

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

CALCULATED COMMUNICATIONS
IN A CONCAVE WORLD

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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16 February 2016

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Biography

Colonel Lance A. Wilkins entered the United States Air Force in 1994 as a distinguished military graduate of the United States Air Force Academy. He is a Command Pilot and Weapons Instructor with over 2,500 hours in several different aircraft including 1700 hours in the F-15. He has over 350 combat hours in the Middle East. His diverse background includes extensive experience in DoD programs of the highest classification as well as over 6 years of weapons evaluation and testing. He also served as Chief of Advanced Programs, Headquarters, United States Air Forces in Europe. Following this staff tour, he served as Director of Operations for the 83d Fighter Weapons Squadron and Commander, 82nd Aerial Targets Squadron at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. Following squadron command, he served as Deputy, Operations Group Commander, 48th Operations Group, RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom, and then as Commander, Air Force Element, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. He is currently a student at the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

Abstract

Strategic communications coupled with existing and emerging technologies results in a globally powerful tool. In the current environment, the Department of Defense's (DoD) methods are woefully inadequate for the agile, dynamic, and far-reaching nature of this domain. Instead of continuing along its current path, the DoD must radically transform the way it thinks about strategic communications. Rather than allowing itself to be victimized or permitting current procedures to render a potentially valuable tool ineffective, the DoD must take an introspective look at the myriad of risk averse policies currently resident in its strategic communications community. Furthermore, the DoD must adopt a revolutionary concept and innovative application of strategic communications in order to achieve the agility required to maximize benefits to the Department in the future. This revolutionary approach is titled "Calculated Communications in a Concave World".

On a hillside in a remote corner of the world, a caravan of terrorist-laden vehicles slowly makes their way away from the mayhem of the crowded market that they just destroyed with several remotely-detonated IEDs. As they jostle along the treacherous terrain in a half-dozen SUVs, the bumpy road and dusty conditions can barely hide the smiles that accompany yet another successful strike. As a slowly smoldering pipe of opium-laced goodness continues to be passed from one terrorist to another within one SUV, the lead vehicle is suddenly and forcefully lifted straight up off the ground and slammed back down to the earth with tremendous force. Occupants in the other vehicles feel the concussive torridness of the blast and instantly screech to a halt. Screaming at each other in unintelligible words, they attempt to back up only to be instantly engulfed in a rolling inferno of loud explosions, indescribable noise, and immeasurable heat...all caused by the armed UAV circling overhead.

Minutes later, as the smoke begins to slowly clear, a lone terrorist slowly awakens. Along the hillside lies the burning and popping steel skeletons of the SUVs. The smell of cordite, feel of dust, and the metallic taste of blood are the predominant stimuli to the senses. Getting slowly up, the terrorist begins to do a little damage assessment. "I can walk...I can think...I can..." Nearby lies what once was a nice-looking young 16-year-old boy. His face now bloody and lifeless and his eyes peering skyward as if he was wondering if this was all a dream. (The scene which visits him now is eerily similar to the devastation that he facilitated only about an hour previous.) As the terrorist surveys the scene, something comes to mind. She reaches gingerly through her burqa and into her tactical vest pocket, retrieving her ruggedized smartphone. She immediately accesses the camera app and opens it. Arranging the boy's headscarf to show the most horrific angle and gingerly removing his cartridge belt and nearby AK-47, she meticulously prepares the scene. She finally gets the effect she is looking for and snaps a single photo. She opens up her social media account and presses the "share" button. Her post simply states, with the accompanying picture, "Infidel Americans Attack Birthday Party" ...and the clock begins to tick.

While this story is fictitious, it is not unrealistic. Effective manipulation of information, is repeated time and again and the reality is the story that is told first is frequently the story that gets the widest dissemination and becomes accepted as truth. This "info-agile" world is not myth or science-fiction. It is today's reality and any institution concerned with advancing truth must deal comprehensively with the manipulative nature of information. This new reality should not be ignored or feared, but instead, it must be embraced, understood, and utilized.

Clearly, strategic communication, especially in the form of social media and open network reporting, is an immensely powerful instrument. Given the current environment, the US Department of Defense (DoD) cannot sit idly by and hope that its own information

dissemination efforts will be impervious to the effects of this emerging information technology or that the impressibility of those targeted by the technology will otherwise be influenced in its favor. Rather than allowing itself to be victimized or allowing current procedures to render a potentially valuable tool ineffective, the DoD must change its myriad of risk averse policies currently resident in its strategic communications community so that it can operate in this environment with advantage. Furthermore, the DoD must adopt a revolutionary vision and innovative application of strategic communications in order to achieve the agility required to maximize and successfully disseminate accurate and effective information in support of national objectives.

