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NATO's Strategic Communications concept and its relevance for France

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RAND EUROPE

Prepared for the Joint Forces Centre for Concept Development, Doctrine and Experimentation, France. (Centre interarmées de concepts, de doctrines et d'expérimentations, Etat-major des Armées, France).

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Preface

The original version of this report is in the French language and was commissioned by the French Joint Forces Centre for Concept Development, Doctrine and Experimentation (*Centre interarmées de concepts, de doctrines et d'expérimentations, CICDE*). The present English version of the report was commissioned by the Delegation for Strategic Affairs (*Délégation aux Affaires Stratégiques, DAS*) at the French Ministry of Defence. The report presents the results of a study on the relevance of NATO's Strategic Communications concept for France. The aim of the report is to provide the CICDE with the tools it requires to decide whether to integrate such a concept in the French doctrinal body. Since communication is a way of exercising influence, the study forms part of a body of research commissioned by the CICDE on the subject of influence.

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[1]   For more information, consult: http://www.rand.org/standards/.

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Glossary

Branding Expression from the marketing sector. The entire process involved in creating a unique name and image for a product (good or service) in the consumers' mind, through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers. (Adapted from the Business Dictionary, 2010b)

Collateral audiences Those affected by the communications that the armed forces direct towards their target audiences. The armed forces do not try to change their way of thinking, although they may accidentally be influenced by the armed forces' communications.

Communication For the purposes of this report, when the term "communication" is used, it refers to the concept in a holistic way; namely, the words expressed as well as the perceptions created by actions.

Empowerment In an institutional context, the act of mandating persons to communicate without their having to seek authorisation.

Harnessing Developing its influence on a person or an activity, so that they participate in promoting the desired objectives.

Influence Influence consists of "taking the target audience away from its way of thinking to steer them towards another way of thinking" (Juillet, 2009). It "acts on attitudes, i.e. convictions and ideas, with a view to provoking a change in behaviour" (Chauvancy, 2010).

Information Operations (according to NATO) A military capability to provide advice and coordination of military information activities in order to create desired effects on the will, understanding and capability of adversaries, potential adversaries and other NAC [North Atlantic Council] approved parties in support of Alliance mission objectives. (MC 422, 2008)

J3 and Joint Effects The operations bureau in NATO's command.

Military Public Affairs (according to NATO) NATO military PA is the capability responsible to promote NATO's military aims and objectives to audiences in order to enhance awareness and understanding of military aspects of the Alliance. This includes planning and conducting media relations, internal communications, and community relations. (MC 0457/1, 2007)

Narrative The narrative is a story explaining an actor's actions in order to justify them to his/her audience. The aim of a narrative is to guide decisions so as to ensure their coherence. It acts as an institution's brand.

NATO's comprehensive approach How NATO needs to work with other actors to deliver integrated effort in peace-building and crisis-response. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2010)

Public Affairs (according to NATO) NATO's public affairs section is responsible for promoting NATO's objectives to its audiences in order to improve awareness and comprehension of the Alliance's activities. Public affairs include the planning and implementation of media relations, internal communications and relations between communities. (Adapted from the military public affairs definition, MC 0457/1, 2007)

Public Diplomacy (according to NATO) The totality of measures and means to inform, communicate and cooperate with a broad range of target audiences world-wide, with the aim to raise the level of awareness and understanding about NATO, promoting its policies and activities, thereby fostering support for the Alliance and developing trust and confidence in it. (SG(2003)0876(INV), quoted in MC 0457/1)

Psychological Operations (according to NATO) Planned psychological activities using methods of communication and other means directed at approved audiences in order to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, affecting the achievement of political and military objectives. (MC 402, 1997)

Strategic Communications (according to NATO) The coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities – Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs (PA), Military Public Affairs, Information Operations (lnfo Ops), and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), as appropriate – in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims. (PO(2009)0141, 2009)

Segmentation Expression from the marketing sector: Sub-division of a market or population into segments with well defined characteristics of similarity. (Business Dictionary, 2010c)

Shaping Battlefield activities designed to constrain adversary force options or increase friendly force options. (Helmus et al., 2007)

Strategic Communications (according to the authors of this report)
Strategic Communications is a process designed to coordinate communications (words and deeds) between inter-ministerial actors and to reinforce their strategic effect. To achieve this, Strategic Communications exploits all existing expertise, to be found in the various information and communication departments. The aim of Strategic Communications is to promote behaviour in target audiences that is favourable to the actors' objectives and, thereby, to shape the operational environment.

Target audiences Population targeted through the armed forces' communications, sometimes in an attempt to change their way of thinking.

Targeting Expression from the marketing sector: The selection of potential customers to whom a business wishes to sell products or services. The targeting strategy involves segmenting the market, choosing which segments of the market are appropriate, and determining the products that will be offered in each segment. (Adapted from the Business Dictionary, 2010a)

Way of thinking A way of thinking refers to the perceptions, interpretations and expectations of a person towards another. A person's way of thinking is influenced, amongst others, by the information this person holds, his/her past experiences, culture and plans.

Abbreviations

ACO	Allied Command Operations, NATO
ACT	Allied Command Transformation, NATO
CICDE	Joint Forces Centre for Concept Development, Doctrine and Experimentation, France (*Centre interarmées de concepts, de doctrines et d'expérimentations, Etat-major des Armées, France*)
DAS	Delegation for Strategic Affairs, Ministry of Defense, France (*Délégation aux Affaires Stratégique, Ministère de la Défense, France*)
D CoS Comms	Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications, NATO
EUCOM	United States European Command
HQ	Headquarters
IRSEM	Strategic Research Institute of the Military School, French Ministry for Defence (*Institut de recherche stratégique de l'Ecole militaire, Ministère de la Défense, France*)
Info Ops	Information Operations
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, NATO
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, NATO
PA	Public Affairs
PSYOPS	Psychological Operations
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe, NATO

SACT   Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, NATO
SHAPE   Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, NATO
StratCom   Strategic Communications
US   United States

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Research context and scope

This research was commissioned by the Joint Forces Centre for Concept Development, Doctrine and Experimentation (*Centre interarmées de concepts de doctrines et d'expérimentations, CICDE*) following the adoption of the Strategic Communications concept by NATO in September 2009. This concept, which is still being developed, responds to the difficulties experienced by the Western forces in gaining the support of the Afghan population. The aim of Strategic Communications is to make political-military communications more strategic and capable of influencing target audiences' way of thinking and behaving, by facilitating the rapidity and coherence of the communications.

The objective of the research is to provide the necessary elements for the CICDE to decide whether to integrate an equivalent concept into the French doctrinal body, in an effort to maintain coherence of its doctrinal body with NATO's.

Research methodology

The research followed two phases; the first aimed to clarify the objectives, direction, structure and resources of the Strategic Communications concept. This phase consisted of a comprehensive literature review; the majority of the literature that was reviewed came from NATO and the United States, given that they were the only ones to have adopted the Strategic Communications concept at the time the research was conducted.[2] Key informant semi-structured interviews carried out at NATO and in the United States

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[2] The United States' concept is known as Strategic Communication (note the singular form, in contrast with the plural form of NATO's concept).

allowed us to contextualise the literature and complete the first phase. In each interview, the research team probed on the following areas:

– the context in which the concept has been developed,

– its objective, range and the way it is implemented,

– the resources made available,

– the difficulties and opportunities that arise.

