



# **Strategic Communication Theory and Application**

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**June 2008**

# Assumptions

- Information and communication shape perceptions, attitudes, and behavior.
  - Information is processed data. Communication is transmission of information from sender to receiver.
- Communication can create strategic effects.
- All communication is not “strategic.”
  - Must engage multiple diverse audiences over time through tailored messages.
- Audiences are biased listeners who process information through a frame of reference.
  - The meanings others attribute to our messages only partially come from the words and images we use.
- The more we know about cultures, social and political structures, languages and religions, the better we will understand biases and then can tailor our messages.
  - We are dealing with many audiences we do not understand and who do not understand us.
- A certain level of anti-Americanism will exist.
  - We can tolerate some anti-Americanism without detriment to US policy.
  - It matters less that people like us than that they don't try to kill us.
  - Credibility and respect must precede affection.

# USG Definitions of Strategic Communication

- QDR 2005: Focused United States Government processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen or preserve conditions favorable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programs, and actions synchronized with other elements of national power.
- Joint Pub 3-13: Focused United States Government (USG) efforts to understand and engage key audiences in order to create, strengthen or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of USG interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages and products synchronized with the actions of all elements of national power.
- DOS – no definition but synonymous with public diplomacy.

# Concept used in multiple ways

- ***A tool***
  - Informational instrument of national power
  - Means to support or promote a national goal, purpose, objective
  - Means to influence perceptions, attitudes and behavior, rather than just to inform
- ***A process***
  - Of listening to, understanding and engaging key audiences
  - Of coordinating themes and messages across USG and with key international partners
  - Of developing plans that anticipate and respond to events, and shape the information environment
  - Of synchronizing and integrating information with other instruments of national power (DIME)
- ***An output***
  - Message (themes, words) and action (programs, deeds, products)

# Strategic Communication Defined

**What:** *Massing of information, ideas and actions to influence attitudes and behavior of target audiences in support of our policy objectives.*

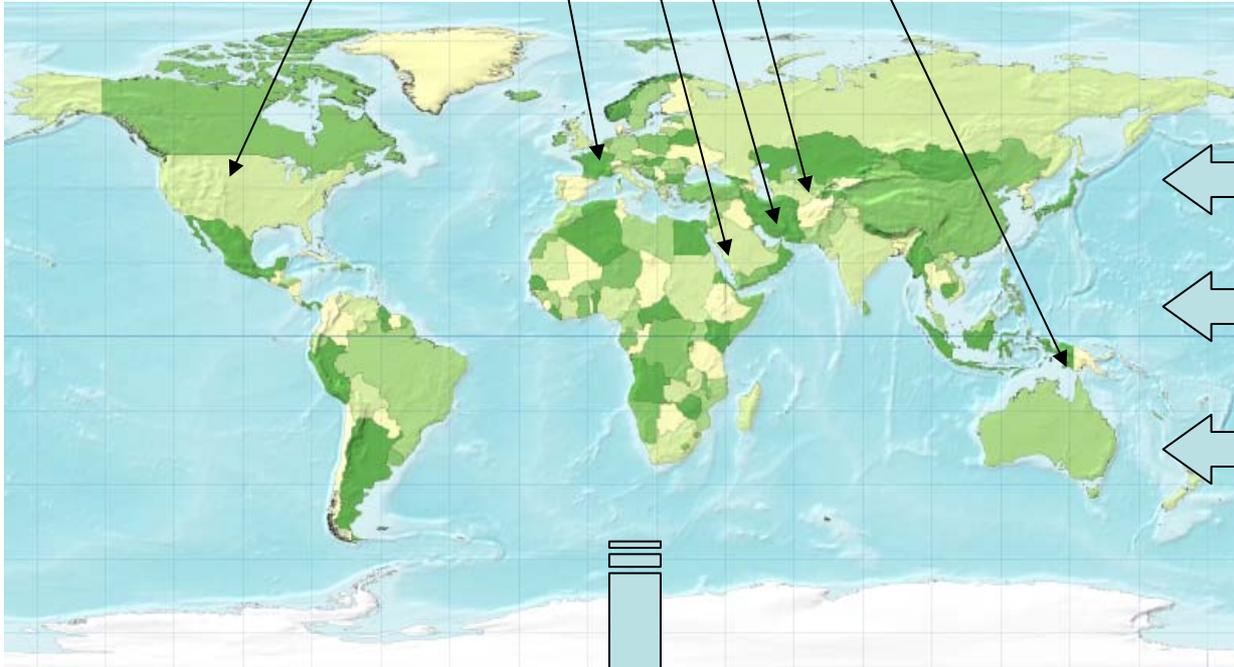
**How:** *The synchronized promulgation of information, ideas and actions over time through means and content that are tailored for multiple and diverse audiences.*

