

The Short Road from the COVID-19 Pandemic to the Infodemia

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Introduction

The confrontation with the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences has not really begun. From a security perspective, one of the biggest challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic is who will be the winner of the information war. China is trying to take the initiative in psychological operations, the US and European countries are coming up with insinuations, and Russia is using gross accusations.

We will reach the most complicated phase of psychological operations when the crisis that humanity is experiencing reaches the economic level when shocks are significant, social tensions increase, and discontent becomes difficult to manage. The mixture of economic and political crises has always been the spark that has triggered widespread social movements, strikes, conflicts, and even wars.

In the medical phase, the grim statistics of thousands of deaths and daily pressures, society instinctively withdraws from any partisan dispute, refuses, also

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instinctively, to engage in political arguments or messages. There is an almost natural common sense of populations who, faced with an intangible enemy from the *other world*, are not so quick to identify the culprits in the *here world*. Hence, the healthy backwardness of societies, regardless of regimes, and consequently a natural ineffectiveness of information wars that bring political or strategic issues to the fore. We cannot sue a virus! Nor can we punish a virus.

But the medical dimension of the crisis will eventually pass, most likely with the introduction of the vaccine. At that point, a large portion of the population will be looking for who to blame. At that moment, many PSYOPS specialists will *help* a certain part of the population, to quickly *identify* the targeted groups.

Systemic analysis of information warfare by COVID-19

This study represents a systemic and multidisciplinary study of the impact of the pandemic COVID-19 and had as its research method the comparative, multi-layered scientific analysis of specialized research at different levels, such as political, economic, psycho-social, and medical.

The Context: Hybrid Threats

A particular threat to the information space around the world and the contemporary battlespace are the hybrid threats. The term *hybrid* emerged in 2005 to describe Hezbollah's actions in the Lebanon War. Thus, the threat comes from an adversary capable of carrying out actions by “conventional/unconventional, regular/irregular, overt/covert means.”³

We believe that hybrid actions are, in principle, a special type of action in which all instruments of power are used directly, with the military having a special status. The

³ Damien Van Puyvelde, “Hybrid War: Does It Even Exist?” *NATO Review Magazine*, 7 May 2015, accessed 6 February 2021, <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2015/Also-in-2015/hybrid-modern-future-warfare-russia-ukraine/EN/index.htm>

latter is used indirectly, where the threat of military force is mainly used to promote a demonstration/image of power.⁴

Another extremely useful tool of power in hybrid threats is information. NATO addresses the definition of hybrid threats by analyzing two important elements in the spectrum of the information environment: disinformation and cyber attacks.⁵ The EU's approach is similar. The EU identifies cyber attacks and disinformation campaigns⁶ as tools of the hybrid threat agenda.

For this research, data from surveys conducted by well-known polling institutes around the world were used. Based on the idea that a picture is worth a thousand words, we start the systemic analysis with a graphical representation of the levels to be analyzed. The crisis we are witnessing thus has several levels (Figure 1).

⁴ C. Ichimescu, "Fundamentals of Information Operations," *Strategies XXI: Conference Proceedings* (Bucharest: Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies, "Carol I" National Defense University, 2018), p. 126. In Romanian.

⁵ "Countering disinformation: improving the Alliance's digital resilience," *NATO Review*, 12 August 2021, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2021/08/12/countering-disinformation-improving-the-alliances-digital-resilience/index.html>

⁶ "A Europe that Protects: Countering Hybrid Threats," *Factsheets* (Brussels: European Union External Action Service, 13 June 2018), accessed 23 April 2021, <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/46393/factsheet-hybrid-threats>.

