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## Deficits in Strategic Communication for Armaments

### Deficity ve strategické komunikaci pro vyzbrojování

Vladimír Vyklický, Ivo Pikner

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to contribute to scientific research in the field of examining the shortcomings in the use of strategic communication for armaments. A comprehensive approach that rationalises the political, military, economic and technical decision-making process, as well as appropriate strategic communication with stakeholders, is required for the procurement of military equipment for the armed forces. The paper first analyses the existing shortcomings in the use of strategic communication in support of armaments, and then recommends a model for the adequate use of it. The results of a questionnaire survey and structured interviews with specialists in strategic communication and armaments show a high level of support for the use of strategic communication. However, the selected case studies on the Pandur and BVP modernization projects did not confirm the assumption of an improvement in the ability of the Czech Ministry of Defence to acquire new military equipment.

**Abstrakt:** Cílem článku je přispět k výzkumu možného využití strategické komunikace pro oblast vyzbrojování. Pořizování vojenského materiálu vyžaduje komplexní přístup, racionalizující politické, vojenské, ekonomické a technické rozhodování, vyžadující vhodnou strategickou komunikaci se zainteresovanými stranami. Článek nejdříve analyzuje stávající slabé stránky v užívání strategické komunikace při podpoře vyzbrojování a následně doporučuje model jejího optimálního využití. Výsledky dotazníkového šetření a strukturovaných rozhovorů se specialisty na strategickou komunikaci a vyzbrojování ukazují vysokou podporu pro využití strategické komunikace. Vybrané případové studie k projektům modernizace Pandur a bojového vozidla pěchoty však nepotvrdily předpoklad zlepšení schopnosti Ministerstva obrany ČR pořizovat novou vojenskou techniku.

**Key words:** Acquisition; Armament; Communication; Modernisation; Planning.

**Klíčová slova:** Komunikace; modernizace; nákup; plánování; vyzbrojování.

## INTRODUCTION

Approaches to the provision of national defence and defence policy as such are always determined by the specific conditions of a given historical epoch. The contextual framework is defined primarily by the evolution of the security and operational environment and technological developments. The current security framework can be characterised as a highly dynamic, fluid, uncertain and indeterminate environment, the so-called VUCA environment.<sup>1</sup>

The dynamic evolution of the security environment results in increasing requirements for the development of armies. According to SIPRI<sup>2</sup> military spending in Europe increased by 13 per cent in 2022. This increase is the largest since the end of the Cold War. The trend towards increasing the military budget is also confirmed in the Czech Republic by the adoption of the law on ensuring defence spending at a level of at least 2 per cent.<sup>3</sup> It also confirms the planned development of the armed forces to fight a protracted, high-intensity defensive war against a technologically advanced adversary equipped with nuclear weapons, as published in the new defence strategy of the Czech Republic.<sup>4</sup> The ongoing projects to acquire a new Infantry Fighting Vehicle and SHORAD<sup>5</sup>, as well as the planned acquisition of new fighter aircraft, are examples of the acceptance of the conclusions of the new Defence Strategy.

Achieving greater flexibility and adaptability of the armed forces increases the demands on the armed forces associated with the modernisation of weapon systems capable not only of replacing obsolete weapon systems, but also of meeting the new challenges that are also emerging thanks to the rapid development of technology. To achieve this, it is necessary to gain not only support of the political representation, which is now mostly in favour of modernisation because of the current international situation, but also of the public.

Information generally influences, positively or negatively, the decisions, opinions, and actions of stakeholders. The way they communicate and the speed with which they communicate has a fundamental impact on their performance, which can be a weakness of state institutions, where most changes in communication must go through a relatively lengthy approval process.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

<sup>2</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 2023. "SIPRI Fact Sheet: Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2022." [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/2304\\_fs\\_milex\\_2022.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/2304_fs_milex_2022.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Ministerstvo obrany. 2023. "Poslanci schválili 2 % HDP na obranu i balík změn branných zákonů." <https://mocr.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/poslanci-podporili-2--hdp-na-obranu-i-balik-zmen-brannych-zakonu-243337/>.

<sup>4</sup> Ministerstvo obrany. 2023. "Obranná strategie České republiky." [https://mocr.army.cz/assets/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/obranna\\_strategie\\_c\\_r\\_2023\\_final.pdf](https://mocr.army.cz/assets/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/obranna_strategie_c_r_2023_final.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> SHORAD – Short Range Air Defence.

<sup>6</sup> MO. 2018. *Záměr rozvoje strategické komunikace rezortu*. Praha: MO.

This paper aims to contribute to academic research on the weaknesses in the use of strategic communication by the Czech Ministry of Defence (also MoD) for military acquisitions and to propose a model for its adequate use. Strategic communication seems to be one of the possible tools to achieve the desired rationalisation of armaments. However, using it for armaments is not much discussed in the existing literature. It presents findings based on an analysis of the use of strategic communication in the armaments process within the Czech Ministry of Defence and the NATO member countries.

The paper is structured as follows: first, the theoretical background is outlined, and the main points from the literature are summarised, both in terms of armaments and strategic communication. This is followed by a section in which the design and methodology of this research are presented. The next section describes the findings of the research and presents the proposed model of strategic communication to support armaments.

## 1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This part of the paper deals with the theoretical background of armaments in the Czech Republic and the theory of strategic communication.

### 1.1 Armaments<sup>7</sup>

In general, armaments can be considered as a complex of principles, processes, and activities by which the required level of equipment of the armed forces is achieved. Armaments involve the exchange of military equipment and capabilities at all levels, i.e., strategic, operational, and tactical.

However, some sources mention the term acquisition, for example, acquisition according to Brown *“includes design, engineering, test and evaluation, production and operations and support of defence systems”*.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the word *“procurement”*, according to Brown, is mistakenly thought to be synonymous with acquisition; *“instead, it is just one of many functions that are performed as part of the acquisition process”*.<sup>9</sup>

According to the Czech MoD, armaments is defined as *“a complex of principles, processes, activities, and preparation of professional personnel by which the required level*

<sup>7</sup> The term is used in NATO, e.g. Conference of National Armaments Directors.

