SLOVAKIA AS A TARGET OF RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

Jakub NYÉKI

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of hybrid warfare has become an inherent part of our daily lives, and the dissemination of disinformation is its vital component.

A notable increase in the dissemination of disinformation within the information space has been observed since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. To pursue its objectives, the Russian Federation is influencing the development in other countries through non-conventional means, and the dissemination of disinformation is one of the many tools in its arsenal. It is unfortunate, but Slovakia is not an exception to this rule. In this study, the author employs a dual approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies, to assess Slovakia's vulnerability to disinformation. The paper will provide a detailed analysis of the various factors and particularities of Slovak society that contribute to its vulnerability. The subsequent examination will address the methods and means by which disinformation is disseminated into Slovakia's information space, and the manner in which it is disseminated within the population. The objective of conducting this analysis is to enhance our comprehension of the underlying causes of the problem and to identify potential solutions.
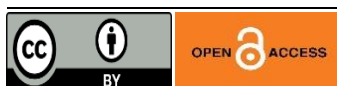
INTRODUCTION

In recent years, we have witnessed growing tensions between the Russian Federation and NATO. It is important for Russia to undermine the cohesion of NATO member states and their internal stability as much as possible, in order to weaken the overall cohesion and response capacity of the alliance in the event of an open conflict. Hybrid warfare is the primary tool used by the Russian Federation in times of "peace" to achieve this goal. Within the framework of hybrid operations, disinformation is most often used to influence the public opinion of the opponent with the aim of dividing society, sow uncertainty, arouse insecurity, and question democratic principles, undermining its cohesion and thus reducing the overall

defence capability of the opponent. The Slovak Republic is undoubtedly a frequent target of Russian disinformation campaigns due to its sensitive location on the eastern flank of NATO. Based on the experience of the last presidential and parliamentary elections, when society was extremely divided, we can conclude that these disinformation campaigns were successful in Slovakia. Based on the GLOBSEC (2025), 43% of the Slovaks believe that "Democracy does not exist, because in reality, hidden elites rule the world" and 46% believe that "World affairs are not decided by elected leaders but by secret groups aiming to establish a totalitarian world order". We will try to find out why Slovakia is so susceptible to disinformation. In the opening chapter, a comprehensive definition of pivotal terminology is provided, with particular emphasis on the comprehension of these concepts within the paradigm of hybrid warfare. In the subsequent chapter, an examination will be conducted of the key factors that render Slovakia vulnerable to Russian disinformation campaigns. Finally, the focus will be on the methods employed by the Russian Federation to conduct disinformation campaigns in the Slovak information space.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative scientific research. Its aim is, firstly, to understand the nature of the spread of disinformation, its scope and its impact on the public; and secondly, to identify the factors that influence the dissemination of disinformation within the Slovak information space.

The qualitative element of the research uses content analysis and discursive analysis, which facilitate an examination of the factors contributing to the widespread success of pro-Russian narratives in Slovakia. In this context, the author aims to examine the manner in which narratives are adapted to the Slovak audience, with a particular focus on the utilisation of historical contexts, the escalation of political polarisation, and the augmentation of pro-Russian sentiments within Slovak society.

The quantitative element of the study lends support to the findings of the qualitative research through indicators of the spread of disinformation in Slovakia and by analysing the repetition of disinformation narratives. The statistical analysis of this data facilitates the identification of prevalent narratives within the Slovak information space and the subsequent analysis of the online platforms utilized for their dissemination.

1 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

To ensure a clear understanding of the topic and its broader context, it is essential to first define the fundamental terms used in this study that need to be understood correctly.

Terms such as disinformation, hybrid warfare, information warfare, and alternative media are frequently used in both academic and public discourse, but their meanings may

often vary depending on the context they are used in. This can cause conceptual ambiguity that can lead to inconsistencies or inaccurate interpretations.

The following definitions, therefore, provide important theoretical definitions of these key terms, based on relevant scholarly sources. The aim is to establish a coherent framework that will serve as the basis for their further understanding of the topic analysed in this paper.