**Strategic communication is an influence strategy.  
The goal is to influence attitudes and behavior, not to make others  
like us.**

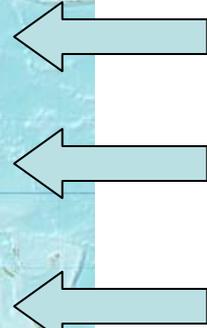
**Policy Goals**

**Strategic and Operational Guidance**

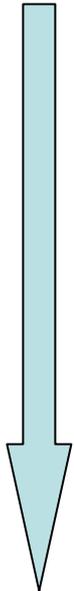
**INTERAGENCY**



**Tailor Messages to Diverse Audiences and Local Conditions**



**Delegate Resources**



**STRATEGIC EFFECT**  
**Tailored Messages; Same Effect**  
*Act Globally; Think Locally*

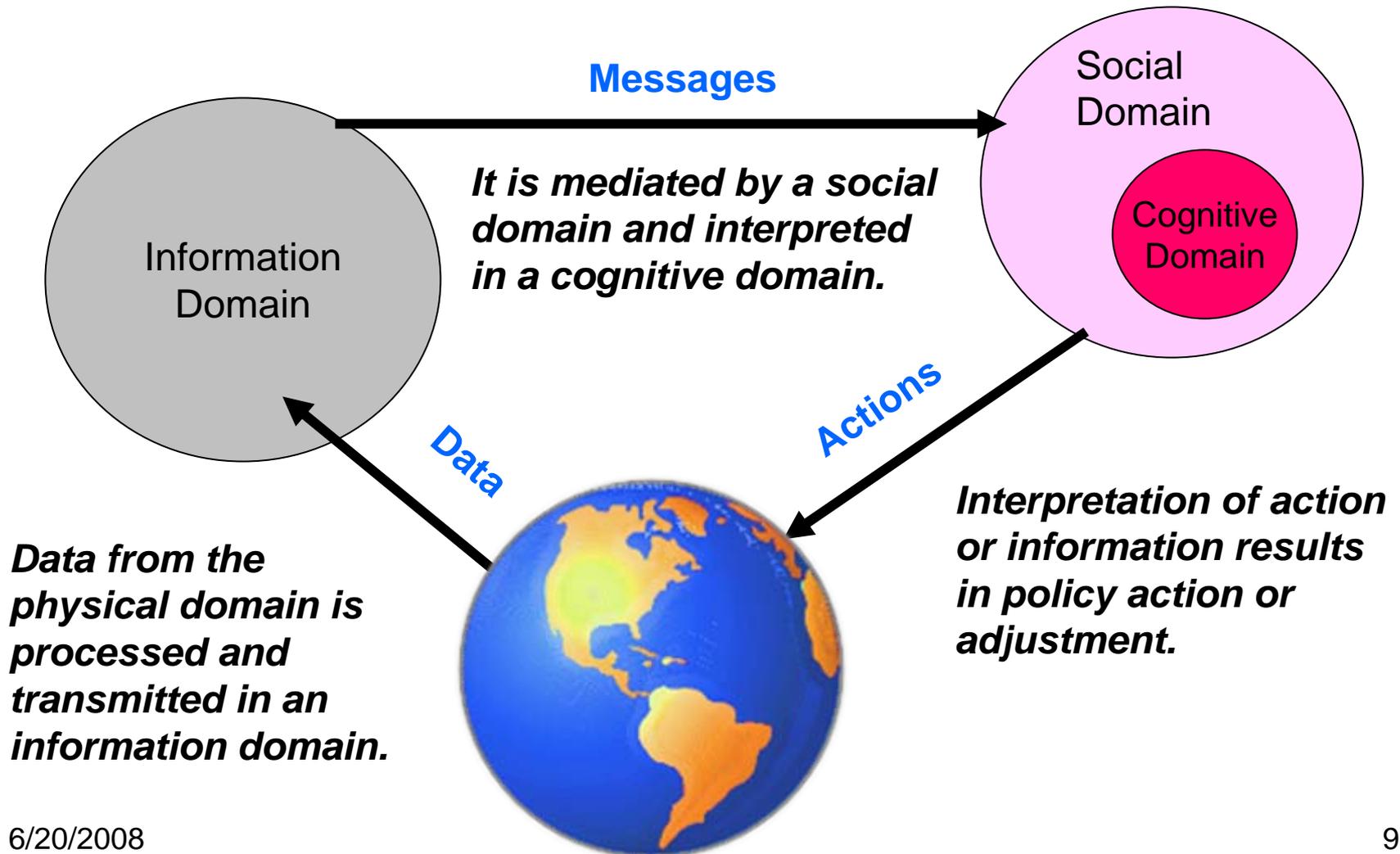
# “Strategic” in Military Operations is Hierarchical and Linked

