

DEFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND THE LACK OF COMMUNICATION – MAIN CAUSES OF SECURITY CRISES BETWEEN COMMUNITIES BELONGING TO DIFFERENT CULTURES

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Abstract

Lack of communication is another way of naming indirect communication. When someone, be it individual or community, accuses lack of communication between or among people as well as communities, then we should understand that, the accusation goes to the ones who decided to renounce to use direct communication because people communicates all the time verbally, written or through their actions, positions and so on.

Indirect communication causes most of the problems among people and communities. Sometimes intermediaries are guilty for altering messages as a result of negligence, lack of skills or bad intentions. Other times messages are intentionally altered by the parts involved into the process of communication in order to confuse, to deceive or to manipulate the opposing part or even public opinion.

Decision makers may or may not understand correctly the meaning of messages received from the opposing part. That is why they, and their advisers as well, have to possess good skills and enough experience in dealing with international business. Otherwise wrong interpretation could create crisis and even violent confrontations.

Keywords: *communication, mass-media, international politics, conflicts, wars.*

1. THE LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Although it has been demonstrated with viable arguments that people and human communities communicate permanently in various ways, we use to say that certain individuals and, respectively, certain communities do not communicate with one another. The syntagm "lack of communication" refers really only to the lack of direct communication, especially oral and written. Most of people communicate directly – orally or in writing – because this type of communication gives them the opportunity to explicitly convey messages regarding goals and interests, as well as the ways and means by which

they will advocate them in competition or negotiations with a third party.

Unfortunately, direct communication doesn't necessarily open the way toward a successful solution for settling the disputes between individuals or communities. On the other hand, through direct communication intermediaries are excluded and, implicitly, misinterpretation or distortion of the messages between the two negotiating parties are reduced.

Breakdown of direct communication is a decision by which another form of communication is chosen, usually indirect or through intermediaries. The individual or the community making this decision seeks to communicate to the negotiating party or the enemy, as well as to internal and international communities that the management of controversial issues will be carried out in different ways and by other means than the mediating, peaceful way. History offers us enough examples to illustrate situations of the sort.

Armenia and Turkey interrupted diplomatic relations because Armenia had asked Turkey to admit the Armenian genocide during the First World War. Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, in the U.S. state of Massachusetts has published a statistic showing that in the year 1914 there lived 2.193.190 persons of Armenian nationality on the Ottoman Empire territory, while in 1922 there had been left only 387.800.¹ It is unlikely that the difference between the number of Armenians in 1914 and that in 1922 comprised only people who had died because of the Turkish military retaliations. On the other hand, in 1922 the Ottoman Empire no longer existed and Turkey, its successor, had a much smaller area than that of the empire. It is quite

likely that a part of the people who had not got included by the census on Turkish territory emigrated to other countries, during and after the ceasing of military confrontations, because the Turkish officials admit the deaths of approximately 500.000 Armenian persons during the mentioned period of time.

The official position of Turkey on the events that had generated the already mentioned casualties is that they died because of the war and not because of some Turkish military retaliations against the Armenians. On the other hand, the Armenians advocate that the human victims have been caused by executions, mass deportations in the Syrian desert to Syria and Iraq, by the imprisonment and ill-treatment in prisons of people who had no other fault but that of being of their own countrymen.² The French historian Jean Baptiste Duroselle considers as masacre the rough attitude of certain Turkish military against the Armenians during the First World War. ("On the 6th of March, 1921, in Moskow, Mustafa Kemal <Attaturk> concluded a treaty through which Russia gave Turkey the Armenian n.n. districts Kars and Ardahan, depopulated by massacres and exile").³ Nowadays, the retaliations against Armenians are considered genocide in 21 countries around the world.⁴

"The Architect" of Turkish retaliations against the Armenians is considered to be Talaat Pasha, former interior minister and then prime minister during the First World War. The former Turkish official kept a journal, called by some authors "black covered book" (the black book), where he noted the details of those events. The journal was used for writing his memoirs, published posthumously in *Time*, in 1921. In those memories Talaat Pasha recognized that the number of deportees was 924.158, but said that although most of those deported were Armenians, among them were also found people of other nationalities, including Turks. Former Pasha also wrote that deportations were made in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon but also in other places in Turkey. Since 2005, Talaat Pasha's memoirs were reprinted in the newspaper *Hurriyet*, in several articles, by Murat Bardakci.⁵