The second phase of the research aimed to examine the relevance of NATO's concept for France. Key informant semi-structured interviews were carried out in France to enrich the research team's reflections on the matter. As Strategic Communications did not exist in France, each interview started by identifying the extent to which the person interviewed understood NATO's concept and its relationship to the influence domain. The research team then enquired about the process of political-military communication in France: its structure, resources, audiences, coherence, rapidity and effectiveness.

The names and positions of the persons whom the research team interviewed are available in the "Acknowledgments" section at the start of this document.

Research conclusions

NATO defines its Strategic Communications concept as follows:

> The coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities – Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs (PA), Military Public Affairs, Information Operations (lnfo Ops), and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), as appropriate – in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims. (PO(2009)0141, 2009)

In order to clarify the concept's objectives, its scope and execution, the research team produced its own definition of it:

> Strategic Communications is a process designed to coordinate communications (words and deeds) between inter-ministerial actors and to reinforce their strategic effect. To achieve this, Strategic Communications exploits all existing expertise, to be found in the various information and communication depart-

ments. The aim of Strategic Communications is to promote behaviour in target audiences that is favourable to the actors' objectives and, thereby, to shape the operational environment.

This concept seems relevant to France, a country where strategic changes since the end of the 20ᵗʰ c. have had an impact on the efficiency of communications , like in other Western states. The revolution in information technologies and the multinational nature of the current military deployments mean that military communications have to be particularly coherent and rapid in order to have an effect on targets. Key informants have underlined the fact that, in this new environment, the strategic range of the French political-military communications sometimes needs to be reinforced. They explain that this would allow the government to further shape the operational environment rather than be defensive, as in past crises, with knee-jerk reactions to situations as they arise.[3]

This concept is however only relevant in France in crisis situations.[4] The Elysée already conducts strategic communications, instructing Ministers on the messages they must convey. The interviewees nonetheless argued that this effort would benefit from being subjected to a more concerted effort in situations of crisis. The Elysée would continue to direct communications in these times as it benefits from a unique inter-ministerial authority which can facilitate rapid and coherent communication, as required by Strategic Communications.

If France developed an equivalent concept to that currently in place in NATO, it would be vital to reflect on its terminology as the term Strategic Communications is confusing in the French context. On the one hand, it alludes to media capabilities rather than all oral, written and behavioural communication instruments and, on the other hand, it positions the concept at a strategic level despite also being relevant at the operational and tactical levels.

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[3]   This notion refers to the American military concept of "shaping", i.e. influencing one's environment (see definition in the glossary).

[4]   The notion of crisis refers in this report to political-military situations which require governments to react quickly and effectively, such as instability in a neighbouring country, or riots requiring military as well as police action.

The structure facilitating Strategic Communications would also need to be studied. The aim of the concept is to coordinate the communication of inter-ministerial actors and reinforce their strategic effect, including through making it more coherent and rapid. A flexible network structure can promote this type of communication. The way the French institutions are structured is nevertheless hierarchical and bureaucratic, thereby allowing for clear leadership which is also key to Strategic Communications. It would be beneficial to find a balance between the current hierarchical and bureaucratic structure and a network structure that is relatively flexible.

If a concept that was equivalent to that of NATO's Strategic Communications were to be put in place in France, the possibility of creating a working group would be worth exploring. Such a group would help institutionalise the concept, and once established within the institutions, ensure its continued relevance and effective implementation. In France, this group could be directed by the National Defence and Security Committee (*Conseil de défense et de sécurité nationale*) and could involve relevant experts. Initially, the group could focus on the following questions, which have yet to be answered:

- Which terminology would be used to describe this concept in France?

- How could one achieve a better balance between the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of the institutions and a flexible network structure?

- What processes and principles could be developed to ensure that Strategic Communications experts would be available during crises, and that their expertise and know-how could be exploited?

- What role could the private sector play in implementing Strategic Communications, given its expertise in the subject?

- How would Strategic Communications training be configured?

Introduction

NATO recently adopted a new policy, Strategic Communications, calling on member states to determine their stance towards it. The French Joint Forces Centre for Concept Development, Doctrine and Experimentation (CICDE) has therefore asked RAND Europe to research the relevance of NATO's Strategic Communications concept for France. This report presents the results of the research and this first chapter explains the context in which Strategic Communications developed.

1.1 The key role of influence in 21st c. warfare

Contemporary wars, such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, are counter-insurgencies in which influence plays a central role. The CICDE's expert on influence has written that:

> [Influence] may have the objective of causing a change in the target audience's way of thinking, adding new elements to consider to its existing points of reference. As explained by Alain Juillet [2009], it consists of taking the target audience out of its way of thinking so that they can move towards another way of thinking. It works on attitudes, i.e. convictions and ideas, in order to provoke a change in behaviour.[5] (Chauvancy, 2010)

Influence is an essential element of counter-insurgencies, which require the support of local populations to be successful (Gompert et al., 2008). In fact,

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[5] Translated from French: "[l'influence] peut avoir pour objectif d'amener l'audience cible que l'on veut influencer à changer son modèle de pensée, à modifier les références qui y contribuent, en lui présentant d'autres éléments d'appréciation. Comme l'a exprimé Alain Juillet [2009], elle consiste à sortir l'audience cible de son schéma de pensée pour aller vers un autre schéma de pensée. Elle agit sur les attitudes, c'est-à-dire sur les convictions, les idées, en vue de provoquer un changement de comportement."

insurgencies are led by organised movements attempting to challenge political, social, cultural and strategic movements that are opposed to theirs, by gaining the support of the populations (PIA 00.180, 2008).

Influence has always played a significant role in military strategy. In the 6th c. BC, the Chinese General Sun Tzu made it the subject of his –alleged- work "The Art of War" (Sun Tzu, 2009) and, in the 20th c., David Galula, a French military theoretician, recalled the key role of the support of populations in his work entitled "Counter-insurgency: Theory and practice". Galula (1964) characterised this support as the ultimate objective of counter-insurgencies.

Despite influence being a traditional military concept, military strategies, including influence strategies, evolve according to the reality of the world in which they operate. As the next section will show in detail, today's communications and operational environment reflect a reality that is different from that of the Galula's period and certainly that of Sun Tzu's.

1.2 The strategic changes that took place in the 20th c. to impact on questions of influence

Some of the strategic changes that took place at the end of the 20th c. have made influence, through communications, particularly complex and significant for contemporary warfare.

To begin, the revolution in information technology has had a huge effect on communication[6] in the contemporary world. It has diversified the resources available – especially with the appearance of the internet, computers and mobile telephones – and it has also democratised and expanded access to these technologies. These resources have, in turn, significantly increased the volume of information being communicated in an almost instantaneous way. The information technology revolution has, therefore, complicated the task of influencing an audience's way of thinking. Speed of communication is a prerequisite for offering one's own interpretation of events, before

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6   This report uses the term "communication" in a comprehensive way: i.e. words expressed, as well as the perceptions created by behaviour.

audiences form their own way of thinking. Attaining the requisite speed is nevertheless challenging as numerous other individuals are also trying to be among the first to communicate. Similarly, ensuring coherence between messages is key to anchoring one's message in an audience's way of thinking. However, as a message can be modified time and again during retransmissions, and audiences are faced with a multitude of other messages, it is hard to ensure that they perceive that one message in a clear way.

The contemporary operational environment complicates the task of communicating in an influential way, as coalition forces are common in this environment (for example, in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan). The more partners there are, the harder it is to agree quickly on the message to be transmitted, and to communicate it in a coherent way.

