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# Theorizing Strategic Communication in Parsimony from the U.S. government perspective

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**Abstract:** Although the term *Strategic Communication* seems to be a rising topic in communication studies, it is obvious that the term has been hardly visualized and explained from the U.S. government perspective in academic work. This paper theoretically visualizes strategic communication processes. The Department of State and the Department of Defense streamlined the use of strategic communication in different terms but they both focus on using soft power over hard power to gain support from foreign audiences through communication. Both departments especially after the 9/11 attacks have developed programs to win hearts and minds of the target audience. This paper shows the salient process of strategic communication programs and conceptualizes principles of strategic communication from their perspectives. This paper after all illustrates the processes for theorizing strategic communication.

**Keywords:** strategic communication, Department of State, Department of Defense, public diplomacy

## Introduction

It is convenient and safe to mention that the term *strategic communication* carries some kind of meaning holistic but nebulous despite the term's popularity after 9/11 in the United States as the George W. Bush administration popularized it (Halloran, 2007). Over the last few years, a wide variety of industrial, academic, governmental, and non-profit institutions have used the term in a form of their own interpretation, which lead to convoluted confusion while they attempt to preoccupy supreme authority in terms of agreed-upon meaning of strategic communication. Although the term literally seems to refer to conversation, dialogue, and any form of opinion exchanges, these institutions tend to be subordinate to self-obsession of righteousness to insist that definition and usage of strategic communication should be understood and performed under each one's independent guidance. In other words, it will not be feasible to share a common concept of strategic communication until the very representative and unified consensus is accepted among the strategic communication community.



maintenance of national security because the absence of official definition allows another confusing birth of strategic communication definition and application at the coiner's interests, which can conflict with the government interests (as will be discussed in a later section). A thorough review over definitions of strategic communication is inevitable in generating the superior definition, which should integrate as many adoptable areas of strategic communication as possible in order to settle in social consensus aiming at successful policy-making that will eventually lead to securing national security. It needs to be clarified that the term *strategic communication*, first of all, gets confusing whether an "s" is added at the end. It seems that industrial or public relations organizations prefer to define the term with the "s." Typing "strategic communications" on Google leads to some recognizable definitions for the industry use. O'Malley Communications Inc, a PR company, defines it as "using corporate or institutional communications to create, strengthen or preserve, among key audiences, opinion favourable to the attainment of institutional/corporate goals" (O'Malley, 2012). Another website states that strategic communications is "a process guided by the relentless pursuit of answers to deceptively simple questions [such as] who has to think or act differently for that to happen? What would prompt them to do it?" (Communication Leadership Institute, 2012). Another institution argues: "strategic communications is an art – the art of presenting ideas clearly, concisely, persuasively and systematically in a timely manner to the right people ... maximizing available resources and positioning your organization to be proactive" (Communication Leadership Institute, 2012). These definitions evidently show the discrete usage or meaning of the term, with "s."

Public or non-profit organizations, on the other hand, adopt the term without "s." A study conducted by UNICEF states:

„Strategic Communication is an evidence-based, results-oriented process, undertaken in consultation with the participant group(s), intrinsically linked to other programme elements, cognisant of the local context and favouring a multiplicity of communication approaches, to stimulate positive and measurable behaviour and social change. (UNICEF 2005: xiii)

The System Staff College of the United Nations also sees strategic communication as an important tool to carry out its humanitarian work by defining, "strategic communication takes a client-centred approach, it involves the development of programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences [and actors] to achieve management objectives" (Klaverweide, 2006: 4). Another global organization The World Bank states that strategic communication is "a stakeholder- or client-centered approach to promote voluntary changes in people's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to achieve development objectives" (Cabanero-Verzosa and Garcia, 2009: 5). Similarly, strategic communication can be referred to as a process of using communication, "aiming at increasing the level of awareness and creating change in behaviour of actors and the relationship amongst and between actors" (Klaverweide, 2006: 6). In a nutshell, strategic communication in non-profit organizations as opposed to industrial ones is used to emphasize a group rather than an individual, social change rather than personal profit, and relationships rather than goals.

