns is that they fail to produce a significant impact on target audiences. However, such campaigns have been shown to produce short-term campaign effects of about .09, which roughly translates into 9% more people performing the behaviour after the campaign than before.³⁴ When campaigns specifically discuss enforcement strategies (i.e. if you inform people that there will be checks on their behaviour and penalties for noncompliance) the effects sizes can jump to 17%.³⁵ The fact that many campaigns do not show any change in target audiences could be the result of poor assessment, rather than true null findings. Without a clear theory of change and evaluation parameters in place (including a baseline measure), there is no means to observe campaign effectiveness or improve efforts in the future. For example, overall campaign failure may point to a need to change message frames or diversify communication channels, depending on where the proposed theory of change was observed to break down.

All three stages of evaluation are valuable to counterterrorism communication. Beginning with an assessment of effectiveness, identified weaknesses can point to further assessment efforts oriented toward improvement and efficiency, which can then guide future planning. Additionally, various levels of evaluation can also attest to the success of theoretical specification and program implementation.³⁶

33 Stevan Weine, ‘Building resilience to violent extremism in Muslim diaspora communities in the United States’, *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways Toward Terrorism and Genocide* 5 (2012), 60-73.

34 Leslie B. Snyder, and Mark A. Hamilton, ‘A meta analysis of U.S. health campaign effects on behavior: Emphasize enforcement, exposure, and new Information, and beware the secular trend’ in Robert C. Hornik (ed.), *Public health communication: Evidence for behavior change*, (New York, 2002), pp. 357-383.

35 Ibid.

36 Carol Weiss, *Evaluation research: Methods of assessing program effectiveness*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1972).

Weiss posited that there are three scenarios that can unfold during a communication campaign. The first is that a successful program produces a causal process specified by a theory that yields a predicted and desired outcome. Secondly, a theory might fail but the communication implementation may prove to be successful (identified by the process stage of evaluation). In this case, modifications to the theory would be made. Lastly, poor implementation would not allow for any theoretical evaluation due to the intervention not working as intended and not beginning the process of a causal sequence.³⁷ Process evaluation and summative evaluation are required to make assumptions about theoretical specification and program implementation.

Conducting Assessment Under the Funnel Model

Testing the theory of change implicit in the funnel model or conducting assessment under its assumptions is potentially problematic. Some of the desired outcomes of influence efforts under this model are counterfactual: preventing those who might have radicalized and mobilized from doing so. It is easy to point to all of the members of a population who do not move down the funnel and assert success. Radicalization and mobilization are relatively rare events, however, so the vast majority of a population does not radicalize and mobilize, and there is no easy way to identify the much smaller segment that (counterfactually) might have done so. Unlike the public health environment where researchers can rely on population level data (e.g. prevalence and incidence) to track health outcomes following communication efforts over time, radicalization is not measurable in a similar fashion.

The uncertainty inherent in the funnel model begs for more and better formative research, such as improved target audience analysis and a thorough exploration of the paths to (and away from) radicalization and mobilization.³⁸ Nonetheless, there are several possibilities for assessment of movement between populations. One option is to articulate a narrower theory of change, one focused on a smaller segment, or on a smaller part of the problem, like demobilization or deradicalization. Although the connection between radicalization/mobilization and actual acts of terrorism is a safer assumption, it is also useful to measure those who once were mobilized or radicalized and are no longer. Research that begins with a well-identified population is also a helpful starting point for future researchers studying transition processes of populations.

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37 Ibid.

38 Of course, we are not alone in this call for better understanding of processes of radicalization and mobilization to terrorist violence. See, for example, Peter Romaniuk and Naureen Chowdhury Fink, *From input to impact: Evaluating terrorism prevention programs*. (Centre on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, 2012) and John M. Venhaus, 'Looking for a fight: Why youth join Al-Qaeda and how to prevent it', (Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2010) in the U.S. Army War College Online <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR236Venhaus.pdf>.

Another possible approach would be to attempt to validate the assumptions implicit in this theory of change. This might involve measuring impacts on attitudes at higher levels of the funnel and outcomes at the bottom of the funnel (terrorist recruitment, funding, and acts), showing correlations over time. This would also require greater explication of the model's theoretical underpinnings. Additional insight is necessary to determine which behavioural theories work best in the context of counterterrorism communication.

For example, the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) uses the independent variables of attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control account for considerable variance in actual behaviour.³⁹ Another alternative is social cognitive theory, which looks to source role models, explicitly demonstrated behaviours, and the representation of vicarious reinforcement to enhance the impact of mediated messages.⁴⁰ Using theory validated elsewhere as a starting point during the formative research and evaluation process can help identify promising variables for consideration. Pilot testing, focus groups, or other forms of limited-scale pilot testing can be used to refine the variables to be targeted and the specific communication or other interventions implemented to change those variables.

For an example of a good start to that sort of process see Daniel Aldrich's preliminary evaluation of the effectiveness of USAID's efforts in parts of Mali.⁴¹ Aldrich discusses a mixed segmentation approach using demographics, socioeconomic, political, and cultural inputs. His evaluation shows altered civic behaviour and listening patterns in exposed audiences compared to unexposed audiences, but no significant differences in attitudes toward violence or the west, nor anything actually connected to violent behaviour. Still, this is a good first step in using evaluation to show the effectiveness (or lack in effectiveness) of programs of this kind. Aldrich's contribution is also particularly important for testing these assumptions in an applied setting. Unfortunately, much of the research in this area is not facilitated in applied contexts, minimizing ecological validity.

Attending to both the immediate needs of transitioning between populations in the model and using behavioural theory to influence the segmentation process, future assessment should focus on measuring outcomes of counterterrorism communication longitudinally. Collecting baseline data allows for future comparisons following a communication intervention. Many shifts in attitudes and behaviours can occur

39 Icek Ajzen, 'The Theory of Planned Behavior', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50 (1991), 179-211.

40 Albert Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1986).

41 Daniel P. Aldrich, 'First steps towards hearts and minds? USAID's countering violent extremism policies in Africa', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26 (2014), 523-546.

marginally, over an extended period of time. Finally, longitudinal data are helpful for measuring slippage between populations and/or ascertaining maintenance over time. Even though counterterrorism communication may protect or improve attitudes and behaviours in the short term, population members continuously consume and process new information.

Moving Forward

As counterterrorism efforts shift from kinetic to mixed approaches, further research and evaluation is needed to document impact on the bottom line. Counterterrorism communication programs may provide a useful tool for reaching populations in various phases along the radicalization trajectory. Decades of public health and health communication research show that tailored communication is a tested means of achieving behavioural change.⁴² As counterterrorism efforts turn to psychological, communication, and educational solutions, rigorous theory and evaluation of efforts are needed to demonstrate success. The prevalence of the funnel model in current counterterrorism communication despite its possible shortcomings emphasizes this need.

Evaluation is essential to support counterterrorism communication planning, improving communication effectiveness and efficiency, and enforcing accountability.⁴³ Evaluation also ensures that theoretical specification and program implementation are operating as expected. Every counterterrorism communication effort, according to whatever assumptions or approaches, should be explicit about its objectives and theory of change and then should assess results against theory, making adjustments as needed, discarding mistaken assumptions, as well as helping others avoid poor assumptions in the future.⁴⁴ The assessment process should also touch on the formative, process, and summative evaluation stages.

This is important, because there are those who are sceptical of the potential effectiveness of strategic communication for counter-terrorism, and would like to see

42 Refer to Seth M. Noar, Christina N. Benac, and Melissa S. Harris, 'Does tailoring matter? Meta-analytic review of tailored print health behavior change interventions', *Psychological Bulletin* 133 (2007), 673-693, for a thorough investigation.

43 For a comprehensive reference on designing and conducting such assessments, see Christopher Paul, Jessica Yeats, Colin P. Clarke, and Miriam Matthews, *Assessing and evaluating Department of Defense efforts to inform, influence, and persuade: Desk reference* (Santa Monica, CA, 2015) in RAND Corporation Online http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR809z1.html

44 Apparently many European counterradicalization programs now have assessment components, a trend which should be applauded and continued. See James Brandon and Lorenzo Vidino, *European experiences in counterradicalization* (West Point, NY, 2013) In Combating Terrorism Center at West Point Online <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/european-experiences-in-counterradicalization>

such efforts terminated or diminished.⁴⁵ In order to argue compellingly for continued support to this aspect of the broader counter-terrorism portfolio, proponents need to be able to clearly show which efforts work, and to what extent. As terrorists' use of mediated (i.e. electronic) communication grows to encompass psychological warfare, online indoctrination, recruitment and mobilization, planning and coordination, fundraising, and data mining and disinformation, a better understanding of these tactics and counterterrorism responses are needed.⁴⁶

Future research should explore the extent to which existing behavioural change theories are or are not useful in the counterterrorism communication context. Existing theories, might, for example, be useful for developing more carefully constructed audience segments and population groups, which could then be validated through rigorous assessment. Additionally, there is potentially much to be learned from merging behavioural change theories and radicalization theories. For example, some interventions may work better during different stages of the radicalization process.

The funnel model may also better serve communication efforts if placed in a broader evaluative context. Standard procedures should outline how to use evaluation prior to, during, and after communication efforts.⁴⁷ Not all evaluation is created equal, and different stages of evaluation serve different purposes. In order to build and refine counterterrorism communication theory and justify implementation strategies, more resources are required to collect short term and longitudinal data.

Currently, it is difficult to ascertain the effectiveness of the funnel model. It may be (again, this is an empirical question that should be tested) that smaller, more complex and nuanced efforts targeted against smaller and more carefully specified population segments will prove to be more effective. Dutch domestic counter-radicalization efforts provide an example.⁴⁸ Either way, better assessment will help establish which forms of intervention work best in which contexts, and help get the most out of any effort.

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45 See, for example, Alex P. Schmid, 'Al-Qaeda's "single narrative" and attempts to develop counter-narratives: The state of knowledge', International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (2014). and Philipp Holtmann, 'Countering Al-Qaeda's single narrative', *Perspectives on Terrorism* 7 (2013), 141–146.

46 Gabriel Weimann, and Katharina Von Knop, 'Applying the Notion of Noise to Countering Online Terrorism', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (2008), 883-902.

47 See Peter Romaniuk and Naureen Chowdhury Fink, *From input to impact: Evaluating terrorism prevention programs*. (Centre on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, 2012). for an example of a comprehensive evaluation cycle diagram.

48 Lorenzo Vidino, 'A preliminary assessment of counter-radicalization in the Netherlands', *CTC Sentinel* 1 (2008), 1-3.

Thorough assessment should lead to better counterterrorism communication in the future, because approaches that actually work will have been separated from those that do not, and because process and practice will have been improved through assessment-based learning. There is much to gain from additional critiques of the funnel model. Using this approach to structure and tailor communication, attitudes and behaviours may be shifted away from radicalization. Finally, if further investigation demonstrates audience segmentation to be ineffective at identifying targets for counterterrorism communication, we can move on to testing other approaches to accomplish attitudinal and behavioural change.

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THE RAINBOW IN THE DARK: ASSESSING A CENTURY OF BRITISH MILITARY INFORMATION OPERATIONS

Lee Richards

The West is again facing multiple threats spearheaded by hostile information activity. ISIL's exploitation of social media has lured new recruits reaching straight into the bedrooms of our teenagers. Seemingly inexplicably, young intelligent minds have been radicalised through a perversion of their faith. A resurgent Russia has reinvented its 'hybrid war' doctrine of the Soviet Cold War-era, believing that it can only be secure when we are weak. Putin's incursions into Ukraine and now Syria have required a vanguard of blatant untruths filtered through its expansive international news agencies *RT* and *Sputnik*. All the while our own performance in Iraq and Afghanistan has been questionable with our strategic communications (stratcom) never becoming as pre-eminent as they were in the World Wars. As will be shown in the following review of British military information operations, a recurrent pattern of under-resourcing, ad-hoc responses, and Whitehall battles of control have been a constant hindrance to effective stratcom, particularly through the Cold War period and despite the best efforts of those involved.

It seems, and one hopes, the UK Ministry of Defence through its 'post-Afghan reset' has recognised and is attempting to address these deficiencies, as it continues to wrestle at almost every level to understand and respond effectively to the emerging character of war in the information age.

In 2012, Stephen Jolly was appointed the UK's new Director of Defence Communications. It was a controversial appointment.¹ An expert on information operations and psyops, Jolly is an unorthodox thinker drawn from an academic background (he is a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge); he held a Fellowship in Psychological Warfare at the International Centre for Security Analysis at King's College, London, in the early 2000s; and was a former instructor at the UK Defence Intelligence and Security Centre at Chicksands. His knowledge of the history of British black propaganda operations is evinced by a long list of expert publications. In his seminal Mardin Essay on 'Psychological Warfare and Public

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1 Hugh Muir, 'Master of black propaganda gets top job at MOD', *Guardian*, 13 December 2012, online <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/dec/13/hugh-muir-diary-jolly-mod> (Last accessed 1 September 2015).

Relations' Jolly discusses how Public Relations can learn and utilise concepts from the broader history of political and military information operations but also help it to recognise areas it should never emulate. He concludes:

Whether we like it or not, public relations and psychological warfare are sister disciplines. The remit of the public relations professional most closely conforms to the white and grey propaganda activity of the psywarrior. However, in certain situations, the psywarrior has the capability - sanctioned by law - to extend his range of activity into areas closed to his PR counterpart (black operations).²

During his tenure as Director of Defence Communications, Jolly publicly advocated Full Spectrum Defence Communications, through what has become known as his *Rainbow in the Dark* doctrine.³ This thinking led to a radical overhaul of Defence stratcom capability and governance. Reforms included wholesale digitisation, the introduction of a new Target Audience Analysis (TAA) methodology, a refreshed Defence Advisory Notice system, the formation of a cross-Whitehall National Security Communications Committee and even the birth of 'Twitter troops' in the form of the British Army's 77 Brigade.

As we approach the centenary of British military information operations (IO), it is opportune to take an objective look back at the history, successes and failures of British IO, how an awareness of these might have shaped current *Rainbow in the Dark* thinking and consider how an historical perspective might further influence the future development of stratcom when, now more than ever, a mastery of the art is so critical.

MI7: Britain's first military full spectrum communications operation

From the British perspective, it was not until the creation of the MI7 branch of Military Intelligence exactly one hundred years ago that information operations were first implemented in a truly organised and systematic way. Indeed, it is arguable that MI7 was the first 'full spectrum effects' operation in what we would now call British Defence communications.

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2 Stephen Jolly, 'Psychological Warfare and Public Relations', *Frontline: The Global Public Relations Quarterly*, 22/4: 22-30 (October/November 2000).

3 'Rainbow in the Dark: How UK Defence is moving to 'full spectrum' operations', *DefenceIQ*, <http://www.informationoperationsevenet.com/rainbow-in-the-dark-how-uk-defence-is-moving-to-full-spectrum-operations-mc> (Last accessed 1 September 2015).

The catalyst for MI7 was seeded in the late nineteenth century with the realisation of the enormous influence newspapers had established for themselves and the numerous incidents where the press had published potentially damaging military information at times of national crises. Consequently, Parliament drafted legislation in order to stop the press from printing articles considered harmful to the Armed Forces.

Initially, at least, the press were open to the establishment of a framework of censorship to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of sensitive information as long as they maintained their rights of criticism. Some disagreement between Government and the media did arise later as legislation was drafted then dropped and then redrafted over the first decade of the twentieth century. Consensus was finally reached in the summer of 1912 following the creation of the ‘Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee’ through which ‘prohibitory notices’ could be communicated to the press to prevent the disclosure of military information of value to the enemy. These were the origins of the Defence Advisory Notice system still in use today.⁴ The War Departments recognised that the Committee was a means of collaboration with the media rather than purely a means of censure, as an official report commented later, they ‘...were not slow to realize the justice of the claims put forward by the Press that newspapers should not be used as a medium for the dissemination of false information, that criticisms of policy should not be stifled, that news should not be restricted except where national interests were at stake, and that in the distribution of news all papers should be treated on an equality’.⁵

The D Notice has often been criticised as a means of Government censorship and non-conducive to a free press but that ignores the underlying voluntary nature of the system. Throughout its 100-year history, the press have generally been supportive, notwithstanding several notable exceptions.⁶ Simon Bucks, vice-chair of the recently remodelled Defence and Security Media Advisory Committee, described it in a *Guardian* op-ed as ‘a very British idea; emphatically not censorship (though critics would argue otherwise) but voluntary, responsible media restraint’.⁷

4 See <http://www.dnotice.org.uk/history/index.htm> for the history of the DA Notice system, (Last accessed 1 September 2015).

5 See file at the National Archives (TNA), INF 4/1B – Military Press Control: A History of the work of MI7, 1914-1919, page 4.

6 For example the 1967 revelations by journalist Chapman Pincher of the British Government’s interception of international cables and more recently the *Guardian*’s involvement in the Snowden affair.

7 Simon Bucks, ‘The D-notice is misunderstood but its collaborative spirit works’, *The Guardian*, 2 August 2015.

The birth of MI7

On the outbreak of the First World War, responsibility for press and cable censorship and the issuing of War Office communiqués through the Press Bureau was initially entrusted to a small sub-section of the Directorate of Military Operations designated MO5(h). Its activities expanded quickly, for instance taking charge of policy regarding the sketching and photography of prohibited areas, and was soon upgraded to a new section MO7. At the end of 1915, a reorganisation of the Imperial General Staff resulted in the formation of a new Directorate of Military Intelligence with all press matters being concentrated under the control of MI7. The new MI7 was considered a more ‘comprehensive and important organisation than MO7 had been and advantage was derived from the coordination under one centralised control of all press matters’.⁸

MI7 was divided into several sections. The first section, MI7(a), dealt with the censorship of press articles, books, and cinema films; arranged for the accreditation of, and the issue of permits to, journalists working in the field; controlled official photographers and artists; and, through the Press Bureau, released communiqués on progress of operations. The section also became responsible for giving official permission to officers and other ranks wishing to publish in the press their opinions on military matters.

Whereas MI7(a) was more concerned with the control of information, the second section, MI7(b), was mostly concerned with publication. After a time, for organisational purposes, MI7(b) was split into six subdivisions dealing with a variety of press and propaganda matters including the authorship and distribution of articles for the domestic, colonial and foreign press; the creation of an archive documenting the British war effort; the production of daily summaries of the home press; and organising weekly press conferences or ‘press lectures’.

The first subdivision, MI7(b)(1), dealt with ‘General Press Propaganda’ and focused on the writing of press articles from the military perspective.⁹ In August 1916, a general request was made for army officers with literary experience to offer their writing services. This request, and a second one made in May 1917, resulted in almost one thousand respondents. Eventually, five hundred volunteers were selected to write propaganda articles for the international press. As well as the volunteers, the subdivision employed up to 20 full-time officers which included such notable

8 Ibid, page 10.

9 Throughout this narrative the terms contemporary to that era will be used to describe influence and information activities.

literary greats as author of *Winnie-the-Pooh* and Assistant Editor of *Punch* magazine, A A Milne; Irish poet and journalist, Patrick McGill; author of fantasy novels such as *The Gods of Pegāna*, Lord Dunsany; and Cecil Street, who would later author the Dr Priestley series of books using the pen name John Rhode. By the end of the war, around 7500 articles had been produced. Other work included both weekly and monthly summaries of military operations provided to the Ministry of Information, a daily account of the 1918 offensives which were taken by up to 50 domestic newspapers, and a morale-boosting weekly letter to soldiers issued to British troops with a second version for Belgian forces. And it was not just the written word; numerous artists were employed to create illustrations. These included Frank Reynolds, the Art Editor for *Punch* and contributor to the *Illustrated London News*, amongst other publications, and Bruce Bairnsfather, the cartoonist and creator of the popular ‘Old Bill’ character.

The fourth subdivision, MI7(b)(4), can lay claim to fathering British Psychological Operations. The subdivision was formed in June 1916 with the appointment of the renowned zoologist Captain Peter Chalmers Mitchell as its head. His initial task was to create a Propaganda Library, to catalogue and critique all enemy war publications that came into British possession through the interceptions of the Postal Censorship branch of Military Intelligence (MI9). Two to three thousand books and pamphlets would eventually make up the library. In August 1917, Chalmers Mitchell’s detailed report on the Propaganda Library was printed and distributed. In the introduction, the report is described as ‘... the most condensed and comprehensive summary of German War-Literature that has been compiled. It is an analysis of enemy propaganda, and material for the preparation of counter-propaganda rather than actual propaganda in itself’.¹⁰ It outlined German interpretation of themes like ‘The Causes of War’, ‘Imperialism’, ‘Prophecies of the War’, ‘War Aims’, and ‘Socialism’.

The main role of MI7(b)(4) was the preparation and dissemination of aerial propaganda. Germany was the first nation to drop propaganda from aeroplanes in the war when their airmen leafleted Paris on 30 August 1914.¹¹ Britain returned the compliment in October with the dissemination of an aerial propaganda leaflet containing a few home truths. This leaflet, titled ‘News for German Soldiers’, attempted to quash the rumour that Britain was treating captured German soldiers in an ‘unmanly fashion’. It reassured German troops that prisoners of war were, in fact, well treated. The leaflet also tried to counter rumours about the war situation.

10 TNA, CAB 17/196 – ‘Report on the Propaganda Library’, 1917. The brief introduction to the report was written by Brigadier-General George K Cockerill, Director of Special Intelligence.

11 R G Auckland, ‘The First Leaflet Dropped in World War I’, *Falling Leaf*, No. 49, 1970.

The news of the German defeat at Montmirail was given, as well as pointing out that the German army had never captured Paris.¹² The leaflet was a one-off effort organised by General Swinton and printed by the *Daily Mail* local office in Paris.¹³ This new form of warfare was not taken up again by the War Office until MI7(b) (4) was conceived.

Over the two years of its existence, the subdivision would produce nearly 26 million copies of propaganda leaflets and postcards.¹⁴ Of note was a series of facsimiles Prisoner of War letters sent by captured soldiers to their relatives back home in Germany. Letters were selected for reproduction that praised the conditions in the British POW camps, their good treatment, and others that contained anti-war and defeatist sentiments. It is interesting to note that the prejudices of a target audience can adversely affect the credibility of accurate and truthful information. Although the original letters were genuine and written by real Prisoners of War, German soldiers who had seen the reproductions often claimed that they found them to be unbelievable and exaggerated.¹⁵ In 1918, the highlighting of United States' entry into the war and the number of American troops making their way to Europe proved to be an important theme for air-dropped leaflets. By June of that year, over a million American soldiers will have arrived in France.

Developing means to measure the effect of psychological operations has always been notoriously difficult. One useful metric is how the enemy reacts to, and tries to counter, propaganda directed at them. And certainly the German authorities were very paranoid about MI7 leaflet activities. German soldiers were financially rewarded for handing in leaflets to their officers, up to 10 marks for a leaflet, or severely punished for reading or distributing them. Soldiers were also warned that leaflets were deliberately infected with disease and should not be picked up. Machine guns, bombing civilians, and mustard gas may have been considered acceptable forms of warfare but for the German High Command the dropping of pieces of paper on their soldiers was not sporting, indeed was considered a war crime. Several captured British airmen were actually court-martialled for treason by the German authorities on the charge of dropping 'inflammatory literature'. They were each sentenced to ten years hard labour for their crime.¹⁶

Accordingly the use of airplanes for dropping leaflets was abandoned. Alternative means of disseminating leaflets were experimented with which included release

12 TNA, AIR 1/823/204/5/52 contains an example of the original leaflet and a typed English translation.

13 TNA, AIR 1/723/68/4 – Interview with Major General Swinton, May 10, 1920.

14 TNA, INF 4/1B – Military Press Control: A History of the work of MI7, 1914-1919, page 23.

15 TNA, WO 32/5143 – British Balloon Propaganda (Second Report August 16th – Sept. 10th [1918]).

16 TNA, AIR 1/67 – Distribution of Propaganda by Air, 1914-1918 by Captain Morris.

from high-attitude box kites or by being fired in modified artillery shells and mortars. Specially designed paper balloons were found to be a satisfactory replacement as they could be manufactured in large enough numbers, were relatively cheap to make, and could carry an adequately large load.¹⁷ From now onwards leaflets had 'by balloon' printed on them in both English and German in an effort to protect airmen from future prosecution by the enemy.

MI7(b)(4)'s propaganda activity was not just focused towards enemy troops but also towards the maintenance of the morale of French and Belgian civilians caught under enemy occupation. This was principally achieved through a weekly leaflet-newspaper in French, instituted by Chalmers Mitchell, titled 'Le Courier de l'Air' or 'Air Mail'. The first issue was dated 6 April 1917 and would eventually reach 78 editions. Typically 5,000 copies were dropped over occupied territory each week. The front page news was drawn from MI7(b)(1)'s 'Weekly Resume of Military Operations'. In the closing two months of the war, aerial leaflet production was taken over by the recently-created civilian organisation known as Crewe House, under press baron and proprietor of *The Times* and *Daily Mail* newspapers Lord Northcliffe.

The two remaining sections of MI7 will only be covered briefly here. MI7(c) was initially the translation section until June 1917 when it adopted responsibility for visits to the front in France. A visitors' château was acquired at Tramecourt and financed between the War Office, Admiralty and Foreign Office. Renowned journalists were invited to spend time at the château and to visit the front in order to give them a favourable impression of the British war effort. In late 1917, a second, slightly larger château at Radingham was used principally for invited American correspondents. MI7(d) was responsible for the reading of foreign press and issuing a daily review containing military, political and economic intelligence gleaned from enemy and neutral newspapers. Weekly supplements were soon produced to analyse changes of opinion and to gauge enemy intentions.

Immediately following the end of the war, MI7 was shut down and responsibility for propaganda activities within the War Office taken over by the MI1(b) branch. Throughout the interwar period rather too much credit was attributed to leaflet propaganda for the rapid German collapse. General Ludendorff wrote in his autobiography, 'We boggled at the enemy propaganda as a rabbit stares transfixed at a snake... The Army was literally drenched with enemy propaganda leaflets... we could not prevent them from poisoning the heart of our soldiers'.¹⁸ Later,

17 TNA, WO 32/5143 – Various reports on methods of leaflet dissemination.

18 Meine Kriegserinnerungen, 1914–1918; Ludendorff, Erich; (Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1919).

recalling the enemy leaflets dropped over German trenches, one lowly corporal named Adolf Hitler, would contest, ‘...This persistent propaganda began to have a real influence on our soldiers... [It] began to achieve undoubted success from 1916 onwards’.¹⁹ On the British side, Sir Campbell Stuart, the wartime Deputy Director of Crewe House, helped to cement the reputation of Lord Northcliffe’s propaganda organisation in his book *Secrets of Crewe House*. This high-profile study quickly relegated MI7, an arguably more significant operation, to the footnotes of Great War history.

An abridged version of Stuart’s account had previously been printed in *The Times History and Encyclopaedia of the War* and the *Times* newspaper had itself rather erroneously claimed that good propaganda probably shortened the war by a year and saved a million lives.²⁰ The Nazis were quick to appropriate this omnipotent reputation of Allied propaganda to further its own *Dolchstoßlegende* ‘stab in the back’ rhetoric and to blame Germany’s defeat on enemy tricks.

The Revival of MI7

Following the Munich Crisis in September 1938, the British Government was no longer under any illusion that war was again imminent. For some time, preparations had been underway to re-establish a Ministry of Information. Now Sir Campbell Stuart, who had since been the Managing Director of *the Times* newspaper and the longstanding chairman of the Imperial Communications Advisory Committee, was approached to organise propaganda to enemy countries in event of war. Already the previously politically-neutral word ‘propaganda’ was acquiring negative connotations and seen as the exclusive tool of manipulation and malevolent dictators. Its use very slowly started to fall out of favour and to be excluded from the military lexicon. Reflecting this change of terminology Campbell Stuart’s organisation was officially titled, although rarely called, the ‘Department of Publicity in Enemy Countries’. Campbell Stuart worked from Electra House, the headquarters of communications company Cable and Wireless on London’s Victoria Embankment and, consequently, his department was more commonly referred to as either ‘Electra House’ or ‘Department EH’.

Electra House very much continued where Crewe House had left off. The humble leaflet was still seen as a principle means of influencing the enemy but now joined

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19 Mein Kampf; Hitler, Adolf, translated by Murphy, James; (Hurst and Blackett, 1939), pp.153-154.

20 Secrets of Crewe House: The Story of a Famous Campaign; Stuart, Sir Campbell; (Hodder and Stoughton, 1920); The Times History and Encyclopaedia of the War: British Propaganda in Enemy Countries; Unsigned; (The Times Publishing Company, 1919); The Times (London, England), Friday, October 31, 1919; p.13; Issue 42245.

by radio broadcasting. The department actively collaborated with the British Broadcasting Corporation in the preparation of radio broadcasts to Germany and occupied territories.

Campbell Stuart considered it essential that Allied propaganda obeyed three principles, firstly that it must be related to a defined policy of war aims; secondly that it must be 'rigorously truthful' and thirdly that it must never contradict itself. These guiding principles were adhered to in overt propaganda throughout the war and beyond.²¹ But as far as covert operations were concerned these principles could and were ignored. Tension did arise over the possibility of unacknowledged and exaggerated activities potentially compromising the well-established reputation of open propaganda. For example, the BBC, initially at least, was against the development of the *Soldatensender Calais* radio station (see below). Its Allied origin would soon be apparent and the BBC was concerned that any mistruths or misleading reporting on *Calais* might have a knock on effect on the BBC's own credibility.²² These fears proved to be unfounded.

