

***Transformational Strategic  
Communication:  
A New Paradigm for Counterterrorism  
Communication***

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Note: These notes were not read as the talk, but only provided a guideline for it. There is therefore, some variance between the notes and actual presentation. Only those things said in both forms can be attributed to the "talk."

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3. Thanks to Dr. Chris Weaver for his tireless efforts at helping me to analyze various forms of political communication related to terrorism.
4. Thanks Dr. Mike Coombs for introducing me to the areas of government activity in strategic communication.

In this talk, I will attempt to describe the historical nature of strategic communication (SC), why it is presently not working well, and what can be done to make it work. In doing so, I will cover the following topic areas: a) the history of strategic communication in general and in the United States specifically, b) the nature of strategic communication and strategic persuasion for the United States government, c) the problems the United States is now having with a unified SC system, and d) the need for applying communication theory to how SC is handled. More importantly, I will attempt to help us rethink the role of strategic communication in counterterrorism by offering a new paradigm for how it is used.

#### WHO AM I?

1. communication scientist
2. political participant
3. researcher involved in project funded by the IC.
4. researcher with some international contacts who is working on collaboration with a scholar in Israel concern some of the ideas presented here.

#### MY COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

I come to this topic as a communication scientist which obligates me to take a communication perspective in examining issues about terrorism. A political communication perspective has the following assumptions:

1. Social and political realities are constructed in message exchanges and are never matters of purely objective facts or interpretations.
2. Political actions result from political communication.
3. All political actions are symbolic and have message value.

4. Unintentional influence can be just as important as intentional influence in political communication.
5. Influencing people in political communication involves specific processes such as event framing.
6. Receiver interpretations are more important than sender intentions when it comes to any kind of persuasion, particularly political persuasion.
7. Communication creates intractable conflicts and communication is what can diminish or resolve intractable conflicts.
  - Micro-level interactions form networks of interactions and have cumulative effects that generate meso and macro levels of influence. People form relationships and networks of relationships.
  - All conflicts are related to patterns of interaction and all means of resolving conflicts are related to changing patterns of communication.
  - Communication mechanisms provide both the generation and the diminishment of human conflict.
  - Conflict, particularly intractable human, conflict forms the seedbed for terrorist ideologies.
8. A deep understanding and employment of the communication dynamics related to intractable conflicts holds open numerous possibilities for strategic communication that moves beyond strategic influence to transformational communication.
9. Human problems are seldom a matter of a presence or absence of communication but usually result from abundant communication that is of poor quality.
10. Intractable conflicts require specific conflict management processes such as identity expansion and these require specific communication strategies and techniques.

## RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF TERRORISM AND A “WAR” AGAINST IT

In my view, terrorism is a method used by people with a political agenda and cause. It is deliberate and brutal action done against civilians to create shock and awe. A sobering view of terrorism from serious research indicates the following:

- While terrorists do very horrific deeds, they are not the psychotics as often assumed in various descriptions.
- Terrorists and insurgents are not the same thing while it is possible that insurgents use terrorism and it is also possible that insurgents and terrorists work together.
- Terrorism is not a political end, but rather a method that serves political ends.
- Terrorism did not begin with 9/11.
- A war on terrorism is technically not possible. However, we can use the term figuratively and extend it into “Global War on Terrorism” (GWOT) to note that we are trying to reduce the use of terrorism as a political tool. However, I have come to the conclusion that simply talking about counterterrorism is more realist and more productive. Terrorists want to set our agendas and if we declare war on them, they have set the agenda.
- Terrorists do not lack sophisticated technology. In terms of Internet technology, they have experts and have stayed ahead of many efforts to track their Internet organizing.
- Common criminal behavior knowledge does not provide an understanding of terrorists.
- Religion is an important aspect of much of today’s terrorism but tends to be a supporting factor rather than a causal one.

## WHAT IS THE STATE OF TERRORISM TODAY?

The Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence of 2006 makes the following arguments about terrorism today:

- Joint efforts by the United States with its allies in counterterrorism have results in major setbacks for groups like Al Qaeda.
- Jihadists continue to seek to overthrow what they consider apostate regimes.
- There are numerous “self-generating progeny” of Al Qaeda (Negroponte, 2006, p. 3).