FLAT WORLD TO ROUND WORLD

Until around 500 BC, many philosophers and scientists still believed that the earth was flat.¹ Despite ever-increasing evidence to the contrary, for thousands of years, the prevailing opinion and the most brilliant minds subscribed to this “flat world” mindset. Their rationale was pretty simple... “We just haven’t found the edge yet.” Therefore, the theory predominated until breakthroughs in astronomy and exploration opened the understanding of the geniuses along with the simple-minded and yielded more comprehensive explanations for commonplace occurrences.

Once an understanding of the “roundness” of the earth was realized, stellar navigation and time-keeping became increasingly more logical. Time and again, this revelation illuminated the darkness of confusion with more complete and more accurate explanations. This luminary revelation was profound for one simple reason – it turned all previous pretenses that were built upon the erroneous “flat world” mindset upside-down. The “flat world” mindset, therefore, was eventually overcome by the positive results that the “round world” view yielded

over time. With each new “well that makes sense” proclaimed by the new generation of experts, the “round world” theory gained traction and even opened new avenues of discovery. This all happened due to a simple change in mindset within the context of already-known facts.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS DEFINED

“I hate newspapermen. They come into camp and pick up their camp rumors and print them as facts. I regard them as spies, which in truth, they are. If I killed them all there would be news from Hell before breakfast.”

Gen William Tecumseh Sherman, during the Civil War²

This quote from General Sherman is a perfect example of not only how strategic communications have changed (newspapers to smartphones), but it also demonstrates the frustrations that leadership has historically dealt with in this dynamic realm. General Sherman’s words prophetically shadow what is now here on an even grander scale than was imaginable in his time. Consider the following definition:

“In the U.S., Strategic Communication is defined as: Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.”³

Another common definition is:

“By strategic communication(s) we refer to: (a) the synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as (b) programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations professionals.”⁴

These definitions provide a platform to begin understanding the paradigm of modern strategic communications. However, these traditional definitions fall short in capturing the width and breadth of the current environment. Specifically, arguing that communications are designed for a “key audience” belies the reality that the world is a cyber/comm playground. Because of the diffusion of the audience, today’s reality is that a nation-state no longer gets to

decide or “select” its intended audience. Rather than some neat, organized activity, the traditional viewpoint also fails to account for the unassailable truth that coordinating anything through a bureaucracy is arduous at best and attempting to synchronize all instruments of national power, to include strategic communication, takes inordinate amounts of time. Finally, in today’s world, these types of info-sharing are not anywhere close to being monopolized by state institutions since it does not take a professional to “tweet, post, chat” or hit “send” and immediately distribute to, or gain access to, an audience of millions.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT

Throughout the history of strategic communications many brilliant minds and renowned experts have reacted to the phenomena they observed rather than adjust to the future which they could not conceive. The end result is that they missed (and continue to miss) the revolutionary changes of the respective discipline.

A salient example is that of Thomas L. Friedman, who is often viewed as futuristic and visionary. In his book titled “The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century,” his title serves as a metaphor for viewing the world as a level playing field in terms of commerce, where all competitors have an equal opportunity.⁵ He further intimates that due to globalization on a massive scale, many borders, lines of demarcation and traditional boundaries are simply no longer pertinent in the realm of international and inter-cultural trade. His basic premise is that with the advent of worldwide communications and the proliferation of the 24-hour news cycle, the world has been “flattened,” thus allowing equal access to all. Therefore, it seems that Friedman’s “flat world” vision changes our perception and interpretation of the most common statistics we take for granted:

(Order of top six most populated countries as of 2015 (Statistical Set #1)):

- China – 1.3 billion
- India – 1.2 billion
- US – 322 million
- Indonesia – 255 million
- Brazil – 205 million
- Pakistan – 188 million

In concert with Friedman’s opinion, in a flat or round world where clearly defined borders exist, these are useful statistics as they suggest something about a nation’s global impact. When viewing these nation’s populations in combination with land mass, natural resources, economic capability, etc., effective analysis can derive largely accurate judgments.

