

PASCC

Research in Progress

FY18

ESCALATION BY TWEET: THE IMPACT OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON CRISIS ESCALATION AND COMMUNICATION

Performer: King's College London
Project Lead: Heather Williams
FY18

ABSTRACT:

This project will rewrite Herman Kahn's escalation ladder to incorporate modern technology and communication, particularly social media. Recent Twitter activity by U.S. President Donald Trump and other world leaders has demonstrated the impact of social media on strategic communications and strategic stability. Additionally, new technologies such as hypersonic glide vehicles are increasing the speed at which conflict can escalate and reducing the time for de-escalatory signaling. Both of these trends are exacerbated during a crisis when decision-makers are short on time and information, and potentially under increased emotional and political stress. Re-establishing deterrence and assurance under such circumstances is particularly challenging, and social media, in particular, can play either a stabilizing or de-stabilizing role. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), along with its allies as part of NATO, are in need of a toolkit for signaling amidst crisis escalation, particularly at the lower levels of conflict. Current scholarship either approaches this challenge from a policy-based perspective by focusing on cross-domain capabilities, or an academic perspective that explores the principles behind signaling and crisis communication. This study will merge these approaches and contribute a richer analysis to the study of WMD and escalation.

Research in Progress describes ongoing PASCC research. For more information please contact INSS@usafa.edu.