Communication strategy is about more than words. Deeds, images, and symbols are equally important. All need to be consistent in messaging.

**Ensure Actions Support Messages**
Actions should support rhetoric and message. Contradiction—planned or unanticipated—will undermine your credibility.

**Example: Afghanistan.** USAID promised that reconstruction in Afghanistan could proceed rapidly and effectively. Its failure to do so contradicted assurance that the United States could succeed in rebuilding the country. Whether a shift to that goal around 2006 made sense is irrelevant to this topic. USAID wanted quick results in Afghanistan to show success, so it built schools and clinics, but failed to fund teachers and doctors. USAID funded a highway from Kabul to Kandahar, but failed to ensure it was built with a deep enough layer of asphalt to withstand snow; consequently, heavy snows and subsequent melts washed away parts of the road. The gap between promise and accomplishment eroded the credibility of a strategy intended to show that U.S. efforts were improving the quality of life for people.1

General McChrystal found that Afghan leaders desired commitment more than additional troops. They lacked faith in their own government and had a “primal fear” of abandonment.2 Going to Helmand Province, General McChrystal described a key meeting with Marjah elders who had come to discuss the impending operation; they wanted to avoid civilian casualties and to clean out corrupt police and officials. “Finally, if you come, you must stay. If you don’t, the Taliban will return and we will all be killed,” they told McChrystal.3 General McChrystal reassured them, “Your conditions represent our intentions for this operation.” The general later wrote: “And they did.”4 Doubtless McChrystal was sincere, yet the situation raises a serious question: How could commitment square with the U.S. withdrawal of most troops by 2014? One can understand the elders’ concerns. The Taliban has been ruthless in killing allies or collaborators of the government or U.S./ISAF forces. The question was not resolved well in Afghanistan.
Lesson: failure to maintain commitments, especially where they affect the lives and deaths of people, will shred credibility. Journalist Ann Jones, who was embedded with U.S. troops in Afghanistan, argues that many Afghans became deeply hostile over the perception of broken promises about aid, civilian casualties, and a corrupt Afghan government.5

Example: Iraq, 1975, and Operation Desert Storm. As U.S. secretary of state, Henry Kissinger colluded with the former shah of Iran to encourage the Kurds to rise up in Iraq against Saddam Hussein and channeled $15 million to their fight for self-determination. But when Iran and Iraq resolved a border dispute, Saddam yanked his support and then launched a ruthless campaign to crush the Kurds. Kissinger pithily advised a congressional committee: “Covert action should not be confused with missionary work.”6 Americans have short memories, but people in countries affected by American actions have long ones. The Iraqis, notably the Shiites, remembered the failure of American forces to support them when these forces stood by as the Shiites rose up against Saddam after Operation Desert Storm only to be slaughtered by his forces while U.S. forces failed to provide support. One should not be surprised that many Iraqi Shiites are skeptical about trusting the United States

Example: Syria, 2019. Once again, the Kurds feel threatened by the potential desertion of U.S. troops with whom they fought against ISIS and whose support has been vital to inflicting battlefield defeats on the terrorist movement. As this book goes to press, the Kurds will look back on what they view as Kissinger’s betrayal and contemplate whether in 2019, a U.S. draw-down from Syria will expose their 60,000 fighters, who aligned with this country, to an onslaught from Turkey.7

Know Your Weak Points and Vulnerabilities
Can communication strategy make a real difference? Bing West argues in The Wrong War that the political and cultural dynamics of Afghanistan rendered the war unwinnable for U.S. strategies.8 Others sharply dispute West’s views about that doctrine. This book is not the venue to resolve the debate, however the question West poses is real: Is success for an operation or conflict plausible or worth the cost?9

As you evaluate an area of operations and form a communication strategy, remember to:

• Watch out for gaffes. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry made a district visit and walked past the district governor, himself a former convicted criminal who had done time in a German prison for attempting to murder his stepson, and embraced a former police chief whom locals viewed as a corrupt pedophile. Rajiv Chandrasekaran said, “Marjah residents couldn’t understand what message the top American diplomat in Afghanistan was trying to send them.”10

• Be cognizant of local leader agendas. Local leaders pushing their own agendas will play off different parts of the U.S. government to promote their interests at American expense. In Afghanistan, many U.S. officials wanted to crack down on corrupt leaders, such as Ahmed Wali Karzai, who stymied officials by leveraging relationships with the military or other parts of the U.S. government.11 As the U.S. Army’s 82d Airborne Division entered Iraq in 2003, it reached out to local leaders in an effort to find allies. Understanding who had influence and their agendas proved very challenging.12 Key leader engagement (KLE) is important
to information operations. Competent preparation for these encounters is almost as important as following up the impact of the meetings in affecting action.