In a delineated world, these statistics are relevant. Yet, while Friedman’s argument seems logical, upon closer examination, his visualization of the environment is somewhat flawed.

While Friedman talks about a world without borders, the context he depends on, as indicated by the population figures provided above, continues to rely significantly on a world with borders (despite their commerce-related porousness). In his construct, those desiring to communicate directly without impedance to others must still either travel or maneuver around obstacles to gain unimpeded access, even in a flat world. Unfortunately, this does not accurately define today’s environment. Consider, instead, the identity of the “nations” listed below (Statistical Set #2):

- Smartphone – 1.9 billion owners
- Facebook – 1.49 billion users
- Tablet – 1 billion owners
- LinkedIn – 380 million users
- Twitter – 304 million users
- Instagram – 300 million users

While it is obvious that these are not nations in the archetypal sense, they share many of the same traits. These “nations” often have a common purpose, share a common language, and

utilize common methods to intermingle. Therefore, communication between nations, heretofore called “international communications”, might be considered an obsolete term amongst Statistical Set #2. Furthermore, it is intriguing that future predictions are even more unsure in set #2 than in set #1. Still in doubt? Think Arab Spring. What Friedman’s argument lacks in visualization is that in today’s commerce and communications, there is no horizon and there exists minimal interference, obstacles, or resistance from transmitter to receiver, therefore a different perspective beyond returning to a “flat world” is needed.

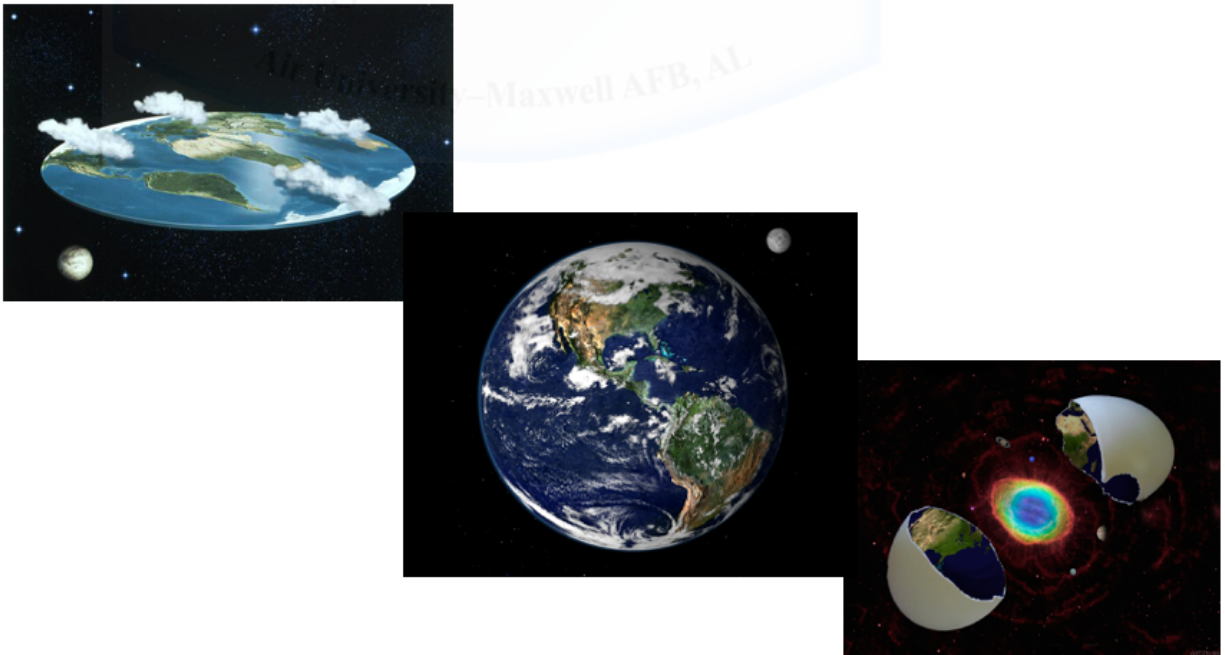
The proposed shift necessary to properly think about modern strategic communications is just as significant as making the jump from a “flat world” mindset to a “round world” one. Once the world was perceived with the correct shape, orbit, interstellar framework, etc. – everything else started making sense. Similarly, in order for strategic communications to achieve its full potential and be effective in any consistent way, the DoD must truly look at it differently, think about it differently, and above all – employ it differently. Copious amounts of rapid, agile, and nimble communications bounce around the earth like a super-bouncy-ball, but not on the outside of a round world or on the top of a flat one...More like on the inside.

