



## The disinformation life cycle, the news legend, and the creator of disinformation

### Životný cyklus dezinformácie, zpravodajská legenda a tvárce dezinformácie

Viktor PORADA<sup>1</sup> and Anton LISNÍK<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The University of Security Management in Košice

<sup>2</sup> Slovak Technical University in Bratislava

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#### Abstract:

*The life cycle of disinformation begins with its ordering and ends with its acceptance or rejection by the target consumer, the target object. The disinformation lifecycle has the following relatively separate but related attributes: disinformation originator, disinformation planning, disinformation purpose, goal, and content. In this context, the types of disinformation that take the form of simple disinformation, or it is a narrative/narrative/theme, as well as news legends, which can take the form of an active influence measure, and the issue of the creator of disinformation, including the technical implementation of disinformation, are elaborated*

**Keywords:** *The cycle of disinformation, the orderer of disinformation, the planning of disinformation, the creator, the purpose, the goal, the content, the type of disinformation, the news legend, the social, cultural, religious, historical, geopolitical environment of disinformation*

#### Abstrakt:

*Životný cyklus dezinformácie začína od jej objednania a končí jej prijatím alebo odmietnutím. Ďalej obsahuje tieto atribúty: cieľovým konzument, objekt, ďalej nasledujúce atribúty: objednávateľ dezinformácie, plánovanie, účel, cieľ a obsah dezinformácie, druh tvorcu, prevedenie a vlastnosti dezinformácie, spôsob šírenia, prijatie/odmietnutie a vyhodnotenie dezinformácie.*

**Kľúčové slová:** *Dezinformácia, cieľový konzument, objekt, objednávateľ dezinformácie, plánovanie, účel, cieľ a obsah dezinformácie, druh tvorcu, prevedenie, vlastnosti, spôsob šírenia, cieľový konzument a vyhodnotenie dezinformácie.*



## **Introduction**

Information influences our decision-making, behavior, short-term and long-term attitudes, life orientation. It is therefore logical that the provision of information or misinformation can also be purposeful, so that the target recipients behave according to pre-prepared, expected, and planned scenarios, or that they themselves prepare them according to the interests of the originator of the disinformation. Mass media, mainstream and alternative information sources, the Internet, mobile phones (also equipped with cameras or video cameras) are therefore very effective tools for spreading information or disinformation of any kind.

Disinformation is an integral part of aggressive propaganda, manipulation, information, and psychological warfare. They are therefore a tool of manipulation, influence, and rule. The information environment includes information itself, individuals, organizations, and systems that receive, process, and transmit information; and the cognitive, virtual, and physical space in which it takes place. That part of the information environment that includes digitized information in computer systems, storage and networks is called cyberspace. Operations in the information environment include operations in all three dimensions, including cyberspace. We encounter the concept of disinformation almost every day, especially in tense, crisis situations of complex social, global transformations, in times of economic, political, social, military, or civilizational conflicts. The term disinformation has several synonymous meanings in the Czech language – false information, lie, fraud, mistake, rumor, hostile propaganda, deception, trickery, conspiracy, conspiracy theory, fake news, hoax, etc.

In the Czech literature, we most often find a definition where disinformation is lying, deceptive, false information that aims to influence the judgment and opinion of an individual, several people or the whole society, to create the appearance of trustworthiness and authenticity. Sometimes the goal is just to challenge the original information or its truth value by pretending that some kind of alternative truth exists. It is in an antagonistic position to the true report. A person who creates or spreads disinformation is called a disinformation. Disinformation is divided into misleading (inaccurate, ambiguous), compromising and deceptive (falsified) information. Disinformation is an integral part of aggressive propaganda, manipulation, information, and psychological warfare. The life cycle of disinformation begins with its ordering and ends with its acceptance or rejection by the target consumer, the target object. It has the following attributes: Orderer of disinformation, planning of disinformation, purpose, goal and content of disinformation, type of disinformation, creator of disinformation, technical implementation of disinformation, properties of disinformation, method of dissemination of disinformation, target consumer of disinformation, acceptance/rejection of disinformation and evaluation of the results of disinformation. information channels, media and information sources are finished outputs. These are news, programs, films, discussions, etc. stored in a certain database to which we can repeatedly return (e.g. archives of television and radio broadcasts, websites with newspaper articles, discussions, etc.). Information channels (media) can be divided from many points of view. The first criterion is their ownership. According to him, information channels (media) are state, public, and private. A person obtains information from various information sources using various media and communication channels. According to the method of disseminating information with the help of

various technologies, we divide the media into newspapers (magazines, books, etc.), television, radio. Internet, social networks, personal communication, and more.

A separate problem is the strategy of disseminating and processing dis(information). We recognize push, pull, and push and pull strategies. The differences are described. The audience, the recipient of information, chooses, analyzes, and evaluates the information that interests them and which they are more willing to believe. Individual methods differ in the degree of probability that he will be cheated, manipulated. In the conclusion, ways to recognize disinformation and how to combat it and the basic approaches to combating disinformation are presented. For this purpose, areas of application of disinformation are being investigated.

## **1. The life cycle of disinformation**

The life cycle of disinformation begins with its ordering and ends with its acceptance or rejection by the target consumer, the target object. The disinformation lifecycle has the following attributes [1]:

### **1.1 Orderer of disinformation**

The customer of disinformation is the entity that primarily decides what tasks, activities to create, how to conduct propaganda, how to use propaganda methods (including disinformation), how to conduct informational and psychological warfare. Overall, it is particularly involved in the strategic level of preparation, planning, and management of disinformation measures, by which it defines the main goal and the time of implementation according to the current and desired situation. At the state level, in the case of large-scale and long-term international conflicts, there are several institutions that deal with information and psychological warfare. These institutions may or may not coordinate their activities with each other; they act according to pre-prepared strategic plans, which they then in reality fill with disinformation content. The person who orders disinformation, disinformation campaigns and various disinformation actions does not have to be their implementer at the same time. The customer of disinformation can choose, acquire, then hire specific creators, implementers who prepare disinformation of various kinds. Different creators can be used to implement different types of disinformation, depending on their experience, abilities, capabilities, degree of secrecy, specialization, etc.