After World War I, the political leaders of *Young Turks*, who had led the Ottoman Empire between 1909-1918, also known as the *Triumvirate*

or the *Three Pashas* – Talaat Pasha, Enver Pasha and Djemal Pasha – fled to Germany. A few Armenian survivors of the Turkish military retaliations against their countrymen in the Great War, constituted themselves in a secret organization. This was intended to punish those guilty of retaliations against Armenians. One of their most famous actions was *Operation Nemesis* organization whose purpose was to punish the political leaders of the *Young Turks*, who had taken refuge in Germany. On March 15th, 1921, Talaat Pasha was identified, pursued and shot in the street in Berlin.⁶ The bomber was arrested and tried, but was acquitted and released, claiming that he was not in his right mind because of the retaliations committed by the Turkish military against its own people in the First World War.⁷

The issue of Turkish retaliation against Armenians is so sensitive that art. No. 301 of the Turkish Constitution punishes by imprisonment all who refer to the events as genocide. Not only the Turkish state officials but also ordinary citizens react against those who insist on the existence of a genocide against Armenians. The Turkish citizen of Armenian nationality, Hrant Dink, ex-editor in chief of *Agos* newspaper, was assassinated by a Turkish extremist because he made public data about the Turkish retaliations against the Armenians.⁸

In 2011, when the French parliament passed a law that Turkish retaliations against Armenians are to be considered genocide, the Turkish government decided to discontinue military cooperation with France.⁹ After announcing the breaking of the Turkish-French cooperation, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned French President Nicolas Sarkozy that they should not play with history and it would be better if he would ask his father about the French genocide in Algeria.¹⁰

Armenia and Azerbaijan broke diplomatic relations after the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1992-1994. Armed confrontations began in 1992, triggered by the inhabitants of the Azerbaijani province Nagorno Karabakh, mostly Armenians, that rose against Azerbaijan with Armenia's support. The ceasefire took place on May 12th, 1994, mediated by the Minsk Group (Russia, USA, France) under the OSCE. On the

ceasefire date, Armenians occupied, in addition to Nagorno Karabakh, a part of Azerbaijan's territory, called Lachin corridor, which links the Azerbaijani breakaway province with Armenia. Most of the Azerbaijani inhabitants of Nagorno Karabakh fled to Azerbaijan.¹¹

From 1994 to the present Armenian and Azerbaijani officials have had several contacts mediated by the Minsk Group but the situation does not seem to return to normal anytime soon. On the contrary, Azerbaijani President Ilhan Alijev said that if negotiations did not progress, his army would be ready to regain by force the territories occupied by Armenians. Azeri refugees from the Nagorno Karabakh province, who are living in poor conditions in Azerbaijan, take up military training for the final battle with the Armenians.¹²

In the conflict between Armenians and Azeri, Turkey and Iran supported the Muslim Azerbaijan, and the Orthodox Russia supported Christian Armenia. Azeri-Armenian military confrontation had influences that Iran didn't want on the country's Azeri community. To stop them, the Tehran regime changed its attitude and promoted an equidistant policy towards both of the two warring parties. (Iran has about 13 million Azeri inhabitants¹³ – the largest ethnic community in this country, after Persians. They formed the *Movement for Azeri Autonomy* that did not recognize the authority of Ayatollah Khomeini and the legitimacy of clergy involvement in running the state. Consequently, the Azerbaijani religious leader – Ayatollah Shariatmadari – was sentenced to stay under house arrest. This decision of the Tehran religious court triggered the uprising of the Azeri, harshly quelled by the Iranian security forces.¹⁴ In Azerbaijan, a member of the party in power – Yeni Azerbaijan – proposed the change of the country's name in "Republic of North Azerbaijan." In this way he wanted to give a signal to the Iranian Azeri, whom he hoped to lead into constituting themselves in the "South Azerbaijan", thus separating from Iran and ready to unify with the actual Azerbaijan¹⁵). The latest meetings of the presidents (June 19th, 2010 – St. Petersburg) and foreign ministers of the two countries (June 9th, 2012 – Paris), mediated by the Minsk Group,

ended without progress, each side accusing the other for the failure of negotiations.¹⁶

