

**SC** **STRATCOM**  
**SUMMIT '23**  
INTERNATIONAL  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION  
SUMMIT '23

ISBN: 978-625-6281-17-2

**STRATCOM**  
**INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION SUMMIT'23**

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1st Edition, İstanbul, 2024

**Contact**

Kızılırmak Mahallesi Mevlana Bulvarı No:144 Çankaya  
Ankara/TÜRKİYE  
T +90 312 590 20 00 | [webinfo@iletisim.gov.tr](mailto:webinfo@iletisim.gov.tr)

**Print**

Prestij Grafik Rek. ve Mat. San. ve Tic. Ltd. Şti.  
T +90 212 489 40 63, İstanbul  
Matbaa Sertifika No: 45590

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# PREFACE

**D**istinguished members of our media world, esteemed guests, ladies and gentlemen, I greet you with my most heartfelt feelings, respect and affection. I am pleased to host you in our country on the occasion of the “Strategic Communication Summit,” which has become an international brand in its field. I would like to welcome all of you to our beautiful Istanbul, the meeting point of continents, cultures and people. I wish in advance that our summit and the meetings you will hold will be auspicious.

This year, we are hosting our summit during a difficult time when indescribable pain is taking place nearby. There has been massive slaughter and brutality going on in Gaza since October 7, where every value of humanity has been trampled. Israel’s deliberate targeting of civilians is not limited to children and women; Israel is also killing journalists, particularly those who, against all odds, are trying to inform the world about the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza. More than 60 journalists have been killed so far as a result of Israeli attacks. In addition to shutting off the Gazan population’s access to fuel, food, water, and electricity—which is a clear war crime—Israel is also attempting to keep the oppression hidden by severing their lines of communication with the outside world. International organisations and the global system, unfortunately, give a terrible account of themselves in this test, as humanity is faced with this atrocity. The United Nations Security Council, which is responsible for ensuring global peace and stability, has remained completely dysfunctional during this process. The resolution, which was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly with 40 countries’ “abstention” and 121 countries’ votes “in favour,” was meaningful and valuable in that it reflected the common conscience of humanity. Another aspect of the Gaza crisis that upset us as much as the deaths of children was the biased coverage by international media outlets. Many press and broadcasting organisations that addressed the October 7 incident ignored Israel’s crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza. This attitude has not changed despite the massacre of their own colleagues by Israeli security forces. This unprincipled attitude, I believe, has deeply wounded not only the families of the journalists who died but also the entire press community.

As Türkiye, just as we have supported the people of Gaza against Israeli oppression since the beginning, we have also resisted Israel’s propaganda campaign, which sought to destroy or falsify the truth.” By means of our Centre for Combating Disinformation, we have exposed the truth behind over a hundred deliberately fabricated news stories. The Directorate of Communications, the Anadolu Agency, and TRT all fulfilled their respective responsibilities. The Turkish press, which has consistently provided updates on the situation on the ground, has adopted an exceptionally courageous position throughout this period. I extend my sincere congratulations to all journalists who, irrespective of their nationality, stand for the truth. The significance of strategic communication is the most critical lesson that the recent critical developments, particularly in Gaza, have taught us. We have collectively observed that war, conflict, assaults, and defences are not confined to the front lines. Collective action is required to combat the destructive effects of disinformation, which undermines democratic processes and violates the rights and liberties of individuals.

The Directorate of Communications hosted the Strategic Communication Summit for the third time, and I consider it to be of the utmost importance in this regard. I hope that discussions under the theme “Global Response to Hybrid Threats: Stability, Security, and Solidarity” will be fruitful. In light of the foregoing, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all the speakers and guests who have made contributions to the summit in advance. I greet you all with sincerity, affection and respect. May you remain safe and healthy.



PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE  
**RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN**

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# Opening Speeches-1



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**Melissa Fleming**  
Under Secretary General for  
Global Communications of United  
Nations



Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, we meet at a time of great global tensions amid grave threats to stability and security, including in the Middle East. In the fog of war, we are also witnessing lies and hate spreading online with incredible speed with real time, real-world consequences. Words are turned into weapons. They are deployed to amplify tensions and prolong violence. And we know that hate speech mis and disinformation are not new threats. But the rise of digital platforms has enabled their rapid dissemination at scale. There are instances where lies spread on social media have helped governments convince ordinary people to murder, rape or drive out their fellow citizens. What is more, disinformation is being used to erode public institutions, impacting all areas of conflict prevention. For example, UN peacekeeping operations are under attack, targeted with false allegations at a scale and speed, they are not equipped to address. And this is endangering UN staff and the civilians that they are tasked to protect. It is also fuelling misunderstanding and tensions within the local communities. It is threatening peace processes and it is helping to recruit combatants and to radicalize individuals. We did a survey recently that found that a huge 58% of peacekeepers now say mis and disinformation have a severe critical impact on



their safety, security and their work and it is already a hugely challenging information environment. But we believe that deliberate disinformation is about to get more sophisticated and widespread with artificial intelligence being weaponized to accelerate the spread of disinformation, while AI and deep fakes are further blurring the lines between reality and fiction. Threats to information integrity are affecting the whole of the UN and impacting many of our efforts to make the world a better place. And that is why Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is taking this challenge extremely seriously and has asked my department to develop a code of conduct for information integrity on digital platforms. The code will include a set of recommendations with very specific goals. Firstly, we want to disincentivize online harms. This means that we want to discourage all business models that are designed to addict and to profit from the spread of lies and hate. Second, we want transparency from digital platforms to reveal how their algorithms work. Third, we want to empower internet users by equipping them with the skills to think critically about the content they see and to understand why platforms are pushing it to them. Our recommendations are firmly rooted in the right to freedom of expression and opinion, and the right to access to information.



But we know we cannot do this alone. And we are looking to build a broad coalition to seek solutions to these complex challenges from governments to civil society, media and academia. And so, I wish you all the best for your discussions over the coming days because it is vital to keep this momentum and these conversations going to build solidarity in pursuit of global stability and security to restore balance in our information ecosystems and to build integrity into our public spheres. Thank you so much.

## Opening Speeches-2



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**Fahrettin Altun**  
Presidency's Head of  
Communications of the  
Republic of Türkiye



Esteemed Minister, distinguished members of the media, civil society and academia, distinguished ministers, public officials, strategic communication experts, and ladies and gentlemen who have visited our country from many regions of the world, I would like to express my delight and honour to be with you at Stratcom, the Strategic Communication Summit, which we are organising for the 3rd time this year. Welcome; it is an honour to have you here. As you all know, Stratcom is not only the title of a summit we organise once a year; in fact, Stratcom is also the name of a brand that facilitates various events such as Stratcom Forum, Stratcom Youth and various publications and streaming services such as Stratcom Podcasts and Stratcom Books throughout the year in Türkiye and abroad. At Stratcom, our goal is very clear. In fact, we want to make Türkiye a global engagement hub and a global brand in the field of strategic communication. In line with this goal, we are trying to exchange experience and knowledge with individuals and organisations that have achieved success in the field of strategic communication on a global scale. Our summit theme this year is “Global Response to Hybrid Threats,” and we have three main concepts: stability,

security, and solidarity. We will talk about how to combat hybrid threats around these 3 concepts.

Distinguished Minister, dear guests, today our world is on the verge of a turning point. We have come to the end of the world as we know it. Yes, “the end of the world as we know it” is what Immanuel Wallerstein said. And Immanuel Wallerstein also said, ‘I believe that we are in the middle of a dark forest and that we do not have enough clarity about which way we should go. The modern world system, as a historical system, is in a fatal crisis and is unlikely to survive for another fifty years. Although the collapse of communism in 1989 is thought to mark the triumph of liberalism, I believe it marks the final collapse of liberalism as the defining geo-culture of the world system. Yes, time will tell how true Wallerstein’s dire prediction is, but it is an obvious fact that especially in the last 20 years, the system created after the Second World War, with its constituent actors, institutions, mechanisms, and norms, has been in great turbulence. The era we live in today is surrounded by many challenges and uncertainties, such as wars, conflicts, humanitarian tragedies, global terrorist threats, nuclear risks, food, health, and energy crises. During the pandemic, the world experienced a major global governance crisis. It faced an even bigger crisis regarding global production following the pandemic. While states and governments were attempting to find solutions to the deepening global inflation caused by the pandemic, we witnessed together the weakness and ineffectiveness of the global economic cooperation channels. Again, we have seen that an effective global combat mechanism against natural disasters, which have reached to an extent that threatens human life on our planet with climate change and global warming, could not be produced. And this was despite the warnings of scientists for many years. The international system has not only been incapacitated in the face of newly emerging crises. It has also been inadequate in the face of destabilising conflicts which the international system has traditionally maintained their presence. If we look back at how the world first became aware of this in the last 10-15 years, we see the Syrian crisis. In this crisis, we witnessed how international actors and international organisations were helpless in the face of civil war and humanitarian tragedies. The war between Russia and Ukraine started 21 months ago, and this showed how helpless the international system is in the face of inter-state conflicts. However, the events that have transpired in Gaza over the last 47 days, namely Israel’s attacks on the Gaza Strip that are devoid of any conscience and sense, have revealed a very bitter picture, which has justified the crisis in the international system. The crisis of the international system, which was previously discussed at the level of elites, has today turned into an ordeal experienced at the level of peoples. We must put it simply and clearly that we are confronted with a paradox, a contradiction. On the one hand, the real world is rapidly globalising; on the other hand, the mechanisms built in the context of global governance are becoming dysfunctional day by day. While interdependencies in inter-societal relations are deepening, crises, threats and problems



