

## WHAT IS “STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS”?

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### **Abstract**

Strategic Communications, (contracted to “StratCom”) as a separate field/profession, is still in the process of formation and, consequently, is not fully studied yet, especially in Georgia. Moreover, even the individuals working in this field find it difficult to properly understand the importance and functions of “StratCom” and, in general, to distinguish it from communication and information disciplines such as “public relations”. Despite the importance and urgency of the issue (especially in today’s information-laden environment), this topic has not been studied in depth. The present paper directly and clearly confirms that the current definitions of “Strategic Communications” and the authors’ reasoning do not form the basis for creating an independent theoretical framework for the profession, which in turn, would end any professional misunderstandings and also no longer mislead individuals or educational institutions.

Some experts in this field have been trying for years to create a theoretical framework for “Strategic Communications”, which, as a rule, should be a sharp separation of “StratCom” from other related disciplines and set a different scope, goals or objectives for this new discipline. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned attempts fail to lead us to the desired result. The use of “Strategic Communications” as an information discipline in professional, educational institutions or government agencies is done by “individual” interpretation of certain persons and/or groups. A good and clear example of this issue is the statement made by the Deputy Minister of Defense of the Czech Republic, Jan Havranek, noting that strategic communication is often confused with “public relations” or even political technologies. Compared to the complicated situation in the “West”, the case is even worse on its periphery, for example in Georgia, where the import of knowledge and experience on the “StratCom” started from the “West”.

The purpose of this paper is to provide the public with a critical understanding of the existing definitions of “strategic communications” and, secondly, to share with them a discussion of the relevance regarding our vision of strategic communications.

The paper uses all the basic literature that would more or less enable us to discuss the existing terms, show us the essence of the problem and help us to achieve the purpose of the publication: to explain the “Strategic Communications”, to establish/understand the relevance of the vision.

**Keywords:** Strategic Communications, Glossary, Public Relations, Planned Communication, Information Environment.

## Introduction

From the 2000s to the present, “Strategic Communication” (StratCom), as a new discipline of information management, actively fights for self-determination and maintains tough relations with already established similar specialties or professions (informative and psychological operations, public relations, marketing, integrated marketing communications, organizational communications, etc.).

More became known about the “Strategic Communications” in 2014-2015. Following the Russo-Ukrainian War, the North Atlantic Alliance named the “Strategic Communications” as one of the most effective tools for confronting Russia’s hybrid threats. In Eastern European countries of Ukraine and Georgia, the development of structural units of strategic communications in state agencies has actively begun. NATO member and partner countries have invested both human and financial resources in this direction.

Strategic Communications trainings for representatives of both private and public agencies soon started in Georgia. Developing Strategic Communications courses has become a trend in educational institutions and in this way, attracting an additional stream of students. It should be noted that Georgia, in this case, was a natural part of the ongoing processes in Europe. It was during this period that the renowned British educational institution King’s College developed a new master’s course in Strategic Communications.

Nevertheless, we think that the answer to the question of what strategic communications needs to be provided. Lack of answer to this question leads to professional misunderstandings, misleading university entrants trying to select modern and competitive disciplines as their future profession; public relations representatives feeling uneasy with the Strategic Communications representatives at workplaces. Thus, in this paper, we endeavor to bring more clarity, firstly, to the term “Strategic Communications” itself and try to contrast it with the second term, which we have long known as “public relations”. The paper also discusses a critical understanding of the existing definitions of “Strategic Communications” and, finally, discusses the validity of our vision of “Strategic Communications”.

### 1. Discussions Regarding the Term

The term “Strategic Communications” (StratCom) was first used during World War II and it was defined as a transport system during warfare.<sup>1</sup> Second, “Strategic Communications” appeared again in 1966<sup>2</sup> when Lt. Col. Robert D. Stroke of the American National War College published an essay on “STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND THE SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT”. According to Jesper Falkheimer and Mats Heide,<sup>3</sup> “Strategic Communications” was still discussed in the Journal of Peace Research in 1966 as a mechanism for maintaining peace in the face of nuclear conflict. Although the Strategic Communications has been debated since the second half of the twentieth century, it lacked any scientific research and theoretical basis until the end of the same century.

