

**Disinformation's Threat to Peace and Security in the Media: A  
Detrimental and Dire Devastation**

Essay  
created for the  
International Forum for Peace, Security & Prosperity High School  
Student Writing Competition

Author:

**Téa Morton**

Age: 17 years

Student at Villa Maria High School  
Canada

Montreal, February 2023

Disinformation is a tool that has been used to mislead individuals for centuries. It is used for economic, political, social, and personal gain and is primarily executed through propaganda. Disinformation has been used as a weapon in battles countless times and has disturbed the peace and stability of multiple nations. It has also been used to shift narratives causing increased mistrust throughout international entities. The spread of false information has increased the publicity of exaggerated stereotypes as well and has primarily targeted minority groups. To clearly emphasize these dire issues, attention to the War of Ukraine, West African multi-ethnic groups, and the COVID-19 pandemic will follow.

❖❖ Disinformation ❖❖

❖❖ Instability ❖❖

❖❖ Global ❖❖

❖❖ Hierarchy ❖❖

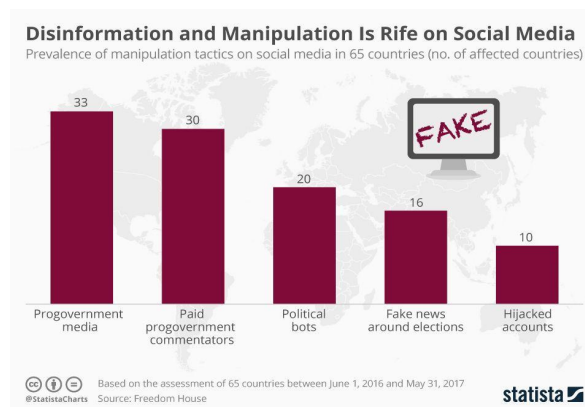
❖❖ Social Media ❖❖

# 1. Table of Contents

<b>1. Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>3. The Power of Disinformation</b> .....	<b>3</b>
3.1 Russia's Nuclear Propaganda.....	3
3.2 The Hierarchy of Attention.....	4
3.3 Race is Not a Disease.....	5
<b>4. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>5. Annexes</b> .....	<b>7</b>
5.1 List of Figures.....	7
5.2 List of Literature.....	8
<b>6. Affidavit</b> .....	<b>9</b>

## 2. Introduction

Disinformation has reached high levels globally. Russia, West Africa, and western regions of the world most notably experience the effects of this campaign.<sup>1</sup> Countries have now begun to use the spread of disinformation as a weapon of war. Disinformation is a weapon used for personal, political, or economic gain and is committed casually. It's seen as low-risk and high-reward because, by the time it is noticed, the damage has already been done. This is why it is so appealing within politics and so prevalent today. It is important to note the internet has simply escalated the presence of disinformation but did not cause the creation of such. Disinformation can emerge through simple dinner conversations, which creates a domino effect.<sup>2</sup> Disinformation is a destructive and rapidly increasing issue that continues to worsen due to the volume of social media presence.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Homepage of OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine. Page Disinformation and Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine URL: [www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/disinformation-and-russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-37186bde/](http://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/disinformation-and-russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-37186bde/) [03-11-22].

Homepage of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The EU's Role in Fighting Disinformation: Taking Back the Initiative URL: [carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/15/eu-s-role-in-fighting-disinformation-taking-back-initiative-pub-82286](http://carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/15/eu-s-role-in-fighting-disinformation-taking-back-initiative-pub-82286) [07-15-20].

Homepage of Centre for International Governance Innovation. Disinformation Is Undermining Democracy in West Africa URL: [www.cigionline.org/articles/disinformation-is-undermining-democracy-in-west-africa/](http://www.cigionline.org/articles/disinformation-is-undermining-democracy-in-west-africa/) [07-04-20].