### **1.2 Planning disinformation**

Planning disinformation at a professional level is a very responsible and complex process that requires a lot of time and attention in both planning and preparation. The submitted disinformation must be credible for the recipient, sufficiently effective for its originator and creator (it must fulfill its purpose to the greatest extent possible). When planning, it is necessary to take into account the goal that we want to achieve with disinformation and propaganda, the broad contexts surrounding the target object in terms of location, time, concurrent, past and future events, and especially from the point of view of many aspects of this target object (its cultural, social environment, education, expertise, professionalism, economic, living situation, religious belief,

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political orientation, preferences, purchasing power, moods, orientation, likes, personal interests, weaknesses, etc.) [2]:

When creating disinformation, its purpose, the type of disinformation, the entity that will create the disinformation, its technical implementation, the method of dissemination, the time, and circumstances when the disinformation will be released for the target object are considered, etc. elections and the implementation of disinformation is repeated in terms of monitored, targeted disinformation or propaganda activities, the exact opposite effect can also occur. There is a fundamental difference between the tactics, the strategy of very sophisticated disinformation on the one hand, and the disinformation, propaganda realized by the method "a lie repeated a thousand times becomes the truth" on the other. But even this method from the point of view of influencing the masses is successful in modern, consumer-oriented societies in the age of information, because most people are no longer able to think in the wider social context for their personal, individualistic interests, or do not attach any importance to it "yet" (until the irreversible effects of various events affect her).

The modern disinformation used today rarely exists on its own. As a rule, this is a whole set of disinformation that appears in parallel and sequentially and complements each other, expands, develops, deepens, supports so that the end object - the recipient of the disinformation - has the feeling that the disinformation (for him, just information) comes from different, independent sources; and thus their truth is mutually confirmed. The time sequence of various misinformation then "draws more into the story", it causes and maintains constant attention, sufficient pressure so that the target object consciously and unconsciously (subliminally) perceives the entire context of the propaganda.

To achieve this well-thought-out approach, sufficient coordination must be carried out in the planning, preparation and implementation of disinformation and propaganda. More so when, from the point of view of their input, multiple organizational subjects participate in disinformation.

Disinformation planning (propaganda, strategic communication, etc.) usually includes these phases [3]:

- **Strategic planning.** The process of identifying which behaviors need to be changed in which group of people to obtain results that measurably contribute to the achievement of strategic goals.
- **Identification of the target audience, recipient of (dis)information.** A process where among the many groups of a given population with a relationship to a problem behavior, the one that is more inaccessible, open to influence, and most associated with the problem behavior is selected. A targeted (dis)information campaign, a strategic communication campaign will be conducted for this audience.
- **Analysis of the target audience, recipients of (dis)information.** In-depth analysis of the selected target audience using quantitative and qualitative measures with the aim of understanding the diverse characteristics of the audience, recipients of (dis)information.
- **The intention, goal of the (dis)information campaign.** Planning this phase involves crafting the message and determines the breadth and size of the campaign. It proposes the design of (dis)information events, campaigns, as

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regards the communication channel (distribution of (dis)information), sources and messages.

- **Execution of the action.** This phase benefits from the previous phases and includes the communication itself through the appropriate message of the communication channel, with the appropriate source and using the correct message.
- **Evaluation of the action (evaluation of the effectiveness of the action).** After carrying out (but also during) the (dis)information campaign, the campaign is always followed by an evaluation of effectiveness, i.e. an overall evaluation of how the behavior of the target group is being changed. The key is to choose the right measures of effectiveness. Even this last phase is subject to detailed planning and preparation.

The general assumption is that a message has a greater chance of acceptance and effectiveness if it has been created and delivered in accordance with the analysis of the intended target audience [3, 4]. The basic premise of strategic communication is the understanding of the audience (recipient) of the (dis)informational strategic campaign. This step is the most important and at the same time the most demanding, the most complex.

### 1.3 Purpose, objective, and content of disinformation

The possibilities, and thus the uses or purposes of disinformation, are very broad, just like propaganda. We must realize that depending on the type of propaganda (black, white, or gray propaganda) disinformation may or may not always be used. We can look at the possibilities of disinformation both from the point of view of the very purpose of the disinformation, as well as the duration of its consequences. During its planning and preparation, the general purpose of disinformation is then assigned its more detailed goal and already specific content. The purposes, objectives and contents of disinformation usually depend on the area of use.

Typical areas of disinformation use include:

- Personal area – lies, slander, compromise;
- Area of state, public mass media;
- Scientific and technical field;
- Economic, entrepreneurial areas;
- Political area (local, regional and national; national and international);
- Intelligence area;
- Military area;
- Area of security, legal;
- Ecological area;
- Field of education, education, culture, history;
- Area of non-profit organizations;
- The area of the most diverse clashes of opinion, different concepts; development models, geographical locations, etc.

