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**RESEARCH ON STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND
HUMAN SECURITY: ANALYSIS FROM HUMANITARIAN
COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE**

Ebru Caymaz, Assoc. Prof.; Atalay Bahar, Assoc. Prof.

Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University/ Canakkale/ Türkiye
Police Academy Istanbul Arnavutköy Police Vocational Training Center/ Istanbul/Türkiye

Abstract:

Being listed among the priority issues by the United Nations (UN), human security necessitates a wide and interlinked framework based on reducing vulnerability, sustaining human progress, and building resilience on a global scale. Most recent military operations and protracted crises have become concrete examples that highlight the increasing power of communications while new terms such as strategic communication are directly linked to national security and defense. Since humanitarianism has become a component of global governance and transnational power, humanitarian communication has emerged as an interdisciplinary field based on humanitarianism, media, and communication. Therefore, by broadly focusing on human vulnerability as a part of public concern, humanitarian communication has gained significance with respect to communication strategies designed for humanitarian aid and development. Based on selected international cases, this study aims to portray the relationship between strategic communication and human security from a humanitarian communication perspective.

Key words: humanitarian communication; human security, security studies, strategic communication.

1. Introduction

Humanitarian communication's most visible domain is disasters since the whole crisis process includes images of all types of emergencies and their associated destruction which also becomes highly visible on social media [1]. Therefore, humanitarian communication is defined as a type of communication that focuses on the fact that human

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vulnerability is a cause for public concern. It compasses humanitarian aid, development, humanitarian rights, and humanitarian war processes [2].

Major disasters often are met with global media coverage which takes the attention of transnational actors while mobilizing immediate response [3]. A vast array of media and communicative coverage by several actors is also examined through the lens of crisis communication that provide critical information during disasters for individuals and communities to survive and facilitate relief activities [4].

Being a relatively new concept, human security was introduced in the Human Development Report in 1994. The term stands for protecting individuals' freedom, preventing chronic threats such as poverty and hunger, and disasters [5]. Therefore, human security necessitates a wide and interlinked framework based on reducing vulnerability, sustaining human progress, and building resilience on a global scale. Accordingly, based on selected international cases, this study aims to portray the relationship between strategic communication and human security from a humanitarian communication perspective.

2. The Relationship between Strategic Communication and Human Security

Strategic communication can be broadly defined as communicating purposefully to advance the mission of the organization which implies that people will engage in intentional communication practices on behalf of organizations, causes, and social movements [6]. Communication strategies play an important role in shaping the messages that states convey to the global public and in the process of providing international support. In this process, states use strategic communication while coping with complex crises and shape the balance of power through regional cooperation. Therefore, strategic communication is considered an important process including information management and public opinion manipulation skills at both international and regional levels [7].

In today's world, strategic communication has become an effective tool for states and organizations to achieve their goals at national and international levels. This concept covers planned, long-term, and target-oriented communication strategies to influence a state's domestic and foreign policies and direct public opinion. Effective use of strategic communication is of great importance in many areas, from national security to foreign policy, from trade to cultural diplomacy and crisis management [8].

Strategic communication is originally perceived as an essential component synchronized with national power in the process of supporting national interests. The term

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was previously used in terms of security-related issues. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it has become a highly popular term used in more than a hundred disciplines, subdisciplines, pseudo-disciplines, and professions indicating smart thinking, strategic planning, and coordination [9].

On the other hand, the concept of human security is defined by the United Nations (UN) as security against chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and oppression, as well as protection against sudden and negative disruptions at homes, work environments, or daily life patterns [10]. Since 2017, the UN Security Council has placed the issue of climate change and human security on its priority agenda and started to organize training to raise awareness on this issue and encourage the participation of all its stakeholders.

Upon the establishment of the Commission on Human Security (2001), the human security concept has become a part of international politics providing a human-centered perspective with a focus on protecting individuals. Therefore, a broader understanding of security has emerged and necessitated an essential strategic communication process in which human rights are preserved in addition to traditional issues. Recent nature-related disasters such as the Haiti and Japan earthquakes have shown that these disasters can cause major struggles similar to armed conflicts causing “want” (i.e. lack of water, food, and shelter) and “fear” (i.e. deteriorating social order). By applying strategic communication strategies both in post-disaster and post-conflict situations, multiple actors get engaged in providing bottom-up and holistic humanitarian response.

3. Revisiting the Term Humanitarian Communication

Humanitarian communication can be defined as “*the collection and dissemination of critical, time sensitive, lifesaving information among crisis affected populations and humanitarian agencies, to enable a more effective response to emergencies*” [11]. In recent years, the humanitarian response has become an agent of solidarity, global governance, and transnational power thanks to the centrality of media in human communication [2].

While humanitarian response is based on impartiality, human rights, and neutrality principles, increasing role of military actors in peacekeeping operations, protracted crises, and disasters has complicated the crisis management process. Therefore, strategic communication may offer new tools for humanitarian communication since it also encompasses crisis communication as well.

4. Conclusion

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Albeit being a universal concept, human security is relatively new and still requires special attention for its development as an academic discussion field. In addition to civil-military relations, human security encompasses policy development, developing and implementing resilience measures, as well as strategic communication strategies. Some scholars perceive strategic communication as the management of public relations that is based on social communication. On the contrary, this study examines strategic communication within the framework that focuses on how to deal with threats leading to conflicts and deploying the broad spectrum of necessary resources associated with national power.

Since disasters necessitate the need for a broad perspective for reconsidering human security, a multidisciplinary perspective including both social sciences and the natural sciences would provide essential strategies for disaster risk management while ensuring human security. Herein, by applying a security-based approach, strategic communication would facilitate a more effective crisis management process. Therefore, being directly linked to national security and defense, strategic communication holds the potential to enhance humanitarian communication in the process of ensuring human security in both military and non-military operations.

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