

Distorting Your Perception of Russia's Aggression How Can We Combat **Information Warfare**?

INTRODUCTION & RESEARCH IMPORTANCE

DESPITE THE BRUTALITY OF RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE, SUPPORT/SYMPATHY TOWARD RUSSIA IS SHOWN BY SOME ACTORS. THIS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO RUSSIA AND ITS STRATEGIC PARTNER CHINA'S MULTI-FACET INFORMATION WARFARE.

LITERATURE GAP

(I) ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION WARFARE DURING THE WAR REMAINS SCATTERED; (II) A LACK OF PEER-REVIEWED SCHOLARLY LITERATURE DIRECTLY DISCUSSING THE USE OF INFORMATION WARFARE DUE TO THE INCIDENT'S TIMELY NATURE

METHODOLOGY

DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AND MEDIA SOURCES TO CONCEPTUALIZE THE FORMS OF INFORMATION WARFARE USED BY RUSSIA AND CHINA; USING RELEVANT KEYWORDS FOR SEARCHING AND COMING UP WITH THE ANALYSIS

FINDINGS: TYPES OF INFORMATION OPERATIONS DEPLOYED DURING THE WAR



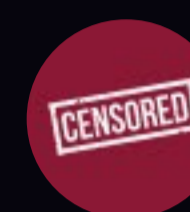
WORDING SANITIZATION

- REFUSE TO FRAME RUSSIA'S AGGRESSIVE ACTS AS WARS OR INVASIONS
- CALL THE INVASION 'DEMILITARIZATION OPERATIONS' / 'SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATION'



SELECTIVE REPORTING

- UNDERSTATE THE SCALE OF RUSSIA'S MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND WAR DESTRUCTIONS
- IGNORE CIVILIAN DEATH CAUSED BY RUSSIAN TROOPS



CENSORSHIP

- EXPAND FAKE NEWS LAWS AND IMPOSE HARSH PENALTIES
- LIMIT CITIZENS' ACCESS TO FOREIGN MEDIA (E.G. BBC & DW) TO CONTAIN THE SPREAD OF ANTI-WAR MATERIALS
- FILTER AND REFUSE TO TRANSLATE OR BROADCAST ANTI-RUSSIA OR PRO-WEST CONTENT



DISTORTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

- BLAME NATO AND THE US FOR FAILING TO SATISFY RUSSIA'S DEMAND FOR SECURITY AND CREATING HUMANITARIAN DISASTERS IN PREVIOUS CRISIS
- CREATE ANTI-WEST HASHTAG, CARTOONS, AND PUBLICATIONS
- BLAME UKRAINE FOR DAMAGING INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND OTHER FACILITIES



BASELESS ACCUSATIONS

- ACCUSE UKRAINE OF HARMING CIVILIANS, PERFORMING GENOCIDE AGAINST RUSSIAN-SPEAKING PEOPLE, COMMITTING WAR CRIMES, OR THREATENING RUSSIA WITHOUT ANY JUSTIFICATION



EMOTIONALLY CHARGED CONTENT

- CIRCULATE CLIPS OF WOMEN SUPPORTING RUSSIAN SOLDIERS AND CLIPS OF SURRENDERED UKRAINE SOLDIERS TO BOOST MORALE AND ENCOURAGE SUPPORT
- CALL UKRAINE A NEO-NAZI FORCE AND COMPARE THE INVASION TO THE SOVIET UNION'S DEFENCE OF ITS HOMELAND FROM NAZI AGGRESSION



FABRICATED INFORMATION

- PRODUCE 'EVIDENCE' TO SUPPORT ITS CLAIMS (E.G. A VIDEO IN WHICH UKRAINIAN SOLDIERS TREAT CIVILIANS VIOLENTLY)
- DENY RUSSIAN MILITARY SETBACKS LIKE THE LOSS OF RUSSIAN AIRCRAFT, HELICOPTERS, AND ARMORED VEHICLES
- SPREAD FALSE CLAIMS THAT UKRAINE'S MILITARY PERSONNELS WERE LEAVING THEIR POSITIONS AND EXAGGERATE THE NUMBER OF SURRENDERED UKRAINE SOLDIERS



CONSPIRACY THEORY

- SPREAD MESSAGES THAT UKRAINE HAS BUILT UP BIOWEAPON MANUFACTURING LABORATORIES WITH US ASSISTANCE AND DEVELOPED A BIOWEAPON WHICH COULD HINDER THE REPRODUCTIVE CAPABILITY OF IMMUNITY OF RUSSIANS, THUS PUTTING RUSSIANS VULNERABLE TO EXTINCTION



