NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence

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COE as the hub for the StratCom Community of Interest
Post-truth. Disinformation as a combat tool.

Are we prepared to face this new dimension of conflicts?
What is the challenge with hostile messaging?
A model of opinion formation

Something happens

*New information, an event, news, scientific breakthrough, decision...*

Experts, officials, sources

Experts, officials, representatives, scientists, eye witnesses, communicators *explain new information*

Media and culture

Newspapers, television, radio, blogs, Facebook, Twitter *mediate new information*

Public sphere

*New information filters through into a social context. An individual deliberates with their community, both social and para social.*

You
Vulnerabilites

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You

Media system vulnerability

- Forged evidence, manipulated sources
- Fake experts, eyewitnesses, commentators
- Fake media, hacked accounts/sites
- Amplification via bots, clickbait
- Unbalanced reporting
Vulnerabilities

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**You**

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**Public opinion vulnerability**

- Social proof, fake proof
- Spiral of silence, bandwagon effects
- Outrage, polarisation, trolls
- Sockpuppets, memes
- Filter bubbles / echo chambers
Vulnerabilities

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Cognitive vulnerability

• Bias confirmation

• Psychographic targeting

• Backfire effects (familiarity, overkill, worldview)
What is legitimate influence?

Legitimate influence

Illegitimate influence

Illegal influence

Free and open debate

Information influence

Source: Lund University, 2018, Countering Information Influence Activities: The state of the art
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is legitimate influence?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deception</strong></td>
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<td>Legitimate communication is open and transparent about its source, origins and purpose. Its contents are credible and can be verified. Therefore, deceptive information is by definition an illegitimate form of communication.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intention</strong></td>
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<td>Legitimate communication intends to contribute toward a constructive debate, even if the nature of the solution is contested. Information can be framed in a way that is persuasive and angled, but not entirely biased. Deliberately unbalanced information intended to benefit only one party is an indictor of illegitimacy.</td>
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<td><strong>Disruption</strong></td>
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<td>Legitimate communication is sometimes disruptive, for example in public demonstrations. Disruption can also take place on websites, where for example trolls undermine a discussion. Examples where disruption is not productive and is disproportionate to or outweighs the potential benefits of that disruption, may be an indication of illegitimacy.</td>
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<td><strong>Interference</strong></td>
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<td>Legitimate communication rests, at least partly, on being personally affected by an issue. Do all of the parties involved in a debate actually have a stake in that debate? The clandestine involvement of a foreign power in an election, for example, would constitute illegitimate interference.</td>
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*Source: Lund University, 2018, Countering Information Influence Activities: The state of the art*
Are we prepared to deal with this new dimension?

Understand → Identify → Counteract

Learn
Are we prepared to deal with this new dimension?

We are..
Reducing our vulnerabilities
Raising the threshold through preparedness

We understand the need to...
Use audience centric responses
Use value based responses
Whole of society response