VERTICAL *VERSUS* HORIZONTAL MEDIA

Using Agenda-setting and Audience Agenda-melding to Create Public Information Strategies
in the Emerging Papyrus Society

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And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter. Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing.[1]
—John Milton, *Areopagitica*, 1644

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I. The Emerging Papyrus Society

After 11 September 2001, when United States and coalition troops engaged Taliban forces in Afghanistan, one of my 20-year-old students told me he was very glad the capable volunteer Army was available to engage in war. I am sure we all are glad that our nation has such proficient, highly motivated, and well-equipped ground, air, and naval forces to represent us. Still, my student might have made the same comment about the local fire department coming to extinguish a dormitory fire. For him, fighting wars, like fighting fires, seemed to be the special province of trained professionals; the rest of us belonged on the sidelines. Incredibly, he added that he would hate to think that such important missions would have to rely on draftees. But it is draftees who lie row on row in graves in Europe, in the small towns of America, and in Arlington National Cemetery. These extraordinary yet ordinary Americans shouldered their share of the communal burden in past national crises, when citizenship presumed service, and they performed superbly. Today we have a volunteer military, and we still have some sense of shared history and commitment to community, but communities evolve. Ours is—and in a challenging way.

Let's begin with a metaphor to describe this evolving community. I had an opportunity several years ago to visit the three towering pyramids at Giza, where the many stones at the base support the fewer stones at the top more than 400 feet up. Like other tourists, I marveled at ancient Egyptian engineering. What a view of the surrounding sands (and modern Cairo) there must be from the top! If Demosthenes had stood there, transported in time and place, thousands might have heard his apparently magnificent voice. Nearby, in Giza itself, shops still produce ancient Egyptian papyrus paper by trimming the outside green covering of the triangular papyrus reed, then cutting and pressing the pulpy white strands inside the plant. Craftsmen lay one strip down, then one over and another down and so forth, like Scottish tartan plaid, to form sheets that can be connected, dried, then rolled into a scroll resembling the rolling pin in your kitchen. Scrolls were the books of the ancient world, and the words written on the flat horizontal surfaces they contained came to challenge the power of those who stood at the top of organizational pyramids.

Such is our argument. From papyrus to animal-skin vellum to Johannes Gutenberg's books, from newspapers and magazines to radio and television to satellites, computers, the Web, and iPods, communication technology has

demonstrated the power to level societies, perhaps not from the point of view of those who lead our necessary organizations, but certainly from the point of view of those being led. In the 1930s, Albert Speer, Adolph Hitler's chief of armaments (among other roles), remarked on his leader's power to reach the masses, allowing citizens and party members to share the same message at the same time.[2] Of course, Hitler moved to smash alternative agendas, but leaders today, even in China and North Korea, have found that horizontal media communications—not the vertical mass-media television and radio networks, but niche magazines, websites, blogs, cable TV shows, satellite radio stations, and such—nibble at the foundations of power. The era of mass media is passing into history, and as it does, the ability of leaders to shape and control national agendas is diminishing; in fact, their agenda-setting is now quite often contested.

This is where we find ourselves today. We, as individual Americans, are blending the agendas of vertical and horizontal media into that Scottish weave, like ancient papyrus paper, thus creating a more horizontal, papyrus-like society less responsive to univocal sources of information. The U.S. Armed Forces today need a public information strategy that fits this papyrus society emerging around us. Vertical and horizontal forces, as we shall see, have competed for centuries to be the dominant public media portraying important public issues. So this is nothing new. But the Army's challenges are.

This article attempts to deconstruct the American national community in the new century as the press evolves, as audiences express more personal interests, and as a military with a vertically-based operational planning history adapts to horizontal social forces. It will also offer suggestions for how the Army and its fellow services might best respond to the new communication paradigm.

Americans spend about six hours daily with various media such as websites, television, or MP3 players. These media are so ubiquitous that it is hard to believe that the age of *mass* media is passing into history. Mass media, such as daily newspapers, network radio, and national television address the concerns of an entire community. Yet these powerful media have seen their audience diminish for decades (although local television less dramatically so). There were nearly 3,000 daily newspapers at the time of World War I; today, there are fewer than half that, and collective daily newspaper circulation is steadily declining despite a continual increase in national population. In 1933, when President Franklin Roosevelt spoke to the Nation from his White House fireside, he reached a huge, attentive audience. In the 1950s, the dominant networks some evenings reached more than eight of ten households in the national viewing audience. Today, the nation's premier mass-media event, the Super Bowl, brings in about a third of the national audience.

Mass media address the entire community from a vertical (top-down), entire-community perspective. We generally learn of events from mainline journalists charged with being society's sentinels. However, we often turn to more personalized news sources, such as special-interest magazines, talk shows, satellite radio outlets, or trusted websites to deepen our knowledge and to provide a context for what Walter Lippmann once called the "confusing buzz of events."[3] Full of opinion and bent on interpretation, these media frame the news to fit within a particular ideological view. We gravitate to them because they cater to our own, often established, views. In this way, the ability of professional journalists to provide a balanced context for events has been challenged in the United States and elsewhere in the world, even in totalitarian states. For many, the mass media have been replaced by radio hosts like Rush Limbaugh and Stephanie Miller—20th-century versions of 18th-century Cotton Mather.

It is not hard to see why people seek to nest knowledge of public events within their own perspectives. Take a look at the various service-oriented newspapers: there is an *Army Times*, a *Navy Times*, a *Marine Corps Times*, and an *Air Force Times*. No doubt all present news about major events, but each paper shapes the details to fit the interests of its particular service audience. Similarly, editors who assemble *Cosmopolitan* or *Seventeen* sometimes cover the same major events, but from a presumed perspective of older or younger women, and the same is true of *Sports Illustrated, Fortune*, or any other magazine. Even *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report* seem directed at a particular audience—an educated middle class interested in political news. Most media today aim at specialized audiences–what we call horizontal media– while daily newspapers, network radio, and national television outlets—vertical media—still aim

mainly at the entire community from the president to the humblest citizen.