As a civilian agency under the direction of the Foreign Office, Electra House needed to liaise and secure the cooperation of the three fighting services. Through the Admiralty, in early 1939 Campbell Stuart arranged the secondment of a Royal Marines officer, Lieutenant Colonel RAD Brooks, to head Electra House's military wing. Over time, Brooks would become the lynchpin between the civilian propaganda agencies and the Chiefs of Staff and was considered to command the confidence of all three Services. Through weekly meetings with General Ismay, he kept very close links with the Directors of Plans thereby keeping Electra House, and its successors, abreast of forthcoming military operations.²³

In another respect, the early working relationship with the Admiralty was not as good. Campbell Stuart had tried to secure assistance for the dissemination of propaganda in the central Mediterranean. The Admiralty considered possible means for distributing leaflets from Royal Navy ships and submarines. Such methods as using radio-sonde balloons, launching them with rockets, firing inside star shells from 4-inch guns, or floating leaflets in bottles were all considered but quickly rejected as being impractical. All the Admiralty could offer was in certain circumstances to drop leaflets from Fleet Air Arm aircraft over Sardinia and Western Libya but insisted that there was little hope of aircraft being available for the more imperative targets of Italy and Sicily. The proposition of radio broadcasting from

21 TNA, PREM 1/374 – Memorandum by Sir Campbell Stuart, 19 March 1939.

22 TNA, FO 898/45 – Memorandum on *Soldatensender Calais*, 19 November 1943.

23 TNA, ADM 223/477 – Proposed appointment of Lt Colonel RAD Brooks, RM, to work under Sir Campbell Stuart, on propaganda.

ships was also rejected due to the fear a vessel's position could be given away.²⁴

The assistance of the Royal Air Force was particularly needed as the principal provider of the means of distributing leaflets either by Bomber Command aircraft or through the especially established 'M' Balloon Unit. The Air Ministry's 'Plans 5' section maintained contact with Electra House and had the power of veto on the dissemination of leaflets. A veto could be applied either for operational reasons or if the RAF felt the content of a particular leaflet was excessively subversive thereby potentially giving the enemy cause to bring legal proceedings against captured aircrew. The Plans 5 section was later absorbed into the wider Air Ministry Public Relations department but crucially remained directly responsible to the General Branch of the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff. Its work then expanded so greatly that the section was upgraded to the Deputy Directorate of Counter Propaganda on 1 December 1942.²⁵

The War Office on the outbreak of war had re-established MI7 but on a less grand scale. It acted as liaison between the War Office and Electra House and the Ministry of Information as well as providing material for use in propaganda. A year later MI7 was reorganised into the War Office's Deputy Directorate of Information and Propaganda, under the Director of Public Relations.²⁶

The Emergence of the Political Warfare Executive

Following the change of the British Government with Churchill as the new Prime Minister and the fall of France imminent, the Chiefs of Staff considered their future strategy. Means suggested to continue the fight included the application of economic pressure on Germany, air attack on economic objectives and on German morale, and the creation of widespread revolt in the conquered territories. The Chiefs of Staff ordered plans to be urgently put into effect to create a special organisation to conduct subversive action in occupied countries.²⁷ Two months later, the Special Operations Executive was created to commence subversion and propaganda in enemy and enemy occupied territory. Electra House, along with elements of Section D of SIS and the Foreign Office's Political Intelligence Department, was subsumed into the SO1 section of SOE. While Campbell Stuart was considered to have 'good qualities', he appears to have been generally unpopular in both military and certain political circles. His continued presence in the new

24 TNA, ADM 223/477 – Propaganda in enemy countries in time of war.

25 TNA, AIR 41/9 – Air Historical Branch: Narratives and Monographs: Propaganda and Publicity.

26 TNA, WO 165/95 – War Diary of the Deputy Directorate of Information and Propaganda.

27 TNA, CAB 80/11/58 – War Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff Committee Papers, COS(40) 390, British Strategy in a Certain Eventuality, 25 May 1940.

set up was deemed likely to be ‘a constant source of friction and disharmony’. Accordingly his appointment was terminated.²⁸

SOE was directly accountable to the Minister of Economic Warfare, Dr Hugh Dalton. On taking up this new responsibility Dalton penned a memorandum titled ‘The Fourth Arm’ suggesting how subversion and propaganda could assist the fighting services. The opening paragraph read:

The Germans have shown that success in war can, to a large extent, be achieved by “Subversion”, by which I mean not only propaganda but subversive activities in the widest sense. Before a shot is fired, before even war is declared, the ground has been so well prepared that [the] opposing nation, divided, discouraged and even to some extent, disarmed, is unable to offer the desperate and united resistance which alone can prevail against military resources at Germany’s disposal. In other words, Subversion, I suggest, is an essential element in any large scale offensive action...²⁹

Dalton further suggested that in conducting subversion action ‘the selection of the right men is even more important than the creation of the right machine’. The three services appeared to have agreed with this statement, but still had reservations that the proposed leadership of SOE was overly civilian. In the opinion of Commander Ian Fleming, the personal assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence, the right men should not be ‘political cranks’ but taken from the services if immediate confidence and cooperation was to result. He felt that Dalton’s proposals sounded rather ‘Chatham Housy’ and warned that he ‘must not be allowed to shroud himself with secrecy as an excuse for inertia or incompetence as Campbell Stuart did’.

It soon became obvious, however, that the two branches of SOE, propaganda and subversion, were not working well together and if anything matters had been made worse. Both internal fighting within the organisation regarding division of labour, as far as the production and dissemination of overt and covert propaganda to different audiences was concerned, and external fighting across Government over control of policy resulted in another reorganisation a year later. SO1 was split from SOE to create the Political Warfare Executive in the autumn of 1941. A Ministerial committee consisting of the Foreign Secretary and Ministers of Information and Economic Warfare dealt with major questions regarding propaganda policy. The day-to-day running of PWE was left in the hands of the Executive Committee

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28 TNA, PREM 3/365/6 – Letter from Hugh Dalton to Winston Churchill, 24 July 1940.

29 TNA, AMD 223/477 – Memorandum titled ‘The Fourth Arm’, 19 August 1940.

comprising of Robert Bruce Lockhart as Chairman with Brigadier RAD Brooks and Rex Leeper. Brigadier Brooks retained his link with the Chiefs of Staff through General Ismay and the Directors of Plans in order to provide PWE with guidance on the strategic aspect of the war. Leeper continued his supervision of the more clandestine political warfare activities.

The Director of Naval Intelligence remained sceptical that the new PWE would improve matters in any way with essentially the same staff and same mentality but now under two-committee control. DNI's frustration was plain to see, when he commented '...the difficulty in the past has not been lack of ideas, but ...a certain flabbiness in the prosecution of whatever policy has been put forward. Ideas have been plentiful and these, by means of the existing machinery, have been passed to SO1 and its predecessor, Electra House. Means for converting these ideas into action also exist, but the will to use them has in the past been lacking, due partly to divided responsibility and partly to timidity and lack of realistic thinking. In this respect the Russian methods employed during the last three months have acted as a distinct stimulus, and have in fact been partly responsible for the formation of [PWE]'. The frustration proved to be short-lived as effective and close cooperation between PWE and the Admiralty was quick to ripen with the establishment of a new section of Naval Intelligence, NID17z, devoted to political warfare matters. NID17z was headed by Lieutenant Donald McLachlan, a former *Times* journalist who had worked in Berlin before the war. McLachlan, as Secretary of the Axis Planning Section, had recently provoked a useful debate following the circulation of a strategic appreciation he had prepared on 'German Psychological Warfare'. The appreciation was written from the German point of view and how it might plan a propaganda campaign against Britain in the build up to and during an invasion.

The preparation of a special Naval programme broadcast on the BBC's German service was one of the first profitable collaborations between McLachlan and PWE. A very productive and close partnership also flourished with Sefton Delmer, PWE's director of special operations, with the creation of the clandestine *Atlantik* shortwave radio station. McLachlan was able to provide Delmer with intelligence from the most secret sources in order to frame the broadcasts of *Atlantik* to best attack the morale of U-boat crews and the wider Kriegsmarine. The station appeared to develop a sizeable audience very quickly. Interrogations of 200 German Army prisoners of war taken within the first six months of broadcasting revealed that *Atlantik* was widely listened to in Tunisia and Sicily. One prisoner said that it was the most listened to station in his unit, more so than official German radio stations. The music was generally considered to be the first appeal of the station

with its news segments judged informative and interesting.³⁰ *Atlantik* later evolved into the *Soldatensender Calais* medium wave station that assisted the deception plans for Operation Overlord and built up a large listenership in the closing months of the war in Europe. The *Soldatensender* broadcast separate new bulletins aimed at the Kriegsmarine, Luftwaffe and German Army in between interludes of specially recorded dance music and Jazz. The War Office's disaffection with the new Political Warfare Executive setup would remain for a little while longer, with it expressing concern that the new organisation might be submerged by the 'curious mixture' of Bloomsbury-set and émigrés which made up the 'PWE-BBC circus'.³¹ With the fighting in North Africa, the War Office was taking an interest in the possibilities of frontline propaganda directed towards civilian populations and enemy military personnel immediately prior to and throughout a campaign. It was noted that the Germans had paved the way for many of their successful campaigns through the use of propaganda in this way. Ideas considered were the employment of mobile broadcasting stations, leaflet printing units combined with the provision of aircraft to distribute them, and the possibility of installing aircraft with loudspeaker systems.³² The latter idea does not appear to have been taken forward at this time, although radio broadcasting from aircraft was later trialled by the Air Ministry in cooperation with BBC engineers. The first two ideas were implemented when the 1st Army Field Propaganda Company went into action with the Eighth Army in the Western Desert in June 1942. The Company produced and broadcast its own radio programme under the name 'Radio Marmarica'. The station call sign was the Morse letter 'V' – dot-dot-dot-dash – sounded on a reed. Separate German and Italian programmes were transmitted on a wavelength of 35.33 metres up to five times a day. To help establish a regular audience captured undelivered letters from home to Axis soldiers were read out on air. The Company's printing presses were rarely used for their intended purpose of producing leaflets. Instead they were mostly utilised for printing the *Eighth Army News* newsheet and reproducing General Montgomery's famous personal messages to the troops.³³

Meanwhile, planning for Operation Torch was underway, which included provision for a joint Anglo-American 'Psychological Warfare Branch' to conduct propaganda in the North African theatre. The Psychological Warfare Branch was formed from a mix of staff from the US Office of War Information and Office of Strategic Services and, on the British side, from PWE. Some served in uniform and others as civilians. US Colonel CB Hazeltine was appointed commander with Richard H

30 TNA, ADM 223/477 – Evidence of Listening to German Atlantic Station.

31 TNA, WO 193/447 – Relationship between the Political Warfare Executive and the General Staff.

32 TNA, WO 193/446 – Provision of Propaganda Units for use in the field.

33 TNA, WO 169/6826 – 1st Army Field Propaganda Company war diary.

Crossman, later an eminent Labour Cabinet Minister, being the most senior British official attached. Before his transfer to the Middle East, Crossman was head of the German section of PWE.

The Psychological Warfare Branch provided the framework for the future organisation of tactical psychological warfare. It invented new means of leaflet dissemination using artillery shells and dedicated leaflet bombs and developed staple leaflet products like Safe Conduct Passes and bomb warnings. It also formed Combat Propaganda Teams, put captured radio transmitters back on air and monitored enemy broadcasts. The branch attempted to measure effects of psychological warfare with a programme of enemy prisoners of war interrogations. As planning for Operation Overlord commenced, a new Psychological Warfare Division was formed under the command of General Robert A McClure. The Psychological Warfare Division was not only fathered by PWB but also supplied it with most of its staff.

For Overlord, the British Army fielded five Amplifier Units, accompanied by the same number of Leaflet Units, to provide forward PsyWar and consolidation support to 21st Army Group.³⁴ In the battle to capture the port of Cherbourg, the 13th Amplifier Unit distinguished itself. Advancing at the front of American troops, in two days the Unit netted around 1,200 enemy prisoners following broadcasts from their loudspeaker truck. One broadcast was made from 500 yards from the walls of the Cherbourg arsenal in daylight. Following a brief negotiation and a show of strength, the commanding General and the entire 600-man garrison of the Arsenal surrendered. The four-man crew of the 13th Amplifier Unit truck were each awarded Bronze Stars by the Commanding General of the 1st US Army in recognition of their efforts.³⁵ The 14th Amplifier Unit was part of the first British troops to enter the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in the early afternoon of 15 April 1945. The Unit remained in the camp for the next two weeks acting as interpreters, using their loudspeaker to restore order in the camp, organising the distribution of food and arresting collaborators hiding amongst the inmates of camp.³⁶ The Amplifier and Leaflet units would also fulfil a civil affairs role, for instance with the production of newspapers in recently liberated areas.

In South East Asia, the arrangements for psychological warfare were even more complex than in Europe due to divergent British and American post-war policy towards European colonial possessions. This eventually resulted in separate British

34 The Amplifier Units were numbered from 10 to 14 and the Leaflet Units from 15 to 19.

35 TNA, WO 171/168 – Report of the action in the 21st Army Group Publicity and Psychological Warfare war diary, 29 June 1944.

36 TNA, WO 171/8142 – 14th Amplifier Unit war diary, April 1945.

Commonwealth and US organisations. On the British side, the five Indian Field Broadcasting Units (IFBUs) established by the Special Operations Executive beginning in 1943 was one of the more noteworthy endeavours in the region.

The IFBU's were tasked 'to carry out frontline propaganda against the enemy, and also behind the enemy lines' with this to be accomplished 'by loudspeaker apparatus, by distribution of leaflets, cartoons and other printed material by hand and by mortar, and by patrols whose ostensible purpose is to sell trade goods to local inhabitants'.³⁷ The trading with local inhabitants behind the lines was found to be an excellent way of securing both intelligence about the Japanese enemy and to foster goodwill amongst the local population.

Assessing British military information operations conducted in the Second World War, Dr Dalton was proved mostly right that selection of the right men proved more important than creating the right machine. The political organisation of psychological warfare was never satisfactory despite the improvement following the establishment of the Political Warfare Executive. It was the later opinion of Richard Crossman that subversive and propaganda activities were the only aspects of war at which Britain achieved real pre-eminence.³⁸ As far as psychological warfare is concerned, this pre-eminence was due to the imagination, acumen and strength of purpose of the likes of himself, Sefton Delmer, Donald McLachlan and their many colleagues. Whitehall battles over control of information activities were a distraction at best.

The decline of British military full spectrum communications (and the Psychological Warfare Executive that never was)

The post-war history of British military information operations is at best chequered. Without the existential threat of war, it proved impossible to replicate the coherence and reach of 'full spectrum communications' operations such as MI7 and PWE.

The transition into the Cold War came rather quickly and it is not surprising that planning for psychological warfare would continue in a similar vein as previously. In the Cold War, the Foreign Office took the lead and, in 1948, created the Information Research Department as a means to counter the worldwide threat of Soviet propaganda. Ralph Murray was appointed the first head of IRD. He was

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37 TNA, HS 1/333 – IFBU war diaries.

38 Richard Crossman, 'Personal view', *The Times* (London, England), Wednesday, May 16, 1973; p.18; Issue 58783.

one of the few senior figures originally from Electra House who had remained working with PWE throughout the war. Other former staff from both PWE and SOE also joined the department. In the event of global war with the Soviet Union, IRD was to provide the nucleus of a new 'Psychological Warfare Executive'.³⁹ One chief weaknesses of the original PWE, as Murray saw it, was the huge burden placed on the Director General, bearing responsibility for policy, strategy and administration. In the proposed new PWE, the structure included two Assistant Director Generals, one responsible for policy, the other for strategy. The latter was to be a Brigadier, or equivalent rank, as the senior Services representative. The new PWE would solely be responsible to the Foreign Office to avoid the complications of the previous triple Ministerial wrangling. It would be based in London with sub organisations envisioned in overseas commands in the Middle East and Far East and a small liaison section in Washington.⁴⁰

Planning in this immediate post-war period was centred on a future global war with little consideration given to Defence needs for a psychological warfare capability in local war or counterinsurgency. Information activity to help pacify the Emergency in Malaya, for instance, was originally entrusted to Government Public Relations. It was well into the 1950s until a small military psychological warfare section was formed as part of the wider civilian information effort.

The US Department of Defense had a monopoly on PsyWar activity throughout the Korean War. As Brigadier-General Robert A McClure, then head of the US Army's Office of Psychological Warfare, put it, this monopoly was 'not by design but by default'.⁴¹ Britain had no provision for tactical psychological warfare and could not provide either a PsyWar unit or technical hardware. The apparent American disappointment at the lack of assistance appears to have prompted the Chiefs of Staff to reconsider the position. The Chiefs acknowledged that limitations on manpower and equipment would prohibit setting up a military PsyWar organisation on the same scale as the Americans but they could not let psychological warfare activities 'go by default'. They further pointed out that 'it is in matters of this kind that we can establish a special relationship with the Americans'.⁴² At their meeting on 21 March 1952, the Chiefs of Staff requested the three Service Ministries to

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39 The terms 'Political Warfare' and 'Psychological Warfare' had been used analogously since 1943. Psychological Warfare, the favoured American term, was officially adopted over Political Warfare by the British Chiefs of Staff in May 1949 with agreement with the Foreign Office. TNA, DEFE 11/275 – COS(49) 74th meeting, 20 May 1949.

40 TNA, DEFE 11/275 – Details the Chiefs of Staff involvement with the planning for a Psychological Warfare Executive in event of war, 1948 to 1953.

41 Ibid, Brigadier-General Robert A McClure quoted in COS(51)727, 7 December 1951.

42 Ibid, COS(51)727, 7 December 1951 and Confidential Annex to COS(52) 4th meeting, 8 January 1952.

each nominate an officer to be responsible for liaison with the Foreign Office in peacetime regarding the organisation of psychological warfare. This appears to be the origin of what became the 'Interdepartmental Working Party on Psychological Warfare', which steered Defence planning for the next few years.⁴³

In May 1952, two officers were sent to Korea and Japan for two months to examine American PsyWar units in the field. They were certainly impressed at the level of resources the US military provided but, despite acknowledging that the value of psychological warfare operations is always difficult to estimate, felt that only some limited and local success had been achieved. Their conclusion was there was 'no clear proof that the results justified the effort'.⁴⁴ They pointed to organisational issues within the US machinery, which might have reduced effectiveness. There was an absence of proper State Department guidance, tension between the three services and insufficient coordination between the operations and intelligence staffs of individual services. They further suggested that the propaganda was unskilful and certain staff appointments were ill chosen.

While the Chiefs of Staff were considering psychological warfare purely in terms of global war, the Emergency in Malaya was *de facto* highlighting the requirement for a military capability in counterinsurgency. For example, about this time, the Director of Operations in Malaya, General Templer, secured the temporary use of a C47 Dakota loud hailer aircraft being used by the Americans in Korea. At the end of October, trials were undertaken by the War Office Operational Research Section using the Dakota to establish the effectiveness of loudspeaker broadcasting from aircraft. As a result of these trials, the employment of 'Voice Aircraft', using RAF Valettas and Austers, now became a rapid means of communicating with the Communist terrorists holed up in the jungle.⁴⁵ It is clear world events were rapidly overtaking the planning process.

The next major development occurred in the spring of 1956 when responsibility for psychological warfare planning inside the Ministry of Defence was taken over by the Directorate of Forward Plans. The Directorate, headed by John A Drew, was the successor to the London Controlling Section that had been so effective at organising Allied strategic deception in the Second World War. Deception remained the principle function of the DFP but now aimed towards misleading the Soviet Union. In the coming years, the importance attached to strategic

43 Ibid, COS(52) 42nd meeting, 21 March 1952.

44 Ibid, Psychological Warfare in Korea, Appendix to Note on NCDB/19.

45 Emergency in Malaya: The Psychological Dimension; Derry, Archie; (National Defence College, 1982) and TNA, WO 291/1762 – Operations Research Section (Psychological Warfare) Memorandum No. 2, Experiments in the use of Airborne (sic) Loudspeakers: Operation Hailer.

deception would wane with increasing effort devoted to psychological warfare. The Chairman of the Interdepartmental Working Party became a permanent member of the Directorate.⁴⁶ On joining the Directorate, he shared his disaffection at the previous lack of progress and commented that other nations' forces:

...are or are becoming organised to conduct psychological warfare both against troops, and also subversion-wise and counter subversion-wise. The French MOD and forces have recently built up a large PsyWar organisation and the Americans are of course well set up. Oddly, we are amongst the most backward, whereas we have in the past been pioneers in this field. And it will take time for us to catch up. Do we have the time?

The first challenge for DFP came with the Suez Crisis. A challenge, which painfully highlighted the unpreparedness of Britain to conduct psychological warfare and must rank as the low point in the history of its information operations. John Rennie, then head of IRD, began to make the necessary arrangements for the information campaign for Operation Musketeer at the start of August 1956. He proposed the formation of an Information Coordination Executive, (ICE), composed of IRD staff with liaison officers from the three Services. Above ICE, was an advisory committee chaired by Douglas Dodds-Parker, a former officer of the Special Operations Executive. The Advisory Committee first met on 24 August with those in attendance including John Drew from the Directorate of Forward Plans, John Rennie, and Sir Dick White who had recently switched hats from head of MI5 to head of the Secret Intelligence Service. Donald McLachlan, Sir Charles Hambro, the banker and another high-ranking veteran of SOE, and Hugh Carleton-Greene, previous head of the Emergency Information Service in Malaya but now representing the BBC, also attended. This time, however, having the right men available was not going to compensate for a lack of suitable machinery not being in place.⁴⁷

The psychological warfare plan for Operation Musketeer was divided into three phases. The first pre-invasion stage would be conducted exclusively by IRD and consisted of an 'all-out attack on Egyptian morale combined with some action to restrain other Arab States'. Then if an invasion of Egypt were still necessary, the second phase would be conducted mostly by the military with assistance from IRD. An all-out PsyWar effort would be mounted against other Arab States to undermine Egypt in conjunction with 'some action to disrupt any resistance in

46 TNA, DEFE 28/1 – Directorate of Forward Plans: Terms of Reference, 1950-1966.

47 TNA, FO 1110/880 – ICE set up.

Egypt'. The final phase was the rehabilitation stage.⁴⁸ IRD provided facilities for printing leaflets in Cyprus and transmitters for broadcasting a special *Voice of Britain* radio programme in order to counteract the pernicious anti-Western Cairo radio. The transmitters of Cairo radio would be put of action by bombing on the first night of operations. Two Voice aircraft were promised plus six loudspeaker vehicles provided with pre-recorded messages in Arabic and leaflets to hand out. Brigadier Bernard E Fergusson was appointed Director of Psychological Warfare for Musketeer. 'For this my qualifications were nil', Fergusson later remarked.⁴⁹

Fergusson recalls that from the beginning everything that could go wrong did go wrong. One of his first and crucial problems was the great difficulty experienced trying to recruit Arabic speakers suitable for broadcasting and translation work. The printing presses in Cyprus broke down delaying production of leaflets by several days, (Five different illustrated leaflets had been designed by cartoonist Ronald Searle. The reverse sides were left blank so texts could be printed later as the campaign progressed). The air drop packages designed to release leaflets at lower attitudes using barometric fuses were incorrectly calibrated and required sand ballast to function properly. Then once Musketeer began the RAF experienced great difficulty allocating aircraft for leaflet dropping. The now single voice aircraft, which was expected from Kenya, arrived with a serious case of laryngitis having had its loudhailers removed en route. On the first night of operations, the scheduled bombing raid on the Cairo radio transmitters, which were supposed to be taken out so that *Voice of Britain* could broadcast on the same frequency, was rescheduled. Several days passed before the transmitters were finally knocked out but were then back on air within a few more, albeit at reduced power. *Voice of Britain* had taken over the studios of the Near East Arab Broadcasting station *Sharq al-Adna*. Originally this clandestine station was operated by the Special Operations Executive in Jerusalem during the war.⁵⁰ The transmitters were later relocated to Cyprus and the station continued as a commercial enterprise although still remaining a tool of the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office felt that *Sharq al-Adna* was no longer effective as it used to be and so could be sacrificed for Musketeer. One IRD official put it this way, 'Effectively *Sharq* has been 'blown'. Although the act of requisition will in itself add some substance to the tattered fabric of its cover, any advantage this might have is, in my view, outweighed by the disadvantage of the station's Arabophile line and that attendant complications with the French and Israeli Governments'.⁵¹ In their first meeting, the Advisory

48 TNA, DEFE 28/9 – Psychological Warfare in Support of Operation Musketeer, 23 August 1956.

49 Bernard Fergusson, *The Trumpet in the Hall, 1930-1958*, (Collins, 1970), p.259.

50 Ewan Butler, *Amateur Agent: A story of 'Black' Propaganda during World War II*; (George G Harrap & Co Ltd, 1963).

51 TNA, FCO 1110/947 – Draft memorandum on the future of Sharq, 17 October 1956.

Committee gave a prophetic warning that following the take over of its studios by *Voice of Britain* the Arabic staff, who were pro-Egypt, were likely to resign. That is exactly what happened, but not before unscheduled broadcasts were made by rebellious staff telling the audience not to trust any future broadcasts from the station.

If anything good came out of the Suez operation, it was the final recognition that urgent improvements were required in planning for psychological warfare in peacetime. The shift in thinking was moving away from planning for global war to focusing on limited war and local actions. The Directorate of Forward Plans had already begun work to improve the situation prior to the Suez interruption. Importantly, it recognised that effective machinery had to be in place in peacetime. A reserve PsyWar unit needed to be formed with the wider training of personnel undertaken and the necessary hardware for psychological warfare procured. The first post-war psychological warfare training course for staff officers had taken place in September at the Joint Concealment Centre. An official manual embodying the principles and practice of psychological warfare was in preparation.⁵² Another positive to come out of Suez was the now permanent availability of printing facilities in Cyprus, which remained under Defence control.

The Chiefs of Staff were also supportive and recognised the need for upgrading defence psychological warfare capabilities, they commented in February 1957:

We have long been concerned about the state of our information and propaganda activities... We consider that information and propaganda form an integral part of our defence effort. Up till now they have proved weak and ineffective weapons and their control has been confined to those not responsible for defence. The reductions to be imposed on our armed forces will inevitably circumscribe the influence they can exert in support of the policy of Her Majesty's Government and efficient information and propaganda services will often be the only means of filling the gap. We can discern nothing in the present organisation of information and propaganda which gives us any hope that the use we can make of our wits will prove equal to our needs.⁵³

On the demise of the Joint Concealment Centre, a new Psychological Warfare Centre was set up at Maresfield Camp, East Sussex in September 1958. Its role was to train officers, to provide advice to the Service Ministries and to prepare

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52 TNA, DEFE 28/148 – The Psychological Warfare Organisation in Peace and War, a note by the Director of Forward Plans, 21 June 1956.

53 TNA, DEFE 28/148 – COS(57)50, 25 February 1957. Propaganda and Information.

PsyWar publications. The Centre maintained an establishment of three officers, seven other ranks and three civilians. In time, it also would provide a psychological warfare cadre unit to be activated at times of crisis.⁵⁴

In early 1959, discussion over terminology was reignited. 'Psychological Warfare' was often considered the 'unbreathed dirty word' in terms of both technique and description. Proposals had been made to water the expression down to either 'Psychological Support' or 'Psychological Operations'. The latter term was favoured by the Americans and had been used the previous year in a British contingency planning paper for possible 'Psychological Operations' in the Lebanon. In consultation with their American opposite numbers, the Directorate of Forward Plans agreed that 'Psychological Operations' would become the new generic term to encompass all forms of psychological activity.⁵⁵

During this period of reorganisation, several local actions requiring PsyWar support had been ongoing, particularly in Kenya, Cyprus, and Muscat and Oman. In Cyprus, the EOKA insurgency to secure 'Enosis' for the Greek-Cypriots had been raging since 1955. EOKA orchestrated a very active propaganda campaign aimed at gaining support from fellow Greek-Cypriots and denigrating British security forces. The propaganda was mostly channelled through a cyclostyled leaflet war, a friendly press and physical intimidation. The information department of the Cypriot Government was predominantly concerned with counteracting the insurgent propaganda at the strategic level. Through the earlier part of the campaign the military provided a single 'Propaganda Officer' to coordinate psychological warfare against EOKA. In 1958, a tactical psychological warfare unit was established on the island. For security purposes, it was titled the 'Information Research Unit' (IRU), but rather than being utilised for its intended purpose of psychological warfare, it was taken over by the Secretariat and used intensively for 'information research' and other administrative work. By the time the IRU was put into action once the DFP Middle East officer had taken command, the insurgency was in its final throws with a political solution bringing it to an end. Useful lessons were learnt. As in Malaya, the voice aircraft provided a very useful and rapid means of broadcasting to the EOKA insurgents ensconced in the mountainous regions. Airdropped leaflets proved less useful as EOKA incited Greek children to collect and destroy them immediately after they fell. In the circumstances on the island, leaflets pushed under doors by security patrols during curfew were a more effective

54 TNA, DEFE 28/16 – Working Party file, 1957-59. Its War Establishment was officially approved from January 1959 at the COS(58) 42nd meeting, recorded in DEFE 28/17.

55 Discussion on change of terminology in several TNA files, including CO 1027/179 and DEFE 28/16.

way of getting them read by civilians.⁵⁶

Throughout the 1960s, more challenges would require psychological operations support from the attempted revolt in Brunei and the Borneo Confrontation in South East Asia to the rebellion in Aden in the Arabian Peninsula. Regrettably, there is not space to examine the PSYOPS response to these small wars here. PSYOPS planning and training through the decade continued in much the same vein.

An official 'Staff Officers Guide to Psychological Operations' was published in 1962 by, what was now called, the Psychological Operations Centre. The Guide covered the nature, role and aims of PSYOPS in the strategic, tactical, and consolidation spheres as well as support to internal security measures. Media was discussed in terms of leaflets, loudspeakers either on the ground or using voice aircraft, and radio operations.⁵⁷ The guide opened with the definition of Psychological Operations as:

...the planned use of propaganda and other psychological actions, to support current policy by influencing the opinions, emotions, attitudes and behaviour of enemy, neutral and friendly groups in time of war or emergency.

