



INFORMATION **WARFARE**

Forging Communication Strategies for
Twenty-first Century Operational Environments

JAMES P. FARWELL

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FOR JOE GAYLORD

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Foreword

Through the long and varied history of the U.S. Marine Corps, one thing has remained consistent: its ability to recognize when change is needed and adapt to the situation. A significant factor that contributes to the Corps' adaptability is the constant focus on training and education that every Marine—officer and enlisted—receives throughout the length of their career. In the *36th Commandant's Planning Guidance, 2015*, General Joseph F. Dunford Jr. highlighted how the Corps can continue to meet those changing needs: "The challenges of an increasingly uncertain, complex, and decentralized operating environment will continue to place new demands on our leaders at all levels. Our recruiting standards, manning policies, training, and education must constantly evolve to produce Marines who can meet those challenges."¹

As a Corps, we must move away from the Industrial Age educational approach of listening to a lecture, memorizing facts, and then regurgitating those facts. For Marines today, training and education must be understood as vastly different exercises of the mind and body. Marine Corps *training* refers to job-oriented training aimed at accomplishing the tasks associated with the military mission. It prepares us for what we know we will have to do in combat. The concept of education itself seems intuitive: learning in an academic setting. However, distinctions for our purposes must be made because education entails much more than that simple concept—it also prepares us for dealing with the unknown in combat. For our purposes here, though, *higher education* generally refers to a university education that qualifies the degree holder to work in a professional field. *Further education* generally includes postgraduate studies focused on a master's or doctoral degree. As one of the youngest Service schoolhouses, where does that place Marine Corps University (MCU) on the degree-granting spectrum and what is our responsibility to the servicemembers who attend?

In July 2018, when I assumed command of Training and Education Command, I looked at studies of the university, such as the *U.S. Marine Corps Officer Professional Military Education 2006 Study and Findings*, from prior commanding generals including my own tenure as president and the current administration. While much good is being accomplished at MCU, there is always room for improvement. In particular, MCU must offer an Information Age approach focused on active, student-centered learning, through which students are challenged to work as groups to learn by doing and also to learn from each other. Our graduates should have the ability to think critically, recognize the need for change, and act

without waiting for instructions.² Our measure of effectiveness needs to be our students' capabilities once they leave MCU rather than how they perform while they are here.

One of the most important aspects of MCU is its strong publishing program that helps to add knowledge across many different areas. These publications are representative of much of the great thinking and writing going on at MCU and they are the basis for what we are trying to do as we prepare our students for future challenges. A perfect example of this publishing effort is the book you are currently reading.

James Farwell's book offers MCU the opportunity to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world action with a thorough discussion of communication and strategy. Farwell builds on the foundation laid by national strategy thinkers who recognize the need to develop a comprehensive communication strategy to conduct effective information warfare. This text provides a concise treatise on the steps for developing and implementing a communication strategy and includes key historical and contemporary examples for deeper insight. The military concept

of operational art is fully supported by examples that illustrate the environment, the problem to be addressed, and the approach to be used. As the title indicates, *Information Warfare* is intended as an easy-to-use workbook that guides the student step by step, while posing the questions necessary for executing an effective communication strategy. It also includes lengthy footnotes that will fully inform and illustrate how to accomplish classroom and mission goals.

I firmly believe that this book will have a significant impact in an area that has too often been neglected in our operations. We need to understand information operations better and integrate it into everything we do in the operating environment. It is a growth industry that we have mainly paid lip service to in the past—to our own detriment, as amply demonstrated in the book. I encourage all MCU faculty and students to read and study the contents of this book as a start in the process of reaching a better understanding.

Major General William F. Mullen
Commanding General, USMC Training and
Education Command

Endnotes

1. *36th Commandant's Planning Guidance, 2015: Innovate, Adapt, Win* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2015), 2.
2. *TECOM Commander's Guidance* (Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Corps Training and Education Command, 2018).

Preface

I am honored to write a preface for James Farwell's book on information warfare. His opening examples—rooted in the work of Dr. Joseph L. Strange—draw on the experiences of Abraham Lincoln and, notably, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

As the Allies launched the invasion of Normandy, there was no question in the orders received by General Dwight D. Eisenhower: enter the continent of Europe to defeat the German *Wehrmacht*. Indeed, President Roosevelt's strategy to defeat Nazi Germany and then-militarist Japan was clear. He laid the foundation for the strategy with his pronouncement in the Atlantic Charter's four freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. He followed this expression of the four basic freedoms with a stirring speech before Congress to the American people. He roused Americans with his aggrieved expression of the sneak attack by Japanese forces on our air and naval forces at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii Territory. Standing before Congress, Roosevelt's forceful words about the surprise attack on 7 December 1941 as "a day that will live in infamy" stirred America to action. The president clearly communicated U.S. strategy to the American people, and his fireside chats continually communicated what was at stake and articulated progress.

Three war years later, General Eisenhower, acting as supreme Allied commander of Europe, on D-Day formulated a communication strategy encapsulated by the succinct phrase a "great crusade." Eisenhower communicated this well to all soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen with his order on that day.

We know the rest of this history. There is now a pressing need to further study history so that we may use the lessons from the past to understand our present challenges and prepare for the future.

Communication of the World War II strategy to Americans, our Allies, and our soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen was based on a well-designed and -practiced strategy. It is this design and practice of a communication strategy that this book encapsulates. In teaching how to forge a winning communication strategy, Farwell provides a real service to the Department of Defense community.

Information Warfare recognizes that a communication strategy is an intrinsic component of a national strategy. Farwell builds on the foundation laid by historical and contemporary thinkers who recognized the need to forge a communication strategy to conduct effective information warfare. The author defines a communication/information warfare strategy that is persuasive and credible. He distills key factors to frame the strategic thinking for information warfare. The book is innovatively organized in two parts:

- First, Farwell delivers a concise treatise about the key steps for a communication strategy. It includes historical and current examples that offer deep insights. Deference is made to the military concept of operational art. The examples illustrate the environment, the problem to be addressed, and the approach to be used. This instructional section is amply footnoted to provide tremendous depth.
- Second, an easy-to-use workbook employs a step-by-step methodology with questions for the reader to address in creating and evaluating their own communication strategies.

Each chapter is a robust learning experience, guiding the student from an initial explanation of what a communication strategy is and why it is an essential component of an information warfare campaign through methods for determining a strategic situation. This is a first-rate exposition of historical examples that illustrate key lessons, particularly in aligning cultural understanding. For example, Farwell cites the Malaysian rebellion, General George A. Custer at Little Bighorn, and the Roman–Germanic battle in the Teutoburg Forest, superbly illustrating aligned or misdirected approaches.

Failure to understand the enemy is key to a failed communication strategy, and Sun Tzu’s dictum “know your enemy as well as yourself” is discussed in detail.¹ Using contemporary illustrations from the United States’ wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Farwell succinctly illuminates what must be done and what must be understood. Failure to consider aspects of communications and achieve information dominance and failure to un-

derstand cultural precepts are presented. In each case, historical and modern illustrations caveated with lessons to be learned are presented.

As a nation, the United States is expert at building partnerships. Our Revolutionary War experience in gaining France as an ally and partner and our ability to understand England at the negotiating table for our independence provide a keen backdrop to building domestic and foreign constituencies for common actions.

In these chapters, Farwell presents a how-to workbook on what questions need to be addressed in knowing your partner as well as yourself. This approach of knowing, understanding, and appreciating partners, potential opponents, and their cultures is replicated throughout the subsequent chapters. Many current examples from Iraq and Afghanistan are integrated with examples from Panama, Somalia, and Ethiopia along with historical examples from World War II. Each example is succinctly parsed to illustrate the points to be learned.

Farwell also provides a checklist for building a communication campaign that includes 24 characteristics of good communication strategies. One of the characteristics is the ability to measure progress; another is “sharing with relevant parties so that everyone is on the same page,” using Operation Eagle Claw (Iran, 1980) as a case study; another is to define keys to success. In each case, the checklist provides methods for ensuring the communications message is clear. Establishing a campaign’s narrative, story, theme, and message is thoroughly explicated with useful examples.

An entire chapter is devoted to campaign leadership and to explaining a leadership model based on four actions: listen, learn, help, and lead. Farwell offers the examples of Winston Churchill and Roosevelt against Adolf Hitler in World War II,

Lincoln and his team of rivals compared to Jefferson Davis, and President Eisenhower's military background in national security decision making to illustrate the concept that leadership makes the difference between winning and losing.

Farwell offers a list of profound and pithy dos and don'ts for communication strategies, using current and historical illustrations and observations. The Tet offensive in Vietnam in 1968 is a superb example of the necessity for actions to support a message and for leaders to project confidence, competence, and the fact that a strategy aimed at achieving a defined outcome exists.

The author stresses the need to use and integrate social media in the communication strategy. This is a capital idea. He illustrates the need for, and the success of, social media messaging inherent in designing the communication strategy. The global target audience is rising astronomically. Demographically, the audience is huge and growing exponentially. How can intelligence be used to measure trends; changes; outcomes?

Farwell's final instructional chapter investigates the changing nature of the information en-

vironment in the past five years. He concludes that cultural, political, media, and political party changes are occurring alongside dramatic technological change. This is one of the underpinnings for the communication campaign.

He concludes with a workbook that poses a series of questions to evaluate a communication campaign. Key questions are asked, factors are presented that help to measure effectiveness, and techniques are listed for measuring effectiveness and target audience analysis. This is helpful stuff.

Information Warfare is an instrument for learning about the need to design and implement communication strategies today. I highly recommend it be used in professional development programs in the business and diplomatic community. Most importantly, I fervently advise that this book should be studied and used throughout the military, especially the special operations community. Farwell's superb text makes the lessons and insights he offers actionable and practical.

Michael D. Krause, PhD
Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret)

Endnote

1. *Sun Tzu on the Art of War: The Oldest Military Treatise in the World*, trans. Lionel Giles (London: Luzac, 1910).

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All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed are my own and do not reflect the official positions or views of the U.S. government. Nothing in the contents should be construed as asserting or implying U.S. government authentication of information or endorsement of the views expressed.

INFORMATION

WARFARE

Introduction

WHAT MAKES A WINNING INFORMATION WARFARE CAMPAIGN?

Communication strategy and information warfare are about shaping and changing behavior and managing expectations using language, action, images, or symbols to achieve a desired effect or end state. Academics spend a lot of time defining *information warfare*.¹ This fixation and lack of consensus on definitions should not obstruct the clear thinking required for effective information warfare strategy development.

Joseph S. Nye Jr., former dean of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, has observed that in today's threat environment, stories—not kinetic action—may decide who wins conflicts.² The current Ukraine conflict, ongoing at time of publication, illustrates that point. Russia and Ukraine have each used kinetic action to support their respective narratives, not vice versa. Moscow has pushed the narrative that pro-democracy revolutions lead to chaos and civil war; Kiev argues that separatism leads to misery. Journalist Peter Pomerantsev observes that “what actually happened on the ground was almost irrelevant—the two governments just needed enough footage to back their respective stories. Propaganda has always accompanied war, usually as a handmaiden to the actual fighting. But the information age means that this equation has been flipped: military operations are now handmaidens to the more important information effect.”³

The 2006 Lebanon War offers an earlier example. The Palestinians combined kinetic activity with effective strategic communication that discredited Israeli action within the international community. Always quick on the rebound, Israel applied the lessons learned to achieve success in subsequent engagements with Palestinians.⁴

Carl von Clausewitz famously declared that “war is merely the continuation of politics by other means.”⁵ From ancient times, information warfare has played a key role in armed conflict. Roman politician Scipio Africanus the Younger (a.k.a. Scipio Aemilianus) used it through brutal action to subdue Spanish dissent.⁶ Napoleon Bonaparte's Italian campaign can be viewed as an exercise in strategic communication, which he exploited to gain power in France. Napoleon capitalized on the power of newspapers and social networks, art, poetry, personal appearances, and other information tactics to gain power as first consul.⁷ George Washington used false propaganda during the American Revolutionary War to discredit the British.⁸ In the twentieth century, Vladimir Lenin used movies on freight trains to shore up his revolution. William J. Donovan's Office of Strategic Services (OSS) operatives

adroitly used information warfare in carrying out their missions.⁹ Information warfare played a key role in the Vietnam War, as well, and it has been a characteristic of the recent conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

Kinetic or traditional military operations have driven conventional strategy, operations, and tactics. Strategic communication has bolstered the use of military force, but force has traditionally determined victors and losers. The current era presents a different threat environment characterized by new challenges. Evolving, proliferating technology renders the nature of our age radically different from past eras. As author Joshua Cooper Ramo puts it, in forging goals and strategies, and understanding the dynamics that shape success, context matters.¹⁰ Even if you think you have solved a specific problem, context endures. Incorrectly interpreting the context of a problem will produce incorrect solutions.

The internet has transformed the use of communication, blurring the boundaries between war and politics and elevating the importance of information.¹¹ But technology is only one aspect of information warfare. Every form of traditional communication—personal, broadcast, print—as well as actions may come into play. What is different is that in a highly connected world, information can play a role equal to or superior to that of kinetic action.

Networks and connectivity define the nature of the current era. Successful strategy requires understanding the power of networks and how to capitalize on them. Connections expand our ability to communicate and to create new links with people, groups, organizations, and movements. Networks form when nodes—which can comprise people, computers, mobile devices, drones, or any connective object—emerge. Professor

Manuel Castells describes networks as a set of interconnected nodes; or, quoting his academic articulation, “that specific form of enterprise whose system of means is constituted by the intersection of segments of autonomous systems of goals.”¹² Networks are complex, distribute power, and consist of complicated pieces. Connectivity enables small pieces to combine into powerful ones. Castells observes that network-based social structures form a highly dynamic, open system, susceptible to innovating without threatening its balance. He argues that crises and conflicts that characterize this century require an understanding of economy, culture, and society.¹³ A “shift from traditional mass media to a system of horizontal communication networks organized around the Internet” have produced radical changes in the communication of information.¹⁴ Digital networking technologies power new social and organizational networks that transcend geographic sovereignty and form a global system.

These developments impact the nature of information warfare today. The Islamic State has exploited networks and connectivity using social media campaigns to recruit, mobilize, and influence. During the 2003 Iraq War, al-Qaeda and the al-Anbar Province tribes used networks to advance their interests. The U.S. military has exploited expertise in networks and connectivity to enhance its own capabilities. The ability to identify and penetrate insurgent networks proved vital to Coalition success in Iraq, especially after 2007.¹⁵ China’s Three Warfares concept is rooted in identifying, understanding, and exploiting networks.

The existence of networks is not new. Leaders from Julius Caesar to Martin Luther to Napoleon and modern leaders have tapped into networks to exert influence. Technology has revolutionized

the speed at which we receive, digest, process, and project information. Events that a century ago may have afforded the time to think and make a measured decision may today require instant action. Knowledge that used to require months or years to acquire can be learned in hours or days. The ability to move faster than the competition can afford a cutting edge. These critically affect strategic thinking today. Those who master networks and connections can gain a decisive edge in competition for influence.¹⁶

This is increasingly true as engagements and conflicts occur on terrain or in areas shared by civilian and fighting forces and changes expectations of what laws of armed conflict, rules of engagement, and related actions are tolerable to the United States' values and laws, as well as to the international community. Commanders and operators need to tailor strategies, operations, and tactics. No precise and consistent formula governs what will work for strategic communication and information warfare, as each new situation mandates a tailored response.

Generally, information warfare is an element of warfare.¹⁷ But warfare connotes violence. China's approach eschews the use of kinetic action, although its initiatives are backed by military force. Commanders need to understand the parameters within which they can forge and execute information warfare—and how to use nonmilitary means to achieve desired goals or end-states.

A sophisticated, actionable approach to information warfare is vital in carrying out the 2018 *National Defense Strategy* (NDS).¹⁸ The NDS acknowledges an increasingly complex global security environment characterized by overt challenges to the free and open international order and the reemergence of long-term, strategic competition between nations. The NDS adopts

the view that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea pose competitive challenges to U.S. prosperity and security in an ever more lethal and disruptive battlefield combined across domains, and that they do so with increasing speed and reach. In meeting the new challenges, the U.S. military must build capacity and expertise to conduct information warfare.

This book examines how to forge strategies, operations, and tactics using strategic communication as a tool of information warfare to exert influence and gain advantage in this competitive threat environment.

The Fallujah Illustration

In 2004, two battles led by U.S. Marines were fought in the city of Fallujah, Iraq. Each offers key insights into the nature and importance of strategic communication and information warfare.

The first battle took place in April, after insurgents murdered and mutilated four civilian contractors employed by Blackwater USA who were motoring through the city, as well as five U.S. soldiers in Habbaniyah. President George W. Bush saw the photos of the slain contractors and ordered immediate retaliation.¹⁹ On 3 April 2004, the Joint Task Force ordered I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), commanded by Lieutenant General James T. Conway, to attack and reestablish security in the city. Marine commanders on the ground objected to immediate action. They wanted time to prepare the battlefield and to ensure they had adequate forces and firepower; they had two battalions but wanted three.²⁰ Higher authority ignored the recommendations of ground commanders and ordered the Marines into action.

In Operation Vigilant Resolve (First Battle of Fallujah), which commenced on 4 April, the Marines achieved military success in battling insur-

gents holed up within the city.²¹ Unfortunately, civilians as well as insurgent fighters became casualties. As of 2019, Al Jazeera had evolved into a sophisticated, professional news operation. In 2004, however, the reverse was true. Al Jazeera reporter Ahmed Mansour and his cameraman Laith Mushtaq, the only two nonembedded journalists, supplied footage. It depicted faked and distorted images of children and helpless civilians as victims of cavalier U.S. firepower and tactics. Some images were faked by photographing a doll on a pile of rubble to imply U.S. forces had killed children, for example, while other images were taken from previous conflicts and used to misrepresent the current conflict. Al Jazeera neglected to report that insurgents used civilians as human shields and fired from inside schools, mosques, and hospitals.²²

The insurgent propaganda strategy—a classic illustration of information warfare—worked. Iraqis watched Al Jazeera and became outraged. Iraqi Governing Council member Adnan Pachachi declared American operations “illegal and unacceptable.”²³ The influential Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr warned the United States to withdraw or face a revolution, declaring that the Americans “will be fighting an entire nation—from south to north, from east to west.”²⁴ Even Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, a U.S. ally, was sharply critical.²⁵ L. Paul Bremer III, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, came under sharp pressure to call off the offensive.

Ground commanders objected because they were close to victory. For unclear reasons, their views were not communicated to President Bush.²⁶ Intimidated by Iraqi anger fueled by insurgent propaganda, Bremer and Lieutenant General Carlos Sanchez, the commander of U.S. ground forces in the country, caved to Iraqi pressure.²⁷ On

9 April, Bremer announced that the United States would commence a unilateral ceasefire.²⁸ The outcome represented a stunning setback for U.S. forces.

As U.S. commanders in Iraq took stock, one factor stood out: insurgents had won through the adroit use of information warfare. The Marines had acquitted themselves brilliantly in the actual fighting. They would have achieved their military objectives in a battle for which they had believed additional time and resources were prudent, but well-conceived and -executed enemy information warfare carried the day.

The Marines applied lessons learned on information warfare in November 2004, when Coalition forces launched a second, successful attack on Fallujah. The Coalition developed and executed a strategic communication plan that dominated media coverage and seized control of the narrative. It neutralized adversary efforts to characterize the fighting on their terms. It drove a credible message that the Coalition assault aimed to liberate Fallujah from violent extremists. As a tactical action, battling for local control of one city, the Coalition succeeded. They seized the city and drove out the insurgents. They won the shooting war and the information war—both were integral to victory.

A broader lesson emerged as well: a tactical victory had strategic effects. Iraqis watched with growing anger over the fierce firepower directed toward their fellow citizens. The two battles of Fallujah led to widened hostilities in 2005, arguably among the most difficult years in Iraq that Coalition forces experienced.

Looking to History

History provides important illustrations for how communication strategy made the difference in

whether the United States entered World War II united or divided. Though President Franklin D. Roosevelt was caught off-guard by Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, it played into his strategy of portraying the United States as a peace-seeking nation and a victim of Japanese aggression that required a response. Roosevelt knew war was coming. But he expected that Japanese action would occur in the Far East, and he was actively preparing for conflict with both Japan and Germany. That Japan acted before Germany was ironic, as Roosevelt's major concern was Germany, not Japan—and while Japan had largely regional interests, Hitler wanted to conquer the world.²⁹

Historian Richard M. Ketchum argues that Roosevelt had no doubt that war with Japan would break out, although "a cardinal principle of the Roosevelt administration's policy was to put off that date as long as possible."³⁰ Americans were not psychologically prepared for war, making Roosevelt very cautious as he maneuvered to find unity in Congress and with the public.³¹ Historians David E. Kaiser and Nigel Hamilton note that Roosevelt was also concerned about avoiding war as long as possible until the United States was prepared militarily to wage it.³²

The key strategic moves involved no shooting. They pivoted around Roosevelt's communication strategy. Roosevelt worried about antiwar sentiment. Views differ about the quality of Roosevelt's leadership leading into the war. Once declared, he was resolute. Until then, his public actions wavered. Inaction followed strong speeches. Most historians agree he hoped not to lead the nation into war.³³

Roosevelt showed a masterful sense of strategic communication in conveying at every turn the message that the United States wanted peace. Nothing epitomized that desire more in the face

of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's desperate pleas for the United States to enter the war than their conference at Placentia Bay, off Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, at which cameras filmed a service showing Britons and Americans praying together. While Churchill hoped to depict the image of alliance for war, historian Nigel Hamilton points out that Roosevelt "was determined that the imagery reflect his joint declaration of principles of peace—and how better than by showing men worshipping God together!"³⁴ Roosevelt had his own camera team film the service to ensure that it communicated the appropriate message.

Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson said, "The question was how we should maneuver [Japan] into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves."³⁵ Ketchum emphasizes that Roosevelt believed victory required a united Congress. For that, he needed the support of Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Hull would give his support only if Japan initiated hostilities.³⁶ Roosevelt avoided giving Japan any pretext that it could cite as evidence that the United States had provoked war. Roosevelt needed unity in Congress.³⁷ With Pearl Harbor, he got it; all but one isolationist voted to declare war against Japan, Germany, and Italy.³⁸

Roosevelt's challenge paralleled the one confronting President Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln recognized that only if the South fired the first shot could he persuade the North to fight. Far wiser than Jefferson Davis, Lincoln baited Confederate forces into acting at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, then aggressively mobilized public support. Lincoln's grasp of information strategy affected the outcome of the American Civil War.³⁹

Napoleon Bonaparte was equally adept in his understanding of information warfare. He

amassed enormous power while nearly laying waste to Europe through continuous warfare from 1799 to 1815. But his path to power in France, made possible by the Italian campaigns, lay in his grasp of how to use propaganda. Napoleon was a genius at information warfare and strategic communication, using propaganda to portray himself as a hero in an era when the French sought heroes.⁴⁰ His entire Italian campaign in 1796–97 was an exercise in building an image profile as a military genius and statesman as part of a calculated campaign to become first consul of France. He was the first leader to recognize how to exploit newspapers to glorify his achievements. He commissioned poems for fallen officers—and made sure they were broadly disseminated, which helped to show he cared about and honored those who served under him. He made himself visible at scientific meetings, the theater, and the opera, communicating the image of an enlightened intellectual. When he traveled to Egypt, he brought along 160 scholars to record his discoveries and other intellectual achievements.

Napoleon courted painters. They repaid him with paintings that made him look heroic. Poets wrote tributes. Sculptors made busts of his head. Playwrights dramatized his exploits. In case anyone failed to receive the message, artists such as Antoine-Jean Gros were on hand to mythologize his courage and the virtues of a military leader through romanticized portraits of him, such as Gros's *Bonaparte at the Pont d'Arcole*. Depicting—falsely—a swashbuckling Bonaparte leading his troops to storm the bridge during the Battle of Arcole in 1796 near Verona, Italy, the portrait is a powerful vision of a conquering hero, fated by destiny and inflamed with passion, whose courage seizes victory. The painting was turned into engravings that achieved wide distribution.⁴¹ Na-

oleon thought about his image in military and political dimensions and recognized the impact that it could have in influencing the outcomes of conflicts.

The lesson for students of information warfare is that communicating that your leadership is uniquely outstanding builds credibility and clout. This is the point that Cathal J. Nolan makes in *The Allure of Battle*: in today's world, a cult of leadership has emerged that places a false premium on the generals as the decisive factor in winning wars.⁴² Nolan's well-argued book raises a valid point, but it seems naïve to believe that building and projecting the image of top-tier generals fails to boost morale on our side while intimidating or raising doubts among the enemy. Though they have both supporters and critics, during the periods General Stanley A. McChrystal and General David H. Petraeus led U.S. Army forces, they each projected the character of a strong, capable general. Their images bolstered U.S. efforts.

Forging a Communication Strategy for Information Warfare

Until recent times, warfare was largely decided by a combination of kinetic action and, arguably, attrition and will.⁴³ Succeeding in current and future threat environments requires forging and articulating prevailing narratives that work in tandem with traditional military action. The rise of nonstate actors in conflicts and the shift in power from hierarchies or institutions to individuals and to networks is accelerating this development.⁴⁴ In Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) showed, while it enjoyed battlefield success, the potential for “highly strategic types of evolutionary network advantages” that infuse warfighting with narratives.⁴⁵ While ISIL suffered catastrophic defeats on the battlefield in 2017 and

2018, its actions demonstrated how conventional distinctions between the “tangible and intangible, lethal and non-lethal dimensions of operations” have changed. The U.S. military must not only match but exceed that capability.⁴⁶

An earlier book by the author analyzed core components of strategic communications.⁴⁷ General Stanley McChrystal, British Army Major General J. F. C. Fuller, B. H. Liddell Hart, Shimon Naveh, British Army General Rupert A. Smith, Carl von Clausewitz, David Kilcullen, and others have evaluated the operational military or political aspects of campaigns.⁴⁸ Smith especially recognizes the importance of information warfare and communication strategy in the new threat environment, in which engagement and conflict will mostly occur in areas populated by civilians rather than on a conventional battlefield on which opposing armies face one another.

Steve Tatham and Andrew Mackay (with foreword by General McChrystal), on the other hand, have written astutely on the need to conduct influence operations to change behavior.⁴⁹

Rand senior analyst Linda Robinson has written an important book, *One Hundred Victories: Special Ops and the Future of American Warfare*, which describes how special operations forces (SOF) teams have operated in Afghanistan.⁵⁰ While its focus is not explicitly on communication strategy, SOF teams’ work with Afghan villages offer numerous examples for applying the principles we discuss. The book is required reading for operators.

Information Warfare acknowledges the precepts those important authors embrace. Its focus differs in providing a step-by-step guide for actually forging and executing a communication strategy to conduct information warfare. Commanders and operators need to understand what factors drive

any strategy. That includes the policy that animates a strategy and what decisionmakers must know to forge and execute a winning information war. Strategy exists at the operational, tactical, and grand levels. The precepts set forth here apply at all of those levels.⁵¹

What Is Communication Strategy?

Communication strategy employs words, actions, symbols, or images to mold or shape and influence a target audience’s attitudes and opinions to achieve specific effects, objectives, or end states. It is about persuasion that changes behavior.

Key factors that frame strategic thinking for information warfare are:

1. A powerful idea or cause that drives strategy.
2. A clear vision for what constitutes winning or success (i.e., end states and outcomes).
3. Clear definitions of the obstacles to success.
4. An actionable strategy that employs operations and tactics designed to produce success.
5. Well-constructed, actionable plans.
6. Operations and tactics to execute strategy.
7. Metrics that measure the effectiveness of a strategy.⁵²

Success in military campaigns usually requires both kinetic and communication strategies. No single formula leads to success. Sometimes kinetic activity takes precedence, while at others, information warfare is more pivotal.

How This Book Is Organized

First, the reader learns about the key steps for developing a communication strategy, centered around the military concept of *operational art*.⁵³ Operational art thinks in terms of the environment, as understood from knowledge and experience;

the problems to be addressed, as informed by the external and internal factors that affect how one changes the state of affairs from the current one to achieving conditions that satisfy a desired end state; and the approach to be used in solving problems through iterative creative thinking. It is a sophisticated approach. The work draws on historical and current examples that offer deep insights and illustrate the environments, the problems to be addressed, and the approaches to be used.

Military commanders employ a different language than political or corporate actors. They desire strategies, operations, and tactics that carry out their intent to achieve conditions that satisfy a desired end state. This work's approach incorporates the notions of operational art, although it may employ slightly plainer language to describe what

to do and how. This instructional section is amply footnoted to provide tremendous depth.

Second, an easy-to-use workbook outlines a step-by-step methodology for creating and evaluating communication strategies. The reader is intended to address supplied questions about their developing communication strategy.

This text discusses counterinsurgency (COIN) and counterterrorism (CT), which have both inspired fierce debate. This work expresses no opinion on the merits of that debate, but a communication strategist must understand the spectrum of ideas, theories, or notions that a commander may embrace for action. This book does not focus on public affairs; that is a separate subset of communication and lies largely outside the scope of this work.

Endnotes

1. See, for example, L. Scott Johnson, "Toward a Functional Model of Information Warfare: A Major Intelligence Challenge," *Studies of Intelligence*, no. 1 (1997); David Stupples, "What Is Information Warfare," *World Economic Forum*, 3 December 2015; and Roger C. Molander, Andrew Riddile, and Peter A. Wilson, *Strategic Information Warfare: A New Face of War* (Santa Monica, CA: National Defense Research Institute, Rand, 1996).
2. As quoted in *Information at War: From China's Three Warfares to NATO's Narratives*, Beyond Propaganda series (London: Legatum Institute, 2015), 2.
3. Peter Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019), 108–9.
4. See Col Thomas X. Hammes (USMC), *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004).
5. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, rev. ed., 3 vols., trans. Col J. J. Graham, vol. 1 (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1918), Kindle ed.
6. Alvin H. Bernstein, "The Strategy of a Warrior-state: Rome and the Wars against Carthage, 264–201 B.C.," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, eds. Williamson Murray et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 63.
7. See James P. Farwell, *Persuasion and Power: The Art of Strategic Communication* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 67.
8. Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, 66.
9. See Douglas Waller, *Wild Bill Donovan: The Spymaster Who Created the OSS and Modern American Espionage* (New York: Free Press, 2011).
10. Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Seventh Sense: Power, Fortune, and Survival in the Age of Networks* (New York: Little, Brown, 2016), 251. Ramo sets forth an acutely insightful analysis of this era. See also Albert-László Barabási, *Linked: How Everything Is Connected to Everything Else and What It Means for Business, Science, and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); and Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2d ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). Castells is

- arguably the most influential thinker about the rise of social networks.
11. David Patrikarakos, *War in 140 Characters: How Social Media Is Reshaping Conflict in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 9.
 12. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 187. Castells wrote a multivolume work entitled *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture* (1996–98). Castells defines *networks* broadly, ranging from stock markets to the European Union, drug cartels to television networks.
 13. In his preface to the 2010 edition of *The Rise of the Network Society*, the crises that Castells cites include the global financial crises; religious fundamentalism; national, ethnic and territorial cleavers; the widespread resort to violence as a way of protest and dominations; climate change; and the growing incapacity of political institutions based on the nation-state to handle global problems and local demands.
 14. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, xviii.
 15. See Gen Stanley McChrystal (USA, Ret), *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Portfolio, 2013).
 16. Romo defines paradoxes that define challenges the U.S. faces, including the mismatch between broad national interest and ever-narrowing traditional means, decline in trust in institutions, impact of innovation, massive impact small forces can have on larger ones. *The Seventh Sense*, 76.
 17. The *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication (JP) 1, does not define information warfare. It describes but does not define either war or warfare. See *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, JP 1, incorporating change 1 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017). The Department of Defense dictionary also does not define these terms. See *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, JP 1-02 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007).
 18. James N. Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense, 2018), 2.
 19. William Head, "The Battles of Al-Fallujah: Urban Warfare and the Growth of Airpower," *Air Power History* 60, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 32–51.
 20. Robert Kaplan, "Five Days in Fallujah," *Atlantic*, July/August 2004. Kaplan was on the ground during the April operation and bore firsthand witness.
 21. The term *insurgents* is used here because al-Qaeda formed after the battle, although the man who emerged as its most famous leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, participated. He and his forces claimed responsibility for killing 27 American military personnel in and around Fallujah, according to Head, "The Battles of Al-Fallujah," 38.
 22. Head, "The Battles of Al-Fallujah."
 23. "Iraqi Governing Council Members Denounce U.S. Actions," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 9 April 2004.
 24. "Iraqi Governing Council Members Denounce U.S. Actions."
 25. Tony Karon, "What We Learn from Fallujah," *Time*, 12 April 2004.
 26. It is unclear why ground commanders' views were not communicated to the president. The author speculates that this failure was due to a combination of the president not asking the right questions and Bremer arrogating all expertise to himself while suppressing views contrary to his own.
 27. Azriel Peskowitz, "IO on the Counterinsurgency Battlefield: Three Case Studies," *Global Security Studies* 1, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 100–14; and Bing West, *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah* (New York: Bantam, 2005), 210–15.
 28. Head, "The Battles of Al-Fallujah."
 29. Dr. Joseph Strange identified the challenges that presidents Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt confronted in maneuvering to place the North and the United States, respectively, into the Civil War and World War II conflicts. This aspect of the book you are holding draws on the ideas expressed in Strange's outstanding work, *Capital "W" War: A Case for Strategic Principles of War*, Perspectives on Warfighting No. 6 (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps War College, 1998). During the 11 months prior to Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt made only four references to Japan, to keep the focus of the American public on Europe. Roosevelt always viewed Hitler, with his ambition for global domination compared to Japan's regional aspirations, as by far the greater threat. See Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War against Nazi Germany* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 40. See also Michel Fullilove, *Rendezvous with Destiny: How Franklin D. Roosevelt and Five Extraordinary Men Took America into the War and into the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), 10. Casey's fascinating book makes the point that even after Pearl Harbor, Americans were reluctant to fight, and even then, it was to extract revenge against Japan. Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 49. Indeed, newspaper coverage between December and March 1942 heavily outweighed coverage of the war against Germany, and many argued, to Roosevelt's consternation, that Japan represented the more immediate danger. Fullilove, *Rendezvous with Destiny*, 48–49. Americans showed little interest in fighting the entire German nation, whom they—and Roosevelt—distinguished from Hitler and the Nazis. Fullilove, *Rendezvous with Destiny*, 58–302.
 30. Richard M. Ketchum, *The Borrowed Years: 1938–1941* (New York: Random House, 1989), 671. Like Winston Churchill, Roosevelt underestimated Japan. Ketchum is critical of Roosevelt's sloppy strategic evaluation of Japanese intentions and capabilities, even as Japan misread American resolve. Ketchum, *The Borrowed Years*, 692. Ironically, while hoping to

- avoid war with Germany, Ketchum says that the isolationist America First policy supported a tough policy in the Pacific. Still, Roosevelt “was reluctant to put matters to the test.” Ketchum, *The Borrowed Years*, 677.
31. Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 44. Casey argues that Roosevelt lacked strong support for formal involvement in war.
 32. David Kaiser, *No End Save Victory: How FDR Led the Nation into War* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); and Nigel Hamilton, *The Mantle of Command: FDR at War, 1941–1942* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin Harcourt, 2014). Kaiser also acknowledges that the White House, in Henry Stimson’s words, conducted its “diplomatic fencing . . . so as to be sure that Japan was put into the wrong and made the first bad move—over move.” Kaiser, *No End Save Victory*, 304. The need to prepare for war and not fight until the United States was ready is a theme of Kaiser’s book, but Hamilton affirms his view.
 33. See Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, and America’s Fight Over World War II, 1939–1941* (New York: Random House, 2013), 358, 400, 404, 406–7. Olson’s book offers a lucid account of Roosevelt’s struggle against isolationists. Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 395. Citing opinion polls, she argues that Roosevelt’s views lagged behind those of Americans, although a lot of his top military commanders, including Army Gen George C. Marshall, had hoped to avoid war. Once he saw war was inevitable, Marshall shifted course and pushed hard for war preparations. While Roosevelt held back from the political fracas in Congress, Marshall led the successful fight to extend the draft and prevent the effective dissolution of the 1.4-million-man army. The U.S. House of Representatives passed the extension by a single vote, 203 to 202. See also Susan Dunn, *1940: FDR, Willkie, Lindbergh, Hitler—the Election Amid the Storm* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), which focuses on the 1940 election and illuminates the divisions on the eve of World War II; and James P. Duffy, *Lindbergh vs. Roosevelt: The Rivalry that Divided America* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2010). Duffy is more sympathetic to Charles Lindbergh.
 34. Hamilton, *The Mantle of Command*, 30.
 35. Ketchum, *The Borrowed Years*, 697. Ketchum goes on to stress that the “question was how to arrange things so that the United States could intervene [in Japanese strikes in Thailand or Malaya] without somehow seeming to be the aggressor or the instigator of the hostilities.” Although polling showed Americans supported a strong stand against Japanese imperialism, there was “little enthusiasm” for going to war to defend European colonies in Southeast Asia. Ketchum, *The Borrowed Years*, 697. Historian Joseph E. Persico argues that Roosevelt did not want or necessarily expect war with Japan and that his attention was focused on Germany. Certainly, Pearl Harbor caught Roosevelt off-guard. He thought any conflict would surface in the Far East. See Joseph E. Persico, *Roosevelt’s Centurions: FDR and the Commanders He Led to Victory in World War II* (New York: Random House, 2013), 104–5.
 36. Ketchum, *The Borrowed Years*, 702.
 37. See Strange, *Capital “W” War*. His views echo Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), 402 (also cited by Strange). For more, see Ketchum, *The Borrowed Years*; and Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932–45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).
 38. See Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 47. Historians such as Nigel Hamilton point out that had Germany not declared war on the United States, Congress would not have declared war on Germany. Not bound by the 1940 Tripartite Treaty with Japan to enter the war, Hitler foolishly believed that Pearl Harbor would occupy U.S. attention and make his own efforts to achieve victory easier. See Hamilton, *The Mantle of Command*, 88–90, 94.
 39. See Strange, *Capital “W” War*, 7. Strange provides an excellent description of Lincoln’s dilemma. He leans heavily on Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937), 135, 205–6. See also Ronald C. White Jr., *A. Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2009), 407–9. White points out that in his inaugural address, Lincoln had declared: “The government will not assail *you* [emphasis original]. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors.” In deciding to resupply Fort Sumter, Lincoln had overruled his cabinet in full recognition of what lay ahead. White quotes Lincoln as telling his friend Orville H. Browning: “The plan succeeded. They attacked Sumter—it fell, and thus did more service than it otherwise could.” White, *A. Lincoln*, 408. For an excellent strategic analysis of the Civil War, see MajGen J. F. C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961). Fuller disagrees with Strange’s argument that Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America, was baited into allowing his forces to fire the first shot at Fort Sumter. Carl Sandburg concurred in his epic four-volume study of Lincoln, *The War Years*, that Davis ordered Gen P. G. T. Beauregard to fire the first shot, leaving the timing to his discretion. Indeed, Davis’s willingness to initiate hostilities was the decisive factor in his selection as president of the Confederacy over Alexander H. Stephens, who made clear he would never issue such an order. (Stephens became vice president.) Fuller’s incisive analysis of Jefferson’s strategic blunders—focused on a combination of ill-advised offensive action and defending Richmond, VA, instead of placing major forces in Tennessee, where the North might have been stymied—should be read by any student of strategy. Historian William Trotter is equally harsh on Davis for replacing Gen Joseph E. Johnston

- as commander of Confederate forces in the western theater. Johnston's abilities are hotly debated. Trotter rates him as equal to Robert E. Lee, a brilliant tactician, who, as historian and politician Newt Gingrich has observed, employed speed, mobility, and ferocity to devastating effect. Arguably Johnston's desired approach to dealing with Union Gen William T. Sherman—a Mao-like strategy of forcing a war of attrition on Sherman—might have stymied Sherman's march to the sea. Extremely brilliant at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels, Sherman recognized the challenge when he later met with Johnston to negotiate a peace. Perhaps fortunate for Sherman, he had to face Johnston in war for a limited period. Davis despised Johnston and replaced him with the ineffective LtGen John Bell Hood at a critical point on 17 July 1864. See William R. Trotter, *Silk Flags and Cold Steel: The Civil War in North Carolina*, vol. 1, *The Piedmont* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 1988; Kindle ed., 2013). An obvious lesson is that the quality of leadership can decide who wins or loses. After the war, Sherman and Johnston remained good friends for life.
40. See Philip Dwyer, *Napoleon: The Path to Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).
 41. See: "Bonaparte at Arcole," Napoleon.org, History Website of the Fondation Napoleon; Dwyer, *Napoleon*; and Andrew Knighton, "Napoleon: The Great General Also Used Propaganda to Boost His Popularity," *War History Online*, 5 January 2017.
 42. Cathal J. Nolan, *The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). Nolan's book is a significant contribution to the study of what matters in winning wars and is splendidly written, although arguably he too lightly dismisses the impact the right generals can have on outcomes.
 43. See Nolan, *The Allure of Battle*. Nolan argues that too often people overstress the role of great commanders or "decisive" battles as determining the outcome of warfare. In his view, most wars represent a triumph of attrition over enemies, as well as superior resources and manpower.
 44. See Patrikarakos, *War in 140 Characters*, 5. While many people share and have written about the view he expresses, he articulates this notion succinctly in his study of Twitter's impact on conflict.
 45. Dr. Shalini Venturelli, "Dynamic Innovation and Evolutionary Capabilities of ISIL," in *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Strategic Multilayer Assessment Team, 2014), 35.
 46. Venturelli, "Dynamic Innovation and Evolutionary Capabilities of ISIL," 35. The entire document is an excellent commentary and required reading.
 47. Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*.
 48. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*; B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1967); Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 1997); Gen Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 2008); John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
 49. Andrew Mackay and Steve Tatham, *Behavioural Conflict: Why Understanding People and Their Motives Will Prove Decisive in Future Conflict* (Military Studies Press, 2011).
 50. Linda Robinson, *One Hundred Victories: Special Ops and the Future of American Warfare* (New York: Public Affairs/Perseus Books, 2013).
 51. What role does State Department public diplomacy and Broadcasting Board of Governors international broadcasting play in the ideas this book describes? The answer is that while in theory the State Department has the lead for strategic communication, in practice foreign service officers tend to be dismissive of it in favor of statecraft. Public diplomacy should be an important part of the department, but since the dissolution of the United States Information Agency in 1999, diplomacy plays a secondary role for career officers. The Global Engagement Center was established in 2016 to coordinate communication with the U.S. government, but thus far has enjoyed limited success, despite a hard-working and competent workforce, in part due to funding issues. In any event, this book focuses on the military's role.
 52. The focus is on those deemed most relevant to information warfare or communication strategy, but factors such as geography, ideology, and the organization of government and military institutions are important. See Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, "Introduction: On Strategy," in *The Making of Strategy*, 1–24.
 53. See *Art of Design, Student Text*, Version 2.0 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2010). It lays out the U.S. Army's notion of operational art, centered on eight topics: the objective; levels of war; operational factors (space, time, and force); the four questions pertaining to objectives and end states; sequences of action; resources; likely chance of success or failure; and theater geometry and center of gravity.

Chapter 1

UNDERSTANDING STRATEGY FOR INFORMATION WARFARE: WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

Information warfare is about communication strategy. Forging and executing effective strategy requires avoiding the trap of allowing academic definitions to obstruct the operational requirements. It is about managing information and communication technology to gain a competitive edge. It embraces more than language. It entails the use of language, action, symbols, and images to shape perceptions and influence attitudes and opinions to change behavior in the interest of achieving a desired end state or effect.

Strategy requires a well-defined, clearly understood picture of success. Influence planners must be part of developing a strategy from the outset. The key steps are:

- Define winning or success. What is the desired outcome?
- Define the specific effects to be achieved, especially as a kinetic effect may be no different than a nonkinetic one.
- Figure out where to acquire the knowledge necessary to forge a winning strategy.¹
- Develop your strategy.
- Develop plans for operations that will carry out the strategy.
- Develop the tactics—combined to form operations—that implement a strategy.
- Define metrics so that you can measure success or failure.

Define What Constitutes Winning or Success

In elections, it is easy to define success: you win or you lose. The candidate is elected or a proposition put to a referendum vote passes or fails. Only in the game of horseshoes does one receive prizes for second place.

Legislative battles often afford clear-cut goals. Either desired legislation passes, fails, or passes in an amended form. The definition of winning in a legislative battle, however, is generally pretty clear to the interested parties.

National security policies are notorious for their lack of clarity at the strategic, operational, or tactical levels and the failure to take these into account when forging strategies. Partly, this stems from the diverse agendas that drive the goals of warfare, which can make it difficult to define the goals being fought for. In forging strategy, it is vital to discern what distinctions exist among coalition partners or key players regarding their covert and overt goals.

Partner and key player goals may differ dramatically and they may, along with the means used to forge alliances, affect the complex relationships between the parties. Engagements and conflicts we are likely to encounter during the next two decades seem likely to stress the need to build coalitions among or between states, organizations, and nonstate parties. Coalition building and maintenance is a complicated, nuanced process, and information strategy lies at its heart.²

This book's introduction cites the tactical battles of Fallujah as a core example of why and how clear purpose matters. Adroit information warfare by insurgents cost Coalition forces the first battle as Marines were about to achieve military success. Coalition dominance in both spheres netted victory in the second battle. As a tactical operation, the second success was brilliant. Yet, at the operational level in Iraq, it produced serious blowback that led many to fear that the war would be lost. The strategic situation may have mandated fighting the battle, but failure to forge and execute an effective, clear-cut national strategy that anticipated and considered Iraqi reaction to battles such as this cast a shadow. Indeed, although in 2005 the U.S. Marines began turning things around in al-Anbar Province, a dismal air of gloom prevailed in many quarters.

The 2003 Iraq War itself is a case study in what happens when there is a failure at the outset to de-

fine winning. Some favored ousting then-Iraqi president Saddam Hussein to prevent his acquisition or use of weapons of mass destruction (or as the military terms them, chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosives). Lieutenant General F. John Kelly talked about establishing democracy in Iraq—a very different goal.³ The Department of State had a plan it called the *Future of Iraq*, but whatever its merits, which were debated, this plan sat on a shelf. The Department of Defense took over planning for Iraq but failed to define what constituted winning or success.⁴ Senior commanders developed sharp differences with the White House and Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld about how events in Iraq were unfolding and what success was achieved.⁵

Skeptics have worried that the U.S. effort in Afghanistan has lacked a clear definition of success or a desired end state or even a coherent strategy for winning. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has concluded that between 2001 and 2017, U.S. efforts to stabilize insecure and contested areas failed. SIGAR blasted the failure of military and civilian parties to coordinate effectively.⁶

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) defined its mission as supporting the government and growth in capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces and facilitating improvements in governance and socioeconomic development to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population.⁷ Former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates expressed the mission as to “‘deny the Taliban momentum and control, facilitate reintegration, build government capacity selectively, grow the Afghan security forces, transfer security responsibilities, and defeat al Qaeda.’”⁸ He argued that end state was vital, as Afghanistan had status as a base

for extremist jihadism where native and foreign fighters had defeated a superpower and caused its collapse at home. Gates argued that a Taliban victory would strengthen “extremist Muslim mythology and popular perceptions of who is winning and who is losing.”⁹

A joint statement in January 2013 by President Barack H. Obama and Afghan President Hamid Karzai seemed consistent with ISAF’s pronouncement.¹⁰ Others have suggested, less formally, that the United States would be satisfied to ensure that Afghanistan does not serve as a safe haven for terror networks or al-Qaeda. At the time of this writing, negotiations between the United States and the Taliban have focused on securing a withdrawal of U.S. forces in exchange for a commitment by the Taliban to prevent terrorist organizations from using the nation as a launchpad for terrorist activities elsewhere. Although presented to the American public as a negotiation for a peace accord, the Taliban has long been willing to negotiate with the United States, as long as the discussion is confined to two topics: returning Taliban prisoners and withdrawal from Afghanistan of U.S. and Coalition forces. Not surprisingly, former ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan C. Crocker, among others, has denounced the deal as a surrender.¹¹ Ironically, there is no evidence that even should the Taliban try to deliver on such a commitment that it has the power to do so in a nation with a large number of competitors for power.

