

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN NATO: NEED FOR A UNIFIED APPROACH TO SECURITY POLICY

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Abstract

This paper presents issues of strategic communication, both in terms of political communication and in terms of security risks and threats that may occur due to improper application of the communication process. A review of this issue is carried out through direct analysis of NATO's communication framework, particularly through direct analysis of examples from the recent history of the work of this organisation. This paper aims to outline an original approach to the application of strategic communication, especially in view of the exposure of direct challenges resulting from an inadequate transfer of information as well as incompetent and insufficient professional staff in relation to the sensitive issue of public relations and modern communications. The purpose of this paper is to offer a critical reflection on the strategic communication of NATO, which must be planned and created in a timely manner on the basis of pre-summarised data (both from the theoretical and practical aspects), and to set the foundation for a serious discussion on the topic of communications and public access to particularly high-level communications. This is of particular strategic importance because communication contributes to the image of NATO and to the public's perception of it, which can be completely wrong and distorted as a result of the failure to use the correct communicational approach.

Key words: Strategic communication, NATO strategic communications, media policy

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Introduction

NATO has, since its establishment, confronted a number of obstacles, and it continues to go through modifications. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, there have been a number of inconsistencies and contradictions regarding NATO's existence. These have become especially popular as a result of the current developments in Ukraine, i.e. the actions taken by Russia in the country. The state of Ukraine and its relationship with NATO is just one example of the support and practical cooperation offered by NATO, both through various programmes and in terms of political dialogue.

NATO supports various initiatives, particularly in security and the reform process. These forms of support are vital to the democratic development of each country in order to strengthen defence capabilities. What the Alliance is geared towards, and can best be illustrated by current interventions on the territory of Ukraine, is full support for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In every country in which there is a need for additional support in defence and security, it is important to influence the development of control, communications, strategic communications, and cyber defence.

From the beginning of the Cold War and onwards, the NATO mission has been recognised as successful in terms of deterring and avoiding real conflict situations in affected areas. In the Alliance treaty, signed in Washington, DC in 1949, Article 5 states that “an armed attack against one or more [State Parties] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against all [members].” This provision is particularly critical during periods of crisis or uncertainty in the security situation in some member states of the Alliance. In such circumstances it is necessary to point out the true meaning of the NATO Alliance².

What is needed from NATO under such circumstances is the encouragement of greater communication between member states, the promotion of a mentality of collective defence, and the readiness for a rapid response whenever it is

² MC 422, NATO Military Policy on Information Operations, Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration, Brussels, April 4, 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm?mode=press+release, accessed on October 7, 2014.



required. The communication process of the reinforcement and defence process is supported by, and depends to a large extent on, the financial power of the state – namely, the estimated military costs as a percentage of gross domestic product. European countries supplied a huge part of their budget for defence issues. Despite the importance of this factor, however, it remains necessary to work on improving the real state of NATO, which entails the re-promotion of a sense of belonging, and also of collective defence, where member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by external parties.

Analysis of the Political Communication Process in the Public Sphere - theoretical approach

The development of the political communication process is determined by parallel social changes that are an expression of the dynamics of social processes. The same processes apply to public relations practitioners. The development of public relations is determined simultaneously by social and political culture. Therefore, the models of public relations applied by the institutions that create public policies need to be unified and subjected to continuous measurement and evaluation in relation to public relations, planning, and strategy in their applicability.

The impact of mass media and public relations is essential in the formation of an informed public.

The traditional liberal assertion is that the primary role of the media is to be a democratic public defender that keeps the state in check. This protective role is expected to transcend in importance all other functions of the media and also dictate the form in which the media need to be organised. Only by anchoring the media in the free market is it possible to provide for their complete independence from the government. Once the media become subjected to public regulation, they lose their protective role and may be transformed into “The Rottweiler that barks at the service of the state.”³ This definition of the role of the media is too

³ James Curran, “Mass Media and Democracy: A Reappraisal,” in *Mass Media and Society*, ed. James Curran et al. (London/New York: Edward Arnold, 1991), 84.