- The IC in the U.S. is most concerned with Al Qaeda because its core leaders continue to plot operations and messages are still be distributed to followers.
  - The top operational priorities of AQ are attacking the U.S. homeland, its overseas interests, and its allies.
  - AQ continues to seek weapons with which to attack U.S. interests. AQ has formed relationships with other terrorist organizations like Jemaah Islamiya, Islamic Jihad Union, Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, and others.
  - New jihadist cells appear to take inspiration from AQ while doing operations on their own.
- Nearly 40 terrorist organizations, insurgencies or cults are seeking chemical, biological, nuclear or radiological weapons.
- Debates between Muslim extremists and moderates will affect the rhetorical environment of terrorists.
- Most Muslims reject the extremist messages of the jihadists.
  - It is possible for people to endorse democracy, freedoms, equality, rule of law with any major religion's beliefs.
- Jihadists offer a more authoritarianism, isolation, and economic stagnation.

## OUR NATIONAL IMAGE

### Perceptions of the United States Today

Data before 9/11 indicate the following about perception of the United States. While most opinion leaders saw the war on terror as justified, many saw the United States as overreacting (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001). High numbers of opinion leaders in Europe, Latin America, Asian nations, and the Middle East believe that it was god for Americans to know what it is like to be vulnerable (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001). Most felt that the war on terror should be confined to Afghanistan (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001). Few saw public support for Al Qaeda and most (2/3) believed that people in their nations had a positive view of the United States (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001).

However, about half of those leaders in Middle Eastern nations believed their people had negative views (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001). Reasons for the negative views appeared to include beliefs like the U.S. helps expand the gap between rich and poor nations. Positive beliefs appeared to include beliefs that the United States is a leader in science and technology (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001). Also high on the positive side was the belief that America is a land of opportunity (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001). This was true for the Middle Eastern leaders as well as those from the other regions (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001).

The spread of American culture through media products was rated as low in regard to factors creating negative impressions of the United States (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001). Globalization was also rated as a minor factor (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001). Most of the opinion leaders believed that there would not be a cultural clash of the West against Islam due to the war on terror (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001).

There was an interesting gap between what American opinion leaders thought of the United States national image and what opinion leaders in other nations thought of it. Seventy percent of American leaders perceived that the U.S. was taking allies' interests into account in the war on terrorism while only 40% of other nations' leaders believed this (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001). Among Middle Eastern opinion leaders in late 2001, most believed that the United States has been overly supportive of Israel and also that American pressure on Israel to facilitate the creation of a Palestinian state would lower terrorism (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2001).

Anti-U.S. sentiments appear to be driven by aversion to American policies including the war in Iraq, the GWOT, and support for Israel (Kohut, 2005). Another factor appears to be the perception that the U.S. does not consider the interests of nations in a region that it enters (Kohut, 2005). What good news exists consists of the fact that the U.S. image has improved in few nations and the support for terrorists has declined (Kohut, 2005). Another bit of good news is that perceptions of bin Laden as a world leader have worsened (Kohut, 2005). More importantly, among numerous Muslim populations, there is a growing belief that free elections, free media, and criticism of government can work in their societies (Kohut, 2005).

The U.S. is less popular in the Middle East than in any other part of the world (Kohut, 2005). The best situation for the U.S. image is in Morocco where the views are more

positive than negative (Kohut, 2005). What is called anti-Americanism seems most related to opposition to U.S. foreign policy (Kohut, 2005). Muslims are divided on whether or not the U.S. supports democracies. When it is perceived that it does, there is a more favorable view of the U.S. (Kohut, 2005).

It is important to recognize that there is broad support for democracy among Muslim populations studied by the Pew research project (Kohut, 2005). In one of the most recent surveys, the data indicate that large majorities of Jordanians, Lebanese, and Moroccans say that democracy is not just a western way of life and that it is possible to work in their societies (Kohut, 2005). For those who are optimistic about democracy developing in the Middle East, some give credit (Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon) to the U.S. and others (Morocco, Turkey) do not (Kohut, 2005). Some (Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan) explicitly blame the U.S. for their lack of optimism (Kohut, 2005).

