

Media, Manipulation, and Information War

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Abstract

Globalization and the communications revolution have brought major changes in the way traditional and electronic media exist. Information flows increased tremendously in volume and began to grow exponentially with the advent of the Internet. It can now fall outside the control of certain authorities, easily cross state lines, and be instantly copied on social networks. The growth in the volume of information makes it much easier than before not only to form public opinion, but also to manipulate it, to wage large-scale information wars. In recent years, problems of media manipulation have been associated with fake news. Of course, fake news (false information) in itself is nothing new: Fake news has been spread by traditional media since its inception. Another thing is that the Internet has made possible the mass distribution of counterfeit products, both by bots (robots) and real individual users. In this study, the information war that our consciousness is subjected to in the context of media and propaganda and the importance of the media in this war are investigated. Information warfare is a type of warfare that involves the use of information and propaganda alongside traditional warfare. This type of warfare is effectively employed in international relations, political struggles, and conflict zones. Information warfare can be seen as an arena where rival actors attempt to manipulate public opinion. The renowned German military and political leader Clausewitz emphasized in his 1832 work "On War" that "War is the continuation of politics by other means."

In the 21st century, information warfare can be said to be an important tool in contemporary world politics for gaining political and economic power. Many countries have developed information warfare strategies and used these strategies to serve their national security and foreign policy objectives. States can attempt to influence the perception of rival countries or groups by using tactics such as propaganda, cyberattacks, fake social media accounts, and others. Information warfare is conducted by establishing a system to control the flow of information and using this information management system to serve one's own objectives.

Keywords: Media, Manipulation, Information, Political struggles, Information Warfare

Медіа, маніпуляція та інформаційна війна

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Анотація

Глобалізація та комунікаційна революція принесли значні зміни в спосіб існування традиційних та електронних ЗМІ. Інформаційні потоки надзвичайно зросли в обсязі та почали зростати в геометричній прогресії з появою Інтернету. Тепер він може вийти з-під контролю певних органів влади, легко перетнути межі держави та бути миттєво скопійованим у соціальних мережах. Зростання обсягів інформації значно легше, ніж раніше, не тільки формувати громадську думку, а й маніпулювати нею, вести широкомасштабні інформаційні війни. Останніми роками проблеми маніпулювання ЗМІ пов'язують із фейковими новинами. Звичайно, фейкові новини (неправдива інформація) самі по собі не є чимось новим: фейкові новини поширюються традиційними ЗМІ з самого початку їх створення. Інша справа, що Інтернет зробив можливим масове розповсюдження контрафактної продукції, як ботами (роботами), так і реальними індивідуальними користувачами. У цьому дослідженні досліджується інформаційна війна, якій піддається наша свідомість у контексті ЗМІ та пропаганди, а також значення ЗМІ у цій війні. Інформаційна війна — це вид війни, який передбачає використання інформації та пропаганди поряд із традиційною війною. Цей тип війни ефективно використовується в міжнародних відносинах, політичній боротьбі та зонах конфліктів. Інформаційну війну можна розглядати як арену, де суперники намагаються маніпулювати громадською думкою. Відомий німецький військовий і політичний діяч Клаузевіц у своїй праці «Про війну» 1832 року підкреслював, що «війна є продовженням політики іншими засобами».

У 21 столітті інформаційну війну можна назвати важливим інструментом сучасної світової політики для здобуття політичної та економічної влади. Багато країн розробили стратегії інформаційної війни та використовували ці стратегії для досягнення цілей національної безпеки та зовнішньої політики. Держави можуть намагатися вплинути на сприйняття конкуруючих країн або груп, використовуючи такі тактики, як пропаганда, кібератаки, підроблені акаунти в соціальних мережах тощо. Інформаційна війна ведеться шляхом встановлення системи контролю над потоком інформації та використання цієї системи управління інформацією для досягнення власних цілей.

Ключові слова: медіа, маніпуляції, інформація, політична боротьба, інформаційна війна

Introduction

The globalization of the information field has not strengthened the power of major states but has instead led to the emergence of multinational media empires. In other words, the media plays a pioneering role in inciting and amplifying armed and political conflicts today. Herbert Marcuse (1994) has pointed out that the disabling of television or other media devices accomplishes what capitalism's fundamental principles could not – it leads to the collapse of the information system. In this regard, McLuhan also suggested in the 1960s, especially that television could transform the world into a global village.

In recent years, with the significant development of communication technologies, there is a common understanding that two global and sometimes opposing trends are observed in the media: the viewer is both the object of manipulation and a partner in this process (Bakulev, 2005). However, the reasons for media manipulations are quite diverse and, according to Grachev and Melnik, can be divided into three main groups:

- Reasons stemming from the individual psychological and personal characteristics of individuals working in the mass media field, such as bias and subjectivity arising from their political preferences, sympathies, etc.
- Reasons determined by the political, socio-economic, and organizational conditions of the media field (e.g., economic and administrative dependencies on certain social actors).
- Reasons related to the functioning process of mass media: in order to attract attention and gain a mass audience, the media is directed by specific general technologies when creating and disseminating certain messages.