In contrast to moderate efforts from profit and non-profit organizations to define strategic communication(s), those of college level scholars excluding military academies are surprisingly sparse and meager. Few definitions are findable: for example, strategic communication is about "dealing with issues that might jeopardize an organization's very survival"; it is understood to convey the best message "through the right channels, measured against well-considered organizational and communications-specific goals"; and it is about

having “a plan, not simply reacting and responding” (IDEA, 2011). On the other hand, strategic communication as defined in government is more abundant, robust, focused, and cohesive.

Although the U.S. government began to recognize the importance of defining, planning, and implementing strategic communication in less than one decade, it is worth noting that the White House has been reluctant to conceptualize what strategic communication is, and it has been anemic about how President directs the use of strategic communication to his cabinet members as Commander in Chief or Chief Executive Officer. Rather, the highest hierarchical organization allows two paramount organizations in charge of maintaining national security to develop strategic communication from scratch: the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of State (DOS). In fact, the former has taken more aggressive approach to developing definition and usage of strategic communication since 2006 than the latter unlikely to use the term *strategic communication* explicitly because the States Department appears to have a tendency of preferring the term *public diplomacy* to strategic communication. A hypothesis is built to explain that these terms are denoting the same meaning in just different spellings. A report by Government Accountability Office states, “We use the terms ‘public diplomacy’, (...) and ‘strategic communication’ interchangeably” (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009: 1). Of course, both terms can often share the same meaning carrying the connotation: using neither physical nor hard power to engage people abroad in favor of the U.S. government policies and interests.

DOD initiated its official effort to take advantage of preoccupying strategic communication as a pioneer government agency by publishing the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Execution Roadmap for Strategic Communication. The Roadmap defines strategic communication from the military perspective:

„Focused United States Government processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen or preserve conditions favorable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programs, and actions synchronized with other elements of national power.” (QDR Execution Roadmap for Strategic Communication 2006: 3)

A several years later, 2009, DOD reintroduced the amended definition:

„Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of US 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.” (The Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms 2009: 518)

Since 2006, it has been significant for DOD to be determined to become the chief player of using strategic communication in terms of authority; it offers a host of conceptions and specific points of strategic communication. The 2008 Principles of Strategic Communication report, a short white paper, notes that strategic communication – as an emerging and extremely pertinent joint concept, but still a developing concept – is “the orchestration and/or synchronization of actions, images and words to achieve a desired effect” (2008: 4). The report for the first time among all official documents suggested nine principles of strategic communication, taking a bold step to develop strategic communication. The principles are: Leadership-Driven, Credible, Dialogue, Unity of Effort, Responsive, Understanding, Pervasive, Results-Based, and Continuous. (2008: 4-6). DOD advances the concept of strategic communication in its 2009 report, asserting that strategic communication in a broader sense is “the process of integrating issues of audience and stakeholder perception into

policy-making, planning, and operations at every level.”(Report on Strategic Communication 2009: 1). In light of formulating strategic communication DOD inserted the new word *process*. Strategic communication as “process” appears to refer to an effort of improvement for an alignment of actions and information that requires no structures or facilities. In other words, strategic communication is an intangible entity to communicate with: no need for tangible capabilities since it is just a “process.” DOD mired itself into the common inadvertent process of over broadening and/or overdeveloping strategic communication when creating a new concept. Because strategic communication is a “process,” there should be a roomful of vacant space for others in other industries to create another concept of strategic communication that can even exacerbate DOD’s pioneer efforts in preoccupying the authority of functioning strategic communication. Hence it is necessary for DOD to try to conceptualize strategic communication in a narrow sense, rather than viewing it as a just “process” that could be implemented without any support of organizational and governmental functions.

DOD’s formidable rival is the Department of Defense (DOS) when it comes to using and operating strategic communication despite the absence of explicit definition of the term from DOS. As mentioned before, DOS has never defined what strategic communication is and how it is used for the department’s interests although Bureau of Public Affairs: Strategic Communications serves as one of the divisions for DOS (see US Department of States website). Not surprisingly, the bureau provides no information or definition directly related to strategic communication. It seems to be fair to assume that DOS with its main goals of informing and influencing foreign audiences is unlikely to use the term *strategic communication*, which connotes militaristic meaning that is prone to conscious or subconscious resistance of foreign audiences to the U.S. government foreign policies; rather DOS plays its role with the term *public diplomacy*, which represents apparatus of building state-to-state relations as well as state-to-audience relationships, while DOD’s role is melted into strategic communication when accomplishing its goals in battlefields without using military power. In short, even if the two terms mean nearly same, DOS prefers to call it public diplomacy.