The first attempt at an academic understanding of “Strategic Communications” as a new information discipline was made in 2007. Led by Kirk Hallahan, the group of authors defined strategic communications as: “In its broadest sense, the process of targeted communication for the success of an organization’s mission”. They also

<sup>1</sup> J. Falkheimer, m. Heide, From Public Relations to Strategic Communication in Sweden: The Emergence of a Transboundary Field of Knowledge, *Nordicom Review*, January 2014, available here: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287139564>, [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>2</sup> R. D. Stroke, “STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND THE SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT”, U.S. ARMY MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE, April 22, 1966, available here: <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a488153.pdf> [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>3</sup> Falkheimer, Heide, Sec. Footnote 1.

argued that strategic communications “imply that people engage in informed/targeted communicative activities, public movements and processes on behalf of organizations.”<sup>4</sup> According to the authors of the above-mentioned book, the impact on knowledge levels, attitudes, and specific behaviors is a major consequence of the use of strategic communications.

The year of the publication of the above-mentioned paper by Hallahan coincides with another, but this time non-academic, definition of the term “Strategic Communication” found in the US National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication. This document was issued<sup>5</sup> in 2007 by the Policy Coordinating Committee.<sup>6</sup> In this case, the document defines the common goal of both disciplines of public diplomacy and “StratCom” as follows: “It should seek to uphold the fundamental values and national security objectives of our nation”.

All communications and public diplomacy activities should:

- Emphasize our commitment and responsibility in the cause of freedom, human rights and the protection of the equality and dignity of every citizen;
- Reach out to everyone who shares our ideals;
- Help everyone who fights for democracy and freedom;
- Resist anyone who supports the idea of violence and oppression”.

In 2008, another paper on strategic communications in the military field appeared,<sup>7</sup> in which “StratCom” was explained as: “Strategic communication is important for both internal and external audiences. Strategic communication is an inter-agency, strategic event in which the military is represented as an ordinary participant. ... In a modern information environment, strategic communication must be transparent, reactive and proactive”.

In 2010, the U.S. Congress renewed the United States National Framework Concept on Strategic Communications, which included the following entry: “We consider strategic communication to be the synchronization of our words and actions and how it is understood by others through programs and activities aimed at engaging the target audience and carried out by professionals in public diplomacy, public affairs and information operations”.<sup>8</sup> The term “Strategic Communications” also referred to national security support in one of the UK Ministry of Defense’s 2012 military doctrines:<sup>9</sup> “Supporting national interests by using all means of defense to influence people’s attitudes and behavior”. According to the authors of the document, this definition of strategic communication was prepared by the National Security Council (NSC) of the United Kingdom based on a working version of the definition of strategic communication. In its turn, the UK National Security Council’s definition of the term looks like this: “The systematic and coordinated use of communications to achieve the UK’s national objectives by influencing individuals, groups and states”. In

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<sup>4</sup> K. Halahan, “Defining Strategic Communication”, *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, March 2007, available here: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241730557\\_Defining\\_Strategic\\_Communication](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241730557_Defining_Strategic_Communication), [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>5</sup> Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) - The committee was conceived as the United States Interagency Coordinating Structural Unit for communicating with foreign audiences.

<sup>6</sup> Policy Coordinating Committee, “U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication, 2007, available here: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/87427.pdf>, [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>7</sup> S. A. Tetham, *Strategic Communication: A Primer*, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, December 2008, available at: [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/94411/2008\\_Dec.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/94411/2008_Dec.pdf), [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>8</sup> Homeland Security Digital Library, “UPDATE TO CONGRESS ON NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION”, 2012 available at: <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=704809> [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>9</sup> Joint Doctrine Note 1/12, “Strategic communication: the defense contribution“, 2012, available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/33710/20120126jdn112\\_Strategic\\_CommsU.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/33710/20120126jdn112_Strategic_CommsU.pdf) [L.s. 03.8.2021].

2013, in the definition of the term “StratCom”, a unifying definition of pre-existing attributes emerged, which argued: “Strategic communication is the act of conscious and purposeful communication, when the communicator acts on behalf of the organization<sup>10</sup> to achieve public goals”.<sup>11</sup>

In 2014, the communications researchers mentioned above, Jesper Falkheimer and Mats Heide, explained “StratCom” as “Strategic communication is a conceptual and comprehensive framework that is more relevant than public relations ... We think that strategic communication combines organizational (internal) communication as an aspect of management theory, including marketing. Therefore, this data allows us to better understand, explain and criticize the modern communication process, both within organizations and between organizations with the external community”.

On the website of the NATO School of Strategic Communications (the School was established in 2014<sup>12</sup>), “StratCom” is defined in the following way: “Strategic communication is the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communication measures and capabilities to support Alliance policies and activities to achieve Alliance goals”. According to the explanations given above, the military roots of the word “Strategic Communication” are obvious.