Both vertical (mass media) and horizontal (niche) media aim to inform, but their missions—their agendas—are somewhat different. The vertical and horizontal media we use influence the way we see events. Vertical media remain strong, but horizontal media perspectives are rising as audiences enjoy the rich and readily available information environment. One consequence of our ability to reach for media that fit our personal interests is that now, as never before, we can fit events to our own expectations. In other words, we can meld the news to fit our own agendas. Such agenda-melding is occurring wherever the horizontal media have spread, with all their potential for enriching citizen knowledge and destabilizing rigid vertical societies and institutions.

The temptation to live in a horizontal community, ignoring the vertical society, can be powerful. It's like living entirely on an enclosed military base with its own schools, hospitals, libraries, and mall—in an integrated small social system. If you plug "walled off" into a search engine, you will find there has been an explosion of gated communities in America, to perhaps 80,000 or more, where (often well-off) people live safely within walls. Similarly, many of us seem tempted to live within specialized information communities, paying diminishing attention to the larger society around us. Perhaps that is why vertical media have struggled to hold their audience in recent years while horizontal media have exploded (see figures 1-3).

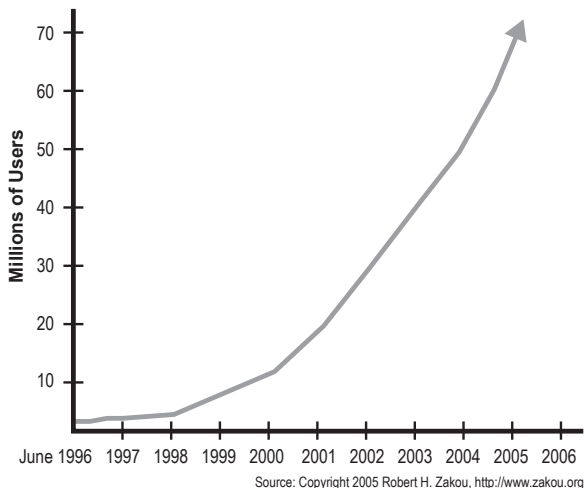Our horizontal differences often become manifest, and when they do, they can influence the entire social pyramid. Social commentator Kevin Phillips finds that those with, for want of a better term, old-fashioned faith and those with oil interests voted Republican in the 2004 presidential election.[4] One predictor of presidential voting in 2004 was: Do you go to church regularly? Horizontal strands can be powerful discriminators. The United States may not be as sectarian as Iraq or Bosnia or Israel, but it is not isolated from powerful horizontal forces that provide meaning for large groups of individuals. Three Supreme Court decisions in the early 1960s mandating "one man, one vote" have resulted in gerrymandering of the 435 congressional districts along party lines, making congressmen and women into magazine rather than newspaper editors. They now represent relatively homogeneous horizontal constituencies rather than diverse vertical districts. In short, there has been a profound "horizontalling" of federal power.

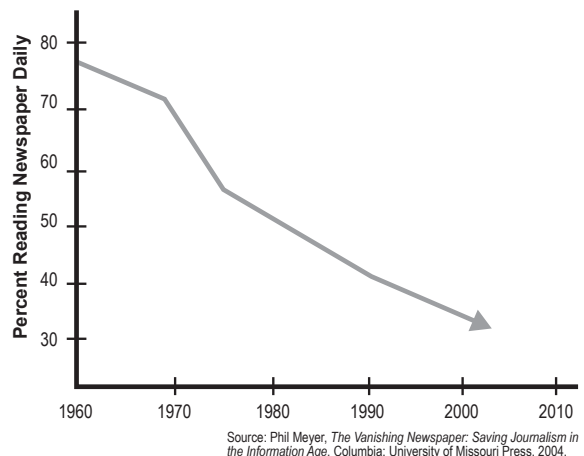Americans who were socialized in the first half of the 20th century grew up with the most powerful

Source: Phil Meyer, *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004.

Figure 2. Daily newspaper readership, 1960–2002

Source: Copyright 2005 Robert H. Zakou, http://www.zakou.org

Figure 1. Growth of the web, 1996–2006

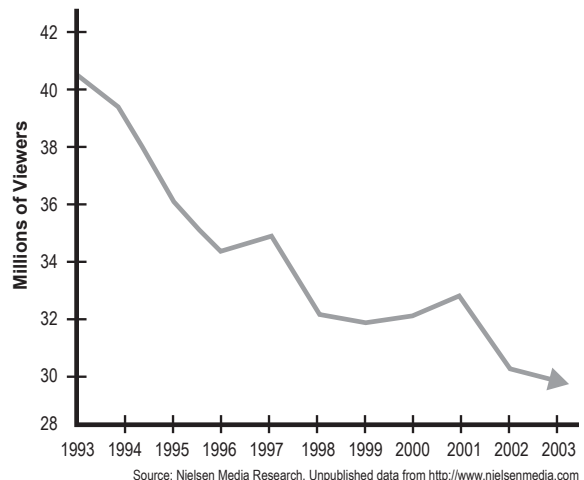Source: Nielsen Media Research, Unpublished data from http://www.nielsenmedia.com

Figure 3. Evening news viewership, 1993–2003

vertical media thus far in human history: network radio and television. Even young people today can identify the voice of President Roosevelt. Americans who came of age in the 1920s and 1930s lined up without question to fight in 1941. Vertical issues were very strong for the World War II generation, socialized as it was by the mass media of the period. Recent wars have created only tiny blips in recruiting. Today's generations, however, have been or are being shaped by both vertical and horizontal messages. They are more likely to think in terms of the fire department than the bucket brigade, the volunteer Army serving a specialized mission rather than the Nation collectively fighting a war. How did this happen?

2. Agenda-setting and Agenda-melding

Before we consider how the current generations' focus has shifted from a general to a particular perspective, we need to look at how the media work. Our thesis is simple: people today want more information; they want context, details, interpretation, opinions. The more or less objective vertical media give them largely facts; they do not satisfy their audience's information needs.

The limits of vertical media. Some will claim, and loudly, that the vertical media are subjective, that they do tell their audiences what to think. Such critics like to point to media coverage of the Vietnam war, for example, as having been blatantly anti-war. This belief has achieved something akin to the status of gospel. However, rigorous content analysis has been conducted of TV (mass media) coverage of the Vietnam war and it has found that the coverage was not negative; overall, it was neutral or even positive.[5] Whatever you might feel about the coverage of Vietnam or any other conflict, media agenda-setting boils down to a few important points: media cannot *create* public opinion; they may not even be able to influence public opinion very much; and they cannot change minds (unless people take the information they receive and make up their minds in one way or the other). Admittedly, the mass media do have an impressive role in telling people *what* to think about. They are able to put a particular issue on the public issues agenda and draw the public's attention to that issue. The media cannot compel readers and viewers to adopt their opinions, but they can force attention to certain issues while excluding others.

