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Strategic Communication
in the Age of Uncertainty

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Strategic Communication in the Age of Uncertainty

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Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Distinguished guests,

I greet you with my most heartfelt feelings, affection and respect. I wish for the 2nd Strategic Communication Summit, organised by the Directorate of Communications, to lead to auspicious results. I congratulate all the institutions and organisations that contributed to the organisation of the Summit themed "Strategic Communication in an Age of Uncertainty." I would like to welcome our guests from different countries around the world and thank them in advance for their valuable contributions. Our communication tools and news sources are undergoing significant transformations as a result of digitalization. As with any innovation, this change in the field of communication presents both risks and opportunities. Especially due to the growing influence of social media on our daily lives, we are forced to deal with issues that we have never faced before. Information pollution and disinformation are the two most prominent challenges of the present era.

Lies, slanders, and distorted news have a negative effect on the lives of countless individuals in many countries around the world, including Türkiye. Accusations made without a thorough investigation can sometimes cause irreparable damage. While digital bullies pose a threat to vulnerable segments of society, particularly children, digital fascism poses a threat to democracy and freedoms, and digital terrorism threatens state security. Digital platforms are increasingly being used as a component of psychological operations in the context of tension and competition between states. Due to its strategic location, unique policies, and principled stance on regional and global issues, Türkiye is one of the countries in the world that is most exposed to fabricated and intentional fake news.

This striking fact has been repeatedly revealed by the hypocrisies encountered during the rightful struggle we are waging against the bloodthirsty terrorist organisations, particularly DAESH, FETO, and PKK. Recently, as we have seen, the language used in some international media outlets' news reports following the terrorist attack on İstiklal Street has almost played into the hands of the perpetrators. We have stated at every opportunity and on every platform that such approaches, which seek to settle accounts with Türkiye rather than provide objective reporting, should now be abandoned. We need a new, truth-oriented communication approach that prioritises people's right to receive information. "Türkiye's Communication Model" is the result of our pursuit of this objective. The purpose of this model is to defend and implement a conception of communication within the circle of truth that draws strength from democracy and international law.

In fact, with the regulation that went into effect in October, we have taken steps to protect the freedom of our citizens to receive accurate and unbiased news. We have once again demonstrated that, despite the fact that lies and distortions pose a threat to communication channels, we will

not compromise our perspective of accurate and transparent communication. With each incident, we have seen how timely and accurate this step has been. We also view strategic communication as an essential instrument for fostering international cooperation. I wish that the Second International Strategic Communication Summit will provide a breath of fresh air to the communication ecosystem by serving as a platform for the exchange of ideas and experiences. As I conclude my remarks, I would like to congratulate all those who contributed to the organisation of the summit and greet you with affection and respect. May you remain safe and healthy.



Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
President of the Republic of Türkiye

Prof. Dr. Fahrettin Altun

Esteemed participants, distinguished panellists, distinguished guests from Türkiye and abroad, ladies and gentlemen, we are honoured to welcome you to the International Strategic Communication (Stratcom) Summit hosted by the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye's Directorate of Communications. We held the first summit last year, and our goal was to create a global interaction centre in the field of public communication and strategic communication. Thankfully, the Stratcom Summit has received a great deal of attention and praise. Our summit continued its activities throughout the year with events and publications in different formats at home and abroad. It grew organically and provided a unique experience for the strategic communication ecosystem, creating a strong platform. On this platform, we brought together strategic communication stakeholders from the public sector, media, academia, civil society, and private sector under one roof. We are gathered with respected communicators from all over the world under the roof of that unique platform. We see that the Stratcom Summit has become an international platform for discussing global topics and trends that shape strategic communication, bringing together representatives from many countries and sectors. We are happy, excited, proud about it. I wish the Summit great success in advance. This year, we are hosting over 50 panellists and approximately 4,000 participants from 5 continents and 40 countries at our summit. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all our guests who will contribute to our summit with their experience, knowledge and participation.

Distinguished participants, the theme of this year's Stratcom Summit is 'Strategic Communication in the Age of Uncertainty' because wherever we look in this age we are going through, from global politics to the economy, from health to the environment, the main reality we see is uncertainty. Today, the whole world faces many challenges, such as conflicts, wars, humanitarian tragedies, terrorism, nuclear threats or food, energy, raw materials, and financial and health crises. In response to these challenges, no systematic, planned, or practical solution proposals have been developed on a global scale. Furthermore, the competition for power, which is becoming fiercer in the global arena and losing its moral basis day by day, exacerbates the threats and challenges that humanity faces. All societies, from the West to the East and the South to the North, are thrown into a spiral of uncertainty. As of today, the entire human family has seen that no part of the world is actually free from wars, conflicts, terrorist attacks, crises and pandemics that are supposed to occur only in certain regions. Because the West has created a world system that has placed it in a superior, privileged, and sterile position since the 19th century. From economic theories to modernization approaches, it was assumed that Western-centered paradigms would transform non-Western societies. Indeed, this viewpoint was reflected in the 'end of history' thesis advanced by Francis Fukuyama in 1992, following the end of the Cold War. Fukuyama declared Western-centered liberal capitalism's final and eternal victory. For him, there would be no more wars, conflicts, or crises. In a global order dominated by liberal capitalism and with the West at its centre, the entire world would live in stability. However, this was not the case. We have seen together that things have evolved in a very different way. From the 9/11 attacks to the Bosnian Genocide, from the Gulf War to the Arab Spring, there have been numerous crises that continue to have regional and global consequences. Waves of instability manifested differently in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Palestine. Aside from this, from Europe to Asia and Africa to the Balkans, new and complex crises have emerged in a variety of fields, including politics, economy, environment, health, and energy. It is happening right in front of our eyes. The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine since February 2022 has not only resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of lives, but it has also exacerbated global instability with the uncertainty it caused in a

variety of fields, including food, energy and the economy. On the other hand, the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the supply chain remain. Increasing natural disasters and humanitarian crises resulting from climate change continue to endanger life on Earth. Thus today, the global political and economic system based on a Western-centric perspective is plagued by structural issues, crises, deadlocks, and uncertainties.

In addition to all of these uncertainties, another main and global issue of this period is the crisis of the truth. In this period called "Post-Truth", the "death of truth" has been declared, so to speak. Just as the fundamental issue of social theory was the struggle between social classes in the 19th century and the issue of modernization in the 20th century, today it is the crisis of truth that currently threatens societal unity and integrity, as well as cultural identity and belonging. Clearly, radical changes and advancements in communication technologies have boosted the potential for information generation. It has increased access to information. In this respect, it has emerged as a democratizing process. During this period, humanity has unquestionably huge opportunities to access news and information. The Internet and social media have enabled the timeless and limitless dissemination of all kinds of information. During this process, the new and institutionalised communication industries have created a tremendous economy in the global arena. However, new communication technologies provide a venue for disinformation, smear campaigns, influence operations, hate speech, terrorist propaganda, and cyberbullying, thus threatening individual lives, public order, and social peace. In modern media contexts, individuals and even entire masses are condemned to echo chambers, where they solely hear their own voices and the voices of people who are similar to them. In contrast to the optimistic belief that social media will bring people closer, ghettoisation, polarization, and radicalisation rise in virtual settings when people are all ears to one fraction and deaf to the rest, and these negative processes are reflected in everyday reality. New technologies that aggravate social polarization, ghettoisation, and radicalisation are also misused and this not only threatens the security of individuals, societies, and nations but also evolves into a global security issue. Particularly systematic disinformation activities that are constantly reproduced through new media and conventional media threaten global peace and stability. At this point, we need to think about how we can resist this process at all costs. I would like to quote a remark by the late philosopher Teoman Duralı, one of the most influential figures in contemporary Turkish thought. Mr Duralı says, 'The dominant civilisation is currently engaged in an extraordinary global propaganda war. Under this bombardment of propaganda, people are led to believe that there is no alternative to the life that is imposed on them.' This imposed perspective mentioned by Teoman Duralı is, in fact, a form of bullying. It is an attack on human freedom, human existence and the freedom of choice. Obviously, such an imposition is maintained by the constant bombardment of disinformation. We require a shield, an anchor of truth, to withstand this bombardment. To quote Teoman Duralı once more, there is an apparent reality and a whole that extends beyond it. We must seek to obtain beyond the apparent and the whole that surrounds it. With your permission, I would like to quote Teoman Duralı again. As Prof. Teoman Duralı says: "By processing what we find in reality in our thoughts, we form the layer of truth, and of course, we do this with language. Because thinking is also a work of language and, of course, in this respect, truth requires an effort. In this respect, reaching the truth is a very precious endeavour, a precious matter. Of course, states are not exempt from this endeavour, societies are not exempt, but neither are individuals. Therefore, it is vital for each individual to engage in his or her own struggle for truth."

Distinguished guests and dear participants, today, we must jointly combat the threats posed by

new media technologies, which range from human rights to national security, from digital bullying to hate speech, from terrorist propaganda to systematic disinformation campaigns, and from algorithm dictatorship to digital fascism. The “crisis of truth” is being exacerbated by global uncertainty, conflict, and instability, highlighting the importance of institutionalising and cooperating on strategic communication at the national and international levels. Of course, these collaborations will contribute to developing new solutions, democratising methods, and methods to combat the threats and challenges we face in the digital world. At this point, I believe that our primary responsibility as communicators, wherever we are in the world, is to combat the crisis of truth, to defend and understand the truth. The growing truth crisis has increased the demand for reliable information more than ever. This is the primary reason why communication has emerged as a fundamental and separate policy area today. Communication is now a separate ecosystem, just like education, health, security, agriculture, infrastructure, and transportation in the post-truth era, where lies and disinformation precede the truth, and strategic communication, which plays a critical role in the communication ecosystem, is critical for having tools that highlight stabilising and constructive efforts in the face of global uncertainties. We, as the Directorate of Communications, have been working since our inception to develop and institutionalise a strategic communication culture in our country. In the international arena, we strive to increase international cooperation in this field by using strategic communication as a tool for managing crises and uncertainties. We see the Stratcom Summit platform as one of the international manifestations of all of our efforts.

In this age of uncertainty, states, governments, and leaders carry out positive communication campaigns on global and local scales, such as strategic communication, nation branding, and public diplomacy; they also have to contend with challenges such as disinformation, black propaganda, cyber wars, and hybrid threats. In the face of these uncertainties and challenges, it is critical that experts in diplomacy, defence, security, communication, intelligence, and technology work together. The need for a global strategic communication approach that focuses on human dignity, rights, justice, and the truth is becoming increasingly apparent from the local to the global scale and at the micro and macro levels. The best answer for us is that policymakers in public communication and strategic communication will undoubtedly make no concessions from the perspective of truth-oriented communication.”

Distinguished participants and esteemed guests, under the leadership of our President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye has become a stabilising power in an era of global uncertainty. Türkiye, as a regional power and global player, aims to be a stable country while also demonstrating active foreign policy performance as a power that stabilises its environment. The most recent example is our President’s peace diplomacy during the Russia-Ukraine war. The grain corridor agreement reached through our mediation efforts during the Russia-Ukraine war was a critical step toward resolving the global food crisis. Türkiye, which does not hesitate to take the initiative in resolving international issues, has emerged as a key country for global peace and stability as a result of its principled foreign policy and the confidence provided by our President’s leader-to-leader diplomacy. Türkiye Models, which we have developed in numerous fields, including diplomacy, the defence industry, humanitarian aid, and health, are currently on the international agenda. We are working diligently to add the ‘Türkiye’s Communication Model’ to this chain. With the motto ‘A Fairer World is Possible’, we strive to continue the struggle for truth waged by Türkiye in the dimension of communication. Türkiye’s Communication Model has been built on strategic communication based on strengthening the nation brand, public diplomacy that stands out in the world, close relations with national and inter-

national media outlets, discourse unity and coordination between institutions, fast and effective crisis management, active state–people communication, a multidimensional and strong infrastructure, especially in combatting disinformation. Moreover, we have developed a significant capacity in terms of verification and OSINT activities carried out by our experts who are highly qualified in their fields. In this context, we have expanded the scope of our activities to combat disinformation with a new centre we have recently established. Our Centre for Combating Disinformation continues its activities as a quick verification and effective information tool against systematic disinformation campaigns directed at our country, institutions and citizens. Of course, we are ready to share our Türkiye’s Communication Model, the capacity and experience we have developed, with all of you, our dear friends.

Distinguished participants, we see that many countries are strengthening their legal and institutional infrastructures to combat the growing hybrid threats. As one of the countries most exposed to disinformation, Türkiye continues to take the necessary steps in this line. We must work to ensure that social media and new media technologies, which affect a wide spectrum from personal rights to public order, from societal peace to national security, are safer for everyone. In the post-truth era, we have to protect our cyber homelands from disinformation, manipulations, agents of influence, cyber exploitation and invasion. Exactly for this reason, our Grand National Assembly of Türkiye passed a law that protects the personal rights of our citizens on social media and strengthens them against systematic disinformation. This law aims to prevent discrediting attempts on social media and protect our citizens from fake news, disinformation, and perception management operations by malicious actors. We believe that this legal regulation will contribute to the construction of an order in which the truth prevails and a cleaner communication environment.

Distinguished participants, I would like to emphasize once again that we are ready to contribute in every way possible to the institutionalisation of strategic communication with the principles of governance, leadership and professionalism to build a much stronger and more resilient international society in the face of crises and uncertainties in the international arena, within our means. A qualified platform such as the Stratcom Summit will advance our strategic communication capacities in terms of eliminating problems and uncertainties with the possibilities for international cooperation. Once again, I am glad to express that the Stratcom Summit has become an important summit where high-level strategic communicators from various countries come together and share their experiences. I would like to express my gratitude to the state representatives, speakers, panellists, and participants for attending our Summit and to all my colleagues who contributed to organizing this important summit. We are also launching the Stratcom Hackathon for the first time this year as part of the Stratcom Summit. In order to improve the strategic communication and crisis communication coordination capacity of our country, 100 participants from 20 institutions will carry out detailed theoretical and practical works for five days. Our valuable participants who contributed to the Hackathon are among us today; I would like to welcome them. I hope that the second International Strategic Communication Summit will be beneficial for our country, our region and all humanity. I welcome you all again to our country and our beautiful Istanbul. I hope our summit will be fruitful. May you remain safe and healthy.



Prof. Fahrettin Altun

Presidency’s Head of Communications, Republic of Türkiye

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Stratcom for Resilience: Challenges in an Evolving World

STRATCOM SESSION - 1





December 2, 2022

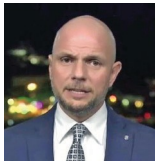
Stratcom for Resilience: Challenges in an Evolving World



Panel Video



Speakers



Yusuf Erim

TRT World
Moderator



Nordin Abdullah

Founding Chairman
of the Malaysia Crisis
Management Centre



Tomasz Chlon

Former Ambassador of Poland to
Estonia and Slovakia and former
Director of the NATO Information
Office in Moscow



Dusko Arsovski

The Spokesperson of
the Government of
North Macedonia



**Edgar Lorenzo
Padran Castillo**

Venezuela's Deputy Minister of
Communication Planning and
Strategy

**Yusuf Erim:**

Hello. OK. So, before we opened up the first panel, I had a little chat with some of my panellists, and they asked me, what is your plan? I said, well, my plan for the panel is what it always is. No plan. It is the best plan because this way everything is natural. This way, we get to communicate with each other. So, I am going to allow everyone to say what they want to say in the first round and then some more specific questions after I hear what you have to say. Now, before I open up the first panel, "Stratcom for Resilience Challenges in an Evolving World", I looked at the topic and smiled. I was like, wow, there is so much we can do with this because if you do this panel every five years, you will be talking about something different every five years. If this panel was held in the 90s, we would be talking about how the Gulf War was the first television war. If this panel was held in the early 2000s, we would be talking about the Internet era; if this was held again la-

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ter on in 2010, we would be talking about smartphones and social media; if this was held a couple of years ago, we would be talking about the Syrian civil war and how it was being communicated over social media, so constantly changing, constantly evolving communications environment. But the most important thing about communication is it adapts so quickly, it catches the latest technology. The pandemic taught us many things. Communication really is the sector that catches up with technology and adapts so quickly to the changing dynamic in the world. So, without further do, I want to open up my panel. I want to start with the Deputy Minister of Communication, Planning and Strategy from Venezuela, Edgar Lorenzo Padron Castillo.

Edgar Lorenzo Padran Castillo:

“We communicate with one another, and the pain or joy is mirrored in this way, so our responsibility is to be very cautious. We must exercise extreme caution while receiving messages and information from academia and universities, as well as when dealing with the truth. It’s not just about understanding and hearing words. It’s also about adopting collective action. This collective action is also about the well-being of these individuals, these citizens.”

Thank you. First of all, I greet you on behalf of the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro. The leaders of the planet who are concerned about what is happening in civilization are also committed. As humanity, we must address communication, the economy, politics, and energy. We are a single nucleus and must communicate in real-time. What is the past and present tense of web time? How is web time conjugated? We are facing a problem known as immediacy. We work tirelessly for information that is quickly consumed. Now, let us take a look at the first webpage for communicating with young people. This can create a false sense of excitement, but in reality, it is the exception rather than the rule. Resilience is a concept that is practiced daily by those who know it and even by those who may not be aware of its existence. The people of the world are accustomed to reinventing themselves in order to find their way. Governments should also prepare themselves for resilience. Do people need to develop critical thinking? Should they learn to communicate with themselves? We often talk about communication through devices, but what about communication with ourselves? What about otherness? Otherness refers to the other subjects that exist within us. And that we talk to them every day? How do we establish that relationship? How do we establish intrapersonal communication, that communication with ourselves, to be able to determine what we should believe, what we should communicate, and what we should repeat? It is an essential quality to have. The internal aspect



refers to the different personalities within us that can experience a range of emotions, such as restlessness, sadness, and contentment. As I was saying, there are two aspects of our being: the external and the internal. Resilience is the ability to get up after being knocked down. We must find ourselves and each other. We must keep moving forward and not be discouraged by the negative news we see in the media. Unfortunately, many large media companies distort the truth. What is the truth? That is another great discussion, but is it only the networks, or are our fellow journalists who have also put a face to the lie? What would happen if journalists were put on trial by the public? What would the verdict be? Are you the reason my mother will not leave the house? Is social communication simply a means to reach others, or have we become mouthpieces of misery and spokespersons of the powerful? We must be cautious and acknowledge this reality, as emphasized by the Academy. From the study and the streets, we hear what people are saying about their reality and suffering. It is not necessary to know the Latin verb or the ascendant of the Latin word to communicate effectively. It is essential to create a shared understanding with others. This understanding leads to collective action for the betterment of society, both for men and

women. Communication with ourselves is important to understand our inner selves and connect with others. Understanding ourselves is fundamental. What does this communication convey? Only human emotions. It expresses disappointment, frustration, and joy, which shape the subject's daily experiences. As communicators, we must consider the subjectivity of our proposals. Let us focus on that. Are we in agreement? Communication and personality development complement critical thinking. To complement critical thinking, let us discuss intrapersonal communication. This includes human emotions and the ability to question what we are told. By doing so, we can find solutions to problems and make informed decisions. It is important to open up and explore our emotions to find solutions rather than relying on Hollywood movies or soap operas. We must look there to determine the phrase that has been mistreating us, our children, and our daughters - fake news, post-truth, and lies that cause significant harm. It is essential to recognize that we are in an information society where most of us do not produce even a gram of wheat or 100 grams of corn. Instead, we produce subjectivities. We communicate by talking, listening, and sharing information. The transition from a knowledge society to an information society is often overvalued. Is the transition to an information society really overvalued? When presented with a scientific argument, it is important to understand the evidence and reasoning behind it. In 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered the New World, which was a significant event in history. Disdaining popular communication and failing to understand it can hinder the mobilization of human armies, which need not be armed, in defence of their territory, dignity, and goods. This is a brief overview of modernization and innovation cycles, as well as the impact of web communication on language. Neologisms are a common result of this phenomenon. This is a brief overview of modernization and innovation cycles, as well as the impact of web communication on language. Especially for a journalist colleague, they always use 'Google' as a verb. 'Google' is already a verb, meaning 'to search for



something online'. 'Google' has become a verb that gives an answer to everything. We can say, 'I googled it' or 'you googled it'. It has become so ubiquitous that it has replaced the phrase 'search for something online'. If the search for the unknown is through religion or technology, it is important to consider the impact on our youth and their way of being. It is worth noting that TikTok is emerging as a popular search engine, potentially displacing Google.

Spontaneously, we capture pictures, images, videos, and audio. It is about what is allowed and the essence of immediacy. This demand requires greater technical and intellectual effort. This is pattern F, and we may think with arrogance that we are smarter now because we have these devices. We read and write more, and we believe we are smarter. However, it turns out that we may not care about the other line because we think we are very smart. I read and write frequently. Is this the norm for everyone, or is it a falsehood? Is there a purpose to reading in this manner, as we are doing now? Currently, we are reading in this way. Is it necessary to write in this manner to effectively communicate? Has the pyramid structure shifted from inverted to horizontal? This is what we have to do well, then comes the political discourse. The institutional political discourse should be conjugated in the present active tense. Like the cinema. Politicians should avoid speaking in the past or future tense, as it can come across as making empty electoral promises. Instead, they should use the present active tense to communicate clearly and directly. Remember, the goal is effective communication, not literary flair. Keep sentences simple and straightforward, with only one verb per sentence. To generate a signifier, be clearer and more efficient. When writing, avoid using it as an opportunity to showcase your knowledge or general culture. Instead, focus on being a conduit for the reader to obtain the information they need. Use short, clear sentences to minimize confusion. Avoid ambiguity and literary flourishes unless necessary. A government should act decisively and purposefully. Does a government act or not? Sometimes, in an attempt to sound more sophisticated, we search for unnecessary words and end up obscuring our message. Removing redundant phrases can improve clarity and conciseness. In this communication, we must quickly locate the reader who is reading in patterns. It is important to avoid using ambiguous connectives such as 'therefore,' 'moreover,' and 'among others.' Stick to a professional vocabulary that is widely understood. It is important to maintain institutionalism, obviously, then the active voice, which is the way you write. Additionally, avoid using passive voice and dubitative expressions in political communication. To generate doubt, literary figures are often used. For example, in the song 'Blue Unicorn' by Silvio Rodriguez, the question arises of how to explain politically what the blue unicorn represents. While this may be acceptable in poetry or song, it is not appropriate for political communication. In Venezuelan universities, old social communication professors used to say, 'Put a straw in it.' Are these words necessary to complete the characters? What about the elements of political discourse? Well, I have the arguments, the main ones, the social impact, and the work where it is reaching, where the impact that generates the political impact, and of course, the figures, which are those that give the argument. To believe what I am hearing and the testimony of others, it is important that the information is presented clearly and

directly. Writing today requires an economy of speech. Communication has undergone a transformation, not only in writing but also in graphics. The logo has evolved into branding. To illustrate, let us consider the difference between a logo and branding. For instance, the Nike logo is a wave that represents air. However, the wave that represents Nike Air is not prominent. Therefore, if the brand's name is not on the keypad, it does not exist. The only input method available to me is the keyboard on my phone. The Nike and Adidas brands have made their names easily locatable on phone keypads. However, the brand in question has not done so. This is a fundamental difference between this brand and the bigger brands.

Yusuf Erim:

Thank you for your comments. Of course, technology comes with positives, but it also makes us much more vulnerable from a communications perspective, as you stated, to fake news wars over the truth. I definitely agree with you, and thank you for the presentation. I want to move on to Dusko Arsovski, spokesperson for the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

“Information brings benefits. It helps the world to be dynamic and contributes to overall democratic development. Disinformation strives to cause damage and undercut trust in institutions. But at the same time, it forces us to jointly tackle it.”

Dusko Arsovski:

Hello, everyone. Thank you very much for having me for inviting me here. I am very glad to speak on behalf of the North Macedonian government and, of course, to share some of my thoughts on this great event in front of this great professional here in the great city of Istanbul. We, as never before, live in a connected digital world where success is being measured by the speed of sharing information. Unfortunately, equally active are the forces that measure unsuccess with the speed of sharing this information. As much as information brings benefits, helps the world to be dynamic, and contributes to overall democratic development, so much disinformation strives to cause damage to undermine achieved results to undercut the trust in institutions. But at the same time, it forces us to jointly tackle it. North Macedonia, as a part of this digital world like any other country in the world, faces influences basically from external factors sometimes. Those influences are radical, sometimes less radical, and it is always remarkable and interesting that all those influences appear in very critical moments. Very important socioeconomic changes when usually occur in the country.

So, more or less all of the countries in the world are facing similar challenges, but I would like to focus more on the case of North Macedonia in order to illustrate what we live in and what we particularly face and how, which is more important, we can go on the next slide. More importantly, how

do we face all these challenges using our communication strategy, transparency and the tools it offers? Of course, our policy of high standards. About the case of North Macedonia, just a few words in order to understand. We are in the Balkans, 21st century, but still facing a lot of disputes around and we have to deal with this, especially from the side of communicators. From a captured state as we were labelled by the European Commission until 2017, in just a few years, North Macedonia became a democracy with flaws in the 90s. That's the definition. And this situation in these circumstances; It is very logical to face the appearance of forces, anti-democratic ones, that are not up for progress and simply pull back the country and the society itself. These are mostly actors from non-democratic societies who, in their efforts, most often tend to present democracy as a failed system and Western and democratic values as degenerative. And to present themselves as saviours of so-called family conservative values. I would like to mention a couple of examples just to illustrate the situations that we are facing recently. One is connected to the NATO membership of the country, the other one is very recent, related to the opening negotiations of the country with the European Union. In the first case, there was a quite visible campaign. I put these sentences not to explain everything, just maybe to make it easier for all of you to memorize. If you find something interesting, memorize our examples so that you can use it in some way. So, the first case was there was quite a visible campaign for boycotting the referendum for the change of the constitutional name of the country. It was a well-organized system, I could say, and an effort for mining the process of solution to the decades-long dispute with Greece over the name of our country. Of course, eventually countries enter into NATO.

Messages instilling insecurity and fear, advocating isolation and turning to alliances with non-democratic societies prevailed in this case. How did it look like when it came to the media? Various Internet pages all of a sudden began to appear with her narrative? That the boycott of the referendum was needed. It was assessed as the self-destruction of Macedonia as a historical betrayal and fake reference. On TV media, on some portals, and on social networks, this information was spread about plans to build, even if they went that far. That is about the plans to build camps for refugees and migrants at that time, which, of course, was denied by the officials of the country. Thankfully, the majority of the people were towards the harmfulness of this campaign, so eventually not, Macedonia became little Member and achieved one of its national objectives; this information campaign was not successful, as you understood, but it established a system that was used later on in the second example that I'm about to explain, and this happened more recently, like a few months ago. Political parties that declared themselves as pro-Russian literally trapped a civic movement and radicalized the resistance against the so-called French proposal for the resolution of the dispute between North Macedonia and Bulgaria. So, this is the second one, still in the 21st century, but we are facing disputes, and we have to deal with this using the same recipes as in the first case. The campaign was dominated by anti-European narratives and nationalist messages that were intended to promote insecurity among the citizens and to create the feeling of utter endangerment of the national identity. A disinformation campaign occurred in conditions when the government succeeded how in achieving this resolution over the name of the language,

Macedonian language and Macedonian identity, which are very important for, you know, the national interest of the country. Of course, this was very important for the start of the negotiations with the European Union after 17 long years of waiting to start this process. The incitement of bloody scenarios was neutralized with a proper, peaceful institutional response. Until one night when the protests of this demonstrations turned into violence, and the police officers were attacked with Molotov cocktails. This attack was immediately sanctioned, and the perpetrators were arrested.



What about the messages when it comes to these two cases? The messages of the disinformation narratives stimulate distrust in the system and in the institutions and serve the regressive anti-democratic forces. Sometimes, in news articles or media articles, I would rather say with the author signed underneath or without any sign of the author. Then on various portals on statuses coming from some suspicious web or social media profiles, sometimes on the TV shows. But also, in official statements from the politicians, which is very much disappointing, and from academics as well.

Yusuf Erim:

Mr. Arsovski, I do not mean to cut you off, but I want to conversate a little. Very quick question: what was the biggest challenge you faced rebranding the name of North Macedonia, and what was the biggest obstacle from outside communications aimed at North Macedonia? What was the biggest challenge there?

Dusko Arsovski:

Of course, changing the name is a very emotional issue for all of us. But we somehow managed to explain to the public that for the sake of the future of the generations that are coming, it is very

important for us to fulfil the criteria for full membership in NATO and the European Union. So, it was a, of course, tough job because it's a new name. I must admit, even now, some of the people do not accept this change of name. But it is good that the majority of the people accept it. That is how the referendum for the change of the name succeeded eventually and made it possible for us to do this change from the name, like you said, branding.

Yusuf Erim:

Thank you. Now, our next speaker is the founder of the Crisis Management Center in Malaysia, Nordin Abdullah.



Nordin Abdullah:

Thank you. Good afternoon, Salam-Alaikum and it is really an honour to be here in Istanbul. I wrote 100 notes like everybody else, but I just want to touch on a few things very quickly. First, we are talking about the concept of resilience. So, whenever I talk about resilience, I always talk about one gentleman, Mike Tyson, and why do I call on the wisdom of Mike Tyson? He said a very famous thing which is "Everybody has a plan until you get punched in the face." What we are seeing today is the metaphorical reality that we are getting punched in the face. So, are we getting up off the ground, and can we take another hit? Organizations, governments, and corporations are under attack. Communicators are at the front line of that battle. But often in the organizational structures, you know, the PR girl or the comms team, they're not part of the strategic thinking. So, I wanted to put that in the mix of the discussion today. The

other thing I wanted to talk about is two other things. One is the manipulation of decision-makers. I think there was one slide, which was a report. So now, we know that data is manipulated, so I need to affect your policy change. So, I can do one of two things. I can speak to you and change the way you think, or I can manipulate the report that goes into your hand, and you make a different decision. So again, I am a big fan of American pop culture, and I met a lovely professor earlier. We were discussing it, you know, this movie "Wag the Dog". So, in this case, we're data manipulating, and I'm excited about looking at some of the other presentations later today. I can now wag the guy who's wagging the dog. Because I am giving you data, but your team is taking data, and they believe it to be true. So, when you believe data to be true and you have not cleaned out the noise, you are being manipulated. So, this is another thing I wanted to put into the discussion, the other thing that I think is very important, and we saw some of the footage from the videos earlier. This is the concept of communication warfare, we are not hearing the word cognitive warfare yet, but that should be part of the discussion of cognitive warfare. Now it is the use of communication to destroy critical value chains and critical supply chains. So, we are seeing the military thinkers, and we see a lot of military images in today's videos. Military thinkers are thinking about how to destroy the tank on the ground. And we are seeing that in a nearby conflict. I will not mention the country, but they are using off-the-shelf parts to create drones to destroy tanks on the ground. So now imagine the forward-thinking of some countries; how do you ensure that you never let that tank be built? Using strategic communications, crisis communications, and weaknesses within organizations to ensure that that tank or drone has never been built. I think this is the new face of conflict. It is not the conflict that is happening today. It is the conflict that will happen 50 years from now, 30 years from now, 20 years from now, and 10 years from now. Because that is where we are seeing the cutting edge of crisis communication. From countries that are able to think that far away. And in that case, a lot of democracies are at a strategic disadvantage because you still want to win the next election. And that is a big problem. It is important to remember one thing; armies do not make weapons. Corporations make weapons. Armies do not make communications where they do some. But we are in the business model of global media giants, and as governments and as organizations, you're trying to control someone else's business model, and you don't even understand it. So, I think that's where I want to leave it for now. I hope that helps with the discussion.

It is important to remember one thing: armies do not make weapons. Corporations make weapons. But we are in the business model of global media giants.

Yusuf Erim:

Thank you for your comments. It definitely raised a couple of questions in my mind, which I am going to ask some of the guests next round now. Tomasz Chlon, former ambassador of Poland to Estonia and to Slovakia. Also, former director of the NATO Information Office in Moscow. Now that

last position sounds like it comes with a lot of challenges. I definitely would like to hear some of your stories and the challenges that you faced while working as the director of the NATO Information Office in Moscow. Thank you.

Tomasz Chlon:

Thank you very much and thank you for having me at this summit and in this wonderful city. I'll start with bad news. That is Stratcom is not going alone. Stratcom alone is not going to save the world. But the good news is that when the world collapses, it's not just Stratcom experts who are going to be blamed. But of course, Stratcom is extremely important as part of a systemic approach in which you have national strategies, in which you have regulations, in which you have structures to deal with, in which you have education. I think one of the most important things is media education and media literacy. It's the civil society that is on the frontline, the main responder, and the task of the states is to assist the civil society in responding. The second thing I wanted to say is that Stratcom is, of course, about what we are saying. But what is more important is what we are doing. And it starts at home. Take the example of Russia. Before the invasion, Russia was, I would not say, very successful, but it had some successes in its operations, influence operations and disinformation. Once it started the war, it was over, practically, at least in many parts of the world. I mean Russia's extreme resources put into disinformation and influence operations, the budget of the state media company that is the umbrella for Sputnik or Russia Today RT, and it is bigger than the Polish Foreign Ministries yearly budget, you know. So, you see the scale? But it's failing in its attempts to go everywhere. I mean, one has to be careful to judge in one approach. Take another example of Estonia, which, after regaining independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, started to think, you know, "how we should not only secure our newly regained independence, freedom and democracy but how shall we promote our country? How shall we brand it? What's going to be our strategic objective or objectives?" So, they started with this IT philosophy, branding Estonia as a country of IT wizards. In the beginning, it was a little bit; an Estonian diplomat told me there was lots of hot air in it. But then, I mean today, if you look at Estonia, there are two things you cannot do through the Internet in Estonia. One is getting married, and the other one is getting divorced.

Take Germany, for example, another successful country in strategic communication, but not everywhere. I mean, if you look at how Germany communicates its support for Ukraine and it is doing huge things. Germany is the biggest provider of funds to Ukraine in terms of macro economy, as the biggest contributor to the EU budget. Through the EU, it supports Ukraine enormously, but it has a problem of communicating that support because of, you know, weapons delivery issues. When they say something that is then interpreted immediately and circulates in the world as if Germany is not willing to support Ukraine. So, Stratcom is about what we are doing and at home, it's like in this business approach, you are not successful in selling the product if it's flawed. NATO is very good; I mean pretty good in Stratcom. With the strategic communication plans every year, they have an integrated approach.



There is only one strategic communication at NATO. Not two, three, or five, and that is very important. With aims, objectives, and implementation methods, there is a huge industry behind it.

There is only one strategic communication at NATO. No, not two, three, five, you know, military, civilian, no, it is just one strategic communication, and that is very important. With aims, objectives, and implementation methods, there is a huge industry behind it. But now, responding to your question, for NATO and others, of course, for us, it's a challenge to reach out to Russian audiences, for obvious reasons. The information environment in Russia is controlled, so it is difficult. So, the big things go to the countries that now facilitate the work of independent Russian media, including here in Istanbul. They facilitate the work of influencers, bloggers, independent media, right? The world is not doing pretty well in the context of Ukraine, for example. You know about this UN resolution on reparations, the number of countries that voted, I mean not against but did not support the resolution, it was quite big. While Ukraine is doing a great job, Ukraine is very successful in its Stratcom, and of course, director Andrea Shapovalova will tell us more about it. But one fundamental reason is why Ukraine is doing it because its strategic communication is based on fundamental issues fighting for freedom, sovereignty, and willingness to sacrifice. So, Stratcom is not the silver bullet. Especially in this world with social media changing with all information and

environment. And I'm happy that it's on the agenda, social media and big tech of this summit. And I'm going to leave that; I'm not going to address it. Thank you very much.

Yusuf Erim:

Thank you, Thomas. I want to go one round, three minutes per question, very, very quickly now. Deputy Minister Castillo, Nordin said, "I can impact you in two ways." He said, "I can talk to you, or I can manipulate the data that's being brought to your desk." How do you ensure that the data coming to you has done its proper due diligence, making sure that it is proper data, data that has not been manipulated, data that is true?

Edgar Lorenzo Padran Castillo:

There are several methods to verify information. Finally, carefully examine the information to uncover any underlying issues. It is important to consider the source of the information and how it may personally affect you. After identifying the source, we will determine if there are any antecedents and potential future implications of the information. It is important that our audience is well-informed, aware, educated, and prepared for the abundance of information and data. Every day, we receive messages on our phones and computers. This makes it easier for us to develop critical thinking and a more objective perspective.

Yusuf Erim:

Thank you very much. I want to move over to Dusko. Now, North Macedonia is a smaller country with a more modest budget, and I think one of the challenges of an evolving world is not only strategic communications but also the attacks that strategic communications apparatus... Let's say your country is under some type of cyber-attack from a communications perspective, what type of Plan B or backup plans would you have in place to be able to ensure that the proper communications are still going on internally and also externally?

Dusko Arsovski:

Yes, speaking about attacks, I did not have time before to mention our strategy as a response to what I explained as challenges we have been facing recently. First of all, delivering information in detail to the public as much as possible, having in mind not to overinform the public. So, it is a thin line, you know, because people are overwhelmed. There is a word infodemic, so we have to take care of that. So first of all, according to our strategy to inform about any decision in detail, any adopted measure by the government on the sessions regularly. On a daily basis, we communicate with the media, answering any possible question that they are raising on a certain day or, you know, in some period of time. The next one is transparency. You know, we offer especially proactive transparency to the public as much as possible about documents that are of public interest, not to hide them. Because we had a history in the past, certain documents had to be classified. Now we simply adopted, you know, this policy of transparency to the maximum. That way, you gain

trust. From the ordinary people, from the media, especially because it opens space for investigative journalism. This is another very interesting topic that maybe we can sometime talk later on. Being a former journalist, I am very happy that many of those documents published are used as a source for investigative journalism. All these that I am talking about create a ground, a stable ground for the people to be well informed. That way, we prevent fake news from prevailing. And, of course, it's impossible to simply stop them. It is good to have this way of informing the people and to narrow the space for those who have a different agenda than that the government has.

Yusuf Erim:

Now, Nordin, I want to move on to you. You talked about companies. Companies in the communication sector now have bigger budgets than other countries. They have more power and more influence than countries. Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and many other social media giants. How do we hold these companies accountable? We cannot expect them to act in the public favour when their bottom line is their bottom line. So, what type of legislation would you look at that could hold them accountable but not limit freedom of speech at the same time? Where's that sweet spot?



Nordin Abdullah:

That is a tough one. If you are looking at losing an election, your policy thinking is very different. If you feel safe in your position, your thinking will be different. I think when we look at some policies,

and we have seen that Australia tried to regulate a lot of these social media companies in terms of making them pay for certain content. So, it is possible to regulate social media companies. Now, they have big budgets, so they are able to, they have excellent government relations teams, they actually help write the laws. So, when they help write the laws, you know they can put in there all the back doors as they were what they want. So now the question is who is writing the laws, and do the policymakers and the decision makers have the relevant education? And their relevant experience in dealing with them? So, I think that's the first point.

So, actually, education is the gap; it's not communication. So, if you don't have that education, how are you going to compete with those who, quite literally, can buy the best and brightest minds anywhere in the world?

Yusuf Erim:

Definitely, education is key. I want to move on to Tomasz. Tomasz, now, you have worked at the Foreign Ministry in Poland as a diplomat. You have also worked at the NATO Information Office. So, these are two geographies that are, again, very close to what's happening on your eastern border. When you're looking at information coming from the war in Ukraine, whether it's on Telegram channels, whether it's on WhatsApp, whether it's on TikTok or Twitter, how do you sit down and determine what's true and what's not? Because it is flowing so quickly, it is becoming viral very quickly. What is your stress test, or what is your truth test when you look at something?

Tomasz Chlon:

Well, your first reaction should be you do not trust it, right? So, when you fix your mind, you do not trust. So, it means I am not sharing it, right? That is the thing we should start teaching kids, even starting from kindergarten, as in Finland. The kindergarten teacher is the first line of response to this information because it teaches young people to recognize disinformation in the science of math; I mean, that is the bigger, higher level in schools already in Finland. How can you not manipulate information with statistics, how can you change the image through artificial intelligence? How can you falsify history, right? So, this is the most important thing, as I mentioned before, media literacy. But when we look at it, I caught myself a couple of times that I shared something that turned out not to be true. So this is a very critical approach to it. Checking the sources, of course. I mean, today, you can google immediately. Is this outlet legitimate? And if it is legitimate, then yeah. But Telegram is a very dangerous platform. Of course, the battle is on this platform. But we had a discussion in Poland about whether we should, when the invasion started, create our own Telegram channels to be part of this discussion or battle, and some people were telling us not to

do it because we risk perhaps too much through Telegram. So, it's very complicated, you know. But the basic thing is your instinct should tell you, "This is suspicious. This is not true. Let us check with colleagues." Let us ask my student colleague next to me about what he thinks and what she thinks about it. And but of course, you know the key thing is in tackling this information, and Stratcom is not to react. I mean, reaction is important, but also to prevent and to prepare, to know the narratives. And if you know what they are, the opponent is going to come up with what narratives you can prepare. You know your responses, and as the Director said, the most important thing is to tell the truth. I mean the basics. I think at NATO we do not lie. Just telling the truth.

Yusuf Erim:

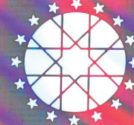
Thank you, Tomasz, and thank you, gentlemen, for your valuable insights. Now the one thing that does not change is change itself. There are new challenges coming every day. The world is evolving, but communication is resilient. I think we can all agree on that. It is always the first to adapt, adapt to new technology, and adapt to a new dynamic. My major takeaway, especially listening to all of you today, your advice, your recommendations and your concerns, is it reminds me of an important quote from the Turkish president, "A fairer world is possible"...

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How to Make Truth Louder in World Politics

STRATCOM SESSION - 2





December 2, 2022

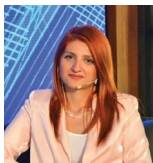
How to Make Truth Louder in World Politics



Panel Video



Speakers



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Assoc. Prof. Şuay Nilhan Açıkalın:

Hello, welcome to the second panel of the Stratcom. I hope you enjoyed the lunch and I hope you are awake for this. The exciting second panel of Stratcom today. Actually, we have very distinguished speakers on this panel today. The topic is quite timing when the truth is desired, but it has not been too easy to achieve in the political sphere in the last one or two years, especially when post-truth and disinformation become more of a reality in our lives. I did not want to take too much time from these amazing speakers. Just for the reminder for all speakers, I just want to remind you that in the first round, we will have 10 minutes and then in the second round, you will have an extra 5 minutes to discuss your last sentences and your last ideas related to this panel. First, we will start with the first speaker, Mr. Fahd Hussain. Mr. Fahd Hussain, the floor is yours.

02

Fahd Hussain:

Thank you very much. I will try to share as much as I can within the next 10 minutes. As I was going through this topic, I think I realized that there are so many commonalities. First, I thought that I would focus more on my country, Pakistan. However, I realized that I think there is so much in common among all the nations when it comes to this topic. So, I'm going to keep my topic of a bit general. And essentially, I'm going to present 3 basic points to you. Point number one is the challenge of doing politics in a post-truth world. Point number 2 is how polarization. Political polarization is actually paying dividends. Moreover, point number 3 is, can truth actually be made louder in a digitally connected world? Now these are three basic points. Let me just race through them quickly. The first one is the challenge of doing politics in a post-truth world. Essentially, since I come from a media background, I have spent my years first in print and then television and then, of course, the rise of digital media. So, I've seen the evolution of how media has had a positive and a negative impact on societies and on politics. So, currently, when I look at the media and the political landscape in the post-Truth world, number one, the fact number one that I see is that emotions have overtaken fact as a determinant of communication. So, emotions are playing a much greater role in the age of digital information. Number 2, information overload through social media is having a very deep impact because it is making it much more difficult for people to sift between fact and fiction.



Number 3 is the fragmentation of mass communication channels. So essentially, the media filters are breaking down. For people like myself, our job was to figure out “What is verifiable and what is not?” Those are breaking down and creating much more confusion, of course, search engines and social media companies, and they’re all transforming the way that we look at our own biases because the information is according to what we like, and that reinforces the ghettoization of our belief system. And finally, therefore, it becomes so much easier for politicians to essentially keep us all in our echo chambers. And reinforce our beliefs as opposed to the beliefs of the others. So, in a post-truth world, politics has become very difficult but also, in a way, very easy. And that will be my next point. How polarization is paying dividends? Because societies are becoming so polarized due to social media. Politicians are finding it much easier to fuel up the support base and, therefore, the so-called authorization of political discourse in which “my truth is better than your truth”. This framing of how we look at the world around us is making it much easier for communicators and political communicators to say, “I am good because he is bad”. And “I am right because she is wrong”. That becomes an easy framing. Number 2 is the shrinking of common ground. It is happening very quickly. Therefore, the common frame of reference where we could actually measure what is true and what is false, and my truth could relate to your truth because that commonality is disappearing. It has become so much more difficult for me to convince you of my truth and much easier for me to tell you that your truth is actually not the truth. In addition, number 3, of course, these skewed narratives are making it very easy to manufacture narratives. Because I can just build a theory, tell you it is true, push it through social media, and have a very large number of people convinced that what I am saying is correct.

Finally, point number 3, and I am going to end here in a very depressing environment. I did not want to depress you, but I think it is a reality. In a very depressing environment, can truth actually be made louder? Which is the actual topic of our conversation. And I think it is an uphill battle. I will not say it is a losing battle. Nevertheless, I think it is an uphill battle, and we need to recognize that because facts are constantly being challenged. And I think I’m sure that if you look at your own media landscape and your political landscape, you’ll see, perhaps, facts are being challenged and lies are being legitimized. And this trend is very clear. It is going in a certain direction and, therefore, the burden of carrying the facts. The burden of carrying the facts is actually becoming more and more heavy. Because the ability to tell untruths is becoming easier. Now in this environment, what can we do? How do we rescue truth from within this deluge of lies and fake news? The answer is very difficult. The only thing that I can think of both as somebody who spent time in journalism and now in government is, of course, that you know. In addition, a number of speakers alluded to it. Number 1 is rediscovering and reclaiming common spaces in our societies. How can we find commonality where we can actually convince each other that, yes, our discourse is based on some rational evidence? #2, reinforcing prioritization and clarity of fact-based issues. For example, climate change. Now you can actually, with evidence, convince people who thought climate change was false.

There is no climate change. Now, with the help of evidence, you can actually convince people, saying, “No, if you think your truth is that there is no climate change, your truth actually is not the truth”. It is a lie. So, finding such issues can actually help in reframing this entire debate over truths and untruths. Finally, my last point is that reviving and focusing on evidence-based discourse will require rethinking policy framing. The role of governments... And some of the speakers talked about this earlier on. So, how do the governments now actually need to ensure that their communication is laden with some facts? It is easier said than done, but governments are normally the most effective, loud, not effective, but loud communicators. And if they can refocus their energies on banking more on facts and evidence, perhaps we can attempt to stop this deluge of fake news in a world which desperately needs a bit more sanity. Thank you.

Assoc. Prof. Şuay Nilhan Açıkalın:

Thank you, Mr. Hussain. I have some notes related to the authorization. If it is okay with you, I will ask questions in the second round. Our second speaker will be Andrii Shapovalov. Mr. Andrii, since the war started, the World has seen a kind of new and concrete version of a hybrid war that we have never seen before. I am excited to hear your comments related to the panel topic from your perspective, too. Thank you.

