

Countering Disinformation at the Strategic Level: Audiences, Alliances, and Applied Wargaming

Alla Skomorovsky, Jacob Benjamin

Department of National Defence, Canada

Abstract

Disinformation poses a unique and multifaceted threat to liberal democracies. Malign actors exploit societal vulnerabilities through hybrid tactics that combine overt and covert influence operations to destabilize institutions and erode public trust. While awareness of these threats has grown, current counter-disinformation efforts among Western allies remain fragmented and largely focused on operational or tactical responses. Strategic coordination across governments, civil societies, and private sectors is urgently needed to strengthen resilience and safeguard democratic values.

This symposium examines disinformation at the strategic level, where decisions shape long-term policy, alliance posture, and whole-of-society resilience. Unlike tactical or operational approaches, strategic-level analysis addresses systemic vulnerabilities, multinational coordination, and enduring deterrence measures—dimensions essential for countering adversarial campaigns that transcend borders and domains. Existing gaps persist in understanding how disinformation operates across societies, how alliances can amplify resilience, and how strategic options can be tested before implementation. To address these gaps, the symposium brings together three perspectives. The first explores adversarial targeting of diaspora communities, highlighting why audience vulnerabilities matter for national security and resilience. The second examines alliances as strategic enablers, emphasizing their role in pooling resources and aligning policies to deter and counter disinformation collectively. The third introduces an analytical wargaming framework to experiment with multinational courses of action, revealing friction points and informing strategic decision-making.

Together, these approaches provide a comprehensive picture of the disinformation threat and pathways to counter it. By combining insights on vulnerable audiences, alliance-based strategies, and structured experimentation, this symposium aims to inform integrated approaches that enhance democratic resilience, strengthen multinational coordination, and deter adversarial influence campaigns at their source.

Keywords: counter-disinformation; disinformation threat; liberal democracies; society resilience; strategic analyses