	<i>Strategic</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Tactical</i>
<b>Scope</b>	Theater	Up to corps	< battalion
<b>Time</b>	Year +	Months	Hours-days
<b>Objective</b>	Policy goal	Linked missions (campaign)	Specific mission
<b>MOE (e.g.)</b>	Secure, stable Iraq	Baghdad stabilized	Haifa Street secured
<b>Communication Means</b>	FYDP / resource plans	Plans	Orders

# “Strategic” in Communication is Non-Hierarchical

	<i>Strategic</i>	<i>Non-Strategic</i>
<b>Scope</b>	Multiple and diverse audiences	Bounded and general audience
<b>Time</b>	Continuous	Discrete
<b>Objective</b>	Advance policy goal	Deliver messages to inform
<b>MOE</b>	Degree of policy advance	Meet deadlines
<b>Communication Means</b>	Receiver-centric	Sender-centric

# Domains of Strategic Communication



# Effective Strategic Communication Requires Operating Across All Domains

- ***In the physical domain***
  - Managing the “say-do” gap.
  - Credibility undermined when actions undercut words, or ambiguity may serve policy goals.
- ***In the information domain***
  - Using communication mediums the audience trusts.
- ***In the social domain***
  - Anticipating and shaping how concepts are translated.
- ***In the cognitive domain***
  - Changing individual frames of reference to cognitively outflank the enemy.