Andrii Shapovalov:

It is actually a great honour for me to represent Ukraine today. I respectfully greet the organizers of the summit. We can share our advanced experience in information security and strategic communications with professionals from everywhere, thanks to our friend Türkiye, with whom we share common values. I need to add a few words about Türkiye’s role. Let me start with a few words about your organization. The Centre for Countering Disinformation is a working body of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine and was established shortly before the full-scale occupation of Ukraine began at the end of 2021. You know that we have the Russian Federation on our territory, so our activity is very important. Our President, Mr Volodymyr Zelensky, foreseeing how strong the information space will be subjected to attacks, approved the establishment of the Centre for Countering Disinformation by decree. Since then, all our activities have been aimed at ensuring information security and protecting the citizens of Ukraine from unrealistic coordinated actions. Today, strategic communication is part of building information. That means it is the most relevant in protection against Russian disinformation, which poses a significant threat to Ukrainian citizens and other countries. We believe that the spread of narratives is one of the main means of influencing the information space, and that is why the centre pays special attention to the mechanisms of damaging engagement. We are watching how Russia uses them to promote its interests on the international stage in most cases. Russian narratives are aimed at destroying Ukraine as a state, destabilizing the military-political situation and causing panic.

The Ukrainian Embassy in Türkiye told us that there is new information. For example, I want to show you one such example of Russian propaganda. On the way to the summit, the Ukrainian authorities

informed people, warehouses, and the Turkish embassy of Ukraine about a new narrative being spread by Russian TV channels in Türkiye. This narrative sounds like this: “Ukraine is allegedly supporting terrorist organizations. And openly advocates undermining Türkiye’s territorial integrity for the benefit of terrorists.” We strongly condemn such attempts to misinform our partners and have already issued a note of protest. There is one more example. For example, “Ukrainian authorities are preventing people from leaving the city of Zaporizhia in order to use them as human shields to protect warehouses and other military facilities.” With this narrative, Russia is trying to portray Ukraine as a terrorist state that does not abide by the rules of war and massacres its own people. The second example: “Residents of the Ukrainian concentration camp are working on reconstruction.” This is how Russian information terrorist groups described the attempt to recruit people for the reconstruction of Ukraine. The narrative aims to distort Ukraine’s image and cause panic. The third example: “Due to destroyed infrastructure, energy companies are forced to disconnect the electricity of southern regions so that there can be light in western Ukraine.” This is also completely false information. In this way, Russia is trying to drive Ukrainians against each other. It should be added about information campaigns that discredit Ukraine’s commitment to the grain deal and other agreements brokered by Türkiye. And these are just a few of the countless narratives that Russia is spreading. Because if we talk about numbers, we record more than a hundred unique information threats every week from Russia. Some are successful, and some are not, but the support of the international community plays a big role in countering disinformation. This is a real threat. These are just a few examples.



I would like to take this opportunity to urge distinguished guests to take this problem, the threat of information terrorism, seriously. I could give you hundreds of such examples. It is indeed a major threat to the international community. And we are always trying to find a way to fight it. That is why we have established an important centre to evaluate this information, to determine what is true and what is false, and that is its main purpose. Why am I talking about this centre or about social media today? Today, we are not talking about fakes or disinformation; this should be a conversation about Atlantic behaviour. We urgently need to create new terminology to prevent disinformation attacks. If we see disinformation attacks, we need to understand that those who create this fake news will definitely be charged for it. As Mr. President Erdoğan said today, they are spreading terror, and they must be punished. We strongly condemn information terrorism and attempts to interfere in the national security of states on behalf of foreign states. And that is why we encourage our partners to revoke the licenses of disinformation networks of the Russian Federation. We are always ready to share our experiences with our partners. Because we want to build a strong shield against disinformation. We can fight disinformation, but without your support, the world cannot stop Russia's disinformation machine. You see our partners, especially tools like Sputnik. Their every word, their every speech has a consequence. Every one of them hits words, and those words have direct consequences. Because every war starts first in the minds of people and only then on the battlefield. They are information terrorists, and the responsibility for their actions is equal to the responsibility for terrorism according to international conventions. Therefore, we encourage the world to revoke their licenses. We want their agencies like Sputnik and ELT to close down because this is clearly propaganda. We can fight disinformation, but as I said, without your support, this world cannot stop Russia's disinformation machine. We sincerely invite our partners to cooperate to protect our citizens. Only by joining together in such efforts will we be able to create a stable information security system, a shield that will protect people and their consciousness. Again, I want to thank you all, and I believe that the best in their fields have gathered here today.

Assoc. Prof. Şuay Nilhan Açıkalin:

Thank you, Andrii. I am seriously interested in the role of the international community in fighting against disinformation in a hot war field or conflict zone. We will discuss this in more detail in the second round. Thank you. Our third speaker will be Caitlin Cahin. Caitlin, I know you have some work on disinformation and some companies generally. So, the floor is yours.

**Caitlin Cahin:**

Thank you so much, and it is great to be here at the Stratcom Summit in Istanbul with participants from approximately 40 countries. I think that really highlights how disinformation is not just a local problem or a domestic problem. It truly is a global issue. And the first panel highlighted how technology amplifies false information online. And lies or misinformation? This is not a new problem, but technology has enabled its spread on a much faster and larger scale than we have seen in the past. And society, too, has shifted in recent years. 50 years ago, if somebody wanted to access information about politics or about national security, they might have gone to their local newspaper. But now with 2022 people with many more options, we see that more and more people are getting their news online from social media, from user forums. And I think that it creates this environment of information overload, just like you were talking about, where false information can proliferate online, and sometimes it's very difficult to know the difference. And we've seen many examples of this. In recent years, we have seen false narratives spread related to national security or foreign aggression, related to climate change, pandemics, and election integrity. So, it's not at all surprising that we're seeing many governments around the world saying that disinformation is a problem that we need to address. I think we have hit that inflexion point. The problem, though, is that disinformation is a very nuanced and complex problem, and I think it is much easier to identify the harms than it is to identify the solutions. For example, we know that disinformation can be harmful. On an individual level, disinformation can result in reputational harm or psychological

harm. You can actually create financial loss or even physical injuries to people. In addition, on a macro level, we have seen disinformation create a loss of trust in institutions. It has made it hard for governments to respond to global crises such as pandemics or climate change. That said, even though we know that discrimination can be harmful. The solution is not always clear. For one matter, if there are technical questions, for example, disinformation is often centralized. There are often many different sources of disinformation, and it could spread on many different platforms. For example, should there be different standards if disinformation is posted online publicly on social media, for example, then disinformation is sent on an encrypted messaging service where somebody might have a greater expectation of privacy. Or should there be different standards for a smaller internet platform to regulate disinformation compared to a larger platform that might have more resources and more capability to employ either human or automated reviewers? These are all questions that Internet platforms are asking, and there are also ethical or moral questions as well. For example, we know that disinformation can be harmful, but it is not always illegal in many countries. Accuracy can also be subjective. So, this leads to questions such as; who gets to the side? What information is false or what is considered disinformation compared to opinion satire or somebody's viewpoint? And I do think that there are a lot of trade-offs when it comes to regulating disinformation as well. Therefore, my last point will be that...

Final note, I believe. The Internet doesn't have borders, so if false or harmful information is posted online in one country, that information is visible in other countries. And on the flip side, if a piece of information is posted online and then taken down in one jurisdiction, that will also impact access to information around the world as well. That is why I think that it is important that we have dialogues like this. I think that disinformation is not a unilateral problem. It is truly a global phenomenon, and I think it is beneficial to think about where countries could potentially align their approaches to regulating disinformation. All around the world we're seeing governments express interest in passing new laws or considering new bills around content moderation, around fake news. However, I think it could be valuable to see where these values or opportunities for collaboration to counter disinformation will be shared. I am glad that we are having this dialogue here at the Stratcom Summit, and I look forward to having the conversation.

Assoc. Prof. Şuay Nilhan Açıklan:

Thank you, Caitlin. As you said, the mobilization of the false narratives, I think, will have a different implication or consequences for indifferent levels. Our last speaker is Radu Magdin. Mr. Magdin, you have both academic backgrounds and you have a lot of experience in the practice in the field. So, as a political strategist, how will you see how we can make the truth louder in politics?

Radu Magdin:

Hello everyone, and thank you so much for the invitation to such an interesting event. I particularly admired the global element because, in many cases, on different continents, we are very much

aware of the regional component. However, it is pretty much us in between us in similar environments. So, I love this diversity right now. We talk about making the truth louder when we talk about this in a wider. Let us say it is an age of uncertainty, but I may add, before proposing to you a certain mental map based on ours, an element of complexity. I think it is pretty pretentious, both from a professional and in the sense of a practical, political or academic perspective, to try to come at this very moment in time. We are still coping with this complexity, with the winning formula by which we can solve issues such as propaganda disinformation, fake news or upgrading the tone of truth.



Speaking of this, I always believe, coming from a background of political communication, that if you have to speak louder, you have a problem, right? Because the more loudly I speak, the louder the tonality of the others will be. And then it's going to be quite a fight soon, or if I use this loud tone, then the moment when I really want to stress something, my tone is already so loud that I will not be getting to my audience. The reason why I made this intro is that I would like to put several aspects on your radar based on our structure. Let us start with repetition. I think in this information warfare and Russian-Ukrainian conflict, we have seen an element of quantity, both from a rhe-

torical perspective and from the perspective of how communication works. Namely, repetition. How do you make the truth louder? Perhaps you should repeat the truth, or your assessment of the facts, or your messaging, right? What you are trying to get across. So, although this is a quantitative element, it's important because, as shown in the previous presentation and visualization, if you're not repeating your message, you will not have enough traction to get that truth across. The second issue is separate from quantity and quality. We are humans. And with all due respect, I think here that political communications have more of a luxury than institutional communications. In politics, you aim for power, and once you are in government, you aim to keep it. Of course, you also, in a very generous way of putting it for good governance, right? However, separate from that, the objective is not, once you are in power 100%, just to make sure that there is truth because there may be inconvenient truth in terms of how you govern. Alternatively, so from this perspective, yes, you can try to use the truth as an excuse and defend it. But coming from a background of government, I can tell you that nobody is 100% right in government all the time. Not to mention it quite the contrary. Therefore, I simply say this is due to this complexity. In addition, even more, this decade, where we are faced with a cocktail of crises. The dilemma of us being able to present a model that works is that either we're shallow enough to make it so general that it kind of sounds commonsensical, and we adopted it, but then again, it's shallow, right? And it doesn't really adjust; it doesn't really personalize to a specific market. Reframing. Because, speaking of our element of humanity, the message has to be attractive. And again, it's easier for political communicators than for institutional communicators because institutional communicators are drier. They have to be drier. Sometimes, my personality is dismissed as bad; I know because I started my career in the Foreign Office. And I had once a more daring press release and somebody just told me to calm down, right? Because I was a diplomat, I was supposed to watch what I was saying. So, of course, the media did not necessarily copy-paste or was very inspired by the issuing press release. But I picked a list in, let's say, in my ministry, what I had to think from a professional perspective. Now relativity... And you mentioned the well, my truth, your truth, his truth.

I think this is why it is hard to make the truth louder. This is the risk of making the truth throughout there because, combined with relativity, if we're going for absolute truth and not in the sense of decent rulemaking, the risk is repression. It is a risk that we face across the world. Yes, rules. We have to think about the rules. I agree that there can be a smearing campaign, you know. Trolling, you know, but it comes with the risks of a job, and I really do believe that, speaking of that very inspiring previous presentation, we should also pick our fights. We should really be clarified as institutional communicators. Is it truly worth it? I mean, even, let's say, if there's a smearing campaign, is it really worth my attention at the president level, prime ministerial level? You know, even opposition level and so on. Is it really worth it? Perhaps it is because if I keep doing this on a daily basis or weekly basis, I achieve nothing. I am going into the next hour, namely reaction, and I think that all strategic communications are primarily proactive. It doesn't mean that we periodically

are not forced to be reactive, right? However, if there is one thing which I think has been achieved speaking of Stratcom in the past few months this is where I finished my introductory talks. If there is one thing we kept complaining about in different formats in the past seven years, for at least eight years, it was Russian propaganda, Russian disinformation. Well, guess what? This year's vast majority of commentators and analysts agreed that Ukrainian information warfare. And this is my initial comments. Thank you so much.

Assoc. Prof. Şuay Nilhan Açıkalın:

Thank you, Radu. I actually like the notion of concept you use, the cocktail of crisis. I will ask about this later. You will have an extra 5 minutes. I would like to start again with Fahd Hussain. I got some notes related to your speech. I actually asked about the notion that you used othering and how the fake news and the post-truth age created othering at both the national level and global levels. Would you like to say something more related to this othering issue?



Fahd Hussain:

Thank you. This whole issue of othering actually is something, which is affecting many societies today, and I see this happening in my country not just at a political level but also at a social level, even at a religious and cultural level. The othering is where you have to validate yourself, your

worth, and your beliefs in opposition to others. This winner-take-all mentality is now taking root because in social media, through social media. The political discourse is focusing on drawing a contrast with the other people, the othering. What has made this very dangerous, in my opinion, is this whole issue of strategic communication, Stratcom. It has been weaponized because of politics. 20 years ago, this was not the case. Now when, if you are somebody who is indulging in politics and, as you very correctly said, the aim is not a moral crusade anymore. And a lot of people do politics to gain power as you said and then retain power. And in order to do in order to gain power, you have to have X number of people who are willing to give you that power, and it is so much easier to convince them of your truth if you can validate their beliefs. If you can reinforce what they already think, and what that does is essentially that it makes it very tempting.

I do not know, I am sure, I see many very young people here also, but people who are closer to my age would probably remember the movie Matrix. And if you're in that Matrix, in the early scene, you know, he tells Neo. "Will you take the red pill?" "Will you take the blue pill?" And it's very tempting to take the blue pill if you know that if you take that pill and use that pill, you can fuel your narrative by reinforcing the biases of people in contrast to the others. And thanks to or no thanks to social media, that message gets personalized because when I hear somebody speaking my truth, I don't want to hear the other person's truth because that makes it an inconvenient truth, as you said. So, I can block it off by not going into an alternate reality and creating this own reality for myself that then reinforces the feeling of authorization. In addition, that ends up producing the kind of politics, which is divisive, which is poisonous which is toxic and which is being done at the expense of those who do not agree with you.

Assoc. Prof. Şuay Nilhan Açıkalın:

Thank you. I think all the speakers sometimes need a little bit of applause when they make it. Thank you, Fahd Hussain. I think the biggest, maybe the threats of these the othering that mentioned that it will become more weaponized day by day, unfortunately. My second question will be for Andrii. Andrii, you mentioned the very important examples that right now you are facing in the Russian-Ukrainian war, but you especially mentioned the importance of the role of the international community in fighting against Russian disinformation in warfare. I think it is a very important dimension. Can you a little bit explain more about how the Ukrainian office gets help from the international community while you are fighting against Russian disinformation both at the Ukrainian national level and at the global level?

Andrii Shapovalov:

I want to speak very slowly now, but I will repeat it a few times if I have to. Sometimes, he wants to turn the red tablet because sometimes, happiness is something that the country or the world does not understand. Ukraine was once a good country, and so was Russia. And the Ukrainian nation

once saw that Russia, Russia with its bear symbol, was sleeping and Ukraine was very comfortable with it. In 21 years, it has shown that it has not crossed any civilizational borders. And unfortunately, the world continued to believe the propaganda, the Russian propaganda. I was born in Luhansk, and after the war started, I moved to Donetsk. And then to Bucha. On February 24th, I was at my house in Bucha. At that time, I was attacked by a helicopter; I have photos, and I have footage. I saw this disaster from my window with my family at that time. The result is only disinformation, fake news. It is television and radio. A journalist has prepossessed people in exchange for money. This story shows what can be the outcome of the battle or the struggle between your truth and our truth. So sometimes, we take a pill and live in our own world. That is what we call propaganda most of the time. Two issues are very important for us right now; the first one is control in the digital environment because this is very important. We can only verify the falsity of some news reports because of this audit. Our enemy does not envy all kinds of weapons. Sometimes a journalist only cares about his duty. He receives a task. This might be a blogger, and sometimes he might get a warning, but he says, "Sorry, this is my own opinion", our methodology in the digital environment is that we need to have the power to verify that this news is false. Because it is necessary to remind society that false news also comes with responsibility. If there is a responsibility, then I am sure... I see this in Türkiye. Türkiye gives a lot of importance to this issue. Your country has started a serious war against disinformation. I am sure that both our country and the whole world should take this as an example. Because erroneous news, false news or intentional fake news can lead to very serious consequences.



Assoc. Prof. Şuay Nilhan Açıklan:

Thank you, Andrii. I think the Ukrainian and your office will be a later role model for other countries in upcoming years while we are talking about how a country conducted a fight against disinformation while the traditional conflicts are ongoing in the fields. Thanks for the answer and your contribution. My third question for the Caitlin, of course. Caitlin, you directly underlined the mobilization of the false narratives and how it will affect our individual lives. I think it's very important to talk about how the individual level of these post-truth ages will influence us because we are generally talking about the security level, global level, and macro level. Yes, we talk too much, but what about our lives?

**Caitlin Cahin:**

There are many different motivations behind disinformation, and many of them are harmful. Earlier in the panel, we covered some of the political motivations for disinformation, which generally have very broad effects on society. However, disinformation can also be used to harm or target specific people or corporations. I might add that disinformation is not only words. It's not only information, but it can come in the forms of deep fake artificial intelligence videos, for example, or photos or audio that can be manipulated to make it look like somebody has said something or done something that they haven't actually done. We have seen examples of either false information or false content to target specific individuals, disproportionately public figures or journalists, and disproportiona-

tely women and people of colour. This can be done for many reasons. To silence somebody, to get revenge on somebody, or even to harass or to dock somebody. So, what disinformation can be weaponized in ways that can disproportionately affect or target specific people? However, there are other types of harm as well. Disinformation can also result in economic or financial losses. For example, if somebody uses disinformation to create a narrative that could potentially scam somebody or potentially manipulate their economic well-being. So yes, there are many, many harmful effects of disinformation, and I think that is one of the challenges; there is not only one type, one source, or one platform for disinformation. It is constantly evolving. Technology is advancing; bad actors are getting better, which makes it really hard sometimes to tell the difference between what is real and what is fake when fake news can sometimes appear to be very realistic.

Assoc. Prof. Şuay Nilhan Açıkalın:

Thank you, Caitlin. I have one last question for Radu. Radu, you mentioned the cocktail of crisis. I just want to ask because I like the concept too much. I just want to ask how the reality of the cocktail of crisis directly affected the quality and quantity that you mentioned when it comes to looking or searching for the truth in the post-truth world.

Radu Magdin:

First, I think, if I were to borrow 3 grams of 3 S this time, substance, style and spin. We said that on the substance, things are bad. So, it's very hard when things are bad on the substance when people and governments feel overwhelmed by so many crises, you know, it's not about good willingness. Look at the trust in institutions. Tend to look periodically at gallop newsletters, which follow things worldwide. So even in countries where we used to have a very high level of trust in government and institutions in terms of competence, now this level is going down. So even the most competent or perceived as competent governments around the world are having problems in their own constituencies with their own citizens. We are all overwhelmed. So, this cocktail of crisis is creating this feeling of, you know, it's perhaps too much on our plate that the instinct is in such a constant political instinct. Perhaps also institutional with political driving is what burns first.

We take fires one by one. Yes, of course, speaking of previous talks and presentations. Some of the things remain there. So, inflation, COVID. In the shadow lurking. Energy issues, war. However, on a weekly basis, speaking of truth, you have a series of major topics, which do not disappear, and you have to show that, somehow, you are managing them. Alternatively, you have to really be careful how you create ways, or I'm sorry to say this is a strategic communications professional coming from politics, but sometimes you have to manufacture new topics or keep people busy with new songs for a while, right? Because you cannot talk about Monday inflation, Tuesday inflation, Wednesday inflation, Thursday inflation... After three months, you discover that you are incompetent in inflation. That may be the truth. And it's an inconvenient truth. You know, I say this. Why? Recently, I had lunch with somebody from our National Bank, and he was so happy about something, which I think is very, very geeky joy.

He told me, have you noticed that inflation is starting to lose its steam? I said like, what do you mean? I mean, still over there, he said. Yes, but it is dropping in terms of upward terms. So, in terms of upward terms, it's dropping with zero points or something. Perhaps this could be part of a good news strategy in which somebody comes to the fore and tells the truth, namely that at least we are not speeding towards the cliff. We have managed to slow down, and we are enjoying the view. It is not easy to communicate that. Of course, it is a good time to be in opposition. For institutions, I think for institution communicators; I think it is a very stressful time because stress in politics transforms into institutional stress, right? Because in politics, you get the mandate, but then again, whenever there is something faulty, you feel the need to pass it forward. Therefore, I am optimistic for the decade in the sense that I believe we are all stuck together at the global level. So, it is not just the regional problem, which means that as soon as somebody comes with different recipes, as soon as we adjust, we are going to be able to kind of copy-paste and adjust, which is different from a regional crisis, right? Because of the regional crisis, there is not a huge amount of creativity being above. So, we are all in Gray land. I am optimistic, it's going to be not White land. I am optimistic it is going to be a Light grey land by 2025. In the meantime, brace yourselves for the inconvenient truth that each week is a crisis.



Assoc. Prof. Şuay Nilhan Açıkalın:

Thank you. This world has some optimism. First, I would like to thank the Directorate of Communications for having such an amazing panel. Then, of course, we have very distinguished speakers. Thanks to all of them for using time very efficiently and wisely. I was so happy to be part of this panel. Thanks for everything. Thank you.

Audience:

Hello, my name is Abdul Karim; I am from Guinea. What I want to ask as a political science student is that I am confused about having true information. Because mostly when we do some research, we find out that mainstream media has information. They are confusing for me because they always have the same narrations, and most of the mainstream media are being heard than others, like BBC or CNN. I want to give the example of maybe the War in Iraq in 2003. Most of them, they say, like Saddam Hussein, he has chemical weapons and these kinds of things. And maybe like two months ago I was watching a video of Nancy Pelosi. She said, "At that time, the decision of George Bush was the wrong decision because Saddam Hussein did not have a chemical weapon". In that way, how can we obtain good information, and how can we differ between right and wrong information? Thank you. That is my question.

Fahd Hussain:

Thank you very much. I think the George Bush and Iraq example that you gave is very relevant because even though there was no social media at that time, that particular moment. Decision is considered as one of the key post-truth disinformation decisions of that time which actually led to a war based on something, which was false. And I'll give you a personal example. At that particular time, I was working for an American television channel.



I will not give the name right now. I was based in New York, in the newsroom. And at the time of this decision, if you remember the Secretary of State at the UN, you picked up, you showed this thing saying here's the proof that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction. And in that newsroom, sir, there's an American newsroom. When some people, including myself, said in a discussion that we are the media, what questions are we going to ask? There was so much pressure on the media that there was zero discussion. There was zero questioning by that media which is trained to ask those questions. Why? What Colin Powell was saying was correct or not because the feeling was that if we asked this question now, we are going to be branded as unpatriotic. And that led to the entire war. Now, if you fast-forward 20 years, because of social media, it is easier for other people to ask that question. But here's the problem. The fact that today's conventional media is not asking those questions is because now the conventional media 20 years ago, CNN and BBC, were not competing with Facebook and Twitter; today, they are. Not only are they competing with Facebook and Twitter, but they are also competing with every person who has a smartphone. Therefore, in order to retain their audiences, they have to loosen their editorial filters. And once those filters begin to loosen, these kinds of fake untruths begin to come through the legitimate, so-called mainstream media, which then produces the confusion that you're talking about.

Radu Magdin:

Are we in Istanbul? Yes, fact, truth. Are we at the Stratcom Summit? Fact. Truth. Are we right in what we are saying? Battle of narratives? It is very easy to say that you can apply the truth to everything. There is some factually identifiable truth which can't be contested. For the rest of the debate, it is storytelling, and that is it. And we should not try to, although the topic of the panel is very generous, have the expectation that they will be a Ministry of Truth. Remember 1984 and Orwell; whenever there is a Ministry of Truth, there's a danger it may be run against you. And it may contradict, at a certain moment in time, the actual reality that we are in Istanbul, for example. Thank you.

Audience:

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Tamba Ijana from Sierra Leone. I am happy to be here at the Stratcom Summit 2022. And I want to take this opportunity to thank the organizers for hosting this Stratcom Summit 2022 in Istanbul. Istanbul is a city that is enigmatic with so many paradoxes. Paradox between the ancient and modern. The paradox between reality and imagination. I like Istanbul so much. I have been here three times, but I have not been able to inhale the beauty and the place of Istanbul. You have to come here many times to be able to get enough of Istanbul. I am going to the question now. Thank you. My question is simple. Reading the concept note for Stratcom Summit, I realized that there is a phrase called black propaganda. When I came across that question, that phrase and I had it around the room today. I said to myself. Is there a white propaganda? You know we are talking about truth being louder, to speak truth louder. We in Africa have gone through several years of racism. And when we see Tia, for example. The white man will call me black. But look at the coat this black colour. I am not black. I am brown. That is another

fallacy. And that's another phobia we need to work against. But the white man calls himself white. The shirt I am wearing is white. The white man is not like this colour. But using black like black propaganda, black market, black something shows that we are still thinking in the narrative of the Caucasian. And that's a propaganda we have lived with as Africans from slavery to the present. We need to wipe that out, and it is Stratcom Summit 2022. Those are phrases that we need to leave out. We should not carry them forward. So, in that pamphlet, in that concept note. We need to take off that phrase, and I do not want it to be repeated in this summit. This is my comment, and perhaps you would like to latch on to it because we are talking about truth in the post-truth era. We should be thinking along those lines, things that are racist. We should forget about them. Because we are trying to form a convergence where we talk about truth going forward. So that's my comment. Perhaps you would like to touch on it, the panellists, but it is up to you. Thank you.

Fahd Hussain:

I completely agree with you. I think when we are looking at strategic communication, the language, the choice of words, and how those words and the framing of sentences actually produce or trigger some unconscious bias. Some of this is built into things because of our colonial baggage or the baggage of racism, as very rightly pointed out by the user. Many times, we do not think of that, but actually, these are dog whistles, and I think I completely agree with you. When we are talking about strategic communication, one very clear and important aspect is to make sure that the language that we use and the words that we choose do not trigger the kind of otherness that I was talking about.

Audience:

Many thanks to the Directorate of Communications in Türkiye. My question is for the Ukrainian speaker. As in war times, we are facing massive black propaganda, and we, as researchers and journalists in the Middle East, are facing massive black and bad propaganda from Israel all the time. About 80 years ago, we faced these research centres and think tanks. They killed the people when they did live streaming, and they said, we will do an investigation. How do you do this? This is a fact, and this is the case of many hundreds, hundreds of journalists killed in Palestine by the occupation army, and police Israeli, and police, and they say they will do an investigation, and this is the facts. How facts? How can we do this aspect? In Ukraine, as Russia does, Israel does this all the time, stays silent, and does not say anything. And Israel has had many employers all over time and all over world media. This propaganda is dangerous for all over the world. Not for Russians or for Ukrainians only. Many thanks to you.

Andrii Shapovalov:

It has been like that. Unfortunately, we have been living in this not only in recent times, not only since 2014 but in other words, for the last 8 years. We have been living in it for hundreds of years. And all this time, Russia has been practising this disinformation against Ukraine. As for the metho-

ds, unfortunately, we are giving many people for this victory. We give their lives. There is a power that can annex you, and this disinformation, unfortunately, is proceeding very consistently now. Its only aim is to destroy us. As the previous announcers talked about, everything we can read, listen to, and everything we can see has Russian propaganda in it right now. As for the black-and-white difference, this is also a disinformation tool, but let us get to the important point. As for TikTok, Instagram and other entertaining social media tools, of course, there is an incredible amount of misinformation on them. They have been filled with propaganda in a tremendous way. When it comes to the news, starting from official news to music and cinema, we can see propaganda everywhere, even in an entertaining way. Political propaganda, social propaganda, and even in history, we can observe propaganda tools. Because they think about how to win this big war, and they use these tools.



Assoc. Prof. Şuay Nilhan Açıkalın:

Thanks to the audience and, once again, distinguished speakers. Thank you very much.



More Effective Citizen Communication: Data and Insights

STRATCOM SESSION - 3





December 2, 2022

More Effective Citizen Communication: Data and Insights



Panel Video



Speakers



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Deputy Editor-in-Chief,
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Carlotta Alfonsi

Policy Analyst, Open and
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Chiara Varazzani

OPSI and OECD Chief Behavioral
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Tom Moylan

Researcher at the Brussels
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the European Commission



Eugene Farrelly

Deputy Director of the Irish
Government Intelligence
Service

**Mehmet Çelik:**

Good afternoon, everybody. That was a indeed an informational and interesting session and the word uncertainty was at the center and you know, combined with the words misinformation and disinformation and how to fight these challenges we are facing in the 21st century and in the year 2022. So about 100 years ago, the world faced a deadly influenza pandemic. That many call it the Spanish flu. About a million, about 50 million people, died at the time, and the communication when it comes to health conditions across the communities was done through telephone, radios, posts and print media. Now, 100 years later, we have the COVID-19 pandemic. In the age of WhatsApp, Zoom, FaceTime and like software and also now we have even the worse which is the metaphors we are at the age of artificial intelligence and now this is also of course you know doubled and combined with the nearly 7 billion mobile phones in

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our pockets worldwide. Communication has indeed been so influential for both citizens, but at the same time, states and governments as well.

Now I remember when former U.S. President Donald Trump was elected, I was at a press event where an American diplomat had said we have now entered the age of uncertainty. I don't think she was referring to the pandemic times, which is, you know, indeed has brought many uncertainties to different rooms in our society and communication is one of these. Both at the citizen level but also at the government and state level. Of course, this has you know, the speed and the advancement in technology and communication technologies, you know, billions flocked to social media to share anything they like basically at this time. Now this has become a challenge for citizens, but of course, certainly it is also a challenge for States and governments too, because they are dealing with this through their policies and through their strategic communications. Be it in health, education and most importantly, also security as well. Carlotta, I would like to start with you. I know all my speakers have presentations, but I would like to pose a question which you can answer throughout your presentations in the first half and on the last 20 minutes we can have an open floor for more of a conversation about what we have discussed in the previous session. Now we talk about our you know, when it comes to your presentation, it is citizen centered public communication. What does citizen-centered public communication mean to you and what are the some of the main barriers to achieving this at present?



Carlotta Alfonsi:

Thank you very much. A pleasure to be here. I think everyone can hear me, so I will get right into it. And that's a very important question to me and to the team that I work with at the OECD. So, I'm a policy analyst working in the Public Governance Directorate of the OECD. I specifically work in a division that we call open and native government. And this is about essentially harnessing innovation for the public sector to bring it closer to citizens and to make it more effective to channel their voices, their preferences into policy making, and ultimately produce better outcomes. I specifically work in the open government team. Open government means transparency, accountability, integrity, stakeholder participation. And this is where communication has a lot to bring and where the potential of this government function can really help advance things. That said, we've been doing some research for a few years now and I'm sharing here some insights from one of the recent papers, which looks a little bit at how innovation is supporting this transition to a more citizen centered communication and in particular the central role that data and insights have for this. So, I will get to a little bit of background. If we take a step back, at the OECD, we have distilled a little bit the role of public communication in three key dimensions and they have to do with building an informed citizenship. A citizen that is empowered to voice opinions and develop opinions. As we know, this is not as straightforward as you mentioned. Then it is about supporting policy, policy design and its implementation. And finally, about establishing a dialogue that can help rebuild public trust. So, innovation was the premise of this paper that we developed on the research that we started and we saw that the bar for what effective public communication is was raised during the COVID-19 pandemic so. Here on the slide, you have what we found were the three key attributes that affected public communication had during the pandemic.

You have inclusive communication, which really has to do with the fact that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to how you communicate. You have to really tailor it and make it relevant to the widest possible public and really move beyond the mainstream with very diversified approaches. Then you have responsive communication, which is kind of about taking a driven approach to communication and listening to the public and acting on what you know and learn. Then finally, compelling communication, which is it is an imperative nowadays because you need to have content and messages that stand out in a crowded and often contested environment. And here is where insights from behavioral science, for example, are so crucial. And this is something that Chiara will elaborate further on. So, with this stage set, I'll talk about a little bit of what we found. So, the COVID-19 response and because of the scale and nature of the pandemic was quite singular and communication took a pivotal role in addressing the challenges that were emerging, whether at the stage of the outbreak or during the vaccination drive, for example. And this is where we saw a lot of new ideas and or existing ideas being adapted and deployed at larger scale by governments, it's really been an accelerator for the innovation and the function. With this, we saw three main trends internationally in how governments adjusted their communication. The first is how data became a catalyst for more precise and specific evidence-based communication. Data was the factor that allowed governments to really know what content to put out, what

messages to use, what was working, what wasn't. And in the bigger picture, it's actually unlocking this possibility for a more tailor-made personalized approach to communicating rather than the mass communication that for example happened when mainstream media or traditional media was dominant. Then it also allows this kind of large scale listening so that it really makes for the two-way dialogical communication that is more conducive to having a better outcome for effectiveness, for policy implementation and for really connecting with citizens. This is also opening the door to automation and transformation that cut down to like the everyday tactics and practices that are used to communicate with the public. The second trend has to do with a little bit of realization by many governments and institutions of the limitations that their channels have for communicating, especially in the context where trust is low and the environment is contested. And so, we've seen a reliance on 3rd party messengers and this has to do with influencers, for example, we know social media influencers have been very big in recent campaigns, but also at a more granular level, community members that have a profile and a platform to reach audiences that are more marginalized, vulnerable, that have different levels of trust in institutions and government. Or for whom simply the mainstream content doesn't resonate with them. So, this is an important transformation and I think I would like to say it also speaks to a bigger change or shift that we might be seeing in this space which has to do with the fact that there's many and diversified sources of information and the traditional gatekeepers are losing their relative importance perhaps, and especially when you break down different audience groups. And so, you have a situation where top-down communication and perhaps even two-way communication is not necessarily enough and you need to build a more networked approach to how you do it you need to build coalitions and you need to earn your reach by widening your bases and breaking down and it's more collaborative and requires a little bit of a of a legwork at the base, I guess. But I'd be happy to discuss this later if there's time. And then the last trend that we spotted which is a very prevalent one and of course behavioral insights is not new to communication but during the pandemic whether on the communication from under the policy, it was kind of a common denominator of understanding how to get people to keep safe and follow the right information. So, we definitely saw a big growth in its use in communication and interestingly, not just in nudging or motivating certain behavior changes, but also taking an approach to understanding how people think, how to consume content, what they retain, what they overlook the information overload that they were exposed to. And this is being pivotal, especially when you think about the responses to missing disinformation and what interventions such as debunking or pre-bunking have been deployed and tested, which are really grounded in this psychological behavioral aspect of understanding public. So, these are the three kinds of big trends that we thought were innovating a little bit how communication was conducted, they were making it more responsive, inclusive and compelling. But also, the common factor to all of them is that they really rely on insights and knowledge and they're really data-driven. It is the core of what makes them work. I will close with a bit of a parenthesis on what needs to be done, because of course we know that this is all very excellent, but governments around the world need to build the capability to do this, and I think some are some ways ahead, others are still working to implement this and from our research there emerged three main institutional prerequ-

isites, which is what countries will need to invest in if they are thinking of reforming the function, to really bring out this this effect. And so, the first is building an agile function. So, innovation in itself is important and you need to have the culture that enables this across your team. But also, there's a need across the board, I would say for really upgrading the mandate for communication with the focus on this inclusiveness and the responsiveness that are perhaps a little bit ahead of when the function was originally regulated and conceit. The second is to rethink the skills and the profiles of communication teams. We know for example in the United Kingdom there's an ongoing reform which has this as a core pillar of the changes, but you have a more specialized and even more multidisciplinary function that requires bringing in new skills and capabilities. I wanted to say just on this topic of skills and professionalization, this is something that the OECD has launched a new initiative on. We are working to build with a community of communication practitioners. A public communication network which serves as a platform for exchanging and learning among peers and to bring in all those emerging practices and lessons that every country is experiencing at the same time. And so, forums like this are obviously very important to advancing the function and the work of communicators. And than the last point and I'll close is that obviously technology and data can have very harmful applications or even miss applications that are unintentional and we've seen in this research that the ethical standards tend not to be up to speed or prescriptive enough when it comes to some of the newer aspects of communication to do with artificial intelligence, to do with data privacy, sponsored content, etcetera. So, this ethical, standards are an important prerequisite to really harnessing well the innovations that we've looked at. Thank you very much.



Mehmet Çelik:

Thank you. You know, COVID shifted everyone out of their comfort zone, I think, and that includes the government on policy formation and reformation and reorganizing themselves, but also the citizens as well. Now you talked about that networked approach and I think that was important because there is also the concepts of transparency and accountability and the open government concepts. And when it comes to policy design, you're dealing with huge sets of data, behavioral data, which belongs to citizens at the end of the day. I think that sense of or that notion of privacy is also important as you mentioned then the ethical standards. We will now move on to Chiara Varazzani. What kind of research approaches and capabilities are needed for institutions looking to design behavioral intervention against misinformation and disinformation?

**Chiara Varazzani:**

Thank you so much for a great question. And it's an easy one in a way, because we just released a guide to apply behavioral science in an ethical way to public policy. But I won't talk too much about that. I will focus my presentation more on the misinformation experiment just to provide

enough time to the other speakers as well. And so, what I would like to do today with you is to explain to you a little bit why behavioral science is important for strategic communication. I will tell you a little bit about what we're doing at the OECD in this space.

Finally, I will share with you some experimental data from an experiment with it with Canada and France. So why are behavioral insights important for public communication and strategic communication? When you think about it, most of today's challenges involve human behavior in one way or another. It could be about the amount of energy consumed or if you decide to go vote at an election or a referendum, or if you decide to share misinformation online or not, we know that. However, we often still assume an unrealistic model of human behavior. What does this mean? Maybe some of you are familiar with the theory of dual processes in our brain, which basically is about having two different systems in our brain, one fast system and one slow system. We all have these two systems and one is very automatic and intuitive and the other one is analytic and very deliberative. And so, why I'm telling you this is because when you think about it the way in which must have traditional communication and strategic comes certainly not by the people in this room but I'm talking generally here mostly to the traditional communication is designed for the system for a system in our brain that we rarely use and the reality is that most of the time our brain goes automatically in system one making very intuitive and quick decisions and very often these decisions are biased. In behavioral science, we use empirical data to hopefully design communications that are more fitted for humans. In this space, we basically do three things. We convene, we enable, and we advise. I do not want to spend too much about it, but it is exactly as Carlotta mentioned. We combine a lot of experts in this field. We have more than 100 behavioral experts from 46 governments. And we also provide advice on specific policy issues to governments. And this is what I would like to share with you today. This is a report we just launched a couple of weeks ago and you can scan it on the QR code here. And it was really an international effort to try and understand why people share fake news online and if there's anything that we can do about it. So why we did this? Well, I think this conference is all about it. We know that new digital technologies and information ecosystems really enable a growth of misinformation and disinformation online. The fact the human lens here is that we know that the spread of fake news online is very much linked to individual choices. If we fail to understand why people share misinformation, there is a risk to basically come up with communication strategies and policies that won't work in the end. So, we wanted to both understand the cognitive factors influencing the decisions of people, but also try to understand how information ecosystems influence our behavior, with the objective to hopefully better design and deliver communications to try to tackle misinformation. So, misinformation is a global challenge.

Fake news does not know any borders of course; they do not stop all day in Türkiye for example. Knowing that we started an international partnership, we tried to put countries together to collaborate together to co-design and test together the same solutions at the same time. We collaborated

with the Canadian government in the Privy Council Office and with the Minister la fonction publiques in France. Basically, what we did is we did the this first cross-border collaborations having three objectives. One; better understand why people share misinformation on social media. Number two; evaluate the impact of a couple of behavioral interventions on choices to share fake news and lastly starting to co-develop a set of best practices to reform policies against misinformation.



When we did this there was this very famous nature paper, a long story short basically, this group of famous researchers highlighted that one of the reasons why people share fake news us online is because they are distracted. Because they are not paying enough attention. They discovered that by providing a little bit of an accuracy, prompt people were sharing less fake news. With this in mind, we tested two different things online to boost attention of people before they engage with news online. One was accuracy evaluation match. We will ask people to rate the through truthiness or the accuracy of a piece of news and then they will see fake news. The other one was a digital media literacy tips list. This is something the people were saying something similar to this. So very quick tips, something like investigating the source or watching for unusual formatting; quick

tips to recognize fake news online. It was an experiment called a randomized control trial where you have a bunch of people, almost 2000 people and they all saw seven pieces of fake news and seven true news. And we divided them in several groups. Two groups where the treatment that I just showed you and then we had a control group to see the effect and then we will ask them: Do you believe this? And to what extent you would like to share these on fake on social media. The first thing that we found that I think it is important to share is that people were of course more likely to believe true news than fake news. This is expected. However, we also found that the differences in intention to share fake news were four times smaller compared to the difference in accuracy beliefs. What does it mean? It means that some, actually a lot of people, may share fake news even if they don't believe fake news to be true. Believing in fake news, it is not the same as sharing fake news. There's something here that I think as governments, we should pay attention to. The second thing so these are I am showing the results from the experiment, so I will show the effects of our interventions. These are the results and you can see that the tips that I just showed to you reduce the intention of sharing fake news by 21%, so the people who saw those messages were 21% less likely to share fake news online. This is massive because it is quite a simple intervention. So, we were very pleased with this and this is the main thing that we found and the cost of doing this is basically nothing. Now the other thing I wanted to know is also why people share misinformation and who are these people. For the sake of time, I will just show you this briefly. The hypothesis was that showing fake news was connected to how much people trusted us. Different things, social media, government, etcetera. Also, to some psychological or cognitive factors such as conspiracy mentality openness to evidence and bunch of different things. Therefore, we basically identify three groups of people, people who don't trust anybody. They are the greenish people there. People who trust more or less everybody, the pink group, that you see there, people who trust institutions mostly, and not so much social media, the gold group that you see on the cluster. We thought that these cognitive factors will influence how much people believe and share fake news, and that is exactly what we found. The people who are non-trusting or trust a lot social media were more likely to believe and share fake news, while the people who trusted institutions were less likely to share fake news. Now, a summary of findings.

First, we found that some individuals may share fake news even if they don't believe in in fake news. Second, the tips on digital media literacy had the greatest impact on intentions to share fake news. And lastly, those differences in trust and information consumption shape our beliefs and likelihood of sharing fake news online. I have 3 messages and then I will close. One, do not ignore the human factor. If anything did these results would show you that taking into account how people think their cognitive abilities factors, etcetera, is something that really as communicators, we all should take into account when we want to tackle misinformation. Second thing this experiment did not touch the content of the news at all. It is not about deciding what is true and what is not true. It is about empowering people and building resilience in online users so they can recognize misinformation by themselves. I do not think it is our role to decide what is true and what

is not true, because everything is relative. Therefore, I think it is important to stress this that it is not about the content but it is about the people. Lastly, something that I am very passionate about is to put governments together to co design and test things because it is impossible for only one government to try to defy and tackle misinformation by themselves. With this, I thank you very much.

Mehmet Çelik:

You mentioned the citizens' digital media literacy. I think that is a huge thing even for journalists themselves because you know, at a time when things are evolving at a speed of seconds, fact checking is a huge obstacle since you fight against time. Even for journalists, that is a huge labor laden issue, which many times people tend to forget or ignore for their comfort. Moreover, you said this information knows no border. I think that is also huge and why citizens tend to fall for this disinformation or what triggers them. These were some of the interesting takeaways for me. So, thank you. Tom, what do we do with all this data? How do we analyze this? From the steps that I take to come here that are recorded on my cell phone to my medical records, the governments would be all sorts of data from these two, you know the tweets that we share on social media. What are some of the ethical challenges with the emergence of these new technologies and behavioral insight for communicators in government?

Tom Moylan:

It is a big question. I should say first, I very much appreciate the invitation here today, particularly because recently I became much less important than I used to be. I just changed jobs. Thank you. But I also noticed that I have slightly less fancy shoes than everyone else up here. I want to share more of an experience rather than just talk about it generally because I want to share an experience from my previous job. I used to work in the European Commission. One of the things I miss very much is access to a huge amount of wonderful, interesting data. Well, first, to give you a little context, I want to tell you about one of the most interesting communication exercises that we embark upon, which is the state of the European Union. The state of the European Union is a speech. Somewhat inspired by the State of the Union and the United States. The idea is that the President of the Commission addresses everyone in the European Union, but also beyond at the same time to kind of map out future policy priorities and reflect on the previous year. It is interesting for me as a communicator because what you essentially have is everybody is being communicated across the whole European Union who I was concerned with communicating with. We are using all of our platforms and we are using all of our tools. And at the centrally means that the same topics, the same themes are dropped all across the continent all at the same time, which gives a unique opportunity to reflect on the data that's coming in. And we have all sorts of data. I have made a little list for myself so I think so I would not forget anything but we have things like political reporting. We have media monitoring, seeing how things are taking off in papers and in media across the continent. We also have social media data and we have web data, we have polling, we have broadcast data. Anyway, there is a lot of data. My job in that context was to receive all of the reports from

all of these different people and to try and make sense of them, which ruins my life for a couple weeks at a time, for a couple of weeks every year. So, I tell my wife that I wasn't coming home for a while and then I'd lock myself in the office and I'd sweat and I'd read and I'd try to make sense of everything and what I would essentially look at was a series of different things.



First of all, look at how our communications were performing. I compare it to last year and I would see what and where we were doing better, where we were doing worse. I would also look at the kind of political mood and the reception of the different themes; how they landed, how different people were talking about them. Then I would look at the dynamics of those conversations so we would be in situations where you would have like climate because we were dealing with such a diverse. Our audience or so many such diverse audiences, the conversation, if you were talking climate in Sweden, you were talking about forestry and the economy, but if you were talking about climate in Greece, you were talking about forest fires and water quality. It is a lot, it was a lot of reflection on how the dynamics of the conversations that we are going so we could kind of inform our communicators as they moved. However, it was not just about our own. It was not just a kind of an inward-looking thing. It was also an outward looking thing. I want to share an example from the stage of the European Union 2020; it is just an interesting example of how we learned one interesting thing about one specific audience that we communicated to. When the data came back, they were like the same topics were resonating all across Europe if they were climate, health and not

surprising because it was late 2020, far in affairs and the economy and the same dynamic would emerge all the time, which was that the topics would take on lives of their own and transform and be discussed in different ways, and that held across most of our channels, but not all of them. We had broadcast news, across written media, across web clicks, across a whole bunch of different areas; it was just the same. We were getting a lot of the same. Even in our political reports, we were getting the same themes coming up. However, social media was different. One of the top themes in about 13 or 14 countries on social media was LGBTQI rights. There was one mention which was a relatively short mention in the speech of LGBTQI rights and across a number of countries on social media this became like a hot topic. The question we had to ask was why this is one of the good or interesting things about having a big pile of data. You do not always come to it and ask questions. Sometimes you walk up to a big pile of data and you poke it until a question falls out. Then we were asking, "Why?" We kind of had several different ideas about why this might have been. Was it because we were soft, squishy cosmopolitans and our audiences on social media liked this type of topic and it resonated with them? But then when we dug in and looked at the details, that was not true. Because it was not always a positive conversation. It was in fact, there were people debating all sorts of different aspects of the mention in the speech. It was not that. Then we had to ask ourselves, was it because it was on social media? We have a younger audience and this is a particularly away to reach young people. Again, the answer was no, because once we dug into the data, it was because or we discovered that it was not just young people discussing it; it was people of all ages.

