



# RESEARCH PAPER

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## Policy making in 140 characters or less: NATO and social media

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*I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.*  
-Thomas Watson, Chairman of IBM, 1943

### Introduction

New media, including web marketing, e-business and social media, is a rapidly growing method for organizations to engage with audiences around the world. With reports that e-business will double globally by 2016, the appeal of online products, services and information is increasing. Will these methods be useful for promoting public engagement with organizations like NATO or security policy think tanks? Moreover, are these methods appropriate for high calibre policy and research, or will they denigrate the information produced? And can the message be delivered in Twitter's allowable 140 characters?

The connection that the Web 2.0 concept, a collection of web services, creates between consumers and security policy organizations will be explored in this paper. A brief analysis of the Web 2.0 toolkit, including different types of social media, online marketing and information dissemination models will be outlined. I will explore the value potential, engagement level, and public perception of Web 2.0 methods in use throughout various industries.

I hope to demonstrate that a new era of interaction has emerged, and security organizations have much to gain from it. Through the use of examples, I outline how the various networks and technological advances available today create a level of interaction between the audience and institution. The development of new media in today's culture calls for a strategic model of information diffusion that alters the classic top-down model of organizations relaying material to interested parties.

I argue that after considering the factors above, the value of social media and other new media to security organizations like NATO and research institutions such as think tanks outweighs the risks. While NATO already employs some aspects of Web 2.0, this new strategic model has the potential to increase the transparency, civilian involvement and popular opinion of these institutions.

### Web 2.0: an introduction to modern applications

The concept of Web 2.0 refers to a series of online capabilities and services that now allow users to interact through the Internet by producing and uploading content, forming communities, tagging, rating, sharing and more. This includes most new

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media such as YouTube, interactive applications or 'apps', social media, and the ability to blog.

The first generation of the web (or Web 1.0) represented a model where a website would 'download' content to the user – implying that information would be sent one way and very little response was received. This is similar to other forms of communication such as mailing or television ads. Web 2.0 allows an equal amount of information 'downloading' to the user and 'uploading' back to the originating site, providing valuable feedback and boosting interactivity.

Security policy organizations, academic institutions and profit-driven corporations find themselves on equal ground in the new internet era. They all share the same need for awareness and distribution of information. Organizations who distribute services, goods or information can all engage in search engine marketing, online partnerships, and social media use. These different methods are explored in more detail below.

The Internet is constantly evolving – already Web 3.0 is being described as the semantic web, where users will be able to use natural speech to search online and direct information. However, until then, it is necessary for organizations to understand the forward momentum of the Internet and put to use the available progresses within Web 2.0. As with evolution, it is unlikely the Internet will regress and consumer behaviour will return to being satisfied with not being involved with content or interacting online.

According to the website Econsultancy, 75% of all digital data is created by individuals and 1 out of every 13 people on earth use Facebook. The Web 2.0 capabilities and culture have changed the nature of information online to one created and maintained by users. The global online community, with 5.3 billion mobile subscribers adding to computer generated traffic, is now vital to any strategy. Also, statistics show this is a worldwide trend not segregated to developed countries or certain demographics – for example, while Africa's internet penetration into the population was only at 13.5% by December 2011, this represented a growth of 2,988.4% over the past ten years and was the highest growth in internet usage in the world.<sup>2</sup> INISI, a Dutch telecommunications company, is already working to establish internet services in South Sudan, the world's newest country and also one of the poorest. Anecdotaly, in 2011, a chief of a western Kenyan village used Twitter at 4am to announce that a schoolteacher's home was being burgled. Villagers gathered within minutes and the thieves fled.

The new media toolbox produced by the concept of Web 2.0 has become ingrained in the habits and behaviours of many people around the world, and most notably, younger populations. A lack of an effective e-business strategy can include such effects for the organizations such as missed opportunities, waste of

time and resources, and limited integration of e-business at the technical level. This analysis carries the same importance for non-profit organizations and those dealing with security policy and information dissemination.

In the next section of this paper, I highlight some specifically popular tools and features of Web 2.0.

