

INFORMATIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SECURITY THREATS IN CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENT

Milan Miljkovic*, Anita Pešić

University of Defense of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia

*milanmiljkovic04011@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper presents the contemporary concepts of information and psychological operation in the contemporary environment. The concepts were presented through general theoretical considerations by presenting leading theorists from the US, Russian Federation and the PR China. The concepts explain the goals, content and methods of acting on potential groups and individuals, and the means of information and psychological operation. The goal of the paper is to show that the research problem is not important exclusively for political and military systems, but that groups and individuals are particularly exposed to the challenges and threats in the contemporary environment. Various means of information and psychological activity in the contemporary environment (rumors, fake news) and their consequences such as changing attitudes and behavior of people in political and social processes are presented. An empirical account showing the importance of this topic is an analysis of the European institutions' activities in counteracting fake news during important political processes and elections for the European Parliament.

Key words: modern concepts of information operations, contemporary environment, goals of information-psychological operations, rumors, fake news, influence on changing attitudes and behaviours.

ИНФОРМАЦИОНИ И ПСИХОЛОШКИ АСПЕКТИ БЕЗБЕДНОСНИХ ПРЕТЊИ У САВРЕМЕНОМ ОКРУЖЕЊУ

Апстракт

У раду су приказани савремени концепти информационо-психолошког деловања у савременом окружењу. Концепти су представљени кроз општа теоријска разматрања приказивањем водећих теоретичара са подручја САД, Руске Федерације и НР Кине. Концепти објашњавају циљеве, садржаје и методе деловања на потенцијалне групе и појединце, као и средства информационо-психолошког деловања. Циљ рада је да се укаже на то да истраживани проблем није искључиво важан за политичке и

војне системе, већ да су изазовима и претњама у савременом окружењу посебно изложене и групе и појединци. Приказана су различита средства информационо-психолошког деловања у савременом окружењу (гласине, лажне вести) и њихове последице на мењање ставова и понашања људи у политичким и друштвеним процесима. Емпиријски приказ који указује на важност ове теме је анализа активности Европских институција на плану супротстављања лажним вестима током важних политичких процеса и избора за Европски парламент.

Кључне речи: савремени концепти информационог деловања, савремено окружење, циљеви информационо-психолошког деловања, гласине, лажне вести, утицај на промене ставова и понашања.

INTRODUCTION

According to the American theorist Toffler, the last decade of the twentieth century presented the transition from the industrial to the new "third age" or information age, whose basic characteristics are that "information" is the central potential of world production and political power. World production is based on the ownership and monopoly of information and new conflicts are based on geoinformation competitions. Information becomes a strategic resource. Philip M. Taylor, an English theorist from the University of Leeds, sees communication and information in the 21st century as important to contemporary society as oil and coal were to the development of civilization in the 20th century.

The widespread use of modern information technology and the phenomenon of information abundance have led to the intensification of competition with regard to information, which has, in turn, led to an increase in the number and type of security challenges in the contemporary environment based on conflicts and influence through information. In other words, information activities become very important for both national security and personal and psychological security, and the protection of organizations and individuals as essential parts of the broader community.

The topicality and importance of information operation, both at the broader social level and at the individual level, influenced the security sphere in terms of a conceptual transition from the "traditional" to the "new generation of conflicts", such as the transition 1) from segmental warfare to total war; 2) from the war in the physical environment to the war in human consciousness and in cyber space; 3) from symmetrical to asymmetrical conflict - simultaneous and coordinated application of political, economic, information, technological and environmental campaigns; points to the currentness of information and psychological operations as a model of psychological action on target groups of different character and level.

*CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS OF INFORMATION AND
PSYCHOLOGIC OPERATION IN THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT*

Information is a term which has been known since ancient times. During the twentieth century, various theories related to this term, such as communication science, were studied more intensively. Many theorists, such as Claude E. Shannon, Norbert Wiener, and Russell Ekof, point to the possibility of influencing the external environment through information (Shannon, 1948; Norbert, 1973, p. 32). Many theories about information functions, such as the "biological theory", the American theory of communicology, and the neo-Marxist theory, point to "influence" as one of the characteristics of information (Radojković, Đorđević T., 2005, p. 211; Mattelart, 1998, p. 57).