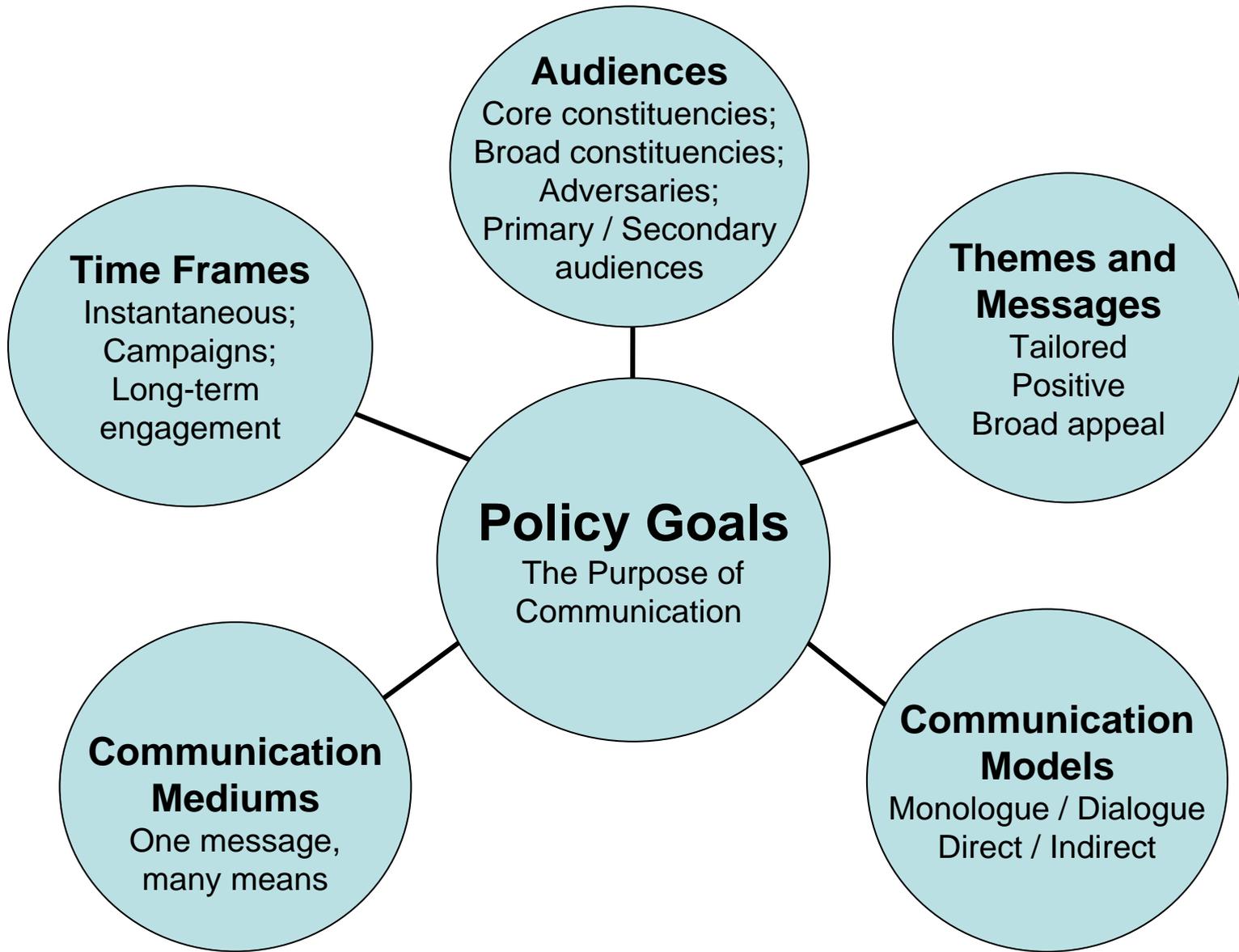
# Strategic Communication Methodology

- **Define** policy goals.
- **Identify** audiences.
- **Define** desired behavioral effects.
- **Conduct** audience analysis.
  - What are current perceptions, attitudes and behaviors?
  - What desired effect on perceptions, attitudes and behaviors do we want to achieve?
- **Identify** themes.
- **Frame** goals and tailor messages, actions, and metrics for audiences.
- **Harmonize** words, actions, and policies.
- **Synchronize** across mediums and time frames.
- **Anticipate**, preempt and counter adversary response.
- **Assess**, update audience analysis and recalibrate.



**Listen, Monitor, Adjust**

**Strategic communication planning should precede operational planning.**



**Policy goals are the driver.**

# Communication Models

## *Monologue*

- Transmit, inform, control message