ROUND WORLD TO CONCAVE WORLD⁶

Globalization, specifically via the internet and smart devices, creates a communications environment where data and information transfer takes seconds. Thoughts, posts, tweets, etc. are transmitted and received with amazing quickness and more importantly, minimal interference. Additionally, everyone has access and visibility to all the information simultaneously. This new visualization and vantage point is actualized simply by looking up and/or across a concave expanse and places both transmitter and receiver in an unprecedented environment for global messaging and an even more uncharted path for strategic

communications. The new world that strategic communications operates within, however, is not a view back to a “flat world” or even a “borderless flat world”, but rather it requires a brand new way of thinking. This new perspective is the “concave world”.

A concave world is a visionary leap forward. A concave world is not hindered by normal barriers to communication. From one side of the globe to the other, and even more substantially than a flat world, the inhabitants of a concave world live on the surface of an inward facing sphere (see graphic). The characteristics of interpersonal communications on the surface of a concave world are vastly different. Anyone, anywhere can see what is happening throughout the world by simply looking up, left, right, or across. There is no need to peer over or around nor is there a need to travel or exert any effort to achieve a greater vantage point or elevation – just look...At light speed!



Getting into a concave world mindset regarding strategic communication takes more than a simple paradigm shift on/about strategic communication. It requires a deeper understanding of what truly matters. While credibility is still important and must be maintained to the maximum extent, does the risk of being wrong outweigh the opportunity of being right and first? As one seasoned USAF 4-star recently quoted, “It is almost impossible to compete with the speed and power of a lie.”⁸ While it may seem impossible to some, the US should at least try to achieve some level of success in counteracting or opposing the adversary’s efforts at discrediting and out-messaging it in the court of public opinion.

Consequently, similar to the “flat-to-round” leap, the “round-to-concave” leap also requires certain acknowledgements. First, the experts must admit that they are wrong in both communications theory and approach. Then they must deeply evaluate old and new theories through a new lens. Finally, the collective intelligence of the world’s sole remaining superpower must initiate new avenues and propagate new ideas within stagnated communication communities.

In a concave world, the rest of the world can see anything that is placed onto an open-source media platform. Anyone, regardless of position, rank, wealth, etc. becomes an equal player. Similar to the US Senate in representation, the smallest state has equal representation to a larger one. Rhode Island loves this. California, New York, and Texas probably do not always feel the same way. Similarly, strategic communications, on a global scale and in a concave world, is no respecter of persons.

For instance, in a concave world, a teenager can cause panic in the media using only Twitter. After fashioning a homemade clock and bringing it to science class, Ahmed Mohamed’s teacher thought it resembled a homemade bomb and alerted the school

administration. Ahmed was subsequently apprehended and questioned by local school and law enforcement authorities.⁹ Heretofore, the school board would simply investigate and determine the validity of the issue. It would normally take days for the word to get out. Yet, in this instance, within minutes, the entire world (and more especially the Muslim world) knew about the issue in multiple languages before the US government, AP/UPI, or anyone else had a clue.

The word of this supposed discriminatory atrocity spread like wildfire. Allegations of Islam-phobia or unfair racial profiling zoomed around the Twitter-verse and Facebook like lightning. Eventually, even the President got involved and Ahmed was invited to meet the President as part of a Youth in Science trip. Interestingly, but not as nearly widely known, was the fact that Ahmed's parents refused to sign the school district's Family Educational Rights and Privileges Act form allowing law enforcement more latitude in what it could report regarding the incident. Additionally, a subsequent investigation identified that Ahmed's sister had been suspended by the school board three years earlier for a fake bomb threat.¹⁰ While these are not necessarily directly contradicting what happened or why it happened, they are pieces of data that went largely ignored in the media. The first story told won.

This story shows the absolute power of technology and messaging to shape the world's perceptions. Messages reach from the poor and downtrodden to the lofty and powerful with equally impactful force. Cases like these should serve as reminders of not only the control that anyone with a smart device has, but also the influence that a single individual can wield. In short, past definitions do not work in a concave world...neither do the methods.