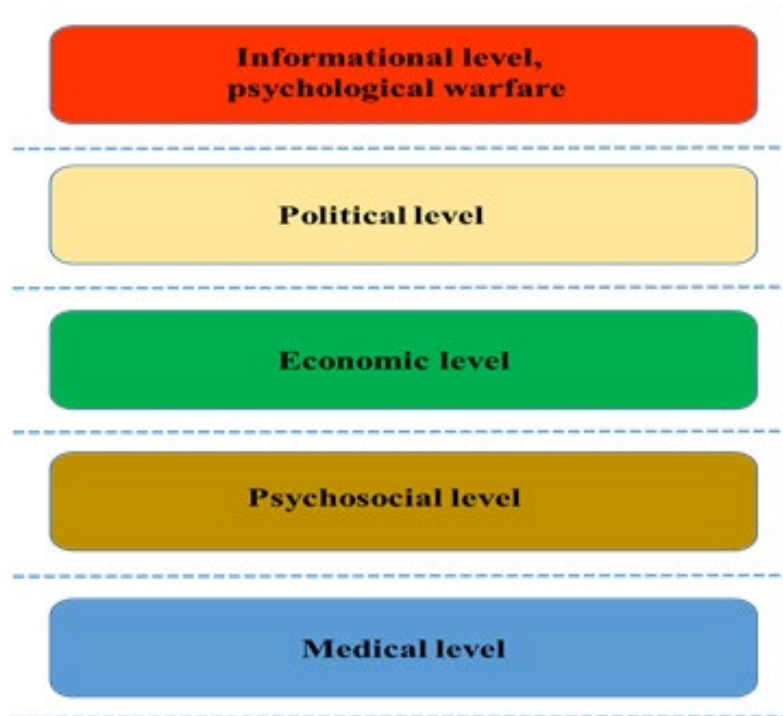


Figure 1: Crisis Stages caused by COVID-19.

Source: Authors contribution

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic spans several levels. The first is the medical level, which we are now experiencing in hospitals. The second is the psychosocial level, which is caused by isolation or fear of the consequences of the medical crisis. The third is the economic level, namely the crisis or the coming economic recession. The fourth is the political level, namely the way these crises will affect the political profile of our societies, whether in nation-states, in entities such as the EU, or even at the global level. The fifth and final is the informational level, triggered by the avalanche of false news surrounding the pandemic.

Current: The Medical Level

COVID-19 continues to spread around the world with an unpredictable trajectory, but we are facing the greatest medical and health crisis of our time. With globalization, acceleration, and ease of human movement, the risk of spreading diseases that until recently were geographically confined to specific areas has increased. This

statement is supported by the global rate of spread of COVID-19. As of November 2020, we were talking about over 151 million cases worldwide and over 3,182,000 deaths, with the most affected countries being the United States (over 32,300,00 cases), India (19,164,000), Brazil (14,659,000), France (5,677,000), and Russia (over 4,759,000).⁷

The very high prevalence rates and complications in some patients are overwhelming medical services in many countries: there are too many critically ill patients (not just cases of COVID-19), there are few places in hospital emergency departments, and few artificial ventilators compared to what is needed. Solutions? Thus, the EU will "focus on addressing the immediate health crisis and resulting humanitarian needs, strengthening partner countries' health, water, and sanitation systems and their research and preparedness capacities to cope with the pandemic, and mitigating the socio-economic impact."⁸

On a global level, possible medical solutions are imperative, related to the adoption of individual protective measures, group protective measures in commercial spaces and institutions, and of course social distancing. The announcement of several companies to complete the process of developing a vaccine against COVID-19 is the best news in the medical field. The next global, regional and governmental challenge will be to get the population to vaccinate. As of 28 April 2021, a total of 1,011,457,859 vaccine doses have been administered.⁹

The Psychosocial Level: Effects of Isolation and Quarantine

To contain the spread of the virus and save lives, social restrictions were imposed around the globe. Isolation has a serious impact on the mental health of telecommuting workers. This is according to a survey conducted in France by the

⁷ "COVID-19 Dashboard," *Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Coronavirus Research Centre, Johns Hopkins University and Medicine (JHU)*, accessed 1 November 2020, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>).

⁸ "European Solidarity in Action," EU's Response to COVID-19, accessed 7 September 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/coronavirus/european-solidarity-in-action/>

⁹ "Recovery plan for Europe," European Commission (2020), accessed 29 November 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en.

Opinion Way institute.¹⁰ The survey was conducted between 30 March and 8 April 2020, just three weeks into the isolation. Nearly half of respondents (44 percent) suffered from anxiety and depression.