<sup>2</sup> Homepage of Centre for International Governance Innovation. Disinformation Is Undermining Democracy in West Africa URL: [www.cigionline.org/articles/disinformation-is-undermining-democracy-in-west-africa/](http://www.cigionline.org/articles/disinformation-is-undermining-democracy-in-west-africa/) [07-04-20].

<sup>3</sup> Homepage of OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine. Page Disinformation and Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine URL: [www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/disinformation-and-russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-37186bde/](http://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/disinformation-and-russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-37186bde/) [03-11-22]

**Figure 1: Affected Countries of Disinformation on Social Media<sup>4</sup>**

### 3. The Power of Disinformation

It is vital that communities recognize the importance of unpacking disinformation and its worldwide effects. Russia, for instance, uses disinformation to weaken Ukraine's reputation and spread false narratives that lead to an overwhelming amount of confusion globally.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, there is a considerable rise in disinformation among multi-ethnic groups in West Africa because of their weak cybersecurity. Many nations then become victims of a subconscious hierarchy, which is when one country may gain more attention than the other due to the algorithm of social media— an inherently problematic system in itself. Additionally, due to COVID-19, western regions of the world have experienced the effects of disinformation. People with a strong media presence used altered narratives for their own financial and political gain throughout the pandemic by subverting scientific experts.<sup>6</sup> The following will emphasize the power of disinformation further.

#### 3.1. Russia's Nuclear Propaganda

High media presence has not only become a threat to information but is now a powerful tool to fight with. Russia has been consistently using disinformation as a weapon against Ukraine. Russia continues to manipulate political narratives, use propaganda, and disinformation to weaken Ukraine's reputation and mitigate its attention in the media, giving Russia the upper hand.<sup>7</sup> Russia has been producing an overwhelming amount of disinformation to the public by creating artificial and fake government websites specifically denying sanctions, military aid, the front lines, and refugees. Unfortunately, this crime has been going on undetected. Due to the sheer volume of disinformation, it is difficult to track,

<sup>4</sup> Homepage of Statista Infographics. Infographic: Disinformation and Manipulation Is Rife on Social Media URL: [www.statista.com/chart/11831/manipulation-tactics-on-social-media/](http://www.statista.com/chart/11831/manipulation-tactics-on-social-media/) [11-14-17]

<sup>5</sup> Homepage of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The EU's Role in Fighting Disinformation: Taking Back the Initiative URL: [carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/15/eu-s-role-in-fighting-disinformation-taking-back-initiative-pub-82286](http://carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/15/eu-s-role-in-fighting-disinformation-taking-back-initiative-pub-82286) [07-15-20].

<sup>6</sup> Homepage of Union of Concerned Scientists. Covid-19 Disinformation URL: [www.ucsusa.org/resources/covid-19-disinformation](http://www.ucsusa.org/resources/covid-19-disinformation) [07-14-20]

<sup>7</sup> Homepage of OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine. Page Disinformation and Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine URL: [www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/disinformation-and-russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-37186bde/](http://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/disinformation-and-russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-37186bde/) [03-11-22]

and, consequently, there's a profuse amount of inaccuracy and cognitive bias spreading throughout the world.<sup>8</sup> Any individual can be a victim of disinformation by clicking on the first link shown and being blind to its unreliability, possible bias, and dangerous consequences. This is how Russia manipulates the media and the algorithm, the search engine.



**Figure 2:** The War in Ukraine<sup>9</sup>

### 3.2. The Hierarchy of Attention

Recently, there has been an alarming rise in conflict between multi-ethnic communities in West Africa. This is due to the link between disinformation and increasing geopolitical issues. West Africa does not have the resources to adequately monitor disinformation among its societies; therefore, false claims and internal disputes are either being suppressed or exaggerated throughout the media. Consequently, a geopolitical dilemma has arisen between West Africa, its nations, and the world. Disinformation has caused one country to gain more awareness than the other, which ultimately creates resentment toward each state and a newly developed hierarchy. Which country gains the most attention, the most charity, and the most publicity at that moment. However, this attention will dissolve as quickly as it

---

<sup>8</sup> Homepage of OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine. Page Disinformation and Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine URL: [www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/disinformation-and-russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-37186bde/](http://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/disinformation-and-russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-37186bde/) [03-11-22].