One aspect of the Afghanistan quagmire—a war that has gone on longer than both World Wars and Korea combined—has been the absence of a coherent political/military/diplomatic strategy for winning.¹²

The SIGAR report sharply criticized the failure of U.S. military and civilian parties to coordinate effectively. It blasted the U.S. government for failing

to forge or execute a cohesive strategy for allocating military or civilian resources. In short, there was never a workable, defined strategy for winning.¹³

It bears stressing: a clear definition of the mission and the desired outcome, tactically, operationally, and strategically—bearing in mind that tactical units like special operations forces (SOF) often create strategic effects—directly affects the narrative, story, theme, and messages that govern and drive what is done, when, and how.

Determine Where to Acquire Necessary Knowledge

Figuring out where to acquire the knowledge to forge a winning information strategy is vital. World War II planning offers a classic example; the Iraq War provides a modern one.

- **World War II:** President Roosevelt’s Army chief of staff, George C. Marshall, appointed Lieutenant Colonel (later general) Albert C. Wedemeyer to develop the Victory Program in 1941, which became the blueprint for how to defeat Nazi Germany. Wedemeyer’s first task was to find out where he could find the information required to create the program. He succeeded. Wedemeyer’s imagination and disciplined effort made a difference.¹⁴
- **Iraq:** General Petraeus needed to divide his time among various political activities to gain critical knowledge that enabled him to make and implement decisions. For example, he spent 30 percent of his time with Iraqi leaders, 30 percent in the field, 10 percent at headquarters, and 30 percent on matters relating to Congress and the executive branch in Washington.¹⁵

Define Your Strategy

Military, information operations, and strategy expert and retired U.S. Army special operations officer Jack C. Guy, who currently serves on the faculty of the Joint Special Operations University, thinks of strategy this way: “strategy equals ends plus ways plus means.”¹⁶ A U.S. Army War College publication states that “strategy is about *how* (way or concept) leadership will use the *power* (means or resources) available to the state to exercise control over sets of circumstances and geographic locations to achieve *objectives* (ends) that support state interests. Strategy provides direction for the coercive or persuasive use of this power to achieve specified objectives.”¹⁷ The means include, as Guy points out, the essential elements of power such as diplomacy, information, military, and economics (DIME), “but the key is the objective or the ends.”¹⁸

There are other definitions to think about. B. H. Liddell Hart famously defined strategy as “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy.”¹⁹ In that view, invading Normandy was a strategy for defeating Germany in World War II.

Clausewitz, whose classic work *On War* is heavy on philosophy, is more often quoted than illuminating.²⁰ He states, “Tactics is the theory of the use of military forces in combat. Strategy is the theory of the use of combatants for the object of war.”²¹

Clausewitz focused on victory, not peace. He adhered to Napoleon’s view on victory, as well, perhaps forgetting that Napoleon wound up on Saint Helena in the South Atlantic. He agreed that strategy is an instrument of policy.²² His conception of grand strategy related to his views on the center of gravity: a point in the enemy’s organism—military, political, social, etc.—that if lost or defeated, collapses the enemy’s national will. In his general principles of war, strategy aims to defeat an ene-

my’s center of gravity, which forms the basis of an opponent’s power at the operational, strategic, or political levels.²³

Clausewitz considers strategy in the context of three objectives for war: (1) defeat the enemy’s armed force; (2) gain possession of the enemy army’s material elements; and (3) gain public opinion.²⁴ Where Clausewitz stands out is in articulating his holy trinity of principles that determine the outcome of warfare: “passion, chance, and reason.”²⁵ Passion, including hatred and animosity, is a characteristic of the people. Chance and probability fall into the realm of the commander and their army; the quality of reason (political purpose), to which war is subordinate, is primarily the concern of government.²⁶ As King’s College, University of London, professor David Betz points out, “war itself has not changed,” although changes in technology have complicated its dynamics.²⁷

Critics such as Major General J. F. C. Fuller argue that Clausewitz focuses too much on violence rather than what should be the real end of conflict: the achievement of peace.²⁸ Still, Clausewitz acknowledges that political objectives should determine the aim of military force and the effort to be made, although he saw war and politics as parallel as well as separate but related activities.²⁹

Commentators such as B. H. Liddell Hart suggest that Clausewitz’s insistence on destruction of the enemy no matter what is easy to misconstrue. Hart declares, “The object in war is to attain a better peace—even if only from your own point of view.”³⁰

Colonel Thomas X. Hammes places the debate about strategic purpose in the context of Fourth-Generation Warfare (4GW). In his view, that unfolds over a timeline that exceeds the duration of a single event and is rooted in the understanding of a strategic situation. Fourth-Generation Warfare’s

aim shifts away from the destruction of enemy forces to influencing political decisions. Hammes argues that it is

to convince the enemy's political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit. It is an evolved form of insurgency. Still rooted in the fundamental precept that superior political will, when properly employed, can defeat greater economic and military power, 4GW makes use of society's networks to carry on its fight. Unlike previous generations, it does not attempt to win by defeating the enemy's military forces. Instead . . . it directly attacks the minds of enemy decision makers to destroy the enemy's political will.³¹

Retired Israeli Defense Forces Brigadier General Shimon Naveh views strategic campaigns as a "complex of operations and actions, aimed at accomplishing a strategic goal. . . . The campaign, like the theatre, is related to a comprehensive aim and a defined framework of time, space, and force."³² Strategy allocates resources and provides a framework for articulating operations and tactics that achieve defined strategic aims. Naveh's approach is sophisticated and nuanced.

Naveh argues not for destruction of an enemy, but inflicting "operational shock" that defeats an enemy's ability to achieve its aims and knocks out its operational equilibrium. Successful operations attack the enemy's center of gravity by identifying exact points of enemy strength and weakness; creating operational vulnerabilities; and exploiting those through maneuvering strikes.³³

Chinese Colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui echo that argument in contending that information warfare needs to focus on a maximum point of impact through the choice, timing, and combination of

a strategy's dominant orientation, spheres of operation, tools, means, and directions.³⁴ In their view, future strategy—including information warfare—needs to reimagine the scope of dominant tools available to achieve the ends of warfare in seeking to secure desirable outcomes other than physical destruction of an enemy. As one looks over the horizon, one cannot rule out kinetic conflict between states. But as the Chinese strategists ably observe, state aggression may well prove better deterred or defeated by economic, diplomatic, and other nonkinetic strategies and tactics.

Naveh's notion applies to information warfare, which aims to defeat the enemy's ability to achieve its goals. Destruction may be a goal of warfare. Savvy commentators like British general Rupert Smith draw a distinction between confrontation and conflict. Confrontation aims to change an enemy's intention. Conflict aims for destruction.³⁵ In his view, use of force may instead aim for containment, deterrence, coercion, or destruction.³⁶ Smith argues well.

The point of using force may or may not be destruction. But as Naveh points out, strategically, destruction may not be an achievable or intended outcome of conflict. Naveh argues that victory is better achieved by frustrating enemy capabilities and the adversary's ability to achieve its aims. Smith recognizes that where there is war among people—Bosnia and Iraq offer good examples—"information, not firepower, is the currency upon which it is run; and information is neither purely military nor purely political."³⁷ From that perspective, "military force can only achieve tactical results."³⁸ What matters is the political objective. Achieving that requires intelligent integration of information strategy.

One may leave to military theorists different definitions of the object of war. What is important for communication strategists is to understand how

a commander views it. Information strategy supports or is supported by kinetic activity. But while its tools—including television, radio, print, or social media—may be employed as weapons and provide the trigger for destruction, most information warfare does not, per se, cause physical destruction.³⁹ There is a theoretical bog here that theorists revel in. Avoid it. You do not need to go there to devise effective communication strategy.

Internationally respected political consultant Ronald A. Faucheux offers a practical view of communication strategy that applies squarely to how you develop one. It is, he says, “how you position yourself and allocate resources to maximize your strengths and minimize your weaknesses in achieving goals. It is a concept. It is a way to win.”⁴⁰

In short, a strategy describes concisely how you will achieve your strategic goals. In the end, your strategy is your roadmap to winning.⁴¹

What Are Operations and Tactics?

Discussions on military tactics can become complicated. Let us keep the analysis to plain speaking. An *operation* is “a sequence of tactical actions with a common purpose or unifying theme.”⁴² T. E. Lawrence’s classic definition of *tactics* remains valid. While strategy sets goals, allocates resources, and defines a timeline, operations develop campaigns that tie a series of battles together to achieve strategic goals.⁴³ Tactics are “the means towards a strategic end, the particular steps of its staircase.”⁴⁴ They are specific actions taken to implement a strategy. Tactics are the battles: the techniques, procedures, and actions for fighting.⁴⁵

One may forge strategy at the tactical level. The Second Battle of Fallujah illustrates that well. It was a local conflict taking place within a large national theater of war. That is distinct from grand strategy, which views the achievement of strategic

objectives—success or winning—from a broader perspective. In Iraq, the grand strategy required a clear plan of how all the elements—all operations—are integrated to support a strategy that achieves national policy aims.

Information warfare takes place at all three levels: strategic, operational, and tactical. The role of media cuts across all of them. What happens tactically may be broadcast across different operational theaters internationally. Events in Fallujah affected how Iraqis nationally felt toward Coalition efforts and the conflict; they affected international opinion. The kinetics may have a local effect, but those same actions, especially in what Rupert Smith terms *war among the people*—conflicts that entwine combatants and civilians—will gain wider coverage and the effects will extend beyond the tactical level.

Forging effective communication strategy requires thinking through effects in all three dimensions, not merely at the tactical or operational level. Today’s battlespace exists in living rooms around the world. How events are portrayed in traditional and social media, opinion in a wider operational area, and international opinion, can affect the outcome of a battle. The first battle for Fallujah in April 2004 offers a classic illustration, as explicated further in chapter two.

Endnotes

1. Charles E. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941*, CMH Pub 93-10 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1992). This work explains how then-Army major Albert C. Wedemeyer gathered the information to frame problems, propose a strategy, and devise concepts of operations across multiple theaters to defeat Germany. Ironically, Wedemeyer made no apology for his pro-German perspectives, for which Gen George Marshall shielded him from criticism.

2. Cols Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui insightfully argue that the 1991 Gulf War—Operation Desert Storm—amassed an international Coalition that came together for very distinct goals. They note that warfare agendas in prior eras exhibited greater clarity between overt and covert goals. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing, China: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999), 27–28. Note that the diversity of players who can affect the outcome of a modern conflict is far greater and their influence may be manifested in complex combinations of dimensions to affect the outcomes.
3. Richard H. Shultz Jr., *The Marines Take Anbar: The Four-Year Fight against Al Qaeda* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 33. See also George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005), 58–59.
4. Shultz, *The Marines Take Anbar*, 34–35. U.S. Central Command commander Army Gen Tommy R. Franks blew off the idea of post-war planning, referring people to Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz.
5. Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 37–40.
6. *Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan* (Arlington, VA: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2018).
7. "ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan (2001–2014) (Archived)," North Atlantic Treaty Organization (website), 1 September 2015.
8. Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Borzoi Books/Knopf, 2014), 375, loc. 6792 of 11052, Kindle.
9. Gates, *Duty*, 374, loc. 6781 of 11052, Kindle.
10. "Joint Statement by President Obama and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, January 11, 2013," GovInfo.gov.
11. Ryan Crocker, "I Was Ambassador to Afghanistan. This Deal Is a Surrender," *Washington Post*, 29 January 2019.
12. This point is among the lessons learned in the SIGAR report *Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*. SIGAR's report is a blistering indictment of failed U.S. and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) efforts.
13. *Stabilization*.
14. See Gen Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958), in which he describes how he accomplished the task. Wedemeyer had a key advantage: aside from graduating from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, he spent time at the German war college Kriegsakademie in Berlin between 1936 and 1938, gaining crucial insights into German military strategic thinking. See also John J. McLaughlin, *General Albert C. Wedemeyer: America's Unsung Strategist in World War II* (Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2012); and Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*. Ironically, like many U.S. military officers, including Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, Wedemeyer was an isolationist who not only opposed U.S. entry into World War II but was unapologetically pro-German and anti-Semitic. See Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 100, 363, 414. Still, Olson credits Wedemeyer for his brilliant and "stunningly prescient analysis that ended up serving as the basic blueprint for U.S. military planning." Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 415. It bears noting that Gen Marshall protected isolationists, including Gen Stanley D. Embick, who opposed aid to Britain and U.S. participation in the war prior to Pearl Harbor and made him the Army's most influential strategist. Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 447. Army Col Truman Smith, a personal advisor to Marshall who had served as the U.S. military attaché to Berlin, opposed war with Germany and disliked Roosevelt to the end. Initial supporters of America First policies included future presidents John F. Kennedy and Gerald R. Ford, future Supreme Court justice Potter Stewart, and many others who changed their views once war commenced.
15. See, for example, Mark Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 249.
16. Jack Guy, interview with author, June 2013, hereafter Jack Guy interview.
17. Harry R. Yarger, "Toward a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the Army War College Strategy Model," in J. Boone Bartholomees Jr., ed., *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, vol. 1, *Theory of War and Strategy*, 5th ed. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2012), 45. For more on national security strategy, see Steven Heffington, Adam Oler, and David Tretler, eds., *A National Security Strategy Primer* (Washington, DC: National War College, National Defense University, 2019).
18. Jack Guy interview.
19. Hart, *Strategy*, 335.
20. A view also expressed by J. F. C. Fuller: "As the book stands—incomplete and unrevised—it is largely a jumble of essays, memoranda, and notes set together in no very precise form." Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*, 60.
21. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Col J. J. Graham (Mobile Reference), loc. 416 of 4382, Kindle.
22. The often-quoted language, which is not dissected in this book about information strategy, examines war in the context of an international environment in which struggle predominates. Clausewitz states that war changes like a chameleon depending on the circumstances, but consists of a "wonderful trinity, composed of the original violence of its elements, hatred and animosity, which may be looked upon as blind instinct; of the play of probabilities and chance, which make it a free activity of the soul; and of the

- subordinate nature of a political instrument, by which it belongs purely to reason." Clausewitz, *On War*, loc. 644 of 4382, Kindle.
23. Graham, commenting on Clausewitz, *On War*, loc. 4343 of 4382, Kindle. See also Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*, 69.
 24. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*, 69.
 25. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New York: Knopf, 1993) as quoted in David Betz, *Carnage and Connectivity: Landmarks in the Decline of Conventional Military Power* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), 7.
 26. Betz, *Carnage and Connectivity*, 12.
 27. Betz, *Carnage and Connectivity*, 4.
 28. Betz, *Carnage and Connectivity*, 76. Clausewitz acknowledges that war is an instrument of policy, but his theme is the destruction of the enemy. If an enemy is destroyed, there is not much room for political maneuver. Military strategy must serve defined political ends, not the other way around, although in practice, political dithering in Washington results in de facto delegation to the military of policy making by default, which is not necessarily the most prudent approach, no matter how capable our commanders. That happened in Iraq and Afghanistan.
 29. See Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 59–61. Clausewitz, *On War*, loc. 467 of 4382, Kindle: "[T]he political object, as the original motive of the war, will be the standard for determining both the aim of the military force and also the amount of effort to be made."
 30. Hart, *Strategy*, 366.
 31. Col Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (Saint Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004), 208.
 32. Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, 12–13.
 33. Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, 18–19.
 34. Ling and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, 141–44.
 35. Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 189. They emphasize especially the importance of moving beyond military operations to achieve warfighting objectives, as nonmilitary operations to achieve military objectives may prove more powerful. Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 144.
 36. Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 382.
 37. Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 377. Smith astutely observes that future wars will likely fall into this category, spurred by media coverage.
 38. Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 378.
 39. See, for example, Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*. In Rwanda, radio was used effectively as a weapon, directly triggering murder. The Taliban in Afghanistan and al-Qaeda in Iraq used it indirectly to inspire violence.
 40. Ron Faucheux, as quoted in Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, 155.
 41. Less helpful is the Pentagon's definition of strategy: "A prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and / or multinational objectives." *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, JP 1-02 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2010 [as amended January 2011]), 365. In his witty, provocative book, *The New Rules of War*, National Defense University professor Sean McFate takes a stab at defining grand strategy at a conceptual level. Sean McFate, *The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder* (New York: William Morrow, 2019), 74. His suggestion that "grand strategy is a policy that governs how a country behaves in international relations" comes up short. McFate, *The New Rules of War*, 77. But his description of the characteristics of certain grand strategies, such as those adopted by ancient Rome and Britain, is worth reading.
 42. *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 174.
 43. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed. (1929), s.v. "T. E. Lawrence," and Lawrence's commentary on guerrilla warfare commissioned specially for that edition.
 44. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed. (1929), s.v. "T. E. Lawrence," on guerrilla warfare.
 45. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*, 215.

Chapter 2

KNOW YOUR STRATEGIC SITUATION

It seems obvious that you need to understand your strategic position and the strategic situation. Modern and ancient history, however, is full of examples of leaders who failed to do so.

Consider these questions when assessing your strategic situation:

- What is happening in the theater of operations?
- What dynamics drive the strategic situation?
- Who has the momentum and why?
- Where is the momentum headed?
- What is your narrative, story theme, and message?
- Who are the target audiences?
- What language should be used to express the above?
- What channels and messengers should be used?

Historical Examples

Malaysian Emergency of 1948–60. During the 1950s, Sir Robert Thompson, who served on the staff of the British director of operations, helped defeat an anticolonial-driven insurgency led by the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA), the military arm of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). A key to Britain's successful communication strategy lay in the recognition that Malays wanted independence from Britain. Thompson's campaign recognized that and promised Malays their independence. The decision proved a decisive factor in a sophisticated strategy that separated insurgents from the population as part of a successful counterinsurgency conflict.¹

Lesson: Successful strategy aligns messages with an understanding of culture, national aims, and popular aspirations. The British understood what the population desired and tailored their campaign strategy to meet those desires.

Battle of the Little Bighorn. General George Armstrong Custer's ill-fated battle on 25–26 June 1876 against the Sioux and Cheyenne in eastern Montana has inspired an avalanche of books, art, and commentary. In addition to its relevance to modern information strategy as a demonstration of the failure to understand an adversary's culture and a strategic situation, this historical tragedy is also used today by adversaries such as al-Qaeda in their propaganda to discredit the United States in its efforts to counter violent extremism.² Little Bighorn illustrates important lessons.

Lessons:

1. Recognize when circumstances mandate that an enemy will fight.

The historian Evan S. Connell has remarked that Custer's Last Stand at Little Bighorn "has been resurrected so often that General Custer is beginning to rival Lazarus."³ Perceptions differ on how the U.S. troops expected the tribes to respond. Historian Nathaniel Philbrick was writing about American Indians, not Iraq, but his point applies to both cultures. Philbrick points out that the U.S. government misjudged how Native American tribes would respond to the destruction of their buffalo herds, upon which they depended for food and sustenance, and to demands that tribes give up their lands and move to reservations so that Americans could exploit the discovery of gold in the Black Hills. The loss of buffalo and the land they roamed posed an existential threat to tribes' survival.⁴ That many white pioneers and settlers simply butchered buffalo for the fun of it intensified the tribes' volatility.⁵

It was a dark chapter in U.S. history. The government entered into 354 treaties with Native American tribes, and it broke every one.⁶ Civil War icons such as Philip H. Sheridan declared, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead," a statement later made famous in the epigram that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian."⁷ He did not stand alone. General William Tecumseh Sherman also called for the extermination of indigenous peoples.⁸ Newspapers echoed the sentiment. President Ulysses S. Grant turned a blind eye to the slaughter. Why would any U.S. officer or soldier expect the native tribes to perceive them or the federal government

as anything except deeply hostile to their future? Ironically, that was arguably not Custer's view, but he did not make policy.⁹ Custer opposed extermination, although he favored opening up the Black Hills for prospecting and extinguishing the Sioux's title to the land granted by an 1868 treaty.¹⁰

Compare lack of understanding of Native American tribes' concerns to Paul Bremer's failure to grasp that disbanding the Iraqi Army and banning even many school teachers from the ability to earn a livelihood and feed their families would alienate them and help foster insurrection. It is a mistake repeated time and again. Japanese Imperial Navy admiral Isoroku Yamamoto made it in supporting the attack on Pearl Harbor. General Douglas MacArthur made it in failing to anticipate that the Chinese would intervene in Korea.¹¹

2. Ensure that a communication strategy is rooted in realistic expectations.

The federal government wanted the Sioux to become farmers, despite the fact that the tribe had no agricultural tradition.¹² That ignorance echoed that which Rajiv Chandrasekaran attributed to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Afghanistan. USAID ignored savvy counsel that one could move farmers off poppy into cotton, which would grow in Afghan soil and be profitable. Instead, USAID pigheadedly insisted they grow other crops. But the terrain was wholly unsuited and economic prospects were limited. Not surprisingly, farmers refused, and USAID efforts failed.¹³ **Key lesson: target audience analysis will provide insight into what the audience wants and will motivate it to behave**

in a manner that helps achieve a desired objective or outcome.

3. Do not allow pride to drive your strategy.

Custer's decision to divide his forces has been debated. The debate about military strategy lies in a different venue; it is his communication strategy that is relevant here, as it was integral to his view on warfare. He boasted that "his regiment could whip and defeat every Indian on the plains."¹⁴ Custer's main tactic was the cavalry charge. Many believe that charging blindly into the fray was rooted in a vain belief that he was lucky, coupled with sheer bravado. Nathaniel Philbrick comments that charging a large village such as the one at Little Bighorn "makes no logical sense. But cavalry charges are not about logic; they are about audacity, about using panic and fear to convince the enemy that you are stronger than they are, even if that is not even close to being the case."¹⁵ Music accompanied this display of bravado. Custer always brought a band along with him into combat.¹⁶ As the cavalry charged, the band struck up "Garry Owen"—his version of shock and awe.

Apparently, Custer did not expect the Lakota Sioux and Cheyenne warriors to stand and fight, ignoring stern warnings from his scouts.¹⁷ Driven by hubris and failing to think things through, he got himself and his entire troop—approximately 220 soldiers (the exact number is not clear)—killed.

Similarly, the U.S. decision to wage the first battle for Fallujah was driven by the hubris that ignored sage advice from U.S. Marines who knew the score, rather than by a cohesive strategy that prepared and shaped the battlefield, enabled victory, and looked

ahead to what seizure of the city would achieve.¹⁸

4. Do not be seduced by myths of heroism or invincibility.

Errol Flynn's movie version of Custer's Last Stand and most paintings that memorialize the event falsely portray the battle and its participants. Little Bighorn was a debacle built on a policy of ethnic extermination, and Custer was a disgrace, not a hero. Our enemies are ruthless in distorting the truth about the United States and its values. But the facts support criticism over the treatment of the tribes—a sentiment perhaps voiced most vehemently by the tribes themselves.¹⁹

5. Understand what the enemy is saying.

Custer did not grasp the realities of communication with an adversary. He had smoked a peace pipe with Cheyenne warriors led by Medicine Arrow and Little Robe and promised he had come in peace. A skeptical Medicine Arrow warned Custer that they would kill him should he break his word.²⁰ **Lesson: it pays not merely to hear but also to listen.**

Historian Nathaniel Philbrick argues that while Sitting Bull was renowned for his strength and desire to resist the settlers, "at the Little Bighorn, he [Sitting Bull] did not want to fight. He wanted to talk. . . . As he recognized . . . our children are best served not by a self-destructive blaze of glory, but by the hardest path of all: survival and accommodation."²¹ Custer did not grasp that, nor did the other generals involved in the campaign. They made no effort to try. Some may dispute Philbrick's conclusion, but if he is correct, Custer made a tragic, avoidable, and costly mistake. The point is not whether Philbrick is correct, however; historians

may argue about that. It is the questions he poses: What is the enemy's real intent, and can we achieve our objectives without kinetic engagement? Mao Zedong was right. Politics is war without bloodshed. Why fight if it can be avoided and goals still can be achieved?

The Little Bighorn and the slaughter of tribes and their food sources have special relevance today. Al-Qaeda propaganda frequently cites what U.S. policy did to its own indigenous peoples to discredit U.S. efforts to counter the organization's violent extremism. Knowing our own history is critical in enabling us to deal with some of its darker aspects.²²

Americans tend to focus on recent and current events. For others, what happened hundreds or more than a thousand years ago may hold emotionally explosive contemporary relevance. That held true in Bosnia, where different parties laid claim to land based upon dominance over it at different periods of history.²³ It is true for China.²⁴ It is true in Arab cultures, where the Crusades resonate as if they happened yesterday. It is true in Iran, which views its relations with the West through the lens of more than a century of troubled interactions.²⁵

Battle of the Teutoburg Forest. In 9 CE, Rome suffered one of its worst defeats when Germanic tribes massacred three of Rome's 28 legions. Rome was all-powerful in its world, but had a small army—between 125,000 and 150,000 soldiers. Rome did not replace the legions until Tiberius became Emperor six years later.²⁶ The debacle occurred when provincial governor Publius Quinctilius Varus allowed an ambitious German leader, Arminius—whom he supposed an ally—

to trick him into leading the legions and the civilians accompanying them deep into the Teutoburg Forest. Aside from simply misjudging the enemy, Varus failed to understand the strategic situation he had entered, presuming he was governing a peaceful province.

A contemporary Roman historian, Velleius Paterculus, recorded the Roman governor's naïveté:

When given the German command, he [Varus] went out with the quaint preconception that here was a subhuman people which would somehow prove responsive to Roman law even where it had not responded to the Roman sword. He therefore breezed in—right into the heart of Germany—as if on a picnic. . . . Meantime the Germans, a race combining maximum ferocity with supreme guile (and being born liars besides) fawned upon Varus . . . marveling at his jurisprudence and flattering him regarding his civilizing mission.²⁷

Two thousand years later, the 2003 Iraq conflict offered a parallel lesson. Larry Diamond, advisor to National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, quoted one diplomat's impression about the Americans in Baghdad's Green Zone: "What struck me about the palace was the completely self-referential character of it. It was all about us, not about them [the Iraqis]. People would walk around the palace with a mixture of venal and idealistic motives. None of them knew Iraq."²⁸

Lessons:

1. Know your enemy. Varus misjudged the interests, cultural values, aspirations, and desire for independence among the Germanic tribes. Their rebellion and fatal ambush of his legions came as a total surprise. Target audience analysis is a persistent requirement for influence operations. One lesson applicable

today is that populations are not monolithic. An analyst's insight is vital to understanding the demographic differences among target audiences so that messaging may be calibrated to each audience segment.

- 2. Presume nothing about the loyalty of ostensibly peaceful populations and calibrate communication strategy accordingly.** Varus thought that the Germanic people could be ruled as subjects of Rome. His actions taken in that misperception inspired deep hostility and motivated the people to action. He had no strategy for winning them over or keeping them peaceful. Not surprisingly, they rose up against him when his policies became rooted in oppressive rule. They lulled Varus into letting down his guard.

Varus lived 2,000 years ago, but the lesson that applied to him also applies, in its own way, to Afghanistan, where, as author Bing West points out, villages that seemed friendly and grateful one minute could turn on U.S. troops in a flash.²⁹

- 3. Communication strategy requires dependable intelligence about what the enemy is up to.** Varus failed to achieve this goal from the outset. He did not consider the Germanic people his enemy. He made foolish assumptions about the population, instead of viewing his situation with an open but skeptical perspective.

A different analogy applied in Iraq. West's study of the battles for Fallujah revealed that the insurgents lacked the command-and-control hierarchy that, for example, the Viet Cong had. They wore no uniforms, operated from their homes, and had a lack of military communications that (at least initially) could be intercepted, "yet they all know

one another."³⁰ He analogized as well to the American Indian tribes, bonded by common hatred of an enemy but launching different raids at different times for different reasons. Communication strategy must anticipate such challenges.

Modern Examples

Iraq. Nathaniel Philbrick stated the following critical question: How will a society facing changes that produce inescapable catastrophe deal with it? Fear of the future is critical to people on the verge of cataclysm. It can imbue even the most trivial incident with overwhelming significance.³¹ In Iraq, the minority population of Sunnis had long controlled the country. Ousted from control as Coalition forces toppled Saddam Hussein, Shiites violently targeted Sunnis. At the same time, Coalition Provisional Authority head Paul Bremer had banned many Sunnis from earning a living. Failure to grasp that Sunnis perceived an existential threat to their existence nearly produced military defeat for Coalition forces. Only effective Coalition outreach, commencing in al-Anbar Province, persuaded Sunnis that al-Qaeda was an unacceptable alternative and reversed the situation.

Lesson: Iraq is full of lessons. A critical one is to recognize how people in other societies and cultures will perceive how actions and events affect their well-being, prosperity, cultural integrity, or survival and how they will respond.³²

Afghanistan. Afghan politics are driven by a very complex tribal structure. Special operations veterans like Major Jim Gant have offered a cogent argument, worth studying, for why success in that culture requires winning "one tribe at a time."³³ Linda Robinson has catalogued concrete examples

of how understanding the ethnographics, tribes, villages, and key players at the local level can spell the difference between success and failure, and how achieving that was key to special operations teams successes.³⁴ Former U.S. speaker of the House Thomas Phillip “Tip” O’Neill once said that all politics is local.

Example: Special operations operators who this author interviewed all held the view that understanding the political and military dynamics of Afghanistan required a nuanced, subtle, detailed knowledge of the provinces, villages, tribes, clans, families, and key individuals who comprise a decentralized culture.

Philippines, 2013. U.S. special operations forces have played a key role in providing useful advice to the Philippine military in countering violent Islamic extremism in the southern part of the nation. Recognizing that a smaller footprint serves the interests of the United States and our Filipino partner, U.S. special operations forces have calibrated the assistance. That decision is integral to a communication strategy. It has cut off the ability of violent extremists to credibly argue that the United States occupies the country or controls the government.

Lesson: Think carefully about what degree of visibility aids or undercuts an operation. The low profile taken by U.S. special operations forces in the Philippines, ceding the lead to Filipinos, has worked well. It has insulated both parties from enemy propaganda that would undercut U.S. aid by decrying foreign intervention, and it has bolstered the strength of the Philippine government.

Yemen. Yemen’s president Ali Abdullah Saleh permitted the United States to strike at al-Qaeda

operatives with General Atomics MQ-1 Predator drones inside Yemen, providing the United States kept quiet about it. In November 2002, U.S. military forces tracked down al-Qaeda leader Abu Ali al-Harethi in the northern province of Marib and killed him with AGM-114 Hellfire missiles. Arguably, al-Harethi was the mastermind behind the USS *Cole* (DDG 67) bombing.³⁵ Unfortunately, a high-ranking U.S. defense official praised the strike on CNN. A furious Saleh felt this revelation made him look hypocritical. He ordered the United States to cease Predator operations.³⁶ The failure to grasp the fragile, explosive, fluid state of Yemeni politics cost the United States eight years, until 2010, when Saleh lost power and the Predators swung back into action.³⁷

Lesson: Gear strategy to a realistic assessment of what an ally finds politically plausible. Saleh faced a complex political situation in Yemen. In his view, visible U.S. action lacked a political foundation among Yemenis and could prove destabilizing. He was understandably upset when a U.S. official breached a U.S. commitment to stay below radar. Do not ask political or military allies in another country to provide more support than is politically feasible. Control information as part of a strategic communication plan.

Ethiopia, 2006. The United States funded warlords in Somalia on the theory that they opposed al-Qaeda and could help keep it at bay. But the warlords themselves lacked credibility and aroused fierce hostility among Somalis.

Lesson: Be careful about the friends you choose. Backing the warlords complicated rather than solved the problem the United States needed to address.

Endnotes

1. See Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1966). Thompson's five basic principles of counterinsurgency have achieved the status of catechism. See also Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, which discusses various insurgencies, including Malaya.
2. Younus Abdullah Muhammad declared in the al-Qaeda propaganda publication *Jihad Recollections*: "America's role as an imperialist nation started at their very root with the genocide of an entire indigenous population, the American Indians." Younus Abdullah Muhammad, "The Predications of the Conquering of Rome," *Jihad Recollections* 1 (April 2009), as quoted in "Younus Abdulla Muhammad—Contributor," on "The Life and Legacy of American Al-Qaeda Online Jihad Pioneer Samir Khan," MEMRI Jihad and Terrorism Studies Project, Western Defense Studies Institute (website), 29 September 2012.
3. Evan S. Connell, *Son of the Morning Star: Custer and the Little Bighorn* (San Francisco, CA: North Point Press, 1984), 361.
4. At one point, 8 million buffalo roamed the prairies. They were hunted nearly to extinction before the federal government facilitated their comeback in the twentieth century.
5. Larry McMurtry, *Custer* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 39.
6. McMurtry, *Custer*, 94.
7. Connell, *Son of the Morning Star*, 179–80; and Nathaniel Philbrick, *The Last Stand: Custer, Sitting Bull and the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (New York: Peguin, 2010), 287.
8. In a letter to his brother, John Sherman, Gen Sherman declared: "The more Indians we can kill this year the fewer we will need to kill the next, because the more I see of the Indians the more convinced I am that they must either all be killed or maintained as a species of pauper." William T. Sherman to John Sherman, 23 September 1868, Rachel Sherman Thorndike, ed., *The Sherman Letters* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), 321–22. Historian James Donovan had no doubt that Sheridan and Sherman favored extermination. See James Donovan, *A Terrible Glory: Custer and the Little Bighorn—The Last Great Battle of the American West* (New York: Little, Brown, 2008), 91. Sherman's role in the Civil War is fraught with irony. His "march to the sea" dealt a lethal psychological blow to Southern hopes. No one disputes his remarkable ability. His strategy to conduct psychological warfare to break the will of the South and the operational and tactical imagination he employed to carry out his strategy mark him as perhaps the North's top general, along with another master strategist, Ulysses S. Grant. See Hart, *Strategy*, 149–55; and Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson and the Americans* (New York: Vintage, 1993). However, Sherman's tactic of conducting violent war on innocent civilians arguably satisfies the modern definition of *terrorism*—perpetrating violence on civilians for political aims. See Sherman's letter to Henry W. Halleck declaring: "We are not only fighting armies, but a hostile people, and must make old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war, as well as their organized armies." William T. Sherman to Henry W. Halleck, 24 December 1864, Civil War Era NC (website), accessed 24 May 2019; and Trotter, *Silk Flags and Cold Steel*, loc. 3362–3373 of 6371, Kindle. Sherman critics charge that Sherman did not believe in racial equality and refused to allow African Americans to serve as soldiers in his army. See Michael Fellman, "A White Man's War," *Civil War Times Magazine*, 19 November 2009; and Steven Hancock, "William T. Sherman: Hero or Villain?," *Civil War Diary* (blog), 3 September 2011. But Stanley P. Hirshson, *The White Tecumseh: A Biography of General William T. Sherman* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1997) disputes Fellman's view and argues that he was not racist. Sherman's champions argue that no matter what, his attitudes should be judged in the context of the times and that while wreaking physical destruction, Sherman's campaign was relatively bloodless. Certainly, once hostilities were concluded, he was gracious toward Gen Joseph E. Johnston in offering terms that were rejected in Washington by Lincoln's successors. See Royster, *The Destructive War*; and Noah Andre Trudeau, *Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea* (New York: Harper, 2008). Royster's fine book offers a very sympathetic account of Sherman and his career. He notes that sentiment among many Northerners toward the South was harsh. An Ohio legislator proposed "one million dollars to pay for the scalps of rebels." Royster, *The Destructive War*, 79, emphasis original. Senator John Sherman declared on 9 July 1862: "you cannot conduct warfare against savages unless you become half-savage yourself." Royster, *The Destructive War*, 81. "Talk of regeneration," Royster wrote, "included talk of extermination and depopulation." Royster, *The Destructive War*, 81. In Royster's view, a combination of Northern opinion and difficult fighting to take Vicksburg, MS, persuaded Sherman that breaking the South's will to fight required harsh measures, although his "march to the sea" inflicted mainly damage on property, not civilian deaths. He justified war on civilians on the theory that all Southerners—civilians and military—bore a "collective responsibility" for the war. Royster, *The Destructive War*, 117. At the outset of the war, Sherman had been teaching in Louisiana. His objection to the Confederacy lay not in opposition to slavery (Royster, *The Destructive War*, 90, 109), but what he viewed as a treasonous desertion of the union. The weakness in Royster's account is that he glosses over Sherman's extremist views toward the Indian tribes. Trudeau argues that

Sherman's destruction has been exaggerated in a detailed account of a well-executed campaign and desire to restore postwar normality. Sherman's brutally extremist views toward the tribes, however, seem evident. Grant was complicit in the war against the Native Americans, although excellent historians such as Jean Edward Smith make a strong case that he is vastly underrated. See Jean Edward Smith, *Grant* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), Kindle. Smith praises his "peace policy" toward American Indians (*Grant*, loc. 9936 of 21625, Kindle), and argues that he restrained Gens Sherman and Phil Sheridan and was conciliatory (*Grant*, loc. 10926–10937 of 21625, Kindle), putting a peace policy in place by 1869 (*Grant*, loc. 11087 of 21625, Kindle). Smith feels Custer's battle and corruption in the Indian Service did much to undermine a humanitarian bent in Grant. Smith, *Grant*, loc. 11367 of 21625, Kindle.

9. Connell, *Son of the Morning Star*, 241. Connell's view is that whatever Custer's opinions, he did not make policy. His job was to follow orders. A review of what Custer said and did makes it hard to take a benign view of him. He was cold-hearted and cruel to his own soldiers. Many of his colleagues disliked him. Gen Sheridan used him but did not trust him. His attack on Black Kettle in 1868 at Washita was particularly telling. He led a murderous assault on a Cheyenne camp, killing women and children, then he ordered the senseless slaughter of more than 700 horses. Philbrick quotes a Cheyenne woman as remembering the very "human cries of the ponies, many of which were disabled but not killed by the gunfire." Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, 136. See also McMurtry, *Custer*, 64–65. Ironically, in 2013, the roles seem to reverse themselves, as American Indian leaders supported the slaughter of wild horses in New Mexico, while former Governor William B. Richardson and conservationists like Robert Redford battled to save them. See Fernanda Santos, "On Fate of Wild Horses, Stars and Indians Spar," *New York Times*, 10 August 2013. As to Custer, the romantic aura ascribed to him in film does not survive scrutiny. His men shot deserters who tried to surrender, while Custer himself shot a Confederate officer during the Civil War who tried to surrender. Apparently, he wanted—and kept—the dead officer's expensive saddle and sword and his fine thoroughbred horse. Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, 30–31. As with Sheridan and Sherman, a key quality that stands out about him is bloodlust.
10. Donovan, *A Terrible Glory*, 90.
11. See David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007); and Stanley Sandler, *The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 99–100.
12. McMurtry, *Custer*, 222.
13. See Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War within the War for Afghanistan* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 200–4, 330.
14. Donovan, *A Terrible Glory*, 219. See also Connell, *Son of the Morning Star*, 276. Connell poses the question of why Custer thought he could achieve with one regiment what an army would have difficulty accomplishing. He suggests that Custer trusted too much to luck.
15. Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, 172. See also Connell, *Son of the Morning Star*, 278–79.
16. McMurtry, *Custer*, 67.
17. McMurtry, *Custer*, 7. Nor, McMurtry writes, did the Indians expect an attack.
18. Bing West, *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah* (New York: Bantam, 2005), 60.
19. See, for example, Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Bantam, 1972); and William S. E. Coleman, *Voices of Wounded Knee* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). For a critical examination of how foreign publics may perceive the United States and its values, and the sense that American films and television not only transmit an ideology that may incite hostility, but are themselves ideology, see Ziauddin Sardar and Marryl Wyn Davie, *Why Do People Hate America?* (Cambridge, UK: Icon Books, 2003). The issue here is not whether one agrees with their views, but to comprehend and be able to address them, and to factor in criticisms of the United States, in forging communication strategy.
20. Medicine Arrow famously kicked ash on Custer's boots, signifying either a warning, contempt, or a curse—or all three. See Connell, *Son of the Morning Star*, 202; and Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, 123.
21. Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, 312. In 1890, Sitting Bull was murdered by police at Wounded Knee, SD. Philbrick quotes Lakota tribe members from Sitting Bull's village as stating years later that had Custer simply asked for a council instead of attacking, "he could have led them all into the agency [reservation] without a fight." Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, 144.
22. Not helpful is the romantic myth that has grown up around Custer. Contemporary historians laud him as a hero. Bad poetry by Walt Whitman and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and paintings or illustrations by William Cory, John Mulvany, and F. Otto Becker inaccurately depicted a glorious last stand by bluecoats led by a gallant leader with flowing locks, portrayed by Errol Flynn in the 1941 movie *They Died with Their Boots On*. Actually, Custer's hair, as Connell points out, was short; it was too hot to wear Army bluecoats; and the motley group he commanded "might be mistaken for a limping drunken mob of itinerant farmhands." Connell, *Son of the Morning Star*, 362. Instead, history is left with an image, as Connell puts it, of "fantastically painted redskins whirling in barbaric splendor around a disciplined unit of whites in uniform blue coats." Connell, *Son of the Morning Star*, 356.
23. See Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

24. Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin, 2011). Kissinger observes that Mao Zedong was facile in citing ancient Chinese history to analogize to current strategy.
25. The history of the Iranian relations with the West is too complex for this book. Suffice to say the picture is more complicated than modern media suggests. One might start in 1872, when, “for a paltry sum, [baron Julius de Reuter] acquired the exclusive right to run [Iran’s] industries, irrigate its farmland, exploit its mineral resources, develop its railroad and streetcar lines, establish its national bank, and print its currency.” Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 31. George N. Curzon, then a member of British Parliament, described this as “the most complete and extraordinary surrender of the entire industrial resources of a kingdom into foreign hands that has probably ever been dreamt of, much less accomplished, in history.” Honorable George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, 1892), 480. One can examine the role of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), formed in 1908, and its impact on Iranian culture and politics. See Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men*, 48–49; and Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 24. By 1914, the British government had control of APOC, and left Iran with a small 16-percent royalty on net profits, which inspired deep bitterness. See Dr. Mohammad Malek, “Oil in Iran between the Two World Wars,” Iran Chamber Society (website), 10 July 2008. Iranians drew the lesson, continuing through the present, which in no way justifies its vicious hostility toward the existence of Israel, that the West would always treat Iran and its citizens as pawns to control oil while trampling on Iranian interests and sovereignty. World War II persuaded Iranians that the West would employ military force to abuse Iranian sovereignty—also a complicated issue, as Reza Shah Pahlavi had flirted with the Nazis, prompting the Allies to oust him. Iranians would argue he acted out of nationalism, not empathy for Germany. The U.S.-backed coup that ousted the only democratically elected leader of Iran in more than a hundred years, Mohammad Mosaddeq, directly led the 1979 revolution and its aftermath. See Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men*, chapter 5; Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*; and James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).
26. Barry Strauss, *Ten Caesars: Roman Emperors from Augustus to Constantine* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2019), loc. 445 of 7371, Kindle.
27. See Velleius Paterculus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* [Compendium of Roman History], trans. Frederick W. Shipley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 117–18. Shipley translates Paterculus in these words: “[H]e entered the heart of Germany as though he were going among a people enjoying the blessings of peace. . . . But the Germans who with their great ferocity combine great craft, to an extent scarcely credible to one who has had no experience with them, and are a race to lying born” trumped up various lawsuits and won Varus’s trust by feigning gratitude for his settlement of the fictitious disputes to blind him to the treachery that they planned and brutally executed. The battle was a catastrophe for Rome. It cost Rome a province and all of its garrisons. The Nazis revered what they viewed as the noble and heroic virtues of Arminius. Nazi propaganda cited his achievements, rooting the National Socialist Regime in Germany’s history and casting Arminius as a unifying hero. See Job Mestrom, “Arminius in National Socialism: How the Nazis Presented Antiquity in Propaganda” (master’s thesis, Raboud University 2016), 3–4.
28. Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2005), 298. Rajiv Chandrasekaran made a similar point in *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq’s Green Zone* (New York: Knopf, 2006).
29. Bing West, *The Wrong War: Grit, Strategy, and the Way Out of Afghanistan* (New York: Random House, 2011), 55.
30. West, *No True Glory*, 18.
31. Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, 64.
32. Israeli concern about Iran’s nuclear program raises similar concerns.
33. Maj Jim Gant, “One Tribe at a Time: A Strategy for Success in Afghanistan,” *Small Wars Journal* (blog), 2009. Gant argues for embedding tribal engagement teams in Afghan villages to forge bonds of trust and help empower them to provide for their own security. See also Col Ty Connett and Col Bob Cassidy, “Village Stability Operations: More than Village Defense,” *Special Warfare*, July–September 2011.
34. Robinson, *One Hundred Victories*. The book focuses on Afghanistan but her examples and the lessons to be drawn from them apply to other nations, societies, and cultures.
35. “U.S. Kills al-Qaeda Suspects in Yemen,” *Associated Press/USA Today*, 5 November 2002; and Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 85–87.
36. Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife*, 100–1.
37. See Peter Baker, “Obama’s War Over Terror,” *New York Times*, 4 January 2010; and Bill Roggio, “US Kills AQAP Leaders in Airstrike in Southern Yemen: Report,” *Long War Journal*, 9 June 2011.

Chapter 3

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

You must understand the role your enemy plays in affecting your winning communication strategy. Identifying who you are fighting and understanding their attributes may spell the difference between victory and defeat. You need to know who they are; how they see themselves; their roots, history, values, traditions, priorities, friends, and allies. You need to understand what is important to them and what is not. You need to understand how to communicate with them and through what channels and what messengers to use to effectively engage with them. You need to be able to explain to them what you are doing, how it affects them, what their stakes are, and why they should support your efforts or, failing that, decline to oppose them.

The general precept “know your enemy” is of critical importance. It is far easier to see who or what you expect or want to see, rather than to be objective. Chinese strategist Sun Tzu said, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”¹ This is about two confluent notions.

First, identifying your enemy is not always easy because enemies often avoid showing themselves. Ask any veteran of Vietnam, Iraq, or Afghanistan. You need to devise dependable approaches to identifying the enemy. That is partly about intelligence collection and information gathering. It is about identifying every source possible as well as who can provide a means of identifying an enemy, including apparent friends whose agenda is hostile to yours.

Second, understanding your enemy. What motivates, inspires, threatens, or frightens an enemy? What coalitions does the enemy belong to—and what is the nature and composition of such coalitions? Understanding these things enables you to identify seams or divisions in coalitions and stories, narratives, themes, or messages that can create division or defection.

Mao Zedong stated, “Some people are good at knowing themselves and poor in knowing the enemy, and some are the other way round; neither can solve the problem of learning and applying the laws of war.”²

Questions to ask include:

- Who is the enemy and how do you define them?
- How does the enemy see themselves?
- What does target audience analysis reveal as you break down a population into its demographic elements and the histories of their individual provinces, towns, villages, or valleys?

- How is the enemy organized?
- What is the enemy's objective?
- How does the enemy define *winning*?
- What obstacles to success confront the enemy?
- Which of these obstacles can communication strategy surmount?
- What is the enemy's communication strategy?
- What are the enemy's story, narrative, themes, and messages?
- What language is the enemy using to express the above?
- How credible and persuasive to an enemy's target audiences as well as to its own supporters and allies is the enemy message?
- Who comprises the enemy's target audience(s)?
- What channels and messengers are the enemy using?
- How effective is the enemy's strategy?

Historical Examples

Pakistan. President Yahya Khan launched an invasion of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in March 1971, after the 1970 parliamentary elections deadlocked. Bengali nationalism and political self-interest by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto ignited the war. Understanding what happened requires a look at the formation of Pakistan.

After World War II, the United Kingdom granted India its independence. Negotiations produced two new states: Pakistan and India. Pakistan was created for Muslims, while India was predominantly Hindu. Pakistan was an awkward creation. It comprised two geographically and culturally distinct areas 1,000 miles apart. East Pakistan was culturally uniform and citizens spoke

Bengali. Its leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, led the Bangladesh Awami League.

West Pakistan (now Pakistan) was ethnically diverse and its feudal class produced the political leadership. Its citizens considered themselves superior to the Bengalis. Its population comprised four main ethnic groups: Punjabis, Pushtuns, Sindhis, and Baluchis; there were also other minorities. The elites spoke English, while much of the population spoke Urdu. Language differences and action by the west, which took a disproportionate share of the government budget and key government and military posts, fueled tensions.