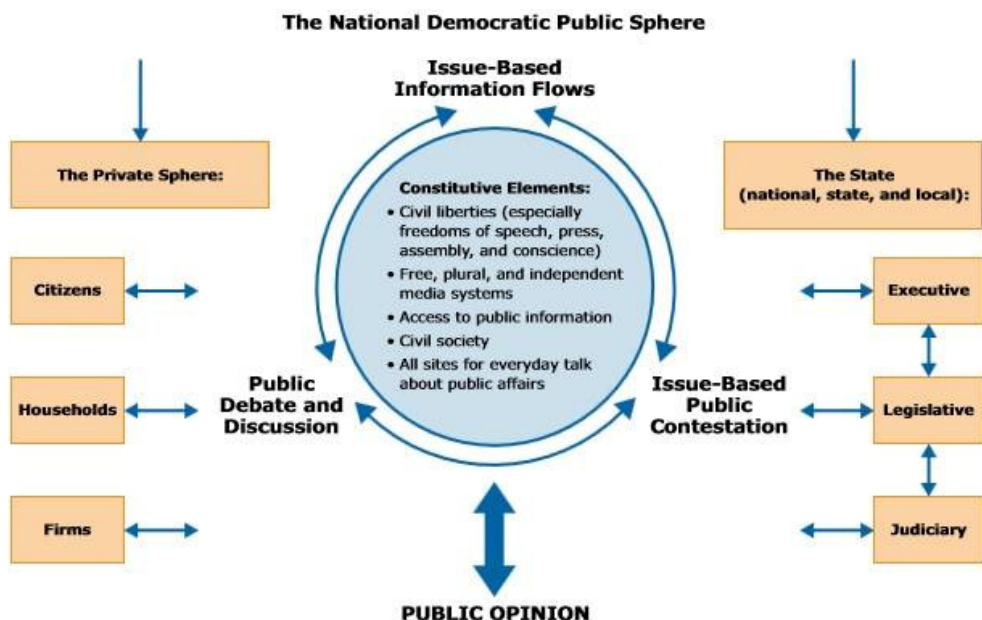
narrow, however, because the center of attention focuses only on protection from the state. But what about the other centres of power in society? Or, moreover, what happens in the era of privatisation of the media? It is very easy to overstep the border that represents the media, on the one hand as protectors of the public interest, and as the epitome of greed in achieving their own interests on the other.

The content of the mass media is the likely source of the timeless changes in the preferences of the individuals in the political domain. On the one hand, the media are the main channel between the public and policymakers. According to Page, Shapiro and Dempsey, "It would be premature to celebrate the triumph of democracy before knowing how and by whom the public is itself influenced."⁴ The media are the most powerful tool of modern society when it comes to shaping public opinion. When talking about the media, we are talking about achieving a mandated mission. They are a source of information and education that shape daily choices in people's lives. They also play a role in shaping people's thinking and influence their perceptions of what is happening in society. The media of the free market inform citizens about different views; they keep open channels of communication between rulers and the masses and between different groups in society; they provide a neutral zone in order to allow the formation of public opinion⁵. However, it is essential, if the media are understood as a political tool and force considered in a particular way by the major powers, international agencies and large corporations, used by them to achieve their political and economic goals. What happens to the big media agencies around the world? In fact, while they are always around to talk and to present news, views, and positions in their communities, their main purpose is to inform the public and to serve the political and economic goals set by the religious and political leaders.

4 Benjamin I. Page,, Robert Y. Shapiro and Glenn R. Dempsey, "What Moves Public Opinion?" *American Political Science Review* 81 (1987): 23.

5 J. Curran, "Mass Media and Democracy," 101.





Source: Odugbemi, Sina., Jacobson, Thomas. (2008). *Governance reform – under real – world conditions*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank 2008, 30.

Figure 1. National Democratic Public Sphere

A new era of globalisation has been launched around the world through the advancement of technological development. This allows for the quick flow of information from one end of the world to the other. The topics that once worried societies, primarily problems and issues at the local community level – questions about the church, for example – are no longer the only ones that affect the educational and moral shaping of generations to follow. Now, there is also the influence of wars and violence around the world – for instance the war in Iraq, terrorist attacks in Israel and Palestine, nuclear weapons in Iran, poverty in Africa, and the large number of migrants worldwide. This affects a change in the concept of media programmes and their place in everyday life. Violence and scandal skillfully replace the cultural, historical, and musical programmes. Simply put, public opinion depends on what is covered by the media⁶.

⁶ Sina Odugbemi, and Thomas Jacobson, *Governance reform – under real-world conditions: citizens, stakeholders, and voice* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank 2008), 34.

We may ask ourselves: “What kind of relationships with media build society?” Firstly, to produce particular social transformations, civil societies, NGOs, and international organisations are responsible for producing real pictures for certain issues. For example, a particularly sensitive topic worldwide is racist behavior and action. In this case, the objective of all these institutions would be to encourage media agencies to contribute to the fight against racism and enhance peace in the world as an urgent need. To achieve this, it is important for civil society activists, lobbyists, and advocates to build relationships and promote cooperation with the mass media actors – publishers, editors, editorial writers, and journalists – in order to generate public awareness about this particular situation and to provide accurate information and facts. This is the power and the real reason for the existence of the media. Relations with media actors are able to create fair, balanced coverage of a problem and would allow for an environment to support the current issues, thereby affecting public opinion and shedding light on the primacy of the problem.

Relations with the media are important because they serve to convince legislators that their actions are monitored, not only by people in their vicinity, but also by countless others who read newspapers, listen to radio, and watch TV; they create lobbying campaigns that build great support and transform issues that are initially non-public in nature into public issues.

The role of the media is primarily to present the truth—that is, to constantly reproduce reality and reveal the visible and less visible facts of things, to develop a just society according to the rule of law and driven by the ethics of human rights, and to develop and promote the idea of global citizenship.

The media are left to continually remind the great powers that the role of ruling the world should be fair and just, and that in the current moment they have the privilege and opportunity to make history by upholding world order and global society with values that respect universal human rights and the terms of democracy.

