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## **You Don't Fool Me. 5 Steps To Develop Effective Countermeasures Against Disinformation and Manipulation**

This article explores factors enabling the employment of strategic approach to communications' threats posed by ubiquitous phenomena such as disinformation and manipulation targeted at citizens via various media channels. These threats may and do cause social, economic and political instability in a particular country, and when occur in a number of nation states, they affect international security as well.

In a drive to ensure an optimal countermeasure, governments, researchers and NGOs seek to find the golden remedy, however, these initiatives – if implemented – still seem to be too partial to be efficient. Ever-growing challenges of communications demand consistency and speed hence the need to develop a global cooperation between governments, NGOs and media in order to raise awareness and build resilience in citizens.

Citizens who are well-educated and aware of communication-related opportunities as well as risks not only add up to empowering national security systems, but also can benefit from this knowledge in their daily life, whether it is a consumer decision, elections for a local community leader or initiative. Considerate analysing their messages, noticing manipulative tricks or messages intentionally misleading can be critical to an individual. Therefore teaching information analysis is essential in a modern democratic country.

Five fundamental elements must be taken into account when thinking of a consistent, comprehensive communications strategy:

1. Cross-sectoral approach – integration and cooperation – individual actions and initiatives don't pay off: to result in long-term effects they need to be managed on a strategic level. Information education for citizens at different stages of educational stages as well as promoting critical thinking in media is equally essential.
2. Flexibility – communications is a process spreading quickly and easily. To address and manage communications' crises, governments need to be active instead of reactive while the promoted message requires to be tailored to the audience. Communications' process is a flow – to manage this, no organization can only follow thus various crisis scenarios have to be recreated.

3. Tools - to overcome manipulation and disinformation, a nation state needs to use propaganda techniques. Democracy is helpless without tools of effective communications used in organised system of communications. According to Aristotle, if the audience of the message chooses the con artist instead of the good-willed speaker, then it is the fault of the speaker who failed to convey truth well enough to convince his audience. As controversial as it may seem, it is the only known method now to counter-fight anti-democratic narratives. As health campaigns show, propaganda techniques can serve society well
4. Life-long learning – developing and improving communications based on advertising expertise, media and social psychology – implementing new methods and trainings for different audiences. Governments should share experiences in regards of these initiatives, to assess their efficiency.
5. Lessons learnt - evaluation of methods. Strategic approach is defined by its goals: raising awareness of the threats in mass communication faced by citizens, delivering tools for developing critical thinking and thus analysis of received messages, enabling citizens to differentiate persuasive messages to manipulative ones as essential in preventing anxiety or/and distrust in society.

Following the above-mentioned key-points, based on experiences of different governments, organizations and NGOs, the relevant methods and techniques will be discussed.

**Form of presentation:**

Research-based oral presentation supported by slide show.

**Research topic:**

Resilience to manipulative techniques in mass communications

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Manipulation, Disinformation, Propaganda, Strategic Communication

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