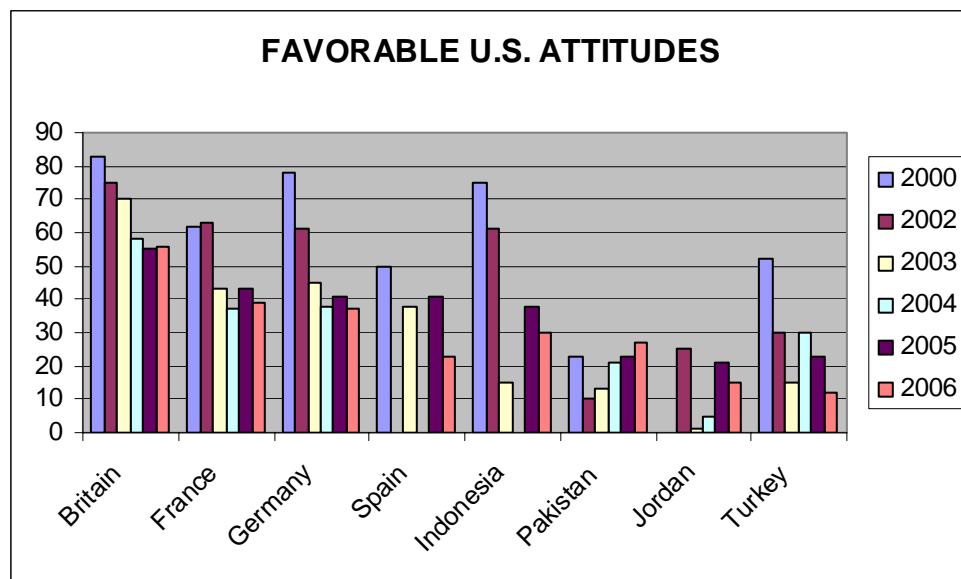
Kohut (2005) argues that the Pew studies indicate that communication changes are not likely to achieve most positive in the Middle East because policies and how they are perceived seem to be the main cause of negative impressions of the United States. However, Kohut also notes how disaster relief appears to increase positive impressions. Also, he acknowledges that reactions to foreign policies are what move the impressions. I argue that both of these cases involve strategic communication.

Of the policies that seem to contribute the most to negative impressions of the United States, Kohut and Stokes (2006) argue that their Pew Research Center data indicate that the war in Iraq does the most damage, but that there are other factors like the unrivaled power that now belongs to the United States. At September, 2001 after the AQ attacks, numerous leaders reveal that their populations felt sympathy for Americans while also harboring resentment toward the U.S. (Kohut & Stokes, 2006). Sadly, some people thought it was good for Americans to feel vulnerable (Kohut & Stokes, 2006).

While the GWOT was understood and accepted by many populations studied by the Pew surveys, many people studied thought that the U.S. was overreacting to the attacks (Kohut & Stokes, 2006). After the start of the war in Iraq in 2003, the U.S. image deteriorated in every nation longitudinally surveyed by Pew (Kohut & Stokes, 2006). The surveys done in subsequent years showed more decline in America's image (Kohut & Stokes, 2006). Attitudes toward both the American people and the American government were

becoming more negative (Kohut & Stokes, 2006). Ideals as well as policies became objects of criticism (Kohut & Stokes, 2006).

A report released by the Pew Global Attitudes Project in June, 2006 indicates the following about the national image of the United States for numerous other nations (Pew Research Center, 2006). The national image has worsened for many and support for the GWOT has lessened even among close allies like Japan. While many countries see Iran as a threat to world peace, they also see U.S. presence in Iraq as a threat to world peace (Pew Research Center, 2006). There are indicators that U.S. aid for tsunami victims helped the national image but that the positive effects were short-term. Favorable impressions declined in most the 15 nations studied (Pew Research Center, 2006). Some of the nations are shown in Figure below.



Of fifteen nations surveyed, the most support for the GWOT is found with India and Russia (Pew Research Center, 2006). Support for the GWOT has declined in Japan, Indonesia, and Spain. In Spain, which suffered a devastating terrorist attack in 2004, 76% of the Spaniards are opposed to the GWOT while only 19% favor it (Pew Research Center, 2006). In Turkey, 77% of the people oppose the GWOT while this number was 56% in 2004 (Pew

Research Center, 2006). While the American national image has improved in Jordan and Pakistan, it has worsened in Turkey and Indonesia (Pew Research Center, 2006).

#### COUNTERTERRORISM TERMINOLOGY

- Terrorism is violence against innocents and is a method rather than an entity.
- Counter-terrorism is working against the sources, spread, and support of terrorism.
- Anti-terrorism is violence against terrorists.
  - Covert action
  - Clandestine action

#### COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS OF TERRORISM

- Violence is done to coerce or to make political demands.
- Violence is done to get people committed to see that those trying to stop the violence are also violent with superior means (Fanon).
- Combine religion with terrorism to make actions holy or blessed by divine rights.

#### STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION DEFINED

- Strategic communication is influence used by a nation on audiences in foreign nations and sometime on its own population.
- Goals of SC include persuading other nations that foreign policies are good, dissuading them regarding competing ideologies, and discouraging enemy rhetoric.

#### FOUR AREAS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

1. Public diplomacy
2. Public affairs
3. International broadcasting
4. Information operations

## BRIEF HISTORY OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

- Ancient cultural diplomacy and political persuasion. Ex. Alexander the Great
- World War I Committee on Public Information
- German Nazis
- Office of War Information, WWII
- United States Information Agency
- White House Office of Global Communication
- State Department SC
- DOD State SC

## TERRORIST STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

- “Social networks are complex communication networks that create shared worlds of meaning and feelings, which in turn shape identity, perceptions, and preferences.”
- -- Sageman, 2004, p. 158
  
- Al-Zawahiri, “Knights under the Prophet’s Banner,” 2001:
- “The jihad movement must dedicate one of its wings to work with the masses, preach, provide services for the Muslim people, and share their concerns... We must win the peoples confidence, respect and affection. The people will not love us unless they feel that we love them, care about them, and are ready to defend them.”

## THE SOCIAL NETWORKS OF TERRORISM

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#### THE INTERNET AND TERRORISM

- “The Internet has also dramatically affected the global jihad by making possible a new type of relationship between an individual and a virtual community.”
- Sageman, 2004, p. 160).

#### THE INTERNET AND COUNTERTERRORISM

- “The struggle between dangerous international nationalism and sophisticated cosmopolitanism will be played out on the Internet.”
- Don Ellis, 2006.
- “The Internet has also dramatically affected the global jihad by making possible a new type of relationship between an individual and a virtual community.”
- Sageman, 2004, p. 160

#### EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

- “Strategic communication must include synchronized themes and messages reinforced by premediated actions.”
- Josten, 2006, p. 17
- “Good strategic communication cannot build support for policies view unfavorably by large populations. Nor can the most carefully crafted messages, themes, and words persuade when the messenger lacks credibility and underlying message authority.” (Defense Science Board, DOD, 2004, p.11).

#### PROBLEMS WITH TRADITIONAL STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

- Supply side focus does not deal with demand.

- “Solutions lie not in short-term, manipulative public relations.” (Defense Science Board, 2004, p. 16).

#### NEW DIRECTIONS IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

- Cultural Diplomacy
- Net Diplomacy
- Virtual Diplomacy
- Soft Power
- Goat Grab Diplomacy
- Transformational Public Diplomacy

#### TOWARD A THIRD PARADIGM OF TRANSFORMATIONAL STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Transformation communication is an approach to managing or diminishing conflicts and involves specific actions like rehumanization and reinterpretation of narratives (Ellis, 2006). Groups can have similar goals like “peace” but have conflict over accomplishing goals (Ellis, 2006). Conflicts that are zero-sum are very difficult to resolve (Ellis, 2006). An example is the status of Jerusalem as seen by Palestinians and Israelis. The intensity of zero-sum conflicts goes up as what is valued is scarce and highly symbolic and central to the identities of the conflicting parties (Ellis, 2006). Jerusalem has high symbolic value to both Jews and Arabs.

While simply increasing the quantity of communication does not assure any strong effects, it is useful for increasing commonness and identification (Ellis, 2006). This is why travel and educational exchanges should be encouraged. Much of the Israeli conflict involves identity. The Israelis and Palestinians have nonrecognition of each other as a starting point (Ellis, 2006). Israelis say that there is no such thing as a Palestinian and Palestinians say that the state of Israel lacks legitimacy (Ellis, 2006). Even insults about religious legitimacy can enter the communication.

Throughout nature, survival instincts appear related to groups and abilities to sort out friendly from threatening groups (Ellis, 2006). Studies in psychology show how easy it is to get people to take on group identities whether it be common descent, sports teams, etc. etc. However, we should remember that some groupings more important than others.

“People will die for their ethnic groups but not their book clubs.” Ellis, 2006, p. 52).

Islamic terrorists argue that their people have been humiliated by the West (Ellis, 2006). Individual identity depends on secure group attachments (Ellis, 2006). Social identity is acquired and nurtured in groups. Some large-scale communities are imagined and this can be facilitated with communication technologies like CMC that allow remote contacts and network building (Ellis, 2006).