The different forms of media are prominent in the formation of public opinion. The mass media, combined with other political factors, can influence society through television coverage of public opinion concerning social conflicts, major crime stories, and the criminal justice system. More precisely, the process through



which a journalist covers and creates a story about a particular event often plays a key role in shaping the perception of the reality of millions of people in all spheres of life⁷.

The printed, audio, and audio-visual media often serve as models for the creation of attitude and behaviour. In the process of creating an image, the media construct a framework of views and behaviours that are acceptable, or even deserving of praise, as well as those which are unacceptable or outside of the main focus in a given society. Audiences can learn how to get involved in common social and work situations, how to deal with personal crises, and how to evaluate major social institutions such as the police or the medical profession. Media stories also delineate what is considered important or irrelevant by different groups of elites, what is consistent with existing standards of justice and morality, and how events are related to each other⁸. In this process, the media present a set of cultural values that their audience is likely to accept in full or in part, which is typical for the respective society they address. In this way, the media facilitate the integration and homogenisation of societies.

The mass media also serve as powerful guardians of political norms, as in any democratic society it is believed that freedom of the press constantly ensures that citizens are informed about government fraud.

How does the public receive information from the media? According to Graber⁹, print media provide factual details and explanations, including abstract ideas. Electronic media, especially television, provide a better sense of reality, which explains why specific audiences find electronic media more reliable than the print media. Electronic media also carry natural images, including body language and facial expressions, more effectively than print media, and are particularly well placed to respond to the emotions of the viewers. For most of the public, it is easier to gain insight about specific events and matters via electronic media. After all, the nature of each technology has implications for the political purposes for which it is useful. Therefore, political images transmitted through different types

7 Doris A. Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2010), 3.

8 Andrew Kohut, *A Content =Analysis: International News Coverage Fits Public's Ameri-Centric Mood* (Washington D.C.: Times Mirror Center for People and the Press, 1995).

9 Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, 5.



of media can vary greatly in sophistication, manner of presentation, and political consequences that they are likely to generate.

Especially interesting is the fact that national governments need to present not only on the national level but also to an international audience. In that way, they are designed to foster goodwill and promote specific goals, such as increasing trade, investment, and tourism. Societies such as Iraq, Afghanistan, the United States, and the United Kingdom spend large sums of money on what Philip Taylor calls “the mind of ammunition”¹⁰.

Political PR consultants play important roles in informing the public. With readiness and efficiency, they affect the creation of public opinion, which continues to play a role in creating the perception of the situation in the society.

What is the main role of the information service within the government sector? According to Black, public relations in a government body have two main objectives: to provide regular information about policies, plans, and achievements of the institution, and to inform and educate the public about the laws, regulations, and all issues that affect the daily lives of the citizens¹¹. They can also advise ministers and officials in terms of responses or potential responses to current and proposed policies. In accordance with the interpretation of Somerville¹², the usefulness of public relations in the British government is to manage the delivery of what the British government and its agencies generally want the public to be informed about; in the same way, to control the information deemed fit “for public consumption.” It should be mentioned that, in the face of the problem of manipulation of information or suppression of information in a democracy, citizens have the right to this information in relatively unchanged form. According to McNair, the manipulation, suppression, censorship, and

10 Trevor Morris and Simon Goldsworthy, *Public Relations for the New Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 30.

11 Sam Black, *Introduction to Public Relations* (London: Modino Press, 1989), Дејвис, Антони. *Совладување на Односите со Јавноста*, (Скопје: Икона, 2011), 257. [Author should transliterate Cyrillic titles]

12 Ian Somerville and Emma Wood, “Public Relations, Politics and the Media,” in Alison Theaker, *The Public Relations Handbook* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 107-118.



forging of information is a powerful tactic and must not be allowed¹³. But what happens when certain information is declared secret, based on what is in the “national interest?” For example, the British government is reportedly the most secret government in the world – even worse than, for example, the government of the United States, which says “American democracy could not function on the basis of the rational thinking of the common man.”¹⁴ On the one hand, certain information can be protected as “strictly confidential,” while on the other hand there are laws on behalf of transparent operations that promise unfettered access to “unclassified government information.” In this case, they can lead to abuse of a particular statutory provision that is made on behalf of the implementation of democracy in a society. For example, in this case, they can be limited to a very small number of questions to be answered in a given period.

Table 1. Crisis Communication

<p>In circumstances of crisis, certain actions are necessary:</p> <p>Prepare a crisis plan and call experts to help in the analysis and explanation of the crisis, as this will help open the lines of communication;</p> <p>Ensure that key political actors are familiar with the crisis plan;</p> <p>Forward all questions to the person who is trained to represent you in crisis. In this case, the entire staff is necessary to refer questions to this person without giving their own versions or opinions;</p> <p>Contact a media outlet and immediately start providing available information;</p> <p>Be open and tell the full story. If you do not, someone else will;</p> <p>Demonstrate the institution’s concerns about what happens to people who are affected by the situation;</p> <p>Stay up to date with the story until the media are interested in it;</p> <p>Meet with the team for crisis management in order to summarise the consequences of what happened, then review and evaluate the plan and recommend improvements to it.</p>	
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13 Brian McNair, “Performance in Politics and Politics of Performance: Public Relations, the Public Sphere and Democracy,” in *Critical Perspectives in Public Relations*, ed. Jacquie L’Etang and Magda Pieczska (London: International Thomson Business Press, 1996), 85.