Since 2014, the military has demonstrated particular sympathy and demand for “StratCom” on the basis of which we can consider Russia’s military aggression in Ukraine. In response to the so-called Russia’s “hybrid threats”, the North Atlantic Alliance, among other measures, named the development of strategic communications in member and partner countries. The European Union has taken the same path.<sup>13</sup><sup>14</sup> However, dozens of universities and various types of educational institutions in the West have made this discipline a subject of study for civilians alongside PR, marketing, corporate marketing, and integrated marketing communications.<sup>15</sup>

“Strategic communications” soon became more and more fashionable and popular in Western society, although this process was accompanied by a great deal of misunderstanding and professional rivalry between the “strategic communication” and “public relations” practices that continue to this day. In this context, it is interesting to note that the American Public Relations Association in 2011-2012 revised the definition of “public relations” established in the 1980s and offered a new version: “Public relations is a strategic communication process that develops mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their audiences”.

It should be noted that 2011-2012 is more or less the most active period for discussing strategic communications in “Western” academic circles. Consequently, the emergence of word-for-word “Strategic Communications” in the PR definition has further deepened the professional gaps between the fields. It should

<sup>10</sup> “Organization” (Communicative Entities) means non-governmental and governmental organizations, social-political or economic associations.

<sup>11</sup> Derina Holtzhausen, Ansgar Zerfass, Strategic Communication Opportunities and Challenges of the Research Area, in *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication*, Routledge Publishing, 2015, pp. 29-621.

<sup>12</sup> NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence – information about the organization is available at: <https://www.stratcomcoe.org/about-us> [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>13</sup> Axel Hagelstam, "Cooperating to counter hybrid threats", November 23, 2018, Policy and Analysis section of the North Atlantic Council official website, available here: <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2018/also-in-2018/cooperating-to-counter-hybrid-threats/EN/index.htm> [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>14</sup> Source organization: European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), commissioned by the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, "Strategic Communications With a View to Counteracting Propaganda", May 2016, available here: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/578008/EXPO\\_IDA\(2016\)578008\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/578008/EXPO_IDA(2016)578008_EN.pdf) [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>15</sup> K. Hallahan, Defining Strategic Communication, *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, March 2007, available here: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241730557\\_Defining\\_Strategic\\_Communication](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241730557_Defining_Strategic_Communication), [L.s. 03.8.2021].

be noted that this process came naturally to the Georgian reality when the development of “Strategic Communications” in state institutions began with the help of the North Atlantic Alliance.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Struggle for Self-Determination

There has naturally been a moment of professional competition and rivalry between public relations specialists and those involved in the development of StratCom’s structural units in government agencies. This process, of course, was facilitated by the lack of sharp differences between the professions, but then and now, the situation was further complicated and is still aggravated by the superficial attitude of high-ranking Georgian officials, both “StratCom” and “PR” and, in general, on the importance of communication on the way to achieving organizational goals.

Where is the problem found? We think it would be appropriate if, in order to answer this question, we consider in a sequence the scientific and non-scientific attempts to give importance to “Strategic Communications”, which we have already presented above.

Such efforts are, first of all, a more or less modern and well-known definition of “StratCom”, which was offered in 2013 by Derina Holtzhausen, Ansgar Zerfass: “Strategic communication is an active, conscious communication. The communicator acts in the name of the organization<sup>17</sup> in the public space to ensure the set goals”.<sup>18</sup> This definition, uniquely, consists of two parts. First, the words that the authors pay special attention to are: “Strategic communication is the practice of deliberate and purposive communication”.

How useful is the emphasis on these two words in order for “StratCom” to be sufficiently separated from its relative and, in this case, competing discipline? We think that, in this way, it is a very weak attempt by the authors. In 2001, a book titled “Fundamentals of Public Relations” was published in the United States by Wilcox,<sup>19</sup> Dennis L., Philips Autt, Warren Agee and Glen Cameron<sup>20</sup>. An updated version of the same book, “Public Relations - Strategy and Tactics”, was also published in 2011 by the US Embassy in Georgia’s Book Translation Program, this time by Wilcox and Cameron. However, in both of the above-mentioned editions, among the words used in the definitions of “public relations” and form the meaning of the term, the first word is “deliberate” and the word “planned” is the second.<sup>21</sup>

The main task of the model of public relations by Edward Bernays, the so-called “Father of PR”, was to use a behavioral psychology and other scientific disciplines to convince the target audience. In such a case, it is inconceivable that communication is devoid of “forethought” and “purposefulness”, especially if it is “planned”.

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<sup>16</sup> In 2014, at the Wales Summit, Tbilisi received the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package, which is successfully implemented by the Georgian side by the decision of NATO member states and with the support of the same countries. With this decision, NATO began to strengthen our country’s defense capabilities in 13 areas. 13 initiatives were developed, which are known to be based on the analysis of the events of 2008, the identified shortcomings and mistakes. Several initiatives are declassified, while some remain classified for objective reasons. Within the framework of the above-mentioned package, a Joint Training and Assessment Center and a School of Defense Institution Building were established in Georgia. Also, the development of a completely new direction in the defense system, the discipline of strategic communications, has begun. In 2015, the Department of Strategic Communications was established at the Ministry of Defense of Georgia within the framework of the Substantial Package.