Ellis (2006) argues that narratives are the most powerful tools of identity building. Stories build cohesion in communities. Stories define who are and how we have roles in the world (Ellis, 2006). While constructivists argue that meanings are always changing, we know that meanings turn into what Ellis (2006, p. 58) calls “stable semantic systems.” This suggests that while meanings can be changed, the changes do not occur quickly. Collective memories are an important part of conflicts among political forces. Political identities can be formed by using history and collective memory to justify current actions. The stories told by Israelis about the Holocaust and the formation of the state of Israel are competing stories used to delegitimize the other side (Ellis, 2006). Resolving conflicts requires recognizing the collective memory of the other side of a conflict (Ellis, 2006). Another important requirement is identity expansion such that one side can be more inclusive of the other (Ellis, 2006).

Some community involvement or membership is what Anderson (1999) calls “imagined communities.” In such cases identification with the collective is based less on actual experience than on mythology and narrative (Ellis, 2006). It is interesting to note that no group of humans considers itself as having common boundaries with all other humans, according to Ellis (2006). Comradeship, even if imagined, can provide a basis for killing or being killed for the community (Ellis, 2006).

CMC helps material and information flow (symbolic flows) in ways that allow networks to organize with decreasingly dependence on national or organizational boundaries (Ellis, 2006; Monge & Contractor, 2003). Because communication is so fast with CMC, relationships can transcend locales (Ellis, 2006). CMC also increases the quantity of information and the types of information that people have access to today (Ellis, 2006). Certain communities, whether offline or online, are emergent systems. This means that they more from naturally occurring social interactions than from formal patterns or plans from authorities (Ellis, 2006). CMC facilitates the blending of formal and emergent networks as lateral forms of communication become more

common (Ellis, 2006). The concept of emergence in communication systems refers to patterns and predictability arising from looks like disorder (Ellis, 2006).

Patterns of human interaction in systems follow rules of interaction such as one that says, "I am more likely to communicate with someone who is similar to me." When many people follow that rule, a social structure emerges and is reproduced by how people interpret their communication behaviors (Ellis, 2006). The homophily rule noted above leads to tight-knit communities and is predicted by Social Identity Theory.

CMC makes it possible for people separated over geography to stay in contact with their homeland and family and friends they left behind. An example is Tibet Online which provides supported for the exiled Tibetan government in India (Ellis, 2006). CMC can help political mobilization by making it easy for like-minded people to assemble in CMC spaces of interaction (Ellis, 2006).

Muslims are getting religious and political messages from a variety of media sources including audiocassettes, CD-ROMs, and CMC (Ellis, 2006). Some researchers believe that CMC can have a moderating or depolarizing effect on Islamic discourse (Ellis, 2006). The argument says that because they have so many sources available with CMC, it is easier to challenge religious leaders (Ellis, 2006). Variety of views and sources can encourage cosmopolitanism and this in turn can lead to more positive views of democracy (Ellis, 2006). Mandeville (2001) argues that Internet usage has had a moderating effect on Islamic discourse and this is because the extremes are weakened by more convergence online on the center of Islam (Ellis, 2006).

Other older media should not be discounted. For example, Al-Jazeera TV has a show where religious scholars are pressured to defend their positions by a critical audience (Ellis, 2006). For most Muslims, the Internet is a way to be in contact with other Muslims and with Islam (Ellis, 2006). What is interesting here is that the Muslims online have an ability to be more free with their expression than in other venues of communication about Islam (Ellis, 2006).

Despite the fact that many Muslim sites like ummah.net are militantly anti-American and anti-Israeli, there are still opportunities for online discussion and dialogue (Ellis, 2006). Some scholars believe that a virtual ummah or Islamic community can be forming online as there is increasing interdependence and networking of Muslims with new media (Ellis, 2006).

Communication technologies like mass media can unintentionally become part of the terrorism process. This is due to three factors: a) contributing the intractable conflicts that spawn terrorism, and b) showing the carnage done by terrorists to create the terrorist goal of fear, and c) discussing or showing terrorists in ways that highlight their missions and thus encourage further

recruiting. Researchers on terrorists note that they take the actions they do because they believe that they work (Ellis, 2006; Pape, 2003).

Old media and new media keep communities informed (Ellis, 2006). More importantly, a plurality of viewpoints and a large number of outlets for discussion can open up the potential for less violent confrontations (Ellis, 2006). However, plurality does not guarantee this and it is possible that people self-select to the point that they reinforce their violent ideologies.