Social media platforms enable the rapid spread of information warfare. Fake accounts, troll campaigns, and viral deceptive content can easily spread through social media and reach large audiences. Of course, social networks were not originally designed as political or manipulative tools. They were initially used by users to share photos and videos of books, films, music, travel, gastronomic preferences, pets, plants, etc. (Bakulev, 2005). However, when social networks gained millions of viewers, they quickly became an area of interest for business and politics. Today, social networks are used as a fast and relatively inexpensive way to promote information, including false information. As a result, the media has become a source of various manipulations.

In conclusion, the media, manipulation, and information warfare represent a complex field where the flow of information is controlled, directed, and used as a tool in conflicts (Ozyumenko, 2017). Understanding these issues and limiting their effects emerge as a significant challenge for societies and states.

The aim of this study. In recent years, media manipulation has been closely associated with fake news.

Fake news is not entirely new, as it has been disseminated by traditional media in the past. However, the internet has made it possible for both bots (robots) and real individual users to distribute false information in bulk. In this regard, the aim of this study is to investigate information warfare in the media as a manipulation tool, especially in the context of fake news.

The scope of this study is the information warfare conducted through the media. The selected cases for this study are as follows:

Russian Invasion of Ukraine and Propaganda: During Russia's intervention in Ukraine, Russian media and propaganda machinery distorted events and used deceptive tactics to serve their political objectives. For example, during the annexation of Crimea, Russian media portrayed the events as a defence against a Ukrainian government led by "fascists."

Social Media Manipulation in American Elections: In the 2016 United States presidential election, Russia was accused of manipulating the election process through fake accounts and advertisements on American social media platforms. This is an example of how political campaigns can rapidly spread deceptive information through social media.

Syrian Civil War and Media Manipulation: During the Syrian Civil War, both sides engaged in media manipulation. Both the Assad government and opposition groups used propaganda and deceptive information to shape events in their favour.

Chemical Weapons Allegations and Manipulation: Regarding chemical attacks in Syria, deceptive information and manipulative images were disseminated through the media about the use of chemical weapons. This was done with the aim of influencing international reactions and interventions.

Crimea Crisis and Information Warfare: During Russia's annexation of Crimea, Russian media and government officials influenced the international perception of events by presenting them deceptively. They engaged in an information war with Western media and governments.

Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar and Social Media: During the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, social media platforms contributed to the rapid spread of deceptive information that incited violence and exacerbated ethnic tensions. This was used to hide ethnic cleansing and human rights violations.

These examples illustrate the complex relationship between media, manipulation, and information warfare. Such cases emphasize the importance of being a more informed and critical media consumer and raise ethical and accountability issues for governments and media organizations.

Method of the research: The examination of the sample cases was conducted using the Case Study research method. Case studies are often used to examine one or a few example cases in detail, aiming to understand

how these examples work in the real world and whether they can contribute to generalizations. This method is employed to test how examples operate in the real-world context.

Media Manipulation.

Manipulation is an influence on an individual's consciousness and emotions that is not carried out by themselves but has an effect on their thoughts and feelings. In this regard, firstly, an important point in the manipulation process is its impact on a person's psyche, consciousness, and emotions. Secondly, the influence is hidden, not conspicuous, and it requires power, time,

and knowledge to reveal it. Thirdly, manipulation is also motivating (Tekke, & Aybala, 2021).

The manipulator's goal is to arouse emotions, create an idea, form an attitude, and prompt action. Manipulation is a programmed thought. Fourthly, it is emphasized that manipulation has an organized, planned, and purposeful character. This characteristic of manipulation is extremely important because it reflects the intentionality and thoughtfulness of the manipulator's actions and requires skill (Çakmak, 2019). Additionally, the intentionality of manipulation leads to the fact that manipulation can be characterized as primary or secondary.

Table 1.
Specific Characteristics of Manipulation and Influence

Manipulation	Influence
Address is often an unwanted "illusion of independence."	Recipient's interests that influence/do not influence, "free will action».
The consent of the recipient is not important for the outcome of communication.	Does not disregard the consent of the recipient.
The manipulator programs the recipient's actions and finds goals that the recipient should follow.	Provides an opportunity for free, independent choice.
The expression is constructed in a way that the recipient will not know the author's real objectives, not only are the author's interests hidden, but also the existence of interests other than those declared is concealed.	The recipient is clearly informed about what the author wants.
It leads to a one-sided gain in communication, benefiting only the author.	Benefits both sides of the interaction.
The recipient does not know how the interaction will end or assumes a different outcome from what is real.	The recipient has an idea about the outcome of the communication and makes efforts towards it.
The recipient cannot account for their actions and attitudes that arise after manipulative communication.	The recipient can reasonably explain the reasons for their actions and beliefs.