14 Дејвис, Антони, *Совладување на Односите со Јавноста*, (Скопје: Икона, 2011), 261 [Author should transliterate Cyrillic titles].



On the other hand:	
Do not convey anything to the public of which you are unsure. Do not respond to questions by journalists and reporters that are designed to spread speculation;	
Do not minimise the problem and do not attempt to distort the real picture of current events. The media will soon learn the truth;	
Do not expose information about individuals if this disturbs their privacy;	
Do not say “no comment” or any comment without any context. If you do not have something appropriate to say, explain to journalists when they can expect the information. If information is not available, say so and make sure that journalists will soon be able to deliver the information;	
Do not pick favourites among the media and reporters;	
During the crisis, do not attempt to emphasise and promote the interests of the institution. It can be perceived as frivolous and improper to promote yourself during times of crisis.	

Source: Scott M. Cutlip Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom, *Effective Public Relations*, 9th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2006), 329.

NATO Policy Regarding the Public Image of the Alliance: Current Issues and Challenges

Since the 1990s, NATO has increased its popularity and the number of member states has also grown, with particular reference to the countries of the former Soviet Union. In terms of analysing the current case of Ukraine, the European Union and NATO are actually trying to attract the country to its ranks, but this works against the gravity of the country’s relationship with Russia. In this case, NATO’s strategy in Eastern Europe must change, and this change can best be made through a quality communication system that will allow the public to capture the positive attitude of NATO and the positive consequences in terms of its involvement in the overall situation of the country.

The overall current situation in Eastern Europe is an excellent indicator of the need to “defrost” the NATO troops on the continent and analyse the need for a more serious approach to the carrying out their mission. A well-designed approach to the public communication of its member states and to the foreign public will prevent a string of manipulative and negative propaganda about the



“true” meaning of NATO, especially in terms of speculation about the intentions of the organisation on the European continent.

The process of communication regarding NATO aspirations has been confusing since the outset of its expansion. In fact, poor communication between NATO and Russia began during the fall of the Iron Curtain. Promises that NATO would not expand to the East at the expense of Russia were made when both parties agreed on a united Germany joining NATO¹⁵. However, from a legal point of view, NATO’s main argument is that there is no formal legal agreement that prevents the Alliance from taking this step (expanding to the East). Consequently, this situation shows that there is a real communication problem between NATO and its member states and with other countries, on several levels: in terms of international law, the scope of its claims, and in terms of peacekeeping and avoidance of conflicts in Euro-Atlantic relations.

NATO is an organisation that has its own rules of decision-making, and the International Court of Justice has little impact on the moves undertaken by the organisation. Consequently, it is necessary to find the right strategic approach for it, in order for societies to be able to feel real benefits from NATO’s actions.

In this context, a particularly interesting move taken by NATO was the naming of Jens Stoltenberg as the new head of the Alliance. Stoltenberg has an excellent relationship with Germany (enjoying the full support of Angela Merkel) and Russia (showing great familiarity with Vladimir Putin). This situation can be considered a great opportunity to improve the relationship between NATO and Russia, especially in terms of collating their relationships after the Ukraine crisis. However, the Ukraine crisis is not the only area where it is necessary to have an understanding and good communication between Russia and NATO; on the contrary, it is necessary to mention other issues such as Iran’s nuclear programme, the fight against terrorism, and the situation in the Middle East.

The communication that takes place between NATO and non-members needs to be properly justified, i.e. the appropriate choice of words must be equally understandable to all parties involved, in order to prevent their being taken in a negative context and also to prevent further provocation of conflict.

15 MC 422, NATO Military Policy on Information Operations, op. cit.



Communication between stakeholders involved in the political and legal aspects means respect for the principles such as the rule of law, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the right to self-determination. This refers both to the powerful and the less powerful countries. In this context, it is important to note that NATO's process of communication with its member states and the public needs to take place, not only in terms of sending missions for military purposes, but also in terms of continuous advice, training, and helping improve current problems and challenges. This will allow for the benefits of the lasting partnership to be felt and will send a real message about NATO's mission and its goals¹⁶.

Although NATO is an organisation that is fighting to stop the crisis, preserving the peace and welfare of one country both politically and economically, every other crisis also raises the need for an appropriate change of approach. NATO needs to show a new form of strategic action, through which it defines the precise steps for its actions and goals. These must be directed towards carrying out missions that will be with the full support of its member countries, which seek to promote politics on a common ground¹⁷.

All this is necessary because non-NATO countries (as is the case with Russia) wonder about the aims of the NATO and the action it undertakes (such as full support of Ukraine, although this country is not a member of the Alliance). This can greatly contribute to the disturbance of interstate relations between NATO member states, as a result of insufficient clarity of vision and of the objectives and steps that need to be taken.