Isolation leads to work overload for both private and public sector employees, resulting in mental and cognitive fatigue," said Jean-Pierre Brun, co-founder of Empreinte Humaine, a company specializing in prevention, psychosocial risk and quality of work, the survey's beneficiary.¹¹

More specifically, more than a quarter of workers (27 percent) suffered from *moderate* depression, which can cause post-traumatic symptoms. In 18 percent, the depression is *severe* and carries the risk of triggering a mental illness. This state of major depression is more common in women (22 percent) than in men (14 percent), the study notes.¹² Most women with major depression are at the top of the health care or retail industries. And when they are telecommuters, no longer exposed to the stress of pollution, women take on household tasks to a greater extent than men. The situation is all the more troubling because the sociological study only looks at the first three weeks of isolation. The longer the isolation, the greater the risk factor for mental health.¹³

If telecommuting itself is not a risk factor, the conditions under which it takes place are, according to the study.¹⁴ For example, only 45 percent of employees can isolate themselves to work throughout the day because they lack space. Isolation in a space of less than 40 square meters is a big risk. In the survey, 24.6 percent of respondents say this leads to severe depression. Job motivation also declines over time, according to 24 percent of those surveyed, with this figure reaching 50 percent for those complaining of a severe state of depression. If seven out of ten workers say that the employer does its best to help them, they still say that they feel supported mainly by

¹⁰ <https://www.opinion-way.com/en/opinion-political-surveys/published-surveys/opinionway-pour-microsoft-le-bonheur-au-travail-decembre-2020/viewdocument/2489.html? x tr sl=fr& x tr tl=en& x tr hl=en& x tr pto=ajax,sc>

¹¹ Ghislaine Labelle & Jean-Pierre Brun, "La gestion du stress et de l'anxiété en temps de pandémie," *Order of Chartered Human Resources Advisors*, 23 March 2020, <https://ordrecha.org/ressources/dossiers-speciaux/covid-19/stress-anxiete-en-temps-de-pandemie>.

¹² Ghislaine and Brun, "La gestion du stress et de l'anxiété en temps de pandémie."

¹³ Christophe Nguyen, "Santé psychologique au travail et COVID-19," September 2021, <https://empreintehumaine.com/>

¹⁴ Ghislaine and Brun, "La gestion du stress et de l'anxiété en temps de pandémie."

colleagues (79 percent) and their direct superior (70 percent). It is necessary to maintain and emphasize the social empathy and emotional closeness that manifests itself to everyone because they can become a true lifeline.

The COVID-19 crisis also has effects at the psychosocial level. The pandemic has contributed to an increase in domestic violence. UNICEF analysis shows the vulnerability of children and women in a statistical perspective published in May 2020. The data published in this report is frightening:

Nearly 8 in 10 children aged 1 to 14 have been exposed to some form of psychological aggression and/or physical punishment by caregivers in the home in the past month. Globally, as many as three-quarters of children ages 2 to 4 have been exposed to verbal aggression or physical punishment by caregivers at home. In addition, 18 percent of women and girls aged 15 to 49 who have ever had a partner have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence. In times of crisis, especially now, girls and women are very likely to be at greater risk of experiencing violence at home from a partner.¹⁵

In China, a communication was published by the National Health Commission that provides guidelines for psychological crisis intervention to reduce the psychosocial impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.¹⁶ The synergy of leadership and individual interventions plays an important role in addressing the psychosocial impact.¹⁷ Together, we can succeed against COVID-19 at the psychosocial level.

¹⁵ Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, "How COVID-19 is changing the world. A statistical perspective," Volume I, pp. 54-55, accessed 28 August 2020, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/how-covid-19-is-changing-the-world-a-statistical-perspective/#>.

¹⁶ National Health Commission of China, "Principles of the emergency psychological crisis interventions for the new coronavirus pneumonia" [in Chinese] [cited 7 February 2020], <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/jkj/s3577/202001/6adc08b966594253b2b791be5c3b9467>. Quoted in: L. Dong and J. Bouey, "Public Mental Health Crisis during COVID-19 Pandemic, China," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 26, 7 (2020): pp. 1616-1618, DOI: 10.3201/eid2607.200407, accessed 1 November 2020, <https://europepmc.org/article/med/32202993>.