It was also a lot of interest groups, a lot of NGOs, a lot of different types of organizations. It was not any of those and we had to throw a lot of our presumptions out the window when we looked at that. I want to share the answer to that question that I thought was most convincing to me, as the speaker from Malaysia earlier mentioned, is that a lot of the time, when you come and present data, you can't come in and just present hard facts and say this is the answer. Because ultimately, it's probably challengeable in some ways but the one I found most convincing was that social media is more of a natural outlet for people who have an interest in these topics and themes because they do not necessarily have access to the standard halls of power. They do not have access to newspaper editorial rooms. They do not have access to TV studios. They do not have access to the halls of power. Instead, they overcorrect towards social media because social media also has gatekeepers, much like other media. These gatekeepers are algorithms and they discriminate in different ways. However, accessing a platform on them is easier. Therefore, what do we learn from this? What we learned was that in the medium, long term, we learned what type of messages resonated on different platforms with our audiences. We learned about the nature of our audiences on a different platform, on a specific platform, a specific channel. Then we learned the value of chewing over data and taking quite a long time to reflect upon those things. I also fully recognized that I did not necessarily answer your question directly or at all in some parts, but I had a story I wanted to tell, so I just went for it. I hope that is OK.

Mehmet Çelik:

I think that was quite interesting. This story you shared about all the sets of data you mentioned about all these sets of data where you would say, "I'm not going to be home for a while" to your wife. I think data enables valuable predictions and social media as you mentioned, you know gave us some of the unpredictable insights. And I think that perhaps maybe because it is also a platform where many feel more comfortable sharing their stories or engaging in some sort of discussion on topics where they wouldn't otherwise discuss in a personal conversation. I think social media provides that for the average citizen. This could be dangerous sometimes. We talked about misinformation and disinformation. It is of course valuable and surprises us as you mentioned. Eugene, Tom talked about all these datasets that he would analyze to seek some of the questions or find out some answers when it comes to audience insights. It is almost impossible to make some sort of communication analysis and generate related policies when it comes to the governments or institutions. What are some strategic tools out there where this database inside can become valuable? Maybe you would like to elaborate on the Irish example for that.

Eugene Farrelly:

Thanks very much. I should say thanks a million to the organizers of the event. I know from bitter experience how much work goes into organizing these things. I appreciate all the work that is gone in behind this and it is fantastic. Thanks to everybody for really interesting presentations earlier on today. I will try to answer at least some of your question with reference to the Irish example. I work in the Government Information Service, which resides in the Department of the Taoiseach, which is the Irish Prime Minister's office, but on the institutional side. I was very pleased to hear a presenter earlier empathizing with the stress of institutional and communications because that is not always recognized but it exists.

Talking about COVID, and you're probably all groaning. Not another COVID presentation, because we have all heard an awful lot of them over the last while. We also, if you are like me, working in government communications, have been talking about COVID probably every day for the guts of three years. We have moved on a little bit, the world has moved on into another global or a series of global crises. I think actually that makes this a good time to talk about COVID. The temptation, particularly in government communications, is just to roll straight into the next thing, we talked about reactive, and trying to be strategic and being strategic, I think means taking a pause, taking a step back and trying to learn some lessons from what we have just been through. It might sound strange to say it, but actually some of COVID was positive. There were positive things to it, certainly in the realm of communications, which is all I could speak to but I know across the board there are positive things to take from this. We spoke earlier; COVID has enhanced a lot of what we have been trying to do over the years. This is better connection and better communication with citizens, certainly in Ireland. Something we've tried to do from an institutional perspective is to improve how we communicate with citizens. Those reforms have been ongoing for the last number of years. At a relatively slow pace. Because we thought, we had time. Then COVID arrived and we realized that we do not have time and we have to do this now. What it did was it sort of validated for want of a better word, some of the things we put in place, some of the things that we thought

were important and we are working towards. Some of the communications output, for example during COVID, is to have a recognizable identity for government, and we talked about better connecting with citizens. You cannot connect with citizens if they do not recognize when you are actually speaking to them as a state. I do not mean in terms of the political government, I mean the wider government. We introduced I do not like using the word brand and unified identity, visual identity for government. If we had not had this when COVID arrived, we would have had to invent it, because there was such a demand for official information, for authoritative information. We did this through many ways, but advertising is one, which worked well for us. And this is just an example. There are many different agencies within the state represented on the screen here, including ourselves in the center. They are all working to a unified identity. They are all easily recognizable as information from the government. There's been quite a lot of sorts of I won't say negativity but you know crisis and things are looking sort of grim at times, but there are positives to take from things we've been going through. So, I'm going to focus on two specific examples that I hope will sort of pick up on some of the things my colleagues have been speaking about already today. One in particular that Carlotta mentioned was targeted communications towards your audience. Anyone working in government communications will probably recognize this problem.



At a certain stage, we found ourselves saying, "We need to communicate with young people." How do we communicate with young people? They are ignoring us. They are ignoring our messages. They do not care about COVID, not worried about it. It is not going to affect them as much. Therefore, we are all sitting around saying "how do we do this?" The people sitting around were people like me wearing a suit and gray in their hair. There were no young people in the room. Someone had the

brain wave. Well, let us ask them. Ask them what they think. Ask them what they want to hear. Ask them what would work for them. Therefore, we did. We gathered as many representative groups as we could. They had all been doing research. We looked at their research. We went in with the expectations that young people did not care. What the engagement did for us was that it confounded those expectations. We found that young people did care, young people were struggling, really struggling. They were not seeing themselves in the official communications. It was not that they were ignoring them, they just were not relating to them. They did not feel any empathy from everybody else towards them. The only time young people appeared in the media was around a negative story; if they had all gathered somewhere. There is a particularly high-profile case of young people drinking in the streets and flouting the rules. They are the only times that young people appeared in the news media or in any kind of communications. The temptation I spoke to somebody earlier about this, the temptation is to wag the finger to say, "These are the rules, you need to obey the rules and this is why." What they wanted to hear from us was their concerns reflected back to them. They wanted positive reinforcement of good behaviors. They did not want the finger wags, they just wanted it explained in a way that they could understand, on channels that they used, and what was really important was they wanted to recognize themselves in it. We put together a campaign. It was an antiviral campaign created by young people on their channels for them. That was a big leap for us because we are used to controlling the communications we put out. When we would see the content, it might make us a little bit nervous and uncomfortable, because it is not the kind of thing normally we would say is good. We will do that on our channels. We have to understand that this is native to their channels. This resonated with them and we ran this. There are a couple of iterations and it was certainly our most successful campaign.

I talk about impressions and reach and engagement and so forth, which are all good in their own right. However, they are not the real metric. The real metric is the impact of your work in actuality. And we did find, and I'm not claiming credit for this, just for the communications because it's too complex, we operate in a suite of interventions that people are reacting to, but certainly when case numbers, for example in COVID, went up, it was always the young people. That went up first. But then conversely, when they started to come down, we found certainly after running this, the numbers did start to come down. We could see the impact of whatever we were doing. The real takeaway of it from this, -and I think this applies to all kinds of minority groups- is about going beyond the data and we talked about the human aspect and it's about that sort of age-old technique of listening. Particularly in a crisis, the instinct is to communicate and communicate and communicate, but sometimes that involves not saying anything and listening and listening. To what? Our audiences trying to understand what they are actually hearing from us because the messages we think we are putting out quite often are not the messages that are being received. The only way to understand that is to interact, to engage with citizens.

Certainly, one of the things that our policy colleagues have started understanding following COVID is that need for engagement and the need for communications to be wrapped up in the whole

process, not just something at the end of the process. We talked about data and bunches of data on everything and anything. We are polling around opinions and attitudes. However, for much of our time in COVID, our biggest defense was actually people's behavior before vaccines. The only way of preventing the spread was through behavior, but we were not assessing behavior. We were not trying to measure behavior. We are asking for opinions. So, are you obeying the rules? Yes, I am obeying the rules instead of saying, "What are you doing? Did you wear a mask when you were there? Did you meet people nearby? Did you shake hands with somebody when you were there? With our Economic and Social Research Institute, we devised a survey to try to measure in some way that behavior. And that again, and I think this is the thing about research and behavioral insights, it's about confounding expectations. There was a presumption at one stage that people were fed up with restrictions and so they were not complying with restrictions. This behavioral research found that yes, people were fed up with restrictions, but that was not predicting or driving behavior. Other things were driving behavior. Coherence of restrictions was driving behavior. The more incoherent people found restrictions, the less they complied. That is a boon to people and communications because that is something we can fix, that is something we can work on. We can improve our communications to really emphasize why we are doing what we are doing, to make sure that those restrictions are coherent and that we communicate regularly. We took this one, for example and really built a communication strategy around it. You can see the nice sort of level bit in the middle of that graph there. That was the sort of most successful period of that when we had a really clear, concise message that we can communicate, people found restrictions coherence during that period of time and the numbers. All the metrics measuring the spread of the transmission levelled off and fell during that period of the time; so it was a real clear demonstration of how those behavioral insights helped us devise a communication strategy and how that had an impact on the ground. Finally, I just want to leave us with a quote from our colleagues in the UK. As I talked about the positive take from COVID and I think it is one of the reasons why the four of us are here for example and why we're doing this work with the OECD, with our policy colleagues in the OECD. This is being more widely recognized because of COVID that communications are another lever for government alongside legislation, regulation and taxation. Communications should be part of the whole process of policymaking, not just a press release at the end of it. If anybody has been to communications conferences over the years, you will have heard people like me go on and on about this. I think actually people are starting to recognize this as a result of COVID. And with that, I'm done. Thank you very much.

Mehmet Çelik:

Thank you. Thank you, Eugene. I think traditionally or even in the age of AI that human factor has always played a great role in communications and you said, "Let us talk to them." I think that is something that is often ignored due to the top-down strategies built in the offices with the men with gray hair. I think that is impactful from what I can understand. Now we have about 10 minutes. I would like to allocate about a minute each for some key messages and then the remaining 5 minutes we can take some questions from the audience. If that is OK with you and Carlotta, I would like to

go back to you and maybe I would like to initiate that last message with a question. You know, often that political communication is mixed with the public communication, the governments that deliver political communication, but at the same time, the public communication comes from the politicians very often as well. At time of crisis what would be some of the strategies that states should employ to make that differentiation so that the messages are clear to the public? Thank you.

Carlotta Alfonsi:

I think the policy is the policy of the government and the messenger, or the person conveying it, obviously needs to amplify a core message. What COVID demonstrated is that there is not a single messenger, and a single messenger is not going to go very far, even if it is the President, the Pope, or any other top figure. There is a grassroots leader, people that have a standing in their communities, who are influential with young people. It really comes down to that, you have to have acquire all voices. Increasingly I would say the important thing is to earn this following and this collaborative willingness from the groups in society that you need to engage to deliver the policies for their impact. I would say that's the big take away.

Mehmet Çelik:

Thank you and Chiara, we can take your message.

Chiara Varazzani:

Just very, very briefly, I think if I had to choose only one message for this crowd, it would be don't assume that communication itself is enough to change people's behavior. This is my technical side speaking here and I think that in all our presentations we showed you that it is not because you are telling something that it is enough for people to change their behavior. In the misinformation study, we saw, for example people still share misinformation, even if they do not believe them to be true. So do not focus on that intention action gap, and focus also on changing people's behavior, not only on communicating information.

Mehmet Çelik:

I think behavior and understanding the behavior is key to from what you are telling me. Tom, you know the data sets and the behavior. How do we connect the two if you could?

Tom Moylan:

Not too easy, but I think it actually is also sort of linked a little bit to your ethics question from before, because I've been thinking about that while I've been sitting here and feeling guilty about the fact that I didn't answer it. I think that the same goes for kind of connecting what we learned to behavior. It is also a theme that I have seen emerge among all of the speakers here, which is that. We do not communicate for fun. We do it to achieve specific things and we should use the data in a way that we achieve those things. As I come from the field of public communications and whenever I'm wondering about how one should apply this data, whenever I'm wondering about

whether it's a good idea or ethical to apply it in this way, I kind of take a step back and ask myself what my role as a public communicator is, and what my objective here is. I ask myself what I am trying to achieve and if there is a list that I could run off to provide high quality information to facilitate debates. We act to make government transparent and to share the best quality information to equip people. Incidentally, one of the reasons why this misinformation is a threat is because it removes people's ability to make high quality choices to make informed decisions. In addition, we try to cultivate trust and create trusting environments because again, if you want people to follow, say COVID measures, you need them to trust you. That is why we cultivate trust in governance and one of the ways we do that is by providing this high-quality information. Ultimately, it's about we come back to and I think something a lot of people can relate to here is we do have to sell our policies but also a lot of the time we are public communicators so we're not politicians who are ultimately responsible for rolling out the policies and proposing the policies. A lot of the time, I think we should focus on supporting these policy goals and showing that we are doing them in the best way possible. Ultimately, we should always ask ourselves what we are trying to get people to stand up and do after this. What is the most efficient way to do that? Or what problem am I solving with this piece of communication? I think keeping focused around one's role is very helpful for making sense and using data in the correct way.



Mehmet Çelik:

Thank you very much. Eugene, Tom talked about cultivating trust, particularly in policymaking and delivering that policy. If I could take maybe a few key messages. For the next two minutes.

Eugene Farrelly:

Yes, it is an interesting question actually. The OECD has a recent survey demonstrating just how low trust is in institutions. I think that was 2021 that survey was taken in. Getting the tail end of still a bit of a COVID bounce. I think if you did it now, it might even be lower again in terms of trust in institutions. For me it is not an easy question because as I think we saw earlier, it has been declining for quite a while. Engagement is key, though, and it is difficult, it takes time. We do not often have time, but it is hard for people to trust institutions that they cannot relate to or they cannot see. It is really important to engage with citizens and that means politicians understand this better that in institutions it means a bit of face-to-face communication. It means talking to people, listening to them, asking them. It is not enough just to talk to them. We need to ask them. We need to ask them how they are receiving our messages and to understand what they are receiving. When we broadcast the most important messages to us; that is not necessarily what they are looking for. One lesson from COVID is that governments have faced with lobby groups, with many noisy, loud voices in the media, which do not always reflect what the public actually thinks and what the citizens are actually concerned with. I think that difficult tricky thing of engaging with citizens and asking and talking to them is the one real key take away. I said I do not have an easy answer to how you achieve that regularly and consistently. It is expensive at the time, it is time consuming, but and I certainly would be interested in people's views on that.

Mehmet Çelik:

Thank you very much. There is a quote, which says that oftentimes people think that they are communicating but what they do is actually take time and take turns in talking rather than engaging in active listening. I think the same goes for the governments to citizens as well. I would like to thank the audience and of course my distinguished speakers and the organizers for such a great event. I think we may have time for a couple questions, Alican, if that is OK with you.

Audience:

Hi. My question is for Carlotta. Is there any way to make social media ethical? Is there any way that social media can distinguish truth and disinformation data? Its aim has been to keep their users online, not to educate them. Since they are using our behavioral surplus thanks to human mining as indicated in the age of surveillance capitalism and the American court has indicated that, it is matter of security, not privacy due to 9/11. What is the way to make social media ethical?

Carlotta Alfonsi:

This is a very big question that a lot of people are tackling with, because there is no obvious answer. What makes social media appealing to people is this open space where information can be shared and anyone can have a voice in a platform. In fact, everyone having a voice in a platform can sometimes be problematic. The social media companies ultimately are commercial enterprises. They have values. They are trying to make changes that they see compatible with

their commercial ends and the social implications of their work. But it really comes down to governments to regulate them. This is a bigger question and one that touches into some of the interest values of democracy. I think we're not seeing the type of solutions and the speed of solutions that we expect from them and that's why interventions that are grounded in communication or behavioral interventions or other types of work from increasing media literacy and social resilience, you know this breadth of work that is happening across different disciplines and policy areas, is part of building a solution in an environment where social media will likely continue to be imperfect and people themselves will continue to be imperfect. I would say disinformation and misinformation have existed before social media and I do not think we will necessarily ever get rid of it. It is more how we stand up to it as societies and how we sort of uphold certain values and resilience and education that will make the biggest difference at the end of the day because technology will find a way of tangling itself out of the regulation and the boundaries that we put up. Thank you.

**Mehmet Çelik:**

We have one more question.

Audience:

Hello, welcome to Türkiye. There are companies in Türkiye that work day and night to verify or refute the news. For example, teyit.org is a company that I find very successful in this context. I am also a journalist. I think and know that there are companies with different names in different countries. What do you think about these organizations? My second question is what do you think about what governments can do in terms of encouraging this, and what they can do? Thank you.

Eugene Farrelly:

I mean it is only positive. In Ireland, we have many different media outlets, all of whom engage in fact checking, some specialized in it. It is only healthy the more, the more people doing it, the more beneficial to society in general. I do not think there is anything negative about it and the more you encourage that kind of thing... I mean, as a former press officer it is not always the easiest thing in the world to deal with fact checking journalists contacting you but it is a healthy way. It can only be healthy, I think.

**Tom Moylan:**

I just wanted to add as well that fact checking, absolutely, is a huge and very important part of the process, but it's not the only part of the process as well, because ultimately a very nice way I had someone describe misinformation to me once was 'like pollution'. I think it is better to put in work to cultivate high trust environments and educate people. Cultivating media literacy are incredibly important. Thank you. You have to consider it as part of a system of building stronger more reliable information and environments, I think.

Chiara Varazzani:

Can I just add very quickly? This is great that you are doing this and many of the efforts of the European Commission is on fact checking as well. However, just very quickly want to say that fact checking is not the only solution. Exactly as Tom said, for two main reasons in my humble opinion. One, some things are very hard to be checked, if ever impossible. Something that is true today

and true tomorrow may fall tomorrow. The second thing is that imagine that we removed all fake news from the online world tomorrow. Impossible, but imagine. Even in that situation, people, human beings will always share misinformation in one way or another. That is why; fact checking is far from being enough. OK? So please always think about holistic solutions, and not only about the content and the checking out the facts.

Tom Moylan:

I just want to throw in one last thing as well because indeed you have reminded me that the commission works a lot on fact checking. I remember reading some of our research that illustrated how sometimes fact checking or correcting misinformation or disinformation, especially if it is a smaller issue, can in fact spread the misinformation or reinforce the belief in it. It can actually ultimately end up part of the problem. Therefore, it is very important to choose the types of information that you deal with when you are working in this area, because for example, an institution or a news agency amplifying something by saying it is not true might accidentally get it to more people. On the kind of behavioral end, I remember reading that even seeing the information again, even in the context of fact checking, can reinforce the belief, so it can remind people of "Oh, Yes, I believe this," and that can back up. Therefore, it is a highly complex issue.

Eugene Farrelly:

Someone said earlier "you have to choose your battles" and I think that applies to that.

Mehmet Çelik:

Once again, I would like to thank the organizers and my distinguished speakers as well as the audience for their patience that we exceeded our time by 10 minutes and I think that is great. Thanks, Alican and Andrea for bearing with us. Thank you.



Media in the Post-Truth Age

STRATCOM SESSION - 4





December 2, 2022

Media in the Post-Truth Age



Panel Video



Speakers



Doğan Eşkinat

International Media Coordinator at
Directorate of Communications
Moderator



Borzou Daragahi

Journalist, The
Independent



Adasewa Josh

Broadcast
Journalist, TRT
World



Saadet Oruç

Chief Advisor to the
President of the Republic of
Türkiye

**Dođan Eřkinat:**

Welcome everyone. Thanks first of all to Gökhan and his team for their kind invitation. Thanks to our guests for making the trip here today in this beautiful weather. And thanks obviously for your patience because we all know how these events go and we appreciate your interest. Now. I do not want to take too much of your time, because it is already late. Let me introduce my guests. First, we have Saadet Oruđ, Chief Advisor to the President of Türkiye. She is originally a journalist. I am going to say once a journalist, always a journalist and we look forward to your contributions. Today we have Borzou Daragahi from The Independent. We have Adasewa Josh from TRT World, who is the host of Africa Matters. Welcome everyone.

04

Doğan Eşkinat:

Let me turn to Adasewa. Part of what we problematize is also race and sort of having Nonwestern voices in newsrooms and I want to ask you about that.

Adasewa Josh:

Thanks for having me here. I am going to start this conversation by just debunking a couple of words around journalism, media, and post truth. Listen, journalism is not media. Journalism is a profession. The needs are medium to disseminate the truth that it curates. When people look at me and call me, a media person actually sends my head spinning. I am a journalist. I am in the business of gathering, making sure I find the truth when I gather and presenting it in accordance with the expectations of my platform, which at the moment is television. Unfortunately, our profession is now pretty much at the mercy of the medium to which we disseminate. Print, which came first and then radio, which challenged print, and now television, which sent radio running. Why are we surprised that the digital media is giving us a run for our money and television? Every couple of centuries, like a hundred years, there is an improvement in technology that changes how people take, receive, understand the stories that we do. Now what is post truth? Post truth, is a circumstance where fact does not have the kind of influence it should have on public opinion. And whose fault is that? Listen, the truth about the truth is that it does not in and of itself have the capacity to be distorted, to be changed. However, the quality of truth that you get depends on who is telling it, what medium it is coming from to you.



As a journalist, my job is to make sure I curate the best of the truth, find a way to incorporate all of the sides so that when I am telling the story, you see your truth in my story. Let us say, for example, the lady right in front of me when you're looking at me, if you ask her what I'm what am I like? She is probably going to tell you the story from what she has seen. My nose, my face, my hair. Put someone right behind me. Tell them to tell you who I am. They are going to be describing something else. My job is to make sure that I incorporate all of the sides. Put it together and present it in a way that when you hear the story, there is a bit and there is a piece of the truth that you can connect with it. The reason why we are talking about post truth and blah blah blah right now is because we have become, we are now in the noodle face of news. You know, how many minutes does it take noodle to get noodle to get done? Noodle face of news where it is so fast, the sites that needed to be covered are now gone with it. I am going to speak to my race right now, for the longest time the West and still now has the biggest platform for international media. In most of our stories, black people have been wearing the raconteur of their own stories we did not have the funding with another platform, etc. However, that is changing. People are now smart enough to realize that if you want to hear about black people, you want to understand what is happening in the continent, it rather looks weird to see a white person telling that story to you. But that was the case for the longest time. Newsrooms are now opening up the opportunity to allow the people in those areas to tell their own story. What that does is that the nuances are not lost on you. There is a certain way that someone who is from a region will tell his or her story that would be outstanding from someone who just read it or has a friend who knows about it. The diversity in the newsroom would kind of say, I know some people just play to the paper and just play to the rules, but some people are actually doing it and I'm so happy to be in a newsroom that is also doing it. I picture your newsroom as all of these people together. When you run into the newsroom you can hear five different languages in one stretch. You hear someone speaking Farsi, someone speaking Australian English, someone speaking British English, someone speaking Kenyan or Swahili. What that does is it improves the quality of the stories that we tell. It lets when you open up that kind of station; people see bits and pieces of themselves in the way you present the news. It is not only smart in terms of how you make money; it is also how journalism should be done. I hope I kind of went round and tried to put together.

Doğan Eşkinat:

Thank you. Let me continue with Borzou Daragahi who has vast experience in conflict zones. I think as society we trust journalists to be honest and good curators to filter, not in the sense of censorship, but to filter and to help us distinguish the noise from the signal. I am interested in your take about citizen journalism, especially in sort of conflict zones or areas that may be less accessible to the conventional media.

Borzou Daragahi:

I would say that, first of all, citizen journalism is not an ideal situation. It has come about because journalists are under attack. Journalism is criminalized in many countries. I actually am a pillar of civil society and democracy, and I forget that when I'm in this part of the world, because we are so much under attack by governments, by companies, by people on social media, running troll farms and so on, basically depicting media and journalists as bad people who are negative and a threat. Let us go back to like for example, the war in Vietnam. There were journalists all over the country. Sometimes it was dangerous. As I have spoken over the years with correspondents who covered Vietnam and other wars in the previous eras, they would be on a trail or something and they would announce journalist, journalist, journalist, journalist, when they would see the men with guns. The men with guns would generally let them go if they could prove they were journalists. That pretty much ended. When did it end? It ended in the Bosnia war when people started targeting journalists, like literally if you wore a press logo on your flag jacket. That was actually the first war when people started using regularly body armor and getting armored cars and having all these security concerns. The danger actually started then. Now you have a situation where certain countries have become so dangerous, so restrictive, so risky for journalists that essentially, there is absolutely no other way to report on places like Syria, Iran, right now, Iraq, during the 2004/2005/2006/2007 when journalists were generally held up in Baghdad depending on their local correspondence on news and information about the country. Basically, citizen journalism is a product of that very sad situation and I just want to make a little plea to everyone here. It is something that we should all think about. Journalism at its best holds governments and people accountable, brings good things, benefits society and democracy, roots out endemic corruption, points out social ills and so on. At its worst, it is an annoyance to those in power. Journalists do not bring down governments. Chill out, relax about us. They do not bring about huge change and so on. We are not a threat. Strategic communication is probably the worst thing that has happened to journalism. It is this idea that we have whole departments and devote entire budgets to manipulating and controlling journalists who are just trying to get good stories out that people read, trying to bring some measure of accountability to the worst, most corrupt aspects of governance and power, possibly just entertaining people and titillating them and so on at the most basic levels, pointing out social ills like child abuse and, in some countries, abuses against minorities, women and so on. This is the most that we do. Do not be afraid of us. We are good for you unless you are such a bad government and have so much to hide and do so many terrible things that you cannot even tolerate the smallest little element of truth. Let us in, work with us. Give us access. If you are going on a military operation somewhere, bring us along. We are not going to compromise the military operation; we will report on it and humanize the participants and so on. Anyway, that is my little plea. Let us give up strategic communications and just accept journalism, journalists as an important, and an inherently crucial part of civil society and our democratic aspirations.

**Doğan Eşkinat:**

Thank you very much. I will let my colleagues know Gökhan stepped out, but I will let them know. I think it is mostly companies to be honest. But you know I get that, I think that's just clash between the public interest versus the vested interests, and sort of the media being reduced to spreading information as opposed to reporting. I think it is an important issue. Let me turn to Saadet Oruç, because what I am curious about is you have a background in journalism. Well, you have had a very long career as a journalist; that is a better way of putting it. Recently, you moved into the government side. Going back to this curating role and public interest, can you talk to us a bit about bias in the newsroom and specifically Islamophobia? I know it is an issue that is close to your heart.

Saadet Oruç:

Yes. Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to thank Professor Fahrettin Altun and his team at the Directorate of Communications for organizing this important summit. It will be a pleasure for me as a person who has been a journalist for a long time on the other side of the table. We asked, "What is the importance of strategic communication?" First of all, here I will not be speaking with my title of advisor to the President, but as an ex-journalist. As you said if one is a journalist, she always is a journalist. The post-truth in the title of the conference was the role of traditional media

in the post-truth era. I think we are at a very important cross point. The traditional media, contrary to the general belief, I think can play a very crucial role in the combat against that parallel universe of the post-truth, just by fact checking, and defending the truth. Technology, social media, the use of the technological means just increase the field of post-truth. We can say that the number of social media users is equal to the number of the post-truth fields. One can create his own media and one can create his own truth because for example, a social media user sits at home and tweets something or just shares a view and there is a difference between the sources of information. The importance of the work of a traditional journalist, the work of media has increased a lot during the time. Before getting into some theories, I would like to show some images that I prepared. It is a caricature of Le Canard Enchaîné, the famous French weekly satirical newspaper about the World Cup organized in Qatar. It is a recent example of the Islamophobic side of Western media. That is post-truth, but it is not as innocent as the aphorism of a parallel universe. It is a threat against the legitimacy of a people. It is a threat against legitimacy of all Arabs or and it is a threat of the white identity of the world against the organization of the World Cup. There may be ups and downs, successes, failures but you shouldn't criminalize a country by putting the footballers, by putting the people just like terrorists. It is a recent example of post-truth. The role of traditional media here is to defend, to voice their own ideas against this kind of distortion of the truth. We can speak a lot about Islamophobia in the Western media but before getting into my other image; I would like to refer to Ole Wæver from University of Copenhagen, his securitization theory and the importance of speech act. It is theory in general; I did not prepare such a speech.



Can you pass to the other image please? This is a tweet about the terrorist attack in Istanbul. Here there was a terrorist attack and six people were killed. And the PKK is behind this attack. It was revealed by the security operations and the security investigation is still going on. But he made a clear reference to the Kurds. The PKK is a terrorist organization but the Kurds are a part of Türkiye and they enjoy their rights in living in this country. If you put a parallelism between the PKK and the Kurds here, you give harm to Kurds themselves. I tweeted here, could you please pass to the third image? Here I tried to say that it is a catastrophe of terminology to name the PKK terrorists as Kurds; it is a real insult for the Kurds themselves. Here in post-truth era, for example, as I said, it is not as innocent as a sort of an aphorism of parallel universe. Türkiye's combat against terrorism here and the place of Muslims in Europe, we can just talk about the place of refugees or many other sociological factors can become a kind of matter of the post-truth field. Here, the traditional media has a very important task in the just reducing this distance between the people getting information from them and the reality and what is the fact on the ground. Thank you.

Doğan Eşkinat:

Yes, that is obviously a very important issue and widespread issue. I see that you want to add something.

Adasewa Josh:

Because you see, part of the challenge with most of the newsrooms you have now is that at the very top, the people who are putting things together do not know about the job. So, it puts pressure on the people who are actually trying to do the job, but the biggest disaster that the newsrooms are going through is mismanagement. You said the new generation of journalists just copy and paste. There are people who do that and I am very sorry for them. They are complete disgrace to what we do, but there are people who actually do their job well, who do so much, who's late through the night just because of one sentence they're about to write. They are looking at it and looking at it again and again to be sure they have all of their angles put in it. The main problem with many newsrooms is mismanagement. I am actually quite impressed, I have been on your station a couple of times to contribute to some of the shows. If we do have the top echelons, just trying to make sure the right people do the right thing, putting the right talent in the right places and just making sure that these things work seamlessly, which is not the easiest place. Newsrooms are a melting point of talent. You have to be really committed and passionate to make sure who can handle what. Most newsrooms are so fast right now that even developing the talents and helping them grow as a big issue. Everybody wants the biggest star who can just do it because it helps the ratings etc. So, who is helping the ones coming up and who is helping them grow? You throw people right in the middle of the sea and they learn to swim. Whatever they learn out of the way, whether it is to copy and paste and then you get it done. It is a big challenge. I also would like to jump on what you said about that: "Do not see us as a threat; allow us to do our job." The beauty of what we do is that the most powerful thing in the world is not a gun, it is not an AK-47. It is this guy,

and this guy. It is the mouth and the pen and people who actually do know are very afraid of that, especially when it is in the hands of the right people, people who are not afraid to say the truth and who are not afraid to write it. We do need that and as I mentioned earlier, the truth in whatever capacity cannot be distorted, bent over. And whatever the quality of the truth that you're getting depends on who is telling it and the medium. I went to school in the States for my masters, worked there a little bit. Then I went to Nigeria and started my career there. The point I am making is, when I went to the US, I was quite disturbed with how the Republicans have their own media machine and the Democrats have theirs. But where is journalism in all of this? Which is what I mean by our job is at the mercy of the mediums and I just do not know how we can do that in any way, shape or form. Thank you very much.

Doğan Eşkinat:

Now let us move on to you.



Saadet Oruç:

I would like to, if you will permit, to make exchange of views with you. You said, "Do not see us as a threat." I will be pleased if you listen to me as an ex-journalist and who still has the feeling of the information, although I have been an advisor since 2015. I will just give an example from France again, because I was a journalist there for years. After that famous Charlie Hebdo attacks, the terrorists had hidden at a printing house and the French radio reporter telephoned the printing house and he spoke with the perpetrators of the terrorist attack. But he didn't publish it. Because of the security concerns of the country, he just kept that story until the end of the police operation. The

terrorists of the Charlie Hebdo attack, they just escaped to Belgium and there was a police operation going on conducted in Brussels. Before the inhabitants of Brussels, they started tweeting some information about the special operation. When the authorities of Brussels asked people not to share information because there was an ongoing police operation, they started tweeting images of their cats on social media. I am trying to say that sometimes the information is as important as a weapon. I would like to emphasize the importance of strategic communication. For example, I showed you the caricature, which was published by Le Canard Enchaîné, a French weekly. Every government official, when they wake up early on the Wednesday morning, they think about whose scandal will be published today. Many government members had to resign because of this, it is more serious than Charlie Hebdo. Even they could designate people; they are not only making a reference to the Qataris, they are making reference to all Arabs, Muslims.



Borzou Daragahi:

It was a really stupid thing. I think Le Canard Enchaîné has a circulation of 9,000 in all of France. You give it more oxygen.

Saadet Oruç:

But it is very powerful.

Borzou Daragahi:

So what? Ignore it; do not give it oxygen. As an American, that is what I would say. You ignore something like that, it is garbage. It is a part of this stupid dimension of the French tradition; it is uniquely French.

Saadet Oruç:

But it seems to me that you are minimizing.

Borzou Daragahi:

I am not minimizing. I am just saying ignore stuff like that. You have also people who publish racist and anti-Semitic stuff on the internet and so on and people retweet it and give it more oxygen. I would say ignore it, it is not really a threat; it falls more in the category of annoyance.

Saadet Oruç:

But when you consider the traditional media's role and responsibility, and strategic communication; in a world where information is just mainly everything in the world, it is very important.

Adasewa Josh:

I am sorry; I think I am trying to string together the whole conversation here. I think the last word is censorship. The other one is control of the media and whether freedom of speech. There is like a gray area everyone is trying to dodge and not sort of go there, which is very understandable. But I will speak from my experience as a journalist and having worked in three continents now, I know, and I'm going to sort of try and work it down through strategic communications and through "don't come for us with journalists. We're saying the truth." Look, social media is a public square where everybody without a face feels confident to say whatever they want. Unfortunately, now people come for them, but the chances of actually you coming for me, my house, is very slim whereas for establishment media like radio and television, you have to call in, they are going to know you and it exposes you. You can get away with all sorts of stuff on social media as a public square. You can do whatever. Now, governments have now become very concerned that a group of people can organize and consistently say things that are not true. And then it's just a matter of time. You see, if you keep saying something that is untrue for a long period of time, you're going to have followership. And with followership and popularity, you know how it is. It is a big, big problem. Now do not forget, politicking and government is a game of numbers, so politicians understand the power of popularity. If you are more popular than them with your propaganda, there is a big problem. Now to funnel it down to how it works in newsrooms, there is something we call editorializing, that thing that they teach in journalism school, that we have to be objective, we have to look at our biases. Every newsroom says "Do not come for me; please do not come for me." This is a fact; every newsroom is biased. When you then grow as a journalist, as you grow in your career, you are going to decide which bias you want to take. Because when I am telling a story of a black people, I will check my biases all the time. I will try because that is what I can do as a human being to reduce that bias. But if I am telling a story to my audience, I will first curate for that audience and that would decide how I tell the story. It does not take away from the fact that I still have to balance objectivity and fairness, which is, all these things played out. But the reason why maybe, at BBC, we play up a certain story and then put a certain story from Middle East or Africa at the

bottom of the bulletin. Why would they be telling the story except maybe it is a big story is a like a breaking news? The point I am making and I think what you are trying to say about strategic communication is that, sometimes in the newsroom, the editors sit down and they try to decide is this the right time to tell the story. Are we going to be doing more harm than good? If we release and publish the story now, what if we wait one more minute to decide when it goes on air? For me, that is strategic communication, but strategic communication is not censoring the truth. It is not telling people not to say what they believe is the truth. If you think you have a better truth out there, you better be doing the job of going to the public square and stating it. Social media has come to stay, but I do feel that what newsrooms should do is to become the moderators of that place. Again, I go back to my word as the truth cannot be distorted or changed in itself; it does not have a capacity to do so. But the quality of the truth you hear depends on who is telling it. So instead of us shying away from the public square, and I think that's what most newsrooms have done now, they have TikTok, which is bizarre to me by the way. I do not have a TikTok account because it is just too much energy, right. But we've got to go there because that's where all these conversations are and they're moving fast, so fast, intercontinental, global. If we're not using the word censoring a.k.a. strategic communications, and if we're not using the word being irresponsible when we're reporting, I think we're all sort of on the same side. Thank you.

Doğan Eşkenat:

Let me push back in defense of stratcom. When I was in high school, I was in a band and there was a joke. I was playing drums. This is important for the joke. The joke is what do you call a person that hangs out with musicians? It is called a drummer. And in my life now in my work, I hang out with journalists. And what I've seen, sort of in my professional experience, since you're not letting me moderate anyway, is that part of the, the strategy of stratcom is about access. In a way, I do not think it is contradictory either. The more access you give, the better you are able to communicate your position and to contribute to the public debate, which is ultimately the more open, that is, the more sides it reflects. That's I think where the public interest is vested. That is my brief defense for stratcom.

Borzou Daragahi:

I just wanted to add something on the issue of bias in the newsrooms. I think every journalist has biases and every newsroom may have biases as well. But I think that where bias works is where there's consistency. So, I have a bias towards the underdog or the people who are being hurt in a conflict. The Ukrainians, because they're the civilians that are losing their lives, the Syrian people over the government of Bashar al-Assad. But as long as we're consistent, if we're critical of the Iranians, we're critical of what the Israelis are doing to the Palestinians, what the Saudis are doing, what the Americans are doing in their own country, and so on; as long as I think we are consistent in our values, the biases make sense and they do not damage our credibility as much as if we're biased in favor of one government versus others; when we're when we're selective in our biases and applying those biases, that's when we lose credibility and damage the role of journalism.

**Doğan Eşkenat:**

Thank you. We need to wrap up, but I want to give each of you maybe a minute to reflect on our discussion and to say a few final words today.

Adasewa Josh:

Journalism and journalists; there is a reason why they call us the fourth estate. We are a medium on our own. We help speak truth to power. Our superpower is that we look you in the eye and then we say “you did wrong.” We all need that sort of thing in our lives and in our society. Again, I will go back to my first sentence, which is the truth. We say media in the age of post-truth. If we are doing in the business of the truth, which cannot be bent, just like energy can neither be created nor destroyed; it can only be converted from one form to the other, I kind of feel like that is applicable to the truth. I believe that there are journalists in this place. We are going through a phase that is being distorted by technological advancement, but the core of what we do is truth. As long as we continue to do our job the right way, challenge ourselves to kind of evolve with all these technologies, just like fashion, it will come back. The truth is going to come back in the fashion and the core of what we do, which is gathering, curating, making sure we do it right and when we fall short, we apologize; the truth, the different angles, putting in the work to show the different faces of every story, even if it means calling your dad out if you’re connected to power and your uncle is part of

those people, you still have a responsibility to tell the truth. No matter what happens, I do not know what is going to happen tomorrow, whether Metaverse is going to take over our journalism etc., the core of what we do, as long as we continue to do it, the world is going to conform in the end. That is my take.



Borzou Daragahi:

I imagine there are many people here who are a communications specialist and I would just say to them that if you are struggling to get your story out and you want to get it out, give us access, give journalists access. Do not try to control us. We see right through it. Just bring us along for the ride and unless there is something really dark you're hiding, which is very rarely the case, you will get something great out of that. I have said this to communications professionals at UN agencies before in little talks that I have had. You want a story to get out the work of the UNDP on medicine in Eastern Europe, give me access to what you are doing, bring me along and we'll do it instead of sending me a press release and mistrusting that if I see how you are putting something together. You want a story about the righteousness of your military operation; bring me along, let me see the soldiers in action and allow me to report on it, and it will eventually work out in your favor and in the favor of the facts and the truth.

Saadet Oruç:

When I was a journalist, the format, the story, when I was trying to follow or cover something, the principal for me was that the story is not what is being told to me, but what is not being told me. In my search for the answer, I should not be the one to fabricate, right? First, you just try to understand the other side of the table and some concerns you just mentioned, health for example, during pandemic, the sort of information, the time, the place, the person who is giving this information, strategic communication especially in sort of for example catastrophe, crisis, disasters, pandemic, it's very crucial, It's very important during such times. You should yourself be there. You should yourself force it. It is an energy. It is something just coming from inside of you. Do not just expect, try to find some means.

Borzou Daragahi:

Believe me; we do try to force it.

Doğan Eşkenat:

Well, thanks very much to for this great conversation, discussion and thanks very much to our audience and to the team that really put in a lot of work into making this happen. Thanks very much. Thank you.



Reimagining the World Through Data

STRATCOM TALKS - 1





December 2, 2022

Reimagining the World Through Data



Speakers



**Dr. Kalev Hannes
Leetaru**

GDEL Project Founder



Dr. Kalev Hannes Leetaru:

Thank you so much. It is truly an honour to be here today with all of you. This image really summarises the focus of my work, which is about how we can combine massive data, massive computing power, and new technologies like AI and new forms of analytics to try to understand the planet around us to take the deluge of daily information and harness that in a way that it goes from being petabytes on discs in a network around the world to insights that allow you to make actionable decisions, whether that is supporting policy decisions or that is influencing narratives and communication, whether that is putting forward narratives or countering narratives such as during a pandemic. And this image, by the way, is actually a real photograph. This is not a CD. This is actually a sphere that is hung from the ceiling. They project from around it, and that is one of my datasets on there. And again, it is that idea of massive data down to this tiny, simple display. It is really about this. Imagine a day of

