

# THE EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN THE FIELD OF NATIONAL SECURITY

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*The research is dedicated to "Strategic Communication" and its elements. Either core element of strategic communication is enlightened through study of literatures. As a showcase the Second Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia is reviewed and studied. The outcomes achieved in the conclusion of the research proves the essence and importance of strategic communication in victory.*

**Key words:** *strategic communication, information operations, psychological operations, public affairs, national security*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The effective application of Strategic Communication in the field of National Security is essential to achieving national security objectives. Several areas in the concept of general communication began to develop in the last two decades. In particular, at present, we come across acronyms such as Information Operations (IO) and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) and Public Affairs (PA). The development of communication was carried out by allocating integrated communication technologies for use in implementing elements of the

national strategy. Thus, the regular use of the terms IO, PSYOPS and PA in the field of national security began to popularize the concept of "strategic communication." For example, we can show the period after the terrorist attacks in the USA in 2001.[1]

## 2. THE ESSENCE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

The term "strategic communication" has become a trend in recent years. Before starting the main body of the topic, we must begin clarifying what we mean by

strategic communication. Strategic communication means synchronizing words and actions and how selected audiences will receive them. It also includes programs and activities to communicate and engage with a targeted audience. Strategic communications are essential for countering hostile narratives and engaging with the global community. Therefore, strategic communication is viewed as something that should be used to support national interests and be synchronized with national power. The majority of the country's political and public spheres have developed strategic communication. Every government organization has a unique method of strategic communication. As a result, its inappropriate application has become widespread and needs to be clarified. Strategic Communication is one of the main tools for pursuing and maintaining permanent national objectives for National Security. Regarding national security, strategic communication is a definitional draft devoid of any theoretical or methodological underpinnings and a logical practice entangled in a battleground of disciplines and professions that intend to adopt the idea in one way or another without considering the intellectual ramifications. Therefore, despite the mutilation of the lexicon, they need to recognize the

significance of the strategy concept and attempt to accommodate it. [2]

We can mention another widespread definition of strategic communication. The "capability" to disseminate messages in the quickest, most synchronized, transparent, and most effective way to reach the intended audience would be considered strategic communication. Strategic communication began in the economic sphere and has evolved into a phenomenon whose adaptability and applicability have been hotly debated in the current global security environment. [3]

Implementing strategic communications in national security is an integral part of the state's efforts to achieve political and defense objectives. Strategic communication efforts should reinforce key themes and messages and be constantly measured against defined objectives. As a result, adjustments must be made, and those responsible for implementation must be held accountable. Strategic communications efforts are an essential component of any country's national security. Strategic Communications play a vital role in winning in non-war contexts. Strategic communication is the primary means of action against dangers that can threaten the values and security of the state. Moreover, it can be used effectively against

external threats in modern times. The formation of the practical application of Strategic Communication in the field of National Security depends on the mutual study of its main principles and the experiences of its application in the Second Karabakh War.

### **3. THE PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

The main principles of Strategic Communication help stakeholders of National Security to work together to identify, prevent, and respond to domestic and international security threats. Strategic communications combine actions, words, and images to achieve the desired effect. Visible leadership behavior and integrated actions and messages are essential to effective strategic communication. If we look at Strategic Communication, some concepts emerge. We can identify the most important ones and evaluate them as fundamental principles. National security is a complex and dynamic field involving many stakeholders, including government agencies, military personnel, law enforcement agencies, private companies, and civil society organizations. Effective strategic communication can play a vital role in achieving these goals by building relationships, promoting understanding, developing trust, managing crises, countering

misinformation, and enhancing cooperation.

Firstly, building relationships with key stakeholders is a critical component of national security. Relationship-building with foreign governments, media outlets, and civil society organizations can benefit national security agencies from strategic communication. These connections can make it easier to work together to address common security issues like cyber security, counterintelligence or terrorism. Effective communication strategies can enhance trust and understanding among diverse stakeholders, reducing the risk of conflicts and misunderstandings.[4]

Next, promoting understanding is another important aspect of strategic communication in national security. Understanding different cultures, communities, and nations is vital to ensure that national security objectives are achievable. Strategic communication can help bridge knowledge gaps, promote understanding, and reduce misperceptions between different groups. [5] Strategic communication makes sure that the message is conveyed clearly to the intended audience while also being accurate and effective.