Setting the agenda. Lippmann, observing that modern life is so complex that we necessarily learn of events via the press, claimed that the press functions like a spotlight on a stage, focusing on a certain character or action, then another character or action, then another, et cetera.[6] Since then, other observers have discovered that the press does have, as political scientist Bernard Cohen put it in a study of foreign media, the power to tell us what to think about, although not what to think.[7] In 1972, communication theorist Maxwell McCombs and one of us (Shaw) decided to systematically test Lippmann's claim that the press worked like a spotlight. What we wanted to know was: What, if anything, do the vertical media teach their audience? And just as importantly: Do the media shape attitudes, as so many observers suspect, especially those wary of press bias? Our study of the 1968 presidential campaign between winning Republican Richard Nixon and losing Democrat Hubert Humphrey employed a content analysis of what the press (newspapers, magazines, and television) focused on in a single community, along with what undecided voters in that community thought were important issues.[8] Presumably, undecided voters needed information to make a choice; they would get that information from the media accessible to them, and they would then vote according to what that information had told them. Our study concluded that those undecided voters did reflect the issues that the media had featured. One could almost predict about 50 percent of their answers by knowing what media they were reading. So in fact, the press did set the agenda, just as Cohen had suggested in his study of foreign news coverage.

Since then, many other studies in the United States and elsewhere have concluded that the press seems to have the power under many circumstances to tell us *what* to think about, if not to tell us *how* we should think. These studies show that media ranking of issues at Time 1 is judged by audiences to be important soon thereafter, at Time 2. Correlations show the degree of connection to a high .70 on average, with 1.00 meaning a perfect match and .00 no match at all. (Correlations can also be negative.) McCombs calls this transfer of broad topics a "transfer of objects." Scholars now call it agenda-setting, level 1.

More recently McCombs and his colleagues have discovered that audiences also learn major

details of a subject along with the main subject (a connection so close that he surmises the press also can tell us *how* to think about issues under certain circumstances).[9] McCombs therefore has divided the power of the press into two parts, which he calls agenda-setting, level 1, and agenda-setting, level 2. In a recent book, he discussed the way topics (which he calls "objects") and details ("attributes") transfer over time from media (Time 1, first mention) to audience members (Time 2, after publication).[10]

Several other recent studies have also asked audiences what topics and associated details (or frames), they learned from a particular media story. The studies show that audiences reflect the same patterns of absorbing the details as of the major topics—about .70 or higher.

Alternative views of vertical media. There are many perspectives on what happens in media agenda-setting. Some analysts, like Stanford's brilliant Shanto Iyengar, believe that the details the media choose to provide in a story—how the media frames the message—can define social problems in such a way that the story tells the audience what to think. Consider what happens with the reporting of crime stories. Such stories nearly always blame the perpetrator; they rarely blame the conditions, such as poverty or lack of education, that might have been an underlying factor in the crime.[11] An interpretation of the story is implied: if the perpetrator is at fault, then there is no problem with the system and no need for collective social action. Political scientist Robert Entman, who used content analysis, found that Chicago television stations most often framed crime in terms of race, specifically, African-American race.[12] Put the two frames (perpetrator, African-American) together and you can see the power of agenda-setting, level 2. The subject is crime, but people of another race are individually responsible—such might be one result of object and attribute agenda-setting. Or, those who struggle to make ends meet on a minimum wage should just work harder or get more education; as with crime, no social action is needed. By the same token, if a military operation fails, should that failure be framed in terms of the Soldiers or leadership involved—thereby exculpating you and me—or are we all to some extent to blame?

Iyengar and Entman's theories notwithstanding, vertical journalists really think little beyond balancing "both sides" of controversies, perhaps without much awareness that audiences, often intensely interested in topics, may not find that adequate. The vertical media introduce audience members to an issue or event, and they may have some power to push members to begin thinking a certain way about the issue or the event, but the vertical media will soon move on, as they must in a changing world full of events. In their wake, they leave a public still hungry for information.

Audience involvement. Public absorbing of agendas at levels 1 and 2 does not mean that information absorption ends with newspapers and television. Audiences continue to learn of events from many other sources. The more significant the event, the more people seek additional information, and not without their own values and attitudes coming into play.

All of us learn basic *values* from our parents and family, schools and religious leaders, social and political systems, friends, and media as we mature. These values form the base of our pyramid of cognition. With little more than values to guide us, we may form *attitudes* toward a particular subject. Attitudes are based on affect and emotion; they are visceral, not intellectual. *Opinions*, although more informed by conscious thought, are not as deeply held as attitudes or values. Then, of course, we have *knowledge* of events and issues gained from direct or mediated experience. We can draw a picture of this personal pyramid of values, attitudes, opinions, and knowledge in the order of their importance to us (figure 4).

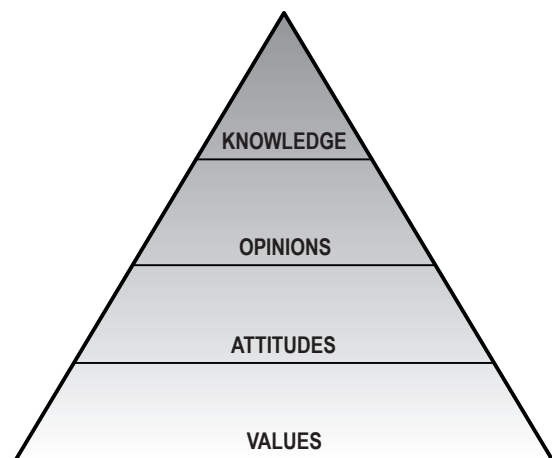There is no evidence to suggest that news about events translates easily into opinions or attitudes

Figure 4. Individual knowledge, opinions, attitudes and values

about the event, at least in the short run. As we mentioned, all of us have acquired values, and these values, along with the attitudes and opinions we have accumulated, act like filters through which we form, over time, other attitudes and opinions. The values, attitudes, and opinions that anchor our lives are powerful players when we read and interpret the news. For one thing, if readers judge a medium as biased (to their values, attitudes, and opinions), they might avoid that medium. Similarly, they are liable to be attracted to media (e.g., talk shows) whose hosts share their leanings. In sum, our acquired three-part filters limit the power of vertical media, even though those media give us our initial knowledge of events. It is easy to argue that a journalist's major role, like that of a Soldier's, is to alert us to dangers, but after we are alerted many of us turn to interpreters in the horizontal media for meaning. Is the thud in the forest a danger? Yes, say some bloggers or broadcast hosts; no, say others.