In their study [5], Steve Tatham and Rita Le Page, based on the experience of NATO operations, recommend that strategic communication (propaganda, disinformation campaigns, etc.) should be considered primarily as a mechanism of influence. The spectrum of this influence ranges from activities of public diplomacy and informing the public (both work with the aim of informing and are the most

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indirect forms of influence) to activities of psychological and information operations (they work in the range from persuasion to coercion and coercion). For this broad spectrum, they list the key components of the process of strategic communication, propaganda, disinformation actions as follows [3]:

- Understanding, informing, and influencing target groups to promote the interests of the target by influencing the perceptions, attitudes, opinions, and behavior of the target audience;
- Aligning actions, images, and words to support processes and planning to achieve overall strategic goals;
- Recognition that all operations and activities involve critical components of communication, because everything we say and do (or don't say and do) has intended and unintended consequences for intended and unintended target groups of recipients of strategic communication, propaganda, disinformation actions;
- Recognition that strategic communication, propaganda, disinformation action is not an additional function, but that it is an integral part of the planning and management of all military operations and activities [4].

During, for example, war conflicts, the purpose of propaganda, disinformation (information, psychological warfare) can be [1]:

- cause him various losses, lead him into disadvantageous tactical or strategic situations or positions, disorient him;
- change the course and outcome of combat, logistics, etc. operations;
- break the opponent's will to fight;
- get him on your side;
- convince the population, the world community, of a just war of one side against the other;
- disorient the population;
- cause contradictions in the leadership of the army or the country;
- cause social, political, economic tension in the adversary's country;
- provoke resistance of the population against the war in the adversary's country;
- provoke the resistance of the population in neighboring countries, the world community towards the aggressor and vice versa - to get support, partnership on one's side, with one's own allies (military, technological, economic, political, food, humanitarian support) of neighboring countries, the global community;
- create an image of a common, bloodthirsty, inhuman enemy, nation, population group, etc.;
- incite hatred, resentment, hysteria, national phobia, contempt, resentment against the enemy's army, soldiers, population, nation, country;
- invoke political, economic, financial, raw material, product, food, technological, information, etc. sanctions against the aggressor;
- dismantle and/or slow down the activity of existing or emerging military-political and economic groupings;
- prevent generally undesirable activities in any field (political, economic, military, etc.);

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- create contradictions and mistrust between individual powers, each other, their governments, allies, representatives and institutions;
- create distrust of neutral, developing countries towards major powers and vice versa;
- create situations leading to political, economic, military or other contradictions and crises among the adversary and its allies;
- divert attention from an important topic, the publicity of which should be delayed or completely hidden;
- to discredit the enemy's secret services, centers of ideological diversion, units of information and ideological warfare, reveal the actions of the enemy's special services;
- to raise and maintain the morale of your troops and the support of your population for the war, to intimidate the enemy and his population.

A belligerent country does not have to wage a just war, and in doing so, with the help of disinformation and aggressive propaganda, it can try to falsify or completely change the image of its country, the overall nature of the primary conflict, its course, etc. the situation.

In furtherance of the above purposes, the objectives of propaganda, a belligerent may use disinformation which [2]:

- Conceal, dispute or state false information and reasons about the nature of the beginning and context of the conflict;
- they accuse the other conflicting party of aggression;
- provoking, they incite the other side to start a conflict;
- ahead of time, they shift the blame for certain actions to the adversary (in fact, they have been carried out or are about to be carried out by the interested party himself), the "thief cries catch the thief" method;
- questioning or stating a completely different course and results of war, logistical operations;
- compromise official representatives, question their competence, abilities, experience, skills, etc.;
- question the physical, health condition of the leadership of the aggressor country (key politicians, military commanders, world authorities, leaders);
- questioning the observance of the law of war;
- confirm the use of prohibited types of weapons (chemical, biological, nuclear);
- they drastically reduce the standard of living of the population, and blame it on the enemy;
- they do not inform about civic activities directed against the ruling party;
- they do not inform about the life of small entrepreneurs, tradespeople and ordinary people affected by restrictions;
- challenge experts who have a different opinion.

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To support propaganda, disinformation, to increase its credibility, the seriousness of "truth", the following propaganda and disinformation methods are usually used in practice in the public space [1]:

- **News programs of mass media (television, radio, Internet, press, etc.)** under the control of government bodies, with conscious and unconscious cooperation with intelligence units, specialized units for conducting information and/or psychological warfare;
- **Government statements, press releases, statements and conferences;**
- **Interpellations, debates in parliament, speeches in government, whippers in diplomatic circles, notes of ministries;**
- **Summoning ambassadors to give explanations. Transmission of diplomatic notes, expulsion of diplomats;**
- **Declaration of political parties;**
- **Performance of pro-government political parties, movements, associations, etc.;**
- **Expression of authority** – politicians (active and retired), state representatives, representatives of state institutions, experts, specialists, scientists, security analysts;
- **Expression of self-proclaimed pseudo-authorities** – singers, actors, other artists, athletes, public figures, active persons, members of parliament, leaders of political parties, university teachers (especially in the field of security, international law, military, various pseudo-institutions for strategic studies);
- **Statements of eyewitnesses of conflicts, participants of various events – citizens, war reporters;**
- **Expressions of commentators, political or military observers;**
- **Expression of institutions** – representatives of the military, intelligence services, research institutions, official, world-renowned higher education and scientific workplaces;
- **Expression of global, international institutions** – health, economic, social, church;
- **Publication of articles, documents, comments in the mass media;**
- **Publication of books, brochures, leaflets, stickers, posters;**
- **Protest notes, letters, reactions, complaints from readers, residents;**
- **Statistical overviews, data, public opinion polls, prognostic, (pseudo)scientific reports and analyses;**
- **Activities of churches, including the Pope;**