The type of adversary that NATO forces face today obliges them to take up the challenge of communicating in an influential way. The insurgents are competent and effective in the new strategic environment (Hoffman, 2007) and they have certain advantages over NATO forces. In the first instance, the counter-insurgencies are taking place on insurgents' territory which means that they have a better cultural and linguistic understanding of the local populations who are strangers to NATO forces. They are therefore more equipped to connect with the population through their communications. Secondly, insurgents are typically organised according to flexible network structures, allowing them to exchange information and communicate coherently as soon as an event happens. They are therefore able to offer their own interpretation at the same time as one's way of thinking about an event takes shape. This is more difficult for NATO forces, whose hierarchical and bureaucratic command structures do not provide for quick communications. Thirdly, by definition, insurgents do not need to abide by the international political system and its norms (PIA 00.180, 2008). For their part, NATO forces are limited in terms of their actions by the laws, principles and values that govern this system.

Faced with the complexity and importance of communicating in an influential way in contemporary warfare, several experts have expressed that we need force employment strategies as appendices to information and communication strategies rather than force employment strategies with information and communication strategies as appendices (cfr. Kilcullen, 2006 amongst

others). The American theoretician David Kilcullen (2006) judges that the virtual battle space represents one of the greatest differences between contemporary and previous insurrections.

1.3 The emergence of NATO's concept of Strategic Communications

NATO started to develop its Strategic Communications concept in September 2009, faced with the need to adapt its influence strategies to the requirements of the contemporary operational environment (PO (2009)0141, 2009). As the interviews confirmed, the Strategic Communications concept came out of NATO forces' inability to gain the support of the Afghan populations to the extent hoped and within the timetable set.

The concept which has to date not been finalised is designed to reinforce the influence exercised by NATO communications over its audiences. More specifically, the concept is designed to ensure that audiences receive clear, fair and opportune information regarding actions and that the interpretation of the Alliance's messages are not left solely to NATO's adversaries or other audiences (PO(2009)0141, 2009). NATO's ultimate goal with the development of this concept is to reinforce the strategic impact of its communications.

Figure 1 shows the process of military communication from message design to population influence. Its various components are referred to time and again in this report.

Figure 1 The process of military communication
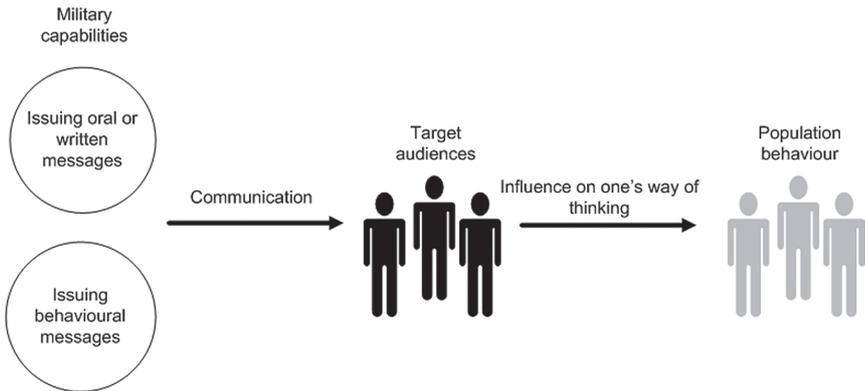
1.4 Research methodology and report content

The study of NATO's Strategic Communications concept's relevance for France involved two phases. The first was designed to clarify the objectives, structures and resources of the concept as it exists in NATO. This phase was based on a comprehensive literature review. Most of the literature came from NATO and the United States as they were the only ones to have adopted the concept in question at the time. The United States had in fact developed its own concept (Strategic Communication[7]) during the first decade of the 21st c., before NATO adopted its own (Strategic Communications). Key informant semi-structured interviews were carried out in the United States and NATO to address contentious points and gaps in the literature. The interviews covered the following themes:

- the context in which the concept was developed,
- the aim of the concept, its scope and the way it is implemented,
- the resources made available,
- the obstacle and opportunities associated with it.

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7   Note the singular form, which distinguished the US concept from NATO's, which is in plural form.

The interviewees' names and positions are detailed in the report's "Acknowl-edgments" section.

The aim of the second phase of the study was to examine the relevance of NATO's Strategic Communications concept for France. To do this, the research team interviewed a series of French experts, military officers and civil servants. Given that the concept of Strategic Communications does not exist in France we started each interview by identifying the extent to which the interviewee understood the concept of Strategic Communications and its relationship to influence. The research team then probed interviewees about the political-military communication process in France: its structure, resources, audiences, coherence, speed and efficiency. It is important to note that the Strategic Communications concept was foreign to the majority of these people and some of them understood the concept to be closer to media and information capabilities than influence strategies. This might have influenced their answers (see section 2.3). The interviewees' names and positions are detailed in the report's "Acknowledgments" section.

The report's initial chapters present the results from the first research phase: the second chapter defines NATO's Strategic Communications concept as well as its objectives; the third details the commanding structure; and the fourth, the resources required to implement the policy at NATO. The fifth chapter presents the results from the second research phase; namely, the relevance of the concept for France and the form it could take if adopted. Finally, the sixth chapter highlights some of the conclusions stemming from the research and six policy recommendations.

CHAPTER 2 Description of NATO's Strategic Communications concept

As the previous chapter explained, NATO recently adopted a new policy, that of Strategic Communications, to be able to better respond to the new operational environment. The chapter described how communications, as means of exercising influence, are essential to waging contemporary warfare. The information technology revolution and the multinational character of military operations have nonetheless imposed a speed and coherence in communications that are hard to obtain, thereby making it challenging to communicate influentially. This chapter defines the concept of Strategic Communications, describes its objectives and explains the challenges associated with its terminology.

2.1 Defining Strategic Communications

NATO has defined the concept of Strategic Communications as follows:

> The coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities – Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs (PA), Military Public Affairs, Information Operations (lnfo Ops), and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), as appropriate – in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims. (PO(2009)0141, 2009)

It is important to clarify what this definition implies. To begin with, communication, when discussed in the context of Strategic Communications, refers to all the words and actions that are perceived and interpreted by audiences. As explained by interviewees from NATO, Strategic Communications is not limited to media activities.

Next, Strategic Communications reaches various audiences, not all of which are intended: the national population and the foreign population, including

allies and enemies. As interviewees explained, Strategic Communications was developed partly as a response to a new environment in which volumes of information are communicated and can be accessed by practically anyone instantaneously. In this new environment, communications are hard to control they can often reach collateral as well as target audiences (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Target and collateral audiences
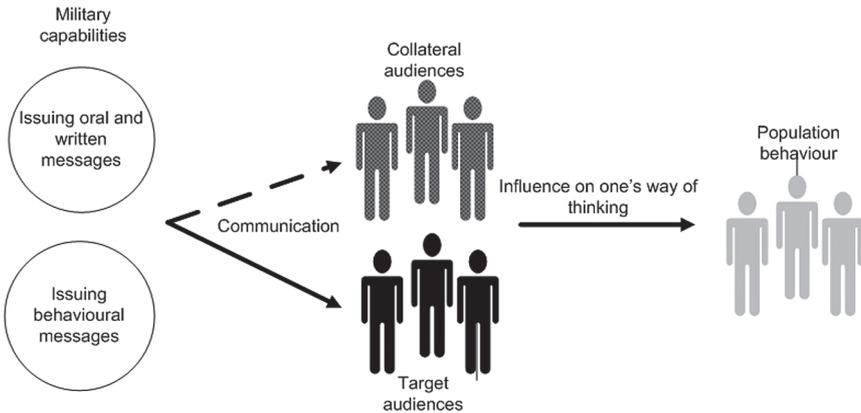
A third point to note is that Strategic Communications is an inter-ministerial and intergovernmental concept. In practice, the definition refers to the military capabilities of Information Operations, Psychological Operations and Military Public Affairs as well as the civilian activities of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Strategic Communications is thus aligned with NATO's comprehensive approach, developed in April 2009 at the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit (NATO, 2009). Since this research was carried out for the CICDE, this document looks at the concept from a military point of view. It does not explore the concept's relevance for the other affected ministries but takes into account the concept's inter-ministerial and intergovernmental character when drawing conclusions so as to ensure that these are coherent with the concept.