Agenda-melding. The power of media reaches down to the edge of our attitudes and values, but our values and attitudes also reach up. For messages to become part of the total social fabric, there must be a marriage, a melding of personal and media agendas. Certainly audiences do reach up. Communication scholar David Weaver tested the notion that voters who, 1) wanted to vote and 2) knew little of campaign issues and 3) needed orientation, then 4) sought information from newspapers and television that would 5) reflect the media agenda more than did voters who were not interested in voting or who already knew about the issues and therefore had little need for orientation. Weaver's findings, almost unique in mass-communication literature because they are predictive (and not just explanatory after the fact), are sketched in figure 5.[13]

Using the Weaver model, one may speculate how different populations—older and younger people, for example—use media to arrive at a particular view (figure 6). Each group could perceive an event initially in the same way, but later they may access media so differently that they end up operating in different cognitive environments. In short, the view of older people, who typically depend on vertical media, can be represented as "Xvvv" while younger people looking at

the same issue might see it as Xhhh (X = the issue; V = vertical media details; H = horizontal media details). Put another way, given information about a firefight in Tal Afar, older people might conclude, "We won by blowing up the insurgents," while younger people might think that "such violence only plays into the insurgents' hands."

Supplementing the vertical media. Many studies suggest that audiences learn about subjects from mass media, and there is growing evidence that they also pick up the details of a subject from those media. Vertical media, in other words, do seem to have agenda-setting power, levels 1 and 2. But we argue that the vertical media's reach has declined, while that of the alternative media—horizontal media that primarily interpret details—has increased. We get an initial view of events, such as the 2003 explosion of the space shuttle Columbia, and then we turn to our favorite website for discussions of whether or not there was a conspiracy to blow up the spacecraft, or to find out if the astronauts were
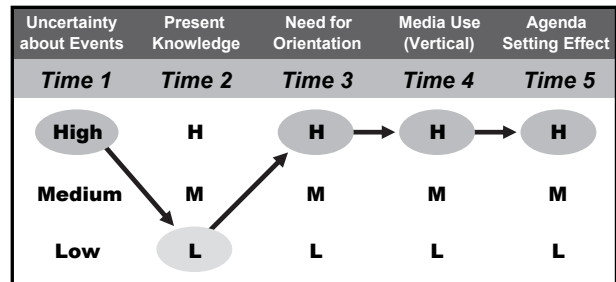

Uncertainty about Events	Present Knowledge	Need for Orientation	Media Use (Vertical)	Agenda Setting Effect
Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 5
High	H	H	H	H
Medium	M	M	M	M
Low	L	L	L	L

Figure 5. Audience need for orientation and agenda setting

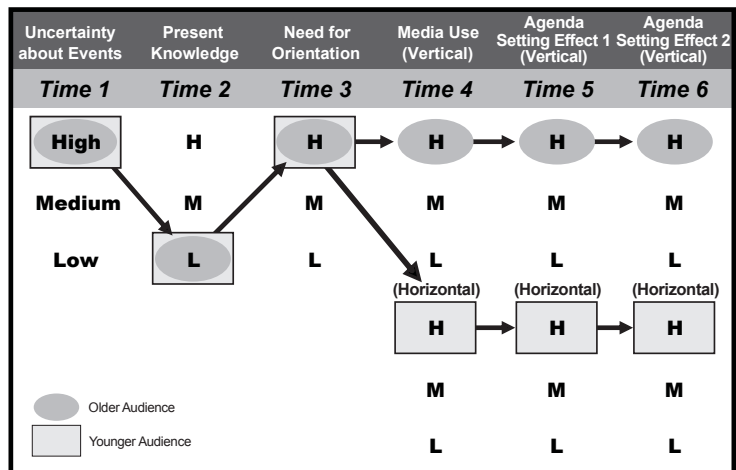| Uncertainty about Events	Present Knowledge	Need for Orientation	Media Use (Vertical)	Agenda Setting Effect 1 (Vertical)	Agenda Setting Effect 2 (Vertical)
Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 5	Time 6
High	H	H	H	H	H
Medium	M	M	M	M	M
Low	L	L	L (Horizontal)	L (Horizontal)	L (Horizontal)
			H	H	H
			M	M	M
			L	L	L

Older Audience
Younger Audience

Figure 6. Learning media messages: the divide between older and younger audiences

adequately prepared, or to learn which company sold NASA a defective part (this is a hypothetical example). Little or none of that would be provided by the vertical media, unless it could be conclusively documented.

John Milton's 1644 *Areopagitica* argued for the freedom to express all views, contending that in a fair fight truth would defeat falsehood. Never has Milton's argument about wheat and chaff been more tested. Today, there are many voices other than the pharaoh's.

Americans today live in a world in which mass agendas rarely dominate public thinking, and, as we have seen, even when they do (agenda setting, level 1), audiences often reframe the issues (agenda setting, level 2) by use of those horizontal media with which they are comfortable. Every mainline vertical journalist in American could reflect the view of the National Command Authority (NCA), but that would not—as it often did in the Depression and during World War II—guarantee that the government's agenda would be learned and absorbed in the way the NCA desired. Times have changed; media agendas have fragmented; audiences have gained great power to frame events. How did this come to pass?

3. Framing the Public Issues over History

The evolution of technology that made it possible for average people like us to connect via email and find news channels that match our own views is increasingly evident to us today. Less evident has been the influence technology has had on the rise of dominant media in various periods of our history. Media are dominant when they capture the attention of the leaders and followers of a period, and thereby also attract economic support. In our system, the media are free to pick and choose topics, but they also are part of the economic system and must win support to survive. The rise and fall of vertical media has shifted the focus of public issues over time, from local place to social and economic concerns, to national ideology and community, to individuals and groups within the global economy. During all these periods, community issues have been framed and reframed…and reframed again.