Despite that fact that DOS has barely used the term *strategic communication*, President George W. Bush in 2006 devolved authority to DOS as the lead for strategic communication, placing it “in charge of the administration’s worldwide strategic communication” (Young and Pincus, 2008). And the Bush administration’s Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee in collaboration with DOS published a report including an ambiguous but integrated concept of the two terms, stating, “Public diplomacy and strategic communication should always strive to support our nation’s fundamental values and national security objectives” (U.S Department of State 2007: 2). It also adds that communication and public diplomacy activities should:

- Underscore our commitment to freedom, human rights and the dignity and equality of every human being
  - Reach out to those who share our ideals
  - Support those who struggle for freedom and democracy
  - Counter those who espouse ideologies of hate and oppression.
- (U.S. Department of State 2007: 2)

After President Obama took office in 2009, DOS focuses on public diplomacy instead of strategic communication with regard to managing its role. Public diplomacy like strategic communication carries multiple definitions with no unanimous agreement. But defining the term *public diplomacy* is a bit simpler than strategic communication because public

diplomacy, the orthodox field of government operation, limits private industries to interfere. According to the Public Diplomacy Alumni Association website (2011), three agreed-upon definitions are as follows:

1. Seeking to promote the national interest of the United States through understanding, informing and influencing foreign audiences (DOS).
2. Official government efforts to shape the communications environment overseas in which American foreign policy is played out, in order to reduce the degree to which misperceptions and misunderstandings complicate relations between the U.S. and other nation (Hans N. Tuch, author of *Communicating With the World*).
3. Promoting the national interest and the national security of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad (About U.S. Public Diplomacy: 2011).

Given the definitions, it is not nonsense to say that public diplomacy can be defined as a government's strategies to implement foreign policy and achieve national interests through communication with people of foreign nations by providing information and outreach programs for them. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton elaborates on the strategy, arguing that successful public diplomacy is embodied by making public engagement "every diplomat's duty through town-hall meetings and interviews with the media, organized outreach, events in provincial towns and smaller communities, student exchange programs, and virtual connections that bring together citizens and civic organizations" (Clinton 2010: 22).

With the combination of confusing usage and connotation of DOD and DOS in terms of clarifying the two terms, Congress played a go-between role in encouraging the White House to address the confusion of strategic communication terminology, introducing the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. In particular, it required President Obama "to submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on a comprehensive interagency strategy for public diplomacy and strategic communication" (National Framework for Strategic Communication 2010: 1). In response to the congressional requirement, the White House published a white paper titled *National Framework for Strategic Communication* in March 2010. In the cover letter, President Obama writes, "I am providing a report on my Administration's comprehensive interagency strategy for public diplomacy and strategic communication of the Federal government." (Obama 2010: 1)

After admitting that the term *strategic communication* became popular over the few years but diverse uses of the term causes significant confusion, the white paper epitomizes a wide range of usage, applications, and aims of strategic communication. First of all, the paper refers to strategic communication(s) as: "(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" (National Framework for Strategic Communication 2010: 2-5). In the definition, the White House apparently subordinates public diplomacy to strategic communication, rather than using them as synonyms. It in turn offers the definition of public diplomacy, which seeks promotion for "the national interest of the United States through understanding, engaging, informing, and influencing foreign publics and by promoting mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people from other nations around the world" (ibid: 6).

To represent the aforementioned definitions in a visible fashion, the following table is added:

<b>Entity of Strategic Communication(s)</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>PR Firms</b>	Using corporate or institutional communications to create, strengthen or preserve, among key audiences, opinion favourable to the attainment of institutional/corporate goals.
<b>UNICEF</b>	An evidence-based, results-oriented process, undertaken in consultation with the participant group(s), intrinsically linked to other programme elements, cognisant of the local context and favouring a multiplicity of communication approaches, to stimulate positive and measurable behaviour and social change.
<b>Department of Defense</b>	Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of US 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.
<b>Department of State</b>	Promoting the national interest and the national security of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad.
<b>The White House</b>	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.