**Know Your Strengths and How to Leverage Them**

Recognize and understand what assets you possess to forge and execute a communication strategy. Such assets can include people, channels, equipment, and affiliated influence.

Realistically assess your credibility among the target audience you are attempting to persuade. Credibility flows from developing an image that resonates positively with a target audience. Partly that is about capturing and holding the moral high ground. One cannot overemphasize the importance of communicating moral strength. No one illustrated that better than President Roosevelt, for whom—as historian Nigel Hamilton records in his superb study of Roosevelt’s presidential decision making—the moral basis for a coalition that brought together as many allies as possible was vital to ensuring unity at home and among allies. He consistently invoked morality as a fundamental rationale for the Allied effort and drew that as a key distinction between what the Allies and the Axis fought for.¹³

Partly, it is about explaining who you are, what you are doing, why you are doing something, and what it means to a target audience. Image is about far more than slogans, slick photographs, or great media. It is about communicating with target audiences a strong sense of integrity about yourself and your cause.

Apply the cultural knowledge you developed in selecting which strengths to emphasize. Have a realistic assessment of what you are capable of doing to build credibility and the available options that strengthen your position.

**Example: Barack Obama’s 2012 U.S. presidential campaign.** Obama had the power of incumbency and thus the tools of the presidency to raise money, create headlines, get a message out, and to drive that message. Obama’s use of paid media returned marginal dividends, but his uniquely sophisticated use of social media—especially Facebook—to identify and mobilize voters was unprecedented.¹⁴ The campaign drew from top minds in the private sector as well as political professionals to forge its strategy.

The Obama campaign monitored its voter contact tactics to increase effectiveness. Political strategist and voter contact expert Walter D. Clinton, who consulted for the campaign, said that “never in my 40 years’ experience have I seen this combination of true grassroots techniques driven by modern technology. It made a decisive difference in mobilizing the president’s base constituency. It expanded and energized that base, and it succeeded, amid a very close election, in motivating voters who otherwise would have stayed home to get out and vote for the president.”¹⁵

The carefully crafted—and well-tested—messages and repetitive contacts through multiple channels motivated people to vote and played a key role in helping the Obama campaign to gain three quarters of the billion dollars it raised from small donors contacted online.

**Example: 2003 Iraq War.** In Iraq, the Coalition had access to major media, social media, and paid media. It capitalized on the rumor mill. It networked extensively through engagement with local and national leaders, following the precepts that General Petraeus set forth in his 14 observations on engagement there. The action steps he defined were integrated with Coalition communication strategy.¹⁶ The victory in the Second Battle of Fallujah and the success of the surge—even
though the longer-term political outcome in Iraq remains unresolved—emanated from adroit leverage of these strengths.

- U.S. communication strategy acquires unique strength from support available through kinetic force. As seen above, this was crucial to inspiring enthusiasm among Iraqi soldiers as Operation al-Fajr was launched to take Fallujah back from insurgents.
- The United States achieved success in Operation Desert Storm by assembling a coalition of many nations. President George H. W. Bush capitalized on the perception that the United States was the world’s only superpower while seizing the moral high ground, posturing American forces as liberators fighting an evil tyrant, and communicating—and honoring—specific constraints on the strategic and tactical goals that the Coalition would achieve.

Precise, measured employment of integrated communication and kinetic strategy produced a brilliant achievement, marred only by the mistake in encouraging the Shiites to rise up without providing them support when Saddam Hussein unleashed a murderous assault against them.

**Lesson:** do not encourage allies to act in the perception that you will support them unless you are prepared to do so.

### Avoid Inflating Claims

Maintaining credibility is crucial to information operations. That requires avoiding statements or pronouncements that inflate the success of operations. Here are key examples that illustrate this precept.

**Example: Vietnam.** During the Vietnam War, the U.S. government constantly talked up the prospects of success. U.S. Army commander General William C. Westmoreland claimed he could see the “light at the end of the tunnel.” The inflated claims came back to haunt President Johnson after the 1968 Tet offensive, which prompted the nation’s prestigious news anchor, Walter Cronkite, to conclude that the time had come for the U.S. to get out of Vietnam. Cronkite called the war a draw and fatefully pronounced: “We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds.” Having inflated expectations, Westmoreland and Johnson found their credibility shattered. Johnson was forced to abandon ambitions for a second term.

Military personnel, diplomats, politicians and journalists will long debate the merits and potential for winning that war. Yet, the irony of Cronkite’s pronouncement is that Tet produced a stunning victory. But it was reported as a debacle. The impact on public opinion and loss of public support for the war is hard to overstate.

Our military was understandably frustrated. Initially caught off-guard, the U.S. military recovered swiftly and dealt the enemy a devastating blow. Yet, while a military defeat, information aspects made Tet a huge political victory. A key Communist objective had been to persuade Americans that the war was not winnable; Communists achieved that goal.