- Receivers are passive interpreters; senders state message
- Requires shared organizational culture and power hierarchy

## *Dialogue / Multilogue*

- Symmetrical exchange
- Sender must be perceived credible; message must be perceived truthful
- Requires openness to potential change

## *Indirect*

- Diversity within unified theme
- Accepts flexibility and local empowerment of meaning
- For turbulent environments with low trust and credibility
- Relies on trusted interlocutors

## *Direct*

- Actions
- Person to person
- Government to Government - Demarche

**Different models can be employed simultaneously.**

# Communication Mediums

- ***Information domain***

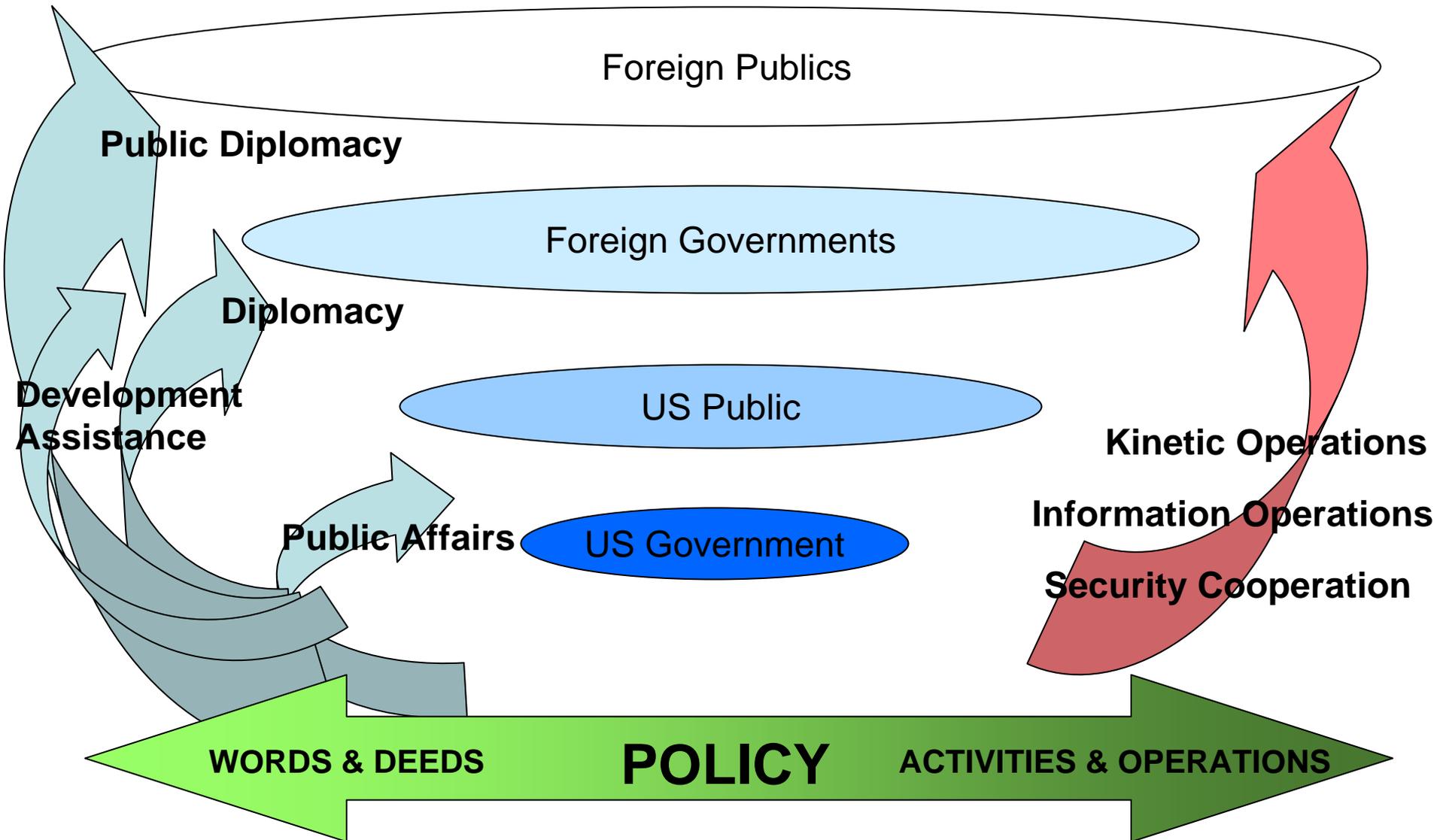
- Radio
- Terrestrial TV and Cable
- Satellite TV
- Print
- Internet
- Streaming video and cellular phones
- Tribal councils
- Word of mouth; rumors