Promoting this kind of policy for NATO can lead to the risk of it losing its current position. That is, the current situation presents a double edged sword to NATO: the Alliance must show its strength and convince its members that it is still functioning at a high level and heading in the right direction, and it must convince non-member states that it still strives to preserve peace and security through the actions it undertakes¹⁸.

16 NATO Allied Command Operations (ACO) Directive 95-2–Strategic Communications (Brussels: NATO, 2009), available at <http://www.aco.nato.int/page300302915.aspx>.

17 *Report on Strategic Documentation* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2009).

18 Christopher H., Sterling, ed., *Military Communications: From Ancient Times to the 21st Century* (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO, 2008), 47.



Each NATO activity must be reviewed in terms of its communication policy output. That is, the internal and external access must be in accordance with the actions taken. From this perspective, it is necessary for NATO to reconsider the notion of the words “partnership” and “cooperation”, among its member countries, as well as among the general public that is affected by NATO-relevant issues.

The Need for Setting Up an Effective Strategic Communication System for NATO

For the NATO strategic process, it is necessary to develop long-term development plans and an appropriate approach towards the attention of the member states and those countries that are not members. In order to be able to present an efficient and effective strategy for NATO action, communication is necessary at a high level. This strategy needs to be fully compatible with current and future security threats, risks, and challenges to the national security of each member state. Also, it is very important for NATO to have clearly-defined strategic defense missions and guidelines for meeting these, in order to provide a real and viable mission¹⁹.

Achieving a high level of communication within the Alliance will set an excellent basis for further development of sustainable and effective armed forces, which will have a capacity according to the needs and changes of the strategic situation, as well as future requirements and challenges (in terms of the variability of the environment).

Also, it is necessary for NATO to create an environment where each member country feels accepted, as well as to ensure the success of Alliance missions through their efforts. However, the main issue that needs to be asked is as follows: are the NATO member states willing to accept the principles, objectives, and fundamental tasks required with each new challenge and target of NATO’s strategic activities? In this context, the contribution of the democratic, economic

¹⁹ Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).



development, regional cooperation, and real integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures is of great importance²⁰.

Local knowledge of each NATO country and its way of functioning in international relations can be of great help in the creation of a long-term communication strategy for NATO. In this way, it will largely be able to identify the impacts of terrorism, transnational crime, regional conflicts and crises, and ethnic and religious intolerance. Also, there will be chances to see the level of the country's perception in terms of contemporary security threats as well as opportunities to reply with their own forces. Measurement of the real situation is particularly important in the functioning of NATO and in the consideration of real opportunities and real needs²¹.

Regardless of whether a country belongs to NATO or other organisations, each country is interested in preserving its independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the unitary character of the polity. Moreover, each country is committed to the preservation and continued maintenance of regional security and stability through friendly relations and cooperation with its neighbours. Euro-Atlantic relations also contribute greatly to the development and maintenance of the national system and the security and stability of member states. This is what it takes to see that the strategic approach that NATO has adopted to achieve these goals is equally supported by its member countries²².

In this context, a particularly sensitive topic is the contribution to the operations in the overall range of missions led by NATO. All member States (even, in this case, non-members) need to know whether their internal policies are in accordance with the provisions of the Alliance in order to indicate the level of support they can provide. In fact, the strategic activities of the NATO Alliance aim to improve the political, defence, and military capacity of the member states and those countries that share an equal interest in Alliance missions (as exemplified by the Republic of Macedonia). In this context, the contribution of the countries aspiring to NATO

²⁰ Emily Goldman, *Strategic Communications; Theory and Application* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2008), 118.

²¹ O. Hoering and Des Sood, *Military application of Commercial Communications Satellites*, Proc. of MILCOMM, 1999, 107.

²² Ibid. 111.



membership is interesting, namely that they can be real promoters of the regional stability and security that the Alliance aims to achieve²³.

The main purpose of NATO is to provide for the independent planning, development, and maintenance of political and security conditions in the member states and the Euro-Atlantic region. It seeks to achieve and produce relevant capacities and skills in the planning and development of the forces necessary to contribute to peace and security, both domestically and in the region.

The strategic management of the communication system in NATO aims to achieve the full support of its mission and objectives by member states and aspiring members, and support the goals of the Alliance. Effective communication will contribute to the easing of dealing with the security challenges of the 21st century and help in the setting up of an efficient and well-functioning model for the organisation of political and security structures in the country. Also, effective communication between members and clients will enable consistent development, achievement and establishment of national strategic and operational facilities in accordance with the Alliance's needs. It aims at improving the logistics systems further, at the management system of the human resource aspect, for the participation of civilian and military personnel, and at improving the defensive infrastructure in order to fully meet the goals and objectives of the Alliance²⁴.

During the process of promoting a stable communication system, NATO must provide excellent relations with its member countries, as well as show its willingness to protect its members' national interests and also provide support in missions in other countries and threatened areas.