Newspapers and place, 1700-1870. Newspapers dominated public attention from roughly 1700 (the first successful colonial newspaper was founded in Boston in 1704) to 1870. Newspapers, then and now, are a medium that concentrates an audience's attention on a specific place (e.g., the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune)*. These media present news from around the world, but the events of the world are viewed from a particular, locally flavored perspective. Even today, newspapers regard community news as their franchise, and smaller newspapers, unlike large dailies, have mostly retained their audience and even occasionally expanded it. Because newspapers focus on place, issues are framed in terms of place.

In the early years of newspaper dominance, an emerging America confronted its most dramatic challenge of place: wresting political independence from Britain. As the young republic expanded, it defended place again in the War of 1812, and in the 1860s it finally confronted one of its most dramatic social issues, slavery. The North defeated the South to remove slavery from the fabric of America, thereby settling a social issue in terms of place, just as the American Revolution had won the independence of a specific place.

The major documents of our national life were formed in the era of place—the Declaration of Independence, for example, and the Constitution, which recognizes the role of place by mandating two senators for all states, regardless of size. The day's issues were framed in terms of place; newspapers were addressed to specific communities, even if significant segments, for example women and African Americans, were often ignored in the early days. Consider the newspapers of 1700-1870 as providing a vertical strand of issues that helped frame the earliest days of our republic.

Magazines and class, 1870-1930. The magazine made its first appearance in America in the mid-18th century. Benjamin Franklin, whose shadow falls across so much of our early history, was one of the earliest magazine publishers. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the single most powerful piece of literature published in America in the 19th century and certainly the most effective challenge to slavery in U.S. history, first appeared as a magazine serial in 1851 (she did not even have an ending for the story when she started). It wasn't until after the Civil War, however, roughly between 1870 and 1930, that magazines exploded, with publications of an early version of *Cosmopolitan* for women, *The Progressive* for farmers, and issues for every conceivable interest group that had the means to follow the topic. Artist

For who knows not the Truth is strong, next to the Almighty. She needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious—those are the shifts and the defenses that error uses against her power. Give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not true…but then rather she turns herself into all shapes except her own.[15]

— Milton

Charles Gibson's girls, drawn for the covers of many magazines, revealed women who rode horses and bicycles, and did so without men around. The world of middle-class women emerged in front of American eyes on the front covers of magazines.

These magazine-dominant years were ones of class, by which we mean that Americans identified themselves as members of specialized groups, or niches. There was, in effect, a more horizontal slicing of American life. Individuals and groups who could do so consolidated power. There were winners. Women, who also founded their own horizontal publications, such as *The Revolution* and *The Lily*, gradually gained ground. In 1920, the 19th Amendment guaranteed the right to vote in national elections for women and for those living in states that had not yet passed such laws. There were losers, too, in the age of class. Native Americans were put on reservations, and African Americans, who enjoyed a season of political freedom (along with economic struggle), were re-segregated. The era also saw a titanic, class-oriented struggle between capital and the growing labor unions.

Even newspapers, such as the mass-circulation papers published by William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, aimed at major segments (for example, immigrants in their cities of publication), while Adolph Ochs, who bought the nearly bankrupt *New York Times* in 1896, pointed the *Times* at the upper economic and educational strata of New York—a fact that is still true of the *Times* today.

Between 1870 and 1930, America, an emerging nation, turned inside and then outward. Muckraking magazine journalists, such as Lincoln Steffens and Ida M. Tarbell, may have saved democracy by attacking the burdens an economic plutocracy placed on the middle class at the turn of the century.[14] Magazines, and even large daily newspapers, framed issues in terms of groups, adding a horizontal strand to our emerging papyrus society.

Radio, TV, and mass ideology, 1930-1980. Radio, the next technological innovation to hit America, soon regularized sounds in the air into programming. By the mid 1920s, David Sarnoff's NBC and William Paley's CBS had put radio networks together, so that by the 1930s the leaders of all advanced nations could reach mass audiences with the same message at the same time. The years from 1930 to 1980 were dominated first by network radio, then by network television (first NBC and CBS and then ABC). This was a period of true mass media, of news aimed from the top down, and the media, along with its technology, fit the age. President Roosevelt's calm voice from his White House fireside soothed a nation devastated by the Great Depression. In Germany, Hitler's propaganda machines skillfully blended voice and brutal political practice to organize the agenda of national socialism. In 1969, television captivated much of the Western world for days when Apollo 11 landed on the moon.

This was also the period that saw the first systematic studies of mass-media effects. In the 1930s, social scientists used scientific methods to study the reach of modern mass media. They concluded that their reach was powerful indeed, though not directly. In sum, radio and TV broadcast networks certainly laid a powerful vertical strand to our emerging papyrus society.

New media and space, 1980-present. The major TV networks' audience share began declining in roughly 1980. Since then, we have been living in an age of space, participating in a global economy wherein individuals contact each other through newspapers, via radio or TV programs, and by e-mail. Sometimes citizens take action, as they did in 1999 when they materialized in person to disrupt the proceedings of the World Trade Organization in Seattle. In *Smart Mobs*, Howard Rheingold highlights the swift transition from information to a sense of community to action, all made possible by the new media.[16] This capability would have dazzled Samuel Adams, confined as he was to mobilizing revolutionary interest in the years before the American Revolution via mails that could take weeks or months to travel from colony to colony. Speedy information isn't all that the new media have to offer. According to an *Army Times* story in June 2006, a first lieutenant who recently refused duty in Iraq claimed that while some Soldiers want to shoot him, others have shaken his hand. The lieutenant says he has received email from NCOs and field-grade officers encouraging him to follow

his beliefs.[17] Social support is just as important as information. In the papyrus society, no one need feel lonely if he has access to the new media.

The rise of alternative, horizontal media has undercut the vertical media's ability to—for want of a better term—dominate the interpretation of events. The new media have threaded another horizontal strand into our emerging society. Much of this is good news: as a people, we should be less tractable, not so prone to spurious crises or complacent about unaddressed problems or inequities. The new media has the potential to make us a smarter, more civically active population. At the same time, however, as we noted earlier, the rise of niche media might also be tremendously divisive: it could split the national community into specialized groups, each of whose interests supersede the larger community's interests.