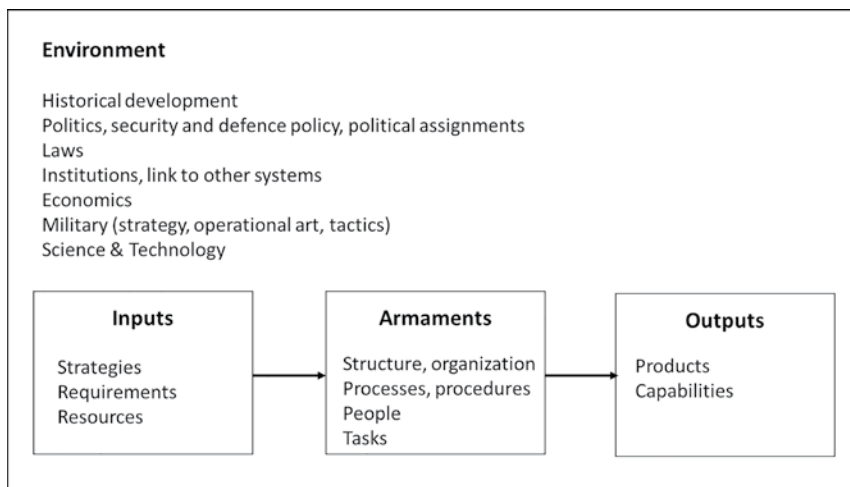
<sup>8</sup> Brown, Bradford. 2010. *Introduction To Defense Acquisition Management*. Virginia: Defence Acquisition University.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, Ref. 4.

*of capabilities of the Czech Armed Forces is achieved through the provision of material resources (military material and services)".<sup>10</sup>*

The main objective of armaments is to produce the necessary operational capabilities of the armed forces for the future, based on the ambitions of the respective state and its resource capabilities. The achievement of this objective is influenced by the development of the security environment, the political and economic situation, and finally the attitude of the population towards the armed forces and their support.

For the purposes of this paper, armaments are viewed from a systemic and process approach, which leads to an understanding of the broader context and uncovering the dependencies associated with military acquisition process.<sup>11</sup> The systemic approach makes it possible to identify the required inputs, which include strategic decisions, intentions, underlying capability requirements, and resources. The process approach translates it into required outputs, i.e. military materiel, through the armaments process (see Figure 1).

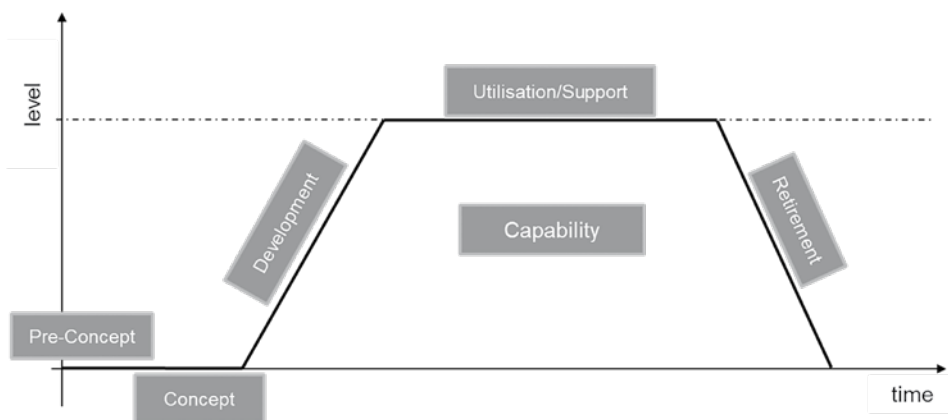


**Figure 1:** Systemic and procedural approach to arming the armed forces (Source: PROCHÁZKA, Josef. Strategic approaches to arming the armed forces and their systemic use: Dissertation).

<sup>10</sup> MO ČR. 2016. "Strategie vyzbrojování a podpory rozvoje obranného průmyslu České republiky do roku 2025." [https://mocr.army.cz/images/id\\_40001\\_50000/46088/strategie-vyzbrojovani-do-2025.pdf](https://mocr.army.cz/images/id_40001_50000/46088/strategie-vyzbrojovani-do-2025.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Procházka, Josef. 2005. *Strategické přístupy k vyzbrojování ozbrojených sil a jejich systémové využití: Disertační práce*. Brno: MO.

Figure 2 shows the Life Cycle Model of capability defined by NATO<sup>12</sup> comprising the following stages: Pre-Concept stage, Concept stage, Development stage, Utilisation/Support stage, and Retirement stage.<sup>13</sup> The main purpose of the first stage called Pre-Concept is to document a new capability requirement.<sup>14</sup> One of the main objectives of the Concept stage is to provide confidence that the proposed solution is achievable.<sup>15</sup> Verification of the technical solution is the objective of the Development stage<sup>16</sup>, the Utilisation/Support stage is performed to operate the product according to the intended purpose of the operational site, including modifications and upgrades.<sup>17</sup> The purpose of the final stage Retirement is to demilitarise and liquidate the capability at the end of its useful life and to remove the associated operational and support services.<sup>18</sup>



**Figure 2:** Schematic Life Cycle Model of capability (Source: Český obranný standard: Systém managementu programu NATO)

<sup>12</sup> NATO (2013). *NATO System Life Cycle Processes: Edition B Version 1*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, Ref. 12.

<sup>14</sup> "Český obranný standard: Systém managementu programu NATO." <https://oos-data-army.cz/cos/cos/051662.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, Ref 14.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, Ref 14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, Ref. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, Ref. 14.