- ***Physical domain***

- Exercises
- Force posture
- Visits / Person-to-Person (conferences, workshops, education, exchanges, alumni networking, mil to mil)
- Reconstruction
- Trade and Aid

**One message, many means.**

# Strategic Communication Arsenal



# The “War of Ideas”

- **Strategic Communication** - Massing of information, ideas and actions to better align the perceptions of key audiences with our policy goals.
- **Public Diplomacy** – A sub-component of strategic communication that, through words and deeds, aims to provide a more accurate picture of America, our ideals and our culture to foreign publics.
- **Countering Violent Extremism** – The panoply of messages and activities designed to counter al Qaeda’s radical ideology, to diminish support for the ideology among the uncommitted, and to delegitimize militant extremist tactics and violence against civilians.

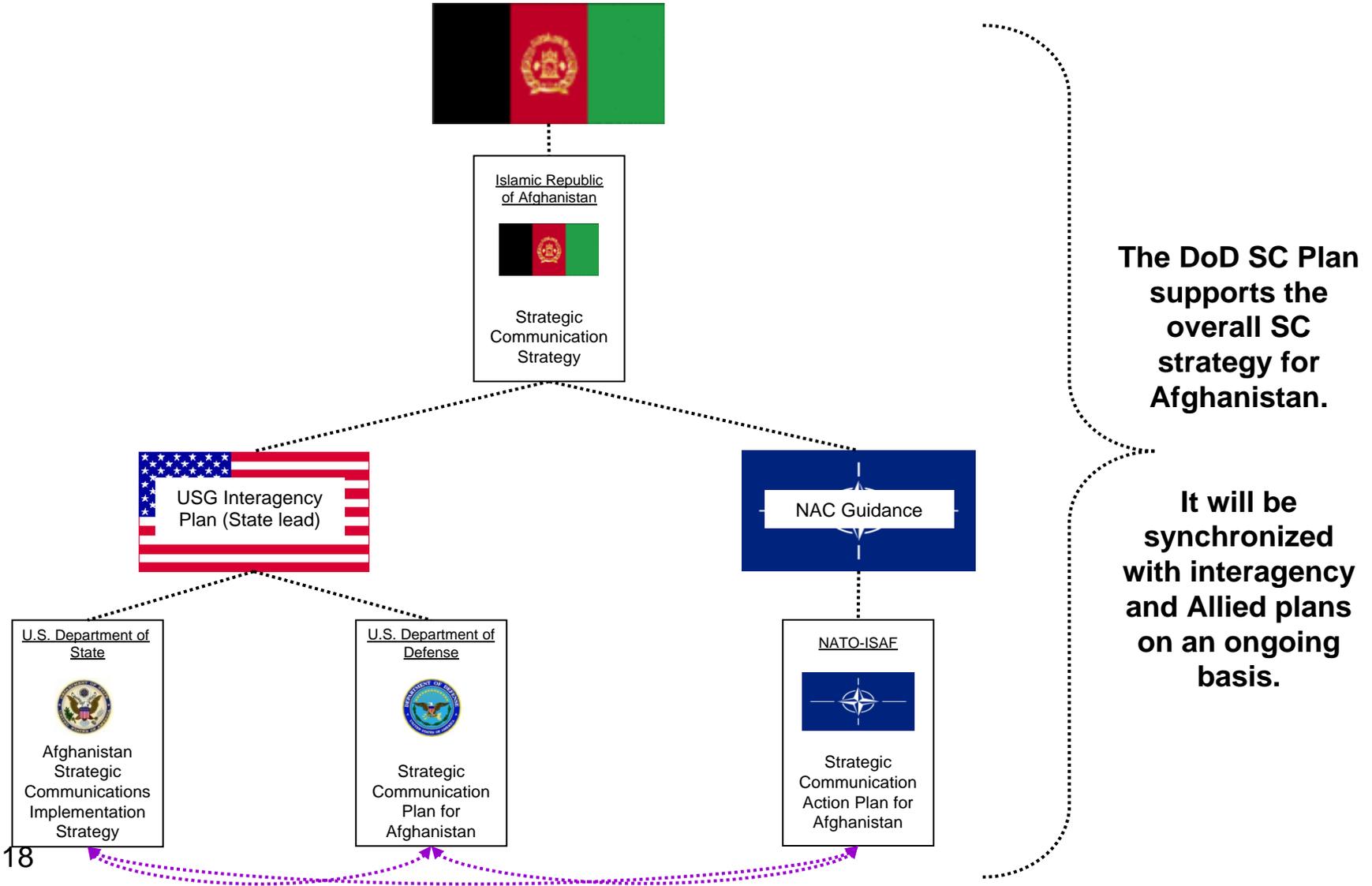
**Strategic communication is an influence strategy to advance our policy goals and counter violent extremism. Public diplomacy activities are one set of tools in the strategic communication arsenal.**

# DOD Afghan SC Plan: Purpose

- To identify messages and tasks for strategic communication efforts in support of U.S. objectives in Afghanistan.
- This plan will help identify how SC efforts can help advance USG strategic goals for Afghanistan, including by complementing, shaping, and supporting:
  - the “Afghanistan Strategic Review” Way Ahead;
  - interagency activities and the State Department Bureau of South and Central Asia’s draft “Afghanistan Strategic Communications Implementation Strategy for 2007;”
  - the SC component of ISAF’s “Proposed 2007 Action Plan;”
  - the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and leverage its programs and products to advance USG strategic goals; and
  - relevant regional and GWOT objectives.

**DoD Plan signed by DSD England 12 September 2007. USG Interagency Plan under development.**

# Supporting the Overall SC Strategy



# Supported Goals

- USG GWOT goals  
(National Implementation Plan for the War on Terror, 26 June 2006)
  - Protect and defend the homeland and US interests abroad.
  - Deter/mitigate terrorist activity and their capacity to operate effectively in the United States and abroad.
  - Counter violent extremism.
  - Prevent terrorists' acquisition or use of weapons of mass destruction.
  - Institutionalize domestically and internationally the strategy for the war on terror and violent extremism.
  - Continue to nurture and expand foreign partnerships and partner capacity to defeat violent extremism.
- USG Theater Mission  
(US Central Command unclassified website)
  - Attack, disrupt, and defeat terrorism.
  - Deter and defeat adversaries.
  - Strengthen regional stability.
  - Build the self-reliance of partner nations' security forces.

# Supported Goals (cont'd)

- **USG Goals for Afghanistan**  
(Afghanistan Strategic Review for Principals – approved 1 February 2007)
  - A reliable, stable, geo-strategically placed ally in the War on Terror;
  - Moderate, democratic, with a thriving private sector economy;
  - Capable of effectively governing its territory and borders; and
  - Respectful of the rights of all citizens, including minorities and women.
  
- **NATO ISAF Goals for Afghanistan**  
(NATO in Afghanistan: Master Narrative – 08 June 2007)
  - The extension of government authority across Afghanistan;
  - The development of the Afghan government structures necessary to maintain security across the country without the assistance of international forces;
  - The establishment of a stable and secure environment in which sustainable reconstruction and development has taken hold; and
  - The promotion by the Afghan government of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.
  - NATO-ISAF provides indirect assistance to the Afghan authorities' counternarcotics operations through training and logistic, and in-extremis support, as appropriate. NATO/ISAF also helps the Afghan government to explain its counter narcotics policy to its people.