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- **Meetings with indirect participants in conflicts** – discussions, artistic performances, happenings;
- **Organization of special purpose congresses, resolution of congresses, interpellation of congresses;**
- **Forced, arranged statements**, confessions of captured/"captured" soldiers, regretting their actions;
- **Expressing solidarity;**
- **Prepared performances of traitors, defectors, deserters;**
- **Television programs, films;**
- **Other influence measures;**
- **Referring to other disinformation sources, elaborate disinformation narratives;**
- **The use of figures, "crisis actors" in the creation of disinformation;**
- **Public punishment, dishonor** and intimidation of residents who do not want to act according to the instructions of the government, institutions, etc.;
- **Disparaging true information, shutting down true, objective websites;**
- **Teaching false** information already in kindergartens, false teaching videos and discussions at schools;
- **Pointing to the "death" of commanding officers - generals, etc.;**
- **Disparaging messages from the enemy;**
- **Highlighting the friendly side of the ruling set** and exaggerating their achievements;
- **Supporting the reporting of people who do not want to submit to the ruling dictatorship;**
- **Liquidation of books, banning of enemy authors, culture**, renaming of streets and destruction of enemy monuments, especially from historically older periods;

The methods for supporting and implementing disinformation and propaganda campaigns are very old, they have been used since ancient Rome, ancient China and Egypt. With the passage of time, these methods are constantly being improved, new ones are invented, especially in connection with scientific and technical progress, globalization, with the technologies of information dissemination through mass media. Security, intelligence services, information and psychological warfare units use all historical experience from their work, from their predecessors [6]

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In various statements, claims, various facts are pointed out, but in reality, it may be well-thought-out misinformation:

- Committing war crimes, genocide;
- Accusations of fascism, Nazism, war atrocities;
- Accusations of murder, rape, robbery, theft, etc.,
- Lack of weapons, military equipment, ammunition, logistics, medical supplies, etc.;
- Lack of (professional) soldiers;
- Lack of military, professional experience;
- Poor quality of weapons, training, command of operations, morale of soldiers;
- Great loss of life, wounded;
- Causing global famine;
- Causing ecological disasters as a result of war activities;
- Use of prohibited weapons (chemical, biological, nuclear);
- Glorification of own weapon systems, etc.

Propaganda, disinformation, special information and psychological operations are also used to destabilize various political systems in "peacetime". "Mass campaigns on social networks, friendly debaters, manufacturing political scandals, undermining the credibility of politicians and blackmailing them, organizing the failure of justice so that it is obvious and visible to the naked eye, blackmail, subversion in the police and military forces, trust in the media, science and facts - all conditioned by continuous collection and evaluation of information. On a visible level, this effect manifests itself in rising social tension, rising frustration of various groups of residents, increasing aggressiveness of discussions even in public, increasing threats and vulgarisms in public space, loss of inhibitions in unwritten codes of decent behavior" [7]. However, we must be careful when evaluating these manifestations. Very often they are caused by the leadership of bad, inappropriate policies of the ruling parties, who can even use the excuse that their enemy is working against them with disinformation. Therefore, a careful analytical evaluation of the overall economic and social situation is necessary, revealing the primary causes of the problems.

### **1.4 Kind of disinformation**

Disinformation and other ways of influencing the opinions, opinions, behavior and decision-making of the public and experts can be divided into several basic types according to the method, complexity or difficulty of their preparation and implementation [1,2]:

- Plain misinformation
- Narrative/narrative/theme
- News legend

- Active influence measures

Different types of disinformation are then suitably combined with each other, complement each other, build on each other, support each other, develop, transition from one type to another, etc.

## **2 Plain misinformation**

This is usually "ad hoc" created, one-time, simple disinformation, without any further context. It is not assumed that this type of disinformation would somehow continue to spread in the future, or that it would develop misinformation in the long term. It is also not assumed that anyone would investigate and verify the disinformation in a complex way. This is usually a quick reaction to a certain situation when the author of disinformation does not even think or need to confirm the credibility of the disinformation. An example can be a lie when a schoolboy explains to the teacher why he was late for school. In his thinking, he does not assume that the teacher will check his information; the schoolboy has no experience yet. Simple disinformation is naive, short-lived (the truth will soon emerge), low-quality, amateurishly created and implemented. They cause little damage; they are not believed by a large part of the target objects on which simple disinformation is aimed.

### **2.1 Narrative/narrative/theme**

Propaganda, information, and psychological warfare, i.e. manipulation of people's thinking, their behavior and decision-making, have a long-term, systemic nature of action on the target objects of propaganda, disinformation and psychological activities. A single piece of information or misinformation is never enough to influence a person, a group of people, an institution, etc. It is therefore necessary to find a way to ensure long-term, logical continuity for propaganda, disinformation activity. Therefore, artificially created stories, narratives, topics often terminologically referred to as narratives are therefore very often used in practice. The organizer, the originator of disinformation campaigns, invents and chooses a suitable story (narrative, topic), which can then be openly and independently developed and supplemented in the long term from various parties. In the past, the narrative was, for example, "AIDS", "Covid-19", "The threat of the West", "Trolls and elves", etc. An appropriately chosen narrative then becomes a certain framework, a glue, with the help of which it is possible to logically, non-violently connect and cement various disinformation activities without attracting attention. Each narrative then has a whole series of sub-stories, cases.

Through the narrative, the coherence and integrity of the main ideas in strategic communication and propaganda can be achieved. It is not just a sequence of words; a narrative also includes supporting symbolism and images. Therefore, we can understand the narrative as a thematic and organized description, with which the author communicates the meaning of specific events to the participants of the communication. It is fundamental like any strategy, providing a framework for how to defend and describe events. The story connects all the activities and ensures a unified understanding. The stories, the narratives, are not only directed at the internal and

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domestic audience, but also at the adversary. The stories of the individual parties then compete for attention [3].