NATO leaders need to constantly review the mission and priorities of the Alliance, and to find appropriate ways to inform the public regarding their activities and further steps. In this context, one of the applied tactics can be to regularly update the NATO website, as well as all the additional structures (such as the International Military Staff and the military command structure). This implies a need for continued cooperation between the administrative staff and military structures in

23 *Psychological Operations*, Joint Publication 3-13.2, Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States of America, 2010, <http://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3-13-2.pdf>.

24 David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964).



order to synchronise their output policies. Also, NATO needs to regularly update the political aspects of the fundamental security developments worldwide. Thus, it would accurately determine the targets of the Alliance and be easier to manage relations between the Alliance and other international organisations and the member countries' partners on regional, economic, and security issues²⁵.

This means that within NATO there should be a high level of information about political, economic, and security issues. Consequently, there is need for common advice about future prospects, as there is a separation between the activities of the North Atlantic Council and other committees of NATO, as well as departments within the International Staff and International Military Staff.

Within this process, it is necessary to provide appropriate guidelines for the implementation of the Alliance's current policies. This includes the need to give advice, assistance, and also support for operational issues in the field of crisis management; coordination of political and economic aspects of cooperation; and coordination of political considerations. It is particularly important for NATO to create a high level of public relations awareness during its activity, through which foreign audiences and partner countries alike will be informed about NATO's objectives, policies, and goals²⁶.

Crisis management is a particularly important aspect of NATO's strategic communications approach to its partner countries as well as to others. This means that information and communication processes and technological aspects of the mechanisms of crisis management will greatly contribute to the promotion of the Alliance and the transfer of messages in the correct manner²⁷.

As an organisation that cares about security and the political well-being of the population, NATO is necessary and also has an obligation to inform the public (particularly in its member states and partner countries) of the actions

²⁵ David C. Gompert et al., *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency: RAND Counterinsurgency Study –Final Report* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), 98.

²⁶ Strategies d'influence, le decryptage d'Alain Juillet, *Communication Influence*, special edition 1 (2009).

²⁷ Robert Lowe and Spenser, ed., *Iran, Its Neighbors and the Regional Crises*. Chatham House Middle East Program Report (London:, British Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2006, 36.



it undertakes. In its current form, this organisation is taking care of all of this through a range of different communication activities, such as contacts with the media, websites, print and electronic publications, seminars, and conferences. All this, to a great extent, contributes to raising public awareness and to a better understanding of the issues and challenges that have affected the organisation; it contributes to a promotion of constructive debate on its policies and objectives. In fact, NATO may have an excellent output policy towards member states and partners, but if the public relations strategy is not suitable for the transmission of the information to the international public, then the main message can go in a completely different direction. It is continuously necessary to provide support to the main structures of the Alliance during briefings, interviews with journalists, and press conferences. It is especially important to perform regular screening and monitoring of the media in order to not appear to be lacking the needed information at the right time. For NATO, this is of particular importance because it is an organisation that ensures the security of nations around the world. Moreover, it is important to pay attention to public diplomacy because of the way the organisation creates its image for the foreign (general) public²⁸.

To set up a successful communications strategy for NATO, it is especially important to coordinate the work of the staff at the headquarters of the organisation, and to establish networks of communication between it and the other bodies of the Alliance. As for the function of advisor to the Chairman of the Military Committee, it is important that this position be filled by a person who will be responsible and contribute to the development and monitoring of the policies concerning military doctrine and public information. Moreover, it is important that the person in this function be included in all committees and working groups of the organisation, and that they be involved in ongoing activities and in coordinating and implementing overall strategies for informing the public. This means that this person would be required to have a close relationship with all bodies and to inform the public.

One of the main problems that may occur as a result of the inefficient management of NATO's external image is the threat of sharing confidential internal information.

28 NATO Strategic Communications Policy, SG (2009) 0794, Private Office of the Secretary General.



If an appropriate strategy for informing the public is lacking, or if the organisation allows this function to be run by unprofessional or incompetent persons, this type of error could occur. It may happen by unconsciously transmitting information that is key to the strategic actions of NATO as a result of access to important documents, information, and secret policies of the organisation. If there is a quality of NATO, in this case, there is possibility for early warning about the potential misuse of the information and crisis management.

In this context, it is especially important that the NATO Centre for Emergency Situations (SITCEN) helps the North-Atlantic Council, and that the Planning Committee of Defense and the Military Committee are shouldering their responsibilities in the field of regular consultations. This body is also a central point within the organisation in connection with the receipt, exchange, and distribution of political, military, and economic information. This body is responsible for all external communications from NATO headquarters, allowing contact with the countries, their strategic commands, as well as with other international organisations. It is very important the mutual communication is at a high level and perfectly feasible in terms of tension and crisis over the current political and security developments²⁹.

It is also necessary to mention the importance of NATO's specialised agency for Consultation, Command, and Control. This agency, based in Brussels and The Hague, aims to develop the Allied facilities in the area of communication-information systems organisation. The main role of this agency is to provide opportunities for continuous communication between the structures of command and control of NATO and its partner countries, especially in times of crisis. In this context, it comes to matters of these domains: operational research, surveillance, monitoring, control, and communication-information systems³⁰.

²⁹ NATO Strategic Communications Policy, 4.