Thirdly, building trust is critical for national security. Strategic Communication can help national security agencies build trust with the public by providing accurate and transparent information, addressing

concerns, and responding to criticisms. Effective communication can nurture a relationship of trust and understanding between the stakeholders as well. In turn, this will allow for important security concerns to be shared openly and productively.

Then, managing crises effectively requires a coordinated response from national security stakeholders. Strategic Communication can be used to manage crises such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or cyber-attacks. Effective communication can provide accurate and timely information to the public, enhancing their understanding, reducing panic and confusion, and potentially saving lives.

The final principle, strategic communication, can assist in battling false and misleading information that could be used by enemies to erode national security objectives. In today's information age, misinformation and disinformation are major issues because various actors use them to spread harmful information.

Based on the principles, we can see the application of Strategic Communication in various areas of our environment. According to the US Army, conventional and nuclear kinetic capabilities are fundamental principles in strategic communications to influence the appropriate audience. [6] Because action, talk, and safety are all equally important. Strategic communication is one of the critical elements of the "coordinated deterrence" strategy adopted by the

United States in 2006 and is still used today.[7] Ensuring that the adversary fully and accurately understands your intentions and capabilities in the new global security environment is critical to use coercion strategies to influence an adversary's strategic decisions. As strategic communication is used in the security sector, discourse and action packages importance increases.

If we refer to the official NATO website, we can see that Strategic Communications includes many other elements. These include public diplomacy, political marketing, persuasion, international relations, military strategy, etc. can be cited as an example.[8] When we look at the traditional communication strategies of the first years of NATO's existence, it seems that it focused primarily on increasing awareness of the Soviet military threat by developing political discourses that would influence the public opinion of the member states against the Eastern Bloc.[9] Let's understand how NATO views the principles of strategic communication.[10]

a. Consistency in Action-Discourse Packages: An institution must consistently give the relevant public the most accurate and satisfactory information on any subject of interest. Additionally, the institution's actions and negotiations should always support one another during communication.

b. Integrity: entails harmony and communication between the tactical and strategic levels.

c. Rapid response: The organization must obtain the most accurate information quickly and without errors and bring it to the attention of the relevant public.

d. Transparency: An organization must be transparent in its intent, purpose, and, most importantly, in sharing information.

e. Strategic Leadership: Strategic communication is the element the organization's leader manages. Strategic leadership sets policies to shape the organization's official discourse.

f. A decentralized approach and initiative in Strategic Conversations: The defined strategic talks should be communicated to all institution employees, and everyone should have continuous, anywhere, anytime access to these discussions.

g. Continuity: The institution must stay in touch with the appropriate public. There shouldn't be any breaks in the flow of communication. At every opportunity, actions and speeches highlighting the organization's objectives should be shared with the public and supported by written, verbal, and visual materials.

h. Clarity: It is essential to be clear about the communication's goals and the desired outcome. Communication procedures without a purpose and unpredictable consequences must be avoided.

i. Creativity: To raise its "corporate awareness" in front of the

relevant public, an organization must continuously follow innovations.

j. Ability to analyze: The organization should understand the communication environment and pertinent public opinion.

When these principles of NATO are examined, it can be said that the deception and counterintelligence operations conflict with the strategic communication concept, which is based on continuously, transparently, and accurately informing the relevant public. [11] For instance, the units in charge of information operations may want to show more or less the capabilities used in this exercise due to strategic objectives. In contrast, the Public Relations Office wants to share accurate information about any NATO exercise with the relevant public. In addition, military intelligence officers may be opposed to disclosing information on this subject to open sources as a principle of counterintelligence, even though the Public Relations Office strives to provide transparency by sharing as much information as possible with the related public.[12]

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION IN PRACTICE**

In 2020, during the Second Karabakh war, Azerbaijan recaptures territory around Karabakh after six weeks of fighting and Armenian forces agreed to return to

Azerbaijan all occupied territory outside of the former Soviet Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast [13].