Fourthly, Strategic Communications applies to all existing information and communication capabilities. It is a process which does not try to create new

competencies but to exploit existing capabilities more effectively so that their strategic impact is reinforced (IMSWM-0023-2010 (SD 3), 2010). This interpretation of the NATO concept, as a process and not an independent capability, is currently similar to that of the American concept (see Department of Defense, 2009a). It is however important to note that the United States' National Security Council recently suggested defining the concept as a capability[8] (see White House, 2010).

To clarify these aspects, we propose to define NATO's strategic concept as follows:

> Strategic Communications is a process designed to coordinate communications (words and deeds) between inter-ministerial actors and to reinforce their strategic effect. To achieve this, Strategic Communications exploits all existing expertise, to be found in the various information and communication departments. The aim of Strategic Communications is to promote behaviour in target audiences that is favourable to the actors' objectives and, thereby, to shape the operational environment.

2.2 Aim, enabling conditions and scope of Strategic Communications

2.2.1 Strategic Communications' aim
The objective of Strategic Communications is to make NATO's communications more influential, by influencing the way audiences think so that their behaviour is more favourable to the Alliance's objectives. It is impor-

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[8]   The United States' experience illustrates the role that Strategic Communications could play if it were interpreted as a capability. An American interviewee explains that when the concept was implemented within the United States Southern Command towards the middle of the 21st c.'s first decade, a centre of innovation for communication techniques was created under the auspices of Strategic Communications. Through this centre, Strategic Communications hoped to reinforce the impact of communications by testing the effects of various communication methods. Once these methods proved effective, they were made available to other information and communication bodies. For example, after the innovation centre identified the role that social media (Twitter, Facebook etc.) could play in developing a dialogue with local populations as well as the challenges and limitations to this mean of communication, Military Public Affairs was charged with using these media.

tant to note that Strategic Communications is intended to influence not only audiences' attitudes but also their behaviour. As interviewees from NATO explained, Strategic Communications does not try to seduce target audiences, because seduction does not always result in taking action. This is described in NATO documents (see, for example, PO(2009)0141, 2009), although it is not explicit in the concept's official definition.

2.2.2 Enabling conditions

In order to achieve Strategic Communications' objective, communications must be both rapid and coherent. This increases an actor's chance of becoming part of a target audience's way of thinking (cf. section 1.2). The first condition which enables speed and coherence of communications is intensifying collaborations within the military hierarchy (vertical collaboration) and between the various departments (horizontal collaboration). NATO's policy therefore asks heads of Strategic Communications in the various governmental departments to work together (ACO 95-2, 2009).

The second condition which enables speedy communications is empowerment. As an interviewee explained, NATO's traditional structure only allows those at the higher ranks to authorise the sharing of information and communication between individuals. This slows down the potential speed of communications. NATO is therefore trying to empower more individuals to communicate; the interviews given by various members of General McChrystal's team in Summer 2010 when he commanded the International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan (ISAF) are an example of this effort and the risks associated with it (see section 3.1).

The conditions enabling Strategic Communications thus appear linked to flexible network structures. NATO, a traditionally hierarchical and bureaucratic organisation, is therefore faced with the task of finding a balance between these two types of structure if it wants to adapt to requirements of the new operational environment.

2.2.3 Strategic Communications' scope

Although Strategic Communications has mainly developed in response to NATO's challenge in gaining the support of the Afghan people, it applies to

both humanitarian and warfare missions. The concept's development in fact points to a change in the environment in which civil and military institutions operate, which mainly results from the information technology revolution and the growing multilateral character of military deployments.

The United States are already applying the concept of Strategic Communications to their humanitarian missions. For example, the US Navy's mission Continuing Promise 2009, led by the vessel Comfort, is designed to:

> distribute free medical, dental and veterinary aid", as well as assistance in engineering, to the poor communities of Antigua, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Panama… [in order to] influence the generations to come (Axe, 2009)

Captain Jerry Hendrix who worked under Admiral Stavridis when he was Commander of the United States Southern Command[9] favours this model. He suggests that future naval procurement be aimed at supporting this type of naval mission which he calls "Influence Squadrons" and which, according to him, responds more adequately to contemporary threats (Hendrix, 2009).

2.3 Difficult terminology

NATO has decided to use the term "Strategic Communications" to refer to the concept that has just been described. This term is not perfect: the word "communications" alludes to media capabilities rather than all written, oral and behavioural communications; as for the word "strategic", it situates the concept at the strategic level despite it applying also to the operational and tactical levels.

Experts recall that in light of this, other terms have been – and are still – being advocated, such as "influence", "strategic public engagement", "global engagement", "strategic effects", "informing, influencing and persuading". These terms nonetheless have their own limitations. For example, inter-

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[9]   Admiral Stavridis is also Supreme Allied Commander Europe, SACEUR within NATO.

viewees explained that the word "influence" can be highly problematic depending on the audience. Some view influence as the inevitable result of communication, because this process determines the information that an audience holds and therefore the choices that are presented to it. Others view influence as implying communications with hidden agenda and thus deception of an audience. The way in which one perceives the term influence will therefore determine the legitimacy of the term to refer to what NATO calls "Strategic Communications". In fact, Strategic Communications are meant to coordinate all information and communication capabilities and this could not be done if the concept referred to deception: deception is only allowed by certain military capabilities, and not by all in all countries[10]. This report uses the word "influence" in the sense of affecting an audience's information environment, and not in the sense of referring to deception (see glossary).

In light of a vast choice in terminology but one which is always imperfect, NATO adopted the term "Strategic Communications" for two reasons. Firstly because it is one of the only terms that is acceptable for all member states; the term "influence" is, for example, unacceptable for most of them. Secondly, as the interviewees at NATO explained, as the term "Strategic Communications" was already being used in the United States, its adoption by NATO was pragmatic. NATO nevertheless invites its member states to choose the terminology they would like to use in their own conceptual and doctrinal corpus, acknowledging that this will differ between member states.

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[10]   By way of example, in France, deception is allowed by the deception operations (PIA 03.253, 2008) and, in the United States, by psychological operations (Joint Publication 3-13.2, 2010).

Strategic Communications' command structure

Strategic Communications has significant structural implications as it is designed to facilitate collaboration between the different information and communication capabilities. As explained in section 2.2.2, NATO is aiming to adopt a more flexible network structure to allow for this but is a challenge considering the institution's hierarchical and bureaucratic tradition and doctrine. This chapter will explore NATO's command structure for Strategic Communications and its evolution around the "firewall" issue.