HOW CURRENT STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION METHODS FAIL

In the context of a concave world, today's DoD strategic communications continue to fail for three main reasons. First, today's methods are the victims of burdensome processes and

hence they are simply too slow. Secondly, the majority of the DoD's global messaging efforts emanate from a reactionary standpoint. Finally, an excessive level of risk aversion creates an environment where "failing to try" is more encouraged than "trying and failing". When lethargic and cumbersome processes are combined with a reactionary default and then laboriously pushed through a risk averse pinhole, the resulting antipathy creates insurmountable obstacles to capitalizing on modern, or at least agile, communications methods.

The unwieldiness of existing efforts was on display when shortly after the DoD stood up its strategic communications capability, its effectiveness eroded so rapidly that a Pentagon spokesman stated, "We don't do strategic communications anymore."¹¹ This perspective is disturbing. In today's world, even silence by the DoD is in fact strategic communication. What the Pentagon spokesman meant was that by the time the DoD had identified the strategic communication capability gap, secured funding to organize, train, and equip forces to achieve objectives, and then deployed the human capital to address the shortfall, the train had already left the station and the slowly arriving answer to yesterday's question in the light of today's problem was most assuredly overcome by events. He spoke to an obvious weakness that enemies of the US seek to exploit.

The adversary's agility and shrewd awareness of the power and influence of strategic communication has never been more clearly demonstrated than in what has become known as the 2013 Yemeni Wedding Party drone strike. This, in title alone, demonstrates a major US communications failure. It is a prime example of the reactionary flaw coupled with a risk averse flavor. It also should serve as a reminder that in a concave world, the story that is *first* is the story that sticks, with rare exception. The "Wedding Party" story is worth telling.

Shawqi al-Badani was a notorious international terrorist who led the bomb plot that shut down 19 US diplomatic posts throughout Africa and the Middle East in 2013. He was also connected to the plot that targeted the American embassy in Sana'a in 2012.¹² Because of his terrorist activities he was being tracked and he knew it. Therefore, he surrounded himself with as many civilians as he could when he travelled. Late in 2013 this murderous terrorist was finally fixed in time and space in Yemen using all-source intelligence and approval for a strike was authorized. Waiting until his convoy had entered a ravine to minimize collateral damage, aircraft attacked the four vehicles known to contain Shawqi al-Badani and his accompanying henchmen with devastating effect. Yet, that is not the story that is told.

Subsequently, CNN reported that a top Yemeni national security official, who "asked not to be named because he is not authorized to talk to media" falsely stated, "This was a tragic mistake and comes at a very critical time. None of the killed was a wanted suspect by the Yemeni government."¹³ On that day, the attack killed 14 people and injured 22 people, but amazingly no one in the Yemeni government seemed to know the exact identity of the deceased.¹⁴ Another unnamed Yemeni security official incorrectly stated that the convoy was "mistaken for an al-Qaeda convoy."¹⁵ This implies that from the outset the counter-terrorism operators were errantly tracking the wrong people. The result was that the story that first emerged was that this convoy consisted of eleven vehicles enroute to a "wedding" that "sadly, never made it to their destination."

Despite the prevailing narrative of a "mistaken strike" against a "wedding party," the Yemeni state news Saba stated shortly after the incident that, "On board the vehicle were top leaders who plotted several terrorist attacks against the armed forces, police, civilians and vital government installations."¹⁶ In addition, one of three Yemeni security officials stated

unequivocally that “al-Qaida militants were suspected to have been traveling with the wedding convoy.”¹⁷ This implies that the right vehicles filled with terrorists was targeted..¹⁸

Nevertheless, the story that the US had struck a wedding party dominated the news.

The obvious difference in the truth and the story that emerged highlights the key to the strategic communication solution. Clearly the US would never knowingly strike a wedding party. Yet, despite the negative dispersions cast on the US, a study of this event reveals that there was very little response to the “wedding story” narrative by the US.¹⁹ While it may be advisable, even to a considerable degree, to withhold classified information or operational details to protect methods and other operations, the day after the strike only the DoD knew the facts and only rapid, proactive, and calculated messaging from the US could have turned this “wedding party” narrative on its head. In short, the US chose the “give up” messaging road vice even a “catch up” option. This decision enabled the enemy to shape the entire narrative and serves as a perfect example of how the US can lose the ability to navigate within this dynamic environment due to a combination of reasons.