As citizens, it is incumbent upon us to attend to media whose agenda stretches across the entire society, not just to those media that personally interest us. We must engage in open public dialog to share our own views with more than our friends. We have to vote. We have to involve ourselves in public life at all levels of community. If we do not, the papyrus society may break into strands.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

If you have come this far and are wondering what happened to your own niche magazine—why, you might ask, are you reading about newspapers and blogs in *Military Review*?—you could be experiencing a symptom of the new media paradigm. That said, we do have a reason for writing in *Military Review*: we are doing what the military should be doing: making its case not just via the vertical media, but to the specialized horizontal media, too. This is particularly critical today, when intelligent, well-meaning people like my student seem to have divorced themselves from the idea of active military service. We might have a professional Army right now, but that Army must be refilled continuously and there is no guarantee that citizens will, as they have in the past, come forward to serve. Additionally, it is conceivable that our professional Army will need supplementation at some time in the near or distant future to address crises beyond its current ability to respond. Where will those Soldiers come from?

The need for an information strategy. Because its mission transcends administrations, the military should develop broad public-information strategies—and not just for the conflict environment—that build and maintain relationships both vertically and horizontally (with due regard given to the NCA) with the U.S. public. Information strategies should reflect this truth: military forces belong to the Nation, not to any particular commander-in-chief and his or her administration.

No one in the military should be surprised by the direction that modern communication technology has taken, with its movement from large to smaller audiences. The technological and communication changes that have so altered the world of mass media likewise have altered the planning, training, and deployment of military forces. In the Civil War, companies were assembled into regiments, then into divisions, then into armies, and that was pretty much the way they stayed. This static method of organization continued for more than a century. Now, the Army has strong independent brigades that can be assembled for a particular need, as surely as a White House chef assembles the ingredients for either a state dinner or a small dinner entertainment.

The Army has become mainly modular (it had been partly so for decades); in other words, it has become as horizontal, at least organizationally, as many other modern institutions. Internally, the Army must retain the ability to communicate effectively from the top down. As it was for the ancient pharaoh, so it is for all modern leaders, from president to professor to a private first class in charge of a work detail: they need to be heard clearly; the mission must be done.

But the pharaoh—and his generals—must also listen. Although it is a very vertical organization, the military must adapt itself to an increasingly horizontal world. This means that the military, like all organizations, should develop information programs cognizant of the fact that citizens are constantly shifting into public life who have no previous involvement with the military other than what they have learned via the media (either vertical or horizontal). Congress was once filled with veterans in the post-World War II decades. Their sons, then, often served. No longer. Military service is increasingly the exception in the House of Representatives and the Senate, not the rule. This has profound implications for the armed services. The military's strategic information planning should therefore

be zero-sum and cyclic, without any assumption that warm feelings developed for the military over previous decades have necessarily transferred to the younger generation. We cannot rest on our laurels. We can't take anything for granted.

Address both media. The evolution of technology favors both vertical and horizontal media, and citizens in a free society will avail themselves, if they are interested and have the means and access, of a variety of agendas, although they will be partial to those that fit their values and interests. As we have seen, sometimes vertical and horizontal media work together to build national community, and sometimes they work at cross-purposes, polarizing segments of the larger community. The military's information strategies should recognize that significant "advertising" of the armed forces in vertical media (of the positive type) is necessary but not by itself sufficient to build relationships with citizens of the entire community (many of whom spend little time with vertical media). A home run in the first inning—a great pro-military story in, say, the *Washington Post*—does not guarantee victory. Already, for example, those who handle Army recruiting are finding that they must also target audience niches via specific cable or radio shows.

Implementation. The following suggestions are offered to assist the Army in developing effective communication strategies that use both vertical and horizontal media.

● *Clarify objectives*. As some public affairs (PA) practitioners have discovered, an effective way to achieve one's information goals is to begin with the prospective audience and work backward to develop appropriate messages and themes. The Army has various audiences; therefore, an Army organization must first ascertain its primary audience and then figure out the best way to approach that audience. The organization has to determine what attitude it must instill in that particular audience to achieve the effects desired. Appropriate information delivered by the right mix of media—vertical and horizontal—should help elicit the necessary attitude. Figure 7 depicts the possible links between how individuals and groups receive

their news, how they process it, how they adopt an attitude, and finally, how they act on it.

The public uses both types of media at times, most commonly receiving initial information on a topic through vertical media before going to their medium of choice (e.g., talk shows, blogs) to find more specific information. The "attitude" category above depicts methods the Army currently uses (or could use) to divine the public's attitudes toward the service. Congress and the NCA naturally provide their input. Focus groups, surveys, blog reviews, and content analysis of media could provide additional information on various publics' attitudes toward the Army.

In the end, we want these various audiences to act on the attitudes generated by our media messages. If the Army is generating appropriate messages and using both vertical and horizontal media effectively, the outcomes will include public approval, successful recruiting and retention, and support from various audiences.

● *Restructure the PA effort*. Currently, Army PA has three major functions: media relations, command information, and community relations. PA personnel are expected to perform duties in all three areas to varying degrees and in various situations. The media-relations activities that are perhaps the most visible—providing press statements, interacting with media representatives, running the embed program—are all examples of media-relations functions. Army PA personnel perform command information duties when they publish or broadcast any material on behalf of leadership that is specifically aimed at informing Soldiers. Finally, the community-relations side to Army PA historically interacts with the cities and towns adjacent to military installations in order to foster mutually beneficial relationships between the military and its civilian neighbors.
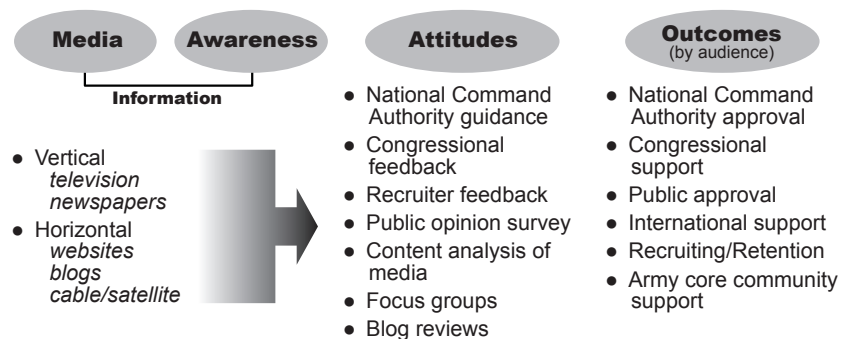

Figure 7. Securing outcomes through the media

To accomplish its mission effectively, Army PA could and should restructure the above three functions while adding additional functions. The Division PA offices could have two sections, one horizontal and one vertical, that would capture all of the existing functions while allowing for new ones. The vertical section of a PA unit would take on the job of interacting with vertical media (newspapers, television, radio). Command-information activities would also translate effectively into the vertical section. Finally, the vertical section would be the best team to keep the local community informed. It would use vertical media and would act as the single point of contact between the installation and the community during heavy deployment times.