1.1 Disinformation

Unfortunately, disinformation is part of our daily lives, and its quantity and quality are growing exponentially. Disinformation often undermines trust in institutions, digital and traditional media, and damages democracies by preventing citizens from making informed decisions. Disinformation also often promotes radical and extremist ideas, activities, or narratives spread by the party that has an interest in it. The European Commission defines disinformation as *"as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm".* (European Commission, 2018, p. 3-4)

Disinformation is an ever-evolving threat that requires continuous efforts to identify relevant actors, tools, methods, priority targets, and impact. Some forms of disinformation, particularly the one spread and commissioned by states, are particularly dangerous. However, disinformation can also be spread by non-state actors and even by individuals within a state. (Ivančík, 2025a)

NATO, for example, regards disinformation *"as the deliberate creation and dissemination of false and/or manipulated information with the intent to deceive and/or mislead. Disinformation seeks to deepen divisions within and between Allied nations, and to undermine people's confidence in elected governments."* (NATO, 2020)

Disinformation is an integral part of information, psychological, intelligence, and cyber operations, which form the core of hybrid threats. (Ivančík, 2025b) Disinformation as part of hybrid threats is part of the broader concept of hybrid influence and hybrid actions that aim to disrupt and destabilize the target society through various tactics, methods, and means. (Ivančík, 2025a)

According to Jurčák (2018), hybrid warfare is a combination of activities (actions) of a military and non-military nature, carried out by state and non-state actors, or interest groups, which work in synergy and organize their activities at the same time and with the same goal, whereby their goal is to destabilize, neutralize, or degrade the reference object.

1.2 Hybrid warfare

A particular change in the perception of hybrid warfare occurred after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, when the number of publications on this issue increased exponentially. The

concept of hybrid warfare began to be directly associated with the activities of the Russian Federation. Many authors and institutions began to address this issue on a larger scale and also attempted to define the term. (Andrassy, Ondruš, 2024)

Hybrid warfare is a type of armed conflict in which both conventional and unconventional methods of combat are used. Hybrid warfare combines various tools, including not only traditional military, political, and economic ones, but also cyber and information tools, with the primary goal of weakening the enemy's internal stability. *"Hybrid threats combine military and non-military as well as covert and overt means, including disinformation, cyber-attacks, economic pressure, deployment of irregular armed groups and use of regular forces. Hybrid methods are used to blur the lines between war and peace and attempt to sow doubt in the minds of target populations. They aim to destabilise and undermine societies"*. (NATO, 2024)

Hybrid warfare can be understood as a broad spectrum of hostile activities in which the military component is rather small, because political, informational, economic, and psychological influence becomes the main means of waging war. Such methods help to achieve significant results: territorial, political, and economic losses for the enemy, chaos and disruption of the system of state power, and a weakening of society's morale. (Manko, Mikhieiev, 2018)

The Slovak national security bureau defines hybrid warfare as a set of coercive and subversive activities, conventional and unconventional, military and non-military methods, which can be used by state and non-state actors in a coordinated manner to achieve specific goals without a formal declaration of war below the threshold of a normal response. (NBÚ, n.d.)

Within the context of the Slovak Republic, hybrid warfare can be conceptualised as a component of a broader security threat, wherein information operations and disinformation campaigns serve as effective instruments for foreign actors to influence public opinion and impact domestic political processes.

1.3 Information warfare

The positive impact on the population resulting from technological progress is sometimes accompanied by negative effects. This is also true in the case of information dissemination. Historically, warfare only took place in traditional domains such as land, air, and sea. Nowadays, battles are also fought in cyberspace, in space, and in the information space. Information warfare enables actors in the international arena to enforce their interests without the use of force. Information warfare can also be implemented where traditional military force cannot be used, either for legitimacy reasons or in an effort to conceal an actor´s intentions. Information can also be used in the preparation of the operational environment prior to the use of conventional warfare. NATO (n. d.) defines information warfare as *"an*

operation conducted in order to gain an information advantage over the opponent. It consists in controlling one's own information space, protecting access to one's own information, while acquiring and using the opponent's information, destroying their information systems and disrupting the information flow. Information warfare is not a new phenomenon, yet it contains innovative elements as the effect of technological development, which results in information being disseminated faster and on a larger scale."

