

Informational Fatigue in the Face of the Challenges and Stakes of Disinformation

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Abstract:

Propaganda and disinformation have been used throughout history to destabilize opposing forces. In times marked by turmoil and crisis, especially during war, information becomes both a tool and a weapon, where disinformation is used through fake news to influence public opinion and control perceptions and worldviews. Thus, the media becomes a double-edged sword. False information is used to steer public opinion and distort facts. The challenges posed by fake news during armed conflicts directly affect civilians and journalists, reinforcing chaos and creating psychological pressure on society.

Keywords: Digital rumors, false and misleading information, artificial intelligence, soft power, sharp power.

1. INTRODUCTION

Disinformation, a term that is now everywhere, often accompanied by “fake news,” “manipulation,” “information warfare,” “propaganda” ... words that had once been set aside and are now being reused, often without fully grasping their meaning, depth, or scope. The term "disinformation" itself sheds light on various realities but also on many related challenges and dangers.

This article is important because it highlights digital disinformation wars rooted in concepts like digital rumors and similar phenomena such as fake news, false and misleading information, and propaganda. These are tools and weapons developed by humanity, refined by experts, whose fabrication and formulation have evolved through the ages as nations and civilizations rose and fell, and as countries' situations changed in times of war and peace, catastrophe, and crisis, all with the aim of destroying the other and disrupting human relationships.

However, the rise of the Internet and the development of artificial intelligence and digital technologies have breathed new life into the phenomenon of disinformation, a dream of domination and dissemination, and have provided researchers and academics with a complex and unique phenomenon that has generated much analysis and intellectual debate. These are disinformation wars with ancient ingredients but in a new digital form and color, wars that have not yet received the necessary study or analysis and have not garnered sufficient attention from researchers and academics to break down the phenomenon and diagnose its characteristics, dimensions, and implications in the context of digital transformation.

2. Problem Statement

What are the challenges and stakes of digital disinformation, which spreads at lightning speed in the context of artificial intelligence?

2.1 Research Questions

1. How can influence maneuvers be used between states without military confrontation?

2. Why has the use of fake information become so widespread in the media and on social networks?
3. Will artificial intelligence help reduce disinformation or make it worse?

2.2 Objectives

In a world where it has become difficult to control information and verify its authenticity due to the major development of information and communication technologies, access to information has become easy and widespread. This article aims to:

- Clarify the concept of disinformation through the spread of false and misleading information.
- Analyze the pursuit of control and influence through information using various communication channels.
- Explore the use of artificial intelligence in the dissemination of fake videos and information, particularly in regional conflicts.

4. Methodology

To provide a global image of media disinformation and the widespread dissemination of fake news through media outlets with the intent of influencing the public or deceiving them. This article aims to clarify the proper understanding of informational disinformation in traditional media and its circulation on social media. Such strategies are even used by countries in regional conflicts for domination, now commonly referred to as soft warfare.

This is done through the spread of fake news and misleading information on social media platforms, using a descriptive method.

The descriptive method aims to provide a comprehensive view of the phenomenon and the research subject. It also aims to understand its nature, as description helps study an unknown phenomenon. (Mohammed Shalabi, 1997, p. 64).

5. Definition of Terms:

Digital Rumors: These spread rapidly and are often amplified by social networks. They can influence public opinion and harm the reputation of individuals or organizations (Cloe Debiève, 2025, p. 10).

False and Misleading Information: Often referred to as disinformation, this includes completely false information, but also incomplete or inaccurate content (Caroline FAILLET, 2016, 87).

Artificial Intelligence: The term “artificial intelligence” or “AI” was introduced in 1956 by John McCarthy, who defined it in 2004 as “the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs.” (Arnaud Mercier, 2025, p. 18). It is related to the task of using computers to understand human intelligence.

Soft Power: A concept in international relations meaning “the ability to influence others through attraction rather than coercion.” Developed by American professor Joseph Nye, it has been adopted by many political leaders (Laura Garrigou, 2025, p. 23).

Sharp Power: Refers to a country’s manipulative diplomatic strategies used to influence and undermine the political system of a target country (Laura Garrigou, 2025, p. 23).

6. Influence Wars: States Conquering Minds

The rules of international competition have changed. Influence operations have overtaken direct armed confrontations. This evolution, visible since the end of the Cold War, has become a major issue. According to the author, “the battle for influence will shape a large part of the strategic landscape in the years to come.” (Frédéric Charillon, 2022, p. 352).

This theme of new forms of warfare has been the subject of numerous publications in recent years, including those by “Pascal Boniface”* on artificial intelligence.