In pro-social moral development, people learn to take perspectives of others and to know that there are negative consequences for violent actions (Ellis, 2006). This moral development also works with what is learned in schools, churches, and legal organizations (Ellis, 2006). Moral control involves the regulation of one's behaviors. But the moral development process does not remain inert. New social contexts can affect moral judgments (Ellis, 2006). Moral control is related to both internal and external factors. An individual can deviate from internal moral control with social influence is strong enough to make his or her behavior consistent with a contrary moral set of judgements. Thus, a nonviolent person may become violent for social reasons.

Psychological inhibitors to violence are either internal or external (Ellis, 2006). External sanctions have more force when the person wants social acceptance and want to avoid social reproach. Unacceptable behavior is perceived as acceptable when there is moral justification for the negative actions. This can happen when various types of messages are used to dehumanize and blame the victims of the violence (Ellis, 2006).

There are six processes commonly used to frame other group of people in ways that justify violence against them: exaggerated comparison, euphemistic labeling, blame attributions, dehumanization, moral exclusion, and self-perception of victimhood (Ellis, 2006). Likening your opponent to Hitler is an example of exaggerated comparison. Euphemistic labeling of groups allows an avoidance of particulars. An example is calling terrorist "freedom fighters." (Ellis, 2006). Blames attributions create what are known as cycles of blame allocation. These cycles exonerate each side from responsibility and help along the disengagement from moral control against violence (Ellis, 2006). The process of dehumanization reduces the other group to the extent that it is assumed that they need no moral concern (Ellis, 2006). The extreme versions of this type of discourse, as in the case of the "into the sea" framing of the Israelis by Arabs, can lead to extreme violence like genocide (Ellis, 2006, p. 117). Moral exclusion involves a process of excluding the other group from one's own moral values (Ellis, 2006). Self-perception of victimhood involves arguing from the premise that one's group is always victimized by the other. The Israelis and Palestinians continuous go through cycles of victimhood claims (Ellis, 2006).

The victimhood phenomenon can get so extreme that it is taught in childrens school books and used as a theme in TV programs (Ellis, 2006).

Framing is the process of presenting information in ways that encourage one interpretation of events over other possible interpretations (Ellis, 2006). Framing is done by leaders, citizens, news media, and other participants in political communication. One important aspect of political conflict is a competition for framing dominance. For example, one can frame the Palestinians as either partners ready to compromise or as enemies determined to destroy Israel (Ellis, 2006).

Framing in political conflict produces images of the conflicting parties (Ellis, 2006). When framing processes reduce the nature of a political conflict to dichotomies, images result which imply that there are good people on one side and bad people on the other (Ellis, 2006).

Terrorists do what they do in relation to their commitments to causes and links to strong social identity. Terrorists have two main goals: a) do psychological damage to the enemy, and b) organize supporters (Ellis, 2006). However, they also want their political claims and demands to be taken seriously (Ellis, 2006). Unfortunately, it appears that terrorist have been honing their communication skills in recent years (Ellis, 2006). They rely on media coverage to give them attention, channels of announcement and threats, and favorable impressions to those who like their cause (Ellis, 2006). Ellis refers to a terrible “image-improving effect” of terrorist operations (Ellis, 2006, p. 124). What he means by this is that a terrorist act increases audience knowledge about the demands of the terrorists and with subsequent acts, they may develop sympathy for the terrorists.

While history and religion can be important aspects of the intractable conflicts, their roles are often exaggerated to attack the other side (Ellis, 2006). Disagreements about history are common in these conflicts. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the history of ancient Israel is used by both sides to argue against the other (Ellis, 2006).

CMC can increase contact between groups that are in conflict but contact by itself does not end or diminish conflict and can, in fact, increase it. The Common Ingroup Identity Model research shows that rigid ingroup boundaries establish clear rules for exclusion (Ellis, 2006).

Communication which worsens intractable conflicts includes zero-sum historical narratives on both sides, polarization of discourse, identity formation that is oriented around the conflict, and a trained incapacity to think beyond the boundaries created symbolically (Ellis, 2006). To work toward conflict resolution requires that the parties in this kind of conflict move to end their old patterns of conflict-reproducing communication (Ellis, 2006).