<sup>17</sup> Communicative entities mean non-governmental and governmental organizations, socio-political or economic associations.

<sup>18</sup> D. Holshausen, Ansgar Zerfass, Strategic Communication Opportunities and Challenges of the Research Area, in The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication, Rutledge Publishing, 2015, p. 29-621.

<sup>19</sup> Dennis L. Wilcox, a representative of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at San Jose State University.

<sup>20</sup> G. T. Cameron a Representative of the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri.

<sup>21</sup> D. L. Wilcox, Glant T. Cameron, Public Relations - Strategy and Tactics, Diogenes Publishing House, 2011, Chapter 1, p.7.

To make our reasoning even more convincing, it would be appropriate to address the arguments of the German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, about communication. Habermas in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, published in 1981, distinguishes four ideal types of social action, including two of interest to us: communicative action and strategic action.

With Habermas, action is strategic when it comes to action-oriented, selfishly directed actions: “strategically acting entities that are not limited to instrumental interventions in the world and pursue their goals by influencing the decisions of other actors ...”,<sup>22</sup> and the purpose of “communicative action” is completely different: it is an action focused on consensus and mutual understanding, that is, communication is an action by nature and this action can be both communicative and strategic.

These types of actions differ from each other, although Habermas’s reasoning confirms that both of them are “deliberate”. If we look at the more or less established and recognized role of public relations, we will be convinced once again that it is inconceivable that “PR” produces aimless communication. According to Lawrence W. Long, and Vincent Hazelton, PR is “the management communication function through which an organization adopts, changes, or maintains its environment to achieve organizational goals”.<sup>23</sup> Achieving organizational goals, which must be fulfilled through communication, necessarily requiring planning and goal setting.

In such a case, it is clear that we are dealing with social behaviors that are driven by information and that will inevitably be directed at the recipient of the information. Thus, we are dealing with planned, purposeful and conscious communication. The second part of Holshausen and Zerfass’s definition focuses on acting on behalf of the organization in the “public space”, which the authors say should give the area of exclusive action to “strategic communication” and thus ultimately separate it from public relations and/or other related entities.

What is public space? According to the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas,<sup>24</sup> the “public space” was born in Europe with the rise of capitalism. It was an arena of social coexistence where public opinion was born; A space for critical reflection and self-presentation, where the press played a special role, which will eventually become the backbone of the “place”. Speaking on the subject, Habermas refers to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and says that this was the “space” which society referred to the “public use of the mind”.<sup>25</sup>

It was a space where, according to Habermas, people refused to engage in manipulative, insincere relationships, and preferred a rational form of problem-solving: arguing, deliberation, discussion for the public good. In this way a space of public judgment was formed, the Habermas structuring of which looks like the following: political public space and literary public space. The literary space, which consisted of coffee/tea houses, cafes, salons, clubs and other institutions, formed a discussion space that further facilitated people’s self-presentation and critical discussion of issues.

This reality inspired Gigi Tevzadze to write in his work: “European high culture has become open from representation: until the new era, only units could self-present and only units had the right to do so. Salons and coffee houses contributed to making self-presentation accessible to everyone in principle. The axis of modern

<sup>22</sup> J. Habermas. “Preliminary outlines and additions to the communicative theory of action”, Kutaisi Publishing Center, Editor: Guram Tevzadze, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> D. L. Wilcox, Glen T. Cameron, *Public Relations - Strategy and Tactics*; Diogenes Publishing House, 2011, Chapter 1; P.6.

<sup>24</sup> J. Habermas, German philosopher <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jurgen-Habermas> [L.s. 03.9.21].

<sup>25</sup> Iliia State University, "Immanuel Kant", 2017, available at: <https://library.iliauni.edu.ge/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/kanti.pdf> [L.s. 03.9.21].

culture and public space is communicative rationality and communicative action. It is because of communicative rationality that culture becomes open and attracts as many people as possible”.<sup>26</sup>

However, as capitalism became more and more powerful, Habermas public space began to slowly disappear. Once sincere communicators who reached out for public good with arguments and good faith debate, now use agitations for the benefit of governments and private companies. Lobbying, PR strategies emerged, businesses began funding people to represent their interests in parliament, the media became more and more dependent on advertising. Through regulations, the modern state is an active participant in public space.