6.1 Influence: A Complex Concept

Frédéric Charillon* first seeks to clarify the notion of influence. While it can be understood as the ability to make someone do something

without using force, it should not be confused with propaganda, lobbying, or soft power. Influence is a means, not to be equated with domination. It includes methods such as storytelling, smart power, and sharp power.

This influence thrives in a complex and changing international context, where competition is constant and subtler than before. The return of divisive ideologies and the expansion of conflict zones, especially in the cyber domain, have also contributed to the rise of influence strategies (Frédéric Charillon, 2022, p. 350). Indirect approaches to conflict have proven effective and highlighted the limitations of direct armed confrontation.

Some states have adapted to these changes, China, for example, advocates “unrestricted warfare,” meaning warfare on multiple fronts and through various channels (Frédéric Charillon, 2022, p. 352). The **social arena**, which targets hearts and minds, has become central to conflicts: winning the support of the local population is crucial.

The goals on the agenda are diverse: changing another state’s behavior, controlling an international body, enhancing national image... Influence can be closely linked with the notion of “**public diplomacy**”, which is defined as “institutional communication aimed at showcasing a state's foreign action to all audiences, directly engaging with and listening to the population.” (Pierre Roussot, 2022, p. 6).

Some analysts speak of **nation branding** (Frédéric Charillon, 2022, p. 359), referring to the process of defending a state’s image as one would manage a corporate brand.

Public diplomacy takes many forms: university exchanges, diaspora engagement, television broadcasts, support for particular causes, etc. The digital realm has become a crucial field of action, for instance, for creating virtual embassies in countries where diplomatic relations are difficult (Frédéric Charillon, 2022, p. 352).

Among state strategies, “**cultural diplomacy**” remains important, but transforming culture into influence is now a challenge. This is why “**sectoral diplomacy**”, more targeted, exists to build networks and spread norms. Local actors are also engaged by states: regions, municipalities, and

local governments develop networks of interest to central governments. As for private actors like “**multinational corporations**” (MNCs), coordinating their communication with state actors is often difficult, as their interests frequently diverge.

7. What Forms of Influence Exist Today?

The American liberal democratic model is based on the idea of "convincing and attracting." This model relies on the belief that the United States is the world's beacon, the dominant, undisputed superpower. To transform this power into influence, the U.S. relies on a global presence and “**smart power**”, leveraging its excellence across various sectors. To ensure the spread of its ideas, the country maintains a central position in international news and strives to control media coverage of conflicts to its advantage. (Pierre Roussot, 2022, p. 8)

However, this model was challenged, first by the **September 11, 2001 attacks**, which revealed that large segments of global public opinion harbor deep resentment towards America, and later by the **presidency of Donald Trump (Laura Garrigou, 2025, p. 35)**.

Other Anglo-Saxon countries (Canada, Australia, New Zealand) mimic the American model of influence, highlighting their diversity and portraying themselves as entrepreneurial havens. **Asia** is another major battleground for influence. The "Asian Tigers" and **Japan** polish their image as prosperous and modern democracies. **Taiwan**, in a unique position, fights for its survival and the preservation of its democratic model.

When analyzing **Russia**, experts use the concept of **sharp power**, an aggressive and subversive policy toward the West. Manipulation takes precedence over seduction in a defensive strategy responding to perceived Western attacks. For Russia, the conflict is waged through platforms like the **Valdai Club**, in emerging countries, through **diasporas** and **media outlets** (RT, Sputnik) ((Pierre Roussot, 2022, p. 43).

As for **China**, it has developed a comprehensive and formidable influence strategy through dedicated organizations (e.g., the **United Front Work Department** of the CCP Central Committee, **Xinhua News Agency**, **Confucius Institutes**, fake NGOs, and **Chinese students on foreign campuses**, etc.). The **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** is the most ambitious

geopolitical influence strategy by Chinese authorities, spreading Chinese norms, agendas, and governance models (Pierre Roussot, 2022, p. 44).

The **common features** of Russian and Chinese influence strategies are also their **weaknesses**.

Authoritarian regimes do not tolerate criticism well in international competition. Moreover, their authoritarian models generally fail to appeal to **democracies**. The **Chinese model** remains largely unattractive and culturally foreign to many countries.

8. The EU in These Influence Wars

Europe must recognize the existence of new “**niches of influence**” if it wants to assert itself. Among the key sectors of influence, **youth** are central. As the future of nations, potential voters, consumers, tourists, and vocal commentators on social networks, young people must be won over through **higher education, digital platforms, and direct engagement**.