# Supported Goals (cont'd)

- USG Counter-narcotics Goals in Afghanistan  
(U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan – August 2007)
  - Support the Government of Afghanistan's eight pillar National Drug Control Strategy, with emphasis on the first five pillars: public information, alternative development, elimination/eradication, interdiction, and law enforcement/justice reform.
  - Increase development assistance to incentivize licit development while simultaneously amplifying the scope and intensity of both interdiction and eradication operations.
  - Increase coordination of counternarcotics and counterinsurgency planning and operations.
  - Encourage consistent, sustained political will for the counternarcotics effort among the Afghan government, our Allies, partners, and international organizations.

# Themes

- The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, NATO-ISAF, and the U.S. are committed for the long term to ensuring a democratic, stable, peaceful Afghanistan that is inhospitable to terrorism. The Afghan people can rely on their allies, including the U.S. government and NATO, to stay the course.
- Success in Afghanistan over insurgency, terrorism, violent extremism, and trafficking in narcotics is critical to the security of the Afghan people, the United States, our NATO Allies, Afghanistan's regional neighbors, and the international community.
- Afghanistan's security, reconstruction, and development needs remain large but the country has come a long way since the overthrow of the Taliban and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan continues to make progress.
- Success requires a comprehensive approach that includes both security and stability and reconstruction and development.
- The Taliban are a destructive force that targets innocent Afghan civilians. They engage in criminal activity and brutal tactics for their own gain and cannot offer long-term security, stability, or development for the people of Afghanistan.

# Audiences

- Afghan Population
- Afghan Government
- Government and Military of Pakistan
- Pakistani Population
- Governments of ISAF Troop-Contributing Nations (TCNs)
- Populations of ISAF Troop-Contributing Nations (TCNs)
- Enemy Leadership (AQ, AQAM, Taliban, criminal networks)
- Taliban Rank-and-File
- Governments of Central Asia
- Central Asian Populations
- IGO and NGO community
- U.S. domestic audiences

**JIOWC “Voices on Afghanistan: Audience Analysis and Assessment” Seminar 15-17 January 2008.**

# The Execution Matrix

## B. Execution Matrix

The intended audience

AUDIENCE: All Audiences						
Desired Effects	Constraints	Methods	Tasks	Lead	Partners	Measures of Effectiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate understanding of international community's efforts in Afghanistan</li> <li>• Comprehensive understanding of progress country-wide</li> <li>• Comprehensive understanding of the long-term challenges</li> <li>• Recognition of the strategic importance of Afghanistan to international security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple actors means multiple voices</li> <li>• NATO is a consensus-driven body made up of sovereign governments</li> <li>• Media attention tends to be drawn to kinetic operations</li> <li>• Enemy exploits any perceived dissonance among Allies</li> <li>• Difficult to develop a consensus strategic response to crisis events in such a fast-paced media environment</li> <li>• Extremely complex modern media environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Message coordination within USG, with NATO, ISAF, Government of Afghanistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and update quarterly a Master Narrative, synchronized with NATO's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PA</li> <li>• USD(P)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CENTCOM</li> <li>• EUCOM</li> <li>• JS</li> <li>• State</li> <li>• NATO MOC</li> <li>• Government of Afghanistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater clarity on OEF and ISAF missions</li> <li>• Greater understanding of progress, and increased appreciation of Afghanistan's strategic importance to international security</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, coordinate, disseminate, and regularly update talking points and supporting materials/fact sheets on key issues related to Afghanistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PA</li> <li>• USD(P)</li> <li>• State</li> <li>• CENTCOM</li> <li>• SOCOM</li> <li>• NATO MOC</li> <li>• Govt of Afghanistan</li> </ul>	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of methods by which audience receives messaging (e.g. TV, traditional communication, etc.), and assessment of shifts in attitudes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JIOWC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PA</li> <li>• USD(P)</li> <li>• USD(I)</li> <li>• JS</li> <li>• State</li> <li>• Intel Community</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular operational coordination to deconflict and synchronize messages and activities</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CENTCOM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOCOM</li> <li>• State</li> <li>• USD(P)</li> <li>• PA</li> </ul>		

The effect we wish to have on the audience's perceptions – a more facts-based perception

Constraints that make it difficult to attain the desired change in the target audience's perceptions

\* Cells with a gray background represent non-DoD leads.