## 1.2 Strategic communication

The term strategic communication was first used in 2001 by Vince Vitto.<sup>19,20</sup> According to Galvin, *“Strategic communication originated in the defence community as an integrated process of creating and disseminating desired messages, ostensibly to persuade adversaries of friendly intentions”*.<sup>21</sup> The basic essence of strategic communication is its use to support the organisation’s mission.<sup>22</sup> Ingram considers *“strategic communication to be an umbrella term for any communication that is deployed with the intent to inform or persuade a target audience in support of strategic political and/or political-military objectives”*.<sup>23</sup>

As in the entire field of information, communication, and audience influencing, there are different definitions for strategic communication. For the purposes of this article, it was necessary first to establish a definition of communication. According to Luhmann, communication is a *“complex process of mutually sharing interpretations of actions, assigning thoughts, motivations, and intentions”*.<sup>24</sup> It was also necessary to define the term strategic, which is used in strategic communication. In a military setting, strategy is considered a more important aspect of the war or conflict. Military strategy can be defined as *“the art and science of using the armed forces to secure the political objectives of a given state”*.<sup>25</sup> Simply put, the term strategic can be associated with power and decision-making.

As in the entire field of information, communication, and audience influencing, there are different definitions for strategic communication. The following definition was chosen for the paper *“the promotion of national interests by using the Department of Defence as a communication vehicle to influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour of audiences”*.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Tatham, Steve, and Rita Le Page. 2014. *NATO Strategic Communication: More to be Done?* National Defence Academy of Latvia: Center for Security and Strategic Research.

<sup>20</sup> In 2001 as chairman of The Defence Science Board Task Force on Managed Information Dissemination.

<sup>21</sup> Galvin, Thomas P. 2019. *Two case studies of successful strategic communication campaigns*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/AD1070626.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Hallahan, Kirk, Derina Holtzhausen, Betteke van Ruler, Dejan Verčič, and Krishnamurthy Sriramesh. 2007. “Defining Strategic Communication.” *International Journal of Strategic Communication* 1 (1): 3-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15531180701285244>.

<sup>23</sup> Ingram, Haroro. 2016. “A Brief History of Propaganda During Conflict: A Lesson for Counter-Terrorism Strategic Communications.” *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.19165/2016.1.06>.

<sup>24</sup> Corman, Steven R., Angela Threthewey, and Bud Goodall. 2007. *A 21st Century Model for Communication in the Global War of Ideas: From Simplistic Influence to Pragmatic Complexity*. 13 ed. USA: Arizona State Univ.

<sup>25</sup> Yarger, Harry R. 2017. “Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy: Art Lykke and the Army War College Strategy Model.” file:///C:/Users/Vladimir/Documents/Pr%C3%A1ce/Doktorsk%C3%A9%20studium/Podklad/p16378coll5\_417.pdf.

<sup>26</sup> “Joint Doctrine Note 2/19: Defence Strategic Communication: an Approach to Formulating and Executing Strategy.” 2019. GOV.UK. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ce7fc2fe5274a4873de09e5/20190523-dcdc\\_doctrine\\_uk\\_Defence\\_Stratategic\\_Communication\\_jdn\\_2\\_19.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ce7fc2fe5274a4873de09e5/20190523-dcdc_doctrine_uk_Defence_Stratategic_Communication_jdn_2_19.pdf).

According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), officials in the Department of Defence (also known as DOD) should view strategic communication as a process by which leaders and planners creating policies, plans, and operations at all levels implement, monitor, and evaluate how audiences respond.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, success in strategic communication can be achieved by understanding the following three aspects: the role of strategic communication in a campaign, the actual cognitive communication process, and the empirical analysis of the target audience.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.3 Status of strategic communication in the Czech Republic

The deterioration of the security situation after 2014 triggered the discussion of strategic communication in the Czech Republic. Based on the 2016 Czech Republic National Security Audit, strategic communication was identified as an important tool for the defence of the state against new security threats.<sup>29</sup> Although the effort for proactive communication has already appeared in the Czech Republic in the past, for example, the campaign about the possible placement of elements of American antimissile defence on Czech territory, the campaigns did not represent integrated and coordinated state communication, but only time-limited communication activities that were the responsibility of individual departments.<sup>30</sup>

The use of strategic communication was mainly attributed to the institutions of power, which began to communicate more intensively with the public and thus laid the foundation for the beginning of the use of strategic communication. Nevertheless, the main shortcoming of the use of strategic communication in the Czech Republic is the absence of a supradepartmental coordinating body at the Office of the Government, whose mission would be to design a long-term communication strategy in accordance with the strategic goals of the state.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> United States Government Accountability Office. 2012. "DOD Strategic Communication: Integrating Foreign Audience Perceptions into Policy Making, Plans, and Operations." <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-12-612r.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Tatham, Steve A. 2008. *Strategic Communication: A Primer*. 08/28. Shrivenham: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom.

<sup>29</sup> Syrovátka, Jonáš, Lenka Dušková, and Šimon Pinkas. 2019. "Strategická komunikace v České republice: reflexe současného stavu a návrhy na jeho zlepšení." [https://www.pssi.cz/download/docs/8091\\_731-studie-strategicka-komunikace-v-cr.pdf](https://www.pssi.cz/download/docs/8091_731-studie-strategicka-komunikace-v-cr.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, Ref. 29.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, Ref. 29.

## 1.4 Literature review on strategic communication in support of armaments

A review of the literature indicated that strategic communication is only marginally examined in terms of its potential use for the benefit of armaments. Research on strategic communication is more focused on its use to counteract disinformation, e.g. research by Tatham<sup>32</sup>, Feyyaz<sup>33</sup>, and Corman<sup>34</sup>.