According to van Vuuren (2016) *"Information warfare is defined as actions focused on destabilising or manipulating the core information networks of a state or entity in society with the aim to influence the ability and will to project power as well as efforts to counter similar attacks by an opposing entity and/or state."* These definitions make it clear that decision-makers and military planners must also pay close attention to this area in their efforts to ensure the sovereignty of the country.

1.4 Alternative media

The term 'alternative media' is used to denote media entities that present themselves as opposition to the so-called mainstream or traditional media. From an academic perspective, alternative media comprise a broad spectrum of actors, ranging from civic initiatives and independent journalism projects to websites and platforms that systematically disseminate manipulative or disinformation content. The common features of such publications tend to be a lack of editorial standards, unclear ownership structures, insufficient verification of information, and strong bias.

John Carroll University (2023) defines alternative media as *"media sources that differ from established or dominant types of media (such as mainstream media or mass media) in terms of their content, production, or distribution. Sometimes the term independent media is used as a synonym, indicating independence from large media corporations, but generally independent media is used to describe a different meaning around freedom of the press and independence from government control. Alternative media does not refer to a specific format and may be inclusive of print, audio, film/video, online/digital and street art, among others."*

According to other scholars, alternative media are understood in relational terms, positioning themselves as corrective forces that stand in opposition to mainstream news discourses. They suggest that such media function as critical observers and challengers of dominant narratives, offering counter-perspectives within the broader media environment. In this conceptualization, the notion of "alternative" stems not from structural or formal differences, but from the stance of opposition such media adopt toward established journalism. (Ihlebæk et al., 2022)

In his work, Kapas (2018) elaborates on the issue of alternative media and compares them with mainstream media, defining them as follows:

- they disseminate information that is not covered by mainstream media at all, or not to the full extent,
- they are often, but not exclusively, created by non-professionals,
- hey are characterized by the dissemination of unverified information, alarmist reports, misinformation, and conspiracy theories,
- differ from the mainstream in their artistic output through a more demanding form of production or reception,
- in times of technological progress, they represent an alternative in the form of technical improvement or a completely new way of producing, distributing, or receiving media expressions.

Based on all the definitions mentioned above, we can judge that the term "alternative media" should not be understood in a negative point of view. The idea of alternative media is not malign in its nature, but it is very often abused.

2   SLOVAKIA IN THE CONTEXT OF HYBRID WARFARE

Each country has its own specific characteristics and unique features that shape its fundamental direction and values. These factors also influence a country's overall defence capabilities as well as its resilience. This is also true in the case of the Slovak Republic and its ability to defend itself against disinformation and hybrid warfare. In this chapter, we will therefore examine the factors that make Slovakia vulnerable to disinformation campaigns by the Russian Federation.

2.1 Ethnic and historical aspects

There are many reasons why Slovakia is a good target for Russian disinformation campaigns. From the ethnic point of view, the definitive majority of the population of Slovakia are Slavs. Therefore, many Slovaks tend to lean towards Russia as "they are the same people as we are and who share the same values as we do".

According to the Russian Federation´s propaganda, there are plenty of historical reasons why Slovaks should incline to Russia:
- Slavic, pro-Russian sentiment of the historical Slovak national movement,
- liberation from the Nazi occupation by the Red Army in the Second World War,
- 40 years of "prosperity" under the communist regime (bolstered by the nostalgic optimism of a part of the older generation),
- decline in living standards after the Velvet Revolution and uncertainty associated with the introduction of a new political system and social order in the 1990s. (Šmihula, 2024)

Some may argue that the evidence of Russian aggression in Ukraine and attacks on defenceless civilians should convince those who feel sympathy for Russia that Russia is an aggressor and a real threat. But there are other psychological factors e.g., cognitive

dissonance that influence general perception of the population. Cognitive dissonance is a state in which there is a difference between your experiences (Russia acts aggressively) and your beliefs about what is true (Russia is not a threat). (Cambridge University Press, n. d.) However, people experiencing cognitive dissonance crave to maintain their original stance. They believe misinformation and propaganda regardless of how absurd it is because it allows them to support their beliefs. Thus, disinformation is successful not because it is a sophisticated or intellectually elaborate argument, but because targeted individuals do not have to think of Russia as an aggressor. It allows them to resolve the discomfort they experience in their opinions. (Jarcho et al., 2011) All these points provide a good basis for the production of Russian propaganda.