¹⁷ J.C. Morganstein, "Annals for Hospitalists Inpatient Notes - Preparing for Battle: How Hospitalists Can Manage the Stress of COVID-19," *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 19 May 2020, accessed 9 September 2020, <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M20-1897>.

The Economic Level: the Crisis or the Coming Economic Recession

The spread of the coronavirus epidemic is causing turmoil in the financial markets. It is expected that the measures taken to deal with the medical crisis will have an impact on the global economy. This will be immediately felt in interest rates on bank loans, higher bills for telephony or utilities, and purchasing power for goods such as real estate (homes, rentals, etc.) or cars. Many investors surveyed on the subject also reported utility problems, possible price increases, and worsening financial stress, according to a barometer according to analysts quoted by the Frames Barometer:

The epidemic COVID-19 is a significant test for the global economy, which unlike the SARS episode is now much more interconnected, with China the key player in international trade chains. Growing supply problems, especially in China, the world's largest exporter, significant fluctuations in commodity prices, such as oil, gas, copper, etc., are likely to increase the prospects of a potential crisis, exacerbated by a significant drop in consumption, world's main economic driver."¹⁸

According to the bleakest scenario analyzed by Bloomberg, 2020, the economic impact could include recessions in the United States, the Eurozone, or Japan, but also the lowest level of economic growth ever recorded in China.¹⁹ In total, the loss of world output could amount to around \$2.7 trillion - the equivalent of the UK's GDP. However, if China manages to keep the epidemic under control and companies return their global activity to normal levels in the second quarter, the impact on the global economy could be limited. Because this is a rapidly evolving and unpredictable situation, economists have not yet provided definitive data on the exact impact on financial markets. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the provided the effects of the virus outbreak fade as assumed, the impact on confidence and incomes of well-targeted policy actions in the most exposed economies could help global GDP growth recover to 3¼ percent in 2021.²⁰

¹⁸ "Frames barometer," Frames media (2020), accessed 23 October 2020, <http://framesmedia.ro/>.

¹⁹ T. Orlik, J. Rush, M. Cousin, and J. Hong, "Coronavirus Could Cost the Global Economy \$2.7 Trillion. Here's How," *Bloomberg*, 6 March 2020, accessed 1 September 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2020-coronavirus-pandemic-global-economic-risk/>.

²⁰ OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/berlin/publikationen/Interim-Economic-Assessment-2-March-2020.pdf>, March 2020.

However, the economic data could be more worrisome if the epidemic proves to be long-term and could take a more aggressive turn. Under these conditions, experts predict economic growth of only 1.5 percent in 2020 as businesses shut down due to the isolation of their employees at home. The latest estimates from the International Monetary Fund indicate that the “global growth is expected to moderate to 3.3 percent over the medium term—reflecting projected damage to supply potential and forces that predate the pandemic, including aging-related slower labor force growth in advanced economies and some emerging market economies.”²¹ Indeed, confidence indicators in the world’s main economic blocs have been mixed recently.

The Political Level: National Political Profiles of States, International Organizations and Globally.

The COVID-19 pandemic tested the political leaderships of all the affected states. In this context, some presidents or governments appear as strong, unifying leaders, while others have adopted an anachronistic approach.

If we analyze the model of the European Union, we can see that at its level it was decided to activate an integrated mechanism for the political response to the crisis, which led to the elaboration of an economic recovery plan for Europe worth 1.8 trillion euros²² to repair the damage caused by the crisis. It is very likely that there will be political disagreements that will fuel intra-European rivalries, especially when it comes to access to the financial resources released and made available by the EU. The first signal was sent by Hungary and Poland, which blocked the vote on the multiannual budget European Union. The motivation of these states stems from the EU's desire to link access to European funds to the rule of law.²³

Politics is currently at least an outlet for the problems currently facing the US. The COVID-19 crisis in the US factored heavily in the American election of Joe Biden over former President Trump. Trump lost the election because he failed to find