Narrative is something that already operates latently in the mass consciousness, and with skillful manipulation we can bring it to light, dust it off, flavor it, intensify it and turn it into a destructive whirlwind of impulses. Without a good narrative, it is not easy for a story today to sway people to their passions. The task of a good propaganda narrative is to implement emotions, especially fear, and to provoke wrong decisions under the pressure of emotions [7].

The narrative can be, for example, the topic of the harmfulness of vaccination against COVID 19, the illness or death of the president, the existence of Nazism in a certain area, a bloodthirsty enemy, heroes of the conflict, economic independence, the fuel, or food crisis, etc. A well-chosen, smartly chosen topic, the narrative, can be approached gradually at any time return and invent new and new stories, additions, information/disinformation. The target object of black propaganda then acquires the belief that new facts and evidence are constantly appearing, confirming a certain idea (new evidence about the defectiveness of the vaccine, the development of the president's illness, his death and the use of doppelgangers, other evidence about the genocide of the population, etc.). Let's notice in which situations, when and why, for example, information about the development of the president's illness appears "out of the blue" - whenever someone is very bothered by something, key negotiations, elections, landmark events, threats of irreversible changes, potential tactical or strategic losses etc.

Narratives also serve to carry out constant propaganda, information/disinformation pressure on target objects of interest. Narratives are also used by common marketing techniques to promote commercial products. You cannot sell the same product all the time - the product must be constantly innovated (even if not significantly) - its packaging changes, it acquires new, improved "miraculous" properties, etc.

Another magic of information and psychological warfare is the fact that even different narratives can be connected, supplemented, expanded, connected to each other, and combined at will. As a result of domino effects, disinformation campaigns can then be constantly modified, improved, and developed endlessly (until the moment when the narrative is out of date, unfashionable, uninteresting, compromised, unacceptable for the target objects for various reasons, or a new, much more acceptable narrative appears, with greater "sexy" disinformation potential). Several narratives, initially very intensively discussed and mediatized cases in the media, are gradually disappearing. Usually, with the passage of time, they fall into oblivion without any of their objectivity, truth, essence being proven. Narratives and cases have usually served their disinformation purpose.

It is obvious that narratives are the working method of already experienced, often professional disinformers. They pay great attention to the choice of the right narrative, they cleverly contextualize the narratives in various political, social, and economic situations. Narratives, orally told or written stories can then be supplemented with other supporting elements – images, photos, videos, other documents, sound, music, etc.

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## 2.2 A news legend

In security and disinformation practice, we encounter situations where it is necessary to hide certain classified facts, intentions, a person's real identity, activities from a professionally educated enemy, adversary, etc. (usually the intelligence service, military and police forces, specialists, etc.) very well, for a long time, but currently also in front of the public). The author (specialist department, managing operations) who prepares a classified activity knows or professionally assumes that the activities managed by him will be thoroughly, systematically, repeatedly controlled, checked from different sides, points of view, sources by the opponent, etc. To implement the intended classified plan, it is therefore necessary to prepare a professional cover that can withstand thorough scrutiny by an adversary. For this activity, the so-called news legend is used in practice. It is a fictitious, artificially prepared story, situation, reasons, circumstances, etc., the primary goal of which is to prevent the disclosure of the real secret intention, activity (of an intelligence service agent, department). Legend (covering) is support for concealing the real interest, activity, identity, reason, circumstances of the planned activity. Historically, the initial use of legends in intelligence, security, and now also disinformation activities was primarily based on ballads, myths.

But a news legend is not only a well-prepared story itself, which must be perfectly known to the subject who uses it. When preparing a news legend, it is necessary to think in detail about all other supporting facts related to it - e.g. documents, persons - witnesses, results of certain activities, etc. For example - if the agent pretends to be a journalist, this journalist must be known to my colleagues in the past, there must be reports that he processed, articles written, etc. An agent must learn the work of a journalist if he wants to use such a legend. The preparation of some news legends is therefore very demanding and can take years in some cases. This preparation is called legalization. A journalist is really employed in a newsroom where he works. A single thoughtless detail that is forgotten can ruin the whole secret event and cost the lives of its participants.

## 2.3 Active influence measures

This kind of covert operations with the aim of greatly damaging the adversary is specific. It is primarily an active, covert activity, which can be very general, diverse in terms of its preparation, implementation, use and consequences. It does not necessarily have to be primarily a disinformation campaign. The goal is to provoke a reaction from the opponent or other objects that is desirable and beneficial for the person ordering or implementing this operation. It is not just initial disinformation in the form of a report, but a very well prepared and implemented diverse activity where disinformation can be one of its results, either direct (disinformation, propaganda was planned as the primary goal) or indirect (disinformation is by-product, which can also be used appropriately).

An active influence measure can be, for example, covert support (financial, organizational, logistical, etc.) of the opposition political party of an opponent or a selected politician (candidate for a certain position), student or other movement, various propaganda actions, support for the operation of disinformation websites, manipulation during elections, provoking various demonstrations, manifestations, clashes, riots up to sabotage, terrorist act, military provocation, which are subsequently used (abused) also for subsequent large-scale disinformation activity. It

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is typical for disinformation, which is then shared and spread in the media space because of an active influence measure, that it is supported by various material evidence, physical traces (findings of weapons, documents, victims' bodies, etc.). To secure these "evidences" it is necessary to expend considerable intellectual as well as physical effort [2].

As the name suggests, this is an active, covert activity, a measure (having the character of a systematic, thought-out, very well-planned procedure in advance), the aim of which is to gain influence, control over a certain object of interest (person, group of persons, institution, political party, environment, public opinion, etc.). The essence is the induction of controlled and intentional stimuli into a certain environment and a certain situation of interest with the aim of evoking a reaction of the object of interest or the environment of interest, which are monitored, recorded, evaluated, and further controlled. The essence is the artificial creation of a situation in which we expect some reaction, which we need to purposefully manage.