Source: (Gorina, 2016)

Primary manipulation is a deliberate, planned action that knows the purpose and methods of manipulation. Secondary manipulation is the result of primary manipulation; it is the manipulation that automatically follows the primary effect. Secondary manipulation can be carried out by the player (and even new players), but it cannot be considered a negative action. In other words, secondary manipulation is the spread of manipulative material by individuals who themselves are victims of primary manipulation (Toktay, 2019).

It is well known that the media greatly manipulates the consciousness and emotions of society. Indeed, the media is designed for a wide range of viewers who trust it to some extent, making the media a suitable manipulator for manipulative clients. Media manipulation involves a range of manipulative techniques aimed at deceiving or influencing society through media platforms using news, information, and images. Such manipulations can be carried out for various reasons, including political purposes, economic gains, creating societal impact, or individual interests. Common examples of media manipulation may include (Agapova, & Gushchina, 2017):

- **Misleading Headlines:** News headlines can be misleading to capture the reader's attention or trigger a

specific emotional response. Headlines may exaggerate an event or contain misleading information.

- **Biased News and Distortion:** News sources may present an event in a biased way or distort facts to create news. This can be done to interpret an event in a manipulative way or to support a specific agenda.

- **Misleading Quotes:** News articles or reports may alter quotes in a misleading way or take quotes out of context to change the meaning of the news.

- **Deceptive Photos and Videos:** Media manipulation can be achieved through the use of deceptive photos or videos. This can lead to events or individuals being misrepresented.

- **Fake News and Dissemination of Misinformation:** Fake news and misleading information are one of the most harmful types of media manipulation. False information is intentionally produced and can quickly influence public opinion.

- **Social Media Manipulation:** Social media platforms allow the rapid spread of deceptive content through fake accounts, bots, and algorithms. This can be used for political campaigns or commercial gains.

- **Conspiracy Theories and Propaganda:** As part of media manipulation, the spread of conspiracy theories or propaganda is also a common method.

Such information can influence people's beliefs and behaviours.

- **Perception Operations:** States or organizations can manipulate information through perception operations at the national or international level. This may aim to influence public opinion of rival countries or groups.

Media manipulation underscores the importance of conscious and critical media consumption for societies. It is also crucial for journalists, news organizations, and social media platforms to adhere to ethical standards and take measures to limit the spread of manipulative content.

Disinformation as a Manipulation Tool.

When discussing the spiritual and mental aspects, the essence of information warfare lies in the manipulation of the masses' consciousness and the introduction of targeted false information into their awareness. The psychological mechanism of spiritual violence towards an individual, a group, or a mass involves making the person underestimate and act according to this false information, despite the distortion of the truth. Manipulating consciousness is a form of domination over the mental state of individuals. Manipulative messages shape appropriate thought patterns that are in favour of the exploitative class. With the help of manipulation, it is possible to achieve changes in life attitudes at the first two levels of effect. Fundamental changes in the opinions of a person, group, or community would require complex influences on consciousness over a long period.

Psychological warfare researchers believe that with the help of manipulation, it is possible to achieve changes in life attitudes at the first two levels of effect. Fundamental changes in the opinions of a person, group, or community would require complex influences on consciousness over a long period. Professor R. Goodin from Yale University (USA) in his book "Manipulation Policy" sees this phenomenon as a spiritual tool for people. Goodin (1982) states that essentially manipulation is "a well-organized deception of people."

In McCarthy Cannon's (1986) article "Resurgence in Washington," it is mentioned that people in the White House knew that "the more knowledgeable people are, the harder it is to manipulate them." Therefore, the author emphasizes the need for officials to campaign for the removal of freedom of information laws. Because the absence of truth increases the possibility of manipulating consciousness. Thus, manipulation acts as an integral feature of lifestyle and exercises control over people's thoughts and actions. This is one of the most important levers for rulers. On the other hand, bourgeois manipulation theory largely approaches this process from a behavioural standpoint: stimulus-response (Gorina, 2016).

The organizers of information warfare cynically view manipulation as a kind of social reflex - a specific behaviour caused by appropriate ideological and psychological motives. As an important component of the mechanism of psychological warfare, manipulation

includes several elements: the provision of exaggeratedly produced information; deliberate concealment of accurate, valid information; providing an overload of information that makes it difficult for an ordinary person to understand the essence of the subject (Seçil, 2018).

Disinformation is a manipulative tool that involves deliberately spreading deceptive or false information with the aim of misleading. Such manipulation refers to the process of disseminating information or stories with the intent of deceiving or misleading individuals, groups, or organizations. Here are some examples and important aspects of using disinformation as a manipulative tool (Frolova, & Frolova, 2018):

- **Political Manipulation:** Disinformation is commonly used during political campaigns and elections. It aims to spread false information or baseless claims to portray a rival candidate or party negatively.

- **Fostering Social Divisions:** Disinformation can be used to increase social tensions or incite groups against each other. This tactic may deepen ethnic, religious, or ideological divides.