### Facebook

As of August 2011, this social networking site had over 750 million users. With 4 billion videos, images and other pieces of information shared each day through posts, and 52% of users accessing the site on a daily basis, it is not surprising that the price of advertising on this network increased by 70% in the first half of 2011. Facebook started as a network linking university students together, and is now a multi-billion dollar machine. With special pages for organizations to issue announcements, recruit members and create events, it is a useful tool to connect with the public through the most prominent online medium. The number of Facebook users in Europe alone is over 225 million.

Businesses and non-profit organizations alike have taken to Facebook, well equipped with e-business strategies, to accomplish their goals. When Canadian non-profit Free the Children began their 'We Day' campaign, they advertised that one Facebook 'like' equalled one dollar in donations. Within four months, they had 500,000 likes, with 1 out of every 8 Canadians between the ages of 13-25 being a Facebook 'Fan'.

The way it works is that each time a user visits a page they like, they can click on a 'like' icon, or a 'fan' icon, which automatically displays this information to their entire networks of contacts and signs them up to receive future notices in a form of opt-in marketing at virtually no cost to the organization. Active Facebook users of this method of information dissemination include the US Marines, with 30,000 public 'likes', the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with 60,000 'likes', and INTERPOL with 3,385 'likes'.<sup>3</sup>

Facebook's appeal for security policy organizations lies in the fact that it is not easily censored, available throughout the world, costs nothing to publish on, promotes the organization brand and lends an interactive side to what would otherwise be impenetrable institutions. Information travels quickly through Facebook's channels, and as no information is uploaded, the content is able to be carefully controlled with little to no risk of security leakage.

### Youtube

Youtube is a social media platform on which anyone can load any video content. Other users are able to rate and comment on videos, while other sites are able to embed non-copyrighted video directly into their own websites. Owned by Internet giant

<sup>2</sup> "Internet World Stats" N.p., 15 Feb. 2012, Web, viewed 05 Mar, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> As of March 10, 2012.



Google, Youtube is another interactive tool that is not easily censored and spreads information quicker than any non-digital medium is able to. Every day, 3 billion videos are watched on Youtube with 70% of traffic originating from outside the United States.<sup>4</sup> Youtube is available in 43 different languages, and as of the end of 2011 is banned in only four countries: Libya, Sudan, Turkmenistan and China. Every minute of the day, 24 hours of footage is loaded onto the site.

Many security policy organizations already have Youtube official channels to distribute videos and other information, such as NATO and the CIA. However, as a public tool, Youtube has gained much publicity by raising awareness of human rights abuses and political turmoil. The search term 'Libya' turns up 171,000 videos, with many of the top results discussing the recent revolution and violence.

On March 8th 2012, the Syrian deputy oil minister defected from President Assad's government to join the rebels in the country's yearlong war. He did not do this through a press release or by informing the United Nations – instead he posted a Youtube video with a direct message to President Bashar Assad. "I do not want to end my life servicing the crimes of this regime," Abdo Husameddine said in the video, and then added he will be joining the "dignified people's revolution."<sup>5</sup> In August 2011, the Syrian attorney general in the city of Hama also appeared in a video announcing he had defected from the regime. On Youtube, Husameddine's message is available to President Assad and the rest of the world: "I advise my colleagues...to abandon this sinking ship."

## Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging site that allows users to post short messages of 140 characters or less. Twitter is arguably the fastest information disseminator as it is incorporated into many mobile applications and constantly uploads, delivering up-to-the-second news to any 'followers' across many devices. This allows updates to be sent instantaneously and be received around the world. Hash tags, key phrases identified by placing '#' before them, allow users to quickly connect to the relevant tweets they need. The phrase '#Egypt' was the most popular hash tag in 2011, though others in the top ten included '#tiger blood' (a cultural reference to Charlie Sheen), '#japan', and '#superbowl'.

To use Twitter, organizations set up accounts and then strategize to attain as many followers as possible. This can be done by following other people or by being reposted or 'retweeted' by others and therefore infiltrating their networks. Each user is given a 'handle', a name beginning with the symbol '@'. Twitter is a prime example of viral marketing since information moves

like lightning across its various channels. Only 5% of Twitter accounts create 75% of all content that is distributed to Twitter's 110 million users.<sup>6</sup> As one of the top ten visited sites on the Internet, companies and institutions are flocking to Twitter.