It is worth noting where this level of risk aversion has come from in hopes of foreshadowing where it might be headed. From World War II to Vietnam to Operation DESERT STORM, the degree of US risk aversion spans the spectrum. As example, in today’s environment, few could understand the extreme level of “risk” that Eisenhower was willing to accept in order to execute the Normandy invasion. The dilemma he faced is nearly unfathomable today. Today, the same countries that participated in that exceptionally risky Cross-Channel attack are increasingly unwilling to assume even diminutive risk (by comparison). The causes of this are many.

While the evolution in war-making technologies and asymmetric versus conventional battles weighs heavily in this debate, the media itself often creates curious standards. For instance, in Vietnam the US lost about 25 soldiers per day. In the war on terror (post 9/11), America has averaged a little more than one soldier per day in lives lost. In summation, over the course of this modern asymmetric war, less than 5,000 Allied lives have been lost. By comparison, recently released studies of D-Day show that 4,413 died during just the first day! Despite these obvious and glaring differences in casualties, the main-stream media seems hell-bent on continuing to shift the risk aversion bias even further by repeatedly proclaiming, per situation, that “this (insert conflict name here) is becoming another Vietnam.” In actuality, most modern conflicts are not even close.

This same flavor of risk aversion, fed by the media and absorbed by senior leaders (both military and civilian), is what hamstring the successful use of modern strategic communications methods. Whereas in combat, risk aversion and decision paralysis deals specifically with a much more impactful subject – the loss of lives – a similar approach and the same risk aversion mindset neuters the advantages of strategic communications capability.²⁰ Therefore, with the understanding that risk aversion will negate this important dimension of info warfare, something must change.

In a concave world, it is impossible to hide. It is, however, reasonably possible to miss opportunities. Countering lethargic processes with more agile ones is relatively easy. Changing mindsets from reactionary to proactive is definitely more challenging. Yet, modifying risk aversion will be the most daunting. Senior leaders must realize that mistakes are going to be made and the intentions of those authorizing the report are significantly more important than the data eventually transmitted. Damage control will be necessary, but leaders must ponder

whether negating an internally created crisis is more or less damaging than attempting to reverse the potential global perception created by the enemies messaging efforts. Risk aversion, therefore, must be revolutionized or the US will fall even further behind.

CALCULATED COMMUNICATIONS – THE WAY FORWARD

The majority of US DoD press releases and communications are reactive in nature. While there are some instances within the Building Partnership Capacity efforts, select humanitarian crises, and some high visibility deployments that are “trumpeted” for effect, normally this is not the case. Usually, the US government, and in particular the DoD, finds out about the impact of its actions in the world via social media first rather than through any official channel. Thus, more often than not, the DoD is left responding when something happens on the world stage – even if they caused it!

When this is the case, usually hours or even days after an event has already been reported, posted, and tweeted, the Pentagon or DoD public affairs has gathered information, formed a working group, and/or prepared a press release deemed worthy of public consumption. To be sure, this does give the DoD a certain level of surety/credibility, but it also misses marvelous opportunities. While it would be an exercise in futility to attempt to counter every news story, when the DoD does know what is going on, the curtain of secrecy and current level of risk aversion must be lowered to even have a hope of “getting America’s message” out ASAP.²¹ Therefore, to truly capitalize on modern strategic communications, every attempt should be made to create a proactive system versus a reactive one.

Developing technologically agile systems has already been accomplished commercially and market economics will most assuredly ensure that this innovation continues. Therefore, the focus is not on the technology, but rather the mindset driving what is disseminated. It is

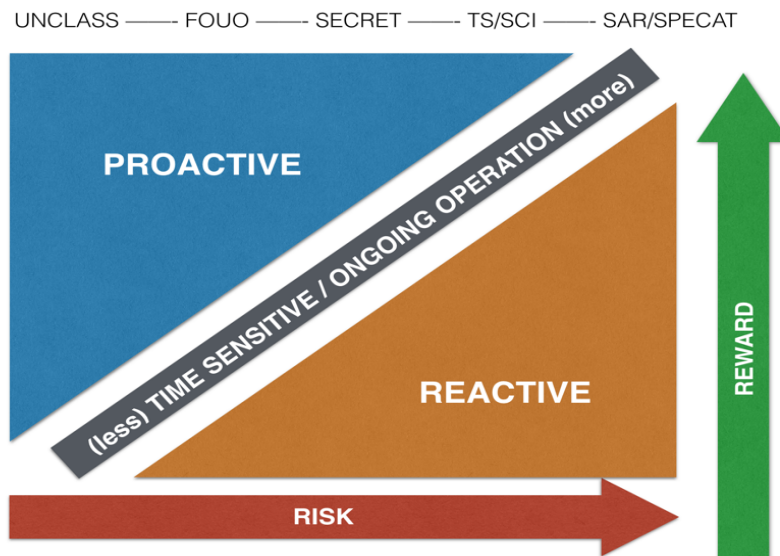
important to note that as Edward Murrow once stated, “The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings, and in the end the communicator will be confronted with the old problem, of what to say and how to say it.”²² This amazing insight applies directly to current and future US strategic communications.