- **Economic Gains:** Types of disinformation, such as fake financial news or market manipulation, can be used as tools to achieve financial gains for individuals or groups.

- **Spreading Conspiracy Theories:** Disinformation can be used to propagate or popularize conspiracy theories. This can fuel fear and paranoia among individuals.

- **Use in International Relations:** States may use disinformation to discredit or weaken rival countries or international organizations. This can be done to disrupt diplomatic relations or serve strategic interests.

- **Scientific and Health Disinformation:** Disinformation in scientific or health domains can be used to promote or discredit specific medicines or treatments. This can misinform individuals and lead to health issues.

- **Spread on Social Media and Digital Platforms:** Social media platforms facilitate the rapid spread of disinformation. Fake accounts, bots, and viral content contribute to the dissemination of deceptive information to large audiences.

Developing media literacy and critical thinking skills is of great importance to limit the effects of disinformation and protect society. Additionally, social media platforms and news organizations need to take more effective measures against false information. Preventing the spread of disinformation can contribute to the preservation of democratic processes and social stability (Frolova, & Frolova, 2018).

Manipulation policy is closely linked to the systematic misinformation of the population, society, and specific groups of people. Disinformation is a message that aims to intentionally mislead people, imposing on them a false, distorted, and simply wrong idea of reality. For example, to prevent the ratification of the SALT-2 Treaty, the CIA sent sensational news to news agencies: "Soviet regular troops have been seen in Cuba! America

is in danger of being invaded!" The presentation of false news, photographs, satellite images, eyewitness accounts, all properly done, confused the minds of citizens already fearful of the legendary Soviet threat. The official statements by Soviet and Cuban authorities that Cuban military personnel were being trained by Soviet experts "went unnoticed" and were not taken into account. The disinformation continued until the end of the process, and as a result, the United States did not ratify SALT-2. This demonstrates the effectiveness of manipulation (Danilova, 2012).

Therefore, misinformation and distortion of facts constitute a significant part of the information warfare process. Information warfare experts deliberately choose, fabricate, cut, and distort objective information, presenting a false picture of events. Groups, masses, or individuals following such information often fall victim to their deception, knowingly or unknowingly.

Media as a Tool of Information Warfare.

Information warfare is a reality in the modern world. The transition of the operational field into the realm of information, without requiring any approval, is a process that takes place. The new type of warfare has two characteristics (Manoil, 2016). The first characteristic is that the war does not take place in a specific geographic location but rather in the realm of information, which is a product of the human mind. The second characteristic of information warfare is that its most important weapon is information itself. The dominance in the information domain being determinative is also a feature of information warfare.

August 18, 1948, is considered the official birthday of information warfare. On this day, the United States approved Directive 20/1 Targeting Russia. This document marked the beginning of the Cold War. The Cold War is described as the "first global and comprehensive war of a new kind in human history" (Zinoviev, 2009). This war was one of the successful examples of influencing people's thoughts.

The main purpose of information aggression is to bring about a qualitative change in traditional cultural and spiritual life, violate the continuity of national ideals and values, and uproot historical memory (Samokhvalova, 2011). It should be noted that if information pressure is carried out systematically and continuously, people eventually lose their cultural and historical memory, cultural self-awareness, and ideological resistance.

This process is triggered by four impacts. Informational-semantic impact disorients a person's direction, information-emotional impact destroys their ability to perceive adequately, making them indifferent or irritable, information-moral impact destroys a person's previous ideas about good and evil, and information-historical impact leads to a person's atomization in their own culture, making them stop feeling involved (Manoil, 2016).

In any information warfare, the main weapon is the media. They play a dual role: on one hand, they serve as a means of delivering information to the entire population or specific groups of citizens, and on the other hand, they serve as a tool for disinformation and manipulation in the interaction of the conflict. The arsenal of war includes lies, repetition, specific structuring of information, suppression of certain facts, and complex information warfare methods that can construct a parallel reality. Media creates a "heap" where a lie is replaced with a new one before it has time to be exposed (Samokhvalova, 2011).

Both confirmed and unconfirmed information is released from the information field through the media. Various forms of misinformation can appear in the information field. This includes specially prepared disinformation aimed at diverting the public from real issues and focusing their attention on unimportant matters or falsehoods. There can also be a controlled data leak (controlled leakage) aimed at reducing/increasing dissatisfaction with a particular situation. Another feature of the media is that they can legitimize unconfirmed information in the eyes of the public (Pavlyutenkova, 2001).

Media is used as a platform for governments or actors to conduct propaganda campaigns to serve their national or political purposes. This can be done to gain public support, weaken adversaries, or gain an advantage in international relations. Media, due to its ability to rapidly disseminate misleading information and manipulative content, can be used as part of information warfare. Fake news, forged documents, and deceptive images can be used to change or mislead the perceptions of targeted viewers or readers (Danilova, 2012).