Israel has no diplomatic relations with most Arab and Muslim countries. One exception is Egypt, with which it has a peace treaty signed in 1979, and for whose existence Egyptian President Anwar Sadat paid with his life.¹⁷ The lack of direct communication between Israel and the Arab states is a result of the almost permanent war between Israelis and Palestinians, begun in 1948, shortly after Israel had declared its independence (May 15th, 1948), recognized in a few hours by the USSR and the next day by the U.S.A. The UNO received Israel as the 59th state member on May 11th, 1949.¹⁸ The Palestinians are supported by the Arab states politically, diplomatically, economically, financially and military, and Israel is supported by the Western countries, mainly the U.S.A.

During 1990-2003, the former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein proclaimed himself the protector of Palestinians and repeatedly threatened that he would destroy a large part of Israel.¹⁹ Following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the fight against Israel and the Western countries was taken by the political and religious leaders of Iran. They engaged in a real "declarations war," with Israel. In 2012, the supreme religious leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, called for the deletion of the Hebrew state off the world map²⁰, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad considered Israel an insult to humanity.²¹

The aggressive rhetoric of Islamic leadership in Tehran is intended, apparently, to divert the international community's attention from its extremist religious policy of supporting the terrorist organizations (Hamas, Hizbollah etc.) and from the development of programs for supply of mass destruction weapons.

In response to Iranian rhetoric, Israeli leaders have threatened to bomb the Iranian facilities for research and production of missiles and enriched uranium, to prevent the Islamic regime from getting weapons of mass destruction.²² On the other hand, Israel seems to have taken preventive measures to stop his declared opponent from obtaining weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. The subversive actions of the Hebrew state are denounced by

Iranian sources – confirmed by some Western sources – which repeatedly accused Israel of involvement in the assassination of several Iranian scientists, specialists in nuclear physics. (Iran accused Azerbaijan of helping Israel to kill Iranian scientists, experts in atomic energy. Azerbaijan is one of the few Muslim nations that cooperates with Israel, says a retired U.S. diplomat, as the current leadership of Azerbaijan is not Muslim, but a “kleptocracy”, founded by Heydar Alijev, a former KGB general.).²³

2. DISTORTION OF MESSAGES AND ITS EFFECTS ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Depending on the international context (the nature of relations between the international actors, the purposes of the “actors” being in the strained relations, the balance of power between them, the international community’s attitude towards the existing tense situation between the two actors etc.), the messages the two actors send one another may be intentionally distorted – by one or both parties, or by an interested third party – either by mistake or negligence.

During the Iraqi-Iranian war, Iraq had accumulated an external debt of 100 billion U.S. dollars (USD) for which it had to pay an annual interest of about 7 billion USD. To reduce the debt level, as well as the related interest, in 1990, the Iraqi president asked the wealthy Arab states to give him a grant of 10 billion USD and to erase the 30 billion debt Iraq had to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.²⁴ In support of his request, Saddam Hussein claimed that the amount was due for the shield he had provided against extremist Iran’s expansionist tendencies. In reality, the war had been triggered by Iraq, which took advantage of the weakness of the newly Islamic regime installed after the revolution from February 1979 and aimed at conquering the fairway around Shatt el-Arab, disputed between the two countries. Although the debate on this topic had been resolved by a peace treaty in 1975, which established the border between the two states on the midline of the fairway, the leadership in Baghdad claimed that the treaty was only a truce. In addition, Saddam had planned to also occupy