³⁰ Velizar Shalmanov, "NATO, Consultation, Command and Control Agency," available at <http://www.afcea.org/europe/events/tni/documents/Dr.VelizarShalamanov.pdf>, accessed October 8, 2014.



Promotion of Strategic Communications within NATO

The process of promoting the strategic placement of the NATO communications system also provides a modern, effective, and secure system for achieving a continuous process of management and control. This is needed to continually apply modern technological solutions, development platforms, methodologies, application software, and reliable strategies in order to ensure the protection and security of data and resources used during communication.

For the development of strategic action in the field of communications, NATO aims to:

- Improve its capacity to prevent the appearance of adverse scenarios (scenarios of potential threats);
- Improve participation in multinational coalition operations through use of the full potential of communication-information system that is available to the organisation;
- Establishing main NATO goals, in order to achieve compatibility and interoperability across all member states and partner countries;
- Focus on upgrading and modernising network communication centres to build a global network of communication and exchange of information³¹.

Within the system of strategic communication activities, it is necessary to attain the creation of a developed system for:

- The exchange of information with a common domain;
- The intelligence system;
- A system to monitor operational situations;
- A system monitoring the communication of operational units.

When it comes to analysing the level of safety and security of the communication process within NATO, it is necessary to pay attention to³²:

31 Jack Wittman, "NATO Merges Five C4SR Agencies," *Defense News*, June 19, 2012, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120619/C4ISR01/306190007/NATO-Merges-Five-C4ISR-Agencies>, retrieved July 19, 2012.

32 Ibid.



- The development and management of facilities for information security;
- The development of a capacity for protection against cyber crime³³;

It is important to collect quality and qualified personnel in order to achieve the goals and missions of NATO in a timely fashion and to meet not only current but future security challenges. This will result in building a professional, balanced, and rewarding personal infrastructure that will be efficient, effective, and flexible and will also fit the new dynamic demands and challenges.

Economic and technological developments have a major impact on the development of an appropriate communication system within the military or the promotion of military skill. Modern communication strategies must be consistent with the new doctrines in terms of scientific research and technological development. In fact, communication and information technologies represent a great discovery in aiding the development of military thought and military technique, especially due to the ability to have communication between the countries.

Strategic communication greatly affects the achievement of positive results in command, management, and business intelligence, and increases accuracy and efficiency in action within the scope of work.

Geostrategic points are particularly important to consider when analysing the security aspect. These communications break down the boundaries of the state, both in terms of positive representation of goals and in terms of their level of acceptance by the public and their realisation. However, there are a variety of opportunities in different areas in terms of the development of the country in the field of communications and the wide range of the public approach.

³³ *National Framework for Strategic Communications* (Washington, DC: White House, 2010), 43.



Guidelines for Efficient and Effective NATO Strategic Communication

Today's lifestyles, reviewed in terms of the availability and communication of information, require the 24/7 commitment of individuals within an organisation that are responsible for this process. Regarding NATO, the setting up of the network of communications greatly affects NATO's actions, especially in terms of how it will be perceived by the public. The public perception is particularly relevant and has an impact on the success of NATO's operations and policies. NATO must use different channels, namely of traditional media and Internet-based media; it must involve the public in management and operation in order to build awareness so that they can understand and support its decisions and operations. This requires an institutional approach and a high level of coordination between member states and partner countries, i.e. between the relevant actors, in accordance with the procedures, policies, and principles of NATO.

An effective strategic communication policy within the NATO alliance requires:

- Clear goals of the strategic actions of NATO in the field of communications;
- Key principles of NATO strategic communication;
- Connectivity between the various information disciplines within NATO (public diplomacy, civil public affairs, military public affairs, information operations, and psychological operations).
- Clear designations of the role and authority of involved actors responsible for the communication process in NATO³⁴.

In fact, strategic communications represent a significant part of the internal commitment to achieve political security and maintain an effective military alliance.

According to Sakan, NATO strategic communications represent the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities – Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations, and

34 Di Pietro et al., "Military Secure Communications," 123.



Psychological Operations – in support of Alliance policies, operations, and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims³⁵.

The main principles and the key NATO strategic communications concern:

- Equally valuing the message across all the areas where it is transmitted;
- Monitoring the transfer speed of the information and making sure it is relevant and useful;
- Clarity and precision of the message;
- Effectiveness in terms of the effect of information transmitted – i.e. achieving a desired goal;
- Analysis of public opinion and the process of adaptation of Alliance policy on public attitudes regarding the matters presented.

The North Atlantic Council provides full support of the process of strategic communications within NATO. However, in order to successfully achieve this process, it is regularly required to achieve a strategic flow of information activities. In accordance with the goals and principles described above, there is the role of the secretary general and also the principal spokesperson for the Alliance. However, the North Atlantic Council gives precise directions about policy directions and decisions, and not only to the secretary general, but also for the Military Committee.

It is particularly important to maintain the controlled function of the Public Affairs Advisor, because the person who is responsible for this domain enables coordination and interaction between the strategic commands and strategic operations.