To work toward transformational communication in intractable conflict situations requires some very guided communication changes. First, both sides have to intend to work with the goal that they will seek solutions that meet the needs of both sides. After that, they must commit to interaction that is responsive to both sides (Ellis, 2006). Macro-level structural-political contacts that guide new forms of communication are important for progress. If effective, the communication should move toward identity widening and shared identity (Ellis, 2006). This is when the communication that is instrumental only can become transformational communication (Ellis, 2006). With identity widening, groups recategorize themselves with some features of the competing group (Ellis, 2006).

This type of conflict management requires changes at both micro and macro levels of interaction. At the micro level of interpersonal communication, attitudes and beliefs can be changed as well as various psychological patterns (Ellis, 2006). From there, social structures may emerge which have a basis in the transformed interpersonal communication (Ellis, 2006). For this to work, contact must be intense and long-term (Ellis, 2006). Superordinate goals that are valued by both sides are also necessary. Macro-level societal structures constrain or encourage the micro-level interaction patterns (Ellis, 2006).

Two key processes related to transformational communication are structuration and framing. Structuration is the production and reproduction of social structures with communication practices and the cycles involving both. An example of this is conciliatory communication at the interpersonal levels being stimulated and reinforced by leadership at the macro levels of societies (Ellis, 2006). Generating less conflicted interpersonal communication is not enough alone and generating better communication among leaders alone is not enough. Framing, as noted earlier, is the process of using communication to encourage particular interpretations over other possible interpretations.

The connections of all of this to counterterrorism are not yet evident, but hopefully will emerge with my closing argument. By now it should be clear that the psychological processes on both sides can be changed by strategic transformational communication which diminishes the extreme polarization of a conflict that encourages political violence including terrorism.

In-group communication done by the United States against in-group communication done by terrorists is bound to fail in perpetuity. There is no useful communication strategy to such an approach. Oppositional frames and how they are confronted and managed is a central challenge to transformational communication (Ellis, 2006). All of this is easy to say in the abstract and difficult to implement on the ground. But there is enough research to justify the plausibility of the

claims here. Later, I will note where some successful applications have occurred for the principles argued here.

Reframing processes do not make conflicts do away but they do address the interpretation of conflicts that make the problems worse over time. All of what is being argued here is incremental, long-term and about gradual but steady processes of structuration. Framing and reframing are crucial processes because they involve the naming and labeling of problems which affects who the problems are handled (Ellis, 2006).

My colleagues and I are currently doing research on depolarization as must one aspect of transformational communication. We note that Ellis argues that false polarization bias exists as one side in a conflict thinks their viewpoint is objective and their opponents' views are biased (Ellis, 2006). The result is exaggerated perceptions of polarization in viewpoints (Ellis, 2006). Consequently, the parties in conflict may be more pessimistic than is justified by circumstances and also miss the opportunities for concurrence about issues (Ellis, 2006).

Some examples of successes in changing communication related to conflicts include the following. In South Africa, progress was made toward ending apartheid when the white South Africans admitted crimes and their admission led to more reconciliation (Ellis, 2006). Ceasefire in Sri Lanka between Tamil Tigers and the Sinhalese appear related to recognition of atrocities by both sides (Ellis, 2006).

In the paradigm argued here for counterterrorism communication, psychology of terrorism is assumed to be important but mainly important in terms of how individuals organize with others, thus in terms of social identity. Also, social identity is vital but is not the entire picture involved with transformational communication.

#### The Layers of Strategic Transformational Communication Analysis:

1. Psychology of individuals in political conflict situations.
2. Social identity formation of terrorists and peaceful activists.
3. Social structures which link individuals to groups and groups to other groups.
4. Superordinate structuration (structural overlap) or cross-linking of groups.

By developing cross linkages of groups that can easily be in conflict with traditional boundaries like geography or religion, it is possible to develop superordinate goals that make conflict less easy to develop (Ellis, 2006). This involves more sharing of common resources and interests (Ellis, 2006). Research done in India shows that communities with more structural overlap between Hindus and Muslims have less violence than those with lower structural overlap

(Ellis, 2006). The research also indicates that structural overlap in small communities can be mainly at the interpersonal level to lower violence but in large communities, there must also be changes in communication and structural overlap in formal associations (Ellis, 2006). In this way, the size and connectivity is increased more (Ellis, 2006).