Even the once independent members of the public space, now through elections seem to have been and will not be cut off from the Habermas public space. Habermas also talks about new post-liberal trends and says they have lost their political function in public space. The process of socialization, which is unimaginable without communication, is still going on, although it is, this time, already filled with biased, hired specialists who are busy organizing political and economic masquerades. In such a situation, the German philosopher thinks that public opinion was no longer an instrument for establishing the truth. Public opinion was no longer a servant of the truth, and communication became more manipulative. In his view, today, communicative rationality is no longer the cause of such goodness as public space, open culture, the emergence and spread of enlightenment and identities. Nevertheless, there are opposing and counter-views as well.

Gigi Tevzadze says in one of his online lectures that after the 17th century, the 21st century is the time when the Enlightenment is given a second chance to spread as successfully as it once did thanks to the press of that time.<sup>27</sup> For example, Tevzadze names such big actors as: anti-globalism, the green movement, groups of activists created around climate change, and others. What is this innovation that has actually replaced the Habermas public space, which, in turn, was created by the Enlightenment and which has “turned European high culture from representation to openness”? Most likely it must be a modern information environment, the partial statistics of which look like this:

- As of the end of 2020, 4.5 billion people use the Internet;<sup>28</sup>
- 3.5 billion search operations per day are done in “Google”;<sup>29</sup>
- More than a billion hours is sent watching a day on YouTube;<sup>30</sup>
- 319 new users are added to Twitter every 60 seconds;<sup>31</sup>
- 41,666,667 messages are sent/shared on WHATSAPP;<sup>32</sup>
- More than 80 million small businesses around the world use Facebook;<sup>33</sup>
- 527,760 photos are shared by Snapchat users in one minute;

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<sup>26</sup> G. Tevzadze, "What is Enlightenment", Ilia State University, 2012, available here: <https://bit.ly/3ccdcNu> [L.s. 03.9.21].

<sup>27</sup> G. Tevzadze, Title of the lecture: “The history of constructing a great identity. Enlightenment as the First Great Identity”, a video lecture course on YouTube, May 15, 2011, is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-c1Vkl0KKk> [L.V. on 03.9.21].

<sup>28</sup> A. Ali, “Here’s What Happens Every Minute on the Internet in 2020”, Visualcapitalist.com, September 15, 2020, available at: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/every-minute-internet-2020/> [L.s. 03.9.21].

<sup>29</sup> M. Mohsin, “10 GOOGLE SEARCH STATISTICS YOU NEED TO KNOW IN 2021”, www.oberlo.com, April 3, 2020, available here: <https://www.oberlo.com/blog/google-search-statistics> [L.s. 03.9.21].

<sup>30</sup> K. Newbury, 25 YouTube Statistics that May Surprise You: 2021 Edition, blog.hootsuite.com, February 3, 2021, available here: [https://blog.hootsuite.com/youtube-stats-marketers/#YouTube\\_user\\_statistics](https://blog.hootsuite.com/youtube-stats-marketers/#YouTube_user_statistics) [L.s. 03.9.21].

<sup>31</sup> Ali. See Footnote 28.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> M. Mohsin, “10 FACEBOOK STATISTICS EVERY MARKETER SHOULD KNOW IN 2021”, www.oberlo.com, January 15, 2021, available here: <https://www.oberlo.com/blog/facebook-statistics> [L.s. 03.9.21].

- 510,000 comments are posted on Facebook every minute;
- 500,000,000 people use Instagram Story every day;<sup>34</sup>
- 347,222 “stories” are shared on Instagram in one minute;<sup>35</sup>
- 600 new pages are added to Wikipedia every minute.<sup>36</sup>

What novelties did the modern information environment bring us? It is a more virtual reality that can be successfully compared to the public space transformed by Habermas, which, in turn, has created invaluable benefits for individuals, even isolated ones, in addition to identities:

- Eliminated geographical barriers;
- Inspired new ways of self-presentation;
- New levers of democratic pressure on the government have emerged;
- There has emerged a greater space for the expansion of personal freedoms;
- Reduced time required to realize goals and desires;
- Every citizen is already a journalist by phone today;
- Everything has gone global Today.

The digital reality described above clearly proves that the Enlightenment is now given another chance to inspire new identities thanks to a new public space where billions of people are already given a chance to “publicly use one’s reason”: any Facebook post, any YouTube video can be considered as a modern, 21st-century version of Kantian “public use of one’s reason”. In this new, public space society is included. Where are the organizations as social actors?