Media allows governments or actors to control how conflicts or crises are presented. This can affect how the public or the international community perceives events. Cyberattacks carried out through the media, such as disinformation campaigns, can be used as a tool for information theft or causing harm to enemies. Media plays a significant role in international relations and can influence how one country views and understands other countries, affecting diplomatic relations, trade agreements, or international crises (Chebotareva, & Kovaleva, 2016).

Media can be used as a tool to enhance a country's "soft power," which refers to its international influence in terms of culture, science, and politics. Well-designed media campaigns can be used to enhance a country's cultural, scientific, and political influence. Media literacy and cybersecurity measures are of great importance for protection against information warfare threats. Individuals and organizations need to be resistant to misleading information and consume information consciously (Frolova, & Frolova, 2018).

In conclusion, the influence of the internet on the global community has increased as politics has moved

there. The relationship between politics and digital media can be best described by former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who said, "The internet has become the public space of the 21st century" (Antyukhova, 2015). Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have become factors that accelerate political protest movements worldwide. In the modern world, politics and media, especially digital media, are inseparably linked. The ability of governments to interact effectively with digital media has become a necessity for a modern society interested in stable political development.

Above all, it should be remembered that in information warfare, the media is not just a means of conveying information but also a weapon aimed at instilling any idea in a person's mind. Information warfare, strange as it may sound, is not conducted solely in the media. False information, controlled data leaks, and other information warfare methods do not always pose a threat on their own. The threat arises when a person is exposed to a large amount of information that begins to affect them. A person actually lives in constant stress, realizing that there is a lot of information, but it is not interconnected. In the end, individuals get lost in the information noise and do not understand how to resist it (Samokhvalova, 2011).

Case Studies.

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and Propaganda: Russian media and propaganda machinery distorted the events during Russia's intervention in Ukraine by presenting them in a misleading manner to serve their own political objectives. For example, during the annexation of Crimea, Russian media portrayed the events as a means to protect Ukraine from a government they claimed was led by "fascists" (Mittal, 2022).

Systematic information manipulation and disinformation were operational tools employed by the Russian government during its attack on Ukraine (Akyüz, & Özkan, 2022). Throughout Russia's occupation of Ukraine, both sides engaged in an information warfare and actively spread disinformation. Russian and Ukrainian sources propagated false claims even before a full-scale war erupted in Ukraine. On the online propaganda battleground, both state institutions and individual social media users continue to disseminate misleading rumours.

Most news related to Russian-Ukrainian military propaganda, especially those concerning Russian disinformation, highlight Russia's intentions. According to international media assessments, Russia's objectives were to create a pretext for the occupation, justify the invasion, and display its power (Mittal, 2022). Russia laid the groundwork for its operations under a "foreign flag," falsely claiming that it was responding to Ukrainian aggression while labelling Ukrainian citizens as fascists and neo-Nazis as the invasion drew near.

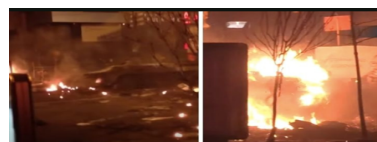
Ukrainian media, on the other hand, has been accused of crafting propaganda narratives, such as the "ghosts of Kiev" or stories like the Snake Island battles, in an attempt

to secure a victory for Ukraine (Stuart, 2022). Ukrainian propaganda primarily focused on sharing emotional and dramatic stories of Ukrainian resilience (Patil, 2022).

Before the invasion, suspicious videos circulated on the internet and in Russian media, claiming to provide evidence of Ukraine's aggression towards Russia and the self-declared Republic. These false flag operations made it possible to create a pretext for the occupation of Ukrainian territory (Alba, 2022). In a post on Russian media, it was claimed that Ukrainian saboteurs were planning to detonate containers filled with chlorine in Gorlovka. However, after it was proven through another video that this information was false, the original video was removed.



Makeup to Appear Injured



Attack on Russian Tanks



Falsehood About TB2 UAV

Figure 1. Images of Disinformation Emerging in the Early Days of the Russia-Ukraine War.

Source: <https://www.odatv4.com/guncel/rusya-ukrayna-savasinda-ortaya-atilan-yanan-bilgiler-h-231028>

On March 6th, Russian media began claiming that Ukrainian biological laboratory workers had delivered documents to Moscow confirming the erasure of traces of the US Department of Defence-funded military biological program. The next day, Russian media published a report by former US Army officer and counterterrorism expert Scott Bennett, claiming that US laboratories in Ukraine were developing biological weapons against Slavs. US Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland stated that there were only biological research centres in Ukraine (no laboratories for weapon production). The claims that Ukrainian laboratories were attempting to create ethnically oriented biological weapons were rejected by the parties involved. In 2017, experts from the Russian Academy of Sciences concluded that creating genetic weapons was scientifically impossible (Solovey, 2017).