Table 1: Various definitions of strategic communication

In the following explanations, the paper emphasizes the importance of synchronization, which coordinates words and deeds from the beginning of policy-making. Synchronization of words and deeds takes the communicative value of actions into account, and it eventually sends messages to audiences who interpret them, based on their culture and beliefs. In other words, strategic communication through synchronization of words and deeds “as well as the effective execution of deliberate communication and engagement” is the key to accomplishment of successful U.S. foreign policy (ibid: 5). In addition, the report enumerates priorities when communication efforts are made for strategic communication affecting foreign audiences’ belief and behavior. The priorities are to convince foreign audiences to “recognize areas of mutual interest” with the United States, to persuade foreign audiences to “see the United States as a constructive role player,” and to encourage foreign audiences to regard “the United States as a respectful partner in efforts to meet complex global challenges” (ibid: 6). It is clear that this report originating from the White House officially announces the definition, goals, and positions of strategic communication including the boundary of public diplomacy, which is still an essential part of strategic communication. The report implies that strategic communication is critical to upholding global legitimacy and performing the U.S. policy.

## Historical and Theoretical Origins of Strategic Communication

The concept or the notion of strategic communication is not built in a day, nor does it come out of nowhere albeit relatively seemingly fresh. Tracing far back to strategic communication's origins rests on the era of Aristotle as the basic theory of communication for individuals and organizations is derived from human nature. In ancient Greece, communication known as the use of language to stimulate the public to think and act in a certain way was synonymous with the art of rhetoric (Argenti 2009). In Aristotle's book, *The Art of Rhetoric*, the root of communication theory is found: "Every speech is composed of three parts: the speaker, the subject of which he treats, and the person to whom it is addressed, I mean the hearer, to whom the end or object of the speech refers" (quoted in Donfried 1974: 35). Aristotle refers to "the speaker" as creator, "the subject" as message, and "the hearer" as the public. After Aristotle, there were numerous elites of developing communication throughout Roman Empire and the Dark/Middle Ages, but it could not be noticed as a form of strategic communication until Pope Gregory XV established a new "papal department," the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, in 1622 (Taylor 1995: 111). The term *propaganda*, then, was referred to as efforts to convince a large number of people about faith in Christianity and political leaders. It appeared that propaganda using a method of persuasion settled in as a model of communication; however, going through modern wars from World War I, propaganda was associated with the negative connotation as a tool for disseminating information distorted, manipulative, deceptive, and irrational. Framing messages with the organized attempt to change behavior, affect belief, and inculcate attitude of target audience is the common theory of modern propaganda.

By relating propaganda with strategic communication armed with "programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences," (National Framework for Strategic Communication 2010: 2) it is difficult to deny that strategic communication is eligible to take advantage of both negative and positive sides of propaganda's tenet (Taylor 1995: 111). The former represents lying and deception to make the target audience fall for the message the sender fabricates, whereas the latter underscores the benefit of sharing information so the target audience would have a chance to know better. There exists a tiny line between propaganda and information engagement, depending on who uses which one; shortly, it is propaganda if the enemy uses.

During World War II, the world witnessed vicious propaganda competitions. Political ideologies between totalitarianism and democracy were center located in triggering the battle. Deciding to play the lead for the war, the U.S. government performed not only striking physical blows at the enemy states but also bombarding psychological persuasion or propaganda at audiences of the states. Reluctant to use the word *propaganda*, the government established two organizations by explicitly excluding the word but including information and strategic: Office of War Information (OWI) and Office of Strategic Services (OSS). OWI dealt with white propaganda while OSS was in charge of black propaganda (Taylor 1995: 226). Information covered with black propaganda was used to vilify and demonize the enemy in a covert operation covered with false sources, fabrications, and lies. White propaganda, by contrast, came with overt information sources, informing foreign and domestic audiences that the U.S. government tried to influence and persuade them to support its efforts to win the war in an issue of good versus evil. In order for the government to accomplish the victory of the information or propaganda competition, it cultivated propagandists utilizing any possible media such as posters, advertising, leaflets, radio, books, cartoons, magazines, and newspapers. All the media aimed to foment the foreign audience to resent their soldiers and to urge the domestic audience to embrace inconvenience and sacrifice in the name of

patriotism. The government efforts to win the competition showed that propaganda through media information dissemination at target audience could be understood as psychological persuasion that encourages the audience to change or maintain attitude and belief toward national goals in a form of communication. In a narrow sense, Baran and Davis (2005) argue that communication in terms of sending messages to change target audience's attitude is equivalent to well-organized propaganda as the theory of symbolic interactionism suggests that when people receive meaning on a certain event through symbolic message delivered by media, the meaning controls those people's opinion and attitude. Similarly based on the definition and objectives of the White House, strategic communication with the activities of aiming at communicating and engaging with intended audiences to affect their beliefs and perspectives is not massively different from the core of propaganda. In addition, public diplomacy, according to the United States Information Agency's definition (About U.S. Public Diplomacy 2011), supposed to promote "national interest through influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and their counterparts abroad" shares common elements with propaganda. In other words, strategic communication and public diplomacy accommodate some amount of conceptual overlap with propaganda even though the U.S. government is likely to dislike this idea.