True agility must come from a paradigm shift in how the US views these types of communications. While the US should always strive for 100% accuracy and complete confidence in reporting, the US should also remember, once again, that the first story is what gets reported and believed. Since the US would never willingly and knowingly attack an innocent wedding party on purpose – some attempts at winning the race to the media are possible. The US can always investigate and redact, but in this day and age, corrections are rarely what are remembered. While this may sound ambiguous, knowing what we do and how we operate gives us the advantages in being almost completely accurate with an initial, quick message versus how the enemy knows it wants the situation to be viewed without the facts. Obviously, there is no way to anticipate or predict many situations or crises. Yet, there are several operations in which the US actually controls the timing and execution. These events, especially those shrouded in secrecy, are typically the ones where “he who tells the story first” shapes the message. The next step, therefore, is calculated communications in a concave world.

Calculated Communications are defined somewhat differently from strategic communications. A working definition of Calculated Communications is:

Calculated Communications are focused efforts of the United States Government to dynamically assess the strategic risks and rewards associated with seizing the initiative and capitalizing on opportunities to proactively disseminate sensitive and accurate information vice reactively responding, thus preempting adversary messaging efforts.

Calculated Communications can also be visualized like:



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In this model, as classification increases, so does risk when proactively divulging details. The reasons for increased risk include the potential compromise of sources, methods, etc. Additionally, as ongoing operations are increasingly time-sensitive, risk also increases for similar reasons. Therefore, in cases where risk is high due to these factors, it is acceptable to be predominantly reactive in reporting and responding (if at all). Conversely, when actions are less time sensitive or occurring at a lower security classification, there is less risk, so proactive messaging is possible and, in Calculated Communications, should be encouraged.

What this model attempts to also capture is that within Calculated Communications, maximum reward/benefit is realized when the US operates proactively. This even means that with a high level of classification, attempts to proactively disseminate information are advisable since this perspective allows the US to shape the message before any potential adversary may even know the event occurred. Hence, the reward arrow is fairly self-explanatory. When calculations allow, proactive messaging should occur. The more proactive the US is in this

realm, the higher the reward because it forces the adversary to react more and shapes the messaging at the onset.

The most important aspects of the way forward are spreading the understanding, at the highest levels of the DoD, that the US is behind, the communications environment has changed, and doing nothing (or doing something slowly in this time-sensitive environment) says a lot. While the DoD is probably not quite ready for "Facebook free", smartphone-equipped Special Operators posting late/breaking news from remote hillsides uncensored, an incremental approach utilizing the basic tenets of Calculated Communications is an advisable course of action. For starters, the Professional Military Education (PME) system must begin teaching this concept to tactical-level leaders at the introductory level initially and then expand upward into mid-level as well as the most senior Service schools, Capstone courses not excluded. Additionally, cycling mature public affairs personnel through Calculated Communications courses and then coupling them with an operations centers' de-classifying elements and embedding them into ongoing operations would also help close the knowledge and capability gap. Another possible enabler would be the development of Calculated Communications Tiger Teams (C2T2). These rapidly-deployable, small footprint teams would consist of a mix of communications systems experts, public affairs personnel, foreign disclosure/de-classifying agents, and operations liaison(s) that are sent to locations as needed to increase the effectiveness of the DoD's overall strategic communications efforts.

Furthermore, Calculated Communications should not operate in a vacuum. Authorities responsible for the use of instruments of national power must continue to deconflict messaging to ensure that efforts to be proactive are not detrimental to other entities nor other ongoing efforts. Once again, this must be done proactively vice reactively. This paradigm shift takes

strategic leadership, foresight, and acceptance of additional risk. This vital triad of Calculated Communications should enable DoD and USG messaging efforts to move beyond integration and into synergistic behaviors across the spectrum.