Not until 1956 did Pakistan's Constituent Assembly frame a constitution. It divided the National Assembly equally between East Pakistan and West Pakistan and made Urdu and Bengali national languages. Democracy was short-lived, however. In 1958, General Mohammad Ayub Khan seized power, jettisoned the constitution, declared martial law, and became president. Khan strengthened the economy, supported free enterprise, aligned Pakistan with the West, and worked to stabilize Pakistan. In 1962, he lifted martial law and enacted a new constitution, although it was flawed in giving an equal number of seats in the assembly to the less populous West Pakistan. He earned praise as one of Pakistan's most able chiefs of state. One could argue that had Pakistan continued on the course Khan set, it could have avoided many problems that have beset it during the past 50 years and emerged, as India has, as a confident economic powerhouse.³

Khan lost credibility when India defeated Pakistan in a 1965 war over Kashmir. Bengalis felt repressed by his rule, which treated them as second-class citizens. Their sentiments moved toward seeking greater autonomy and perhaps independence from West Pakistan. Complicat-

ing matters—fatally for Pakistan’s fortunes at the time—was the emergence of the charismatic Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Initially, he served as Khan’s foreign minister. After India’s victory, he resigned, founded the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), and emerged as a Khan critic. Politicians are fond of pledging eternal friendship, but in politics eternity can be brief.

Popular discontent in 1969 forced Ayub Khan out of office. Another general, Yahya Khan, replaced him. Yahya Khan had poor political instincts. Like his predecessor, he set aside the constitution and declared martial law. He picked the wrong time for that action, however, as Pakistanis had wearied of military rule.

Bhutto and East Pakistani leader Mujibur Rahman, who led the Awami party, joined together to force an election in 1970. Yahya Khan set a “one person, one vote” rule. It was statesmanlike but lit the fuse for civil war because, predictably, East Pakistan’s larger population earned it a majority of the assembly seats, while the PPP won the most seats in the West. Bhutto and Rahman each wanted to be prime minister. That conflict played into the hands of the army, which had anticipated a political deadlock to be broken by making Khan the president. Rahman was also charismatic, but he lacked Bhutto’s backroom political skills. Khan was prepared to cede power to Rahman, but Rahman mucked up matters by demanding too much. Stoked by Bhutto, rumors circulated that Rahman was acting in league with India to control Pakistan. Deadlock persisted. Egged on by Bhutto, who kept warning Khan that Rahman and the Indians were colluding, Khan launched an invasion of East Pakistan. Bhutto assured him it would be an easy victory. It was more like genocide.

Muslims populated West Pakistan while the Bengalis, who populated the east, were mainly

Hindu. “Kill three million of them,” Khan declared, “and the rest will eat out of our hands.”⁴ Khan neglected to consider how India’s prime minister, Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, also a Hindu, would respond. She sent in the Indian Army, which inflicted a humiliating defeat. The repercussions of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 are still felt today in continuing tensions in Kashmir and Pakistani paranoia about India’s involvement in Afghanistan, and a general (rather absurd) fear that given the right opening, India would invade Pakistan. Indeed, Pakistan’s military has exploited this paranoia since the nation’s inception to maximize its influence and power.

Lesson: Carefully think through how parties perceive themselves as having a stake in your actions and the message such actions will send. Yahya Khan never anticipated the Indian intervention. Religious motivations also complicate matters. Muslims of West Pakistan looked down their noses at the Hindus in Bengali. Their sense of innate superiority prompted indiscriminate violence and murder. Today, in Iraq and Afghanistan, Islamic extremists have used religion to bolster their credibility and to discredit Westerners. Action and pledges by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to restore the caliphate have proven to be its most resonant message. It pays to understand that people of the same faith will often act vigorously to support fellow believers who confront political challenge or violence from those of other faiths.⁵

Napoleon in Spain, Italy, and Russia. As discussed in chapter 1, Napoleon Bonaparte displayed flashes of tactical genius. Political savvy marked his ascent to power, yet he was erratic and rarely strategic except at the tactical level. He turned in his best performances directing smaller armies, such as at

the Battle of Austerlitz, where line of sight enabled him to control maneuver and firepower. He had a strong grasp on the power of communication strategy and information warfare, however. His battle campaigns in Italy at the end of the eighteenth century were aimed primarily at building his image as a hero and the savior of French fortunes.⁶ That approach and effective networking paved his way to becoming first consul and later emperor.

However, Napoleon failed to think long term or within a grand strategic framework. His posture of humility at home was seldom on display in Italy. Professing to be a liberator, he reigned over a repressed population like a monarch while looting and pillaging. His failure to align actions and propaganda led to uprisings in 1806 that undercut the French position.⁷

He lacked sound strategic reason to invade Spain or to oust Charles IV and his son Ferdinand, with whom he had postured an alliance. Napoleon substituted one form of authoritarian rule for another. This ploy backfired and demonstrated what happens when strategy conflicts with a target audience's aspirations and desires. The Spanish peninsular campaign (1808–14), as well as Napoleon's campaigns in Italy and Russia, offer instructive lessons.

Lessons:

1. Avoid hubris in evaluating the strategic situation. Napoleon started a war without understanding how the Spanish would react. Their hostility was immediate. Historian Frank McLynn notes that “even those sympathetic to the Emperor concede that his Spanish policy was one of his greatest errors.”⁸ Bonaparte blamed advisors for misleading him about Spanish opinion but proceeded to wade into a morass that drove a wedge between himself and core political supporters. Napoleon was

on a “downhill slide towards ultimate disaster” beginning in May 1808.⁹

Napoleon's experience is instructive. His military challenges paralleled some that Coalition forces confronted in Iraq and that may crop up in future confrontations or conflicts. In Iraq, some Iraqis sided with the United States, hoping to move Iraq to peace and stability. Others remained aloof and focused on preserving their own safety. Many Iraqis viewed al-Qaeda as foreigners and the Americans with open hostility.¹⁰ In Spain, Napoleon deposed Charles IV and installed his own inept, corrupt brother, Joseph Bonaparte, who was named King Joseph I of Spain. Joseph enjoyed support from *Afrancesados* (the “Francophiles”). But most Spaniards remained aloof. The Spanish guerrillas who opposed Napoleon achieved historical fame. Though they never numbered more than 50,000, they attacked the French ruthlessly.¹¹ McLynn has described the guerrillas as “the rock on which Napoleon's Spanish adventure foundered.”¹² Romanticized as freedom fighters, “mostly they were old-style bandit chiefs whose activities were legitimated by the struggle for Ferdinand.”¹³

Al-Qaeda beheaded prisoners and tortured them. The Spanish guerrillas skinned French captives alive, placed them between wooden boards and sawed them in half, plucked out eyes, and, according to one account, even boiled a French general alive. The French took hostages, summarily executed priests and captives, wiped out the population of Saliente, raped women, and smashed the heads of babies against walls. Employing a tactic unlikely to win hearts and minds, General Jean-Marie-Pierre Doursenne

kept the bodies of three guerrillas hanging outside his window as a warning of what would happen to those opposing the French.¹⁴ History often rhymes.

- 2. Grasp the role of religion.** In both Iraq and the Peninsular War, religion played a key role in information warfare and attests to its influence. Al-Qaeda denounced the Coalition forces as infidels and foreign occupiers. No less vehement about Napoleon's occupation of Spain, the Spanish Roman Catholic Church declared the French to be "former Christians and modern heretics" and pronounced that killing a Frenchman was no greater sin than killing an animal.¹⁵
- 3. Know when to fold.** The French excited such popular hostility that the British saw a target of opportunity and intervened in 1808. Napoleon should have understood that the war in Spain was a loser and withdrawn his army. Instead, perhaps fearing loss of prestige, he simply distanced himself from the campaign.¹⁶ His decision compounded the difficulties confronting France in Spain and led to its defeat there. The Spanish were not going to yield to French hegemony, and, aided by the British under the leadership of Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington, France became bogged down in a bloody, unwinnable war. Distracted by conflicts on other fronts and blinded by arrogance, Napoleon ignored ground realities and did not recognize the futility of pursuing an ill-judged invasion. It underscored his weakness as a grand strategist.
- 4. Understand the power of nationalism.** During the 1948–50 insurgency in Malaya, the British made nationalism work for them in defeating a Communist insurgency led by Chin Ping,

who had been Britain's most trusted guerrilla in fighting the Japanese. The Masses' Movement reached into most towns and villages. The flaw that the British exploited was that few Malaysians were in the Malayan National Liberation Army. It was almost entirely Chinese, many of whom were unwelcome squatters. The British embarked on a resettlement program that moved half a million Chinese to protected villages. Police work interdicted supply to guerrillas through difficult jungle terrain. Led by Lieutenant General Sir Harold Biggs, the British forged an "us versus them" narrative. It was well conceived and executed, and it paid off, capitalizing on nationalism and antiforeigner sentiments to discredit, isolate, and defeat the Communists.¹⁷

In contrast, Napoleon's behavior caused Spanish nationalism to work against him; the Spanish monarchy may not have inspired strong devotion, but Napoleon's invasion and the manner of the French occupation ensured a debacle. Some saw in Spanish nationalism a rebellion against a foreign occupier driven by a message of "us versus them" that trumped Napoleon's suggestion that he had come as an ally to help Spain fight the Portuguese. Nothing could detract from his forcing Charles IV and his heir to abdicate in favor of Napoleon's brother.

Similarly, as discussed above, al-Qaeda in Iraq undercut its appeal by seeking to impose its version of Islamic life on Muslims who opposed what that life meant to them. That al-Qaeda was led by and mobilized non-Iraqis who dealt arrogantly with the tribes in al-Anbar enabled U.S. Marines to exploit Iraqi hostility to forge bonds of trust and effective alliances.

5. Recognize a losing cause. Napoleon's Spanish morass was insignificant compared to his Russian catastrophe. Aside from his strategic stupidity in launching a major new war on the other side of Europe while struggling in Spain, the Russian campaign affirms the cost of failing to think things through. Militarily, the 1812 Russian fiasco is depressing even to read about. Napoleon planned poorly and had inadequate logistics, an inept military strategy, and incompetent military leadership. Films portray the Russians as wily adversaries who capitalized on a harsh winter to destroy Napoleon, when actually, the invasion went wrong from the start.¹⁸

His communication strategy was equally flawed. McLynn observes that, typically, Napoleon positioned his invasion as a crusade for liberty. But that required aligning his rhetoric with action: giving Poland its independence and the Russian serfs their freedom.¹⁹ The thought seems never to have seriously crossed his mind, and he paid the price.

Napoleon's arrogance drove his mindset. He cheerfully ousted Charles IV from his throne and substituted his brother as the new ruler and never stopped to ask himself how the Spanish might respond to his imperialism, or to show that the new leadership he ordained might be a change that served the interests of the Spanish. It is not clear that any logical argument would have enabled the French, who executed their operations and tactics with brutality and arrogance, to overcome Spanish nationalism. But having embarked on that conflict, he would have benefited by asking hard questions such as what success would look like and what was plausibly achievable. Napoleon did not think

that way. He focused on winning battles, not winning over continents.

Modern Examples

America and Iraq. Your ability to accurately identify and understand your enemy can tip the balance between victory and defeat, a point excellently illustrated by the two battles for Fallujah, Iraq, fought in April and November 2004. It is worth looking at these battles closely and drawing lessons.

Discussing Americans in Baghdad's Green Zone, Larry Diamond, advisor to National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, concluded that Americans were constrained by a myopic world view that focused on Western ideas or beliefs. Journalist Rajiv Chandrasekaran reports in detail on the strategic awkwardness of a U.S.-led effort that failed to consider Iraqi perspectives. He eviscerates Western leadership that did not understand the political, cultural, or social dynamics of Iraq.²⁰

The most glaring example of blindness was arguably Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) head Paul Bremer's decision right after arriving in Iraq to disband the Iraqi Army and ban members of the Baath Party from holding jobs. The ban included school teachers and lower-ranking civil servants who had been forced to join the party for political reasons.²¹ Those individuals and their families needed their jobs to survive. Most had anticipated that the Iraqi Army and Baath Party would continue to function to some extent to maintain order in the society. Criminals would be purged but the organizations had to be viable to maintain stability. Bremer ignored the reality that his actions would help create a reservoir of alienated Iraqis who joined and fueled the insurgency.

The al-Anbar Tribes: The prize for blindness in discerning tribal culture in al-Anbar Province in

western Iraq is a split decision between Bremer and terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. In his excellent book, *The Marines Take Anbar*, scholar Richard Shultz examines the cost that both sides paid for their ignorance during the first battle, in April 2004.

Bremer showed neither a comprehension of the importance of Sunni tribes in al-Anbar Province as a center of gravity there, nor did he appear to grasp their political/social dynamics. Shultz argues that the “central U.S. goal should have been to keep them [Sunnis] out of the hands of both the former regime elements and the Salafi jihadists.”²² In his view, officials were more interested in transforming Iraq than stabilizing it. There was scant understanding of a variety of elements, including: 1) tribal history and what that history meant to the al-Anbar tribes, who were Sunni; 2) the fear of a Shia revenge campaign; 3) their demand for respect, a value they thought abused by American tactics of kicking in the doors of houses; 4) their worldview, which saw Americans as invaders and occupiers, and a historical narrative that demanded defiance; 5) the centrality of honor in their code of values; 6) the notion of collective duty to a tribe rather than individual right; 7) the salience of religion; 8) the need to demonstrate manliness in a male-dominated society; 9) the identities of key political actors and how they operated; 10) the need to be open to working with tribal leaders; and 11) a recognition that the tribes did not want to adopt Western ways or become like us.²³

The U.S. Marines figured that out. Shultz details how they applied their learning, courage, and expertise in adapting to winning the fight in al-Anbar Province against al-Qaeda with a strong counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy. It is worth recounting some key points that Shultz brings out; his book is important reading for any service-member entering a theater of operation.

Shultz points out that the Marines have a culture of learning and adapting in combat. They learned from hard experience in western Iraq. Despite problems caused by the rotation of units, commanders reached out to local Sunni leaders to forge common ground against a common enemy whose values and agenda were hostile to these Iraqis. They capitalized on the fears that Sunnis harbored of Shias—whose population comprised a majority in Iraq and whom Saddam Hussein had brutally repressed—to offer partnership and security. The effort required was arduous, but eventually the Sunnis perceived the Americans as their hope for survival against the Shia rather than as their enemy.

The Sunni tribes offered partnership in fighting al-Qaeda, to whom sheikhs were losing power and at whose hands they faced murder. Working closely together with Iraqis built trust. They opened mosques that al-Qaeda had closed. They exploited an egregious mistake in al-Qaeda’s strategic approach. In 2006, al-Qaeda announced that its goal was to build an Islamic State modeled on the austere tenets of Salafism. The Sunnis were devout Muslims—but not Salafists. They did not like what al-Qaeda stood for, much less its violence conducted against anyone who dissented from its strictures or authority.

That was bad enough. But al-Qaeda, comprised of many non-Iraqis, were arrogant. They felt superior and made no effort to hide that sentiment. They displayed ignorance of Iraqi culture and failed to show respect to local Sunnis, wounding pride and alienating locals. They also failed to understand that Iraqis believed in the value of revenge. Shultz cites the “Arabic rule of five,” which holds that “‘if you do something to someone, then five of his bloodline will try to attack you.’ Kill a sheik and the whole tribe will come after you.”²⁴

Marines capitalized on al-Qaeda's failure to offer security and a united front in defeating the terrorists and shielding Sunnis from Shias. This was classic COIN. The hard work paid off, using a clear build-and-hold approach rooted in an inkblot strategy that secured areas one place at a time.²⁵ The Marines helped to train police, strengthening security that was provided by locals whom Sunnis knew and trusted. They increased the capability of the Iraqi Army, strengthening its ability to fight. Throughout this process, the Marines took pains to communicate that they would stand firmly with the Sunnis and stay with them. The Sunnis were not interested in friends for a day or a week. They wanted allies on whom they felt they could count for the long term. The Marines lived among the tribes, conducted patrols and joint operations, and step-by-step proved rather than merely asserted friendship and alliance.

What made the Marines special? In fairness, Bing West points out that the U.S. Army's 82d Airborne Division, which preceded the Marines in al-Anbar, had made vigorous efforts to forge local ties only to be rebuffed.²⁶ It is plausible that it took living under al-Qaeda's brutal repression and coming to terms with the Sunnis' loss of power in Iraq to motivate the tribes eventually to side with the Americans. But as a matter of strategy, Shultz's view on what the strategy should have been makes sense.

Lesson: Changing behavior may require changing how a target audience sees itself.

In Iraq, once the tribes saw themselves as victims of a worse evil (al-Qaeda) than Americans (foreign, non-Muslim intruders), the Marines' goal of forging an alliance became more plausible.

Zarqawi made the opposite mistake. He tried to impose an Islamic State modeled on Salafism on the Iraqis, who rejected the idea.

When they resisted, he instituted a ruthless campaign of terror. His people beheaded and killed people, including police officers and tribal leaders. His people forced themselves into marriages with locals, held an unrealistic view of Iraqi jihadi, and considered themselves morally superior.²⁷

On the other side of the coin, journalist Mark Urban notes that Zarqawi's tactics were driven by an information strategy aimed at establishing himself. Zarqawi was a Jordanian criminal who went to Iraq, not a native Iraqi. He understood that Arabs would respond to sensationalism and that it would attract volunteers from Syria or Saudi Arabia.²⁸ He achieved short-term gain but long-term loss. Zarqawi may or may not have inspired support through a strategy that focused violence on foreigners. The lesson is that short-term gains can prove costly when you fail to think through the long-term implications.

The Fallujah Battles: The Coalition victory in the second battle for Fallujah in November 2004 turned heavily on understanding how insurgents there—including former Baath Party members, former members of Saddam Hussein's army, and foreign jihadis—viewed propaganda and had employed it successfully during the first battle in April 2004.²⁹ That understanding enabled Coalition forces to forge and execute a successful integrated information and kinetic strategy that defeated the insurgents and ended insurgent dominance of the city. The two battles for Fallujah offer important lessons. The strategies that both sides employed reveal much about how to judge the enemy and to anticipate its information strategy and counter with effective communication strategy.³⁰

Lessons:

1. Information, not kinetic warfare, may be what determines the outcome; do not underestimate the enemy. Insurgents won the first battle. They won partly by prevailing in information warfare.³¹

Four information challenges haunted the Coalition. First, the city was full of civilians who refused to be, or could not be, forced to evacuate.³² That helped insurgents use civilians to drive a wedge between themselves and the Coalition. Second, there was no information campaign to mitigate reports about civilian casualties among Iraqi and international public opinion.³³ Third, although the CPA developed a public affairs plan to support the offensive, it did not address the Arab press.³⁴ Fourth, there was no strategic plan for Fallujah that specified what seizure of the city would accomplish.³⁵ Coalition commander Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, Paul Bremer, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld supported heavy use of military action, despite objections from the U.S. Marines on the ground, who protested that it was the wrong strategy.³⁶

An attack was ordered, and the Marines attacked. Insurgents responded with adroit use of propaganda to discredit the Coalition. The tactics were devious but effective. Al-Qaeda claimed U.S. troops used night-vision goggles to see through women's clothing.³⁷ They showed dead babies on Al Jazeera at the main hospital, alleging they were victims of air strikes. Absent Western media to provide factual reporting, the insurgent narrative dominated the media.³⁸ At the same time, insurgents appropriated the hospital as a command and control center—a

place from which to spread false propaganda that they knew Coalition forces were likely to bombard.³⁹

Violence ginned up insurgent recruiting among the religiously inclined and former Baathist elements threw in their support. Across Iraq, Iraqis perceived Coalition offensives as an attack on their whole society.⁴⁰

Dexter Filkins reported that the insurgents undid every U.S. effort made to win over Fallujah residents. They blew up a brick factory the Americans had repaired. They shot teachers from a school the Americans had painted. Troops offered candy to children, but the children believed propaganda claims that it was poisoned.⁴¹ Insurgents placed teddy bears among the rubble before photographers showed up to convey the false impression that Americans were indiscriminately firing at civilians.⁴² Doctors declared hundreds had been killed in just a few days of battle, while children told the press that their parents had been gunned down. Many Sunnis sided with the insurgents.⁴³ Al Jazeera aired stock footage from previous battles and claimed it was from the current battle.⁴⁴

Insurgents vigorously conveyed and distributed the message that the April attack was an act of revenge by Marines for their casualties with the goal of punishing innocents for the actions of a few and that it killed civilians.

General McChrystal noted that Arab satellite television fostered the perception that Americans were committing atrocities, using artillery to hit mosques or wipe out whole families. American newspapers repeated the claims.⁴⁵ Across Iraq, insurgents showed their fighters photos of Abu Ghraib

prison and warned how badly they would be treated if captured.⁴⁶

- 2. Communication strategy fails when lacking local key stakeholder support.** The Coalition obtained no buy-in for the attack from key players. They did not present a credible rationale that justified the attack to Iraqis or persuaded them it was being conducted in a reasonable, realistic way. General Petraeus consistently made the point that ultimate success depends on local leaders and that cultivating Iraqi leaders who were seen by their people as legitimate was vital to success.⁴⁷

His grasp of that political necessity was central to his success in commanding the 2007 surge. Success eluded Lieutenant General Sanchez, Bremer, and U.S. Central Command commander General John P. Abizaid, who overruled Marine protests. Their mistake was costly.

Within days after the battle commenced, the Association of Muslim Scholars called for a general strike and demanded the United States get out of Iraq. The Iraqi Governing Council protested the action, and the Iraqi leader Adnan Pachachi denounced the attack as illegal.⁴⁸ Pressure applied from many directions spooked the top U.S. leadership—including President Bush (who, unforgivably, was never advised of the Marines' firm contrary view)—into backing down from an achievable victory.

If your own people or allies fail to support what you stand for, you are probably going to fail.

- 3. Communication strategy must look at the broader impact of tactics.** Complicating matters, Bremer and Sanchez did not ade-

quately anticipate the wider national impact of the battle on attitudes, opinions, and behavior.⁴⁹ Result: although Coalition forces would have prevailed militarily, the political blowback persuaded Bremer to call off the attack.

- 4. Failure to create a foundation for an information strategy unleashes consequences not easily reversed.** The CPA did not have a strategy for addressing and embracing Arab media, including its bias or inaccuracies. As Marines attacked and Western media outlets feared capture and/or beheading, their television networks pooled video shot in Fallujah by Arab cameramen approved for entry into the city by the insurgents. Predictably, the pictures depicted destruction and death at the hands of the Marines.⁵⁰

Other Arab media outlets unrelentingly broadcast the “plight” of civilians in Fallujah. The internet amplified the message of Marine callousness and sped protests around the world on a minute-by-minute basis. During April 2004, a Google search on the term *Fallujah* jumped from 700 to 175,000 stories, many critical of Marines. Between 4 April and 13 April, the CPA documented 34 Al Jazeera stories that distorted or misreported events.⁵¹

Failure to incorporate the Arab media into its communications strategy neutered core U.S. messaging, while the volume alone validated insurgent messages. The mass of anti-American stories inspired the mistaken conclusion that the insurgent propaganda was factual.

Credibility drove national and regional support for the insurgents. This was achieved not just in the media, but in fiery sermons delivered at Sunni mosques. Clerical endorse-

ment spurred spontaneous support and mobilization of new fighters. The insurgents boosted their credibility by labeling their resistance an *intifada*, associating themselves with the Palestinians and their occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, whose situation aroused empathy among many Iraqis. Lack of a strong U.S. narrative elevated insurgent credibility. Enemy propaganda that goes unchallenged is more likely to be—and here was—accepted as believable, credible, and persuasive.

Failure to consider the agenda and motives of the Arab media outlets with access to a battle produced an inevitable problem. Qatar-based Al Jazeera and Saudi-based Al Arabiya are both Sunni and both supported their Sunni brothers in Iraq. Such sectarian positions naturally influenced such media outlets to favor the insurgent narrative. Jack Guy worked as a senior information operations advisor on the Counterinsurgency Advisory and Assistance Team (CAAT) for International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul in 2010. According to Guy, “That happened because we had not done our Target Audience Analysis at the command level. As a broader lesson looking to the future, too many Political Advisers (POLADS) are simply not schooled in this.”⁵²

The second battle for Fallujah produced many other lessons as well.

Lessons:

1. Information operations and public affairs worked jointly to ensure message discipline, consistency, and efficiency. The role of public affairs is much debated. The author’s work, *Persuasion and Power* (2012), discusses the hypocrisy of many public affairs offi-

cers in espousing the view that their role is to “inform” and not to “influence.” Actually, they engage actively—and correctly—in influencing audiences.⁵³

Army General Mark T. Kimmitt’s adroit handling of the Abu Ghraib fiasco was a masterpiece of political campaign management. During the Iraq war, a CBS *Sixty Minutes* episode broadcast allegations that U.S. military personnel had abused the human rights of Iraqi prisoners.⁵⁴ The events transpired between November 2003 and March 2004. A report to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) of an investigation led by Major General Antonio M. Taguba found that the U.S. Army’s 800th Military Police Brigade personnel were guilty of punching, slapping, and kicking detainees; jumping on their bare feet; videotaping naked male and female detainees; forcibly arranging detainees in sexually explicit positions for photographing; forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate while being photographed or videotaped; positioning a naked detainee on a box with a sandbag on his head and attaching wires to his fingers, toes, and penis to simulate electronic torture; using military working dogs without muzzles to intimidate and frighten detainees; and other abuses.⁵⁵

The revelations and accusations were a political debacle for the United States, whose ability to operate in theater depends on seizing and maintaining the moral high ground and communicating that it conducts operations in a manner consistent with American values that respect the dignity of human beings and fair play.⁵⁶ The military removed Brigadier General Janis L. Karpinski of duty as the commander at the prison.

Kimmit got the facts, developed a narrative, and then reached out to the media proactively to disseminate the narrative. He got ahead of the story and made it clear that the United States would handle the controversy with transparency and that the matter was an aberration and did not reflect American values. In a 28 April 2004 statement, he praised a U.S. soldier for coming forward with the facts and placed matters in context:

That soldier came forward. He presented evidence to his chain of command. The chain of command brought it forward. General Sanchez, upon hearing it, immediately started a criminal investigation. . . . That outcome . . . has resulted in criminal charges being levied against six soldiers. . . . [This behavior] does not reflect the vast majority of coalition soldiers, vast majority of American soldiers that are operating out of Abu Ghraib Prison. We have had thousands, tens of thousands of detainees in Abu Ghraib. We have understood that a very, very small number were involved in this incident, and of the hundreds and hundreds of guards they have out there, a small number were involved in the guards.

I'm not going to stand up here and make excuses for those soldiers. I'm not going to stand up here and apologize for those soldiers. If what they did is proven in a court of law, that is incompatible with the values we stand for as a professional military force and its values that we don't stand for as human beings.⁵⁷

As Kimmit promised, the military prosecuted and imprisoned offending sol-

diers and discharged them from the Army. Confluently, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld testified before House and Senate committees and underscored the message that conduct at Abu Ghraib had been "fundamentally un-American."⁵⁸ The U.S. military ensured that the events were placed in context, as did Rumsfeld. Military police lacked proper training, for which there was no excuse. Still, they confronted a difficult, hazardous situation. Documents revealed that inmates vomited after meals, sharpened toothbrushes into makeshift weapons, and initiated attacks on soldiers and riots. One detainee regularly covered himself in his own feces.⁵⁹

Abu Ghraib seriously damaged U.S. credibility everywhere. But instead of burying the facts and lying about them, prompt action to get the facts out and ensure that audiences heard all sides of events limited the damage.

In contrast, the Jessica D. Lynch fiasco was a poorly handled mess, but it aimed at influencing audience response. Private First Class Lynch was a soldier fighting in the 2003 Iraq War who went missing in action and was presumed a prisoner of war (POW). Actually, she sustained injuries when her Humvee crashed after her convoy had taken several wrong turns. Her gun jammed with sand, so she could not use it. She was taken prisoner and taken to a hospital in an-Nasiriyah, where Iraqi doctors and nurses treated her well. An alarmed U.S. military dispatched special operations personnel to rescue her from what they surmised were life-threatening circumstances. They stormed the hospital at which she was recuperating

and in no danger, a point she made in dismissing any talk that she had been a hero.⁶⁰ Public affairs personnel had glorified the incident to the media as an example of heroic rescue by courageous operators worthy of an action thriller. The story backfired when the truth came out, and public affairs personnel looked silly.

The point—for those who think that in practice the Pentagon treats public affairs as an exercise in putting out just the facts rather than capitalizing on perceived opportunities to drive narratives, themes, and messages—is this: in both the Abu Ghraib scandal and Lynch episode, public affairs officers acted to influence audiences as surely as any psychological operation or political campaign.

Here is the reality: public affairs have both the right and the duty to influence target audiences. Communication consultants and directors for political figures and private companies understand that. Respect the precept that truth is our ally. The media's role is to provide a channel through which to reach target audiences. However, government makes policy, and its servants should explain, defend, and advance the policy. If unable to competently perform that job, the solution is to fire the incompetents and hire public affairs officers who can do it properly and effectively.

During the November 2004 Fallujah battle, the commanders understood that communications needed to be tightly organized. The public affairs and psychological operations teams were unified. It was a smart decision that drew misplaced criticism from those who did not understand communication strategy or information warfare.

Bottom line: do not allow Pentagon definitions or bureaucratic turf sensitivity to obstruct good communication strategy.

- 2. Anticipate how kinetic and information activity will resonate locally where an operation unfolds, as well as more broadly.** Commanders understood that winning the battle required securing political support nationally among insiders and the Iraqi public, within the international community, among partners, and among local citizens affected by the fighting. This time they defined the goals of the operation and calibrated kinetic action to satisfy that requirement. There is no formula, but the care taken to address each target audience and to satisfy its concerns helped achieve victory.
- 3. The language used to define operations and actions matters.** Originally, commanders named the second battle Operation Phantom Fury. Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi argued that the operation needed a name that would resonate politically with the population. It was renamed al-Fajr (New Dawn). The aim, Allawi said, was to seize and maintain control of the narrative in the media coverage throughout the Arab world and throughout the country, so that everyone would understand what the Coalition was doing, why it was necessary, and why Iraqis benefitted from the operation. *New dawn* was a phrase more likely to resonate with Iraqis. It helped drive the message that ejecting insurgents from Fallujah would produce a better quality of life and security inside the city, free from the fear of terrorists.⁶¹ Although the second battle elicited a national blowback, that situation stemmed from earlier strategic failures. Allawi made a good suggestion and commanders wisely heeded it.

Information operations expert Jack Guy, who has advised on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, adds this observation: “Locals always have good ideas (to a point) that are often better than the American-Iraqis, American-Afghans, or American-other nationals we hire for specific situations. The caveat is that too much time in the U.S. may deteriorate their sense of home and render their counsel counterproductive.”⁶²

4. Inspire support from local allies by showing them you will win. Coalition forces needed Iraqi forces to participate in the operation. Concerns abounded about how they would perform. Coalition forces addressed that partly by taking pains to show their Iraqi allies the extent of Coalition forces and logistical support. It proved a huge confidence builder.⁶³ The lesson is that one should never presume that allied units will believe that siding with U.S. forces will help ensure victory. Take action that inspires moral will and loyalty.⁶⁴ Show that playing on your team will pay off.⁶⁵

5. Use local forces when possible in attacking local, high-visibility, and sensitive targets. Giving the lead to local units fighting in the cause of their own nation and for their own people is smart.⁶⁶ They know their culture, their people, what is important to them, how to best communicate effectively with them, and they speak the same language as fellow citizens. From the United States’ standpoint, if we are helping people to protect their nation, they ought to bear responsibility for taking the lead in providing such protection.

6. Encourage local leaders to take the lead and do the talking. Allawi was wisely designated as the key spokesperson. General Petraeus

has stressed the importance of giving the lead to local leaders. Quoting T. E. Lawrence, he noted: “Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them.”⁶⁷ Allawi was better than tolerably good during this battle. He was tough, courageous, talented, and effective.

7. Understand foreign populations’ ability to see through a communication ruse. Novelist Louis L’Amour wrote that just because someone does not speak English does not mean they do not have good ideas.⁶⁸ In other words, do not confuse failure to speak English well for stupidity.

In Afghanistan, the Marines in Nawa District positioned District Governor Abdul Manaf to front for them in dispensing aid. Manaf was more than happy to play the role, which made him seem big and important. Rajiv Chandrasekaran reported that this action thrilled the Marines and USAID, who thought the Afghan government was trying to help them.⁶⁹ Locals saw through the ruse, and it undercut the credibility of the effort. The lesson is obvious: do not think that people who talk, walk, dress, act, and look differently are fools.

8. Achieving information dominance is critical. Winning the information battle was a make-or-break issue in Fallujah. Commanders thought in terms of an information operations threshold: the point at which enemy information-based operations aimed at international, regional, and local media coverage might undermine the Coalition forces’ ability to conduct unconstrained combat operations.⁷⁰ Coalition forces embedded more than 90 journalists representing more than 60 me-

dia outlets to help disseminate and drive the Coalition narrative, themes, and messages.

Coalition forces worked vigorously to communicate that they would make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. One tactic was to frighten civilians into leaving while reminding them they owed the insurgents no loyalty.⁷¹ Coalition forces understood that al-Qaeda would stoop to any level to accuse them of firing at civilians, even though, as in Afghanistan, they never hesitated to hide in buildings inhabited by women and children or use them for shields.⁷²

9. Deny the enemy opportunities to spread false propaganda.

Coalition forces moved at the outset of the operation to seize the hospital, denying insurgents a second opportunity to use it as a center for its information warfare.⁷³

10. Employ combat cameras to obtain footage that supports and helps drive your narrative factually.

In conducting the operation to seize the hospital, Coalition forces deployed one combat cameraman and two advisors outfitted with helmet-mounted video cameras to tape the operation. The helmet-mounted video was used to feed the media. Correspondent Kirk Spitzer was embedded with the force, providing a third-party source to footage. He broadcasted video clips via satellite to the CBS news facility in London for rebroadcast by CBS in New York. Other combat cameramen captured other aspects of the action.⁷⁴ These efforts ensured that the images of the action communicated through the media put out the facts, not distorted enemy propaganda.

11. Show the media the torture houses used by the enemy and characterize them with

language that drives the message about enemy barbarity.

Coalition forces showed embedded media the torture, slaughter, and execution houses, and consciously employed that language to characterize what the media was seeing.⁷⁵ That helped define the players, justify Coalition action, maintain the high ground, and discredit the enemy. This media blitz was coordinated tactically, operationally, and strategically—meeting the definition of a good information operation.

12. Let the media, not the government, tell the story.

U.S. government sources—military and civilian—are less credible to audiences than the media. Provide the media with the information, characterize it in a manner consistent with desired narrative, story, theme, and message—then let the media tell it. The identity of the messenger makes a difference, as audiences judge credibility. The media is more credible than any government or army. Coalition forces did that well.⁷⁶

13. Develop a message that resonates with civilian populations affected by an operation.

Civilians did not want better water plants, bland assurances about a better life, or money. They wanted jobs. Messaging directed toward Iraqis stressed that aligning with the Coalition would produce government that created good jobs.⁷⁷

14. Mount a campaign to secure buy-in from local populations as well as regional leaders.

Allawi helped muster support from regional leaders such as Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah II while informing Iraqis about the impending assault. He made clear the target was terrorists, not the people of Fallujah. He made clear that nonmilitary options had been exhausted.⁷⁸

15. Avoid the trap of using enemy brutality as the justification for kinetic action; focus on positive benefits to civilians. In Fallujah, some pressed for messaging about insurgent atrocities against locals. However, that message was not credible, although it might be in a different situation. In Fallujah, the U.S. military felt that showing pictures of dead civilians could backfire. People might see it as proof of Coalition brutality, not insurgent terrorism.⁷⁹ The key here is to let local (host nation) media play an active role in messaging.

16. Advise civilians how to protect themselves. During the first battle, civilians filled Fallujah. During the second, Coalition forces caused most to evacuate. Those who remained behind were advised to stay out of the way and off the streets, not to call out, and not to carry a weapon. Painstaking efforts were made to avoid civilian casualties.⁸⁰

Civilian casualties are a challenge in any conflict. Major General Richard F. Natonski and other commanders understood that. Former Assistant Secretary of Defense Bing West—a former U.S. Marine—dwells on it incisively in *The Wrong War*, a controversial, unsparing critique of the U.S. effort in Afghanistan and the doctrine of COIN.⁸¹ West argues that “war required agonizing decisions between protecting your own soldiers and placing civilians at risk.”⁸² In Afghanistan, West argues, civilian casualties alienated a population that was happy to accept U.S. aid and in many ways became dependent on it. Yet, it declined to support U.S. or ISAF troops and often turned on them, no matter how hard they worked to help and protect the local population.

Dexter Filkins reported the same thing about Iraq.⁸³ Soon after Saddam Hussein was ousted, Filkins found himself with Ali, a medical assistant who had been hauling dead and wounded from buildings that the Americans had bombed. “I saw how the Americans bombed our civilians with my own eyes,” he quotes Ali as saying. Ali told him that had “forfeited his support” for Americans, despite having no love for Saddam.⁸⁴

It bears noting that COIN supporters suggest that West misinterprets the doctrine, which they argue is about control and convincing the population that you are going to win rather than winning hearts and minds, as they feel West believes.⁸⁵

17. Look for ways to instill paranoia among the enemy. Action, not just words, is integral to communication strategy. Coalition forces heightened enemy paranoia by killing high-value targets. Any action that heightens anxiety among the enemy may interfere with its judgment and cause it to commit mistakes. Uncertainty and fear are critical to instilling paranoia.

18. Evaluate how local, tactical victory may affect a national narrative and its impact on national strategy. Coalition forces scored a decisive military victory, but this success provoked a national backlash. Sunnis saw in the sacking of Fallujah a new narrative of American brutality and occupation that justified national resistance.⁸⁶ In the aftermath, violence in Iraq intensified; the challenge grew harder, not easier.

Afghanistan. At the time of this writing, the United States and the Taliban have signed a peace

accord. Nevertheless, understanding how groups like the Taliban function is essential in countering such enemies. The Taliban uses many tactics, including print, to communicate its messages. They warn against cooperating with the Afghan government or the Coalition. They employ videos to influence the media and internet users. They also use traffic stops to help identify collaborators and intimidate potential government allies. Killing government officials and allies gives teeth to Taliban communications and illustrates the confluence of words and action in forging communication strategy. Jack Guy makes the point that “the Taliban plan their activities for the effects they want to achieve and will commit forces against overwhelming odds to do so. They intuitively understand information warfare.”⁸⁷

Somalia. General Mohamed Farrah Aidid advised General Anthony C. Zinni that before visit-

ing tribal leaders he should arrive with food and medicine rather than guns, so that the first time they see U.S. forces they associate Americans as different from other militias and gun toters. Do not surprise anyone, he warned; prepare the way. Surprise visits by armed groups can communicate intent for conflict in an area in which a party can be a friend one day and an enemy the next. General Zinni heeded his advice. Aidid’s point about friends becoming enemies was borne out when Task Force Ranger was sent to arrest him later on, igniting the incident referred to as Blackhawk Down. The point is to understand the culture and the agendas of a culture’s leader. Agendas shift. When it served Aidid to be friendly with Americans, he showed friendship. When his agenda clashed with the American agenda, he did not hesitate to shift posture and proved himself an able adversary.

Endnotes

1. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Lionel Giles (Seattle, WA: AmazonClassics, 2017), loc. 727 of 3205, Kindle.
2. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking, China: Foreign Language Press, 1963), 88, as quoted in Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, 3d ed. (London: Taylor and Francis, 2005), 36.
3. See Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 60–69.
4. “Case Study: Genocide in Bangladesh, 1971,” *Bangladesh—Audacity of Hope* (blog), 26 December 2013; and Robert Payne, *Massacre: The Tragedy at Bangla Desh and the Phenomenon of Mass Slaughter throughout History* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 48. See also James P. Farwell, *The Pakistan Cauldron: Conspiracy, Assassination and Instability* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2011).
5. See Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 58, 62, 66; Tariq Ali, *The Duel: On the Flight Path of American Power* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 77; and Farwell, *The Pakistan Cauldron*, 54–57.
6. See Dwyer, *Napoleon*.
7. David A. Bell, *The First Total War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 270–72.
8. Frank McLynn, *Napoleon: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1997; Kindle ed., 2002) loc. 7800 of 15527, Kindle.
9. McLynn, *Napoleon*, loc. 7827 of 15527, Kindle.
10. Bell, *The First Total War*, 284.
11. Bell, *The First Total War*, 285. One should caution against simplifying a more complex strategic picture. Napoleon was at times adept in his use of information strategy. At other times, it eluded him, costing him dearly. Napoleon’s reputation as a commander rests on his erratic tactical brilliance, which shone brightly at battles such as Austerlitz and Friedland. Deeply flawed judgment proved a calamity in Russia, Spain, Egypt, Leipzig, and Waterloo and in his general inability to discipline and harness his impulses to

- conduct warfare. He was a poor strategist once he got beyond the tactical level and conducted warfare because he felt impelled to do so. He allowed his large, and largely useless, family to exploit his power for wealth and position. He was hit-and-miss in his selection of marshals, often seeming unable to distinguish those with exceptional ability, such as Louis-Charles-Antoine Desaix, Louis-Nicolas Davout, André Masséna, and Jean Lannes, from mediocrities such as Joachim Murat, Emmanuel de Grouchy, Michel Ney, and, arguably, Nicolas-Jean de Dieu Soult, although Soult has his defenders. See Peter Hayman, *Soult: Napoleon's Maligned Marshal* (New York: Sterling, 1990). In a much earlier book, R. P. Dunn-Pattison agrees with Hayman. See R. P. Dunn-Pattison, *Napoleon's Marshals* (London: Methuen, 1909). Picking the right people to achieve your goals counts.
12. McLynn, *Napoleon*, loc. 8941 of 15527, Kindle.
 13. McLynn, *Napoleon*, loc. 8953 of 15527, Kindle.
 14. Bell, *The First Total War*, 290.
 15. Bell, *The First Total War*, 287.
 16. See McLynn, *Napoleon*, loc. 8878 of 15527, Kindle.
 17. See Robert Taber, *War of the Flea* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2002), 139–42. Taber's book is a classic study of guerrilla warfare. See also Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (McLean, VA: Brassey's, 1990).
 18. At Austerlitz, Napoleon had about 85,000 soldiers. For his Russian campaign, he assembled 650,000 for his Grande Armée. A smaller army lent itself to tight discipline, rapid movement, and adroit maneuver tactics that enabled Napoleon to concentrate power at critical points. See Robert Asprey, *The Reign of Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); and McLynn, *Napoleon*. McLynn is incisive in deconstructing Napoleon's triumphs and defeats.
 19. McLynn, *Napoleon*, loc. 9927 of 15527, Kindle.
 20. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* (New York: Knopf, 2006).
 21. George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005). Bing West asserts that both the Pentagon and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) had the opportunity to object to Bremer's decision but failed to follow through. See West, *No True Glory*, 24. Most reports suggest that the military on the ground in Iraq understood that Bremer was making the wrong decision and said so but were overruled.
 22. Shultz, *The Marines Take Anbar*, 27. The discussion on the tribes is drawn from Schultz's analysis, 27–32, 37–38, 45. Shultz places part of the blame for missteps on Condoleezza Rice, as well, but Bremer was the one with authority on the ground to make decisions during his time there. Bremer evidently doubted the tribes would or could pose a challenge to central authority in Baghdad. Shultz, *The Marines Take Anbar*, 53. In *No True Glory*, Bing West reported that the 82d Airborne, which preceded the Marines in Anbar after the invasion, made vigorous overtures to local notables for help and conducted civil reconstruction such as building a soccer stadium that locals then trashed. He notes that 82d Airborne leaders complained that the CPA failed to deliver sufficient resources to get much done, a challenge complicated by the need to obtain congressional approval for releasing money. He cites as examples the idiotic requirements that instead of hiring local seamstresses to sew uniforms for Iraqis or acquiring vehicles for Iraqi police, competitive bids had to be taken within the United States. It was time-consuming and financially wasteful—and sent the wrong message to already skeptical audiences whose support the Coalition needed to win.
 23. In Mark Urban, *Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the SAS and the Secret War in Iraq* (London: Little, Brown, 2011), 31, the author records one Iraqi's reaction to American tactics: "We don't like Saddam; he was a dictator. But the Americans, they handcuff us, they put us on the floor in front of our wives and children. It's shameful for us." See also West, *No True Glory*, 15.
 24. Shultz, *The Marines Take Anbar*, 136.
 25. The term *inkblot strategy* refers to subduing a large hostile region with a relatively small military force. The occupying force establishes a number of small safe areas that are dispersed across the region and then pushes out, extending its control until eventually the spots join the way ink spots spread on a piece of paper. Historically, the inkblot strategy is associated with the Vietnam War. See Greg Mills, "Calibrating Inkspots: Filling Afghanistan's Ungoverned Spaces," *RUSI Journal* (August 2006).
 26. West, *No True Glory*, chapter 3.
 27. Shultz, *The Marines Take Anbar*, 133, 136, 140, 148. Shultz provides an excellent analysis of al-Qaeda's mistakes.
 28. Urban, *Task Force Black*, 47.
 29. There's a debate about whether al-Qaeda in Iraq was there under that name.
 30. Carter Malkasian of the Center for Naval Analyses has written incisively about the first battle. See Carter Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 3 (June 2006): 423–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390600765843>. Gen Stanley McChrystal has offered key insights on the challenge that the strategic situation there presented. See Gen Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2013). A team led by Dr. William Knarr of the Joint Special Operations University and by Maj Robert Castro conducted an intensive analysis for the Institute of Defense Analyses that examined both battles. See William Knarr et al., *Seizing the Peninsula, a Vignette from The Battle for Fallujah: An Education and Training Resource Guide* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2011); Dr.

William Knarr and Maj Robert Castro, Institute for Defense Analysis Non-Standard Document NS D-3787, Log H 09-000669, "The Battle for Fallujah: *Al Fajr*, the Myth-buster," May 2009, a short version of the following study; Dr. William Knarr and Maj Robert Castro with Dianne Fuller, *The Battle for Fallujah: Al Fajr, the Myth-Buster*, IDA Paper P-4455 (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2009), the full study report; and transcripts of interviews with key participants in the Fallujah battles by Dr. William Knarr used to inform the aforementioned reports, provided to the author by Dr. Knarr, which are also available on DVD appendices to the printed reports. *New York Times* journalist Dexter Filkins has written an excellent first-hand account of his time in Iraq and Afghanistan and was present for the second battle. See Dexter Filkins, *The Forever War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008); and West, *No True Glory*. Comments on these battles and material from which the author extrapolated lessons draw on their superb scholarship.

31. Important analogies: (1) Afghanistan. Andrew MacKay and Steve Tatham argue that in Afghanistan "the true asymmetry of the campaign is that the Taliban rely on 90 percent psychology and 10 percent force where we rely on 90 percent force and 10 percent psychology in an environment where perception is reality, memories are very long, and enemies are easily made." In their view, the Taliban are waging a communications war and "understand that public opinion is probably the Achilles heel of the international community." MacKay and Tatham, *Behavioural Conflict*, 57. (2) Bosnia. MacKay and Tatham incisively dissected how Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic used propaganda to wage war against NATO forces. Milosevic believed he confronted a bombing war and a media war and resolved to win the latter. He geared up a well-oiled propaganda machine to do so. He silenced hostile journalists and independent media. State-controlled broadcasts referred to NATO as *criminals*. It broadcast footage and news reports alleging that NATO was bombing hospitals and causing ecological disasters. Milosevic exploited centuries of ethnic tension, old folk tales, and stirring poetry to drive the message that Kosovo had always been and would remain Serbian. He stoked Serbs with images that equated NATO with Nazis, and Serbian ministers entered internet chat rooms to drive Milosevic's messages. MacKay and Tatham, *Behavioural Conflict*, 29–31.
32. In interviewing LtGen John Sattler, Malkasian suggested that all but 5,000 out of 250,000 civilians were evacuated. See LtGen John Sattler, commander, I Marine Expeditionary Force, and Dr. Carter Malkasian, CNA, interview with Bill Knarr and Maj Robert Castro, 6 December 2005, 14, transcript provided to author by Dr. Knarr, hereafter Sattler interview. Bing West has reported that the insurgents consisted of a hard core of 20 leaders, controlling about 600 "tough fighters plus a thousand part-timers who would

grab a weapon to defend the city of Islam or whatever someone told an impoverished, impressionable teenager to defend." West, *No True Glory*, 63.