the Kouzestan region, inhabited mostly by Arabs and very rich in oil. Some authors state that there had been personal animosities between Saddam and the Khomeini Ayatollah, lasting from the period when the Iranian religious leader had been exiled for 15 years to Iraq and then expelled in 1977. By starting the war, Saddam still hoped to remove Iran from the position of dominant power in the Gulf area. Saddam’s decision was initiated on the basis of a wrong strategic evaluation, which estimated that Iran had emerged weakened from the Islamic revolution, both internally externally, especially after the “American hostage crisis” during November 1979-January 1981.²⁵ By achieving these objectives, Iraq would have obtained direct access to the Persian Gulf waters²⁶ and placed itself in a hegemony position of the Arab world and the Middle East. Seeing that his request is not honored, the Iraqi dictator chose to threaten Kuwait, accusing it of ‘stealing oil’ from the Iraqi oil fields in Rumyallah and of increasing the extraction rate set by OPEC, thus causing oil barrel price reduction and a prejudice of approximately 1 billion USD annually to the Iraqi state. In order to highlight his position as the leader of the Arab world, to which he aspired, Saddam (“the one who fights”²⁷) also attacked the “regimes subservient to the West” (an allusion to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar). These were threatened that they would one day be made to pay for having brokered weapons sales to Iran, or increased oil production quotas, causing a price reduction and thus contributing to the “economic war” against Iraq.²⁸

Saudi Arabia had no official reaction to Saddam Hussein’s request for financial support. The Emir of Kuwait agreed to meet the financial support requests of the Baghdad leader only if the latter would admit to the emirate’s sovereignty and accept tracing the boundary between the emirate and Iraqi territory. At the learning of the Emir of Kuwait’s position, Saddam decided to send three divisions of infantry forces to the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border (approximately 35.000 military people, fighting and related logistics²⁹) to convince the Emir of Kuwait that if he cannot get by negotiation what he wants, then he will use military force. Alerted by the escalation of tension, King Hussein of Jordan, President Hosni

Mubarak of Egypt and Yasser Arafat – chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization- tried to settle things out.

All three mediation sessions failed, yet, that carried out by Hosni Mubarak seemed to have somewhat contributed to the crisis escalation. The Egyptian President's well-intended official mission between Iraq and Kuwait began in Baghdad. During the meeting between the two heads of state, Saddam Hussein said: "when I negotiate, I don't attack." Mubarak sent the Emir of Kuwait and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia only the second part of the message: "Saddam said he will not attack". As a result of this message, when the Iraqi troops were set in fighting formation in the joint Iraqi-Kuwaiti border, the emirate's leadership believed that the action was intended to impress or to blackmail, not to trigger aggression. Consequently, the emir mandated his representative to the United Nations to address the Security Council so that Iraq would withdraw its troops. Kuwaiti complaint remained without echo and, since he did not receive the money he had asked for, Saddam decided to invade Kuwait (the night between the 1st/2nd August, 1990), annex it and thus get direct access to the Persian Gulf. This action was the first part of the crisis, known in history as the first Gulf War. The second part of the crisis was the armed intervention in Kuwait and Iraq (January-March, 1991) of a Multinational Coalition led by the U.S., under a UN mandate, to liberate the emirate from under the military occupation of the Baghdad regime.

Another case of messages distortion, but this time fully-intended, caused the outbreak of the Gulf War.

After the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11th, 2001, President George Bush Jr. accused Iraq of collaboration with Al Qaeda in planning and executing the attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon. Since 2002, on a basis of information provided by Iraqi defectors, united in the Iraqi National Congress, led by Ahmad Chalabi, the Washington administration accused Saddam Hussein of continuing the programs of WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) development in spite of the ban imposed by the UN Security Council (UNSC) after the first Gulf