The central place in all these theories belongs to the evaluations of effects and the nature of influence information can have on the influence object.

Information has always been a means of influencing target groups, whether states or individuals. In contemporary society, information technology is spreading information much more widely and faster than ever before in history, which is why the importance of information as a factor of influence has grown. Accordingly, in the information age, information is becoming increasingly important for national security as well. In addition to the traditional elements of national power, in the second half of the twentieth century, power in the information sphere especially stood out, i.e. the ability to influence the target groups in the information sphere. This ability of the state as expressed in international relations is realized through diplomacy, media, new media and other means. Information operations and psychological operations are used as basic conceptual models for opponents, neutral and domestic public in the information age.

In Western theory, information operations are defined as activities undertaken with the goal to act on hostile information and information systems simultaneously protecting their own information and information systems. The primary targets of information operations attacks are the opposing leadership, the infrastructure (telecommunications, transportation, energy system, financial system, production system) and citizens (Joint Pub 3-13: *Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*, US Army Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1998; and *Joint Vision 2020*, United States Department of Defence, Washington DC, 2000).

When analyzing psychological operations as a specific part of information operations, by looking at the period from the end of the Cold War until today, the transformation of the use of the term can be noticed in propaganda, media action, and "Perception Management". Psychological Operations (PSYOP) are defined as activities designed to convey selected information and indications to a foreign audience. They aim to influence emotions, motives, ways of thinking and ultimately the behavior of

foreign governments, organizations, groups and individuals. Psychological operations are applied at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. At the strategic level, they often take the form of political or diplomatic views and statements (Joint Pub 3-53: *Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations*, US Army Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2003).

All information and psychological operations are realized within a much broader context called the *information environment - sphere*. The information sphere is defined as a set of individuals, organizations or systems for collecting, processing or distributing information (Field, 1996).

The information sphere consists of three elements: 1) information infrastructure (systems and devices for collecting, transmitting, processing and delivering information), 2) information and its flow, and 3) the personnel performing various activities. The information sphere was created as a result of the emergence of a new socio-economic formation in the society - the information society (Sinkovski, 2005). There are three conceptual dimensions within the information sphere: physical, information and cognitive. Similarly, a Chinese military theorist Dai Qingmin states that the information sphere is made up of three dimensions: a) the electromagnetic space, b) the computer-network space, and c) the cognitive and value system of decision makers (Qingmin, 2003).

In accordance with the previous definitions, and in the opinion of the American theorist Joseph Nye, "winning hearts and minds has always been important, but it is of particular importance in the global information age." In that sense, he states that information has always been power, and that contemporary information technology is spreading information much more widely and faster than ever before in history, which is why the importance of information as an element of power has grown. Nye points out that the nature of power has changed in the last fifty years, and especially since the last IT revolution that made computers and the Internet indispensable in all walks of life (Stenley, 1967).

For Russian authors, the security of the information sphere is a complex and, in its essence, a multilayered problem. It is the subject of interdisciplinary, technological and humanistic scientific research (Petrović, 2012). Therefore, Russian theorists argue that information operations, by means applied, are divided into operations carried out by: 1) information-technical means - such as attacks on critical objects of national infrastructure, cyber attacks and 2) information-perceptive means - such as propaganda, management of opponents' perception, misinformation, psychological operations and deception (Thomas L. T., 1996).