Topics of politics and security have never shied away from Twitter, making the social networking platform a vital tool in organizing the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, and capturing General Gadhafi in Libya in 2011.

Twitter has also served as a platform –or middle ground– for conversations that would arguably never have occurred otherwise. In September 2011, after 20 hours of combat, NATO and Taliban forces in Afghanistan squared off on Twitter over the topic of civilian casualties. NATO tweeted, "Re: Taliban spok [spokesman] on #Kabul attack: the outcome is inevitable. Question is how much longer will terrorists put innocent Afghans in harm's way?" The reply came from Abdulqahar Balkhi, a Taliban spokesman who uses the handle @abalkhi. He wrote, "I don't know. You have been putting them in 'harm's way' for the past 10 years. Razed whole villages and markets. And still have the nerve to talk about 'harm's way?'"<sup>7</sup> During asymmetrical warfare, it is interesting to note the conversation moving to social platforms versus intergovernmental institutions – whether for good or bad, social networks like Twitter represent an egalitarian frontier for dialogue.

## 'Apps'

Along with innovations online, there have been ardent strides in technological infrastructure that include access channels. Internet access through mobile phones now represents an increase in online use, with 1.2 million new GSM connections every day, 7 billion text messages sent daily and 1 billion phones sold in 2007.<sup>8</sup> Recently, Nokia has developed a smart phone that rivals the market leaders in terms of technical specifications, and is affordable. Google's free Android platform also allows for low-cost options in the marketplace.

An example of a location-based service now available through smart phones is Foursquare, a social networking application where users share where they are by 'checking in' to locations provided as options through GPS. Users compete with their online friends to get points and badges for checking in to various venues and events. Foursquare has 10 million users, and has inspired similar services from Facebook and Google. The American Red Cross has joined with Foursquare to have users collect bonus points and a special badge when they check in to a blood donation clinic.

Mobile applications have proven to be phenomenal with information dissemination. In 2010, Iphonedev reported that

<sup>4</sup>The Design Oven, "YouTube Facts 2011", Visually, 28 December 2011, Web, viewed 11 March 2012.

<sup>5</sup>Karam, Zeina, "Syrian Deputy Oil Minister Defects on Youtube, Joins Anti-Assad Camp", *The Toronto Star*, 8 March 2012, Web, viewed 8 March 2012.

<sup>6</sup>Maynez, Neltje, "20 Facts About Twitter", Business2Community, 25 October 2011, Web, viewed 10 March 2012.

<sup>7</sup>Kurtz, Ced, "NATO, Taliban Square Off on Social Network", *Post-Gazette*, 16 Sept. 2011, Web, viewed 10 March 2012. Maynez, Neltje, "20 Facts About Twitter" Business2Community, 25 October 2011, Web, viewed 10 March 2012.

<sup>8</sup>Chaffey, 164.



500 millions apps were downloaded to 100 million users.<sup>9</sup> While 65% of users claimed to download apps for gaming, 54% used them for social networking and 56% for news access, proving that the mobile phone is becoming as important as the computer in information delivery.<sup>10</sup> Demonstrating growing subscriptions around the world, China now has more mobile subscribers than the entire population of the United States.

Another incredibly useful development in Web 2.0 has been the widespread use and accessibility of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) applications. This includes phone calls and video through Google+, Skype, and other service providers.

How do mobile applications apply to security organizations? Social networking applications for Twitter, Facebook and other forms of news delivery are now a fixed product in millions of palms around the world. This means instantaneous access to news and information. Location-based applications can not only help the public track people and events, but to involve the international community in an organization and localize content to suit the population. The low cost of telephones with access to Internet means the world is getting more connected every day. Voice over Internet Protocol suggests an era of more communications and dialogues, less travel, and a wider network for engaging the public through virtual education, information and delegation.