"The Ghost of Kiev" is an urban legend in Ukraine's media about a particular Ukrainian master pilot who allegedly shot down many Russian planes in aerial combat over Kiev (Stuart, & Alba, 2022). Ukraine's official Twitter account and the Ministry of Defence actively shared these videos, spreading false information. It was later revealed that the video they shared was fake and created in a video game called Digital Combat Simulator. Research showed that many pieces of evidence for the existence of "The Ghost of Kiev" and similar stories were fake and could not be reliably verified. Experts emphasized that stories like "The Ghost of Kiev" were part of Ukraine's propaganda or morale-boosting campaigns (Mittal, 2022).

Social Media Manipulation in American Elections: In the 2016 United States presidential election, it was alleged that Russia manipulated the election process through fake accounts and advertisements on American social media platforms. This serves as an example of political campaigns rapidly spreading deceptive information through social media. Social media manipulation became a significant topic of discussion in the 2016 US presidential elections. It involved various actors (such as foreign states, political campaigns, or individuals) using social media platforms to create political influence and shape voter behaviour (Ismayilzada, 2020).

One of the most well-known examples of foreign interference in American elections is the allegations that Russia was involved. Russia was accused of being behind the St. Petersburg-based company Internet Research Agency (IRA), which had evidence of interfering in American elections. IRA used fake social media accounts and content to try to influence American politics. Besides Russia, different political campaigns and groups ran deceptive advertising campaigns on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. These ads were used to fuel political debates, increase social division, and influence voters (Grigoryan, & Manik, 2017).

As part of social media manipulation, fake social media accounts and automated bots (bots) were used to rapidly disseminate deceptive content. These accounts tried to deceive real users by creating seemingly organic interactions. Social media manipulation was used as a strategy to manage perceptions. It was done to support a particular candidate or political view or weaken opponents. One significant event related to the election was the leakage of emails from the Democratic National Committee. These leaks aimed to influence public opinion and harm the election campaign (Zverev, & Fedorov, 2020).

Social media ads during the 2016 US elections were widely used by various political campaigns, foreign actors, and groups. These ads were employed to influence voters, fuel political debates, and change the perception of candidates or issues. Here are some examples (Ismayilzada, 2020):

The Russian-based Internet Research Agency conducted fake account and ad campaigns on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. For example, a fake Facebook page called "Black Matters US" published political content in an attempt to influence the Black community. IRA's ads aimed to fuel social division and manipulate voters.

During the 2016 elections, there was rapid dissemination of fake news and deceptive content on social media platforms, especially targeting Hillary Clinton. For instance, the "Pizzagate" conspiracy theory claimed that a pizza shop owner was a leader of a pedophilic ring connected to Hillary Clinton. The spread of such fake news affected the political atmosphere.

Facebook effectively used political ads during the 2016 elections. Specifically, "dark post" ads, targeted ads, were published to specific demographics or geographic areas. This allowed political campaigns to send tailored messages to specific groups of voters.

Twitter was frequently used by fake accounts and bots. These accounts were used to promote specific political views or target opponents. For example, some bots rapidly spread political hashtags to manipulate trending topics.

YouTube was utilized for video ads to spread during the election. Some political campaigns tried to reach voters by using targeted YouTube videos to introduce or criticize candidates or issues.

Social media platforms started implementing stricter policies and security measures after the discovery of such manipulation. They began using algorithms and human moderators to detect and remove fake accounts and deceptive content. Following the American elections, there was an increased effort to raise awareness among the public about social media manipulation and to encourage people to question suspicious content. The importance of media literacy and critical thinking skills was emphasized.

WikiLeaks CONFIRMS Hillary Sold Weapons to ISIS... Then Drops Another BOMBHELL!

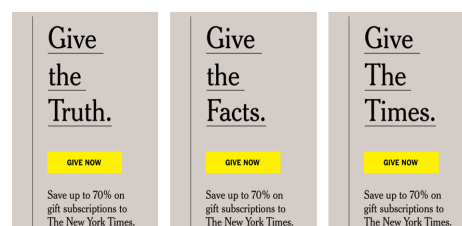
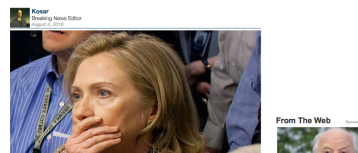


Figure 2. Visuals Related to Social Media Manipulation in American Elections

Source: <https://www.twipemobile.com/stanford-report-examines-fake-news-in-the-2016-us-election/>

These examples illustrate the impact of social media advertisements during the 2016 United States presidential elections. The targeted and personalized nature of these ads increased their potential to influence voters and led social media platforms to implement stricter measures to prevent such manipulation.

Syrian Civil War and Media Manipulation: During the Syrian Civil War, examples of media manipulation were observed on both sides. Both the Assad government and the opposition resorted to propaganda and misleading information to spin events in their favour. In the Syrian civil war, which has become a battleground for the United States and Russia, both superpowers actively used media as a powerful tool to influence the civilian population, establish information superiority, and achieve their goals. It should be noted that since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in March 2011, more than a hundred international news agencies have waged an open and highly sarcastic information war against this Middle Eastern country. Among the most active are the Arabic (Qatar) TV channel Al-Jazeera and the Arabic website of the same name, which is the main rival of the first Arabic satellite TV channel on the market, Al-Arabiya (Volykova, 2022).