These are planned and systematically implemented sets of diverse intelligence activities that are connected to each other, complement each other and condition each other to achieve the desired goal. Various psychological methods, methods of reflexive games, assertive behavior, etc. can also be used. Active influence measures are usually implemented by intelligence services [6], in their terminology they can be called variously - information influence operations, special operations, intelligence combinations, influence intelligence, intelligence games, etc. Preparation and implementation are usually carried out with the use of employees, collaborators of intelligence services, their agency networks, units for conducting information and psychological warfare. The preparation of active influence measures is a professional matter that also requires considerable financial resources, lack of time for preparation, coordination, etc. Knowledge of the environment, excellent analytical processing and precise execution in perfect secrecy are essential for the preparation and implementation of an active influence measure.

Active influence measures belong to the most demanding and complex types of disinformation, they belong to the "royal discipline" of conducting strategic communication, propaganda, disinformation, and information warfare. In war and other severe conflicts, strategic communication gradually intensifies, escalates, and gains in aggressiveness, especially in those cases where it is necessary to manipulate a very large audience on a global scale; to get the expected result of the information war as quickly as possible. In a state of war, the principle "the end justifies the means" applies, and therefore some narratives are very cruel to draw especially emotional attention to themselves. If the active influence measure was successful, it was accepted by the audience, the creator and organizer of the disinformation campaign will use an even more intensive, aggressive (dis)information operation in the next step.

Some countries do not shy away from using methods where they accuse their rivals of genocide and war crimes with the help of pre-prepared disinformation campaigns, which are also evaluated as provocations. For these purposes, it is used for impersonating the enemy, using the uniforms or markings of enemy troops, abusing the bodies of victims (both your own and the enemy), killing the enemy and even your own population with the aim of placing the blame on enemy units, even if this brutal activity is carried out by your own combatants and other folders. Some methods are

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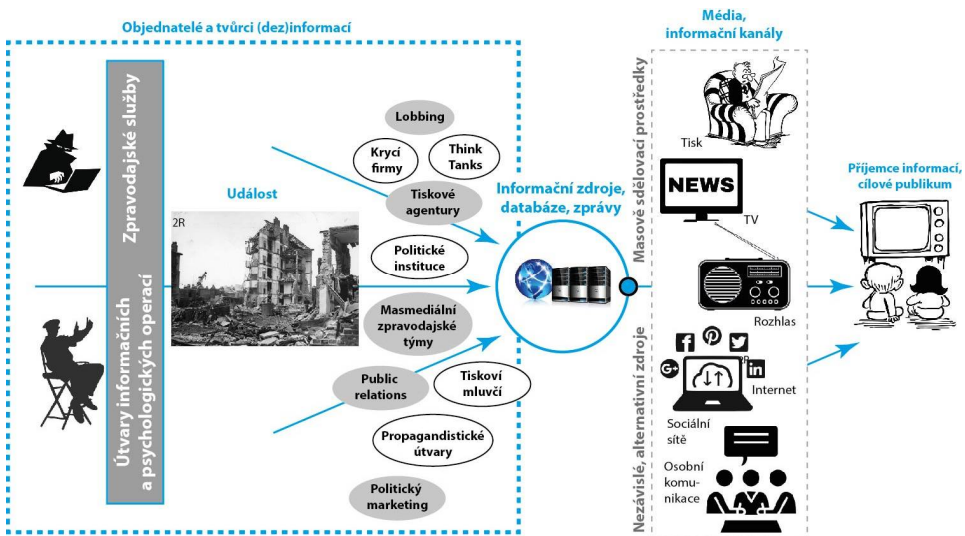
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then in direct conflict with the methods of standard warfare - for example, the use of the civilian population (own and foreign) as human shields to protect one's units, firing positions, staffs, weapon depots, etc.

### 3. Creator of disinformation

Disinformation is mainly used to spread influence and manipulation, especially with the public. People are constantly trying to influence others - the advertising industry and other public relations industries try to influence our behavior every day. Influence is also one of the basic building blocks of diplomacy and foreign policy, which legitimately uses information to achieve desired results. On the other hand, the originators of disinformation activity try to influence others with the help of untruths that serve to achieve a certain goal. In doing so, they consciously exploit people's vulnerabilities, preventing them from making informed decisions [1].

Different perpetrators use disinformation to achieve different goals. A significant amount of disinformation is created and disseminated for economic gain or to promote political views. These activities contribute to the contamination of the information space, but their impact is often limited. A more problematic situation occurs when disinformation is spread by hostile state or parastatal entities as part of a larger campaign [2].



Picture 1 Basic diagram of the information process and information sources.  
Sources: Roman Rak.

In detailed analyses, we should consistently distinguish between the terms client and creator of disinformation. In practice, these entities can differ from each other (the customer and the creator are different from each other), but they can also be identical. It only depends on what professional level and to what extent, with what goal it is necessary to produce and subsequently spread disinformation. The division of labor between the client and the supplier of disinformation is therefore natural. In practice, e.g. in election marketing, a political party sets the terms of its election campaign, and the supplier (creator) of the campaign implements various media outputs, including