### Blogging

A blog – the term taken from ‘web log’ – allows organizations and individuals to upload content online. Blogs can be multimedia and adorned with embedded videos, images and more. There are hundreds of thousands of blogs today about virtually every topic, with RSS Feeds (Really Simple Syndication) allowing users to subscribe to a blog and then be automatically notified when a new post or update is made.

For users who would like to express a longer opinion than Twitter allows, or would like to be independent from Facebook, various blog hosting websites exist for free, including Wordpress and Blogspot. Other services like Flickr, a photo hosting program owned by Yahoo, or Tumblr, with nearly 20 million posts at the time of writing, allow users to share virtually anything with the public. Programs like Reddit track the popularity of any single topic online and organize this for users, allowing them to quickly view what is trending worldwide.

With so many users, it is not surprising that many popular blogs have become news sources. The Huffington Post receives 54 million monthly visits, while entertainment news site TMZ receives 19 million. Even the 10th most popular blog at the time of writing, LifeHacker, a technology site, receives 5.5 million

visits every month.<sup>11</sup>

### The Value Proposition

The value of social media and Web 2.0 applications for security policy organizations is sizeable. Firstly, we can examine the minimal cost associated with new media adoption. While many businesses and institutions still struggle to develop the necessary technological infrastructure needed, organizations like NATO have the advantage of being physically capable of handling these technological demands. The need for technical equipment and skills in many security policy organizations has created an environment ready for greater new media implementation. Other costs associated include software and networks, but available open source programs are not only free and secure, but also constantly evolving, fostering the spirit of adaptation and evolution prevalent throughout the Internet.<sup>12</sup>

One of the biggest benefits that social media and other aspects of Web 2.0 can offer is raising awareness. In *The Tipping Point*, international best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell writes on the rapid distribution of ideas, products and behaviours. He identifies three rules that work to facilitate the rapid dissemination of an idea: it takes a few very well connected people to become early adopters and spread this to their networks, an organization must have the best product or excellent content to ensure the information will stick in the minds of consumers, and the idea must be released into the proper context or environment. The use of social media, the Internet and an effective e-business strategy can achieve this for organizations that have rarely sought to interact with the public, like military institutions or think tanks.

Search engine marketing is another new and highly valuable technology for increasing outreach, whether of products or information. Search engines use meta-tags or tags in the programming language of a website’s content or code to link it with search terms. Strategic content writing is vital to increase the reach of any communications, news or other information distributed online. Meta-tags embedded in the text and data of the main document online will allow search engines to link these pages with the proper audience through searched words or phrases. This is called search engine optimization (SEO) and can greatly increase the number of organic traffic to sites, articles and campaigns.<sup>13</sup> Research indicates that 90% of internet users say they use search engines to look for information, creating a sizeable opportunity for organizations seeking to increase information dissemination and awareness.

In the current state of affairs online, the public contributes to nearly all of the information delivered to them. The days of sending out information into the unknown are gone. A

<sup>9</sup> iPhoneDev, “App Store Average Earning per Month per Paid Add is \$700”, Tumblr, 30 June 2010, Web, viewed 1 March 2012.

<sup>10</sup> “The State of Mobile Apps”, Nielsen, 1 June 2010, Web, viewed 10 March 2012.

<sup>11</sup> “Top 15 Most Popular Blogs March 2012”, EBiz, 20 March 2012, Web, viewed 20 March 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Open source programs are created by developers collaborating throughout the world and are uploaded to the internet free of charge.

<sup>13</sup> Organic traffic is all traffic to a site achieved without paid promotion on search engines or paid directories.



powerful communications strategy can help think tanks to penetrate deeper into chosen demographics with new research and ideas, as well as engage with public around the globe. The use of blogs, Twitter, and Facebook can get early adopters to popularize concepts put forward by organizations and initiate a dialogue about them. These features promote transparency and accountability, which in turn garner public support. While many good things come from these benefits, by using these techniques, research institutions could secure a lasting positive impression that would be carried forward to the next generation.