The horizontal section should be staffed by individuals who are creative and aggressive. It would perform community-relations functions while expanding the definition of community to include the world. This section should be able to engage various forms of media, such as websites and blogs, in accordance with Army policy and in coordination with the vertical section. The horizontal section staff should receive language and culture training so they can interact with international media when deployed.

● *Adjust PAO training.* To enable public affairs officers (PAOs) to communicate the military's messages to all audiences, PAO training should be adjusted to focus on leveraging emerging technologies and the vertical and horizontal media. Currently, the only mandatory training for PAOs is the PAO Qualification Course at the Defense Information School (DINFOS) at Fort Meade, Maryland. This course does an excellent job of preparing new PAOs for their first assignments (as editors of military publications or as command spokespersons), but that's about the extent of it. The DINFOS curriculum doesn't provide enough training on issues like media analysis, public opinion, polling, engagement of local and regional media, or the political ramifications of the media and communications, and it offers no formal training for mid-career or senior PAOs.

We recommend that DINFOS add two additional courses for career PAOs. The first would focus on senior majors and lieutenant colonels, and the second would be solely for those officers selected for colonel and general officer. Both courses should be tailored to the specific requirements of rank and responsibility.

A New and Improved Public Affairs Organization

	Vertical Section	Horizontal Section
Media Relations	* Engage vertical media (newspapers/local television)	* Engage horizontal media (internet/ blogs/satellite television) * Engage international media
Community Relations	* With the local community	* With the global community and in the area of operations
Command Information	* All command information	* Internal communications

Suggested topics include strategic planning, media analysis, the importance of public opinion, emerging media, audience development, and working with and understanding the foreign media.

Media-related training should extend beyond PAOs to all officers from major on up. Information-strategy planning should be part of the curriculum at the Command and General Staff College and the senior war colleges. Nor should we neglect senior NCOs. Even an inarticulate officer or sergeant can be effective if he or she looks at the public as a major player in modern conflict. Wisdom and maturity, not speaking skill, is the major requirement for sound information-strategy planning and implementation, just as it is for all military missions. It would help, too, if members of the military reminded themselves that the press did *not* undermine military operations in Vietnam, and that both the military and the press work on behalf of the public. This latter connection became clear for many journalists and service members with the embedding efforts during the early phases of the Iraq conflict. As it had been in earlier wars, the arrangement was fruitful for both sides.

The current operating environment underscores the need for adding this type of training. Our enemies are using the horizontal media to communicate effectively. Contemporary communication research suggests that poor information strategies can risk the possibility of winning the kinetic battle and losing the information battle—a development that could cost U.S. military forces victory in the new types of conflict in which we are engaged (such as wars against terrorism, not against specifically bounded nations) as public opinion becomes a very real element of contemporary wars. The loss of public support could leave American forces exposed to opinion climates that might remind us more of the final period of the Vietnam war, traces of which lingered for

years, than the closing periods of earlier, large-landmass conflicts such as World War II and the Korean War.

Just as brigades replace divisions and other large units, smaller communication segments replace mass media as major sources of information and opinion. As military forces are fitted to specific conflicts, many media fit to specific audiences, a trend certainly emerging with the decline of the reach and power of daily newspapers and network radio and television. A call for unquestioned support from American media fit World War II (where support was not *always* unquestioned by some Americans) but not all contemporary conflicts, especially those rooted in ideological or ethnic differences that do not fit state boundaries. Journalists are as well trained and targeted as are military leaders, and both work for the same audience, the public. From that point of view, journalists and the military share the same bed, as they have in past conflicts, and so they will always be aware of each other's tossing and turning. That is not likely to change.

● *Give senior PA positions more rank.* Army Transformation is already rectifying previous deficiencies in PAO staffing (too little rank) at corps, division, and brigade levels. The rank structure for the senior military PAO slate should also be adjusted. Currently, the senior military PAOs for each service are one or two-star flag officers. The senior PAO officers in the major or combatant commands are still 0-6s (colonels or captains). We recommend that each service's senior PAO be, at a minimum, a two-star flag officer. In addition, a minimum two-star position should be created to advise the Joint Chiefs, and a one-star position created to advise the secretary of defense.[18] Right now, despite increasing responsibility, the PA rank structure has not increased in proportion to other areas. This may cause friction or influence gaps between PAOs and commanders or other staff members. The PAO rank structure should *at least* parallel that of doctors, lawyers, and chaplains. Figure 8 shows the current rank structure of PAOs and other selected staff sections.

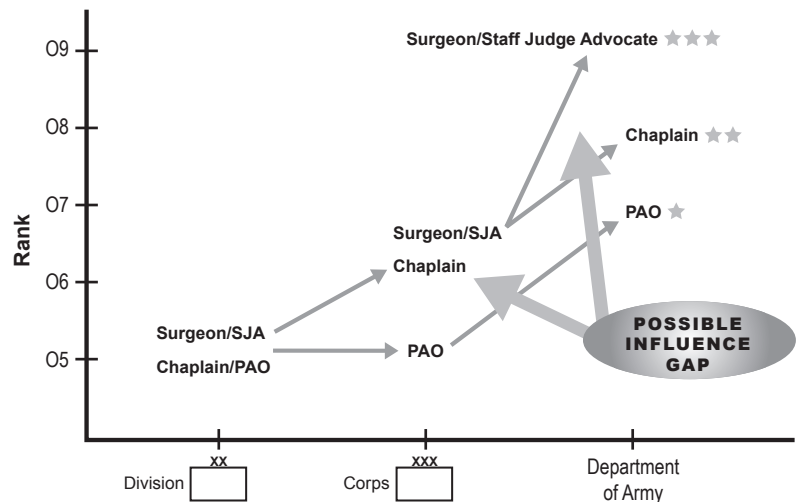● *Increase Guard and Reserve PA forces.* Often a National Guard or Reserve PA detachment provides

Figure 8. Potential PAO influence gap

support to deployed units. These detachments bring a wealth of technical writing and broadcast skills to the fight, providing much needed manpower and expertise to the command-information and media-engagement sections. The current media operating environment requires even more support from Guard and Reserve forces. We need units that can plug in at the senior staff levels and provide key support to senior PAOs and commanders. Just as the military has developed broadcast- and print-specific units, so it should develop media-analysis, public-opinion-tracking, and media-engagement units.