In October 1964, the Psychological Operations Centre moved to the Joint Warfare Establishment at Old Sarum, near Salisbury in Wiltshire, becoming the Psychological Operations Section. The Section provided two courses, one for senior officers and the other for staff officers. The senior officers course lasted for one week and was intended to acquaint officers of the three Services with the principles of psychological operations and its capabilities as a support weapon for military operations. The two-week staff officers' course was aimed at officers likely to be involved in the planning or execution of psychological operations.⁵⁸ Permanent psychological operations staff officers were now serving in Aden, Singapore and Malaysia. If other locations required emergency psychological support, an Old Sarum trained staff officer could be deployed on an *ad hoc* basis. If a full team was also needed then previously earmarked men were available to receive additional training at the Joint Warfare Establishment and pre-packaged equipment was available from a reserve.⁵⁹

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56 TNA, DEFE 28/10 – Report on visits by DDFP(ME) to District Security Committees in September 1958.

57 A reproduction of the Staff Officers Guide to Psychological Operations is available online from the author's website: http://www.psywar.org/pdf_WO_PSYOPS_Guide.pdf

58 TNA, DEFE 28/84 – Joint Warfare Establishment, Old Sarum correspondence.

59 TNA, DEFE 28/1 – Psychological Operations, 10 May 1966.

Following rioting in 1967 a new unit, known as the No. 1 Army Information Team, was deployed to Hong Kong at the request of the Hong Kong Government. Most likely this unit was principally concerned with community relations rather than psychological operations.

In the summer of 1968, the Directorate of Forward Plans was closed down and its staff integrated into a new PSYOPS section in the Defence Operations Centre. The Section's responsibilities essentially covered those of the former DFP and were defined as:

- a) Military PSYOPS support to all contingency and operational plans;
- b) Policy and technical guidance to PSYOPS staff on Commands overseas;
- c) Policy guidance on PSYOPS training;
- d) Community Relations, allocations of funds; and
- e) Briefing of senior officers and officials.⁶⁰

Currently, little documentation is in the public domain detailing British psychological operations planning and deployments for the remainder of the Cold War period.

What is known of the PSYOPS campaign for the 1982 Falkland Islands conflict very much implies a re-run of the Suez Crisis. Five leaflets, including a Safe Conduct Pass, were prepared and sent with the Task Force but no leaflet bombs were available to disseminate them from fast jets. Despite newspaper coverage, based on a Ministry of Defence press release, saying that leaflets had been dropped over Port Stanley, it proved impossible for the planned leaflet mission to proceed. Known as Project Moonshine, a radio station *Radio Atlantico del Sur* was set up directed to Argentine troops and their families using a BBC transmitter on Ascension Island. From the moment Project Moonshine was suggested by the Ministry of Defence, the FCO, recalling the *Sharq al-Adna* debacle, recorded their disquiet against the plan. Among their objections, they questioned whether the MOD had access to suitable linguists for a professional radio station, whether a suitable frequency could be found without pirating one assigned to another nation in the region and by requisitioning a BBC transmitter how would this impact on the BBC's scheduled World Service broadcasts in Latin America. In one respect the FCO was proved correct, regardless of the excellent early 1980's popular music including Elton John and the Bee Gees, the station was criticised for using announcers speaking Spanish with Anglicised accents.⁶¹ The press also did not report favourably on *Radio Atlantico del Sur* by accusing the MOD of broadcasting

60 TNA, AIR 20/12048 – PSYOP Brief for Colonel Rigby on Joining, February 1974.

61 TNA, FCO 26/2449 – Project Moonshine.

propaganda. *The Times* was particularly scornful in an article under the mocking headline 'The ultimate weapon. Radio station could be last straw for invaders'.⁶² Press relations more generally were far from ideal throughout the short campaign. Perhaps this poor performance throughout the Falklands Campaign was the result of a decline in support for a psychological operations capability since the closure of the Directorate of Forward Plans.

Post Cold-War

While the Cold War progressed through its death throes with one Soviet state toppling after another, the Middle East took centre stage with the Iraqi invasion of neighbouring Kuwait in late 1990. As a US-led coalition advanced to liberate Kuwait, an extensive psychological operations programme was mounted by the US 4th Psychological Operations Group. Throughout the six-week campaign of Operation Desert Storm, over 29 million leaflets were dropped, at least 66 loudspeaker teams deployed, and the radio station 'Voice of the Gulf' broadcasted continually to Iraqi troops from 19th January 1991 using multiple transmitters.⁶³ Forty-four percent of Iraqi troops deserted with an estimated 17,000 defecting to Saudi Arabia and Turkey and 87,000 surrendering to Coalition forces. Very many of those surrendering had leaflets in their possession. Just as happened in the Korean War, psychological operations were almost exclusively conducted by the United States with, it seems, British forces not contributing in any significant way to the tactical information war. Perhaps because of the apparent success of US psychological operations in the Gulf War, the British Chiefs of Staff agreed to the formation of a new shadow PSYOPS unit soon afterwards.

A tactical battlefield unit, it was officially designated the 15(UK) Psychological Operations Group (Shadow) with the double-digit prefix '15' being assigned to distinguish it from its American opposite numbers. It resurrected the stag's head emblem of the Indian Field Broadcasting Units as its insignia. It was quartered initially at Templar Barracks, Ashford before moving in 1997 to Chicksands in Bedfordshire where it became a lodger unit within the then Defence Intelligence & Security School. Stephen Jolly became a PSYOPS instructor at Chicksands

62 Nicholas Timmins, 'The ultimate weapon. Radio station could be last straw for invaders', *The Times* (London, England), Saturday, June 05, 1982; p.4; Issue 61252.

63 Leaflets of the Persian Gulf War, published by 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne), 1991, <http://www.psywar.org/psywar/reproductions/LeafletsPersianGulfWar.pdf>. Also see Psywarrior: <http://www.psywarrior.com/gulfwar.html>, this article puts the number of tactical loudspeaker teams deployed at 71. The Gulf War was also the first 24-hour rolling news war, which helped to cement the reputation of CNN in particular. Most of the major international broadcasters carried live reporting from their correspondents in the Iraqi capital Baghdad. Extensive use of military imaging, particularly onboard camera footage of precision guided weapons, marked another innovation for war reporting.

during this period.⁶⁴

Around the same time, at the strategic level, the Directorate of Forward Plans component of the Defence Operations Centre in Whitehall had morphed into a Defence Targeting & Information Operations (DTIO) cell of which today's Military Strategic Effects (MSE) branch is a lineal descendant.

15 (UK) PSYOPS Group's baptism of fire came when it was deployed to Bosnia in January 1996. But, as Major David Hazel, the Group's unofficial historian, acknowledged, the deployment '...highlighted the inadequacies of the shadow or double-hatting concept',⁶⁵ whereby a unit's personnel are designated as 'shadow' (ie deployable on demand from the ranks of other units in which they serve). As a result, the Government agreed to the funding of a permanent and dedicated capability. The Group as a joint organisation constituted service personnel from the Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force, and Royal Marines. Within a few years, it consisted of 8 regular servicemen, supported by 2 civil servants and 28 reservists. The reservists were particularly important for providing the Group with non-military skills in television production and post-production, desktop publishing, and market analysis. Soon, the perennial debate over finding a more suitable name for 'psychological operations' raised its head again. The new Labour Government, elected in 1997, considered the name 'PSYOPS' to carry unacceptable connotations of 'black propaganda' and underhand methods. Consequently, the Group was renamed '15(UK) Information Support Group' as from 13 March 1999. The unfortunate upshot of this name change was that the Group began receiving phone calls from the wider Defence community requesting IT support to fix their personal computers and a psychological operations capability disappeared from the Army's Order of Battle.⁶⁶ Three years later, the Group's name reverted back to 15 (UK) PSYOPS Group.

During recent years, the Group nested within 1 Military Intelligence Brigade of the Army. Although joint, it came under the command of HQ Land and as a result, was subsumed into the Army's Security Assistance Group in 2014 and into the new 77 Brigade in 2015. In 2016, all personnel are expected to relocate to Hermitage in Berkshire.

64 Stephen Jolly, 'Wearing the Stag's Head Badge: British Combat Propaganda Since 1945', *Falling Leaf*, no. 170, October 2000.

65 Ibid.

66 Anonymous source.

The future of the ‘Rainbow in the Dark’ doctrine

One hundred years of British military information operations and post-war institutional history suggest that, without the unifying force of war, the probability is that the full spectrum communications experiment – the *Rainbow in the Dark* – is unlikely to prosper. However, in this era of ‘carnage and connectivity’,⁶⁷ with ISIL rampant and Russian ‘hybrid war’ being waged in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, it might be argued that such a doctrine offers its greatest potency at this very point in history. Conventional responses to the current non-conventional threats are not working. MOD information operations and experimental work in full spectrum effects must be nurtured. The *Rainbow in the Dark* should not be disregarded or relegated to the sidelines else it will be consigned to history as yet another brave but ultimately failed experiment.

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IT'S TIME TO EMBRACE MEMETIC WARFARE

Jeff Giese

'The best way to counter ISIS is to unleash an army of trolls on them', Charles C. Johnson joked over beers last spring. 'I could totally mess with their recruiting and propaganda.'

Johnson is known as one of the Internet's biggest trolls, the social media equivalent of an annoying gadfly or guerrilla warrior, depending on one's perspective.¹ He's been banned from Twitter and is alleged to have spearheaded the rumors that triggered the downfall of the all-but-certain Speaker of the House of Representatives, third in line for the American presidency.²

During our carousing, Johnson and I joked about different ways to troll ISIS or Daesh. One could systematically lure and entrap (i.e. 'catfish') Daesh recruiters, as three Russian girls did in early 2015.³ One could water down its recruiting propaganda using fake 'sockpuppet' Daesh accounts, creating hall-of-mirrors confusion for sympathizers and recruits.⁴ One could expose and harass people in Daesh's funding network, including their family members.⁵ One could even play on Daesh's prejudices, fears, and hypocrisies, enlisting gay activists worldwide to start and spread an #ISISisgay hashtag, the idea being to denigrate and ridicule Daesh in a way that weakens its appeal to recruits.⁶ The list went on. 'These types of tactics are no-brainers,' we concluded half-jokingly. 'So why aren't they being done?'

1 Articles on Johnson: Mother Jones, 16 Dec. 2014, 'The Rise & Fall of Twitter's Most Infamous Right-Wing Troll' (<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/12/charles-chuck-johnson-gotnews-rolling-stone>); Gawker, 9 Dec. 2014, 'What Is Chuck Johnson, and Why? The Web's Worst Journalist, Explained' (<http://gawker.com/what-is-chuck-johnson-and-why-the-web-s-worst-journal-1666834902>); Slate, 28 May 2015, 'Why Did Twitter Ban Charles C. Johnson?' (http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/users/2015/05/chuck_c_johnson_suspended_from_twitter_why.html)

2 Gawker, 8 Oct. 2015, 'Source: Kevin McCarthy Affair Rumors Have Been Circulating for Months'.

3 Yahoo, 29 July 2015, 'Catfished! Girls Scam ISIS on Social Media for Travel Money' (<https://www.yahoo.com/travel/catfished-girls-scam-isis-on-social-media-for-125374397897.html>).

4 Some refer to this as a 'hall of mirrors' strategy.

5 Brookings, 24 Oct. 2014, for insight on ISIS funding, 'Cutting Off ISIS Cashflow' (<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2014/10/24-lister-cutting-off-isis-jabhat-al-nusra-cash>).

6 One could get the public and gay groups involved in a denigration campaign, sharing memes like these (<https://imgflip.com/login?redirect=/creations>) and captioned videos like this one (http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=f08_1424123423) (nsfw).

Obviously, this was lighthearted banter with no strategic frame or focus. But for many of us in the social media world, it seems obvious that more aggressive communication tactics and broader warfare through trolling and memes is a necessary, inexpensive, and easy way to help destroy the appeal and morale of our common enemies.

The term ‘memetic warfare’ has come into use on the fringes of foreign policy thinkers in the last five years to describe these types of efforts.⁷ I believe memetic warfare could be effective in countering Daesh’s recruiting and propaganda efforts and in modern conflict in general, including operations other than war. Trolling, it might be said, is the social media equivalent of guerrilla warfare, and memes are its currency of propaganda. Daesh is conducting memetic warfare. The Kremlin is doing it. It’s inexpensive. The capabilities exist. Why aren’t we trying it?

It’s no secret that the U.S. and NATO allies have done a poor job combating Daesh on social media thus far. In June 2015, the U.S. State Department conducted an internal assessment of its communications efforts that admitted that the NATO-led coalition is losing the social media war with Daesh.⁸ Existing efforts like the ‘Think Again, Turn Away’ campaign have proven ineffective against the tide of outreach coming the other way. By mid-2015 there were an estimated 30,000 foreign Daesh combatants,⁹ with the majority coming from NATO countries. Experts say Daesh’s recruiting is reaching ‘network effect’ velocity, and much of it is conducted through Twitter, YouTube, and other social media. The need to counter Daesh’s communications onslaught is urgent.

Kalev Leetaru makes a compelling case for a more muscular communication approach in a July article in *Foreign Policy*.¹⁰ The article, ‘A Few Good Internet Trolls’, argues that more aggressive and comprehensive cyber communication efforts are needed as battlefields shifts online.

What Leetaru and others seem to overlook, however, is that selling the high-level concept is not the hard part. Political leaders already understand the need for a more

7 The first use I found was by Brian J. Hancock, ‘Memetic Warfare: The Future of War’ (https://fas.org/irp/agency/army/mipb/2010_02.pdf), Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin May-June 2010; also see Max Macrides, ‘Freeing the Empire of the Mind: Memetic Warfare and International Strategy’, unpublished paper, 2015.

8 NY Times, 12 Jun. 2015, ‘ISIS is Winning The Social Media War, U.S. Concludes’ (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/13/world/middleeast/isis-is-winning-message-war-us-concludes.html?_r=1).

9 NY Times, 26 Sep. 2015, ‘Thousands Enter Syria to Join ISIS Despite Global Efforts’ (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/27/world/middleeast/thousands-enter-syria-to-join-isis-despite-global-efforts.html?smid=nytnow-share&smprod=nytnow&_r=1&mtrref=undefined&assetType=nyt_now).

10 Foreign Policy, 14 Jul. 2015, ‘A Few Good Internet Trolls’ (<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/14/islamic-state-twitter-recruiting/>).

aggressive approach, at least at an abstract level. The hard part is actually making it happen, of transitioning the abstract concept into reality and, in turn, victory. There are numerous obstacles standing in the way: conceptual ones, financial ones, cultural ones, legal and bureaucratic ones, and strategic ones.

Here are several things we need to do to overcome these obstacles. By pursuing these, we can bring to life smarter online strategic communication practices and adapt civilian practices that can help us defeat present and potential enemies like Daesh.

Develop Memetic Warfare Conceptually

The first challenge is conceptual. Neither NATO nor its individual members have fully developed a language or conceptual grounding for social media-focused Strategic Communications. Memetic warfare today is a fringe concept, but it shouldn't be. It needs to be developed and brought into mainstream military thinking.

In doing so, it should be thought of as broader and more strategic than 'weaponized trolling'. Memetic warfare, as I define it, is competition over narrative, ideas, and social control in a social-media battlefield. One might think of it as a subset of 'information operations' tailored to social media. Information operations involve the collection and dissemination of information to establish a competitive advantage over an opponent. Memetic warfare could also be viewed as a 'digital native' version of psychological warfare, more commonly known as propaganda. If propaganda and public diplomacy are conventional forms of memetic warfare, then trolling and PSYOPs are guerrilla versions.

Memetic warfare can be useful at the grand narrative level, at the battle level, or in a special circumstance. It can be offensive, defensive, or predictive. It can be deployed independently or in conjunction with cyber, hybrid, or conventional efforts.

The online battlefield of perception will only grow in importance in both warfare and diplomacy. Regardless of what we call it, NATO countries must continue to develop a body of knowledge around social-media Strategic Communications.

Allocate Better Resources to It

Greater investment – and better investment – is required, too. As NATO members continue to aggressively invest in cyber warfare and cyber security, they should also invest in memetic warfare.

Let's clarify how these areas relate. Cyber warfare involves attacking a nation's computers and networks to cause disruption or gather intelligence, or defending against such attacks. Examples include the Stuxnet virus that sabotaged Iran's nuclear program in 2010, or China's breach of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management files in early 2015 (and the U.S.'s response).¹¹ They involved no physical combat in the traditional military sense.

Cyber warfare is about taking control of data. Memetic warfare is about taking control of the dialogue, narrative, and psychological space. It's about denigrating, disrupting, and subverting the enemy's effort to do the same. Like cyber warfare, memetic warfare is asymmetrical in impact. It can be highly effective relative to cost. The attack surface can be large or small. Memetic warfare can be used in conjunction with troops, ships, aircraft, and missiles, or it can be employed without any kinetic military force at all. It operates in the communications battlespace.

The communications battlespace, of course, is where we are losing to Daesh. Ambassador Alberto Fernandez, former head of the U.S. State Department's Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), gave a frank assessment of communication efforts in an outgoing interview last year. 'It's not that ISIS is so great', he said. 'It is that the response to ISIS is both limited and weak.'¹²

If the communications battlespace is where we're losing, why aren't we investing more in it? Why has NATO placed itself in the position of responding to Daesh rather than having prevented Daesh and similar forces from existing in the first place? Why hasn't NATO gone on the offensive to wipe out Daesh and other jihadists as credible psychopolitical movements? (The discussion of waiting until extremists become violent before they are countered — the essence of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiatives — rather than forestalling their rise in the first place is another issue entirely, but it is one that can also be addressed through memetic warfare.) NATO and many of its members individually are investing some funds in strategic communications, with the U.S. State Department alone spending \$118 million in 2015.¹³ Yet the amounts, while impressive, are miniscule in proportion to what we're spending overall.¹⁴

11 BBC, 15 Feb. 2011, 'Stuxnet Virus Targets And Spread Revealed'; NY Times, 31 Jul. 2015, 'U.S. Decides to Retaliate Against Chinese Hacking' (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/01/world/asia/us-decides-to-retaliate-against-chinas-hacking.html>).

12 CBS News, 10 Jun. 2015, 'Flaws Seen In U.S. Approach to ISIS Propaganda' (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/flaws-seen-in-u-s-approach-to-isis-propaganda/>).

13 Last February, the U.S. State Department funded a \$188 million CVE initiative. See fact sheet 19 Feb. 2015 (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/02/237647.htm>).

14 Mother Jones, 14 Jun. 2015, 'Charts: How Much We're Spending On The War Against ISIS' (<http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2015/06/us-defense-spending-war-isis>).

Even at current spending levels, one must question how effectively these resources are being allocated. The civilian funds directed toward CVE and communications are relying on public diplomacy and top-down ‘conventional’ Strategic Communications, with military information operations and PSYOP showing themselves to be tepid, timid, and stale. Where is there experimentation? Where are the guerrilla efforts? Where is the innovation? Where is the war-gaming of tactical successes at the Strategic Communications level?

NATO’s communications efforts to date are like Version 1.0 of a software program. Releasing the first version is incredibly difficult and an accomplishment in its own right, but now it is time for version 2.0 and a more serious commitment to rapid learning and improvement. To get there, NATO and individual member countries must commit more physical resources and command authority to Strategic Communications, allocate existing spending more intelligently, and provide intellectual and operational space for learning and innovation.

Embrace the Memetic Mindset

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to memetic warfare is a lack of appreciation for social media as a battle space and the extent to which memetic warfare is already taking place. Perhaps this is generational: from the outside looking in, it doesn’t appear that the alliance’s military and foreign policy decision-makers truly understand social media at all, much less as a tool and weapon for the common defense. How many generals are active on Twitter and truly understand it beyond the explanations of their kids or younger colleagues?

Even for those of us who live on social media, it is sometimes difficult to appreciate how quickly information can spread, the profundity of its global scope, and the significance of its impact on perceptions, narratives, and social movements. Once one starts viewing the Internet through meme-colored glasses, you see memetic warfare everywhere — in political campaigns, in contested narratives about news events, in the thoughtless memes shared by Facebook friends, and in videos on YouTube. It shows up in movements like #BlackLivesMatter, where there’s an attempt to shape perceptions and galvanize public support. In the U.S. Republican Primary race, Jeb Bush recently attempted to paint Donald Trump as the ‘chaos candidate’. But when his campaign tried spreading a #ChaosCandidate hashtag, trolls supporting Trump took it over and used it to denigrate Jeb Bush.¹⁵ Hashtags, one might say, are operational coordinates of memetic warfare.

15 See <https://twitter.com/hashtag/chaoscandidate>

On the geopolitical stage, memetic warfare is being used in a military capacity by centralized governments like China and Russia, in addition to non-state actors like Daesh. Anyone who has read the comments on news articles related to foreign policy has probably noticed some suspiciously inauthentic, biased comments. China employs 20,000-50,000 Internet police and an additional quarter-million ‘trolls’ who spread pro-Beijing material domestically and abroad, and who help monitor citizens.¹⁶

Similarly, Russia has ‘troll farms’ where Internet commentators spread pro-Moscow messages and disinformation. It tends to use memetic warfare offensively. It has been notorious in its disinformation related to Ukraine, from the ‘green men’ who were ‘not’ Russian troops, to the shoot-down of the Malaysian airliner, to the nature of the Ukrainian government itself. Moscow has also targeted domestic affairs in the U.S. In 2014, Russian trolls spread disinformation about a chemical plant explosion in Louisiana under the #ColumbianChemicals hashtag. They spread similar disinformation about an Ebola outbreak in Atlanta, under #EbolaInAtlanta. In each case, there were fake videos, photos, and Wikipedia pages, combined with outreach to journalists and buzz centered on a hashtag.¹⁷ As the United States has downsized its information operations and PSYOP capabilities, the Kremlin’s RT propaganda house has begun to recruit former professionals.¹⁸

A ‘memetic skirmish’ involving the U.S. Embassy in Moscow demonstrates that talented and creative State Department communicators are poised to act when allowed. In August 2015, the local news in Moscow released a photo showing U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Tefft conducting a press conference at an opposition rally. The photo, according to the U.S. Embassy, was a fake. It seemed to be deliberate disinformation. The Embassy had a brilliant response. ‘Ambassador Tefft spent his day off yesterday at home’, the embassy tweeted. ‘But thanks to Photoshop, he could be anywhere.’ Shortly thereafter, various Russian twitter accounts released the same press conference photo of Ambassador Tefft against a variety of backgrounds - landing on the moon, surrounded by cats, at various weddings, at a hockey game, landing in the Philippines with General MacArthur during World War II, and elsewhere. It became a meme, and Russia’s disinformation effort backfired.¹⁹

16 American Political Science Review 5/13 ‘How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression’ (<http://gking.harvard.edu/files/gking/files/censored.pdf>)

17 NY Times 6/2/15 ‘The Agency’ (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/magazine/the-agency.html>); also Reuters 3/11/15 ‘EU leaders want to tackle Russian “disinformation” on Ukraine war’ (<http://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-eu-idUSL5N0WD4JL20150311>).

18 I will provide this source material soon.

19 For more info and examples of the memes, see BuzzFeed, 21 Sep. 2015, ‘This Is The Best Photoshop The US Government Has Ever Produced’ (<http://www.buzzfeed.com/maxseddon/the-state-department-has-finally-learned-how-to-use-twitter?utm#.ssV4eV2Ln>)

The Ambassador's Photoshop imbroglio recalls a meme from early in 2015, when Daesh was demanding \$200 million in ransom to release two Japanese journalists. The terrorists released a photo of Jihadi John wielding a sharp knife above the heads of the two Japanese men, kneeling in orange jumpsuits. As the 72-hour deadline to pay the ransom passed, Japanese Twitter accounts began sharing doctored images of the threatening photo set against darkly comic backgrounds — one with Jihadi John holding a banana instead of a knife, another of him wearing Mickey Mouse ears and the Disney Magic Kingdom in the background, and another with him wearing pink lingerie in a field of flowers. The 'meme-ing' of the image was viewed as a symbol of defiance among the Japanese, a classic denigration. It did not save the life of journalist Kenji Goto, but it may have helped lessen the psychological impact of Daesh's propaganda.²⁰

For memetic warfare to succeed, decision-makers need to get into the right mindset and empower those who have it. Study what's worked and what hasn't. Network across civilian disciplines, particularly with Internet trolls, hackers, marketers, and PR pros. To the extent possible, experiment on social media yourself or through those close to you. Try following and influencing an issue. Embrace memetic warfare as an essential capability in modern warfare.

No one is better to support this than the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. I recommend organizing a cross-disciplinary global summit on memetic warfare. Consider focusing it specifically on countering Daesh and giving it the feel of a TED conference (perhaps partner with them), drawing fresh ideas, perspectives, and connections from multiple disciplines and countries.

Make Space for It Legally, Bureaucratically, & Ethically

As a thought experiment, let's pretend that a NATO member nation decides to experiment with counter-narrative strategies to blunt the appeal of Daesh ideology among Muslim males aged 15-35 in the Western world. Let's assume further that creating a viral #ISISisgay denigration campaign is deemed a tactic worth testing as part of a broader memetic war effort. How could this tactical effort be executed from a legal and bureaucratic standpoint in their political and cultural context? Let's look at some potential obstacles using the U.S. as an example.

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 20 For more info and examples of the memes, see DailyMail, 24 Jan. 2015, 'How Japan Is Fighting Back At Jihadi John With Memes' (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2924504/How-Japan-fighting-Jihadi-John-MEMES-Images-ISIS-executioner-cutting-kebab-meat-posing-selfie-stick-viral-nation-shows-won-t-silenced-new-hostage-threat.html>)

In the U.S., there are laws from the State Department and Broadcasting Board of Governors that expressly prohibit domestic propaganda. The trouble is, social media doesn't recognize borders. Would an #ISISisgay denigration effort be considered domestic propaganda as conducted on worldwide platforms like Twitter? Today it likely would. These laws, designed for a 20th century media environment, pose a significant structural challenge for memetic warfare, not to mention a convenient rationale for officials who do not want to get involved.

Even if legal hurdles were cleared, it's not clear which government agency would be in a position to conduct such a campaign. Would it come out of the State Department's Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communication? The military? The CIA? Would it be done from within the government or through contracts with private companies? In the current environment, the only way this could occur from the U.S. is through a Title 50 contract as a covert intelligence operation, which would require a presidential finding. Even without these top-level barriers, how could the campaign be executed free from multiple layers of stifling bureaucracy? This is perhaps the more significant question.

Politically, #ISISisgay would be a sensitive campaign to execute. Even with thoughtful coordination with gay groups and other domestic interests, there would still be a risk of media and political criticism. Recall what happened in 2005 after the Pentagon awarded contracts worth \$300 million for psychological operations to improve foreign public opinion about the U.S. abroad. The media discovered that the contractor, Lincoln Group, was planting stories in the Iraqi press. The perceived meddling became a political lightning rod.²¹ For campaign like #ISISisgay, decision-makers are likely to be exceedingly gun-shy.

Ethically, it's not clear where to draw boundaries for this type of campaign. Is it ethically justifiable to spread homophobic and juvenile memes if it helps undermine and ridicule Daesh and its followers? Would the answer be different if the memes come from the gay community and 'Gays Against ISIS'-type groups? How does the possibility of unintended consequences factor into this, including the possibility that such a campaign inadvertently helps Daesh? Are NATO member nations too politically correct to use offensive themes to undermine mortal enemies?

Here is what seems odd about the current context: Today NATO members have the legal, moral, and bureaucratic setup to tear apart human beings with bombs, but not to fight them with social-media-focused Strategic Communication. Does this make

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21 LA Times, 30 Nov. 2005, 'U.S. Military Covertly Pays to Run Stories in Iraqi Press' (<http://articles.latimes.com/2005/nov/30/world/fg-infowar30>)

sense? If we want to counter Daesh's digital outreach, NATO countries must make space for memetic warfare in their respective legal, bureaucratic, and ethical contexts. NATO's Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence can do two things to help. First, it can help initiate conversations about creating legal, bureaucratic, and ethical space for memetic warfare among member nations. Second, it can help member nations understand each other's operating environment in order to facilitate the sharing of best practices and the coordination of memetic war efforts. Indeed, one advantage of NATO is that member nations each have their own unique legal, bureaucratic, and ethical environments. If a certain type of campaign isn't feasible in one country, perhaps there's another country where it would be.

Keep Learning & Experimenting

Even with all of these unresolved issues, NATO member nations must continue experimenting with social-media-focused Strategic Communications in their respective operating environments.

The technology industry is known for mantras like 'test and measure', 'iterate rapidly', and 'move fast and break things'. The same mindset applies here. Yes, there are known and unintended risks to consider, particularly in a type of activity that flourishes with greater autonomy and less oversight. But as with a company facing a disruptive technology (think of Kodak with the rise of digital photography), member nations must adapt and innovate or get left behind. Except in this case, the consequences of inaction are much greater than bankruptcy, layoffs, and a loss of market share.

Indeed, the riskiest thing NATO members could do is to allow risk-aversion to hamstring the development of memetic warfare. To say a lot is at stake is an understatement, not just with Daesh but with Russia, China, Iran, and all the non-state actors watching Daesh's success from the sidelines. If a small non-state terror organization can outfox the wealthiest nations on social media, what does this signal to others? How many more lives will be lost and what will the world look like if Daesh's online recruiting continues unabated? The threat is civilizational or at least geopolitical. NATO member nations cannot afford to sit on the sidelines.

It's time to drive towards a more expansive view of Strategic Communications on the social media battlefield. It's time to adopt a more aggressive, proactive, and agile mindset and approach. It's time to embrace memetic warfare.

THE RETURN OF KHILAFAH: THE CONSTITUTIVE NARRATIVES OF DAESH

Theron Verdon

INTRODUCTION

The radical extremist Muslim group that is referred to by the media variously as ISIS or ISIL is one of the greatest military dangers we face in the world today. In this article I will use the name Daesh to refer to this group, and I strongly encourage others to use this name as well. Daesh is strategically a better choice: it is accurate in that it spells out the acronym of the group's full Arabic name, Daesh is the Arab acronym for Al-Dawlah Al-Islamiyah fe Al-Iraq wa Al-Sham or The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (the Levant), from which the West originally derived the acronyms ISIS or ISIL.