Referring back to the benefit of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), committees, organizations and even students can be both localized by staying in their home environment or project area and internationalized by the ability to conference with people everywhere. All that is required is an Internet connection for security policy organizations and institutions to have face-to-face conversations and brainstorming sessions with people everywhere. Think tanks could collaborate on research and hold web-conferences, eliminating travel costs and being able to include more people than ever. NATO could begin education and awareness programs in trouble areas, developing workshops and seminars with youths from around the world on topics relevant to them. The uses of this tool are practically unlimited, just like its value if employed effectively.

Social media can also be vital in transforming business continuity management (BCM) which is the process of identifying potential interruptions and crises that can affect reputation, brand and key stakeholders. Gartner, the largest technology analyst firm in the world, predict that by 2015, 75% of organizations with BCM programs will have public social media services in their crisis communications strategies, and they advised BCM professionals to immediately begin assessing social media opportunities and risks.<sup>14</sup> Business continuity management can be applied to security policy organizations as it deals with how to ensure that services and information lines remain open despite any event. These occurrences range from power outages and server malfunctions, to wars and natural disasters. However, the effective use of a new communications channel requires forward planning and practice so that human factors in the continuity management strategy are familiar with the technology.

It is important to note that the new era of Internet is not all or nothing. With an effective strategy, organizations have a carte blanche of useful and low cost programs with which to connect to their audience. In Twitter's mission statement (2011), the company claims, "We want to instantly connect people everywhere to what's most important to them." While bold, this statement summarizes the capabilities and dedication of Web 2.0 to information dissemination – a resource that security policy

organizations cannot afford to ignore.

### **Engagement: A battle for hearts, minds and 'followers'**

In the world of Web 2.0 there is a constant battle for the hearts and minds of the public. The potential outreach of good content, mixed with strategy and brand placement, has been too tempting for organizations across all industries to pass up.

Unisys, an international company that designs and supports communications and networks, was commissioned in 2011 by the Hong Kong government's Efficiency Unit to help re-design its Youth Portal to better connect with young people. Unisys is employing Web 2.0 technology to create a portal for a dialogue between the youth in Hong Kong and the government, using platforms familiar to them. Mrs. Patricia Lau, Deputy Head of the Efficiency Unit for the Hong Kong government has said, "Unlike a conventional government website that pushes information out to its citizens, the Youth Portal has evolved into a multimedia platform with integrated content from approximately 190 organizations as well as content created by local youths themselves including 3,100 exhibits, 675 videos and 140 blogger articles."<sup>15</sup> The site also includes RSS feeds, Youtube videos, mobile phone applications and social networking.

Concrete goals often drive communications strategies, and are part of a good e-business strategy. While security policy is different than non-profit charity work, government programs, or celebrity gossip, the need for public awareness and interactivity remains the same. The Hong Kong government, attempting to connect to its future generation on their level, has shown great strides in regime awareness and adaptability. Similarly, many security policy institutions may feel the need to connect to young people and raise public awareness where there has been little or none in the past.

Other governmental institutions have begun seeing social media as a necessary way to connect with young people. In 2010, the city of Chicago paid a public relations firm 72,000 USD to teach its employees how to communicate with the public on Twitter, Facebook and other platforms.<sup>16</sup> The discourse can bolster engagement, participation, education and awareness.

NATO has also recently joined the fray with the launch of the website, 'WE-NATO'. At the date of writing, the site does not allow for comments, but promises interactivity through social media networks and subscription access for users. The site asserts, "This site is not a one way communication talk-shop, but a forum where YOU contribute and share ideas with NATO officials."<sup>17</sup> Other forums for security communications include the Security Defense Agenda's Security Jam, an annual event akin to an online seminar (webinar), and the Atlantic-Community.

<sup>14</sup> Normans Media Ltd., "Gartner Says 75 Percent of Organizations with BCM Programs Will Have Public Social Media Services in Their Crisis Communications Strategies by 2015", M2 Presswire, 28 February 2012, Web, viewed 1 March 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Unisys, "With the Help of Unisys, Hong Kong Government Uses Social Media to Connect with Youth", *AsiaPulse News*, 10 July 2012, Web, viewed 1 March 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Leininger, Kevin, "City Spending \$72,000 for Lessons on Social Media Use", *News-Sentinel*, 6 November 2010, Web, viewed 1 March 2012.