Final thoughts. One legacy of the 20th century is that mass media have mass effects. After World War I, a war in which propaganda played a significant role, the "hypodermic needle" theory of the press (the press as inoculator or drugger of populations) became part of popular belief. The power of media naturally concerns many leaders, scholars, and citizens, some of whom assume that the vertical media have more power than they actually do. In the 21st century, we know that newer, more horizontal media agendas often blend with the messages of mass media, resulting in a mix of messages by audiences that can challenge old ways of thinking and even those institutions to which we have long given our loyalty. Every issue now is zero-sum, and we have to explain our activities to many audiences via a variety of targeted media. This most certainly includes military actions and conflicts. Writer Ben Bagdikian, for example, has often cited concerns about the accelerating consolidation of media, most recently

in his book *The New Media Monopoly*.[19] Still, as economic consolidation pulls together the top of the Japanese fan (vertical media), the fan's colorful bottom blades (horizontal media) are opening wider than ever. Media cannot set agendas without audiences, and audiences have a lot of choice.

Unfortunately, despite having so many media sources from which to choose, we do not always follow Milton's implied suggestion that we sample many sources in order to separate the wheat of truth from the chaff of falsehood. In a study of websites, legal scholar Cass Sunstein found that more than 90 percent of sites direct users to other sites that reflect the same perspective, either liberal or conservative.[20] Such blinkering can lead only to reinforcement of one's position, not to an honest assessment of it. In the emerging papyrus society, vertical institutions like the military that need broad top-down support face the danger of becoming horizontalled—separated from rather than included as a part of vertical public life.

Who imagined that communication-technology development would have continued so relentlessly, shifting more power down the pyramid? When tiny transistors replaced big, hot vacuum tubes in the 1950s, it became possible for each of us to own small portable radios, then TV sets, and then computers, so that families no longer had to cluster around the big family radio, as did the fictional Walton family in the 1930s to hear President Roosevelt. Now, many homes have TV sets for individual viewing, some even in the bathroom. Newspapers once brought citizens to coffeehouses and taverns to read and share the news.

Today, communication technology fragments audiences into separate rooms according to their personal interests; in fact, the newest media, iPods and computers for example, seem to divide us from the start. From the point of view of social structure, the new media represent a two-edged sword: while they offer unparalleled access to information, they also have the power to slice the community into segments.

My 20-year-old student does have a lot for which to be grateful: a strong democracy and a skillful military force to defend the Nation. Likewise, he benefits from a vibrant free press and a multiplicity of agendas. As he mixes information from media that can communicate from top to bottom with media that focus on his specialized interests, his actions are not, metaphorically, unlike the production of ancient papyrus paper. For him, national community is likely to be more complex than it was for his parents and grandparents. Still, he is an essential part of a solid information strategy, one that can leverage an iPod as well as a bugle. Like all of us, my student needs to follow Milton's suggestion to pick the wheat from the chaff, and he must resist the temptation to live in a walled-off information community. Certainly the United States Army cannot live there. The Army is part of all of us. Any information strategies it employs have to be as flexible as its operational strategies to keep it ready. To meet the changing national and world communication requirements of the emerging papyrus society, the Army—indeed, all military services—will have to be as flexible with information as it is with combat operations. ***MR***

NOTES

1. John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. by Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Odyssey Press, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957), 746.

2. Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: MacMillan, 1970).

3. Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: MacMillan, 1922).

4. Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York: Viking Press, 2006).

5. See Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982). See also Peter Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington* (Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1977). This point needs to be carefully reiterated: reporters, particularly TV reporters, did not create a bad image of the Vietnam war for home consumption. Additionally, the oft-heard charge that reporters lifted their eyebrows or made physical gestures telegraphing their "true" opinions was also found to be bogus. To get beyond anti-press prejudice, we have to accept this fact, as well as the reality that wars are conducted in the name of the American people, for whom the media are the principal conduit of information. Both the military and the press work for all of us.

6. Lippmann.

7. Bernard Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963).

8. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (1972).

9. Esteban Lopez-Escobar, Federico Rey Lennon, et al., "Two levels of agenda setting among advertising and news in the 1995 Spanish elections," *Political Communication* 15, no. 2 (April-June 1998): 225.

10. Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and Public Opinion* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

11. Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

12. Robert Entman and Albert Rojecki, *The Black Image in the White Mind* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

13. David Weaver, "Political Issues and Voter Need for Orientation," in Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, *The Emergence of American Political Issues: The Agenda Setting Function of the Press* (St. Paul, MN: West, 1977).

14. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: from Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Knopf, 1955).

15. Milton, 747.

16. Howard Rheingold, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (New York: Perseus Books, 2002).

17. William Cole, "Lieutenant defies Army over 'illegal' war," Army Times, 6 June 2006, online at <http://www.armytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-1851191.php>.

18. The two-star advisor to the Joint Chiefs would also be charged with coordinating information strategy across military and civilian branches of government in all phases of military operations and activities. His (or her) office would have representatives in other branches of government, and would issue internal studies regularly that integrate various aspects of the ongoing information strategy. This position would be more narrowly focused than the White House Security Advisor and would concern itself primarily with the public's perception of current military forces. This position obviously could coordinate the perspectives of the service branch general officers into a coherent picture, so that the Joint Chiefs would be able to see operations from a longer perspective than that provided by the daily news. The office would be able to issue regular internal assessments to the Joint Chiefs. It would rotate every few years among the services.

19. Ben Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

20. Cass Sunstein, *Republic.com* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).