Tet provided a keen lesson for General David Petraeus, an avid student of military history. Taking command in Iraq in 2007, he downplayed expectations while executing a brilliant kinetic and communication strategy that reversed a military situation. General Stanley McChrystal was
equally careful when taking command in Afghanistan. Both commanders understood that winning involved hard fighting, and in no small measure depended on how audiences judge events. They recognized the impact of perceptions and communication strategy in shaping or changing behavior.

Example: Afghanistan. An operation in the Taliban stronghold of Marjah, Operation Moshtarak (together in the Afghan Dari dialect), launched by U.S. Marines and ISAF forces was ballyhooed as a model for future success and a new beginning in Afghanistan, winning the hearts and minds of Afghans. General McChrystal declared, “We’ve got a government in a box, ready to roll in.”

But Marjah proved painstaking and difficult. Some viewed the operation a failure, others saw it as a draw, while still others branded it a misleading exercise in media hype and misinformation. Marjah consisted of farmers’ homes and markets in an agricultural area. The Associated Press published an article stating that “‘Marine commanders’ . . . expected 400 to 1,000 insurgents to be ‘holed up’ in the ‘southern Afghan town of 80,000 people,’” and that Marjah was “the ‘linchpin of the militants’ logistical and opium-smuggling network.’” ABC News characterized the place as the “city of Marjah” and heavily populated. Expectations were quickly frustrated. Finding mixed success, Jamestown Foundation expert Michael Innes wrote that “perhaps most frustrating for many observers is the manner in which political pressures have apparently skewed expectations of progress,” with the definition of success shaped by “requirements set in the political capitals of NATO member states.”

When General McChrystal shifted focus to Kandahar, he recognized that expectations for Marjah had been unrealistic. His communication strategy for Kandahar wisely lowered expectations.

Project Confidence

Ensure that you clearly communicate that you know what you are doing and will prevail. If target audiences—as well as partners, allies, and your own people—do not believe you will win, chances are good that you will fail. Great communication strategists exhibit imagination, boldness, and a willingness to take risks. Confidence is manifested in confluent ways:

- A clearly-stated, easily understood story, narrative, theme, and message. Confusion or lack of clarity suggests you do not know what you are doing or lack the confidence that an operation or campaign will succeed.
- Message discipline. One of the most difficult things in campaigns or operations to do well is maintain message discipline. That means ensuring that actions and messages, whether communicated through language or other means, remain consistent and mutually supportive.
- Accessibility to media. You do not need to explain strategy or tactics to the media. Doing so may not be prudent. However, the media will cover events; that is its job. It is critical that you get out the points that define your message and drive them. Hiding from the media suggests lack of confidence and is likely to inspire stories that a strategy is beset with problems.
- Accessibility to partners and allies. They want to know what you are doing, how, why, and what it means to them. Staying ahead of the curve in engaging with them shows confidence and is more likely to inspire their support and cooperation.
- Communication with your own team, from top to bottom. People need to un-
derstand a commander’s intent and how a strategy, plan, and operation execute that intent.

- **Decisive action consistent with messaging.** Backing up communication with decisive action that supports a message makes it meaningful, gives it teeth, and reinforces your trustworthiness.

- **Competent, confident, and accessible leaders.** Providing visible leadership from commanders and spokespersons that exude leadership in appearance, posture, voice, composure, expression, and action.

**Example: Winston Churchill.** Churchill stands out for his ability to use communication to define his leadership and the cause for which he stood. He took office as prime minister at age 65 after having been a public figure for decades. His speeches were immaculately crafted on note cards and carefully thought through before he delivered them. Every speech aimed to shape the public’s mood or attitude toward a subject. Everything about the way he presented himself was masterfully calculated for effect. His command of language and projection of strength and resiliency gave voice to an entire nation during its darkest hours. Churchill’s message that England would not give in but would stand, fight, and prevail was clear, uncompromising, and exuded the confidence of the resolute.27

**Example: John F. Kennedy.** Kennedy had a knack for compartmentalizing his private and public life. Historians such as British journalist Henry J. Farlie and Frederick Kempe have criticized his leadership.28 Still, as a public figure, Kennedy transformed the American political landscape. His formidable communication skills and style changed expectations for American leaders at home and abroad. His inspiring speech in Berlin in 1963 exuded command and confidence, illustrated the power of speech in projecting resilience and strength, and reminds us what American values and strong leadership mean to those for whom freedom is about life and death.29 In a modern era of cynical skepticism, Kennedy’s speech reminds us of how well the right U.S. leadership, communicated in vivid, concrete, relevant language that specifically addresses the concerns and sentiments of an audience, can resonate.