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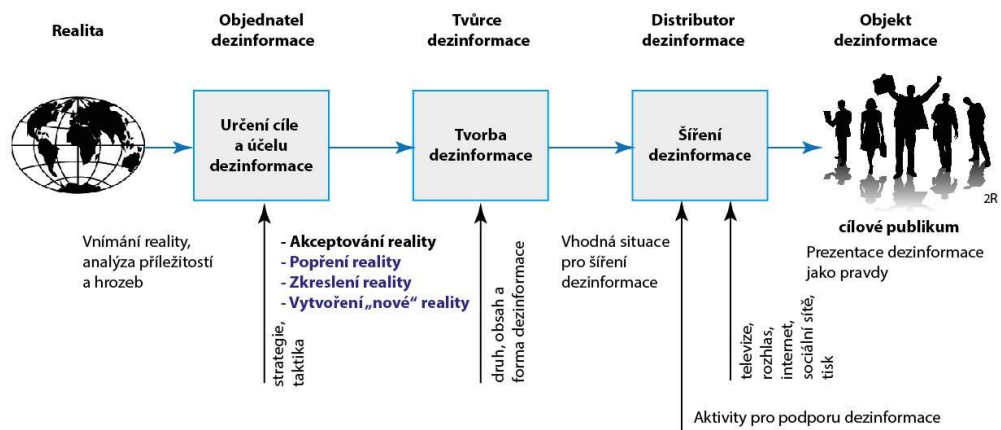
propaganda and disinformation. Due to the high level of secrecy, the intelligence agency can carry out some disinformation actions by itself, in other cases it can create civilian cover companies that are essentially troll companies, or it just rents them or pays them commercially.

Disinformation can therefore be created by a wide range of subjects, from complete amateurs to top experts:

- lonely individuals;
- mentally or otherwise deranged individuals;
- induced, hired, paid persons;
- individual amateur trolls;
- independent, professional trolls (they are paid for their work);
- troll farms;
- hired agencies, specializing in promotion, political marketing, public relations (PR) in various forms (public relations agencies, marketing agencies, press representatives, etc.);
- mass media (press, radio, TV, Internet);
- specialized companies;
- cover companies (organizations);
- state-run agencies;
- press agencies;
- political institutions;
- think tanks;
- intelligence services;
- departments for conducting informational and psychological warfare;
- etc.

The quality, of course, depends on the quality and experience of the entities commissioning and subsequently implementing the promotion or disinformation, on their budgets, and sufficient time to prepare the disinformation.

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Picture 2 A basic diagram of the life cycle of the creation of disinformation. Source: Roman Rak.



### **3.1 Technical implementation of disinformation**

The technical implementation of disinformation itself depends on many factors, such as [1]:

- **Kind of disinformation.** The simpler the disinformation is in terms of logic or content, the simpler its technical implementation is usually. But this in no way means that well-thought-out, sophisticated methods cannot be used. The closer disinformation is to the truth, the harder it is to detect. In the case of narrative-type disinformation, disinformation is produced not only in textual form, but in all possible forms (visual, audio, audiovisual, etc.). Nowadays, the narrative is complemented by various visuals, signs, symbols that affect the consciousness and subconsciousness of the target audience, creating various associations. Disinformation of the type of news legends, active influence measures are not just textual or audiovisual forms, but represent a whole series of physical, thought, informational objects that must be harmoniously and logically combined into one uniform whole. All these objects, partial building blocks, on their own, but also in all logical, mutual relations, must be realized in such a way that there is no suspicion of forgery, lie, there is no mistake, lack of thought, etc. The smallest detail can then ruin the entire operation.
- **Purpose, audience of disinformation.** Different purposes of disinformation, different audiences to whom disinformation is intended, can affect its technical implementation. In Europe, for example, we do not assume at all that someone cannot read, does not have a television, a mobile phone, or an Internet connection. However, in countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, etc., it can be quite different, and strategic communication needs to be adapted accordingly. Here we can encounter the use of posters, flyers, etc. Another factor is the very purpose of the disinformation and the composition of the audience that the disinformation will affect. If the target is the broad masses, it is usually based on their knowledge, behavior, attitudes, average intellectual abilities, etc. In such cases, disinformation is based on these criteria and does not have to be sophisticated in any way. Colorful, emotional pictures are enough; for example, materials from completely different conflicts, different places, taken at a different time, etc. can be used as evidence of war rage, and almost no one will notice anything. This aspect is also interesting from a financial point of view because it costs almost nothing. However, the situation is completely different when we want to deceive the command of military units, units, intelligence services, professionals in general who know and assume the issue of information warfare by trickery and deception, misinformation. In these cases, creating disinformation, preparing supporting news coverage, creating legends, other information operations require a completely different level of technical environment, necessary time for planning and preparation.
- **Financial and technical possibilities of the creator of disinformation.** Information warfare nowadays is considerably cheaper than physical warfare. But this does not mean that considerable financial resources are not invested in it. It depends on the extent and duration of (dis)information processes, the

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breadth of the audience addressed and its geographical spread. Disinformation campaigns can be conducted by private entities, political parties and their hired agencies, consultants, states. In the case of ideological, state propaganda, intelligence services, etc., these are entire specialized propaganda, disinformation organizations and departments employing a relatively large number of people, who also recruit other people to cooperate (including operatives). Finances are also invested in special technical equipment, which can be very expensive. The scope of (dis)information campaigns or operations, their quality, duration, etc., also depend on the financial and technical possibilities.