This has led to a real battle between **universities** to attract talent and shape narratives. While Europe hosts three of the most attractive countries for international students, it lags behind in the **digital influence war**. It has failed to establish its own search engine or a European equivalent to Facebook, acting only to regulate global digital giants. (Frédéric Charillon, 2022, p. 359)

Compared to the initiatives of the **U.S.** and **emerging countries**, Europe appears “**helpless**”, more a stage than a player in the influence game. In the absence of unity and common interests, European countries leave the field open to non-European influence strategies. Brussels lobbying facilitates these maneuvers, as shown by the **EU-China Friendship Association** in the European Parliament (Frédéric Charillon, 2022, p. 363). From the outside, Europe may seem to have an influence policy, through its **enlargement strategy** and **global aid projects**, but it “lacks respect.” Its virtuous causes and normative power reflect a **naïve strategy** in the face of rising tensions and authoritarian regimes.

The UK appears as the only European country with a truly effective influence strategy. **Germany** benefits from its reputation as Europe’s

economic powerhouse and is asserting itself more through **influence tools** (university exchanges, think tank foundations, **Goethe Institutes**, etc.). **France**, meanwhile, prefers the term “**radiance**”, which does not necessarily translate into influence, as illustrated by the **Francophonie**. Furthermore, France suffers from three flaws that prevent it from developing influence strategies:

- Confusing **presence** with **influence**.
- Believing that **influence** can exist by mere **decree**.
- Clinging to the idea that holding prestigious, visible positions automatically generates influence.
- That said, France does have assets, such as the **ENA** and **IFRES**.
(Pierre Roussot, 2022, 45)

The **COVID-19 pandemic** added to this dynamic. The crisis mobilized each country’s influence strategies, sparking **rivalries between governance models**. It became a battle for **image** and **nation branding**, amid competition over masks, hand sanitizers, and vaccines. Democracies touted **transparency** to denounce China’s silence on the virus’s origins, but they still had to import Chinese masks, welcome Russian virologists, and admit that their **healthcare systems were overwhelmed**.

In “**populist countries**”, deniers initially downplayed the seriousness of the pandemic, only to eventually implement necessary measures. The crisis also **brutally exposed** Europe and North America’s **vulnerability** in key strategic sectors. As a result, the concept of **strategic autonomy** has become central, “the new rationale behind influence strategies”. (Jeanne Maurin Bonini, 2025, 19).

While information has always been subject to manipulation, **technological advancements** in recent decades have **amplified and worsened** the phenomenon. **Internet, social media, and artificial intelligence** have dramatically expanded the scale and speed of disinformation. Now, it's possible to **reach everyone, everywhere, all the time, simultaneously**. (Jeanne Maurin Bonini, 2025, p. 31)

Among the recent trends that further complicate a unified European influence strategy:

- **Fragmentation of social media platforms** by audience
- Rise of **discussion forums**.
- Emergence of internationally recognized **influencers**, often used by governments in influence campaigns

In the era of **cancel culture**, **wokism**, and **Twitter**, the battle is no longer about debating arguments but about casting the adversary as **evil**, making their voice **unheard**. **Insults and hate** have replaced debate, and constant **criticism of authorities** is the norm. Influence now takes on the **appearance of intimidation**. (Cloé Débieve, 2025, p. 11).

9. Winning the War of Influence

The “war of influence”, or influence wars, refers to the competition between states to dominate international relations through non-military means. These wars are characterized by influence tactics that have replaced direct military confrontation and involve a variety of strategies such as storytelling, smart power, and sharp power (Laura Garrigou, 2025, p. 17). These strategies aim to shape the behavior and decisions of other states through subtle yet powerful methods.

States are investing heavily to boost their influence, especially soft power. While such strategies are sometimes criticized as interference or propaganda, they have become standard in the new geopolitical landscape.

The European Union, for example, faces real challenges in this evolving strategic game, often displaying timidity compared to more assertive international competitors. The war of influence is a complex and constantly evolving field, where the rules are becoming more discreet, and the players are more diverse. States must reinvent themselves to remain competitive in this strategic domain.

10. Influence Wars: States Competing for Minds

"Winning the war before the war."* This refers to structuring an operational chain focused on influence and "information warfare". This chain includes the development of doctrine, equipment strategies, and legal frameworks.

Alongside deterrence, prevention, protection, intervention, knowledge, and anticipation, disinformation the deliberate spread of inaccurate information with the intent to mislead and cause harm has become a method of attack (Dominique ANNET, 2015, 203). The goal? Destabilize the adversary, isolate them, and weaken their ability to act.