In the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan used strategic communication to advance its national security interests presenting itself as the victim of Armenian aggression and depicting the conflict as a fight against terrorism, reiterating the United Nation's resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 [14]. Azerbaijan's strategic communication efforts were focused on shaping public perceptions, gaining international support, and controlling the narrative of the conflict.

Firstly, Azerbaijan used social media campaigns, official statements, and diplomatic efforts to present itself as a victim and counterbalance the Armenian allegations [15]. By highlighting the destruction and loss caused by Armenian forces in the conflict, Azerbaijan attempted to gain empathy and support from the international community. An active process of influence aimed at persuading the relevant public, taking into account people's current attitudes and behaviors, and measuring changes in those attitudes and behaviors is what communication is instead of a straightforward and one-way exchange of information.[16]

Azerbaijan implemented its strategic communication strategies in the field of war through information warfare groups. The Nation also used strategic communication to showcase its military successes and technological advancements, emphasizing its ability to defend its sovereignty and territorial Integrity. This approach served to boost national morale and demonstrate dominance on the battlefield, thereby advancing its national security interests.

Another significant strategic communication strategy was the increasingly sophisticated way Azerbaijan used its Israeli UAVs and Loitering Munitions (LMs). Those systems were not only used to strike, but real-time video from these weapons was used to fight an information warfare campaign via social media outlets, hoping to demoralize Armenian public support for their government. [17]

The high-definition videos produced by drones and used by Azerbaijani and Turkish information warfare teams had a dramatic effect on the domestic front of Armenia. Mothers closely scanned dozens of strike videos on social media, hoping their sons were not in one. Never before in the history of warfare has an information war campaign had such immediate and dramatic high-quality video footage. [18]

We consider this an example that supports the idea of complete

superiority of Azerbaijan's defense sector in Strategic Communication.

In terms of diplomatic and persuasion principles, during the Second Karabakh War, President Ilham Aliyev directed Azerbaijan's informational campaign and was interviewed by media organizations from various nations in four languages. More than 30 interviews with foreign media outlets, including the BBC [19], CNN [20], France24 [21], Sky, Al Jazeera, Fox TV, ARD, Le Figaro newspaper, TRT and RBC were conducted by the president. Through these interviews, President Aliyev represented Azerbaijan worldwide. Despite the bias of the global media, President Aliyev's interviews helped shift the dynamics of the information war in Azerbaijan's favor. [22]

Second, by suggesting the presence of foreign fighters, and mercenaries, among Armenian forces, Azerbaijan's strategic communication efforts sought to frame the conflict as a war against terrorism. Azerbaijan sought to gain international acceptance for its military actions and support for its efforts to combat the threat of terrorism by portraying the affiliation between the Armenian forces in Karabakh and global terrorist organizations. We can cite as an example the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian War, which brings together the international relations and military domains. The fallout

from Russia's aggression in Ukraine hastened the development of Strategic Communication within NATO and has also drawn attention to the country's defense strategies. Moreover, it supports the idea that the North Atlantic Alliance shouldn't have been surprised at all about the unfolding of the events, because the Russian side had been talking about what they did for years. Media and social networking tools should be used in order to perform STATCOM assignments. [23]

In his book "The Art of War," the famous Chinese strategist Sun Tzu states that strategists win the battle before the War. However, in another chapter, he said that fighting or invading was not the highest professionalism in War and that he saw the perfection of fighting in breaking the enemy's will to fight. [24] The fact that the Armenian side was forced to turn over control over the Lachin region, and cities like Shushi, and Agdam in the aftermath of Second Karabakh War is a clear illustration of Sun Tzu's statements. [25]

## 5. CONCLUSION

The successful application of strategic communication is critical for national security during times of War. It helps to shape public perception, gain international support, and control the narrative of

the conflict. Strategic communication's practical application in the area of national security depends on the mutual study of its guiding principles and the lessons learned from its use during the Second Karabakh War.

In this conflict, Azerbaijan used strategic communication to its advantage, and the effectiveness of its communication strategies influenced the outcome of the conflict. Azerbaijan's national security strategy during the Second Karabakh War heavily relied on the use of strategic communication. By portraying itself as a victim of aggression and framing the conflict as a war against terrorism, Azerbaijan was able to advance its national security interests, control the narrative of the conflict, and win international support.

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