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news: So, this image right here is the year 2013, represented as a graph, all of the people, the organisations, the locations, and all the events of the year represented by their interconnections. Now, at first, you might see a graph like this, and you would say, "It is an artwork; it is beautiful, but what does it tell me?" If we take a similar version of this from more recent years, we can drill further down. Remember, this is a network. We drive further and further and further and further until we can start understanding the people, the organisations, the events, the emotions, the dreams and fears of the world around us and the connections and the relationships that allow them to function. Now, in my particular work, I run a project called the GDAL project. It is a massive open data catalogue, essentially of the world. This map shows all the locations from which we monitor information where there are people on Earth from whom we monitor. I am going to go through the power of the news media, but this map is not the most interesting map. This one is so all too often in the world of data, and most of the world of AI and analytics has been focused on English language material. As you know, historically, in political science, many of the data sets that existed were based on English, and a few newspapers like the New York Times from the US. Scholars wondered, "How come we do not understand the world around us? How come we are struggling to understand what is happening elsewhere around the world by only looking within our own news media?" And so, in the aftermath of the 2014 Ebola outbreak, one of the things that we found is that we had actually monitored a lot of the early coverage of that, but it was in French. And in that time period, we were not able to process that. So, what we did then was begin mass-machine translating by the end of 2014, which was everything that we monitored in 65 languages from around the world. Now, let us fast forward to December 30th, 10:00 PM Eastern Time on December 30th, 2019. Now, because of this mass machine translation, a company in Canada called Blue Dot, a biosurveillance firm, was able to use our data to see the sudden surge of SARS-like viral pneumonia of unknown origin and send out a worldwide alert the following morning with that ability to look past language, to look past access to data. One of the ideas was to reach local languages and local coverage from around the world. Because, with all due respect to the New York Times, whose motto is all the news that is fit to print, there are a whole lot more things that happen around the world each day. The reason this becomes so powerful is, as I said, because you can see December 30th. So, this is a graph of discussion of pneumonia worldwide. And we see, all of a sudden, this anomaly right here that reflects local coverage in Wuhan at that time. And you can see there were almost two weeks of monitoring and continual coverage about this from local media and then from other press. It is not until two weeks later that the rest of the world wakes up and says, "Wow, this is a big deal." If you lived in the US, you really did not see a whole lot there. You saw just a little bit of mention here and there, but it was not a tier-one story. And this graph right here really shows the importance of monitoring media around the world in local languages. So this was the 2014 Ebola outbreak. Now, you can see the first arrow right there. By that point, WHO had already announced it. By this point, so many people were infected and were dying. But yet, in America, we had not heard anything about this. It was something on the other side of the world. And when the first Americans get it, it is an issue. Now, we are going to talk about it. And this is one of the important things when we think about strategic communication, which is not just looking at the press within our nation or within the nations in which we are interested. It is about looking at the press across the entire world. And what is interesting here, though, is this bottom graph. So, in journalism, for example, you are taught that America's a saviour and that when something bad happens around

the world, America comes to the rescue. This is one of the sorts of tropes of US journalism. And you can see that right here. So, this is one of the first Americans to get it. The press suddenly becomes more and more positive. The first coverage in the US was this was a horrible disease, and if it came to America, we were all going to die. It was really uplifting. But when the first Americans got it, it became more and more positive because the American press said, "Do not worry, now that Americans have it, we are going to save us, we are going to save the world." But to be able to actually quantify us, to be able to visualise that in real-time, is a huge leap forward. And we can do all kinds of fascinating things. We can map out events in real-time. We can actually catalogue things like global protests and actually watch them. As you know, we talk about forecasting, we talk about predicting the future, but oftentimes, it is more powerful just to see the earliest glimmers, like with COVID. You could never have forecast that would happen, but you can catch those earliest glimmers, and you have weeks and weeks, in some cases months, to be able to react to that. So, these are those huge things that we were able to catch with the glimmers here by the EU Asylum Agency. This is the paper they published. They are actually using this to forecast where they are going to see refugee inflows, what their needs are going to be, and what a lot of the causative factors are there that allow them to better prepare for that with this ability to harness. And we think about the news, and we think about what it is just telling us and what is happening today. But buried within that are so many glimmers of tomorrow's biggest stories. And what is interesting is the format of the news. So, once we start thinking about the news, it is this deluge of material that is coming in. But when we start using machines to harness that and form that into things like actual graphs and data sets, we can use them and do things like this. We can actually come up with mathematical models of news. This is for those who are journalists and those who have a journalism background. It is no surprise that when something happens, like a natural disaster or a sudden onset event, you suddenly have a burst of coverage. You get about 3 days, and then it curves down about seven days. By 14 days, it will have largely faded away from the news. What is interesting about this is that any sudden onset event follows this formula. So, when events occur, and they deviate from this, we know that this is no longer an organic news story. This is inorganic, and time and again, what we have been able to show with this is when we see stories that deviate from this. We can say, "Hey, you know what? This is no longer a story of a natural disaster." This is a story. This has become a political story about a government failing its citizenry, which is being promoted from abroad, for example. So, it is a really powerful way of understanding the cycles of news. We can map world events in real-time. So, this is by BBVA, and it is very interesting. They were mapping refugee inflows and outflows in 2015 strictly from news data, from our data. What was so fascinating about this is that when you went back afterwards, governments released this data quarterly. The data actually matched exactly what they were showing. But in this case, it is real-time, hour by hour. The ability to see, but most importantly with data like this, to be able to ask questions about how the media portrays those refugees. This is a fascinating piece in that she did what she did: she took the data and looked for where refugees are, and then she said what the word that follows that is. And she made a map. And this is just one little screenshot of her map. And what is fascinating is that she was coding it as positive or negative. And you can see what someone was saying. So, in this case, refugees are living at our doorsteps. This is a really fascinating way that you can then scale up. And then what she did was that she took the word refugees, and then what is the next word that follows that and the word that follows that and the word that fol-

lows that. As you can start understanding, you can then drill down country by country, and you can say, "How are they being portrayed in this country?" This is a really powerful way because when things go wrong, and there is hardship in a society, you need a scapegoat. And oftentimes, it is the people that have just arrived. So, this is the ability to dig deeply into the media to ask these questions and go even a step further. During COVID, one of the questions that was asked by the government was, "We know most of the falsehoods around COVID; what are the narratives that we do not know? What are those things that we are not expecting right now?" So, what we did here across the 65 languages we were translating at the time, which, by the way, now is more than 400. What is interesting here is we are able to cluster that, and we are able to show these different clusters. Then, we can start looking at some of these clusters and say, "Well, that is interesting here. This is an emerging new narrative." And there is actually a fascinating analysis where they were actually looking at different falsehoods like the 5G, Bill Gates, Soros and mind control. This is a fascinating analysis in which they looked at each of those and how they were beginning to merge. So, you could actually see these different falsehoods combined and form new narratives off of that, sort of like planets intersecting and spinning around. This is incredibly powerful to build up, to look at that 30,000-foot view of the narratives and to be able to look at influencers. So, thinking about strategic communication is all about communicating. This was an example of what we did for CCS with carbon capture and sequestration. We just took out all the names of the people mentioned in a collection of 30,000 articles and drew lines between them if they appeared in an article together. And the end result was you got this clustering of, for example, the pro-solar industry and a pro-solar community and Australia or the anti-wind industry in another area; it was interesting around each other's peripheries are the journalists and the Wall Street analysts and the others that drive the conversation in that area. So essentially, this is sort of the world's ultimate influencer guide but generated in real-time, and you drill that down. You can say that I want the people to cover this in a positive light or a negative light, or hype it and build the drill down and understand not just what is being said but who is saying it. And this is a fascinating one. We talk about sentiment and emotion as positive and negative, but the landscape of emotion is so much deeper. So, this is tracking emotion and anxiety, actually. From the start of COVID, you can obviously see this huge surge, but then you can see for about a month that this is English language coverage here. For about a month, the world's global English language coverage was very anxious, reflecting that society was concerned about lockdowns and what would happen. But then, something happens. Suddenly, anxiety collapses. Societies had not stopped being locked down by that point. What had happened was societies themselves had just decided they were done with this. They were not scared. They were not worried about COVID anymore. The governments, however, acted as if that was continuing. So that is the moment when we really started seeing all these fights happening between societies and their governments. That is the ability to see things like this at scale and then say, at this point, we have to change, and we have to change the way we are communicating this, and then being able to do things like mapping global happiness. This is a fascinating map, by the way. So, this is not how happy or sad people are. What this is is that you take every mention of pairs today across the world. How positive and negative was that mentioned? What this shows you is not how people feel within this country; it is how the world portrays those countries. And this again reminds us, wherever we live around the world, the legend that we see the world through the lens of media in most cases. We need to understand that the lens may only be feeding us negative news from some areas and only positive news from other areas and to think about that. This

is a map of the global tone, positive and negative, from 1979 to 2010 around the world. And you notice there are some ups and downs, but you notice that something remarkable happens in the late 90s. That was the rise of the web, and you can notice everything became steadily more negative after that. And what this shows us is the rise of the web. Social media is often blamed for all this negativity, but it was actually the rise of the web because, all of a sudden, news outlets were competing with each other. And so, negative news sells. They raced to the bottom. This continued, by the way. What this calls is just more and more. You know the world may or may not have changed. We talked about how dark the world was getting. The World may have actually been the same as it always was, but the news media is focusing more and more on the negatives. And, of course, video is everywhere today. As you know, we increasingly consume. If we see something happening, we do not tweet, you know, we do not write about it. We take a photograph or a video of it. So, how do we analyse that? We do it in collaboration with internet archives and television news archives; we are actually processing 5 million broadcasts from over 50 countries, standing back portions of 20 years and asking how machines and humans together can help us understand. So, this is actually one hour of television from 30 different stations. You can actually see how different the world's narratives are and what we see around the world. It is interesting, too, because in some countries you will see science and technology. There is an hour of it every day, and it is positive. They are talking about the possibilities. In the US, the only science and technology news we tend to see is that social media is destroying us and AI is going to kill us all. And so, think about what that means. You never communicate in a vacuum; you communicate in a landscape. And that is one of the things that we are looking at. Again, I speak English, and a little bit of Estonian as well. So, I do not speak Russian. So, if I want to understand Russian television news, how can machines help with that? This is some of the work that we are doing right now with television. We are using live transcription and live translation to take television news in real-time, and again, these are things that have been done for a long time now. What we are doing is demonstrating, at scale, new forms of interface that really get through. Now again, machine translation is far from perfect, but it is good enough that I can get a general guess and understand for myself if someone tweets and says, "Oh my God, you have to see what was just on an hour ago." I can go and say, "Yeah, that was there, but that was pulled way out of context." And so, a huge thing for us is being able to understand and use machines to help us with this. Similarly, there is a lot of text on television. So, this was a question for social media. When Twitter at one point began labelling Donald Trump's tweets and saying this is false or questionable, we were able to show that he learned this. And so, by scanning what we did, we scanned American television news for any of his tweets that appeared on screen. And we looked at the timing of those. What we found out was that Twitter started labelling his tweets the moment that he would tweet. He recognised it, so he would tweet something, and then Twitter would flag it. And now, all of a sudden, its front page would be in the news for the next three days, and then it would calm down. And he would tweet something else to generate another burst of coverage. So, the ability of politicians to learn the cycle of something that was designed to be helpful, which was the falsehood flags, suddenly became the big thing: something you thought to counter narratives. This was something that was supposed to decrease visibility, and instead, it drove the visibility of its narratives. Now, these are graphs that most of you probably have not seen. In the aftermath of Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter, a lot of people are asking what is happening to Twitter. So, this top graph right here is the total volume of daily tweets since 2012. We can see that Elon Musk's purchase is right there towards the end. So, contrary to what you have

been hearing in the news, Twitter is far from dying. In fact, yes, it is hemorrhaging employees and advertisers, but in terms of tweets per day, its user base is tweeting like nothing is happening. Down here, on the left, is the average and median age of the account. What this tells us is that there is now a huge influx or outflux of users. The same users that have always been there and tweeting just like they always have. This is huge, but this graph down here is the percentage of tweets, retweets, replies and mentions. What it tells us is that Twitter is becoming an echo chamber. Half of the tweets every day are retweets. 10% of all tweets are sent either by a verified user or are one of their tweets retweeted. In other words, a handful of elites are basically driving the narrative on Twitter, and that has huge implications. We analyse Twitter because it is easy to analyse. There are a lot of tools for it. But what you are hearing on Twitter is not from ordinary people. You are hearing from elites. Now, going back to television, one of the most important things is the visual narrative. It is not what is said. It is the visuals there. If I talk about inflation in the US, is it about gas prices, is it about small businesses, or is it about what imagery that is being used to convey it to the public? So, one of the things that we are looking at is how we can use machines to help us with this. So, that is done by using machines to scan all these television news and annotate it. Machines are really good at telling us what is on the screen, but they are not as good at telling us why. In the early days of the pandemic, in April or May, we asked what is different about television news right now compared to pre-pandemic. And the first thing that the machine said was bookcases. They are everywhere. Now, a machine can say, "I am seeing these bookcases everywhere. But interestingly, I am seeing them on BBC News and MSNBC. I am not seeing them on CNN or Fox News." What the machine does not know is why all those bookcases are there all of a sudden. You can see this graph here; they all appear magically right as lockdowns occur, and everyone is filming from home. That is because, in the US, a bookcase is sort of shorthand for expert, scholar and authoritativeness. And so, it is interesting that essentially, all across the board, every politician, every talking head, every person that showed up on television news found whatever pile of books was in their house and put it behind their head. But this is huge because machines can tell us that this is happening, but they cannot tell us why it is happening. This is why the human and the machine are such a powerful combination. Because machines can sift through petabytes of video, they can sift through 5 million broadcasts, and they can tell us patterns like this that a human then can dive into and say, "Why am I seeing this?" Finally, one of the most interesting things now is we have AI tools today. We can actually say, "I want a soldier in front of the Russian flag," and you can actually find that, describe scenes, and machines can actually find that for you and give that to you. And this is really the future of visual search. It is not a keyword search for spoken words. It is not a keyword search on the web. It is complicated visual searches that allow us to see where these narratives are showing up. Conversely, the machine could start telling us not just, "Bookcases are everywhere," but "I have seen bookcases in a particular context." And so, in the end, it really comes down to this idea. As you know, this is a famous quote from Isaac Asimov: "Any fool can tell a crisis when it arrives. The real service to {society} is to detect in embryo." My work is oftentimes likened to psychohistory because it is about scooping up the world's information. Think about it as strategic communicators: if I present you with hundreds of petabytes of news, that is not useful to you. What you need are the final insights from that, the things that tell you what you need to do next. So, in the end, it is really this idea of using massive data and massive computing power to take these fire hoses of material that are around and transform them into simple visualisations and actual insights that you can use to make your own decisions. Thank you so much.



Media in the Post-Truth Age

STRATCOM TALKS - 2





December 2, 2022

Strategic Communication in the Age of Uncertainty: Cyber Battles in Conventional Wars



Speakers



George Tykhyi

Media and
Communications Advisor
to the Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of Ukraine

**George Tykhyi:**

Hello everyone, and thanks for welcoming me here. It is really a great pleasure to talk to you all. And I thank the organisers of the forum for inviting me. It is a really great event, and I enjoyed all of the previous panels with lots of really insightful and interesting thoughts that might be useful for me, too. And I think it is very appropriate to hold this summit in Türkiye. Because we have actually admired the communications that the Turkish government has been conducting, especially regarding the grain deal. This is a topic that connects us as Ukraine and Türkiye, and I think it is very appropriate to have this summit in Türkiye because there is a lot of experience to share. Of course, I will be focusing on Ukraine and on the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the way we communicated through it. I have heard some of the pleasant remarks of previous speakers actually saying that Ukraine succeeded in communicating

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its messages. I will say that, first of all, it is pleasant to hear that, but we had our mistakes, too, and we had our problems, too. But I think if we talk about the Atlantic space, Europe, North America, Ukraine has been very successful. It is a bit more difficult getting out to other regions because the world is not limited to Europe and North America. There are many other people and nations in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and we now focus a lot on trying to get the message out to them. I was thinking when I was preparing to be in front of you today and talk to you. I was thinking of many theoretical and elaborate things to say, but then I just realised that it is better to share our experiences throughout the last year, and actually, when we look at how we communicated and what we did, then you can realise all the basic principles are outlined in the end. So, the first point I want to make is that Ukraine's success in communicating its messages during this full-scale invasion of Russia had a strategy and people behind it. Sometimes, I hear people saying that everyone is companions with Ukraine, and basically, it is not such a difficult job to communicate, and in such circumstances, it all just happens automatically. But actually, we knew about examples of Russia attacking other countries before this full-scale invasion. They were not successful in getting the message out, or at least the Russian propaganda was so strong that it actually succeeded in muting those voices and just basically undermining all of these efforts. If you look at Chechnya in the 90s, the outside world was completely silent. Even after the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, there were not many sanctions, or at least it was forgotten by the world quite soon. And even if we look at Ukraine in 2014 when Russia first illegally annexed Crimea and started the war in the Donbas. We had some media attention, and we had it for a year or maybe two years, but then it faded, and the international media attention was diverted to other topics. So, I am saying this to highlight that we knew how difficult the task was, and we knew that we had to make a lot of effort actually to make this success happen. We started preparing for a possible scenario of what happened on February 24th long before this date came and this full-scale invasion started. At the Minister of Foreign Affairs, we started preparing some contingency plans back in the summer of 2021. So, more than half a year before the full-scale invasion, we saw in the spring of 2021 the build-up of Russian forces, and we realised that this was a threat and if there was even a 1% probability that this attack could happen, we need to be prepared. And by prepared, I mean on many fronts, not only preparing the key messages that we will spread around and so on and so forth but sometimes it is about the physical ability to communicate. Because if you lose all of the mobile connection in the country, if you lose normal Internet connection, if you lose basically all of the means of delivering your message, they will not just reach the audience even if you prepare the best signals. I will not go into detail. I mean, I have a difficult task today to tell you the secrets and the works behind the machine of Ukraine's Strategic Communications of the Foreign Ministry and not reveal too much because of some things I cannot reveal. But we have a plan for various scenarios, one of which I would say is the last one, which was a full-scale invasion. By going through the periods of our communications throughout this year, I will illustrate the challenges that we encountered and what we did to overcome them. I would say that the most responsible period was actually the last weeks before the invasion. You can remember the tense situation

unfolding, as well as news reports of an imminent invasion. Some tended to believe them, some not. And we knew that Russians would start the invasion, and at some point, probably in December, we were pretty sure that they would try to create a casus belli, some fake pretext, some incident, something that would justify what they would do. Because they did it in Georgia, they did it in Ukraine in 2014, and we knew that this was their strategy for their propaganda. In the last days before the invasion, I basically spent my entire day refuting and comparing the messages for the minister to refute some story of Ukrainian saboteurs crossing the border, of some shelling going somewhere. Then, we got some information about some possible chemical incident in Crimea that could also be a casus belli and a trigger of that. Our strategy was very simple. With basically whatever information of this kind we got, we just put it out, and we debunked it immediately. So, this was about speed and about really not giving them any opportunity to create a pretext. And actually, we succeeded in that because, in the end, they invaded without any pretext. It was just Putin ordering the bombs, and 240,000 troops poured over our borders from the north, east, south and from the air, from water, but without any reason. And I think this played a major role in setting the narrative of Ukraine's fight as the side of good in the good-against-evil narrative of an unprovoked invasion. And, of course, I am not talking about some narratives that Russia has been spreading about NATO enlargement, protection of Russian speakers and all other Russian propaganda talking points because this is a long-term goal, but we managed to refute the imminent casus belli. Then, of course, the first days of the invasion were pretty difficult, but because it was just a lot of work. And I think we have posted the first tweets about this starting at 6:00 AM. The bombing started at approximately 5 AM, 6:00 AM. We started communicating actively from various sources and pages. And, of course, the first days were the most difficult because, in a situation like this, the world actually stands by for some time to see who is winning. Because foreign countries would not back a power that was going to collapse in a few days. The most difficult challenge was to convince Ukraine that it could withstand this attack, which actually happened later. And we knew that we needed to hold on for some three, four, five days or a week, and only after that would we actually start to see some real action and some real support. You know the stories; I will not go into too much detail about them. I want to highlight some of the further periods, of course. The work has been of such intensity since the very beginning, and it remains so intense that Ukraine needs a lot of weapons to fight, and this is a very difficult topic to communicate. Because the agreements between countries on weapons are usually undercover, they never go public, which is not the case with Ukraine. Because we have communicated about weapons in such detail and such intensity that I think no one ever did that in history. And it was very difficult for us since the very beginning to hold the balance between motivating countries to actually arm Ukraine and send weapons, which implies a bit of criticism. And I think you have all heard Ukraine sounding really very harsh in these times. But this is the way to motivate, underline the sense of urgency, and express our gratitude to the countries that help. I would say the most difficult part of our job has been to balance the former with the latter. And, of course, later, we faced some other problems, such as the grain blockade and problems that a lot of regions in the world faced because Ukrainian ports were blo-

cked by Russian warships and the naval blockade. Because Ukraine is a huge exporter of the grains of sunflower oil and all the agricultural products. It has been a really difficult task to try to communicate the reason for the problem because the Russian propaganda has always been very, very active in trying to convince that it is Ukraine that is the problem and it is not the Russian aggression or the Russian naval blockade that stopped the shipment of grains. It is a difficult battle, but we know Russians, and we have been in this business for a long time, so we picked up the fight. I would not say we were successful all the time, and still, I don't think we always succeed. It is important to understand and underline this part. It is important to understand that we never communicate alone. We were never the only voice in the room. There are always various voices communicating, and they are rivalling narratives. So, we are never alone. There is always a rivalry between narratives. One speaker said a really great phrase today: There is a level of facts that can be just that we are all now in Istanbul. This is a fact that no one is going to contest, but also there is a level of debate. The ancient Greeks called it *Doxa-Episteme*. *Episteme* is this basically factual reality that you can prove, and *Doxa* is the area and the space where we can compete. The narratives can compete, so we are always in a competitive environment. And the 2nd takeaway that we have got from our communication is that there is no more periodic communication. We hold the meeting and then communicate about it. We do something, and then we make a report about it. We are living in the age of a stream of communication. It is a constant stream, which is like a chorus of streams or various streams in which you can only steer them in one direction for some time, not forever. And that is why the third takeaway is the consistency and persistence of messaging. I have a media background, and as a journalist, you tend to look for news that are basically new. That is why they are called the news, something new every time. In government communications, it is completely different. You actually need to communicate the same thing for a long time and repeat it, and sometimes, you even get bored of yourself repeating that. But it is the only way to get the message out to the audience. It is not enough to say it once and convince someone. So, just to conclude a few important things that we learned throughout this time, first of all, in a situation like this, and in a war of such intensity, you cannot always be defensive, and you need to be proactive. Let us call it proactive communications to be more diplomatic. So defensive is when you actually try to defend from the narratives, from the propaganda, from the disinformation, from competing their narratives. It is not always disinformation. Sometimes, it is just a competing narrative, another worldview, but you have your own, and you have to communicate it. So, this is the defence, and today, a lot of speakers spoke about the defence in detail, debunking disinformation, protecting people from manipulation from social media, and so forth. But our experience is that protecting and defending is not enough. It is essential, and you have to do that, and if you do not do that, you will not survive. You have to combat disinformation and protect yourself from all of these lies, which are online and viral things. But if you do not have a proactive strategy and narrative, you actually want to tell and if you don't try to get across the line, even to your adversary, even to communicate outside there in a completely hostile environment or create a narrative which will limit the space for propaganda, disinformation. You will not survive. So, you still need to

always think ahead. And the other thing is that I think Ukraine will win this communication battle this year. The important thing is that Ukraine is a democracy. In Ukraine had a freedom of speech. Ukraine has free media, and we have been born and raised in this culture. This is why we understand that there are different views, and you actually have to convince someone, and you have to be active in convincing. I think that some of that is the kind of advantage that Ukraine has over Russia in communications. Because, in an environment where you do not have any free media, you don't have any free press, and you don't have freedom of speech, you can actually forget how to convince someone. You just have this propaganda going out all the time, and you basically lose skill. Moreover, I would dare to say that Russian propaganda has lost a lot of skill in two, three, four, and five years. They were much more dangerous, persistent and skilful before than they are now, and I think the reason for that is a very simple paradox. The paradox is that to lie well; you need to A: know the truth. B: Construct a lie. And C: you have to compare your lie with the truth and check how good the lie is. If you lie for a long time, for too long. You basically forget what the truth is, and when you forget what the truth is, you cannot lie well; this is the paradox. And that is the reason why Russian propaganda really became weaker. And we have been able to counter it much better. To conclude, our work throughout this time included the coordination of many institutions in Ukraine. This is one of the lessons because it is not only the Foreign Ministry; it is the president's office, the government, various speakers, MPs and basically all of the people of Ukraine who became communicators. To coordinate all of this, we had a lot of effort, and we coordinated between ourselves as well. And basically, all of our people became Ukraine's ambassadors. They communicate, they speak out, they start social media campaigns, and they share hashtags. And so on and so forth. So, the conclusion is that you cannot just be successful as a government; you need allies. You need the whole society to communicate this thing to get the message out of the country. And, of course, the primary element, I think, was the Ukrainian humour. Some people do not understand why Ukraine keeps joking during the invasion. But I mean, even the government institutions were putting out memes and jokes online and so forth. But this is the only strategy to get the message out. This is not actually us having fun during the invasion. The humour is a tool to get the message out far and wide and also a tool to combat Russian authoritarian propaganda because it is very serious. It is grandeur. You know, it says, "We are a great country, and we are going to conquer the world." And these people, the only thing they are afraid of is actually laughter, humour. They are not afraid of something like "You will not do this." They are afraid of something else, and we have that.

Moderator:

It obviously does help, and I say this with the utmost respect, it does help when the president of your country happens to be a former comedian as well. So that is important. All right, George, I am going to keep you on stage. I am going to ask our staff to actually put up an extra stage here

because we have an extra seat for our next session. I am moonlighting as a master of ceremony here, so let me go back to my original job as a journalist, as we have 2-3 minutes with you. I am wondering what your strategy is when it comes to dealing with media fatigue. I understand that this is a very well-crafted strategy that has been going extremely well for the past nine months. Keep in mind that winter is around the corner, and the war has no end in sight. And I think it was two panels ago where they said that the news media loves to talk about something on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, but on Friday, they move on to something else. How do you prevent that? What is your strategy there?

George Tykhyi:

One thing that we learned is that whatever strategy you have, you have to be ready to adjust it and change it. Of course, the strategies we had at the beginning of the spring are not the same as we have now because we realised the fatigue at some point, and I realised that they used to work on media and international media. I realised that we should write a new story. Russia has thrown like 100 rockets at Ukraine. Ukrainian energy is destroyed, and Ukraine is suffering. Russia is bad, Ukraine is good. We wrote it once, twice, three times on the first time. Everyone understands that. So, what do you communicate? This is the biggest challenge we have right now because, at this point, the media starts to look for extravagant topics. We understood all this. Now, they look at a story that Russia planned to attack Japan in 2021. This is interesting now, so this is the big problem that we face. However, the answer is a larger investment in not only media but also other types of communications, like even paid advertisements on foreign TV. Government communication has to be stronger, and you have to engage journalists all the time, try to invent topics for them, and try to make them interesting.

Moderator::

I will be in Kiev next week to actually do a week-long broadcast from my company. Well, I would love to interview you on the spot. I want an interview.

George Tykhyi:

You will be very welcome.

Sunucu:

OK. Second question, my last question, when you are talking about the Russians attacking a particular city in eastern Ukraine or southern Ukraine, and you are very effective in terms of getting that narrative out. One thing that we have seen on multiple occasions in this conflict is a so-called false flag operation. This is extremely dangerous because it has a lot of dangerous consequences. One of the most recent examples is that Russia was claiming that the Ukrainians already had nuclear bombs and they would actually detonate them. And I'm not just talking dirty bombs, or I think it could be conventional weapons that actually have nucle-

or waste. How do you deal with actually telling that story in an effective way, keeping in mind the potential risks?

George Tykhyi:

We take it very seriously. We knew since the very first hours they started spreading the dirty bomb allegations. We knew that it was a complete fantasy. But we understood that this was a coordinated effort because a Russian defence minister was actually getting on the phone and calling our foreign ministers and telling us this stuff, which also tells us that they cannot get the media attention the other way. They only need their defence minister to sit on the phone to get headlines. But we realised it was a serious thing, and we started counteracting immediately. So, we immediately refuted it on the level of the foreign minister. Then, the president came out and refuted this story. Then, we invited the IAEA experts to Ukraine to officially refute this story. So, this was a huge battle. I think we won the battle with the dirty bomb and denied them this false story except for their domestic audience because we always have to bear in mind that sometimes they just play it for their domestic audience, and there is little you can do about it.

Sunucu:

I am going to put you on the spot. Do you have any backdoor communications with the Russians?

George Tykhyi:

No, there is no communication. This was not an ambiguous answer. We do not have any direct communication right now. There is the Grain Deal, the Grain Deal communication which goes through Türkiye and the United Nations, but not like that.

Moderator:

Okay, awesome. All right, George, it was a pleasure listening to you. Thank you very much. And also hope to see you next week in Kiev. Thank you very much. A round of applause to George.

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Founder of All Tech is Human & Member of TikTok's Content Advisory Council

STRATCOM TALKS - 3





December 3, 2022

Founder of All Tech is Human & Member of TikTok's Content Advisory Council



Speakers



David Ryan Polgar

Building the Global Responsible
Tech Community



David Ryan Polgar:

Glad to be here. How's everyone doing this morning? I know we had a busy day yesterday. Round of applause if everyone's feeling good from yesterday. How's everyone feeling? Okay. We need some energy, right? You know, I am feeling a little jet lag from my overnight flight from New York, but I will say I just had some Turkish coffee. So, I'm ready to go for the next three hours.

We are going to have a good talk on ways to tackle thorny tech and society issues. We had a lot of discussion yesterday around the issues, the problems. It can be easy to feel pessimistic. I'm going to leave you, hopefully by the end of our 20 minutes together by feeling a sense of optimism that there's so many people who deeply care about these issues. I want to start off with a quick exercise. I want you to raise your hand if you think we have a problem with

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truth in the digital age, the spreading of misinformation and its relationship with social media. Raise your hand if you think we have a problem with truth. I see a lot of hands raised. Now I want you to put your hands down. Now raise your hand if you think we have a viable, actionable solution to tackling this complex issue. Raise your hand if you feel comfortable that we have a solution. I don't see many hands raised. This is my life's work. To change the difference between the two. We know we have a problem with the information. We know that the information ecosystem is polluted and that its relationship with truth is fragmenting society across the globe. We know that there is a major threat to democracy with the rise of the tyrants across the globe. But what we don't have is a cohesive movement to actually tackle these wicked problems. These problems work like a Rubik's Cube. Probably familiar with the Rubik's Cube. In a lot of the discussions, we heard partial solutions. Maybe we need a law against misinformation. Well, that's complicated because if you're a tech company, you might get sued by one country. But in the United States, where I'm from, you have states like Florida and Texas that will sue a tech company if they take down the content. So effectively you have a tech company that's getting sued for taking down the content and getting sued by another group for not taking down the content and then hit from the middle by saying, "who are you to define misinformation?" This is a complex, thorny issue. But don't worry, I'm going to leave you with some level of hope, some level of optimism that we are switching stages right now from the problem stage to the solution stage.

What this is going to take is a multistakeholder, multidisciplinary and multiple perspective approach that weaves together civil society, government, industry and academia. Because change doesn't just happen from one group. Change happens from within a system, from outside pressure and then from reimagining our tech futures. In other words, on the stage behind us, we should have somebody from Twitter; we should have an academic researcher, a policymaker, an educator. Because all of these issues are tied together. Very similar if we are trying to tackle crime in a major city. Nobody says, "Well, it's just about a law, it's just about law enforcement". You would say, "Well, maybe it's about the jobs, maybe it's about the community, the cleanliness of the community. Maybe it's about law enforcement and our policies." We understand this as a complex, nuanced issue where we bring in all different stakeholder groups. We oftentimes do not do that for tech issues. We wrongly approach the issue as if there is a silver bullet, as if we could just get one person -if only Elon Musk would do the right thing. Well, let's think about that current situation with Twitter. A lot of people are discussing this. One of the issues that I deal with because I toggle between so many different groups, talking to policymakers, talking to trust and safety teams, talking to educators, talking to students. And there's a lot of misconception. Elon Musk describes Twitter as a public square. It can't be a public square. Public square has public scrutiny and oversight. In the United States, you would have your three coequal branches of government that would make the laws, interpret the laws, and enforce the laws, thereby providing checks and balances. When you consolidate that under one group, you have the judge, jury and executioner, which would be typical to democratically challenged countries. There is a name for what happens

when one person has such a high concentration of power over what people can say. And I'll say it's not a democracy.

What we're going to talk about today is this need to have a cohesive movement. This is what I am involved with. On my overnight flight here to Istanbul, I was leaving a gathering that we had in New York of 250 people, including people from tech companies, people who are activists, people who have organizations. These groups do not usually commingle. And one of the reasons why they don't commingle is because they don't trust each other. Sometimes they hate each other. But my argument, where I think this is going, is that there is actually a connective tissue that binds us all together. So, all of these different groups, they disagree and they should disagree. This is the future of democracy. We may never agree about democracy. We don't agree about solutions. We shouldn't. We should fight for our ideas. But if you go one layer deeper, what you'll notice is that there is actually an agreement. There is an agreement that the status quo, our current situation is not sustainable. Most people, whether they are researcher, a student, somebody who is working inside a tech company, somebody who is working outside the tech company adding maybe advocacy for changes, they all want the same thing. They all want a thriving democracy. They want to ensure that our human condition is a world in a future that we want to live in. In other words, the future of tech is intertwined with the future of democracy, in the future of the human condition. That is a big deal. What we are struggling with is the shift of power. Oftentimes when we think about this issue, I will say there's a little bit of a misunderstanding or misnomer. We often talk about these issues as if a tech company wants this power. No, a tech company wants to make money and show you advertisements. Do you think they want to deal with political debates that are no win situations that cost a lot of money, that lead to a lot of headaches, that lead to a lot of lawsuits? Of course not. What's happened is that our squares, our public squares, as our communication has shifted from the public squares that had scrutiny, that had a bureaucracy, that had checks and balances and accountability and transparency that we fought over for hundreds of years, to privatized companies that are based on scalability and have an inherent business model. That's why we heard a lot of discussion yesterday around some of the inherent problems of this business model. But moving on what I focus on is the next stage. It is this idea that when we come together next year, we should be talking about the solutions, we should be talking about actually rolling up our proverbial sleeves and understanding each other.

There is a line from an old movie with Paul Newman, Cool Hand Luke. It is also used in a clip from Guns and Roses song and it says, "What we've got here is a failure to communicate". I think about that line because what we have here is a failure to have an interconnected sense of communication. Oftentimes we have gatherings and we use it in a unilateral form of communication. We say, here's what this group wants to do, and then they disseminate the ideas. That's not how the web works. Communication needs to be bidirectional. It needs to be intersectional and intertwined, just

like a web. All of these different stakeholders should be talking to one another. And again, they disagree. They should disagree. But everything that we talk over these two days; How does that inform? How does that inspire? How does that affect change? If it just sits in a video on YouTube, then that's not reaching the full potential. All the great discussions for the last two days, how do they affect the trust and safety team at TikTok? How do they inform the policymaker? How do they inform curricula for education? All of these different parts are parts of the Rubik's Cube. So that's what we do at the nonprofit I will take us human that we run. We try to create this global nature that's multidisciplinary, multistakeholder and weaves together multiple perspectives. Because we don't just need technologists. This is the time life we bring in the Saints and poets and the advocates and the designers. Because again, think about social media. We can think about it from the business model. So, we bring a type of person there. We think about its design and how it influences human behavior. As you heard about in a talk yesterday, there are different types of thinking, how we have our reactive state and we have our reflective state, our reptilian brain versus our owl type of brain. We need all different parts of this puzzle to come together. You didn't realize there'll be two videos, so you see a lot of me behind you. I'm giving you a helping hand. The point is that my own perspective, I'm coming about it from constantly talking to so many different groups. And what I always notice and what I want to share with you is that so much is being lost in the communication, being lost in translation. Because you have the policy maker that is saying, "Why isn't this tech company doing more?" As if this is just about caring. This isn't about caring. The tech companies aren't moving because there's no viable path forward. Like I said earlier, you're sued over here. And you're sued over here for totally different reasons. Even in the United States, the political parties, Republicans and Democrats, dramatically disagree about the future of social media. It's a very complex topic. And then you talk to the tech companies and they're saying, "Wait a minute, what's the relationship with parents and allowing teens online?". And then you talk to educators and they're saying, "How come we don't have great education around digital citizenship and media literacy?". Everybody is pointing the finger at someone else. When the finger pointing stage as opposed to the handshaking stage of collaboration. But again, this isn't easy. This is not about agreement. We should disagree. The future of social media is just like our democracy, where we are supposed to weave together different ideas, to air grievances, to understand each other, to understand values and trade-offs. If I summarize and really get to the heart of the work that I do, it is about the massive distribution of power and ideas. And importantly, because it doesn't typically happen, we need to be agile and move, what I like to say, at the speed of tech. The issue that we constantly encounter -and this is why there is so much frustration on this issue- is that individuals feel left out of the process. Twitter, TikTok, Meta... They are not traditional companies anymore. They are still classified under the business structure of a company. But that's part of the problem that's going to be shifting over the coming years. Because the way that individuals on a platform relate to that platform is in a quasi-governmental fashion. They think, "Why doesn't this have some level of appeals process, of recourse. I need to be heard. That is what you would have in an actual public square, where you come in front of a court and they could determine to

make sure that the laws are not arbitrary or capricious, that people are being treated. In a similar fashion. You'll notice these are the issues that we've debated on social media over the last few years. But I come bearing good news. I flew over here because we do not actually lack for the knowledge. We don't lack for the passion or the people. We have plenty of these ideas and people and passion. I get the privilege of being surrounded by thousands of people. We have over 4000 people just on our slack group all across the globe coming together debating ideas. But what we don't typically do is inform all these different nodes. We segregate these nodes and everyone is currently upset with each other because we are not sharing. This is kind of ironic because the future has been disrupted by the web. But we have not caught up to web together. Our people and ideas and to be agile and speedy, just like the web. This is what we talk about, this frustration people feel. There is a wide gulf or delta or difference between how fast tech innovation moves and how slow our consideration to that technology is going. In other words, technology is designed, developed and deployed in a rise affecting people. And it affects communities that have no recourse. And they say, "Wait a minute, I'm impacted by social media, but I don't have some way to say this is my values". I like to say no application without representation. Not about us, without us. If you are impacted by technology, if you are impacted by social media, you should have some level of recourse, some ability to affect its change. I want to quickly go through some of these next few slides, but the point is, in communication, we need to listen to each other. We need to understand the tradeoffs, as we've seen in a lot of social media issues. It deals with the difference between security and privacy, different interpretations, different cultural norms, historical backgrounds that influence us throughout the globe. We have companies that are global by nature, but laws that are based on borders. So, if you're a tech company, what do you do? It's a problem. We have a lot of gatherings that is why you have the picture. We don't typically have this intertwined system. That's why the work that I do is arguing for this agile approach, I'll just quickly go over why it's different. We traditionally have top-down models that are based on a power structure that is based on its dissemination of information by having these very elite organizations. That doesn't work anymore. It does not work because the power structure, the levers of power, are not connected with the diverse range of ideas, and those people who are being influenced by social media do not feel involved in the process. Again, not about us, without us; no application, without representation; they are left out. There's zero buy in. This is not something that's going to work. In addition, on the flip side, the antithesis, you have grassroots models. They have the ideas, the diverse range of ideas. But they're not typically connected to the traditional power structure of journalists, of major tech companies, of policymakers. So, there's a disconnect. In addition, grassroots models tend to be adversarial in their very nature. Whereas a lot of where this future is going, the work that I do is based on creating an agnostic, neutral hub that binds together people across these different stakeholder groups, disciplines and perspectives in the shared mission of co-creating a tech future that's aligned with the public interest. And that's what we're talking about right here. If we connect each other, we can realize that our differences are on the surface but beneath the surface, most everyone outside of a few sinister characters in the world cares about the future of de-

mocracy, wants it to be aligned, and that's what we want to be focused on. Generally, what we need to do is to go back to the Rubik's Cube. The work that I'm focused on, I bring this as an example, is understanding the ecosystem from different perspectives, from the multi stakeholder convening, from the multidisciplinary education, from the talent pipelines of getting people from all different backgrounds involved in the system, from the inside, from the outside, from reimagining. And that's what we want to focus on. We also do this in a speedy, agile approach. Just in the last, less than a year, we released four reports and the difference is you connect people from The World Economic Forum, Aspen Institute with somebody who is maybe a different part of the globe, who has not had that involvement, somebody who's newer to the issue, somebody from a different perspective, a different background, a different lived experience. That is valuable, this intermingling of ideas and values and communication. What we need is not just a tech shift. The reason why I call the nonprofit All Tech Is Human is because it's not about technology. It's about us. It's about everyone here today. Everyone watching. Later on, it is about humans, it is about the laws that we create or do not create, the guardrails that we debate or we do not debate, the values and understanding that we do or do not do. In other words, it is about human agency and coming together in some pursuit of understanding in a co-creation.

Just lastly, since I am all about bidirectional communication, I will leave you with the final thought. Feel free to get in touch. The point is solutions are not going to come from individuals. They're not going to come from one organization. They are going to come from a shared understanding in order to have the tech future that we want. In order to have a thriving democracy, our challenge today is a challenge of communication, to weave together our different ideas, our different perspectives, our different values; to come together and co-create that tech future that we want and the tech future that works for all of us. Thank you.



Why is OSINT So Popular Now?

STRATCOM TALKS - 4





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Speakers



Oliver Alexander

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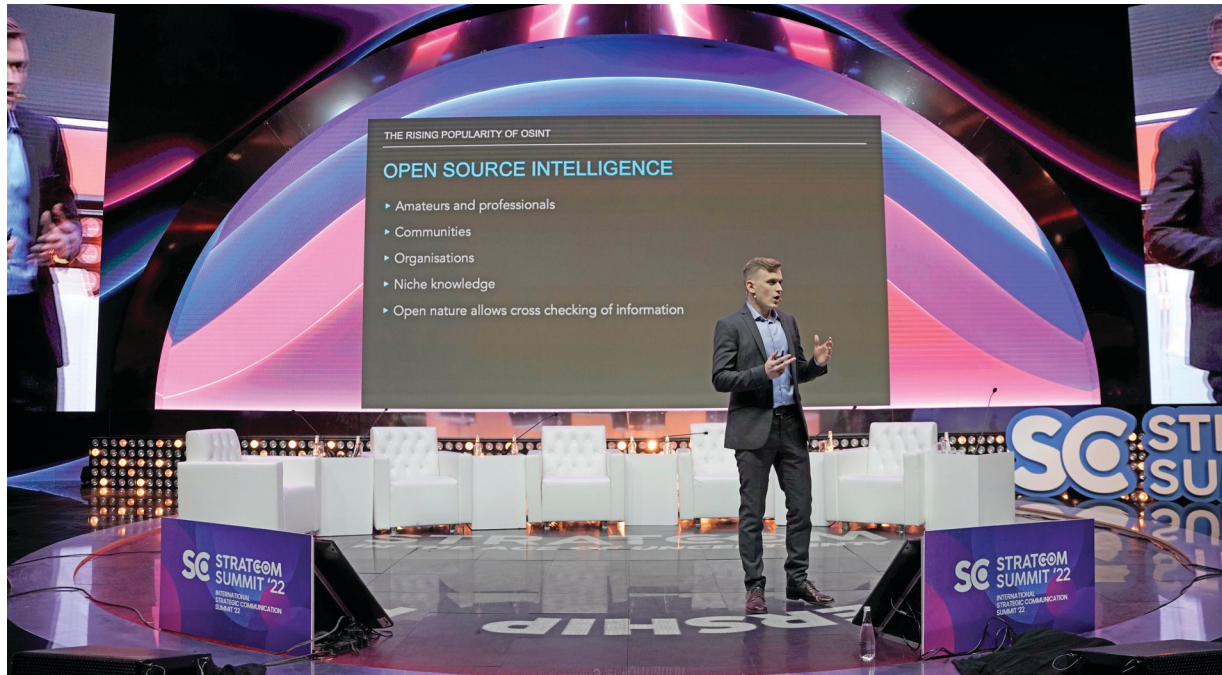
Hello. Firstly, I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me here. I would like to thank you for coming, and I would like to apologize to the translators in advance. Because there is going to be a lot of technical jargon that might be hard to translate, so I will try to go slow over that part.

To get it started, I am going to talk about open source intelligence and what it is and the rise in popularity and possibly some pitfalls that we are going to be moving into in the future with the way that information and disinformation are advancing. To start off with, I am going to explain to you what open source intelligence is. It is in fact the use of open source data. It is the use of open sources for intelligence gathering. It is used in national security.

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It is used in companies and any publicly available information to create intelligence. About me, I work with this in my free time. It is a hobby for me. It is totally becoming a profession, and there are not a lot of people that work with open source intelligence professionally because it is a small... I am going to talk about the rising popularity of open-source intelligence. With open source intelligence, it is a mixture of amateurs and professionals that work with open sources to create intelligence and try to find the truth in a way. It is the mixture of both amateurs who work in their free time and do a bunch of this work as a passion project and then a bunch of professional organizations that work with this in the search of war crimes, solving them and then also just intelligence generally. There is a large group of communities in this sector, both open communities full of thousands of people that work together to try to solve these things and come to the truth and events that happen. And there is also close-knit, tighter, smaller communities of people that work in this field, that work together to try to come to a conclusion and find the truth. There are also a bunch of organizations that work in this space. You might have heard of Bellingcat, which is a very well-known media organization that works a lot with open-source intelligence. They have large investigations. They are probably one of the main organizations that brought open-source intelligence to the mainstream with their investigation of the MH 17 shootdown in Ukraine several years ago. That was also used in the trial because they identified who was behind it and identified the specific vehicle used. They identified the people that gave the orders through the use of open source intelligence, using images, using satellite photo, using conversations and then just general data that's available to anyone without security clearance. The benefit of this is that you get a ton of people all around the world who have this exceptional niche knowledge of just one tiny little subject; they are probably not popular on Twitter. Some of the best open source people I know or other people I know have maybe 100-200 followers on Twitter, but they just know their subject matters so detailed. They will tell you about the Russian Black Fleet or Black Sea Fleet. They will tell you this ship has a scratch underneath the right window from an exercise in 2013. They can identify it from two pixels and then also the open nature of open source intelligence means that you can cross check information. You can verify other people's work, whereas in traditional intelligence work it is classified or top secret, so you cannot. They will just tell you this is happening. There is no way of really collaborating or corroborating this evidence.

Whereas in open source due to the open nature of the data and unclassified nature, it is possible to go and check people's work, collaborate and then make sure that it actually is true. Some of the methods used in open source analysis are verification, specifically when you take videos and stuff off the Internet, you want to verify that it is real. There is a lot of instances of video game footage being portrayed as footage from war zones. Additionally, identification, during the build-up to this war, you started seeing freight trains full of Russian equipment being moved to the front. Here it is important to verify or identify what kind of vehicles they are. From this, From this,



you can identify where they were coming from, where they are going, what kind of division they were a part of, and whether this was a standard move for an exercise or if they were part of something bigger. Then there is the use of satellite imagery, which is becoming increasingly popular, where there is both free satellite image available through Sentinel, which is a public service that you can use where you can see relatively low-res imagery, but you can use it to see larger changes on the battlefield. For example, larger changes and build-ups in areas and then you can use paid sources for data such as Maxar or Planet. You can then purchase high-resolution images that anyone can purchase as long as they are willing to pay. They can be relatively expensive, but you can pay and you can see these and you can publish them and you can show that “Okay, here at this point, there’s a buildup of forces.” Next, there is the geolocation, which is a very important tool because you might see a video on social media from somewhere, something just happened that there was an explosion or there were troop movements or anything. From this, you can use background features and to locate exactly where this video was taken and where it was recorded, which can be important for plotting war crimes on maps and seeing the movement of troops. In addition to this, Chronolocation is a kind of a subsection of geolocation where you can use shadows, you can use the time of year. You can use all this specific data to pinpoint exactly when this video was taken. And on top of this, there is just the general analysis of this, once you have all of this information. I am going to take an example of something I did recently, which has happened a few weeks ago. It was the missile impact in Poland. Initially it was reported by AP from what they said was unconfirmed intelligence source that it was two Russian missiles, which they then spread out and they went everywhere all over the Internet that

it was two Russian missiles that hit a NATO country. And the news all over the world panicked. They had since fired the journalist; but it was not his fault. It was an editorial problem for spreading this news because it was an unconfirmed report from an unknown official. But this was the first image released and you can see there was just this large crater near the tractor where two men were unfortunately killed. A few minutes later, this image was released from a fragment from the missile. Here I and several other people in the community noticed this particular fragment was in fact possibly the part of the rocket booster from a S300s, specifically a 5v55 rocket engine. As you can see here, I have tried to superimpose it on a known piece of debris from one of these. From this first initial thing, there was a bit of doubt in this official or this 'unofficial' narrative that came out that it was a Russian missile and there was a chance that it was in fact the Ukrainian air defense missile that had gone off target trying to intercept a Russian cruise missile and then impacted in Poland. So, afterwards, the day after, this image came out, and from here, there were these two pieces of debris that I noticed, and then I have thousands of reference photos from previous attacks, and there were these reference photos that showed debris from known S 300 missiles. As you can see, there are matching pieces of the debris from this. You can confirm that there was in fact an S300 missile that hit this site. This also was corroborated by the Polish government when they came out with their press release. President Duda came out and said that it was a Russian produced missile. This is a use of strategic communication. They did not specifically say it was a Russian missile; they said it was Russian-produced, which S300 are technically Soviet-made. But that's technical. Yes, from here, they were later confirmed by NATO sources that there was no indication this was in fact a Russian missile. It was likely a Ukrainian errant air defense missile. And one of the things that I looked at this when I said this, I have posted it on the Internet, posted on Twitter where I do most of my work. Then there are a lot of discussions about this cannot be true because the AP report already stated that it was Russian missiles and they had an unconfirmed, unsourced U.S. intelligence official and the crater was too large that you can maybe see here. It was too large for 100 kilo warhead, fragmentation warhead in one of these missiles. So, I looked at where the impact was, I noticed that it was on top of a weigh bridge for weighing grain, specifically a pit type weigh bridge which has a large pit underneath. From these photos that were later released from the site after they finished excavating, I found some specifications of these types of weigh bridges, similar weigh bridges, and they built this little diagram here to illustrate that much of the crater was in fact already there prior to the explosion, so the actual crater from the explosion was very minimal. There was also the talk about there being a lack of fragmentation from the fragmentation warhead, but from what you can see here, the explosion happened almost directly up against this concrete wall, which would have absorbed almost all the fragments from this. And as of right now, this is by far the most plausible conclusion, and as there have been no real updates in the past three weeks. And then they recently came out and said that they have so far seen no evidence that counterpoints to their original point that it was an errant Ukrainian air defense missile. I think this is

probably what happened. To talk about the rising popularity in the open source community, it really grew in popularity during the pre-invasion build-up to the war in Ukraine. As troops were being moved and vehicles were being moved to the border, there was a large amount of TikTok videos, Twitter videos posted all over the internet of these things, including a lot of them posted by Russian troops because they have exceptionally poor operational security in their military. So, this allowed people to build up very detailed maps of exactly where all of these build-ups were. From here you could then use satellite imagery to confirm and count the number of tanks that they are parking in individual fields and build up this real-time network of exactly what was happening. An article was released a few months back, I believe it was in the New York Times, that gave a really detailed picture of the behind-the-scenes in the intelligence community, the actual intelligence community, and diplomats about how they were working on the intelligence. And if you look at it and compare it to some of the really high-profile open source community, analysts and stuff like it was almost one to one, like using just open source as the intelligence was lining up and the timelines were lining up almost identically. It is actually impressive how much you can actually do with this open source. During the pre-invasion, there was also a large disinformation campaign, in particular false flag events by Russia. These were surprisingly low quality, which gained a lot of traction on social media for the debunking of these because there were some really odd examples. There was specifically a supposed attack by saboteurs to launch or attack with chemical weapons, which turned out to be a complete fabrication. And then the audio from the video of machine gun fire was taken from a video on YouTube of a finished exercise. They just cut this out and you could actually see in the metadata that they literally just clipped this audio on top of the other one. There are other examples including bombings that were clearly staged and a man that I posted on Twitter where I had gotten the original video before they had altered it, of a man who had reportedly had his leg blown off by Ukrainian mortar and he was laying on the ground. However, you could see that he had actually already had a prosthetic leg, and they were simply taking the leg off, and you could see that he already had lost his leg. Later, they released a version in which they censored the legs. They tried to get away with it. And again, there's a near real-time, if you follow the right sources, you can have information hours before it becomes available on mainstream media. There is coverage of all events. Not everyone will follow every event, but there are people tracking every corner of their globe. There are people tracking conflicts in Africa and Asia, in the Middle East, in South America, all over the place. There are people who do this in their free time or professionally who spend a lot of time analyzing all of this data. Now we come to the downsides of OSINT because there are several. One of the main downsides is explosive growth in the community or in popularity over the past year. I would say probably the community has ten doubled in size over the last year. This has created a large amount of people creating OSINT accounts and creating their subpar analysis. They are mostly just retweeting videos. Maybe they do not have any subject matter expertise, they do not know how to really analyze things and they are just putting noise out there,

and it makes it harder for people to actually find out the truth. There is a pretty large Dunning-Krueger effect here, with people that scream the loudest usually know the least. And unfortunately, this also means that popular opinion, at times, can win over facts. On Twitter, for example, if you post something that people want to hear, you will probably get a lot more retweets, likes, and it will go viral, whereas if the truth is an inconvenient truth, then it might not go very viral. You might not have the popularity to have it spread. Even journalists fall for bados, and if you go through, there are several examples of large international newspapers using analysis from generally just bad OCINT, poorly researched. I just want to quickly talk about this intelligence cycle which is something used by intelligence agencies and law enforcement staff for the way that you turn information into actionable intelligence. You start off by planning where you kind of find out what are we trying to figure out. Then you have collection, where you collect all the data. Processing, you process the data, then you start analyzing the data. Then you disseminate it, and then afterwards, you get feedback. It is kind of a loop that goes around, where once you get feedback you can kind of move in and then you start going.