The end of WWII indicated another advent of war era: the Cold War. The tension between the Soviet Unions and the United States reflected a new faith in the power of propaganda. It was ironic that the world after WWII strived to eradicate propaganda through "denazification propaganda," which aimed at annihilating militarism and imperialism (Taylor, 1995). In light of the efforts to rebuild the world damaged by the war, the U.S. government had to spend billions of dollars to fight against the spread of communism and totalitarianism. But the Vietnam War dragged the government into another battle of propaganda against communism. Since the United States kept itself from using the term *propaganda* in battlefields from WWI, it was necessary for the country to come up with a new communication method to conduct psychological persuasion operations in Vietnam. President Lyndon B. Johnson said in May 1965, "We must be ready to fight in Vietnam, but the ultimate victory will depend upon the hearts and the minds of the people who actually live out there ... for the cause of freedom throughout the world" (Johnson 1965: para. 8.). From his speech, the U.S. army picked the words *the hearts and minds* to develop as a campaign, "Winning hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people" who were encouraged to resist "the North Vietnamese communists and the home-grown insurgents, the Viet Cong" (Bell 2008). Major Gen. Ed Lansdale privileging values on words and music over guns to win the war organized a group of people who could sing and create music in support of the campaign (ibid.). He hoped that people in Vietnam were persuaded to consider American soldiers friends, not invaders.

Though the Vietnam War turned out to be one of the greatest humiliations in the U.S. military history, the spirit of "Winning hearts and minds" has been passed down and regarded as an important part of military operations. Koch points out that the U.S. military planned to use the campaign for the war in Iraq from 2003 with the more sophisticated operational program, called PSYOP or psychological operations. The plan was to deliver public messages to Iraq insurgents and citizens that as long as they do not attack the U.S. soldiers and provide assistance to find WMDs, insurgents would go free and citizens would be rewarded. Disseminating the messages was carried out via PSYOP devices such as leaflets, radio and television broadcasts, and more modernly, cellular phone texting (Koch 2003).

Although no official report on the effectiveness of PSYOP has been out yet, the winning hearts and minds campaign goes on. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, Commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan, emphasized the importance of maintaining the campaign in 2009. He reported the Obama administration that without the hearts and minds of the people, the war would fail, saying that if Afghanistan people "view us as occupiers and the enemy, we can't be successful

and our casualties will go up dramatically” (Keck, 2009). His approach to the campaign can be conceptually analyzed that winning the hearts and minds of Afghan civilians would lead the U.S. troops to the places Taliban hides. Thus it is safe to point out that the inevitable principle of the winning hearts and minds, at least for the U.S. military forces, is to obtain foreign audience’s support by understanding, informing, educating, and persuading them. Not surprising if the winning hearts and minds campaign is already embedded into one of the main pillars of strategic communication for the forces.

Not only has the government agencies adopted and developed strategic communication, but also politics is another robust field of strategic communication being taken on. With the emergence of television, which became one of the dominant media in the 1950s and 1960s, politicians especially for presidential candidates had to undergo a new adjustment to TV debates as a strategic communication form. Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy fell into the first political TV debate generation who adapted their debate strategies to meet the TV environment. On September 26, 1960, 70 million Americans tuned in to watch “the first-ever televised presidential debate” between the two candidates; the program was titled, “Great Debate” (Allen 1960). Before the debate broadcast, voters thought Nixon would defeat Kennedy by a large margin, but Nixon’s unorganized TV appearance wearing ill-fitting shirt and no make-up that made him look more senile and less handsome than his opponent, who appeared confident and fit to TV, resulted in giving Americans the youngest president then 43. Voters agreed after the election that the first TV debate served as a significant reason for electing Kennedy (ibid). The TV debate and election result became the turning point for those pursuing political career. They began to realize the rising power of TV as media, being concerned more about how to use TV to appeal to voters rather than to promote political engagement such as rallies (Baran and Davis 2005). Politicians on TV had to adjust “their electioneering techniques to meet the presentational demands of the medium” (Owen 1995: 138).