Campbell, in his paper *Strategic Communication and its Effect on Acquisition Programs*<sup>35</sup>, has examined the use of strategic communication for the needs of armaments. He concentrated on exploring how strategic communication can be used to influence stakeholders. Campbell examined three specific components: the communication of senior political leaders, the integration of the vision of the new weapon system with senior military leaders, and the level of strategic communication with stakeholders at critical points in the program. To improve the effectiveness of armaments, he recommended the development of a strategic communication plan for acquisition programs at the land force level<sup>36</sup>; according to the author, only projects that fit the vision of senior US Army officials should be included in the plan. Furthermore, proactive media engagement should be tied to key acquisition milestones to ensure that Congress, the public, and the troops receive the most up-to-date information while staying abreast of relevant developments from the modernization project. The final recommendation concerns project managers who must develop proactive operational plans to support the Army's strategic communication plan.<sup>37 38</sup>

Rather than in the context of strategic communication, academics prefer to study armaments in other fields. For example, Correia's paper<sup>39</sup> explores the link between military capabilities and strategic planning. Another example is the revision of the optimization

<sup>32</sup> Mackay, Andrew, and Steve Tatham. 2009. *Behavioural conflict: from general to strategic corporal : complexity, adaptation and influence*. Shrivenham, England: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom.

<sup>33</sup> Feyyaz, Muhammad. 2015. "Why Pakistan Does Not Have a Counterterrorism Narrative." *Journal of Strategic Security* 8 (1-2): 63-78. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.8.1.1409>.

<sup>34</sup> Corman. 2012. "NATO Strategic Comm and Narrative in Afghanistan." *COMOPS Journal* 2012 (1). <https://csc.asu.edu/2012/06/21/nato-strategic-comm-and-narrative-in-afghanistan/>.

<sup>35</sup> Campbell, Scott A. 2007. "Strategic communication and its effect on acquisition programs." <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA471573.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, Ref. 35.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, Ref. 35.

<sup>38</sup> In the United States, acquisition is carried out at the level of the individual services. The establishment of a strategic communications programme at DoD level is an alternative for smaller countries.

<sup>39</sup> Correia, João. 2019. "Military capabilities and the strategic planning conundrum." *Security and Defence Quarterly* 24 (2): 21-50. <https://doi.org/10.35467/sdq/108667>.



of the armament models described in Fauske's article<sup>40</sup>, although these papers do not deal with the use of strategic communication, their research is important in providing the necessary information to justify the need for a particular capability, which should be used to the full when developing a strategic communication framework.

The ethics of using narratives in armaments is explored in Newal's paper<sup>41</sup>, a novel application of Bourdieu's theory of practice in the context of public-private integration, which shows that narratives are used *"as a means of delegitimising options that threaten people's field positions"*.<sup>42</sup>

An evaluation of available sources leads to the conclusion that the possibility of using strategic communication for armaments has been explored in a very limited way. However, the analysis suggests that the integration of strategic communication into military procurement will raise awareness of force development, which may lead to the guarantee of desired purchases. The possibilities of its use are the subject of research presented in this paper.

## 2 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACHES TO PROBLEM SOLVING

The literature review revealed that there is a gap in the concept of strategic communication in terms of its use in the support of armaments. This may be because the use of strategic communication has so far been more in line with the needs of foreign military operations and has therefore been the subject of more research. Another possibility is that the use of strategic communication for armaments is a topic too sensitive for which researchers do not have enough material or that because strategic communication is a new capability, its use is limited to, e.g., planning and execution of military foreign operations.

The focus of the work is guided by the qualitative logic of research, which concentrates on the description of many variables in a small number of cases, allowing for generalisation to other cases or the subsequent formulation of hypotheses or the proposal of a theory. This is a case study, the aim of which is to describe in detail the experience of the Czech MoD with selected armament projects from the point of view of strategic communication, to identify the main reasons for inadequate implementation, and to

<sup>40</sup> Fleischer Fauske, Maria, Magnar Vestli, and Sigurd Glærum. 2013. "Optimization Model for Robust Acquisition Decisions in the Norwegian Armed Forces." *Interfaces* 43 (4): 352-359. <https://doi.org/10.1287/inte.2013.0690>.

<sup>41</sup> Newal, P. J. 2017. "Ethics, Narratives and Legitimacy In Defence Acquisition Centre." <https://dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1826/12016/Newal%20P%20PhD%20Thesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, Ref. 41.

identify examples of good practice in the Czech Republic and abroad in the use of this tool precisely to support armament, which will allow us to propose an optimal strategy for its future use. The case is limited to the Ministry of Defence and the period from 2003, when it is possible to gradually follow the creation and implementation of the concept of strategic communication in the Czech Republic. Specific data collection and analysis techniques to answer the stated research questions are detailed below.

The following research questions were established:

- What were the shortcomings in the use of strategic communication to support major military acquisition projects managed by the Czech MoD?
- What is the appropriate model for using strategic communication in support of armaments?

The paper is based primarily on qualitative research. The methods used are a questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews, and case studies to collect the required collection of primary data.

The questionnaire survey was designed to obtain data from experts from NATO member countries. It was conducted by approaching armaments experts at the Conference of National Armaments Directors. A total of 30 experts were contacted and four representatives responded. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from experts from the Czech Republic who work in the Czech MoD, either in the field of strategic communication or in the field of armaments. All participants in the questionnaire survey and the semi-structured questionnaire were guaranteed anonymity.

An exploratory case study was conducted to answer the first question and propose an optimal model for the use of strategic communication for armaments. It was designed to investigate an issue characterised by the lack of previous research<sup>43</sup>, and the case study examined two significant acquisition projects of the Czech MoD. The first acquisition project was a wheeled armoured personnel carrier, and the second was an infantry fighting vehicle. Both projects were selected for the following reasons:

- They are strategic projects.
- The first project took place at a time when strategic communication was not working in the Czech Republic; the second project has the framework of strategic communication.

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<sup>43</sup> Mills, Albert J., Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe. c2010. *Encyclopedia of case study research*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Results of a Questionnaire survey of NATO armaments experts

NATO armaments experts were consulted during the questionnaire survey. Of the 30 professionals contacted, four representatives responded to the questionnaire, only about 13% of the respondents. The reasons for such a low return rate can be various; besides the common ones such as generally low return rate of questionnaires because the contacted experts did not want to answer the questions or forgot the request, other reasons can be e.g., sensitivity of the topic or lack of knowledge of the issue among the contacted experts. The results of the questionnaire survey are presented in Tables 1 and 2 (see Annex 1).