33. MajGen Richard Natonski, commander, 1st Marine Division, LtCol Michael McCarthy et al., interview with Bill Knarr, 9 December 2005, 28, transcript provided to author by Dr. Knarr, hereafter Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview. McCarthy served as the fire support coordination officer in the Civil-Military Operations Center. Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 5. To understand how media can dramatically portray events, view Jeremy Scahill's 2013 documentary *Dirty Wars*. The national security correspondent for *The Nation*, Scahill offers withering criticism and skepticism about America's approach to fighting violent extremism. This author strongly disagrees with his conclusions, which treat an operational error in Afghanistan causing civilian casualties, for which the U.S. apologized, as a dark military conspiracy; absurdly infer that the decision to back Somali warlords, which was made by civilian policy makers in Washington, was made by the military or other government personnel; and argue that killing al-Qaeda volunteer Anwar al-Awlaki (who also placed his son in harm's way) was wrong. The implication that SOF forces are cavalier in inflicting casualties among civilians is notably egregious. Actually, a study of 2,245 counterterrorism missions conducted in Afghanistan from May 2010 through April 2011 revealed that 84 percent saw no shots fired, while 1,862 missions captured or killed the intended target and/or their associates (83 percent). LtGen John F. Mulholland, USA, "U.S. Army Special Operations Command State of the Command Brief" (PowerPoint briefing, 3 June 2011), 14, as cited in Jim Thomas and Chris Dougherty, *Beyond the Ramparts: The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2013), 19. Still, it is important to comprehend and anticipate how events may be reported. The film's interview with retired Gen Hugh Shelton in defending a JSOC operation in Afghanistan offers a valuable case study in how not to conduct a press interview and what to avoid.
34. West, *No True Glory*, 60. Anticipated phases and timelines for the operation, West reported, were not laid out—warning the population, consulting with allies, gaining Iraqi agreement, preparing the media, consulting with Congress, and marshaling forces.
35. West, *No True Glory*, 60. The first battle was a response to the murder of four American contractors as they crossed through Fallujah. Apparently, President George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Bremer and his coterie wanted to send a message that such action would not be tolerated, without tying that sentiment to a cohesive strategic plan. It bears stressing that the order to proceed overruled protests from U.S. Marine commanders on the ground ar-

- guing against the attack. The Marines preferred a different approach that would reduce the insurgency, install capable Iraqi security forces, and revive Fallujah prosperity. West, *No True Glory*, 58–61.
36. I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) Brief to Gen John Abizaid, Camp Fallujah, 9 April 2004, as cited by Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," 435.
 37. Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah." Malkasian served as an advisor to I MEF in Iraq from February 2004 to February 2005. The discussion on the history of the first battle for Fallujah draws on his commentary. He points out that in Vietnam, Viet Cong successes in Long An enabled the Communists to execute propaganda that brought new people into the movement. He argues that in 2000, the hasty withdrawal from Lebanon of Israeli Defense Forces may have caused Palestinians to perceive violence as a useful means to attain their aims. Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," 425–26. See also Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1973), 191; and Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 125. Malkasian cites all of these sources.
 38. Shultz, *The Marines Take Anbar*, 79.
 39. Knarr and Castro, "The Battle for Fallujah: *Al Fajr*, the Myth-Buster," 13.
 40. Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," 435. He notes that dissatisfaction with political and economic conditions stiffened anti-Coalition sentiment.
 41. Filkins, *The Forever War*, 83. West makes the same point in *No True Glory*, chapter 1.
 42. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 130, 131, 143.
 43. Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," 438.
 44. Comments by LtGen James Conway, Camp Fallujah, 29 April 2004, and an interview with LtGen John Sattler at Camp Pendleton, 10 November 2004, as cited in Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah."
 45. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 131.
 46. Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 43.
 47. LtGen David Petraeus, USA, "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq," *Military Review* (January/February 2006): 2–12. See also West, *No True Glory*, 60.
 48. Anne Barnard, "Anger over Fallujah Reaches Ears of the Faithful," *Boston (MA) Globe*, 12 April 2004.
 49. Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," 424.
 50. West, *No True Glory*, 92–93. After the Egyptian military ousted Mohamed Morsi as president in 2013, Egyptian television stations were also caught using old footage to portray current events. Maintaining a lookout for such distortions and calling them out is a key element in maintaining message discipline.
 51. West, *No True Glory*, 92–93.
 52. Jack Guy, interview with author, 1 June 2013.
 53. The book offers a detailed analysis of the different forms of strategic communication, including information operations as it embraces psychological or military information support operations, public diplomacy, propaganda, and public affairs. Those who wish to know more should read Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*.
 54. "Introduction: The Abu Ghraib Files," *Salon*, 14 March 2006; and Seymour M. Hersh, "Chain of Command: How the Department of Defense Mishandled the Disaster at Abu Ghraib," *New Yorker*, 17 May 2004.
 55. MajGen Antonio Taguba, *Article 15-6 Investigation of the 800th Military Police Brigade* (Washington, DC: Joint Task Force, 2004). Originally classified, the report was made public.
 56. An important distinction lay in the status of the detainees. On 7 February 2002, President Bush signed a statement declaring that the Geneva Conventions did not apply "to our conflict with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan or elsewhere in the world." See White House, "Statement by the Press Secretary on the Geneva Convention," press release, 7 February 2002. The administration stated that the Geneva Convention would apply to Taliban detainees but not "to the al-Qaeda international terrorists." The Abu Ghraib detainees were treated as al-Qaeda operatives.
 57. "Text of Remarks by Gen. Kimmitt on Prisoner Abuse in Iraq, 2004-04-30," *Voice of America*, 30 October 2009.
 58. David Holloway, *9/11 and the War on Terror* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 48.
 59. Josh White, "Abu Ghraib Guards Kept a Log of Prison Conditions, Practices," *Washington Post*, 25 October 2004.
 60. "Jessica Lynch Fast Facts," CNN, updated 3 April 2018. Officials later presented her with the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and POW medals for her service and captivity. The experience also netted Lynch a million-dollar book deal with publisher Alfred A. Knopf.
 61. Knarr and Castro, *The Battle for Fallujah: Al Fajr, the Myth-Buster*, 50–51; BGen Erwin F. Lessel, director of strategic communications, Multi National Forces–Iraq, interview with Bill Knarr, 28 December 2005, 6–7; and Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 17.
 62. Jack Guy, interview with author, 5 April 2018.
 63. Knarr and Castro, "The Battle for Fallujah: *Al Fajr*, the Myth-Buster," 16.
 64. LtCol Michael McCarthy put it this way: "[The Iraqis] didn't really know what was going on, but once they took a look

- around and saw tanks and Marines and soldiers, and guns and helicopters, you could see their calmness: ‘We are actually on the winning team this time.’ They realized that they weren’t getting kicked in, they weren’t getting shoved into the city with us just watching them, but we were there with them, and they were on the team, and that they were on the right side.” Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 37.
65. Journalist Dexter Filkins, who was on the ground during the second battle, reported that in fact this was an American battle and dismisses assertions that Iraqis were shouldering the burden. See Filkins, *The Forever War*, 192. Military servicemembers who were interviewed off the record argue that Filkins overstates his point.
 66. MajGen Richard Natonski took pride in that aspect of the second Fallujah battle. See Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 34.
 67. Petraeus, “Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq,” 3.
 68. Louis L’Amour, *Ride the River: A Novel* (New York: Bantam, 2010), 40.
 69. Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 196.
 70. LtGen Thomas Metz and LtCol James Hutton, “Massing Effects in the Information Domain: A Case Study for Aggressive Information Operations,” *Military Review* (May/June 2006): 2–12, as cited in Knarr and Castro, *The Battle for Fallujah: Al Fajr, the Myth-Buster*, 51.
 71. Metz and Hutton, “Massing Effects in the Information Domain”; and Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 28.
 72. See Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 38. Fear of killing civilians was a key factor in the development of COIN doctrine.
 73. Knarr and Castro, *The Battle for Fallujah: Al Fajr, the Myth-Buster*, 57–59; and Knarr, *Seizing the Peninsula, a Vignette from The Battle for Fallujah*, 23–24.
 74. Knarr and Castro, *The Battle for Fallujah: Al Fajr, the Myth-Buster*, 60–61; and Knarr, *Seizing the Peninsula, a Vignette from The Battle for Fallujah*, 24–29.
 75. Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 41, as cited in Knarr and Castro, *The Battle for Fallujah: Al Fajr, the Myth-Buster*, 41.
 76. See Col Bob Napp comments in Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 42.
 77. Napp comments in Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 30. Said Napp: “One of the key things on the leaflets [we distributed] was identifying what was of value to the Iraqi people as opposed to what was of value to us.”
 78. Knarr and Castro, “The Battle for Fallujah: *Al Fajr, the Myth-Buster*,” 6.
 79. Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 30–31.
 80. Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 30–31.
 81. West, *The Wrong War*, 29–30, 43. This book is not the venue for debating the merits of COIN versus counterterrorism (CT) or other notions. Fred Kaplan, John Nagl, and others strongly espouse COIN. See Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013); and Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. West offers a searing indictment of the view that COIN applied well to Afghanistan. In *Little America*, experienced journalist Rajiv Chandrasekaran sides more with West’s view. Many argue that vital elements of COIN were not implemented in Afghanistan. Karzai’s government was viewed as corrupt and incompetent and provided no cause or catalyst to rally citizens. The inkblot notion of progressively securing areas in which populations could be protected—and identified through a census—did not occur. At this writing, the Afghan National Army (ANA) has yet to meet standards of proficiency that would enable it to take over the fighting if American troops withdrew, although some argue that the ANA is improving steadily and moving toward shouldering the real burden of fighting. They argue also that lack of air support as the United States withdraws from the country presents a huge obstacle to the ANA’s ability to succeed. A final problem confronting application of COIN in Afghanistan is that Pakistan has provided a sanctuary to which the Taliban can flee. In *Duty*, Robert M. Gates quotes Gen McChrystal’s concisely stated point that CT can disrupt but not defeat an enemy. McChrystal states: “CT operations are necessary to mitigate a sanctuary but to defeat a terrorist group, host nation capacity must grow to ensure a sustainable level of security. . . . Without close-in access, fix and find methods become nearly impossible. Predator [drone] strikes are effective where they complement, not replace, the capabilities of the state security apparatus, but they are not scalable in the absence of underlying infrastructure, intelligence, and physical presence.” Gates, *Duty*, loc. 6599 of 11052, Kindle.
 82. West, *The Wrong War*, 29–30.
 83. Dexter Filkins favorably reviewed West’s book for the *New York Times*, commenting: “As ‘The Wrong War’ shows so well, the Americans will spend more money and more lives trying to transform Afghanistan, and their soldiers will sacrifice themselves trying to succeed. But nothing short of a miracle will give them much in return.” Dexter Filkins, “The Next Impasse,” *New York Times*, 24 February 2011.
 84. Filkins, *The Forever War*, 89.
 85. See Andrew Exum, “In Afghanistan with our Warrior Elite,” *Wall Street Journal*, 19 February 2011. Exum admires West’s on-the-ground reporting but argues that, unlike most military professionals whom Exum, himself a veteran, dealt with regarding Afghanistan, West misconstrues both the doctrine of COIN and the approach to winning that the United States has taken in this difficult conflict.
 86. Shultz, *The Marines Take Anbar*, 105–06.
 87. Jack Guy interview, 4 April 2017.

Chapter 4

KNOW YOUR PARTNERS—FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC

Knowing foreign partners, allies, and those with whom you must deal and understanding their interests and agendas matters as much as dealing with other parties in the U.S. government. Effective partner forces can provide “manpower, local knowledge, and political legitimacy.”¹ The most effective partnerships require “trusting relationships built over time around shared goals,” a point essential to special operations forces as well as general purpose forces.²

Know Your Foreign Partners

U.S. policy generally favors strong partnerships with allies in countering violent extremism, providing for common defense, and battling transnational crime. We operate through NATO, the United Nations (UN), and country-level organizations. Often, our interests and theirs coincide; at other times, they do not. The conflict in Afghanistan has dramatically shown how differently our NATO partners viewed their mission. It has affected their rules of engagement, strategic considerations, definition of success, allocation of resources, and other key decisions.

In Iraq, General McChrystal built an impressive killing machine in his SOF-led Task Force 145 (2006). Yet substantial tensions arose between the United States and the British Special Air Service (SAS) contingent, which held a different view of strategy and treatment of prisoners.³

Communication strategy must understand how partners view a situation or partnership and realistically calibrate it to the realities.

Here are key questions to ask about foreign partners:

- What is the basis for the partnership?
- What are the key interests for each party?
- What are their *overt* and *covert* agendas, and how do they affect partnership dynamics? How can you influence them to effect a positive strategic outcome?

- How indispensable to the United States is the partnership?
- How does the United States operate in practice to foster or maintain the partnership?
- What leverage does the United States have to secure support for U.S. strategic views or interests?
- What weaknesses from the U.S. viewpoint characterize the partnership?
- Is the partner really a partner, or is it a partnership in name only? To what extent, and how, do you envision the partner making their contribution to a joint effort?
- Have U.S. troops trained regularly with the partner's military? Do we have ongoing mission training?

Modern Examples

Afghanistan. This book does not aim to catalog the complex, complicated challenges that the Afghan conflict has presented. However, it is worth citing one glaring example to illustrate the potential pitfalls of dealing with foreign partners: former President Hamid Karzai. At the time of this writing, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah are fighting over the 2020 presidency. But our experience with Karzai offers key lessons. In theory, he was a U.S. partner and ally, yet he publicly accused the United States of harassing and torturing civilians; colluded with the Taliban through daily talks; and employed rhetoric that vilified the United States.⁴ Karzai was widely viewed as corrupt while blaming foreigners for all corruption and exempting his own family members from such charges.⁵ He turned out or subverted competent local leaders in favor of his own hacks.⁶ It is apparent that Karzai stole the 2009 presiden-

tial election.⁷ Although the official U.S. policy in Afghanistan favored COIN, Bing West points out that Karzai blocked efforts to organize local militias, while for their part, Afghans often did not organize to defend themselves.⁸ Karzai opposed efforts to build up local government.⁹ He demanded the United States commit American troops to costly battles in strategically irrelevant places simply to advance his election prospects.¹⁰

One must, however, recognize two realities. First, Karzai's rhetoric was often meant for home consumption and directed to his Pashtun base. He is a Pashtun in a Northern Alliance capital. That was and remains a key issue for target audience analysis. Second, the Afghan Local Police (ALP) was roundly disliked by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) as it smacked of the militias that supported warlords after the downfall of the Taliban, and the ANSF did not want to deal with that threat again.

Politicians like Karzai can turn any partnership into a catastrophe. He was not the first. He will not be the last. Forging a communication strategy requires asking hard questions about so-called allies to understand the realities of the relationship and to calibrate strategy to those realities and U.S. policy. Too often that has not happened in Afghanistan. It is a vital lesson.

Lessons:

- 1. Do not presume that the interests or agendas of foreign partners and the United States align or are consistent.** In Afghanistan, the mercurial Karzai held a different worldview from that of most U.S. policy makers, and it affected commanders and action officers at every level, as well as their ability to forge an effective communication strategy. National security journalist Fred Kaplan raised this issue, citing Dr. Stephen D. Biddle, who

posited the powerful question: What strategy is prudent when a host government has a different view from the United States of its best interests—as Karzai did? What if the host government’s agenda favors a particular group, not the national population?¹¹ Strategy must assess the existence and significance of such differences and adjust to them.

2. Do not presume foreign partners’ actions will not subvert U.S. actions. Figure out what they might support and calibrate communication to that. A key message commanders such as General McChrystal tried to communicate to Afghans was that U.S. forces would stand with them, offering protection and opportunity. Karzai’s actions in foisting his patronage pack on villages and provinces, his corruption, his autocratic approach aimed at centering power in his hands, and his ineffective leadership undercut U.S. intentions.¹² You cannot change people like Karzai. His successor, Ashraf Ghani, is viewed as more honest but the government remains corrupt despite efforts to clean it up.¹³ However, you can identify specific actions or operations that such partners cannot or will not subvert and build strategies around those.

3. Recognize that coalitions shift. Today’s partner may be tomorrow’s adversary. Coalitions are often fragile, and agendas that bring together parties—state and nonstate actors alike—may collapse. While in office, Karzai was alternately friendly and hostile to the United States in his public statements. Pakistan has played both sides despite the billions in foreign assistance that the United States has provided. Think ahead to how events or actions can affect the dynamics of

an existing partnership, how to maintain one, and how to address frictions and possible future conflicting agendas.

4. Be prepared to forge a coalition on an issue if it does not already exist. Seek out commonalities. Build a community of interests. Maintain and strengthen the coalition through information, travel, engagement, and networking.¹⁴

Pakistan. The politics of Pakistan are complex, nuanced, and riddled with fear, insecurity, and a culture of conspiracy, paranoia, and treachery. Pakistanis are proud and feel the United States has treated Pakistan like a second-class friend, and charge that the United States has abandoned it at critical junctures. This book offers no venue to dissect or debate U.S.-Pakistan policy. But it is apparent that in fighting violent extremists, Pakistan has played on both sides—at one turn, accepting U.S. aid dollars and helping track down al-Qaeda operatives, at another helping the Taliban fight the United States. Pakistan has lied about its nuclear weapons program, which may fall at risk should the Taliban expand its influence and power inside Pakistan—which it fully intends to do.¹⁵

Communication strategies that affect parties such as Pakistan or members of its military require sensitivity. When the United States killed Osama bin Laden, there was debate about how to handle Pakistani chief of Army Staff Ashraf Parvez Kayani and what to say. The Pakistanis were in a tough position. If they said they did not know bin Laden was hiding there, they looked incompetent; if they did know, they were complicit. It is not surprising that Pakistan’s National Assembly conducted a special hearing to find out why it was caught by surprise.¹⁶ The fact is, the United States and Pakistan had different interests. The United States said it would track down

bin Laden no matter how long it took and accomplished that mission. From Pakistan's viewpoint, the United States breached its sovereignty and made it look bad.

Lesson: Every level of engagement with such nations requires words, actions, and signals that communicate what you want, what you are doing, and why you are doing it and factors in their viewpoints, recognizing that they may differ or prove incompatible with yours.

Know Your U.S. Government Partners

Understand the role played by the different U.S. entities that have a stake in what you are doing. That includes U.S. government-funded entities (e.g., USAID), and recognized U.S. entities with no government affiliation, including private businesses and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Key Questions:

- Do the different parts of the U.S. government engaged in an operation or conflict share the same or a compatible vision?
- Do they agree on the same strategy and tactics?
- Is their risk assessment consistent or compatible with yours?

Afghanistan. U.S. Marines secured independence from the command as a condition of agreeing to deploy to Afghanistan on a requested schedule. Even as the commander of U.S. forces, General McChrystal lacked authority to order them where to deploy. In committing troops to the theater, Lieutenant General James T. Conway obtained authority to maintain operational control over the Marines.¹⁷ NATO forces operated under their own rules of engagement.¹⁸ Different commanders in Afghanistan held different views about whether COIN or a

kill/capture counterterrorism strategy made more sense. They all followed their own best judgment.¹⁹

USAID in Afghanistan had its own priorities. These often collided with the military's COIN strategy. Experts saw cotton as an ideal crop to replace heroin poppies, but USAID refused action to capitalize on that.²⁰ American officials, including the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), have held a different view than the military and other U.S. security operations on how to deal with drug trafficking.²¹ The merits of that debate lie elsewhere. The point is that communication strategy needs to account for the conflicting views among stakeholders whose partnership and cooperation are vital to achieving victory. In Afghanistan, the military, USAID, diplomats, and the DEA had different, often contradictory, priorities. Those wanting to fight drugs clashed with the military, because the warlords whom the military found useful allies were involved in the drug trade.²² When experts suggested that cotton was one profitable crop that could earn farmers enough income to make weaning them off of growing poppies plausible, USAID clashed with proponents because its bureaucracy proved too inflexible to make it happen and its leadership worried that such action would lead to clashes with U.S. political champions of the domestic textile industry.²³ The conflicts between various U.S. government parties presented a strong impediment to waging effective warfare against the Taliban.

As noted previously, U.S. ambassador Karl Eikenberry and the military command viewed the strategic situation in Afghanistan differently and advocated different strategies. Richard Holbrooke, President Barack Obama's envoy to Afghanistan, wanted to negotiate a settlement with the Taliban, effect political reconciliation, and apprehend high-level drug dealers.²⁴ The military believed that was

unrealistic. When Holbrooke proposed a strategy to pursue reconciliation, General David Petraeus reportedly replied, “That’s a 15-second conversation. Not now.”²⁵ Vali Nasr, one of Holbrooke’s senior aides, wrote that the White House acceded to the military and “did not want to try anything as audacious as diplomacy.”²⁶

Lesson: these conversations represent the need for a strong strategic communication plan at the National Security Council level that the White House chief of staff oversees, to ensure consistent action across the government, including the Department of State’s USAID, which, as journalist Rajiv Chandrasekaran makes clear, merits infamy for ignoring good advice and following its own bureaucratic impulses.

In Iraq, the use of private security contractors by the U.S. government and private companies created so many challenges that the Iraqi government eventually moved to limit their activities. The most famous private contractor, Blackwater (now renamed Academi) was banned after Blackwater per-

sonnel guarding a U.S. embassy convoy killed 14 civilians in Baghdad in 2007.²⁷ The Iraqis banned foreign security contractors from the 12 major oil fields being developed by international companies, placing pressure on U.S. forces, arguing that the companies, using heavily armed mercenaries, were reckless operators who killed innocent civilians and escaped justice.²⁸ The first battle of Fallujah was ignited when four U.S. contractors were murdered as their convoy drove through downtown Fallujah. The lesson is that the priorities of private companies—Blackwater, for example, provided security to Bremer and the U.S. embassy—and the American military might overlap, but operational differences and different resources led to significant problems in conducting information warfare. The approach to any situation is to assess who the players are and to ascertain which ones, especially if associated with the United States, can inadvertently cross-pressure a communication strategy.

Endnotes

1. Thomas and Dougherty, *Beyond the Ramparts*, 12.
2. Thomas and Dougherty, *Beyond the Ramparts*, 12. Thomas and Dougherty argue that in Afghanistan, village stability operations (VSOs) have proven successful. These rely on four confluent efforts: “gaining the trust of village elders, building local security capacity, strengthening local civilian institutions and infrastructure, and effectively conveying information about these efforts to target populations” through military information support operations (MISO). Communication strategy lies at the heart of such indirect mission

activity. Efforts by civil affairs teams (CATs) are critical to VSO success. Gaining trust enables three lines of operation, typically carried out in four phases: shape, hold, build, and expand and transition. The approach entails bringing tangible benefits to the local population. Thomas and Dougherty, *Beyond the Ramparts*, 25. Note that Bing West and Rajiv Chandrasekaran have questioned whether in practice certain of these efforts in Afghanistan have worked as intended or generated active support for the government or sustained action by locals against the Taliban. One lesson Chandrase-

- karan's reporting drives home is to take care in communication strategy to avoid overpromising.
3. See Mark Urban, *Task Force Black*, 80. Urban details the differences of view throughout his book, which focuses on SAS activities and the British view of events in Iraq.
 4. Kevin Sieff, "U.S., Karzai Agree on Wardak Withdrawal," *Washington Post*, 20 March 2013; Matt Smith, "ISAF Chief: Karzai Claim of U.S., Taliban Collusion Is 'Categorically False'," CNN, 11 March 2013; and Alissa J. Rubin, "Karzai Bets on Vilifying U.S. to Shed His Image as a Lackey," *New York Times*, 12 March 2013.
 5. Leslie H. Gelb, "To Hell with Karzai," *Daily Beast*, 12 March 2013; "Karzai Blames Foreigners for Corruption," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 22 December 2012; and Matthew Rosenberg and Graham Bowley, "Intractable Afghan Graft Hampering U.S. Strategy," *New York Times*, 7 March 2012.
 6. See Chandrasekaran, *Little America*; Sardar Ahmad, "Karzai's New Cabinet Seen as Return to Patronage Politics," *Telegraph*, 11 January 2010; Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Karzai Visit a Time for Tough Talk on Security, Corruption," *Brookings*, 8 January 2013; and George Packer, "The Last Mission: Richard Holbrooke's Plan to Avoid the Mistakes of Vietnam in Afghanistan," *New Yorker*, 21 September 2009.
 7. "Karzai Stole Election, Says Carter," *Dawn*, 18 September 2009. Gen McChrystal records in his memoir that Abdul Rahim Wardak advised the United States to "waste no more blood or treasure" should the 2009 elections fail. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 330.
 8. West, *The Wrong War*, 23.
 9. Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 168
 10. West, *The Wrong War*, 79.
 11. Kaplan, *The Insurgents*, 340–41. Many believed that the facts belied the notion that Karzai was a true strategic partner. Biddle served on Gen Stanley McChrystal's strategic assessment team in Afghanistan and is a senior fellow for defense policy at the Council on Foreign Relations.
 12. See Packer, "The Last Mission"; Chandrasekaran, *Little America*; McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*; West, *The Wrong War*; Kaplan, *The Insurgents*; and remarks of Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry in Robert Mackey, "U.S. Ambassador's Riposte to Karzai," *The Lede* (blog), *New York Times*, 20 June 2011. Many feel Eikenberry's well-publicized cable to the White House blasting Karzai as "not an adequate strategic partner" and the fallacy of presuming that the Afghan government was a dependable ally willing and able to step in and provide basic services have proven accurate. Even leaders such as Fred Kaplan, a proponent for COIN about which Eikenberry expressed doubt, concurred that "the ambassador's main points were so clearly accurate." Kaplan, *The Insurgents*, 315.
 13. John F. Sopko, *Afghanistan's Anti-Corruption Efforts: The Afghan Government Has Begun to Implement an Anti-Corruption Strategy, but Significant Problems Must Be Addressed*, SIGAR 18-51 Audit Report (Arlington, VA: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2018), 1.
 14. Brian E. Carlson, State Department liaison to the Pentagon and former ambassador to Latvia, interview with author, 18 June 2018.
 15. See Farwell, *The Pakistan Cauldron*; Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife*; and Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark, *Deception: Pakistan, the United States and the Global Nuclear Weapons Conspiracy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).
 16. The author points out the problem that the attack posed for Pakistanis: "They believe that the attack placed them in an untenable position: either they did not know bin Laden was there, rendering them ignorant or incompetent; or else they were willing conspirators." Farwell, *The Pakistan Cauldron*, 258. In 2013, Mark Mazzetti wrote of Kayani's response: "He could either appear complicit in hiding Osama bin Laden or incompetent for being able to stop the world's most hunted man from taking refuge in the middle of his country. He chose the latter." Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife*, 289.
 17. Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 64–65.
 18. Richard Norton-Taylor and Julian Borger, "NATO Tightens Rules of Engagement to Limit Further Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan," *Guardian*, 8 September 2008.
 19. Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 154–60, 211, 212; and McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 307, 321.
 20. Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 64–65. Another challenge he identified that affected communication strategy was USAID's insistence on funding massive projects that benefited large U.S. contractors, when development proponents such as Richard Holbrooke sought to direct more funds through Afghan ministries and local aid organizations. Apparently, 70 percent of U.S. aid went to overhead, and only 30 percent to the Afghan people. Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 198.
 21. See Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin Is Bankrolling the Taliban and al Qaeda* (New York: Thomas Dunne Book, 2009).
 22. See Peters, *Seeds of Terror*.
 23. See Chandrasekaran, *Little America*.
 24. Vali Nasr, "The Inside Story of How the White House Let Diplomacy Fail in Afghanistan," *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2013; and Packer, "The Last Mission."
 25. Nasr, "The Inside Story of How the White House Let Diplomacy Fail in Afghanistan." Nasr was a senior advisor to Holbrooke and maintains that the Taliban were ready for talks as early as April 2009. Other experts challenge that assessment, arguing that all the Taliban was ready to negotiate for was the release of their people locked up in Guantánamo, and that the only talks that might have any opportunity of succeeding required participation by all key ethnic groups, including the Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazara, not

just the United States and the Taliban. See James P. Farwell and Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Transition in Afghanistan: Securing the Best Achievable Outcome," *Atlantisch Perspectief* 36, no. 4 (June 2012).

26. Nasr, "The Inside Story of How the White House Let Diplomacy Fail in Afghanistan." Despite what Nasr asserts, it is important to note that personal dislike of Holbrooke by key White House personnel apparently contributed to

skepticism or rejection of his advice, perhaps as much as holding a different perspective on how to resolve the Afghanistan conflict.

27. "Iraq Wants to Limit Private Security Contractors," *Al Arabiya News*, 8 February 2012.

28. "Iraq Bans Security Firms on Oil Fields," UPI.com, 19 March 2012.

Chapter 5

RECOGNIZE TARGET AUDIENCE CULTURE AS AN OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The social norms, values, customs, shared beliefs, and behaviors in a society all can influence how people make judgments about right and wrong, assess what is important, and suggest what to do and what not to do, as well as how and with whom.¹

Establishing an understanding of a target audience's culture needs to be done at the outset of any operation. It is vital, as former U.S. ambassador to Latvia Brian E. Carlson has observed, to understand whether or how a topic that interests the United States engages a foreign audience and, if so, how and in what manner. That understanding helps to define how you will prioritize resources, what you both will and will not say or do, and the time frame and operational phases within which you will act.²

"Who are they?" Carlson asks as he analyzes cultures. "What do they think about a subject on which you wish to engage? Why do they think or feel that way? What do key words mean to them? Where do they get information on this subject? Who do they trust? Who do they listen to or follow? Are there gatekeepers whose 'permission' is required before the audience will act or change behavior?"³

In examining narratives to articulate for target audiences, psychological operations (psyops) experts Major Gregory S. Seese and Patrick Hanlon insightfully point out that understanding any target audience and influencing its behavior requires forging a narrative keyed to seven elements: 1) how the audience's community was created; 2) what it believes; 3) what symbolizes it; 4) how it routinely behaves or responds to certain situations; 5) the words its members use to describe themselves and what they do; 6) who they are and never want to become; and 7) who leads them.⁴

Historical Example

Pearl Harbor. Just as with bin Laden, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto and the Japanese misjudged America's character and will to fight. Pearl Harbor was Japan's version of a shock and awe strategy. Hoping to cripple the United States' spirit and frighten Americans by communicating the message that Ja-

pan was all-powerful, Japan expected Americans to pressure their government to negotiate a settlement with Japan. At no point did it occur to Japan that Americans would stand and fight. That was critical to Japan's strategic thinking, as many Japanese leaders doubted they could win a prolonged war. Their misjudgment provoked World War II. The Japanese mistake came from drawing the wrong lesson from Japan's 1905 war with Russia, when the same strategy succeeded.

One notes again that at the outset of World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt confronted precisely the same challenge, as he maneuvered through sophisticated communication strategy—manifest in his words and deeds—to create a situation in which Japan fired the first shot, insulating Roosevelt from any charge that he had provided a pretext that forced Japan into conflict. Roosevelt knew that Americans needed to be united, but uniting the country, in his view, would have been impossible unless peace proponents agreed that America was the aggrieved party.⁵

Modern Examples

Somalia and General Anthony Zinni. Never presume you know what is best for people in another society. Do not apply Western values or worldviews. Look at the world through the eyes of the foreign audiences you deal with. Operating successfully in a clan-dominated society such as Somalia, General Zinni pointed out that knowing how they operate and interact with one another is vital. Somalis have no concept of individual responsibility. Only the clan can accept responsibility.⁶ That had important consequences when a decision was made to announce a \$25,000 reward for Mohamed Farrah Aidid's capture. It was foolish. Somalis interpreted it as a declaration of war on an entire clan, not a plan to constrain one indi-

vidual. The avoidable Blackhawk Down incident flowed directly from the failure of leaders subsequent to Zinni to recognize that reality.

Lesson: When entering a different cultural environment, set aside Western preconceptions. Think differently. Think about the local culture, history, and norms, and how actions will affect people and their anticipated response. Do not think like an American. Think like someone who lives and breathes the culture of the target audience.

11 September 2001 and Osama bin Laden. Osama bin Laden thought that attacking the Twin Towers in New York City would galvanize Americans to pressure the U.S. government to get out of what bin Laden defined as Muslim lands. Instead, bin Laden provoked an all-out war that led to his death.⁷ He drew the wrong lesson from the October 1983 attack on U.S. Marines in Beirut, which killed 241 American servicemembers and caused President Ronald W. Reagan to withdraw the U.S. military from the city.⁸ Bin Laden deluded himself into believing that pressuring the United States by inflicting casualties on its troops or killing civilians would cause the nation to back away from a fight. Instead, Americans embarked on a no-holds-barred effort to hunt him. Far from achieving his goal, bin Laden became the most-wanted criminal on the planet while alienating his Taliban hosts, whom he double-crossed after promising Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar not to take action that would cause problems for him.⁹ Americans did track down bin Laden and kill him, fulfilling a pledge to do so, no matter where he was or how long it took.¹⁰

Lesson: Use communication strategy to make clear to an adversary that the cost of opposing or attacking your forces exceeds any de-

sired benefit. Communication strategy must anticipate how adversaries may perceive—and misjudge—your intentions. That hinges on developing as complete an understanding of an adversary as possible. Effective communication strategy can play a pivotal role in deterring or preventing conflict.

Corollary: Increasingly, the emergence of hybrid warfare is leading to the use of weaponized social media to advance political or military objectives. In 2016, Russia meddled in U.S. elections. One option that President Barack Obama considered and declined to approve was using computer malware for offensive or retaliatory action. The option remains on the table in surmounting future challenges. A critical challenge lies in the danger of rapid escalation. Prudent use of malware may well argue for communicating with an adversary ahead of time as to the risks it exposes itself to through cyber warfare. For example, the United States in theory might caution Russia that hacking into election machinery to alter outcomes or voter registration rolls may prompt an attack on a Russian power grid or some other target. It is important to define limits on the use of cyber tools, because the escalatory risks can prove enormous. In that context, cyber tools should be seen as potential elements of information warfare.¹¹

Somalia and Ethiopia, 2006. First, the United States supported brutal warlords in Somalia because they postured themselves as anti-al-Qaeda. But the warlords alienated Somalis and the Mogadishu business community, accomplishing this under the auspices of a so-called Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism. Supporting warlords backfired on the United States, however. So-

malis responded by establishing the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). The ICU quashed the warlords and restored order, amid a raft of hostility toward the United States.¹²

Then the United States supported Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia to oust the ICU. Relations between Ethiopia and Somalia had been tense for many years. Many believe that the United States misread the situation and the Somali population's likely response to intervention.¹³ Ousting the ICU gave rise to Al-Shabaab, an al-Qaeda affiliate that used antforeigner sentiment to recruit and mobilize an extremist army that terrorized and brutalized the population.¹⁴

Lessons:

1. Facts on the ground trump any communication strategy; and actions are a key element of strategic communication.

Backing the warlords was a mistake. Be careful about the allies you choose and how populations perceive these allies and your actions, whether direct or indirect.

2. Ill-judged action may worsen the situation. The Ethiopian troops were accused of brutality in their own right, compounding Somali hostility and compromising any chance that an antiextremist message to the mostly Sufi Somalis might resonate.

Analogy: At this writing, Syria is torn by civil war. Its brutality is evident in the high numbers of civilians who have been killed. One striking feature of the conflict is that both Bashar al-Assad's government *and* certain Sunni rebels appear to have committed atrocities. Arming the rebels with heavy weapons may have been a good idea, but once ISIS appeared on the scene and presented a common enemy to other Sunnis, rebels

against the regime who ostensibly represented pro-Western forces intermixed with those such as Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Nusra Front) or Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which identified with al-Qaeda, and the parties were known to swap weapons.¹⁵

Panama. General Manuel Noriega misread American will when his troops murdered Marine Corps First Lieutenant Robert Paz and beat up a Navy lieutenant and his wife (who was also sexually harassed). Noriega presents an interesting case of arrogance blinding a ruthless, street-savvy leader. In 1970, Noriega was a rising figure in the Panamanian military. Media reports claimed that the U.S. government had recruited him as an asset but removed him in 1977 after he got involved in drug trafficking. According to media reports, the United States reengaged after the Sandinistas gained power in Nicaragua. Apparently, Noriega also acted as a double agent for Cuba and the Sandinistas, fueling tensions with the United States.

In 1989, Noriega annulled a presidential election that Guillermo Endara had won, a move that prompted President George H. W. Bush to beef up U.S. forces stationed in the Panama Canal Zone. On 16 December 1989, an off-duty U.S. Marine was shot to death at a Panamanian Defense Force

roadblock.¹⁶ Bush responded by launching Operation Just Cause, which ousted Noriega on the grounds that he threatened Americans living in Panama and the security of the Panama Canal.¹⁷ Noriega surrendered, was taken to the United States and tried for drug trafficking, and was handed a 40-year jail sentence.¹⁸

Lesson: There is a corollary to 9/11. It is important to communicate the cost of committing hostile actions against the United States. The use of loudspeakers to blare music at Noriega once he sought refuge in an embassy offers a good example of psyops (today called MISO)—a communication strategy—to force a party out from hiding or a refuge.

2003 Iraq War. This conflict serves as a case study for the need to understand how the physical environment (geography), history, social organization, religion, beliefs and values, and the economy confluently influenced what strategy offered the best opportunity for success.¹⁹

Lesson: The failure of Coalition forces and leaders such as Paul Bremer to understand these factors and how the social and political dynamics they generated caused frustration and nearly the defeat of Coalition forces.

Endnotes

1. See Col Hershel L. Holiday, USA, "Improving Cultural Awareness in the U.S. Military" (master's strategy research project, U.S. Army War College, 2008), 2–3.
2. Ambassador Brian Carlson, interview with author.
3. Ambassador Brian Carlson, interview with author.
4. Patrick Hanlon and Maj Gregory Seese, "Deconstructing Narratives: Using Primal Branding to Design Oppositional Narratives," *IO Sphere* (Fall 2013). They astutely state that psyops' mission is to influence behavior, not just attitudes and that behavioral change lies at the root of the psyops mission.
5. See Strange, *Capital "W" War*, for an excellent description of Roosevelt's strategy. In his book, MajGen J. F. C. Fuller offers a provocative analysis of Allied strategy leading up to and through World War II that provides an alternative—and highly critical—view of the strategies that Churchill and

Roosevelt adopted. Fuller argues these were naïve, created avoidable strategic debacles, and produced a Cold War stalemate instead of a clear-cut victory.

6. MajGen Anthony C. Zinni, “Non-Traditional Military Missions: Their Nature and the Need for Cultural Awareness and Flexible Thinking” in *Strange, Capital “W” War*, 266–68. Gen Zinni’s entire quote is worth repeating: “What I need to understand is how these societies function. What makes them tick? Who makes the decisions? What is it about their society that’s so remarkably different in their values, in the way they think, compared to my values and the way I think in my western, white-man mentality? My mentality, which has absolutely zero applicability here but which drives everything I do. My decision-making, my military way of METT and T [Mission, Enemy, Terrain and weather, Troops and support, and Time available], my way of building my synchronization matrix, my top-down planning, and my battlefield geometry—all is worth absolutely zip in this environment where the enemies are abstract: starvation, anarchy and disorder. Where the problems you’re going to face have nothing to do with military operations which are a small piece, secondary to everything else. The situations you’re going to be faced with go far beyond what you’re trained for in a very narrow military sense. They become cultural issues; issues of traumatized populations’ welfare, food, shelter; issues of government; issues of cultural, ethnic, religious problems; historical issues; economic issues that you have to deal with, that aren’t part of the METT-T process, necessarily. And that rigid military thinking can get you in trouble. What you need to know isn’t what our intel apparatus is geared to collect for you, and to analyze, and to present to you. An assumption going in is that you know what’s best for them; that you’re trying to implant Jeffersonian Democracy, ultimately. Jefferson, Locke and Rousseau all have one thing in common in a place like Somalia—they’re three dead white men. End of discussion. So, try to implant these theories by all us great western nations, and you might have a little problem. If you don’t understand the tribal structure of the Kurds, if you don’t understand who Chaldeans are, and the Assyrian Christians, and Uzbeks, and Uzars; if you don’t understand Habr Gedir, and Issaq, and Abgals; if you don’t understand the complexity of the clans and their interrelationships in Somalia, you’re in trouble. And if you understood that there is *no* concept of individual responsibility in Somalia, then you wouldn’t do a stupid thing like put out an arrest warrant on Aideed and a \$25,000 reward on his head. When you do this, you declare war on his clan. Only the clan can accept responsibility. And if they do, they pay a *dia*, in effect blood money, in payment of a wrong that they have accepted as a wrong that they have committed, or a member of their clan has committed. When you go fight them then, why is it that the women and kids are out in the street committing atrocities on American bodies? Because you went to war with the clan. You declared war on the clan. You’re there to eradicate the clan. Your enemy is Habr Gedir. And when you go to war with the clan, the whole clan fights. And you can’t understand that in a western context or a western view of the world. Because what you’re out to collect and what your decision process is all about is alien to that particular environment.” Emphasis original.
7. Dr. Fawaz A. Gerges presented his argument that while Osama bin Laden did not like the United States, the goal of 9/11 was less about ideology than to change the U.S. government’s attitude about maintaining a presence in these lands at the Sovereign Challenge Conference held at the U.S. Strategic Command in October 2005. He describes bin Laden’s miscalculation in his book *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 162–64. See also Farwell, *The Pakistan Cauldron*, 256–58, on the U.S. commitment to track down Osama bin Laden.
8. Farwell, *The Pakistan Cauldron*; and Peter L. Bergen, *Manhunt: The Ten-Year Search for Bin Laden—from 9/11 to Abbottabad* (New York: Crown, 2012).
9. This point is documented in Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clarke, *The Exile: The Flight of Osama bin Laden* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017). They reported that bin Laden had arrived in Pakistan before the Taliban took power. Levy advised that Mullah Omar allowed bin Laden to remain but warned that al-Qaeda action such as the 1998 Nairobi bombing made him uneasy. Mullah Omar had specifically warned bin Laden against provoking the United States as a condition for offering Taliban hospitality. Bin Laden ignored the directive. Omar also had been tipped off that bin Laden was planning other global terrorist attacks, which especially angered him. His frame of mind was to allow Pakistan—as it was a Muslim state—to apprehend and seize bin Laden. After 9/11, the mood shifted. Even though the al-Qaeda *shura* had opposed the attack, Levy says there was a sense of euphoria about the harm inflicted on the United States. One reason that Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) encouraged Omar to refuse to turn over bin Laden was that ISI did not want to be perceived as turning over a new folk hero to the Americans.
10. The United States did not stop with bin Laden. U.S. forces have killed his cohorts in Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and anywhere they are found. “U.S. Kills al-Qaeda Suspects in Yemen”; and “Pakistan: U.S. Drone Kills Senior Al Qaeda Leader,” *Associated Press*, 9 December 2012.
11. See James P. Farwell, “Countering Russian Meddling in US Political Processes,” *Parameters* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 37–47.
12. Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife*, chapter 8, 137–43. Mazzetti

- reports that the U.S. government sent weapons and suitcases containing \$200,000 to favored warlords.
13. Jeremy Scahill, "Blowback in Somalia: How U.S. Proxy Wars Helped Create a Militant Islamist Threat," *Nation*, 7 September 2011. Scahill argues that of the 13 Islamic Courts, 12 were really clan courts with no connection to global jihad and that the United States and Ethiopia showed poor judgment and acted on poor information.
 14. Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife*, chapter 8; and Armin Rosen, "How Africa's Most Threatening Terrorist Group Lost Control in Somalia," *Atlantic*, 21 September 2012.
 15. Mariya Petkova, "Where Is al-Qaeda in Syria?," *Al Jazeera*, 1 March 2018.
 16. "This Day in History: December 20, 1989—The U.S. Invades Panama," *History.com*, 9 February 2009.
 17. Peter Eisner, "Manuel Noriega, the Invasion of Panama and How George H. W. Bush Misled America," *Newsweek*, 18 March 2017. Eisner argues that Bush's rationale was false and that Bush had no justification for the invasion. He reported that officials advised him privately that Noriega could be persuaded to leave office without an invasion. The author's belief is that Bush was looking for an excuse to show the world that the United States was willing to assert its military power in an effort to end a perception emanating from the American withdrawal from Vietnam that it was reluctant to employ its military to advance or protect U.S. national security interests.
 18. See Larry Rohter, "Noriega Sentenced to 40 Years in Jail on Drug Charges," *New York Times*, 11 July 1992; Maureen Mahoney, "President W. H. Bush, Masculinity, and America's invasion of Panama City in 1989," *NeoAmericanist* 1, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2005–6); and Eytan Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited: Lessons for the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War Era," *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 4 (Winter 1995–96): 529. The commentary provides a good history of U.S. efforts to depose Noriega.
 19. See Shultz, *The Marines Take Anbar*, 8–25. He observes that geography "is the starting point for understanding how and why" Iraqis see themselves. Shultz, *The Marines Take Anbar*, 11. The Marine Corps produced the *Iraq Tribal Study*, which stands out as a model for cultural analysis and helped decode the beliefs and values of the Sunni Arabs of al-Anbar Province. These were derived from Bedouin tribal traditions, Islam, and Arab culture and shaped Sunni identity. They affected self-perceptions and expectations and directly affected Sunnis' hostility to foreign domination that helped fuel resistance to the Coalition, until the Coalition adapted its strategy to successful COIN tactics and capitalized on al-Qaeda mistakes to turn the tide in al-Anbar. See Lin Todd et al., *Iraq Tribal Study—Al-Anbar Governorate: The Albu Fahd Tribe, the Albu Mahal Tribe, and the Albu Issa Tribe* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2006).

Chapter 6

BUILDING YOUR STRATEGY—YOUR CHECKLIST

This chapter builds on the first five and provides a checklist of the key steps you should consider in building an effective strategic communication plan. The author's political campaign colleague, Joseph Gaylord, whom the American Association of Political Consultants has named a campaign manager of the year and who was a founder of the National Republican Congressional Committee's college for candidates and campaign managers, merits credit for shaping political consulting industry thinking on this topic.

Twenty-four Characteristics of a Communication Campaign Plan

- 1. Written down.** Plans that are too complicated lead to miscommunication and confusion. Writing down a plan instills disciplined, clear thinking. You can revise, enhance, or deviate from it operationally, but a written plan provides a roadmap for prudent thinking. A written plan can be distributed to necessary parties to ensure they understand the commander's intent and operational details. It helps avoid confusion or misunderstanding. You can refer to it again and again and reduce the risk of word-of-mouth misinterpretations, enhancements, or oversimplification.
- 2. Engages with stakeholders.** Once a plan is written down and distributed, commanders at relevant levels should visit with the operators to make certain they understand, to answer questions, and to entertain suggestions.¹ Input from stakeholders maximizes the opportunity to spot and correct flaws, gain new perspectives, learn new options, and improve the plan.
- 3. Oriented toward winning.** General George S. Patton is reputed to have declared: "America loves a winner and will not tolerate a loser. This is why America has never, and will never, lose a war."² Vince Lombardi put it this way: "Winning is not a sometime thing; it's an all time thing. You don't

win once in a while, you don't do things right once in a while, you do them right all the time. Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing."³ A winning attitude inspires everyone around you. If you do not play to win, do not play. A strategy must exude that attitude and always aim to succeed.

4. Realistic. There is no point in executing a strategy that sets unrealistic goals. You need to assess the strategic situation objectively, examine the strengths and weaknesses of your narrative, measure how they stack up against those of the adversary, and devise an actionable, realistic plan. Plans that are confusing, unclear, too broad, untimely, or impossible to carry out become self-defeating. Plans need to be as simple as possible. Using a football analogy, Vince Lombardi won acclaim for an approach to coaching that focused on top-notch execution of what he termed the *fundamentals* in coaching, starting with making sure his players got fit and mastered the art of blocking and tackling. Campaigns that employ too many contingencies and too many elements risk failure through lack of coordination, integration, and cohesion.

5. Divisible, with assigned responsibilities. Information warfare plans often involve many moving pieces at many levels. The Fallujah battles offer a good example. Those involved in information operations and public affairs had to coordinate closely in communicating a narrative, story, themes, and messages to a broad range of Iraqi citizens—insiders and outsiders to politics and the military—local media, the international media, the international community, to those involved in the operations, and to Coalition

forces generally. You have to divide the tasks, assign them with clear lines of responsibility for performance and clear lines of reporting, and ensure accountability.

6. Measurable to ensure progress. As much as possible, it is essential to know what parts of a plan are working, with whom, when, and why. Gaining that information enables you to either persevere with the current plan or improve on it with necessary adjustments to ensure success. Detecting problems enables you, at a minimum, to know what deficiencies are in your plan and hopefully solve them.⁴

In Iraq, Coalition leaders terminated the First Battle of Fallujah amid pressure levied by Iraqi political leaders and unfavorable media. They calculated that the cost of military victory outweighed the benefits, and as a result insurgents scored an enormous propaganda victory. Under new leadership later in 2004, the Coalition studied what had gone wrong in April and applied those lessons to win the second battle of Fallujah in November.