Russian scientists have also been studying the potential of information-psychological operations on a system of values, emotions and beliefs of a target group (traditional psychological warfare), but also the methods for influencing objective reasoning and decision-making processes for military and civilian leaders. In this sense, the Russian theory deals not

only with the study of the possible influence of information weapons on computer systems and processes, but also on the possible information influence on the human mind (Miljković, 2010). In the naval forces journal, *Morskoy Sbornik* (October 2003), a retired officer R. Bikkenin points out that information warfare has become a kind of an „art“ where offensive and defensive actors are engaged in influencing the intellect of the civilian population and the members of the armed forces of the opponent (Bikkenin, 2003, p. 39). Following this line of thought, technological cyber attacks can also be undertaken in the information space. Russia believes that any deliberate dissemination of information on the Internet by a foreign government in order to undermine or overthrow the government of another country must be qualified as aggression in international relations (Mladenović, Drakulić, Jovanović, 2012). The completely opposite view is promoted by the United States and the states assembled around NATO, which deny the right to any attempt to establish state censorship of ideas and information on the Internet, explaining it as a universal principle of protection of human rights and democracy. From the American point of view, information activity cannot be a form of armed aggression against a state in the sense of international law. The US implies that information assault in terms of use of force consists solely of the offensive use of cyber weapons for the purpose of causing damage.

Similarly, Chinese theorists seek to develop and update a theory and ideology of psychological action that will be based on intimidation and that will use the advantages of the difference between Eastern and Western mentality. PLA plans to set up command structures for psychological warfare, as well as specialized PSYOP units to reduce technological inferiority of the Chinese military by deploying PSYOP in military operations. Even more significant is the fact that Chinese theorists believe that contemporary psychological warfare can provide stability and contribute to shaping and building a broader culture of thinking about the importance of national security, leading to the conclusion that PSYOP operations are much more applied in peace than in war.

Objectives and the Importance of Information-Psychological Operations against Target Groups

The goals of psychological operations may be, conditionally, divided into general, special and individual. Long-term and general-purpose psychological operations are generally performed to influence the value systems of large groups of people such as nations, states, religious communities, political movements, or multinational companies (domestic or competing). Specific objectives relate to areas of human activities such as culture, tradition, morale and, in particular, combat morale in war. An individual goal refers to a specific process in a limited space and in a short

time. The effects are short-lived and quickly noticeable. Such goals are set in the conduct of war operations (Miljković, 2008, p. 100).

According to its importance and level, psychological activity is performed at: the strategic, operational and tactical level. At the strategic level, psychological action is the responsibility of the highest leadership of the country. It is undertaken and implemented in order to achieve major national interests and influence on opposing and foreign national, political and military leaderships, as well as the public opinion of other countries. They are dominantly executed by civilian institutions and bodies, while military authorities can participate in supporting their implementation. Psychological action of operational importance is performed in the area of a particular region or country for the purpose of influencing the views of the adversary and its population. At the tactical level, psychological activity is performed in a narrower space, in order to influence the opposing forces and the population. It achieves partial, current and short-term goals (Miljković, 2008, p. 102).

Content and Methods of Information-Psychologic Operations

The most common content of psychological information is "persuasive and strong" information (messages), half-truths, "misleading information" and misinformation, rumors and fake news that are distributed through the media, diplomatic channels or the "face-to-face" method. Propaganda information and messages, first and foremost, aim at those psychological factors (perception, motivation, doubt, fear, stress - to psychologically shock, etc.) that, in different situations, have a decisive influence on people's behavior. In relation to these factors, appropriate methods and techniques of psychological operations have been developed. The following methods are most commonly applied in relation to the effects intended against a particular target group: causing certain emotional states (including shock); influencing knowledge, attitudes and beliefs (up to the level of commitment in practice); causing confusion in the value system (disorientation); imposing our own value models (ideologization); aggressive imposition of behavioral models (indoctrination); inhumane alteration of a "victim's" personality (Miljković, 2008, p. 106), etc.

American propaganda experts classify methods of psychological action in several groups:

- the first group includes the obvious methods: claiming authority, assertion, connection to others, disagreement, "glittering" generalizations, ambiguities, rationalization and simplification, projecting guilt and moral labeling, the "least of evils", "ordinary" people.
- the second group includes unconvincing methods: incredible truths, insinuations, unverified information, simplification, "let the other side be heard" (Miljković, 2008, p. 106).