Here are some of the problems. Several actors in the OSINT community are the ones that just go straight from collection to dissemination. I would not call that open-source intelligence, though. Many of them call themselves this. They are information aggregators. They do not have any direction or analysis. They just find videos on Telegram or TikTok or wherever and just post them one for one with no commentary or no analysis. There are also OSINT accounts that are mostly just processing. They will take Russian post from Telegram channels and just run them through machine translation and put them up one for one and do not have any input. There is a bunch of bias analysis which you'll find on both sides of the conflict. It is especially prevalent in this conflict in Ukraine because the people have drawn very firm lines in the sand that they are either on one side or the other. From this, you get people that ignore a lot of actionable intel because of the fact that it is an inconvenient truth that goes against them or they are trying to spread a narrative. And then due to this, of course, people will also ignore feedback because there is a lot of, "I know best, it doesn't matter what you think". But I think there is a real importance in knowing all the narratives that are pushed out by all sides. That is why I spend a lot of my time reading Russian state news, even though I know a lot of it is blatantly false. Because it is important to see where the narrative is coming from. Because things that happen on the battlefield happened or happen politically usually never happen out of the blue. There is usually a build up to it, and if you piece together the paper trail prior to the thing, you can kind of anticipate where this is going. One thing I want to say to everyone is watch out for people who have all the answers, especially in the OSINT community. There will be people who seem to know everything about every subject. One second, it is the conflict in Ukraine; the next second, it is China, and they will just swap. They're experts on all areas. If you know everything about everything, you probably do not. And then I try to move on to something that was mentioned in the previous talk about

Twitter. As an OSINT platform, it is probably the most vital of all platforms because 90% of all OSINT communication, OSINT dissemination happens on Twitter. I have been extremely vocal of my criticism of the takeover of Twitter by Elon Musk. But this comes from someone who is also very critical of the previous admin, because many OSINT accounts had their accounts locked by botnets just prior to the invasion and there was no explanation given. There was no real recourse to stop unlocking these accounts earlier, and they came up with an excuse where they said that nothing happened to that manual review, even though 20 accounts were locked on the same second and were not given a reason. So that was just a flat-out lie. But with the new one, there is an air of unpredictability, which makes all of this hard because Twitter was a platform of problems before, it was a platform with predictable problems and stability in those problems. You knew where it was. Nowadays you do not know. Firstly, for example, the blue tick. If you use Twitter, you might be aware that many of you probably have one where you are verified on Twitter, which means that you are who you say you are. Elon decided that does not matter anymore. Everyone who pays \$8 can now get a blue tick, which means that is useless. It does not mean anything anymore, which is fine. But the problem is that people have been spending years and years getting used to and getting accustomed to the fact that if they see a blue tick, it means this information is important. That is going to lead to a ton of problems in the short term where people have not really recorded their brain for the fact that the blue ticks do not mean anything. Secondly, there is the system that hides people who are not paying. He wants to promote people that are verified by paying these \$8. This is going to allow a lot of smaller accounts that do not pay these \$8 to get hidden and hidden by the algorithms. A lot of open source intelligence starts with a small account in Gaza or Ukraine, for example, or posting a picture of something that happened just outside their window. They might have two followers. Someone finds it and it gets shared, but this will not happen because these people will not be paying \$8 to get verified. They only have two followers. And as it's the largest platform, if it dies it will be a massive loss in the ability to share information because it has become a public platform in some sense. That is important to global discourse all around the world. Finally, the monetization aspect. As someone who, in my best months had over 50 million impressions, you think I would be for monetization of Twitter, but I am not. I am against it because it incentivizes popular stories over the truth. It incentivizes people to post stuff where they have unconfirmed reports of conflicts in the DMZ in Korea or something that will get viral just for the sake of monetization. There is a change in the OSINT community recently, which I have noticed. I have not really seen anyone really talk about it, but there is this kind of shift in open source to more of private, maybe independent intelligence agencies people are becoming. Because as people get more popular, get better at OSINT, create a following. They create a network of sources and they create their own sources, and they start moving away from only having open source intelligence information to having access to what is called HUMINT, which is human intelligence. They might have their own sources in a town in Ukraine or a town in Russia that they cannot share for obvious reasons. They

start the buying of satellite imagery, this puts you over to image intelligence and it starts kind of becoming this grey zone of where the whole idea was this democratization of intelligence. We can share and cross reference things, but slowly it becomes this point where you can no longer share because you have your own private source and for good reasons, you cannot give this person up to everyone else on the Internet. You cannot do this. So, it is kind of transforming fast and it is transforming fast and I am not quite sure where it is going. And that is all I have for you today. Thank you.



**“Strategic Communication in the
Age of Uncertainty,”
Prioritizing User Safety**

STRATCOM TALKS - 5





December 3, 2022

“Strategic Communication in the Age of Uncertainty,” Prioritizing User Safety



Speakers



Timur Altop

Head of YouTube Partnerships

**Timur Altop:**

Thank you very much. You set that bar pretty high there. I hope I deliver this. Thank you very much for inviting me. I am very excited to be here today. At this conference, we are discussing major challenges impacting digital world in the age of uncertainties and efficient ways to respond to them.

At YouTube, we face such challenges too, and I am going to speak about the paths we have developed and keep investing in which help us overcome these challenges to the benefit of our creators, our users and our community. First, I would like to give you an overview of what YouTube is today and how it helps countries to prosper. YouTube acts as an intermediary between three core stakeholders, creators, users and advertisers. Therefore, it is a critical catalyst for the creative economy. Our creators and partners who started uploading their ideas and sharing their creativity from a webcam are now next generation media companies with incredible impact.

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In the past two minutes since I have been on this stage, maybe not two minutes, let us say a minute, more than 1000 hours of videos were uploaded to YouTube. This is such an astonishing number. It shows the impact and value that we create together.

Over the last 15 years, YouTube has grown from a small place where communities formed connections around common interests into a bustling and energetic global platform with over two billion monthly users.

This transformation comes with its share of challenges and opportunities. YouTube continuously works on supporting our creators, helping them to find new audiences, build growing businesses and supporting their livelihoods. Globally, we have paid over \$50 billion to creators over the last three years and this is just an astonishing number. We are investing in innovation to support our creators, to diversify their businesses and income sources through products such as Super Chat, Super Stickers, channel memberships that are also available in Türkiye. With the coming monetization of shorts, we are going to be a game changer again to support the creative economy. To share in their work on YouTube, the global audiences engaging with their fans, YouTube creators are building thriving businesses on their platform and empowering the creative ecosystem in their respective markets. According to a recent study by Deloitte, YouTube is a second most visited website after Google search in Türkiye and the number one video platform accessed from a wide variety of devices. YouTube has reached over 45,000,000 users in Türkiye, and each user watches 45 minutes of content on average every single day. Users in Türkiye also define it as a very important useful platform for learning, education, entertainment and intellectual development. A survey by Ipsos reveals that 92% of respondents say that YouTube is the first place they go when they want to watch something. Another research study by Deloitte in 2022, this year, the majority of the response claimed that they started to follow in the news, the media with YouTube. They also believe YouTube plays a big role, increasing our knowledge of arts, literature and history. Also, there are more. I am very proud of this. There is more than 43,000 channels on YouTube in Türkiye. Using food channels that introduced our rich culture and export Turkish dramas such as Muhteşem Yüzyıl - Magnificent Century in different languages to the international community. We are proud, super proud that we are contributing to Türkiye's tourism; spread our rich cultural legacy and worldwide recognition of local talent in this way. So, shifting to responsibility. The creative economy that we are talking about here flourishes thanks to the concept of openness. We created a platform that is open to anyone who wants to have access to information, to learn, to work, and to entertain.

At the same time, core to our platform are our community guidelines. Our core responsibility is to protect each community from harmful contents while preserving the positive power of openness. This is why we have been investing significantly over the past few years in teams and systems that protect YouTube and its users, and we are making incredible progress. Responsibility is our number one priority and it is infusing everything that we do. Our approach to making YouTube safer is driven by 4 responsibility principles that we call our 4R's: Remove content that violates our policies, reduce



the spread of harmful and borderline content, raise up authoritative news and information, and reward our trusted creators.

It is important to note that removing content is only one part of what we do to tackle complex challenges. It is the most visible part, however, but our levers go way beyond that, such as our focus on recommendation systems to ensure that we're reducing the supply of borderline content. And let's dive a little bit deeper into this. We remove content that violates our Community Guidelines, which means policies that draw the line between what content is acceptable to upload and what is not. We are improving these policies, hiring thousands of people, working with experts and investing in machine learning. Our policies cover a wide range of issues, from child safety and graphic violence to spam and hate speech. Globally, between July and September 2022, YouTube has removed over 5.6 million videos for violating our community guidelines, compared to 6.2 million videos last year. A great example of this is our actions around COVID, where we removed misinformational content with false allegations about approved vaccines. This included content that falsely says that approved vaccines cause autism, cancer, or infertility, or that the substances and vaccines contract those who receive them. Moreover, this year we started reporting misinformation videos globally.

In Q3, we removed over 120,000 videos in this category alone. It is worth noting that problematic videos only represent a fraction of one percent of all the content on YouTube. Second, we raise

up authoritative voices on our platform, launching many new features to do so. YouTube elevates high-quality, trustworthy content from authoritative sources, such as public health authorities, news organizations, learning institutions, and search results and recommendations. We educate and empower users to improve their ability to navigate information online. We just launched a media literacy campaign called “Hit pause”, a multi-year campaign that will teach viewers in over 70 countries to become better critical thinkers and more digitally responsible. The campaign was also launched in Türkiye as well. And during the pandemic, this is one of my favorite projects. We partnered with a local health organization such as the Ministry of Health in Türkiye and raised their authoritative concept of COVID-related search queries. We also created a video series in which popular Turkish YouTubers conducted interviews with experts from the Ministry of National Health Science Council to address the frequently asked questions about COVID-19, vaccines and the concerns of vaccine-hesitant groups.

Third, we reduce the spread of borderline violent contents. We are working to reduce the spread of content that brushes up against our guidelines but do not necessarily violate them, which we call borderline content. Starting in January 2019, we launched a series of changes to our recommendation engines to limit the spread of harmful misinformation, low-quality, and borderline policy violative contents. Similar to removing relative concepts, these actions aim to benefit the platform as a whole and reinforce YouTube as a place where users can engage with safe and high-quality contents. Fourth, this is why a lot of users YouTubers come to the platform right; we reward trusted creators and content that meets our highest dinners for monetization. YouTube has over 10 sources of revenue that we share with our content partners. In 2018, we raised the standards for creators to be able to earn money on YouTube.

We now require 1000 subscribers and 4000 watch hours to be eligible for monetization through our YouTube partnership program, which we call YPP. We recently added new requirements for our shorts, short-form content partners that will start monetizing on the platform from early next year. As part of YPP, apart from monetizing their content, creators also received email, chat support, and got access to our copyright match tool to help them protect their content. Over the last few years, we have taken steps to strengthen the requirements for monetization so that spammers, impersonators, and other battling actors cannot harm the ecosystem or take advantage of our good creators in producing original content. As part of this, every channel on YPP is now reviewed by humans through a responsibility lens. And also, all content on our YouTube Select platform is also human-reviewed.

In summary, to conclude, like the recap of several important points, YouTube’s open platform allows millions of creators around the world to connect with global audiences and build thriving businesses. It is a hotbed for the creative economy and a place for everyone to explore, thrive, and contribute. To protect this openness, YouTube’s number one priority is responsibility.

Problematic content represents a fraction of one percent of the content that is on YouTube. And we’re constantly working to reduce this even further while raising authoritative content that provides the best and safest experience for our users. And as you’ve seen, we built a robust process to ensure a responsible approach and then help enhance user safety and sort facts from fiction in these uncertain times. Thank you very much.



Social Network Map of Türkiye

STRATCOM TALKS - 6





December 3, 2022

Social Network Map of Türkiye



Speakers



Assoc. Prof. Ismail Çağlar
Istanbul University



Data is a beautiful thing, but in the wrong hands, it can be used for manipulation or speculation.

İsmail Çağlar:

Hello and good evening, everyone. I am Associate Professor Dr. İsmail Çağlar. Although I am not fond of titles, I wanted to correct it as I was called "professor." Today we will talk about social network mapping. This is a project that we work on with the Directorate of Communications, or rather that the Directorate of Communications works on, and I provide academic consulting as part of a team. Our starting point was this: since almost everyone in this hall is interes-

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ted in these issues, they have always needed data on the use of social networks in Türkiye or other countries, whether for a speech, for an academic study, or for a business-related activity. It is more or less obvious from which platforms and sources we obtain such data. I have been using and benefiting from them for many years. In the absence of more detailed, better data, they were excellent, useful platforms, which we utilised. But one day, like many of us, I wondered about the methodology of these studies. “When is it done, where is it done, and with how many subjects?” Since there are internationally referenced studies that are used internationally, this kind of questioning is not noticed much at first; there is no need for it, but when I look at it later, frankly, I do not mean to be ungrateful or unappreciative because we have used this data for years, but I realised that there was data that did not have enough depth to make interpretations for Türkiye as a whole or even globally for different parts of the world. Let me tell you about the situation in Türkiye. A survey of 1,500 people, conducted via email every six months, provided information on the use of social media and the internet in Türkiye. As I previously stated, I am grateful; I have used that data for many years. In a way, it was unrivaled, it had no alternative. However, as an academic, I prefer to base my statements regarding social network use in Türkiye on more robust data. If I had my own means and were to organise a survey, especially if such a recurrent panel provided data, I would be not be satisfied if it was conducted with a sample size of 1,500 every six months. We did something different. We said with friends, “Instead of complaining, let’s see if we can do better.” We have drafted a project. We outlined the content of the project and presented it to the Directorate of Communications. I would like to thank Director Fahrettin Altun and Deputy Director Evren Başar, as well as Deputy Director Çağatay Özdemir, who is particularly interested in this project due to his academic background. We were able to convey the matter smoothly. Normally, when you go to bureaucrats and discuss this matter, you may receive a puzzled look, but we didn’t have to explain why it was required or how vital it was. They shared the same concerns with us. We focused on how we could do it. Our main objective was to map Türkiye’s social network. And this is also a public duty: to provide accurate, reliable, and high-quality information. And this information must be consistently reliable under the scrutiny of the public. Data that is present now and gone tomorrow, as you are aware, is not very useful. However, ensuring its continuity throughout the process makes it very useful. Within the scope of the project, we conducted surveys in the seven regions of Türkiye four times a year, or every three months, with a minimum sample size of 2,500. We then shared all of these on sosyalagharitasi.gov.tr, including reports, infographics, and raw data—in other words, not the uncleaned, unprocessed form but the raw form as a data set—on this web

This is also a public duty: to provide accurate, reliable, and high-quality information. This information must be consistently reliable under the scrutiny of the public.

platform so that actors who need them from the private sector, academia, and civil society can benefit from it free of charge. We have completed two years. I will also share some data with you today. That data is the overall average for 2022. In 2021, we had 4 research periods; in 2022, we had 4 research periods, too. The second period was in April in 2021, and May in 2022. We had a 5–10 day overrun there, but other than that, we tried to stick to the research period, and thank goodness, at the end of two years, I believe we were successful to a large extent. And one of the differences from comparable studies and data is that we prepared the form in a very comprehensive manner, and the content is satisfactory in this regard. We have a section about basic internet access in Türkiye. We provide separate data and create separate reports regarding device ownership, gaming habits, social network usage, and all social networks. We are confident in all this. We are confident because our survey is divided into sections. Turkish citizens who participated in the survey were also asked to complete the relevant section of the questionnaire about the social networks they were using. Put simply, it is not possible for a social network to reach a certain popularity and not be covered and accepted by this research. And our achievements: we have created reliable, public data. We offer this service completely free of charge and the entire process is transparent. And you all know this; I do not think I need to explain the importance of that to this room. I do not need to tell you how big the opportunities and risks are. Data is a beautiful thing, but in the wrong hands, it can be used for manipulation or speculation. We are confident, at the very least, that we are presenting unaltered and unspedulated data in this instance, with me providing the academic part and with public assurance providing the other part. I do not have much time, so I do not want to drag it out. We are at the end, and it was a very busy programme. So let me quickly move on to the basic data. These are the 2020 averages, based on the data we collected over four periods. Our website also allows you to view separate figures for each period. As you can see, unsurprisingly, we have a high internet usage rate in Türkiye, reaching 94%. Sometimes it is 94, sometimes 95 in different periods. As you know, this is also within the acceptable margin of error. As a result, in a society where internet usage has become so widespread, it would be a significant shortcoming if this issue were ignored, that is, if no data on the subject was produced. Fortunately, we started producing it. 82% of those who say “I use the internet” have a home internet connection. Not only do they have internet access at home, but 82% of them also have it on their mobile devices. And we immediately ask those who answered “yes” to that question if they use social networks. We see a rate of 98% there. In other words, everyone who uses the internet uses social networks, and this is how they are distributed. Of course, a messaging app ranks first. We had a lengthy discussion about how much it was a messaging application, how much it resembled other social networks we knew, and where we would classify it. But, in the end, because we provide detailed information for all platforms and applications, we had no trouble including it in the social network group. We were very comfortable about it. Users can also access the data to change the reading if they believe it should be different. For example, it is worth noting that all this data can be easily cross-referenced on our website based on age, gender, region of residence, and socio-economic status. We also have a really nice interactive panel there. It can also be used. When discussing the use of

social networks in Türkiye, the political dimension of the issue takes centre stage. Twitter, in particular, holds a significant influence in this realm. Let us leave WhatsApp and YouTube aside for now, as they have a different usage trajectory. Instagram is primarily used by young people, while Facebook is more popular among middle- and older-age groups. In fact, the platform that we refer to as a social network falls somewhere in the middle of the frequency-of-use scale. It is not that much. In other words, when we talk about social networking, the possibilities of social networks and consumer behaviour today, we unfortunately ignore the platforms that are most commonly used for manipulation because Twitter is the focal point of political debate. Seeing these details allowed us to make these additional comments. There are many questions. We are trying to find an optimum point, which we find very difficult to do. If you extend the survey, you get more data, but the reliability of the data decreases. Because when you conduct surveys that take half an hour, people try to give quick answers after a certain period of time. We want to provide as much data as possible, but we also want to trust our work. That was the most labor-intensive thing. We have so many questions. We will show you a selection that I believe is important and may be of interest here. I am especially interested in the issue of personal data. When we ask people, "Who uses social networks?" I remember that the rate was around 94%. "Do you think social networking platforms can protect your personal data?" 35% say, "Yes, I think they partially do, but I have my doubts," while 31% absolutely distrust them. Alternatively, we could say that 23% are confident about this issue. A similar picture emerges when we ask "Do you trust the information you get from social networks?" 38 percent of them, especially when we asked them to compare it to more traditional news sources, said, "I think it is a better news source." 34% were skeptical and 18% strongly disagreed. The issue of supervision is one that we all care about. Yes, social media should be controlled. However, this control should not be contrary to their spirit, and they should not lose their speed, ability to speak without supervision, or ability to express themselves more easily. But it should not be a place with no supervision either. This is probably a common conviction among all of us. When we asked respondents about this issue, 54% agreed that it should be controlled, 27% disagreed, and 18% were undecided. Why do those who oppose control believe that it should not be controlled? We can learn this by delving into the data. Those who say "it should not be controlled" have a concern that we can all agree with. They say that freedom of thought and expression should not be restricted. 37% believe "there should not be an oppressive environment." The third one is very interesting for me: 36% think that social networks should not be monitored in terms of the privacy of personal data. In other words, when we look at the issue in terms of social media literacy, we can say that this 36% group does not understand the issue very well. Our concern about personal data in social media channels is how well these channels can protect this data or what they do with it. Or, at least, when we look at the scandals that have emerged in this field so far, we can see that social media platforms are generally unable to protect data, but 36% of Turkish society believes that if these platforms are controlled, that is, if the state or the public supervises them, such a problem will arise. I think this is something that policymakers should focus on. Those who say, "It should be controlled, there should be more control," need to make their point a little



more clearly. The most common reason given by those in favour of control is fake news and information pollution. After that comes inappropriate content that is immoral, and personal data and safety considerations. Others continue at similar rates. Again, this is very interesting to me: 32% of respondents refer to the prevention of insulting and profane language. In other words, we may disagree on 1,2,3,4, which may be more politically speculative and controversial justifications, but I believe everyone in their right mind would agree that these channels should not be used for insults and profanity. However, we observe that 30% of the respondents have a complaint and demand supervision to eliminate this negativity. One of the burning questions is, “Who will do the supervision?” 43 percent think that this should be handled by the public authorities and the state. 17 percent think that social media companies should conduct this in the form of a self-audit. 36 percent think that two actors should conduct an audit together, a double audit. It is not a very surprising result, but I think 17 percent tells us something. In other words, although people use these mediums, they do not trust the work of these mediums too much in terms of internal audit. Therefore, the rate of those who think that “it is best to leave the audit mechanism to them” is quite low. We said it was also a bit business-oriented. There is valuable data for politics, civil society and

the private sector. I think we wrongly ignore this debate, focusing on the political side of the issue, but there is a significant market there. This is an enormous sector. We have detailed questions regarding that sector as well. We have chosen and included some of them here. Türkiye's internet shopping rate is 47%. It depends on how you view it and what aspects you consider, but I think it is a fairly high rate that should be taken into consideration. Since this is the average for the entire country. This includes big cities, small cities, rural areas, all socio-economic groups of A, B, C, and D, and different age groups. Which means it is not only the young people who are taken into account in this average. It is not just white-collar workers. It is not only those living in big cities. In other words, if we have reached a rate of 47%, this means that any Turkish citizen who does not have much income or who is not a university graduate in a remote part of Türkiye has started shopping online. When we divide it into sectors, as you can see, they are clothing, textiles, footwear, accessories, foodstuffs, food service, electronics, cosmetics, beauty, books, and magazines. Of course, we can always compare the 26% shopping rate for electronics with other data, but regardless, when I considered it with the curiosity of a researcher, I found it highly interesting. It is interesting to note that a quarter of online shoppers buy electronic products at this rate, an item with a higher unit price and an area where the user experience is much more individualised. When it comes to device ownership, almost 94% of the population with an internet connection owns a smartphone, and 46% have a smart TV. I won't go through the purchase rates of laptops, tablets and other devices one by one, but again, I think they support intensive, frequent and high access to the internet. I deliberately saved this for last. I know we may be moving on rather quickly, but this is unique data. Gaming habits also do not surprise as you can see in the table. As expected, game-playing habits are high at younger ages. But my humble advice to all of you, not only as a consultant for this research but as someone who shares the same interest in these matters with you, is to please visit the website "sosyalağharitasi.gov.tr" and check the Türkiye gaming habits section and examine the subcategories there. There is data by gender, age and income group. I do not want to say too much and spoil the surprise, but you will find highly interesting data. Let me tell you about just one of them as an example. Until I saw this data, I was thinking, "There is probably a huge gap between men and women." It turns out that the gap in their game-playing habits was not that huge at all. Also, in certain genres, like car racing or platform games for example, I expected a more male-dominated player base. The gap was not that huge there as well. In summary, the point I wanted and sought to explain is this: we have an academically reliable platform where you can easily access all these interesting details that I have only mentioned under general headings, where data is collected regularly. We want to make it more widespread, more effective, and more user-friendly. As a team, we expect and value your engagement and contributions, whether they are providing feedback, sharing your opinions, suggestions, and criticisms, or offering assistance. Thank you very much for taking the time to listen to the last session of a long and full programme on a rainy day in these difficult Istanbul conditions. I thank you very much for listening. Thank you.



Toward Effective Government Communication

STRATCOM SESSION - 5





December 3, 2022

Toward Effective Government Communication



Panel Video



Speakers



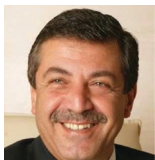
Büşra Karaduman Aktuna

Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye
Directorate of Communications Press and Publication Department
Moderator



Nabil Abu Rudeineh

Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister;
Minister of Information



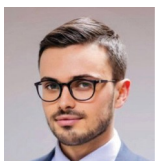
Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu

TRNC Minister of
Foreign Affairs



Murat Karagöz

Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye,
Director General of Information &
Antalya Diplomacy Forum Solidarity
and Steering Coordinator



Rinor B. Nuhii

Advisor to the President of
Kosovo



Büşra Karaduman Aktuna:

Dear guests, I am more than happy to meet you at the International Strategic Communications Summit, which is being held for the second time this year. I felt very lucky when my dear colleague Mr. Gökhan Yücel provided me with the opportunity to moderate this panel titled "Toward a More Effective Government Communication". As someone working in the same field in Türkiye, I am looking forward to hearing the valuable lessons regarding government communications from our esteemed guests here. Today, one of the most important stages of democratic functioning in the context of public administration is government communication because it carries out essential functions such as enabling citizens to obtain information about government policies, providing support for the decisions to be taken by the administrations and enabling citizens to express their will through certain mechanisms. Yesterday, Mr. Fahrettin

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Altun made important remarks about the Türkiye Communication Model, which is built upon the vision of staying on the path of truth in this age of uncertainty. Türkiye is getting prepared for this new era with an authentic communication perspective. We have an ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine on our doorstep, and there are devastating global economic outcomes of the energy crisis and other imminent global problems. But despite all. With these distressing conditions, I think it is safe to say that Türkiye carries out a leading problem-solving diplomacy, and successfully using government communication to convey this globally. Well, I will stop here because I am sure our guests would rather listen to what His Excellency Ambassador Murat Karagöz has to say about Türkiye's government communication. He is the Director General of Information at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he is also the coordinator of Antalya Diplomacy Forum. So, His Excellency, I'm looking forward to hearing what you have to say about the main challenges of Türkiye, especially in the field of foreign policy.

Murat Karagöz:

Thank you very much. I greet through you, the whole audience. Since yesterday, we have been witnessing interesting debates and very valuable presentations as well as the panel. I thank also the Directorate of Communications for inviting me to this panel again. Last year, exactly I was in your place and there were four different panellists from different parts of Europe. Well, while we were evaluating the performances of governments during the COVID-19 pandemic, I remember very well, despite assuming the role of moderator, that I described three successes of Turkish diplomacy in terms of government communication as follows: Number one, Türkiye was very successful actually in terms of evacuation. We have evacuated more than 100,000 Turkish citizens from 102 countries that went through this strategic communication. And I remember I went through the details. And number two, actually Türkiye has reached out to 161 countries. Among them are some allied countries and among them some G7 countries. They provided them with ventilators, medical materials, masks, etc. So, this was exactly the basic message in terms of international solidarity and assistance and cooperation. And number three, I remember very well. They shifted the gear in the field of multilateralism and diplomacy. So, we initiated, in the pandemic era, this Antalya Diplomacy forum, which maybe we can develop in the later part of this debate. But since last year, really, we faced tremendous challenges. What has been proven is maybe the change. Change is perhaps the only constant in our life. Today it changes faster. And more visible. We are passing through an era of rapid transformations. Systems' lifespan gets shorter. And periods of uncertainty get longer. We witness several power centres. And competing agendas. For instance, technology is advanced enough that the food needs of the entire world can be met. Yet we still face today a challenge called food security. And because of a zero-sum mentality. And it is because of this zero-sum mentality that we are facing a multiple crisis from climate change to energy insecurity. It is safe to say that no single country can overcome these challenges alone. So, we need international solidarity and cooperation. However, in my judgment, the main issue is the lack of trust among states. Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu was yesterday in Rome to attend the 8th Mediterranean Dialogue. He described this picture as a vicious cycle. And he basically said that this lack of dialogue feeds distrust. And distrust leads to division and polarization. And these divisions prevent any dialogue again. So, we need to break this vicious cycle. Someone has to take the first step to break this vicious cycle. So, Türkiye, in this case, has a special role to play. Since last year, since last February, we again came back in the diplomacy literature, hard power. We talk again about war and peace. Two big neighbours of us through the Black Sea, Russia and Ukraine, enter the World. And we are suffering tremendously as a neighbour, as a region and the entire world basically. And we have a role to play here. Some people and some circles criticize Türkiye's position, which is absolutely wrong because V2, the principle stands since the very beginning, we rejected the war. We rejected Russia's illegal annexation of some parts of Ukraine. Actually, we did this in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea. We continue to do so. We are a member of NATO. We have responsibilities within the allies. We invoked the Montreux Straits Convention. Actually, Article 19 stopped the passage of warships through the İstanbul and Çanakkale straits. So, the



same is applicable for the warplanes. We do not use our airspace for the warplanes. Actually, we are totally committed to NATO's strategic communication in this respect. But in the meantime, we also believe that we need to talk, and it is no secret that in the Western Hemisphere, only Türkiye and President Erdoğan is the only credible leader who can talk to President Putin and President Zelensky. That leads to some concrete results as well. Istanbul Grain Deal. This Black Sea Grain Initiative is quite an important achievement in this respect and we did this through our dialogue and mediation efforts. Prior to this, actually, since the war erupted... I guess it erupted on the 24th of February, and we conducted this year at the 2nd Antalya Diplomacy Forum in March. So, already in 2-3 weeks, we were able to bring together Mr. Çavuşoğlu, his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts, Minister Lavrov and Minister Kuleba in Antalya. And then both countries' delegations met together in Istanbul, again. We were closer to reaching the deal at that time, but now we are not there, and we all know the consequences. This was one of them. Another achievement is, of course, this business exchange between Russia and Ukraine. Big numbers of people were exchanged again with the facilitation of Türkiye. And last but not least, perhaps it is important to shape. In order to

secure the Zaporizhzhia, I wonder whether I pronounced correctly, the nuclear power plant, again in Istanbul, we facilitate the dialogue between IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency and Russia so that we can take we can reach a deal in terms of this nuclear power plant security. So, what I'm going to say is that we believe that dialogue is an indispensable part, and at the essence of diplomacy and dialogue lies this strategic communication. But while doing this, again, I mean Türkiye continues to be criticized. This is an area of uncertainty, and this uncertainty in strategic communication comes mostly from social media. As was the case yesterday, as the Director of Communications, Prof. Altun, mentioned very well that how Türkiye is targeted badly in terms of disinformation in social media. I do not need to further elaboration on this, but it is enough to say that we keep being targets of particular groups. Armenian diaspora, PKK, PYD, FETO Affiliated groups, extremist right groups. They continue to target social media and in all other media, the efforts of Türkiye. Even very recently, Türkiye has been criticized for this food security deal; although it was an important deal, we did this in July, a coordination centre has been established, and since then, 11,000,000 tons of grain have been exported with 100 and 500 ships. Russia suspended for a while. They were able to change their mind, and as of 19 November, we extended this deal for 120 days. However, I am going to say that some circles still criticize Türkiye. Türkiye is doing this because of domestic reasons. Türkiye is facing hunger, which is absolutely wrong. Türkiye is among the few states... We are quite self-sufficient. We do not need to do this, but the private sector of Türkiye does this import. And you know what? Because Türkiye is among the largest, I underline the largest, larger than Italy, pasta producer in the world. So, for this reason I mean we are importing grain and flour from Russia as well. So, all you know what I am going to say is that these are the challenges and big challenges of the disinformation era. And among them, this Russia-Ukraine war is the most visible one. Maybe I stop here; maybe we can follow up later on.

Büşra Karaduman Aktuna:

Thank you very much. Mr. Ambassador, for your valuable contributions. And distinguished participants, we have the privilege to host the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus here today. Mr. Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu. Considering the challenges the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has been facing since its establishment and its aim to defend itself. It just goes into the international arena. I think government communication is one of the country's strongest structures today. His Excellency, we are looking forward to hearing from you the experiences of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in government communication.

Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu:

Thank you. Dear friends, this is how the international community has approached the Turkish Cypriot people. Our state is the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. We have been talking about manipulation and disinformation. The Turkish Cypriot people have been experiencing this for the past 60 years, to say the least. It is not just an issue of misinformation during the digital era. Technology has obviously improved drastically during the past 60 years, but the discrimination that the Turkish Cypriot people have been subjected to has not changed. What are we doing about it? To begin with, we are not a stateless people. We are treated as such. The Turkish Cypriot people have been ruling themselves since 1963. We were the cofounder partner in the establishment of the long-defunct Republic of Cyprus in 1960. That Republic survived only three years, and as of 1963, there is no partnership one can talk about. But the Western world, specifically led, unfortunately, by the United Kingdom, has chosen to treat the party that destroyed the partnership, namely the Greek Cypriot people. As if they are the natural successors, or what was a partnership? In the process, there was an indiscriminate against the Turkish Cypriots, even though we are a cofounder and equal partners in the partnership. It is a miracle that Turkish Cypriot people have survived this discrimination and this inhuman policy of embargoes and restrictions. In addition, I see resilience here. It is exactly what has ensured that we have survived. Obviously, with the support of motherland Türkiye throughout the whole process. It is a well-known statement of President Erdoğan that the world is bigger than the Five. I hope the world will realize that is so. If one were to talk about the Cyprus problem, it is the United Nations Security Council that has created the Cyprus problem. The Cyprus problem is not what the Greek Cypriots would like the world to believe. If you were to talk to a Greek Cypriot, I am sure many of our guests in the audience would say, "Yes, that's right. The Greek Cypriots talk about the Cyprus problem as if it is a problem that began in 1974. And that it's a so-called Turkish invasion and continued occupation". They do not want to talk about why there have been United Nations soldiers on the island since 1964. 1974 war did take place. That is right. There was a war in 1974, but 1974 was not the beginning of the Cyprus problem. It is the result of the Cyprus Problem. And in a way, it's the solution to the Cyprus problem. The interesting thing is the Western world, led by the United Nations Security Council permanent members, has intentionally misinformed and manipulated the Cyprus problem to serve their own national interests. And in the process, have discriminated against the Turkish Cypriot people. We have been punished all these years for a crime we have not committed. We were faced with attempted genocide back in the 60s. What took place in Bosnia, for example, years later in Europe. We experienced the island of Cyprus at the hands of the Greek Cypriots. When there were United Nations' so-called peacekeeping forces on the island. All these atrocities are reported and declared in the United Nations reports. Yet where is the World media? Does anyone here know about the atrocities that the Turkish Cypriots have been subjected to? Does anyone here know that there is a fully fledged sovereign state called The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus? It is the only legitimate state on the Island of Cyprus. The Island of Cyprus is one island but two states. There is a Greek Cypriot State. There is a Turkish Cypriot State. We are the ones who say who we are. We are the Turkish



Cypriot State, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. That is the truth. Greek Cypriot State pretends to be the so-called Republic of Cyprus of 1960. When it has absolutely nothing to do with that partnership republic. It is a purely Greek Cypriot State. Disinformation, manipulation. That is exactly what took place in Cyprus. What is still taking place in Cyprus? And we are the victims. The world has chosen to glorify the aggressor. The party that destroyed the partnership and punished the victim, us, for a crime we have not committed. I specifically referred to the United Nations Security Council's permanent five led by the United Kingdom. Just the United Kingdom, but the leader is the United Kingdom. The United States. Russia, France. China. Analyse every single country I have just talked about. Their national interests dictate to them to discriminate against the Turkish Cypriot. And they have made sure that they have influenced all the countries in their spheres of influence to discriminate against Turkish Cypriot people. If I were to ask the audience, do you believe that there is a legitimate Republic of Cyprus in place with its legitimate government, which is a member of the United Nations General Assembly? It is a member of the European Union. So, do you believe that there is a legitimate Republic of Cyprus in place? The answer inevitably would be "Yes". It is a member of the UN General Assembly. They are a member of the European Union. So how can you say they are not legitimate? Well, thanks to the Security Council P5, that is exactly what is happening. That is why I am sure I differ from all the speakers who have sat here and exp-

ressed their opinions because we have a unique issue here. To cut a long story short, if you say there is a legitimate Republic of Cyprus, what you are basically doing is playing into the hands of the Greek Cypriots and assisting their policy of discrimination and embargoes against the Turkish Cypriot, inhuman embargo. Our sovereignty is denied. Our statehood is denied. Our identity is denied. And this is supposed to be the 21st century. What are we talking about? It's not just technology, as David said at the beginning. It is much bigger than that. When there was no technology the way we are experiencing today. This discrimination was taking place through the media. Maybe there was no social media back then. I am talking about the 60s. But there was an intentional campaign to serve the interests of the Big Five, which themselves influenced their countries and their spheres of influence, and we have been outcasts. Thanks to the Motherland Türkiye, Turkish Cypriot people have survived. We are a sovereign people with our own statehood. It is a fully influenced state. It has all the mechanisms of any modern state. And we are standing up to the rest of the world. Not just in communication but in every sense of the world with the help of motherland Türkiye. We are an observer member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation under the name of the Turkish Cypriot State. Very recently, after President Erdoğan spoke in the General Assembly, the UN General Assembly in late September and called on the membership of the General Assembly to officially recognize the Turkish Cypriot state. And end the inhuman embargo against the Turkish Cypriot people. Shortly after that, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, for the first time with its official name, is now an observer member of the Organization of Turkic States. So, what I'm referring to is this intentional manipulation, discrimination, and misinformation campaign is gradually being eroded. Thanks to Motherland Türkiye, thanks to the resilience and determination of the Turkish Cypriot people. The way is now open for the international community to come to terms with the real issues on the island of Cyprus, and I am sure the discrimination I have been referring to is not just taking place on the island of Cyprus. It is all around the world. It is, unfortunately, again. The United Nations Security Council membership is the five permanent members who are at the root of every single problem in the international arena. Cyprus is situated in such a strategically significant location that every stakeholder, every major power, and every major institution has an interest in that geography. Water resources, energy resources. Mediterranean, America, Russia, the United Kingdom, Israel, the Arab countries, and the European Union. Therefore, it is not just a problem of Turkish Cypriots versus Greek Cypriots. It is a much bigger scenario. And who are the people suffering for no reason? We are. That is why I have come here today to basically inform the audience in such a short period of time about misinformation, manipulation and disinformation that has hurt the Turkish Cypriot people. I will stop here and hopefully be able to answer some questions from the audience. Thank you.

Büşra Karaduman Aktuna:

Thank you, His Excellency, for your valuable contribution and your vision. Following a regional conflict, Kosovo has been successfully building its governmental structure. As a new state, Kosovo seems to be more dynamic, versatile and able to adapt rapidly to transformations in communication strategies as in every field. Therefore, I believe Kosovo's current government communication practices will present a unique and valuable model for us. Without further ado, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Rinor B. Nuhiu, advisor to the president of the Republic of Kosovo.

Rinor B. Nuhiu:

Thank you very much. Good morning. Everyone, I would like to begin by saying that the incredible line-up of speakers and panellists and this year's Summit is definitely a testament to how important this topic is. It is just another example of the fact that communication, disinformation, and fake news are present all over us, and we have an urgent necessity to tackle them. I think it is very crucial that we understand Stratcom from an education perspective. I think it is very important to understand that media literacy and media education are crucial because of the impact of information. We are now living in an era where information is very fast absorbed, and therefore, it is a platform that can be misused in many cases to distort the truth to push forward very false and dangerous narratives. That is why forums like this are very important to come together and talk about ways that we can tackle these issues. We have many examples of starting from just recently with the COVID-19 pandemic and information revolving around it, elections across the world; there are tendencies all over by different militias and actors to influence elections, development in our region, especially and very importantly, the brutal war in Ukraine. Today, I would like to quickly discuss the case of my country, The Republic of Kosovo; the past 20 years of freedom and the past 15 years of sovereignty and independence have seen outstanding achievements in strengthening democracy and the rule of law and freedoms in general. Just this year, we have seen immense progress in different international indices, starting from the World Justice Project. Kosovo is the second country in the world with the best progress in the rule of law. Media Without Borders has recently published its report that Kosovo is currently the leader in the region, having the opportunity to build resilient, democratic and very strong institutions. However, actors with malicious intents often overshadow these successes. Of course, we are all witnesses to what is happening in Ukraine. Obviously, because it is near our borders, it is in our continent, it has a spillover effect immediately. It is very unfortunate that Putin's malicious intents are also being utilized by his proxies in our region, which is, in our case Serbia. I would like to give you some examples. Just after the war started, Serbia remains the only country in our continent that has not sanctioned Russia and has not condemned Russia's brutal aggression against the people of Ukraine. Not only has it not sanctioned Russia, but it has continuously aided its presence in the Balkans. As many of you know, Russian propaganda machines like Sputnik and Russia Today have been banned in many countries. Not only have they not been banned in Serbia, they have been enforced and empowered. Just a few days ago, just a few days before I came to Istanbul, RT Balkan Service had just opened



in Belgrade. This is very important because this pushes forward Putin's dangerous narrative and it automatically has an impact on their destabilizing efforts not only in Kosovo, but we are seeing what's happening in Montenegro. We are seeing what is happening in Bosnia Herzegovina, and this is very concerning. Not only for national security, but it is very dangerous for European security in general. So, this is why we must tackle it, and we must be more vocal when it comes to having a say in what Serbia is doing in this case. In this case, it is not only Serbian leaders who are aiding Russia. They are playing by Putin's playbook. Today we see traces of Milosevic's dangerous propaganda in the 90s, as you remember, with hundreds of thousands of people being killed and with genocides taking place in our country in Bosnia. We see today from the same people. Serbia's president today is Milosevic's former propaganda minister. Today we see the same people in those same positions, just under a new facade of progressive and peaceful leaders. Unfortunately, many cases appease leaders. I think that the facts that I am outlining are very evident in many reports. Recently I came across a report by the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee that highlights how Russian propaganda machines have increased their efforts and their propaganda in our region, distorting the truth, inciting fear and basically instrumentalizing communication as a platform to attack what we've achieved, which is peace, are very hard-fought peace. In today's world, as David mentioned a little earlier, I really liked it. He said, "We have to be agile, and

we must walk in the same steps as technology". Oftentimes, because we are walking at such a fast pace in technology, it is greatly being utilized by people with malicious intents, in this case by Putin and his proxies, because information is so fast absorbed. Basically, you go on Facebook, and you immediately see information that is not verified, and I think it's very concerning because it is something that can cause fear, can cause riots, it can cause very destabilizing efforts that in our region we've seen, and we've witnessed and we've felt 20 years ago. We must really stand united in ensuring that we do not allow this. I would like to take some examples of what is happening in our country. I mentioned many great achievements that our country has made in different fields. Sometimes and maybe people in the audience, when they come across Kosovo, most of the time, it is not for the achievements that I mentioned. It is for scandals that are created with the intent to overshadow our country. According to the EU Parliament's report and just recently, the EU Commission report was also very harsh on media freedom in Serbia. We have seen very malicious intents to create scandals, fake scandals to ensure that we change the narrative and protect the status quo. So we do not move forward. You know our commitment, which is we are very committed to our Euro-Atlantic path. We want to become a member of the European Union, become a member of NATO. Because there are scandals that are being created in the northern part of our country from Serbia to ensure that, our partners create this narrative that we are an unstable country, that we create very dangerous precedents. This is very problematic because it is being served on the media, and therefore, this is what people are seeing. As I mentioned, the EU Parliament report highlights that in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Montenegro, the disinformation landscape is dominated by Serbian media with the support of Serbia of Russian disinformation networks. Now if you just look into many different international indices, you will see that there is hardly any media freedom in Serbia. It is completely controlled by the government, which has been in power for a very long time, and it currently controls not only the media but also most aspects of life. It is extremely problematic because now we see very hard examples in Montenegro and Bosnia, where people believe the information that is being served. When we talk about the problem, it is evident, we see it every day; we sometimes struggle with the solution. So, what is the solution? I think that for us, it is extremely important that we have unity. I talk about unity oftentimes in the case of Kosovo because in the 90s and late 90s, when we had a war in our country and when people were being murdered for the sole fact of being an ethnic Albanian, our partners came to our rescue. In 1999, our American partners, our Turkish partners, and our British partners came to our rescue with the NATO intervention, as you remember. We really value this unity; we really value this cooperation because, ultimately, this is about values. This is about what we stand for. Our shared democratic values. This leads me to my point in Ukraine. What is happening in Ukraine is a perfect example of how dangerous it is when you distort the truth. How dangerous it is when you create false narratives and make people believe them. You have seen and have heard Putin's outrageous narratives on Ukraine, which I would not even like to discuss because I genuinely hope that people do not believe those narratives, but because of the lack of media freedom in Russia and in many countries, they are led to believe that this is the correct narrative. This is why democracies must

continue to stand united. We must continue to have platforms like this when we discuss ways to tackle disinformation and fake news because we live in an era where we have cyber warfare. We are living in a time of constant cyber attacks. Constant cyber-attacks. We must find ways, we must come together as democracies and find ways that we can tackle this issue and have a common response. I feel like this is very important to emphasize. We must have a common response because our shared democratic values and our security architecture in Europe are in danger right now. We must stand united against Putin and its proxies in their efforts to continue with these false narratives and these destabilizing tendencies in Ukraine, in our country, in Bosnia, in Montenegro, and in many parts of the world. Because otherwise, appeasement does not work; appeasement does not lead to stability, appeasement leads to more instability, and appeasement leads to more wars. We must be vocal, and we must be strong in our response to people like Putin and its proxies in our region. We must also stand united in reporting the truth about what is happening in Ukraine, in our region and beyond. I think it is very important to emphasize that we must continue to stand with Ukraine and we must continue to stand with the people of Ukraine. Thank you.

Büşra Karaduman Aktuna:

Thank you very much, Mr Nuhiu, for your contribution and your call to stay united for the sake of truth. Thank you. And we can run a second round for our panellists to share their additional sentences and comments on the matter. And also, His Excellency said, we can also take your questions to our panellists. We are very welcome. And His Excellency Murat Karagöz, I have a second question for you. I think it would also be very valuable to learn about the multilateral diplomacy tools Türkiye has used for more effective government communication. The floor is yours.

Murat Karagöz:

Thank you so much. As I explained in my introductory remarks, one of the things during the COVID period that Türkiye did was shift gear to multilateralism, giving more way to diplomacy and bringing its role to the forefront in terms of mediation and facilitation. To this end, in 2019, already before COVID erupted, the Foreign Ministry declared three openings. Number 1 is digital Diplomacy; number 2 is Asia, a new initiative, and number 3 is the Antalya Diplomacy Forum. Through Digital Diplomacy, we were able to reach out to larger groups. We created new technologies within the Ministry. We renewed our website. It is now in 10 languages, which is unique in the world. We keep using our network. Türkiye is the 5th largest diplomatic network in the world, with 257 diplomatic missions. We also created digital services for our consular services. Türkiye has about 6 million citizens in Europe and 7 million, perhaps general, all over the world, which is not a number to underestimate. Therefore, it is quite important for us to have 24/7 digital counsellor services. Last year, 6 million people visited our website and get information about Türkiye's foreign policy and its priorities. Within my department, we have created a digital design service. There are experts who are working on this. We keep sending messages through Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to commemorate national days and give important messages from the ministers or deputy ministers.