The structuration processes described here are active and dynamic. Static structures are not a concern for contemporary approaches to communication networks. The kind of transformational communication described here involves the following principles of structuration:

Journalists should be encouraged to back away from the drumbeating and polarized framing habits they appear to display in covering conflicts (Ellis, 2006). Multiparty organizations like nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can be useful for both interpersonal contacts and macro-level changes in framing (Ellis, 2006). They provide joint tasks and help to integrate people with common goals (Ellis, 2006). Common goals are important for cooperation. An interesting example of an effort along these lines is a joint textbook writing project in Israel. The project is sponsored by the Ministry of Education and is located in Acre, Israel where there is conflict between Arabs and Israelis (Ellis, 2006).

There is a well documented bias in human information processing known as the negativity bias. This involves the commonly observed phenomenon of overweighting negative information. Scholars believe this could have had biological utility in human evolution (Ellis, 2006). This suggest that those who pay attention to the signaling of political behaviors should be careful about the tilt toward negative interpretations of what might be intended as positive messages.

Much of what the United States is facing today in terms of international conflicts goes beyond state conflicts and involves ethnopolitical groups competing for territory that is not clearly defined historically (Ellis, 2006). Terrorism is common in regions with these kinds of conflicts. Relationships between nations and political parties are the product of interaction patterns and like any other relationships are always subject to change and can always be modified (Ellis, 2006).

The reason for optimism about change among communication researchers is the fact that they have observed that throughout history humans try to persuade each other of various arguments when engaged in any form of conflict (Ellis, 2006). Attempts to resolve conflicts also depend on persuasion (Ellis, 2006).

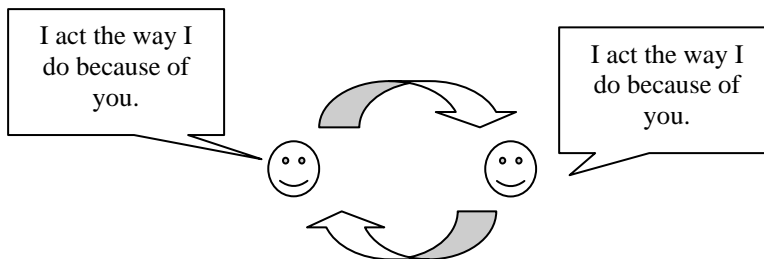
Cultural differences in persuasion must be accounted for in new strategic communication. Palestinians and Israelis, for example, have different methods for persuasive discourse (Ellis, 2006). Intractable conflicts share a persistence in resisting strategies of conflict management

even if parties begin good-faith conversations. Ellis (2006) argues that to understand change we have to understand persistence.

There are many reasons why it is naïve to think that individual-level changes in political psychology and social behavior will be enough to generate significant changes in persistent political conflict. One is that structuration of social structures and social systems involves social interaction occurring at macro, meso, and micro levels of communication simultaneously. Another is that group dynamics and CMC dynamics are not totally the same as face-to-face interaction dynamics despite the many similarities that do exist.

Transformation communication involves change to a system of social interaction rather than to individual-level behaviors alone (Ellis, 2006). As with interpersonal conflicts, conflict among political parties involve cycles of actions with each generating a response in the other's action (Ellis, 2006). Blaming communication clearly works against transformation and punctuates a cycle of mutual problem-building into a one-way path of cause and effect.

### Human Conflict Cycles



When conflict is not adequately managed or resolved, cycles of blame and attack continue and get worse. The Arabs and Israelis experience circular patterns of violence being blamed on violence by the other side (Ellis, 2006). In dialogue that tends to get nowhere, conflicting parties argue from a perspective which assumes that their viewpoint is unassailable (Ellis, 2006).

A dialectical process is what occurs with transformational communication (Ellis, 2006). Transformational communication requires control of social interaction (Ellis, 2006). Threats and promises are not the only way to encourage change. Emotional responses must be controlled to prevent harm to the process yet moderation cannot be too extreme or solutions to problems will

not look like they emerged from natural dialog (Ellis, 2006). Dialogic processes help participants acknowledge the perspectives of others (Ellis, 2006).

Moving from contradictory identities to common identity takes specific steps of controlled communication. The first step is decategorization which involves the process of individuation (Ellis, 2006). Individuation can be encouraged by relating to people as individuals rather than as members of groups. Mutual differentiation is the next step and this entails group members refining their boundaries by accounting for both similarities and differences among groups (Ellis, 2006). A third step is recategorization which involves members of different groups taking on a superordinate identity (Ellis, 2006).

Terrorism does not arise in a vacuum. It is born in political conflict. (Ellis, 2006). If strategic communication can be used to deal more with diffusing political conflicts, a decline in terrorism should follow as a natural consequence.

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