²¹ International Monetary Fund, “World economic outlook,” April 2021, <https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/WEO/2021/April/English/text.ashx>

²² BBC News: “EU budget blocked by Hungary and Poland over rule of law issue,” November 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54964858>

²³ BBC News: “EU budget blocked by Hungary.”

solutions to the multitude of problems created by this crisis. Trump also lost because he did not wear a mask in public meetings or meetings.²⁴ Thus, he visibly conveyed the message to the American people that he did not believe in the seriousness of the pandemic. The fact that he later fell ill only confirmed that he did not follow the rules set by the doctors for everyone: wear a mask, wash your hands, and keep social distance.

An interesting political situation can be observed in Brazil, in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. Here we can observe an interesting combination between state institutions taking measures to fight the pandemic and the presidential institution with the government represented by Jair Bolsonaro taking a different approach.

The Ministry of Health and the Supreme Court of Justice are two institutions in the state apparatus that have tried to fight the pandemic by taking measures similar to those recommended by WHO. Instead, President Bolsonaro along with a section of the Evangelical Church called for an aggressive disinformation campaign to convey the message that the pandemic was just a cold.²⁵

These states or organizations, such as the EU, tried to find solutions to fight the pandemic by using information as the main tool. The first solution was to provide the right information to the target audience. The second solution was to use modified, disguised, or false information to minimize the pandemic. What is the right solution for the public? The next elections in these nation-states will be telling.

Information Warfare: China, Russian Federation and the West (especially the EU and the US)

People who are stressed about staying at home, who are dizzy from the numbers of disasters that befall them every day, and who are disturbed by the *fake news* coming

²⁴ A. Parker, J. Dawsey, M. Viser, and M. Scherer, "How Trump's Erratic Behavior and Failure on Coronavirus Doomed his Reelection," *The Washington Post*, 7 November 2020, accessed 29 November 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/elections/interactive/2020/trump-pandemic-coronavirus-election/>

²⁵ B. Gordon and L. Kibuuka, "Complicity and Synergy between Bolsonaro and Brazilian Evangelicals in COVID-19 Times: Adherence to Scientific Negationism for Political-Religious Reasons," *International Journal of Latin American Religions* 4, pp. 288–317, accessed 29 November 2020, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41603-020-00124-0#citeas>.

out of the TV screens, will eventually realize that some of them could not go to work yesterday because they were not allowed to, and today because their job no longer exists.

At that point, the economic crisis will inevitably complicate things. The result will be a mixture of unemployment, inflation, debt, rates, and installments, with the specter of staying at home. The transition to the political level of the crisis will of course be followed, just as hard to notice, by the transition to the strategic level.

Who will be to blame? Governments, Europe, democracy ... These are the ideal candidates for a terrible unleashing, which is unlikely to be avoided. In this tumultuous context, it is very likely the main international actors will conduct their influence using psychological operations.

The main international actors, China, Russian Federation, and the West, will most probably, have fertile ground to sow disappointment and distrust by exploiting vulnerabilities through conditions²⁶ - this is the favorite strategy of PSYOPS warfare - incomparably more favorable than those after the financial crisis of 2007 - 2008 or the migration crisis of 2015. It will be very interesting to watch how the main actors in the information arena will propose enemies and *argue* for their decisions with simple, direct, and above all *unquestionable* theories. There will be no trials or deliberations, instead, they will automatically proceed to *executions*.

The final target will be the Western system where the actors will be represented mainly by the US and the European Union. Pro-European national governments will also be targeted, weakening larger EU or NATO projects, which will be dealt with mainly by the Russian Federation, which is probably already collecting real-world data to help European states in times of crisis. This is what some people want us to do.

In the global vaccination campaign, disinformation about vaccination has replaced that of wearing a mask. Since the beginning of 2021, there have been more than

²⁶ Allied Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations, <https://info.publicintelligence.net/NATO-PSYOPS.pdf>.