**Example: Ronald Reagan.** After his near-assassination, President Ronald Reagan’s poise, grace, and wit restored confidence to a shaken nation. Few understood how close death had come. His charisma shined during his two most famous speeches: Normandy, where he praised the heroes of Operation Overlord while calling for a strong Atlantic alliance against Communism; and his 1986 eulogy to the seven Challenger astronauts.30 Author, journalist, and presidential speechwriter Peggy Noonan wrote both of these elegant speeches, but Reagan’s vibrancy, conviction, and confidence brought them to life and forged a connection with his auditors. Reagan pursued a broad strategy of projecting strength, calm, resolution, and vision in efforts to strengthen the United States, revive confidence after the failed presidency of the Carter administration, and defeat Communism. As with Churchill and Kennedy, Reagan spoke not merely for himself. Each gave powerful voice to the feelings and emotions of their citizens.

**Example: Julius Caesar.** Historically, no leader has exceeded Caesar’s skills at communication strategy on or off the battlefield, despite the fact that his final accession to power blinded him to ground realities and led to his assassination. As a commander, Caesar experienced the same hardships as his troops.31 He led from the front in tough bat-
tles against formidable opponents and shared the profit of plunder with his men, who acclaimed him *imperator* (commander). Many celebrated examples define his leadership and communication strategy. It bears stressing: as with many great leaders, Caesar’s effectiveness as a communicator and in forging communication strategy flowed from his strength and character. He was conscious of his image. Historian Adrian Goldsworthy notes that images of Caesar on busts or coins “radiate power, experience and monumental self-confidence, and at least hint at the force of personality of the man.”

Unlike Napoleon, who never faced a general equal to his ability when he was on his game, Caesar confronted several capable leaders, including Pompey the Great, who was widely viewed as the outstanding military leader of the day; his immensely able chief deputy Titus Labienus, who defected to Pompey after both fell out with Caesar; and the charismatic Gallic chieftain Vercingetorix. Caesar’s career is full of telling examples. In his first major battle in Gaul against the Helvetii, he confronted a superior force that had proven itself by defeating German tribes in different battles. Not surprisingly, this formidable adversary inspired anxiety. Caesar needed to keep his troops calm and stiffen their resolve. He adopted a simple strategy to communicate his own resolve and courage and to inspire his legions. He sent his horse away to signal that he would fight on foot alongside every soldier, exposing himself to the same danger, and delivered a speech that roused his men to action. This was even more significant than it might seem. Suetonius records that Caesar rode a “very remarkable horse, with feet almost like those of a man, the hoofs being divided in such a manner as to have some resemblance to toes . . . and the soothsayers having interpreted these circumstances into an omen that its owner would be master of the world.” The horse, historian Philip Freeman says, “adored Caesar and would not allow anyone else to ride it.”

In thinking about information strategy, Caesar was always conscious of the need to communicate clearly with troops under his command or, in those chaotic days of the Roman Republic, the voters whose support he sought. He used his commentaries and medals to gain visibility and credibility. He understood the importance of communication strategy. He was an excellent strategist and he executed strategy adroitly.

**Be Creative—Especially with Younger Audiences**

The differences among audiences of various ages require that you gear messages differently for different generations. Young audiences reject hard sales pitches or lectures. The U.S. military is infamous for its almost liturgical reverence for PowerPoint presentations. Its “just the facts, ma’am” approach to dealing with the media resonates haphazardly.

Younger audiences seek to engage and to interact—with one another as well as with you. As author Clay Shirky pointed out in *Here Comes Everybody*, technology has triggered the emergence of new social media and fundamentally altered the way that young audiences communicate and think about communicating. It is now a two-way street. Newspapers, radio, and television were one-way communication: one party communicating a message to many. Letters, facsimiles, and telephones are one-to-one direct communication technologies, which paved the way for interactive engagement using social media.

U.S. politics offers a striking example of how the generational divide affects this equation. When it came to reaching the crucial 18- to 29-year-old demographic, the 2012 Barack Obama presidential campaign came to a startling realization: that
fully 50 percent of its targets in this key demographic proved unreachable by telephone, a traditional method of direct voter contact. However, 85 percent of them were friends with an Obama 2012 campaign supporter who was also a Facebook app user. The Obama campaign responded by launching “targeted sharing” to Facebook friends who were voters in swing states. The campaign contacted 600,000 people, who in turn reached 5 million voters. Twenty percent of those 5 million took some action, such as registering to vote.²⁹

Few nations are as wired as the United States. Internet usage abroad is limited, but it is rapidly growing. The impact of internet usage was manifest in the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions. All sides in the Syrian Civil War—the world’s first true cyberwar—use the internet and cellular technology extensively for strategy, operations, tactics, communication, and command and control. Younger generations, even in less affluent countries, connect on the internet or social media through smart phones.