The presidential election in 2012 offers an appropriate analogy. Voters responded positively to candidate Mitt Romney's performance in the first debate and poorly to incumbent Barack Obama. Obama went into the debate without making a serious effort to properly prepare. Obama is an extremely intelligent individual, but it strikes this author that he fell victim to conceit and underestimated his opponent. He did not articulate his ideas in a compelling or clear manner and did not seem presidential, and it appeared as though the debate was a nuisance to him.

President George H. W. Bush made a similar mistake in debating candidate William J. “Bill” Clinton in 1992 when he betrayed ignorance about the price of milk and kept looking at his watch. The message he conveyed was that he was too important to bother with explaining his record, views, or vision to voters. Bush was commonly regarded as one of the most gracious and talented individuals to occupy the Oval Office, but the president’s behavior during this debate turned off voters.

In 2012, Obama’s savvy team recognized that he needed to do better in the next two debates. They did not let hubris further obstruct the execution of the campaign. That held true for the candidate, as well. His team objectively assessed what Obama needed to do to improve and worked closely with him to correct the flaws evident during the first debate. Although some on his team maintained after the election that the outcome was never in doubt, the president took no chances. His preparation for the second and third debates was intensive, and he more than held his own with Romney in them.

7. Shared with and distributed to relevant parties so everyone is on the same page.

The failure to share key information with stakeholders and decision makers can turn success into a debacle. It produces gaps in information critical for decision making. It leaves unanswered key questions that make all the difference in whether or how an operation is carried out.

Consider Operation Eagle Claw, the failed Iranian hostage rescue attempt in 1980. It illustrates the consequences when the plan is not shared with every party involved

and the right questions are not asked—or answers by those in the know are withheld in deference to the military hierarchy of decision making. This operation lacked unified command and an integrated mission rehearsal. The operational plan called for six helicopters. Lieutenant General Charles H. Pitman did the final briefing for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General David C. Jones. Pitman revealed years later that Jones had failed to ask whether the mission could be carried out with only five helicopters. Pitman failed to volunteer that information. That prevented Jones from communicating it to the White House and it proved a missing piece of information that governed whether the White House gave the green light or aborted the mission.⁵

The author interviewed former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski about what the White House knew about the operational plan. Brzezinski confirmed that he had not known the mission required only five helicopters. Although at the time of the interview and reflecting back on events, he was philosophical, at the time of the incident he had made clear that he would have urged President James E. “Jimmy” Carter to greenlight the rescue had there been a basis for doing so. There was one; he just did not know about it.

Ironically—here is a mystery—both the Delta Force commander, Army Colonel Charles A. Beckwith, and the Desert One commander, Air Force Colonel James H. Kyle, seemed unaware that the mission could be carried out, in Pitman’s view, with just five helicopters. Pitman worked with the helicopter teams and in interviews with the author,

he was adamant that the rescue attempt using only five helicopters had been successfully rehearsed. This fact was never disclosed to the White House by either Jones or Defense Secretary Harold Brown.⁶ The White House deferred to Beckwith, who decided to abort the mission. The issue is not whether Beckwith made the correct decision; it is the fact that vital information relevant to how decision makers viewed their options was not shared with them at a critical point.

Perhaps Beckwith made the right call. That debate is for others to resolve. But hypothetically, presuming the mission had gone ahead and succeeded, a successful hostage rescue might have changed the outcome of the 1980 presidential election. It may have affected whether U.S. Special Operations Command, created in the wake of the operation's failure, was established. Sharing information with those who matter makes a decisive difference.

8. Ensure unity of command and control. In the military, unity of command means that forces fall under one responsible commander who has the authority to direct all forces in pursuit of a unified purpose. In the words of one soldier, "one mission, one boss."⁷ The principles of unity of command are well known. It produces a better relationship between superiors and subordinates; clear authority, responsibility, and accountability; reduces duplication of work; facilitates rapid decision making; fosters good discipline; encourages teamwork; boosts morale and inspires a positive attitude; and leads to higher productivity.⁸

It seems common sense, but Iraq and Afghanistan illustrate where command and

control was not unified. In Iraq, the ground commander, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, did not get on with Coalition Provisional Authority chief Paul Bremer. No one is willing to state exactly who empowered Bremer to do what. Not surprisingly, Coalition efforts between military and civilian officials were poorly coordinated and did not work well.

One reason that the Iraq surge worked well was that General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker joined forces and worked cohesively as a team to provide coordinated leadership.⁹

In Afghanistan, Ambassador Karl Eikenberry was generally at odds with military commanders. Journalists Mark Mazzetti and Rajiv Chandrasekaran reported strong differences between White House officials and Afghanistan-Pakistan envoy Richard Holbrooke.¹⁰ USAID had different ideas about civil reconstruction in Afghanistan than other officials. The U.S. Marines maintained control over their forces independent of General McChrystal.¹¹ Chandrasekaran reported that Marine independence posed challenges in mounting a coordinated, winning effort in Afghanistan, although on-the-ground experts such as Jack Guy reported that he was unaware of Marines ever responding negatively to McChrystal, a highly admired and respected commander whose work in Iraq and the results he and his team produced are legendary.¹²

Eagle Claw was a mess because it lacked unity of command, to which the response afterwards—a good response—was the establishment of the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) to cut through

inter-Service issues and assure unity of command for special operations. Failure to mount a cohesive effort for much of the time has been a challenge for the United States in Afghanistan.

9. Integrated with relevant command authorities. This is a corollary to the above precept. Lack of cohesion is self-defeating at all levels.

10. Forward-thinking and avoids fighting the preceding campaign. The changes that are sweeping the world are effecting a massive transformation. Terrorism and violent actors have become horizontally dispersed over distributed networks. Cyber capabilities, such as those employed in Iraq by Task Force 145 to track down Zarqawi and in Afghanistan to find and eliminate bin Laden, have transformed the capacities for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and the way warfare is conducted. The emergence of adversarial networks has mandated that U.S. forces develop their own networks, because it takes a network to beat one. The strategy to deal with those foes differed from the strategy used in Fallujah, although all efforts employed some of the same capabilities.

Future conflicts are likely to be asymmetrical, not set battles between two armies on a conventional battlefield. They will be, as British general Rupert Smith astutely has written, wars among people.¹³ Combatants and noncombatants will be physically entwined.

In the future operating terrain, special operations forces (SOF) are shifting, as Admiral William H. McRaven (Ret) has stated, away from direct missions to focus on indirect missions.¹⁴ Strategies need to account

for the new operating terrain and the challenges that new adversaries—or existing ones such as al-Qaeda—will present.

Strategies and tactics need to keep pace with how the world is changing and how technology is evolving. World War I arguably offered the most dramatic example of leadership that failed to keep pace with changing technology. Millions of soldiers died or were wounded when nineteenth-century tactics confronted twentieth-century weapons.

11. Defines the keys to success. Communication strategy requires the development of a narrative, story, themes, and messages. These will be addressed below. They require understanding what factors provide the cutting edge that spells success, such as

- Integrating narrative, story, themes, and messages into the variables that frame successful information warfare.
- Identifying the key points that strike a responsive chord with target audiences.
- Recognizing that audiences may not be a single, unified target. They may consist, as Colonel Thomas X. Hammes wrote, “of fragmented interest groups that shift sides depending on how a campaign affects their issues.”¹⁵
- Identifying the most credible messengers.
- Identifying the most credible channels of communication.
- Anticipating how an adversary will articulate messages advocating its ideas while discrediting yours.
- Anticipating and preparing to rebut adversary actions/responses.

- Anticipating media coverage and how to address it. Hammes has described how, during the First Intifada in 1987, the Palestinians relied on the power of the international media to neutralize Israel's military power and political process.¹⁶
- Recognizing that an organization's or nation's image can be shifted.¹⁷
- Recognizing that different sides may see a different message, even witnessing the same dynamics.¹⁸
- Understanding and allocating available resources to ensure the success of your communication strategy.
- Forging a clear plan that lays out your communication strategy.
- Defining metrics to evaluate success or failure.
- Recognizing that success does not require achieving 100 percent of your goals. A chance at 51 percent success may be all you can achieve, and it may be highly desirable.¹⁹

12. Defines team management and how the plan will be implemented.

Effective communication strategy requires cohesive efforts by a team to achieve a clearly defined set of objectives. Identify:

- Who is on the team?
- Who is in charge of/leads the team?
- Who does the team leader report to, how, and when?
- What are they going to do; what are their responsibilities?
- Who will give instructions to various members of the team?
- Who will supervise what each team member does?

- How will performance be monitored?
- How will corrections or changes to strategy be made?
- How will communication within the team be facilitated?
- What timeline governs execution of the plan?
- How will the plan be integrated with efforts by other parties outside the team?
- How will monitoring be accomplished, and by whom?
- How will metrics be developed and applied, and by whom?

13. Defines how information strategy will coordinate with and be integrated into military (kinetic) operations.

Define how the plan integrates communications and kinetic operations. Define the challenges both sides confront.

- What obstacles to success are posed?
- What information strategy, operations, and tactics can overcome the obstacles, including enemy propaganda?
- How will these integrate with kinetic operations envisioned by the military?
- Who are the points of contact between kinetic and information aspects of an operation?
- How will these parties coordinate their actions?
- What processes or channels will be used to ensure coordination?

14. Integrates information and intelligence.

Actionable information and intelligence are critical to communication strategy. Importantly,

not all relevant intelligence affecting communication strategy is classified. Social media intelligence and open source data are often more valuable. So is grasping how the media may cover a story, and anticipating challenges and opportunities.²⁰ Researching opinions and knowing what is flowing through the rumor mill matter.²¹

It is important to get your facts straight. The most effective communication strategies are rooted in facts and truth. Identify enemy lies and distortions; knowing their tactics offers keys to discrediting their narrative, stories, themes, and messages. In fact, rumors may be your medium.

Integrate information about key political players: where do they stand on specific issues and what are their likely or intended roles and responses? Both Fallujah battles provide a case study for why this information matters.

- 15. Provides for ongoing iteration and updates of information and intelligence.** No strategic communication plan is set in stone. It should evolve and modify as events change. The iterative process requires keeping an open mind, reaching out for information, and forging a process to ensure that the communication team digests and processes new information and acts on it.
- 16. Addresses efforts to overcome language barriers.** Translation proved a barrier in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bing West suggested using Skype or other technology to link back to Americans who are fluent in particular languages or dialects with whom forward-deployed personnel could connect in real time.²² He argues that in Afghanistan, units in the field “were not linked in real time with

equally talented interpreters.”²³ The United States failed to capitalize on the availability of thousands of Afghan-Americans fluent in tribal dialects who could have been linked. In his words, when a unit went outside the wire, every “farmer could be greeted by a friendly Pashto voice over a headset, while the patrol leader on another headset asked questions.” In West’s view, the United States squandered a significant high-tech advantage.²⁴ The approach might have enabled the military to identify key leaders and players at the local level and create an actionable database about every male in every district. Solutions will vary according to time and circumstances. The key point is that mistakes in language translate into miscommunication. That can spell disaster in forging a communication strategy. Identify, anticipate, and devise a plan to surmount this challenge.

- 17. Cites helpful examples.** This book has used examples throughout to illustrate challenges and solutions. Communication plans should do the same. They provide context and help the team to make sense of the narrative, story, themes, and messages that drive the strategies.
- 18. Has a vision.** What kind of campaign are you creating? Is it tailored to the realities of the situation? Will it help achieve success?
- 19. Defines the key players.** Who is indispensable to success; important to success; helpful to success; unnecessary? Distinguish between these groups and tailor strategy and tactics for each.
- 20. Defines the need for collaboration and identifies collaborators.** Whose help do you need to make the plan work? How are you going to get them on board? Who will be the points

of contact? How will communication be facilitated? How will you establish and maintain operational security with them?

21. Defines the obstacles to success. Who presents them? What is behind the obstacles? Where do they occur? How do the obstacles manifest themselves? How tough are the obstacles to overcome? Why might the obstacles frustrate achievement of success? What has the opponent done in the past, what is he doing now, and what he is likely to do that creates obstacles? What sources and credible information inform you about the obstacles?

22. Defines how each action step in the plan connects to and helps surmount the identified obstacles, considers targets of opportunity, and makes provision to address unanticipated or new obstacles. Message discipline and focused messaging connect action in a way targeted to surmount obstacles. Events, distractions, and unanticipated problems can distort action. Communication strategy may look easy on paper, but execution can prove fragile. Focus on the objective and overcoming defined obstacles. Deal with other issues separately. Important to note is that most influence activities do not take place overnight. These programs take time, tweaking, and constant evaluation. Senior leaders must recognize that reaction to a specific event will normally come from the public affairs staff, in conjunction with the IO plan and operators.

23. Budgets the resources a campaign requires. Define financial costs and define the resources required: people, assets, technology, and transportation—everything a plan requires. Define communication requirements in terms of physical assets to get the job done,

from cameras and recording devices to cyber capabilities.

24. Lays a strong foundation for an information campaign. Like building a house, without the foundational roots, your plan will wobble and eventually crumble under pressure.

- Understand what comprises success.
- Create a series of steps that build visibility and awareness for an issue.
- Take steps to ensure that a target audience understands the issue or action you are addressing. Only believable or credible actions or messages create support, motivation, and mobilization of support.
- Define the objectives.
- Conduct thorough target audience analysis.
- Get organized.
- Think through the plan carefully.
- Identify where you will acquire the knowledge required to forge a winning campaign and how you will access it.
- Obtain as many ideas and as much input as possible.
- Understand how, if it becomes visible, different parts of the news media will cover the story and how to drive a positive message about why and what is being done, and the results achieved.
- Set a timeline. When do you want what portion accomplished?

Narrative, Story, Theme, and Message

Key precept: control the debate and discourse by positioning your narrative, from which flow story, theme, and message.

Narrative provides the broader context.²⁵ For example, in World War II, America fought for the *four freedoms*—freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. The stories that flow from that narrative involve character, time, space, events, and objective placed in settings and recounted for rhetorical purposes.²⁶ The United States invaded Normandy to free Western Europe from the Nazis and open a second front to crush Hitler. The themes included the notion that American forces stood against tyranny and evil, while one message was that America would fight until the Nazis were defeated.

In Iraq, al-Qaeda invoked the crusader narrative: Christian crusaders arrived to oppress Muslims, killing more than 200,000 until the heroic Saladin drove them out.²⁷ The core narrative was that “non-Arab, non-Muslim invaders” steal riches from Arab lands “while proclaiming allegiance . . . to a more righteous religion.”²⁸ Modern crusaders, allied with Israel, had returned to plunder Iraqi resources, torturing Iraqis and keeping them weak, using the government as a puppet. Iraqis must do something—rise up in opposition and kill Americans. The theme was American oppression; the message was that Americans would stop at nothing to oppress Islam and steal Iraqi wealth.

Similarly, in 1994, Republicans won control of the U.S. House of Representatives. They invoked a narrative: taxes, spending, and big government deprive America of its future. Their story was that Democrats wanted to raise taxes to fund big spending programs that benefited other people. The theme was that Republicans supported a contract with America to save the future. The message was that Republicans stood for the middle class, less government, lower taxes, and a balanced budget while Democrats stood for special

interests, big government, higher taxes, and an out-of-control deficit.

Each strategic situation was different, but the requirements for communication strategy in each was the same. Communication strategy needs a strong narrative, stories, theme(s) and message(s). To define these, ask:

What are the issues? Frame the issues. What is this conflict or engagement about? What cause are you fighting? People need something to believe in—people, ideas, concepts. Information strategy should explain these and make them clear to build motivation and support.

Who are the players? Who are the stakeholders? Who does the outcome affect? Who are the potential winners and losers—and why? For what cause or outcome are the players fighting? This includes the host nation.

What are the motivations and choices? Define the stakes and the choices. People must decide. A communication plan should make clear what winning and losing means to affected audiences. Such choices may impact different audiences differently.

Example: in countering violent extremism, the United States has pushed a message that it stands for a future rooted in hope, jobs, opportunity, and security while violent extremists offer one rooted in fear, poverty, repression, and violence.

Example: al-Qaeda in Iraq drew on the narrative of the Crusades to argue that the new war was a continuation of an old one, reviving past ambitions of infidel foreigners to subdue Muslims and pillage their wealth. Therefore, the stakes were Iraqi pride, culture, security, religion, and integrity versus brutal occupiers who exploited Muslims. The Taliban has argued a similar choice.

Example: during the 2012 presidential campaign, President Obama defined the election as a test for whether voters would elect a president for the rich and powerful, who admits he ignores 47 percent of the people, or one who will promote social justice and prosperity for all Americans.

Example: historian Steven Casey has documented the remarkable challenges that confronted Franklin Roosevelt in mobilizing Americans for war even after Pearl Harbor. People were angry at Japan (not Germany), but the cry to go after the Japanese was far more muted than films portray. As Casey put it, the attitude of most Americans was “permissive rather than pressuring,” and few Americans were “calling vehemently for an immediate attack.”²⁹ Even in late 1942, Casey observes, Roosevelt worried about uniting Americans behind the war effort.³⁰

As late as July 1942, Winston Churchill was arguing for an offensive in the Mediterranean. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted to forget about fighting Germany and strike at Japan. Roosevelt overruled them and insisted on action against Germany in 1942. His firm decision making led to Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa.³¹ But first, he had to persuade Americans that Germany was a problem. People recognized that Hitler and the Nazis were evil, but that sentiment did not transfer to the Germans as a people. Indeed, Roosevelt took care to distinguish between the two, but—perhaps surprisingly—stirring up Americans to fight Hitler as an evil monster bent on world domination was a challenge.

His strategy is relevant to operations today. Here is how Roosevelt—a smart leader who played his cards close to the vest—went

about solving the problem. He understood that the key to demonizing Hitler lay in making his evil understandable. There was no CNN at that time, and many Americans found the scale of German atrocities that were unfolding hard to believe. There was surprising (for modern audiences) support for a compromise peace if the German Army tossed out Hitler and agreed to stop the war and discuss peace.³²

How did Roosevelt make the truth understandable? In June 1942, he selected a single event, the Nazis’ brutal retaliation in Lidice for Reinhard Heydrich’s assassination, to illustrate evil. The administration’s plan included five elements:³³

1. Used prominent, credible voices including Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, and Rex Stout to attest to German barbarity, countering skepticism among many Americans who doubted the Germans were capable of such atrocities.
2. Used experts who discussed how the Nazis were desecrating religion and using slave labor.
3. Avoided exaggeration and let the facts—which were compelling—speak for themselves. They avoided over-dramatization.
4. Focused on Nazi atrocities against civilians in occupied countries. They cited the Nazis’ own figures for those executed—in the hundreds, rather than the thousands—being slaughtered, as the smaller figure would provoke outrage and was more comprehensible and believable.
5. Named names, and let the culprits know the world was watching. It is surprising how often those who commit atrocities—including al-Qaeda and the Taliban—point the finger at other parties. That was also true of the Nazis. They tried to conceal, not publicize, their worst atrocities.

All of these strategies are applicable to wars such as in Iraq and Afghanistan and conflicts in East Africa with terrorist organizations like Al-Shabaab.

What is your rationale? Define a credible rationale relevant to target audiences. Credible rationales answer the following questions:

1. Why are we doing what we do?
2. How are we doing it?
3. What does it mean to targeted audiences? How do they benefit?
4. Why should they support our cause—or at least stay neutral and avoid supporting the enemy?

Is your message clear? Ensure message clarity so that audiences will better hear and understand. Apply the tenets of the Maxwell Grid, developed by nationally renowned political consultant John Maxwell.³⁴ The message grid asks five confluent questions:

1. What do we say about ourselves?
2. What do we say about our adversary?
3. What does the adversary say about itself?
4. What does the adversary say about us?
5. Do we do what we say we do?

Compare and contrast judgments. Then make judgments as to which messages define a credible rationale and provide a foundation for a strong narrative, story, theme, and message that support a cause.

Caveat: do not allow ideology fostered by politicians to blind your strategy to an objective analysis. U.S. forces entered Iraq in April 2003, and by October–November 2003, violence against them had begun to escalate. U.S. Central Command commander, General John Abizaid, correctly termed the situation a *classical guerrilla war*. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his close advisors rejected reality, insisting the violence was a

product of Baathist “dead-enders” trying to regain power or by foreign fighters who had aligned with the Baathists.³⁵ Effective communication strategy requires a clear-eyed, objective assessment of what is happening, not political fantasy.

Does your message resonate? Reason persuades, but emotion motivates. The key to motivation is using images, symbols, or stories that tap into the emotions and experiences in an audience, stimulate a response, and channel that response in support of your cause.³⁶ This is why thorough target audience analysis with ongoing revision is so important.

Example: The “Daisy” television advertisement created for President Lyndon B. Johnson’s reelection campaign in 1964 was shown only once to a national U.S. political audience during a broadcast of “Monday Night at the Movies.” It opens with a little girl picking petals off a daisy. She counts aloud. As her count reaches 10, the image freezes. The camera zooms to her eye as an off-screen announcer calls the countdown. As it reaches one, the viewer is in the center of her pupil, where a nuclear explosion is overlaid. The voice of Johnson pronounces, as mushroom clouds rise, “These are the stakes: to make a world in which all God’s children can live, or to go into the dark. We must either love each other or we must die.”³⁷

The advertisement wrecked the campaign of Republican candidate Senator Barry M. Goldwater, about whom voters felt uncomfortable in the face of accusations that he had an itchy finger on the nuclear trigger. The creator of the advertisement, formally titled “Peace, Little Girl,” Tony Schwartz, said that Goldwater could and should have countered it by endorsing it and offering to pay for it—coopting the message.³⁸ Instead, the Gold-

water campaign cratered, became defensive, and never regained lost momentum.

Example: al-Qaeda tried to enforce its rule by ruthlessly beheading opponents. The goal was to instill fear. It achieved that goal masterfully. Unfortunately for the terrorist organization, this backfired, rousing the anger and hatred of Iraqis and helping motivate them—especially tribes in al-Anbar Province—to oppose them. Similarly, in Somalia, the violence of Al-Shabaab perpetrated on Somalis for even simple things like ringing a bell—which the al-Qaeda group said reminded people of Christianity—instead rang a bell in the hearts of citizens and helped turn many Somalis against it.

Example: prior to the Second Battle of Fallujah, U.S. forces took Iraqi counterparts to see the iron mountain of logistics built up to support the looming November 2004 attack. The sight had a great emotional impact, boosting morale and persuading Iraqis that they were on the winning side.

Do you have credible messengers? Fallujah illustrates the need to use messengers who have credibility with target audiences. During the November 2004 battle, Coalition leaders put Iraqi leaders out front, to report and to articulate the narrative, story, themes, and messages. They correctly judged that Iraqis were more credible messengers to Iraqis than Americans. The same lesson has been applied in the Philippines, where U.S. special operations forces have maintained a low profile in favor of Filipinos, who have taken the lead in combating violent actors like the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on the island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. Host nation spokespersons make the best messengers, in words and actions.³⁹

On the other side of the coin, the fact that Zarqawi and a lot of his fighters were foreigners, not Iraqis, hurt their credibility in appealing to Iraqis, who perceived that despite a common Arab ethnic background, the foreigners shared different beliefs and values. That helped undercut al-Qaeda's credibility.

Are you using the right channels of communication? Choose channels of communication that your target audience accesses and trusts. The most effective way to communicate with target audiences is face-to-face. That helps build bonds of trust. You have to have friends before they are needed, not just when they come in handy. In many cultures around the world, tribal cultures facilitate and accentuate the importance of kinship ties and personal engagement and communication. In al-Anbar Province, that engagement was integral to the success of U.S. Marines in forging bonds of trust with Iraqi tribes. To build the necessary trust, you must:

1. Identify the channels through which target audiences receive information. In Africa and many developing nations, radio is an important channel through which people receive information. That has been notably true in Somalia. But avoid hasty generalization. You need to ascertain how credible the radio station is. If audiences perceive that it reflects the views of a particular party or ideology, they will make allowances. The Rwandan genocide proved that radio in the hands of racial extremists—there, the Hutu—could be a deadly weapon.⁴⁰
2. The internet offers important channels of communication. It is especially useful in disseminating information to the media. In Afghanistan, the Taliban has been adept at exploiting the internet to distribute videos of its purported successes to online media to

reach urban audiences while depending upon radio to reach those in rural areas. Looking ahead, internet access is exploding exponentially, especially among younger populations in the southern and eastern regions of the globe. There were more than 4.1 billion internet users as of December 2018, compared to 3.9 billion in mid-2018 and 3.7 billion in 2017. Asia has the most internet users, accounting for 49 percent of all internet users (down from about 50 percent in 2017). Europe is a runner-up with 16.8 percent of all internet users. China has the most users: 802 million; it accounts for one-half of the users worldwide, trailed by India, with more than 500 million users.⁴¹

3. Paid media, speeches, print, flyers, night letters (e.g., unsigned leaflets distributed clandestinely)—there are endless ways to communicate a message. The key is to select what works. Be aware of accessible channels, evaluate in what context they are most credible and to whom, figure out how to gain access, and employ them properly.

Are you using the right language to communicate your message? Native language is one challenge. Using the correct words is another and can alter receptivity to your message.

The choice of campaign title for Fallujah in November 2004 is a good example. Prime Minister Allawi insisted on renaming Operation Phantom Fury as al-Fajr, which translates to *New Dawn*. The messages contained within the operation names were different. One suggested the use of force to achieve objectives while the other indicated that the battle was about a better future.

The Global War on Terrorism illustrates how an innocent mistake can boomerang. During remarks on arrival at the south lawn of the White

House on 16 September 2001, President George W. Bush announced, “This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while.”⁴² Europeans whose support Bush was hoping to elicit cringed.⁴³ Al-Qaeda jumped into action, quoting his statement frequently and producing a video that elicited the narrative of the Crusades to paint the invasion of Iraq as a modern sequel to repress Islam and loot Muslim lands.⁴⁴

Does your message enable coalition-building and persuade new allies? American political leaders tend to articulate messages about foreign policy in ways that appeal to domestic audiences. But it is essential to appeal to and inspire allies, as well. That is a function of words, symbols, and actions.

The U.S. Marines in al-Anbar depended on deeds more than anything else to build coalitions. We have discussed the efforts of the Marines at length. Richard Shultz provides the best account of how they succeeded in winning the trust of Iraqi tribes in al-Anbar, who united with them to turn the tide against al-Qaeda.⁴⁵

President George H. W. Bush demonized Saddam Hussein to galvanize support for Operation Desert Storm but was careful in his statecraft with foreign leaders to pledge that once Kuwait was liberated and Saddam defeated, American forces would halt the war. That commitment, expressed in clear language and backed by his action, enabled Bush to assemble a broad international coalition to take on Saddam. The president’s messaging was an adroit use of communication to arouse support at home—a key center of gravity for the war—while also enlisting a very wide range of support within the international community—also a key center of gravity for the war, backed by a UN Security Council resolution, which conferred legitimacy upon the war.⁴⁶

Can you neutralize those who will not support your campaign? The first aim of an information strategy is to win over people. The second is to deny their support to the opposition. Conflicts often do not draw every member of a population into their midst. Counterinsurgency expert David Galula pointed out that insurgents aim to win over the population, or at least keep it submissive.⁴⁷ While Galula focused on counterinsurgency, his point applies frequently to political situations. While many people refrain from becoming politically active or taking sides, especially in controversial matters, you do not need the entire population to support your cause. One may achieve success by persuading specific elements of the population that is sitting on the cross-benches. A relatively small shift of three to five percent of the population can prove decisive to winning a campaign.⁴⁸

Can you persuade your adversary's allies that you will win and the adversary will lose, to neutralize these allies or gain their support? Information strategy should motivate those aligned with the opposition to move at least to a position of neutrality, either on the merits of an argument or by persuading audiences that the opposition is going to lose. People do not like to be on the losing side. In warfare, the stakes for individuals are high for their security or survival.⁴⁹ Motivate means *motivate to act*; behavior, not merely influencing attitudes or opinions, is the goal.⁵⁰

1. Create effective themes and messages that support your objectives. Great intentions fall flat without clarity of message to support buy-in from target audience(s).

- **Describe, define, and differentiate your story from your narrative.** The nature of story was discussed previously. Good stories explain what is being done and why in personal terms;

they are about actions people take; they must communicate that action benefits target audiences.

- **Messages flow from narrative and story.** Keep core messages simple and concise. The themes to carry your messages should support, more concisely, what you are doing and why. Use the message grid to compare your narrative, story, theme, and message to the enemy's and see how they stack up. Where is your edge? Where is theirs? How do you strengthen yours and overcome theirs?
- **Frame the issue.** Define what is at stake. What are the choices? Who wins? Who loses? Define the stakes in terms that benefit your cause; this will fundamentally affect where people stand. The definition of what the United States and al-Qaeda each stand for is a good example. The issue at stake is the future. The choices include hope or pessimism; wealth or poverty; security or fear; and freedom or repression.
- **Messaging is an iterative process.** You may start with or give emphasis to a particular message, then evolve it or shift to other messages. This holds true in the language and slogans used to help drive themes and messages, even though the content remains consistent.
- **Create a message timeline.** Release messages on a defined timeline using media best suited for the target audience. Some are best reserved for later. Ensure you have several messages in reserve should the campaign require

modification or should the first fail to resonate. Messaging should be supportive to operations and care should be taken not to commit message fratricide. This is why timelines are so important at every level.

- **Define the target audiences.** Different audiences may respond differently to different messages. Be consistent—especially across a theater of operations—but tailor messages to strike a responsive chord with particular audiences. The inconsistency of tactics in Iraq in 2003–4 created confused messaging and undercut Coalition credibility to Iraqis.
 - **Be memorable.** Being memorable is about being concise and relevant, and striking an emotionally responsive chord. Think of messages as a bumper sticker: short, to the point, easily repeatable. In politics, these are sometimes referred to as “zingers.” The caveat: zingers lose their energy when overused. A zinger connected to a deed achieves double the impact.
 - **Respond to attacks.** Unanswered negative messages become truth to audiences, especially if repeated by multiple parties in multiple channels over time. Answer attacks in the medium in which they are launched and respond quickly. Thus, if an opponent attacks on radio, use radio to answer. If the attack is done on social media, respond on social media.
- 2. Mobilize your target audience(s).** Identify, define, and segment target audiences and ascertain what it will take to get their attention and

mobilize their support. There is no formula. There are multiple methods for targeting, and some may need to be used in concert with one another. Use multiple channels simultaneously and activate networks that enable their use—personal contact, news media, social media, paid media, and print.

- 3. Understand and potentially employ communication strategy unconventionally.** The Russian doctrine of reflexive control innovatively seeks to employ information to the enemy to exert control over him.⁵¹ Timothy Thomas cites Colonel S. A. Komov’s key elements to information warfare that he deemed vital. Each of these should be factored into whether they may strengthen a communication strategy:

- **Distraction**, by creating a real or imaginary threat to one of the enemy’s most vital locations (flanks, rear, etc.) during the preparatory stages of combat operations, thereby forcing them to reconsider the wisdom of their decisions to operate along this or that axis;
- **Overload**, by frequently sending the enemy a large amount of conflicting information;
- **Paralysis**, by creating the perception of a specific threat to a vital interest or weak spot;
- **Exhaustion**, by compelling the enemy to carry out useless operations, thereby entering combat with reduced resources;
- **Deception**, by forcing the enemy to reallocate forces to a threatened region during the preparatory stages of combat operations;
- **Division**, by convincing the enemy that he must operate in opposition to coalition interests;

- **Pacification**, by leading the enemy to believe that pre-planned operational training is occurring rather than offensive preparations, thus reducing their vigilance;
- **Deterrence**, by creating the perception of insurmountable superiority;
- **Provocation**, by forc[ing] them into taking action advantageous to your side;
- **Suggestion**, by offering information that affects the enemy legally, morally, ideologically, or in other areas; and
- **Pressure**, by offering information that discredits the government in the eyes of its population.⁵²

Endnotes

1. Although he fared less successfully as a political candidate, as Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), Gen Wesley K. Clarke, USA, earned respect from people for doing that. The late Col Daniel D. Devlin Sr. cited a case in which Clarke and his staff had devised four options and laid them out at a meeting, after which, the room cleared; Devlin stayed behind. Clarke asked him what was on his mind, and Devlin proposed consolidating two of the ideas and substituting a new one. A flag officer also in the room tried to cut Devlin off, but Clarke told the admiral to be quiet and listened patiently as Devlin laid out his suggestion. Clarke nodded and said, "That's a better idea than the one I had." Clarke ordered the admiral to reassemble the staff and announced that Devlin had offered an improvement that would be incorporated into his plan. Clarke then visited all of the action officers involved in the operation to make certain that his commander's intent was clear, to satisfy questions, and to take suggestions. That is the epitome of good leadership. Col Devlin, conversation with author, February 2008.
2. "Quotes," GeneralPatton.com, accessed 5 May 2018.
3. Hannah Huttyra, "115 Vince Lombardi Quotes to Use in the Game of Life," KeepInspiring.me, accessed 5 May 2018.
4. See MajGen Michael T. Flynn, USA (Ret), Capt Matt Pottinger, and Paul D. Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for*

Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2010). Their excellent report offers sweeping changes to the way the intelligence community thinks about itself from a focus on the enemy to a focus on the population. Focusing too many resources "and brainpower on insurgent groups" has left the intelligence apparatus, they argue, "unable to answer fundamental questions about the environment in which we operate and the people we are trying to persuade." Flynn, Pottinger, and Batchelor, *Fixing Intel*, 4. They propose specific initiatives to solve the problem using field analysts to collect information at the grassroots, much like journalists; integrating information collected by all stakeholders (civilian and military); dividing work along geographical instead of functional lines and provided district assessments covering governance, development, and stability; providing data to teams of information brokers in regional commands as part of stability operations information centers to organize and disseminate information; placing the information centers under and in cooperation with State Department senior civilian representatives administering governance, development, and stability efforts in regional commands; and ensuring that the information centers are staffed by "the most, most extroverted and hungriest analysts." Flynn et al., *Fixing Intel*, 4–5.

5. See Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, 124.
6. Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview with author, March 2016. Brzezinski says they relied on that information and deferred to Beckwith when he decided to abort the mission. But at the time, Brzezinski acknowledged deep angst about whether to recommend to President Carter to order the mission to proceed.
7. MSgt Justin Strain, "Unity of Command Still Important Principle," Joint Base Charleston (website), 16 August 2007.
8. See, for example, Gaurav Akrani, "Unity of Command Principle—Meaning Example Advantages," *Kalyan City Life* (blog), 3 February 2012.
9. See Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006–2008* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009).
10. See Chandrasekaran, *Little America*; and Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife*.
11. Chandrasekaran, *Little America*.
12. Jack Guy, interview with author, June 2013.
13. Gen Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2006).
14. *Hearings on the Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2014 and the Future Years Defense Program before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, 113th Cong. (5 March 2013) (posture statement of Adm William H. McRaven, USN, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command), 19–24.
15. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*, 214. Hammes's book is essential reading. The corollary to his point in politics is that while one may expect people to take one side or another on tough issues, in reality they stand on both sides of them.
16. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*, chapter 8, 89–110, 207. Hammes offers an incisive description of how the First Intifada succeeded using peaceful tactics while the second, in 1993, which employed violence, backfired. These are important case studies, superbly described and analyzed. During the First Intifada, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) published pamphlets ordering demonstrators to refrain from using weapons. PLO leaders understood that an uprising by a discontented population that could focus its anger "could not match the Israelis in a conflict based on the use of weapons. It simply gave the Israelis license to use lethal force." Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*, 99. He noted that weapons would also eliminate a powerful image: that of young Palestinians armed with rocks and bottles facing heavily armed Israeli troops. The PLO formed an anonymous Unified National Command (UNC) and produced handbills warning not to use weapons and defining what the PLO viewed as achievable goals. Women and children interposed between Israeli security forces and demonstrators where television cameras were present and forged tactics to ensure their presence, providing drivers, translators, vehicles, access, passports, and contact. The Palestinians drove two messages. One portrayed the fight to the international community as a contest between a brave and oppressed people against a brutal occupier. The second argued to Israelis that there would be no peace while Israelis occupied West Bank territories. Palestinians employed well-dressed, articulate spokespeople to convey their messages through multiple channels: the media, international forums, conferences, even Israeli soldiers who, Hammes writes, had trouble reconciling the firing of rubber bullets at teenagers and women going about their business with their self-image as protectors of Israel. The impact of these tactics paralyzed Israelis, whose leadership failed to grasp the dynamics at play and thus failed to develop a coherent response. The Palestinians succeeded in persuading their side that Israel could be resisted while damaging Israel's reputation in the international community.
17. During the Second Intifada, Israel's shrewd prime minister, Ariel Sharon, capitalized on Palestinian violence to turn the tables on Palestinians, who turned themselves into international pariahs through use of suicide attacks and bombings. The stupidity of Palestinian tactics shifted the narrative away from peace for land to one about a battle to destroy Israel. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*, 125.
18. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*, 128, describes the lessons Hammes drew from the two intifadas.
19. This is a point Ambassador Brian Carlson stresses in teaching public diplomacy to foreign service officers, and he is correct.
20. Bremer and his team did not do this during the First Battle of Fallujah and paid a stiff price for their failure. The team that led the second battle did, and it paid huge dividends.
21. In Iraq, al-Qaeda spread rumors about vaccinations administered by U.S. veterinarians to cattle. Rumors can create destructive anxiety by making plausible connections between concrete events and real social anxieties. The bovine poisoning rumor had a narrative, story, theme, and message, which was: the Crusades were a Western attempt to pillage and destroy Islam; today, U.S. forces are repeating the pattern. This narrative provided context. The bovine story invoked the crusader narrative to tell a story about "non-Arab/non-Muslim invaders plunder[ing] Arab lands for riches while proclaiming allegiance to a high power and a more righteous religion." This narrative defined the U.S. occupation across Iraq: that U.S. forces were poisoning cattle, using helicopters to stir up dust storms, and using technologies to cause draught as they invaded Iraq to pillage oil fields. The rumor portrayed American forces as an existential threat and the Iraq government as weak and ineffective. The message delivered was: Iraqis must rise and resist the occupation. This example is drawn from Daniel Leonard Bernardi et al., *Narrative Landmines: Rumors, Islamist Extrem-*

- ism, and the Struggle for Strategic Influence (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), an excellent study of the nature and impact of rumor-mongering. See also Cass R. Sunstein, *On Rumors: Why Falsehoods Spread, Why We Believe Them, What Can Be Done* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009); Patrick B. Mullen, "Modern Legend and Rumor Theory," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 9, no. 2 (1972): 95–109, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3814160>; and Nicholas DiFonzo, *The Water Cooler Effect: A Psychologist Explores the Extraordinary Power of Rumors* (New York: Avery, 2008).
22. Bing West, *The Wrong War*, 176. West delivers a searing indictment of the Afghan war. He argues that talented generals such as David Petraeus, Stanley McChrystal, and others lacked required support from Washington. He believes the corrupt, incompetent Afghan government and the sanctuary provided to the Taliban in Pakistan rendered victory unachievable.
 23. West, *The Wrong War*, 176. West observes that the Pentagon ignored Google's assertion that it could translate voice from one language to another in less than a second. Yet, technology could prove counterproductive. West says that battlefield update assessments substituted arms-length information/intelligence input to generals for whom gaining a strategic or tactical appreciation is possible only by being on the ground.
 24. West, *The Wrong War*, 176.
 25. In academic terms, Professor Edward Branigan defines narrative as a "perceptual activity that organizes data into a special pattern which represents and explains experience." It organizes events into a chain with a beginning, middle, and end that "embodies a judgment about the nature of events as well as demonstrates how it is possible to know, and hence to narrate, the events." It is a way we organize events to understand the world. Edward Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3. Politically, narrative provides the context for action that enables people to give it meaning.
 26. See Chong et al., *Narrative Landmines*, loc. 332 of 2523, Kindle. Their explanation of the relationship between narrative and story is excellent. Edward Branigan describes story as a "mental reconstruction of some of the events of the narrative which are not witnessed by the spectator." Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, 119–20.
 27. Chong et al., *Narrative Landmines*, loc. 456 of 2623, Kindle.
 28. Chong et al., *Narrative Landmines*, loc. 1056 of 2523, Kindle.
 29. Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 89, loc. 2333–2340 of 8464, Kindle.
 30. Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 78, loc. 2112 of 8464, Kindle.
 31. In Joseph E. Persico, *Roosevelt's Centurions: FDR and the Commanders He Led to Victory in World War II* (New York: Random House, 2013), 221, the historian suggests that Operation Torch was partly motivated originally by Roosevelt's desire to win a victory that would bolster Democratic prospects in the 1942 elections, although Dwight Eisenhower decided on 8 November—five days after the election—for the invasion. In opting for North Africa, Persico recounts that Roosevelt rejected Gen George Marshall's preference for an early invasion of France. Persico, *Roosevelt's Centurions*, 184–90.
 32. Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 76, loc. 2082 of 8464, Kindle.
 33. Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 68–70, loc. 1819–1832 of 8464, Kindle.
 34. Discussed in Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, 222.
 35. See Urban, *Task Force Black*, 25–26; and West, *No True Glory*, 21. Richard Schultz argues the same point in *The Marines Take Anbar*.
 36. For full descriptions of what this means, see Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*; James P. Farwell, "Violence as Propaganda," *Survival* 54, no. 5 (October–November 2012): 203–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2012.728353>; and James P. Farwell, "Jihadi Video in the 'War of Ideas,'" *Survival* 52, no. 6 (December 2010–January 2011): 127–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2010.540787>.
 37. Library of Congress, "'Daisy' Ad (1964): Preserved from 35mm in the Tony Schwartz Collection," 7 September 2016, video, YouTube.
 38. Tony Schwartz and Monique Luiz, *Peace, Little Girl: [Daisy political spot]* (1964) political television advertisement, Tony Schwartz Collection, Library of Congress, video.
 39. The U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) launched Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P) in January 2002. The operation illustrates special warfare by, with, and through partners in working to satisfy mutual security interests. The 2002 *Balikatan* (shoulder-to-shoulder) exercise that killed terrorist Abu Sabaya had Philippine troops in the lead, with the United States providing only tactical training, ISR, logistical, and civil affairs support. See Mark Bowden, "Jihadists in Paradise," *Atlantic*, 1 March 2007; and Maj Matthew J. Gomlak (USA) and Maj Stephen Fenton (USAF), "Real Results: Military Partnerships in the Philippines," *Special Warfare* 25, no. 3 (July–September 2012): 37. The Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P), consisting of 600 SOF personnel, has continued to provide assistance to the Philippine forces.
 40. See Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, which examines how radio was used as a weapon to kill in Rwanda.
 41. "Internet Stats and Facts for 2019," HostingFacts.com, accessed 13 August 2019.
 42. Office of the Press Secretary, White House, "Remarks by the President upon Arrival," press release, 16 September 2001.
 43. Peter Ford, "Europe Cringes at Bush 'Crusade' against Terrorists," *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 September 2001.
 44. Al-Qaeda, "The Return of the Crusaders," 7 September 2005, Archive.org, video, 38:46. Farwell, "Jihadi Video in the 'War of Ideas,'" discusses the video.

45. Schultz, *The Marines Take Anbar*.
46. United Nations Security Council, Resolution 678, Iraq-Kuwait, S/RES/678, (29 November 1990).
47. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 5.
48. This also holds true in U.S. politics. The Obama reelection campaign in 2012 spent nearly \$1 billion. Enormous portions of these funds were directed to identifying, recruiting, and mobilizing new voters, persuading a narrow band of swing voters and emerging base voters to get out and vote. Similar tactics decided the 2012 U.S. Senate race in Colorado, and target audience analysis was equally decisive in the recount that decided the 2012 U.S. Senate race, as Al Franken's team figured out which of the contested ballots were more likely to support his campaign and focused efforts on getting those counted. A small number of voters decided the outcome of both races. See Sasha Issenberg, *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns* (New York: Crown, 2012), a fascinating discussion of cutting-edge voter identification and turnout efforts utilizing scientific methods.
49. Convincing the al-Anbar tribes that the Coalition forces would prevail was, as Richard Shultz observed, a key element to the success of U.S. Marines. As World War II broke out, Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini temporized about what to do. Many of his close advisors, including his son-in-law Count Ciano and his military, were opposed to Italy's entrance into the war on Hitler's side. Mussolini only moved when he saw France capitulate to the Nazis, calculating that Germany would be victorious.
50. See also Mackay and Tatham, *Behavioural Conflict*.
51. These comments draw on Timothy L. Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17, no. 2 (April 2004): 237–56.
52. Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," 248–49.

Chapter 7

CAMPAIGN LEADERSHIP

Leadership often means the difference between victory and defeat. Britain would have lost World War II without Winston Churchill. Germany probably lost the war because Adolf Hitler's early diplomatic victories gave way to blunder after blunder, leadership mistakes compounded by a failure to organize a cohesive general staff, and often-freewheeling, tactically talented generals fearful of disclosing to Hitler what they really thought.¹ That the American North was led by Abraham Lincoln and the South by Jefferson Davis clearly affected the outcome of the American Civil War and the future of U.S. history. President Dwight Eisenhower's knowledge of national security quashed recommendations on several occasions to employ nuclear weapons. Whatever the merits of the 2003 Iraq War, it gave rise to the emergence of a new generation of highly talented U.S. officers who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to become recognized; they made a difference in that conflict.

History offers many illustrations of why and how leadership matters. Napoleon's admirers thought of him as a hero, able to "seize hold of opinions, of opportunities, and of fortune."² Napoleon's close collaborator, Claude-Francois de Meneval, declared that the emperor "took not only the initiative in thought, but also attended personally to the detail of every piece of business."³ Armand-Augustin-Louis de Caulaincourt, who served as Napoleon's ambassador to Russia, characterized his leadership as the product of applying "all his faculties, all his attention to the action or discussion of the moment," a keen edge, as "few people are entirely absorbed by one thought or one action at one moment."⁴

Napoleon was no shrinking violet about himself. "In war men are nothing, it is one man who is all," he declared.⁵ Napoleon liked to rant about the moral force of a disciplined army in which one soldier could overcome three. He claimed that the secret of success lay in the personal touch between officers and their troops.⁶ He had a point, although Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, and George Patton offer strong examples.⁷

Today, we do not need heroes of the moment—the ideal to which French revolutionaries aspired—or the Roman ideal of "great men." We need smart, disciplined, organized leadership that motivates, encourages, and inspires leadership from below.

Great leaders motivate by providing a role model. They articulate and personify a cause and why that cause matters; this inspires people to follow. Loyalty to leaders and the ability and energy of a leader matter. However, there is a reason that causes more often spark revolutions, rather than the personal ambitions or personalities of those who lead revolutions.

An excellent study of the Fallujah battles by the Joint Special Operations University illustrates the difference between the Napoleonic approach to strategic thinking and the excellence of U.S. military leadership—which relied on strong leadership from the top, but team collaboration—at its best.

Leadership Models

In forging an effective campaign team in politics, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and his senior counselor, Joe Gaylord, set forth a leadership model rooted in four characteristics. Their model also applies to information warfare. These characteristics look beyond the capacity of those in a hierarchical organization, such as the military, to pull rank. Such behavior is a poor motivator. The best campaign leaders “listen, learn, help and lead.” In *Campaign Solutions*, Gaylord defined what those notions mean. The following principles draw on his thinking, which Gingrich also preached:

Listen. Ask questions, listen to what people say, and understand and appreciate why they are saying it. The worst mistake you can make is to kowtow to conventional wisdom, or presume that solutions that worked in the last campaign or war will work in the current one.

Learn. Check what you hear for accuracy and meaning, whether the source is a so-called expert or insider, a broadcast or print story, a discussion with an interested stakeholder, or some other source. Always consider the impli-

cations and options of what you learn. This book discusses the impact of rumor later, but it is important to understand how powerful rumor can be in molding or shaping attitudes and opinions. Rumor, often derived from street talk or perhaps undependable human intelligence (HUMINT) or signals intelligence (SIGINT), is inherently questionable, but this does not render it valueless.⁸

During the Iraq War, a classified email newsletter, *The Baghdad Mosquito*, distributed to an elite group of military officers and policy planners provided interesting insights collected from a weekly panel of prominent Iraqi locals who reported to the Coalition Provisional Authority on a variety of social, economic, and political issues.⁹ It was useful to read the language in which issues were discussed as well as to pick up possible intelligence in formulating strategies and the language employed in delivering themes and messages.