Disinformation has always existed in times of war. Every conflict has involved propaganda aimed at demoralizing the enemy and gaining an advantage. But the digital revolution has transformed this practice. Today, universal internet access enables users to bypass time and borders. Information now spreads almost instantaneously, particularly through the constant use of social media worldwide.

These platforms are revolutionizing how we relate to information. "In a sense, they manufacture opinion," notes Marc-Antoine Brillant, head of the service for monitoring and protection against foreign digital interference. (Laura Garrigou, 2025, p. 13)

Given these new digital habits, disinformation or fake news created specifically to influence public opinion, now circulates at breakneck speed. About 88% of it spreads through social media, mainly X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok (Grégory Darcy, 2025, 26).

"The success of these lies in their emotional appeal, they're designed to sell," says Carole, a psychologist at the Joint Center for Environmental Actions.

These false stories are crafted to trigger engagement, likes, comments, shares, to increase their reach. The danger? Users unknowingly spread misinformation, not realizing the content is manipulated and without....(Claire WALDLE, 2019, 67)

11. Technological Disruption

“Threats have multiplied with the arrival of new technologies. They make information warfare particularly formidable,” states Céline Marangé, researcher at the Strategic Research Institute of the Military School. (Pierre Roussot, 2022, p, 7)

Bots and troll farms, though increasingly easy to detect, have now been surpassed by artificial intelligence (AI). Content production and falsification have become industrialized on a large scale. These contents, realistic and credible, can be created in record time and at low cost. They are then used to feed a multitude of fake accounts on social networks, giving the impression of human-like activity (Arnaud Mercier, 2025, p, 19).

Coordinated posts across multiple platforms can saturate public discourse: they can artificially amplify a topic to polarize public opinion, or conversely, distract from current events.

This occurred a few days after Hamas' attack on October 7, 2023, when many users shared images of blue Stars of David spray-painted in the 10th arrondissement of Paris. These viral posts stirred intense political tensions, though they originated from the "Recent Reliable News" network, made up of 1,095 bots on platform X. With a total of 2,589 posts, the network entirely fabricated the controversy. Behind these inauthentic profiles were several Russian individuals and companies (Lise Dabrowski, 2025, p. 40).

AI also enables the creation of deepfakes manipulated audio or video content that is almost undetectable.

“One day, it will be possible to imitate a commander’s voice giving an order, or make a leader say inflammatory things,” notes Céline Marangé.*

Distinguishing truth from falsehood is becoming increasingly difficult. 5,000 voters in New Hampshire have already suffered the consequences: during the Democratic primaries in January 2024, they received a phone call supposedly from Joe Biden urging them not to vote, saying, “Voting this Tuesday will only help the Republicans reelect Donald Trump.” (Laura Garrigou, 2025, p. 14). But the voice was a deepfake, created to disrupt the election.

Why has online disinformation become the number one threat in many developed countries? Disinformation is not new: it was a central weapon of the Soviets during the Cold War, used in service of ideology. But today, thanks to digital technologies, it has undergone a radical transformation:

- . Instant virality
- . Visual manipulation (deepfakes, doctored videos)
- . Proliferation of channels

It has become a weapon of war, requiring no ideology, but simply serving national interests. The goal is no longer to convince people of a doctrine, but to undermine democracies from within. As strategists have said since antiquity, the goal is less to win militarily than to break the political and social cohesion of the adversary. Russians and Chinese, among others, have understood this perfectly: influencing public opinion in countries where foreign policy is determined by voters is a way to win a war without fighting. (Aymen Chahada, 2025).

As the pace of false information accelerates, the role of journalists becomes crucial in investigating and verifying facts, especially when official narratives or sources are absent. Digital platforms enable rapid

access to information, but also give everyone the ability to publish content, often without oversight.

In this context, journalist Mohammed Zanati, who ran a WhatsApp group of hundreds of Lebanese, Arab, and foreign journalists monitoring war developments daily, stressed the difficulty in combating rumors, especially with some journalists who publish unverified news without making additional efforts to confirm it (Aymen Chahada, 2025).

He explained that the group's efforts to combat fake news were both fast-paced and laborious, as fact-checking involved:

- Cross-referencing with locals in the affected area, speaking with those directly involved on the ground, consulting with rescue and security services.
- Nonetheless, some reports remained difficult to verify due to a lack of nearby reliable sources.
- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) uses the concepts of: Disinformation, Misinformation, Hate speech.

To describe the main types of information that pose "digital risks", potentially leading to serious humanitarian consequences, particularly for civilians affected by armed conflict or other humanitarian crises.