# The Execution Matrix

## B. Execution Matrix

The organization with the lead responsibility for implementation

The methods and specific tasks that will be used to inform the audience

	Methods	Tasks	Lead	Partners	Measures of Effectiveness
Afghanistan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive understanding of progress country-wide</li> <li>Comprehensive understanding of the long-term challenges</li> <li>Recognition of the strategic importance of Afghanistan to international security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Message coordination within USG, with NATO, ISAF, Government of Afghanistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create and update quarterly a Master Narrative, synchronized with NATO's Master Narrative and Government of Afghanistan messages, to provide high-level messaging to all levels of command.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PA</li> <li>USD(P)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CENTCOM</li> <li>EUCOM</li> <li>JS</li> <li>State</li> <li>NATO MOC</li> <li>Government of Afghanistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater clarity on OEF and ISAF missions</li> <li>Greater understanding of progress, and increased appreciation of Afghanistan's strategic importance to international security</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop, coordinate, disseminate, and regularly update talking points and supporting materials/fact sheets on key issues related to Afghanistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PA</li> <li>USD(P)</li> <li>State</li> <li>CENTCOM</li> <li>SOCOM</li> <li>NATO MOC</li> <li>Govt of Afghanistan</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update of Audience Analyses to reflect current attitudes, prioritized list of methods by which audience receives messaging (e.g. TV, traditional communication, etc.), and assessment of changes in attitudes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JIOWC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PA</li> <li>USD(P)</li> <li>USD(I)</li> <li>JS</li> <li>State</li> <li>Intel Community</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular operational coordination to deconflict and synchronize messages and activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CENT</li> </ul>		<p>Measures of effectiveness (MOPs determined by lead organizations)</p>

Other organizations who should coordinate with the lead organization

Measures of effectiveness (MOPs determined by lead organizations)

\* Cells with a gray background represent non-DoD leads.

# The Afghanistan SC Process

## Analyze

- **WHO:**
  - US Embassies
  - Intelligence Community
- **OUTPUTS:**
  - Intelligence Analysis
  - Updated Audience Analysis

## Assess

- **WHO:**
  - US Embassies
  - PRTs
  - Polling
  - Intelligence Community
- **OUTPUTS:**
  - Raw Intel
  - Poll Results
  - PRT Weekly

## Integrate

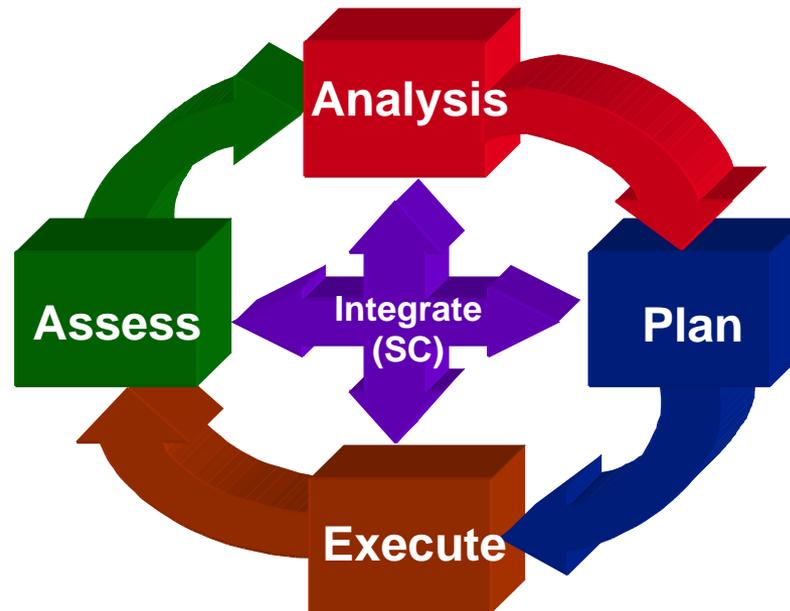
- **WHO:**
  - USG Interagency
  - NATO Media Ops Center
  - GoA Spokesman & NC3
- **OUTPUTS:**
  - Common Themes

## Plan

- **WHO:**
  - USG Interagency
- **OUTPUTS:**
  - Updated SC strategy
  - Updated master messages

## Execute

- **WHO: Strategic Communicators, e.g.:**
  - Afghan leadership on the national, provincial, and local levels
  - PRTs
  - USG, Allied leaders
  - US Embassies
  - NATO, ISAF, OEF Spokespeople
  - State Media Hubs
- **OUTPUTS:**
  - Tailored Communications



# Notional Information Flow