Means for Information-Psychologic Operations

In the past, there have been different approaches to classifying assets for psychological operations. The most acceptable to us is the division made in relation to the sensory bases of receiving messages (Mihajlović, 1984, p. 64). According to this classification, there are three groups of means: auditory, visual and audiovisual. Auditory means rely on the sense of hearing. The most well-known forms of auditory messaging are the spoken word (speeches, oratorship), radio and speakers, while the auditory elements are the human voice, music, sound, noise, and other sound content. Visual means are defined by visual perception. They are in widespread use and are characterized by appropriate symbolization. The most famous visual means include: print (newspapers, magazines, illustrations), leaflets, posters, drawings, paintings, cartoons, graphic symbols, comic books, books and the like. Audiovisual propaganda means are the result of modern science and technology. The most famous are: film, television, means of IT support (computers) and the Internet. The most powerful tool today is television. Artificial satellites allow real-time tracking of events from anywhere on the planet. The Internet is a powerful tool for spreading propaganda. Internet and satellite connections allow the placement of information and propaganda content "inside" and in the conditions of closed media space of a certain country from the influence of other media.

The media has the power to represent the world in different ways. The effectiveness of the message depends on the technical carrier of the message. The same message, communicated through various types of technical means, causes unequal effects, which proves that the power of the message depends not only on the content of the message but also on the form and structure of the technical transmission (Djordjević, Pešić, 2004). McLuhan points to the importance of form explaining it by comparing the effects of two stimuli: one that is the American flag (with stars and stripes) and the other stimulus that is a fabric that says "American flag". Although the meaning is the same, their effects are different. The words "American flag" cover only the conscious layer of shared experience, while the stars and stripes express both the conscious layer and the collective subconscious and unconscious. Engaging in action rather than meaning is a basic characteristic of a new society, because one experiences more than one understands, and it is wrong to conclude that a person acts only based of what they understand, but also on the basis of what they experience and do not understand. (McLuhan, 1971).

*INFORMATION-PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATION
AGAINST SMALLER GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS*

In relation to the objects of operation (target groups), the goals of psychological operations may be directed towards:

- top state government - to influence changes in the decisions, attitudes and intentions of the opposing leadership in terms of accepting the political, economic and other interests of the other party;
- the population - to provoke thinking and dilemma among civilian structures and reduce the support of the population of their own leadership, encourage passive resistance in relation to the fulfillment of the citizens' obligations and organize protests as well as other forms of civil disobedience.

The common goal of acting on these subjects is to change attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Rumors and fake news stand out as a characteristic form of psychological activity towards smaller groups and individuals (Miljković, 2008, p. 100).

*Rumours as a Method of Psychological Activity
against Small Groups and Individuals*

One of the oldest forms of propaganda and simultaneously a method of applying psychological operations and a means of influencing the consciousness of the masses are rumors. It is believed that the rumors were responsible for Nero's confrontation with Christianity, that Genghis Khan had special front-line units moving before the remainder of the army and spoke of the cruelty of Genghis Khan's army, and that Napoleon used artists and negotiators for the same propaganda purposes. Frederick the Great used methods of deceiving the enemy by using dirty tricks, fake news (Neubauer, 2010).

According to their origin, there are two types of rumors: spontaneous and intentionally constituted. Past experience suggests that rumors are one of the most reliable and most powerful means of psychological activity. They work by being inserted from multiple sides simultaneously and through different channels (print, Internet, radio and TV). Rumors are actually about deliberately publicizing various misinformation with strictly dosed content (Marković, 2000, p. 108) about certain events and people which, under the influence of emotions of the receivers most often get accepted, subjectively interpreted and transferred further as new facts, which, the more they spread, have increasingly less connection to reality. The motives relating to some emotional and intellectual states, such as fear, hatred, hope, expectation, curiosity and others, are especially important for the emergence of rumors. Rumors most often refer to certain well known persons from the state and military leadership with influence on decision making, or are themselves

responsible for giving important orders or making important decisions regarding the security of an entire state and nation. Also, rumors may relate to certain events and situations concerning the security of a number of groups or individuals, such as casualties, injuries, capture, loss of technology, enemy environment, the use of new enemy weapons, and similar.