2.2 Political polarization

The Slovak political environment is currently based on very high polarization. The division between the left and right is reaching extreme and unusual levels. During the last presidential and parliamentary elections in 2024 and 2023, respectively, the main topics of the political debates and political campaigns were very emotional, divisive, and binary. The aggressive verbal expressions of politicians only added fuel to the fire in an already very tense social situation. It is very easy to spread disinformation in these conditions because if they support the argument of one or the other group, they are spread at tremendous speed as the opinion becomes part of the people's personality, and in their point of view, it needs to be defended and supported. War in Ukraine, migration, discourse on gender and sexual diversity, and vaccination became the main talking points. On these topics, it is required to adhere to only one opinion or the other, there is no compromise. This caused even greater polarization of the already divided population. Other, and one can say more important topics like pension system, aging population, healthcare (accessibility, quality, funding), education reform and modernization, family policy, and social welfare were pushed to the periphery of the public interest due to their low emotional impact.

2.3 Cognitive factors

One of the potential reasons why Slovakia is vulnerable to disinformation might be the lack of innate cognitive abilities. But according to the Lynn & Becker study (2019), the average IQ of a Slovak population is 96 points, which results in an approximate ranking of 33rd to 39th in the world. This is a rather neutral ranking in relation to susceptibility to disinformation.

Critical thinking is very closely connected with creative thinking. Based on the PISA 2022 study, the Slovak Republic achieved a score of 29 points in creative thinking, while the average was 33 points. (OECD, 2023) According to the latest surveys among primary school teachers, although up to 96% of respondents consider the development of critical thinking to be important, only 17% said they use methods to develop it regularly. Most perceive the need for greater systemic support and better tools to develop these skills. More than half of

teachers would welcome the introduction of a separate subject devoted to critical thinking, but a large proportion prefer an integrated approach within regular subjects without increasing teaching hours. According to 38% of teachers, the biggest barriers to the development of critical thinking are a lack of methodological materials, and according to 28%, their concern is that they will not have time to cover all the necessary material. (Rapčan, Štrompová et al., 2025) It is very worrying that even teachers themselves feel that critical thinking is not given sufficient attention in the educational process. The result is a society that lacks developed critical thinking skills, which makes it more susceptible to disinformation campaigns.

The research on media literacy index assesses the potential vulnerability of 41 European societies to the so-called "fake news" and related phenomena by employing indicators of media freedom, education, and interpersonal trust. The research includes the EU member states, the EU candidate and potential candidate countries, prospective candidates, the countries in closer relations with the EU, such as the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland as well, as the UK. In this study, Slovakia once again ranked below average, in 24th place. (OSCE, 2022)