War. Based on "evidence" provided (actually counterfeited³⁰) by former Iraqi officials and some participants in the WMD development programs from 1990-1995, the U.S. and Great Britain asked the UN Security Council to approve the use of force for overthrowing Saddam Hussein and determining the Iraqi state to renounce WMD development programs. Vetoes of Russia, China and France in the Security Council did not allow the adoption of the resolution demanded by the U.S. and U.K but have not stopped the military preparations for attacking Iraq either. Basically, the other permanent member states of the Security Council that opposed the US and British request asked for more convincing evidence than that provided by the U.S. about the incriminated programs. This evidence should have been provided by the members of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna that had conducted several inspections in Iraq and had not identified conclusive evidence of the existence of WMD development programs. Similar positions have been adopted also by other non-permanent member states of the Security Council and most Arab states. Some of the states that had opposed the use of force without the UNO approval were and are allies of the U.S. and Great Britain within NATO. The most prominent members of NATO, whose position was different from the American-British one, were France and Germany. Unhappy with the stance taken by the French and Germans, the U.S. secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, said that "the time of rigid coalitions had passed." Therefore, the U.S. constituted a "coalition of the wills" that attacked Iraq, not before President George Bush Jr. had granted Saddam and his sons an ultimatum of 48 hours to leave Iraq and allow the peaceful disarmament of the country.³¹ As expected, Saddam did not comply with the ultimatum and Iraq was subjected to intense bombardments from air and sea, followed by military actions of land forces, ended with the defeat of Iraq.

After the end of the major military operations,³² mixed teams of American and other nationalities experts have sought unsuccessfully for evidence of WMD existence. The unsuccessful results of the Iraqi WMD identification fueled the conspiracy theories generated by those authors

who had accused the U.S. and the West of their intention to obtain and maintain the control over the most important oil area of the world. To exonerate itself, the U.S. administration blamed the CIA for not having provided it with accurate data. The indictment resulted in the resignation, in 2004, of the agency director, George Tenet, and other important members of the leading staff, after the discussion of the Senate's report on this issue. Most of those who resigned felt humiliated when Goss, the head of the reporters' group, characterized the CIA as "a bunch of dysfunctional bastards... a bunch of idiots ..." ³³ and remained with the perception that they had the role of scapegoats.

After the NATO summit in Prague, in November 2002, when Romania was invited to join NATO, local media launched different messages about the importance of the event, the merits of the political class and the accession which was to be followed until the joining, that was to take place in 2004. Letting go of objectivity and neutrality, most of the media hovered and eventually polarized, some with the power and some with the opposition. While supporters of the power commented the event on a triumphalist tone, the opposition accused the power of trying to take the full credit for the joining invitation, warning that "NATO will not eliminate corruption, clientelism, influence peddling and justice abuse". ³⁴ Journalists who stood by the opposition taunted the events organized by the power, comparing them with those in the Ceausescu regime, ending with the conclusion that "the crucial event was thus transformed into a fairground." ³⁵

3. MISINTERPRETATION OF MESSAGES

Some historians and political-military analysts found WWI an error and a conflict hard to understand. ³⁶ There are also voices that accused the military of starting the war because they might have asked for the declaration of mobilization that could not be stopped. The assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife at Sarajevo by a Serbian nationalist extremist, was the pretext which Austro-Hungary used as ultimatum to ask

"unacceptable conditions" to Serbia (paragraph 6 of the Vienna's ultimatum to Belgrade, submitted on 23rd of July, 1914, consisting of the two-headed imperial monarchy representatives from Vienna participating in the conduction of investigations for the discovery and elucidation of the circumstances and causes of the crime in Sarajevo and the possible accomplices of the author ³⁷). Belgrade's refusal to accept Vienna's conditions was followed by the shooting of the Austro-Hungarian troops on Serbia. Tsarist Empire declared mobilization with the intention to assist Serbia. Germany, allied to Austro-Hungary, sent Russia an ultimatum to quit mobilization, alongside with an ultimatum addressed to France, allied with Russia, not to declare mobilization. Russia's refusal to abandon the mobilization was followed by a declaration of war from Germany, on August 1st, 1914. In this context, France has decided to declare general mobilization on August 1st, and Germany declared war and asked Belgium, who had declared neutrality, the right of free passage for its troops through Belgian territory. Belgium's refusal to meet the request of Germany was followed by the invasion of its territory by German troops on August 3rd, 1914. ³⁸ The United Kingdom, allied to France and Russia within the Entente, but also ally of Belgium, declared war on Germany on August 4th, 1914. ³⁹ Thus began the world's first military confrontation.