Here it is important to understand that organizations (private as well as international, non-governmental and governmental institutions are meant) are the most important representatives of the modern public space. They engage in discourse by participating in this “space” or they themselves create topics for discourse. They have the ability to persuade (communicate). For example, the monthly Facebook advertising amount paid by small businesses alone ranges from 500 to 1500 USD. According to the publication “Business Insider”, in 2012, “Facebook” received a billion dollars from advertising services in just one quarter.<sup>37</sup> According to the data of 2020, the advertising revenues of the social network “Facebook” have already amounted to 84.2 billion US dollars, which is also 21% more than the revenues of 2019 (69.7 billion).

A total of \$796.8 million was spent on political advertising on this platform during the 2019/2020 election cycle, and it became the dominant digital advertising digital platform. Created by more than 3.3 billion users, this public space clearly gives the impression that it is more commercial than political.<sup>38</sup> As of 2020, there are

<sup>34</sup> K. Newber, “44 Instagram Stats That Matter to Marketers in 2021”, blog.hootsuite.com, January 6, 2021, available here: <https://bit.ly/3ejyf35> [L.s. 03.9.21].

<sup>35</sup> A. Ali, “Here’s What Happens Every Minute on the Internet in 2020”, Visualcapitalist.com, September 15, 2020, is available here: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/every-minute-internet-2020/> [L.s. 03.9.21].

<sup>36</sup> Wikipedia, “Wikipedia: Statistics”, April 6, 2021, available here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Statistics> [L.s. 03.9.21].

<sup>37</sup> J. Edwards, “Meet The 30 Biggest Advertisers on Facebook”, Business Insider, September 24, 2012, available here: <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-30-biggest-advertisers-on-facebook-2012-9> [L.s. 03.9.21].

<sup>38</sup> G. Sloan, “FACEBOOK REVEALS ITS BIGGEST POLITICAL AD SPENDERS”, adage.com, October 23, 2018, available here: <https://adage.com/article/digital/facebook-shows-biggest-political-ad-spender/315373/> [L.s. 3.10.21].

Facebook Revenue and Usage Statistics (2020) <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/facebook-statistics/> [L.s. 16.03.2021].

about 90 million business organizations (the so-called “Page”) on Facebook<sup>39</sup>, and much of it is active advertising. The advertising revenue of another social network, Instagram, in the second quarter of 2018 amounted to \$ 2 billion. A profile of 8 million business organizations was registered on the platform.<sup>40</sup> In 2020, Instagram’s advertising revenue amounted to 6.8 billion. Clearly, we are dealing with Castells’ “information society”, in which “the world is an arena where individuals try to influence the environment: their efforts intersect, coincide, succeed or fail. Central to these efforts is the way information is transmitted/received: individuals try to understand the information they pass on to others as well as to the information they receive from others, since it depends on the perfection of the way the individual achieves the goal for which it started social behavior”.

Thus, in modern public space, societies and organizations are in communication with each other. We are dealing with an extremely intertwined “space” where the physical world is successfully replicated (duplicated) in the virtual world. Therefore, deriving from all the above-mentioned, it becomes clear that the practice of public relations takes place in this “public space” and that this “space” cannot be considered as an exclusive area of operation of “StratCom”, as the authors suggested in the definition of strategic communication.

It is in this “space” that all exchanges of information take place as social behavior. Even our reasoning on the term proposed by Derina Holshausen and Ansgar Zerfass in 2013, we think, extends to the definitions proposed in 2007 by a group of authors led by Kirk Hallahan. They said that strategic communication “means that people engage<sup>41</sup> in realized/targeted communication acts, public movements and processes on behalf of organizations”. When defining the role of strategic communications as a term and/or “StratCom”, one of the most prominent is the word “influence” in relation to behavior.

For example, “Supporting national interests by using all means of defense to influence people’s attitudes and behavior”.<sup>42</sup> The above-mentioned paper, prepared by Hallahan and a group of authors, also states that “influencing” knowledge levels, changing attitudes, and “influencing” specific behaviors are key functions of strategic communications. A similar view can be found in the 2008 paper by the British military, Steve Tatham, in which he offers an interdepartmental definition<sup>43</sup> of strategic communication: influence through communication to cause a change in behavior. Again, our area of interest is to determine the extent to which “influence” on the behavior of the target audience is the exclusive prerogative of strategic communications, which even takes the place of StratCom’s definition by some authors and which, as it could not and/or will not fall into responsibilities of related disciplines.

The main cause of interstate conflicts is often the desire for access to free natural resources.<sup>44</sup> As much as it is known to political and economic interest groups that these natural resources are both vital and inexhaustible,

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<sup>39</sup> Facebook's annual revenue from 2009 to 2020, by segment - <https://www.statista.com/statistics/267031/facebooks-annual-revenue-by-segment/> [L.s. 5.3.2021].