The questionnaire survey was divided into two parts. In the first part, a Likert scale was used to examine whether the respondents had encountered strategic communication and whether they had experience with the practical use of strategic communication in armaments. The responses show that all the respondents were familiar with the concept of strategic communication. One of the respondents was directly responsible for strategic communication planning. In addition, all four responses suggest that strategic communication was used in the defence departments. Two respondents confirmed that they had a concept of strategic communication at the national level. Two respondents participated in the development of the strategic communication framework for armaments. All respondents assumed that the institutions they represented did not have a methodology for strategic communication. Instead, they said, the development of a strategic communication framework was not part of the planning of the new armament projects. Two respondents were unfamiliar with measuring the effectiveness of strategic communication, and two respondents believed that it was not analysed or explored much. Additionally, one respondent added the comment that effectiveness was measured through Google monitoring and analysis.

The second part of the survey asked the respondents to express their experiences of good and bad practice in using strategic communication and to identify the organisational element responsible for strategic communication in their departments of defence. For three respondents, Public Affairs is responsible for strategic communication planning. In one case, the responsibility was more complex and not entirely clear from the answer. Citing an example of the best practice, one respondent considered the acquisition of a communications satellite, which was presented as a *"Pillar of our sovereignty"*, confirming the national ambitions of the state, which are a strategic presence on different continents and in space. The second respondent considers as an example of best practice those issues that were proactively communicated and where the media took over the narrative. As an example, he cited problems with the chassis of LYNX command and

signal vehicles or a malfunctioning fire suppression system in ground forces vehicles. The third respondent considered coordination of efforts at the level of the Department of Defence, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be best practice. A fourth respondent believed that strategic communication was a useful tool for raising public awareness if it was thoughtful and timely.

When describing bad practices in the use of strategic communication in armaments, one respondent did not offer an example, the second respondent, without elaborating, criticised the poor presentation at press conferences, and the third considered strategic communication useless if it was not in line with the topic, meaningless, and used late.

The fourth respondent believed that, at the component command level, they had never considered the impact that communications can have on armaments. He believed that the command structure must react very quickly and in a timely manner. He took an example from his own experience during the initial phase of an armaments programme, when inaccurate information was leaked to the media, leading to the programme being described as a fiasco and money being spent unnecessarily. However, no funds had been spent on the project at that time and the problems were known and addressed. The respondent, as the person responsible for strategic communication, was not allowed to speak to the press in time, although he was prepared. The press published their story, which was negative. Only the following day was the respondent granted permission to hold a press conference to mitigate the damage done. Additionally, the fourth respondent considered the lack of leadership of those responsible for strategic communication to be an inappropriate practice. In his experience, strategic communication is ultimately the responsibility of the head of communication at the component command level or directly of the person responsible for armaments; so strategic communication is created from the bottom up.

The results of the questionnaire survey show that strategic communication frameworks must be developed for projects with a political dimension; the strategic communication expert must lead the development of the strategic communication framework; and strategic communication should be timely.

### 3.2 Results of national semi-structured interviews among strategic communication or armament experts

In addition to the international environment, the author also examined the attitudes of experts on strategic communication and armaments within the Czech MoD. To do this, he elaborated on the survey already carried out by Stolička<sup>44</sup> to analyse progress in the implementation of strategic communication in the field of armaments.

<sup>44</sup> Stolička, Libor. 2021. *Možnosti využití strategické komunikace v oblasti rozvoje schopností AČR*. Brno: Univerzita obrany.

The results of the semi-structured interviews are divided into two parts. The first part describes the responses of strategic communication experts, and the second part describes the responses of armament experts. A set of prepared questions is attached as Appendix 2 to this paper.

The author conducted semi-structured interviews with two strategic communication experts at the General Staff level. A respondent was involved in the development of the strategic communication framework for armaments projects. This strategic communication framework is the approved *“Strategic Communication Plan of the Czech Armed Forces for 2022”*. On the contrary, the second respondent was not involved in the development of the strategic communication framework for armaments projects. Both respondents confirmed that no strategic communication framework had been developed for an individual modernisation project. However, one respondent added that a press information service campaign, called a *“Communications Strategy Campaign”*, had been developed. Both respondents confirmed that there was no codification of strategic communication in the Czech MoD. An interviewee confirmed that the capability managers responsible for developing specifications for modernization projects should incorporate a strategic communication utilization plan into new modernization projects. Both respondents agreed that a strategic communication framework should be developed for projects that have an impact on national policy. In strategic communication, the use of terms that are difficult to understand, such as ‘unsurpassable condition’<sup>45</sup>, is considered inappropriate by one of the experts. One respondent refined this to strategic and major modernisation projects.

Five semi-structured interviews with armament specialists were conducted with armament specialists from the Czech MoD Armaments and Acquisition Division. Of these five interviewees, one was involved, and one was likely to have been included in the development of strategic armament communication frameworks. No one had used any manual to develop a strategic communication framework. According to the respondents, the development of a strategic communication framework was not part of the planning and acquisition of armament projects. Two respondents believed that the strategic communication framework was coordinated within the Czech MoD, two did not know, and one believed that it was not coordinated. Three respondents did not know which organisational unit was responsible for developing the strategic communication framework, one thought the project manager was responsible, and one thought the Communications Department of the General Staff was responsible. According to one of the respondents, feedback on the project was obtained through the successful implementation of the project. Others were unaware of any measurement of the success of strategic communications on a project-by-project basis. Three respondents believed that a strategic communication framework should be developed for all strategic and major projects, one believed that it should be developed for those who need interaction with the manufacturer, and one believed that it should be developed for all modernisation

<sup>45</sup> „Nepodkročitelná podmínka“.

projects. One respondent considered the NATO Cannon and SHORAD<sup>46</sup> projects as an example of best practice, one considered the Global Data and Transport Networks project as an example of best practice, one considered only SHORAD, and two did not provide any examples. Four respondents were unable to give an example of bad practice and one gave a Deployable Passive ESM Tracker. Three respondents had no additional knowledge; one thought that a strategic communication expert should be part of the project team, and another expressed the idea that no one really knows what strategic communication is and how it should work.