3.1 Strategic Communications' command

The question of command is key for all new concepts, whose structure and scope are yet to be defined. This is particularly true in the context of Strategic Communications, given that the policy calls on empowering individuals to communicate without authorisation: if empowered individuals communicate unclear messages or wrong ones, this could be detrimental to the institution and its operations. We recently saw in Afghanistan that General McChrystal's team compromised the Force Commander's post when it revealed the disagreements between McChrystal and President Obama, his Commander, in an interview given to the American Rolling Stone magazine in June 2010 (Hastings, 2010).

The interviewees emphasised the role that the Strategic Communications chief can play in mitigating the risks inherent to empowering individuals to communicate. The chief can design a narrative to be communicated in every message; this narrative which essentially acts as an institution's brand[11] can

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[11]   This notion refers to that of the process of creating an image of branding – see glossary.

guide decision-making to ensure institutional coherence through a story that justifies an actor's words and deeds (see ACO 95-2, 2009). By way of example, NATO's institutional narrative is that of "a multinational and democratic alliance, united beyond the frontiers, in order to reduce, courageously and competently the threats against out homes" (ACO 95-2, 2009). Through its deployments, operations and communications, NATO tries to communicate this narrative.

NATO has shared the command of Strategic Communications between three players (see PO(2009)0141, 2009):

- − The Secretary General is responsible for Strategic Communications when it relates to NATO policy.

- − The Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy is responsible for Public Diplomacy activities, with the exception of the press and the media.

- − The Secretary General's spokesperson is responsible for Strategic Communications to the press and media.

3.2 Strategic Communications' structure

The Strategic Communications command structure is essentially made up of three levels of responsibilities (see ACO 95-2, 2009; information gathered through interviews)[12]. The first two levels are strategic while the third is operational and tactical:

1. The messages communicating NATO's objectives are determined at NATO headquarters (HQ), including the North Atlantic Council, the Secretary General and the Military Committee.

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[12] Although this chapter distinguishes between activities located at a strategic, operational and tactical level in order to clarify structural issues, an interviewee from NATO pointed out that such distinction is neither useful nor adequate when dealing with Strategic Communications. He explains that operational and tactical levels are always strategic for communications, since transmitted messages will always have a strategic scope due to the influence they have on the way audiences think.

2. Strategic Communications is then developed at the Supreme Head-quarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) under NATO HQ guid-ance. SHAPE has thus defined the Strategic Communications concept, described its objectives and the expertise it requires. SHAPE is also in charge of developing Strategic Communications training.

3. Finally, the successive Force Commanders are responsible for ensuring that their written, oral and behavioural communications transmit the messages determined by NATO HQ.

NATO has been experimenting with several command structures at the operational level, where the challenges linked to finding a support structure for Strategic Communications is felt most significantly.

3.2.1 The so-called "firewall" challenge

Interviewees all emphasised the challenge that finding a command structure for Strategic Communications faces: how can the credibility of communi-cations be managed when capabilities which are sometimes authorised to use deception collaborate with capabilities that are not? As the interviewees explain, these capabilities derive their legitimacy from the very fact that they never use deception. For example, NATO Military Public Affairs, which is responsible for transmitting factual information regarding NATO through the media, is credible because it never deceives its audience. In contrast, Psychological Operations use information to influence their audiences. If these two capabilities collaborated closely, as required to effectively influ-ence target audiences through communications (see section 2.2.2), Military Public Affairs would lose its credibility (Hemming, 2008).

The United States' experience in 2002 when they were looking to set up an Office of Strategic Influence to implement Strategic Communications bears witness to the challenge presented by the collaboration of various capabili-ties (Dao and Schmitt, 2002). The media had been informed that Military Public Affairs and Psychological Operations were going to work side by side in this Office. A Pentagon employee had in fact announced that the Office was going to implement "from the blackest of black programmes to the whitest of white programmes" (Dao and Schmitt, 2002); in other words,

that this Office was going to make capabilities that made use of deception with capabilities that never used it. Due to the public reactions that this disclosure led to, the Office of Strategic Influence was never established in the United States, and the country now upholds a firewall between Military Public Affairs and Psychological Operations, at least officially (Dao and Schmitt, 2002); in practice, as we will see in section 3.2.2, the firewall between the two capabilities is not so well-defined and this has resulted in new media problems (see Hemming, 2008).

3.2.2 NATO's experimentations with the command structure of Strategic Communications in ISAF since 2006[13]

NATO's doctrine requires that Military Public Affairs (PA) be under the direct orders of the Force Commander and that Information Operations (Info Ops), which coordinate all information capabilities including Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), be under the orders of the J3, the operations bureau. An interviewee from NATO explained that at its origins Strategic Communications was situated under the authority of the Force Commander by means of a coordinator to avoid interfering with the established structure (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Strategic Communications' command structure according to NATO doctrine

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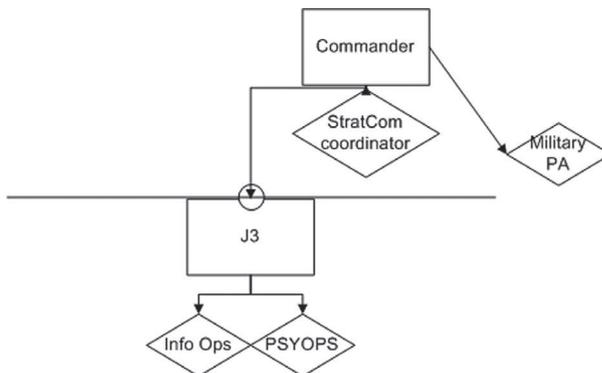
13   This section is based entirely on interviews carried out at NATO.

This structure nevertheless made it difficult to coordinate Military Public Affairs with Information Operations and Psychological Operations, as required by Strategic Communications (see section 2.2.2). A NATO interviewee explains that as a result, ISAF Commander General Richards reorganised the command structure in 2006-2007 so that Military Public Affairs, Information Operations and Psychological Operations were all situated under the authority of J3, thereon known as Joint Effects. They could now be coordinated for the purposes of Strategic Communications. To this end, General Richards had to downgrade Military Public Affairs, dismissing its privileged link to the Commander (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Strategic Communications' command structure under ISAF Commander General Richards (1)
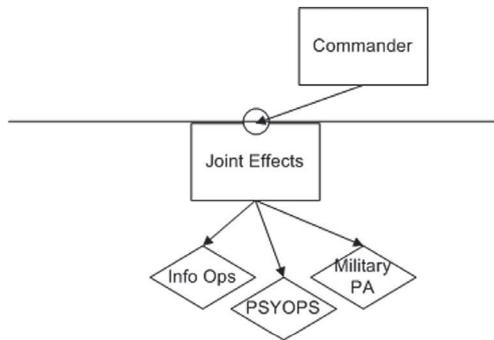
This restructuring was closely followed by another, as it breached NATO doctrine by making Psychological Operations collaborate too closely with Military Public Affairs. As a NATO interviewee explained, General Richards returned Military Public Affairs under the Force Commander's authority but kept this capability downgraded so that Joint Effects could continue to coordinate it alongside Information Operations and Psychological Operations for the purposes of Strategic Communications (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Strategic Communications' command structure under ISAF Commander
General Richards (2)
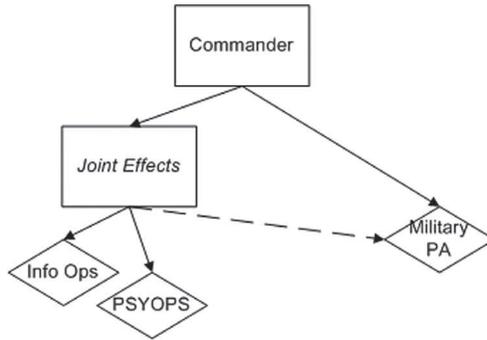
Legend: A full line suggests a command function while a dotted line
suggests a coordination function