In terms of Twitter usage, I guess there are more than 1.6 million followers of the Turkish Foreign Ministry. It is number one among European foreign ministries and fourth in the world, which is something to be proud of. We opened up our account on Instagram as well, which is also very popular, and one of the features is that we keep sharing something about diplomacy. I see here many students from different universities in Istanbul. I have constant communication with them, instant communications, by WhatsApp or by phone. They all say that they find it quite useful. As far as the Antalya Diplomacy Forum is concerned, we thought that it is quite important to support, academically and intellectually, the base of Türkiye's foreign policy, as well as diplomacy. In the year 2021, actually, we wanted to do this in 2020. Because of COVID, we had to cancel it. We already put the team diplomacy in the digital age, but they could not materialize it. A year later, the Foreign Ministry was very patient about it. We worked on this, and we managed it. Innovative diplomacy, new era, new approaches. We were able to bring bureaucrats, politicians, media people, private sector representatives, experts, and influencers in Antalya to discuss the issues of global concern with a view to finding solutions, actually discussing them in a quite free atmosphere. Last year was quite remarkable. Although it was only the 2nd year of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, under the team of recoding diplomacy, we were able to collect in Antalya 17 heads of state and government, 88 foreign ministers, and about 40 Secretary Generals of Regional International Organizations. Among them are the OSC and NATO. It was quite an interesting activity. Maybe we will be doing this next year, the 3rd edition. All of you are invited to Antalya. If you are not able to show up in per-

son, you can follow up on social media because, through TRT and TRT World, we were able to reach out to larger communities. Last year was quite successful. An important feature of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum is ADF Youth. We brought from 97 universities of Türkiye 400 students. They were able to sit together with the panellists to pose questions, interact with them during the coffee breaks and then report them having some social media sharing. We will be doing this year in Antalya as well. So, all in all, again, this is a strong commitment of Türkiye to multilateralism and diplomacy. However, before I end, let me how happy I am now being with Minister Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu as well as with my Kosovan friends. I have special feelings for this vote of independent countries, and my sincere congratulations to the Turkish Part of Northern Cyprus for being elected as the observer state of the Organization of Turkic States. Last week you also had a foreign guest, the Deputy President of Gambia, if I am not mistaken, Mr. Minister. So, congratulations to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the right way. I have also familiarized myself with Kosovo; my grandfather is from Pristina. Many greetings to Kosovo as well. Thank you, Ms. Büşra, for this wonderful event. If there are any questions, I will be more than happy to answer them. Thank you.

Büşra Karaduman Aktuna:

Thanks to both of us. Mr. Karagöz, my grandmother, is from Kosovo as well.

Murat Karagöz:

There are 10 million people in Türkiye who have Balkan origins, by the way. Your Excellency, you started with lines from a beautiful poem.

Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu:

Well, I can assure everyone that we are here and we are not going away. We are a reality that cannot be overlooked. If anyone is interested in my remarks again, go to the UN Security Council, permanent Five. If anyone is interested in "solving" the Cyprus problem, then they must change the Security Council resolutions. These resolutions are treated by the international community, thanks to the P5, as if they are binding resolutions. I wish to inform everybody that the Security Council resolutions on Cyprus are advisory; they are not binding. An obvious example of a country that does not follow Security Council resolutions on Cyprus is Türkiye. Türkiye recognizes the Turkish Republic of Cyprus and has an ambassador there. Türkiye receives our ambassador in Ankara, and you do not hear of any United Nations' activity to punish Türkiye. These resolutions are advisory. The more countries free themselves from the influence of the P5, the more the World realizes, as President Erdoğan says, that the world realizes that they are bigger than the Five. The positive developments for humanity, for democracy, for truth will flourish in the rest of the world as the TRNC. As I said earlier, we had a full state. We have all the organs of a modern state. We have 27 Missions outside of Cyprus. Seven of them are in Türkiye. One embassy and six consulate generals. And 20 outside of the Türkiye. Very soon, we will be opening up a few more offices. As you can see, I refer to them as offices because of the lack of recognition we cannot call them embassies. However,

as far as we are concerned, they are our embassies. They do not have diplomatic recognition. The ones outside of Türkiye do not enjoy diplomatic recognition. However, they are there, and they serve to tell the countries they are situated in that there are two states on the Island of Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot state is not the Republic of Cyprus; it is a purely Greek Cypriot state that represents only the Greek Cypriot people. For the Turkish Cypriots, we have our own representation Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. I will hasten to inform the audience that there is no Cypriot nation, my dear friend. There is no Cypriot nation. There is no Cypriot language. There is no Cypriot religion. Cypriotness is a geographic identity. Anyone from the Island of Cyprus can be considered a Cypriot. But there is no Cypriot nation. As such, there is no Cypriot national anthem. Because there is no nation. Even at the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 60, the Greek Cypriots were to continue using the Greek national anthem as they still do. And we were to continue using the Turkish national anthem. So, if anyone says they are Cypriots, the follow-up question must obviously be Greek or Turkish or one of the minorities, Armenian or Maronite. So, coming back to the misinformation and manipulation about the realities of the Island of Cyprus and how we are coping with it. It is a very tough job for us to cope with misinformation and manipulation because of the recognition that the Greek Cypriots enjoy. As a recognized state, obviously, what they say carries more credibility as far as the international audience is concerned because, at the end of the day, it is the Republic of Cyprus presumably saying it. And they are dishing out misguided, wrong UN Security Council resolutions. It is very easy for them to influence their audience. But we



are doing whatever we can to try to inform the rest of the world. The Department of Information is the Department of the Ministry that I represent, the Foreign Ministry. We have been sending information to the rest of the world about the realities of the Island of Cyprus, about the Greek Cypriots, about us, but again, I emphasize because of the recognition that they enjoy, they have an advantage over us. This does not mean that we are going to give up. This makes us even more determined to continue standing up against these difficulties. One example is the embargoes we face; they are all-encompassing in every way of life. We are under embargo. Embargo we are facing and the embargoes we face are all-encompassing in every way of life we are under embargo. One of them is because of the ongoing World Cup Football, we have obviously the Turkish Cypriot Football Federation, and we have 3 divisions. But we cannot play even a friendly game with a team from Türkiye. Why? Presumably, because the Greek Cypriot Football Federation is the Football Federation of Cyprus. And without their consent, we cannot even play a friendly game with a team from Türkiye. This is ridiculous. This is inhuman. But this is just a minor example of the embargoes we are facing. This does not mean we are going to give up. All I can say is, to cut a long story short again, as long as the world treats the Greek Cypriots as if they are the so-called Republic of Cyprus, that does not exist, and we are treated as if we are a community of that state or even worse as if we are a secessionist ethnic minority of that state. Then there can be no improvement towards reaching a mutually acceptable deal as far as the Cyprus problem is concerned. So long as the Greek Cypriots enjoy the advantages that they enjoy and we are at this disadvantage that way we have been all these years. There will not be stability, harmony and peace in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Büşra Karaduman Aktuna:

Thank you. Thank you, Your Excellency. If we have no questions for His Excellency. I also want to say that I now understand why such a young person like Mr. Rinor is advising the President of the Republic of Kosovo. Kosovo's governmental bodies use social media very successfully. I wonder what you would like to say about that.

Rinor B. Nuhiu:

Just a fun fact, Kosovo is the youngest population in Europe. Our average age is around 27 or 28. It is a very young population. I think I represent that today. Indeed, because of this fact, social media is widely used. Unfortunately, I do not have data on the percentage, but I can say very confidently that it is the most used media platform. Therefore, it creates many problems when messages are conveyed. Because of this fact, we have taken it very seriously to ensure that government communication is correct, it is analysed and it is effective. That is why whenever we have tendencies that I mentioned previously from malign actors like Putin's proxies in our region; we tend to immediately utilize social media to ensure that people are well informed about the situation and that the correct reflection of what is happening in the country. Because of the hardships that we have endured for over two decades, I think we have become very good at ensuring that information is

being conveyed correctly. I think it is very important that every time, especially when you come from a government office, the responsibility is much bigger. You ensure that the information that you release is well analysed and the tone is correct. You ensure that your audience will take that information, and it is always with the mindset of ensuring that it does not create fear; it does not create any sort of tendencies in the population. I think our very unfortunate, dark history has made us very agile and very confident in how we use social media and ensure that despite hardships, we can walk in the same way at the same pace. To be frank, I think that is a problem in countries all over. We are looking at great examples, thankfully, but it definitely is problematic with our current digital ecosystem because it is moving very fast, and sometimes, we stand a step back. However, we are trying to ensure that in every new platform and every new communication tool that is released, we ensure that we are in touch with the population, we are in touch with the people that we represent, and that information is always correct, unbiased and true.

Büşra Karaduman Aktuna:

Thank you very much, Mr. Nuhiu. Dear guests, we gained very useful and valuable information about the lessons learned from the valuable experiences of the North Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Kosovo and Türkiye. As we conclude our session, I would like to thank you for your participation today. We are very happy to meet you in Istanbul, Türkiye, and Stratcom at a very important historical turning point, and we hope to be able to meet again next year. Stay well. Thank you.

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SC STRATCOM SUMMIT '22

INTERNATIONAL
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
SUMMIT '22



Sami Hamdi

International Interest Genel Müdürü

Managing Director of the International Interest



Strategic Communication as a Stabilizing Force in Conflict Resolution

STRATCOM SESSION - 6





December 3, 2022

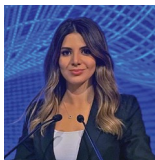
Strategic Communication as a Stabilizing Force in Conflict Resolution



Panel Video

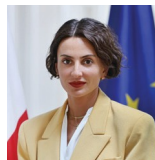


Speakers



Kübra Akkoç

TRT World
Moderator



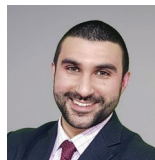
Medea Skhirtladze

Deputy Head of the Strategic
Communication Department
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**Prof. Karen
Freeberg**

Professor of Strategic
Communication at the
University of Louisville



Sami Hamdi

General Manager of International
Interest



**Dr. Maria Saifuddin
Effendi**

Pakistan National Defense
University

**Kübra Akkoç:**

Welcome. Thank you, Alican. Hello everybody. I am Kübra AKKOÇ. It gives me great pleasure to moderate the Stratcom session on Crisis Communication, especially strategic communication and conflict resolution. I believe it is a very timely discussion we are going to have today here. I am joined by very distinguished guests. I thank you all for being here with us. Welcome to Istanbul, first of all. Hope you are having a fabulous time. And so our panel is titled Strategic Communication as a Stabilizing Force in Conflict Resolution. As I said, it is a very timely discussion because the whole world is facing multiple crises at the moment, all at the same time simultaneously, be it a financial crisis, all economies battered by the pandemic, energy crisis. Russia continues to attack Ukraine, and Europe's response to that crisis created instability and insecurity in the energy market and also food crisis. And again, the same conflict, the

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same ongoing conflict in Ukraine, disrupted the whole food delivery system, with the poor countries being hardest hit. But, strategic communication and communication channels might help reduce tensions. While also facilitating mediation processes and even, at times, helping provide humanitarian aid. I would like to dive deep into it and I would like to start with you, Karen, please walk us through your reflections on this.

Karen Freeberg:

Absolutely. Thank you so much and it is a pleasure and honor to be here in Istanbul at the Stratcom summit. I am really excited to talk about my perspective because I come in from a different stakeholder group, as David mentioned earlier, as a researcher and educator in this space. And I feel that Stratcom, as we have talked about over the last few panels and days, has an opportunity to really bring together not only the different disciplines but also different stakeholders to see how we can come together to address all of the crises that are coming forward, and I think that strategic communication, as a whole, is a discipline and profession that is unique compared to other aspects that we do see in related disciplines like marketing and public relations. Because it is not only analyzing and utilizing the different channels, you know that we are able to share stories, provide information, but it is also the application of social psychology. Before I came into strategic communication, I was a psychology major. And so, for me, seeing the power of understanding the motivations, the emotions, the empathy that is needed to really make those human-to-human connections. At the end of the day, tools will change, but human behaviour does not. So, we have to really think about, kind of going back to the fundamentals, and when addressing the crises, how can we as human beings relate to each other, come together to move forward. The use of strategic communications is really about informing and educating, but also understanding the application and challenges as well as opportunities of cross-media. And I study social media, obviously. So, when I talk about cross-media, it is about tying in all of the different components when we look at social media; it is not only about the textual and image information we have. It is the links, it is the comments, it is the feedback, and it is about tying all of those elements together. So, it is very complex when you are looking at conflict management. So, we have to, kind of, be aware of that, and I think in order to be ahead, you know, we can all come together to address these conflicts moving forward. If we take the same strategies and approaches that we have done previously, those might not necessarily work. I really liked what David said earlier about all of these stakeholders coming together to address these challenges, all these states and different countries, because I think for the long period of time, I know just, even in my sector as a professor and educator, we have been siloed in many different ways. We have kind of operated in our own group, but we really need to come together because I think if we were able to come together to formulate solutions, we can overcome this together. And one way we can do that is through evidence-based practice. This is a concept that we see a lot of times in research where we are tying in best practices based on research and theory. That is where the academics come forward. We also have expertise that comes from the industry. We are subject matter experts, but then also we need the experience from our partners. What is their shared experience? Because we're all coming in from different perspectives in order to address these new conflicts and challenges with social



media with fake news, disinformation, and misinformation, we can come together and have a holistic perspective. I do think that education in the media and digital is absolutely necessary and to put light and share some positive news. There are a lot of educators around the world that I know that are really very invested in media literacy because they do see that this is a growing issue that needs to be addressed in the future generation. And so, they are seeing kind of the impacts that we have from a global standpoint related to the need for digital and social media literacy. So, the future is coming up with our students and they are getting more experience in that, which is exciting. And the one thing that I will end here in my short comments is I think we are not only, in terms of conflict management, addressing an issue related to a truth crisis, but it is more of a trust crisis as well. And I think when we're looking at conflict management, we have to look at also, who are we trusting and coming together with the different stakeholders and seeing what we can do to identify really who are the driving forces? Who are the actors? What are the characteristics that make them influential and powerful in this state? And how can we come together, brainstorm ways in which we can combat that proactively together and successfully. You know influencers, actors, through my research, they do share some unique qualities and what we have to think about in this day that we're living in with the constant flux of technology, the constant changes that we're seeing is that first impression, that is so powerful and we can actually measure what

are the characteristics, what are the particular moments and factors that do influence someone to say “OK, I’m going to share this piece of news versus this piece of news.” And so, the research is coming forward and that is where the evidence-based practice model moving forward to address the conflict management and how that kind of line of work can really help strategic communications be a force to come to address some of these emerging challenges. So, I would be happy to answer any other additional questions later on in the panel. Thank you.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you, Karen. I would like to move to Medea. I am really looking forward to hearing your insights about this crisis communication, but also what Karen just said about the trust crisis. I know one of the areas you are specializing in is also disinformation, so I would like to ask if you can also expand on that; I would appreciate it.



Medea Skhirtladze:

So good afternoon, everyone, once again, and thank you for kindly inviting us here. I would like to express our gratitude on behalf of the Head of Strategic Communication Department of the Administration of the Government of Georgia. Participating in such kind of events is always important for us. It has enabled us to share our experience and at the same time familiarize ourselves with international practice. So today, I am going to share broad information about how we started our strategic communication across the government of Georgia and how we implemented the discipline itself, and I will speak a bit about the main document of our department, which is the communication strategy of the government of Georgia. So, everything started back in 2015 actually from the Ministry of Defense. They pioneered the Strategic Communication Department across the government, and later, the MOD was followed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry

of Internal Affairs, and the administration itself, and now I can probably tell you that out of twelve ministries, eight already have strategic communication departments. As for the administration, the way it functions now with this structure, we started working on that in 2019. However, everything moved to a qualitatively, I would say, and significantly new level in 2021 after Prime Minister Garibashvili signed an ordinance on coordinating our strategic communications. According to the very document, we established Stratcom Coordination Group, which is led by the head of our department. The group members come together once a week to discuss current issues as well as future plans. Therefore, I would like to mention that we have great co-operation with two of our main partners, the UK Cabinet Office and the Embassy of the United States in Georgia. Actually, the head of the organization throughout this project is somewhere here in the hall. I would like to thank her as well for the huge effort that they have been doing for us. We prolonged the US project last year for two more years, and this year, we prolonged our cooperation with the UK Cabinet Office for two years or two years and a half actually. Therefore, the leadership of the strategic communication initiative of the sustainable NATO Georgia package is under our department as well. We have set 10 main objectives in 2021, which should be fulfilled in 2021 and 2024 years. Secondly, I would like to give you a brief information about the main document of the department, which is communication strategy of the government of Georgia. We were brave enough, I would say, to start working on that because this is the first document of this kind. There were some challenges, of course; it is not so easy to collect all the strategic communication information from the ministries in one document, but with the help of our international partners and with the use of our local expertise and experience, we are on the on the right track I believe, and the document with the annual action plan will be approved next year. Last but not least, one of the main topics of our summit as well, is disinformation. So, this is one of the main challenges of the 21st century, I would say, and we have mentioned these words several times yesterday and today as well. So, in the 21st century, disinformation has no boundaries, and it concerns each and every society. It is our civil service people and civil sector duty as well to build the resilience of our societies together. In that sense, I would say that since 2021, our department, together with our line ministries, has been involved in a global disinformation-sharing platform. This is the GCHQ platform established by the US State Department and the UK Cabinet Office. Mainly, we share disinformation narratives with each other. Approximately 22 countries are present on that platform, and the main task of that platform is to share the main disinformation narratives with each other and to have the main disinformation trends the taste of main disinformation trends. This is something very important, especially for us representing the region where we live now. So, I believe this is pretty much everything that I wanted to share with you. Thank you once again for hosting us. We have heard so much about Turkish hospitality, but what we have seen here even exceeded our expectations and we wish you a good day. I would like you to enjoy the rest of the conference. Thank you.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you, and I am glad you are enjoying your time here. And Sami Hamdi, I would like to continue with you. We just mentioned disinformation, and the media says it has no boundaries anymore. We are also talking about crisis communication and conflict resolution, resolving conflicts

using tools of strategic communication. If you can, I would like you to answer address also the challenges, ensuring all these while resolving the conflicts.



Sami Hamdi:

Thank you very much, Kübra. Thanks to the organizers for putting on an excellent panel. Thanks to the Directorate of Communications. Thanks to Ali Ozkan, who has also been an excellent liaison officer. And I haven't mentioned him just because I want an invitation to this event again next year as well. But the point here is that when we're talking about communications and strategic communications, I think the reality is first and foremost to appreciate that politics, in its essence, is the science of human relations. It is the science of our interactions between each other. The way we interact with each other on a personal level is the same as nations interact with one another. The difference is that the stakes are higher. The same way that we feel anger, the same way we feel happiness, the same way we feel sadness, the same way we feel fear, nations have exactly the same emotions, but manifest them in very different ways and in ways that affect all of us together. One of the reasons that I mentioned it is that communications, in its very essence, is about changing people's minds by communicating with their minds and with their hearts. It is about playing with emotions. It is about mobilizing emotions, creating a sort of feeling or an environment in which conflict resolution can take place, in which reconciliation can take place or at least the mediation process can take place. This can be seen via a media article by Abdul Khaleq Abdulla, a prominent UAE commentator, who told the Financial Times before the Türkiye UAE reconciliation that in the region, both parties are tired, and it's time to come together to sit down. It could be an article in TRT World in which an analyst states that the time has come for us to work with the UAE because there are great economic opportunities. The good word suddenly causes a sort of momentum in these capitals that says, you know what, did you read that article by that person? Let us sound out whether there is a process for mediation or not. The reason I mentioned that is that when you look at it from a human perspective then it becomes abun-

dantly clear why we continue to have conflicts. And I want to give a few examples. I will only use three or four examples, and then I will leave the rest to you. The first example is one I would take from somebody, who is described as the greatest politician in world history, a man who is described by Michael Hart as the man who influenced the world, the greatest out of any individual ever. He is The Prophet Muhammad (Sal Allahu Alaihi Wasallam). The Prophet Mohammed took his forces to Mecca after 13 years of conflict and was about to enter Mecca. Before he enters Mecca, he issues a communication protocol, he declares that anybody who stays in their home will be safe, and anybody in the home of Abu Sufyan, the leader of the enemy, will be safe. In this communication protocol, with this issue, Muhammad Sal Allahu Alaihi Wasallam declared, "I am not coming to subjugate you. I am not coming to destroy your dignity. I am coming to reconcile and uphold and preserve your dignity." Abu Sufyan understood the message and told his forces to stand down and Mecca continues to this day to be the center of Mohammed's philosophy. Some people may appreciate that this example was from 1400 years ago, but let me give you an example where narratives do not coincide a modern narrative. Tunisia, where I hail from, Sidi Bouzid, is my hometown. It is the town that launched the Arab Spring, where Mohamed Bouazizi, from the village next to me, burnt himself to ignite one of the greatest movements that have taken place in modern times. In Tunisia, the media, the international community, or our narrative on Tunisia was this is fantastic. People have toppled an authoritarian regime. This is romantic. This is a revolution. In 2014, I went to Kairouan, and Kairouan is a city and old Islamic capital. It is a rundown city. It is not well looked after. I went to a cafe during the election period to try to convince people to register to vote and to go and actually make the change to manifest their right to a democratic transition. I stood on the table in a cafe, and I said to them, "Guys, go and register to vote; go, the nation is in your hands." I spoke for about five minutes, and then the crowd gathered, and they said, "OK, OK, OK. Tell us how much you are giving us first. I said, "What do you mean by how much I am giving you?" They said, "Candidate A came this morning and gave everybody 30 dinars." Did he come? Did he not? They said "he did." Candidate B came and gave everybody 40 dinars. Did he come? He came. Yeah. So, Sami, how much are you giving us? I said to them, "Guys, I'm looking for people with honour who love their country, who want to develop it, who want to manifest their right to vote. They're coming to give you money to vote because they know you have the power." He is coming from London to talk to us about honour. Yeah, he gives us all visas to London. You can keep this whole country to yourself. The point is that this narrative was the complete opposite of what the media and the international community were saying. We were hailing the Tunisians for an amazing Arab Spring while the people were saying I want to leave this country and never go back. There were memes on social media showing the departure gates of Carthage Airport, in which it has verses from the Quran which say (speaking in Arabic) Allah, take us out of this country, and if we ever return, then truly we are an evil people. In other words, I do not want to be here. So, last year, in 2021, the constitution is was suspended, the parliament is was suspended, the country is now ruled by decree. There is a unilateral written constitution. The opposition cannot get people on the streets. You go to Tunisia and say, "go and protect your democratic transition." They tell you, "What did these ten years democratic transition give me? You are talking to me as if it is something amazing. I saw nothing of it." This disaster could have been averted if we had appreciated the narratives on the ground, but we did not because we wanted to impose a narrative. We wanted to go top-down and say this is how you should feel; this is how you should think. The absence of the understanding or the synergies between the narratives resulted in the crisis that we have today. Now, I go to the Ukraine example, the third example, now the Ukraine example. Let's remember that when Biden asked the world to stand with Europe,

to stand with Ukraine against Russia, there were many abstentions in the United Nations. There were many in the United Nations who said that we are not going to go along with the US with this. This is a fight between Europeans. It has nothing to do with us. When America lashed out and said, "how dare you do this, implying there can only be one right narrative." The reality is that the American narrative was one in which we need to protect this global order. If you go to see Sidi Bouzid and you tell them to protect this global order, he tells you, "What global order am I protecting?" One that leaves me unemployed, one that leaves me in poverty, one that leaves me in dictatorship, one that leaves me living in the hut that I cannot even fix the roof. "What global order are you telling me that I should sacrifice in order to protect?" the Americans said, "How dare you say this? We will threaten sanctions; how dare you not stand with us on this?" The Russians came out with their narrative, saying NATO is getting closer and they are building military bases. Whether it is true or not it is irrelevant. What is relevant is that there is no bridge between these narratives. But even if there is no bridge, there is no understanding of these narratives. I will almost wrap up on this one. But if I have a pain in my heart and I'm telling you that I'm feeling it, the world is telling them that this pain, you do not feel it or you have no right to feel it. And this is why Türkiye when it takes the third position, when Türkiye says that "Look, I am neither with Russia nor with Ukraine. I will help the Ukrainians here if it means it promotes a mediation process. But it is not A and B. I have a third narrative, a third narrative that means that I should push for stability, peace and mediation process. A third way that lets me talk to Russia and lets me talk to Ukraine. We have a very popular maxim for this, which we call Shaaret Muawiya, the hair of Muawiya. Very briefly, Muawiya said that if I have problems with an individual, to the extent that all that is left between us is a hair, and he pulls on this hair. I will not pull on the hair so that at least I maintain my communication channel. The point is to conclude, to answer your question, is this at the heart of public communications is understanding. I do not need you to agree with me, but I need you to understand me. If a human being is forced to choose between being loved and being understood, they will choose being understood over being loved. Because, at the end of the day, when you argue with your sibling, with your brother, with your relative, with your nation, often when you reconcile, it is not because one says the other was right and the other was wrong, but that you understand where they both came from and you develop a framework in which you cooperate with one another. And you move forward, because what matters is not who was right or wrong, what matters is an environment in which we both thrive, in which we both develop, in which we both prosper. And that's what should be at the essence of all public communication strategy, not necessarily right or wrong, but how can we coexist? Because neither of us is going anywhere. Thank you.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you actually. Thank you. I wanted to ask you, like you mentioned, a narrative being imposed as a problem. How do you think this should be avoided? Like what should leaders or decision makers do to avoid imposing their narrative?

Sami Hamdi:

Everybody likes to tell their story. Sometimes my friends joke. They say, Sami, you love to talk about yourself sometimes. You know, it is nice. Everybody likes it. We have a famous Arab poet who says, (speaking Arabic) I seek protection from the word I. It is natural to human inclination and it is the same with nation states. What the Tunisia example serves to demonstrate is that no matter what you impose top-down if the people do not buy into your narrative, it fails. In Tunisia today, ever-

ybody is shouting 'democratic process, democratic process', and the Tunisians are turning their back on this argument. It is a tragedy that we are seeing because top-down narratives do not work. The narratives that work are the ones that engage in civil connections, interlocutors, intermediaries, working with civil society, going to them and saying, "OK, listen, I might not understand, but tell me I do not agree with you, but maybe we can come to an agreement on the messaging. Maybe we can agree on something here." The point here is that when narratives are taking place, this world is beautiful because of its diversity. Multiple narratives existing is not a bad thing. This is why it is the understanding that is relevant. But the point here is this: when we talk about top-down narratives, how the media pushes one side of the narrative, eventually you get is the environment of repression, and you get angry people, despairing people who no longer believe in the identity that you are trying to push. That manifests clearly in football tournaments. The reason why I struggle sometimes when Arab teams play in the World Cup, like Algeria, Tunisia, where I am from, I will not talk about anybody else. In Algeria, you will sit in a cafe with the Algerian and his dream is to go to Europe. He will tell you "I'm ready to leave this country," Tunisian says, "I'm ready to leave this country." And in that football euphoria, here's a better example in 2018. I will finish with this example. I apologize, but I will finish with this example. In 2018, Egypt was terrible at the World Cup, and they left very quickly in the group stage. A video went viral of a taxi driver driving in Cairo, and he was shouting like he was so angry. He was like, "I want to be happy. I want something in this world to make me happy. I want somebody to understand that I am valued. I want somebody to understand that I mean something in this world, that it is not every time somebody bombs me; I am just a test statistic. It is not every time I see a World Cup, and I am a backward individual. I am a human being with value", and this is the essence of public communication. How do you make someone feel valued? How do you make your opponent feel like he is worth your time? How do you make that person feel like you are the one that I want to sit with. Because when you make someone feel valued, he goes above and beyond for you. So, the direct answer to your question is this. When you impose a narrative, you tell people they are not valuable. You are telling, listen, I will tell you who you are, and I am not interested in listening to you. But when you make people feel valued, they will go above and beyond for you. So much so, they will invite you sometimes to these events and the like and it is not that I did anything to get here. But the point here is that, people go above and beyond to help you because they start to believe in you. The final sentence is this: The essence of public communication is this. We are created with a mind and a heart. Often, we only talk to the mind with facts, but we forget that we also have a heart. I feel something as well. I feel it. If you acknowledge that, even if I disagree with you, I may just for your sake be willing to sacrifice my narrative for yours. This is what we are trying to build. We are trying to build the bridge. This is why I liked it in the panel just before David when he spoke about the human side of tech. It does not matter what technology you create. At the end of the day, me and my brother will fight over some things. We will cry over some things, and we will hug over other things. My sister will call me from Korea when she is stressed, and we will sit down and we will talk about it when she comes. I am happy when she has these emotions. This is a natural human inclination. We should not ignore it. We should embrace it.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you, Sami. Maria so much to react to after Sami's examples. You were nodding a lot as well, so I would like to hear your thoughts and also insights on this.

Maria Saifuddin Effendi:

Thank you. Hello everyone and As-Salamu-Alaikum. I would like to express my gratitude to Directorate of Communications, Türkiye for having me over here. Well, the topic is very close to my heart: Strategizing communication to resolve, manage, prevent or transform conflicts.



Now I would like to start with the bottom line of my presentation. We need to change and shift our lens from information warfare to information crisis management and peace-building process. Now do we have something like that? So, since yesterday, we have been hearing and having a thought-provoking, fantastic discussion on how strategic communication and strategic narratives are developed and how effective they are in enhancing a country's national security objectives and foreign policy goals. But, at the same time, we are struggling with the battle of narratives. You have just asked a question for my colleague Sami. How can we avoid this battle of narratives? I think, first of all, we should kill the strategic narrative that brings up conflict entrepreneurship. Do we need weapons because we have conflicts and we have to fight wars? Or do we need conflicts because we have weapons and we have to make them and we have to buy them, or we have to sell them? Now, these are the two discourses, and we are struggling in between these two discourses. As long as we have a stronger strategic narrative for conflict entrepreneurship from various countries of the world, we would not be able to fight this battle between these two strategic narratives: one from conflict entrepreneurship and the other from conflict resolution. If you look at the last 100 years of international politics and international relations, we have seen two world wars. We have seen the Holocaust. We have seen 40-45 years of the Cold War era. We have seen 20 years of war against terrorism in Afghanistan. We have seen ten years, or more than 10 years, of Afghan war from 1979 till 1991. We have seen war and the conflict of Israel-Palestine issue. We have been seeing conflict

for the past 75 years, in fact, more than 75 years, between India and Pakistan over the conflict over Kashmir. Now what is the strategic narrative we are having? That it necessitated to continue with the conflict. To normalize various forms of violence, including structural violence, cultural violence, and direct violence. So, do we have something which is countering to a war narrative or a conflict narrative? So, last night, I was trying to figure out if we have something that attempts a comparatively powerful competitive strategic narrative that developed the approach of conflict resolution and peace-building procedures. Unfortunately, I did not find a strategic narrative there that is as strong as conflict entrepreneurship because countries justify the rationale to be in the warfare. Countries justify prolonging the conflict in certain conflict zones. There have been hundreds of UN resolutions related to the Kashmir conflict, Palestine-Israel, and various other conflicts, but none of them resolves these conflicts. We did not have a good conflict resolution or a strategic narrative to prevent the Russia and Ukraine war. We did not have enough and sufficient strategic narrative for crisis management and the Kashmir conflict since August 5th, 2019. There has been continuous structural violence happening on the Indian side of Kashmir. India frames it as part of conflict resolution by revoking the semi-autonomous status of Kashmir and integrating it within the Indian Union as two units. Nowhere in the world is a conflict resolved by revoking its semi-autonomous status and the stationing of more and more armies, putting that state on curfew for more than one year, and keeping the political leaders in illegal detention. These are not conflict resolution strategies. These are conflict-escalating strategies. But the narrative is very different. So, my point is that there are a few approaches. There are two approaches that I am proposing. Number one is I have taken it from the discourse of strategic communication. There are three types of narratives, issue narrative, identity narrative, and international system narrative. We have to transform it with the vision and the spirit of peace-building approaches. Now, what is that? So, the issue narrative tells us that we have to focus on conflict, why it happened and why it is justified to continue with it. We need to change this one issue narrative dynamic by putting this one question "Why can't we resolve it? Why don't we resolve it?" It is taking human lives. It is putting us into vulnerability. It is bringing devastation and disaster for human community, global human community. So why cannot we dissolve it? That has to be issue narrative under the prism of conflict resolution approach. Number two, Identity Narrative. Yesterday, my colleague from Pakistan, Fahd Hussain, gave a very good explanation of otherization of the news that your truth is not better than my truth. We work on otherization of enemy, so identity narrative is more related to dividing the conflict actors more and more by putting them into a particular negative demonized, demoralized framework. In conflict resolution and strategic narrative, we try to transform that lens. We try to give similar identity to our enemy as a partner. "Let us collaborate, let us cooperate. Let us talk about it and discuss it and resolve the conflict." Number three is international system narrative. Now international system is supportive to resolve the conflict in two senses: I quote Türkiye example because it has done immensely from playing its role, its very positive role, as a mediator in regional and international conflicts. Two: developing the capacity for mediation and negotiation through various programs that we have also been attending. Antalya Diplomacy Forum is one of the excellent programs that Türkiye has been doing. And Istanbul Mediation Platform... All of these platforms are working together. Similarly, we need to have more such platforms, more such facilitating role, with the approach of peace building and conflict resolution, sustainable peace throughout the global order. Now another approach that I have taken is from the discourse of conflict resolution. It is called as problem solving approach. It has three components. Number one is cognitive belief. We are able to resolve the conflict, like Sami said we are able to resolve the conf-

lict. We do have differences, but let us celebrate diversity. Let us promote tolerance, let us promote respect for each other. Number two: conative related to political will or desire.. Are we willing to resolve the conflict or is conflict too glamorized not to resolve it or not to be resolved? Are we ready to take some bold step towards peace or not? Number three, emotive, compassion... I may sound very pessimistic. Sorry, not pessimistic. I may sound very utopian or ideal, but I have a dream. I am a big fan of Martin Luther King Junior. And I think once we dream, we can achieve it. So emotive is related to compassion. At the end of the day, we belong to global human community. So, these two approaches may bring us together to talk about conflicts and resolve it. It is not that easy, I understand, but we have to work towards it. This is the right time, we should move ourselves from information warfare to information crisis management. Let us not bury it under the carpet. Let us talk about it and resolve it. Thank you very much.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you, and you said there was no narrative stopping Russia's war on Ukraine from happening. Why was that, like why we did not have that narrative stopping that war to start?

Maria Saifuddin Effendi:

Because there is still lack of collective effort. To me world is polarized between two sides. So, one side may be supporting Russia, and the other side may be supporting Ukraine. That is one thing I look at, there is one more thing coming from Pakistan coming from a developing country. There are visual conflicts. There are local conflicts; there are certain conflicts that are going on. Now, we ask a question that we do not define all the conflicts in a single way. We do not feel the pain of various conflicts in the world. The way this new war that is Russian war. I feel a lot of pain because war, at end of the day, is bad, no matter where it is taking place. But it is bad. It brings a lot of devastation and disaster, from humanitarian crisis, refugee migration, internally displaced people, food insecurity, environmental insecurity and various other problems. War is bad. But there are countries, there are conflict zones which feel very discriminated that they have been in conflict, they have been seeing violence for the past so many years and nobody talks about it. So that is also one reason that we see a polarized world. Why that strategic narrative towards peace building with regard to Russia and Ukraine could not win? Because we need to make more efforts to make them realize that war is bad. Sanctions are there, international community is talking about it, but there are not sufficient efforts. We need to be collective. We need to have a collective resolve to stop countries from moving toward conflict or escalating it.

Kübra Akkoç:

All right, so Sami and Maria both emphasize the importance of human angle and Karen, you also mentioned at the end of the day, while establishing these communication channels, we should not be forgetting we are all human beings. Can you please expand on that a little bit more please?

Karen Freeberg:

Yeah, absolutely. I think a lot of times and I look at social media especially, we just see an avatar, we see an account and we forget there are individuals behind that account running and

telling the stories, providing information, managing the conflicts. But at the same time there are many other human beings that are looking at the eyeballs and so, I think so many times, I feel we have focused so much on the technology and lost the human side of technology. I think at the end of the day, you do see most recently the calls for compassion and empathy, building a platform to have that conversation because we are seeing across all different sectors this polarization. People are afraid to share their views or they are afraid to offend anyone. And I think at the end of the day, these conversations need to happen because in order to move forward, we need to be able to have those conversations and as we heard earlier, we need to have a better understanding. If we just assume there could be no solution available, we are already losing the battle. But if we can come in with an open mind saying, here's my perspective. What is yours? Where do we go forward in this process? And I think if we are able to bring those human qualities again and come to the table as nations, as party stakeholders with a concerted effort to be able to have that conversation, I think that is important, because as human beings, conversations and dialogue is important, but I think what really is powerful is the actions that are taken because those are the ways in which we move forward.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you. And Sami, I would like to ask you, you are a foreign policy adviser, and at the moment if you would be advising like Ukrainian and Russian governments, both at the same time with regards to strategic communication, what would your one advice be to them to resolve this conflict?



**Sami Hamdi:**

I think, first and foremost, when it comes to Russia and Ukraine, I think that there is a lack of appreciation, particularly in Moscow and amongst the Russian side, about how Ukrainians view the history of the Soviet Union. The reason I mentioned that is that while Moscow might see the Soviet Union as a nostalgic entity, there is a lack of appreciation, perhaps sometimes in Moscow, that the other states that are part of the Soviet Union have a very dark version of what the Soviet Union represented. I think that this bridge was never made in terms of them actually listening to each other as to why many of these nations were even trying to get to NATO in the first place. You do not go to NATO unless you feel like there is something, that there is a reason you want to get close to them, and I think that perhaps the Russian side never entertained the discussion or the relevance of actually trying to hear why Ukrainians do not necessarily want to be part of them. Equally, the Ukrainians never really appreciated that if you are sitting in Moscow and you open a map and there is a NATO military base established in Europe, and it gets closer and closer and closer and closer. I am not saying Russia is justified. I am saying that if you are sitting in Moscow and you are watching it, you would feel at least even a little bit perturbed. You will feel there is something going on over here. The thing is what I believe with Ukraine and Russia is that the fears on both sides escalated so much with no communication and now we have war. This is why strategic communication is such a relevant topic. I am not saying the war could have been averted, but certainly with the wars that we are seeing here today are the result of a lack of effective communication, not just at state level, but at community level, at societal level and the like. The reality is that coming from the Middle East, for example, like in the US. They have the elections, they have Trump, they have Biden, they have whatever they have democratic process or the like. But when I want a democratic process in the Middle East, I see Obama recognizing authoritarian regimes in the region, then Trump, then whatever. In other words, you are telling me how great your system is and

then you are actively making sure I do not have that system in the region. And then when I tell you, listen, I want to understand why you are doing this. You tell me my opinion does not matter. You tell me, "I'll tell you what your narrative should be." My point in using these examples is to highlight that one of the reasons the world is so polarized despite the technology making us closer than ever is because we are closer than ever technologically, but further than ever away in terms of our understanding of each other or understanding of each other as societies. And this is why I think that one of the things that's good about conferences or even tourism or the like. Part of my business is involved in tourism and getting people to go to different countries. I think that we need to reconnect each other with each other's memories. And I will give you just this one anecdote and end. And I know anecdotes are bad and I know all I did give many anecdotes, but I hope you will forgive me for it. I went to Saint Petersburg and my wife wears a hijab, she wears an abaya, and she is very proud of it. We entered the Peter the Great's Palace. And it is nice, it is nice, it is European stuff or whatever. There is a picture on the top of a sinking ship of a navy, which is burning and falling down. So, the tour guide looks up and she goes, this is my favorite picture. She looks at Sümeyye up and down and she looks at the picture. So, I asked her what is this picture about? She said it is the day we defeated the Ottomans. I said, "Whoa", this is a socio-historical memory that might have been a microaggression, but that is my first interaction with the Russian. That is my first interaction with somebody from Moscow. My point is that communication such as this can also work on other levels in terms of, yes, that might have been a microaggression, but the more we get closer to each other and listen to each other, the more I believe we will find common ground. And today, in the environment we live in today, nobody listens to each other. We are all shouting loud, no one is listening to the other. And now we are like bullies in the playground, punching each other and kicking each other, and still shouting that we are right and we are right and we are right and we are all paying the price for it. COVID is everywhere. Inflation is everywhere. Economic crisis is everywhere. We see all this chaos and conflict. For me, going to Tokyo used to be 11 hours. Now it is 14 hours because we cannot go via Ukrainian airspace. That is a long time. I do not like flying. But the point is that for public strategic communication, we need to tone down a little bit. I get it. I present on TV sometimes and I give interviews. I know people love negative news. Why has been Salman doing this? Why has been Said doing this? What does Türkiye want to achieve and power empire, etc. I get it. But sometimes it is nice that when Eid comes, for example, or Christmas or these celebrations, sometimes on Eid, even if you argue with a family member, you invite him for dinner because it is Eid. It is an opportunity for you to sit down at least in a common platform and say, you know what, let us take this opportunity to talk and I will finish on this final point. I promise Kübra, final point, and I'm sorry audience. It is just that I really want to deliver this particular point. You know when you are greeted at the door by somebody, if somebody says to you "hi", it's cold, you notice it, you feel it. You ignore the person you walk by. "Did you see the way he said hi", if somebody goes "Merhaba, Hello. Hi, how are you?" The way Ali did to me yesterday, mashallah. You know, when he came here, Sami, here you go, here is your water, or whatever. I have never met the guy before but I feel valued. I feel thank you, you know, like thank you. It makes a huge difference in the interactions, you know. But this is my point, if a state is arguing another state, when UAE put on a huge grand reception for Erdoğan, they did it for a reason, for President Erdoğan, sorry, sorry, but I'm in Türkiye. They did it for a reason. It was to say, listen, we may not like you. We have had our issues. We are still wrestling in Libya, but I am taking a gamble here and I am doing something nice because I want to see if there is room for us to cooperate and President Erdoğan reciprocated. When they came here, they say "Merhaba, asker." You know, it makes a big difference because we are human beings and the reason I gave the example of being greeted

at the door is see how you feel when they greet you nicely and see how it in encourages you to treat that person. It is the same on the nation level, it is the same at diplomatic level, it is the same on state level, and it is what public communication should be encouraging. Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh. Thank you.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you, Sami. Maria, do you agree with him?



Maria Saifuddin Effendi:

I do agree with him. Nonviolent communication matters a lot. And as a student of conflict resolution, we believe in that. The moment you look at a person with a humane expression and give him a smile, that is the moment that conflicts usually are resolved. I am not saying that hardcore conflict can be resolved by a cup of tea or, you know, exchanging greetings. But I would like to quote one of my teachers, Betty Bigombe. She was chief negotiator of Ugandan peace process. So, she was lecturing on the role of women in peace process as a negotiator or mediator. And she said that Joseph Kony from Lord's Resistance Army would not come to the negotiating table. She called him "My son, would you like to have a cup of tea?" And he was engaged with this just one expression, which is very normal expression coming from a woman, an elderly lady, that actually made him engage in negotiation for next three or four years. This did not resolve the conflict, but at least it made a way. So, I think the humane side of human beings is good mannerisms, a little bit of peaceful way to talk about things that matter. So, I do agree with him. Thank you.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you. Medea, Sami said, "We do not listen to each other, and that is where the conflict actually starts." What do you think?

Medea Skhirtladze:

Well, I would agree and thank you for everything you just said. I think that in communication everything is about perspective, how you see stuff in front of you. You might see that something looks like this way, but from another perspective, from each side there are different positions. Sometimes they have their perspective and the fact that I do not agree with someone does not mean that his or her opinion could not exist. I mean I have my perspective and my background and some other people have their perspective and their background, and it is all about listening. I would agree it. It does not mean that you understand and you agree in everything what someone says. At least you should understand the perspective and the point of your rival and not enemy maybe, but of someone who is sitting in front of you. So yes, thank you for everything you said.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you. Karen, are you optimistic that like leaders or decision makers would be able to apply while establishing crisis communication channel? Will they be able to apply all these fundamentals and acknowledge that it actually starts with very basics like even listening to each other and establishing the narrative, understanding, acknowledging each other's problems?

Karen Freeberg:

I would have to say I have always been an optimist person, and I do think events such as the Stratcom Summit, where we are bringing in so many stakeholders from 22 different countries, is a great start that we are having these conversations, we are making inroads. And I also think as someone who works with future professionals in strategic communications, I can see that they are getting the information that they need and they want to make a difference. They say that they do see with conflict management, they see the issues that are happening around the world and they are motivated to take a part in it. So, I do think that we are moving in the right direction. We are having these conversations and we are acknowledging that there is an issue. So, that is the first step. Is this going to happen overnight? Probably not. But I think if we are able to take those small steps together, we will be able to eventually make inroads, but I think we are moving in the right direction, especially with events such as this, and I think what we need to do is continue the conversation. We need to continue having these partnerships, collaborate, brainstorm, and formulate relationships here so that we can see what we can do together. How can we utilize all of these different perspectives and formulate these new partnerships and brainstorm even more solutions and ideas? And so, I think this is a jumping-off point for us to move things forward in this community. So, I think that is the inroad and pathway that we need to go to really solve this, and so that is why I am optimistic about it.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you. And I really would like to conclude on this very note, being optimistic; if all the panelists also agree on that, I hope you are all optimistic, including you, Sir. Are you optimistic?

Sami Hamdi:

I am. I am optimistic and because we have Georgia here. I will tell you something very, very interesting about this. There was a World Travel market in London for the tourism stuff. So, I wanted to bring some Muslim groups as well, to Georgia, to whatever. There were some Muslim countries that were looking and they were like, "Look, we can provide this, but Georgians, they looked at us, me and my wife sitting down, they said, "Listen, we know Muslims don't drink alcohol, but Georgia has so much to offer. We can offer this itinerary and this and this. That understanding, when we went home, we were like fascinated. Georgians understand us. We did not even need to explain it. She just looked at us and she knew automatically. Look at the itinerary they presented. It is really good. The fact I talked about that in my own home after that interaction summarizes exactly what it is about the public communications. You do not need to be right or wrong. But while we're having a discussion, humanize me. Show me that you recognize me as a human being, and we could take it from there. If we fight, we have an avenue to resolve it. If we argue, we have an avenue to resolve it. But as long as you deny my humanity, we will keep fighting till the end of time.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you. Does Georgia want to respond to this?

Medea Skhirtladze:

Well, it all means that we have so much to offer to other countries. So, it sounds great, and you are all so welcome to visit Georgia, and it sounds great. So, thank you for this comment.

Kübra Akkoç:

Thank you all for being with us today here on the Stratcom Summit. Karen Freberg, Maria Saifuddin Effendi, Medea Skhirtladze and Sami Hamdi. It was a real pleasure to have you on this panel, and I really want to thank you for making time to come to Istanbul to be with us.

Sami Hamdi:

And sorry to the translators, I was warned not to speak too fast before, but I see people playing with their headphones. Translator, I am very sorry, but thank you. Well done, give them an applause, please.

Kübra Akkoç:

And thank you for listening to us.

SC STRATCOM SUMMIT '22

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION SUMMIT '22



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The Role of Intelligence in Counter-Terrorism

STRATCOM SESSION - 7





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The Role of Intelligence in Counter-Terrorism



Panel Video



Speakers



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Dr. Cavid Veliyev
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Dr. Hamoon Khelghat Doost
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**Nazif Mentem:**

Hello. Working with the professors has been quite thrilling from the beginning because we actually work in these fields. I approach the issue from the media standpoint, while our panellists approach it at an academic level. I would like to give the floor directly to our panellists without much delay. Associate Professor Ali Burak Daricali many of you may already be familiar with him, but I wanted to present him once more. Why are this event and the remarks herein important, Professor? We may start by commenting on this.