<sup>17</sup> The mission statement can be viewed on <http://we-nato.org/about/>



org where an ‘open think tank’ has been developed for idea sharing. Security policy organizations are slowly working towards developing environments rather than distribution lists, and the path is paved in social media.

In the case of NATO and the Arab Spring, officials have acknowledged engaging with online users from around the world who were tracking targets in Libya. A Twitter account was even created by the British military asking users to submit precise co-ordinates of troops loyal to Moammar Gadhafi. In a press briefing on June 10 2011, Wing Commander and NATO spokesman Mike Bracken described the ‘fusion centre’ that analysed all intelligence received through social channels. “We get information from open sources on the Internet; we get Twitter... You name any source of media and our fusion centre will deliver all of that into usable intelligence.”<sup>18</sup>

Even during the brutal crackdown on communications by the Assad regime in Syria, which has so far not allowed Red Crescent workers into devastated districts, social media like Youtube, Facebook and Twitter have played active roles in giving a voice to the revolution. In this fashion, the Internet offers a connection to people who may otherwise be isolated and censored by regimes and other factors. Institutions dealing with security, policy and governance must take advantage of this effective form of communication.

In her paper, *Lessons from the Front Line*, Sylvia Cambié argues that the Arab Spring has catapulted the uses of Web 2.0 into the mainstream. Noting that the number of Egyptian Facebook users increased by 30% in the course of 2011 to 8 million and that tweets dealing with political issues jumped from 2,300 per day to 230,000 per day, she highlights the importance of Internet social networking.<sup>19</sup>

It may have all started with a Google Middle East employee in 2010, setting up a Facebook page called ‘We are all Khaled Said’ in commemoration of a young man tortured and killed by police in Alexandria. In an interview with *60 Minutes*, the employee is quoted as stating, “Our revolution is like Wikipedia, OK? Everyone is contributing content... Revolution 2.0 in Egypt was exactly the same.” In Syria, a similar Facebook page called ‘We are all Hamza Alkhateeb’ commemorates a 13-year old boy who was arrested and killed by police after demonstrating with his family against the regime.<sup>20</sup>

However, caution must be made against wholesale generalization of social media activism. While new media networks have been called the “Che Guevara of the 21st Century”, implying a predisposition to socialist and often Western liberal values of equality, this is not the case throughout the world.<sup>21</sup> Certainly, movements like the Occupy Protests and revolutions in the

Middle-East have brought their case for equality to the forefront of Western media, but other cases still exist.

In February 2012, a young Saudi named Hamza Kashgari addressed the prophet Mohammed on Twitter saying, “I will not pray for you.”<sup>22</sup> Immediately, a Facebook group entitled, “The Saudi People Demand the Execution of Hamza Kashgari” gained 20,000 members and a series of powerful clerics – including a Youtube video posted of a wrathful Sheikh Nasser al-Omar that went viral – demanded his arrest. The Saudi king complied and the 23-year old man now awaits trial and possible execution in Saudi Arabia. Critics of social media who label it as the social movement of younger generations will have a long time to wait before a Facebook revolution takes hold in countries like Saudi Arabia.

In many cases, however, added benefits like the lack of governance online and available localization create an online experience suitable for every kind of user around the world. The fact that the Internet is not owned or sponsored by any one regime allows for it to maintain an objective platform status – a place where people of differing opinions consider it legitimate to formulate their ideas. Localization encourages engagement not only with the international community, but with local and national perspectives as well. By getting involved in these opportune movements – whether grassroots or global – military, academic and other non-profit institutions can cast aside the shroud of elitism and become more transparent and trusted.

Organizations who engage in meaningful and effective e-business are able to foster a culture of learning and growth for their own employees and any other interested parties. The conventional one-way conversation has been replaced with a society that expects to be heard and listened to, capable of ‘uploading’ their views using the avenues best known to them. In complying, organizations like NATO will join corporations in turning the old supply model on its head and creating an institution with not only a military uniform, but a human face.