General Richards' successor, General McNeill, reinstated J3 with its original
structure: Information Operations and Psychological Operations were once
again under direct authority of J3 while Military Public Affairs was under
that of the Force Commander. General McNeill nonetheless also ordered a
change to NATO doctrine in an attempt to facilitate greater collaboration
between capabilities: Information Operations, Psychological Operations and
Military Public Affairs coordinated each other while also managing the Stra-
tegic Communications process (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Strategic Communications' command structure under ISAF Commander General McNeill
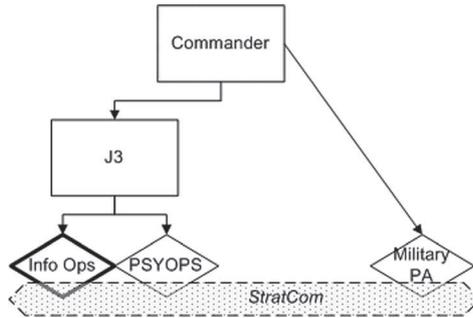
General McNeill gave each of the capabilities the same authority to avoid that one capability takes ownership of Strategic Communications, which is by definition an independent process. A NATO interviewee explains that such a command structure is contrary to military tradition for which a leader is essential and that as a result Information Operations assumed *de facto* command of Psychological Operations and Military Public Affairs. This was precisely the scenario that General McNeill wanted to avoid.

As a NATO interviewee recalls, General McKiernan, who succeeded General McNeill as ISAF Commander, opted in turn to create a Strategic Communications unit (StratCom) to resolve this conundrum. The General's plan was to give the Strategic Communications capability a support role through some changes to the existing command structure: Military Public Affairs were no longer under the Commander's direct authority but under those of the Strategic Communications unit alongside Information Operations and Psychological Operations, which, from thereon were no longer solely under J3 authority (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Strategic Communications' command structure under ISAF Commander General McKiernan (1)
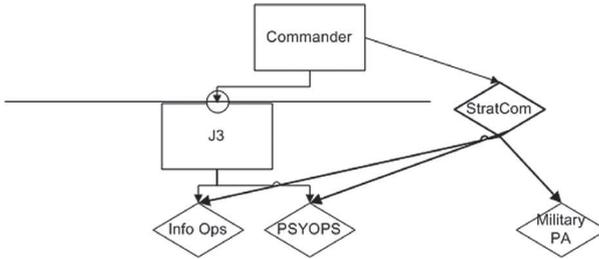
The idea that Information Operations and Psychological Operations were coordinated with Military Public Affairs did not appeal to the majority of NATO member states (see, for example, Hemming, 2008). General McKiernan created a structure where the Strategic Communications unit only coordinated Information Operations and Psychological Operations; Military Public Affairs returned under the Commander's direct authority and was therefore no longer coordinated with Information Operations and Psychological Operations, as required by the Strategic Communications policy (Figure 8).

Figure 8 Strategic Communications' command structure under ISAF Commander General McKiernan (2)
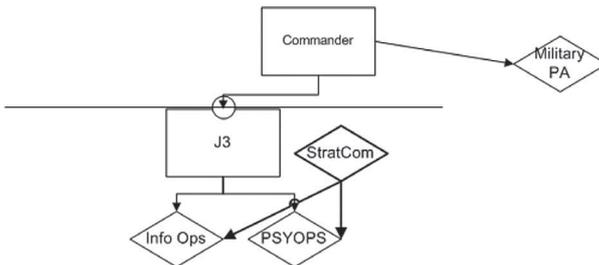
General McChrystal wanted in turn to see how Military Public Affairs could be coordinated with Information Operations and Psychological Operations in light of NATO's doctrine. As an interviewee explains, General McChrys-

tal created a Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications (D CoS Comms) position, an operational capability responsible for coordinating the three information and communication capabilities (Figure 9). Military Public Affairs were also coordinated by a spokesperson who reported to both D CoS Comms and the Force Commander.

Figure 9 Organisation of Strategic Communications of ISAF under General McChrystal
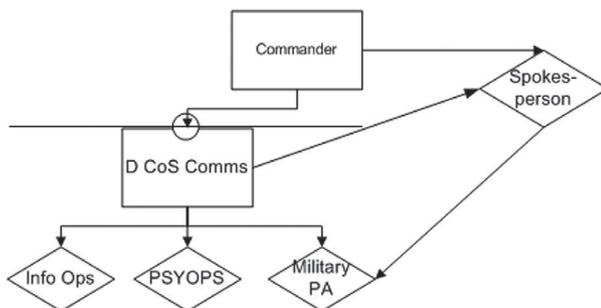
This complicated structure was put in place to ensure that:

- D CoS Comms could achieve its objective of managing all information and communication in theatre,
- The ISAF Commander would not be deprived of his spokesperson,
- The spokesperson would not be deprived of the Military Public Affairs capability that supports his or her efforts.

It remains to be seen whether General Petraeus, Commander of ISAF since July 2010, will also change the way the Force's Strategic Communications process is organised, in an attempt to address the firewall issue.

3.3 Comments

A NATO interviewee explained that due to the challenge of finding a command structure that could promote coherence and speed of communications whilst respecting NATO doctrine, the institution insists on only two

principles regarding member states' Strategic Communications command structure. Firstly, NATO recommends that the responsibilities held by Strategic Communications, and the process' relationships with existing information and communication capabilities be made clear. Secondly, it recommends that Strategic Communications be subject to the authority of the most appropriate person. The interviewees suggested that this person should be capable of coordinating all elements of an indirect approach to conflict. They also suggested that this person should not be associated specifically with one of the capabilities coordinated by Strategic Communications. This could in fact lead to a situation where Strategic Communications is acquired by an existing information or communication capability, while the new process is by definition independent of these capabilities. As the interviewees explained, NATO leaves the task of defining the rest of Strategic Communications' command structure to the discretion of member states.

CHAPTER 4 Resources required for Strategic Communications

This fourth chapter explores the implications of implementing NATO's Strategic Communications concept. It is important to recall that Strategic Communications does not create new competences, but exploits those that already exist in the institutions. The concept's resource implications are therefore notably different from those that would result from a concept which requires new competences.

4.1 Strategic Communications officers and a working group

NATO has put two types of resources in place for its new policy.

Firstly, it has introduced Strategic Communications officers within each of its divisions and operations (see PO(2009)0141, 2009). Accordingly, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) directs and guides Strategic Communications within Allied Command Operations (ACO) according to NATO headquarters (HQ)[14] instructions. Thus, SACEUR directs and guides the Strategic Communications of Military Public Affairs, Information Operations and Psychological Operations. The Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) is in turn responsible for directing and guiding Strategic Communications within the Allied Command Transformation (ACT). This Command is also responsible for developing the concept and competences it requires according to NATO HQ instructions and in collaboration with ACO.

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[14]   NATO HQ refers to the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the Secretary General and the Military Committee.