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**Ali Burak Daricali:**

Such communication activities and events of this kind, in my opinion, are very important in terms of combating black propaganda, especially in terms of preventing terrorist propaganda activities, raising awareness or fostering social media literacy. Specifically, as you are aware, it has been two weeks since we had a Taksim attack. Speaking of which, I want to reiterate my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives; that attack has demonstrated once again that the most crucial aspect of terrorism is propaganda. Stated differently, it is an activity that seeks to instill fear and violence in society for political gain through means that are different and more impactful than the conventional ones. It is already included in the universal definition of terrorism. During the early phases of the attack, people shared horrific footage of the dire situation in a senseless manner. I am sure individuals present in the hall now, too, have received them. After the first shock, a restriction was put in place within the legal framework provided for by the new internet law. We must address this issue from two angles. As soon as you have this restriction in place, you not only prevent black propaganda and terrorist propaganda, but you also prevent the flow of accurate information into society. However, it is also necessary to allow

accurate information to enter the system. This is also very important. In terms of informing state institutions, you are completely invalidating the possibilities offered by social media. At this point, you may consider this a negative situation at first. However, I believe this is due to rushing or being unprepared. Citizens must raise awareness on this matter. Individuals should understand that sharing such images can actually aid terrorist propaganda. I often handle the matter on social media and TV broadcasts and inform my students. I actively strive to spread awareness among those I interact with. This gruesome face of terrorism must be prevented from being displayed to society. At this point, rather than implementing a ban, it is crucial to ensure that the public receives education, awareness and media literacy. As an academic who studies terrorism and intelligence, I find this event to be highly valuable. University students often approach us during our interactions while enjoying tea and coffee indoors. It is especially this group that uses social media. At this point, citizens, as well as the state, have a great job to do in preventing terrorist propaganda through the use of social media. Events of this kind are very important in terms of creating awareness and revealing this interaction. I wish it would continue in the future. I will participate in such activities with all my means. In conclusion, I may comment on it like this in general.

Nazif Mentem:

Thank you, Professor. We often discuss what terrorism can take away from us and where it may lead. The professor's remarks have been highly valuable. Footage, images, or visuals shared and circulating on social media can sometimes be more effective than a weapon. It may play into the hands of terrorism. Therefore, media literacy is important at this point. As someone in the field of digital media, I can say this clearly. It can result in very problematic situations. Therefore, the professor frequently presses on the matter. He often discusses it in his classes and explains it to his students. I want to proceed and present Professor Kaan Kutlu ATAÇ. The professor and I have actually been working on the matter for a long time. We handle it at the academic level. Sometimes, we talk in broadcasts, but I would like to hear your thoughts on this event first and then continue with our panel.

Kaan Kutlu Ataç:

Thank you. A crucial aspect of strategic communication relates to the future development of the relationship between the intelligence organisation and political authority. I have a topic related to political geography that I would like to discuss with you in this context. To begin with, let me provide an overview of how this political geography will be shaped in the future. As is known to everyone, there is this famous quote from Charles Dickens's "A Tale of Two Cities": "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity." Therefore, we are concerned about how the future world will be shaped, particularly about how we will use the age of reason in relation to the measures to be taken against terrorism and keeping terrorism under control. For both the elimination of this concern in legal terms and ensuring state continuity, we have intelligence organisations, a structure or an umbrella of intelligence organisations in place, which play a vital role. I want to state that we have entered a new dimension in the age of terrorism, as presented in this framework. In the relevant fight against the matter, or maybe in the upcoming process, it may be necessary to clarify how systematic information to be collected by intelligence organisations will serve the operations to be conducted by the political authority to ensure the continuity of the state. After the 9/11 attacks, an investigation report by the US Congress found that the US intelligence structure lacked imagination. It is quite an interesting process. This emphasises



the need for imagination to prevent such attacks. In what sense should we use our imagination? In the relationship between the intelligence organisation and the political authority, the latter naturally has significant concerns vis-à-vis the public regarding how the defensive structure will be shaped for the prevention of terrorism and terrorist attacks, which only current intelligence can provide. But beyond dealing with the surface of the issue, developing imagination requires a comprehensive approach. As I understand it, two key factors in this process relate to the relationship between intelligence organisations and terrorism. As we witness the escalating Migration of Tribes in the current era of terrorism, it becomes clear that this trend is likely to continue in the future. Consequently, the intelligence agency is tasked with addressing social decomposition by strengthening the bonds that uphold society. A different role of the systematic information structure and the preventive intelligence that it provides to the political authority will unfold within the framework of the said task. How so? The tension between political authority and intelligence, which strives to keep pace with the media's inundation of information, must be eliminated. In other words, in regard to counter-terrorism intelligence, the primary objective of the intelligence agency is to establish a clear and unbiased vision for itself, free from any political pressure put by the political authority striving to maintain power during an election cycle. The underlying task for the intelligence organisation here is to "train" the political authority. Therefore, how the objective structure brought on board by professionalism will be used is crucial for strategic communication. Based on these efforts, strategic communication must be taken to another level within the structure between the intelligence organisation and the political authority that exercises state authority. In what way must this be approached? This is a projection task amidst the uncertainty and unpredictability of the future. In combating terrorism, or at least in efforts to manage it, this expectation must remain realistic within the confines of our imagination. Therefore, it is vital to make a projection within the relationship between the intelligence organisation and political authority. To achieve this, it is necessary to envision the future and move beyond current values and prior lessons. I actually have a proposal for a new organisational structure, which I call "hybrid professionalism." It is necessary to combine the professional qualities of diplomats, soldiers, and intelligence officers into one single unit. That is to say, within the framework of strategic communication, a separate cluster structure is required in the second half of the 21st century, which will ensure the transition between the intelligence organisation and the political authority. Let me answer the question, "What potential lies for Türkiye in this context?" Here lies an advantage, an opportunity for Türkiye. However, political authorities must demonstrate a will to establish an appropriate framework to use it. In a Q&A session, I can further elaborate on the benefits of this hybrid professionalism and the relationship between the three professional officers.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you very much, Professor. You mentioned a concept that can actually go into the literature. I am also very excited. I would definitely like to hear you elaborate on this. However, we are actually talking about the role of intelligence in the fight against terrorism, and as you know, terrorism has become a global concept. I think there is no need to say that terrorism is a reality for everyone, a problem for everyone. Therefore, I would also like to give a word to Professor Cavid. I would like to have an evaluation from the perspective of the Azerbaijan axis. What information could you provide us on the use of intelligence for counter-terrorism in Azerbaijan, and what is the current state of intelligence in the country?

Cavid Veliyev:

Azerbaijan experienced multiple terrorist attacks following its independence in 1991. The attacks were both perpetrated by terrorist organisations and sponsored by various states engaging in intelligence activities. Therefore, the terrorist attacks on Azerbaijan were not limited to terrorist groups. The country experienced a state-backed terrorist attack, too. We also encountered a similar situation during the occupation of Azerbaijani territories. On the one hand, separatist groups there were armed, and on the other hand, they attempted to increase this instability across Azerbaijan. The Baku subway was blown up, and assassinations were perpetrated across Azerbaijan, which specifically targeted those involved in the country's political and security decision-making processes. One such example occurred in November 1992, when the separatists assassinated the interior minister and commander of the special forces in a helicopter. These actions were, in large part, a terrorist attack. Azerbaijan had only recently gained independence and lacked sufficient intelligence capabilities at the time of the attacks. This continued in the following periods. There were various underlying reasons. The first one is Azerbaijan's geostrategic position and the energy resources it possesses. This is not only about Armenia. In other words, when describing the geographical position of Azerbaijan today in the West, they say, "A sandwich country between Iran and Russia." Indeed, our country has experienced this firsthand, and it has continued until recently. We have witnessed the impressive capabilities of Azerbaijan's intelligence agency during the Second Karabakh War. In fact, the Second Karabakh War also represented a war of intelligence. The territories had been under occupation for 30 years, and we needed to know what went on behind the front lines, as our ultimate goal was to liberate those territories. Consequently, extensive intelligence work was conducted, and the outcome of the war demonstrated Azerbaijan's success in this field. Currently, the Azerbaijani intelligence agency has a specific target in three aspects. First, in the region where Russian peacekeeping troops are present, we now can monitor every person and vehicle that enters and exits the area every minute and every second according to the works conducted there, with the help of technological support and as understood from the statements released by the intelligence agency. For instance, several days ago, the Azerbaijani intelligence agency reported and shared facial



images of individuals who had arrived from Iran and arrived in the region where Russian peacekeepers were stationed. However, you may be aware that Azerbaijan is located 5 km away from the road that Russian Peace Troops and Armenia share. Nonetheless, we are technologically capable of controlling it. Ten days ago, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Intelligence released a statement regarding the detention of several individuals with ties to Iran. Look at the area in Karabakh where there are Russian peacekeepers. The Russian peacekeepers stationed there are supposed to prevent this, but they allow outsiders to come there. Recently, a wealthy Armenian entrepreneur was granted permission to operate in Russia, placing a significant burden on the Azerbaijani intelligence agency. In other words, in this sense, there is a very heavy burden on the Azerbaijani intelligence agency at the moment, and even though this is only visible outside with an Armenian attack, there is a very heavy burden on the Azerbaijani intelligence agency to fight in three directions. This burden is further exacerbated by occasional attacks within Azerbaijan, further straining the capacity of the Azerbaijani intelligence agency. When we evaluate the

Second Karabakh War in terms of intelligence warfare, then we can see that Bayraktar TB2s have been very useful for us. They significantly altered the course of the war. They would even say, "Azerbaijan fought a fifth-generation war, while Armenia fought a third-generation war." We could see this through the lens of both the technologies and weaponry they utilised. There has been a heavy burden on the Azerbaijani intelligence agency, but in recent years, there has also been a notable recovery. This issue not only pertains to intelligence efforts but also directly affects the future of political, economic, and energy projects in the country.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you, Professor. Now we have another very valuable guest: Hamoon Doost. He works very intensively on these issues in an academic sense. When we say terrorism, we can actually evaluate it in conjunction with many different adjectives or words. Still, among many other studies by the professor, some have recently focused on gender and terrorism. I will ask you to elaborate on it, Professor. Fundamentally, what point has the relationship between gender and terrorism reached, and how do you evaluate this?

**Hamoon Khelghat Doost:**

Thank you very much for that. My apologies in advance. My Turkish is not at that level of coverage; I am making a conversation as it is now, but I hope that it will be good enough in English. Thank you so much for having me on board today. It was great to hear the presentations throughout the day, especially on this panel. They were talking about more than what happens on the field. But coming from academia and being a teacher at a university, one thing that is very important to pay attention to in the world of today is that everything is becoming more and more inclusive nowadays. When we go around the world, we are talking about inclusivity in any way possible, about gender, about religion, about sexual orientation, everything. So, one of the things that is also very important to look at is inclusivity when it comes to fighting terrorism, intelligence and other things that have been traditionally defined as male domains. So, even if you look at the panel that we have here, we are talking about security, but it is a male-dominated panel, which is truly understandable. It reflects the world's situation today. So, for this reason, there is a huge demand to bring the gender perspective into what we would rather call countering terrorism or gathering information. There are a few things that we need to pay attention to as well. There are quite a lot of misunderstandings and also prejudiced ideas or miscalculations about the whole idea of what terrorism and counter-terrorism are, specifically

when it comes to the matter of gender, specifically women. For example, many of us in today's world think that women are being involved in terrorism because of some personal emotional injuries that they have in life. They have lost somebody in their lives, and that is why they want to take revenge, and they intend to join terrorist organisations. That is a false thing. Women in Jihadism or terrorism - all these violent activities with the same motives that men have - is something that has to be taken into consideration. We have to understand that at the moment that we are talking, in the past year, 25% to 26% of all the people who have been arrested under terrorism charges back in the European Union were women, and the number is increasing. We have to understand that thousands of women from all around the world have left their homes and their families and joined ISIS. So, these are alarming things that we need to understand. And in order to understand the target and how to counter them, we need to understand why they do this kind of stuff. And if we are going to continue business as usual, these women are nothing but just some psychologically problematic, injured kind of people. It does not work. That is the first assumption that needs to be corrected. The second assumption is that women are always the victims. This is very important in the literature and also among the practitioners; unfortunately, we have this approach that women are victimised. It means that they are nothing but victims. We are stripping women from the agency, and that is another very important thing. Women can decide on their own. Women can actually choose what they want to do. In many cases, joining terrorist organisations is a choice and a kind of informed choice. So that is also very important. Another thing that is also very important to realise is that when we understand and fix the misunderstandings that we have about gender and the connectivity of that with terrorism, then we can actually think about whether our counter-terrorism policies, activities, and practices are in line with the changes that we see in the field. So, when we see the number of women increasing, when we are saying that the reason for them to join these organisations is quite different from what we were thinking, we have to ask ourselves, in the position of fighting terrorism, are we on the right track? Are we equipped with what we are supposed to do? There are better practices nowadays than in previous times. We are seeing more and more women officers there. When we have women there, and when we bring gender perspective, we are getting a more holistic understanding. It means that some points, some ideas or some initiatives that we might miss because of looking at everything from the masculine point of view would be brought up. When we talk about this kind of stuff, we also need to pay attention to the fact that a specific event comes to the media. We also have to be very careful about how we portray gender when it comes to counter-terrorism. When we talk about women in counter-terrorism, we are not talking about a superficial thing; we are not talking about a few pretty women in uniform on the field and this kind of stuff to satisfy the fetish of some people. No, we are not talking about this kind of stuff. We are talking about the real involvement of women in different aspects, in different sectors of counter-terrorism. As I said, terrorism is becoming more inclusive at the counter-terrorism level, and we also need to be very inclusive. For that reason, understanding the target and the

audience is absolutely important. If our audience is evolving, it is very illogical for us to fight that evolving nature with the tools that we have been using there for ages. So, we need to think about this kind of thing. What happened in Taksim a couple of weeks ago actually raised the alarm that things should be looked at from a different point of view. So, women are not victims; women are joining terrorist organisations with the same motives as other people and at the same time, women are not the pacifist thing that we are thinking about. I can just invite you next time when you are passing by a metro station in İstanbul, for example. Just imagine there are some security forces there, and you can actually sit or stand there and look at the thing for a few minutes and see how many women are being stopped there at the metro station. Hardly any. Who are the ones being stopped and asked for IDs and this kind of stuff? It is 100%, I can tell you, male. So, these are the things that we have to think differently about in order not to be hit by terrorists. That is the gender point of view, thank you.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you. Professor Burak, intelligence is now a concept that is constantly developing and undergoing transformations. The methods of collecting intelligence are changing. The opportunities brought by technology can advance to other points, but from today's perspective, how do you evaluate the future of intelligence, particularly in terms of counter-terrorism?

Ali Burak Darıcalı:

Now, after making a general and brief assessment of the future of intelligence, I would like to elaborate a little more on the main theme of the conference. Now, technology is always one of the most important factors shaping intelligence in the future. Technological developments are the most fundamental paradigm that directly contributes to both news-gathering techniques and analysis techniques. In this context, as a sub-heading, we may point out especially the use of artificial intelligence algorithms in intelligence analysis, the use of cryptocurrency opportunities in the planning of covert activities, and covert actions. We can evaluate Dark Web applications and the illegalities therein under this heading. Intelligence services have important duties in the development of cyber espionage activities and cyber-attack activities in terms of defence, that is, in terms of both cyber defence and cyber-attack capacity. The issue I am going to talk about separately is the manipulation and perception management activities that take place through social media. I will elaborate on this. Another topic, which is a fact, is that private intelligence companies are now in a very important position in organising and planning intelligence activities. This is also obvious with concrete examples. For example, the Wagner Company of the Russians or the Blackwater Company of the United States from the past, which has now become an academy, have now reached 60% of the contractors, or what we call outsourcing in the United States system. It is said to use 60% of the budget. The place and position of private intelligence companies in the organisation of intelligence activities will be significantly shaped

in the future. At this point, how these companies will be audited and how they will be placed on a legal basis is a very big problem. However, it is a fact that private intelligence companies are now part of this ecosystem. Hence, this is also very important. In addition, the democratic system of control and oversight is always a subject of debate in intelligence. Especially what limits should parliamentary oversight have? After such an expansion of these activities, intelligence activities must be supervised by mechanisms that balance and control one another if your country is a democratic state. If it is a country like North Korea, it does not matter. But if your constitution embodies “democracy”, you have to control your intelligence mechanism. If anyone has the view that “intelligence cannot be controlled”, you should know that this is a view that belongs to the Cold War period. This is indisputable. This is one of the important points that will shape the future. Another point is, as I said, disinformation activities on social media, especially terrorist propaganda. Why is social media of great importance to terrorist organisations in terms of propaganda? Because social media has no cost, there is no need for a fee. You can circulate a large amount of data across continents in a very short time; you can turn it into hashtags around the world. The crypto feature allows users to disguise themselves with various VPN applications or pseudonyms or through Wi-Fi access in public areas, and after carrying out terrorist propaganda on social media, they can carry out this activity without being caught at



all. A very typical example is the Fuat Avni issue in Türkiye. The disinformation activity carried out by FETÖ members under the pseudonym Fuat Avni is a typical example of this. In other words, by getting a fake cell phone and a fake line and using Wi-Fi in public areas, they carried out a very serious disinformation activity in the country for a year. It is an activity used by a pool of 10 people. This is a very important issue as an example. Another point is that social media has become very interesting, especially with the visuals and humour in these videos, shocking horror videos, and attention-grabbing materials. As a result, you can interact with the younger generation very quickly through social media communication. Another point is that your disinformation distribution system on social media is flexible. In other words, if a post you make gets a reaction, you can change it, you can even delete it, and you can add it later. In other words, there is a mechanism that you can constantly improve and the effectiveness of which you can increase. For these reasons, social media plays a very important role in terms of propaganda for terrorist organisations. Let me finish with two concrete examples. First, for example, those horror videos of DAESH that you know about. Those videos of people in yellow jumpsuits decapitating people are extremely striking; with the disinformation activities they carry out on social media through those videos of atrocities, the horror images with those short videos, suicide bombers, the Rashid music in the background, hymns – that is what they call it – in that climate of fear where they created an impressive propaganda system with really professional shots, the Iraqi Army clearly left Mosul to DAESH out of fear in 2014 without a fight. Despite all the weapons and training, they left Mosul almost without a fight. Then they took it back at great cost. In another activity, for example, during Türkiye’s Olive Branch operation, we encountered a disinformation strategy used by PKK circles on social media. Now, those studying terrorism know very well that terrorist organisations copy one another. Terrorist organisations maintain their activities by copying one another. In other words, the PKK copied the systematics used by DAESH. Even if it did not use it as effectively as DAESH, we have seen that the PKK tried to implement a systematic disinformation strategy, especially during Operation Olive Branch. For example, by showing a helicopter shot down in other conflict zones around the world as if it belonged to the Turkish Armed Forces, or by manipulating an image of a conflict, they tried to present a perception that did not exist, that was fabricated. I have mentioned this before in our programmes with you. For example, if you follow those well-known news agencies of the PKK, almost every week, two or three helicopters of Türkiye are shot down. If you make a one-year inventory, you will see that the Land and Air Forces of the Republic of Türkiye do not have that many helicopters. But this is how it is all the time. Every week, there are so many casualties, so many helicopters are shot down, but the Republic of Türkiye does not have so many helicopters in its inventory. At this point, social media plays a very important role in the creation of propaganda by terrorist organisations due to the advantages it offers. This will also be important in the future. I would like to draw attention to this point in line with the main theme of the conference.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you, Professor. You also talked about DAESH's method. You mentioned the technique of using social media. These can actually change over time. They were technically using other social media platforms before, but now they are trying to do it again through a messaging application. They are now trying to carry out propaganda a little more actively through Telegram. Methods change, attitudes change, but the main theme never changes. Here, the terrorist organisation often does this in order to make its propaganda, sometimes to create a militant ground, and sometimes just to create an empire of fear. So, let me emphasise once again that media literacy is very important.

Ali Burak Daricali:

Let me add this briefly: every month on Telegram, an average of 6,000 pro-DAESH news channels were shut down in that sharing area. We see that organisations that we call lone wolves outside the main organisation of DAESH in Europe can carry out actions in favour of DAESH on their own with videos that have been effectively prepared by DAESH, translated into French, English or prepared by foreign fighters, such as how to carry out undercover activities, how to produce a bomb, how to plan. Maybe they do not use explosives or bombs because they cannot get it on their own. Yet they can run over a Christmas market with a rented truck and kill people. So, the method of action is also very new and fantastic. Or they can attack people in a European capital with a big machete and a knife and carry out such activities alone without taking orders from the main mechanism.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you. Professor Kaan, I would like to ask you to explain your concept, which we have discussed at the beginning and which excites me in terms of its introduction to terminology. Why is the concept of hybrid professionalism important, and what advantages can such a system offer us?

Kaan Mutlu Ataç:

One of the most important problems the world faces is the inability of the state to respond so quickly and effectively to the initiatives and adaptability of terrorism. In other words, when you look at classical literature, the state is unable to react to this. Because it has a serious bureaucratic structure. Secondly, there is a very serious political concern. In other words, the government is concerned with continuity and maintaining power. So, the initiative is technically in the hands of the organisation. It comes in a horizontal hierarchy, and its mobility is very strong. In what sense am I saying this? In 2020, when mainland China enacted the National Security Law within the autonomous structure of Hong Kong, it received very serious criticism from Western countries, such as "the United States of America" or "the United Kingdom", where "freedom, democracy and human rights" are at the most advanced level. It received a lot of criticism, but

when you look at it from a technical point of view, the National Security Law that China enacted in Hong Kong created an incredible demand and an incredible space for the circles dealing with these issues, the security bureaucracy and security mechanisms. Everyone looked at this with envy. It is about China's security law. This is very important. In what sense? First of all, it creates a sudden, fast and effective legal mechanism in the process of the deterioration of the social texture that I was trying to express earlier. In other words, the new law in Hong Kong has introduced very serious shortcuts. How do we know this? Let me try to express it through only two news reports from the United Kingdom and the United States. The new Prime Minister of the UK, Sunak, said yesterday that there is an incredible delegation of authority to the police in the UK and to the police forces in the process in which the British state faces demonstrators, that is to say, challenges and threats. In what field? The suppression of demonstrations? According to yesterday's news in the United States, after the attacks of January 6, 2021, for the first time in America's history, the Biden administration is using amendments to the law to define the situation arising from domestic threats as terrorism. In other words, for the first time in its history, America is now engaged in a fight against domestic terrorism, and one of Biden's orders is being implemented differently as of yesterday. Both at the state and local police levels, at the security police level, and the federal level, there is a process of equipping the Directorate of National Intelligence and



the FBI with very different powers. Thus, there is actually a transformation in the basic field of intelligence, which is the prevention of open and imminent threats, which involves a very serious transformation for the future. So how can Türkiye catch up with this transformation? Why am I asking this? Türkiye is in a situation where we need to make the following assessment: Roughly 7-8% of Türkiye's population - whatever you call it, there is a good terminology for it - you can call it people under protection, you can call it migrants, you can call it political asylum; within the legal procedure, roughly 7.5-8% of Türkiye's population is subject to a different ethnic composition within the national borders. On top of that, let's use the expression of the Minister of Defence; we have to accept the figure he gave: Türkiye is currently holding in the military area in Northern Syria, which is the area it controls, roughly twice as much as the size of this structure in Türkiye, which is roughly 4 and a half million. The Minister of Defence mentioned that food is being provided for a Syrian population of 9,000,000. Therefore, at a time when the social texture in Türkiye is undergoing a rapid transformation, when we look at the structural dimensions of the attack in İstiklal, for example, you see that the medium used by the terrorist organisation has shifted to a very different religious motif, a very different political motif and a very different hierarchical structure. So, the difficulty of controlling the capacity for adaptability demonstrates the necessity of a fast, effective and solution-oriented organisation, which I refer to as "hybrid professionalism". The expertise of classical diplomacy, the classical military and the classical intelligence structures need to be combined. In other words, we need an effective structure that can gather this structure at the core. There is a structure that I envisioned. It is a structure that I call crisis professional officers. I have a group of "45" people in my mind out of these 3 professional structures who have been trained within certain professionalism and have reached a certain maturity. I imagine a group that will be exempt from the politicising influence of political decision-makers, which is very important, that will preserve objectivity. This group can preserve objectivity in threat perceptions, such as the national security of a country. Within this group, there should be a group of roughly 10-12 people, gathered from each unit and formed out of those who acquired the professional knowledge of other organisations by personally working with those organisations. In which sense? The political authority needs a "structure for crisis intervention" that is trained outside the bureaucratic, military, security and intelligence structures of the state. Therefore, in future projections, the state needs a structure that can get rid of the surprising effects of terrorist structures as much as possible and minimise the security concerns of society. This needs to be worked on. The legislation in Türkiye is technically convenient. This is because you can ensure the professional transition between institutions and the bureaucratic structure. Therefore, if you can gather these professional civil servants who have been trained in these units and who, in certain groups, in certain departments, and even at very specific desks within these units, have been granted the opportunity of transition, then as the political authority, you need to set aside the structure which, only during the election period, during the period we call "election circle", will not fall behind the news bulletins of the media in the short term, whi-

ch is the biggest concern of the political authority, and put into effect a structure that is instantly effective and, this is very important, “objective”, in which this group of professional civil servants can provide a continuous, a systematic flow of information. So, China is active in this; the US is working on this, and the UK is working on this. I think it is necessary to discuss other dimensions of how effective structuring can be possible in a period when these ethnic structures, social structures and a “Migration of Tribes” await us, where transnational transitivity is quite intense.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you, Professor. We mentioned that there are actually new things that can be said and that there are even countries that have tried this, but we also can do this. I would like to return to Professor Hamoon. Professor Ali Burak actually mentioned it partially; he said, “Terror methods are changing.” Many countries in the world can now encounter many different new things related to terrorism. They can encounter different terror structures and different terror methods. What should be done to develop a defence mechanism against these? What is your opinion about this? Or is this not something very challenging technically? We need to catch up somehow.

Hamoon Khelghat Doost:

It was a very interesting question, and it is also very much related to what the other respected panellists discussed. The first thing is that charity starts at home. So, before we actually start to look at what is happening around us, we have to look at ourselves and see how prepared we are. And there are two things that we can always look after. It is about who the enemy is – that is the first thing to see – how they are evolving, and the evolution of the enemies so that we can adjust ourselves and not only adjust ourselves but put one step further than them to predict things. Second, as you were talking about, look at the successful examples of other countries or other alliances that we have all around the region and the world. So those two things can be quite interesting to have a look at to understand what can be done later on. But at the same time, going back to what I was talking about and related to the first comment that I made, understanding the target is very important. We have to understand who we are fighting because sometimes we are getting into a fantasy of what we are doing, and that is quite a difficult thing to do. We have Professor Ali Burak on this panel, who had the chance to be a practitioner. Still, the point of the story is that perhaps he actually agrees with means to some extent that sometimes we lose direction and that losing direction is just because we do not understand what we are after. That is the basic question. Sometimes, we need to actually revisit the basic question or the basic duty of the institution that we belong to in whatever level of counter-terrorism. We have to understand, and we have to ask ourselves again: Are we on the right track, or are we actually answering the question of the protection of the nation? We need to understand the audience, particularly when it comes to social media. A big part of what I was doing, and I still do as part of my rese-

arch, is dealing with the social media of extremist groups, specifically those who affiliate themselves with Islamism. I am talking about ISIS here. So, I spent the last seven years of my life working and monitoring hundreds of accounts. The accounts that, as the panellists mentioned, are getting closed down and actually reappear somewhere else. So, I am just like a cat and mouse; they are getting closed today; tomorrow is another name coming up. So, it is about seven years spent going after them, making an archive for myself and for the research that I am doing. It is very important to realise that social media acts as a very strong double-edged sword. As much as it provides us with the opportunity to understand the enemy, it is ready to harm us as well. Please have a look at the content of the media and the output of terrorist organisations, especially ISIS, which is professionally active in social media, specifically the dangerous messenger of Telegram, which is very difficult to work on. and I know that the Turkish government is trying to put a hand on that and control some of the channels. As my personal opinion and as a personal practitioner, I am telling you that from the moment you enter Telegram until you find a channel, you can access all those extremist materials, which would not take you more than a few minutes, honestly speaking. So, if you know some of the tricks, if you know some of the techniques that are not really secret to get to that kind of stuff, it is very easy to access, and then when you are getting there, you can see how prepared the enemy is. One thing that I would always like to



emphasise is that we are dealing with an enemy that is very well prepared. The enemy is very well prepared, even if you look at the content. As it was also mentioned here, the content is tailor-made in any way you think. About your language, about the part of the world that you are coming from, if you are a man or a woman, all this kind of stuff has been taken seriously and in detail in the propaganda of these groups. For example, I can give you a vivid example of that. If you are a housewife, the material that is produced for you by these organisations is very different from what it would be if you belonged to another occupation or if you were a man. These are very important things. So, everybody, with whatever background, can honestly find something there. And then it brings us to this very important question: Are we ready? Is our content really tailor-made for the audience, whether it be our nation or those who are in danger? Youth is a very important thing. You might not believe the level at which ISIS is going down. When I was back in Iraq, and I was doing my research, there were quite a number of young people who had been radicalised. Guess where? In cyber cafes, in the places where they were actually playing games, such as country strike games or other kinds of games with shooting one another and so on. So, in this kind of thing, you have a network with people from all around the world. Everybody has a nickname there, and you do not know where they come from. There are recruiters in these places who actually observe you to see how good you are playing, where you belong, what you do, etc. Then they contact you. So, it is very important, especially for parents, especially for you. That is where terrorism comes into the family. It is also very important that, when we talk about terrorism or counter-terrorism, we always have this typical image in our mind that it should be a police officer or an intelligence service officer who should protect us. However, the fact is that the enemy has come to the level of our homes. With this mobile phone in our hands, we can actually do everything, and together with that, our children can do the same thing. So, we must have this resilience for the whole part of society to understand that protection starts with the family, the first unit of society, and what security forces and others are doing, which are mostly complementary in that sense. So, it is very important to realise that and to start thinking about how our system of education should be changed, especially for a country like Türkiye, which is located at the heart of a region that is very much underestimated. From the east to the south to the north to the west, you are actually surrounded by what I do not want to use the word enemy for. But in many cases, we have a conflict of interest, and that conflict of interest would be translated somehow in practice. We have to be careful and also pay attention to the fact that everything is not always the duty of respected police officers, intelligence service and the army. But everybody, every single citizen, should actually have a share of that, and it is the duty of the education system and the Directorate of Communications in the country to actually bring this issue more towards the public without scaring them. Actually, this is not to scare people; it is just to enable people and empower them so that you can protect yourself and, in the next stage, your community and your own country.

Nazif Menteş:

Professor Cavid, as also mentioned by Mr. Doost, said, "It is important to determine the target." After all, the targets against us are shown in various ways, which is, sometimes, from all 4 sides. In the case of Türkiye, for example, the number of terrorist organisations that Türkiye is fighting is very high. In the case of Azerbaijan, we can also talk about terrorist organisations. However, there was also the recent tension with Iran. I would like to discuss intelligence over this tension with Iran. What is the latest situation? What do we know?

Cavid Veliyev:

In fact, although the tension between Azerbaijan and Iran emerged last year, it has been going on for 30 years. In my opinion, the reason for its emergence in the last year is that the powers that have a big influence on the Iranian intelligence service, which have been making propaganda against Azerbaijan in the Iranian Deep State, have come to power in Iran. İlham Aliyev recently made such a statement: "I have worked with three Iranian presidents before this; with none of them, there was such tension. We did not have so many problems." This is the main reason for it. That is to say, those who are now in power in Iran have already been making propaganda against Azerbaijan in Iran's interior politics for the last 30 years. Now, the reason why this is so visible and happening so openly is because they came to power. After all, did he also support it with intelligence? Yes, he did. The reasons that brought Iran into a confrontation with Azerbaijan in terms of intelligence activities are actually political. This is because, first, Iran did not accept the secular state structure of Azerbaijan and was constantly working against it. At a certain point, Azerbaijan had succeeded in making them accept it. Still, as I said, with the recent presidential election and the new change in Iran, they thought that they could achieve a different result by putting pressure on them. Actually, let me say this from an intelligence point of view: There were some people and institutions that Iran used as tools, and a few months ago, shortly after the presidential elections in Iran, Azerbaijan sent them out of Iran. And this was actually a very successful step in terms of counter-intelligence. Secondly, after Azerbaijan's victory in Karabakh, a geopolitical reality began to emerge in the region, and many states preferred to cooperate with Azerbaijan in the face of this geopolitical reality. But Iran, especially, persistently tried to resist this. For example, you can see that there is a paradox in its policy, and at the same time, there is a failure. There is a very interesting point. For example, we discuss the Zangezur Corridor a lot in the region. While discussing the Zangezur Corridor, both Türkiye and Azerbaijan say that Iran can also benefit from it, but when opposing the Zangezur Corridor, Iran openly opposes it for two reasons. First, it says, "The purpose of this is to bring NATO to the region." Of course, when it says "bringing NATO to the region", it intends to get Russia's and China's support against Türkiye and Azerbaijan. On the other hand, it says, "This is a Turan corridor." There is a paradox here because nearly 40 million Turks live in their own country. And it expresses its discomfort with the increasing influence of Turks in the region. In other words, it is actually expressing their discomfort with



the Turks in their own country. At this time, this backfires. We see that Iran has recently been trying to moderate its Azerbaijani policy. As a result of this aggressive policy against Azerbaijan, it has started to experience backlash from within, and it is trying to moderate this with Azerbaijan in some way. And there is another issue here: During the Soviet Union, religion was banned in Azerbaijan. After we gained our independence, there was a gap in this respect, and Iran was trying to fill this gap. It managed to use this for a certain period, but after a certain period, it failed. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is that the Azerbaijani state has managed to form its policy on religion and has trained its clergy. Secondly, within the framework of these works and intelligence activities in Azerbaijan, it had a story. Now, especially after the Second Karabakh War, it has lost its credibility and reputation. Nobody trusts it. What did it do? After the Second Karabakh War, they openly declared that they were against the Zangezur Corridor. They went and opened a consulate in Armenia; Iran's Foreign Minister went to Armenia and said, "Armenia's security is our security." What is this now? This has caused Iran to lose credibility within Azerbaijan. On the other hand, when we look at it from an intelligence point of view, it has made the work of the Azerbaijani intelligence service easier and the work of the Iranian intelli-

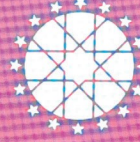
gence service more difficult. Because intelligence is also a matter of trust and reputation. The other side needs to believe in the statements it makes, and this needs to be supported politically. Therefore, in such a political environment, intelligence activities have also weakened as they have lost their credibility. They were actively using social media the most here. This is also my personal opinion. This provided an opportunity for the Azerbaijani intelligence service: When the crisis came out, all their faces in Azerbaijan were exposed, and it became much easier to collect them or to act against them. And it became legitimate to act against them. Because they have started to target the country openly.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you very much. We can end our session here because our time is up. Thank you very much for giving us your time.

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION SUMMIT '22

TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ
CUMHURBAŞKANLIĞI
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PRESIDENCY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
DIRECTORATE OF
COMMUNICATIONS



Capacity Building for Public Communication: Coping with Global Uncertainties

STRATCOM SESSION - 8





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Capacity Building for Public Communication: Coping with Global Uncertainties



Panel Video



Speakers



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Buğra Kanat**

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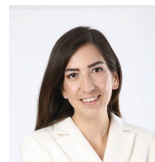
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Deputy Chairman of the State
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**Assoc. Prof. Başak
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**Kılıç Buğra Kanat:**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to our 8th panel today, Capacity Building for Public Communication: Coping with Global Uncertainties. Right now, most of the panels and forums around the world use the term uncertainty. Due to COVID, the rapidly changing global political climate, and the Ukraine-Russia War, multiple regional conflicts have made uncertainty the most frequently used word right now in forums, panels, and different kinds of settings. We know that there is uncertainty. We know that we are almost at the end of the pandemic, but we will discuss today the impact of the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine War, and the changing geopolitical dynamics around the world on public communication. We know that in every different phase of life,

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we will see some changes. We started to see some changes. We see increasing digitalisation with the pandemic. We see increasing debates about supply chain infringements and changes in economics. And we will discuss today how these dynamics actually impact public communication. We will start our discussion today with Pieter Idenburg, one of the senior advisors at Issue Makers. The floor is yours.

Pieter Idenburg:

Yesterday, there was a quote on this same screen that said, “Anyone can tell a crisis when it arrives. But the real service to society is to detect it in embryo.” We have to find ways to tackle crises in advance, and one concept that could be interesting for people working in Stratcom is what we call issue management. It is like the embryo that starts somewhere in society with an NGO, the media, and social media, and it keeps growing. It will grow until it is dealt with by policymakers. And we see it in many different places. In other words, what we say is that an issue is like a crisis, but in slow motion. This is a picture from Sri Lanka in 2004. This is the tsunami beach. Everyone was on the beach. Nothing was going on. The ocean was flat. Everyone was lying in the sun until suddenly this huge wave came. The people did not notice. But the birds and the animals did. An hour before, they went up to the hills because they sensed that a crisis was coming. This is about



definition. You have got an incident that is low-impact with high pressure. That is a crisis. We talked about crises, which have a high impact and also a high time pressure. An issue has a high impact but low pressure. And if you neglect an issue, it can lead to a crisis. We have a farmer's crisis now in the Netherlands—a revolt by farmers that has been going on for three years. They block the highways; they go to the cities. It is a crisis that has become more than just a farmer's crisis. It has become a crisis of trust against the government. Farmers are also cooperating with other groups who are against the government, and it is really difficult now to put this crisis back in its place. I did not see this coming. What did I learn? When they talk about communication, it is about sending out the message and crafting a narrative. It is about the mouth. But we need to be more aware of the ears, the eyes, and the brain to look out for signals—both strong and weak signals. It is easier said than done to implement this in your organisation. I came to the conclusion that what we need within a government organisation to tackle this crisis in advance is to create what we call organised issue management. An issue management system could be your blind spot mirror because you are focused on ten different strategic issues at the same time. You may forget the eleventh one that is coming from behind you. You have to organise this within your government organisation. This may sound simple, but I have worked for 20 years within government. I know how government organisations work or do not work, how they deal with signals, and how they do not. How does it work? When a signal comes into an organisation where it is laid on the table, they may say, "We are too busy with other priorities," "it is an issue, but no worries," or "Sorry, it is not my issue." Or this can be negative, and they may say, "Let us not bring this difficult message to the boss." Sometimes people within government are afraid to speak the truth to power. But this comes with consequences because important signals may be neglected. How does this work within government organisations? Sometimes the signal comes in, but it goes from one department to another, from communication to the policy department, legal department, and management department, until it comes to the plate of the minister, if it ever gets there. But most often, it does not get there. Somewhere on the line, it is sometimes put off the table for valid reasons. But what is missing is a sort of integral strategic assignment of these signals. Then we come to issue management, which means that you have to organise this within your government organisation. The main thing is that you bring the most important professionals together. Communication strategy, management, policy, and legal. We get these integral assessments of the signals. And before that, you need a monitoring unit, which is more than a media press office. It is about getting all these signals into the organisation through media, social media, public service, or all different kinds of instruments. Then you get to an assessment and bring it up to the political level. Then you can, in time, make strategic adjustments before it turns into a crisis. There are a lot of instruments you can work with, like an issue heat map, because sometimes the signal is still weak and you have to ignore it, but sometimes it is getting hotter. There are a lot of instruments if you want to work on issue management, but in the end, it is all about signals, hearing, listening, and not only talking. Thank you very much.

Kılıç Buğra Kanat:

Thank you, Peter. I will have some questions at the end. Our second presenter is Başak Yavcan from TOBB University. The floor is yours.

Başak Yavcan:

Thank you very much. And I have been asked to talk about another crisis topic, which is migration and the communication of migration. At this rate, the drivers of migratory movements are becoming more forceful, and additional drivers are being included in our models, such as climate change and environmental drivers. It seems like we will be facing this issue a lot more, and we will be facing the challenge of communicating migration a lot more. What I will be reflecting on today is based on where I come from. I am an academic, and it is academic work that other scholars and I have been conducting on the communication of migration and its impact, especially on perceptions and, in particular, public opinion. And this communication can be done through government institutions. This communication can be done by public or private media agencies, but at the end of the day, we tend to sometimes not be very methodological or systematic about the implications of the kind of communication we are doing or even the ones that we are not doing. Let us take a step back and remember that any information provided through public communication, regardless of the medium, has important and multiple impacts on public opinion. I will talk about five impacts in particular. The first one is setting the agenda. It is a particular choice to talk about an issue or not to talk about an issue. When it comes to migration, we can ignore the issue. We can ignore the fact that migrants are coming; we can pretend it does not happen and not talk about it. And a lot of governments today choose this option. But we are talking about the people, and that means these people are being encountered by other people at times, and when the numbers are increasing or when the migrants become more visible, it becomes hard to ignore. And then you are faced with a choice about how to talk about this issue and how to set the agenda. I will get back to this very shortly, but let us remember the other ways that communication impacts perceptions. The second way is through the media, in particular. Communication has a limiting and directing impact on policymakers. As a way of being a watchdog, it says, "Give us the correct numbers," "Give us the real policy challenges," "What are the policy options?" and "Help initiate a conversation with the public." The media does have an important role vis-à-vis the government as well as the public in this regard through being a watchdog. Again, the kind of communication we have, in addition to setting the agenda, also primes people to think about it. To think about the concept that we are discussing in a certain way, we can talk about migration as a positive thing. We can talk about it as a negative thing. We can talk about it in a balanced way; what we see missing a lot of times is this balance and also a positive conversation about migration. Another way is framing. The way we communicate has an important impact on the framing of the issue. Do we talk about migration and international refugee movements as human rights issues or as security issues? This is very important in shaping people's opinions, and unfortunately,



around the world, we see this concept of securitization being enacted very widely by policymakers because it gives them additional area or manoeuvre in their policy making. They become less accountable by presenting migration as a security threat that needs to be tackled right away. So, we are going to do the extraordinary way of decision-making. But what this does is actually close up the channels for reciprocal open communication and creates a black box where people cannot see through, which creates a lot of anxiety for people. That is not necessarily considered enough, unfortunately. And this securitization does not have to be done by policymakers a lot of the time. Now, what we see is bottom-up securitization; people are securitizing. Media outlets are securitizing because they see the potential for people clicking on that news more, reading this more, and getting more advertisements. And media also creates, when it comes to the issues of migration and migrants, an extended contact. A lot of times, individuals and citizens living in the country do not have direct contact with migrants. They do not know them as neighbours; they do not know them as colleagues at work. And by telling their stories, they learn about these different groups now. It is unfortunate when this extended contact is created on a very negative basis. When we think of the particular implications, first of all, in the absence of correct information, when you ignore the issue and do not communicate “what these groups are,” “where they come from,” “what

are their characteristics," "why are they coming here," "what are they escaping from," "if they are here, what are their problems," "what are their concerns," what happens is that you create a grey zone, which is very fertile ground for fake news and urban myths, unfortunately, which we see everywhere. And then we see WhatsApp group messages going in circles, and it is therefore important to talk about who they are and where they are coming from. The second thing I would like to talk about, and we find a lot of evidence for this in the media content analysis that we do, is about humanization, or the opposite, dehumanisation. I would like to help our translators a little bit because I did think a lot about this concept. I like to translate this into Turkish as "Ete kemiğe büründürmek" (put flesh on the bones of something) because, at the end of the day, these people are of flesh and bones. They are people; they are humans. But as someone who also works with surveys with data on migratory flows, we work a lot with numbers, and when you work with numbers, you forget that these are actually human beings, and a lot of the time in the communication we create, especially in the media, we do not hear their stories. Why did they come? What is the story of this young woman? Every individual has a different story, and every migration is, in fact, a crisis on its own. We have looked at the newspapers, and those that actually had a story of a human being had a very positive tone in the content as compared to those who do not have a human face. It is really important that we set this. Another thing is the number of sources. This is taught widely in communication schools: how important it is to have multiple sources. But in reality, it is sometimes not convenient. You reach out to the first source you find and maybe a second one, and then you write your story or communicate through this, but a lot of times the underrepresented, the minority, the small group, and the migrants are part of the story. When we have to make an additional effort to hear it from their side in order to give a balanced view and create a balanced perception, unfortunately, we do ignore this sometimes. It is because you do not speak the language, but there are a lot of NGOs that can do this and that can provide this information. I am happy to talk about the different cases from around the world to give examples of securitization. For instance, the migrant caravan coming from Latin America was labelled ISIS recruits when it was just Latin Americans. They had nothing to do with this clear example of securitization, but we have many examples. I'm happy to talk about them, but I just wanted to remind us that when we talk about the communication of migratory crises or migration, we are actually talking about people. And a lot of times, we forget this. If we are living in a country like we do in Türkiye, where there are very sizable groups of migrants from different backgrounds, it is very important to set the information correctly in order to prevent social conflict from arising. Unfortunately, I do see some bad intentions in some of the fake news being created in terms of galvanising this kind of conflict. So, I do really appreciate that there is now a centre affiliated with the Presidency to fight disinformation. And there were some private NGO's initiatives that were doing this, but it really is an area that grants systematic methodological effort. So, I look forward to their work. I will be following it. Thank you.

Kılıç Buğra Kanat:

Thank you very much. I will have some questions for you as well. Our next speaker is Fuad Huseynov, Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Refugees and Displaced Persons Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The floor is yours.