Media literacy index 2022 of chosen countries
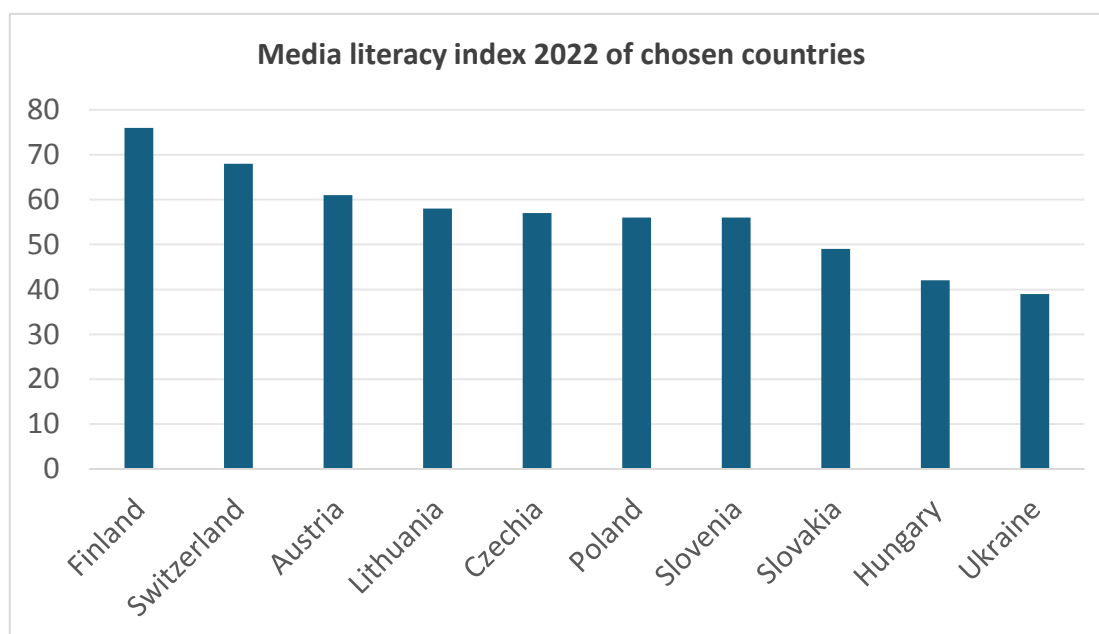
Graph 1 Media literacy index 2022 of chosen countries
Source: OSCE, 2022

Although the population in Slovakia has good genetic intelligence predispositions in terms of intelligence, it is still very vulnerable to the spread of disinformation. This is mainly due to the insufficient development of critical thinking within the country's education system. Furthermore, resistance to disinformation from Russia is also influenced by historical and ethnic factors, which have a particularly strong impact on the older generation, who experienced a totalitarian regime in which they were also educated.

2.4 Tools of disinformation dissemination

The first significant increase in the spread of disinformation in Slovakia was recorded after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, as it became an integral part of the Russian Federation's operations. The amount of disinformation spread remained stable until Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, when it was increased again. With the conventional invasion underway, unconventional operations also began, and the spreading of disinformation is a vital part of it.

Social networks are clearly effective in spreading disinformation and are therefore the most common place where such misinformation is disseminated. More traditional media such as television and online newspapers lag behind, but they still clearly play a role. We saw the first significant increase in the spread of disinformation at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a lack of information and uncertainty left a large information vacuum that was exploited by disinformers. After the war in Ukraine began, most of the users, websites, and portals that had spread disinformation in connection with the pandemic began to spread disinformation about the war while they kept their audience.

One of the reasons why information and misinformation spread through social networks and why alternative media remain so popular is the existence of echo chambers phenomenon and confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is *"seeking or interpreting of evidence in ways that are partial to existing beliefs, expectations, or a hypothesis in hand"* (Nickerson, 1998, p. 175). An echo chamber is defined as *"a network of users in which users only interact with opinions that support their pre-existing beliefs and opinions, and they exclude and discredit other viewpoints"* (Alatawi et al., 2021, p. 1).

There are many popular social networks in Slovakia, and the most popular ones are undoubtedly Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, and Telegram. Although Telegram is not the most popular one, it plays a very important role in spreading Russian disinformation.

Telegram channels allow individuals or organizations to publish content—text statuses, videos, or photos—in the same way we are used to, for example, from Facebook wall. The advantage of Telegram channels is that users have subscribed channels listed among their regular chat conversations. When a channel publishes new content, it moves to the top of the list of unread conversations for subscribers, who can also opt to receive push notifications. This, together with the ability for subscribers to share content further, allows Telegram posts to reach tens of thousands of views. Users can comment on individual posts, or the owner can link their channel to a separate discussion group for up to 200,000 users. (Príbelský, 2023)

The former chief of the Center for Combating Hybrid Threats at the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic Daniel Milo mentioned that Telegram´s importance is significant because, according to our internal analysis, up to 20% of the content on Slovak