100 new examples of pro-vaccine disinformation claims about vaccination. Some examples are: ²⁷

- G20 countries recognised Sputnik V as the best drug for coronavirus prevention;²⁸
- The American Government and corporations are creating food riots in Europe;²⁹
- COVID-19 vaccine will cause more deaths than COVID-19; it is a plot to reduce population.³⁰

These examples demonstrate the ability of the Russian Federation to use tools such as trolling factories, intelligence agencies, and other non-traditional actors to reach and influence audiences within the EU.

The concept of resilience and related concepts have found particular resonance in current policy thinking in the face of global change. If until recently we spoke of resilience with a particular emphasis on security disruptions with implications primarily in the political and military spheres, the current crisis caused by COVID-19 has shown us that its implications go deeper and can occur in the realm of information warfare.³¹

²⁷ "Special Report Update: Short Assessment of Narratives and Disinformation around the COVID-19 Pandemic," European Union External Action Service (Updated December 2020 - April 2021), 28 April 2021, accessed 01 May 2021, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/eeas-special-report-update-short-assessment-of-narratives-and-disinformation-around-the-covid-19-pandemic-update-december-2020-april-2021/?highlight=trolling%20covid-19>

²⁸ <https://mundo.sputniknews.com/20210909/los-ministros-de-salud-del-g20-califican-sputnik-v-como-la-mejor-vacuna-anti-covid-1115874478.html>.

²⁹ <https://ria.ru/20210901/produkty-1748055161.html>. Western campaign against COVID-19 aims to impose control over society, <https://www.geopolitica.ru/it/article/potrebbe-essere-un-complotto-la-riduzione-della-popolazione-dopo-tutto>

³⁰ <https://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2021/08/22/could-it-be-a-population-reduction-plot-after-all/>

³¹ Ciprian Ignat, Increasing State Resilience through Crisis Management in *Security and Defense Crisis Management*, C. Ignat, and Ş. A. Dan-Suteu [in Romanian] (Bucharest: RAO, 2019), p. 104.

Discussions and Proposals: The need for Integrated Strategic Communication

The proposals start from two legitimate questions: Who will manage strategic communication at the country level? What can we do to find a balance in a world that is in danger of becoming too high?

The lack of credible landmarks and narratives can be irresponsible for any country in the European Union, which is more divided than ever. In view of the challenges ahead, it is now more necessary than ever for the competent institutions of each EU country to approach the *information war* and related public communication with greater prudence.

The authors of this study consider the following steps to be useful for effective strategic communication (see Figure 2 below):

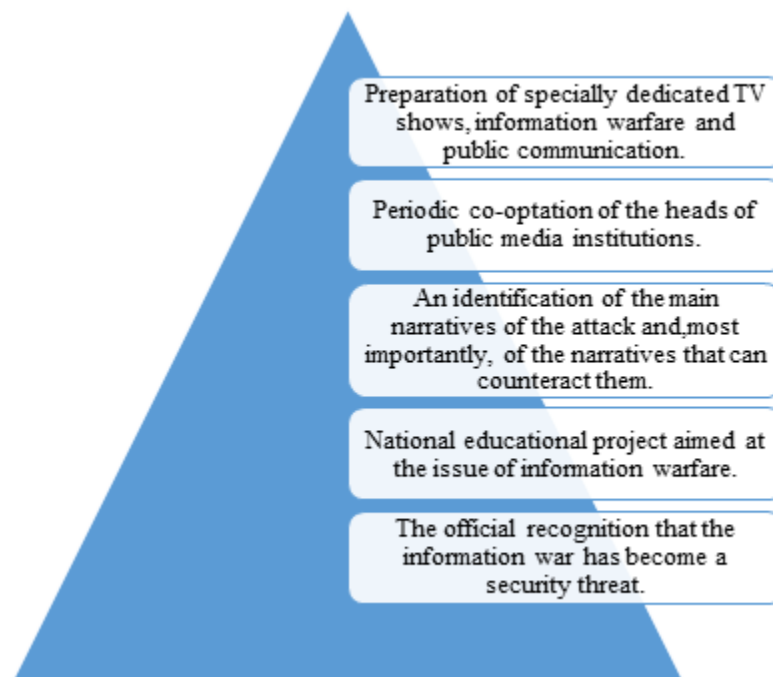


Figure 2: Useful Steps for an Effective Strategic Communication

Source: Authors contribution

According to the operating procedures, expertise, and best practices gained by the two authors of this study in the field of information operations within NATO theaters of operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans, the information warfare based on the effects of PSYOPS has become a security threat that can no longer be ignored. Consequently, better cooperation/coordination between EU and US profiling institutions is needed.