Fuad Hüseyinov:

Thank you, Mr. Moderator, distinguished panellists, distinguished delegates, and media representatives, ladies and gentlemen. First and foremost, on behalf of the delegation of Azerbaijan, I would like to extend a sincere welcome to the esteemed audience attending Stratcom 2022, and I would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to Directorate of Communication of the Presidency of our brotherly Türkiye for extending us a kind invitation and generous Turkish hospitality, which went much beyond any praise. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof Fahrettin Altun for his thought-provoking opening statement yesterday, which clearly demonstrated the present global challenges facing the world community in the age of uncertainty caused by wars, conflicts, persecution, violations of human rights, and climate change across the continents, with an emphasis on the crisis of truth. I am privileged to be a panellist during today's discussion. Since I represent the State Committee for Refugees and IDPs of Azerbaijan, in my capacity



as Deputy Minister, I would like to focus on the issue of forced migration in an era of uncertainty and new realities after a long period of uncertainty in the aftermath of the 2020 Patriotic War from my country's perspective. This year's summit scheme is Strategic Communication in the Age of Uncertainty. If we turn to the classical definition, uncertainty is the only certainty there is. Uncertainty is all around us. And irrespective of whether it is a pandemic, health, or civil strife, we have a certain degree of tolerance for uncertainty in our lives. But as human beings, we crave security. All of us have different limits, but no matter how hopeless and helpless we are, it is important to note that there are steps we can take to alleviate suffering, reduce anxiety, and have better situations and better steps in order to address uncontrollable circumstances. People at risk, such as forced migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons, constitute major challenges towards sustainable development and are more vulnerable than others in the era of uncertainty. Migration in its various forms is not a common phenomenon in humanity's history. But the beginning of the 3rd millennium was characterised by the largest migratory movement, which involved, in terms of origin, transit, and destination, nearly every part of the world. In recent years, the scope of migration has reached an expanded level. In most cases, people who are fleeing their homes are fleeing because of conflict, persecution, inhuman treatment, or climate change. Despite the goal being set for a global agenda of 20–30 to reduce internal displacement by 50% each year, we see an unprecedented number of displaced people, which is on the rise. And today, Europe faces the largest crisis ever since World War II. And humanitarian movements have doubled or even tripled efforts for prevention and solution, and they are an absolute necessity. Azerbaijan's sensitivities towards displacement, which were declared problem number one by national leader and founder of Azerbaijan state, Heydar Aliyev, are clearly understandable as a country that has been hosting, in per capita terms, one of the highest caseloads of refugees and IDPs in the last three decades, comprising 10% of its overall population. And displacement in my country has been a consequence of Armenian aggression and the occupation of 20% of Azerbaijan's territory, compounded by the ethnic cleansing policy pursued. And had there been no assistance on the part of international organisations and friendly states, particularly brotherly Türkiye, the country would have faced a real humanitarian catastrophe at the onset of the crisis in the early 1990s, for which we were always thankful and grateful to all those entities who rendered us assistance during the most critical period of Azerbaijan's history. Over the past three decades, Azerbaijan has gained an enormous knowledge base and experience in dealing with large-scale displacement. Today, 116 new modern residential complexes have been erected in the country, and as many as 320,000 displaced people have been provided with improved housing. The poverty level among the displaced dropped from 75 to 80%. Activities of the Azerbaijani State under the leadership of our President, His Excellency Ilham Aliyev, were highly appreciated by the most reputable international organisations, including current UN Secretary-General Mr. Antonio Guterres, in his capacity as a UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the course of his missions to Azerbaijan. But notwithstanding all the exemplary care and attention rendered to the displaced by the national sources of Azerbaijan, the only durable solution to protracted displacement was closely linked to the political settlement of

former Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and the liberation of Azerbaijani territories. That would have enabled hundreds of thousands of our compatriots to exercise their fundamental right to return in safety, dignity, and on a volunteer basis. For almost 30 years, Armenia has kept 20% of Azerbaijani territories under occupation. Not complying with UN Security Council resolutions of 1993 demanding full, immediate, and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces from occupied territories. However, the glorious victory in the 44-Day Patriotic War of 2020 put an end to this long-standing conflict. It not only reinstated the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognised borders but also created conditions conducive to the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of hundreds of thousands to their homeland. At present, the state of Azerbaijan has the noble task of ensuring restoration and sustainable development in liberated areas. Currently, security measures are being undertaken, and magnificent infrastructure projects are being implemented with an emphasis on the smart village and smart city concepts. And I am pleased to note that the first wave of returns has already started, and we hosted 70 families this summer. The great return, along with the reintegration of liberated territories into the national economy, has been declared one of the five national priorities for the social and economic development of Azerbaijan to be achieved by the year 2030. Only a few weeks ago, the first state programme on the great return to liberated areas was endorsed by presidential decree. I would like to underline at the same time that Armenia has contaminated a large amount of Azerbaijani land with mines and other unexploded ordinances to the extent that today, according to international experts, it is considered one of the most mine-polluted areas on earth. According to our president's statement during the Astana Summit, it might take up to 30 years and will involve about \$25 billion for the total mine clearance exercise. And by refusing to hand over accurate mine maps, Armenia continues to grossly violate the fundamental rights of hundreds of thousands of IDPs to return to their homes in safety and dignity. Despite this total distraction from occupied territories and the huge mine issue, we are confident that in the coming few years, Azerbaijan, with the support of the international community and, first of all, with the support of our brotherly nation and the state of Türkiye, will be in a position to present a new model for post-conflict rehabilitation and reintegration of displaced communities in their homelands. We will convert the lands, once devastated and abandoned, into a real paradise and a place of peace and prosperity. Restoring justice for IDPs is a solid foundation for any long-term peace and stability in the region. From that perspective, putting an end to this long-standing conflict means restoring basic fundamental rights for IDPs. I will conclude here, and we can have further talks. Thank you very much for your attention.

Kılıç Buğra Kanat:

Our last panelist is İpek Tekdemir Rupp, Policy and Strategic Communication Advisor at European Parliament.

**İpek Tekdemir Rupp:**

Thank you, Mr. Kılıç. Thank you very much to everyone for being here today. I would particularly like to thank the whole team of Presidency's Directorate of Communications. I would like to give them a big applause because they have done a great job here, bringing people from all around the world to this stage and to this conference where East meets West and West meets East in this lovely city, Istanbul. Let me focus on the context of our discussion topic. Mr. Kılıç's introduction to the global uncertain times cleared what I wanted to highlight today. These global uncertain times are not new. In fact, we have been experiencing it since 2008 with the economic crisis and crash right after Arab Spring and Arab Winter. Then afterwards, we had Crimea, Brexit, the Trump administration, the ongoing war, COVID-19, the current nuclear weapon threats, climate change, and so on and so forth. Here are my argument and my highlights in regards to public communications: What was the strategy and message that we, who are in public institutions, were trying to deliver to our society? The message was always, "We were in the midst of the crisis, and things will get better." Then, during a second uncertain time, we were in another crisis. Then we said things would get better. We had experienced this one time, two times, three times, and four times. I am asking our audience here: What happens afterward? What happens afterward is that it leads so-

ciety to mistrust public institutions and their governments. Exactly what my dear colleague Pieter mentioned is what is happening in the Netherlands in the agricultural sector. When there was a crisis, there was mistrust. I would like to refer to what we experienced during COVID times as an example. Were people not reluctant to take vaccines? I have chosen the coronavirus period as a primary example that can reflect reality for all of us. We have experienced lots of COVID rumors. 5G towers were attacked. We were believing that Bill Gates put a chip on the vaccines. I would like to highlight here that we were, and in fact, still are, in the era of misinformation. And this spread was quite extensive. What happened in Europe and Western countries peaked. But I will give you a good example of what the UK government developed as a strategy. The UK government took particular action. There were ethnic minority groups and Muslim communities that were reluctant to take the vaccine. What did the UK government do? They have appealed to local authorities, they have gone to imams, and they have used mosques. They transformed these centres into vaccine centres in order to communicate with society and to break this mistrust between the government and the public. We have seen a great example of the civil engagement that has been developed. The UK government used ethnic faces on the posters, as Prof. Başak had mentioned when talking about the threat the ethnic groups were under. And they have asked people to get their vaccines done. At the same time, we were in a period of media centralization. The government was required to build new bridges between their policies and transform their messages. And they require more partnerships. That is why and when we had the digitalization movement during this process. People started to listen to the instructions of the governments during digitalization. And digitalization was a really important tool to build this trust back. As well, the government immediately implemented the National Health Service Applications in order to access the information as quickly as possible. This, in fact, is for the citizens to reach the information. So, what we see here with these examples is that the authorities have used digitalization to build a bridge between the public and the government, and they use this to increase civic engagement and build up society. If we cannot define the problem, how can we build something that we have lost? And here I would like to quote Professor Freiberg and Sami Hamdi. Can we build this trust by using only digital communication? Obviously not. We need human-to-human touch. Today we are here, and we are meeting from all around the world. We are meeting people from different backgrounds. We are having an actual, real exchange of views. This is what we need. What can be done to increase this? I would say we need to create more cooperation, use more influencers and civil society, and mobilise more local authorities in our communication strategies. In order to be more open and resilient, I would say we also need to focus on more citizen-centred policies. My final words are for the youth. I would like to end my words by emphasising youths' involvement in public communications. So, we need to involve more youth in our public communication strategies by using the digital age, and we can definitely support the development of our future and our stronger democracies for a better future and a more resilient future. Thank you very much. Merci Beaucoup.

Kılıç Buğra Kanat:

Thank you. We have 15 minutes, but I have tonnes of questions. I will try to ask one question per panellist. Pieter, the first question is for you. Last week I was at a panel with a former board member of the World Health Organisation, and he told me that not only national governments but also international bodies were warning about a potential pandemic coming. But there was not enough action, neither by the national governments nor by international organisations. My first question is, "What did the world learn about crisis management following the pandemic?". And very much related to that is your distinction between the issue and the crisis. We have seen right now that there is a quick transformation from an issue to a crisis. Two years ago, we were not talking about the food crisis. But now we are talking about the food crisis. Two years ago, we were not talking about an energy crisis, but maybe it was an issue. But we are talking about an energy crisis today. And with this rapid transformation, do you think your prescription on how to handle a crisis has changed or not?

Pieter Idenburg:

That is an interesting question. I think sometimes you remember when you experience it. And gladly, these epidemics do not happen so often. You saw a difference between countries. There are countries in Southeast Asia that had the SARS epidemic about 10 years ago. They reacted much quicker than, for instance, countries in Western Europe and the government's organisation and communication were not prepared. It can help if you practice and share your experiences. But I think for now we have learned; the whole world has learned. I think it is very valuable that communication is carried out not only through the government but throughout society. That is why we need to look at which countries are better at communication at this point. We have to learn from each other. That is why it is very important to be in places like this. We also need to learn from this example of COVID for tackling other potential crises and, especially, to get these signals earlier and take them seriously.

**Kılıç Buğra Kanat:**

Thank you. Ms. Başak, my question to you is: You talked about five steps in handling the immigration crisis. Accepting the agenda, framing, etc. This is a good plan of action but Mike Tyson has this famous quote: "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face." When do countries face an immediate crisis? Do you think a country can handle the public communication side of the immigration crisis in those steps? And considering that now there are external interventions, it means that in many countries there is far-right extremism that depends on anti-refugee feelings. And those anti-refugee feelings can be contiguous, which can pass from one country to another in a rather short period of time. When a country faces a significant crisis in a rather short period of time and is facing these external interventions, do you think those five steps can work, or do we need additional steps to at least prove our immigration policy?

**Başak Yavcan:**

That is a great question. Thank you for asking. I will answer by first problematizing the concept of crisis and what a crisis is. At the Hugo Observatory of the University of Liege, we are conducting a new project on this. We look and find that there are actually a lot of times when an issue or migration is labelled as a crisis. That is not correlated with the numbers or with the speed at which people come in. Sometimes it is strongly related to the identity of migrants or it is a lot of times related to the institutional capacity of the country. A lot of times, the crisis is actually a governance crisis, not a migration crisis. That is why, while hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, we never called it a refugee crisis. But the moment the refugees started to cross the Aegean Sea, it was the European refugee crisis. I think I do sympathise with your question that the intensity can be very high but it also depends on how we approach it and if we think that "Oh my God, this is a crisis" from the beginning, we are withdrawing from our plan. So, I do not think it is a good idea to go away with a plan in the beginning. And regardless of where we can pick up, I think a structured communication strategy can be set up. I would like to bring up an example related to far-right parties and it is very timely that you brought it up because it gives me an opportunity

to say something I wanted to on this issue. Studies that are conducted across the world show that when you provide people with negative information about any group, a minority group based on religion, ethnicity, or sect, it is really easy to persuade them to become intolerant, as opposed to persuading them to become tolerant. Unfortunately, the far-right parties have the upper hand when it comes to persuasion. That is precisely why we cannot stop humanising them. We cannot stop showing the different angles of the issue. We cannot stop talking about what a refugee is and why people come. For instance, why did migrants from Afghanistan come and why were they predominantly men? What was the story behind it? Because it was a very dangerous road that they did not want to take with their families. Or why do all Syrian refugees have smart phones? Because that is all their investment in their migration trajectory. That is how they move. That is how they communicate with the diaspora. That is how they pay the smugglers, if they do. So, we need to know that we should not stop listening to and communicating the stories because it is those stories that will make people realise that maybe it is not a crisis and we can govern this. I think the Ukrainian refugee crisis, in quotation marks, has shown us this. When we sit down with a sober mind and try to increase our capacity as opposed to scaring them away, we can do it. Yes, we can.

Kılıç Buğra Kanat:

Thank you very much. Mr. Huseyinov, you mentioned the war in 2020 and we have actually seen both in that war and the Ukrainian–Russia War that the instruments countries use in the world are changing and information warfare is part of that. And we have known before that the first victims of wars are usually the truth. And we have seen this in the Azerbaijan–Armenia war as well. Tell us how Azerbaijan dealt with information warfare and tried to make its story heard around the world. How did our Azerbaijan achieve this?

Fuad Hüseynov:

Thank you very much for your question. The Patriotic War of 2020 was not limited to the battlefield only; there was also a very heavy information war against Azerbaijan, which started 30 years ago. I will give you one example. Azerbaijan, as a country that just regained its independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union back in 1993, was the first among newly established states to be sanctioned by the United States Congress. There was a famous amendment to Freedom Support Act 907, according to which any direct assistance from the U.S. government to Azerbaijan was prohibited. And that was imposed against the country, which was subject to aggression and occupation and had the largest influx of refugees and internally displaced persons among all ex-US-SR countries. That was the result of fake information and misuse of information by the Armenian diaspora, which managed to convince US Congressmen that it was actually Azerbaijan that was blockading and attacking Armenia. This information war intensified even more during the 44-day



Patriotic War. Our President, Supreme Commander in Chief, also proved to be the best strategic communicator leader in this. In the course of the 44-day patriotic war, our president gave intensive interviews to more than 30 leading world media and TV agencies, including agencies from our brotherly state of Türkiye, which was instrumental in bringing true information to the attention of the world community. Assistance and support from our journalists in brotherly Türkiye were valuable. I can give one example. Fulya Öztürk, CNN Turk reporter, was there when indiscriminate shelling of civilian populations in the second-largest city of Azerbaijan, Ganja, took place. She saw an innocent baby, already dead, and reported this, conveying a strong message to the world community about atrocities and crimes committed by Armenians against civilian populations and cities which were very far from the line of contact.

Kılıç Buğra Kanat:

And my last question is for İpek Tekdemir: You mentioned the state-society relationship and how it can be fixed through different strategies. But we are probably going through one of the most polarised moments of history in each and every country; election results show that. And we are not even talking about polarisation anymore. We are talking about calcification among certain segments of the population. We have seen this in the pandemic, actually in a rather short period of time. We have seen that wearing a mask could be a political symbol. Tell us how a state can achieve the desired results that you mentioned, considering the existence of such polarisation within society. Can a state, by using the channels you mentioned, reach two different poles of society?

İpek Tekdemir Rupp:

This is a very good question. Yes, indeed. I would say there are many tools that we have to use. We need to use all the multiple communication strategies in order to convey our messages. So, I would say "Yes". We have to use all different players, different actors, when the state wants to transfer the message and wants to transfer their policies to society. I would like to give an example. Türkiye has done quite well during the pandemic compared to Europe. We were in uncertain times; we were in times when governments could not guide us well, particularly in the European Union. I would say that connecting with people and understanding and using different players on the ground will definitely lead us to success when we want to transfer our messages.



**Kılıç Buğra Kanat:**

Thank you very much Ms. Ipek. I think the time is up. There will be a next panel right now. Go ahead.

Fuad Hüseyinov:

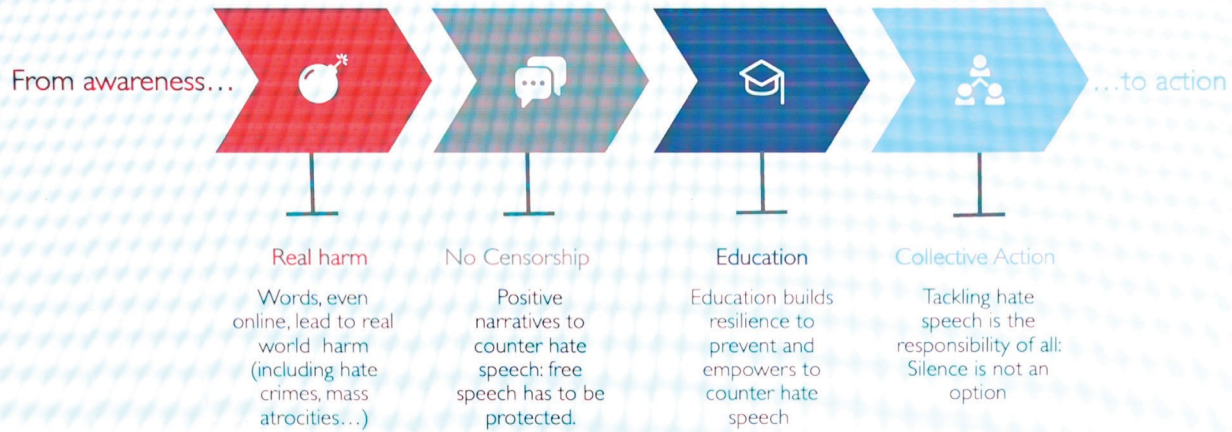
Last but not least, we are approaching the end of this year's summit, and in a matter of a few weeks, we are approaching year-end. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all and your loved ones a very happy new year. The year 2023 is particularly important for our brotherly Republic of Türkiye, as it will be 100 years since the establishment of Türkiye Cumhuriyeti. I would like to take this opportunity to wish the nation and state of our brotherly Türkiye peace and prosperity. Thank you very much.

Kılıç Buğra Kanat:

Please join me to thank our panellists one more time and thank you for being here and attending this panel.

#NoToHate

Key Messages



Combating Extremism and Hate Speech

STRATCOM SESSION - 9





December 3, 2022

Combating Extremism and Hate Speech



Panel Video



Speakers



Assoc. Prof. Enes Bayraklı
Turkish-German University
Moderator



Jonathan Fowler
UN Regional Communications Officer
for Europe and Central Asia



Fadi Farasin
Assistant Director
General of SESRIC



Mersiha Smailovic
Activist; Legis Founder



Unfortunately, we see the effects of far-right ideology racism all around the globe. We see it, especially in Europe. We see that far-right parties are now gaining access to some government resources.

Enes Bayraklı:

Thank you very much, and once again, welcome to you all. I assume we are having the last panel of Stratcom 2022, and there won't be any more audience or panellists. I would like to thank all our speakers for their presence here today. As mentioned, the topic of our panel today is how to combat extremism and hate speech for the global good. Extremism is on the rise globally, but so

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are hate speech and hate crimes, populism, the far right, ideology, and racism. We see this all around the globe, especially in Europe; we see that far-right parties are now gaining access to government. In some countries, they are already part of coalition governments; in some countries, they are already enrolling in positions. Beyond that, we also see another shift: mainstream parties are shifting towards increasingly far-right policies. So, I think this is happening not only in Europe but also globally. We see a shift towards the far right of all parties. The political landscape, especially, is shifting towards the far right. So even Social Democrat parties and Green parties are taking an anti-refugee stance, for instance, in some European countries. So, this is an important issue, and this is what we are going to discuss today, and we have three distinguished speakers with us. I would like to introduce them shortly, but you have the extended CVs on our website, Stratcom. We have Fadi Farasin, Assistant Director General of SESRIC, with us. We have Mersiha Smailovic. She is an activist and founder of Legis—an NGO in Macedonia. We also have Jonathan Fowler, UN Regional Communications Officer for Europe and Central Asia. Welcome to you all. And I would like to start with Jonathan. And since you are also working for the UN, and, of course, the United Nations is also taking action on how to combat hate speech globally. And you can explain to us here what the United Nations is doing in this regard. Thank you. The floor is yours.

Jonathan Fowler:

Absolutely. Thank you. Yes. I would like to begin by thanking the organisers again, specifically the government of Türkiye, since it has been very, very stimulating the past couple of days. I was invited to attend last year but unfortunately was unable to make it. So, it is great to actually be here this time. I would like to single out the government of Türkiye and underline that part of the United Nations' work, and I will go into more detail on this in a moment. However, part of the United Nations' work on hate speech is, of course, curated by the Alliance of Civilisations. Now, the Alliance of Civilisations was an idea and initiative by our former late Secretary-General Kofi Annan, but it was co-sponsored by the governments of Spain and Türkiye. So, it is important to underline that because this was created in 2005 precisely to explore the roots of polarisation and how hate speech was actually accentuating that polarisation and to attempt to spur international, intercultural, interfaith dialogue through education, youth work, work on migration, and work on the media. I am not going to talk in detail about the work of the Alliance of Civilisations, but I want to mention that because it underscores the fact that governments who are concerned about this issue are very deeply involved and have been deeply involved in the UN's work on this for some time. We also have multiple strands to our work. Specifically, what I want to talk about today is the "No to Hate" Campaign because we are here talking about strategic communications; I thought it would be useful to address a campaign and what the strategy is behind that campaign. Please wave if I am starting to run out of time. I want to begin with a childhood anecdote. When I was a schoolboy, I lived in North Wales up to the age of eight. Whenever we would get into arguments in the playground, and we talked to our parents about them all, we talked to the teachers afterwards; there was this common proverb, which was, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words



will never hurt me". So, the sense was as long as nobody is actually hitting you, physically attacking you, really, you are not hurt. But of course, we know that hate speech causes real harm. Words actually have the possibility of morphing into real-world damage. As we put it in our campaign, words can be weapons. We have a number of infographics and graphic identities for the campaign. This is one of my favourites. It is quite brutal, but it is powerful also because the implication is that spoken and written words can actually become weapons that can morph into real-world damage to people now. As Secretary-General Antonio Guterres put it in 2019, "Hatred is a danger to everyone, and so fighting it must be a job for everyone." This was why there was a decision made at the top level of the United Nations to create an actual strategy for combating hate speech. A specific one that would inform the work of all the different parts of the United Nations be it in peacekeeping, health, or other areas, would basically ensure that we were all on the same page and that we could help empower the Member States to combat this ill. Now, in 2021, the context, of course, is no accident. The UN General Assembly proclaimed June 18th as the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, so we had the first edition of it this June 18th. Now, you are all aware, of course, that hate speech, misinformation and disinformation go hand in hand. So, one of the reasons why this International Day was created was because of hate speech misinformation related to the pandemic; everything was accelerating with finger-pointing about who was supposedly to blame for the pandemic, misinformation, and disinformation about vaccines attribution for COVID. These things were all coming together at the same time on the back, of course, of the kind of hate

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2021 as the International Day for Countering Hate Speech.

speech that we have been seeing over recent years related to what is known as the migration crisis. So, this was not a coincidence. This was an intent to try and drive things forward. Basically, we have four driving elements to it. The understanding that just being aware that hate speech is being pervaded is not enough. You have to understand that hate speech causes real harm. We have to navigate the issue of censorship very carefully because anybody familiar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights knows that Article 19 is very strict on protecting freedom of expression. This is also etched into other bits of international law, including the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. At the same time, international law does not mean that there is a free-for-all to say what you like. There are limits placed when we start to move into the areas of incitement to violence, discrimination and so on. This is no censorship, but making sure that while protecting free speech, anything which crosses the boundaries have to be tackled in the right way. Education is absolutely critical to our strategy because if you don't educate people to build resilience, then you are actually helping to empower hate speech. The route to prevention is education and collective action. As I have cited the Secretary-General before, it is everybody's responsibility to deal with this, either to call out people who are doing it, or to stop it from happening, or to not do it yourselves through lack of awareness of what is being said. Again, it is rather small, but we seek to maximise reach. We seek to build trust by elevating the voice of the Secretary-General, who believes very strongly in the essence of this campaign. We seek to spread knowledge about the negative impact of hate speech. Now, of course, we all know that hate speech is not something that has been created in the online world. However, as examples, we can cite the use of the mass media by the Nazis against Jews in Germany as the way that they paved the way for the Holocaust. In the Rwandan genocide in the 1990s, Radio Mille Collines was the key vector to the Tutsi population and, therefore, paved the way for the Rwanda genocide. In the Internet age, we have seen this worsening in terms of the reach of hate speech. We have some examples, such as from Myanmar with the attacks and the atrocities against the Rohingya population, which have been amplified and then given real life, real-world life through platforms. Notably, there is a huge challenge there because of the lack of moderation on some platforms, in other words, platforms that we are not able to track or we are not seeking to track the kind of negative language that was then leading to real-world violence. We have also seen this in many other settings. This is always a cause for concern. So, we can demonstrate the real negative impact, share good practices on countering it, push back, and get people who are pushing hate speech actually to get out of that zone and move them away from being so negative and engage the public to spur interest. Why is this a problem? What does this mean in the real world? You know, words can actually lead to cir-

cumstances which can end up with people suffering from violence and actually being killed. We specifically have primary targets for this campaign. So, we engage with digital natives; this is very specifically related to online hate speech, of course, people who are using multiple devices and platforms and for whom the Internet online is a natural component of their self-expression. This is the risk where negative thoughts and negative attitudes can actually spill online and end up being amplified. Secondary targets are the world, what we call the world shapers. So, the media technology business executives, journalists, and public officials are the kind of people that we need to have on our side to set the right policy tone. A further secondary target is people who are dealing with youth, or youth caretakers, as we refer to them. That would be educators but also families. The main points of our campaign are our clarity and making sure that the content is clear, relatable, and inclusive. So, when we do this, we are not engaging in adversarial 'us versus them' behaviour; we are making sure we are all on the same page and also very hopeful. That is not about being naive and everything being beautiful in the world. You know, while addressing the real issues, we are actually talking about solutions. We can purvey sorts of solutions focused on ways to deal with hate speech and also show the advantages of togetherness. We launched the campaign in May 2022 with different kinds of visuals. You can see some of them up here. We also created a portal that anybody who is interested in the United Nations' work in this area can use. They don't have to go to individual bits of the United Nations because we recognise that we are a complex animal, and the United Nations has different parts. It is sometimes hard to find out what is going on in one area or another. We brought all this together in a single portal with a very clear written strategy so that people are able to get the assets that they need. Also, if they have a niche interest in a particular part of the work of the United Nations, they can find out about what sort of niche entity the UN is doing on the hate speech issue and help amplify that work. As I said here, we created the portal. We have had a decent number of page views; we have created the assets in nine languages, and we have implemented the campaign in over 40 countries so far. The key thing, of course, because we are a global family, is to localise the content. So, as I said, we have implemented the campaign specifically in over 40 countries. We have some splendid examples of cross-border collaboration, by the way. The colleagues that I have in Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia created a kind of common set of messaging because of the commonality of language in those three countries, which is tailored to the particular circumstances of each country. However, there was an intent there because a lot of the hate speech is cross-border in that region. There was an intent to actually come up with a sort of cross-border messaging that would affirm the fact that people need to work together across their borders in silos. We have the content now available in 25 languages, so those are just some examples on the screen. Phase two is what we are moving into now, and this is our wrap-up. We are basically moving forward to the next International Day, which will be on June 18th next year. We are going to increase our understanding of the real harm that is caused because that is an area that we need; we need to push more on what we have in terms of direct examples. We need to be much more specific on this. We are going to do a deeper dive into the impacts on vulnerable groups because it is well-known that the primary

victims of hate speech tend to be the people who are already the most vulnerable and who are less likely to be able to push back. That is hugely problematic because they need to be supported as well as empowered to deal with this. So, we are going to look more deeply into the effects on vulnerable groups. We are going to move more from awareness raising to direct engagement, and this is where anybody in this room is interested in this work or is doing work on this themselves, of course. Please reach out to us because it is important that we all engage together on this. One of the things about the United Nations is that we are a collective. We are a grouping of the member states—the international community in the best sense of the word. So, anybody who is doing anything on this can use these assets, tailor these campaign assets, and use them for themselves or give feedback to us on what they are actually doing on the ground because it is not a top-down kind of campaign. Finally, here are a couple of points: internal stuff. We are drawing on some very specific expertise in different parts of the United Nations system. I want to point out, as well as the alliances on the civilisations, the Office of the Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, extremely important work is being done there, and they have really informed this campaign. They do a lot of risk monitoring in different parts of the world to see where there is a risk of hate speech actually moving into something much more serious. So, we are working very closely with them at the Department of Global Communications level. That is a wrap. Thank you.

Enes Bayraklı:

Thank you, Jonathan. As you mentioned, online hate speech is quite important. It can lead to real crimes in some cases. Terror attacks and the speech and the demonisation of certain ethnic groups are also playing a huge role in the genocide. We have seen this in the past—the genocide in Srebrenica and other parts of the World. The United Nations declared the 15th of March last year as the Day to Combat Islamophobia. This is the day that Tarrant carried out the terror attack in Christchurch, which killed 51 people and injured many more. Of course, the OIC - Organisation of Islamic Cooperation also plays a role in combating hate speech and extremism. The Muslim world is also at the receiving end of this hate. We see this in the rise of Islamophobia. In the Muslim world, certain groups are misusing Islam at the same time. This is also an important subject, and today, we have a representative who will be speaking about OIC's vision in this field. Fadi Farasin is with us today. The floor is yours.

Fadi Farasin:

Thank you, Mr Enes; at the outset, please allow me to express our appreciation and deep thanks to the Directorate of Communications of the Republic of Türkiye for their kind invitation and their arrangements and outstanding hospitality. Here, as you said, Mr Enes, I will be focusing on the OIC, which is the Organisation of Islamic Corporation, which is the second largest intergovernmental organisation after the United Nations. We have a membership of 57 countries, and I am personally from a centre that is part of the OIC, which is called SESRIC. Now, if we look at the OIC and its charter, we see that it has the lofty goals of establishing peace, security, respect for diversity, dialogue,



and tolerance, but when it comes to reality, we see that the OIC faces a lot of challenges that prevent it from achieving those lofty goals. Here, I will focus on two challenges. One is violent extremism, and the other one is hate against Muslims. Now, different terminologies can be used. This can be argued, but in the OIC, we used the terminology of Islamophobia in our documents and our resolutions. So, let's stick to that. The analysis that we did at our centre shows that in 2003, there was an inflection point at which we started to see a trend where the overwhelming majority of violent extremist incidents were happening in OIC countries. To be specific, almost 76% of terrorism incidents and 90% of all fatalities happened in OIC countries. So, this reality, coupled with the devastating effects of violent extremism on humans, societies and economies, has pushed this issue to the top of the agenda of the OIC as well as the international community. As a matter of fact, the OIC has been among the first to recognise this issue and formulate a policy for it. The OIC issued a convention and a code of conduct on combating international terrorism in 1999 and has not relented in its efforts in this sense. In the 13th Islamic Summit that happened here in Istanbul in 2016, the kings and the heads of states of the OIC Member countries spent a significant part of the agenda of that summit to tackle this issue. If we look at the OIC and the highest-level Starship document there, which is called the OIC 2025 Programme of Action, we see that it identifies radicalism, violent extremism and Islamophobia as areas of high priority. We were assessed as a subsidiary organ of OIC, and we have also been very quick to react following the meeting of the OIC institutions on Combating Radicalism and Valid Extremism, which happened in the headquarters of the OIC and Jeddah 2015. We sprung to action, and we formed a cross-functional team

As part of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's efforts to combat radicalisation, we have established groups that are similar but independent, with distinct processes and functions. I would like to highlight the importance of understanding radicalism, as well as how to create peace in this setting. This was acknowledged in the diplomatic circles of various countries.

to focus on this issue. A lot of outputs have been achieved, but I would like to highlight some of them, such as our report Towards Understanding Radicalism and Violent Extremism in the OIC and another report on achieving peace and security in a world of turmoil and challenge for the OIC. This was highly received by the diplomatic community of the OIC and the member states. Also, in our BINA programme, which is an International Development programme for Libya to help it accelerate state rebuilding, and in collaboration with SETA, we published this study on countering violent extremism in Libya's peacebuilding approach for policy and decision-makers. Now, throughout all of our efforts in OIC, we are against extremism in all its forms and manifestations committed by whoever and wherever. We are against attributing extremism and radicalism to a specific country, race, religion or nationality. We also believe that violent extremism cannot be countered by security and military means alone. We believe that extremism grows in the context of economic, social and political environments. This is why it is very important to consider historical injustices, occupation, deprivation, exclusion, discrimination, and marginalisation. Also, though it emphasises the need to counter the radical and extremist narratives and discourse, we understand that violent extremist groups are increasingly using cyber platforms to spread hate messages and disseminate distorted and self-coined interpretations of the Holy Quran and Hadith, exploit social and economic frustration of the Muslim youth, recruit and retrain and spread hateful propaganda. For this reason, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC has called for the imposition of strengthening measures against social media sites being misused for these purposes. Nonetheless, we are fully aware that censoring all such activities on the Internet is not always possible, literally and technically. The only remedy is to actively counter this violent and radical narrative by using the same online communication and social media tools in order to penetrate and use the soft power to leverage and engage the minds of these people, and this is the most effective tool. The other challenge that we face is hate speech, or what we call Islamophobia. This seems to be a problem that is not going to disappear anytime soon. The analysis that we have done shows that the OIC has been spending more and more in the last two years on Islamophobia, and the number of Islamophobia incidents has increased by one-third. To counter Islamophobia and hate speech, the OIC and its different institutions have put a lot of effort into organising forums, holding awareness activities, and collaborating with international and regional institutions.

However, one of the most notable efforts has been establishing a dedicated unit at the General Secretariat of the IC, which is the OIC Islamophobia Observatory, to monitor Islamophobia trends to provide the analysis and critical reports to Member States, also taking necessary measures to address this formula, in coordination with our member countries and with international communities, using the United Nations human rights mechanisms, as well as other international and regional entities. More recently, the 12th session of the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers, which happened almost one month ago here in Istanbul, was under the team combating disinformation Islamophobia in the post-truth era. At this high-level Ministerial conference of the OIC, the ministers elaborated important resolutions and came up with important resolutions on combating disinformation and Islamophobia in the post-truth area. In addition, they adopted the

I would like to express our deep admiration for the Republic of Türkiye here. The visionary leader of His Excellency President Tayyip Erdoğan established a new approach to politics and diplomacy, an approach that is rooted in morality, justice, and human values. With this new approach, we are witnessing Türkiye spearheading this challenge.

Islamic Istanbul Declaration that stresses the need to combat Islamophobia and hate speech in all its manifestations by presenting the true image of Islam and utilising new and emerging platforms in this area. One last initiative I would like to touch upon within the OIC issues is the “Sawt-Al Hikmah”, which is the voice of wisdom. This is a centre that was established by the OIC in 2016 in order to utilise media and social networking platforms in order to tackle the issue of violent extremism and hate speech. Before concluding, I would like to express our deep admiration for the public of Türkiye here. The visionary leader of His Excellency President Tayyip Erdoğan established a new approach to politics and diplomacy, an approach that is rooted in morality, justice, and human values. With this new approach, we are witnessing Türkiye spearheading this challenge to the unjust international order. Not only that, Türkiye has become a leader in promoting harmony and enhancing greater understanding among diverse world civilisations. It has been proactive in trying to defuse mutual suspicions, fear and tension. As Jonathan mentioned, Türkiye is a founder and partner of the United Nations Alliance of Civilisation. Also, Türkiye, as a member of the OIC, has put a lot of effort into combating extremism and hate speech by hosting various international summits and meetings and helping the Organisation of Semi-Cooperation. With all those efforts, the new Türkiye, under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, really gives the people of this region and the whole world a glimmer of hope and the promise of salvation. Thank you.

Enes Bayraklı:

Thank you very much. I have been publishing an annual report on Islamophobia for seven years now. The coordinator of this report is called the European Islamophobia Report, which can also be downloaded from its website, free of charge. Mersiha is also one of the contributors to that report, altering the North Macedonia report. I think she has been active in the field as a representative of an NGO for a long time now. So, she also has her own experience. After having two representatives of international organisations, we will hear about an NGO activist and her experience in the field. What is your experience in this field? How does Islamophobia affect the daily lives of people, and also, how are state policies affected by Islamophobia? Unfortunately, in some countries, this old narrative is the negative narrative of Muslims, and we would like to hear your own experience. The floor is yours.

The most difficult part of trying to protect human rights was neglecting or not having so much solidarity and a network of support from the people. Because discrimination starts with hate speech, and you need people who will support you and help you defeat this hate speech narrative.

Mersiha Smailovic:

Thank you, Mr Enes, for this nice introduction. I'm very happy to be here, and I hope I will hold your attention. The summit was a really interesting topic to follow. Yesterday, we started with the disinformation. The panel session preceding us also discussed what actually happened. I am an activist and a lawyer from the Balkan countries, and it was great to hear this because we see that hate speech never stops. Likewise, disinformation never ends, and the same goes for hate crimes; the same goes for genocide. I have witnessed several genocides in the Balkans or in my life. Genocide occurred in Bosnia as well as our neighbouring country, the Republic of Kosovo. So, I didn't just research hate speech, hatred, and disinformation. We also see it on the ground, which gives us a clearer view. So, the reason why the hate speech started and continues, especially in fragile countries like the Balkan countries, is that they want to make people unsafe. They want to make them isolated and powerless. The professor who spoke before us made a really nice remark. Hate speech takes physical form. She explained it even in the Turkish language. What does it mean? So, what are the reasons the media, the politicians and individuals, especially extremist right-wings party, are using hate speech? It is because they want to dehumanise the person, the individuals, and the group that they are speaking about with fake news and hate speech, but the-



re are also human rights on the other side. For me, as a lawyer, the most difficult part of trying to protect human rights was neglecting or not having so much solidarity and a network of support of the people because the discrimination started with hate speech. So, the people who will support you and help you to defeat this hate speech narrative or discrimination are now being frightened because the dehumanisation process begins concurrently, and empathy does not exist. Empathy changes with the securitisation threat and terrorism. So, especially when we speak about refugee rights, it is important to note that Macedonia was part of the so-called Balkan route. Even the number of refugees and migrants who crossed our country was huge; the ones who stayed were very few numbers, but it is a very good example of how this propaganda started. Yesterday, the spokesperson from our government was here, and he delivered a speech. He mentioned that 2017 was very interesting because of the opposition and local elections. So, you expect a person, the leaders, to deal with the garbage, the sidewalks, and the streets, but somehow, the refugee or migration movement started to be a topic. They went beyond simply using hate speech; they did not stop at merely spreading disinformation; they went one step further. In the movement, they organised a so-called referendum against the invasion of the refugees and migrants. It began with hatred and the actions of wanting to collect signatures from the people. We are also witnessing referendums in European countries on different issues regarding Muslims and refugees. We are spending money on the taxpayers and the budget of our countries to organise a referendum against burkas and migrants because we need this agenda on our platforms to spread hatred

and fear among the people to gain votes. In reality, we face many problems and challenges, but it is always better to switch to another subject. So, it doesn't finish when the politicians are organised. They didn't manage to organise the referendum because they didn't collect enough signatures. But what happened? Even though they are social Democrats and part of the left, the opposition party, or the next in line, strayed so far from the topics in their agenda regarding migrants and refugees because they were not nice topics to speak about in 2017. Refugees and migrants were already dehumanised in our society, which led to a lack of policy and protection; it led to using their basic human rights, and every person has the right to seek protection and asylum. We now lack a system of protection in Balkan countries. We lack protection because we have chosen to fear being the ones who will lead our policies. So, it doesn't end there. Unfortunately, the increase in the refugee flows to each country fueled the state of hatred. We see so much hatred everywhere. We see hatred on social media, and it is definitely something that brings the policy of exclusion. On the one hand, we have the policy of empowering women to be more active, empowering Muslim women to be active in education, and promoting human rights. On the other hand, when you reach the level that you want to promote and be proud of your identity, you are reaching the limit of not being allowed to go further. We definitely live in a world of systematic racism, systematic xenophobia, and systematic Islamophobia, as it is not allowed to travel, study, or work in specific places simply because of the way you look. Imagine there is someone who will be affected by all of this phobia. So, if you are a migrant, a woman or a man of colour, and a Muslim, you will face many phobias in the host country where you expect to seek refuge. Hate speech is definitely one of the biggest threats to human rights that we are seeing developing rapidly, so racist rhetoric unquestionably has taken over the European continent and our activism. As an activist, I am protecting or advocating for human rights. I definitely spend more time on overcoming hate speech than promoting human rights because hate speech sees human rights as a threat, but unfortunately, we see that governments are not prepared enough for this. We don't see the government supporting this movement, especially when it comes to institutions that must be protected, such as the Ministry of the Interior and Public Prosecutor Office. Now, when a large number of refugees are coming from Ukraine to our visa-free Balkan countries, we see that the system is broken. The system cannot protect them. The system cannot provide the life that they once had because the policy of asylum was led by hatred and they were scared. So, they have decided that it goes beyond only hate speech or discrimination. It affects policies and the daily lives of individuals. That is what we faced during our activism. Thank you.

Enes Bayraklı:

Thank you very much, Mersiha. You have mentioned the Ukraine crisis. I think the 1951 Refugee Convention was a huge awakening moment for many people around the world. After the horrors of the Second World War, the international community came together to create this convention in order to protect refugees because wars can happen anywhere, anytime. Still, up until the Ukraine crisis, they used to think that conventional wars wouldn't happen in continental Europe. It happens, and it has created millions of refugees. Everybody may need this convention in the future. The force can happen, and that's why I think it's important to protect this convention and make sure it is applied in all countries. We still have a little bit of time, and we could have some questions from the audience if there are any. Okay, I see one here.

Participant:

Hello everyone, I will ask my question in Turkish. Hello everyone... As you know, there have been incidents in Sarajevo in the past regarding the refugee issue. The refugee problem has emerged due to the wars in Syria and Iraq, and most recently, a migration problem has emerged during the Ukrainian-Russian war. Do you think there is Islamophobia in the approach of world public opinion, especially Western public opinion, to these three refugee issues in all these three events? What do you think?

Participant:

Thank you so much, Mr Moderator, for giving me this opportunity and the panellists for giving us valuable insight on the subject matter. My name is Abdi Nuradin. I'm a Media and Communications practitioner, and mine is a combination of a question and a comment as part of some of the insights given in addressing this pertinent topic of hate speech. We know Qatar has been hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and we have seen a lot of hateful remarks. We know Qatar has been hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and we have seen a lot of hateful remarks as a kind of criticism; on the other hand, we have seen the Turkish observation or the Turkish view, which was initially a comment from His Excellency President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan that "the world is bigger than five." So, the views of the rest of the world as far as respecting the cultures and the norms of the people and looking at the main issue instead of the side matters have actually dominated in countering the hate remarks. So, for sustainability as a solution, I would like to hear your views as the experts involved in this area. Do you think it's also important to have an alternative view that has global support when encountering this hateful narrative? Thus, we can consider Türkiye's initiative a pioneer in this sense. For example, there are conflicts and many other political matters like humanitarian relief. Would it be useful here? Thank you so much.

Enes Bayraklı:

Thank you very much. We have a third question here.

Participant:

First of all, I would like to thank all the panellists for their precious insights on the topic on behalf of the Directorate of Communications. I work as an Assistant Communications Expert at the Office of Legal Counsellor, and I'm also a law graduate; my question will be directed towards Mr Fowler. So, you were the first participant here to talk about freedom of speech when it comes to taking countermeasures against hate speech or disinformation. And you've taken it a step further by saying that there is a border that shouldn't be crossed. If it is crossed, some countermeasures need to be taken to it. But these are not censorship. I would like to thank you for that. My question is, should that border be static or dynamic? Will it change over time, or will we just set some rules, ground rules for certain words and topics? Will there be no-go zones, and will they be free? Or will it just change systematically over time by somehow measuring the people's minority communities, belief groups, ethnic groups, reactions to those topics, or to those terms used by other people who are generating hate speech or black propaganda? Thank you.

Enes Bayraklı:

Thank you very much. I see there are no other questions. Maybe we can start with Jonathan's speaking order and then continue with that.

Jonathan Fowler:

Okay. Thank you for the question directed to me; I will take the liberty of responding to that one specifically. I'm not an international lawyer, I hasten to add, but what I know and what I can tell you is that there is actually no international legal definition of hate speech. The characterisation of what is hateful is controversial, and it can be disputed because it varies from country to country and from society to society. So, in the context of what we are doing as the United Nations, forgive me for quoting how we put it, hate speech is understood as any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are—in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor. Now, the point, of course, is that this is often rooted in and generates intolerance. Hatred in certain contexts can be demeaning and divisive. However, I alluded to this in my presentation by looking specifically at what international law says. International law doesn't prohibit hate speech as such. It prohibits incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence. It comes from two main international legal frameworks: the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which came into force in 1976 but has been adopted progressively by countries prior to and following its entry into effect. The reason I am setting that out is the way bounda-



ries are created into international law. Yes, it's possible that a boundary can be dynamic, but international law is a slow consensus, the crafting process as it were. So, if there is a perception, that definition needs to be changed. That has to be the subject of an international negotiating process to recraft elements of international law. These things can be done through optional protocols. But I take your point completely because we are living in an incredibly fast-moving world. What is considered right or wrong? What is happening is just accelerating the pace, the pace of this kind of stuff, but it is difficult to create a dynamic border in the sense of the fastest possible, moving sort of adapting because I think an element of consensus implies that there has to be an element of stasis. So, the border has to be static, but it can be adapted. It just has to be subject to procedure. I wanted to take the liberty of mentioning that we are working in some ways to set a sort of voluntary code of conduct. We don't say rules but a voluntary code of conduct. The Secretary-General feels very strongly about this. In 2021, in the wake of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and the events of the previous year, we set out this thing called the common agenda. All the member states adopted this, and an aspect of that is a code of conduct that creates a digital public square that is inclusive and safe for all. So, elements of consensus, building about what inclusive and safe actually means, will come into the discussions. That is what is ongoing at the moment. I will leave the other questions to my colleagues to respond.

**Fadi Farasin:**

I think the last one of the second question asked by the gentleman is in the first row. I believe that this diversity of views and approaches, and even the interpretations, is in the DNA of Islam. This is why when we look at the history of Islam and the great cities that were built by this religion, whether it's in Angelus, Istanbul, Baghdad or India, we see that it is a melting pot of people from different ethnicities, religions, views and traditions. It was not based on the principle of tolerance; it was beyond that. It was based on acceptance, which is beautiful. What we believe is that some people in the West say something, and they have this view that their values are universal, but this is not the case. Other views and value systems in the world exist, and these are our values. However, we are trying to do this, whether through social Sawt-al Hikmah, which I just talked about or by engaging different actors at the societal or international levels. It is first to raise awareness and then engage people. I think we should not just react but also continue to build bridges, communicate freely and confidently, and really emphasise that some people in the West think that those values are universal, but they are not universal. Thank you.

Mersiha Smailovic:

Regarding the question of refugees, first of all, I refer to any refugee in the world, especially the recent ones, Ukrainian refugees. I hope that peace will come and they will return home to their safe houses. Most of the families had to leave behind their families; they couldn't all be evacuated or leave the country. How did the stages progress? We can see how quickly the European Union responded to accepting refugees from Ukraine. They are now all settled, and most of them are granted a work permit and education. Even the universities receive additional funding if they accept professors or researchers. Since 2014, we have been calling to the EU leaders that they can do more for the refugee crisis. Now, with Ukrainian refugees, we see that they had a solution, but there was no will to implement it, so can we conclude that it was due to racism? Is it the Islamophobia? Is it fear? Is it fake news or disinformation? We can't just imagine that it is not the fault of the Ukrainian refugees that they couldn't find a solution for them previously. We evacuated 1000 people from Afghanistan to my country and Macedonia. Afghans arrived with planes at our air borders and had to enter our country via a difficult migratory route. So, there is a solution if there is a will and a regulated convention. There is a law, but unfortunately, refugees from Ukraine, as I mentioned in my speech, face a fragile asylum system that doesn't support them. So, now the Macedonian government has to improve the system because there was previously no will, and refugees were picked based on whether or not the government wanted them to stay in the country, but now, these Ukrainian refugees are experiencing severe difficulties, such as not having work permits, education, vaccines, or any basic human rights. I hope that the world will show sympathy for the refugees, as it did during the Bosnian war. It lasted four years, but the Kosovo war also demonstrated a significant responsibility for receiving refugees from Kosovo. However, I sincerely hope that the war in Ukraine will come to an end with fewer victims and refugees in the world. Thank you.

Enes Bayrakli:

Thank you, Mersiha. On that note, I would like to thank all of our speakers Jonathan, Fadi and Mersiha for their insightful comments and participation. Thank you very much for your patience. I think we will have one more speech, but thank you.

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