Jack Guy has advised top military leaders extensively in Afghanistan. He notes that in a nation of 30 million people, there are more than 16 million mobile phones, supported by four major mobile phone purveyors. Mobile phones are the fastest growing industry in the country. The impact of this technology on the economy as well as on youth, who are networked globally, has proven essential in keeping the Kabul government alive.⁴⁰

One sees this shift toward engagement in commercial marketing. Consumer and business buyers, notes author Shama Kabani, want to make up their own minds about what they need. The key to selling is to engage with consumers and help them search for and find the answers they want.⁴¹ Commercial marketing differs from political and national security communication strategy in many ways, but on this point the parallel is real.

News media that capitalizes on the tools of the internet enables many to communicate with many in real time. This evolution has dramatically reshaped the social and political dynamics that define the environments in which communication strategy is forged and executed.

Two prominent strategies that eschewed traditional media and capitalized on new media illustrate the broader precept.

Example: Egypt. The 2011 Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt were engineered by a group of young, tech-savvy individuals who had grown weary of Hosni Mubarak’s repressive political system rooted in “force and favors.” Upheaval in Tunisia had forced President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali to flee on 14 January 2011 in the wake of mass popular protests. Revolution erupted in Egypt on 25 January 2011 as thousands protested the Mubarak regime.⁴³

But the revolution really began several years before, on 23 March 2008, when young Egyptian activists calling themselves the April 6 Youth Movement launched a Facebook page to support a textile workers’ strike. Within a few weeks, 70,000 individuals had joined the call for strikes. Three years later, the organizers were ready to move against Mubarak’s regime. They forged a strategy to overcome state security tactics traditionally employed to preempt protests by organizing cells of 30–50 activists. Each would group in a preselected spot in Cairo. Each cell had a single person to direct members to the main rendezvous point. A viral video featuring Egyptian activist Asmaa Mahfouz told the youth: “Don’t be afraid of the government.”⁴⁴

That was critical: once demonstrators got over fears about the government and its security apparatus, the revolution moved forward. Protestors in Ukraine, the Philippines, and elsewhere
had used social media for command and control and to provide protestors information to evade security points. But the Tahrir Square protests were a triumph of information strategy. The strategy tapped into deep resentment against the regime; employed interactive social media tools like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter to provide information and direction; and combined with satellite television broadcast from Al Jazeera to achieve a critical mass that forced the army to stage an unstated coup that ousted Mubarak.45

The Egyptian regime, led by the late President Mohamed Morsi and controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood, proved to be just as or more authoritarian than Mubarak’s, but in ousting the prior regime, the April 6 Movement’s leadership showed that while improvising in an atmosphere of uncertainty and heightened tension, a cohesive communication strategy can mobilize a population and more or less peacefully oust a regime. The leaders creatively used their tools to change behavior and got results.

Future engagements and conflicts seem less likely to entail all-out war, such as in Iraq or Afghanistan. Look instead for asymmetrical engagements that entwine information strategies and tactics in dealing with repressive state regimes or armed adversaries.

**Key Lessons:**
- Strategy needs to creatively determine what channels your audiences are tuning into, or you will miss the opportunity to reach them; and
- New tools of social media have transformed the way people communicate. Instead of top-down communication through vertical hierarchies of command and control, knowledge is increasingly shared horizontally and democratically.

Everyone—within specific target audiences—can have a say in the discourse. Yes, state monitoring can penetrate veils of anonymity. Still, the internet facilitates anonymous discourse, which expands the sources and diversity of discourse. It also lessens control over accuracy of the information communicated, opening discourse to accidental or deliberate misinformation. This transformation in how and through what channels information is distributed places a premium on creative thinking.

**Example: Syria.** The Syrian Civil War is complicated and a detailed analysis lies beyond the scope of this book. What is relevant is that both the regime and the rebels have capitalized imaginatively on social media to achieve confluent goals:
- Communicating narrative, story, message, and themes to Syrian and international audiences;
- Collecting information and intelligence, including through cyber hacking;
- Disrupting adversary communication and tactics;
- Gaining momentum while slowing down that of the opposition;
- Pumping up morale by communicating success; and
- Establishing command and control.

**Key lesson:** This bloody conflict demonstrates that technology is an enabler of, but not a substitute for, thinking and smart ideas.

**Example: Hong Kong, 2019.** As this is written, protests occurring in Hong Kong illustrate two sides of information warfare. Protestors seek autonomy from authoritarian rule in Beijing while mainland China seeks to repress dissent. Each has employed different tactics of information warfare to achieve its desired end state.