<sup>9</sup> Homepage of BBCGossip. Russia-Ukraine War: List of Key Events, Day 358 - News and Gossip URL: [bbcgoSSIP.com/news/russia-ukraine-war-list-of-key-events-day-358/](http://bbcgoSSIP.com/news/russia-ukraine-war-list-of-key-events-day-358/) [02-16-23].

came as the media will get tired of the same desperate crises.<sup>10</sup> The more recognition a nation can receive when going through a political or economic downfall, the more support it will have. It becomes a contest between which country has it worst and which will gain the ephemeral upper hand.

### 3.3. Race is Not a Disease

Throughout the pandemic, and to this day, disinformation has spread like the virus itself. The government wanted to combat the alarm of COVID-19 and therefore dangerously misguided its people. Individuals no longer received reliable information presented by the government causing increased distrust of health professionals and inappropriate or ineffective precautions, which endangered their neighbors.<sup>11</sup> Disinformation throughout the pandemic has also threatened the safety of certain minority groups, especially Asian communities. During President Donald Trump's term in office, he referred to the coronavirus as the "Chinese Virus."<sup>12</sup> Since Trump has a powerful and impactful voice, naming the disease after a minority group led to a lot of Asian hate. People started to fear Asians because Trump had spread the narrative that Asian people were the primary carriers. Disinformation not only threatens the peace and security of the world but can target any



group just as disastrously.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 3: "I Am Not a Virus"<sup>14</sup>**

<sup>10</sup> Homepage of Centre for International Governance Innovation. Disinformation Is Undermining Democracy in West Africa URL: [www.cigionline.org/articles/disinformation-is-undermining-democracy-in-west-africa/](http://www.cigionline.org/articles/disinformation-is-undermining-democracy-in-west-africa/) [07-04-20].

<sup>11</sup> Homepage of Union of Concerned Scientists. Covid-19 Disinformation URL: [www.ucsusa.org/resources/covid-19-disinformation](http://www.ucsusa.org/resources/covid-19-disinformation) [07-14-20]

<sup>12</sup> Homepage of Vox. Trump's New Fixation on Using a Racist Name for the Coronavirus Is Dangerous URL: [www.vox.com/2020/3/18/21185478/coronavirus-usa-trump-chinese-virus](http://www.vox.com/2020/3/18/21185478/coronavirus-usa-trump-chinese-virus) [03-18-20]

<sup>13</sup> Author's note: Conclusions based on the author's arguments so far

<sup>14</sup> Homepage of Good Morning America. At Dozens of Rallies, Protesters Call for End to Anti-Asian Violence URL: [www.gma.com/story/anti-asian-violence-protesters](http://www.gma.com/story/anti-asian-violence-protesters) March 28, 2021.

## 4. Conclusion

The effects of disinformation against Ukraine, multi-ethnic groups in West Africa, and western regions of the world prove this is a matter of life or death. The information spread globally impacts how war is handled, which nations get the support they need, and how policies are dealt with during times of crisis. Attention to Ukraine is being suppressed dramatically leaving sufferers vulnerable and bystanders blind. West African nations are praying for the spotlight and disease and discrimination are becoming comical due to disinformation heightened throughout the pandemic.<sup>15</sup> It is crucial to take proactive measures and educate individuals about the dangers of disinformation since anyone can be a victim of this campaign. Media will only become more and more present which is why disinformation must be dismantled now. Through increased global cybersecurity and educating individuals on the importance of reliable resources, future generations will be able to silence disinformation indefinitely. Without solutions, this will not be a world in which the population thrives.