Telegram channels and accounts is taken from Russian-language sources. These are 99.9% Russian propaganda and information operations. This content is then spread from Slovak Telegram groups and channels to Facebook, where it is shared by so-called "influencers." These influencers may be politicians or non-political actors. From there, the content is often spread further with the help of disinformation media outlets, which often simply repost Facebook statuses, especially those of politicians, and publish them as their own articles. (Hodás, Príbelský, 2023) Telegram is not particularly significant in Slovakia, with approximately 100,000 to 200,000 users. (Kőváry Sólymos and Šlerga, 2023) What makes it important is its role as a gateway for Russian narratives into the Slovak information space, as described above.

2.5 Other masmedias

Television and online magazines are a very important part of the Slovak information space. Unfortunately, frequent attacks from the politicians and other high-profile state representatives undermined public trust in traditional media outlets in Slovakia. According to the Digital News Report 2023, trust in news in Slovakia was among the lowest. This was caused by decades of interference by business and political leaders in the chase of their goals. In 2023, the overall trust in news in Slovakia is only 27% which ranks Slovakia 42nd out of the 46 countries covered. (Newman et al., 2023) This statistic is alarming in itself. What is even worse, however, is that people who do not trust traditional media mostly start consuming information elsewhere. Usually, this means the aforementioned social networks or alternative media.

The primary function of alternative media should be to facilitate public discourse by fostering a diversity of opinions. The credibility of alternative media is called into question when there is evidence to suggest that their primary objective is not the dissemination of factual information, but rather the deliberate propagation of false or manipulated content, with the ultimate aim of influencing public opinion. Furthermore, if such actors were to disseminate information with the objective of engendering instability within a specific nation for the benefit of a foreign power, they could potentially pose a significant threat. In Slovakia, the operation of alternative media commenced in 2014 on a larger scale, following Russia's annexation of Crimea, and these media outlets gained the greatest popularity after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The most popular alternative media outlets in Slovakia include *Zem a vek*, *infovojna.sk*, *Slovenské noviny*, and *Hlavné správy*. Alternative media are part of the information space that benefits from the existence of social networks such as Telegram and similar platforms. In their posts, they often cite unverified sources from social networks, or they share articles reciprocally between individual alternative media outlets. Through these practices, they create an illusion of credibility and "generally accepted validity" of the information they share. Based on the research done by Mintal et al. (2021), most of the untrustworthy media operating in the Slovak information space are based in Slovakia and not abroad. The research

also shows that their primary goal is probably to generate profit, as they often display advertisements to a large extent. This contradicts the generally accepted view that these media outlets are sponsored from abroad. On the other hand, it does not refute it either, and if such sponsorship is carried out in a sophisticated manner, it may not be easy to detect without the use of sophisticated investigative methods and resources.

CONCLUSION

The Slovak Republic is influenced by various external and internal factors that make it susceptible to certain narratives that are part of a relatively successful disinformation campaign. These mainly concern historical and ethnic realities shared by Slovakia and the Russian Federation. Furthermore, there is already existing social polarization, which provides fertile ground for sowing further uncertainty and conflict between different social groups within the population. What´s more, the level of critical thinking and media literacy in Slovakia is below the European average. This poses a major challenge for the country, as it is caused by the insufficient integration of critical thinking into the education process for children. Remedying this situation may take several years, which means that Slovakia's resilience will continue to suffer until then.

The Slovak information space has undergone major changes in the last decade. Traditional media have lost popularity, and this vacuum has been filled by newly emerging alternative media, which have experienced an extreme surge in popularity, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another problem is that many people consider social networks to be a valid source of information, even though anyone can share anything on a social network without any proof. For this reason, social networks are very often used to infiltrate disinformation into the Slovak information space, where it is further disseminated as legitimate information.