China makes extensive use of surveillance technology. Young people have led the protests, which
started out as a rejection of a proposed extradition law that would allow suspects to be sent to China for trial. Protestors have shown pluck and ingenuity in safeguarding their identities from potential retaliation by authorities who employ mass data collection, thousands of security cameras, television news footage, and sophisticated facial recognition technology. Chinese authorities have used facial recognition technology to log more than 6.7 million coordinates of the movement by individuals within a span of 24 hours. Authorities have a tool that captures and analyzes body shapes and how people walk to identify individuals.46

In the meantime, China is waging a disinformation war against the protestors, portraying to mainland Chinese and the world images of police violence as emanating from protestors. State television showed an image of a woman counting out cash on a Hong Kong sidewalk—implying that the protestors are paid provocateurs. China’s strategic goal is to provoke nationalist and anti–Western sentiment. It uses state and social media, distorting the context of images and videos, to communicate its message that the demonstrators are a portent of terrorism.47

Despite its aggressive tactics, China’s handling of Hong Kong reveals the flaws in its heavy-handed approach. Its campaign appears to be backfiring. The state news agency Xinhua and the tabloid Global Times resorted to adopting cultural revolution rhetoric in characterizing protestors as a “‘Gang of Four’ endangering Hong Kong.” But arguing that the protests are ignited by malign external forces is undercutting Chinese diplomacy abroad. Twitter and Facebook terminated hundreds of accounts that appeared to be part of a “coordinated state-backed operation” seeking to sow discord in Hong Kong.48

Protestors cover their faces with masks. They decline to give names. They purchase single-trip train tickets with cash rather than using their stored-value electronic cash cards that forward information on travel and locations to a central repository.49 They have deleted all of their Chinese phone applications, such as WeChat, Aipay, and the shopping app Taobao. They use virtual private networks (VPNs) on smartphones to use with the secure messaging app Telegram to hide from cyber monitors. They use only secure digital messaging apps and have gone completely analog in movements. They take no selfies or photographs of the chaos. While well-coordinated, the protestors remain intentionally leaderless. They share protest tips and security measures with people they had met just hours before. They use Telegram to plan meet-ups, and change user names on the app so that it sounds nothing like their actual names. They change the phone number associated with the app. They use SIM cards without a contract. They avoid snapping close-up images, limiting photography to wide shots.50

How the protests and Beijing’s response play out may provide insight into opportunities for turning China’s Three Warfares concept, discussed in chapter 12, against it, to undercut its efforts to strengthen global credibility as part of its 2049 plan to make China the world’s dominant state.

**Capitalize on Your Resources**

Understanding what resources are available to a campaign and when to use these resources is integral to success. Resources do not refer solely to money. Human resources are just as critical as financial resources; it is human capabilities, suitability to meet the requirements of a campaign, enthusiasm, morale, confidence, and energy that form the team and support elements that develop and execute a winning strategy.

There is almost never enough time, money, or human resources to do everything a mission or plan
requires. The test for developing a worthy strategy is not whether you can be creative or effective at any cost; it is whether you can devise a workable strategy within the limits imposed, internally (within a command), or externally (by events or an adversary). If a mission requires meeting a certain threshold that cannot realistically be reached, it is important to stand tall and say so. However, that does not ensure success, as illustrated by General James Conway and the Marines’ warning to Paul Bremer and Lieutenant General Sanchez that the battleground for the First Battle of Fallujah lacked proper resources and preparation. Al-Qaeda won that battle. The problem, however, was corrected for the second battle, and the Coalition employed every available resource deemed necessary to prevail, which enabled Coalition forces to win.