The “Practical Guide on Disinformation, Misinformation, and Hate Speech”, developed by the ICRC, serves as a reference for addressing digital challenges in humanitarian work. It is crucial for journalists, communicators, and humanitarian actors (Cloé Débieve, 2025, 18).

Key Definitions:

. Misinformation: Accurate information shared with harmful intent (e.g., defamation).

. Disinformation: False information spread by individuals who believe it to be true or who have not verified it.

Misleading or Harmful Information and Hate Speech (MDH): An umbrella term for any information that could expose vulnerable populations (civilians, aid workers, volunteers) to new or heightened risks. These risks may be worsened by: Existing political or social tensions, Lack of digital literacy or critical thinking, Scarcity of reliable information sources, Overreliance on sensationalist or non-professional sites masquerading as news outlets.

Hate Speech: Any form of expression (text, images, audio) that incites hate or violence.

Additional Concepts:

Farm: In the context of disinformation and hate speech, a "farm" refers to a group of workers (often underpaid) who perform specific online tasks.

Click farms: Workers are paid to click links, ads, or "like" buttons to artificially boost engagement.

Troll farms: Workers are paid to deliberately post provocative or incendiary content to create online chaos or division.

Information Influence Operations: The strategic and calculated use of information and communication systems to influence society or create social division (Jenne Marin Bonini, 2025, p 29). This may include:

- Intelligence gathering,
- Disinformation campaigns,
- Recruiting online influencers.

Targeted Propaganda: The use of inaccurate or misleading information to promote a specific viewpoint or manipulate a target audience. It may include some elements of truth.

- **Rumors**

Rumors are information that spreads quickly from one person to another, often without verification. They may stem from misinformation or disinformation, but what sets them apart is their widespread circulation, which makes it impossible to trace their origin or assess credibility ((National Democratic Institute, 2018, p. 3).

- **Radicalization and Online Recruitment**

Using social media, forums, and other online platforms as propaganda tools to spread extremist ideologies.

This includes:

- ◆ Targeting and recruiting individuals sympathetic to radical causes,
- ◆ Coordinating operations between geographically dispersed individuals.

- **Hashtag Hijacking**

The act of using a hashtag in a way that diverges from its original purpose, usually by a third party trying to reach a broader audience or manipulate the conversation.

Example: During the 2014 World Cup, ISIS frequently hijacked popular hashtags like #WC2014, #France, and #Brazil2014, turning them into propaganda tweets to promote its ideology (Ayman Chahada, p. 3, 2025).

12-AI and the Detection of Fake News

Detecting fake news is one of the most promising applications of artificial intelligence (AI). Thanks to its analytical capabilities and natural language processing (NLP), AI can be used to spot false or misleading information spreading across the internet. Machine learning algorithms

allow AI to continuously improve its ability to detect misinformation (Arnaud Mercier, 2025, p, 18).

Another use of AI in the fight against disinformation is automated fact-checking. By comparing statements to existing data and available sources, AI can help determine the truthfulness of a piece of information. However, it is important to note that AI does not replace the work of journalists and experts, it can assist them in their investigations.

Chatbots, computer programs that allow users to interact through chat interfaces, can also contribute to combating disinformation. By providing automated and accurate answers to user questions, chatbots can help correct misinformation, thereby enhancing the reliability of the information available online (Grégoire Darcy 2025, p. 26).

13-Conclusion:

In the digital age, fake news and disinformation spread faster than ever before. In response to this growing issue, artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a promising solution to fight these threats.

However, the use of AI in the creation of false media information is also becoming a growing concern. Generative AI technologies, which can produce apparently authentic content, are being used to create fake videos, images, and news, fueling the rise of disinformation. These contents can influence opinions and behaviors, and may also impact mental health and personal safety.

While AI is used to manipulate public opinion and spread false narratives, it can also be deployed to counter this very same disinformation, through modern applications aimed at verifying the accuracy of information and fighting fake news in the media.

To ensure reliable information, it is essential to combine AI with other measures:

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- First, the public must be educated about the dangers of disinformation and made aware of the importance of verifying their sources.
- Media outlets and online platforms should implement verification mechanisms and promote the dissemination of reliable information sources.

The use of AI in the fight against disinformation offers real potential to ensure the reliability of information. Thanks to its analytical skills and natural language processing, AI can be a valuable ally in detecting fake news. However, it is crucial not to rely solely on AI. Other measures, such as public education and collaboration between media organizations and online platforms, must also be in place.

Together, we can fight disinformation and preserve the integrity of information.

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