An active, not passive or reactive, stance on their part is required. It is not just a matter of conducting a *fact check* or detecting *fake news*, useful but insufficient activities, but of identifying the main attack narratives and, above all, the narratives that they can counteract in a balanced and effective way, especially with regard to dissemination of information into the public space.

The heads of the public media institutions, the directors of the major television channels, the directors of the daily newspapers, the websites, the agencies, and the relevant public communicators should be involved in this effort - by co-optation or by regular invitation. At the very least, public broadcasters (television and radio) must prepare programs that deal specifically with information warfare and public communication. Finally, according to a popular proverb from Romania that a good crisis must not be allowed to fizzle out in vain, it will be necessary in the future to lay the foundations for an educational project dealing with information warfare (digital media literacy, fake news, etc.) and the introduction of such teaching in schools.

Another aspect that should be addressed in the short term about the need for integrated strategic communication concerns the increased efforts towards digitalisation worldwide. Digitisation is extremely important in facilitating access to information and various services. However, as online networks and networks are very vulnerable, extensive protective measures are needed. In the case of Europe, which has undergone rapid digitalisation in recent months, this can be done through the Three Seas Initiative,³² which aims to create and develop interconnectivity between the Baltic Sea,

³² O. Brânda, "The Three Seas Initiative – A New Role for Romania?" *Defense Resources Management in the 21st Century*, The 13th Scientific Conference with International Attendance organized by the Regional Department of Defense Resources Management Studies. National Defense University "Carol I", Braşov, 8-9 November 2018, accessed 6 December 2020, <http://www.codrm.eu/conferences/2018/Carte%20CoDRM%202018.pdf>.

the Adriatic Sea, and the Black Sea in the areas of the economy, energy sectors, and digital development.

Of these three areas, digital connectivity, especially during the pandemic COVID-19, plays a special role in strengthening economic, social, and territorial cohesion.³³ Nevertheless, it is also vulnerable to fake news and information attacks, which require a higher level of protection and careful threading. Finally, in addition to the pandemic, there is also an infodemic, which spreads even faster through information networks. Digitisation has only facilitated this, which is only natural because, like any other system, it has both strengths and weaknesses, the latter of which can be easily exploited by perpetrators. It is up to state actors to develop resilient tactics and procedures that can also be applied to the digital sector.

Conclusion

Current and future infodemia will never be solved by monitoring and restricting public discourse, nor by the digital literacy of citizens. All these measures avoid directly confronting the incentives of social platforms to encourage practices such as surveillance, collection, and processing of personal data which, in turn, keep the fire of misinformation and future infodemics burning. We should not just think about how we can make people more responsible in their information diet or how to cut off their access to and the possibility of spreading false information. It is becoming increasingly clear that we need to rethink the role and function of social platforms in democratic societies.

One thing must be clear. Neither denial nor censorship are useful tools in information warfare based on PSYOPS effects. After all, information warfare is not a chess game where excellent minds face each other and try to understand one step earlier what the opponent intends to do, and whoever manages to do it first wins.

There is no such thing: information warfare is first and foremost the effort that must be made after understanding the intentions and strategies (narratives) of the adversary: that is, protecting one's society, the public, through a minimum of education,

³³ O. Brânda, "The Three Seas Initiative."

educating one's communicators so that they are able to speak effectively in public. In such a time of crisis, there is a risk that institutional inadequacies, lack of cooperation or coordination, and, above all, failure of strategic communication become real vulnerabilities, in the midst of a war that has not even officially begun and in which Article 5 NATO or Article 42(7) EU do not apply. The issue of false information and news will never be corrected by tightening regulations on public discourse. Despite all the efforts of the authorities to correct the "information diseases" to which they contribute, they have not been very successful, because they have treated only the symptoms, not the cause of their appearance.

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