Figure 3. Example of Disinformation in Syria
Source: <https://www.vesti.ru/>

For example, one of the co-authors of the scientific monograph "Conflicts and Wars of the 21st Century (Middle East and North Africa)" Dolgov, stayed in Syria in August 2011 and visited the city of Hama. He examined the reports of the American TV channel CNN about the latest visit. In these stories, journalists stated that the reports about the delegation being attacked and two people being injured, which were presented in the monograph, were false. Therefore, a decision was made to block the broadcast of TV channels belonging to the Syrian government.

Since the beginning of military conflicts in Syrian territory, many independent journalists from around the world who worked in or studied the conflict-ridden country talked about the information war waged against Syria. In broadcasts or publications on TV channels and in the press, images of government protests were shown to viewers along with comments on the demonstrations against the government. However, for those who understood Arabic, it was explained that the slogans on the banners held by the demonstrators contained

entirely contradictory messages, expressing support for President Assad. Furthermore, often, media from different countries provided information from their own perspective, their interests being to provide information on who was killed in Syria, and what banned weapons were used during organized military campaigns, such as so-called "peaceful Syrians."

Chemical Weapons Claims and Manipulation: Regarding the use of chemical weapons in Syria, misleading information and manipulative images related to chemical weapon use were disseminated through the media. This aimed to influence international reactions and interventions. There were various claims and mutual accusations about who was responsible for the chemical attacks. The Syrian government accused the rebels, while the opposition groups accused the Syrian government and Russia. This situation created an environment where the international community struggled to determine how events unfolded and who was responsible.

Propaganda and Perception Management: Both sides used propaganda and perception management to serve their objectives regarding the issue of chemical weapon use. Images, reports, and misleading information were disseminated through social media and media organizations. **International responses:** The claims of chemical weapon use in Syria led to significant international reactions. Many countries accused the Syrian government of using chemical weapons and imposed international sanctions. **Destruction of Chemical Weapons:** In 2013, Syria signed an international agreement to destroy its chemical weapons and began the process under the supervision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). However, some claims suggested that the Syrian government continued to use chemical weapons secretly. The claims and manipulation related to chemical weapons in Syria became a significant issue in international relations and complicated the complexity of the Syrian Civil War. Such events affected the international community's efforts to prevent the use and spread of chemical weapons and changed the power balance in international relations.

Crimea Crisis and Information Warfare: During Russia's annexation of Crimea, Russian media and government officials presented events in a misleading manner to influence the perception of the international community. They engaged in an information war with Western media and governments. The Crimea Crisis emerged in 2014 when Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine, leading to a conflict between Ukraine and Russia. During this crisis, information warfare played a significant role (Vasilenko, 2014).

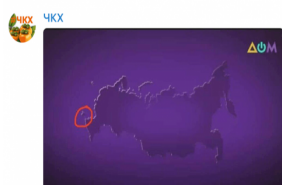
During the Crimea Crisis, Russian and Ukrainian media published conflicting news and information. Russian media claimed that anti-government protests in Ukraine were led by "fascists" and argued that Russian intervention was necessary to protect the Russian population. Ukrainian media, on the other hand, published

news condemning the Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea. This was an information war in which both sides attempted to influence the perceptions of national and international communities. Social media platforms were also used as effective battlegrounds for information warfare during the Crimea Crisis. Fake accounts and bots rapidly disseminated propaganda messages, shaping the discourse. Additionally, fake photos and videos were shared and attempted to make them appear authentic (Frolova, & Frolova, 2018).

The Crimea Crisis attracted significant international media attention. Both Russia and Ukraine sought to manipulate international media to gain support. This involved presenting different perspectives on who was right or who was the victim. During the Crimea Crisis, both sides made mutual accusations. Ukraine accused Russia of invading Crimea and fuelling the conflict, while Russia claimed to be acting to protect ethnic Russians in Ukraine. Such allegations were part of their efforts to justify their campaigns and gain international support.



The IOC supports same-sex marriages, but it does not recognize Crimea as part of Russia.



Президент України Володимир Зеленський заявив, що Крим ніколи не буде російською територією, а його повернення – це питання часу. Об цьому він заявив в інтерв'ю українському державному телеканалу «Дом», телеканалу який в ефірі розмістив карту з російським Кримом.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that Crimea will never be Russian territory and its return is just a matter of time.

Figure 4. Disinformation Example During the Crimea Crisis

Source: <https://voxukraine.org/en/fake-news-of-russian-occupation-of-crimea>

The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar during 2017 saw the rapid spread of misleading information and hate speech on social media platforms, contributing to ethnic tension and violence. Here are some key points regarding the relationship between the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and social media:

- **Propaganda and Discrimination Spread:** During the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, social media platforms were flooded with racist and discriminatory propaganda materials. Many Myanmar citizens shared hostile and hateful content against Rohingya Muslims on platforms like Facebook, fuelling violence and discrimination.