Much of what has been written about the group's strategic communication campaign focuses on the rhetorical tactics used to argue for jihad (in their terms, a holy war that unites Muslims against unbelievers), including the use of violence and threatening tactics, such as beheadings, and religious justification for engaging in a retaliatory war to avenge perceived humiliation visited upon Muslims. However, in order to see the extent of what Daesh is really doing with its strategic communication, one needs to look at the larger picture. Daesh is not just recruiting soldiers to fight a war; the group is using what Maurice Charland, Professor of Communication Studies at Concordia University, calls 'constitutive rhetoric' to construct their particular conception of a Muslim nation-state in the minds of what they hope is a growing global contingent of allies, 'true believers' who will support Daesh's self-proclaimed Khilafah, Caliphate, or Islamic State.

To accomplish their communication goals, Daesh conducts an on-going and technologically sophisticated strategic communication campaign. At the core of Daesh's strategic communication campaign is the use of three main narratives, which they disseminate to the outside world through the Internet via social media platforms such as *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *YouTube* and various message boards. Robert J. Hastings, author of the Department of Defence Principles of Strategic Communication, describes strategic communication as 'an ongoing synchronization of images, actions

and words to get a desired effect'.¹ According to Hallahan et al. authors of 'Defining strategic communication', strategic communication is 'communicating purposefully to advance a mission'.²

Narratives construct meaning for the meaning-making brain by creating social realities that define subjects and establish relational positions.³ Narratives are important to how we perceive the world and therefore become powerful tools for persuasion.⁴ Daesh bases its strategic communication campaign on a hierarchy of narratives. At the top of that hierarchy is Daesh's constitutive meta-narrative. The constitutive meta-narrative organizes and explains experiences, both historical and contemporary, in such a way as to lead the listener to accepting the Daesh's version of events.⁵ Charland defines the purpose of the narrative in constitutive rhetoric as 'calling a common, collective identity into existence'.⁶ Daesh's meta-narrative creates the sense that all Muslims 'are one people with common enemies, values & beliefs, and connected through space and time'. In this hierarchy, Daesh's constitutive meta-narrative comprises three narrative arcs. The narrative arcs create a framework that allows a particular group (especially, susceptible young men) to connect apparently unconnected phenomena around some causal transformation.⁷ Lawrence Freedman, Professor of War Studies at King's College London, tells us that 'Narratives are designed or nurtured with the intention of structuring the responses of others to developing events'.⁸ Or, as Halverson, Goodall and Corman authors of *Master narratives of Islamist extremism* writes, '[They are a...] coherent system of interrelated and sequentially organized stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of its literary and rhetorical form'.⁹

1 R. J. Hastings. 'Strategic communication: Advice from the Defence Department' (8 December 2008) in ragan.com online http://www.ragan.com/Main/Articles/Strategic_communication_Advice_from_the_Defense_De_34540.aspx (Last accessed 5 October 2015).

2 K. Hallahan, D. Holtzhausen, B. Van Ruler, D. Verčič, and K. Sriramesh, 'Defining strategic communication', *International Journal of Strategic Communication* 1 (2007), 3-35.

3 J. Bruner, 'The Narrative construction of reality', *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991), 1-21.

4 K. Burke, *A Grammar of motives*, (Berkeley, 1969); M. Charland, 'Constitutive rhetoric: The case of the people quebecois', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987), 133-150.

5 J. Stephens & R. McCallum, *Retelling stories, framing culture: Traditional story and metanarratives in children's literature*, (New York, 1998).

6 M. Charland, 'Constitutive rhetoric', 133-150.

7 T. Todorov, *The poetics of prose*, (Ithaca, 1977).

8 L. Freedman, 'Networks, culture, and narratives', *Adelphi Papers Series* 45 (2006), 11-26.

9 J.R. Halverson, H.L. Goodall, and S.R. Corman, *Master narratives of Islamist extremism*, (New York, 2011), p. 14.

Daesh masterfully uses ‘immensely rich narratives’¹⁰ to create a worldview that leads to supporting the Khilafah and thus radical jihad. Charland’s three ideological effects—‘struggles and ordeals’, the ‘restricted path’, and ‘consubstantiality’ convincingly explain the three narrative arcs that Daesh uses to influence the perception of their audience in support of their constitutive rhetoric.¹¹ A series of what I will call sub-narratives or stories provide support for the internal logic of each narrative arc, both separately and inter-relatedly. In the sense of this paper, stories are ‘a particular sequence of related events that are situated in the past and recounted for rhetorical/ideological reasons’.¹² The stories provide evidence to support the three narrative arcs.

This paper examines Daesh’s public address, (videos, magazines, and speeches) and the way in which Daesh differs from al Qaeda in their strategic communication by analysing the stories used to support the perceptions crafted in the three narrative arcs. The core argument of this paper is that one aspect of the three, the ‘consubstantiality’ narrative, is the most important collection of stories for convincing new followers to join, and also Daesh’s weakest point. Daesh is conducting a sophisticated ‘long game’ ideological war focused on getting Muslims to accept the meta-narrative, which states: ‘We are one people with common values and beliefs, connected through space and time. We are a people under attack; we have common enemies, the forces of chaos and ignorance. When we join together under one banner in God’s name our victory will be inevitable!’

I will begin with an analysis of the ‘consubstantiality’ narrative because it provides the basis that the other narrative arcs build upon. I will then examine the stories that make up the ‘struggles and ordeals’ and ‘restrictive path’ narratives and what they accomplish. I will end with a summary of the three and some suggestions for combating Daesh’s influence.

CONSUBSTANTIALITY

‘We are people across space and time’

Historically, radical jihadist groups have not received much support from the broader Muslim community. Contemporary radical jihadists have learned from the failures of those who went before them (e.g. the failed assassination attempt on Anwar Sadat

10 S. Cotte, ‘What is it so hard to stop ISIS propaganda’ (2 March 2015) in The Atlantic Online <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/03/why-its-so-hard-to-stop-isis-propaganda/386216/> (last accessed 30 September 2015).

11 M. Charland, ‘Constitutive rhetoric’, 33-150.

12 Halverson et al., Master narratives, p. 13.

that was meant to start a revolution) and have made it their goal to win the support of the ummah (the community of Muslims), if not physically, then at least emotionally, so they can further their aims. The constitutive meta-narrative arises from the need to garner support for jihad; this is where the ‘consubstantiality’ narrative becomes important.

According to Charland, ‘consubstantiality’ is defined as being of the same substance or essence, between groups and across generations.¹³ The ‘consubstantiality’ narrative is meant to forge links between contemporary Muslims and the self-proclaimed Khilafah, as well as to their romanticized past. Global jihadists believe the only way to stop the ‘American crusade against Islam’¹⁴ beset upon the ummah is to unite Muslims everywhere under Daesh ideology. Daesh ideology defines who is and who is not a true Muslim, and describes the need for defensive war to cope with their ‘struggles and ordeals’ (the second narrative arc described below).¹⁵ As stated in the first issue of *Dabiq*, the online magazine produced by Daesh, ‘It also requested [of all true Muslims] that they assist the Islamic State with their wealth, their sons, their men, their weapons, their strength and their opinion, and encourage their sons and their brothers to join the military body of the Islamic State’.¹⁶ The stories found in the ‘consubstantiality’ narrative can be distilled into one sentence: *We are one people across space and time.*

Historical Stories - The Origin of the Ummah

One of the historical stories used by Salafi-jihadists is the origin story of the ummah. ‘If Islam is again to play the role of the leader of mankind, then it is necessary that the Muslim community be restored to its original form’.¹⁷ An origin story is the foundation upon which all else—policy, rhetoric, and action—is built. According to director of History of Religions department at the University of Chicago Mircea Eliade, origin stories repeat the idea that understanding one’s origin is important not only for understanding the past, but also for responding appropriately to what

13 M. Charland, ‘Constitutive rhetoric’, p. 140.

14 *Dabiq*, Issue 3, pg. 35. Online <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq#> (last accessed 15 March 2015).

15 J. M. Brachman, *Global jihadism: Theory and practice*, (London, 2009); A. Gendron, ‘Militant Jihadism: Radicalization, Conversion’ (2007) Online: <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/52.pdf> (last accessed 10 December 2015); A.B. Naji, *The management of savagery: The most critical stages through which the ummah will pass* (2003) Online: <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf> (last accessed 12 March 2015).

16 *Dabiq*, Issue 1, p. 13. Online <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq#> (last accessed 12 March 2015).

17 Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, (in Arabic: *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, Egypt, 1964), (Chicago, 2007).

is happening in the present.¹⁸ The story of the original ummah refers back to the origin of Islam when it is considered to be at its purest. Before Islam, people lived in Jahiliyyah or ignorance; Muhammad discovered the truth of Islam and he and his followers used it to combat ignorance. For radical jihadists like Daesh, utilizing the origin story of the ummah is at the core of the constitutive meta-narrative. The strength of all other Daesh narratives depends on all members of the group buying into Daesh's version of the origin myth.

What Origin Stories Accomplish

The origin story of the ummah defines the policies of the contemporary Khilafah, as interpreted by Daesh. Origin stories contain the political, social, and cultural doctrine of a group. Daesh's use of stories about the origin of the ummah binds contemporary Muslims together while linking them to the past through historical tales of battle that engender an optimistic appeal, assuring faithful Muslims of inevitable victory should they enter into war.¹⁹ For example, in the introduction to the first issue of *Dabiq*, the editors cite Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Husayni al-Qurashi al-Baghdadi in the article 'Glad tidings for the Muslim Ummah': 'The time has come for the Ummah of Muhammad...to wake up from its sleep sleep, remove the garments of dishonour, and shake off the dust of humiliation and disgrace, for the era of lamenting and moaning has gone'.²⁰ The origin stories of the ummah, and others that follow Salafi-jihadist interpretations of the early years of the ummah, explain how Muslims need to act in the present day and how war is legitimised through Qur'anic verses. The narrative of 'consubstantiality' ties Muslims from around the world and 'even across generations' together in their belief in Islam, and the Khilafah becomes the physical representation of consubstantiality.²¹

Historical Stories—Tales of Battle

Tales of battle are common throughout the history of civilization.²² They are used as cautionary tales and stories that inspire optimism by telling of the inevitable victory for those who fight on the side of truth and justice.²³

18 M. Eliade, (W. Trask, trans.), *Myth and reality*, (New York, 1963).

19 R.F. Reid, 'New England rhetoric and the French War, 1754-1760: A case study in the rhetoric of war', *Communication Monographs* 43 (1976), p. 282.

20 *Dabiq*, Issue 9. Online <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq#> (Last accessed 13 July 2015).

21 K.S. Zagacki, 'Constitutive rhetoric reconsidered: Constitutive paradoxes in G.W. Bush's Iraq war speeches', *Western Journal of Communication* Vol. 71, No. 4, October 2007, 272–293 Online <http://www4.ncsu.edu/~kszagack/images/w-2007.pdf>

22 Halverson et al., *Master narratives*.

23 R.F. Reid, 'New England rhetoric and the French war.'

Salafi-jihadist historical battle stories are no different. The common stories, the battles of Khaybar,²⁴ the Trenches,²⁵ and Badr,²⁶ establish the foundations for how one should perceive and interpret contemporary struggles. These stories tell tales of treachery, triumph over perceived insurmountable odds, and, most importantly, faith winning over disbelief. For example, several issues of *Dabiq* mention the Battle of Badr in the context of contemporary warfare. The Battle of Badr was a turning point in the history of Islam.²⁷ The story of the Battle of Badr asserts that the righteous—those who submit to the will of God—will defeat the enemies of God. The story ‘serves as a powerful lesson for all Muslims to be firm in their faith...even in the face of seemingly impossible odds or certain death’.²⁸ These ‘against all odds’ battle stories feed off the ‘struggles and ordeals’ conspiracy stories (described below) and drive home the narrative of ‘consubstantiality’.

What Battle Stories Accomplish

By portraying the current state of war within a carefully designed historical framework, discussions with prospective recruits can address questions of identity and foster a sense of belonging through the ‘consubstantiality’ narratives. This tactic gives the perception of a deeper, more personal interaction with the immediacy, necessity, and inevitability of war. Daesh makes use of historical battle stories to provide a dramatic vision for contemporary Muslims. In their stories, Muslims face what appear to be insurmountable odds. However, by submitting to God and demonstrating their faith and intellect by uniting behind those who carry forth the true message of the Prophet Muhammad, they are able to overcome the odds.

The Battle of the Trenches is an important example. The trench is a condensation symbol that has great meaning in the history of Islam. Political scientist Doris Graber defines the term condensation symbol as ‘a name, word, phrase, or maxim, which stirs vivid impressions involving the listener’s most basic values and readies the listener for action’. A condensation symbol can also be an image. In the Battle of the Trenches, Muhammad and the Muslim defenders of Medina intelligently used the city’s natural fortifications and complimented them by digging trenches where the defenders could weather attacks. This allowed the vastly outnumbered Muslims to defend themselves against a superior force until the confederacy of their enemies was broken. This story not only provides

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24 Refers to a battle that took place between the Muslims and the Jews in 629 C.E.

25 The Battle of the Trenches is an important story in Islamic history. It was a battle where Muhammad and his original ummah dug a trench and used the natural fortifications of Medina to hold off a superior force.

26 The original ummah defeated their enemies and signaled the rise of Islam’s power.

27 R. Aslan, *No god but God: The origins, evolution, and future of Islam*, (New York, 2005).

28 Halverson et al., Master narratives.

a ‘powerful lesson’ for current times, the understanding meant to be drawn from the story is the use of one’s faith and intellect to outwit a superior force.²⁹ ‘O ummah of Islam, indeed the world today has been divided into two camps and two *trenches* [emphasis added], with no third camp present: The camp of Islam and faith, and the camp of kufr (the unbelievers) and hypocrisy—the camp of the Muslims and the mujahidin (those engaged in jihad, plural of mujahid) everywhere, and the camp of the jews [sic], the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of kufr, all being led by America and Russia, and being mobilized by the jews’.³⁰ On the basis of a common interest, the story offers a connection ‘between the dead and the living’, while also giving hope to modern jihadists.³¹ Just as in the battle stories of the past, it tells how the believers, firm in their faith, faced certain death by powerful foes and, by the grace of Allah, lived to protect the ummah.³²

Daesh systematically updates its battle stories while reinforcing the idea of ‘consubstantiality’. They engage their audiences via social media. ‘Social media have become “story telling instruments”, ensuring high circulation in virtual spaces where fighters share their experiences from the battlefield’.³³ Before social media, previous incarnations of radical jihadism tended to function through the use of the older one-way message model of mass communication. Now Daesh has embraced the new technology and can engage their audiences directly through two-way social media platforms.³⁴ Prospective recruits are encouraged to use Twitter and other social media platforms to communicate with foreign fighters engaging in battle to learn from them.³⁵

Stories of Care and a Thriving Community

Origin stories legitimising battle are not the only stories Daesh uses to connect the origin myth to the ummah, ‘the group has also released images showing foot soldiers

29 Ibid.

30 A.B. al-Baghdadi, *The revived caliphate: The Islamic State (2003-2014+)* (2014) pp. 71-72. Online https://archive.org/stream/EbookTheRevivedCaliphate2014/Ebook-The-REVIVED-CALIPHATE-2014_djvu.txt (last accessed 15 October 2015).

31 K. Burke, *A Grammar of motives*.

32 M. Charland, ‘Constitutive rhetoric’.

33 M. Lobardi, ‘IS 2.0 and beyond: The Caliphate’s communication project,’ in Maggioni and Magri (eds.), *Twitter and jihad: The communication strategy of ISIS*, p. 88 Online <http://www.ispionline.it/en/articles/article/twitter-and-jihad-communication-strategy-isis-13105> (last accessed 15 October 2015).

34 Scott Simon interviews Clint Watts of the Foreign Policy Institute, ‘ISIS runs a dark media campaign on social media’ (6 September 2014) in *Weekend Edition Saturday*, NPR online: http://www.npr.org/2014/09/06/346299142/isis-runs-a-dark-media-campaign-on-social-media?utm_medium=RSS&utm_campaign=news (last accessed 16 November 2015).

35 J. Farwell, ‘How ISIS uses social media’, (02 October 2014) Online <https://www.iiss.org/en/politics%20and%20strategy/blogsections/2014-d2de/october-931b/isis-media-9d28> (last accessed 9 September 2015).

eating Snickers bars and nurturing kittens'.³⁶ Farwell cites 'Thomas Elkjer Nissen, who explains that the image of 'playing with kittens' functions as a condensation symbol to connect contemporary Muslims to past Muslims. It is common knowledge among Muslims that Huraira, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, was known for being fond of cats.³⁷ Although violence plays a vital role in Daesh narratives, the original ummah is also represented through stories focusing on community. Fondness for cats can be seen as an oblique reference to the character of the original ummah. The reason for nurturing myriad connections to the Muslim origin myth is to strengthen the perception that Daesh is the re-emergence of the original ummah. 'Isis wants the people living in the lands they now control to return to the ultraconservative traditions that they claim the earliest Muslims lived by'.³⁸ In a documentary-style Daesh production entitled '*From inside the Halab*',³⁹ hostage John Cantlie, a British photojournalist, travels around the Aleppo showing how the city prospers under Daesh's sharia rule.⁴⁰ This sort of video also bolsters the claim that Daesh is reviving the Khilafah.⁴¹

The Impact of the Consubstantiality Narrative

In his article 'Empirical Evidence for a Narrative Concept of Self,' John Bickle argues that the concept of self is constructed through narratives from the perspective of cognitive psychology.⁴² Psychologist Jerome Bruner has also written extensively on how important narratives are to a human sense of self and the construction of a child's identity.⁴³ Stories that support the 'consubstantiality' narratives fit with our understanding of the narrative of self. Stories supporting the idea of 'consubstantiality' work to construct or reinforce the identities of groups of individuals. An individual sense of identity is commonly linked to a person's ethnicity, nation, race, etc. A sense of identity linked to such markers hinders the perception of commonality between Muslims, which in turn impedes the acceptance of the conspiracy narratives and, further down the line, to invasion narratives. The 'consubstantiality' narrative is meant to bind contemporary Muslims to their shared religious past and to each other in the present. These are meant to create a stronger connection to Islam, their

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 P. Kingsley, 'Who is behind ISIS's terrifying online propaganda operation?' (23 June 2015) Online <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/23/who-behind-isis-propaganda-operation-iraq> (last accessed 14 October 2015).

39 The ancient name of Aleppo.

40 P. Kingsley, 'Who is behind ISIS's terrifying online propaganda operation?'

41 A.B. al-Baghdadi, *The revived caliphate: The Islamic State*.

42 J. Bickel, 'Empirical evidence for a narrative concept of self', in McVay, Flanagan, and Fireman (eds.), *Narrative and consciousness: Literature, psychology, and the brain*, (New York, 2003).

43 J. Bruner, *Acts of meaning*, (Cambridge MA, 1990).

Muslim identity, and, eventually, to ‘the Islamic State,’ thus decreasing a person’s identification with other, more salient, identities (national, tribal, ethnic, racial, etc.). In the address printed in the first issue of *Dabiq*, Abu Bakr says of the Khalifa: ‘It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers.’⁴⁴ The ‘consubstantiality’ narrative is meant to redirect the identity of the individual.

It becomes incumbent upon the jihadist organization to convince individuals from any part of the world to defend a place that he/she may never have visited and with which he/she has absolutely no familial ties. It is important for Daesh to make their audience believe an attack on any Muslim is an attack on all of Islam.

In order to influence a person to defend an abstraction like the ummah, Daesh must find a way for that abstraction to become a basic part of the identity of all Muslims, indivisible from their core values and beliefs. The stories of consubstantiality accomplish these tasks. Daesh cultivates these stories, so that their ideology can worm its way into the core belief system of the individual and to slowly twist it, leading to fear of remaining outside the group and the inevitable imperative for fighting a ‘defensive war’. The ‘consubstantiality’ narrative is the key to Daesh’s strategic campaign. Without the acceptance of these narratives, Muslims could not be moved to support their cause. All other aspects of Daesh propaganda rely on people accepting the consubstantial narrative that frames their worldview.

STRUGGLES AND ORDEALS

‘We are a people under attack!’

According to Charland, the purpose of a ‘struggles and ordeals’ narrative is to encourage a group of people to identify with each other through their common experiences.⁴⁵ Most Salafi-jihadist organizations tell stories of conspiracy plots, both internal and external, and invasion, both ideological and geographical, to feed a broader ‘struggles and ordeals’⁴⁶ narrative of Islam under attack.⁴⁷ Salafi-jihadists also make use of common themes in their speeches and imagery, such as ‘the demonization and victimisation of Muslims’⁴⁸ and ‘the occupation of the Islamic

44 Dabiq, Issue 1, pg. 7. Online <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq#> (last accessed 11 March 2015).

45 M. Charland, ‘Constitutive rhetoric’, pp.133-150.

46 K.S. Zagacki, ‘Constitutive rhetoric reconsidered’

47 J. Brachman, Global jihadism; A. Gendron, ‘Militant jihadism’

48 The Combating Terrorism Center, ‘The Islamic imagery project: Visual motifs in jihadi internet propaganda’ (West Point, 2006) Online <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-islamic-imagery-project> (last accessed 16 February 2015).

nations', in order to facilitate the acceptance of conspiracy and invasion stories.⁴⁹ The 'struggles and ordeals' narrative is made up of stories that reflect the idea: *'We are a people under attack!'*

Conspiracy stories

Counterterrorism specialist Jarret Brachman states, 'The first premise of Jihadism is there is a global conspiracy working to destroy Islam'.⁵⁰ The conspiracy premise is built upon stories in which the ummah faces power imbalance, subjugation, and constant humiliation from the West.⁵¹ According to radical jihadists, a conspiracy of victimization has been taking place for more than 700 years; or as Professor Global Studies M.B. Steger notes,⁵² at least since 'the Great Powers' division of the Ottoman Empire after the Great War' with the signing of the Sykes-Picot accord.⁵³

The conspiracy stories tell us that there is an entire system that subjugates Muslims. Not only has it been in place for centuries, but it is vital and active today. 'The current socio-political system is one that oppresses and discriminates against Muslims, who are the victims of an international world order dominated by the West—the aggressor and enemy of Islam'.

A conspiracy must be two or more people, a group, or an organization seeking goals that create undesirable state of affairs for others.⁵⁴ Radical-jihadist conspiracies cite two threats to Islam—ruling regimes in the Arab world and external Western forces. These two threats are enmeshed and cooperate with one another, both overtly and covertly. Thus, the conspiracy stories can be divided into two interdependent types, internal and external threats.

49 C. Bockstette, 'Jihadist terrorist use of strategic communication management techniques', Online http://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/MCDocs/files/College/F_Publications/occPapers/occ-paper_20-en.pdf (last accessed 9 September 2015).

50 J. M. Brachman, *Global jihadism*, p. 11.

51 J. M. Brachman, *Global jihadism*; A. Gendron, 'Militant jihadism'; B. Lewis, 'License to kill: Usama bin Laden's declaration of jihad' in G. Rose & J. Tepperman (eds.), *The U.S. vs. al Qaeda: A history of the war on terror*. (New York, 2011).

52 M.B. Steger, 'Religion and ideology in the global age: Analysing al Qaeda's Islamist globalism'. *New Political Science* 31.4 (2009), p. 535

53 A. Gendron, 'Militant jihadism'.

54 P. Knight, 'Making sense of conspiracy theories' in P. Knight (ed.), *Conspiracy theories in American history: An encyclopedia*. (Santa Barbara, CA, 2003).

The Facilitators of Conspiracy—Stories of Internal Threats

Conflicts between Middle Eastern states and religious Salafi-jihadist groups play an important part in Middle East culture and politics. These ongoing conflicts force radical jihadists groups to prove the need to overthrow Arabic regimes. In order to garner support for overthrowing the status-quo, Salafi-jihadists groups tell stories of conspiracy that point to the internal corruption that threatens the Islamic identity. Halverson et al. have given names to the two stories that tell of internal corruption, the Pharaoh and Hypocrite.⁵⁵

The Pharaoh story articulates the struggles of the believers against despised rulers and corrupt regimes.⁵⁶ These stories identify the state system and its leaders as a part of the internal corruption and provide a need for change through revolution. The Hypocrite story depicts a ruse that involves an ‘individual or group that is insincere and opportunistic, rather than being outright treasonous’.⁵⁷ The story of the Hypocrite is a cautionary story meant to identify those who do not follow the strict path Salafi-jihadists understand to be the true path of Islam. Both of these stories expose corruption within the ummah.

What Internal Threats Accomplish

The Pharaoh and Hypocrite stories work as ethnocentric appeals that serve as a basis for the false set up of the restrictive path narratives described in the next section. These stories create an ‘us vs. them’ opposition, or as stated in Issue One of *Dabiq*, ‘The camp of Islam and faith, and the camp of kufr and hypocrisy’.⁵⁸

The Facilitators of Conspiracy - Stories of External Threats

The external threat to Islam is identified in two abstractions, Jahiliyyah and Western ideology. ‘Jahiliyyah is evil and corrupt, whether it be of the ancient or modern variety’, while the Western ideology represents a defiant and institutionalised ignorance of evil and an inevitable return to the state of Jahiliyyah.⁵⁹ These two abstractions are concretised for the audience by identifying the agents of conspiracy who promote them—Western nations, led by the United States of America, and Israel.

55 Halverson et al., Master narratives.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., p. 57.

58 *Dabiq*, Issue 1, p. 11.

59 Sayyid Qutb, Milestones.

What the External Threat Accomplishes

Stories of external corruption have three effects. First, they identify regions historically and contemporarily viewed as Muslim territories, which are currently experiencing strife, thus reinforcing the conspiracy narrative of Islam under attack. Second, they identify the cause for that strife as being due to Western influence. Finally, in providing an enemy to strike out against in order to defend Muslims, they create a unifying hatred for the ‘inferior alien’.⁶⁰ Together, internal and external threats create the need for change through war—the purity of Islam must be defended against internal threats and corrupting influences and Islamic territory must be defended against invading forces.

Invasion stories

A notable aspect of the stories that support the ‘struggles and ordeals’ narrative is that in each case aggression is perpetrated against Muslims and Muslim nations. These stories have a common theme that Muslims are the victims and therefore need to fight a defensive war. ‘O Americans, and O Europeans, the Islamic State did not initiate a war against you, as your governments and media try to make you believe. It is you who started the transgression against us, and thus you deserve blame and you will pay a great price.’⁶¹ Halverson et al. argue that the invasion stories feature prominently in extremist rhetoric and encourage a desire for satisfaction, which can be attained through jihad.⁶² The invasion story creates a sense of violation that justifies the need for a brutal defensive war.

Daesh addresses the public by means of various media platforms to communicate this perception of world events. The online magazine *Dabiq* is a mouthpiece for the movement. Issue Four of *Dabiq* states, ‘We do not fight Kurds because they are Kurds. Rather we fight the disbelievers amongst them, the allies of the crusaders and Jews in their war against the Muslims’.⁶³ Even in the truncated messaging of Twitter, Daesh finds a way to support the victimisation of the Muslim while projecting an attitude of strength. For example, ‘#ISIS #Break_border The End of Sykes Picot - Islamic State,’ a tweet that directed people to a Daesh propaganda video, was one of tens of thousands of tweets that support the Daesh narrative of the victimization. To many jihadi organizations, the Sykes-Picot accord is a symbol of intrusive Western power in the Muslim

60 R.F. Reid, ‘New England rhetoric and the French War’.

61 *Dabiq*, Issue 4, p. 8. Online <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq#> (last accessed 11 March 2015).

62 Halverson et al., Master narratives, p. 109.

63 *Dabiq*, Issue 4, p. 9.

world.⁶⁴ Daesh uses the Sykes-Picot accord as an example of the humiliation of Muslims brought about by the West. This tweet connects its audience to a larger story by linking to a video of the same name, a video that tells the story of Daesh fighting to destroy the borders created by the Sykes-Picot accord. Layering propaganda over real world events makes it more difficult to distinguish from any type of objective reality and easier to accept.

What Invasion Stories Accomplish— Breaking the Borders in Text and Video

The Daesh stories of invasion are meant to shape a perception of the Middle East as a territory was invaded, that is, the tenets of Islam and its historical truths have also been invaded by Western ideology. These are constant themes throughout Daesh's public addresses—stories of Islamic lands under constant attack spiritually, economically, and physically.

The founding of a state does not exist in a vacuum; it requires people to accept it, to believe in it, and to support it. A significant part of the creation of acceptance, belief, and support is the retelling of historical stories of Islam while prompting modern Muslims recognize their Islamic identity above all other identities (national, ethnic, tribal etc.). Trans-historical narratives are a good start, but to capture the attention and support of modern Muslims, Daesh, like al Qaeda, addresses audiences around the world through social media platforms to show people from different backgrounds all coming together under the aegis of Daesh to defend themselves against territorial invasion and the corruption of the true Islam.

Often times, in Salafi-jihadist public addresses, Islamic identity appeals are textual. For example, the first issue of *Dabiq* contains an article entitled 'Khilafa Declared' in which the editors of *Dabiq* publish 'important excerpts' from a longer speech by Amirul-Mu'minin. Each of the five excerpts rephrases the same theme of unity in Islam even though their audience is worldwide.

Amirul-Mu'minin said: 'O Muslims everywhere, glad tidings to you and expect good. Raise your head high, for today – by Allah's grace – you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership.

64 M. Ruthven, 'The Map ISIS hates' (25 June 2014) Online <http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2014/jun/25/map-isis-hates/> (last accessed 2 December 2015).

It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and Westerner are all brothers.

It is a Khilafah that gathered the Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Shami, Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, Maghribi (North African), American, French, German, and Australian. Allah brought their hearts together, and thus, they became brothers by His grace, loving each other for the sake of Allah, standing in a single trench, defending and guarding each other, and sacrificing themselves for one another.

Their blood mixed and became one, under a single flag and goal, in one pavilion, enjoying this blessing, the blessing of faithful brotherhood.