Blogger Rusty Barber noted that rumors reported at one point included:

- “Ice vendors in Baghdad are selling ice blocks made of contaminated water.”
- “Iraqis now call the current Baghdad security ‘Enforcing the Terrorism.’”
- “Citizens, especially Sunnis, cannot go to Sadr City to pick up their ration card items as it is too dangerous of a journey. This was purposely done so that their rations can be sold by individuals who will funnel funds to the Mahdi Army.”¹⁰

Obviously, more concrete intelligence derived from HUMINT or cyber tools, and the analysis derived from those, factor into assessments on the accuracy of information.

General McChrystal described in detail the efforts of Task Force 714 in evaluating intelligence that enabled Coalition forces to track down and eliminate terrorist Abu Musab al Zarqawi.¹¹

Help. Leadership requires the articulation of vision and offering direction. It is about encouraging a communication team to think unconventionally and make clear that all ideas are welcome. Any indication that an idea or suggestion would be scoffed at, especially by a higher-ranking authority, has a chilling effect. No team can afford that; in military and government hierarchies, in particular, that is a sensitive issue. A mid-level State Department official once stated to the author that putting forth a major idea that is rejected could impair prospects for promotion. That attitude is precisely the mindset that kills creative thinking.

Lead. Leading follows listening, learning, and helping. Gaylord correctly states that you need to say to the team: “Here’s my vision, my suggested strategy, projects, and tactics. But what do *you* think? So, then the cycle of listen-learn-help-lead begins again.”¹²

Leadership Traps to Avoid

Effective leadership requires avoiding four major traps.

- 1. Thin skin.** In any large or small organization, people will have different ideas. Do not be afraid of criticism. Those who devise plans easily lose objectivity about them. Criticism should be welcomed, evaluated, and factored into planning, especially when it comes from members of the same strategy team.
- 2. Big head.** Self-confidence inspires others to see you as a strong leader. Arrogance suggests that you are self-centered. Gaylord

puts it this way: “If you hear that you are coming across as too full of yourself, it’s time for a reality check. Ask friends or staff why you are perceived that way. Or maybe it’s just something in your manner that can be easily corrected.”¹³

- 3. Weak vision.** An effective communication strategy requires knowing and understanding what constitutes success and forging a vision that can achieve it. The United States’ early efforts in Iraq after toppling Saddam and during much of the Afghanistan conflict have drawn wide criticism for lacking a clear vision of what U.S. forces wanted to achieve. No communication strategy can effectively support unclear policy decisions about mission or the commander’s intent.
- 4. Lack of courage.** You must be able to challenge or offer alternatives to conventional wisdom or higher authority’s ideas. The best communication strategies can provoke vicious turf battles or cause conflict with other commanders or authorities who see their own ideas undercut, diminished, or challenged.

In Iraq, Paul Bremer banned all but the lowest members of Saddam’s Baath Party from holding government jobs and disbanded the Iraqi Army just as U.S. officers had painstakingly succeeded in setting the stage to reassemble it.¹⁴ It took a strong leader like General David Petraeus to stand Bremer down, as he persuaded him that the order banning Baathists—which would even cover teachers and throw tens of thousands of Iraqis out of work—would shatter the efforts and progress Petraeus and his team were making in Mosul.

Tact and discretion are hallmarks of dealing with high authorities. But the death knell for forging and executing any strategy is succumbing to

the fear of challenging conventional wisdom or doctrine. Figure out how to adroitly promote your ideas and persuade relevant authorities to buy into them.

Turf Among Leaders

Protection of turf often raises concerns and obstructs the exchange and flow of information. In Iraq, General McChrystal reported, a disconnect between senders and receivers presented serious issues in gaining a clear picture of the enemy and inspired internal distrust within our own forces.¹⁵ Outstations rarely saw the benefits of intelligence collected, while analysts lacked context to evaluate it. Breaking down walls of mistrust and ensuring that information and analysis is shared is critical for communication strategy, as well as broader military, political, and diplomatic strategy. The fusion of efforts by the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and other elements of the military was essential to the remarkable success that his forces achieved.¹⁶

Integrate Communication Strategy with Kinetic Strategy

As noted earlier, you must align communication and kinetic strategies. The failure to integrate information strategies properly into the assault on Fallujah—a failure attributable to Lieutenant General Sanchez and Paul Bremer—is a perfect example of this precept. Let us examine the First Battle of Fallujah. Triggered by the murder of four U.S. contractors in the city, there followed two battles for the city, in April and November 2004.

The U.S. Marine-led attack on the city was instigated to signal resolve.¹⁷ The first battle provided propaganda victory to the insurgents and, as Dr. Carter Malkasian of the Center for Naval Analyses wrote, “renders a cautionary lesson on using military force to signal resolve in an unconventional conflict.”¹⁸

One reason that Operation Eagle Claw, aimed at rescuing hostages, failed in Iran was competition among Services that led to the establishment of the U.S. Special Operations Command to ensure cohesion. U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Southern Command represent efforts to integrate civilian and military leadership.

An ongoing struggle persists within the Department of Defense between the public affairs officers, who incorrectly perceive themselves as the stewards of communication and apply their espoused notion of “informing but not influencing” inconsistently, and the psychological operations (or, military information support operations) personnel over whether or where to draw the line between their activities. It is a draining, useless debate. Both should aim to influence target audiences.

Similarly, DOD often takes the position that the State Department holds the lead on communication strategy. But the State Department has shown time and again its reluctance to engage target audiences outside the category of statecraft and public diplomacy, through which foreign publics are engaged, informed, and influenced. This reluctance stems partly from the cultural hesitations within that department; it is also partly due to resources. These issues need to be worked out for any strategy that raises issues of turf.

Endnotes

1. See Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, chapter 4. Naveh's searing exposition of German strategy, operations, and tactics portrays famous generals such as Heinz W. Guderian and Erwin Rommel as tactically brilliant but strategically flawed. Historian Richard Overy points out that Hitler did not form a *general staff* as that notion is generally understood, but acted as his own chief of staff—a decision that Overy argues proved disastrous. See Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (London: W. W. Norton, 1997).
2. Jacques-Antoine-Hippolyte, comte de Guibert, *Oeuvres militaires de Guibert*, vol. 4 (Paris: Chez Magimel, 1803), 74, as quoted in Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*, 42.
3. Baron Claude-Francois de Méneval, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Napoléon 1er, depuis 1802 jusqu'à 1815*, vol. 3 (Paris: Dentu, 1894), 50–51, as quoted in Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*, 43.
4. Armand-Augustin-Louis de Caulaincourt, *With Napoleon in Russia: The Memoirs of General de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza*, vol. 1, English trans. (New York: William Morrow, 1935), 92, as quoted in Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*, 43. Napoleon's approach stressed reliance on offensive action, trust in speed to economize time, strategic surprise, concentration of superior force at critical moments, and a carefully thought-out protective system that served as a base of operations. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*, 49, 52. Fuller argues that his surprises were strategic, not tactical, but that in the overall scheme, Napoleon lurched from one battle to the next, driven by an impulse for war, not political vision.
5. A. M. Broadley, *Napoleon in Caricature, 1795–1821*, vol. 1 (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1911), 99–100, as quoted in Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*, 45.
6. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*, 46.
7. See Jack Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Crown, 2004). Khan was a political and military genius who inspired extraordinary affection and loyalty. Napoleon was amazingly erratic. He was on his game at Austerlitz and Friedland but off it amid fiascos like Waterloo, Leipzig, and the entire invasion of Russia. Napoleon's flaws became evident when he commanded larger armies, whose movements he was unable to properly control and maneuver. It bears noting that he won Marengo thanks to Gen Louis Desaix and Jena thanks to Louis-Nicolas Davout, two of his greatest commanders.
8. Joseph R. Gaylord, interview with author, 20 May 2019; and Joseph R. Gaylord, *Campaign Solutions* (Washington, DC: American Solutions, 2010), 8, which sets forth these ideas in the context of U.S. campaigns.
9. Daniel Pipes, "The Baghdad Mosquito," *DanielPipes.org* (blog), 23 March 2004.
10. Rusty Barber, "Iraq: Baghdad's Rumor Mill," United States Institute of Peace, 18 June 2007.
11. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, chapters 12 and 13.
12. Gaylord, *Campaign Solutions*, 8.
13. Gaylord, *Campaign Solutions*, 10.
14. Kaplan, *The Insurgents*, 74; and Packer, *Assassin's Gate*, 190–95.
15. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 105–6, 117, 149.
16. See also Christopher J. Lamb and Evan Munsing, *Secret Weapon: High-value Target Teams as an Organizational Innovation* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011). Lamb and Munsing describe how cross-agency efforts were vital to success and the need for the kind of fusion that McChrystal has also written about. British journalist Mark Urban reported in *Task Force Black* that the JSOC operations killed approximately 3,000 insurgents and captured between 8,000 and 9,000. British Special Forces captured or killed 3,500. He notes: "Dead men's shoes are quickly filled. What happened in Iraq was very different. By insisting that each of his five or six task forces carry out multiple take-downs every night, McChrystal set a pace of operations that probably removed from the streets (by arrest or elimination) most of the membership of AQI." Urban, *Task Force Black*, 270–71.
17. Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah." Malkasian served as an advisor to I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) in Iraq from February 2004 to February 2005. The discussion on the history of the first battle for Fallujah draws on his commentary. He points out that in Vietnam, Viet Cong successes in Long An enabled the Communists to execute propaganda that brought new people into the movement. He argues that in 2000, the hasty withdrawal from Lebanon of Israeli Defense Forces may have caused Palestinians to perceive violence as a useful means to attain their aims. Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," 425–26. See also Race, *War Comes to Long An*, 191; and Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 125.
18. Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," 423.

Chapter 8

DOS AND DON'TS IN ACTIONS AND MESSAGING

Communication strategy is about more than words. Deeds, images, and symbols are equally important. All need to be consistent in messaging.

Ensure Actions Support Messages

Actions should support rhetoric and message. Contradiction—planned or unanticipated—will undermine your credibility.

Example: Afghanistan. USAID promised that reconstruction in Afghanistan could proceed rapidly and effectively. Its failure to do so contradicted assurance that the United States could succeed in rebuilding the country. Whether a shift to that goal around 2006 made sense is irrelevant to this topic. USAID wanted quick results in Afghanistan to show success, so it built schools and clinics, but failed to fund teachers and doctors. USAID funded a highway from Kabul to Kandahar, but failed to ensure it was built with a deep enough layer of asphalt to withstand snow; consequently, heavy snows and subsequent melts washed away parts of the road. The gap between promise and accomplishment eroded the credibility of a strategy intended to show that U.S. efforts were improving the quality of life for people.¹

General McChrystal found that Afghan leaders desired commitment more than additional troops. They lacked faith in their own government and had a “primal fear” of abandonment.² Going to Helmand Province, General McChrystal described a key meeting with Marjah elders who had come to discuss the impending operation; they wanted to avoid civilian casualties and to clean out corrupt police and officials. “Finally, if you come, you must stay. If you don’t, the Taliban will return and we will all be killed,” they told McChrystal.³ General McChrystal reassured them, “Your conditions represent our intentions for this operation.” The general later wrote: “And they did.”⁴ Doubtless McChrystal was sincere, yet the situation raises a serious question: How could commitment square with the U.S. withdrawal of most troops by 2014? One can understand the elders’ concerns. The Taliban has been ruthless in killing allies or collaborators of the government or U.S./ISAF forces. The question was not resolved well in Afghanistan.

Lesson: failure to maintain commitments, especially where they affect the lives and deaths of people, will shred credibility. Journalist Ann Jones, who was embedded with U.S. troops in Afghanistan, argues that many Afghans became deeply hostile over the perception of broken promises about aid, civilian casualties, and a corrupt Afghan government.⁵

Example: Iraq, 1975, and Operation Desert Storm. As U.S. secretary of state, Henry Kissinger colluded with the former shah of Iran to encourage the Kurds to rise up in Iraq against Saddam Hussein and channeled \$15 million to their fight for self-determination. But when Iran and Iraq resolved a border dispute, Saddam yanked his support and then launched a ruthless campaign to crush the Kurds. Kissinger pithily advised a congressional committee: “Covert action should not be confused with missionary work.”⁶ Americans have short memories, but people in countries affected by American actions have long ones. The Iraqis, notably the Shiites, remembered the failure of American forces to support them when these forces stood by as the Shiites rose up against Saddam after Operation Desert Storm only to be slaughtered by his forces while U.S. forces failed to provide support. One should not be surprised that many Iraqi Shiites are skeptical about trusting the United States

Example: Syria, 2019. Once again, the Kurds feel threatened by the potential desertion of U.S. troops with whom they fought against ISIS and whose support has been vital to inflicting battlefield defeats on the terrorist movement. As this book goes to press, the Kurds will look back on what they view as Kissinger’s betrayal and contemplate whether in 2019, a U.S. draw-down from Syria will expose their 60,000 fighters, who aligned with this country, to an onslaught from Turkey.⁷

Know Your Weak Points and Vulnerabilities

Can communication strategy make a real difference? Bing West argues in *The Wrong War* that the political and cultural dynamics of Afghanistan rendered the war unwinnable for U.S. strategies.⁸ Others sharply dispute West’s views about that doctrine. This book is not the venue to resolve the debate, however the question West poses is real: Is success for an operation or conflict plausible or worth the cost?⁹

As you evaluate an area of operations and form a communication strategy, remember to:

- **Watch out for gaffes.** Ambassador Karl Eikenberry made a district visit and walked past the district governor, himself a former convicted criminal who had done time in a German prison for attempting to murder his stepson, and embraced a former police chief whom locals viewed as a corrupt pedophile. Rajiv Chandrasekaran said, “Marjah residents couldn’t understand what message the top American diplomat in Afghanistan was trying to send them.”¹⁰
- **Be cognizant of local leader agendas.** Local leaders pushing their own agendas will play off different parts of the U.S. government to promote their interests at American expense. In Afghanistan, many U.S. officials wanted to crack down on corrupt leaders, such as Ahmed Wali Karzai, who stymied officials by leveraging relationships with the military or other parts of the U.S. government.¹¹ As the U.S. Army’s 82d Airborne Division entered Iraq in 2003, it reached out to local leaders in an effort to find allies. Understanding who had influence and their agendas proved very challenging.¹² Key leader engagement (KLE) is important

to information operations. Competent preparation for these encounters is almost as important as following up the impact of the meetings in affecting action.

Know Your Strengths and How to Leverage Them

Recognize and understand what assets you possess to forge and execute a communication strategy. Such assets can include people, channels, equipment, and affiliated influence.

Realistically assess your credibility among the target audience you are attempting to persuade. Credibility flows from developing an image that resonates positively with a target audience. Partly that is about capturing and holding the moral high ground. One cannot overstate the importance of communicating moral strength. No one illustrated that better than President Roosevelt, for whom—as historian Nigel Hamilton records in his superb study of Roosevelt’s presidential decision making—the moral basis for a coalition that brought together as many allies as possible was vital to ensuring unity at home and among allies. He consistently invoked morality as a fundamental rationale for the Allied effort and drew that as a key distinction between what the Allies and the Axis fought for.¹³

Partly, it is about explaining who you are, what you are doing, why you are doing something, and what it means to a target audience. Image is about far more than slogans, slick photographs, or great media. It is about communicating with target audiences a strong sense of integrity about yourself and your cause.

Apply the cultural knowledge you developed in selecting which strengths to emphasize. Have a realistic assessment of what you are capable of doing to build credibility and the available options that strengthen your position.

Example: Barack Obama’s 2012 U.S. presidential campaign. Obama had the power of incumbency and thus the tools of the presidency to raise money, create headlines, get a message out, and to drive that message. Obama’s use of paid media returned marginal dividends, but his uniquely sophisticated use of social media—especially Facebook—to identify and mobilize voters was unprecedented.¹⁴ The campaign drew from top minds in the private sector as well as political professionals to forge its strategy.

The Obama campaign monitored its voter contact tactics to increase effectiveness. Political strategist and voter contact expert Walter D. Clinton, who consulted for the campaign, said that “never in my 40 years’ experience have I seen this combination of true grassroots techniques driven by modern technology. It made a decisive difference in mobilizing the president’s base constituency. It expanded and energized that base, and it succeeded, amid a very close election, in motivating voters who otherwise would have stayed home to get out and vote for the president.”¹⁵

The carefully crafted—and well-tested—messages and repetitive contacts through multiple channels motivated people to vote and played a key role in helping the Obama campaign to gain three quarters of the billion dollars it raised from small donors contacted online.

Example: 2003 Iraq War. In Iraq, the Coalition had access to major media, social media, and paid media. It capitalized on the rumor mill. It networked extensively through engagement with local and national leaders, following the precepts that General Petraeus set forth in his 14 observations on engagement there. The action steps he defined were integrated with Coalition communication strategy.¹⁶ The victory in the Second Battle of Fallujah and the success of the surge—even

though the longer-term political outcome in Iraq remains unresolved—emanated from adroit leverage of these strengths.

- U.S. communication strategy acquires unique strength from support available through kinetic force. As seen above, this was crucial to inspiring enthusiasm among Iraqi soldiers as Operation al-Fajr was launched to take Fallujah back from insurgents.
- The United States achieved success in Operation Desert Storm by assembling a coalition of many nations. President George H. W. Bush capitalized on the perception that the United States was the world’s only superpower while seizing the moral high ground, posturing American forces as liberators fighting an evil tyrant, and communicating—and honoring—specific constraints on the strategic and tactical goals that the Coalition would achieve.

Precise, measured employment of integrated communication and kinetic strategy produced a brilliant achievement, marred only by the mistake in encouraging the Shiites to rise up without providing them support when Saddam Hussein unleashed a murderous assault against them.

Lesson: do not encourage allies to act in the perception that you will support them unless you are prepared to do so.

Avoid Inflating Claims

Maintaining credibility is crucial to information operations. That requires avoiding statements or pronouncements that inflate the success of operations. Here are key examples that illustrate this precept.

Example: Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. government constantly talked up the prospects of success. U.S. Army commander General William C. Westmoreland claimed he could see the “light at the end of the tunnel.”¹⁷ The inflated claims came back to haunt President Johnson after the 1968 Tet offensive, which prompted the nation’s prestigious news anchor, Walter Cronkite, to conclude that the time had come for the U.S. to get out of Vietnam. Cronkite called the war a draw and fatefully pronounced: “We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds.”¹⁸ Having inflated expectations, Westmoreland and Johnson found their credibility shattered. Johnson was forced to abandon ambitions for a second term.

Military personnel, diplomats, politicians and journalists will long debate the merits and potential for winning that war. Yet, the irony of Cronkite’s pronouncement is that Tet produced a stunning victory. But it was reported as a debacle. The impact on public opinion and loss of public support for the war is hard to overstate.

Our military was understandably frustrated. Initially caught off-guard, the U.S. military recovered swiftly and dealt the enemy a devastating blow.¹⁹ Yet, while a military defeat, information aspects made Tet a huge political victory. A key Communist objective had been to persuade Americans that the war was not winnable; Communists achieved that goal.²⁰

Tet provided a keen lesson for General David Petraeus, an avid student of military history. Taking command in Iraq in 2007, he downplayed expectations while executing a brilliant kinetic and communication strategy that reversed a military situation.²¹ General Stanley McChrystal was

equally careful when taking command in Afghanistan. Both commanders understood that winning involved hard fighting, and in no small measure depended on how audiences judge events. They recognized the impact of perceptions and communication strategy in shaping or changing behavior.

Example: Afghanistan. An operation in the Taliban stronghold of Marjah, Operation Moshtarak (*together* in the Afghan Dari dialect), launched by U.S. Marines and ISAF forces was ballyhooed as a model for future success and a new beginning in Afghanistan, winning the hearts and minds of Afghans. General McChrystal declared, “We’ve got a government in a box, ready to roll in.”²²

But Marjah proved painstaking and difficult. Some viewed the operation a failure, others saw it as a draw, while still others branded it a misleading exercise in media hype and misinformation.²³ Marjah consisted of farmers’ homes and markets in an agricultural area. The Associated Press published an article stating that “‘Marine commanders’ . . . expected 400 to 1,000 insurgents to be ‘holed up’ in the ‘southern Afghan town of 80,000 people,’” and that Marjah was “the ‘linchpin of the militants’ logistical and opium-smuggling network.” ABC News characterized the place as the “city of Marjah” and heavily populated.²⁴ Expectations were quickly frustrated. Finding mixed success, Jamestown Foundation expert Michael Innes wrote that “perhaps most frustrating for many observers is the manner in which political pressures have apparently skewed expectations of progress,” with the definition of success shaped by “requirements set in the political capitals of NATO member states.”²⁵

When General McChrystal shifted focus to Kandahar, he recognized that expectations for Marjah had been unrealistic. His communication strategy for Kandahar wisely lowered expectations.²⁶

Project Confidence

Ensure that you clearly communicate that you know what you are doing and will prevail. If target audiences—as well as partners, allies, and your own people—do not believe you will win, chances are good that you will fail. Great communication strategists exhibit imagination, boldness, and a willingness to take risks. Confidence is manifested in confluent ways:

- **A clearly-stated, easily understood story, narrative, theme, and message.** Confusion or lack of clarity suggests you do not know what you are doing or lack the confidence that an operation or campaign will succeed.
- **Message discipline.** One of the most difficult things in campaigns or operations to do well is maintain message discipline. That means ensuring that actions and messages, whether communicated through language or other means, remain consistent and mutually supportive.
- **Accessibility to media.** You do not need to explain strategy or tactics to the media. Doing so may not be prudent. However, the media will cover events; that is its job. It is critical that you get out the points that define your message and drive them. Hiding from the media suggests lack of confidence and is likely to inspire stories that a strategy is beset with problems.
- **Accessibility to partners and allies.** They want to know what you are doing, how, why, and what it means to them. Staying ahead of the curve in engaging with them shows confidence and is more likely to inspire their support and cooperation.
- **Communication with your own team, from top to bottom.** People need to un-

derstand a commander's intent and how a strategy, plan, and operation execute that intent.

- **Decisive action consistent with messaging.** Backing up communication with decisive action that supports a message makes it meaningful, gives it teeth, and reinforces your trustworthiness.
- **Competent, confident, and accessible leaders.** Providing visible leadership from commanders and spokespersons that exude leadership in appearance, posture, voice, composure, expression, and action.

Example: Winston Churchill. Churchill stands out for his ability to use communication to define his leadership and the cause for which he stood. He took office as prime minister at age 65 after having been a public figure for decades. His speeches were immaculately crafted on note cards and carefully thought through before he delivered them. Every speech aimed to shape the public's mood or attitude toward a subject. Everything about the way he presented himself was masterfully calculated for effect. His command of language and projection of strength and resiliency gave voice to an entire nation during its darkest hours. Churchill's message that England would not give in but would stand, fight, and prevail was clear, uncompromising, and exuded the confidence of the resolute.²⁷

Example: John F. Kennedy. Kennedy had a knack for compartmentalizing his private and public life. Historians such as British journalist Henry J. Farlie and Frederick Kempe have criticized his leadership.²⁸ Still, as a public figure, Kennedy transformed the American political landscape. His formidable communication skills and style changed expectations for American lead-

ers at home and abroad. His inspiring speech in Berlin in 1963 exuded command and confidence, illustrated the power of speech in projecting resilience and strength, and reminds us what American values and strong leadership mean to those for whom freedom is about life and death.²⁹ In a modern era of cynical skepticism, Kennedy's speech reminds us of how well the right U.S. leadership, communicated in vivid, concrete, relevant language that specifically addresses the concerns and sentiments of an audience, can resonate.

Example: Ronald Reagan. After his near-assassination, President Ronald Reagan's poise, grace, and wit restored confidence to a shaken nation. Few understood how close death had come. His charisma shined during his two most famous speeches: Normandy, where he praised the heroes of Operation Overlord while calling for a strong Atlantic alliance against Communism; and his 1986 eulogy to the seven *Challenger* astronauts.³⁰ Author, journalist, and presidential speechwriter Peggy Noonan wrote both of these elegant speeches, but Reagan's vibrancy, conviction, and confidence brought them to life and forged a connection with his auditors. Reagan pursued a broad strategy of projecting strength, calm, resolution, and vision in efforts to strengthen the United States, revive confidence after the failed presidency of the Carter administration, and defeat Communism. As with Churchill and Kennedy, Reagan spoke not merely for himself. Each gave powerful voice to the feelings and emotions of their citizens.

Example: Julius Caesar. Historically, no leader has exceeded Caesar's skills at communication strategy on or off the battlefield, despite the fact that his final accession to power blinded him to ground realities and led to his assassination. As a commander, Caesar experienced the same hardships as his troops.³¹ He led from the front in tough bat-

ties against formidable opponents and shared the profit of plunder with his men, who acclaimed him *imperator* (commander).³² Many celebrated examples define his leadership and communication strategy.

It bears stressing: as with many great leaders, Caesar's effectiveness as a communicator and in forging communication strategy flowed from his strength and character. He was conscious of his image. Historian Adrian Goldsworthy notes that images of Caesar on busts or coins "radiate power, experience and monumental self-confidence, and at least hint at the force of personality of the man."³³

Unlike Napoleon, who never faced a general equal to his ability when he was on his game, Caesar confronted several capable leaders, including Pompey the Great, who was widely viewed as the outstanding military leader of the day; his immensely able chief deputy Titus Labienus, who defected to Pompey after both fell out with Caesar; and the charismatic Gallic chieftain Vercingetorix.³⁴

Caesar's career is full of telling examples. In his first major battle in Gaul against the Helvetii, he confronted a superior force that had proven itself by defeating German tribes in different battles. Not surprisingly, this formidable adversary inspired anxiety. Caesar needed to keep his troops calm and stiffen their resolve. He adopted a simple strategy to communicate his own resolve and courage and to inspire his legions. He sent his horse away to signal that he would fight on foot alongside every soldier, exposing himself to the same danger, and delivered a speech that roused his men to action. This was even more significant than it might seem. Suetonius records that Caesar rode a "very remarkable horse, with feet almost like those of a man, the hoofs being divided in such a manner as to have some resemblance to toes . . . and the soothsayers having interpreted these circumstances into an omen that its owner would be master of the world."³⁵ The horse,

historian Philip Freeman says, "adored Caesar and would not allow anyone else to ride it."³⁶

In thinking about information strategy, Caesar was always conscious of the need to communicate clearly with troops under his command or, in those chaotic days of the Roman Republic, the voters whose support he sought. He used his commentaries and medals to gain visibility and credibility. He understood the importance of communication strategy. He was an excellent strategist and he executed strategy adroitly.³⁷

Be Creative—Especially with Younger Audiences

The differences among audiences of various ages require that you gear messages differently for different generations. Young audiences reject hard sales pitches or lectures. The U.S. military is infamous for its almost liturgical reverence for PowerPoint presentations. Its "just the facts, ma'am" approach to dealing with the media resonates haphazardly.

Younger audiences seek to engage and to interact—with one another as well as with you. As author Clay Shirky pointed out in *Here Comes Everybody*, technology has triggered the emergence of new social media and fundamentally altered the way that young audiences communicate and think about communicating.³⁸ It is now a two-way street. Newspapers, radio, and television were one-way communication: one party communicating a message to many. Letters, facsimiles, and telephones are one-to-one direct communication technologies, which paved the way for interactive engagement using social media.

U.S. politics offers a striking example of how the generational divide affects this equation. When it came to reaching the crucial 18- to 29-year-old demographic, the 2012 Barack Obama presidential campaign came to a startling realization: that

fully 50 percent of its targets in this key demographic proved unreachable by telephone, a traditional method of direct voter contact. However, 85 percent of them were friends with an Obama 2012 campaign supporter who was also a Facebook app user. The Obama campaign responded by launching “targeted sharing” to Facebook friends who were voters in swing states. The campaign contacted 600,000 people, who in turn reached 5 million voters. Twenty percent of those 5 million took some action, such as registering to vote.³⁹

Few nations are as wired as the United States. Internet usage abroad is limited, but it is rapidly growing. The impact of internet usage was manifest in the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions. All sides in the Syrian Civil War—the world’s first true cyberwar—use the internet and cellular technology extensively for strategy, operations, tactics, communication, and command and control. Younger generations, even in less affluent countries, connect on the internet or social media through smart phones.

Jack Guy has advised top military leaders extensively in Afghanistan. He notes that in a nation of 30 million people, there are more than 16 million mobile phones, supported by four major mobile phone purveyors. Mobile phones are the fastest growing industry in the country. The impact of this technology on the economy as well as on youth, who are networked globally, has proven essential in keeping the Kabul government alive.⁴⁰

One sees this shift toward engagement in commercial marketing. Consumer and business buyers, notes author Shama Kabani, want to make up their own minds about what they need. The key to selling is to engage with consumers and help them search for and find the answers they want.⁴¹ Commercial marketing differs from political and national security communication strategy in many ways, but on this point the parallel is real.

News media that capitalizes on the tools of the internet enables many to communicate with many in real time. This evolution has dramatically reshaped the social and political dynamics that define the environments in which communication strategy is forged and executed.

Two prominent strategies that eschewed traditional media and capitalized on new media illustrate the broader precept.

Example: Egypt. The 2011 Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt were engineered by a group of young, tech-savvy individuals who had grown weary of Hosni Mubarak’s repressive political system rooted in “force and favors.” Upheaval in Tunisia had forced President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali to flee on 14 January 2011 in the wake of mass popular protests.⁴² Revolution erupted in Egypt on 25 January 2011 as thousands protested the Mubarak regime.⁴³

But the revolution really began several years before, on 23 March 2008, when young Egyptian activists calling themselves the April 6 Youth Movement launched a Facebook page to support a textile workers’ strike. Within a few weeks, 70,000 individuals had joined the call for strikes. Three years later, the organizers were ready to move against Mubarak’s regime. They forged a strategy to overcome state security tactics traditionally employed to preempt protests by organizing cells of 30–50 activists. Each would group in a preselected spot in Cairo. Each cell had a single person to direct members to the main rendezvous point. A viral video featuring Egyptian activist Asmaa Mahfouz told the youth: “Don’t be afraid of the government.”⁴⁴

That was critical: once demonstrators got over fears about the government and its security apparatus, the revolution moved forward. Protestors in Ukraine, the Philippines, and elsewhere

had used social media for command and control and to provide protestors information to evade security points. But the Tahrir Square protests were a triumph of information strategy. The strategy tapped into deep resentment against the regime; employed interactive social media tools like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter to provide information and direction; and combined with satellite television broadcast from Al Jazeera to achieve a critical mass that forced the army to stage an unstated coup that ousted Mubarak.⁴⁵

The Egyptian regime, led by the late President Mohamed Morsi and controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood, proved to be just as or more authoritarian than Mubarak's, but in ousting the prior regime, the April 6 Movement's leadership showed that while improvising in an atmosphere of uncertainty and heightened tension, a cohesive communication strategy can mobilize a population and more or less peacefully oust a regime. The leaders creatively used their tools to change behavior and got results.

Future engagements and conflicts seem less likely to entail all-out war, such as in Iraq or Afghanistan. Look instead for asymmetrical engagements that entwine information strategies and tactics in dealing with repressive state regimes or armed adversaries.

Key Lessons:

- Strategy needs to creatively determine what channels your audiences are tuning into, or you will miss the opportunity to reach them; and
- New tools of social media have transformed the way people communicate. Instead of top-down communication through vertical hierarchies of command and control, knowledge is increasingly shared horizontally and democratically.

Everyone—within specific target audiences—can have a say in the discourse. Yes, state monitoring can penetrate veils of anonymity. Still, the internet facilitates anonymous discourse, which expands the sources and diversity of discourse. It also lessens control over accuracy of the information communicated, opening discourse to accidental or deliberate misinformation. This transformation in how and through what channels information is distributed places a premium on creative thinking.

Example: Syria. The Syrian Civil War is complicated and a detailed analysis lies beyond the scope of this book. What is relevant is that both the regime and the rebels have capitalized imaginatively on social media to achieve confluent goals:

- Communicating narrative, story, message, and themes to Syrian and international audiences;
- Collecting information and intelligence, including through cyber hacking;
- Disrupting adversary communication and tactics;
- Gaining momentum while slowing down that of the opposition;
- Pumping up morale by communicating success; and
- Establishing command and control.

Key lesson: This bloody conflict demonstrates that technology is an enabler of, but not a substitute for, thinking and smart ideas.

Example: Hong Kong, 2019. As this is written, protests occurring in Hong Kong illustrate two sides of information warfare. Protestors seek autonomy from authoritarian rule in Beijing while mainland China seeks to repress dissent. Each has employed different tactics of information warfare to achieve its desired end state.

China makes extensive use of surveillance technology. Young people have led the protests, which

started out as a rejection of a proposed extradition law that would allow suspects to be sent to China for trial. Protestors have shown pluck and ingenuity in safeguarding their identities from potential retaliation by authorities who employ mass data collection, thousands of security cameras, television news footage, and sophisticated facial recognition technology. Chinese authorities have used facial recognition technology to log more than 6.7 million coordinates of the movement by individuals within a span of 24 hours. Authorities have a tool that captures and analyzes body shapes and how people walk to identify individuals.⁴⁶

In the meantime, China is waging a disinformation war against the protestors, portraying to mainland Chinese and the world images of police violence as emanating from protestors. State television showed an image of a woman counting out cash on a Hong Kong sidewalk—implying that the protestors are paid provocateurs. China’s strategic goal is to provoke nationalist and anti-Western sentiment. It uses state and social media, distorting the context of images and videos, to communicate its message that the demonstrators are a portent of terrorism.⁴⁷

Despite its aggressive tactics, China’s handling of Hong Kong reveals the flaws in its heavy-handed approach. Its campaign appears to be backfiring. The state news agency Xinhua and the tabloid *Global Times* resorted to adopting cultural revolution rhetoric in characterizing protestors as a “‘Gang of Four’ endangering Hong Kong.” But arguing that the protests are ignited by malign external forces is undercutting Chinese diplomacy abroad. Twitter and Facebook terminated hundreds of accounts that appeared to be part of a “coordinated state-backed operation” seeking to sow discord in Hong Kong.⁴⁸

Protestors cover their faces with masks. They decline to give names. They purchase single-trip

train tickets with cash rather than using their stored-value electronic cash cards that forward information on travel and locations to a central repository.⁴⁹ They have deleted all of their Chinese phone applications, such as WeChat, Aipay, and the shopping app Taobao. They use virtual private networks (VPNs) on smartphones to use with the secure messaging app Telegram to hide from cyber monitors. They use only secure digital messaging apps and have gone completely analog in movements. They take no selfies or photographs of the chaos. While well-coordinated, the protestors remain intentionally leaderless. They share protest tips and security measures with people they had met just hours before. They use Telegram to plan meet-ups, and change user names on the app so that it sounds nothing like their actual names. They change the phone number associated with the app. They use SIM cards without a contract. They avoid snapping close-up images, limiting photography to wide shots.⁵⁰

How the protests and Beijing’s response play out may provide insight into opportunities for turning China’s Three Warfares concept, discussed in chapter 12, against it, to undercut its efforts to strengthen global credibility as part of its 2049 plan to make China the world’s dominant state.

Capitalize on Your Resources

Understanding what resources are available to a campaign and when to use these resources is integral to success. Resources do not refer solely to money. Human resources are just as critical as financial resources; it is human capabilities, suitability to meet the requirements of a campaign, enthusiasm, morale, confidence, and energy that form the team and support elements that develop and execute a winning strategy.

There is almost never enough time, money, or human resources to do everything a mission or plan

requires. The test for developing a worthy strategy is not whether you can be creative or effective at any cost; it is whether you can devise a workable strategy within the limits imposed, internally (within a command), or externally (by events or an adversary). If a mission requires meeting a certain threshold that cannot realistically be reached, it is important to stand tall and say so. However, that does not ensure success, as illustrated by General

James Conway and the Marines' warning to Paul Bremer and Lieutenant General Sanchez that the battleground for the First Battle of Fallujah lacked proper resources and preparation. Al-Qaeda won that battle. The problem, however, was corrected for the second battle, and the Coalition employed every available resource deemed necessary to prevail, which enabled Coalition forces to win.

Endnotes

1. Critics, including the agency's inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, question what it has achieved with \$100 billion in aid provided to that country. Joel Brinkley, "Money Pit: The Monstrous Failure of US Aid to Afghanistan," *World Affairs Journal* 175, no. 5 (January/February 2013): 13–23.
2. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 318.
3. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 363.
4. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 363–64.
5. See Ann Jones, "The Total Failure of COIN," *American Conservative*, 1 July 2010. Jones argues that the U.S. effort was a failure at almost every level, while saluting the Taliban for assessing the successful surge in Iraq and figuring out tactics to counter a similar strategy in Afghanistan through their own surge. Her views echo those of Bing West, except West concluded that the aid did not advance U.S. interests. West writes that Afghans were grateful for any cash or help, but such gestures did not motivate them to become pro-American or fight the Taliban. Neither writer can be called soft-hearted peaceniks. Their criticism is that Afghanistan has produced a costly U.S. failure. Journalist Peter Bergen offers a contrary assessment. He argues there are now 6 million children in school, compared to 1 million under the Taliban; that 1 in 3 Afghans now own a phone, compared to almost none while the Taliban held power; that 6 in 10 Afghans have a favorable opinion of the U.S. military presence in the country (some would challenge this polling statistic's validity); and that the murder rate in Afghanistan is lower than in Washington, DC. In Bergen's view, the Taliban "are getting squeezed where it hurts" in Helmand Province as well as in Kandahar. He is also more optimistic about Afghanistan's economy, which could make the country a world leader in lithium. See Peter Bergen, "Why Afghanistan Is Far from Hopeless," *Time*, 17 March 2011. Jones's assessment and West's pessimism was also challenged by U.S. Special Operations personnel who the author interviewed; the author expresses no opinion on whose view is more accurate; this work's focus is on what you need to think about to forge a communication strategy or conduct information warfare.
6. See Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 564; and "1972–1975, Iraq: The Fine Art of Betraying Kurds," *Press for Conversion!*, no. 51, May 2003, 27.
7. Ben Hubbard and Eric Schmitt, "Mazlum Kobani Called the U.S. 'Comrades in Arms' against ISIS. Now the U.S. Is Eyeing the Exit," *New York Times*, 12 May 2019; and Jane Ferguson, "Kurdish Control in Syria Threatened by U.S. Troop Withdrawal," news segment, *PBS News Hour Weekend*, 11 May 2019.
8. See also Octavian Manea, "The Wrong War: An Interview with Bing West, a Sequel," *Small Wars Journal* 7, no. 5, 6 May 2011.
9. On Iraq, the Bush administration's case is well known. For the opposition to it, see Brent Scowcroft, "Don't Attack Saddam," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 August 2002; "Former Bush Envoy, Centcom Chief Calls Iraq War a Blunder," *NBC News*, 25 May 2004; and Richard Clarke, "Iraq War 'Enormous Mistake,'" *FreeRepublic.com*, 26 June 2004.
10. Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 143.
11. Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 162–63; Peters, *Seeds of Terror*; Dexter Filkins, Mark Mazzetti, and James Risen, "Brother of Afghan Leader Said to Be Paid for C.I.A.," *New York Times*, 27 October 2009; Abdul Waheed Wafa, "Brother of Karzai Denies Links to Heroin," *New York Times*, 6 October

- 2008; and James Risen, "Intrigue in Karzai Family as an Afghan Era Closes," *New York Times*, 3 June 2012.
12. See West, *No True Glory*, chapters 1 and 3.
 13. Hamilton, *The Mantle of Command*, 83, 112.
 14. See Jonathan Alter, "Did Hipster Tech Really Save the Obama Campaign," *Wired*, 6 June 2013.
 15. Walter D. Clinton, interview with author, 14 May 2013. Clinton is a legend in political campaign circles. He got his start with Matt Reese, the godfather of Democratic party campaign organizing and the strategist credited with helping John F. Kennedy to win the pivotal West Virginia primary. That victory spurred Kennedy on to the White House, partly thanks to Lyndon B. Johnson's failure to timely contest the nomination. See Robert A. Caro, *The Passage of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Knopf, 2012).
 16. Petraeus's 14 observations are: 1) "Do not try to do too much with your own hands"; let locals lead, as it's their war; 2) act quickly, to avoid becoming an army of occupation; 3) "money is ammunition," as one focuses on reconstruction, economic revival, and restoring basic services; 4) "increasing the number of stakeholders is critical to success"; 5) analyze the costs and benefits prior to operations, e.g., ask if it takes more bad guys off the street than it creates by the way it is conducted; 6) "intelligence is the key to success," a precept Gen McChrystal's team put to lethally effective use; 7) "everyone must do nation-building," not just civil affairs personnel; 8) "help build institutions, not just units," such as ministry capacity and not just army or police units; 9) "cultural awareness is a force multiplier"; 10) COIN requires more than military operations—it needs to establish a political environment that reduces support for insurgents and their ideology; 11) "ultimate success depends on local leaders"; 12) commanders must train subordinates well, because corporals and lieutenants are strategic players whose actions make a difference; 13) leaders must be flexible and adaptable; and 14) "a leader's most important task is to set the right tone" and communicate that tone to subordinate leaders and troopers. Petraeus, "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq," 3.
 17. Terry H. Anderson, "The Light at the End of the Tunnel: The United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam," *Diplomatic History* 12, no. 4 (October 1988): 443–62, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1988.tb00036.x>. Three of the most compelling dissections of the failure of President Lyndon B. Johnson and his team to level with the American people—perhaps to some extent guided by self-delusion—are David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972); Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and American in Vietnam* (New York: Modern Library, 2009); and H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997). McMaster levels a stunning indictment of the behavior of Johnson and his defense secretary Robert McNamara's conscious deceit to win the 1964 presidential election, as well as offering a critique of U.S. military decision making. One notes that while Sheehan, Halberstam, and others do not believe the war was winnable, in recent years a contrary school of thought has argued that had Congress continued to fund the South Vietnamese army, Hanoi would have been defeated. See, for example, Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Stephen J. Morris, "The War We Could Have Won," *New York Times*, 1 May 2005. Morris argues that by 1974–75, the south was winning and would have prevailed. He believes it lost when antiwar groups in Washington persuaded Congress to cut back on American aid in 1974. See also: Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harvest, 2007). Sorley argues that Army Gen Creighton W. Abrams understood how to defeat the Communists, and his leadership helped to turn things around. The author of this book on information warfare worked closely on various matters with Nha Hoang, a key South Vietnamese negotiator at the Paris Peace Accords talks held in Paris during 1975. For the rest of his career, he remained bitter at what he considers the duplicity and treachery of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in negotiating away a winning war to the north.
 18. CBS Evening News, "50 Years Ago: Walter Cronkite Calls for the U.S. to Get out of Vietnam," 27 February 2018, YouTube video, 00:53.
 19. See Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*, whose reporting records just how close a call the Tet offensive became. Historian James Willbanks points out that "there was a flow of intelligence, but nobody was putting it all together. Perhaps more important, the intelligence we were getting flew in the face of our own preconceived notions about how the war was going." "Interview—James Willbanks: Tet's Truths, Myths and Mysteries," Historynet.com, 5 December 2012; and James H. Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive: A Concise History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
 20. See "Interview—James Willbanks."
 21. The effect of the surge, of course, was only temporary. In the long run, as the United States left Iraq, only the Iraqis could secure their own future. Whether or how they may do so remains unclear at this writing.
 22. See Dexter Filkins, "Afghan Offensive Is New War Model," *New York Times*, 2 February 2010; Andrew J. Bacevich, "'Government in a Box' in Marja," *Los Angeles (CA) Times*, 17 February 2010; and Gregg Jaffe and Craig Whitlock, "Afghan City Is Now More than a Battle," *Washington Post*, 22 February 2010. "This is the start of a new strategy. This is our first salvo," one senior military official told the *Post*. Jaffe and Whitlock, "Afghan City Is Now More than a Battle."

23. See Jones, "The Total Failure of COIN"; Jim White, "Marja Serves as Microcosm of Military Failure in Afghanistan, But Failure Is Country-Wide," *Empty Wheel* (blog), 7 May 2012; Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 138–47; and West, *The Wrong War*.
24. Gareth Porter, "Fiction of Marja as City Was U.S. Information War," *Inter Press Service*, 8 March 2010.
25. Michael A. Innes, "Perceptions of Success and Failure in ISAF Operations in Marjah, Afghanistan," *Terrorism Monitor* 8, no. 24 (17 June 2010).
26. Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 161.
27. Those interested in Churchill during the war years should read William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill, Defender of the Realm, 1940–1965* (New York: Little, Brown, 2012); and Lynne Olson, *Citizens of London: The Americans Who Stood with Britain in Its Darkest, Finest Hour* (New York: Random House, 2011), which offers an extremely insightful view of how Churchill operated and his communication skills, as well as those of key Americans, including Edward R. Murrow, W. Averell Harriman, and Ambassador John Gilbert Winant, who helped forge a solid alliance between Britain and the United States during World War II. Nigel Hamilton severely criticized Churchill's judgment, meddling, and egomania, but pointed out that what Roosevelt found attractive and indispensable was his moral courage.
28. Henry Fairlie, *The Kennedy Promise: The Politics of Expectation* (London: Methuen, 1973); and Frederick Kempe, *Berlin 1961: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Most Dangerous Place on Earth* (New York: Putnam, 2011). Even Robert Caro, who clearly admired Kennedy, acknowledged his ineffectiveness in dealing with Congress, although his superb portrayal of Kennedy as a candidate and political operator is compelling. See Caro, *The Passage of Power*. Caro's account of Kennedy's assassination is gripping, and his account of how Lyndon Johnson passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act presents a masterpiece of Johnson's own communication strategy in achieving what Kennedy had failed to do.
29. Mentor in a Box, "John F. Kennedy's Speech in Berlin," 31 March 2012, YouTube video, 10:31.
30. Reagan Foundation, "Normandy Speech: Ceremony Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Normandy Invasion, D-Day 6/6/84," 16 April 2009, YouTube video, 13:21; and "President Ronald Reagan: Address on the Challenger Disaster," 17 March 2008, YouTube video, 4:29.
31. Lucius Mestrius Plutarch, *Life of Julius Caesar*, trans. John Dryden (Ann Arbor, MI: Charles River Editors, 1991), loc. 337 of 1084, Kindle: "His contempt of danger was not so much wondered at by his soldiers, because they knew he coveted honor. But his enduring so much hardship, which he did to all appearance beyond his natural strength, very much astonished them."
32. Philip Freeman, *Julius Caesar* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 88.
33. Adrian Goldsworthy, *Caesar: Life of a Colossus* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 61. Additionally, Plutarch recorded that during the 10 years Caesar fought in Gaul, he took 800 towns, subdued 300 states, defeated 3 million adversaries and killed 1 million, and took captive another million. Plutarch, *Life of Julius Caesar*, loc. 313 of 1084, Kindle. Judged in the context of his times, his exploits were remarkable, although in today's world, the party most likely to express interest in his actions would be the International Criminal Court, which would charge him with genocide. See "Article 6. Genocide," in *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (The Hague, Netherlands: International Criminal Court, 2011). Always on his game, Mark Twain summed up Caesar this way: he conducted war against the barbarians not out of revenge "but because he wanted their land and desired to confer the blessings of civilization upon their widows and orphans." Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger* (Auckland, New Zealand: Douglas Editions, Floating Press, 2009), chapter 8, loc. 355575 of 54078, Kindle; also quoted by Freeman, *Julius Caesar*, 2. His actions in Rome echoed his strength. As a young man, he married Cornelia, the daughter of Lucius Cornelius Cinna, a rival to Lucius Cornelius Sulla, who had seized power in Rome. Worse, Caesar was the nephew of another Sulla foe, Gaius Marius. Sulla showed the allies of Marius and Cinna no quarter. He ordained the murder of many, providing a reward to any who killed those appearing on a death list while seizing the property of the deceased for the state. As historian Philip Freeman pithily put it, Sulla "managed to combine murder and fund-raising on a grand scale." Freeman, *Julius Caesar*, 31. Caesar's mother successfully lobbied Sulla to spare Caesar, but Sulla demanded that he divorce Cornelia. In an era in which marriage was often viewed as transactional, Caesar, who loved his wife, refused. Freeman, *Julius Caesar*, 31; C. Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Alexander Thomson, revised and corrected (Lawrence, KS: Digireads, 2004), loc. 94 of 12910, Kindle; Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 59. When his aunt, Julia, the widow of Marius, died, Caesar ignored possible retribution from Sulla and presided over a very public funeral, at which he ignored Sulla's prohibition against displaying images of Marius and led a procession bearing symbols of Marius's victories. Sulla was seen as the champion of the wealthier classes, while Marius was more populist. The gesture made Caesar popular. He also made a public oration eulogizing Cornelia, and Plutarch credits him as the first Roman to do so. See Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, loc. 127–137 of 12910, Kindle; Plutarch, *Life of Julius Caesar*, loc. 146–163 of 1094, Kindle; Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 98–99; and Freeman, *Julius Caesar*, 50–52.
34. Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, loc. 668 of 12910, Kindle. Sue-

- tonius notes that when “the issue of a battle was doubtful, he sent away all the horses, and his own first.” Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, loc. 659 of 12910, Kindle.
35. Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, loc. 668 of 12910, Kindle. Caesar reciprocated his horse’s affection and later dedicated a statue to his horse at the temple of his ancestral deity, Venus Genetrix. Alexander the Great had a similar relationship to his renowned horse, Bucephalus. Pliny records that Alexander got the fierce horse after no one else proved able to tame it. At only 12 years old, Alexander promised his father, King Phillip II of Macedonia, that he would pay for it should he be unable to tame it. See Plutarch, *The Complete Collection of Plutarch’s Parallel Lives* (Oxford: Acheron Press), loc. 26495–26504 of 29380, Kindle; and Pliny (the Elder) (John Bostock, Henry Thomas Riley Tr.), *The Natural History of Pliny*, vol. 2. Caesar’s choice of a similar horse was almost certainly a strategic communication decision to associate himself with the legendary Alexander.
 36. Freeman, *Julius Caesar*, 130.
 37. See Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, 65. In addition, the author conducted telephone interviews with historian Adrian Goldsworthy on the topic during the course of summer 2012.
 38. Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (New York: Penguin, 2008).
 39. Patrick Ruffini, “Going Inside the Cave,” *Engage*, 20 December 2012; and “Inside the Cave: An In-Depth Look at the Digital, Technology, and Analytics Operations of Obama for America” (PowerPoint presentation, Engage Research, 2013), 83.
 40. Jack Guy, series of interviews with author, June 2013–March 2019.
 41. Shama Kabani, *The Zen of Social Media Marketing: An Easier Way to Build Credibility, Generate Buzz, and Increase Revenue* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2016), 10.
 42. Angeliqe Chrisafis and Ian Black, “Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali Forced to Flee Tunisia as Protestors Claim Victory,” *Guardian*, 15 January 2011.
 43. “Egypt: Thousands Protest against President Hosni Mubarak,” *Guardian*, 25 January 2011.
 44. Amy Goodman, “Asmaa Mahfouz and the YouTube Video that Helped Spark the Egyptian Uprising,” 8 February 2011, video and transcript, DemocracyNow!, 25:28.
 45. See “Revolution in Cairo: April 6 Youth Movement,” PBS *Frontline*, 22 February 2011. Note the video of a July 2008 Australian television profile of the democracy activists and their use of social media embedded on the webpage.
 46. Christopher Bodeen, “Hong Kong Protesters Wary of Chinese Surveillance Technology,” *AP News*, 13 June 2019.
 47. Steven Lee Myers and Paul Mozur, “China is Waging a Disinformation War Against Hong Kong Protestors,” *New York Times*, 13 August 2019.
 48. Anthony Dapiran, “Beijing Is Shooting Its Own Foot in Hong Kong,” *Foreign Policy*, 22 August 2019.
 49. Bodeen, “Hong Kong Protesters Wary of Chinese Surveillance Technology.”
 50. Shibani Mahtani, “Hong Kong Protestors Coordinate Tech-savvy Effort to Beat Chinese State Surveillance,” *Independent*, 16 June 2019.