**Figure 4: Media Manipulation<sup>16</sup>**

---

<https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/news/story/dozens-rallies-protectors-call-end-anti-asian-violence-76727278> [03-28-21]

<sup>15</sup> Author's note: Conclusions based on the author's arguments so far

<sup>16</sup> Homepage of Data & Society. Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online URL: [datasociety.net/library/media-manipulation-and-disinfo-online/](https://datasociety.net/library/media-manipulation-and-disinfo-online/) [05-15-17]



## **5. Annex**

### **5.1 List of Figures**

- Figure 1- Affected Countries of Disinformation on Social Media– page
- Figure 2- The War in Ukraine– page
- Figure 3- “I Am Not a Virus”-- page
- Figure 4- Media Manipulation– page

## 5.2 List of Literature

Homepage of BBCGossip. Russia-Ukraine War: List of Key Events, Day 358 - News and Gossip URL: [bbcgoSSIP.com/news/russia-ukraine-war-list-of-key-events-day-358/](https://bbcgoSSIP.com/news/russia-ukraine-war-list-of-key-events-day-358/) [02-16-23].

Homepage of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The EU's Role in Fighting Disinformation: Taking Back the Initiative URL: [carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/15/eu-s-role-in-fighting-disinformation-taking-back-initiative-pub-82286](https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/15/eu-s-role-in-fighting-disinformation-taking-back-initiative-pub-82286) [07-15-20].

Homepage of Centre for International Governance Innovation. Disinformation Is Undermining Democracy in West Africa URL: [www.cigionline.org/articles/disinformation-is-undermining-democracy-in-west-africa/](https://www.cigionline.org/articles/disinformation-is-undermining-democracy-in-west-africa/) [07-04-20].

Homepage of Data & Society. Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online URL: [datasociety.net/library/media-manipulation-and-disinfo-online/](https://datasociety.net/library/media-manipulation-and-disinfo-online/) [05-15-17]

Homepage of Good Morning America. At Dozens of Rallies, Protesters Call for End to Anti-Asian Violence URL: March 28, 2021. <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/news/story/dozens-rallies-protesters-call-end-anti-asian-violence-76727278> [03-28-21]

Homepage of OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine. Page Disinformation and Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine URL: [www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/disinformation-and-russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-37186bde/](https://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/disinformation-and-russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-37186bde/) [03-11-22].

Homepage of Statista Infographics. Infographic: Disinformation and Manipulation Is Rife on Social Media URL: [www.statista.com/chart/11831/manipulation-tactics-on-social-media/](https://www.statista.com/chart/11831/manipulation-tactics-on-social-media/) [11-14-17]

Homepage of Union of Concerned Scientists. Covid-19 Disinformation URL: [www.ucsusa.org/resources/covid-19-disinformation](https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/covid-19-disinformation) [07-14-20]

Homepage of Vox. Trump's New Fixation on Using a Racist Name for the Coronavirus Is Dangerous URL: [www.vox.com/2020/3/18/21185478/coronavirus-usa-trump-chinese-virus](https://www.vox.com/2020/3/18/21185478/coronavirus-usa-trump-chinese-virus) [03-18-20]

## 6. Affidavit

I declare that I have written the present essay independently and on my own. I have clearly marked any ideas borrowed from other sources as not my own and documented their sources. The essay does not contain any work that I have handed in or have graded as a previous scientific paper earlier on.

I am aware that any failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as if they were my own – even if I summarize, paraphrase, condense, cut, rearrange, or otherwise alter them.

I am aware of the consequences and sanctions plagiarism entails. Among others, consequences may include nullification of the essay and exclusion from participation in the PSP Forum High School Student Writing Competition. These consequences also apply retrospectively, i.e. if plagiarism is discovered after the essay has been accepted and graded. I am fully aware of the scope of these consequences.



.....  
Téa Morton

Montreal, Canada in February 2023

Validated by Giulia Bartolone—Teacher at Villa Maria High School

*Giulia Bartolone*  
VILLA  MARIA