If kings were to taste this blessing, they would abandon their kingdoms and fight over this grace. So all praise and thanks are due to Allah'.⁶⁵

Though many Salafi-jihadist organizations textually create a sense of trans-national identification, Daesh also makes its appeal for the 'breaking of borders' visually through online videos such as *Join the Ranks* (2014), *There is No Life without Jihad* (2014), and *The End of the Sykes-Picot* (2014). The videos show Daesh as a multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-racial organization.

Daesh video representation works on several levels. On a visual level they use images that stir vivid impressions of a belief system that attracts individuals from a variety of nations and ethnicities. On a conceptual level, the video stories break down the idea of borders imposed by the West on Central Asia and the Middle East. Muslims from all around the globe renounce their nationalities, ethnicities, etc., and become one with the Islamic state. *There is No Life Without Jihad* contains testimonials from Brits and Australians who reject the East Asian (Middle Eastern) borders falsely imposed by the West.⁶⁶ This, along with illustrations of the territory gained by Daesh, comprises their visual representation of the erasure of 'arbitrary' Western borders.

An Important Difference in Daesh and al Qaeda Messaging

All jihadist narratives, regardless of setting, repeat and rephrase a pervasive theme—'a global conspiracy is working to destroy Islam'.⁶⁷ Jihadist conspiracy stories, framed through appeals to wage war, construct the need for change. They interlace conspiracy stories with territorial and ethnographic appeals to manufacture the need for defensive war by a religious state that will address and rectify the indignities visited upon the Muslim people.⁶⁸

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Dabiq, Issue 1, pp. 7-9.

66 Farwell, 'How ISIS uses social media'.

67 J. M. Brachman, *Global jihadism*, p. 11.

68 R.F. Reid, 'New England rhetoric and the French war'.

Daesh communication campaigns, however, provide examples of ‘fighting a defensive war’ and winning. This is precisely where the Daesh ‘struggles and ordeals’ narrative differs from the messages used by al Qaeda. Whereas al Qaeda spent their time and energy focusing on the persecution of the Muslims, Daesh emphasises stories of conspiracy and invasion in which they are fighting back and *overcoming* their ‘struggles and ordeals’.⁶⁹ This is a key distinction between Daesh and al Qaeda—Daesh narratives portrays the jihadists as the true champions of the faith who are avenging the perceived sufferings of Muslims, stressing that Daesh is gaining strength and amassing power; for them victory is inevitable.⁷⁰ According to Daesh, all that is needed for victory to be achieved, is for Muslims to unite under the banner of Daesh. Here they create another significant either/or proposition described further in the next section.

Using Trans-historical Enemies to Create a Coherent Tale of Conspiracy

Societies and cultures need ‘the other’ to promote their own social systems. Daesh, like other prospective nation-builders, defines its people by not only who they are, but also by who they are not. In seeking to connect contemporary Muslims both to their historical past and in contemporary fellowship around the globe, Daesh endeavours to merge current perceived enemies—Israel and the West—with past enemies such as Jews, Crusaders, and the Quraysh⁷¹, giving credence to trans-historical conspiracy narratives and thus proving the need for both a homeland and a defensive war as corroborated by carefully misinterpreted quotes from the Qur’ān and Hadiths.⁷²

Daesh’s use of ‘consubstantiality’ sub-narratives gives weight to what Reid calls ‘the ethnocentric appeal of barbarism vs. gallantry’, in which the enemy’s cultural values are seen as inherently evil and must therefore be destroyed.⁷³ Jihadist organizations, like Daesh, do this by linking contemporary Western thought and the Western powers to the rationale of the Crusades. The Crusader stories are stories of Western Christian civilization subjugating, mistreating, colonizing, and killing all those who refused to submit to them.⁷⁴ These stories foster the perception that Western powers have historically waged war and corrupted the followers of Islam. This idea dovetails with the ‘struggles and ordeals’ narrative to warrant usurping the current international Western-biased system.

69 J. Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of terror*, (New York, 2015).

70 J. Farwell, ‘How ISIS uses social media’.

71 The tribe in control of Mecca until Muhhamad and his ummah took control.

72 A collection of sayings by the prophet Mohammed that is a major source of guidance for Muslims along with their holy book the Qur’ān.

73 R.F. Reid, ‘New England rhetoric and the French War’, p. 269.

74 Halverson et al., *Master narratives*.

What Trans-historical Enemy Stories Accomplish

The trans-historical enemy story provides a rationale for accepting stories of external conspiracy and invasion. A basic tenet of global Salafi-jihadism is that the ummah has been under attack throughout history.⁷⁵ By linking the idea of the West to the ideology of the Crusades, the ‘established truth’ of constant attack throughout the generations is reinforced in the public memory. ‘Hence there is a sense of belonging to a community encapsulated in an indifferent or hostile society’.⁷⁶ These stories also reinforce the ‘us vs. them’ argument used in conspiracy and invasion stories. The feeling of on-going threat creates an impetus for change, change that can only happen through defensive war or jihad, according to the radical jihadists.

THE RESTRICTIVE PATH

‘You are free to make the right choice.’

According to Charland, constitutive rhetoric that is meant to call a ‘common, collective identity into existence’, must strive to create the ‘illusion of freedom’.⁷⁷ Target audiences are led to believe they have a choice in the way they see the world, but the ‘restrictive path’ narrative is designed so that freedom is limited to an either/or decision. In his 2014 speech ‘This is the Promise of Allah’, Daesh spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-‘Adnani declared that Muslims everywhere support the Islamic state. He told his audience, ‘if you forsake the State or wage war against it, you will not harm it. You will only harm yourselves’.⁷⁸ A person’s identity is constrained to the choice between believer and unbeliever.

Daesh’s ‘restrictive path’ narrative provides only two options—to submit to Allah and follow the path of the true believers, i.e. Daesh, or to flounder in Jahiliyyah, and return to the ‘Age of Ignorance’, the ignorance in which people lived before the prophet Muhammad related the word of God.⁷⁹ According to Egyptian Islamic theorist Sayyid Qutb, those who do not choose Islam ‘whether it is based on nationalism, colour, and race, class struggle, or similar corrupt theories, are truly enemies of mankind’.⁸⁰ Once the truth as told by Daesh is ‘accepted’ the only option is jihad. As Charland says, the ‘endings of narratives are fixed before the telling’.⁸¹ Daesh uses religious stories prescribing the

75 A. Gendron, ‘Militant Jihadism’.

76 O. Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a new ummah*, (New York, 2004), p. 36.

77 M. Charland, ‘Constitutive rhetoric’, p. 141.

78 A.M al-‘Adnani, ‘This is the promise of Allah’, Online https://ia902505.us.archive.org/28/items/poa_25984/EN.pdf

79 Halverson et al., *Master narratives*, p. 37.

80 Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 160.

81 M. Charland, ‘Constitutive rhetoric’, p. 140

inevitable ending, ‘The earth is Allah’s. {Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah. He causes to inherit it whom He wills of His servants. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous} [Al-A’raf: 128]’.⁸²

Religious Justification for the ‘Restrictive Path’

Stories that provide religious justification for the creation of the Khilafah and the premise of jihad are culled from the Qur’an and Hadiths. These stories not only explain how previous generations went to war to defend Islam, but describe how the world should be, thus becoming important guidelines for the members of Daesh. The most commonly cited stories are stories from the Qur’an and Hadiths that describe historical battles. The use of such stories serves two purposes. First, they provide the religious authority to justify war and second, the historical battles are used to provide context that frames contemporary battles in such a way as to serve the purposes of the ‘consubstantiality’ narrative.

According to Stern and Berger, the authors of *ISIS: The State of Terror*, the ranks of Daesh are deeply infused with religious fervour and Koranic quotations are ubiquitous.⁸³ Religious authority is used to justify their actions and any representations of those actions. Thus, if one beheads a ‘kufr’ the action is justified by a decontextualized citation from an accepted religious text, which serves as its own representation of a self-sustaining reality.

Allah (*‘azzā wa jal*⁸⁴) states in the Qur’an after granting *imamah*⁸⁵ to Ibrahim (*‘alayhissalam*⁸⁶), {And who would turn away from the religion of Ibrahim except one who makes a fool of himself. Truly, We chose him in this world, and indeed in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous.} [Al-Baqarah: 130] So we can see from the context of these verses that *imamah* is from the *millah*⁸⁷ of Ibrahim (*‘alayhis-salam*), and that whoever turns away from it is turning away from something that’s a part of this great *millah*. The *millah* is the path that is followed in its entirety, and the path that Allah chose for Ibrahim (*‘alayhis-salam*) and his progeny thereafter is the path of *imamah* – both religious and political – as much as they’re able to do.⁸⁸

82 Dabiq, Issue 1, p. 11.

83 J. Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of terror*.

84 ‘mighty and majestic’

85 ‘the spiritual and political leadership of the Ummah’

86 ‘peace be upon him’

87 Loosely translated *millah* means ‘nation’ but can be used to mean ‘religion and shari’ah’; it expresses the social aspect of religion. See the discussion online at the Questions on Islam website: <http://www.questionsonislam.com/question/can-you-explain-difference-between-%E2%80%9Cmillah%E2%80%9D-nation-and-%E2%80%9Cummah%E2%80%9D-community> (last accessed 03 December 2015).

88 Dabiq, Issue 1, p. 27.

As Jim Suchan, in his article, ‘Toward an Understanding of Arabic persuasion: A Western Perspective’, notes, that there is no need to support the word of Allah; the truth is in the existence of the word.⁸⁹ In the view of a radical jihadist the decontextualized quotes are absolutely true. The use of the Qur’an is at the core of the web of radical jihadist narratives. *Dabiq* is also replete with citations from the Hadiths and the Qur’an that are used to legitimise many of the group’s actions. For example, there are ten mentions of the Qur’an and way more quotes in issue nine of *Dabiq* alone. As Suchan observes, ‘All knowledge worth knowing starts with Muhammed’s recitation of God’s word inscribed in the Qur’an and clarified in other texts’.⁹⁰ The use of decontextualized verses frames the world in the context of creating a need for an Islamic state or Khilafah to protect Muslims and to justify jihad. Daesh fulfils that need.

The Impact of the Religious Justification for the ‘Restrictive Path’

‘Muslim belief and practice is based on the words of the Koran, but Islamist discourse in interpreting the meaning of those words is contentious and fractured. Nowhere is this truer than with respect to jihad, about which there is no single, universally accepted doctrine’, writes Angela Gendron, a Senior Fellow at the Canadian Centre of Intelligence and Security Studies (CCISS).⁹¹ Muslims believe the Qur’ān is the verbatim word of God making it the central text of Islam. The use of the Qur’ān in jihadist rhetoric is important because they need religious legitimization. Salafi-jihadist groups like Daesh use propaganda to justify defensive war to protect the ummah through the selective use of verses from the Qur’ān[...]⁹² This means that the Salafi-jihadist call for a ‘defensive war’ must be seen as taking place within the religious tenets of Islam. The use of religious texts in the stories comprising their Restrictive Path Narrative is meant to give the group religious authority and credibility within the ummah.

Video Representations of Religious Authority and the ‘Restrictive Path’

Daesh videos create vivid associations with our most basic human values and prepare their target audiences for action. At the most basic level, the videos can be divided into two types—holy war videos and execution videos. Each type

89 Suchan, ‘Toward an understanding of Arabic persuasion: A Western perspective’, *International Journal of Business Communication* 51 (2014), 279-303.

90 Suchan, ‘Toward an understanding of Arabic persuasion’, p. 290.

91 A. Gendron, ‘Militant jihadism’, p. 6.

92 Ibid.

of video provides a story to justify the ‘restrictive path’ narrative, the creation of the Khilafah, and jihad. The Holy War videos are propaganda videos that romanticize Daesh Muslims and the mujahidin fighting against internal and external threats (see conspiracy stories above). In the videos *The Clanging of the Swords I-IV* and *Messages from the Land of Epic Battles*, fighters are shown in battle while religious justification is presented throughout, commonly through the use of quotes from the Qur’an or Hadiths.

Perhaps the most sensational and, therefore, most widely-known videos are the execution videos. In these videos, victims are dressed in orange jump suits, a condensation symbol for the subjugation of Muslims held at Guantánamo Bay. Usually, the executioner explains Daesh’s motivation, providing religious authority for the action, before the victim is brutally killed.

Unlike other Salafi-jihadist organizations, Daesh expands upon the ‘us vs. them’ bifurcation through the practice of takfir or violent excommunication, which justifies killing fellow Muslims who do not follow the strict path of Islam dictated by Daesh. Within the Muslim community, the distinction between barbarism and gallantry⁹³ is an important factor in nation-building.⁹⁴ The Daesh video released in February 2015 showing a Jordanian pilot being burned to death is a good example of this. The video frames the justification of the execution by flashing ‘snippets of news segments showing Jordan’s involvement in the US-led fight against the Islamic State before focusing on computer generated images of a “crusader” fighter jet firing missiles and a truck burning.’⁹⁵ By linking the Jordanian pilot to the US-led fight against Daesh, Daesh positions the Jordanian pilot as being in the employ of the barbaric/evil West and therefore is justified in executing the pilot according to the practice of takfir. According to Reid, the ‘barbarism vs. gallantry’ theme is an ethnocentric appeal that depicts an enemy as the epitome of evil and the rhetor’s audience as a force for good.⁹⁶ Salafi-jihadist stories depict a Western-controlled system of corruption that is opposed to everything the jihadists believe to be true of Islam, thus defining the external threat to Islam.⁹⁷

93 R.F. Reid, ‘New England rhetoric and the French War’, p. 269

94 B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, (London, 1991).

95 T. McCoy & A. Taylor, ‘Islamic State says immolation was justified; experts on Islam say no’ (4 February 2015) in *The Washington Post Online*: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/02/04/the-chilling-reason-the-islamic-state-burned-a-jordanian-pilot-alive/>

96 R.F. Reid, ‘New England rhetoric and the French War’, p. 269

97 A. Gendron, ‘Militant Jihadism’.

The beheading videos in particular function to strategically construct a past, present, and future by means of the ‘consubstantiality’ and ‘restrictive path’ narratives.⁹⁸ The beheadings harken back to a past where such violent ‘justice’ was commonplace, ‘So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, then smite the necks’.⁹⁹ By connecting Daesh to the violent past, as ‘the only Islamic organization truly adhering to the ways of the original ummah’, they explain their present-day atrocities. The beheadings also tell the story of the power of Daesh; they are a clear attempt to provoke the US ‘into an ever deeper engagement in Iraq’.¹⁰⁰ And, just as importantly, the beheading videos reveal the future of anyone who does not adhere to Daesh’s strict understanding of Islam, exemplifying the restrictive nature of their belief system.

The Impact of Daesh Propaganda Videos

The Holy War videos become contemporary representations of historical battle narratives. The videos portray Daesh fighters preparing to fight or battling the enemy. They recall both the conspiracy and invasion storylines of the ‘struggles and ordeal’ narratives. The videos present the mujahidin valiantly fighting the kufr. When coupled with religious verses, the visual representation of violence is justified and commended, making it incumbent upon any Muslim to support Daesh in this way.

The execution videos accomplish several tasks. First, they are brutally sensational, therefore almost guaranteeing their transmission by various agents (fellow jihadists, non-jihadi individuals, news media, etc.). Second, they work as messages of intimidation for those within the reach of Daesh. And third, they are a visual representation of the group’s extreme interpretation of Islam and their origin story of the ummah, showing target audiences that Daesh is following a strict path of Islam; they can follow it as well, or end up like the kufr in the videos.

Most important of all, both types of video portray individuals heeding the call of Daesh and supporting the Khilafah through jihad. If the target audience feels connected to the ummah, as described in the ‘consubstantiality’ narrative, accepts the salience of the Daesh worldview, and accepts the need for change, as shown in the stories of ‘struggles and ordeals’, then they can visualize the only solution: jihad and a Khilafah. Visualization prompts action.

98 Miskimmon et al., Strategic narratives

99 Qur’an, 47:4, Online <https://www.comp.leeds.ac.uk/nora/html/47-4.html>

100 J. Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of terror*, p. 244.

The Impact of the ‘Restrictive Path’ Narrative

The end result of Daesh’s rhetoric is to win support for the Khilafah and jihad, financially, emotionally, or most importantly, physically. If one accepts the carefully constructed worldview of Daesh, the ‘restrictive path’ narrative makes jihad inevitable. The ‘restrictive path’ narrative builds upon the ‘struggles and ordeals’ and ‘consubstantiality’ narratives. The ‘struggles and ordeals’ narratives show the ummah experiencing threats from the world at large and illustrate the crises that warrant the unification of the global ummah into the Khilafah, to defend itself in the name of Allah. The narratives strive to obviate the necessity of the Khilafah for the protection of Islam and for waging a defensive war. Through the use of quotes and decontextualized verses from the Qu’ran, Daesh communicators use the ‘restrictive path’ narrative to force Muslims to choose if they are ‘for us or against us’. As do other jihadists, Daesh defines a true Muslim as one who follows their strict interpretation of the Qu’ran.

The second effect of the ‘restrictive path’ narratives is to give Daesh credibility. In a religious system like that of the radical-jihadists, authority is given to those who are knowledgeable in the Qu’ran.¹⁰¹ Daesh cites the Qu’ran and uses it to support the actions of the group and to augment its credibility. For example, the video *Establishment of the Islamic State* part 1, becomes visual evidence supporting the idea that strict adherence to the Qur’an and Hadiths results in the victory of the believers over the unbelievers, thus further adding to the religious credibility of Daesh and spreading the perception that if one is truly Muslim (as defined by Daesh), one must accept the inevitability of supporting Daesh.

‘Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis.

The earth is Allah’s. {Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah. He causes to inherit it whom He wills of His servants. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous} [Al-A’raf: 128].

The State is a state for all Muslims. The land is for the Muslims, all the Muslims. O Muslims everywhere, whoever is capable of performing *hijrah* (emigration) to the Islamic State, then let him do so, because *hijrah* to the land of Islam is obligatory’.¹⁰²

101 J. M. Brachman, Global jihadism.

102 Dabiq, Issue 1, p. 11.

CONCLUSION

Daesh is attempting to influence the perceptions of its Muslim audience on a global scale. In order to do this, the group has crafted a sophisticated, strategic communication campaign to create the vision of a modern Khilafah in need of defending, through which they can spread their ideology. At the centre of their strategic communication campaign is its ‘constitutive’ narrative: a finely crafted meta-narrative that breaks up into three sub-narratives: ‘struggles and ordeals,’ the ‘restrictive path,’ and ‘consubstantiality’. The ‘struggles and ordeals’ narrative is built upon the stories of Islam, humiliated and under attack from both inside and outside of the ummah. However, as Stern & Berger posit, Daesh follows the narrative of ‘struggles and ordeals’ through to the necessary conclusion for the jihadist movement—Daesh is fighting back.¹⁰³ The ‘restrictive path’ narrative relies upon stories of religious authority and actions based on that authority suggesting that one has the freedom to choose one’s own path, yet if one comes to agree with the proposition that it is the duty of every true Muslim to submit to Daesh, then there is only one choice. Both of these narratives are integral to the internal logic of Daesh and their strategic communication, however the ‘consubstantiality’ narratives are at the core of their communication campaign. These are the most important stories Daesh utilizes, because these stories are intended to bring Muslims together under the banner of Daesh. Historically most Muslims reject these attempts by radical jihadist organizations to convince their Muslim audiences to identify with them.

Going after the ‘consubstantiality’ narratives is the best choice to combat Daesh messaging. There are multiple ways to ‘attack’ the stories of ‘consobstantiality’. One simple, yet effective tactic is to discontinue referring to Daesh as the Islamic State or IS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIS, or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or ISIL. It is imperative to deny the perception that the radical jihadist group constitutes a legitimate state that represents the interests of Islam. Instead, the group should be consistently referred to as ‘Daesh’.

To weaken Daesh’s communication campaign there must be a strategic communication campaign to distance Daesh from the ummah origin story. This is best accomplished through two ways. First, counter narratives from the origin of Muhammad’s original ummah to reveal how radically different Daesh’s ideology is from the original ummah. Second, highlight their use of crime to accomplish their goals. Tell the stories of how Daesh commits crimes that do not fit within the creed of the original ummah. Media audiences can be reminded of the group’s self-aggrandizing attitude towards violence by prefacing the name Daesh with ‘the criminal organization...’ The origin story of Islam is a powerful narrative, as are all origin stories, that extreme organization like Daesh tend to

103 J. Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of terror*.

utilize as a sign of credibility. To distance them from it would be a considerable 'blow' to their ethos. As Mazzetti and Gordon note in the New York Times, a crucial part of the West's public diplomacy is to encourage Arab leaders to denounce the 'Islamic State as a distortion of Islam'.¹⁰⁴

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104 M. Mazzetti and M.R. Gordon, 'ISIS is winning the social media war, US concludes' (12 June 2015) in The New York Times Online http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/13/world/middleeast/isis-is-winning-message-war-us-concludes.html?_r=0

METHOD FOR MINIMIZING THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF NTH ORDER EFFECTS IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION ACTIONS¹ AND INACTIONS

Christine A. Ralph MacNulty

ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author discusses a four-step method that is used to identify, and thereby to foresee and minimize, potentially negative nth order effects associated with pending decisions. These decisions may concern actions-e.g. building a power station-or a strategic communication message related to dissuading young men from becoming terrorists-about to be released by video or social media to influence or inform or influence a particular audience. This paper describes the steps and the methods employed in some detail.

INTRODUCTION

In a campaign speech in 1952, Eisenhower told his potential constituents, 'Everything we say, everything we do, and everything we fail to say or do will have its impact in other lands'.² As practitioners of 'Strategic Communication Actions' (SCAs) we ought to consider Eisenhower's words. Will the impacts of our communication be those we intend? Will the consequences be better or worse? Entirely different? Will there be unintended or unanticipated consequences-nth order effects-either positive or negative?

Nth order effects, or unanticipated consequences, are much more important than most people realise. French Economic Journalist Frederic Bastiat, said, 'In the economic sphere an act, a habit, an institution, a law produces not only one effect, but a series of effects. Of these effects, the first alone is immediate; it appears simultaneously with its cause; *it is seen*. The other effects emerge only subsequently;

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1 Since there is significant disagreement about definitions of Strategic Communication, Influence Operations, Information Operations, and Public Diplomacy, as well as uncertainty about which agency is supposed to be doing what, I will use the phrase Strategic Communication Action (SCA) as a catch-all term.

2 From Dwight D. Eisenhower's campaign speech in San Francisco in October, 1952, as reported in: Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*, (University of Kansas Press, 2006), p. 47.

they are not seen; we are fortunate if we *foresee* them...There is only one difference between a bad economist and a good one: the bad economist confines himself to the *visible* effect; the good economist takes into account both the effect that can be seen and those effects that must be *foreseen*.³ The same applies to practitioners of SCAs.

In 2002, on Highway 56 in South Korea, a heavy U.S. armoured engineering vehicle struck and killed two schoolgirls who were walking to a party. The particular type of vehicle being driven that day is so large as to require both a driver and a commander acting as a lookout for successful navigation. The assumption of responsibility and blame are critical in the Korean culture, and apologies are required immediately. For the Americans, however, it seemed proper to withhold judgment until they could reliably determine the cause. The Commanding General said, 'We'll show the Koreans how our justice system works'. It took almost six months before there was a court martial. The soldiers involved were acquitted because the problem was determined to be a faulty communication system in the vehicle. No blame was ever assigned, and no apologies were given until much later. The Koreans were incensed and began a series of anti-American protests, which exacerbated anti-American sentiment. The cascade of consequences was far-reaching, beginning with the election of an anti-American President and ending with the withdrawal of the 3rd Brigade, 2d Infantry Division from Korea.⁴

Sadly, some of the most devastating unanticipated consequences have come from actions intended to be well-meaning assistance from governments and humanitarian organizations. The experiences of such well-respected organizations as the World Bank, Akademie für Krisenmanagement, Notfallplanung und Zivilschutz, and the Special Operations Forces, provide countless anecdotes about unanticipated consequences. The monograph *The Nightmare Years to Come?* argues persuasively for increased efforts to understand the 'human terrain' of foreign territories. 'Negative consequences to U.S. national security may have been an unintended byproduct of U.S. decision-making in the Middle East for decades. There is little a policymaker can do if consequences are unforeseeable. But often that is not the case. Unintended is not necessarily unexpected, nor a total surprise.'⁵

While the military is becoming increasingly cognizant of the need for cultural awareness, there have been few, if any, systematic attempts to anticipate or minimize the effects of military actions and communications strategies past the second or third order. Most decision makers and communicators have a good idea of the primary outcomes

3 Frédéric Bastiat, *Selected Essays on Political Economy*, 1849, Seymour Cain trans. (New York, 1995) online in the Library of Economics and Liberty: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Bastiat/basEss1.html>

4 David S. Maxwell, 'Beyond the Nuclear Crisis: A Strategy for the Korean Peninsula', (National War College of the National Defense University, April 2004) pp. 75-77.

5 Ibid., p. 32.

they wish to achieve, and most work effectively to achieve first order goals. They consult with experts on the ground who understand the current situation, believing that they have thought through potential negative impacts and understand the human dynamics of the situation. However, the negative effects they manage to address seem to be second order at best, and understanding the underlying beliefs and motivations of a population requires further preparation. This paper introduces an approach for bringing greater depth and breadth to the task of understanding populations and their motivations, and suggests a model that can be used to analyse possible courses of action in terms of outcomes or effects.

Every physical action we take, every word we utter starts as an idea. Ideas are shaped in people's minds by nature, nurture, education, understanding, values, beliefs, motivations, and more. Communication involves both the formulation and presentation of an idea, as well as its reception. Both communicator and receiver are influenced by the nature and nurture filters we all have. So how does a communicator, whether military or diplomatic, ensure that the ideas they give out in the form of SCAs match and achieve their intentions?

Relying on the 'six honest serving men', as Kipling called them, 'What and Why and When and How and Where and Who' is not enough.⁶ Not even when we add a seventh most useful question-Who Else? Before we can answer even these basic questions, we need to define the system, or system of systems, we are wanting to influence. Which part of the complex, interrelated world do we want to change? Most real-life systems are nonlinear. Nonlinear systems have a propensity to be sensitive to initial conditions. This means that even a tiny tactical error can have enormous strategic consequences. Most people are now familiar with the concept of the 'butterfly effect', but, while we might be tempted to use chaos and complexity theories to assist us in developing successful communication strategies, they are probably not the answer as they do not consider the human element specifically.⁷

The four-step approach described in this paper has been developed and refined over a period of forty years. The springboard for this trajectory was the author's work at a Plessey think tank in the UK in the late 1960s, providing input to the Lord Justice Roskill Commission on the Third London Airport. The goal of the project was to assess the impact of building the airport on the local area and vice versa. A series of cascading weighted matrices was developed-an example of such matrices is shown later in Step 3. A group of experts, taking a very broad systems perspective, collaborated to comprehend

6 Rudyard Kipling, 'The Elephant's Child', *The Definitive Edition of Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1973), p. 605.

7 Edward N. Lorenz, 'Atmospheric predictability as revealed by naturally occurring analogues' (<http://journals.ametsoc.org/doi/abs/10.1175/1520-0469%281969%2926%3C636%3AAPARBN%3E2.0.CO%3B2>), *Journal of the Atmospheric Sciences* 26 (1969), 636-646.

the salient features of both the airport and the environment into which it would go, so that productive variables could be identified. Their study went into great detail, even examining the impact of aircraft noise on crop growth, since this region was a producer of agricultural products. The system of weighted matrices developed for this project is still crucial to the analytical model presented here, although today calculations rely on more powerful technological solutions, such as Agent-Based Modelling and Simulation (ABMS).

Originally, the work of defining the system and identifying the necessary variables, the **first step**, was conducted through brainstorming sessions. Master Mind groups, established formally by Andrew Carnegie, are well known for producing excellent results that have enabled people such as Carnegie, Ford, Edison, Bell, as well as many contemporary entrepreneurs, to succeed.⁸ The most effective way to develop compelling messages or actions is by having experts from various disciplines, serving a variety of functions, work together. Any endeavour involving people will necessarily involve a good measure of subjective judgment, but steps can be taken to produce a definition of any given system, which is broad enough to include all significant variables, yet specific enough to work with effectively.

Whenever we must assess the impact of an action or communication, we must seek to be aware of the ways in which the affected population is likely to perceive that action or communication, which may differ significantly from the intended result. The **second step** of the method is to understand the stakeholders, all of them, and how the SCA looks from their perspective. As stated above, human perception stems from abstract, subjective, and learned elements. During the 1970s, in order to develop some guidelines for understanding the various aspects of human identity and perception, the author was involved in developing a number of values-based models, including the former Stanford Research Institute's Values & Lifestyles (VALs) Program, and Taylor Nelson Monitor's Social Value Groups. This early work has also proven to be valuable for characterising and understanding the values and motivations of the various stakeholders involved in any SCA.

The **third step** is to understand the relationships between all elements of the system. This includes all of physical elements of the system and the way they interact with each other; the people and/or groups involved and the way they interact, as well as the ways in which the people interact with the system. The elements of the matrices are identified during brainstorming sessions and supplemented by asking the experts to collaborate on the creation of Mind-maps to produce a schematic drawing that visually illustrates the relationships between the variables. In this step the variables are coded into the analytical

model and each relationship is given a numerical value for the strength of the interaction between each pair of elements. The resulting information can be used as feedback to calibrate and fine-tune the variables of the interactive matrices, as well as to generate forecasts and scenarios.

The **fourth step** of the method is to develop mini '*What If?*' scenarios to run through the ABMS program, in order to discover in what ways specified elements of the defined system might react to changes in inputs. Early on, similar scenarios were developed for technology assessment, a precursor to the assessment of nth order effects.⁹ Clearly no one can eliminate all unanticipated consequences, or they would no longer be unanticipated, but we can do our best to increase our awareness of them and minimize them.