### **Perception: You are what you ‘like’**

Public perception of research and information delivered through social media varies greatly. Returning to Gladwell’s *Tipping Point*, factors of who promotes the idea, how large their networks are and the quality of content are all vital. The need to broaden audiences and engage with future generations is similar in both corporations who market goods and security organizations who market information – some of it in retrospect.

Institutions like NATO already use social media to link to the world, and when they do, people listen. For example, hours after Moammar Gadhafi was killed in Libya, NATO’s Supreme Allied

<sup>18</sup> Smith, Graeme, “How Social Media Users Are Helping NATO Fight Gadhafi in Libya”, *Globe and Mail*, 14 June 2011, Web, viewed 11 March 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Cambié, Silvia, “Lessons from the Front Line”, *Communications World Magazine*, January & February 2012, Web, viewed 11 March 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ross, Alec and Ben Scott, “Social Media: Power to the People?”, NATO, 2011, Web, viewed 9 March 2012.

<sup>22</sup> “A Young Saudi Recently Addressed the Prophet Mohammed on Twitter”, *National Review*, 5 March 2012, Web, viewed 11 March 2012.



Commander Europe (SACEUR), Admiral James Stavridis, announced on his Twitter feed and Facebook page the end of military action in Libya. People from around the world used the networks to thank him, with his messages getting 43 're-Tweets', 269 'likes' and 146 'shares' within a week.<sup>23</sup> NATO may have chosen to use social media in this case because of the urgency of the information and the amount of attention it would gather online. Also, the role of social media during the Arab Spring was already considered to be sizeable. As a side note, messages from organizations like NATO seem to receive the best public response when sent by an individual rather than the organization, perhaps due to the perception of increased transparency and accountability. Certainly other options like press releases or news agencies were available to Admiral Stavridis, but nothing can compare to social media in terms of distribution.

In another case, the International Atomic Energy Agency chose social media as a communications medium in March 2011 when they used Facebook to update the world on the state of the Fukushima nuclear power plant after Japan's earthquake.

While initially the internet may have been perceived as uncensored and frivolous, a European Commission for Information Society Technology was established in 1998 promote public awareness and the ability of people to participate meaningfully. The aim was to reduce social exclusion from the internet – thus creating an information society and enhancing socio-economic benefits. In 2009, 81% of medium businesses and 90% of large enterprises in Europe had a website, up from 65% in 2005.<sup>24</sup> Other organizations have also employed the Web 2.0 concept, proving the perception of quality and necessity in internet communications is growing. These include an initiative by UNESCO to connect people in developing countries and even the Vatican.

In February 2012, Pope Benedict XVI used Twitter to issue a Lent message. Using the Twitter handle @Pope2YouVatican (because everything more intuitive was already taken), the Pope tweeted, "The Lenton season offers us again the opportunity to reflect upon the very heart of Christian life: Charity." His message ran a total of 111 characters. Monsignor Paul Tighe, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, told Italy's ANSA news agency that "Many of the key Gospel ideas are readily conveyed in 140 characters."<sup>25</sup>

Even inside NATO top security meetings, an official speaking under condition of anonymity has said of Dmitri Rogozin, Russia's Ambassador to NATO, "There have been a number of occasions where you see Ambassador Rogozin sitting in some seminar and sort of tweeting more or less live...security issues are not a laughing matter."<sup>26</sup> In 2010, the same Ambassador

wrote in Russian on his Twitter feed, "The Americans and their allies again want to surround the den of the Russian bear? How many times must they be reminded that this is dangerous?" He continued with, "The bear will emerge, and kick them in the (expletive)." He later softened his English translation to "Beat them up".

Whether or not the various channels of social media and Web 2.0 are used to drop "rhetorical bombs",<sup>27</sup> transmit blessings or connect with any given demographic in any location of the world, the internet's reputation has improved by leaps and bounds. The era of Web 2.0 has ushered in a feeling of security online through better encryption and password protection, as well as an incentive to use through social networking and low-cost service providers. More services, businesses and organization now recognize this method of communication and employ it to their benefit.

