

INFORMATION WAR

Daria Ivanova

Texas Tech University, the USA

Today the media has a role not only as an informational resource but also as a tool of persuasion. Many people believe that what they see on TV is reality, and the media today is a professional builder of this reality. The media influences people's attitudes and opinions about certain global situations because the easiest way to find out about some issue is through news. This might be dangerous because it can mislead people, and cause them not to look for other news resources that might present different perspectives.

Information Warfare is primarily a United States Military concept that involves the use and manipulation of information and communication technology in order to pursue an advantage over the opponent, usually a different country. Information war includes not only technological communication tools that can disrupt the other country's telecommunication channels, but it also can be used in the spreading of propaganda or disinformation to influence or manipulate foreign publics. The Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States is a great example of the information war. However, if one looks closely the information wars exist today, in the 21st century.

Some people believe that governments use "information war" not only against other countries, but also against its own citizens. In many countries the media are subsidized by government and in some countries it is even in control, such as China or North Korea. Meanwhile, most of the core nations and most developed nations are trying to portray their media as completely objective and bias free, but it is not always the case. In countries with "uncontrolled" media people should not forget where the media revenue comes from. One of the greatest reasons so many broadcasting channels are able to operate today are advertising and influential people and politicians who sponsor some networks. For this reason, one can assume that each news media channel has its own "unpronounced" rules about what can be said or not. For example, in the United States the Fox News is considered to be more conservative; MSNBC more liberal; and CNN somewhat in the middle. People have a chance to watch the channels that mostly present their views and basically they prefer those media channels where they hear what they want to hear. However, by the end of the day some questions might be raised, is it dangerous? Who is interested in this one sided and sometimes cold-minded perspectives that those channels set?

There is a famous theory that can help understand more about information wars - Cultural Imperialism Theory. It is a practice of separation or artificially injecting the culture of one into another.(Thomas L. McPhail) One of the greatest role models of this theory is the United States. This country, over last century, successfully spread its culture around the world and reached an enormous audience. Thus, the US is the leader of having an incredible power, power of the media. Hollywood, MTV, Disney are those media and entertainment giants that help American culture extend around the globe and influence so many minds. Another example of spreading American culture is fashion. Today people all over the world are trying to look more western and sometimes forget about their traditional attires. This adoption of the foreign cultures can play a negative role because there is a chance that it diminishes cultural values of the countries that are under western influence. It easily can become a barrier for the countries' national identity which is needed to stay strong and continue to be an important part of the culture today and upcoming generations in the future.

Another important concept that is worthy to be noticed is what has been called, "CNN effect." CNN is one of the biggest cable networks in the world. It is so powerful that it

actually sometimes is being referred to as the policymaker. It somehow is becoming an “agenda setting voice” that has the opportunity to influence foreign policy. This assumption can be explained by the fact that media can play an important political role in society because politicians watch the news also; and if the media puts the emphasis on a particular issue, government officials need to respond to that issue. Unfortunately, politicians sometimes follow the news without thorough research of credible information outside of those sources, which can lead to conveyance of none desirable decisions that can influence countries and millions of people in those countries.

There are many contemporary examples of the information war today. Most recent is the 2014 Olympics and the Ukrainian crisis. During the last weeks before the Olympic flame was brought to the coast of Sochi, Russia, American media had focused their coverage on holes and mostly negative news from Sochi, and sometimes exaggerated the facts and misrepresented reality. Meanwhile, the Russian media was trying to soften criticism and point out what actually was the truth. Also, the fear of terrorist attacks was also exaggerated making some American fans stay in the US during the Olympics. However, one of the groundbreaking examples of information war became the Ukrainian crisis. Unfortunately, US media is not being objective on all information as was noticed by some American and European politicians. This leads to the framing of the audience minds who takes their news only from the TV screens.

Nevertheless, media in the US and in other countries help to bring to the attention many issues and as it was mentioned above make officials, sometimes, to respond quickly on the issues that carry public’s importance. One of the examples can be the missing Malaysian airplane. The pressure from the media all over the world made Malaysian officials answer uncomfortable questions and take serious steps in their search of the missing plane. Also, today the social media is powerful like never before. It has a momentum to go from the “Arab spring” where social media was a powerful information weapon” to daily local issues in many countries that can be spread by one click or “retweet.”

In a globalizing world the media becomes a powerful weapon that can influence people’s minds, government policies and economic stability. However, people themselves need to be more responsible for their knowledge and for the information that they consume every day. It is crucial that people in each country come to the realization that the media can be hazardous, but it is possible to avoid many misconceptions about many issues that society faces today. One just has to show more interest to the news and other information, and try to look to the issue from his or her own lens.

Since in the modern world the importance of winning the information war is almost the same success as winning on the ground, people need to be aware of what news and social media accounts they follow; moreover, one should always keep in mind this popular quote that “people who are reading the books will always rule over those who are watching TV.”

Work Cited

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