Chapter 9

INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA IN YOUR STRATEGY

What channels are available to reach your intended audiences? Some audiences depend on television (e.g., those viewing Al Jazeera or Al Arabiya). Others prefer word of mouth (e.g., Somalia). Still others have restricted access to the internet. Government censorship or filtering impacts how audiences receive information. This chapter provides an overview of social media—what it is, how it can and should be used, and when it can be an effective part of your communication strategy.

Thomas Elkjer Nissen of the Royal Danish Defence College in Copenhagen has articulated the emerging role of social media in engagements and conflicts and how it is being weaponized.¹ He demonstrates how, during the past 15 years, social network media has “become an integral part of the conflict environment” and progressed ever since Kosovo in 1999.² It includes counterinsurgency campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians, and clashes in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Social media now plays an important role in the politics of nearly every nation, and its utility has been demonstrated by forces that represent democratic and authoritarian powers.³

As Rupert Smith pointed out, the internet has connected audiences globally, rendering every home with a television or computer a battlefield for control over the narrative.⁴ Journalist David Patrikarakos has offered excellent illustrations for how Palestinians and Israelis have employed Twitter to control the narrative, and in doing so, achieving international strategic effects.⁵ Retired Marine Corps colonel Thomas X. Hammes also wrote brilliantly about the impact of information warfare.⁶ In examining how social media has been weaponized, Nissen and others have defined many of its tactics and potential in influencing perceptions and opinions in the battlespace. As Nissen notes and David Kilcullen, former advisor to General David Petraeus, has pointed out, all of this occurs as the character of conflict has grown more urban, enabled by technology, and—by becoming more accessible to broad swaths of parties—empowering. That is rendering war more about local power, money, and control.⁷

The bottom line is that social media networks play an increasingly pivotal role in contemporary conflicts. Regardless of the specific social media platform, they are “all online technologies and practices that people use to share content, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives, and media themselves.”⁸

In the past few years, and notably since 2016, any analysis of the use of social media must account for the increasingly pervasive use of so-called fake news (i.e., propaganda) that has permeated much of the discourse about the use of social media. The intervention by Russia in the U.S. elections in 2016 has provided strong impetus and awareness of disinformation tactics.⁹ The increasing use of bots and fake accounts for social media posts complicates the challenge.¹⁰ The onset of artificial intelligence will further intensify the challenge.

A detailed discussion of social strategies and tactics lies beyond the scope of this book, but operators need to comprehend the utility of social media networks and technologies and how to capitalize on them, recognizing that they continue to rapidly evolve.

Social Media: What Is It?

Social media refers to internet-hosted digital tools used for sharing and collaboratively creating information by individuals and communities.¹¹ It empowers individuals to participate in dialogue.¹² A staggering 4.333 billion people in the world were active internet users as of July 2019, encompassing 56 percent of the global population.¹³ While technical definitions of social media vary, most agree that it is online media whose primary purpose is reader/viewer cocreation or reader/viewer interaction. This includes most blogs and all forums, microblogs (e.g., Twitter), discussion

boards, websites, and sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook). Any website that invites viewers to interact with the site and with other visitors falls into the broad definition of social media.

Social media offers many benefits for individuals and organizations, but there are drawbacks. The ability to reach global audiences is both a blessing and a curse; it also enables the uninformed (and others) to widely propagate narratives that bear little relation to the truth, distorting debate and spreading misinformation.

Traditional media, whether print or digital, such as daily newspapers or television, offers a more tightly controlled information environment. It is a one-way street; information flows in one direction only, with publishers and broadcasters serving as gatekeepers to decide what is disseminated. Social media is a multidirectional highway, but one that lacks proper lanes, speed limits, and dead ends.

Scholars Jennifer Aaker and Andy Smith label the successful use of social media the “Dragonfly Effect.” Their model is based on the mechanical functions of a dragonfly’s four wings. Each wing serves a different purpose, but they all must move in harmony. An effective social media communications campaign should emulate this.

- Focus on a single, measurable goal.
- Grab attention—cut through the noise that clutters other social media chatter.
- Hook the audience with a personal connection or higher emotion to engage an audience more fully.
- Take action that moves audiences from being listeners to team members. If you have a call-in number, make sure you have someone there to answer the phone who can do something with the call.¹⁴

The theory applies to military operations or strategy. All four components (wings) are vital to effective communication.

Difference from Traditional Media

Social media differs from traditional media in its interactive component and user-generated content. Social media comes in different forms, including blogs, microblogs, wikis, forums, podcasts, social networking sites, and virtual worlds.

- Blogs are websites that allow users a venue for publishing their points of view, allowing readers to comment, and carrying on conversations using the commenting feature. This medium has become popular in target countries where media environments are tightly monitored and controlled.
- Microblogs are websites similar to blogs, but with user-generated content limited to 140 characters. This medium allows users to quickly and efficiently disseminate information to large networks in short segments. Twitter is an example.
- Wikis are informal information sites that allow users to create and edit content on webpages. Wikipedia is the classic example.
- Forums are online discussion sites that often include reposting of traditional media content. Many forums are password protected or require registration to participate and/or view discussions.
- Podcasts are online digital audio or video media files.
- Social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook allow users to list interests and link to friends, sometimes

annotating these links by designating trust levels or qualitative ratings for selected friends.

- Virtual worlds are computer-based simulated environments that allow users to socialize via online personalities (avatars).

Social media generally reaches fewer people than well-circulated newspapers or magazines, but social media platforms are extremely dynamic. New topics constantly emerge and are readily overtaken by even newer topics. Different types of social media will rise and fall in popularity, making it challenging to maintain visibility of some sites and issues.¹⁵

A Historic Geographic Shift

The global online population is shifting dramatically and growing fast. Today about one-third of the world's population is online.¹⁶ New users tend to be young and from the developing world. Nearly one-half the online population is under age 25. Users in the developing world increased from 44 percent to 62 percent from 2006 to 2011.¹⁷

The most striking shift has come from burgeoning populations in the southern and eastern parts of the globe. In 2011, Atlantic and European populations accounted for only 35 percent of online users. The Asia-Pacific region boasted 45 percent of users even though only 24 percent of those populations had access to the internet.¹⁸

Most of the new users will use mobile devices as 3G services spread throughout the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁹ Many developed nations there already boast a 90-percent penetration rate. Globally, there are 3.3 billion smartphone users in the world today, and 5.13 billion people have mobile devices

in 2019. There are nearly 9 billion mobile connections among a world population of 7.7 billion.²⁰

Going Viral

Communication specialists deftly use social media outlets to propagate a narrative. You need to watch for the pitfalls of doing so. Those who obtain information through social media do not always distinguish between a trained communications expert and a novice blogger. When a story becomes popular online, it can spread like an uncontrolled virus and reach audiences beyond the world of social media. That is called *going viral*.

Narratives that go viral elude an obvious pattern. They vary in content and format. Some are video clips, texts, games, images, webpages, emails, or audio recording. Some are hilarious anecdotes of animal behavior, political mishaps, songs, or even online ads.

Using Social Media to Influence Target Audiences

When does it make sense to use social media? It depends on the target audience. Those with limited access to the internet or heavily state-controlled internet usage may still find it is a key source for

KEY SOCIAL MEDIA TYPES

Social media is evolving, with new tools, services, and consumers:

- **Blogs (WordPress, Blogger)**
- **Conversation applications (Facebook Messenger)**
- **Crowdsourcing (Tweetbrain, YahooAnswers)**
- **Discussion forums**
- **Gamification**
- **Geolocation**
- **Image content sharing services (Pinterest, Instagram)**
- **Microblogs (Twitter)**
- **Mobile calling (callwave)**
- **Multimedia**
- **News aggregators (digg)**
- **Photograph sharing (Flickr, Picasa)**
- **Podcasts**
- **Search (Google, Ask, Bing)**
- **Social bookmarking**
- **Social knowledge**
- **Social networking (Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn)**
- **Video sharing networks (YouTube)**
- **Virtual worlds (Second Life, Kaneva)**
- **Wikis (Wikipedia)**

command and control, collecting or receiving information or intelligence, surveillance, or reconnaissance. Rebels fighting Bashar al-Assad's government found themselves in that position.

Where internet connectivity is more widespread, social media can be vital to reaching key decision makers. Social media can add depth, reach, and perspective to a campaign that use of traditional media sources cannot equal.

Social media invites shorter texts. Language is often less formal and often grammatically deficient. That is not necessarily bad. In *Twitterville*, Shel Israel comments that "Twitter lets us behave online more closely to how we do in the tangible world."²¹ David Patrikarakos has offered keen insights into how Twitter is reshaping conflict, empowering individuals, and breaking down traditional barriers that existed when institutions acted as gateways to information. The impact, for example, that a single Palestinian tweeter, Farah Baker, had on shaping public perceptions was so strong that it sent the imaginative Israelis scrambling to match her messaging with their own ingenuity. In Ukraine, the power of Facebook has proven indispensable to marshalling support for anti-Russian forces.²²

The internet can be weaponized to communicate a message through action. In 2015, Russia launched BlackEnergy, a malware program. It struck the power grids of the Ivano-Frankivsk region of western Ukraine, knocking out electrical grids during a cold period. Former FBI agent and social media expert Clint Watts accurately points out that such attacks sought to damage infrastructure and undermine Eastern European countries through humiliation and confusion. The actions communicated a message about power and the price of opposition, and it inflicted harm.²³

Understand how target audiences consume social media information and engage by using social

media tools. Persuasive messaging must blend into the social media environment. Tone, language (e.g., colloquial speak), acceptable misspellings for shortening phrases (e.g., Twitter users' preference), and the frequent inclusion of website links embedded in social media text are important.

Watts has offered compelling insights into the use of weaponized social media that operators may have to contend with. Effective social media armies, he contends, consist of three types of accounts:

- *Hecklers*: these identify and drive wedge issues into target audiences, talking up online allies and arming them with propaganda that confirms audience member beliefs. They also target social media adversaries to arouse hostility against them. Hecklers, he says, do not hack computers. They hack minds. They seek to change audience perceptions on issues or personalities. They try to batter adversaries off social media.
- *Honeypots*: these aim to lure unsuspecting targets into engagement that may cause them to divulge location or personal information that forms valuable intelligence. This is the type of tactic that an enemy can be expected to use against soldiers. You might receive a Facebook message from an account that appears to belong to a gorgeous woman or handsome man. The profile image will seem real, but it may be an *avatar*—an artificially generated image. The account's goal is to gain insights and intelligence.
- *Hackers*: sometimes highly networked with honeypot accounts, these attackers may deliver malware to elicit valuable personal information. The danger that hacking or honeypots pose for field oper-

ators is that if they can penetrate firewalls or overcome passwords and steal personal information, they may find a fact they can use to blackmail you.²⁴

Such tactics require commanders and operators to learn and apply basic lessons of cybersecurity defenses, starting with password security and staying on the alert to guard against *spearphishing*—getting tricked by attackers when receiving apparently legitimate emails into giving away passwords or other personal or sensitive information.²⁵

Bots present an increasing threat. German researchers concluded that bots are “capable of massively distributing propaganda in social and online media” and can be “partly responsible for election results.”²⁶

Bots enable operators to flood voter perceptions with false or misleading assertions. They can overwhelm the capacity of humans to respond. Aided by a coming era of artificial intelligence (AI), the dangers posed by bots will escalate. Foreign service officer Matt Chessen has articulated the dangers of a dystopian social media environment that this poses in his report *The Madcom Future*, which this book’s author recommends to every reader.²⁷ Chessen points out that soon enough, the image of a close friend you may see on your cell phone, tablet, or computer may be an avatar yet know more about you than any friend—or even you—know.

The potential for use offensively and defensively in tactics and operations is enormous. It is vital for operators to learn how to use them tactically. Your cell phone or tablet is a mobile office, if used correctly. Just ensure that proper steps for encryption are taken to preserve security at rest, in transit, and at destination and that use of mobile devices or computers comports with the security guidelines that govern your operations. Never presume the

adversary is less sophisticated than your side. ISIS demonstrated a high order, and state proxies or states aligned against us are supple, flexible, agile, and imaginative.

Social Media as an Intelligence Tool

Social media intelligence (SOCMINT) and open source intelligence (OSINT) are invaluable in developing situational awareness and strategy. For example, tracking social unrest in social media channels provides key data points:

- What are the topics being discussed?
- Who are the key messengers?
- Where are they spreading these messages?
- Are there discernible networks?
- How are they doing it?
- What is the reaction to these messages and messengers?
- Are there countermessages emerging?

Intelligence analysts and military operators can use social media analysis in a variety of ways to aid them in fulfilling their missions.

- Early detection and assessment of emerging issues
- Identification and tracking of key communications by influential individuals, organizations, and their networks
- Analysis of recurring communications and messages and how they shape attitudes and behaviors to push perceivers to act

Social media enables you to monitor unofficial online dialogue. It helps detect emerging narratives and key voices that have resonance, which can enable an intelligence analyst to track discourse on issues and key messages in open source media and

to apply emerging technology to assess the resonance of each. It helps develop countermessaging and countermessengers. It enables you to help analyze an entire media campaign related to a military operation: editorials, authors, media type, etc.

Measuring how audiences are exposed to certain messaging—favorable or unfavorable to your military strategy and desired outcome—aids in determining support or opposition to on-the-ground tactical military efforts.

Direction of Social Media

Technology is advancing what is possible in social media. Various platforms illustrate how the social media landscape is rapidly changing and affecting the capacity of parties to articulate story, narrative, theme, and message, as well as to recruit and mobilize.²⁸

- Twitter has acquired unprecedented influence. Diverse parties including ISIL, Israel, Palestine, Russia, and famously, President Donald J. Trump, have employed it extensively and demonstrated its impact.
- Facebook is closing in on the 2 billion-user mark each month. ISIS used it, YouTube, and Twitter extensively to intimidate enemies and to recruit, mobilize, and drive its narratives.²⁹ Yet, the example of Facebook shows how rapidly situations evolve. In late November 2017, Facebook reported that it was successfully removing 99 percent of content related to militant groups tied to the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, blunting their ability to exploit the platform.³⁰ Some have argued that Facebook appeals to older generations, but political campaigns as well as violent extremist groups

such as ISIS have made strong efforts to capitalize on it.

- YouTube is used by 1.3 billion people. About 300 hours of YouTube content are uploaded to the site every minute. Nearly 5 billion videos are watched on it every day. About 80 percent of those age 18–49 watch it, and 60 percent prefer online video platforms to live television.³¹
- Instagram enables you to post photographs with a caption. It is especially popular with younger audiences.
- Chirp is an enhanced shared media, offering a free, open-source tool for programming amateur radio.
- Flayvr is a photo and video sharing program. It is a gallery app that organizes photographs and videos into moments.
- Conversations is a tool to integrate social media and interoffice communications into business operations.

Emerging Technologies and Their Impact on Operations

The internet and social media rank among key drivers that influence people around the world. They fuel emotions, shape perception, and provide understanding into what motivates and shapes behavior. Technology is enabling us to understand the emotional affinity between language and target audiences, and how language can be used to motivate audiences to act. This technology moves us beyond measuring sentiment—whether a party holds a favorable or unfavorable view toward statements, ideas, or people—into understanding emotional triggers that can be integrated into strategy, operations, and tactics.

These drivers affect every country and culture. They affect messages articulated by influencers.

Emerging technologies are enabling us to help measure how influencers affect outcomes. The information derived can support

- Operational plans
- Current and emergent operations
- Strategic planning operational teams
- A better understanding of intelligence and enemy objectives
- Strategic appreciation of ground realities
- Commanders' strategic planning process
- Understanding to help identify and counter adversarial story, narrative, themes, and message
- Measuring the impact of influencers and operations on target audiences

Emerging Capabilities

New automated technologies have had a dramatic effect on the collection of information and intelligence.³²

- Technology enables real-time search-based capabilities on most social media outlets; adversary communications in print, broadcast, and online; image/object data extraction; social network mapping; sentiment detection; automatic translation; and internet infrastructure monitoring.
- Social media collection includes custom drawing and indexing of sources on both the light web and dark web.³³
- Information can be collected on internet providers, domains, uniform resource identifiers (URI), and autonomous system numbers (ASNs) for organizations and individuals, as well as on passive domain name systems (DNS).
- Advanced machine learning algorithms and natural language processing tech-

nology can help measure emotions and motivations. It can ingest any text content: emails, instant messages, social media, online news, print newspapers, and television and radio broadcasts. It can analyze audience response within minutes.

- Technology can be used to measure the effectiveness of messaging on target audiences; rank the persuasive influence of individual groups on specific subjects; and identify extremists not in contact with known radicals, foreign terrorist organizations, or criminal organizations.
- Technology enables advance warning of social unrest disruptions.

The ideal technology would enable measuring the persuasive impact on audiences in any medium. Changes in an individual's emotional response to events, messages, or people can be important security indicators. Gathering metrics that enable analysts to establish an individual's emotional baselines and to receive alerts when those emotions depart significantly from the norm is important. Such technology uses emotional metrics that correlate strongly with the likelihood of violent action. Certain emotional affinity scores correlate strongly, for example, with the recruitment into violent extremist organizations.

The approach employs four vectors. Rooted in the science of Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions, two are emotional: *grief to ecstasy* and *loathing to admiration*. Two are motivational, observes George Beebe, a leading former social media analytics expert with the CIA: *apathy to attention* and *calm to panic*.³⁴ The intersection of emotional and motivational responses generates inclination toward behavior and changes in that behavior.³⁵

Changing Communication Response Times

The speed at which information is put out and the need to respond affects the pace at which military commanders must respond in real-time. That has changed the way communication strategy must be thought through and executed.

Social media amplifies the widespread intentional use of disinformation. Misdirection is not new. What is new is the proliferation of disinformation unwittingly by online users who trust their social media networks and aid in the widespread dissemination of false information.

Afghanistan-based Taliban elements have used social media outlets to spread disinformation. Through Facebook and Twitter, Taliban members have used social media for recruitment and to spread false or misleading information. In 2012, NATO forces voiced concern about keeping pace with the Taliban's use of social media, which outpaces that of NATO and U.S. forces in the information warfare campaign.³⁶

Countering anticipated disinformation campaigns in social media must form part of your communication strategy.

1. Be prepared to disseminate countermessages through preidentified online supporters.
2. Assess the damage. How far has the disinformation spread, for example, beyond online media into traditional channels?
3. Assess the strength of your message against the disinformation through the use of monitoring tools. Whose narrative is dominant: yours or the enemy's?
4. Recognize lessons from any disinformation campaign to plan ahead in future campaigns.

Tactically Using Social Media

Social media is a game changer. Using it well may spell the difference between victory and defeat for

an operation. *Small Wars Journal* author Jeff Gilmore raise key points regarding the power and value of social media as it impacts several feared dictators:

1. Dictators live in fear of the power that is represented by social media:
 - China and Iran banned certain social media sites (e.g., Facebook) due to loss of information control.
 - If social media scares these established forces, why does the U.S. military not more fully invest in embracing the power of social media tools?³⁷
2. Nonprofit organizations and cause-driven entities flood the system with core messages and track the receptivity to their online themes, adjusting as necessary.³⁸
 - Militaries can draw a lesson from their work. Anticipating counterstrategy messaging is one part of the solution. A second is having the capacity to nimbly respond in a social media environment with core messaging, using effective messengers without bottleneck delays in the approving authority channels. Close coordination with public affairs can help ensure this is achieved.

Examples of Military Application of Social Media Outlets

Social media users have used such channels as a personal outlet for commenting or venting, not fully appreciating the potential impact their comments or postings could have.

In Abbottabad, Pakistan, in early May 2010, a computer programmer began tweeting about the noisy helicopter above his quiet town. This tweeter, Sohaib Athar, was unknowingly tweet-

ing live accounts of the takedown of Osama bin Laden. His simple tweets describing a helicopter above Abbottabad at 0200 quickly generated more than 14,000 followers.³⁹ The tweets captured an innocent blogger's curiosity about the purpose and ownership of the helicopters.

Militaries have used social media to help manage wartime public perception. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched a media campaign following its November 2012 military operation in Gaza: Pillar of Defense. It included a constant stream of updated postings on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube during Israeli airstrikes. Israel used these outlets to promote its cause and generate support. One Twitter account, @IDFSpokesperson, urged followers to retweet its core message if they supported the Israeli airstrikes. The IDF used a similar tactic with Facebook, requesting viewers to share a flier-style image with other friends to signify support for Israeli actions.⁴⁰

Hamas responded with its own Twitter messaging. User @AlqassamBrigade declared, "Our blessed hands will reach your leaders and soldiers wherever they are."⁴¹ This message was less about influencing social media consumers than making a threat against Israeli military action.

In Ukraine, David Patrikarakos described how anti-Russian Ukrainian civilians used Facebook to recruit volunteers and supply its forces against pro-Russian forces and Russian troops.⁴² The success of Egyptian protestors in igniting the Arab Spring by using Facebook to organize and demonstrate was political, but the flexibility and agility of the tool offers a lesson for operators.⁴³

Weaponized social media is already playing a pivotal role in engagements. Its potential is growing and evolving. Operators and commanders need to understand how adversaries use it and how to capitalize on its potential to advance their own strategies, operations, and tactics.

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Chapter 10

THE CHANGING INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Information warfare and communication strategy must consider how dramatically the information environment has changed during just the past five years—and how it seems likely to change during the next five to 15 years. These changes are confluent and affect one another.¹ The 2018 *National Defense Strategy* recognizes that “rapid technological change” is impacting an “increasingly complex security environment.”²

Demographic Changes

Most countries are experiencing major cultural changes that are reshaping their political environment. In the United States, the demographics and ethnicity of the voting public have shifted—and will continue to do so—with the influx of Latin Americans. Two of every five babies born in this country today are Latino. We saw the impact of ethnic and generation delineation in the 2012 elections. Upheavals also are affecting other nations. Younger generations drove the Arab Spring, which reconfigured the political dynamics in North Africa and the Middle East. Japanese and Russian populations are aging, a shift that may seem to have no immediate impact but offers longer-term consequences. Asian nations teem with younger generations who see their future differently than their parents did; they hold different worldviews and expectations. Information strategy, at a strategic or tactical level, must account for the impacts of these changes.

Cultural Change

Understanding a culture (cultural awareness) is vital, but a key element in that understanding lies in grasping that change is occurring and in recognizing the nature of the changes, as well as how these are reshaping the environment for any communication strategy. Consider social gatherings in the United States. Compared to a decade ago, one is more likely to see same-sex partners than someone lighting

up a cigarette. One can argue, as Joseph Gaylord does, that U.S. culture today has grown coarser in the language that individuals use with one another. His insight certainly holds true if one examines mass entertainment, such as the lyrics to music or film and television. In Afghanistan, champions of success claim that civil society is emerging as vibrant and viable, demanding transparency in government, respect for the rights of women, competency, and integrity.³ Whether one views this as a cultural or political change, to the extent the assertion is valid, it represents a different environment for communication strategy.⁴

Political Change

The efforts of the United States and its allies to counter violent extremism, the threat of which continues to mutate and evolve, requires new strategies. Al-Qaeda has surfaced as a more urgent threat in Mali and Sahel nations in Africa. The Arab Spring is causing major shifts in North Africa and the Middle East. The conflict in Afghanistan, upheaval in Pakistan, concerns about Iran's aggressive foreign policy, and the emergence of India and China in new ways onto the world stage are reshaping the political environments in their regions.

Colombia offered a dramatic example of how a single political event could reshape the political environment of a country. Oscar Morales watched a news report that portrayed the brutal treatment of hostages by the rebel group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), especially the story of a baby born in captivity to a woman it had kidnapped. Morales created a Facebook group called One Million Voices against FARC with the message "No more kidnapping, no more lies, no more death, no more FARC." It gained 100,000 members in a week. Email, Google Docs, instant messaging platforms, and Skype—all free tools—were used

to rally and communicate with organizers around the world. Planning information was placed on Facebook, but organizers built a public webpage to reach beyond Facebook users. The message went out in 17 different languages.

Morales's efforts produced protests in 45 Colombian cities and towns, with 1.5 million protesters coming out in Bogota alone.⁵ The impact was historic. Until then, Colombians faulted the government for failing to protect citizens against kidnapping. Afterward, they shifted the blame to FARC for conducting kidnapping. The shift vastly bolstered the government's battle against FARC.

Morales's strategy might have been impossible a decade ago. It illustrates how interactive engagement over the internet and through social media is empowering individuals in new and powerful ways. The 2011 Tahrir Square protests in Cairo were a logical extension of what Morales accomplished. Most observers had long thought that President Hosni Mubarak held tight control over Egyptian politics. He had exploited the controlled use of civil society organizations as a safety valve for people to express opinions and discontent.⁶ But as economic problems and anger about corruption worsened, Tunisia's 2010–11 Jasmine Revolution against its own president inspired a similar rebellion in Egypt. The trigger was pulled on 6 June 2010, when police seized and beat to death 28-year-old Khaled Said as he entered an internet café in Alexandria. Protests broke out and continued throughout the summer. In January 2011, thousands of protesters poured into Tahrir Square, the symbolic heart of Cairo. Mubarak lost control of the situation and, while ostensibly resigning, was effectively ousted by his colleagues in Egypt's military.⁷ Protest leaders employed Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and text messages to initiate and coordinate protests, report on events, and foster interaction between protesters

and other social sectors of the Egyptian society and the international community as well as mass media.

Luis Fernando Baron has insightfully observed that social media tools were central “in the process of framing the public messages that emphasized a) the ability and opportunity for the Egyptians to produce social change, b) the importance of mobilization and taking to the streets, c) the protests as legitimate ways to obtain political reforms, and d) young Egyptians as leading that historical process.”⁸

Unfolding events deprived pro-democracy forces of their revolution when the Muslim Brotherhood won new elections and promptly exposed themselves as hostile to religious tolerance and democratic freedoms. Popular anger enabled General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to seize power and win new elections. He remains president of Egypt today. These developments show that popular movements can effectively use social media to overthrow an authoritarian regime, even though success may be short-lived.

Media Change

The media has changed significantly in the past few decades. As Clay Shirky observed, the advent of social media has produced a new world in which everyone may be a journalist, publisher, or producer. Social media outlets have undercut the power of television and radio stations or networks and of publishers to act as gatekeepers and filters for what audiences hear. Indeed, as the media cries out for protection of journalists suspected of obtaining leaked classified information, one must now ask: Who qualifies as a journalist? Is it restricted to *New York Times* employees and the like? Why is a person employed as a journalist more worthy of legal protections than a non-professional blogger or occasional internet user who

posts to social media? Those who object to giving bloggers the professional status of journalists argue that traditional journalists are trained to investigate and report and to abide by higher standards of integrity and professionalism. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has ruled that bloggers have legal status and are afforded protections as journalists in terms of First Amendment rights.⁹ But all one needs to do is take a cursory look at the current social media environment to recognize that many bloggers will repeat rumors without taking the time to investigate and find the levels of corroboration that a traditional media outlet requires.

These changes have created greater opportunities to reach greater audiences. In some places—including the United States—they are also creating greater isolation, as people seek news outlets that reflect their perspectives, engage with individuals who share common interests or views, and shut out other voices. The impact of social media is discussed below. But one bottom line is that the internet and sites such as YouTube have empowered individuals as producers and journalists.

Daniel Leonard Bernardi, Pauline Hope Cheong, Chris Lundry, and Scott W. Ruston have produced an excellent study of how rumors affect the media environment.¹⁰ They point out that the internet enables people to enter discourse using low-cost technology to recast media stories through interpretation or mash-ups, adopting or adapting news content, spreading rumors that affect public perceptions and the credibility of players in a political crisis—in Singapore, for example, the escape of terrorist Mas Selamat Kastari from a high-security prison.

Producer/journalist Neville Bolt raises a similar argument in noting that the gatekeepers (i.e., the institutional press) have lost their traditional power to determine what is news and the infor-

mation that is fed to the public by traditional news organizations. In past eras, they served to filter out stories that could not be corroborated. The argument in favor of the way this operated is that it produced a media environment in which readers or viewers debated the implications of stories in which content was accepted as fact rather than challenging whether a story had its facts straight at all.¹¹ One sees this in U.S. politics every day, as opposing political players accuse each other and the news media of disseminating the now-ubiquitous “fake news.” It is an unwelcome development, but we need to deal with its reality and the implications that require communicators to get their facts straight, explain the facts clearly, and provide appropriate documentation. These efforts may not keep adversaries from denouncing what is said as false, but taking the time to bolster the credibility of factual assertions can make the difference in whether audiences find a communication credible, believable, and persuadable.

Political Party Changes

In the United States, the changes in the political and cultural landscape have created polarization and partisanship that has spilled over into the media. Political changes in other parts of the world also are having an impact on those nations. Financial problems besetting the European Union threaten its existence and its capacity or willingness to partner with the United States on security issues that affect our interests. The U.S. drawdown or withdrawal from places such as Afghanistan

and Syria, and the backlash in Iraq against Iranian ambitions—it is not clear what will actually transpire—will have regional consequences and seem likely to reshape the interests and postures of political parties there. Communication strategy needs to understand what changes are occurring and their impacts.

Changes occur constantly in different countries. The 2018 elections in Pakistan produced a new government led by Imran Khan. The former prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, is the subject of criminal charges. The military’s chief of Army Staff, Qamar Javed Bajwa, and the army have taken firm control of security policies. That has shifted the dynamics of Pakistani politics and affects how the United States should engage with Pakistan, although the role Pakistan is playing in Afghanistan frustrates—perhaps unfairly—many U.S. policy makers. The conflict with terrorist organizations in the Sahel and other African nations is reshaping the dynamics of that region. The point is that communication strategy, the key tool in information warfare, must account for the current political situation in a place but also peer over the horizon to anticipated shifts.

Technology Changes

The bottom line is that social media relates to rapid technology changes and how those changes affect communication strategy and may affect it further with future—currently unknown—changes. These changes also impact how we need to think about dissemination and receipt of information.

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9. *Obsidian Finance Group LLC v. Crystal Cox*, 12-35238 (9th Cir. 2014), a defamation case in which a blogger sued for an allegedly defamatory blog post. The court held that in a matter of public concern, liability requires proof of fault and actual damages. The blogger raised allegations of fraud, corruption, money laundering, and other illegal activities against Summit Accommodators Inc., which a bankruptcy custodian had retained in connection with a bankruptcy. One factor that makes the case interesting is that Cox, the blogger, was accused of having a history of making similar allegations and seeking payoffs in exchange for retractions.
10. Bernardi et al., *Narrative Landmines: Rumors, Islamist Extremism, and the Struggle for Strategic Influence* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012).
11. Neville Bolt, *The Violent Image: Insurgent Propaganda and the New Revolutionaries* (London: Hurst, 2012).

Chapter 11

DETERMINING CAMPAIGN EFFECTIVENESS

Assessing the effectiveness of a communication campaign is important and should be part of any plan to apply lessons learned.

Key Questions

- What did the strategy achieve in changing behavior?
- What was the most powerful factor about the campaign that influenced behavior?
- What impact did the campaign have on molding, shaping, and influencing attitudes, opinions, and beliefs? Most critical, did that impact have a causal connection on the behavior of target audiences? Why or why not?
- Operational design for the military envisions the creation of certain conditions that satisfy a desired end state. What role did the campaign play in realizing that end state?
- Did it measurably neutralize or paralyze the enemy's ability to exert command and control?
- Did it measurably deny the enemy's ability to achieve its objectives?
- Did it change the minds of adversarial policy decision makers, and if so in what way?
- Did it cause adversaries to believe that they are losing or will be defeated? If so, on what basis?
- Did it affect the kinetic performance or information warfare of the other side? If so, how, when, and what was the impact?
- Did it create confusion, distraction, or deception in the mind of the enemy? If so, how, when, and what was the impact?
- Did the campaign reframe an issue raised by the enemy in terms favorable to your side?¹
- Did the campaign succeed in properly branding the enemy in terms favorable to your position?²
- Did the campaign discredit and marginalize the enemy and its rationale?
- Did the campaign make effective use of symbolism?³
- Did the campaign avoid tactics that enabled the enemy to use symbolism against you?⁴

- Did the campaign identify our narrative, story, themes, and messages with citizens, effectively communicating why we are acting and that our actions benefit them? Did the campaign provide a frame of reference that made such communication comprehensible?⁵
- Were the considerations identified earlier in this book satisfied (knowing the culture, enemy, strategic situation, etc.)?
- Did the campaign enable your side to claim and maintain the moral high ground?
- Did the campaign take into account how the enemy was organized to fight and its rules of engagement?
- Did the campaign stir up division among enemy forces?
- Did the campaign effectively trumpet success?
- Did the campaign engage fully with target audiences to achieve its goals? If not, what more should have been done? What should have been done differently?
- Did the campaign expose deceptive or fraudulent tactics of the enemy in a credible way? For example, in the April 2004 Fallujah battle, al-Qaeda manipulated Al Jazeera to convey a false image of what was happening. In the campaign you executed, did that occur? Was the enemy tactic countered, and if so, how successfully—and why and how?
- Did the campaign expose and capitalize on enemy hypocrisy, whether inconsistent statements or actions?
- Did the campaign identify and capitalize on enemy statements and actions to turn them against the enemy and discredit it?
- How rapidly did the campaign respond to unfolding events?
- Did the campaign identify and capitalize on targets of opportunity?
- Did the campaign win over allies in local or foreign governments, including partner allies like NATO countries who may form a part of a broader coalition?
- Did the campaign mobilize an active minority within a target population who helped the United States succeed?
- What does the data show in comparing performance metrics (e.g., how many: clicks did a webpage receive, viewings did an ad receive, mentions did a news media story make of the message) versus qualitative metrics (how well did the campaign actually work: the answers to the questions above)?
- What traps were avoided? For example, in Iraq, storekeepers told U.S. military translators they were glad to see them, then told reporters such as Anthony Shadid they could not wait to see infidels out of the country or killed.

Factors that Help Measure Effectiveness

- Decide what must be monitored and monitor those things. In Iraq, insurgents measured effectiveness partly by monitoring Iraqi, U.S., and international media. Those that succeeded were emulated. Those that failed ceased to be used. It is vital to monitor what an enemy asserts and what and how its claims are covered, as that will give insight into how they are framing issues and results. It affords a base for comparison as we judge whether our own information tac-

tics preempt or counter what the adversary says.

- The number of attacks on civilian or military targets.
- Polling/focus groups/mall intercepts that reflect attitude and opinions of the population as 1) their security, 2) government credibility, 3) U.S./Coalition assistance, 4) tactics, 5) adversaries, and 6) optimism.
- Intelligence data from all sources on relevant points, especially in assessing the adversary's order of battle, tactics, aims; actions of the populace; what the government is doing and needs to do; and other factors that will vary from situation to situation.
- Willingness of key influencers to enter governing coalitions or to support our cause.
- Willingness of influencers to cooperate in providing intelligence.
- Willingness of influencers to cooperate in kinetic action against the adversary.
- Military casualties.
- Civilian casualties; this clearly affects our ability to convince the populace that we are helping not hurting and that we can prevail.
- Media coverage outside the United States conveys a sense of how our narrative resonates abroad, especially among coalition partners and allies.
- Polling data inside the United States provides quantitative data and insight into where voters stand and how well the administration's narrative of events and its messages that flow from that narrative resonate and reverberate. That affects our

will—a key center of gravity—and our range of options.

- Media coverage inside the United States influences attitudes and opinions at home, and is a key element in winning the will of the people.
- Polling data among coalition partners is important because it provides quantitative data and insight into how well our narrative and messages that flow from it resonate and reverberate among those audiences.
- In dealing with Muslim audiences, coverage by Arab media is increasingly important as an indicator of feelings on the so-called Arab Street and among influencers. Many Arabs view issues in a transnational, cultural context rather than purely a national one.
- Statements by Muslim influencers provide insights into the thinking of elites in nations in which democracy is fledgling or nonexistent.
- Information obtained on what is being said at the grassroots in ways particular to different cultures. This is an intelligence function.
- Public statements by key political and opinion leaders. Examine what politicians say in public more than what they say in private.
- Comparison between what political and opinion leaders say in English and what they say in their own language; these may be contradictory.
- Comparison between stories carried by local newspapers in their native language and what a translated version of the paper may say.

- The number, frequency, and quality of defections from adversary groups are an indication of adversary morale and the impact of our own narrative and tactics.

How to Measure Effectiveness and Target Audience Analysis

The science of measuring the effectiveness of action and target audience analysis is evolving. No single tool applies the same to each situation. Those interested in learning more about the sophistication of cutting-edge techniques should read Sasha Issenberg's *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns*, noted above, which carries the history up to but not including President Barack Obama's 2012 reelection, when social media analytics and target audience analysis were carried to even higher levels.⁶

Traditional methods of audience analysis remain important, and the techniques and approaches that Obama's campaign employed to identify, persuade, or mobilize potential supporters should be used in tandem with them. These may or may not apply as well to foreign audiences, especially in zones of conflict. Conducting cultural anthropology to understand the social, economic, political, and historical dynamics is crucial for foreign target audiences. And do not forget the incomparable Yogi Berra, who is reputed to have said, "I observe a lot by watching."⁷ One might add listening and engaging to that task. What is learned on the ground through understanding and engaging with target audiences can provide a fountainhead of vital, relevant information.

The point is: judge and assess each situation on its own merits in light of the audience, and requirements, means, and objectives.

1. Polling⁸

What is it? Polling, says pollster Celinda Lake, "is a scientific backing of public opinion. Polling surveys public opin-

ion by interviewing a random sample of people. A sample is drawn from the population universe tested. Each respondent is chosen by chance. Everyone in a scientific sample has an equal chance of being selected. Polls examine statistical data across different demographic and regional groups. Attention is paid to unbiased wording of questions."⁹

Objectives. Assess public opinion on an issue or, as relevant, political leader or candidate. Determine which messages work or do not work. Segment audiences and examine the impact on attitudes and opinions among base audiences (those whose opinions are hard and fast) and swing or persuadable audiences (those whose opinions can be moved). Lake says, "Polling is often used to create a roadmap to victory or for groups on issues. Knowing your base and persuasion targets is critically important."¹⁰

Determine resonance. Two messages may appear to generate the same support. But one needs to know if one gains support among swing voters and if one simply solidifies a base. President Barack Obama's 2012 reelection campaign made wide use of social media to communicate messages. A large number of potential messages were tested. The instinctive judgments of political experts proved wrong. Opinion testing helped identify what struck a responsive chord.

Avoid mistakes. Good polling helps ascertain both what must be said in communicating a message and what must not be said.

Quantitative findings. Used in conjunction with other methods of sampling opinion, polls help quantify findings and to project those findings onto the population at large whose attitudes and opinions one wishes to test.

Picture in time. Polling provides a picture in time of the dynamics of a strategic situation. You want to know what works and what does not; to compare competitive strategies; understand what people, groups, messages, and ideas are credible; and help define a communication objective. Positive responses today may be reversed tomorrow, or as political campaign professionals would say, a 10-point lead two months before an election does not guarantee victory, just as a 10-point deficit does not guarantee defeat.

Caveat. There is controversy about how reliable polling is in conflict zones or in repressive regimes. Pollsters generally insist populations can be accurately polled. But in Afghanistan, some have questioned whether polling that suggests a positive response to U.S. presence is entirely accurate. Years ago, in Nicaragua, the Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega felt pressured to finally hold an election. He took a survey to find out how the vote would turn out. The poll, conducted by a highly respected U.S. polling firm, suggested he would win. He called the election and lost. Many believe that the poll was accurate in recording what respondents said—but that fearing the phone calls came from Sandinistas, people who disliked Ortega

lied about their true feelings. Respondents often try to please the interviewers and often worry about confidentiality.

Caveat. Response rates vary. In Muslim countries, women often will have lower response rates than men.

Caveat. Use polls and other forms of opinion testing to confirm judgments, not as a substitute for them, even where the data may run counter to instinctive judgments.

Caveat. Polling should not be a covert activity. But do not release poll results to the press without carefully considering the impact—especially of a future poll that contradicts the data in the one you are releasing.

2. Focus groups

What are they? A focus group provides qualitative research aimed at understanding the language in which people express ideas and nuances, the connections, the way people think about things, the information they have, and how they respond to new images and information. Focus groups allow people to explain the how and why. They can elaborate when a survey response would have been “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure.”

How many participants? Usually 10–12 people discussing topics presented to them. They typically last about two hours. There are different views on how best to conduct them, and the right answer may vary from culture to culture.

Homogeneity. It is important to ensure homogeneity within the group along demographic and attitudinal dimensions

that are correlated to the topic to encourage full participation.

Separations. Separate participants by gender, race, tribe, etc. to ensure open and honest discussions and to be sensitive to cultural issues.

Moderators. Match moderators to groups for a more open discussion. Top experts such as Celinda Lake, Douglas E. Schoen, and Ron Faucheux take care to match moderators to group participants and to create safe spaces in which people can freely express themselves. For example, use women to moderate a focus group for women; use an Afghan male to moderate a focus group of Afghan males.

Objectives. Explore participants' concerns in their own words, determine their intensity of interest, and discover the sources of their ideas and opinions. They can help ensure that questions posed in a public opinion survey are asked in the right way using the best language.

Channels for conducting them. In person, online, or by telephone.

3. Individual interview

What is it? In-depth one-on-one interviews with 40–100 people about selected topics. This is a very effective way to gauge the attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of influencers. These interviews can last up to an hour (compared to 20 minutes for a telephone poll, although personal interviews can be much longer). They are more expensive but provide the depth required to obtain relevant information about complex topics.

How are they conducted? Usually by phone but, if possible, in-person interviews are better.

4. Mall testing¹¹

What is it? A form of individual interviewing that explores attitudes, opinions, and beliefs in a setting conducive to open expression of reactions to television, radio, or print ads or ideas presented to individuals. Increasingly, mall testing can also be done online.

How is it done? Individuals enter a private booth or a private area, where in seclusion a message is presented, and they provide responses.

Advantage. Schoen points out that these tests avoid the groupthink that can take over a focus group.¹² (Online focus groups can avoid some of that problem.) Mall testing produces an objective set of responses.

5. Dial testing

What is it? Dial testing is a focus group that uses dials or meters to record audience reaction to speeches, interviews, advertisements and any public messages. The results enable you to evaluate the impact, resonance, and effectiveness with target audiences of that discourse.

How is it done? In-person and online dial testing is a methodology to obtain moment-to-moment reactions to stimulus like ads, speeches, statements, debating, and messaging. Dials can elicit both conscious and unconscious responses. Dial groups typically include 25–1,000 people online. That enables researchers to examine divisions by demographic and attitudinal groups.

Advantage. Moment-by-moment research is a good way to measure the effectiveness of specific words and phrases in your message, as well as the tone and style of the messenger delivering the message. Two cautions: first, make sure all the participants have a clear, common understanding of the rating system used; second, beware of the amount of time between what is said and the respondent's reaction. If you do not attend to these carefully, it will be hard to get an accurate measure of reactions.

6. Message development and research

What is it? "A good research plan re-

quires both quantitative and qualitative research to develop and test messages. You need both if you want the precision that good message development requires."¹³

Advantage. Polling and research disciplines the message development process. When someone asks, "Why should we use this phrase instead of that phrase?" research provides a data-backed answer.

7. Ad and message testing

What is it? Qualitative research is an art and science. You have to know how to listen and how to determine what is important if you want to draw the right conclusions.