When comparing the results of the two groups of respondents, strategic communication experts have a greater awareness of what strategic communication should look like. On the contrary, armaments experts are in most cases not well informed about strategic communication. Both groups agree that the strategic communication framework should be developed primarily for strategic projects, i.e., projects that have political significance.

### 3.3 Case 1 - Acquisition of a Wheeled Armoured Personnel Carrier

In 2003, the Czech government approved the purchase of 240 new Wheeled Armoured Personnel Carriers (also WAPCs), and subsequently in 2005 a tender was announced for this contract. In 2006, the Czech government approved the acquisition of 199 WAPCs for CZK 23.6 billion from General Dynamics European Land Systems - Steyr (GDELS-Steyr). In 2007, Pandur WAPCs were tested, after which the Czech MoD announced that they did not meet the requirements of the Czech Armed Forces. As a result, the Czech government decided to terminate the contract with GDELS-Steyr.

After further negotiations between the Czech MoD and GDELS-Steyr in 2008, the Czech MoD announced its decision to acquire 107 Pandur WAPCs after successful military trials. The value of the entire contract was CZK 14.4 billion.<sup>47</sup> In 2009, the Czech government approved the purchase, which was later criticised in the media for being overpriced. The price of one vehicle was about CZK 134 million. This price was compared to the price of Portuguese Pandur vehicles, which was approximately CZK 35 million each.

The Czech MoD responded to media criticism in its press release of 18 February 2010<sup>48</sup>, in which it tried to set the record straight. The aim of the report was to explain the differences in the equipment of the vehicles, in the capabilities of these vehicles, and

<sup>46</sup> SHORAD - Short Range Air Defence.

<sup>47</sup> Sviták, Ctírad. "Pandur: historie jednoho tendru." In *Armádní noviny*. <https://www.armadinoviny.cz/pandur-historie-jednoho-tendru.html>.

<sup>48</sup> MO ČR. "Tisková zpráva: Nákup obrněných transportérů Pandur." [https://mocr.army.cz/images/id\\_15001\\_16000/15609/024.doc](https://mocr.army.cz/images/id_15001_16000/15609/024.doc).

the price structure was explained (e.g., the price of Pandurs for the Czech Armed Forces included value-added tax, unlike the vehicles for the Portuguese army).

Although this information report was very well prepared, it was a simple reaction to the unfavourable information issued by the media. The Czech MoD missed an opportunity to explain the price of vehicles in the face of media criticism. The deterioration of public image also occurred due to the opening of a police investigation on suspicion of committing the crime of fraud in a public tender and public auction in July 2010. Although the fault was at the political level, public confidence in military procurement has decreased significantly.<sup>49</sup>

The framework document containing the communication plan for the procurement of WAPCs was not obtained during the analysis. In a search of media coverage of the case, it was found that most of the articles from the Czech MoD merely reacted retrospectively to mostly critical information published in the media.<sup>50</sup> This practice has been identified in most articles, suspecting the military of not clearly explaining why it is the Pandur vehicles that have cruise capability, why their price is so high, what has been gained for capabilities that other vehicles do not have, why the supplier is an Austrian company that may not have access to the latest generation weapons systems because it is not a NATO member, and many others.

An evaluation of the process of this purchase shows that strategic communication must be a part of major military projects from the outset. The MoD cannot rely on the fact that information will not be leaked, and therefore the MoD must proactively, not reactively, address the situation before the problem is revealed in the media. Compared to the media, the MoD has the advantage of having the most information and can therefore determine appropriate strategic communication.

It is clear from the evaluation that there was insufficient use or preparation of a communication strategy if one existed.

### 3.4 Case 2 – Acquisition of an Infantry Fighting Vehicle

According to Syrovátka, the 2011 Defence White Paper<sup>51</sup> already contained a requirement for the necessary replacement of Infantry Fighting Vehicles (also IFV). Subsequently, in 2015, an integrated working team of the Czech National Defence Forces was established to prepare a specification for the acquisition of a new IFV. This team was made up of experts with experience in real combat situations. A Feasibility Study was prepared

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, Ref. 29.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, Ref. 44.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, Ref. 29.

to provide information on the current market situation and summarise global trends in the development of IFV. During the initial phase of the integrated teamwork, the basic user requirements were also compared with the actual capabilities and capacities of potential suppliers.<sup>52</sup>

The next step in this armament project was Industry Days 2017 to collect data on existing platforms. Although a larger number of companies were approached, in the end four companies participated in the days and then submitted their proposals to the competition.

Finally, in 2018, a specification was completed and approved detailing parameters that would meet the requirements of the Czech Armed Forces.

In the same year, the Czech MoD issued a strategic communication framework for IFV.<sup>53</sup> The document was prepared by the Communication Department of the Czech MoD and contains the initial narrative, the objective of communication, formulations for conducting communication, for its management, and coordination for all levels of command and control of the Czech Armed Forces.

Despite using strategic communication, the Czech MoD did not sign the contract for the new IFV until May 2023, that is, 12 years after the procurement requirement was included in the concept. The reasons for the delay in signing are mainly political. The previous government did not sign the contract based on the recommendations of the expert bidding commission, which concluded that the bids of the three interested companies did not meet all the requirements and could not be further evaluated.<sup>54</sup> The new government needed to obtain more detailed information on the progress of this project.<sup>55</sup>

This second case shows that strategic communication cannot solve all the pitfalls facing modernisation projects. On the other hand, the result obtained in the first case was confirmed, namely the need for strategic communication experts to be part of the project team from the beginning of the armaments project.