TV changed political strategic communication. Before the TV era, it was likely that candidates focused on campaigns, which let them have a chance to speak for their positions, opinions, and beliefs on certain issues. But after the Great Debate, candidates were prone to staging pseudo-events that TV would cover more of them. Since then, political campaigns became journalist centered, meaning that the TV media spoke for candidates, and TV reporters and commentators, who decided what is newsworthy about candidates and their campaigns, overshadowed performances of candidates (ibid). Politicians, rather than objecting to the phenomena, had no choice but to conform to the new era of media culture as the new strategic communication form. Such surroundings can be explained by the theory of media intrusion. The theory suggests that media intrude into and take over politics to the degree that politics have become subverted (Baran and Davis 2005). If written easily, the media, TV in particular, are capable of controlling politics. But one question is raised: What if the theory would only represent the limited period when TV shockingly served as a new medium. The 1992 presidential campaign could give a clear answer why TV effects are still strong even after the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The campaign between Bill Clinton and George Bush was considered one-step evolved communication activity, as the candidates appeared on talk shows, local newscasts via satellite, and ads as well as formal debates in order to get their messages out. The influence of TV even got bigger. While appearing on a variety of TV programs, the candidates also spent over \$133 million together including Ross Perot on TV ads (Roberts 1995: 179). Their strategic communication to win voters’ hearts and minds ended up enriching TV companies, which raked in windfall profits in sails of political advertising spots.

The TV influence on politics seems to stay stronger even in the digital age as the most recent presidential campaign records indicate that President Obama spent \$250 million on television

ads in 2008, while John McCain spent \$ 80 million (Gordon, 2008). The theory is vindicated again that political strategic communication for TV is to buy ads and comply with TV stations' requests asking candidates to show up on talk shows, one-on-one interviews, and comedy programs for ratings. There is one assumption why politicians allow the media to control their fate. Because their ultimate goal is not to inform or educate the public but to win the election, they strategically make an approach to the media essential to influence voters' decision. In general, their communication strategy to win the election condones the media control on politics in exchange for obtaining positive coverage.

Historically speaking, the concept and the practice of strategic communication has been gone through the processes of persuading target audiences by using communication tools, including the media. Before the emergence of television, strategic communicators used personal dialogue, print materials and radio. With television and the Internet, strategic communicators take advantage of quick and visual tools to inform and persuade the audiences. Depending on who uses strategic communication, people see it as propaganda, public relations, public diplomacy or simple communication action. However, to better understand strategic communication, all integrated historical approaches are helpful.

### **Visualizing and Theorizing in Strategic Communication Process**

The United States government strives to be the front-runner of introducing concepts strategic communication since its three agencies individually engage in promoting the concept by sticking to their policies. The three are: the Defense Department, the State Department, and the National Security Council of the White House. They adopt tactics of public announcement through publication on the media or those of inside-use-only- classification to develop the concept and usage of strategic communication. They view strategic communication as a persuasive vehicle for informing, influencing, and educating intended or even unintended audiences. In short, strategic communication is the core for the government to persuade domestic and foreign audiences in favor of the U.S. national interests and security.

The government ultimately aims at one goal in terms of maximizing the power of strategic communication: having an impact on target audience with no exercise of physical power. In order for the government to facilitate strategic communication, it organizes elaborating strategic communication processes in hopes that the target audience would not play against the U.S. national interests, but rather they would respond to the interests. This is the right timing for a strategic communication project to be born.

It should not be uncommon that the initiation of the project begins with recognition of the principal problem or issue on which project participants or practitioners need to focus (step 1), followed by research to have deeper understanding of the situation (step 2). Before moving to next step, they need to learn about the basic principle of communication known as the message influence model illustrating that a sender of information and idea intends to transform them into a message or a theme that is conveyed through a channel to a receiver. And the receiver is likely to comply with the same way as the sender's intention, so the receiver acts in a specific manner.