The most usual factors taken into consideration with regard to the classification of rumors are the basic objective of their application, the motives which stimulate their occurrence, the psychological state and traits of the transmitter and the combination of these factors, taking into account both criteria. Although there is no precise distinction between the known types of rumors (certain rumors can be categorized into one, another, or even multiple types of rumors) they can be divided into seven groups:

1) rumors of fear - one such rumor was spread by Japanese agents among US troops in New Guinea during World War II. They spread the information that the antimalarial atabrin tablets, taken by US soldiers, cause permanent impotence. US soldiers believed this and began to reject antimalarial tablets, resulting in a large number of malaria-infected soldiers. Because of this rumor, nearly 80 percent of troops were put out of action, which, according to later American analysis, was more fatal than many Japanese military offensives on the battlefield (Rupčić, 2007, p. 68).

2) rumors of uncertainty,

3) rumors of hate – in 1941, a German radio station, camouflaged as the BBC, broadcast the news that English troops were heroically resisting the German offensive at Arden by themselves, while the US troops were retreating, leaving them stranded. That show had high ratings and was a success. The English were angry at the cowardly Americans, while the Americans were angry at the alleged British arrogance (Zvonarević, 1981).

4) misleading rumours,

5) wish rumours,

6) dream (nostalgic) rumours and

7) curiosity rumours - During World War II, German agents spread rumors across America that "Roosevelt was suffering from syphilis, that Churchill had suffered a delirium tremens attack because of his excessive love for whiskey and alcohol, that an American bomber was carrying Roosevelt's son's dog from Europe" (Zvonarević, 1981).

Rumours find support in man's need to find out and explain all that is essential to his existence. They appear because of curiosity, the need to prove oneself and gain respect, but also due to emotions of fear, hope or hatred (Pajević, Kordić, 2007). The emergence of rumors is affected by situational and personal factors. Situational factors are social conditions in which there is no sufficient official information or news about current events (social crises, corruption, crime, stock market events, flood or fire emergencies, war circumstances). In those moments, every news, even untrue, makes people feel better and helps garner the sense of security,

but they are also moments which can lead to falling victim to the rumor maker. Personal factors represent people who are prone to accepting and spreading rumors. The characteristics of these people are most often the need to be in the spotlight, they are often people with some personal problems, people who are more easily frightened. Human desires, needs, and hopes can also be a source of rumours, and then the content of rumours is usually positive and encouraging (pay increase, more days off work). Rumours may also relate to certain events and situations concerning the security of a number of groups or individuals, such as casualties, injuries, capture, loss of technology, enemy environment, use of new enemy weapons, and similar. Rumours about the stock market developments are very common, used to raise or lower the price of certain commodities or corporate stocks (Roganić, 2004), as well as rumours about a supposed product contamination (Dašić, 2014).

*Fake News as a Means of Information-Psychological Operation
Against Small Groups and Individuals*

According to expert opinion, fake news is defined as the deliberate or conscious online publication of false statements (Gelfert, 2018, p. 97). The goal of fake news, based on nonexistent or distorted "facts," is to mislead and manipulate the public opinion. Crisis situations, such as natural disasters, bombings or armed attacks, are favorite situations for fake news authors who use the emotions that surround such events to try to give their works the maximum exposure.

The issue of fake news as a significant challenge to the internal security of states is linked to the fact that social media and online platforms, which represent an important source of information today, play an important role in accelerating the spread of fake news and enabling them to spread globally and broadly, thereby significantly speeding up the spread of the internal instability in a country. Moreover, the fast spread of a large amount of false information can have a significant negative and manipulative effect on public opinion, and consequently become a major security problem today (Lohr, 2018). News, in general, including fake news as its subcategory, transmitted by the use of modern technology that enables fast and inexpensive transmission, emerges as a generator of political, moral and other attitudes of individuals and society, and therefore is the driver of internal political events in the country (Bodrožić, 2017, p. 251).