All these factors contribute to a decline in the Slovak Republic's defensive capabilities, as disinformation is part of the Russian Federation's efforts to destabilize Slovakia and other the NATO or EU member states. Some of the factors mentioned can be improved more easily, while others are more complex. Similarly, improvements in some areas can be made more quickly than in others. For example, the introduction of a comprehensive mechanism for developing critical thinking for school-age children requires careful preparation, and the results of this process will only be seen later. However, such a change can have a positive and lasting impact on the country's future, as a change in this area can eliminate other negative influences (the amount of misinformation on social networks, the number of alternative media, the polarization of society) and improve overall defensive capabilities of the Slovak Republic.

REFERENCES

ALATAWI, F., CHENG, L., TAHIR, A., KARAMI, M., JIANG, B., BLACK, T. & LIU, H. (2021). 'A survey on echo chambers on social media: Description, detection and mitigation', *arXiv*. Available at: https://europepmc.org/article/PPR/PPR454066 (Accessed: 1 October 2025).

ANDRASSY, V. & ONDRUŠ, M. (2024). 'Pohľad na problematiku hybridnej vojny po anexii Krymského polostrova', *Vojenské reflexie*, 19(1), pp. 24–36. DOI: (Accessed: 14 October 2025). https://doi.org/10.52651/vr.j.2024.1

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS (n.d.). *Cognitive dissonance*. *Cambridge Dictionary*. Available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cognitive-dissonance (Accessed: 2 October 2025).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions* (COM(2018) 236 final). Brussels: European Commission. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0236&rid=2 (Accessed: 8 October 2025).

GLOBSEC (2025). *GLOBSEC Trends 2025: Ready for a New Era?* Bratislava: GLOBSEC. Available at: https://www.globsec.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/GLOBSEC%20Trends%202025_1.pdf (Accessed: 28 September 2025).

HODÁS, M. & PRÍBELSKÝ, M. (2023). 'Slováci konzumujú ruskú propagandu „na milióny". Je im šitá na mieru (rozhovor)', *Živé*. Available at: https://zive.aktuality.sk/clanok/aHlrlwZ/slovaci-konzumuju-rusku-propagandu-na-miliony-je-im-sita-na-mieru-rozhovor/ (Accessed: 2 October 2025).

IHLEBÆK, K.A., et al. (2022). 'Understanding alternative news media and its contribution to diversity', *Digital Journalism*, 10(8), pp. 1267–1282. DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2022.2134165 (Accessed: 8 October 2025).

IVANČÍK, R. (2025a). *Dezinformácie. Teoretické východiská ich skúmania.* Praha: Leges. ISBN 978-80-7502-769-6.

IVANČÍK, R. – NEČAS, P. (2025b). *Hybridné hrozby: Bezpečnostná výzva pre demokratické spoločnosti.* Praha: Leges, 2025. 226 s. ISBN 978-80-7502-823-5.

JARCHO, J.M., BERKMAN, E.T. & LIEBERMAN, M.D. (2011). 'The neural basis of rationalization: Cognitive dissonance reduction during decision-making', *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 6(4), pp. 460–467. DOI: 10.1093/scan/nsq054 (Accessed: 29 September 2025).

JOHN CARROLL UNIVERSITY (2023). *Alternative Media Guide.* Available at: https://researchguides.jcu.edu/c.php?g=1422777 (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

JURČÁK, V. et al. (2018). *Identifikácia príznakov vedenia hybridnej vojny.* Liptovský Mikuláš: Akadémia ozbrojených síl generála M. R. Štefánika.

KAPEC, M. (2021). *Mainstreamové vs alternatívne médiá v slovenskom mediálnom priestore.* Trnava: University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. Available at:

https://www.ucm.sk/files/sk/ine-pracoviska/centrum-informacnych-zdrojov-ucm-trnave/referat-informacnych-sluzieb/e-zdroje/ucebne-texty-k-stiahnutiu/mainstreamove_vs_alternativne_media_v_slovenskom_medialnom_priestore.pdf (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

KŐVÁRY SÓLYMOS, K. & ŠLERGA, J. (2023). *Tok klamstiev: Telegram je priestorom neobmedzených možností pre dezinformácie a konšpirácie.* ICJK. Available at: https://www.icjk.sk/238/Tok-klamstiev-Telegram-je-priestorom-neobmedzenych-moznosti-pre-dezinformacie-a-konspiracie (Accessed: 1 October 2025).