- **Fake News and Misinformation:** Social media enabled the rapid dissemination of fake news and misinformation. Given the difficulty of reporting events accurately in Myanmar, misleading content circulated widely, leading to people being misinformed and deceived.

- **Incitement of Violence and Coordination:** Social media was used to incite and coordinate ethnic violence. Groups and individuals used social media platforms to plan and organize violent actions, contributing to the spread of violence and increased coordination.

- **International Awareness:** On the other hand, social media played a crucial role in drawing international attention to the crisis and documenting human rights violations. Civil society organizations and journalists used social media to share evidence and reports, informing the international public.

- **Facebook and Content Removal Policies:** Facebook, in particular, faced criticism for its handling of hate speech and violent content on its platform during the Rohingya crisis. Facebook had to strengthen its content removal policies and was accused of not doing enough to remove certain accounts and content.

The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar demonstrates how social media can be both a tool for spreading hate and misinformation and a means to raise international awareness of human rights violations. It also highlights the challenges platforms like Facebook face in enforcing content policies effectively.

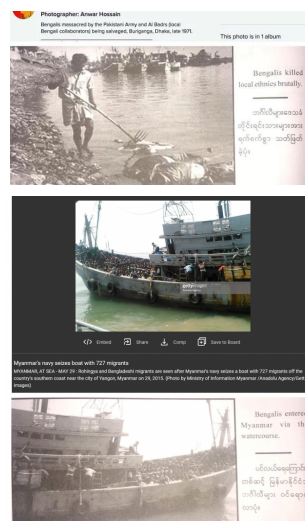


Figure 5. Rohingya Propaganda with Fake Photos from the Myanmar

Source: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1531606/myanmar-army-fakes-rohingya-photos-in-true-news-book>

The Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar serves as an example of how social media can impact human rights crises. Social media platforms can either exacerbate the crisis or help draw international attention to it. However, they can also contribute to the rapid spread of misleading information and hate speech. The role of social media in such crises needs to be carefully examined, and media literacy is crucial in addressing these issues.

Conclusions.

The examination of the manipulation issue reveals that this phenomenon is deep and ambiguous. Manipulation can be used for good purposes, but it is mostly used to negatively influence a person's consciousness and emotions. Manipulation leads to the distortion of the world picture, the transformation of ideas, knowledge, and images that make up human consciousness. Manipulation techniques are diverse, and while only a few were discussed in this study, their cursory analysis clearly demonstrates the complexity and richness of the manipulation issue.

In modern society, the role of media as a tool for propaganda and manipulation is constantly increasing. The audience is accustomed to continuous information consumption, but their perception is not always clear, creating conditions for manipulation. At the same time, within the framework of technological development, the media itself is creating new tools for manipulation.

Trust in all forms of media is important for the health of democracy. Society largely relies on the media for political news. Therefore, mass media can influence the public positively or negatively, depending on the messages they convey. One of the reasons behind the media's influence on opinion formation is the psychological phenomenon known as the illusory truth effect, which states that the repetition of a statement increases its likelihood of being judged as true. Social media establishes individual but direct connections between the public, government, and media. Through social media platforms, trust in the media and government can be affected in different ways. The erosion of public trust in institutions undermines the credibility of official information in the news, leading people to turn to alternative sources of information.

As discussed in this study, social media poses a significant and growing threat in the information warfare.

Coupled with the illusory truth effect and enhanced technological capabilities, the flow of disinformation through social media has made it a powerful tool in information warfare. The spread of disinformation through media threatens public trust in news sources. However, the ease and speed of conveying information through social media will only continue to increase the potential for disinformation to spread.

Media, manipulation, and information warfare cases examined in this study may have commonalities such as the use of media for propaganda and perception management purposes. Parties manipulate the media to serve their own purposes or harm the other side. The presentation of news can greatly influence how events are perceived. In cases of manipulation and information warfare, the dissemination of misleading information and fake content is common. Fake news, false images, and videos spread rapidly through social media and media organizations. Such content can shake society's perception of reality.

Social media platforms play a significant role in manipulation and information warfare. Fake accounts, bots, and automated sharing make it easier for misleading content to spread rapidly. Additionally, social media platforms themselves can become targets of manipulation. These cases often have significant effects on national and international levels. Manipulation and information warfare can affect political events, divide societies, and lead to international tensions.

These cases highlight the importance of media literacy and critical thinking skills. Individuals should question media content, verify sources, and fact-check information. It is also important to evaluate the credibility and impartiality of media organizations. Manipulation and information warfare can also affect international relations. Parties can use the media to influence international support or affect the international community. This can lead to tensions in diplomatic relations.

These example cases can be used to study media, manipulation, and information warfare topics and emphasize the importance of media literacy. Such events help us understand the power and impact of media while highlighting the importance of questioning media content and developing critical thinking skills.

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