TWO CASE STUDIES OF SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

Thomas P. Galvin

Everything an organization and its members say and do communicates. Organizations communicate to survive and thrive in their environments. They do so by promoting themselves and their competitive advantage, targeting opposing or competing organizations, and defending themselves from criticism by others. On the other hand, not all communication is what leaders desire. Say-do gaps and inconsistencies among messages abound. For organizations the size and scope of the U.S. military, these are recurring problems which confuse our partners and provide fodder for criticisms by adversaries. The challenge for leaders is orienting as much of the organization's communication as possible toward specific goals.

Strategic communication emerged in the defense community as an integrated process to develop and disseminate desired messages, ostensibly to convince opponents of friendly intentions. Strategic communication became the subject of many books and scholarly articles, especially on the qualities and capabilities of leaders and great orators who communicate effectively with external audiences. However, neither doctrine nor literature provided adequate clarity as to how strategic communication was related to other organizational functions that managed communication. The result has been studies and stories of communication failures of various forms, such as say-do gaps or wrong-headed actions that confused or angered audiences.

Identifying failure is easy. The negative effects often manifest themselves quickly. However, what does right look like? What constitutes a successful communication campaign? Unfortunately, the answer in the defense community has been to look at significant seminal events such as the moon landing as exemplars, which ignores or bypasses the preceding histories. The space race as a whole contained many successful and failed actions both before the Apollo XI Mission and after. Single events are not good measures of the success of campaigns.

Rather, the best way to understand successful strategic communication is longitudinal. What was the full story of the organization, the campaign it undertook, and the changes in the environment that came from it? That is the approach of this book. Through two historic case studies of successful communication campaigns, one coalition and the other joint, the book presents an architecture that allows leaders in other contexts to build similar campaigns, implement them, and assess their effectiveness. The two cases differ significantly in context, environmental challenges, and the organizations' identities. Nevertheless, they shared one very important factor—the leader personally launched a campaign to change something undesirable in the environment and succeeded.

The book is organized as follows. Chapter 1 introduces this book and provides an overview of its chapters. Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the treatment of strategic communication in joint doctrine and unresolved questions over the concept. One problem has been the disjointed formal structure of communication among military organizations, such as the mutually exclusive functions of public affairs and influence operations (e.g., propaganda). Although strategic communication clearly includes both functions, the (justified) barriers to communication between these entities make understanding and implementing strategic communication difficult. Another problem is the disagreement among scholars and practitioners over whether strategic communication is an organizational process or a leadership skill. These perspectives differ in how they characterize what right looks like.

The approach of the book is to use a simple model from organizational development—Pettigrew's

Triangle of process, content, and context—to understand both the communication environment and the campaign initiated within it. The Triangle is a useful lens to analyze and plan organizational change. Process refers to the processes of communication, or how organizations craft and spread messages. Content refers to the message itself: How well formulated is it? How aligned is it to the situation and the perspectives of audiences? How well does the message spread itself without extensive energy being expended by the organization?

The two cases follow. Chapter 3 is the case study of the Bosnia Multi-Year Roadmap (MYRM) developed by the Stabilization Force-Bosnia (SFOR) in 2000-2001. The MYRM emerged from an internal project assigned by the commander of SFOR to foster greater integration and cooperation between the civilian and military organizations in theater. Seeing the MYRM's potential as a broader collaboration and coordination tool, the SFOR commander used it to harmonize relationships among SFOR headquarters and the subordinate multinational divisions, while also championing it to the High Representative. The MYRM's adoption at the international level conferred legitimacy to the Roadmap, setting the stage for the development of strategic plans eventually handed over to the Government of Bosnia as SFOR's mission drew down.

Next, chapter 4 is the case study of the creation of U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) from 2007 to 2010. USAFRICOM was formed under great controversy, with many opponents accusing the United States of neocolonialism and militarizing foreign policy. The command exercised a campaign to convince a wide range of disbelieving audiences that this was not the case, and it succeeded because of the conciliatory strategy that defused the controversy until USAFRICOM's own programs could take shape. The harmonization of words and deeds over 2 years even-

tually changed the minds of many opponents and neutral parties, leading to enduring and productive relationships.

Chapter 5 analyzes the two case studies to draw common lessons learned in the areas of content, process, and context from Pettigrew's Triangle. Lastly, chapter 6 presents the implications of this report and offers an architecture for strategic communication campaigns built on six essential questions that leaders must answer to develop their own campaigns.

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