CONCLUSION

Ensuring that the actions and objectives of the DoD are clearly and correctly understood is essential to successfully achieving US national security objectives. Critical to this effort are effective strategic communications that make sure these actions and objectives are accurately portrayed in the court of world public opinion.

Continuing along DoD's current path is a poor option. There are numerous instances where the US has been neutered in the messaging domain. A new strategy must be developed and implemented to take advantage of the shifts in perception that rapid communications and globalization have offered both friend and foe. The US has the most copious resources to enable this change, but must alter its mindset and risk aversion in order to realize strategic communication's full potential.

Calculated Communications in a concave world is the way forward. For maximum effectiveness, a less risk averse and more preemptive posture is required. Understanding that the best message the DoD can put forth is an "agile and calculated one" requires a paradigm shift similar to switching from paper regulations to e-pubs and snail mail to email – only it is more important and arguably more urgent. The US, and in particular the DoD, is getting outpaced, outwitted, and outmaneuvered by a less sophisticated, yet more capable force in this dynamic environment. The US can, must, and should adopt a new strategy – a calculated one.

Notes

1. Simanek, Donald E. 2006. *The Flat Earth*. Accessed December 2015. <https://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/flat/flaearth.htm>. The “flat-world” concept was widely believed and propagated through early maps, diagrams, and publications. Many explorers, in bygone eras, were nervous on their voyages because of the thought of what might happen if they found “the edge”.
2. Diamond, John. "Chapter 15: The Media: Witness to the National Security Enterprise." In *The National Security Enterprise*, edited by Roger Z. George and Harvey Rishikof, 301-330. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011.
3. Department of Defense. "Principles of Strategic Communications." August 2008. http://www.au.af.mil/info-ops/documents/principles_of_sc.pdf (accessed October 2015).
4. Hastings, Robert T. "Strategic Communication: A Department of Defense Perspective." *SlideShare*. LinkedIn.
5. Wikipedia 2005. *The World is Flat*. Accessed December 2015. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_World_Is_Flat. Wikipedia page on the book
6. While I came up with the “concave world” concept on my own, I then searched the internet and found a graphic depicting the world on the inside of an egg. This shows that someone thought about this before me, but I had not read about it or heard of it until searching to see if it existed. Additionally, my thoughts are the first time I have seen the “concave earth/world” concept used specifically in regards to strategic communications or communications-related ideas.
7. These diagrams, and several like them, are available open source on the internet. The only one that appears to be more personally created and proprietary in nature (not in a legal sense) is the one found at <http://www.joedubs.com/is-earth-convex-flat-or-concave/>.
8. Quoted with emailed permission from Gen Philip Breedlove, USAF.
9. Wikipedia. 2015. *Ahmed Mohamed Clock Incident*. December 4. Accessed December 2015. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Mohamed_clock_incident.
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18. The actual vehicles containing just the terrorist were the only ones out of the 11 vehicles that suffered direct hits.

19. Draper, Lucy. 2014. *The Wedding That Became a Funeral: US Still Silent One Year on From Deadly Yemen Drone Strike*. December 12. Accessed December 2015.

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20. This in no way implies that the shedding of blood is equivalent to messing up strategic communications – only that the risk aversion mindset has significant parallels.

21. Of note... America desires to be credible and consistent. While nothing in this article recommends a change in that desire, what it does attempt to prove is that truthful statements of intent and purpose can reach the masses almost simultaneously (or in advance) with the adversary's spin.

22. From multiple Wikipedia pages to determine credibility. Edward R. Murrow KBE (born Egbert Roscoe Murrow; April 25, 1908 – April 27, 1965) was an American broadcast journalist. He first came to prominence with a series of radio broadcasts for the news division of The Columbia Broadcasting System during World War II, which were followed by millions of listeners in the United States. During the war he assembled a team of foreign correspondents who came to be known as the Murrow Boys. A pioneer of television news broadcasting, Murrow produced a series of reports that helped lead to the censure of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Fellow journalists Eric Sevareid, Ed Bliss, Bill Downs, Dan Rather, and Alexander Kendrick consider Murrow one of journalism's greatest figures, noting his honesty and integrity in delivering the news.

22. This graphic was created by the author. No outside sources, other than personal experiences, were utilized in making this visual depiction of Calculated Communications.

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