The models and scenarios we use are based on whatever trends/events/variables we identify and believe to be important, however, experience has shown that the scenarios that actually come about are often those we did not foresee. But even in such circumstances, the act of thinking through the scenarios requires decision-makers and communicators to reassess what they know and derive lessons for the next attempt. In thinking about the future there can never be any real rigor because there is no data about the future. We can extrapolate data from the past and speculate about what trends will look like in the future, but this is still speculation. The author has been a forecaster/futurist for more than forty years, and has an extensive understanding of the futures field. '*What If?*' scenarios can never be anything other than speculative. They can be enhanced by the use of various kinds of modelling to increase their accuracy, but they are not infallible. The more we understand, the more we can apply that understanding to successfully minimizing the negative impacts of important strategic decisions.

To recap, the four steps to identifying and understanding nth order effects are:

1. Define the system, or system of systems, and the context in which it is to be considered
2. Understand your target audience, know values and motivations of those involved from leaders to general population
3. Examine the relationships between the people/groups involved, as well as the relationships between them and the system
4. Develop mini '*What If?*' scenarios to discover in what ways the elements of the defined system might respond to changes in inputs

Let us take each step in turn.

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 9 Christine Ralph (MacNulty) 'Scenario Development for Technology Assessment' in Marvin Cetron (ed), *The Methodology of Technology Assessment*, (Gordon & Breach, New York, 1972)

STEP 1. DEFINE THE SYSTEM AND ITS CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS

The first order of business is to define the scope of the relevant system, or system or systems. Any system will be part of a larger system and contain myriad smaller systems. The task here is to define the system in question for productive use in the predictive model.

Looking at the *global economy*, for instance, is too large and general a system to be useful for analysis. It can be broken down into more useful elements such as energy market shifts; government policies with respect to trade, climate, currency; demographics, including both aging populations in some regions and growing youth bulges in others; urbanization, including congestion, demands on the labour force...and so on. A brainstorming session with relevant experts can help to determine the key elements of the system. Then, depending on what you are trying to do, you may want to break those categories down into even smaller components. In addition to brainstorming in this way, mind maps can be very useful for identifying the hierarchies (main branches, smaller branches, twigs) within the elements.¹⁰

To visualize the systems or systems of systems involved, place the subject under discussion in the middle of your mind map (e.g. *Destroying the ISIS brand*) and then start to build up the main branches around it. These branches are the elements of the system you are examining. They may be structural elements, facts, or questions related to the topic. Another approach is to develop a comprehensive systems diagram. System diagrams (sometimes called block diagrams) are powerful tools that help people understand how complex systems work, and show, for instance, how a change in one factor may impact elsewhere. For some people mind-maps encourage more out-of-the-box and creative thinking. Use the method that works best for you and your team.

Example: *Destroying the ISIS brand*

The branches (and sub-branches) may include such topics as:

- The ISIS organization (organizational structure, leadership, capabilities...)
 - ISIS Resources (funds, weapons, allies, skilled people, financial managers...)
 - ISIS people (values, beliefs, motivations, education...)
 - State of the Nation in which they are operating (government – friendly/unfriendly, state of wealth, population – supportive/not, terrain conditions, availability of food, water, shelter...)

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 10 Mind-mapping was developed by Tony Buzan more than 30 years ago as a way to encourage the nonlinear development of ideas. The first book that included the subject was: T. Buzan, *Use Both Sides of Your Brain*, (Plume/Penguin, NY, 1991)

[illegible]

Figure 1: Mind-map - first rough example

STEP 2. UNDERSTAND YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE: THROUGH VALUES

One of the most effective ways of understanding people is by understanding their values. Values underpin every aspect of society, including its culture, politics, economy, industry, attitudes, consumption, and even the development of technology.¹¹ Thus, values provide the basis for understanding the context within which people live and operate in a society.

Values are emotional constructs that form the foundation for our motivations, attitudes, and behaviors. Values are long term structures that change slowly. Because they operate at a deep emotional level, messages that appeal to values are far more influential than messages that address attitudes or behavior. If we want to communicate-to influence people-then messages that appeal to values resonate with people at a much deeper level and have longer-lasting effects than messages that appeal to attitudes or behavior.

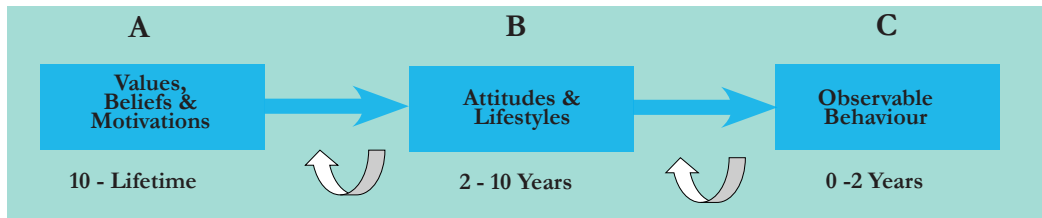


Figure 2: Progression from Values to Behavior

Values models have been used very successfully for multinational organizations, government institutions, and even for forecasting political changes in various countries for more than 35 years. They can be used at a macro-level to identify the values of a whole country or region, or at a micro-level for small groups. They are derived from surveys that can be done online (where internet is available) by phone, or in-person. The latter approach, conducted by local agents, is better for people who are unused to modern technology, who don't have access to it, or who are suspicious of foreigners or strangers.

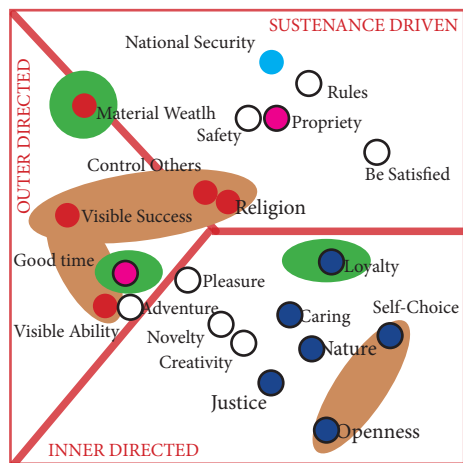
The values model the author uses is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs¹²,

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11 There are numerous approaches to understanding behaviours. The Behavioural Dynamics Institute (UK) has developed successful and measurable behaviour change campaigns based on its own models that empirically measure forty-five different parameters.

12 Maslow, Abraham, *Motivation and Personality*, (Harper Row, NY 1954, 1987), pp. 15-45.

and augmented by the work of Shalom Schwartz¹³, Geert Hofstede¹⁴, Ron Inglehart¹⁵, and others. For global comparisons we rely heavily on the work of Shalom Schwartz, as his 'portrait values' have been tested and validated by academics in 74 countries. In every country, the author and her colleagues have identified three broad groups of values-Inner Directed, Outer Directed and Sustenance Driven-related to Maslow's hierarchy. Within each of these broad groupings there are up to four subgroups. This broad values template can be used for strategic purposes, and the subgroups for more detailed targeting purposes.¹⁶ In Figure 3, we show the areas of the map related to the three broad sets of values, and the Schwartz portrait values are mapped into that space.

The objective of the values analysis is to sort the population into target subgroups based on their values, beliefs and motivations. Since values underpin motivations, the author focuses on the core set of values that might compel or influence a group holding a particular set of values. A population can be segmented according to the different values particular subgroups hold. Using values for this purpose provides a greater depth of analysis than psychographics. There are many different ways of visualizing values data-e.g. heat maps, contour maps, segment maps. Below is an example of the segment map, a simple and easy to use method of data visualisation.



Motivation to become a foreign fighter:

Powefully motivated by the need for the esteem of others, manifest here in strong drive for visible success/ability and desire to control others. Religion plays a significant part for this persona. Other motivators are the need to belong and fear of "the other"

Main inhibitors to becoming a foreign fighter:

Desire for wealth combined with a desire to have a good time. Disregard for loyalty to anyone or organization

Figure 3: Example of a segment 'map' using the 21 Schwartz portrait values

13 Schwartz, Shalom; Melech, Gila; Lehmann, Arielle; Burgess, Steven; Harris, Mari; Owens, Vicki, 'Extending the cross-cultural validity of the theory of basic human values with a different method of measurement', Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol 32 (5) (September, 2001)

14 Hofstede, Geert, Cultures and Organizations, (McGraw-Hill International, UK, 1991)

15 Ronald Inglehart, Modernization and Postmodernization, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1997)

16 Cultural Dynamics Strategy & Marketing (see <http://www.cultdyn.co.uk/>) is responsible for this particular values model and related surveys.

This is the Schwartz values map of one group in a typology of six groups of males aged 18-29 in a particular culture.¹⁷ This map shows a group of young males who are predisposed to becoming foreign fighters. The constellations of 'hot button' values indicated by the red dots (those on which this group is statistically significantly above average) and 'cold buttons' (below average), are analyzed to develop a picture or narrative of the characteristics of the group. These hot button values can be used as the basis for crafting messages to the group, identifying characteristics of new products or services to sell to the group, and so on, while the cold buttons are subjects to be avoided.

Each value can also be considered in turn by asking (ourselves and experts on the culture/region) whether a particular value is likely to push this individual into certain behaviors (orange), or inhibit him (green). In this case, the questions relate to an individual's propensity toward becoming a foreign fighter.

One other benefit of these models is that they can be used to analyze and forecast behavior. As indicated earlier, values are of long-term duration, attitudes are medium term, and behaviour is short term. If all that is available is behavioural data, then the only forecasting method available is some form of extrapolation of that behaviour. But behaviour is fickle, and can be altered by external events of many kinds. In order to forecast behaviour, whether that of a large population or a small group, the most reliable way is to understand the underlying values and motivations, how those are changing, and then anticipate how those changes are likely to play out in behavior. Extrapolating values-especially using a values hierarchy such as that of Abraham Maslow-is relatively easy. Interpreting behaviour is also made easier by this approach. In a recent paper by Cdr (rtd) Steve Tatham PhD, RN, he discusses a situation in Iraq where the US believed that so many Americans were being killed by IEDs was because the Iraqis hated them.¹⁸ It was later discovered that, although most of the bomb-layers were ideologically opposed to the US, the majority of the bomb-makers were doing it solely for the money, and many wanted the money in order to pay their way to the US.

In February 2010, the author gave a presentation on cultures at the State Department. A question was asked about a particular IED maker, who said he loved Americans, and was making bombs in order to be able to join his family in the US. The audience wanted to know what values would allow a person to earn money for escaping to the US by killing Americans. They were given the map in Figure 3 on the previous page,

17 Christine MacNulty 'The Value of Values for IO, SC & Intel', IO Journal, (3rd Quarter 2010), 29-34.

18 Cdr (rtd) Steve Tatham PhD, The Solution to Russian Propaganda is not EU or NATO Propaganda but Advanced Social Science to Understand and Mitigate its Effect in Targeted Population, National Defence Academy of Latvia, Centre for Security and Strategic Research

showing a pattern of values that explain the behaviour very well: the bomb-layer wanted material wealth to get to the US, he wanted visible success, and for people to know his ability, so they would hire him again, and he had little loyalty or sense of caring to anyone except his family. In this particular case, however, religion was unimportant, so that marker would have been uncoloured.

STEP 3. UNDERSTAND ALL THE PEOPLE INVOLVED: THROUGH CULTURAL-COGNITIVE DIMENSIONS

There is an additional tool that can be used, especially for communication—that of Cultural-Cognitive Dimensions.¹⁹ This tool examines where individuals or groups fall on the spectrum for each of a number of cultural-cognitive dimensions listed below. We, in the West, tend to be at opposite ends of the spectrum from many of our target audiences. This makes it difficult for us to frame our messages in terms that make sense to them, and to judge how they are going to perceive our messages. Knowing not only their positions on the dimensions, but also our own, can give us the cultural awareness needed to craft messages successfully.

Altogether 17 dimensions have been identified, and there may be more, depending on the cultures/people we are addressing, but the critical dimensions for crafting most SCAs are the six described here:

- *Epistemology-authoritarian vs. empirical*: If a target culture/individual lies at the authoritarian end of the spectrum, which many of our adversaries do, then invoking authority is likely to produce a better effect than an appeal to science and/or logic and vice versa. In the West, we tend to be at the empirical end of the epistemological spectrum, and therefore have difficulty understanding how someone can live and operate relying solely on an authoritarian voice.
- *Way of thinking-linear vs. holistic/contextual*: If a target culture/individual lies at the linear end of the spectrum, then logical, step by step approach is the best option. If the target lies closer to the holistic/contextual end, then we need to develop narratives and tell stories to put the message of the SCA into context. In the West we tend to be at the linear end of the spectrum.
- *Temporal orientation-past vs. future-oriented*: Do we need to invoke the heroes and glories of the past or the possibilities and potential of the future?
- *Sensitivity to shame-low vs. high*: Should we try to cause shame by ridiculing their actions, or should we offer solutions that help them maintain their honour? This is a difficult metric that needs to be addressed with care on a case by case basis.
- *Approach to power-centralized vs. decentralized*: Should we approach the leader alone

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 19 Christine MacNulty, 'Perceptions, Values and Motivations in Cyberspace', IO Journal (3rd Quarter 2009), 32-38.

and negotiate only with him? Or should we send out broad appeals to the population and expect them to influence the leadership?

- *Group orientation-collective vs. individual:* Should our messages discuss the benefits to the group, or to those of individuals?

STEP 4. EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIPS

In the third step we take the elements we have identified as important and productive features of the system we have defined, and plug them into an analytical model. The method described here employs weighted matrices that can be used together in cascade, where the weights from one matrix feed into another. These techniques are derived from decision impact analysis, cross-support analysis, and *'What if'* mini-scenarios (see Step 4) that are then applied to sub-sets of weighted matrices.²⁰ Decision impact analysis is a matrix technique that was designed to estimate the size of the impact on an organization or system of changes in decisions. It is similar to cross-support analysis, a technique that was designed to analyse the effects of making and implementing complex decisions that affect and are affected by a large number of variables, while also identifying causal and dependent relationships. Although at the time it was developed, computing power was limited, so modelling and simulation was not an option, there were benefits to be had by working through the impacts in person, and that approach is still used—at least, in part. However, Agent-Based Modelling and Simulation (ABMS), together with vastly improved computing power is now able to provide the capability to test relationships and play with *'What ifs'* to generate much improved probabilities and ranges of options.

ABMS is a method of actively modeling a system in such a way that the simulations are adaptable, repeatable, and deterministic. "Agents" are built in software to represent all actors within a system. These actors can include people, groups, organizations, machines, vehicles, resources, and virtually any other component of the system. Some agents will have decision making capabilities, while others will simply react or remain inert to be used by other agents. The complexity of the agents' ability to "think" is determined entirely by the designers of the simulation.

Agent-based simulation refers to a model in which the dynamic processes of agent interaction are simulated repeatedly over time, as in systems dynamics, time-stepped, discrete-event, and other types of simulation. An agent-based model, more generally, is a model in which agents repeatedly interact.

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20 Christine A. Ralph (MacNulty) 'The Beginnings of Cross-Support Analysis as Applied to the Fishing Industry' in Cetron and Ralph (eds.), *Industrial Applications of Technological Forecasting*, (John Wiley & Sons, NY, 1971), pp. 274-289.

Agent-based modeling is equally suited to biological-based systems, machine-based systems, and, of course, hybrid systems containing both. Proven applications include modeling current social behavior, animal behavior, industrial processing, marketing, and many others.²¹

For the real world application of the ISIS example, we might start with a statement of the total system-the branches of the mind-map related to ISIS itself would provide us with that. Let us call those elements of the system S_n . Then we would identify as many of the main relevant variables that could affect or be affected by ISIS-in other words, the main causal and dependent variables. Let us call those variables V_n . We would then prepare the appropriate matrices, such as that in Figure 4, and the expert team would brainstorm the degree of the relationships between the variables.

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7			S
V1	L	H	H	-H	L	L				
V2	-M		H	-M	L					
V3	M	M	M	-M	L					
V4		M	M	L	M					
			L	M		M				
				H	M					
Vn										

Figure 4: Matrix of causal/dependent variable (V_n) against system elements (S_n)

We would take each row variable in turn (as causal) and ask how much does this variable affect each column system element rated on a scale of High (H), Medium (M), Low (L) and Zero (Blank)-positively and negatively, as appropriate. An example of the questions that would be asked of the team of experts might be: If variable V1 were to increase, what would be the impact on system element S1? The same question would be asked for each system element. Then the process is repeated asking what if V1 decreased?

Thus V1 has a High positive impact on S2 and S3, but a -H on S4. We assign weights to the scores: H=8, M=4, L=2, Zero=1 (both positive and negative) so that later we can assess the priorities by adding the scores for the rows and/or columns, depending on what we are want to do with the scores. We can multiply variables

in subsequent matrices, such as Figure 5, by the weights, if it is appropriate for the analysis. Frequently discussions within the group are needed to get at the real issues that emerge from asking what the impacts are. Sometimes the answers can be quite complex, and if there appear to be several possibilities, then we may need to re-work the issues into more detailed sub-issues to make sure we are not cancelling out effects by using a variable that is too general and does not address the specific situation required. The approach is time-consuming, but it means that the people involved (experts, analysts and decision-makers) work through each of the variables rather than just guessing.

For strategic communication, the variables would include the values of our target audience segments, key elements of the messages we wanted to send, the media we might want to use, and the frequency of delivery. Then, because we would be evaluating the degree of impact of these elements on the ISIS system/organization (such as recruiting, sponsorship, availability of weapons, etc.), we would already include the basis for metrics in our assessment.

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6					Vn	
V1		H M	M	M	L	L	H H					$\Sigma_1 V1$
V2	M M		H L	H M	L	M L						$\Sigma_1 V2$
V3		M H		L L								
V4	H L	M										
V5												
Vn	$\Sigma_2 V1$	$\Sigma_2 V2$										

Causal variables - rows: V1 has high impact (H) on V2, for instance.

Dependent variables - columns: V1 has medium dependence (M) on V2

Σ_1 = sum of weights....

Σ_2 = sum of weights....

Figure 5: This matrix examines the relationships between the causal/dependent relationships

We also use more complex matrices such as the one in Figure 5 above which contains both causal and dependent relationships-using the same scales-in order to evaluate more complicated and further order relationships.

Using ABMS we could re-evaluate impacts in terms of weight, probability, and priority quickly and easily in order to form the basis of the *'What if?'* scenarios described below.

STEP 5. DEVELOP MINI 'WHAT IF?' SCENARIOS

Once we have the matrices completed, we try to be as detailed as possible in identifying the *'What ifs?'*. One good approach is to ask questions such as: What would happen if Causal variable V1 increased significantly over the next 12 months? What would be its impacts on V2 to Vn? Or, what would happen if Causal variables V3, V4, V9, V10 all increased at the same time? The possibilities are endless, and with ABMS we are able to try large numbers of options, and be quite comprehensive about the decisions or actions that will be most effective, and have the fewest negative effects. Our social values model are used to enrich these *'What if?'* questions, because we can use them to understand the motivations of the players. By understanding people's values and their behaviour, we can anticipate what they are likely to do next-and why. And we can use those speculations to inform our scenarios. For instance, in many Middle Eastern countries, there are large numbers of well-educated, unemployed young men. Many of them have a pattern of values similar to those shown in Figure 3. These young men want material things, they want excitement, they want to be seen to be competent and successful, and they are not loyal to anyone except their family. We could develop scenarios about what ISIS might be able to offer them that would fulfil their needs. We might think about what we could offer them instead-and it won't be working in factories, even though that might satisfy their material needs. Visible success, ability and excitement are too important to them. We can also speculate on what things and messages will appeal to them and why; what things and messages will have no effect, or will turn them off. Working forward from this information we build scenarios of the short- medium- and longer-term developments that we anticipate, seeking to identify opportunities, advantages, problems, and threats. Although predicting the future is a speculative exercise, the four-step method can provide a rigorous analysis of any situation, both qualitative and quantitative, based on the way in which the judgments from the experts are used, and it can offer significant insights into potential nth order consequences.

CONCLUSION

Those of us engaged in any form of Strategic Communication Actions need to do our best to ensure that we achieve the effects we intend, and do not suffer from those we do not intend. In other words, we need to choose carefully what we say and do. SCAs are not, and should not be, the preserve of the military and not solely about

political warfare. However, well-executed SCAs can help us to avoid unnecessary violence and the escalation of confrontations resulting from unintended negative effects. The *SOF Support to Political Warfare White Paper* states:²²

“A thoroughly whole-of-government endeavor; Political Warfare is by no means the preserve of SOF. Given its diplomatic and economic content and its focus on achieving political ends, Political Warfare is likely best led by agencies beyond the DoD.²³ Indeed, Political Warfare can only succeed if it is conducted in a way to “elevate civilian power alongside military power as equal pillars of U.S. foreign policy.”²⁴

The term Political Warfare is an emotionally loaded term, which is why I have suggested Strategic Communication Actions. Further, the more experts from all branches of government, NGOs, and industry that can be included in SCAs, the greater the opportunity for SCAs to result in positive intended consequences instead of unintended and/or negative consequences. One of the key areas we need to develop is our understanding of other cultures—not only from a behavioural perspective, but rather from the perspective of understanding the deep cultural values, motivations, and mores. Master Mind groups, brainstorming sessions, and roundtable discussions that work through the four steps presented here incorporating many different perspectives and disciplines offer a much greater chance of success. This method may be in conflict with the views of those who want to classify such operations, but much can be done that is unclassified. Finally, we need our ‘political masters’ to recognize that one of the problems that leads to unintended consequences is the short-term view of the metrics used to plan SCAs. We cannot expect a SCA to be effective in days or even weeks. We are dealing with people who may not even see/hear our communication when we make it. If they don’t dismiss it immediately, they may have to discuss it with family, friends, tribal or government elders, and really think about it. And what are our metrics—delivering the message to a large groups of people in the hope that it will stick? Or targeting one key individual, who then has to get his own timing right for the delivery of *his* message? Putting the ‘strategic’ in SCA takes time and a clear understanding of what is feasible within a given time frame. Effective communication with other cultures cannot be achieved with a short-term fix.

22 SOF Support to Political Warfare, White Paper Final, (United States Army Special Operations Command, March 2015), p. 14.

23 See this discussion in the State Department context nearly a decade ago: Dave Kilcullen, ‘New Paradigms for 21st Century Conflict’, in the State Department eJournal, (June 2007), Online <http://smallwars-journal.com/blog/newparadigms-for-21st-century-conflict>.

24 Department of State & USAID, Leading Through Civilian Power: The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, (Washington DC, 2010), Executive Summary 2, Online <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/153635.pdf>

CASE STUDY: TANZANIA

Many people find it difficult to understand how negative nth order effects can come about without them being obvious to the people involved. Therefore, I will retell a well-documented true story about unanticipated negative effects of a well-intentioned government operation in Tanzania exposed by Hubert Sauper in his documentary film *Darwin's Nightmare*.²⁵

In the 1990s, the European Union (EU) and other donors, supported the government of Tanzania in developing a fish processing industry at Mwanza at the southern end of Lake Victoria. The first order effects-Europeans get plenty of good fish and Tanzanians get jobs and money-appeared to be a marriage made in heaven. But the second to fifth order effects-highlighted in the documentary film *Darwin's Nightmare* suggested nothing but disease, death, and destruction. Here is a brief description of the events.

Throughout the '60s, '70s, and into the '80s, the European fishing industry declined precipitously. Overfishing in the North Sea, the Northern Atlantic, and the Mediterranean had reduced the quantities of fish available, just at a time when consumers were starting to become more health conscious and wanted more fish. At the same time, the technology of fast freezing and chilling fish at sea opened new opportunities for processing and transporting fish from around the world to satisfy European demand.

Helping Tanzania

Tanzania lies at the Southern end of Lake Victoria, a poor but relatively calm country surrounded by the more politically troubled countries of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west, and Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique to the south. Mwanza, a city close to the Lake, is the third largest city in Tanzania with reasonable road infrastructure and a small, fairly primitive airfield/airport.

Sometime in the '60s, a voracious fish-the Nile Perch-was introduced into the lake. No one knows exactly when or by whom, or whether it was done by accident or design. The fish ate everything in the lake and bred rapidly. When the fish is filleted, it looks like, and has the texture and flavour of Sea Bass-a fish highly prized by European consumers.

So the European Union helped to establish fish processing plants on Lake Victoria, close to Mwanza. The European Union officials (including especially the Italian representative) held an official press conference, at which they spoke about the economic benefits of the plant to the Tanzanians and the benefits of the fish for the Europeans. They believed they were doing a good thing providing monetary and development assistance

for Tanzania. They were taken on a tour of the plant, and in the documentary, we see the high-tech interior of the plant.

However, one important feature of the plant that was missing, which would have prevented it from being allowed to operate in Europe. It had no means for disposing of the fish heads, offal, and carcasses. In the movie, we see the unwanted remains being dropped out of a chute into trucks or on the ground. Whatever fell on the ground was shovelled up and put back in the trucks. The bio-refuse was taken to a place nearby and dumped on the ground. We see it rotting and covered in maggots; we see kids playing with it and local women and older children picking it up, putting it out on drying racks so that it could later be fried and sold to the local population. Did the Europeans notice? Could they have predicted the effects this one missing element could have caused?

The rotting fish and the stench/smoke from all the smoking and frying turned the place into a real health hazard, creating respiratory problems and blindness in the local population. It became clear that, aside from the fish processing plant itself, there were no clean and sanitary places around-no water except for the lake, no sanitation, and no housing of any kind.

Meanwhile, word of this new industry spread and young men came seeking work, leaving behind wives and families. Prostitution grew into another significant industry, with young women servicing both the workers at the plant and the pilots of the air transporters. This resulted in an increased number of men and prostitutes with HIV/AIDS. When the men returned home, they took the HIV/AIDS with them. Along with the prostitution came drugs, and these drugs were increasingly available to children. In other words, the whole area-from the ecosystem in the lake to the lives of the majority of people living in the area-took a downward turn.

Transportation and Weapons

At this time, the neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Burundi, and the D.R. of Congo were experiencing uprisings and tribal conflict, for which they needed weapons. We do not know whether the EU officials were aware that the Ilyushin Il-76 was a better airplane for transporting weapons than fish, or whether they turned a blind eye to it, since it offered a relatively cheap form of transportation. When asked what was in the airplanes on the return journeys to Mwanza, the Russian pilots said 'nothing', although it became clear to Hubert Sauper, the producer and director of the documentary who photographed them, that they were smuggling in large collections of weapons.

When we analysed the situation, we could see that there were five levels of effects. The first order effects were good, then they got progressively worse, as seen in the Figure 6.

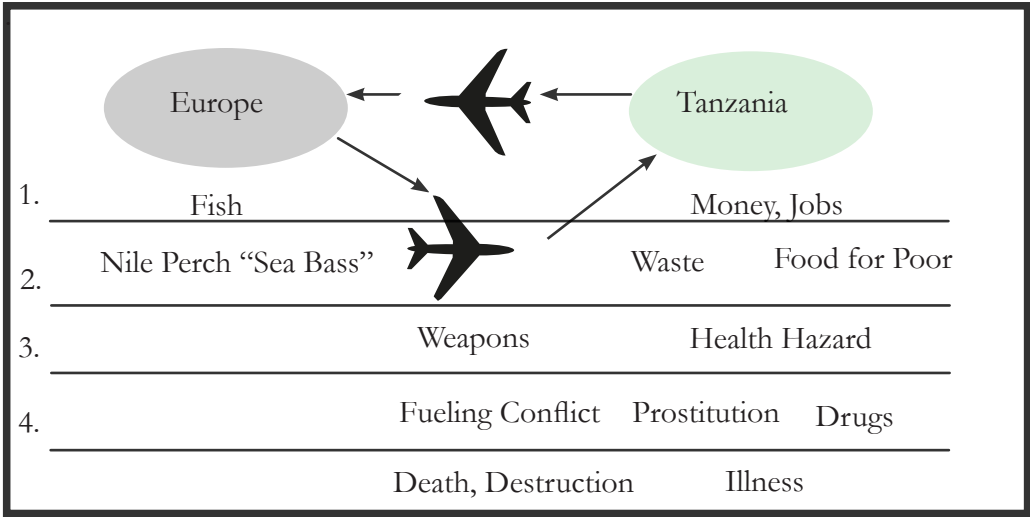


Figure 6: Table of Nth order effects

The Europeans believed that they were doing some good in Tanzania by providing the fish processing plant that brought money and jobs to the area. And they were benefitting European consumers at the same time. Until this movie was made, they had no idea of the disaster they had caused in the area, and many still do not believe they had a hand in it. They had no understanding of the strategic context, even for establishing a fish processing plant. They had even less understanding of the local socio-political environment that underpinned that part of the world. The only two groups that really benefitted were the European consumers and the weapons smugglers.

Obviously, in hindsight, we are able to do a much better job of assessing the nth order effects of that developed from the situation near Lake Victoria. By applying the basic principles of the four-step method, the situation would have been better understood and different decisions concerning the fish processing plant could have been taken. If the EU had conducted even a simple cross-support analysis, decision-makers could have evaluated the importance of the issues and to focus on appropriate solutions, such as having proper disposal system for the fish offal that could have included turning it into edible food for the local or using European aircraft to transport the fish to Europe, returning with products that would benefit the locals, rather than providing weapons to be used in neighbouring conflicts.

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THE NARRATIVE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Miranda Holmstrom

In the Strategic Communications (StratCom) community, we work to get effects, actions, and changes in behaviour from our target audiences. Intuitively one would argue that we are on a mission to persuade people to do things differently, or at least to change their opinions. ‘Winning hearts and minds’ may seem easy, especially when you have the truth, logic, or at least a lot of money on your side. However, years of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan haven’t proven this to be wrong, and through the fields of social psychology and behavioural economics we now know that there is indeed a bit more to it. Attitudes do not necessarily predict behaviour. Why then is a narrative still so important, or why does propaganda work at all?

Barely seventy years have passed since the violent ideological mass movements of the early 20th century. Yet, we seem utterly shocked that another has come into existence, or worse, that propaganda is still so effective. It goes against our sense that the individual and his or her opinion are the cornerstone of democracy; it is unnerving that opinions can be so fragile. We like to think that individuals are capable of living and thinking rationally, that one’s character determines if one does good or evil, and that we can all, at least in the end, discern the truth from lies. The individual is after all the master of his or her own life. Propaganda should not work, especially in the 21st century.