Secondly, NATO created a working group for Strategic Communications within ACO. Directed by the Chief Strategic Communications (see ACO 95–2, 2009), this group meets every month to supervise and manage the development and implementation of the Strategic Communications policy, its plans and activities. The group members include several representatives from Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), in particular from the operations bureau, the J3:

- NATO force commanders,
- Representatives of the Public Diplomacy Division,
- Representatives of the Media Operations Center,
- The International Military Staff Public Affairs Advisor,
- Representatives of Information Operations.

The United States Department of Defense recently suggested creating such a working group in its own country to ensure the concept's institutionalisation and, in the longer term, its continued effectiveness (Department of Defense, 2009a). It thus corroborates the usefulness of such a group.

4.2 Experienced staff and knowledge sharing

NATO interviewees stressed the importance of experienced staff for Strategic Communications. Developing messages that find resonance with audiences, identifying target audiences, using credible and legitimate communication methods, and assessing the success of communications requires technical expertise as well as experience in the field. This last task, evaluation, is in fact considered to be the most challenging by NATO & American interviewees. As they explained, evaluating the effect of Strategic Communications "is an art, not a science". The key informants attribute this difficulty to the fact that influence acts in the cognitive domain and as such is not directly measurable. Behavioural indicators are to be used as proxies to estimate one's influence but even then, attribution of influence remains challenging: in a world full of influence vectors, it is hard to affirm that a change of behaviour is due to a specific influence on a person's thoughts. Any evalu-

ation of the effect of Strategic Communications must therefore consist of multiple methods and multiple criteria that cut across each other in order to increase the reliability of results. As interviewees recalled, the selection of these methods and criteria significantly benefit from involving technical and field experts, as does the interpretation of results.

NATO interviewees also stressed the importance of putting in place processes that facilitate knowledge sharing, given that experienced personnel is not always available. Organisations with flexible network structures are favourable to such knowledge sharing. Such a structure allows more communication and collaboration within the military hierarchy (vertical knowledge sharing) and across the various information and communication capabilities (horizontal knowledge sharing). Such knowledge sharing does not occur as organically in more hierarchical and bureaucratic structures.

A number of interviewees pointed to the US army's new rotation policy as an example of a process which increases the availability of experienced staff for Strategic Communications and the sharing of their knowledge with others. The policy imposes longer deployments, and rotations which depend on expertise (Department of Defense, 2009b).

4.3 The private sector's potential role

All interviewees reminded of the significant expertise the private sector holds in relevant areas. For decades, the private sector has worked on getting target populations to buy its products. Strategic Communications already draws on some of the sector's key concepts. For example, the concept of "narrative", which comes across strongly in Coca-Cola campaigns: whether it is advertising for Coca-Cola normal, Light, or Zero, or for other drinks, such as Fanta, it draws on the refreshment and recreational break themes (see Coca-Cola, 2009). A relatively recent RAND study compared the armed forces' task of shaping their environment with the activities of private organisations' marketing and communications divisions. It concluded that the military sector would gain from adopting more of the private sector's concepts (Helmus et al., 2007). The authors explained that segmentation applies to the armed forces' identification of those populations that are most

favourable to their objectives. Targeting reminds the forces to distinguish between those that can be most influenced and that are most influencing from those that are less receptive to communications and less influential. Branding, in turn, aims to make a given government clearly identifiable (in words or deeds). Finally, key leader engagement is analogous to the private sector's harnessing concept (Helmus et al., 2007).

It is therefore clear that the private sector can be exploited to develop the Strategic Communications capability. The way in which it should be exploited is, however, less clear: interviewees explains that the private sector's relevant competences may be subcontracted, as the United States often do, or used as a sources of expertise which is adapted for the public sector. This choice requires careful decision-making: subcontracting, although easier to realise than adapting competences, is risky since the private sector does not abide by the same ethical principles as governments do. To give an example, the American government had chosen the Lincoln Group as subcontractor to carry out its public relations in Iraq. In 2005, it was revealed that the Group had paid local newspapers to publish articles that were favourable to American objectives (Foster et Reid, 2005). This is contrary to the government's principle of media independence and, therefore, caused an unfavourable public reaction (Shanker, 2006). The interviewees also pointed out that the volume of classified material in the military institution can sometimes be too great to allow fruitful collaboration with the private sector.

4.4 Training in Strategic Communications

NATO is currently developing training in Strategic Communications. It is important to recall that Strategic Communications does not involve new competences but exploits those that already exist. An interviewee explains that as a result, training in Strategic Communications comes down to ensuring its institutionalisation. To achieve this, he advocates developing the competences required for each of the information and communication capabilities individually, as is the case at the moment, and complementing this specialist training with introduction to Strategic Communications. The interviewee points out that another possibility consists of developing training in Strategic

Communications which covers the various competences required for the different information and communication capabilities. He nonetheless reminds that such generic training would be confronted with the problem of a firewall between Psychological Operations and Military Public Affairs. He adds that, in addition, generic training could lead to compromising specialist skills.

CHAPTER 5 Relevance of NATO's
Strategic Communications
concept for France

This chapter explores the relevance of NATO's Strategic Communications concept for France. It starts by explaining that the concept appeared relevant in the interviews the research team carried out in France, with some adjustments. The chapter then examines the structure that could support implementation of this concept in France, and the resources that could be made available to it.

This chapter draws from the interviews carried out in France. It is important to note that not all interviewees were clear on the objectives and scope of the Strategic Communications concept, mostly because of its terminology which led to some confusion (see section 2.3).

5.1 A concept relevant to France in situations of crisis

The strategic changes of the 21st c. that were described in the report's first chapter affect all NATO member states, including France. The revolution in information technologies, and the contemporary operational environment, characterised by counter-insurgencies, multilateral deployments and competent and effective adversaries apply to NATO and the United States, which have already adopted the Strategic Communications concept, in the same way as they do to other member states. This implies that French communications, like those of other countries, are today of particular importance, but that they are also hard to realise in an influential way (see section 1.2).

The French interviewees explained that France already implements a communications strategy, under the direction of the Elysée. This strategy resembles Strategic Communications, especially in two respects. Firstly, through its inter-ministerial character: the Elysée informs ministers of the messages they have to transmit. Secondly, through the effort the Elysée undertakes to impose a narrative on the messages the ministers communicate.

The French interviewees nevertheless indicated that it could be beneficial to reinforce France's capability to communicate strategically during crises. One expert recalls that in the Ivory Coast, a lack of communication had been felt: "An authority orchestrated an information war and we were caught on the hop". Other experts corroborate this perception: "France tries to make tactical efforts with no strategic range"; "[The way in which France addresses the external front] is reduced to responding blow by blow, without in-depth analysis of the situation's implications. Our Defence Staff does not wage an information war". These opinions were also corroborated in the context of the war in Afghanistan by officers returning from the field during a colloquium organised by the Strategic Research Institute of the Military School (*Institut de recherche stratégique de l'Ecole militaire, IRSEM*) and the CICDE[15]. NATO's Strategic Communications therefore seems relevant for France in situations of crisis.

5.2 The challenges linked to the concept

The process of Strategic Communications is marked by two major challenges which would need to be taken into account if France were to develop a concept equivalent to NATO's.

To begin, the concept is by definition international. As a French interviewee recalls, the national population is always more important to a government than foreign populations. One can take the NATO ISAF mission as an example. Its objective is to win the support of the Afghan people and one

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[15]   The colloquium that took place at the French Military School (*Ecole Militaire*) on June 15 2010 bore on the subject of "What strategy of influence can be used to support military operations?".

way of doing this is by communicating that its forces will not be withdrawing from the country soon. If the United States or any other country present in Afghanistan wanted to withdraw its troops tomorrow due to national political pressures, it would however not abstain from doing so for Strategic Communications reasons. This could damage ISAF's message and thereby its credibility and influence on target populations. Strategic Communications therefore risks being dismissed for national political pressures when it is implemented multilaterally.