<sup>40</sup> D. Cohen, "Instagram Now Has More Than 1 Million Monthly Advertisers and 8 Million Business Profiles" *adweek.com*, March 2017, available here: <https://www.adweek.com/digital/instagram-1-million-monthly-advertisers-8-million-business-profiles/> [L.s. 3.10.21]. Projected revenue of Instagram from 1st quarter 2017 to 4th quarter 2020 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/448157/instagram-worldwide-mobile-internet-advertisingrevenue/#:~:text=In%20the%20fourth%20quarter%20of,the%20second%20quarter%20of%202019.> [L.s. 16.03.2021].

<sup>41</sup> K. Halahan, *Defining Strategic Communication*, International Journal of Strategic Communication, March 2007, available here: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241730557\\_Defining\\_Strategic\\_Communication](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241730557_Defining_Strategic_Communication), [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>42</sup> Joint Doctrine Note 1/12, "Strategic communication: the defense contribution", 2012, p.1, available here: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/33710/20120126jdn112\\_Strategic\\_CommsU.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/33710/20120126jdn112_Strategic_CommsU.pdf) [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>43</sup> S. A. Tatham, *Strategic Communication: A Primer*, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, December 2008, available at: [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/94411/2008\\_Dec.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/94411/2008_Dec.pdf), [L.s. 03.8.2021].

<sup>44</sup> *worldwater.org*, *Water Conflict Chronology*, is available here: <http://www.worldwater.org/conflict/list/> [L.s. 3.10.21].

they are ready to fight each other for these resources. In this case, the target object for them is a “natural resource”; for example, drinking water.

We have to realize that as natural resources are exhaustive and limited, so access to our psyche is exhaustive and limited too, which is the main target when individuals of social system communicate with each other. The psyche, like “drinking water”, is an inexhaustible resource: we cannot make friends with everyone, we cannot trust everyone, we cannot give up on everyone, we cannot share with everyone, we cannot agree with everyone and so on. However, it is known that the fight for “mastery of the psyche” is possible, as it is the most vulnerable human function.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, it can be said that the struggle of individuals for the “psyche”, or for the mastery of the mind of another individual, is a natural need.

It is well known that “intelligent creatures that have a central nervous system, can develop mechanisms of survival and success only by communicating with each other”.<sup>46</sup> It is in this way that communication is crucial. We think that any communicative action that leads to the persuasion of the latter from the object, in itself leads to the strengthening, change and/or maintenance of behavior, attitudes, attitudes, or influence on them. This opinion is supported by Z. Kikvidze and G. Tevzadze’s opinion regarding “Evolution” that “the world is an arena where individuals try to influence the environment: their efforts intersect, coincide, succeed or fail”. The key to these efforts is the way information is transmitted/received: individuals try to understand the information they pass on to others as well as to the information they receive from others, as their success depends on the perfection of the way they receive it”.<sup>47</sup>

Since we think that the communication process between individuals naturally involves influencing each other’s moods, behaviors, and attitudes (in order to achieve a better environment and manage the existing one), the question naturally arises: what are the effective ways to influence the psyche as a limited resource: for output/extraction? Our answer is persuasive communication.

Whether it is an integral part of public relations as a discipline, we think, yes, it unquestionably is. It is hard to imagine a stage in the public relations profession where persuasive communication is neglected, especially when in the very first stages of the profession we find emphasis on the importance of persuasion (persuasive communication) from those who call themselves the “fathers” of the profession. “You have to study the emotions of people and all the factors that motivate them and what will convince them in all areas<sup>48</sup> of their activity”, Ivy Lee said as early as 1921, when talking to future public relations practitioners.

The fact that the persuasive nature of “PR” as a first stage of professional development took a special place is also evident from Bernays’s professional efforts. “Unlike Lee’s model of public information, Bernays’s model was essentially a model of scientific persuasion and, consequently, of specific perceptions, behavioral support. It included listening to the audience, but the purpose of the feedback was to create a more persuasive new message”.<sup>49</sup> In his book, *The Social History of Spin*, Stuart Ewen quotes from Ivy Lee’s speech at Columbia University School of Journalism in November 1921: “You have to study the emotions of people and all the

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<sup>45</sup> V.A. Varishpovets „ИНФОРМАЦИОННО- ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ БЕЗОПАСНОСТЬ: ОСНОВНЫЕ ПОЛОЖЕНИЯ”, Вычислительный центр им. А.А. Дородницына РАН, 2013 available here: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/informatsionno-psihologicheskaya-bezopasnost-osnovnye-polozheniya> [L.s. 3.10.21].

<sup>46</sup> G. Tevzadze, “Why Do You Believe in God”, Bakur Sulakauri Publishing House, 2017, p.6, available here: <https://bit.ly/30vEKb2> [L.s. 3.10.21].