At the end of 1949, based on the "pound doctrine" ⁴⁰ and the National Security Concept, begot by the National Security Council, ⁴¹ the U.S. State Secretary, Dean Acheson, mentioned the U.S. defense perimeter with the exclusion of South Korea and South Vietnam. Stalin received details about the U.S. National Security Concept and, discussing with Mao, they decided to help the leaders of North Korea and North Vietnam to use armed forces to remove the existent regimes so as to impose communism in the respective territories. The decisions of the two leaders went from the premise that the U.S. will not get involved to help the South Koreans and South Vietnamese. ⁴²

The interpretation turned out to be incorrect because, fearing the "domino effect" (if a country falls under the influence of communism, then it is possible for others to follow by example), the

United States decided to intervene in support of South Korea (1950-1953) in the leading position of a Coalition, mandated by the UN Security Council. The decision of the Security Council to use the force to repel North Korean aggression, which started on 25 June 1950, was possible because the Soviet Union withdrew its representative from the Security Council, as a protest against the non-recognition of Communist China right to be a permanent member of the Security Council (China was represented by the nationalist regime of Chiang-Kai-sek, retreated to the island of Taiwan).⁴³

The Korean War presents us with another event that could have escalated into a world war. The commander of UN forces – U.S. General Douglas MacArthur – stated to journalists that Chiang-Kai-sek's army should join the UN forces and that they should attack mainland China, using even nuclear weapons if necessary, to release it from communism. U.S. President Harry Truman dismissed General MacArthur for his statements⁴⁴ but Mao Tzedun decided to send several hundred thousands of "volunteers" to support North Korea, whose troops had been rejected by the UN forces to the Yalu River, which separates China from North Korea.

Chinese forces involvement in the war resulted in the rejection of the UN forces close to the capital of South Korea – Seoul – and then, in the setting of the front line on an alignment that coincided roughly with the parallel of 38° N latitude. That was the border between the two Koreas at the onset of the aggression. On July 27th, 1953, at Panmunjom, a truce was concluded between the two Koreas, which is in force even today.⁴⁵

4. CONCLUSIONS

Lack of communication creates fear, distrust and suspicion and creates favorable premises for misinterpretation of certain actions of states, especially the neighboring-ones – feelings that have been proven to be the catalysts for violent acts resulting in numerous casualties and material damage.

Former Prime Minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher claimed that "fear is not a

good basis for foreign policy."⁴⁶ However, fear had and still has a leading role in the behavior of states leadership. This is usually associated with misinterpretation of politico-military situations and generates "struggle for power and security,"⁴⁷ embodied in actions that would prevent attacks from other states on the states that they lead (preventive military actions on other states, tours de force, weapons etc.).

Since antiquity, Thucydides believed that "fear, honor and interest"⁴⁸ are the main causes of the outbreak of war.

John Lewis Gadi said that the Cold War meant in fact a "revival of fear."⁴⁹ He considered the book 1984 by George Orwell (pseudonym of British journalist and writer Eric Blair Anthony) a warning, since it was greeted with rounds of applause but also with cries of fear.

Assessing the aggressive policy of the USSR, Professor Barry Buzan appreciated that it was intended to prevent any possible aggression of the capitalist states and cause other countries to convert to communism in order to ensure its survival.⁵⁰

George Friedman thinks that the other important protagonist of the Cold War – the U.S.A – set their strategic objectives and foreign policy strategy based on fear that they could be the target of aggression, i.e. that they might lose what they had, like many states of the world.⁵¹

Laurence Freedman confirms George Friedman's findings, writing that the U.S. intervened in Indochina and throughout South Asia for fear of the "domino effect."

Distortion of messages among the actors of the international security system may occur by mistake, negligence or malice.

Misinterpretation of the messages of the emitting international actor is usually the result of factors complex, where insufficient knowledge of the emitter, the international context in which the message was delivered and the lack of experience of the policymakers have important contributions.

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