After the step of research, they establish objectives (step 3), which deliberately lead to creation of messages that represent a concept of the project (step 4). These are significant processes of identifying which behavior or attitude needs altering for which group of people. Once the messages are confirmed, they have to define people they want to inform, influence, educate or persuade (step 5). These people are better known as target audiences who are

selected as accessible and amenable through strategic communication, which can be either overt or covert.

Developing specific and articulate strategy in a form of campaign or advertising retaining the intended message or theme is the next step to reach the target audiences (step 6). And then, it is time to implement the communication strategy with efficient use of the media (step 7). In the final step, they monitor a progress of the implementation (step 8), or reorganize detailed strategy if the progress turns out ineffective (step 8-1). When the reorganization process is unavoidable, the practitioners must be determined to go back to the previous or further previous steps until the progress gets back on the right track. Because in a worst scenario they could end up aborting the entire strategic communication that leaves permanent damage on the government, the first three steps require extraordinary effort and elaboration. The entire steps of strategic communication, called the Flow of SC Process, are illustrated in a logical order in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Flow of strategic communication



### Today's relationship between Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy

Since 9/11, the U.S. government until 2009 invested at least \$10 billion in improving communication systems designed to advance the strategic objectives of the United States, expecting to increase constructive views of foreign audience toward its efforts. Unfortunately, foreign public opinion on the U.S. efforts of building good relationships with foreigners stayed sour despite the collective efforts by DOS, DOD, and many other agencies.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office of Congress (2009, p.15) suggests a possible means of addressing the cynical foreign view on the United States that “U.S. strategic communication and public diplomacy efforts can play in promoting U.S. national security objectives, such as countering ideological support for violent extremism.” (ibid.). Congress recognizes the inextricable relationship between strategic communication and public diplomacy, which are represented by DOD and DOS respectively in terms of coordinating U.S. communication endeavor.

DOD and DOS pursue nearly identical goals in operating strategic communication: understanding, informing, educating, and persuading people abroad to strengthen conditions favorable for the advancement of U.S. government interests, policies, and objectives. However, the two government agencies organize different styles when moving toward the goals. While DOD’s strategic communication is implemented by people in military uniform, DOS employs civilian staff, mostly diplomats. The White House creates the guideline on positions, processes, and interagency for the departments in case of working in overlapped areas, stressing an appropriate balance between civilian and military operations. The White House announces a process that was “initiated to review existing programs and resources to identify current military programs that might be better executed by other Departments and Agencies” (National Framework for Strategic Communication 2010: 1). Still, it is overt that DOD and DOS have a broad range of tasks to cooperate under the names of strategic communication and public diplomacy.

There is one government agency not to go unnoticed, linking DOD and DOS to the overall goal of U.S. strategic communication. The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) aiming to support U.S. strategic communication objectives was established in 1999 after the dissolution of United States Information Agency. BBG legally protected as an independent government news agency oversees U.S. international broadcasting while incorporating its five broadcast entities: Voice of America (VOA), the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (US Government Accountability Office 2009: 6). In accordance with the strategic communication objectivities of the two departments, BBG operates 60 foreign language services to “engage, inform, and influence the attitudes and behaviors of global audiences in support of U.S. strategic interests” (ibid.). Monopolizing the five influential media entities, BBG in general makes an acknowledged contribution to strategic communication with the wishful mission in attracting support of foreign audiences for the two departments and the government. But BBG has been under severe criticism because of its weak and disappointing performance. Senator Tom Coburn argues, “The BBG is the most worthless organization in the federal government (...) full of people who know nothing about media or foreign policy. All they are doing is spending money and somebody's got to look into it” (Rogin 2010). It is desperately necessary for BBG to create effective news frame strategy reinforcing and representing values of the United States to achieve its mission before external powers dissolve it.

Strategic communication from the perspectives of the government agencies and the White House is an essentially existing incorporation of tactics, plans, and operations not only to foster mutual interests between the United States and foreign countries but also to create international support of foreign audiences through persuasion, information engagement, and education. At this point, the term *strategic communication* -- albeit vague and nebulous -- leads to a strong assurance to the conceptualization of the U.S. foreign policy-making. In other words, the U.S. government-driven concept and theory of strategic communication leads to implementation of actions for national interests unlike other private actors who pursue individual interests. Therefore this study tried to show that the concept and theory of strategic communication offered by the government agencies needs to be privileged over any other non-government-driven concept and theory of strategic communication.

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