The ‘sanctity of the individual’ is itself a narrative, albeit one that feels ‘true’ because it is so widely accepted in Western Democracies. In order to create narratives and ideals for others it is vital to be aware of the contents of our own narrative framework. Western values such as individuality, life, freedom of choice, rationality, and the ability to think and make decisions for oneself, are not shared by everyone. Unless we understand how we ourselves are influenced by narratives and acknowledge what we take for granted, we inhibit our ability to understand and counter propaganda.

Recent developments in the field of psychology and advertising suggest that attitudes do not necessarily predict behaviour and that people’s actions depend on far more than just their opinion. It is important to understand that the type of opinion created through propaganda is quite different from the average, fluctuating personal opinion.

The phenomenon of social media has made it possible for everyone to play a part in furthering ideas, whether consciously or subconsciously. In order to harness the power of social media it is imperative that we have a simple, yet complete narrative that can easily be reproduced. It needs to explain the past and the present, and provide a hopeful and attainable picture of the future. Most of all, a propaganda narrative must resonate with the needs and beliefs of the target audiences.

In view of the current information war with Russia and the violent extremist ideology of radical Islamists, it is necessary to understand precisely what a propaganda narrative is and what it isn't; how an individual and a mass movement needs it, why a narrative that works well for a Western democratic audience doesn't work in other environments, and what, if anything, the West can influence in the new intensified battlefield of narratives.

In this article I explain what an effective narrative is and why it works at the level of propaganda, how different audiences perceive the ideas of democracy and authoritarian leadership differently depending both on their cultural experience and personality traits, and I present a case that the intelligent use of propaganda from our side is necessary to counter terrorist propaganda.

The Past, Present, and Future

A narrative is commonly thought of as a story or a plot that provides a framework for the information it contains. In the context of information warfare the narrative takes on a different meaning. The type of story we are talking about here is a minimalist one—stripped down and streamlined; it is most certainly not meant to be entertainment. Jason Logue offers the following description, 'A narrative is a simple, credible and overall representation of a conceptual ideal designed to convey the organization's self-concept, values, rationale, legitimacy, moral basis and vision.'¹ A narrative is not just one clever little story, nor is it as wide ranging as a strategy. Rather, a narrative provides explanations. It describes the past, justifies the present, and presents a vision of the future. It offers a framework for the plot and the setting of a story. It provides context for raw information and facts, and helps to shape how we perceive ourselves and the world in which we live. Multiple interconnected narratives provide the intent and the justification of a strategy to different target audiences.

The narrative has been the main rhetorical and educational device used in the field of history. Cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner suggests that people are 22 times

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1 Logue J, 'The Narrative', published online at <https://medium.com/the-bridge/narrative-31b3ec-c1c631> (last accessed 29 October 2015).

more likely to remember a fact wrapped in a story than an independent fact,² and research by the University of California found a high, 0.92, correlation between narrative in text and the amount of information recalled.³ People need stories to make sense of the world.⁴ The amount of complex information and knowledge on a vast variety of topics that becomes available on a daily basis is insurmountable. More and more pure information or facts only muddles our understanding of the world. An overabundance of information eventually leads to a more simplistic, rather than more nuanced image of the world. A few facts can be remembered, but a constant stream of information leads to summary judgment. It is easier for the human mind to remember and make decisions based on meaningful stories than to remember strings of data.

In new and changing environments the need for an explanatory story becomes even more pressing. When a situation cannot be evaluated based on previous patterns, or when opinion is not yet structured, there is a void that needs to be filled. Without an analytical framework that helps structure opinion, people are more susceptible to influence operations. Facts alone cannot ease the feeling of being lost intellectually. Narratives answer the basic human need for structure and predictability. If one side fails to provide a meaningful narrative, others will fill the void. For instance, after the invasion in Iraq, rumours were prolific because they provided answers to the new disturbing information landscape.⁵

It is not just the volume and intensity of information that creates a need for narratives. Many complex topics require an impossible amount of intellectual resources to truly process all relevant information in order to create an informed opinion. No one has the time or the resources to independently generate an informed opinion for every topic that demands our attention. Therefore people need simple stories that provide them with relevant information, talking points, and an explanation of how the topic in question fits into their worldview. These explanations usually come with value judgements that have been granted the status of truth by the volume of their supporters and the opinions of experts and thought-leaders.

We all feel the need to have an opinion on things that matter. In fact, democratic governments demand a certain level of knowledge and understanding from their citizens, as well the ability to judge current issues. Within society it has become a sin

2 Bruner J S , *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Harvard University Press, 1986)

3 Graesser, Hauft-Smith, Cohen, and Pyles, 'Advanced outlines, familiarity, text genre, and retention of prose', *Journal of Experimental Education* 48 (1980), 209-220.

4 Weick K, *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1979).

5 Tatham S *Losing Arab Hearts and Minds: The Coalition, Al-Jazeera and Muslim Public Opinion*. (Hurst & Co, 2006)

to be uninformed, so much so that people create opinions about events they have no first hand knowledge of, or aren't even real. The American TV show, Jimmy Kimmel Live, includes the popular 'Lie Witness News' segment, which bears witness to just how uninformed and completely wrong, but steadfast, opinions can be. The results are often comical. People on the street are asked for their opinions about fictional events such as 'the speech Martin Luther King gave this morning' or 'the birth of Obama's son'. Although the situations are fictitious or impossible, the segment is filled with individuals who are willing to share their opinions, even though no opinion should be present at all.

Drawing on behavioural economics and marketing related studies, contemporary discourse in the StratCom community indicates that personal attitudes or opinions do not predict behaviour.⁶ While in this discourse, the focus is on the individual and the individual decision making process, it is the business of propaganda to focus on the individual as a member of a group. Russia's information warfare does not seek to convince every individual it is right, instead it seeks to influence public opinion. Violent extremism in turn persuades individuals to join a cause, to get a group of people to take a certain action. '[P]ropaganda reaches individuals enclosed in the mass and as participants in that mass, yet it also aims at a crowd, but only as a body composed of individuals.'⁷ Propaganda is, therefore, inherently a social phenomenon, which uses mass communications, and focuses on mass psychology and public opinion.

To be clear, there is a significant difference between a person's public and private opinion. Studies in the field of social psychology have proven time and again that there can be a serious dichotomy between what one thinks in private versus what one does in public due to processes such as groupthink and conformity.⁸ Yet the kind of public opinion that results from a careful propagation of ideas is an entirely different beast. In the excellent words of Jacques Ellul: 'This opinion is no longer a belief at times unsure of itself, spreading slowly by word of mouth, and difficult for opinion surveys to pinpoint. It is projected outside itself, meets itself and hears itself on the screen and the airwaves invested with power, grandeur, magnificence. Such opinion learns to believe in itself, certain now that it is 'truth' because it has seen itself revealed and promulgated on all sides by powerful media.'⁹

6 Ellul J, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. (New York: Vintage, 1973), p. 6.

7 Pinker S, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and Its Causes*, (Penguin, New York, 2011) Chapter 8.

8 Ellul, *Propaganda*, p. 211.

9 Ibid.

In the sphere of StratCom for the defence community the narrative is a framework of creating or reinforcing opinions as well as collective beliefs and transforming them into action. What sets this type of narrative apart from simply another marketing campaign or brand strategy is that it calls for action not based on one's individual needs, but for the needs of the group. There is usually a sense of self-sacrifice required for an ideal future. It changes a passive crowd into a participating crowd. At a minimum, it demands the support of the audience, but, preferably, it creates and crystallizes collective ideological motivations. The propaganda narrative aims to use facts and rationale to create an irrational response. It furnishes a complete system for explaining the world, and with it the problems the group is facing.

The narrative crystallizes what were just vague inclinations into solid ideas or 'truths'. It plays on feelings and simmering passions already present, reinforcing opinions, hardening prevailing stereotypes and creating automatic reflexes. The simplification process described earlier aides to the crystallization of an explicit public opinion. Nuances and gradations diffuse the story, and an explicit public opinion needs the 'you are either with us or against us' mentality to keep dissenting opinion at bay.

The most important part of this kind of narrative is the Problem. Without it there is no need for action since there is no need for a solution. In literature, story structure is called narrative framework. It uses a set-up, a conflict, and a resolution. Within the set-up stage the individual is taught to see his or her own situation in a context that is related to society as a whole. Information is used to inform the public and to propagate ideas. The conflict stage is concerned with the problem. The present is shown to be in dire need of improvement, due to some Evil's actions. One's personal problems are made out to be part of a larger societal problem. Finally, in the resolution phase a solution is being offered. There is a highly desirable future waiting that is just around the corner, as long as the individual takes action.

One does not need to look too far to find examples of this problem in action. The Danish cartoons, Charlie Hebdo's creations, any undertaking of the Israeli army, these are all 'problems' based in reality but explained and hardened through propaganda which has justified violent action all over the world.

Through this hardening process the narrative codifies standards, furnishes thought patterns, and makes ideas irrefutable and solid. Details and subtleties disappear and the idea becomes impervious to reasoning or contrary information. In effect, the narrative has created 'truth'. To use the snowball metaphor, single ideas or 'truths' gain more traction rolling downhill. They become more compact and more resistant to outside forces. Put these snowballs together on a set trajectory with the right amount of momentum, and it can become a destructive avalanche. As Henry

Kissinger said,¹⁰ ‘It’s not a matter of what is true that counts but a matter of what is perceived to be true.’

Truth, as in a fact or piece of information, has no intrinsic value. It is up to the narrative to create that value. Therefore, it is fruitless to expect much from simply providing information. Facts might make a narrative credible, but over time it is the impression that remains. Studies from Hovland and Weiss¹¹ have shown over and over again that even if we distrust the source of the information at the time of intake, we will forget that distrust and remember the message, or at least the impression of that message. The truth in the narrative is therefore not in its verifiability, but in its verisimilitude—the appearance of it being real or true. However, for the individual, the truth provides the motivation and justification he or she needs. The more the truth is believed, the more extreme the individual’s view.

Social Media and the Narrative

‘This war will bring about the realization that the nations of the earth are made up of individuals, not masses. The common man will be the new factor in the world-wide collective mania that will sweep the earth.’¹²

On the 24 August 2015 one billion people logged on to their Facebook account—one in every seven people worldwide saw what their friends had posted along with the news on their personalized feed. This increased connectivity has brought many changes, not in the least to the global media environment. The influence of Social Media during the Arab Spring is well known. The demonstrations in Iran are often referred to as the ‘Twitter Revolution’, and Facebook played an influential role in the Ukrainian Maidan protests. According to Olga Onuch from Oxford University, Facebook wasn’t just instrumental in the organization, but also helped with the creation and spread of the demands being made. ‘We have noticed a pattern whereby a sign or slogan first goes viral on Facebook, and then seems to show up more often in protester signs.’¹³

Maajid Nawaz proclaimed in 2011 that we live in the age of behaviour, where identity is no longer purely linked to an ethnicity or nation state, and where ideas and subsequent calls for action move freely across borders aided by the technology

10 Tatham, *Losing Arab Hearts and Minds*.

11 Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Chapter 8.

12 Miller H, ‘Of Art and the Future’, in *Sunday After the War*, (New Directions, 1944).

13 Onuch O, ‘Social networks and social media in Ukrainian “Euromaidan” protests’, in *The Washington Post*, 02 January 2014.

of social media.¹⁴ Personal and cultural identities are now predominantly defined by ideas and narratives, rather than nationalities or ethnicity.

ISIS is trying to destroy the current nationalist identities in the Middle East by rewriting the history of the Arab people to justify a Caliphate. Similarly, Russia has tried or is working on undermining the other nationalist identities in its target areas, replacing them with a Russian nationalist identity instead. Identity provides a baseline of narratives that have already been accepted. Destroying that baseline would allow for a completely new interpretation of history and the justification for a new course of action.

In his book *Propaganda, the formation of men's attitudes*, Jacques Ellul differentiates between horizontal and vertical propaganda.¹⁵ Vertical propaganda meaning coming from the top down, where a select group of propagandists conjures up ideas and feeds that down to the people. It is a traditional one-way communication strategy. Horizontal propaganda is about individuals making contact with other individuals. It harkens back to the basic need of human beings to be connected to others, to build a relationship, and to be part of the group.

Vertical propaganda is the marketing campaign whereas horizontal propaganda provides the sales force. In larger private businesses, marketing departments equip the salespeople with information, scripts, interpretations, and slogans that the salesperson then uses to create a personal and custom approach that addresses the needs, doubts, and reservations of the individual targeted. In the field of StratCom the narratives are used to sell a strategically relevant idea or cause that people need to be convinced of.

The innovations that modern communication technology have brought us simply allow for a much easier way for people to congregate and participate. Similar to the oral agitprop of the USSR and Mao's political study groups, people come together through social media and create one of the most effective propaganda settings one could ask for. This doesn't even require much, if any, coordination from above to set up. Social media allows people to gather largely by themselves out of the human propensity to seek contact with others, or out of the intellectual need to look for information and explanations that better fit one's personal situation.

The social nature of the group motivates or empowers people to publicly declare their adherence to the ideals of the group with conviction. Social psychologist Michael

14 Nawaz M, A Global Culture to Fight Extremism, (Ted Talk, 2011), Online https://www.ted.com/talks/maajid_nawaz_a_global_culture_to_fight_extremism?language=en (last accessed 29 November 2015)

15 Ellul, Propaganda.

Macy suggests that as extremist ideology takes hold in a society, the more sceptical parts of the community overestimate the degree of compliance by others, which in turn creates a false conformity from those elements that don't necessarily agree with the ideology itself.¹⁶ There is usually a price to pay for non-conformity, so those who privately might disagree are nonetheless eager to prove their conformity by enforcing the group ideology on the sceptics around them. A spiral of false conformity and enforcement is thereby created, allowing an extremist ideology to spread.

Horizontal propaganda inherently demands and creates participation, thereby playing on some of the more basic processes of social psychology. The opinions of people within a group become more similar and more extreme, or polarize. 'Each individual helps to form the opinion of the group, but the group helps each individual to discover the correct line.'¹⁷

This process lowers the bar to share in the creation of 'proper convictions and solutions'. In groups subjected to propaganda, the individual is conscious of becoming part of a discussion where content is 'presented in didactic fashion and addressed to the intelligence'.¹⁸ An individual will find the socially acceptable truth through a false sense of freedom and reasoning, aided by the group. Once someone has found the 'truth' they in turn become propagandists and help others to reach the same conclusions.

The simplicity and strength of the narrative keeps this process going. Intellectual indoctrination, where an individual is lead through a propagation process with carefully selected questions and information to reach the right conclusion. This enables the individual to not merely recite the message when spreading 'the truth', but also to clearly and logically recreate the reasoning that brought them to that conclusion. The process of indoctrination creates the illusion of choice, free will, and personal decision-making, but the results in compliant individuals. This approach allows for the narrative to be spread effectively. In our modern multi-faceted media environment it is imperative to have a simple narrative that can be recreated and reproduced.

Horizontal propaganda allows for decentralization. As Dr Steve Tatham said, 'Decentralizing control, often to the point of discomfort, allows for far greater agility

16
Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Chapter 8.

17 Ellul, *Propaganda*, p.81.

18 Ibid., p. 93.

and speed of response.¹⁹ It also breeds personal initiative as displayed by, e.g. the German soldiers of Hitler's army, or of the 'lone wolf' terrorists of the 21st century.²⁰ Social media is our latest means of communicating horizontally, and the power of the tool has changed the game. Social media should certainly be used in modern information campaigns, but it is important to realize it is merely a different tool that can be used to spread a message. It has always been the message that counts most.

The Counter-Narrative

The battle of narratives is fought on many different fronts, addressing many different target audiences. The counter-narrative discussion is usually understood from a black and white perspective, but a counter-narrative does not necessarily have to contradict what the adversary is saying. Indeed, a more successful course of action would be to build on some of the stories already known to be truths and offer a different, but not necessarily opposing explanation of the current situation and path forward. This difference is more than just semantics. The argument to be won is not one of we are right and they are wrong. It is the argument of what the future is going to look like.

Our narrative should be a simple and clear message sharing our perspective of world history, our intentions, and our vision for the future. Notice how there is no mention of truth, facts, or information? That is not to say that these should be included. The story factor should fall somewhere in between fairy tale and encyclopaedia entry, between superhero arrogance and apologetic fear. It needs to be real and it needs to be the truth, but that doesn't mean it has to be verifiable. Intentions, motivations, and interpretations are what give value to a narrative. They can be contested, but not disproven. Our adversaries make use of this tactic all the time. As we speak, many different explanations of our behaviour are circulating the Internet. Some of these explanations are far better known and convincing than the ones we consider to be the truth. At the very least we need to reclaim our own intent, and shine a light on the intentions of the enemy.

Anti-Western narratives are not just rumours or lies, they are an attack on our culture and values and we should counter them for two reasons, especially if we are not involved in a declared war. One reason is to prevent such narratives from becoming truths. Narratives spread like rumours. In fact, one can argue that rumours in and of

19 Tatham S, The Solution to Russian Propaganda is not EU or NATO Propaganda but Advanced Social Science to Understand and Mitigate its Effect in Targeted Populations, Centre for Security and Strategic Research, National Defence Academy of Latvia.

July 2015, Online <http://www.stratcomcoe.org/steve-tatham-solution-russian-propaganda-not-eu-or-nato-propaganda-advanced-social-science>

20 Leuprecht C, Hataley T, Moskalenko S and McCauley C, 'Winning the Battle but Losing the War?' in Perspectives on Terrorism, August (2009) Volume 3, Issue 2, 25-35.

themselves are narratives that are used as ammunition. Once our own explanations inhabit the media space, they can be used to support a larger end goal. Context-free narrative is portable and can to be used anytime and anywhere for illustrative purposes. The other reason to counter our opponents' narratives is to attain Sun Tzu's 'supreme excellence' of war, by 'breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting'.²¹ After all, we are in it to win it.

Successful counter-propaganda must include an interpretation of the past, explanation of the present, and vision for the future. The audience must be given another story of what the future will look like at a conceptual level. Counter-propaganda is not a plan that can be tracked, but rather an ideological vision that will always be somewhat out of reach. It is important to note that a centralized response is not always as effective as an agile local response, as WWII resistance propaganda shows. It is often best to support the genuine, and therefore convincing and meaningful response of local resistance groups.

Democracy vs. Democratization

It is natural to assume that our narrative should include calls to action for the promotion of democracy, based on the theory that democracies do not go to war against one another. But should we really engage in a propaganda war to accomplish this end? Selective use of information, a lack of dissent, the creation of proper convictions, the illusion of choice—surely this is not democratic. Our values include diversity, choice, tolerance, and respect. It is important to understand that '[...] we are dealing here with psychological warfare, and that we adjust ourselves to the enemy's train of thought, and that proceeding from there, the people that we subject to our propaganda are not those whom we want to see become democratic but whom we want to defeat.'²²

However, supporting plurality does not prevent us from taking a stand on just what our values and intentions are. By doing so, we are not censoring others, if anything we support discussion. Nonetheless, we should be able to back up our narrative with reason. Some of the lessons drawn from propaganda are not necessarily anti-democratic. In fact, we see similar facets coming up in political election campaigns over and over again.

Much of the Information Activity in contemporary conflicts is directed towards democratization. But there is a difference between fervently selling the idea of

21 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. (Filiquarian, 2006), p. 13.

22 Ellul, *Propaganda*, p. 244.

democracy and the actual process of democratization. As noble as this goal this might be, a successful narrative and strategy created according to guidelines set out in this paper does not create democratic behaviour.

In order to spur people into action, the goal is to excite and arouse people in favour of one particular narrative, one problem, one solution. There is only one way to agree, but there are many ways to disagree. In a democracy we celebrate this plurality of opinion. But doubts and diffusion do not allow for a strong call for action, nor do they create a holy cause to dedicate one's life to. The availability of information, lack of censorship, and an absence of dogmatism lead to a vast variety of opinions. Democracy creates a psychological climate that both offers and expects a certain level of participation, and gives each citizen the opportunity and responsibility to use reason to create their own informed opinion. Reason or rationality are attributes necessary in a democratic society. Non-democratic forms of government do not encourage independent reasoning, because those in power decide what the people are supposed to be thinking—there is no need to figure it out yourself.

Of course, this does not mean that all citizens of democracies are purely rational beings or that reason cannot be found in non-democratic societies. A study of the German citizenry of the Weimar republic shows that these character traits do not necessarily come naturally. 'They [...] found the loose irreverent democratic order all confusion and chaos. They were shocked to realize that they had to participate in government, choose a party, and pass judgment upon political matters.'²³ Authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, require a certain level of propaganda to keep their citizens from participating in politics, which, when successful, lead to non-democratic behaviour. This does not mean that democracy cannot be a convincing theme, but the result of such a narrative would be a 'citizen who can recite indefinitely 'the sacred formulas of democracy' while acting like a storm trooper.'²⁴ As a matter of fact, in 2012 a Pew Research survey found that a vast majority of Muslims were supportive of democracy, including such values as freedom of speech and competitive elections. This raises the question of whether we need to include democracy as a theme for Western counter-narratives. Additionally, support for democracy does not necessarily lead to democracy. For example, when asked by the Afrobarometer, 72.8% of Zimbabweans supported democracy, yet, according to the Freedom House, the state of government in Zimbabwe cannot be called democratic.²⁵

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23 Hoffer E, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, (New York, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2002), p. 45.

24 Ellul, *Propaganda*, p. 256.

25 Bratton M and Mattes R, 'BP67: Neither consolidating nor fully democratic: The evolution of African political regimes, 1999-2008' Afrobarometer (2009), Online <http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Briefing%20paper/AfrobriefNo67.pdf> (last accessed at 29 November 2015).

Democracy is really about limiting those who seek power and empowering those who do not. In the field of information and communication, democracy results in a plurality of opinion. One way to stimulate plurality is to question assumptions and facilitate debate and discussion. This can create doubt, diffusion, and nuance, and works to lessen the validity and power of the narrative of the adversary. However, one must not expect that broadening public opinion necessarily leads to a sustainable truth, nor is undermining a negative ideology sufficient if we also want stability. To answer to the intellectual needs previously described, we need to provide answers, explanations, and a vision for the future.

It is common among both soldiers and the general public to long for the certainty we felt after winning WWII, when the allied forces were hailed as liberators. But we must acknowledge the tremendous amount of counter-propaganda that was employed during the war. Whether they came directly from the allied forces, the local resistance, or both, our narratives promoted the hope of liberation and the possibility of defeating the occupation forces, motivated people with calls for action, glorified our heroes, and provided a story that unified those who wanted peace and freedom.

Great effort went into combating the fascist narratives that were directed against the allied forces. WWII propaganda efforts included newspapers and radio broadcasts prepared by the underground resistance that spread the story of how wonderful life was in a capitalist and democratic society, discrediting the Nazi image of the Allies as 'pure evil'. By informing the general public that people in other parts of Europe didn't buy into Nazi propaganda the pitfalls of false conformity and enforcement were mitigated. The Allies' narrative focused on nationalism and on one of the most powerful motivators for action, hate. Hatred toward the atrocities that the Nazis committed against their state and against their people fuelled discontent and imparted 'stickiness', or significance, to the narrative. Hatred justified the violent actions that sometimes needed to be taken while endorsing the value of peace. However, the most valuable contribution of the WWII narratives was that of hope. That narrative carried the key to the future.

So what would a successful narrative for the Middle East look like today? More and more questions are being raised in social media wondering what a positive option for that region might look like. Are violent extremists, dictators, and corrupt governments really the only options for the Arab world? The questions in and of themselves are already part of the narrative, demonstrating that people in the region are hungry for another option. Social media offers us the unique ability to hear the various and dissenting opinions of the people who should be writing their own future.

Not a lost cause

True believers are not necessarily a lost cause, de-radicalization efforts on a local scale have been effective and there is the possibility of converting those who have a deep need for propaganda. The most ardent believers do not worship because they find a specific doctrine convincing, rather they share the need for faith in an authority that they can trust implicitly. They find salvation in the hard-line narratives, justification for previous mistakes and wrongdoing, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Believing means that all questions have been answered, so there are no more uncertainties—the believer is in possession of the absolute truth. The degree to which an individual accepts extremist narratives as true indicates how much of his private opinion has been replaced by public opinion, and to what extent that person has been radicalized.

Radicalization is essentially de-pluralisation of one's opinion and world view. This creates an intense sense of urgency and importance of the problems and increasingly limited set of actions considered to be available to solve the problem. Hence the narrative can lead to the most heinous of behaviour from the true believer, since the individual has been relieved of any doubt or personal conscience.

This doesn't mean that all is lost for the true believer. As both Hoffer and Ellul point out, those who are most strongly influenced by a narrative will want to throw themselves at a new narrative with as much passion and fervour as before. Germany before Hitler was ripe for radicalization and it was often a toss-up if a citizen would eventually become radicalized as a Communist or a Nazi. What makes a true believer a true believer has more to do with the psychology and character traits of the group members than with a particular ideology. This means that when a group like ISIS collapses, as terrorist organizations tend to do, the group members will still need to satisfy their hunger for the answers without which they would be intellectually and existentially lost.

Some will prefer to withdraw completely from the public opinion, but there will be certainly be a group of true believers that remains true to the ideology, and will seek to renew itself, much like the neo-Nazis or white supremacists. However, a pluralistic society will be able to contain those movements and dismiss their ideology for a peaceful one more easily.

Freedom from Being Free

While it may not be true for you, it is important to acknowledge the appeal of authoritarian or theocratic narratives. In a free society, the individual is responsible

for self-expression and self-realization. When that freedom is taken away, one is no longer held accountable for the end product of an autonomous existence. One is no longer to blame for a flawed and meaningless life. In effect the individual has been liberated from the demands of freedom. Kierkegaard expressed it thus, 'Nobody wants to be this strenuous thing: an individual; it demands an effort. But everywhere services are readily offered through the phony substitute: a few! Let us get together and be a gathering, then we can probably manage. Therein lies mankind's deepest demoralization.'²⁶

The Western ideal of self-advancement also includes a personal responsibility for failure. The 20th century that has not been worth writing home about for the Arab people, nor have the decades of a faltering economy given the Russians something to be proud of. And we all need to be proud. It is not hard to see why messages that remove blame by shifting it to those who call for individual responsibility, resonate so well. In the poetic words of the philosopher Pascal, contempt for the self creates 'the most unjust and criminal passions imaginable, for [the individual] conceives a mortal hatred against that truth which blames him and convince him of his faults.'²⁷

On a final note

Propaganda still works and will continue to be a tool to motivate the masses to engage in a particular course of action. Propaganda plays on our human need for narratives that explain our past, present, and future. Social Media now provides a fascinating tool for the propagation of ideas. It draws upon numerous Social Psychology or group processes that allow for a far more global version of horizontal propaganda than the world has seen before.

However, the main strengths of social media are simultaneously weaknesses for propagandists, since social media is all about diverse and dissenting opinions. It is impossible to control content and therefore creates a medium for attacking ideas that our adversaries are already making good use of. Plurality is one of the strengths and benefits of democracy and can be achieved by asking unsettling questions, most importantly about intent, as well as providing many different explanations or offering 'truths'.

In the battlefield of narratives, merely telling the truth is not effective enough. Nor does truth-telling necessarily persuade people to pursue a certain course of action. It

26 Popova M, 'Kierkegaard on the Individual vs. the Crowd, Why We Conform, and the Power of the Minority', in Brainpickings.org, Online <https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/11/26/kierkegaard-individual-crowd-conformity-minority/> (last accessed on 29 October 2015)

27 Hoffer, *The True Believer*, p. 9.

is akin to swatting away the individual wasps, but leaving the wasps' nest intact. The ideal of the democratic society is an excellent narrative theme, but it will not create democratic behaviour. Freedom as we know it is not necessarily as appealing as we tend to think. To counter violent extremism we need a narrative that creates at least as much passion and hope for the future. Common anti-US / anti-Western narratives need to be attacked head on, not just for the sake of current issues, but also to create room to manoeuvre in future conflict.

Different situations call for different narratives and different levels of influence operations, but they always do. Every situation that we encounter calls for a narrative, a strategic psychological format, an overarching account of events. The lack of an inspirational narrative will create despair for the individual and chaos for society, leaving a vacuum to be filled for someone with less peaceful intentions. We must not fail to share our story. 'History is remembered history.'²⁸ If we do not provide a believable explanation of the current situation, someone else will. If we do not explain our intent for the future, someone else will. If we do not write history, someone else will.

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28 Paul Tillich, *Theology of Peace*, (Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), p. 28.

PROACTIVELY PRESERVING THE INWARD QUIET: PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND NATO

Caitlin Schindler

“Because the inward quiet of a kingdom depends on the good measures that are taken from without, to make friends that are able to oppose the designs of those who would attempt to disturb it...”

Francois de Callières, *The Art of Diplomacy*¹

With the rise of Daesh,² the growing refugee crisis in Europe, and the increasing tensions between the West and Russia over Ukraine, NATO is faced with many threats to the collective security and stability of the region, which NATO members have agreed to defend and protect. As Francois de Callières’s observes, the inward quiet of a kingdom requires making friends with those who are willing to oppose the plans of those who would disturb the quiet. Callières also observed that a diplomat must ‘make choice of fit instruments, who know how to apply those means rightly, in order to gain the hearts and inclinations of the persons they have to deal with’.³ To address the issues confronting NATO and its members, the organization must engage and develop solid relationships with those within the organization, publics of member nations, regional organizations (i.e. the European Union), and with those publics outside the organization. NATO must select the right range of instruments to gain the hearts and inclinations of the people in order to address the threats to the region’s security and stability.

Today much emphasis is placed on Strategic Communications (StratCom), ‘a choice of fit instruments’, applied appropriately to garner support and cooperation for a nation or organization’s policies. This emphasis is apparent within NATO in recently updated policies, the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration, and the inauguration of

1 François de Callières, *The Art of Diplomacy*, (1716), Keens-Soper, H.M.A. & Schweizer, K.W. editors (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1983). p. 68.