Fake news, as part of the doctrine of crisis provocation or crisis management, and in the broader sense of public opinion management, of provoking civil dissatisfaction and unrest that most often implicitly impose self-interest, or as part of creating the conditions for the domestic and international public for a media war to grow into a real war, are treated as part of subversive action, specifically as part of information warfare, that is,

as an instrument of information operations for information action on the internal stability of opponents (Stajić, Gaćinović, 2007, p. 242).

*THE ANALYSIS OF APPLICATION OF INFORMATION-
PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS AS A SECURITY THREAT IN
POLITICAL PROCESSES*

Due to the widespread use of information technology in the field of communications modern states face the problem of how to effectively control and protect the national information sphere, and subsequently national security. From the aspect of protection of internal security and political stability, the use of propaganda and misinformation as part of "information operations" by an external factor is classified as a type of subversive action, which as such may be divided into: 1) political influence operations, 2) media and public opinion influence operations and 3) ideological-political indoctrination (Miljković, 2016, p. 206).

The European Commission's High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation defines the concept as disinformation in all forms of false, inaccurate or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to harm the public or for profit. Disinformation, that is, demonstrably false or misleading information which is conceived, presented and disseminated for the purpose of gaining economic benefits or deliberately misleading the public, damages public debate, violates citizens' confidence in institutions and the media, thus damaging the country's internal stability and democratic processes such as electoral processes. Therefore the goal of information manipulation is not to persuade people into an alternative political ideology, but to cause the weakening of the existing internal stability of a country through divisions.

In the European Union, the issue of disinformation and fake news is highly positioned on the security agenda of European lawmakers as proven by the European Parliament elections which were held in 2019. In this regard, a campaign has been conducted in the EU to combat "fake news" in the field of legislation by the governments of many European countries. Germany has already introduced, and France has implemented new rules aimed at removing or blocking hate speech and fabricated content on Internet communication platforms. The United Kingdom, on the other hand, plans to designate a unit within its security apparatus to combat the aforementioned threats, while the Czech Republic has already formed a unit within the Ministry of the Interior to combat hybrid threats and misinformation (Miljković, 2019).

The fact that fake news is a significant security problem for contemporary societies is confirmed by the results of a survey implemented in February 2018 in the European Union, which was conducted among 25,576 respondents in 28 Member States, and on this occasion 85% of EU

citizens recognized fake news as a problem in their states. (Final results of the Eurobarometer on fake news and online disinformation).

The key factor in the spread of disinformation is human behavior on social networks, and the fact that social media has almost completely replaced traditional media. An increasing number of EU citizens (an average of 46 percent in 2016) follow the news on social networks, and six out of ten articles that are shared are forwarded without prior reading. According to the results of a study, false information is shared more than true information, fake stories receive more attention and are therefore distributed at a faster rate. A study by the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, published in March in the *Science Journal*, found that fake news on social networks spread much faster than real news, regardless of the topic. According to the survey, true news on Twitter rarely spread to more than 1,000 people. On the other hand, 1% of the most popular fake news typically reaches between 1,000 and 100,000 people. Also, a true information takes six times longer to reach 1,500 people than a false one.

The Internet does not follow the standards of the journalistic community, so it is impossible to restrain it with traditional instruments and conservative measures. It is the leading place for spreading disinformation, lies and half-truths, and fear and panic are spreading due to social networks, as well as lack of belief in anything coming from the official media (Jevtović, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Information has long been used for manipulative purposes, to influence public opinion, internal affairs, and the security of states. In the contemporary information age, due to the negative impact of the mass application of contemporary information and communication technology on the sovereignty and control of states over the national information space, the importance of "information" as a means of provoking conflicts and "information sphere" as a space for the competition of contemporary global society has been actualized.