However, when it comes to taking on particular responsibilities regarding the communication process conducted within NATO, the maximum effectiveness of the actions of the North Atlantic Council and the secretary general is imperative. Also, it is necessary for member states to respect each other's responsibilities and for there to be constant coordination, with the goal of building a community through the communication of information. This will facilitate an easier realisation of operations, planning, and partnership between states and their representatives.

³⁵ Сакан, Момчило, *Војне науке*, Београд: ВИЗ, 2003 [Author: Cyrillic titles should be transliterated].



Additional guidance is required to be submitted to all bodies and individuals involved in the process of creating a long term and successful communication strategy for NATO, especially in the area of social media. However, when it comes to media with huge authority and influence, the organisation must work according to the media programme, while also being in line with its own abilities. For this purpose, it is necessary to keep up with all the innovations of the social networks, whereby they can be used in order to discuss current events and developments in which the organisation is involved, and to promote daily activities. However, the NATO authorities need to be careful when using social networks, as they must be careful not to compromise operational and organisational security. They must be careful not to transmit news and sensitive information via social media, especially if they are related to security issues. As we turn to the organisation's policy regarding respect for national laws, it is especially important not to violate these in the context of conveying these messages.

Drawing attention to the strategic communication process in NATO is particularly important because of the way it has controlled outgoing messages. It is designed not only for the domestic populations of member states, but also for a foreign population, which includes both allies and enemies. It is about creating a response to the environment that is based on a multitude of information that can be instantly accessed by everyone. (Picture 2)³⁶.

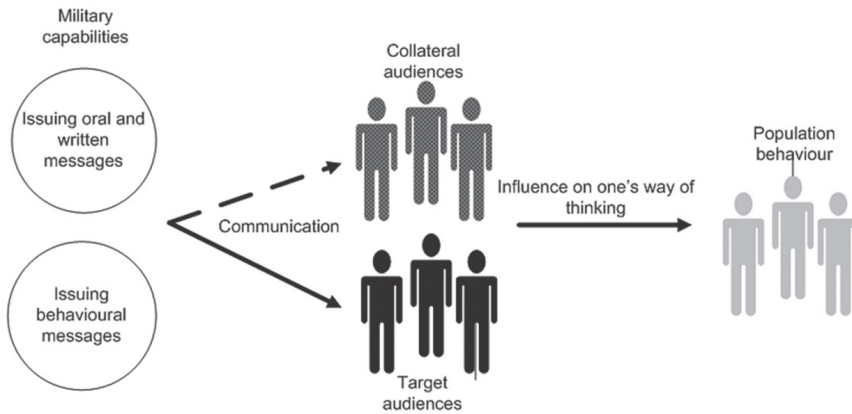
The control of information is as important within the intergovernmental communication of NATO and beyond. Moreover, in this context, it is necessary to pay attention to the concept of inter-ministerial flow of information within the government itself. More precisely, strategic communication must be considered on a global basis, and segmented within the institutions of the member states, partner countries, and within the organisation itself. In fact, the main purpose of NATO's strategic communications is to promote the behaviour of the target audience favoured by the actors involved in the communication.

The strategic communications of NATO aim to improve the image of the organisation and to encourage the audience's behaviour to be directed towards supporting the Alliance. That is, communication in this context contributes not

36 Anais Reding, Kristin Weed and Jeremy J. Gnez, *NATO's Strategic Communications concept and its relevance for France* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 8.



only to influencing the public’s perception, but also to influencing the behaviour of the public.



Source: Anais, Reding, Kristin, Weed, Jeremy, J., Gnez, *NATO’s Strategic Communications concept and its relevance for France*, RAND Europe, National Security, 2010, 8

Figure 2. Target and Collateral audience

To achieve an efficient and effective transfer of information at the right time and place and to conceptualise and achieve the main objectives of the organisation, it is necessary to revise the process of transferring information. This means that the internal hierarchy of NATO sometimes complicates the process of quality and timely information. For this purpose, it is necessary that more individuals from the organisation be engaged in the communication process, in order to make the process smoother based on pre-set rules and procedures.

The process of transferring the message during communication is very important and it consists of three levels³⁷:

- 1) The messages transmitted during communication are based on standards set by the NATO headquarters and by the North Atlantic Council, the Secretary General, and the Military Committee.

³⁷ NATO Allied Command Operations (ACO) Directive 95-2–Strategic Communications, op. cit.



- 2) Strategic processes are shaped and developed within the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), where the objectives and the necessary expertise for the information's transfer are thoroughly described.
- 3) Successive Force Commanders are responsible for what is written and said, as for the weight and substance of the said information.

Conclusion

The NATO Alliance's Strategic Communication of the NATO Alliance is a starting point for creating a positive image of the organisation compatible with its internal organisational structure, mission, and vision. In terms of daily developments and changes in the political-security concept around the world, it is important for NATO to be presented and experienced by the public as an organisation of high integrity, and as an organisation with a unified and synchronised policy and working assignments. Setting up an efficient and effective strategic communications framework is crucial for NATO. In conclusion, it is especially important for the Alliance to create a unified approach in the communication process between the member states and partner countries within the organisation and among the public (collateral and supportive public).