2 Zeba Khan. 2014. ‘Words matter in ‘ISIS’ war, so use ‘Daesh’’, in *The Boston Globe* (Last accessed 30-Aug-2015). Online <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2014/10/09/words-matter-isis-war-use-daesh/V85GYEuasEEJgrUun0dMUP/story.html>

3 F Callières, *The Art of Diplomacy*, pp. 65-66.

the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga.⁴ However, the following paragraphs will argue while good strategic use of communication tactics and mechanisms are of utmost importance in the current international environment, there is an overemphasis on StratCom without full consideration of what makes communication effective, impactful, and necessarily strategic. To dissect this further, the article will examine how public diplomacy is defined within the NATO StratCom paradigm, as well as critically analysing its relationship to other components of StratCom, specifically public affairs and information operations based on publically available policy documents.

There are few accessible policy documents on the different elements of NATO StratCom. Most of the policy documents that provide greater detail on the role and function of military public affairs, information operations, and psychological operations fall under the purview of the International Military Staff (IMS) and Allied Command Operations (ACO). Given the recent adoption of the StratCom framework into NATO the civilian elements of StratCom appear less developed and long-used elements, such as information operations and psychological operations, are not entirely integrated into the civilian elements of public diplomacy and public affairs, or the organization as a whole. This article addresses these issues and offers ways to conceptualize and implement public diplomacy to fit within the StratCom framework. The objective is to envision what public diplomacy can and ought to be beyond effective communication.

By altering the conceptual understanding of the term both within the StratCom framework and in contrast to other elements of strategic communication, the role of public diplomacy within NATO will assume an even greater strategic importance. This logically leads to a re-conceptualization of public diplomacy as a part of NATO StratCom, further examined through its function based on the core practices of public diplomacy. Then, a renewed strategic role for NATO public diplomacy must be provided to facilitate true strategic communications and the grand strategy within the organization itself.

The whole before the sum total

NATO's formal adoption of a StratCom policy is a bold and progressive move, especially in light of the fact that some nations still struggle to define and codify

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4 'Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration', (NATO, 04 April 2009), (Last modified 8 May 2014, last accessed 6 Sep 2015). Online http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease#top.

how communications, statecraft, and other elements of state power should coalesce.⁵ However, as Commander Dr. Steve Tatham and LTC Rita Le Page observe, the NATO StratCom concept is not without its flaws. These imperfections permeate all elements of Strategic Communications within the organization as well as impacting individual member nations, which have yet to adopt or define the concept for themselves.⁶ Tatham and Le Page argue for corporate understanding and policy for StratCom across NATO and for each member nation. To be certain, consensus about what a strategy is and how it should be used within a political-military organization is absolutely necessary for the strategy to be effective, but defining StratCom overlooks bigger conceptual issues which will continue to undermine the concept unless these problems are addressed. The component parts that comprise NATO StratCom—public affairs (political and military), public diplomacy, information operations, and psychological operations⁷—are each laden with debate and confusion as to what they are and how they should be used.⁸ Academics and practitioners have struggled for decades to adequately define, distinguish, or correlate public diplomacy with propaganda, public affairs, public relations, and soft power.⁹ Furthermore, the argument could be made that the new terms that have been incorporated into the lexicons of many governments and organizations since 9/11, such as smart power, soft power, and even strategic communications, are euphemisms or attempts to avoid terms that are difficult to define or carry negative connotations.¹⁰

Looking at the individual elements of NATO StratCom and their intended functions, there is very little that distinguishes each of the terms from the others. Specifically, according to NATO StratCom policy, the terms *public affairs* and *public diplomacy* share many characteristics depending on the definitions used. Public diplomacy is the '*civilian communications* and outreach efforts and tools responsible for *promoting*

5 Paul Cornish, et. al., 'Strategic Communications and National Strategy: A Chatham House Report', The Royal Institute of International Affairs, (2011), (Last accessed 29-Aug-2015). Online <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/International%20Security/r0911stratcomms.pdf>; Commander Dr. Steve Tatham and LTC Rita Le Page, 'NATO Strategic Communication: More to be Done', National Defence Academy of Latvia, Centre for Security and Strategic Research, 2014, (Last accessed 30-Aug-2015). <http://www.naa.mil.lv/~media/NAA/AZPC/Publikacijas/DSPC%20PP%201%20-%20NATO%20StratCom.ashx>.

6 Ibid.

7 PO(2009)0141, NATO Strategic Communication Policy, (29 September 2009), pp. 1-2.

8 Paul Cornish, et. al., 'Strategic Communications and National Strategy', p. vii.

9 Eytan Gilboa, 'Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy', in *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616, No. 1, (2008), pp. 55-77.

10 Definitions for words such as public diplomacy and propaganda continue to be debated among scholars, practitioners, and political leaders. Using new terms to connote similar functions is an attempt to side-step these issues, but this does not mean the problems surrounding the terms disappear. See David W Guth, 'Black, White, and Shades of Gray: The Sixty-Year Debate Over Propaganda versus Public Diplomacy', in the *Journal of Promotional Management*, Vol. 14, (2009), 309-325; and Richard Holbrooke, 'Get the message out', in *The Washington Post*, (2001). (Last accessed 06-05-2012) Online <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/13/AR2010121305410.html>

awareness of and building understanding and support for NATO's policies, operations and activities, in the short, medium and long term, in complement to the national efforts of Allies'.¹¹ Whereas, *public affairs* (civilian) is the '*civilian engagement through the media to inform the public* of NATO policies, operations and activities in a timely, accurate, responsive, and proactive manner'.¹² The definition for *military public affairs* overlaps further with the definition of *public diplomacy*, to included *promoting NATO military aims* by raising *awareness* and *understanding* through media relations, internal and community relations. All three of the terms use communication to inform the public about NATO policies and operations to garner public understanding and support.

These overlapping definitions raise important questions about NATO StratCom doctrine and policy. First, the defined terms lack meaningful distinction and, as a result, the concepts lack any connection or correlation, thus undermining the very objective of the NATO StratCom policy. Some scholars argue that much of what is termed public diplomacy is in fact public relations¹³ and public affairs is the use of public relations techniques by governments. Scholars and practitioners of public diplomacy argue against equating public diplomacy with public affairs or public relations.¹⁴ Etyan Gilboa argues that:

...PR, advertising, political campaigns, and movies are related to public diplomacy as much as baseball is related to cricket. Advertising and branding of products are specific and self-defining; movie-makers want to entertain, political strategies work in familiar domestic settings, and PR rarely goes beyond clichés. Public diplomacy, on the other hand, has to deal with complex and multifaceted issues, must provide appropriate context to foreign policy decisions, and cope with social and political impetus not easily understood abroad. In short, public diplomacy cannot be reduced to slogans and images.¹⁵

Though unable to reach consensus regarding these concepts, there is general agreement that these are separate mechanisms, each with its own function and role within a state or organization. Public affairs denotes a government's efforts to engage

11 PO(2009)0141, NATO Strategic Communication Policy, (29 September 2009), pp. 1-2., emphasis added.

12 Ibid., emphasis added.

13 S. H. Signitzer and T. Coombs, 'Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Conceptual Convergences', *Public Relations Review* Vol. 18 (No. 2), (1992), pp. 137-147.

14 W. Kiehl, *America's Dialogue with the World*. (Public Diplomacy Council, Washington, D.C., 2006); J. L'Etang, 'Public Relations and Diplomacy in a Globalized World: An Issue of Public Communication', in *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 53 (No. 4), (2009), pp. 607-626.; H. Tuch, *Communicating with the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas*, (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1990).

15 Gilboa, 'Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy', p. 68.

with domestic audiences to garner support and consensus for government policies,¹⁶ and Jan Melissen argues that:

...separating public affairs (aimed at domestic audiences) from public diplomacy (dealing with overseas target groups) is increasingly at odds with the 'interconnected' realities of global relationships. It is commonly known that information directed at a domestic audience often reaches foreign publics, or the other way round, but the relationship between public affairs and public diplomacy has become more intricate than that.¹⁷

Thus, there is a need to define and understand each element of StratCom on its own terms before integrating them into a concept, policy, or strategy.

A second issue is that each of these definitions emphasizes producing and disseminating mass communication. This is understandable given their designation as components of StratCom, but even the definition of StratCom gives primacy to *communication*.¹⁸ NATO defines *Strategic communication* as 'the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO *communications activities* and capabilities—Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations and Psychological Operations, as appropriate—in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims'.¹⁹ The objective of NATO StratCom is to ensure effective communication as measured by speed, widespread distribution, as well as support and understanding of NATO's policies and objectives. This is a very functional, superficial conception of strategic communications. Importance is placed, not on the relational aspect of communication or the content of communication, but rather on the mechanics, technology, infrastructure, roles of different types of communicators within the NATO StratCom apparatus, and communications environment.²⁰

This is problematic as many observe the need for NATO to bolster the organization's soft power²¹ and the organization itself notes the need to alter its approach to regional

16 Stephen Stockwell, 'Public Relations and Government' in *Public Relations: Theory and Practice*, edited by Jane Johnstone and Clara Zawawi, (Allen & Unwin, Australia, 2009), pp. 414-442.

17 Jan Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, (Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 8.

18 Commander Dr. Steve Tatham and LTC Rita Le Page, 'NATO Strategic Communication: More to be Done', p. 3.

19 PO(2009)0141, NATO Strategic Communication Policy, (29 September 2009), pp. 1-2.

20 Ibid., p. 1. 'NATO Strategic Communications should be modern in technique and technology in order to match the information cycle...'

21 Indra Adnan. 3 May 2012. 'Why NATO needs soft power', CPD Blog, (Last accessed 6 Sep 2015). Online http://usepublicdiplomacy.org/blog/why_nato_needs_soft_power/ ; Philip Seib, 'NATO Still Pondering Soft Power', in *The Huffington Post*, 12 Apr 2012. (Last accessed 6 Aug 2015). Online http://www.huffingtonpost.com/philip-seib/nato_b_1389974.html.

defence and security to address the changing international environment.²² The significance attributed to the functional and technological aspects of communication over the last decade is a symptom of the Information Age and of the way in which the international political environment is constantly shaped by the ever-changing information environment—both in terms of the available communication technology and the speed of information dissemination. This reaction to the rapid advance of communication technologies, which enables greater access to information and makes communication easier for much of the world, is not a new phenomenon.

With the introduction of the printing press, political leaders were forced to adapt to an increasingly educated and informed public, as with the introduction of the telegraph, underwater cables, and the industrialization of communication at the turn of the twentieth century. Historically and currently, the tendency is to either celebrate the liberalization of information and communication, or to attempt to control it. As NATO's mission is to defend and secure the values of 'individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law',²³ NATO StratCom should also reflect these values in how the organization integrates this concept into the organization.

Public Diplomacy as Diplomacy with the Public

Let's examine the concept of public diplomacy. The term originated in 1962, largely as a way for the US to avoid using the term propaganda to signify the government's significant international communication programs. However, much of the literature on public diplomacy, acknowledges that the idea of a nation or organization engaging with the people of another nation vs. the government is not unique to the twentieth or twenty-first century, and is in fact an ancient practice.²⁴

Returning to the observations made by de Callières, it would seem that even for a diplomat in the eighteenth century, as the practice and art of diplomacy was still developing, that it was still the duty of a diplomat to engage with the people of a nation as much as it was important to engage with those in power. Other examples of statesmen either being admonished to attend to the public of a nation or individuals

22 'Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration', (NATO, 2009), (Last accessed 6 Aug 2015). Online http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease#top.

23 'Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization' (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, November 2010), (Last accessed 29 Aug 2015). Online http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf.

24 Nicholas J Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*. (Figueroa Press, Los Angeles, 2009); Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, p. 3.

urging their government to engage with the public include Benjamin Franklin,²⁵ who was advised to address 'the people without doors' and Arthur Bullard,²⁶ who lambasted President Woodrow Wilson for practicing diplomacy as in Old World, instead of practicing 'democratic diplomacy' as befitted a democratic nation. Bullard wrote '[it] is an anomaly, a denial of our own democratic faith, that our Republics should accredit its ambassadors to the kings and not to the peoples of Europe'.²⁷ By the end of World War II, the Department of State planned to continue the operations of the Office of War Information and Coordinator for Inter-American Affairs based on the idea that as the world was becoming more democratized, US diplomacy should be more democratic. Even stepping away from US examples, from the end of the nineteenth century up until World War II, the internationalist movement swept most of the world. Internationalists generally believed that greater international engagement and exchange would minimize conflict and eliminate war altogether.²⁸ Governments and private organizations initiated and funded cultural exchanges with this in mind.

This suggests that, over time, the term *public diplomacy* has been excessively synced to the mechanical act of communication. More recent literature on the concept acknowledges the prioritization of the technical act of communication and influence over both listening and relationship building.²⁹ Taking the term and translating it literally as *diplomacy with the public* leads to a different understanding of the concept and poses interesting possibilities in terms of its function and role in NATO. Thinking of the concept as a diplomatic function does not in any way diminish its importance or undermine strategic communication, as diplomacy still includes influence and communication. These elements are weighed against other aspects of diplomatic function and behaviour to include negotiation, dialogue, and representation. Defining *public diplomacy* as *engagement, representation, and relationship-building* heightens its strategic

25 The Benjamin Franklin Papers, Vol. 8, p. 87. Online <http://franklinpapers.org/franklin/>; Benjamin Carp, *Rebels Rising: Cities and the American Revolution*. (Oxford University Press, 2007).

While serving as a colonial agent in London, Benjamin Franklin wrote to Thomas Leech of the Assembly of Correspondence in Pennsylvania, that he had been advised by a lawyer regarding colonial complaints to Parliament. 'One Thing that he recommends to be done before we push our Points in Parliament, viz. removing the Prejudices that Art and Accident have spread among the People of this Country [England] against us, and obtaining for us the good Opinion of the Bulk of Mankind without Doors...' As Benjamin Carp explains, with the advent of the printing press, the relaxation of censorship by the British government, and the opening of Parliament, the term 'without doors' began to refer to the general public, outside the closed doors of Parliament.

26 Stephen Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1980). According to Stephen Vaughn, Bullard's article influenced President Wilson's ideas about establishing the Committee on Public Information (CPI). Bullard would serve as the CPI representative in Russia once the US entered World War I.

27 Arthur Bullard, 'Democracy and Diplomacy', in *The Atlantic Monthly*, (1917), p. 492.

28 Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

importance and adds depth beyond merely communicating to the public. As Bruce Gregory observes, '[diplomacy's] context...changes with time and circumstance... What changed was not a generic concept of diplomacy that included a public dimension. What changed was situational...Public diplomacy has always been a part of diplomacy'.³⁰ There is precedent to consider public diplomacy as diplomacy, as much as there is to consider it communication.

Public Diplomacy in a Defence Alliance

One of the other issues confronting NATO StratCom, particularly with regard to public diplomacy, is the question of how a multi-national defence organization, created largely to mitigate military threats to member nations, should employ public diplomacy. Though much of NATO policy on public diplomacy emphasizes dissemination of information and the act of communication, the term public diplomacy entails more. Public diplomacy includes engagement with the media, advocacy, and people to people exchanges.

According to public diplomacy scholar Nicholas Cull, public diplomacy is comprised of core practices, which have been used by leaders and private actors to engage with publics for centuries and can be identified in historical records. These core practices include *listening*, *advocacy*, *international broadcasting*, *exchange diplomacy*, and *cultural diplomacy*. *Listening* is where an entity gathers information about foreign audiences and their opinions; sometimes a form of intelligence gathering. *Advocacy* is when an actor promotes specific policies to the people of another nation or group. *International broadcasting* is when an actor uses communication technology (i.e. radio, television, the Internet) to engage with the public or provide information to the public. *Cultural diplomacy* is when an actor highlights his nation's cultural achievements to the people of other nations. *Exchange diplomacy* is when people from different nations travel to host nations or learn about another nation's culture.³¹ Most of these core practices can be implemented in NATO public diplomacy activities; some are already in place, but require greater attention.

In outlining the NATO StratCom infrastructure, the policy does not give *listening* much consideration.³² NATO has two bodies, which are identified as either advising public diplomacy or carrying out public diplomacy. Public Diplomacy Committee

30 Bruce Gregory, 'The Paradox of US Public Diplomacy: Its Rise and 'Demise'', (Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication, George Washington University, 2014), p. 7.

31 Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*, pp. 18–23.

32 PO(2009)0141, NATO Strategic Communication Policy, (29 September 2009), pp. 1-2.

Within the 2009 Strategic Communication policy, one of the last principles of NATO strategic communications includes 'soliciting public view and adapting efforts as necessary'.

members '...share their experiences on national information and communication programmes and *the perception of their respective public regarding the Alliance and its activities*'.³³ There is no mention of seeking to understand public opinion that exists outside of the NATO member nations. Within the International Staff, the Public Diplomacy Division is comprised of the NATO Multimedia Library, the NATO Information and Documentation Centre in Kyiv, and the Information Centre in Moscow. Yet there is no centralized group within NATO tasked with listening.³⁴

This is not to say public opinion outside member nations is not evaluated. In 2013, NATO conducted a study of Russian public opinion in the Novgorod Province.³⁵ The study is an invaluable resource, demonstrating the gaps between what is known, understood, and believed about NATO among the public versus what is known or understood based on what is reported in the news and just the general knowledge of those surveyed. Perhaps of greatest significance, the report demonstrates that a gap exists between listening and informing. Respondents were asked whether Russia needed to collaborate with NATO on various threats. A majority of those surveyed believed Russia and NATO should collaborate on combatting piracy and terrorism, with a slight majority agreeing that the two should collaborate on destroying obsolete weapons.³⁶ Respondents were also asked if they knew of the NATO-Russia Council and what the council did. Most were aware of its existence, but did not know what the council did.³⁷ The survey report also demonstrates how the Russian public (within Novgorod) still views NATO suspiciously concerning some issues and on other issues sees NATO as an outright threat. A proactive public diplomacy apparatus would consider these views and adjust public diplomacy engagement to address these issues.

However, when the organization intervened in Libya in 2011, it would seem that NATO policy was informed by public opinion. Said Sadiki describes how large swaths of the Arab public supported NATO intervention in Libya and that the intervention altered Arab public opinion toward the organization.³⁸ However, in asking Moroccan

33 'Committee on Public Diplomacy', North Atlantic Treaty Organization, (26 Nov 2014), (Last accessed 29 Aug 2015), Online http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69272.htm

34 'NATO Bi-SC Information Operations Reference Book', North Atlantic Treaty Organization, (March 2010), (Last accessed 29 Aug 2015), Online <https://info.publicintelligence.net/NATO-IO-Reference.pdf>

Information Operations does include gathering cultural and social information, but the information is to support information operations, in designated areas or crisis regions.

35 'Russian Public Opinion of NATO: Novgorod Province', North Atlantic Treaty Organization, (November 2013), (Last accessed 30 Aug 2015). Online http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2013_nio/20131202_131129-nio-survey-summary.pdf

36 'Russian Public Opinion of NATO: Novgorod Province', (November 2013), p. 9.

37 Ibid., pp. 9-10.

38 Said Sadiki, 'Arab Public Opinion and NATO after International Military Operations in Libya', in the Turkish Journal of International Relations. Vol. 11, No. 2, (2012), pp. 78-89.

students about the motives behind the NATO intervention, 90% of those surveyed believed NATO's reasons for going into Libya were more than humanitarian. As Sadiki points out, while Arab public opinion is toward NATO changing, more is needed to ameliorate the Cold War image of NATO as a subsidiary of the United States and an enemy of Islam. He advocates for more person-to-person engagement to facilitate this.³⁹ As Stephanie Babst observes, though the organization has changed rapidly since its creation, the image of the organization in the eyes of the public remains largely the same.⁴⁰ The stasis in attitudes toward NATO is a reflection of how public diplomacy and even NATO's StratCom framework is an incomplete strategy, since it focuses on the distribution of information and responding to media, rather than listening to public opinion and allowing this to inform policy.

NATO strategic communications emphasizes *advocacy* for nearly each element. As discussed in the paragraphs above, civil public affairs, military public affairs, and public diplomacy promote or advocate the political and military aims of NATO. NATO public diplomacy advocates policies through civilian communication and outreach to build understanding in correlation with the individual efforts of the Allies. NATO public affairs, both military and civilian, specifically engage the media to inform and promote NATO objectives. Again, priority is given to 'informing' without strategic connection to the other elements of StratCom or to NATO itself.

The core practice of *international broadcasting* is typically thought of as making use of state owned media platforms such as radio stations, TV channels, newspapers, and magazines. Today, the Internet and social media provide opportunities for non-state entities to create and use their own platform for international broadcasts. NATO makes use of these tools with the NATO YouTube channel, Facebook page, and Twitter feed. Videos such as 'Agile Spirit 2015: Building Defence Skills in Georgia',⁴¹ and 'What's happening in South Ossetia'⁴² are examples of both *international broadcasting* and *advocacy*, since they provide background information and also promote NATO policies in key areas. Yet, while on-line options provide a cost-effective means of engaging with audiences, the medium is limited. First, NATO must consider whether their target audience has the technical capability to access these information resources. Second, with dedicated pages on social media platforms, the user must actively choose to follow the page in order to receive updated information and videos, or seek out the pages of

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39 Ibid., pp. 84-85.

40 Stephanie Babst, 'Reinventing NATO's Public Diplomacy', Research Paper, NATO Defense College Research Division No. 41, (2008), pp. 2-8.

41 'Agile Spirit 2015: Building Defence Skills in Georgia', NATO, (Last accessed 30 Aug 2015) on YouTube, Online <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8d9hedwjEQ>,

42 'What's happening in South Ossetia', NATO (Last accessed 30 Aug 2015) on YouTube, Online <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDwgJFrUfdo>

their own volition. Single-entity owned or administered broadcasting platforms may be viewed with suspicion and scepticism. The content is often labelled as propaganda and discounted. NATO international broadcasting should be used to inform and educate the public about the organization, how it works, and what issues the organization is working on in relation to world events, as well as discuss the concerns of member nations. As an alternative to single-entity owned media platforms, NATO could create regular short broadcasts and printed materials to reach more audiences.

By emphasising the act of communicating, or the 'informing' aspect of communication, other forms of engagement are overlooked. Moreover, the pace of the international communication environment today often intensifies leaders' perceptions of the need to react or respond to overwhelming amounts of new information. To become more strategic about how a nation or organization communicates, more attention and emphasis should be given to slower, relational forms of communication. These include *exchange diplomacy* and *cultural diplomacy*. As noted earlier, NATO could do more to change its image internationally through education and personal engagement. NATO schools currently offer fellowships for partner nations and allied nations, but these could and should be expanded. Furthermore, teachers and leaders within NATO should be encouraged to teach and learn at other state and military schools. There is a great opportunity to not only to forge personal connections, but also to broaden knowledge and experience by increasing our repertoire for approaches to handling various challenges. NATO officers were pleased and surprised that they could learn from their Ukrainian students while they were training them.⁴³ This type of exchange offers opportunities for more *listening*.

Cultural diplomacy might be seen as a challenge for a political-military organization, like NATO. However, NATO has a political culture that 'refers to the specifically political orientations—attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system'.⁴⁴ As an organization that is set-up to defend a particular political culture, the organization projects and upholds that culture in specific ways. When NATO provides training and assistance to other nations, the organization is in fact engaged in a type of cultural diplomacy. Moreover, NATO member nations each have their own culture. Personal engagement with other member nations, or with people outside the organization, offers the opportunity to share personalised views of national culture as well as an understanding of the political culture NATO that defends.

43 'Helping Ukraine Defend Itself', (Last accessed 31 Aug 2015) on YouTube, Online <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRy6QXQe9j8>

44 G.A. Almond and S. Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. (Sage Productions, Inc., Newbury Park, CA, 1989), p. 12.

Another area where NATO could improve its soft power and conduct public diplomacy by action, rather than speaking, is through humanitarian aid. Nation states have used humanitarian aid to facilitate larger foreign policy and diplomatic objectives since the early nineteenth century, and more recently public diplomacy scholars have begun to include humanitarian aid as a practice of public diplomacy. Humanitarian assistance done well and with respect and consideration to recipients can not only alter public perceptions, but also foster dialogue. NATO member nations all have private organizations that provide humanitarian aid, and their national governments contribute funding to these organizations, as well as to international aid organizations. NATO can facilitate the process by providing protection for aid workers and their supplies. NATO can also aid logistics and help aid organizations broker entry into conflict areas. These are small acts that can leave long-lasting impressions, communicating through actions rather than words.

The Strategic Role of Public Diplomacy in NATO

This article has highlighted some of the conceptual issues within the NATO StratCom framework and offered an alternative way to understand public diplomacy in relation to other elements within that framework. The previous section broke down public diplomacy further, analysing how the identified core practices of public diplomacy could be used or improved within NATO. In conclusion, the final paragraphs will look at three strategic objectives of public diplomacy to further integrate the concept into the NATO StratCom framework and the overall organization itself.

The challenges confronting not only NATO, but also every nation today demand that nation-states, state allies, and regional partners take people power seriously. Essentially since 2001, the greatest threats to instability have emanated from small and large non-state organizations including piracy, cartels, cyber criminals, and terrorist organizations, as well as grass roots movements to de-stabilize and overthrow governments, resource shortages, and population displacement due to conflict. The problem that NATO and many nation-states face is that much of their intelligence collection infrastructure gives priority and primacy to nation-state intelligence. Many of the events of the last decade have caught nations off guard because warning indicators have gone unobserved. This is due to the fact that most reconnaissance and intelligence collection is directed at national governments and militaries, not the people. What many leaders overlook is that power is relational and relative to another actor or actors.⁴⁵ Furthermore, as David Jablonsky outlines, national power is comprised of both the psychological and informational alongside political, economic, and military capabilities, size of population, and access to natural resources. A people

strongly united psychologically can overcome militarily and economically superior powers, there are many examples of such cases throughout history. In addition, the '...enhanced communication and dissemination of information...is a two-edged sword that cuts across all the social determinants of power in national strategy'.⁴⁶

In order to better prepare and respond to developing threats, **the first strategic objective** of public diplomacy must be to *listen* and allow the knowledge gained by listening to *inform policy*.

Public aims to influence foreign publics on the understanding that this makes the implementation of foreign policy *vis-a-vis* third countries more acceptable and effective. In a world where national and global interests frequently overlap, *engaging in dialogue with foreign publics is a condition for effective foreign policy*...Indeed, the main reason behind renewed emphasis on PD is the increasing power of citizens and civil society actors.⁴⁷

While serving to guide NATO public diplomacy generally, *listening* should also inform policy, in much the same way any other form of intelligence, political or military, does. With all attention focused on collecting information and intelligence at the national level, there are few tasked with collecting and analysing public views and considerations, even outside of NATO policies and objectives. Listening should not just focus on the key issues of concern, but also be alert to trends in public opinion. This provides an alternative approach to intelligence analysis, focusing on drivers or indicators rather than attempting to predict specific outcomes and intentions.⁴⁸ Qualitative forces synthesis analysis requires the identification of forces, such as political, military, economic, psychosocial, and informational.⁴⁹ The benefit of this type of analysis is that it affords the opportunity to identify trends and potential crises before they develop, allowing time to intervene. Identifying these forces serves as an early warning. With the Georgian-Russian War in 2008 and the on-going fighting over Crimea and parts of Ukraine, good listening in Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine might have provided early warning indicators of prevailing tensions and provided more options for NATO and member nations to respond.

This leads to **the second strategic objective of public diplomacy**. If public diplomacy is applied as *diplomacy with the public*, rather than a strategic approach to producing

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46 Ibid.

47 Filippou Proedrou and Christos Frangonikolopoulos, 'Refocusing Public Diplomacy: The Need for Strategic Discursive Public Diplomacy', in *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 23, No. 4, (2012.), pg. 729, emphasis added.

48 Richard Clark, *Intelligence Analysis: A Target-Centric Approach*, (CQ Press, Los Angeles, 2013).

49 According to Clark, the forces are dependent on the actor and the situation an analyst is trying to predict. The forces can also be internal, external, or in response to forces.

information and disseminating it, then public diplomacy offers the opportunity to build and maintain lines of communication even in the event of a crisis. A government may sever ties with NATO or a member nation, but if personal relationships are maintained within a nation or group, there is still a channel of communication for negotiation and compromise to mitigate tensions and possible escalation. Additionally, a government or entity may disagree with NATO policies or actions, but with public engagement, NATO can keep dialogue going, again ensuring tensions are minimal.

The **third strategic objective of public diplomacy** is to serve as a baseline for offensive and defensive operations, to inform NATO military information and psychological operations. When tensions reach a tipping point, all forces or nations must transition from peacetime operations to combat operations. Public diplomacy can facilitate this transition, as the first two strategic objectives already indicate. If the first strategic objective is met, then information and psychological operations have a baseline of intelligence with which to formulate and execute operations. Though the second objective of mitigating crisis may fail once armed conflict begins, if public diplomacy has in fact built relationships and lines of communication, these can and may remain available despite armed conflict. If such lines are open, these can serve to restore peace. Furthermore, the crisis mitigation objective can also facilitate the transition from combat operations to peacetime operations.

Events and current threats in the course of the last fourteen years have overwhelmingly demonstrated that the traditional tools of state power are effective or can be used in isolation. NATO already recognizes this and has moved to adapt to the new environment, yet the organization must do more to fully flesh out the individual elements of StratCom, making greater distinctions between them. The organization must determine how each element correlates with the other mechanisms of StratCom and integrate civilian strategic communication with the military. Finally, NATO should not only consider communication in terms of speaking, producing, and disseminating information to the public. Communication is a human act, between humans and should also include building relationships, listening, and fostering dialogue. Ultimately, the aim of NATO public diplomacy should be to utilize the core practices, in conjunction with the other elements of NATO StratCom to preserve the inward quiet of the region. *Strategic* use of public diplomacy would allow NATO to address potential threats early on and potentially avert a crisis altogether.

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