A second challenge associated with Strategic Communications relates to the need to coordinate Military Public Affairs with Information Operations. In fact, these must be kept separate due to the firewall issue (see section 3.2.1). The challenge that meeting the need to coordinate while separating these two capabilities represents is illustrated in the successive reorganisations of the Strategic Communications capability in ISAF (see section 3.2.2).

5.3 Confusing terminology

NATO's terminology for this concept leads to confusion in France and could be reconsidered. The interviews highlighted the fact that the term "Strategic Communications" carries connotations with "media" capabilities rather than with all instruments of oral and behavioural communications. The term also positions the concept at strategic level despite it applying to the operational and tactical levels as well. The interviews did not raise suggestions for an alternative, more appropriate term for an equivalent concept in France.

5.4 The structure required to support Strategic Communications

5.4.1 Clear leadership

The Elysée currently directs the French Government's communications and, for this reason, would naturally be at the forefront of a French Strategic Communications capability in crisis situations. Moreover, the Elysée is in a unique position of authority at an inter-ministerial level, which allows it to

develop coherent communications in a short space of time as Strategic Communications requires (see section 5.1).

5.4.2 A balance between a hierarchical, bureaucratic and a flexible network structure

As explored in the introductory chapter, the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of the Western governmental institutions, including France, poses a challenge to Strategic Communications. It can sometimes come in the way of coherent and rapid communications. Yet such communications are required to be influential in the contemporary world (see section 1.2). As French interviewees recalled:

> [Some] situations illustrate complete dissonance [between French ministries] such as the with Darfur, where there is disagreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence … This can pose huge problems; we are still paying the price for Rwanda.

> The military tool is a powerful lever, but it often appears necessary to coordinate messages to gain support of the population. Managing perceptions is key but it presents a challenge as information must always be coherent.

The second chapter of this report explained that a flexible network structure is more favourable for coherent and rapid of communications.

Albeit posing a challenge, the institutions' hierarchical and bureaucratic structure plays a key role, notably for imparting a clear sense of leadership. Such leadership is particularly important to Strategic Communications since the concept empowers individuals to communicate without having to seek authorisation (see section 2.2.2).

It is therefore necessary to find a balance between the institutions' current hierarchical and bureaucratic structure and a more flexible network structure to enhance the ability of the relevant capabilities to engage in Strategic Communications.

5.5 Key resources

Strategic Communications exploits all existing competences, and does not develop new ones. The resources linked to the adoption of a concept equivalent to NATO's are thus relatively limited, mainly linked to the following aspects:

1. If a concept equivalent to NATO's Strategic Communications was implemented in France, it would be helpful to identify a person responsible for Strategic Communications in each information and communication capability, to monitor the implementation of coherent and rapid communications according to the instructions of the Strategic Communications chief (see section 4.1).

2. It would be beneficial to reflect on the policies and processes that could be developed for Strategic Communications experts to be available during crises, and for their knowledge to be shared (see section 4.2). A French interviewee confirms this point:

   > We need an operational memory, tried and tested personnel and a limited turnover. The French military system does not allow operational continuity. We remain in the conjectural and the factual.

   As discussed in chapter four, a structure that tends towards a flexible network may facilitate knowledge sharing. As NATO interviewees pointed out, some policies may also do this, such as the US Army's new rotation policy which they argue is worth looking into.

3. A working group could be instrumental in institutionalising the concept in France and ensuring that it continues to be applicable and effectively implemented over time. NATO recently set up such a working group and the United States are heading in the same direction (section 4.1). The working group could be directed by the Defence and National Security Council (*Conseil de défense et de sécurité nationale*). In fact, this council is inter-ministerial, with membership of the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Ministers for Defence, the Interior, Foreign Affairs and the Budget. In addition, the council is set up to co-opt specialists in those topics

with which they are dealing (Decree 2009-1657), including from the private sector (see section 4.3). The council would therefore be well-placed to understand how the decisions relating to Strategic Communications affect institutions and it would have the necessary skills and competences to carry out an objective and constructive evaluation.

4. To conclude, as Strategic Communications does not develop new competences but exploits those already existing, any training in Strategic Communications would essentially be aimed at institutionalising the concept. Although this training could be envisaged as a new independent course, it may be preferable to include it as a module in existing courses (see section 4.4).

CHAPTER 6 Conclusions and recommendations

As this report has described, communications are crucial in today's operational environment: they are key to gaining the support of populations, which is itself required to succeed in counter-insurgency. Faced with the challenge of gaining the support of the Afghan population, NATO developed the concept of Strategic Communications in an attempt to structure its policies and processes for more effective communications.

NATO defines its Strategic Communications concept as follows:

> The coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities – Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs (PA), Military Public Affairs, Information Operations (lnfo Ops), and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), as appropriate – in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims. (PO(2009)0141, 2009).

In order to clarify Strategic Communications' objectives, scope and execution, the research team has produced its own definition of the concept:

> Strategic Communications is a process designed to coordinate communications (words and deeds) between inter-ministerial actors and to reinforce their strategic effect. To achieve this, Strategic Communications exploits all existing expertise, to be found in the various information and communication departments. The aim of Strategic Communications is to promote behaviour in target audiences that is favourable to the actors' objectives and, thereby, to shape the operational environment.

Based on its literature review and key informant interviews, the research team has concluded that it would be relevant for France to develop a concept equivalent to NATO's Strategic Communications in crisis situations:

1. France is affected by the strategic changes of the 21st c. just like NATO and its other member states. Moreover, France's communications could,

according to French interviewees, occasionally benefit from being more strategic. The concept of Strategic Communications is, therefore, relevant in France.

2. France nonetheless already has a Strategic Communications process in place at the governmental level. NATO's concept would therefore, only be relevant in France in crisis situations, which is where the lack of capacity for communicating strategically was expressed by the French interviewees. The Elysée would continue to direct French communications, benefiting from a unique position of inter-ministerial authority which is favourable for Strategic Communications. In fact, its bodies such as the Council of Ministers (*Conseil des ministres*) allow them to facilitate rapid and coherent communications.

3. As NATO's terminology for referring to "Strategic Communications" leads to confusion in France, it would be useful to analyse alternative terminologies if France were to adopt an equivalent concept specific for crisis situations.

4. The implementation of a Strategic Communications concept would benefit from exploring whether a balance could be found between the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of those institutions responsible for Strategic Communications, which allows effective leadership, and a more flexible network structure, which is more favourable for coherent and rapid communications.

5. A working group would be worth establishing in order to help institutionalise the concept in France. Once the concept established, the group could evaluate the extent to which it continues to be applicable and effectively implemented. This working group could be directed by the Defence and National Security Council (*Conseil de défense et de sécurité nationale*), co-opting appropriate experts in the field.

6. This working group could also consider the following questions, which have yet to be clarified:

   – What could be the concept's terminology in France?

   – How could a better balance be achieved between the current hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of institutions, and a more flexible network structure?

   – Which policies and processes could be developed for Strategic Communications experts to be available in crisis situations, and for their knowledge to be shared?

   – What role could the private sector play in implementing Strategic Communications, given its expertise in the area?

   – What format could training in Strategic Communications take?

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