The increase of security challenges in the information space has made the importance of information security current. However, contemporary practice, especially the actualization of protection against fake news and disinformation in European countries, during sensitive political periods such as the elections, indicates that security challenges in the contemporary information environment are primarily informational and psychological in nature rather than information-technical, which was the prominent concept in an earlier time.

The information security practice so far seems to forget the important fact that in addition to information and the means of information transfer,

man is an important element of the information system of a society, and perhaps its most vulnerable link.

On the other hand, practice indicates that in contemporary societies there is neither a well-developed concept of psychological protection of an individual from fake news, disinformation and rumors at the lower level, nor is there a sufficiently developed concept of psychological protection of society from information and psychological operations at the social level. Therefore, it is necessary to improve and develop the concepts of psychological defense at the state, social and personal level, and at the same time to develop the educational capacities and skills necessary to meet these contemporary security challenges.

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ИНФОРМАЦИОНИ И ПСИХОЛОШКИ АСПЕКТИ БЕЗБЕДНОСНИХ ПРЕТЊИ У САВРЕМЕНОМ ОКРУЖЕЊУ

Милан Миљковић, Анита Пешић

Универзитет одбране Републике Србије, Београд, Србија

Резиме

Информационо деловање остварује се извођењем информационо-психолошких операција. Имајући у виду да су информационе операције по својој природи војне природе, дефиниције информационих операција су пре свега најважније у безбедносним и војним доктринама западних земаља и Кине. Теоретичари Руске Федерације користе термин „информационо деловање”. Упоређујући западни и руски приступ, примећује се да руски стручњаци у својим дефиницијама истичу да се информационе операције изводе у доба мира и рата. У миру се појмови информационе и информативне операције односе на шире активности према владином сектору, културне и производне аспекте, са посебним нагласком на заштиту националних извора информација. Амерички теоретичар Џозеф Нај истиче да је „освајање срца и умова” одувек било важно и од посебног значаја у глобалном добу информација. Најчешћи садржај психолошких информација су „убедљиве и јакe” информације (поруке), полуистине, „обмањивачке информације” и дезинформације, гласине и лажне вести које се пласирају путем јавних гласила, дипломатским путем или „методом лице у лице”. Информације и пропагандне поруке пре свега се усредсређују на оне психолошке факторе (перцепција, мотивација, сумња, страх, стрес, па све до психолошког шока итд.) који у различитим ситуацијама имају пресудан утицај на понашање људи. Технички и технолошки развој утицали су на промену средстава за пренос информација и психолошких порука, али циљеви су остали исти, што доказује да моћ поруке не зависи само од садржаја поруке, већ и од облика и структуре техничког преноса. Заједнички циљ деловања је промена ставова, убеђења и начина понашања. Гласине и лажне вести истичу се као карактеристичан облик

психолошког деловања према мањим групама и појединцима. Питање дезинформација и лажних вести високо је позиционирано на безбедној агенди европских законодаваца чињеницом да су избори за европске посланике и Парламент ЕУ одржани у 2019. години. С тим у вези, у ЕУ је вођена кампања за борбу против „лажних вести” у области законодавства од стране влада многих европских земаља. Немачка је већ увела, а Француска је применила нова правила која имају за циљ уклањање или блокирање говора мржње и измишљеног садржаја на интернет комуникационим платформама. Велика Британија, с друге стране, планира одредити јединицу унутар свог безбедног апарата за борбу против ових претњи, док је Чешка Република већ формирала јединицу унутар Министарства унутрашњих послова за борбу против хибридних претњи и дезинформација. Пракса указује на то да у савременом друштву не постоји добро развијен концепт психолошке заштите појединаца од лажних вести, дезинформација и гласина на нижем нивоу, нити довољно развијен концепт психолошке заштите друштва од информационих и психолошких операција. Стога је потребно развијати концепте психолошке заштите на државном, социјалном, организационом и личном нивоу, а истовремено развити образовне капацитете и вештине потребне за одговор на ове савремене безбедносне изазове.