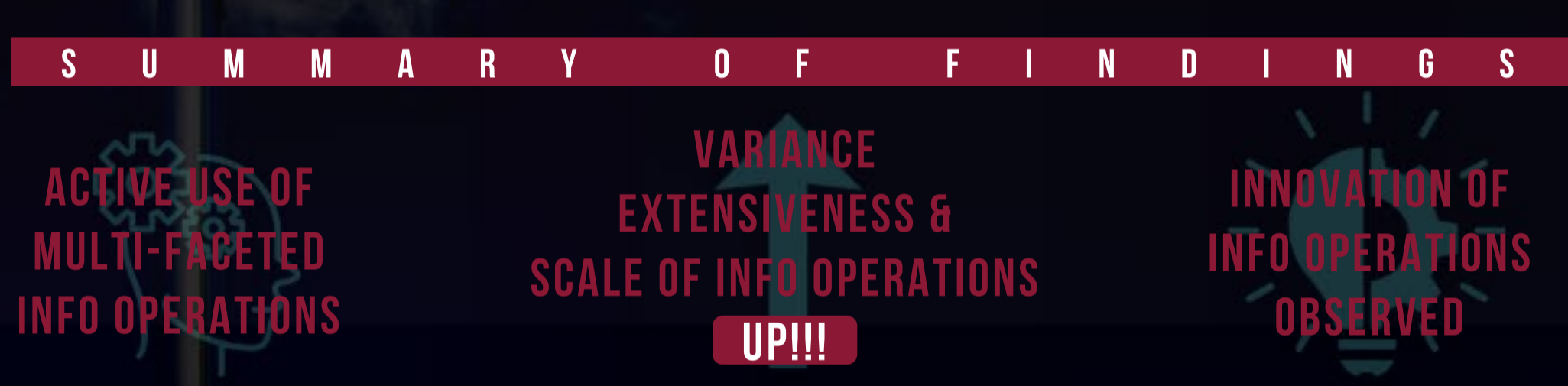
POTENTIAL SEO

- FOR SOME SEARCH ITEMS (E.G. DPR AND LPR), RUSSIAN STATE MEDIA APPEAR IN THE TOP SEARCH RESULTS MORE FREQUENTLY



DISGUIISING DISINFO AS FACT-CHECKING

- MAKE USE OF THE NAME OF "FACT-CHECKING" TO CIRCULATE MORE FAKE CLAIMS BY USING FAKE STORIES TO REFUTE ANOTHER FAKE STORY (E.G. DEBUNKING A 2017 KHARKIV STRIKE VIDEO WHICH IS NOT CIRCULATED BY UKRAINE AND INSTEAD POSSIBLY PRODUCED BY RUSSIA)