- **The length of time disinformation is allowed to operate before it is detected.** (Dis)information, propaganda or strategic communication always have a certain period, during which they should be active, i.e. function well, fulfill their goals. From this point of view, we can divide (dis)information into **tactical level**, whose task is to act right now or in the short term, or **strategic level** (dis)information, which has a significantly longer period of existence. Under tactical disinformation, we can imagine some edited message from the battlefield that is intended to affect only a certain location in the short term. From the technical point of view, it can be issued as, for example, an agency report of a press agency. This is a one-time, simple activity using standard technical means. Another situation is when, from the point of view of propaganda and strategic communication, it is necessary to strategically influence the attitudes of the population towards a certain ideology, state structure, etc. in this case. a specific enemy country, various narrowly specialized (dis)information servers, troll farms, etc. This cannot be done without specific, very demanding, and financially expensive technical equipment, which must then be continuously maintained in operation. In parallel with this, various educational and promotional materials, altered history textbooks, programs, educational courses can be created that, for example, change, question the historical context, etc. it is then not possible to fundamentally change them in any way and it is not possible to allow substantial changes that would reveal the required manipulation intentions. Even from this point of view, the view changes not only on the technical background, but also on the organizational, logistical, etc., so that specialized (dis)information agencies are created and continue to work.
- **Time to prepare, implement and distribute disinformation.** In the case of (dis)information campaigns, information operations often depend very much on the speed of their implementation, distribution of the required information through selected communication channels. Today's information technology, mass media can deliver information even before the audience forms its own opinion about the given situation; they will understand what is really going on. From this point of view, the speed of creation and distribution is very important, because a well-conducted information campaign can influence the opinions of most of the population and manipulate it according to its goals at the appropriate time. Being first in the information war, having the upper hand in information, including disinformation, is very important. If the adversary chooses the strategy of reacting to (dis)information necessarily and

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as soon as possible, explaining its essence, proving that it is not true, etc., he must invest many resources in this process, and he will lose his own time and thus also the strategic initiative. The adversary takes over here and in certain situations spews one misinformation after another for the reasons mentioned above, even though he is aware that in many cases they are easily detectable. The average population, the decisive mass at which strategic communication is targeted, may not even notice these facts in the flood of information. What is important is not the truth, but the intention of the message and its understanding by the audience. The decisive thing is to create a first impression, an opinion, which is then very difficult to change with arguments. In order not to lose the strategic initiative, the adversary can only react to the most important (dis)information and must conduct its own strategic communication, (dis)information operations in parallel. The attacker defends himself against this by limiting the adversary's distribution channels - television, radio broadcasts, web news channels, etc. Some (dis)information is an ad hoc response to certain situations and the creator of the information must react very quickly to be the first to come up with the information. Here, of course, there is a risk of mistakes due to haste. Other disinformation campaigns, of a propaganda, intelligence nature, strategic communication, on the other hand, have a long-term nature, are planned, and implemented in advance according to predetermined programs, concepts, principles, methodologies, etc. They are worked on by professional, well-coordinated teams with diverse educations, including psychologists, sociologists, communication and marketing specialists, experts in the given target environment, native speakers, scientific teams from the field of social sciences, etc. The more financial resources, technical capabilities, and quality teams the creator of (dis)information has, and who knows how to plan and use them effectively, the more he can spread more misinformation and react at the ideal time. However, this does not automatically mean that his propaganda (dis)information campaign, strategic communication must always be successful. It depends a lot on the target audience, the recipient of disinformation, their social and cultural environment, the geopolitical situation, including current, local specifics. The time available for planning, creating, and implementing (dis)information is one of the decisive factors, which in many cases determines the strategy and tactics of (dis)information, its type, technical means, etc.

- **Social, cultural, religious, historical, geopolitical environment of disinformation.** The target audience is always in a certain environment. It can be physical or formed by social, historical, cultural, and other aspects that influence the mentality, thinking and behavior of people in different situations, on the perception of information that comes to them from a different environment or from an originator coming from a different environment. To this, it is necessary to adapt the characteristics of (dis)information from the point of view of various factors – content, form of presentation, technical method of presenting information. There are known cases when Western and Eastern European intelligence services tried to compromise diplomats from Arab countries using so-called honey traps – recording a video of a particular diplomat in a delicate sexual situation with a

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girl from an escort service. When they brought him the photos he had taken as proof, he just smiled and asked if they could give him more because he wanted to share them with his wives and friends about how good he was abroad. Some procedures that are proven in one country may not work in another, both in terms of the chosen method, content, and technical implementation of (dis)information.

## Conclusion

The life cycle of disinformation begins with its ordering and ends with its acceptance or rejection by the target consumer, the target object. It has the following attributes: Orderer of disinformation, planning of disinformation, purpose, goal and content of disinformation, type of disinformation, creator of disinformation, technical implementation of disinformation, properties of disinformation, method of dissemination of disinformation, target consumer of disinformation, acceptance/rejection of disinformation and evaluation of the results of disinformation. information channels, media and information sources are finished outputs.

These are news, programs, films, discussions, etc. stored in a certain database to which we can repeatedly return (e.g. archives of television and radio broadcasts, websites with newspaper articles, discussions, etc.). Information channels (media) can be divided from many points of view. The first criterion is their ownership. According to him, information channels (media) are state, public and private. A person obtains information from various information sources using various media and communication channels. According to the method of disseminating information with the help of various technologies, we divide the media into newspapers (magazines, books, etc.), television, radio. Internet, social networks, personal communication, and more.

## Note:

A comprehensive examination of the issue: Propaganda, disinformation, information, psychological and mental warfare as a power tool in the globalized world, in connection with a comprehensive examination of security theory, is presented in ch. 11.6 "Introduction to the theory of security" in the monograph: Porada, V. et al. Security sciences (Introduction to theory, methodology and security terminology - 2nd updated and expanded edition. - Pilsen" Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, s.r.o., 2022 - 1005 pages.

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## Authors:

<sup>1</sup> **Prof. JUDr. Ing. Viktor Porada, DrSc., Dr.h.c. mult.** - University of Security Management in Košice, Slovakia, e-mail: viktor.porada@seznam.cz

<sup>2</sup> **Akademik Anton Lisník**, - Slovak Technical University in Bratislava: e-mail: alisnik@gmail.com