



Communication as a Pillar of the Culture of Defense. Why Today More Than Ever Informing Means Defending

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In the contemporary world, dominated by the immediacy of information and the pervasiveness of digital media, communication is no longer an accessory element: it is a strategic component. **This applies to companies, institutions, and, increasingly evidently, also to the Armed Forces.**

There are two statements, often cited in the world of communication, that well summarize this reality.

The first recalls an idea that has become almost an unwritten rule for those involved in communication: **keeping a low profile, when it becomes silence, rarely pays off.** This is the message that runs through *Good-bye to the Low Profile: The Art of Creative Confrontation*, a book published in the 1980s by American **Herbert Schmertz (1930-2028)**, vice president and head of communication at the multinational **Mobil Corporation**.

A principle as simple as it is effective: in institutional communication, **remaining silent often means leaving the field open to others**, losing space and credibility.

The second statement is even more famous and is attributed to the philosopher and communication theorist **Marshall McLuhan**, who in **1964**, in the essay *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, **opens the work with a chapter entitled precisely “The Medium Is the Message”**, making the expression “the medium is the message” central. An intuition destined to mark the history of modern communication, as it highlights that it is not only what is communicated that matters, but also, and above all, **the medium through which it is done**, along with the **context** and the **language** used.

Two concepts that are seemingly simple, but that take on a profound meaning when applied to the sphere of Defense and national security.

Communicating Defense: A Modern Need

For a long time, in Italy as in other European countries, the relationship between **Armed Forces and communication** was characterized by a **natural reserve**, sometimes resulting in a real distance from the world of information: a choice understandable in a different historical context, but **no longer sustainable today**.

Institutional communication cannot indeed be limited to managing emergencies or disseminating formal statements, but must become a **continuous tool of dialogue with society**, capable of explaining the roles, missions, values, and sacrifices of men and women in uniform.

In recent decades, also thanks to the evolution of international operations and the growing commitment within NATO, Italy has understood the importance of **better narrating its Armed Forces**.

Missions abroad, air and naval surveillance operations, and humanitarian support represent a constant commitment, often little known to the public.

To this is added the fundamental role played on the national territory, from support in natural disasters to civil protection interventions, to security and territorial control operations. Yet, despite all this, public perception often remains incomplete or distorted: and it is precisely here

that communication assumes a **strategic value**.

The Culture of Defense as a Tool of Awareness

In Italy, the concept of “Culture of Defense” is still often misunderstood today. **It does not mean militarization of society**, nor glorification of conflict. On the contrary, it means knowledge, awareness, and responsibility.

An informed society better understands why the Armed Forces exist, why investing in security is not a waste, and why **the defense of democratic values** also involves deterrence, prevention, and presence on the territory and in international scenarios.

In a global context marked by the return of conventional conflicts, geopolitical instability, hybrid threats, and terrorism, thinking that peace can be guaranteed simply by renouncing defense tools **is a dangerous illusion**.

Recent history shows that peace is preserved also thanks to **military credibility, cooperation among allies, and response capability**.

Institutional Communication as an Operational Tool

In recent years, the Ministry of Defense has taken important steps, especially in enhancing the image and communication of the Armed Forces. Initiatives such as **Radio Esercito**, the increasingly structured presence on **social media**, and the strengthening of informative activities represent concrete and positive signals. In the last two years, moreover, the evolution has been evident, with a significant acceleration in terms of quality, continuity, and ability to reach a different audience.

However, credibility consolidates over time and effective communication requires constant improvement, raising the bar and aiming for ever higher standards.

It is therefore necessary to continue decisively on this path, further investing in dedicated structures, professional skills, technologies, and specific personnel training. Modern information operations require speed, clarity, the ability to tell stories in a comprehensible and authoritative way, as well as full mastery of digital languages.

This is not about propaganda, but about **transparency**. Telling what the Armed Forces do, why they do it, and with what values they operate is an institutional duty towards the citizens who support them and, ultimately, towards the democracy they are called to defend.

Giving Voice to Those Who Wear the Uniform

An aspect of great value concerns communication “from the ground up”. **Officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted personnel** today represent the most direct and concrete face of the Armed Forces.

Tools such as institutional channels have helped give space to young, prepared, and motivated voices, capable of telling their work with **competence and credibility**, in full respect of operational needs.

Encouraging this type of communication, **within clear rules and defined responsibilities**, makes Defense even closer to citizens, more understandable, and more “human” in the best sense of the term: made up of people, professionalism, and service. It does not mean giving up rigor, but enhancing **authenticity and transparency**, fundamental elements for consolidating trust towards citizens.

Conclusions

Communication is not an accessory, but an essential component of **modern Defense**. In an era where information is an integral part of geopolitical confrontation, thinking of returning to “total” reserve is **anachronistic**: silence does not protect, it often leaves room for distorted narratives, misinformation, and manipulations.

This is why today the Italian Defense is right to communicate in an increasingly structured way: not to chase consensus, but to ensure **transparency**, to make choices and commitments understandable, inside and outside national borders.

Investing in the **Culture of Defense** means strengthening the bond between the Armed Forces and civil society, consolidating citizens' trust, and making the national and collective security system more solid.

Because, today more than ever, **communicating well means defending better**.