LYNN, R. & BECKER, D. (2019). *The Intelligence of Nations.* London: Ulster Institute for Social Research. Available at: https://www.ulsterinstitute.org/ebook/THE%20INTELLIGENCE%20OF%20NATIONS%20-%20Richard%20Lynn,%20David%20Becker.pdf (Accessed: 30 September 2025).

MANKO, O. & MIKHIEIEV, Y. (2018). 'Defining the concept of "hybrid warfare" based on analysis of Russian aggression against Ukraine', *Information & Security: An International Journal*, 41, pp. 11–20. ISSN 0861-5160. https://doi.org/10.11610/isij.4107

MINTAL, J.M., KALMAN, M. & FABIÁN, K. (2021). 'Hide and seek in Slovakia: Utilizing tracking code data to uncover untrustworthy website networks', in *Multidisciplinary International Symposium on Disinformation in Open Online Media*, pp. 101–111. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-87031-7_7

NATO (n.d.). *Media – (Dis)information – Security: What is information warfare?* Available at: https://deepportal.hq.nato.int/assets/pdf/2020/5/pdf/2005-deepportal4-information-warfare.pdf (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

NATO (2024). *Countering hybrid threats.* Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_156338.htm (Accessed: 9 October 2025).

NATO (2025). *NATO's approach to countering disinformation: A focus on COVID-19.* Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/177273.htm (Accessed: 6 October 2025).

NBÚ (n.d.). *Krátky slovník hybridných hrozieb.* Available at: https://www.nbu.gov.sk/kratky-slovnik-hybridnych-hrozieb/ (Accessed: 9 October 2025).

NEWMAN, N., FLETCHER, R., EDDY, K., ROBERTSON, C. & KLEIS NIELSEN, R. (2023). *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023.* DOI: 10.60625/risj-p6es-hb13 (Accessed: 30 September 2025).

NICKERSON, R.S. (1998). 'Confirmation bias: A ubiquitous phenomenon in many guises', *Review of General Psychology*, 2(2), pp. 175–220. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.2.175

OECD (2023. *PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The state of learning and equity in education.* Paris: OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/53f23881-en (Accessed: 30 September 2025).

OSCE (2022). *Media Literacy Index 2022: Main findings and possible implications.* Vienna: OSCE. Available at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/4/534146.pdf (Accessed: 28 September 2025).

PRÍBELSKÝ, M. (2023). 'Neviditeľný nástroj vojny: Dezinformácie Slovákom šijú na mieru. Nie je to náhoda', *Aktuality.* Available at: https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/wLVKPuc/neviditelny-nastroj-vojny-dezinformacie-slovakom-siju-na-mieru-nie-je-to-nahoda/ (Accessed: 30 September 2025).

RAPČAN ŠROMPOVÁ, A., NORISOVÁ, V. & MACKOVÁ, P. (2025). *Rozvoj kritického myslenia v mladšom školskom veku: Analýza výsledkov prieskumu medzi pedagogickými pracovníkmi a ich reflexia praxe.* Bratislava: Rada pre mediálne služby. Available at: https://www.rpms.sk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Prieskum_Rozvoj_kritickeho_myslenia_v_mladsom_skolskom_veku_2025.pdf (Accessed: 30 September 2025).

ŠMIHULA, D. (2024). 'Historické korene slovenskej rusofílie a jej dôsledky', *Denník N*. Available at: https://dennikn.sk/3915247/historicke-korene-slovenskej-rusofilie-a-jej-dosledky/ (Accessed: 25 September 2025).

VAN VUUREN, R. (2016). 'Information warfare', *Journal of Futures Studies*, 21(1), pp. 77–96. Available at: https://jfsdigital.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/06-Information-warfare-R-van-Vuuren.pdf (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

1LT Mgr. Jakub NYÉKI
external doctoral student
Department of Security and Defence
Armed Forces Academy of the General M. R. Štefánik
Telephone: +421 902 875 498
E-mail: jakub.nyeki@gmail.com