### Implementing Change

There are certain truths to the internet: no one owns it, everyone can use it, and anyone can improve upon it. With growing numbers of subscribers every day, innovation online is certain. So how do security organizations begin to implement this change? While some larger organizations already have new media models in place, others may need to start from the beginning. There is no one way to move all or parts of organizations online, but I will outline three key phases below in a very brief overview of change implementation.

First, an organization seeking to incorporate new media meaningfully and engage users will need to attain 'human resources'. I use human resources in this case as the sponsorship and support of management, the understanding and cooperation of staff, and the acquisition or outsourcing of dedicated people to implement the changes required. This can be done by acquiring good planning or marketing proposals (from outsourcing or acquisition), properly managing the risks of the project, setting realistic goals and productively communicating with all affected parties throughout the process. Whether the organization is requiring incremental changes or drastic restructuring, proper planning to manage tools is recommended to prevent wasting time and resources.

After a schedule, responsibilities, budget and other factors are agreed, the responsible staff can begin developing the project. If a research institution were to invest in a Web 2.0 toolkit, for example, with the goals of increasing engagement and subscriptions, the development process may feature integration of social media to reach new audiences and newsletters to subscribed users. During the development phase, staff would optimize existing technology to be integrated with social media

<sup>23</sup> Warner, Bernhard, "Why NATO Turned to Facebook to Drop Its Latest Bomb", SMI, 28 October 2011, Web, viewed 07 March 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Chaffey, 194.

<sup>25</sup> United Press International, "Pope Tweets Lent Message in 111 Characters", *UPI Newstrack*, 24 February 2012. Web, viewed 1 March 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Schwartz, Michael, "Bluster on Twitter, and off it, too, from Russia's Envoy to NATO", *The New York Times*, 13 February 2010, Web, viewed 1 March 2012.

<sup>27</sup> As said of Mr. Rogozin's Twitter use by David J. Kramer, a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund (Ibid.)



and become active on these fronts to attract attention to the organization. Series of events and activities meant to have users opt-in to receive further communications could be employed, such as contests, conferences and seminars. Staff would optimize content across various channels and produce various communications to target different kinds of subscribers.

Lastly, management and maintenance of new media channels are vital. Social media has been shown in the sections above to be constantly moving and changing. Metaphorically, it is like a conveyor belt, and if one were to suddenly stop, they would lose their footing. Letting the content on a website or social media become out-dated may be worse than not having these channels at all. A site which is unfriendly to users, or social media on which there is no active conversation, are seen as unprofessional and amateur. Having a dedicated and knowledgeable staff member or team to constantly engage users in a conversation –the fundamental principle of Web 2.0- becomes an organization's digital lifeline. The environment new media creates moves in real time, and must be treated as a priority.

## Conclusion

Today, the Web 2.0 concept does not represent a trend, but rather a cultural shift. The longevity and evolution of the internet is not implied – it is already underway. Many platforms are currently available for delivering messages and ideas, but the initial question launching this paper was simple: Will matters of policy and research be taken seriously if broadcast over 140 characters on Twitter? The short answer is that they already have been for several years. Security policy organizations, as demonstrated above, have been employing online communications. Now what is left to decide is how will other institutions meaningfully participate?

It is important to remember that Web 2.0 seeks to initiate a conversation. The 'information machines' of the past have been replaced with interactive tools that the public – by opting in to accounts and services - have shown they want to use. Organizations must not ask themselves, 'Can we do the same thing a different way?', but rather 'How can we do this new thing in this new way?'

While research and policy does often change formats, methods for promotion, dissemination and translation are available and are –arguably- necessary across all platforms. Just like the advent of headlines changed the newspaper industry, information between security policy organizations and the public must be translated into formats that comply with channels the public like to use.

This paper has addressed an issue of deep change in institutions where the public recognition of their roles and functions, as well as their prospects for success, may depend on outreach. New media is now able to extend the reach of security policy organizations to individuals in contexts where other systems of information have been either censored or non-existent. Controlled transparency, accountability and accessibility are demonstrated as the benefits of Web 2.0, and this paper has sought to demonstrate in brief why policy makers and organizations need not fear its power.