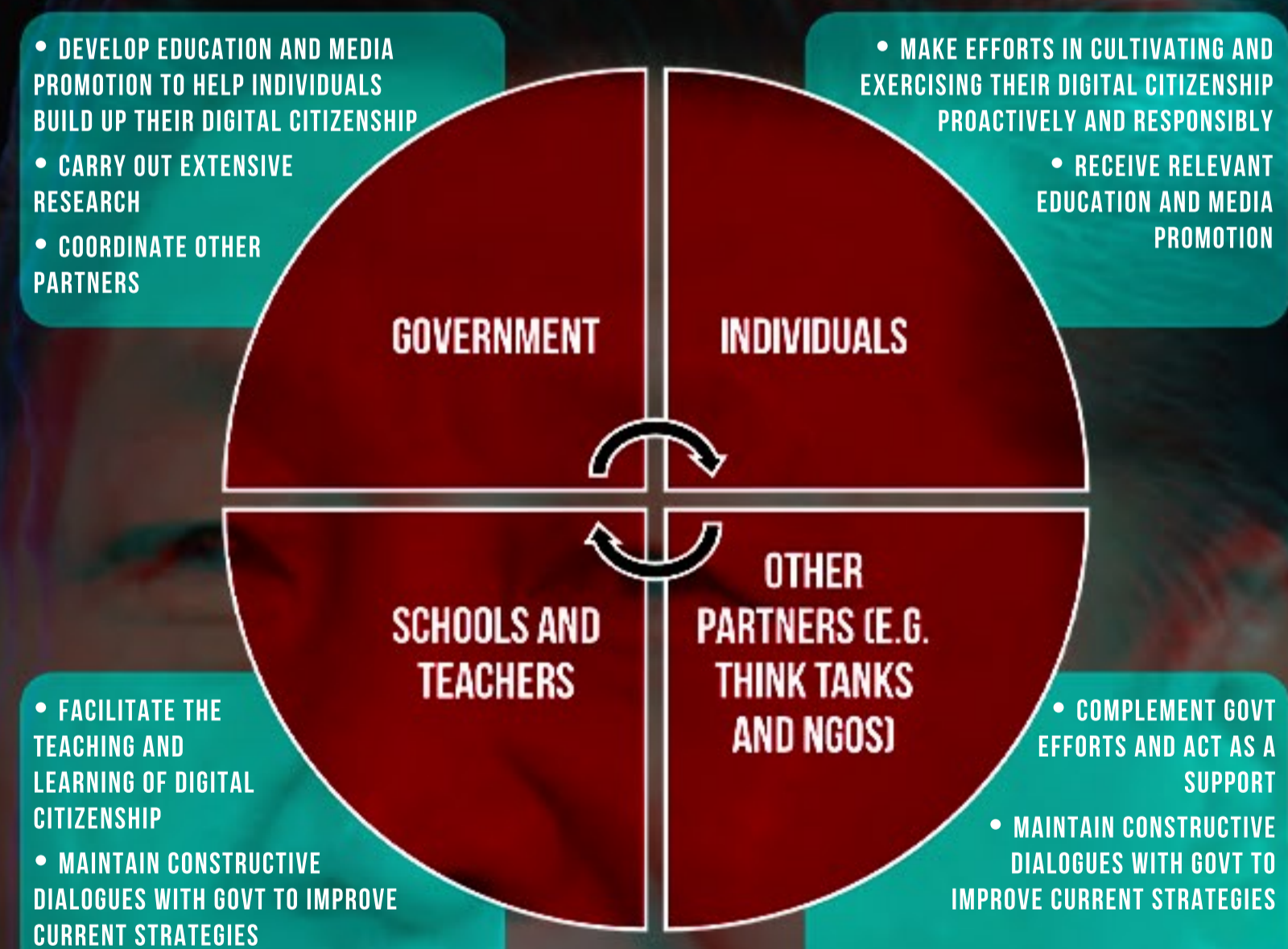


IMPLICATIONS

- SUFFERING FROM INFORMATION OVERLOAD, PEOPLE LACK THE CAPACITY AND TIME TO PROCESS ALL INFORMATION, SO THEY NEED TO SEEK INFORMATION SHORTCUTS. MANIPULATED INFORMATION IS AN ATTRACTIVE SHORTCUT BECAUSE IT IS BRAINWASHING, INVASIVE, OR EMOTIONALLY APPEALING
- THE AUDIENCE MAY NOT NOTICE THAT THE INFORMATION IS DISTORTED, SO INFORMATION WARFARE CAN PROMPT PEOPLE TO BELIEVE AND BEHAVE IN A WAY ALIGNED WITH THE INITIATOR'S POLITICAL GOALS. THE STRONG DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR RUSSIA'S INVASION AND SYMPATHY TOWARDS RUSSIA CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO RUSSIA'S AND CHINA'S DISSEMINATION OF MANIPULATED INFORMATION
- INFORMATION WARFARE CAN COMPLEMENT OTHER FACTORS (E.G. HYPOCRITICAL EMBRACEMENT OF UKRAINE, DISCONTENT WITH THE WEST'S PAST MILITARY ACTIVITIES, BIASED TREATMENT OF NON-WESTERN COUNTRIES) TO FURTHER TRIGGER DISTRUST OR HOSTILITY TOWARD THE WEST, THUS PROMPTING THEM TO STAY AWAY FROM THE WEST OR EVEN ALIGN WITH RUSSIA
- THANKS TO DIGITALIZATION, THE SPREAD OF MANIPULATED INFORMATION WILL BECOME FASTER AND LESS COSTLY. BOTH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES WILL HAVE GREATER EXPOSURE TO MANIPULATED INFORMATION, WHICH CAN TRICK THEM INTO BECOMING AGGRESSORS' SUPPORTER. THUS, INFORMATION WARFARE WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE AS SHOWN BY THE WAR.
- THE TERM FACT-CHECKING MAY END UP BEING A TOOL FOR POLITICIANS AND AGGRESSORS TO MAKE OTHER FALSE INFORMATION MORE PERSUASIVE, SO PEOPLE WILL FIND DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING RELIABLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

SUGGESTIONS

WHILE THE RISE OF INFORMATION WARFARE IS AN UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH TO TRUTH-SEEKERS LIKE US, WE MUST STAND AGAINST MALICIOUS INFORMATION MANIPULATION TO DEFEND DEMOCRACY AND OUR MIND'S INDEPENDENCE. MORE EDUCATION IS NEEDED TO HELP UPHOLD RATIONALITY.



CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

THE WAR HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT THE EXTENSIVE USE OF INFORMATION WARFARE CAN INFLUENCE PEOPLE'S ATTITUDE TO THE WAR AND THE WAR DEVELOPMENT. THE WAR SERVES AS AN ALARM THAT WE MUST KEEP AN EYE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUCH FORMS OF WARFARE, SO THAT THE DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY CAN RESPOND APPROPRIATELY TO FUTURE OPERATIONS.

INDIVIDUALS HAVE TO STEP UP TO BE CRITICAL AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS. COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION DEVELOPED BY THE CONCERTED EFFORTS ACROSS MULTIPLE PARTIES IS ALSO NECESSARY TO HELP CITIZENS BECOME CAPABLE OF COMBATING MANIPULATED INFORMATION. CLOSE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND RELEVANT PARTIES IS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED.

MORE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH IS NEEDED TO COMPREHENSIVELY EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF SUCH TACTICS ON PUBLIC OPINION AND WAR DEVELOPMENT, THUS ASSESSING THE THREAT POSED BY INFORMATION WARFARE. ACADEMIA SHOULD ALSO KEEP TRACK OF THE EVOLUTION OF SUCH WARFARE.

“WARS NO LONGER SOLELY TAKE PLACE ON A PHYSICAL BATTLEFIELD WITH GUNS AND MISSILES,
BUT PEOPLE'S MINDS WILL BECOME A MORE IMPORTANT ARENA.”