<sup>47</sup> Z. Kikvidze, G. Tevzadze "Evolution", Bakur Sulakauri Publishing House, 2015, p. 38-39. Available here: <https://bit.ly/38u7F3Q> [L.s. 3.10.21]

<sup>48</sup> E. Stuart. (1996). “PR! Social History of Spin”. Basic Books. 1st ed. p.132.

<sup>49</sup> D. L. Wilcox, Glen T. Cameron, *Public Relations - Strategy and Tactics*, Diogenes Publishing, 2011.

factors that motivate people to persuade them in any area of functioning”.<sup>50</sup> In addition, it is common knowledge that it is not natural for public relations practices to use persuasive communication to achieve fundamental goals. The use of persuasive communication to influence the behavior or mood of the target audience is also actively seen in the marketing of political communication. It was through the Elaboration of Likelihood Model created by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo in the 1980s that they explained the process of persuasive communication used to persuade consumers.<sup>51</sup>

Almost every stage of the promotion mix in marketing involves influencing customer behavior, ranging from advertising to personal sales. The latter refers to a form of relationship between two individuals, when the seller of a product tries to arouse the potential buyer’s desire to buy the product: to convince them of the superiority of a particular product.

Persuasive Communication and Persuasion as a separate and/or separate subject are often found in various course syllabi. For example, the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications course called “Digital Persuasive Communication” is designed for public relations and marketing professionals.<sup>52</sup> In the syllabus of the Eastern Illinois University course “Introduction to Public Relations”, from the fourth week to the end of the course, it emphasizes the importance of persuasion and persuasive communication in the preparation of the message in the preparation of the narrative or message.<sup>53</sup> Persuasion, will also be found in the syllabus of the curriculum of a public relations course at Algonquin College, emphasizing on studying the basics of persuasion.<sup>54</sup> Barcelona’s Universitat Pompeu Fabra’s four-year undergraduate program in Advertising and Public Relations provides students with the opportunity to study persuasive discourses in three languages, among other subjects.<sup>55</sup> The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR)’s “Fundamentals of Public Relations” syllabus involves a special subsection of “Public Relations and Persuasion”.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

We think that this could be the end of the discussion, which, in our view, clearly proves that the current definitions of strategic communications and the authors’ reasoning do not form the basis for an independent theoretical framework for the profession, which in turn would end professional misunderstandings between disciplines.

Based on the research and analysis of the theoretical material used in the paper, we came to the conclusion that part of the views of the authors mentioned in the paper about the “StratCom” is even professionally confrontational. The reason for the misunderstandings between strategic communications and public relations specialties should be rooted in superficial approaches to the issue. We think that this paper has clearly shown the existence of a new, in-depth study that would once and for all answer the question: “So, what is strategic communications”?

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<sup>50</sup> S. Evan, “PR! A social History of Spin”, published by Basic Books, 1996, Chapter 7, p.132.

<sup>51</sup> R.E. Petty, J. Cacioppo The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion, published by Academic Press Inc., 1986, available here: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270271600\\_The\\_Elaboration\\_Likelihood\\_Model\\_of\\_Persuasion](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270271600_The_Elaboration_Likelihood_Model_of_Persuasion) [L.s. 03.10.2021].

<sup>52</sup> Dr. U. Kim, University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, Course - MMC 6936 Digital Persuasive Communication (# 0961), 2016, available here: <https://bit.ly/3qqSfDA> [L.s. 3.10.21].

<sup>53</sup> Professor S. Volus, Communication 2920: Introduction to Public Relations, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, 2017, available here: [https://www.eiu.edu/\\_eiu15/include/global/show\\_file\\_gsm.php?type=syllabi2&id=18998](https://www.eiu.edu/_eiu15/include/global/show_file_gsm.php?type=syllabi2&id=18998). [L.s. 3.10.21].

<sup>54</sup> Algonquin College, Public Relations Course, 2021, available here: <https://www.algonquincollege.com/mediaanddesign/program/public-relations/#courses> [L.s. 3.10.21].

<sup>55</sup> Bachelor’s degree in Advertising and Public Relations – Syllabus- <https://www.upf.edu/> [L.s. 3.10.21].

<sup>56</sup> Public relations fundamentals - <https://www.cipr.co.uk/content/training-qualifications/student-resources/study-hub/advanced-certificate/syllabus> [L.s. 3.10.21].

We think that this paper will be especially useful to those who has sincerely tried to see the difference between “PR” and “StratCom” in recent years. This publication will also be useful for the individuals who have been persistently arguing that “StratCom” is “PR” and/or vice versa.

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