Endnotes

1. In countering violent extremism, this is about changing the narrative, story, theme, and message. For example, many objected to the term *militant jihadism* to describe violent Islamists, as *jihad* is a positive word for most Muslims. Instead, frame the conflict as a fight to defeat a death cult of political fanatics who murder innocent civilians while trying to hijack a religion to suit a political agenda. Do not characterize them as "warriors." Gen Wesley Clark and Kal Raustiala, director of the Burkle Center, offered the same point in an excellent opinion piece, "Why Terrorists Aren't Soldiers," *New York Times*, 8 August 2007.
2. In Malaysia, framing the issue properly was Britain's key to victory. The decision of British Gen Sir Gerald Templer to change the vocabulary made a significant difference in dealing with rainforest people, who had been referred to as *sakai* (slave). British troops were ordered to refer to them as *orang ulu* (people of the campaign). Steve Tatham, retired British officer and former British defense attaché and commander of British forces in Afghanistan, interview with author, 15 January 2015. See also Steve Tatham, *Losing Arab Hearts and Minds: The Coalition, Al Jazeera and Muslim Public Opinion* (London: Front Street Press, 2006); and Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. More critically, the British rebranded the Malayan Races Liberation Army as the Communist Terrorist Organization. That cut the legs out from under their nationalist appeal. Indeed, a key to defeating the Communists was to show the populace that the Communists, led by the Chinese, were not Malays and did not have their interests at heart. See Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*.
3. There is no formula, but this tactic requires identifying symbols that resonate with a local population and employing them to support our efforts and discredit those of an adversary. It may mean ensuring that new initiatives are announced by local leaders with no U.S. representatives in sight. It may mean using adversary weapons employed to murder innocent civilians as icons to define what they really stand for. It may mean observing a visible protocol in dealing with tribal leaders that respects local tradition

- that al-Qaeda, which in Iraq has used violence in efforts to enforce its own ideology, has eschewed.
4. During Operation Desert Storm, U.S. troops were apparently based away from population centers. The current Iraq conflict presents a different war. Images that insurgents have broadcast on the internet portraying Americans as crusaders bent on destroying Islam are powerful. Precaution is vital to minimize exposure, perhaps by restricting religious symbols to U.S. camps and banning them from tanks, weapons, or uniforms.
 5. This was difficult to accomplish in rural Afghanistan early in the war. Rural Afghans had no frame of reference to understand what the Twin Towers were.
 6. Issenberg focuses on what the 2008 Obama campaign viewed as the challenge of attempting to identify which voters might oppose him because of his race. They thought it a revelation when they realized valuable information could be obtained by asking voters—who might be untruthful as to their own voting intentions—whether they thought their neighbors would support a black candidate. Obama’s campaign was only 20 years behind such thinking and research conducted in Louisiana politics on the issue. See also Jim Rutenberg, “Data You Can Believe in,” *New York Times Magazine*, 20 June 2013.
 7. Michele Gorman, “Yogi Berra’s Most Memorable Sayings,” *Newsweek*, 23 September 2015.
 8. Some of this analysis draws on interviews and longtime working relationships with three nationally respected U.S. pollsters: Celinda Lake, president of Lake Research Partners; Dr. Ronald Faucheux, president and CEO of Fauchaux Strategies; and Dr. Douglas E. Schoen, chief executive officer of Schoen Consulting.
 9. Celinda Lake, interview with author, June 2013, hereafter Lake interview.
 10. Lake interview.
 11. See Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, 51. Douglas E. Schoen and Mark Penn are credited with pioneering the technique for politics. Both served as pollsters for President Clinton. Schoen serves as a pollster and strategic adviser to New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg.
 12. Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, 51.
 13. Dr. Ronald A. Faucheux, president and CEO of Faucheux Strategies (a national, nonpartisan polling firm with national and international clients), interview with author, July 2019. Previously, Dr. Faucheux was president of Clarus Research Group, a Washington-based polling and research firm.

Chapter 12

SPECIAL COMMENT ON HYBRIDITY

This chapter differs from the preceding in that it aims to explain new approaches that Russia and China embrace in using strategic communication as part of information warfare to achieve political and military objectives. Different parties label this set of emerging ideas as new generation warfare, hybrid warfare, and gray zone warfare. The elements of information warfare apply to each but there is a lot of confusion about them; the discourse is complicated and nuanced, and a detailed analysis lies beyond the scope of this book. This chapter seeks to clarify the core precepts associated with Russian, Chinese, NATO, and U.S. views.

For the purpose of this book, *strategic communication* is defined as the use of words, actions, images, or symbols to mold or influence the attitudes and opinions of target audiences as a means to shape their behavior to advance interests or policies or to achieve objectives or a defined end state.¹ The Pentagon's notion of strategic communication focuses on process and understanding how to forge a strategy and it is not very useful to this discussion. It is important to recognize that a distinction can be drawn between information warfare and strategic communication. Warfare connotes the presence of violence.

Most descriptions of what American experts term *hybrid warfare* entail violence, not merely information. NATO's definition embraces violence, but its notion of hybrid warfare is so broad it can be construed to include almost anything. *The New York Times* has published a commentary arguing that the Russian chief of the General Staff, Army general Valery V. Gerasimov, has pitched information operations as a form of warfare.² The Russian military does not embrace a notion of hybrid warfare/new generation warfare, but its political and academic commentators do. Russia expert Ofer Fridman, director of operations at the King's Centre for Strategic Communications, King's College London, has set the record straight, pointing out that Gerasimov has never enunciated a new military

doctrine. His speeches and writing discuss non-military means—including “hybrid methods . . . to achieve political goals with a minimal military influence on the enemy . . . by undermining its military and economic potential by information and psychological pressure, the active support of the internal opposition, partisan and subversive methods.”³ But he wrote in the context of justifying an increase in Russia’s capacity to wage kinetic warfare by strengthening its armed forces.⁴

Russia’s Hybrid Warfare Approach

Russians invoke the term hybrid warfare, which they have taken from the American use, but their notion of it is distinct. Fridman, Mark Galeotti, and Oscar Jonsson have conducted in-depth studies into the complexities of Russian thinking and their works on the topic are invaluable. Russian commentators have developed different interpretations of hybrid warfare, but the Russian military does not embrace a nonkinetic notion of warfare.

The Russian military refers to *new generation warfare*. It may employ information and strategic communication before, during, and after an operation, but Russia sees information as a tool to support military action. For Russia, new generation warfare entails the use of armed force. There is no warfare that is won purely by nonmilitary means, because—in this view—that is not war. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui’s theory of unrestricted warfare similarly envisions a mix of military force with indirect nonmilitary means as one strategy to achieve the goals of an armed struggle.⁵

General Gerasimov’s commentaries and speeches underscore that point. Gerasimov called for new ideas in the context of recent military experience. He identified information warfare as one form of strategic activities that armed forces should pursue. He argued that Russian adversar-

ies possess a hybrid capability that could be used to destabilize Russia, so Moscow needed its own hybrid capability using military and nonmilitary responses to counter internal and external threats. The internet is one tool of hybrid capabilities.⁶ The perspective from which Gerasimov wrote is defensive.⁷

Russian military thought draws a distinction between the notion of *gibridnaya voyna* (hybrid warfare) and the use of military means in a full-scale military operation that may entail use of information and strategic communication to achieve an end. While not part of Russian military doctrine, hybrid warfare represents, to some degree, the Kremlin’s strategic behavior. The Kremlin clearly employs nonmilitary means to disrupt and undercut social and political cohesion in the West.

Russia’s notion of new generation warfare implies violence, economic pressure, subversion, and diplomacy through strategic communication as defined earlier. Its scope entails psychological warfare and can be viewed as a form of political warfare. Fridman notes that *gibridnaya voyna* “focuses on ways that political players undermine their adversaries by eroding their domestic and international political legitimacy and stability by employing a mix of predominately nonmilitary indirect means and methods.”⁸

Gibridnaya voyna embraces color revolutions staged in former Russian states that Russia believes the West has organized as part of a long-range scheme to oust Vladimir Putin and his regime from power.

China’s Three Warfares Approach

Today, China employs a doctrine of “Three Warfares,” that includes legal warfare, media public opinion warfare, and psychological warfare.⁹ While this approach dominates its current strate-

gic thinking, in the late 1990s, Colonels Qiao Lang and Wang Xiangsu offered useful insights as to the potential for information strategy as part of a notion of unrestricted warfare that respects no rules or limits.¹⁰ Such warfare uses information and public opinion to achieve strategic goals.¹¹ Many believe China practices that approach through its trade, cyber, financial, and other policy initiatives. These reflect China's desire to maneuver for psychological advantage and to use information warfare as a tool in multidimensional spaces to paralyze an adversary, gain the upper hand in a game with no rules, and force an enemy to submit to one's will.¹²

China's Central Military Commission endorsed the Three Warfares approach in 2003, recognizing that nuclear weapons are essentially unusable and that kinetic force offers undesired solutions. A lot has been written on the Three Warfares, but this section draws heavily on a 2013 Pentagon study, *China: The Three Warfares*.¹³ Its analysis of the Three Warfares is excellent. Many of the recommendations also offered in the 500-plus-page study raise controversial questions and are debatable. The study itself best explains the Three Warfares approach.

China's Three Warfares is war by other means. It consists of three confluent thrusts.

- *Psychological warfare* seeks to **influence** and/or **disrupt an opponent's decision-making capability**, to create doubts, foment antileadership sentiments, to deceive opponents and to attempt to diminish the will to fight among opponents. It employs diplomatic pressure, rumor, false narratives, and harassment to express displeasure, assert hegemony, and convey threats. China's economy is utilized to particular effect: China

threatens sale of U.S. debt; pressures U.S. businesses invested in China's market; employs boycotts; restricts critical exports (rare minerals); restricts imports; threatens predatory practices to expand market share, etc.¹⁴

- *Media warfare* (also known as public opinion warfare) is a **"constant, ongoing activity aimed at long-term influence of perceptions and attitudes."** It leverages all instruments that inform and influence public opinion including films, television programs, books, the internet, and the global media network (particularly *Xinhua* and CCTV) and is undertaken nationally by the PLA, locally by the People's Armed Police, and is directed against domestic populations in target countries. Media warfare aims to preserve friendly morale; generate public support at home and abroad; weaken an enemy's will to fight; and alter an enemy's situational assessment. It is used to gain "dominance over the venue for implementing psychological and legal warfare."¹⁵
- *Legal warfare* (or "lawfare") **exploits the legal system** to achieve political or commercial objectives. It has a prominent role in the warfare trilogy. Lawfare has a range of applications. They range from conjuring law to inform claims to territory and resources, to employing bogus maps to "justify" claims. In a distorted application of domestic law, for example, Beijing designated the village of Sansha on the Paracel Islands as a Hainan Prefecture to extend China's administrative writ

into the South China Sea. China also uses UNCLOS provisions and other legal conventions for unintended purposes.¹⁶

China's approach is rooted in nationalism and its concept of sovereignty. It assigns to itself a superior status among nations—a radically different notion than sovereignty as envisioned by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. It is designed to counter the projection of U.S. power. The United States is among four key audiences that China targets as part of its broader military strategy of antiaccess/area denial (A2/AD) in the South China Sea. The United States embraces the notion of a maritime commons and free passage as an anchor of its strategic position in Asia. China would restrict U.S. power projection by setting the terms for U.S. access.

It applies its doctrine to employ coercive economic inducements to nations in the region to counter U.S. naval presence. China justifies its position through a restrictive interpretation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), adopted and signed in 1982.¹⁷ Its objective is to counter U.S. surveillance operations and routine U.S. Navy deployments. The Three Warfares are used to expand China's global reach, fueled by its resources and energy demands. The doctrine aims to neutralize concerns and gain support among regional governments, business communities, and the public for its ambitions. The Three Warfares seeks to hinder U.S. offshore control strategy, establishing a naval blockade to create a no-man's sea between the China mainland coast and the first island chain. Its success relies on the cooperation of third parties. It aims to condition public opinion in states including the Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei, and Malaysia to

inhibit those governments from providing the facilities and support needed to service U.S. naval operations in the South China Sea and to deny the United States a favorable regional political environment.

The report *China: The Three Warfares*, written for the Department of Defense Office of Net Assessment, describes how the Three Warfares has been used as an offensive weapon not previously considered in the West. It offers an asymmetrical approach that stands outside most U.S. military thinking and challenges the United States to think anew about what approaches, consistent with American values, are likely to prove most effective as China seeks to establish itself as the premier power in the twenty-first century.¹⁸

China's Three Warfares concept is what should alarm the United States and other members of the international community. It eschews violence or kinetic operations, setting it apart from most definitions of warfare. One has to assess it in the context of a sophisticated, long-term strategy to integrate Europe, Africa, and Asia as an economic system with China at its center.¹⁹ The concept is part of a grand strategy that includes enticing less-affluent nations as well as Europe into its Road and Belt Initiative, a Trojan horse that loans money to nations for infrastructure—but requires the debtor to use the borrowed money to employ Chinese workers, not works of the debtor nation.

Nations such as Sri Lanka and Pakistan have discovered to their regret that the loans create a debt trap, potentially reducing them to a form of economic slavery as a tributary state. One needs to be clear-sighted about China's goals. China talks about them openly. It rejects Western constitutional democracy. It rejects the notion of universal values, such as human rights. It rejects a world order comprised of sovereign states who treat one

another as partners in favor of one that it dominates. It would end a rule-based international order. It stands for suppressing freedom of expression at home.

China expert Jonathan Ward observes that abroad it actively attacks Western values, targeting Chinese students overseas to sustain party doctrine.²⁰ It uses brutal concentration camps to suppress Islam. China seeks to establish itself as economically supreme in the world, possessing the overwhelming share of global gross domestic product. The Chinese system embraces an authoritarian model that functions through a vision of comprehensive social management. It talks about asserting sovereignty over its own territory, but the parameters of that territory keep expanding. It shows no respect for the intellectual property of other nations. Reportedly, China is guilty of half the illegal fishing and half the human trafficking in the world.²¹ While eschewing military force, it employs economic coercion to force nations to submit to its will.²²

China propagates a strategy that touts five principles: 1) respect for territorial integrity; 2) mutual nonaggression; 3) mutual noninterference in internal affairs; 4) equality and mutual benefit; and 5) peaceful coexistence.²³ At the core of its national goals is, as Graham Allison sums up, “a civilizational creed that sees China as the center of the universe.”²⁴ The principles may sound reasonable on their face. China invokes them to justify its actions. In fact, they represent a sophisticated form of diplomatic sophistry.

These points vastly oversimplify a complicated relationship with China. What policies the United States should pursue must be left to political policy makers; this book expresses no opinion on that. But China’s ambitions, its sophisticated Three Warfares concept—which is also an out-

growth of precepts discussed in *Unrestricted Warfare*—define obvious challenges for the United States.

There is no simple counter, although one may argue that while rooting the precepts in U.S. values, we should adapt the Three Warfares concept and add a fourth concept to it: diplomatic warfare. Each of these requires strategies, operations, and tactics rooted in actionable legal authorities, resources, and doctrine that the United States currently lacks.

China poses such a threat. The United States needs to decide and understand what its relationship with China can or should be and how to use strategic communication to achieve desired goals. The year 2049 lies not far over the horizon. U.S. security interests mandate confronting this challenge, forging international alliances and partnerships to address it as an international community—and to do so smartly and immediately.

NATO’s Definition of Hybrid Warfare

NATO’s definition of *hybrid warfare* means everything and nothing, rendering it more or less unproductive. It defines hybrid warfare to include “propaganda, deception, sabotage and other non-military tactics,” characterized by increased “speed, scale and intensity, facilitated by rapid technological change and global interconnectivity.”²⁵ NATO’s commander, General Philip M. Breedlove, USAF, defines it as “a continuum of threat, including unconventional and conventional methods” that “bridges the divide between the hard and soft power.”²⁶

In 2010, NATO defined hybrid threats as “those posed by adversaries, with the ability to simultaneously employ conventional and non-conventional means adaptively in pursuit of their objectives.” In setting forth a strategic approach,

NATO states that hybrid threats will apply pressure, across the entire spectrum of conflict, with action that may originate between the boundaries artificially separating its constituents. They may consist of a combination of every aspect of warfare and compound the activities of multiple actors. Experience from current operational theaters has demonstrated that adversaries can now conduct hostile actions through a broad array of conventional or unconventional means and methods, and have a favourable outcome against a force that is superior, both technologically and militarily.²⁷

NATO sets forth a “comprehensive approach” and a “framework response.” As Ofer Fridman observes, its approach covers everything: military and nonmilitary, covert and overt, “combined to achieve certain political goals.”²⁸ These set forth general precepts for how NATO should address hybrid threats, but it is hardly an action plan, a cohesive doctrine, or a strategy. NATO needs to think through its notions of hybrid warfare and information warfare, including the relationship to both of strategic communication.

American Notions of Gray Zone and Hybrid Warfare

Many American military officers use the term *gray zone* warfare to describe warfare that combines kinetic and nonkinetic means. General Joseph L. Votel, USA, and his colleagues have described the gray zone in these terms: “The Gray Zone is characterized by intense political, economic, informational, and military competition more fervent in nature than normal steady-state diplomacy, yet short of conventional war.”²⁹

They describe gray zone warfare as unconventional warfare that involves an indirect application of power to leverage foreign population

groups to advance or maintain U.S. interests. It is discretionary and clandestine. It may be covert. It can be, Votel et al. argue, subtle or aggressive. The United States employed unconventional warfare to support the *mujahideen* (those engaged in jihad) in Afghanistan in their battle against the Soviet *40th Army*. The concept animated Kurdish Peshmerga forces in northern Iraq during the 2003 invasion of that country. Tactics Votel et al. identify include mobilizing “mass protests, work slowdowns or stoppages, boycotts, infiltration of government offices, and the formation of front groups.” These, they contend, can undermine “the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of the government or occupation authority.”³⁰

Other tactics include sabotage against military or industrial facilities, economic resources or other targets. Guerrilla warfare operations are carried out against military or security forces to reduce their effectiveness or hurt their morale. Much of Votel and his colleagues’ writing focuses on examples from World War II and the Cold War. A core challenge is that the United States’ military strategies, operations, and tactics need to be rooted in the core American values of freedom, respect for life, embrace of democratic processes, fair play, justice embodied in the rule of law, and the goal of achieving peace and stability in the world. Gray zone warfare is a label, not a defined concept. One challenge confronting the U.S. Department of Defense is to develop concepts, doctrines, and actionable strategies to define and make the concept actionable.

The more common term for this is hybrid warfare, a term attributed to Frank Hoffman of the National Defense University, currently serving as a special advisor to the secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Hoff-

man's thinking is informed by the work of multiple scholars, including Michael Evans, Colin Gray, Stephen Bank, John Arquilla, Bruce Hoffman, and John Robb.³¹

Hoffman articulates two related concepts: hybrid warfare and hybrid threats. Hybrid warfare "incorporate[s] a range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder."³² Hybrid threats encompass "any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behavior in the battle space to obtain their political objectives."³³

Hoffman's focus is tactical and operational. He considers himself an operator, not an academic, and his approach aims to support operators. He argues that *convergence* characterizes the evolving character of conflict that includes the convergence of the physical and psychological, the kinetic and nonkinetic, and combatants and non-combatants. So, too, we see the convergence of military force and the interagency community, of states and nonstate actors, and of the capabilities they are armed with. Of greatest relevance are the converging modes of war. What once might have been distinct operational types or categorizations among terrorism and conventional, criminal, and irregular warfare have less utility today.³⁴

At its core, Hoffman's view of hybrid warfare embraces violent conflict between regular or conventional forces and irregular or nonstate forces, such as militias or guerrilla forces, and involves the use of kinetic and information operations in a blurred or blended nature of combat. Hybrid wars blend the lethality of state conflict with the fanatical and protracted fervor of irregular war-

fare. They exploit modern technical capabilities. Hoffman's approach offers guidance for tactical and operational activities in a battlespace.

He cites the 2006 Lebanon War, or the Second Lebanon War, as an example. A nonstate actor, Hezbollah, combined kinetic warfare and strategic communication in fighting the Israel Defense Forces. Israelis insist they won. The better view is that they learned and applied the lessons from a conflict that produced for them an unsatisfactory outcome to achieve subsequent success.³⁵ The conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan provide further illustrations of major armed hostilities that combined different types of military forces, actions, and technology with strategic communication to achieve political and military objectives.³⁶

Hoffman has been critical of U.S. military efforts—notably the 2003 Iraq War—to employ information warfare to battle adversaries such as Islamist extremists:

Today, many small groups have mastered "armed theater" and promoted "propaganda of the deed" to arouse support and foment discord on a global scale. There are a plethora of outlets now in the Middle East and an exponentially growing number of websites and bloggers promoting a radical vision. These outlets constantly bombard audiences with pictures, videos, DVDs, and sermons. Ironically, in Iraq and in the Long War we are facing a fundamentalist movement that is exploiting the very modern and Western technologies to reestablish an anti-Western social and political system.³⁷

In modern hybrid conflicts, Hoffman argues for achieving dominance in the cognitive domain, declaring, "We have to recognize that *perception* matters more than results in the physical battlefield."³⁸

We have to influence and shape audience behavior rather than imposing our will. Majors Timothy B. McCulloh and Richard B. Johnson, USA, vary Hoffman's ideas in formulating seven principles of hybrid warfare that add nuance but do not alter the thrust of his thinking.³⁹

Hoffman's approach recognizes the pivotal importance that networks and connectivity play today. His concept of hybrid warfare is not new; it has been employed since ancient times. The Germans employed it to defeat the Romans in 8–9 CE.⁴⁰ Portuguese irregulars helped the British defeat the French in the Peninsular War, 1807–14.⁴¹ The American Revolutionary War pitted colonial militias against British regulars and Hessian mercenaries.⁴²

Colonials befuddled a Britain that had underestimated the American support for independence. But the gold medal for imagination in the use of information warfare goes to Lieutenant General Lord Charles Cornwallis. His loss to General George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette at Yorktown, Virginia, was the action of a player who knew when to fold in the face of overwhelming enemy superiority, not the dunce too many American children grew up imagining. Strategically imaginative, Cornwallis had earlier moved into Virginia and, in a stroke of genius, offered to free the enslaved people there, who comprised 40 percent of the state's population. Half of them defected, providing intelligence and other support. Cornwallis knocked the American patriots back on their heels. His gambit demonstrated imaginative strategic communication. Had Cornwallis's jealous superior, Sir Henry Clinton, left Cornwallis to his own devices, Cornwallis might have shifted the momentum of the war, despite conventional wisdom that for the British, who underestimated colonial sentiment for independence, the war was unwinnable.⁴³

William Donovan's Office of Strategic Services (OSS) operatives adroitly used information warfare in carrying out their missions during World War II.⁴⁴ Vietnam presented war by Communist guerrillas as well as mainline North Vietnamese units against U.S. and South Vietnamese conventional forces. Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan are poster children for Hoffman's notion of hybrid warfare. These conflicts are about warfare. They entail violence and armed hostilities or confrontation. Strategic communication plays a role, but in support of military action. Hoffman's notion is sound and relevant in that context.

The Need for New Thinking

The United States needs to develop a doctrine, strategy, and approaches for information warfare and the strategic use of communication and needs to organize itself to execute them. This stands apart from the urgent challenge that China poses. China's coherent, integrated grand strategy to achieve global supremacy by 2049 excludes from its doctrine the application of violence. China relies on nonmilitary means—backed up by military power—to achieve its goals.

Discussions of hybrid warfare (or whatever label is placed on its variants) are too Russia-centric. Unless we allow matters to escalate out of hand—always a challenge—it neither poses, nor does it wish to pose, an existential threat to American prosperity or survival. Russia is a regional disruptor with whom this nation can and should, as President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher concluded years ago, do business, identify areas of mutual security concern, and lessen tensions rather than allow rising emotions to escalate relations out of control. No one expects Russia to become a trusted ally or best friend to the West. Reagan's adherence to the Rus-

sian proverb “trust but verify” stands.⁴⁵ We need to be hard-nosed, clear-sighted, and realistic in dealing with the Kremlin and Russians. They play tough; we need to play tough. Still, the security interests of Russia and the West mandate identifying and acting on common security concerns, especially how to counter Chinese economic imperialism, not looking for reasons to heighten hostilities between them.

What other challenges require strategies that employ strategic communication to gain a competitive advantage? Drug cartels pose a clear and present danger within our own borders. The current debate tends to treat drug dealing as a high-intensity crime, and it is. It is also low-intensity conflict and terrorism, which requires in its solution a whole-of-government approach that includes the military.⁴⁶

Migration has disrupted Europe. Pressure on U.S. borders has polarized American politics and raised questions about America’s relationship to

nations south of its border. Dealing with these challenges requires an approach that entails strategic communication or information warfare. The U.S. military will continue to engage in Africa and the Middle East. Information warfare and strategic communication will play a key role in the nation’s strategies, operations, and tactics.

The United States needs to forge a strategy on a grander scale—one that takes into account the most urgent challenges, with approaches that avoid nonmilitary means and focus on the use of information to exert influence on target audiences and, in line with the *National Defense Strategy*, accord this nation a competitive edge for influence in the emerging threat environment. Information is a vital element in satisfying this requirement. The U.S. government is neither organized nor able to meet this requirement, and its survival and prosperity depend upon surmounting this challenge.

Endnotes

1. See Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, which analyzes the notion at length in light of historical examples.
2. Andrew E. Kramer, “Russian General Pitches ‘Information’ Operations as a Form of War,” *New York Times*, 2 March 2019.
3. Valery Gerasimov, “Po opytu Sirii: Gibridnaya voyna trebuyet vysokotekhnologichnogo oruzhiya i nauchnogo obosnovaniya” [According to the experience in Syria: hybrid war requires high-tech weaponry and scientific foundations], *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier*, 9 (2016), as quoted in Ofer Fridman, *Russian “Hybrid Warfare”: Resurgence and Politicisation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 98.
4. Ofer Fridman, “On the ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’: Why the West Fails to Beat Russia to the Punch,” *Prism* 8, no. 2 (2019). Fridman is a lecturer in war studies and ranks among the top experts on the topic. This book’s comments on Russian discussions of hybrid warfare/new generation warfare

draw heavily on his work, as well as that of Mark Galeotti, Oscar Jonsson, and Frank Hoffman (through his writing and author’s engagements with him by email in 2019). See Oscar Jonsson, *The Russian Understanding of War: Blurring the Lines between War and Peace* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019); Ofer Fridman, *Russian “Hybrid Warfare”*; Mark Galeotti, *Russian Political Warfare: Moving Beyond the Hybrid* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007); and Frank G. Hoffman, “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 52 (1st Quarter 2009), 34–39. These scholars have intensively studied the Russian literature and pronouncements on this modality of war. The failure of many Western leaders to do so has produced misinterpretation of Russia’s strategic view. Both the West and Rus-

- sia are guilty of mirror-imaging in assessing one another's strategic intentions and goals. Each misses signals the other communicates. The Ukraine conflict illustrates the knock-on consequences of this failure.
5. Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 159.
 6. *Internet Trolling as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare: The Case of Latvia* (Riga, Latvia: NATO Stratcom Centre of Excellence, 2015).
 7. Roger N. McDermott, "Does Russia Have a Gerasimov Doctrine?," *Parameters* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 97–105.
 8. Ofer Fridman, "A War of Definitions: Hybridity in Russia and the West," in Ofer Fridman, Vitaly Kabernik, James C. Pearce, eds., *Hybrid Conflicts and Information Warfare: New Labels, Old Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2019), 75.
 9. See Larry M. Wortzel, *The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Information Warfare* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College Press, 2014).
 10. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing, China: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999), 12. In their words, "it is likely that a pasty-faced scholar wearing thick eyeglasses is better suited to be a modern soldier than a strong young lowbrow with bulging biceps." Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, 44. Information warfare encompasses a far broader spectrum than cyber (digital) domains but includes it. They refer to it as *network space*, a "technological space that is formed by a distinctive combination of electronics technology, information technology and the application of specific designs." Although written in the 1990s, Liang and Xiangsui were clear-sighted in envisioning the longer-range potential for cyber engagements (including theft of intellectual property to ruthlessly loot an adversary's military and strategic assets and degrade its strengths) or conflicts. Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, 42. Ofer Fridman's analysis of their book is worth reading. See Ofer Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 11–19.
 11. Ying Yu Lin, "China's Hybrid Warfare and Taiwan," *Diplomat*, 13 January 2018.
 12. Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*. As with this book, its footnotes are important. The book was written in reaction to the U.S. success in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm. Some argue that it represents neither a revolution in military thought nor an executable doctrine for future warfare, but rather is a collection of tactics, techniques, and procedures that have been used before and will be used again. See Maj John A. Van Messel, USMC, "Unrestricted Warfare: A Chinese Doctrine for Future Warfare?" (master's thesis, U.S. Marine Corps University School of Advanced Warfighting, 2005).
 13. Professor Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares* (Washington, DC: Office of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2013). See also Timothy L. Thomas, *Cyber Silhouettes: Shadows Over Information Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2005).
 14. Halper, *China*, 12, emphasis original.
 15. Halper, *China*, 12–13, emphasis original.
 16. Halper, *China*, 13, 23–101, emphasis original.
 17. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (10 December 1982).
 18. See Graham Allison, "What Xi Jinping Wants," *Atlantic*, 31 May 2017.
 19. Jonathan D. T. Ward, *China's Vision of Victory* (Washington, DC: Atlas Publishing and Media, 2019), loc. 3282 of 6590, Kindle. This work draws upon Ward's writing, but he is one of many who—in this author's opinion—correctly espouses similar views. See also Francois Bougon, *Inside the Mind of Xi Jinping* (London: Hurst, 2019); and Newt Gingrich, *Trump vs. China: Facing America's Greatest Threat* (New York: Center Street, Hachette Book Group, 2019). Former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich is a strong ally of President Donald J. Trump and much of his recent writing aims to support the president. This book scrupulously has avoided wading into domestic political debates or partisanship. Our security interests must rise above party politics; this author cites Gingrich's book because it offers an excellent analysis of the security challenge that China poses to the United States. This analysis, with which this author concurs, stands separate from whether one supports or opposes the president.
 20. Ward, *China's Vision of Victory*, loc. 3433 of 6590, Kindle.
 21. Ward, *China's Vision of Victory*. Ward discusses this at length but he is one of many China experts that have cautioned about Chinese ambitions. See, for example, Bradley A. Thayer and John M. Friend, "The World According to China," *Diplomat*, 3 October 2018; Allison, "What Xi Jinping Wants"; Katsui Nakazawa, "Xi's Overly-Ambitious Goals Triggered US-China Trade War; Talk of Becoming World No. 1 Backfired," *Nikkei Asiana Review*, 12 July 2018; and Julian Baird Gewirtz, "China's Long March to Technological Supremacy: The Roots of Xi Jinping's Ambition to 'Catch up and Surpass'," *Foreign Affairs*, 27 August 2019.
 22. Ward, *China's Vision of Victory*, loc. 3900 of 6590, Kindle.
 23. "Principles of China's Foreign Policy," teaching unit, 1950–2000, Asia for Educators, Columbia University (website), accessed 28 October 2019.
 24. Allison, "What Xi Jinping Wants."
 25. "NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats," North Atlantic Treaty Organization (website), 8 August 2019.
 26. Philip Breedlove, "Foreword," in Guillaume Lasconjarias and Jeffrey Larsen, eds., *NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats* (Rome, Italy: NATO Defense College, 2015), xxii, as quoted in Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 154; and Lasconjarias and Larsen, *NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats*, 51.
 27. "Part II—Hybrid Threats," in Bi-SC [Strategic Command] *Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats* (Norfolk, VA: NATO Allied

- Command Transformation, 2010), also cited by Fridman in *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 154.
28. Fridman, "A War of Definitions," 75.
 29. Joseph L. Votel et al., "Unconventional Warfare in the Gray Zone," *Joint Force Quarterly* 80 (1st Quarter, January 2016): 102.
 30. Votel et al., "Unconventional Warfare in the Gray Zone," 104.
 31. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges."
 32. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, 29.
 33. Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid vs. Compound War," *Armed Forces Journal* (1 October 2009).
 34. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," 34. See also Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, 28.
 35. See Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*. Hammes's book offers an excellent analysis of Fourth Generation War, emphasizing the pivotal role that strategic communication and shaping audience perceptions plays in determining outcomes.
 36. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges."
 37. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, 52.
 38. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, 53.
 39. Maj Tim McCulloh and Maj Rich Johnson, *Hybrid Warfare*, Joint Special Operations University Report 13-4 (Tampa, FL: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2013), as discussed by Fridman in *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 38. The principles address uniqueness of hybrid warfare to geographic, culture, and historical settings; the existence of a specific ideology within the hybrid force; a perceived existential threat that drives a hybrid force to abandon conventional warfare; asymmetry between hybrid forces and adversaries; a mixture of conventional and unconventional elements in technologies, weapons, and tactics; and imposition by hybrid organizations of a war of attrition in both the physical and cognitive domains.
 40. James Lacey, "Conquering Germania: A Province Too Far," in Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, eds., *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
 41. Richard Hart Sinnreich, "That Accursed Spanish War: The Peninsular War, 1807–1814," in *Hybrid Warfare*.
 42. Williamson Murray, "The American Revolution: Hybrid War in America's Past," in *Hybrid Warfare*.
 43. See Gregory J. W. Urwin, "When Freedom Wore a Red Coat: How Cornwallis' [sic] 1781 Virginia Campaign Threatened the Revolution in Virginia," in Richard G. Davis, ed., *The U.S. Army and Irregular Warfare, 1775–2007: Selected Papers from the 2007 Conference of Army Historians* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2008). Cornwallis's strategy degenerated operationally into a certain chaos, for lack of strong support of the initiative by his superiors. Had the British carried Cornwallis's strategy to its logical conclusion and implemented it with discipline, vigor, and decisive action, the outcome of the war might have been different, even in the face of other challenges confronting the British.
 44. See Douglas Waller, *Wild Bill Donovan: The Spymaster Who Created the OSS and Modern American Espionage* (New York: Free Press, 2011).
 45. See Suzanne Massie, *Trust But Verify: Reagan, the Russians and Me* (Blue Hill, ME: Hearttree Press, 2013), chapter 13; and Nina Porzucki, "Suzanne Massie Taught President Ronald Reagan the Important Russian Phrase, 'Trust but Verify,'" PRI.org, 7 March 2014. Massie points out that Reagan asked not "what did the Kremlin think," but "what did the Russians think?" Massie, *Trust But Verify*, chapter 13.
 46. James P. Farwell and Darby Arakelian, "War on Our Doorstep: Not a Mere Crime Problem," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 8 (Spring 2014): 40–54.

Workbook

WINNING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY WORKBOOK

REMEMBER THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

1. Clear vision for success and desired outcome
2. The powerful idea or cause that drives the vision
3. Understand the strategic situation
4. Actionable strategy and obstacles to success
5. Actionable plans
6. Smart, well-executed operations and tactics
7. Metrics to measure outcomes

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I. ESTABLISH A CLEAR VISION FOR SUCCESS AND DESIRED OUTCOME

What objective or conditions for an end state define success or a desired outcome?

Why are you trying to achieve that objective?

What does achieving it mean to target audiences? How do they benefit?

As you begin planning, in what manner do you expect to achieve the objective?

In executing operations, whose law are you using: that existing in a theater of operations or ours? If ours, do we want the law to change?¹

If we are dealing with foreign leaders, who are we going to deal with: the present leaders of a state or culture within a theater of operations, or do you prefer others? Are you changing the present leadership entirely? If not, who stays?

What resources do you anticipate are required?

II. WHAT CAUSE DRIVES YOUR STRATEGY AND OPERATION?

What larger cause justifies your strategy and operation and will arouse popular support, compared merely to advancing your own interests?

III. DEFINE THE STRATEGIC SITUATION

What is the strategic situation or operating environment in your theater of operations? What is the current state of affairs? What assumptions govern this analysis?

What dynamics drive it?

Who are the key players who can influence the outcome of your operations?

Do these influencers support or oppose your operation, and why?

What role will these influencers play? Will they be passive or active? If active, will they use force for or against you? If so, which?

Which of these influencers are *indispensable*:

Very important:

Somewhat important:

Not that important:

If they oppose your operation, how do you anticipate neutralizing them or motivating them to switch to support?

Is there kinetic conflict in the theater of operation or is it relatively peaceful or stable? What is it and how will that affect operations? Who are the players, who has momentum, and what is the state of affairs at the outset of the operation?

Do your operations aim to affect ongoing conflict within the theater, or is there a separate aim? How might one affect the other locally at the purely tactical level (where a battle occurs), the theater level (a nation or broader area encompassing a series of tactical activities), or the strategic level (the national or international)?²

IV. WHAT IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE/OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT CULTURE?

What are the key beliefs, social norms, customs, and behavior relevant to your operation?

What role does geography play in the culture?

What role does history play in the culture, and how might it affect the operation?

What role does religion play in the culture, and how might it affect the operation?

What role do ethnic groups and tensions play in the culture?

What role do tribes, clans, families and the ties of family play in the culture? Is this a culture in which tribal vs. individual identity dominates?

What key values drive different groups within the culture (e.g., honor, revenge, loyalty, respect for elders or chiefs)?

What other factors about the social organization within the theater of operations are relevant to success?

What is the political structure within the theater of operations? Who holds what power, how is that determined, and how does it relate to social organization within a theater of operations?

What economic factors within a theater of operations affect the operations?³

What role does nationalism play in the theater of operations, and how will that affect operations?

What law governs behavior (e.g., civil state law, tribal or religious law, custom)?

Is the theater of operations within what is effectively an ungoverned space? If so, what is the anticipated impact on operations?

How will you communicate your intentions in a manner consistent with the local culture(s)?

What bonds of trust or relationships can you draw on to enable effective partnerships and to provide manpower, local knowledge, or political legitimacy?

What history of working with local populations exists and how do you anticipate that will affect your planning and your ability to succeed?

V. IDENTIFY THE ENEMY

What motivates the enemy? What is its cause? What are its goals or desired outcomes?

How do enemy goals or desired outcomes differ from yours?

How is the enemy organized?

What is the enemy's narrative, story, theme, and message to maintain its current position? Do you anticipate it will alter those elements in opposing your operation?

Narrative:

Story or stories:

Themes:

Messages:

Who comprises the enemy's target audience(s)?

How credible, believable, or persuasive is the enemy narrative, story, theme, and message? With what audiences? Why (agree with cause, fear, anxiety, etc.)?

Enemy supporters or those leaning to support the enemy:

Neutrals:

Enemy opponents:

What channels does the enemy use to communicate its messages?

What messengers does the enemy use and why were they chosen?

How can you show that their threats will not deter your forces and make your threats to them credible?

Will the enemy respond kinetically? What mandates or motivates it to fight?

What is the enemy's capacity to respond using cyber capabilities or social media to drive its messages?

Who comprise the enemy's key allies or links within the traditional news media (e.g., satellite television, radio, newspapers, etc.)?

How efficient or effective is the enemy in exploiting links or alliances within traditional media (e.g., getting propaganda to them quickly or getting their message aired)?

VI. IDENTIFY DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PARTNERS

Who are your partners?

What is the basis of the partnership with each?

What are the key interests of each partner?

What role do you anticipate they will play in the operations? What resources will each provide?

How will the role of each partner affect command and control for different aspects of operations?

How important are these partners to achieving a successful outcome? Why?

Indispensable:

Very important:

Somewhat important:

Not that important:

What interests or worldviews does each partner hold that differs from yours, and how might that affect the operations?

Do you anticipate that any partner might take action that could subvert or undercut a successful outcome? Do they share the same or a compatible vision? Is their risk assessment compatible with yours? Do they concur on the strategy, operations, and tactics envisioned? How might the issues that these questions pose be addressed, forestalled, or countered?

Possible subversion of outcome:

Risk assessment:

Compatible vision:

Concurrence on strategy, operations, tactics:

What leverage do you have to support or maintain the partnerships?

Who will coordinate or ensure coordination between you and your partners, and in what manner will that be achieved?

What weakness(es) exist in the partnerships and how will these be addressed to ensure a successful tactical, operational, and strategic outcome?

Some in the military insist on separating influence activities under the rubric of information operations and public affairs by erecting a firewall.⁴ Where that occurs, how will coordination between these functions be achieved, and who will ensure that it is?

How are coordination and cooperation for communication strategy going to be achieved within the interagency, from collection, processing, analysis, and sharing of information and intelligence and provision of resources?⁵

What steps are you taking to ensure that partners and allies—foreign, domestic, within the interagency, and on your operational team—have access to information about what you are doing, why, how, and what it means to them?

VII. FORGING A STRATEGY

Where will you acquire the knowledge of the operating environment that enables you to forge a winning strategy and develop plans for operations and tactics?⁶

What are the obstacles (problems presented) to achieving success?

Who presents the obstacles?

What is behind the obstacles or drives them?

Where do the obstacles occur?

Why would the obstacles frustrate success?

What has the enemy done in the past that helps you to understand what to expect?

What sources of information can inform you about expected obstacles?

What is your strategy for the operation and for tactics to be employed?⁷

Operations:

Tactics:

What is the strategic narrative? What you are doing, why, and how do your actions help achieve the strategic goal?

What actions using information strategy will you take to support operations and tactics?

Operations:

Tactics:

What are the most important keys to success?

What points will most likely strike a responsive chord with your target audiences and stir their emotions, including excitement, awe, or anger, and trigger top-of-mind things that help people to remember your points?⁸

What stories can be communicated to help audiences make sense of events; why you are conducting the operation; and why does it benefit them?

What is your key theme?

What are your core messages for each targeted audience?

What is the credible rationale for each message?

What elements of the message achieve emotional resonance among your targeted audience (for example, using story, concept, image, symbol, etc.)?

What elements of your message use reason or facts to persuade logically?

What actions are you taking to ensure your narrative, story, theme, and messages are communicated in the right language, which is nuanced and culturally tuned to a specific audience?

What makes your narrative, story, theme, or message memorable?

How will your narrative, story, theme, and messages enable coalition building or gain new allies?

What are the stakes for target audiences in the outcome? Why does it matter for them?

How does your message claim and retain moral high ground?

How does your narrative, story, theme, or message neutralize allies of the enemy or win over undecided (persuadable) audiences—bearing in mind that these elements may be communicated by word, action, symbol, image, or a combination of these?

Would use of humor strengthen the message or help discredit the enemy, and if so, what action will you take to employ it?

Who are the target audiences for each theme and message (you may have many)?

Who are your most credible messengers and how will you employ them?

How do you anticipate the enemy will counter your narrative, stories, messages, or themes? What narratives, stories, messages, themes? What channels? What messengers?

Attacks must be answered. How do you plan to answer enemy propaganda?

How does each aspect of the communication strategy help overcome each identified obstacle to success?

What actions will maintain message discipline?

Create a message grid. Answer the following:

What do we say about ourselves?

What do we say about the enemy?

What does the enemy say about itself?

What does the enemy say about us?

VIII. TEAM MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

Who is on the communication strategy team?

Who is in charge of the team and leads it?

Who does the team leader report to; how and when?

How will you integrate information strategy with relevant command authorities?

What are the responsibilities for each team member?

Who will give instructions to whom on the team?

Who will supervise what each team member does?

How will performance be monitored?

How will corrections or modifications to strategy be made?

How will communication within the team be facilitated?

How will you enable sharing to ensure relevant parties have the right information on a timely basis?

How will the operational plan be integrated with parties outside the team?

What metrics will apply and who will develop and apply them?

IX. DOS AND DON'TS IN ACTIONS AND MESSAGING

Are your messages, actions, symbols, and images consistent?

What steps are you taking to ensure consistency and message discipline?

What specific actions support each message point?

What are the strong points in your strategic messaging and what makes them strong?

How can you further strengthen them?

What are the weak points in your strategic messaging and what makes them weak?

How might you rectify these weaknesses?

How do the agendas of local leaders affect messaging?

What steps are you planning that will realistically project confidence in success?

What steps are you taking to ensure that your narrative, story, themes, and messages are clear and understood? How are you testing them, aside from using the formal methods noted at the end for this section (see pg. 168)? You may want to express the idea to a small group of colleagues first. What did they remember? What did they hear? What was their response? Was it consistent with your intention?

What steps that provide visible leadership from commanders and spokespeople and that help project confidence and optimism will you take?

X. INTEGRATING INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE INTO THE PLAN

Where will you obtain the information and intelligence to forge and evaluate the plan?

Social media intelligence (SOCMEDINT):

Open source intelligence (OSINT):

Human intelligence (HUMINT):

Signals intelligence (SIGNIT):

Other(s):

What rumors are circulating among different target audiences, and what impacts might they have on the information strategy?

The rumors:

Narrative and narrative landscape for each rumor:

Audience for each rumor:

Impact of rumor (e.g., wedge, clarification, fear/anxiety, etc.):

Channels, extent, and breadth of circulation of each rumor:

How would using rumors offensively help achieve the desired outcome for your operations?

What actions will enable you to effectively launch helpful rumors?

XI. INTERACTING WITH THE NEWS MEDIA

What steps will you take to communicate your narrative, story, theme, or message to relevant news media in a timely way? You need to keep ahead of the story, anticipate negative coverage, and consider that in today's world, media with global reach makes the living room part of the battlefield.

Will members of the media be embedded in your operations?

Who is in charge of handling the news media?

How will you ensure that the news media's cooperation respects operational security?

How will you address unfavorable coverage?

Are you making provisions to include combat camera crews in the operation and to get out its footage to relevant parties on a timely basis? How?

What special steps are you taking to ensure that media from other countries with potentially hostile perspectives toward your actions respect fact and truth and do not distort the story or be used by enemy for propaganda?

XII. HOW EFFECTIVE WAS YOUR CAMPAIGN?

What did the strategy achieve in changing behavior?

What was the most powerful factor about the campaign that influenced behavior?

What impact did the campaign have on molding and shaping attitudes, opinions, and beliefs? Did that impact have a causal connection to the behavior of target audiences? Why or why not?

Did you measurably help to neutralize or paralyze the enemy's ability to exert command and control?

Did you measurably help deny the enemy's ability to achieve its objectives?

Did you change the minds about adversarial decision makers and if so in what way?

Did you affect the performance of the other side kinetically or in information warfare? If so, how, when, and what was the impact?

Did you create confusion, distraction, or deception in the mind of the enemy? If so, how, when, and what was the impact?

Did the campaign reframe an issue raised by the enemy in terms favorable to your side?

Did the campaign succeed in properly branding the enemy in terms favorable to your position?

Did the campaign discredit and marginalize the enemy and its rationale?

Did the campaign make effective use of symbolism?

Did the campaign avoid tactics that enabled the enemy to use symbolism against you?

Did the campaign identify your narrative, story, themes, and messages with citizens, effectively communicating why you are acting and that your actions benefit them?

Did the campaign enable you to claim and maintain the moral high ground?

Did the campaign consider how the enemy was organized to fight and its rules of engagement?

Did the campaign stir up division among enemy forces?

Did the campaign effectively broadcast success?

Did the campaign engage fully with target audiences to achieve its goals? If not, what more should have been done? What should have been done differently?

Did the campaign expose deceptive or fraudulent tactics of the enemy in a credible way? Was the enemy tactic countered, and if so, how successfully; why and how?

Did the campaign expose and capitalize on enemy hypocrisy, whether inconsistent statements or actions?

Did the campaign identify and capitalize on enemy statements and actions by turning those against the enemy to discredit it?

How rapidly did the campaign respond to unfolding events?

Did the campaign identify and capitalize on targets of opportunity?

Did the campaign win over allies in local or foreign countries who may form part of a broader coalition?

Did the campaign mobilize an active minority within a target population who helped us succeed?

What does the data show in comparing performance metrics (e.g., how many clicks did a webpage receive, viewings did an ad receive, mentions did a news media story make of the message) against qualitative metrics (how well did the campaign actually work: the answers to the questions above)?

XIII. OPINION TESTING

Do you plan to employ any form of opinion testing to test messages or for metrics?

If so, which ones?

When?

Who will conduct such testing?

Endnotes

1. Whether the source law is civil law, tribal, religious, or customary law.
2. See the discussion of the battles of Fallujah. The second battle produced military victory but also complicated the strategic situation across Iraq.
3. For example, illicit activity such as growing opium, smuggling, or other criminal activity, as well as legitimate economic activity.
4. As noted in the book discussion, during the Second Battle of Fallujah these functions were wisely consolidated. As discussed in Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, the distinctions often drawn are in many ways absurd.
5. See the discussion in the book of how Gen Stanley McChrystal achieved this with cross-functional teams in Iraq.
6. See Charles E. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1992), which explains how then Army Maj Albert C. Wedemeyer gathered the information to frame problems, propose a strategy, and devise concepts of operations across multiple theaters to defeat Germany.
7. The goal in World War II was to effect Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender. Opening up a second front by invading Normandy was a strategy to achieve that goal. The invasion itself required strategy for operations and tactics.

- This book is focused on strategy at the operational and tactical levels. Forging a strategy is an iterative process, and strategies and plans will undergo new iterations during development as more questions are asked, more information and intelligence collected, more thinking occurs, and suggestions provided. See also *Art of Design Student Text, Version 2.0* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 2010) section 2.1.1.2, and 2.2.2. These sections set forth the conceptual framework for operational design. It employs its own language: learning; understanding the difference in the existing and desired environment; critical thinking; drawing distinctions to grasp what makes a new situation different, unique, or similar to other situations; identifying what information is relevant; taking a systems approach that sees the whole picture in an operating environment and the relationship of action to logical lines of operation, so that information can be placed within a strategic context; and creative thinking. It is easy to get lost in jargon. This workbook's approach incorporates the elements of operational design but translates them into a framework that communication strategists will more easily employ.
8. See Jonah Berger, *Contagious: Why Things Catch On* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013) from which this formula is drawn; and Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*.

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