<sup>52</sup> Světnička, Lubomír. "Nové pásové obrněnce musí obstát v první linii, hájí zadání zkušený velitel." <https://acr.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/nove-pasove-obrnence-musi-obstat-v-prvni-linii-haji-zadani-zkuseny-velitel-212059/>.

<sup>53</sup> MO ČR. 2018. *Communication Strategy for the Acquisition of Modern Tracked Infantry Fighting Vehicles for the Ground Forces of the Army of the Czech Republic*. Praha: MO ČR.

<sup>54</sup> "V tendru na bojová vozidla nevyhovuje ani jeden ze tří dodavatelů Zdroj: [https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/tendr-bojova-vozidla-nesplnujici-pozadavky.A211105\\_145849\\_domaci\\_lisv](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/tendr-bojova-vozidla-nesplnujici-pozadavky.A211105_145849_domaci_lisv)" [https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/tendr-bojova-vozidla-nesplnujici-pozadavky.A211105\\_145849\\_domaci\\_lisv](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/tendr-bojova-vozidla-nesplnujici-pozadavky.A211105_145849_domaci_lisv).

<sup>55</sup> Danda, Oldřich. "Černochová: Armádu modernizovat musíme. Závazek k NATO splníme." <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-fernochova-armadu-modernizovat-musime-zavazek-k-nato-splnime-40383538>.



## FINDINGS

From the questionnaire survey, the semi-structured interviews, as well as the selected cases, a general conclusion emerges that communication that arises secondarily as a reaction to a negative media coverage can hardly be perceived as consistent and trustworthy. However, the second case indicates that the Czech MoD was able to play a more active role in advocating the need for new combat vehicles in the media. Additionally, greater consistency is evident in the MoD's statements on the project.

The development of the strategic communication framework for the purchase of IFVs itself shows that it is essential that the Armed Forces have a well-developed specification and that no significant changes are made during the bidding process, which was the case for the turret requirement that was missing from the original specification. The semi structured interview with the strategic communication expert also revealed that it is not appropriate to use terms that are difficult to understand in strategic communication.

To prepare a strategic communication framework, it is necessary to consider all stakeholders and their attitudes, anticipate them based on previous analysis, and shape their perceptions in the desired direction when planning a particular modernisation project. This need to have strategic communication ready at the initial stage of the project is also confirmed in the described example of the acquisition of a new infantry combat vehicle, where the acquisition specification was prepared in 2015, but the strategic communication framework was approved by the Czech Minister of Defence only in 2018.<sup>56</sup> Most of the time, this loses some of the potential to gain support and become credible.

Furthermore, results of the questionnaire and semi-structured interview show that strategic communication should be used primarily for projects that have a political importance, that is, projects that are defined as strategic or significant for the Czech MoD. Examples are projects for the acquisition of new combat vehicles, helicopters, the SHORAD system, etc. Based on this conclusion, for the final success of the whole project, it is necessary to develop a communication strategy, coordinated with other important institutions, i.e., in this case the Government of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of Finance.

Research has shown that the main reasons for the lack of use of strategic communication in support of armaments are the following:

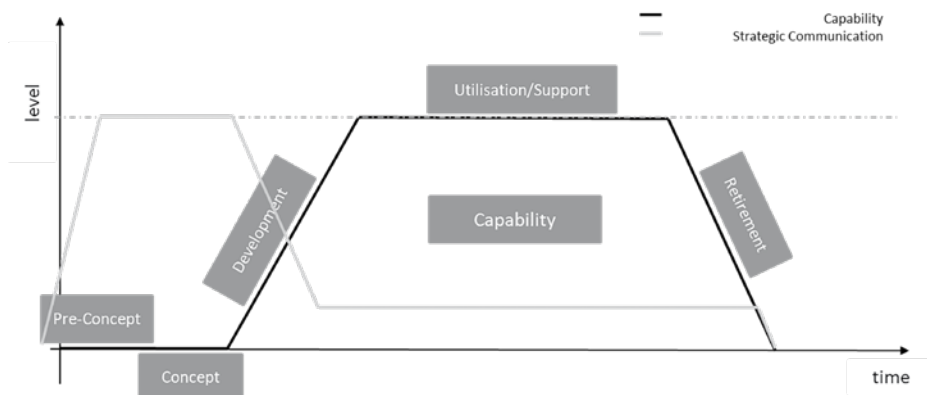
- Lack of codification of strategic communication in the Czech MoD.
- A missing definition of the projects for which strategic communication frameworks must be developed.
- Lack of awareness of strategic communication among armament experts.
- Lack of strategic communication experts.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, Ref. 53.

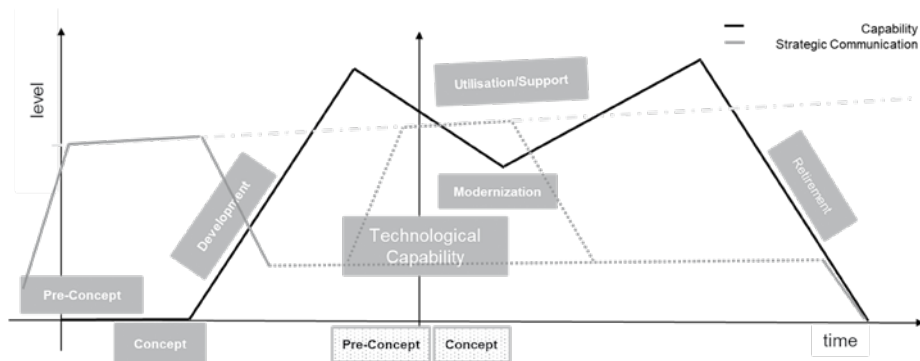
Based on the results obtained from the questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews, as well as the selected cases, a model of adequate use of strategic communication in the support of armaments was developed, based on the simplified relationship between the life cycle of a capability and strategic communication (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 schematically describes the relationship between the life cycle of a capability and strategic communication. The figure shows that, with the identification of the need to upgrade a capability or define a new capability that has policy implications, it is necessary to integrate strategic communication as much as possible in the pre-conceptual phase by involving a strategic communication expert from the very beginning of a strategic or important project. In the absence of strategic communication experts, this capability should be provided by armaments experts. Strategic communication should be used, especially in the period before the contract is signed. Once the contract is signed, its importance diminishes, and it is only necessary to monitor the situation so that, in the event of an unexpected situation, relevant strategic communication experts can be activated on an ad hoc basis at the request of the leadership of the Czech Ministry of Defence.