Endnotes

1. Critics, including the agency’s inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, question what it has achieved with $100 billion in aid provided to that country. Joel Brinkley, “Money Pit: The Monstrous Failure of US Aid to Afghanistan,” World Affairs Journal 175, no. 5 (January/February 2013): 13–23.
5. See Ann Jones, “The Total Failure of COIN,” American Conservative, 1 July 2010. Jones argues that the U.S. effort was a failure at almost every level, while saluting the Taliban for assessing the successful surge in Iraq and figuring out tactics to counter a similar strategy in Afghanistan through their own surge. Her views echo those of Bing West, except West concluded that the aid did not advance U.S. interests. West writes that Afghans were grateful for any cash or help, but such gestures did not motivate them to become pro-American or fight the Taliban. Neither writer can be called soft-hearted peaceniks. Their criticism is that Afghanistan has produced a costly U.S. failure. Journalist Peter Bergen offers a contrary assessment. He argues there are now 6 million children in school, compared to 1 million under the Taliban; that 1 in 3 Afghans now own a phone, compared to almost none while the Taliban held power; that 6 in 10 Afghans have a favorable opinion of the U.S. military presence in the country (some would challenge this polling statistic’s validity); and that the murder rate in Afghanistan is lower than in Washington, DC. In Bergen’s view, the Taliban “are getting squeezed where it hurts” in Helmand Province as well as in Kandahar. He is also more optimistic about Afghanistan’s economy, which could make the country a world leader in lithium. See Peter Bergen, “Why Afghanistan Is Far from Hopeless,” Time, 17 March 2011. Jones’s assessment and West’s pessimism was also challenged by U.S. Special Operations personnel who the author interviewed; the author expresses no opinion on whose view is more accurate; this work’s focus is on what you need to think about to forge a communication strategy or conduct information warfare.
8. See also Octavian Manea, “The Wrong War: An Interview with Bing West, a Sequel,” Small Wars Journal 7, no. 5, 6 May 2011.
10. Chandrasekaran, Little America, 143.
12. See West, No True Glory, chapters 1 and 3.
15. Walter D. Clinton, interview with author, 14 May 2013. Clinton is a legend in political campaign circles. He got his start with Matt Reese, the godfather of Democratic party campaign organizing and the strategist credited with helping John F. Kennedy to win the pivotal West Virginia primary. That victory spurred Kennedy on to the White House, partly thanks to Lyndon B. Johnson’s failure to timely contest the nomination. See Robert A. Caro, The Passage of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson (New York: Knopf, 2012).
16. Petraeus’s 14 observations are: 1) “Do not try to do too much with your own hands”; let locals lead, as it’s their war; 2) act quickly, to avoid becoming an army of occupation; 3) “money is ammunition,” as one focuses on reconstruction, economic revival, and restoring basic services; 4) “increasing the number of stakeholders is critical to success”; 5) analyze the costs and benefits prior to operations, e.g., ask if it takes more bad guys off the street than it creates by the way it is conducted; 6) “intelligence is the key to success,” a precept Gen McChrystal’s team put to lethally effective use; 7) “everyone must do nation-building,” not just civil affairs personnel; 8) “help build institutions, not just units,” such as ministry capacity and not just army or police units; 9) “cultural awareness is a force multiplier”; 10) COIN requires more than military operations—it needs to establish a political environment that reduces support for insurgents and their ideology; 11) “ultimate success depends on local leaders”; 12) commanders must train subordinates well, because corporals and lieutenants are strategic players whose actions make a difference; 13) leaders must be flexible and adaptable; and 14) “a leader’s most important task is to set the right tone” and communicate that tone to subordinate leaders and troopers. Petraeus, “Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq.” 3.
17. Terry H. Anderson, “The Light at the End of the Tunnel: The United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam,” Diplomatic History 12, no. 4 (October 1988): 443–62, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1988.tb00036.x. Three of the most compelling dissections of the failure of President Lyndon B. Johnson and his team to level with the American people—perhaps to some extent guided by self-delusion—are David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (New York: Random House, 1972); Neil Sheehan, A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and American in Vietnam (New York: Modern Library, 2009); and H. R. McMaster, Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam (New York: Harper Collins, 1997). McMaster levels a stunning indictment of the behavior of Johnson and his defense secretary Robert McNamara’s conscious deceit to win the 1964 presidential election, as well as offering a critique of U.S. military decision making. One notes that while Sheehan, Halberstam, and others do not believe the war was winnable, in recent years a contrary school of thought has argued that had Congress continued to fund the South Vietnamese army, Hanoi would have been defeated. See, for example, Mark Moyer, Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Stephen J. Morris, “The War We Could Have Won,” New York Times, 1 May 2005. Morris argues that by 1974–75, the south was winning and would have prevailed. He believes it lost when antiviews groups in Washington persuaded Congress to cut back on American aid in 1974. See also: Lewis Sorley, A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America’s Last Years in Vietnam (New York: Harvest, 2007). Sorley argues that Army Gen Creighton W. Abrams understood how to defeat the Communists, and his leadership helped to turn things around. The author of this book on information warfare worked closely on various matters with Nha Hoang, a key South Vietnamese negotiator at the Paris Peace Accords talks held in Paris during 1975. For the rest of his career, he remained bitter at what he considers the duplicity and treachery of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in negotiating away a winning war to the north.
19. See Sheehan, A Bright Shining Lie, whose reporting records just how close a call the Tet offensive became. Historian James Willbanks notes out that “there was a flow of intelligence, but nobody was putting it all together. Perhaps more important, the intelligence we were getting flew in the face of our own preconceived notions about how the war was going.” “Interview—James Willbanks: Tet’s Truths, Myths and Mysteries,” Historynet.com, 5 December 2012; and James H. Willbanks, The Tet Offensive: A Concise History (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
20. See “Interview—James Willbanks.”
21. The effect of the surge, of course, was only temporary. In the long run, as the United States left Iraq, only the Iraqis could secure their own future. Whether or how they may do so remains unclear at this writing.


27. Those interested in Churchill during the war years should read William Manchester and Paul Reid, The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill, Defender of the Realm, 1940–1965 (New York: Little, Brown, 2012); and Lynne Olson, Citizens of London: The Americans Who Stood with Britain in Its Darkest, Finest Hour (New York: Random House, 2011), which offers an extremely insightful view of how Churchill operated and his communication skills, as well as those of key Americans, including Edward R. Murrow, W. Averell Harriman, and Ambassador John Gilbert Winant, who helped forge a solid alliance between Britain and the United States during World War II. Nigel Hamilton severely criticized Churchill’s judgment, meddling, and egomania, but pointed out that what Roosevelt found attractive and indispensable was his moral courage.


31. Lucius Mestrius Plutarch, Life of Julius Caesar, trans. John Dryden (Ann Arbor, MI: Charles River Editors, 1991), loc. 337 of 1084, Kindle: “His contempt of danger was not so much wondered at by his soldiers, because they knew he coveted honor. But his enduring so much hardship, which he did to all appearance beyond his natural strength, very much astonished them.”


33. Adrian Goldsworthy, Caesar: Life of a Colossus (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 61. Additionally, Plutarch recorded that during the 10 years Caesar fought in Gaul, he took 800 towns, subdued 300 states, defeated 3 million adversaries and killed 1 million, and took captive another million. Plutarch, Life of Julius Caesar, loc. 313 of 1084, Kindle. Judged in the context of his times, his exploits were remarkable, although in today’s world, the party most likely to express interest in his actions would be the International Criminal Court, which would charge him with genocide. See “Article 6. Genocide,” in Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (The Hague, Netherlands: International Criminal Court, 2011). Always on his game, Mark Twain summed up Caesar this way: he conducted war against the barbarians not out of revenge “but because he wanted their land and desired to confer the blessings of civilization upon their widows and orphans.” Mark Twain, The Mysterious Stranger (Auckland, New Zealand: Douglas Editions, Floating Press, 2009), chapter 8, loc. 355575 of 54078, Kindle; also quoted by Freeman, Julius Caesar, 2. His actions in Rome echoed his strength. As a young man, he married Cornelia, the daughter of Lucius Cornelius Cinna, a rival to Lucius Cornelius Sulla, who had seized power in Rome. Worse, Caesar was the nephew of another Sulla foe, Gaius Marius. Sulla showed the allies of Marius and Cinna no quarter. He ordained the murder of many, providing a reward to any who killed those appearing on a death list while seizing the property of the deceased for the state. As historian Philip Freeman pithily put it, Sulla “managed to combine murder and fund-raising on a grand scale.” Freeman, Julius Caesar, 31. Caesar’s mother successfully lobbied Sulla to spare Caesar, but Sulla demanded that he divorce Cornelia. In an era in which marriage was often viewed as transactional, Caesar, who loved his wife, refused. Freeman, Julius Caesar, 31; C. Suetonius Tranquillus, The Twelve Caesars, trans. Alexander Thomson, revised and corrected (Lawrence, KS: Digireads, 2004), loc. 94 of 12910, Kindle; Goldsworthy, Caesar, 59. When his aunt, Julia, the widow of Marius, died, Caesar ignored possible retribution from Sulla and presided over a very public funeral, at which he ignored Sulla’s prohibition against displaying images of Marius and led a procession bearing symbols of Marius’s victories. Sulla was seen as the champion of the wealthier classes, while Marius was more populist. The gesture made Caesar popular. He also made a public oration eulogizing Cornelia, and Plutarch credits him as the first Roman to do so. See Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, loc. 127–137 of 12910, Kindle; Plutarch, Life of Julius Caesar, loc. 146–163 of 1094, Kindle; Goldsworthy, Caesar, 98–99; and Freeman, Julius Caesar, 50–52.

34. Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, loc. 668 of 12910, Kindle. Sue-
Suetonius notes that when “the issue of a battle was doubtful, he sent away all the horses, and his own first.” Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, loc. 659 of 12910, Kindle.

35. Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, loc. 668 of 12910, Kindle. Caesar reciprocated his horse’s affection and later dedicated a statue to his horse at the temple of his ancestral deity, Venus Genitrix. Alexander the Great had a similar relationship to his renowned horse, Bucephalus. Pliny records that Alexander got the fierce horse after no one else proved able to tame it. At only 12 years old, Alexander promised his father, King Phillip II of Macedonia, that he would pay for it should he be unable to tame it. See Plutarch, The Complete Collection of Plutarch’s Parallel Lives (Oxford: Acheron Press), loc. 26495–26504 of 29380, Kindle; and Pliny (the Elder) (John Bostock, Henry Thomas Riley Tr.), The Natural History of Pliny, vol. 2. Caesar’s choice of a similar horse was almost certainly a strategic communication decision to associate himself with the legendary Alexander.

36. Freeman, Julius Caesar, 130.

37. See Farwell, Persuasion and Power, 65. In addition, the author conducted telephone interviews with historian Adrian Goldsworthy on the topic during the course of summer 2012.