**Figure 3:** Simplified model of the adequate use of strategic communication in the support of armaments

Figure 3 is a simplified model that does not consider the upgrades required during the life cycle of a capability or the replacement of the ageing capabilities. For a more comprehensive description of the relationship, considering the upgrade of the relevant capability technology, see Figure 4. Figure 4 shows that in addition to the ad hoc requirements for strategic communication throughout the life cycle, an increase in the need for strategic communication can be expected during the modernisation phase. But this need depends on the significance of the modernization, that is, whether the modernization is politically significant, such as the modernization of tanks.



**Figure 4:** Model of the adequate use of strategic communication in the support of armaments.

The following recommendations emerged from the research conducted:

- Strategic communication must be seen as an important part of acquisition projects. This communication must be proactive, open, honest, and continuous, using different communication channels.
- Strategic communication must be coordinated. A prioritised initial plan should come from the government level. The government should set the goal and method of communication to promote political or government programs, including military strategic projects. Only the government can achieve unity, internal consistency of communication content. Therefore, there should be an organisation at the government level that is responsible for strategic communication. Individual government institutions cannot communicate independently of each other.
- Strategic communication should be described in both policy and concept documents.
- It is necessary to identify lessons learnt from previous acquisition projects. Strategic communication must be prepared for the relevant target groups.
- Strategic communication must also be prepared for unexpected obstacles or deliberate spread of misinformation. Such obstacles include, for example, various conspiracy theories or the printing of unsubstantiated assumptions in search of increasing the attractiveness of the article or the media.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the paper was to examine the reasons for the shortcomings in the use of strategic communication in armaments and to develop a model to make it more effective. The research revealed four main reasons for the lower use of strategic communication, which are the lack of codification of strategic communication; the lack of a set of rules for the use of strategic communication for armaments; the lack of awareness of strategic communication among armament experts; and lack of strategic communication experts.

One of the important conclusions is that the codification of strategic communication is a necessary step on the way to its full implementation. Without codification, awareness of its existence is very low and only at the level of strategic communication practitioners.

From the selected armament projects, it can be concluded that to achieve optimal use of strategic communication, its management is necessary at the top level.

Based on the results of the analysis, a model of the adequate use of strategic communication was elaborated.

## APPENDIX 1 QUESTIONNAIRE

## 1. Do you encounter the term strategic communication in your work?

*Please tick one answer.*☐ YES☐ NO

## 2. Does your institution (MoD, GS) organization use strategic communication in support of armaments?

☐ YES, fill in the set of questions below, please.☐ NO, let me thank you for your time and ask you to send me the questionnaire back to: [vladimir.vyklicky@unob.cz](mailto:vladimir.vyklicky@unob.cz).

## 3. Do you have any (national) strategic communication policy (concept, doctrine, ... ) that can be used to support armaments?

☐ YES☐ NO

## 4. Have you participated in the development of a strategic communication for any acquisition project?

*Please tick one answer.*☐ YES☐ NO

## 5. Have you used any methodology (or any other document providing instructions/guidance/directives/orders) when creating a strategic communication?

*Please tick one answer.*

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Was the development of a strategic communication an integral part of the planning process of acquisition projects?

*Please tick one answer.*

DEFINITELY YES	RATHER YES	RATHER NO	DEFINITELY NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Which organisational unit was responsible for creating the strategic communication?

Write down a unit (e.g., Public Affairs Department, Acquisition Department, ....), please:

8. Have you measured the effectiveness of the strategic communication used in armament projects?

*Please tick one answer.*

DEFINITELY YES	RATHER YES	RATHER NO	DEFINITELY NO	I DO NOT KNOW
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. If yes, could you describe how you have measured the effectiveness of strategic communication?

*Please describe here:*

10. Could you give an example of good practice in using strategic communication for armament projects?

**11. Could you give an example of the poor practice in using strategic communication for armaments projects?**

**12. Would you like to add something on the subject of using strategic communication for armaments?**

- ☐ YES, write it down, please:
- ☐ NO

## **APPENDIX 2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- 1) Do you create or participate in the creation of strategic communication frameworks for armament projects?
- 2) Did you use a manual/guide when developing the strategic communication framework?
- 3) Has the development of a strategic communication framework been part of the planning and acquisition process for armament projects?
- 4) Has the strategic communication framework for major armaments projects been coordinated within the Ministry of Defence?
- 5) Which organisational unit was responsible for creating the strategic communication framework?
- 6) Do you have feedback on the success of the strategic communication frameworks used for armament projects?
- 7) Which projects do you think need a strategic communication framework?
- 8) Could you give some examples of best practices in the use of the Strategic Armaments Communication Framework?
- 9) Could you give an example of bad practice in the use of a strategic communications framework in the field of armaments?
- 10) Do you have any insights that I have not asked about?

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**Authors:** *Colonel Vladimír Vyklický, born in 1965, is a senior research fellow in the Centre for Security and Military Strategic Studies of the University of Defence. His research generally focuses on defence planning, especially capability planning and development. He served in the staff positions of the General Staff and the Czech Armed Forces and NATO structures.*

*Assoc. prof. Ivo Pikner, PhD, ret COL, born in 1963, is a research assistant at the Department of Military Theory, Faculty of Military leadership of the University of Defence in Brno. Over the course of his professional career, he served in the army at various command and staff positions and later on, also in a position of dean at the Faculty of Military Leadership. He has been dealing with character and tendencies of development in military affairs and trends and development of military art.*

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