are also globalising. In this very environment, a challenge has been added to conventional conflicts and global crises. This new challenge is called hybrid threats, which are targeting all societies of the world. Hybrid threats stand out as new methods of competition, struggle, and war in today's world.

Distinguished guests and dear participants, when we talk about hybrid threats, we are talking about wars of tutelage, political manipulations, economic pressures, irregular migrations, manipulations of international law, terrorism, cyber attacks, information races, and disinformation wars. We are faced with a type of threat that combines conventional, irregular and asymmetric actions. We are talking about strategies and tactics that aim to maliciously manipulate political decision-making mechanisms, security architecture, social cohesion, cultural existence, and communication processes. This is a threat that conventional and institutional tools, concepts and methods cannot counter. In order to counter hybrid threats, we must first and foremost reform our national security and defence mechanisms and develop flexible and multifaceted countering strategies. The classical conception of power of the modern period is no longer sufficient to explain today's power struggles. Even Hobbes' description of the state of nature, who laid the foundations of realist thought, is insufficient when analysing the global conflict environment that people experience today. Emotions of competitiveness, insecurity, and desire to gain reputation alone are no longer enough to explain what drives actors to war and conflict. We are faced with a situation where even the state of nature is manipulated. This environment of conflict that people are experiencing at the global level today goes beyond the state of nature. And what we call the state of nature actually corresponds to a political imagination in which lying becomes ordinary. Dear Participants, we, as communicators, are positioned at a critical point in this chaotic structure. Undoubtedly, the jewel of communicators is information. However, information has turned into one of the lost values of today. Since Sun Tzu's famous work *The Art of War*, 'information' has been recognised as one of the most strategic elements of the battlefield. On the other hand, since the invention of the printing press, information has become one of the main reference points in the institutionalisation of modern nation-states and ideologies. In the 19th and 20th centuries, with the development of mass media, information wars became a critical element in the competition between states in the international arena. However, especially with the transition from analogue to digital culture in mass communication, the speed and comprehensiveness of information technologies have increased, and this has transformed information into a much more powerful and effective instrument of power. Initially, information warfare was expected to provide tactical and operational advantages in military terms, but over time, it has come to be seen as a means of achieving strategic gains. Today, states and non-state actors actively try to use information tools before military means in regional and global conflicts and crises. However, for a considerable period of time, these instruments have not been used fairly and for the sake of

truth, and they have often been abused. In these processes, disinformation, misinformation, information pollution and manipulation become the main sources of reference. I would like to quote Clausewitz's well-known remark here: "War is a mere continuation of policy with other means." Today, I believe we can and should modify this statement to read: "War is merely a continuation of policy by corrupt means, and disinformation is one of these political means." Furthermore, we should not settle for just this assessment; instead, we should recognise this situation as a hybrid threat and deliberate on our ways to combat and counter it.

Esteemed guests, distinguished participants; Today, disinformation campaigns not only cause an inflation of false and misleading news but also lead to a deep crisis of truth. The crisis of truth is based on the normalisation of the lie, the trivialization of the truth, and, in Jean Baudrillard's words, 'hyperreal becoming more real than the real'. The crisis of truth brings about, above all, a crisis of democracy, the effects of which are clearly felt in the international arena. Today, because of this crisis of truth, we are facing a global crisis of democracy. The crisis of truth experienced by individuals, societies, and states reveals a deep crisis of trust in interpersonal and inter-societal relations, increases the potential for tension and conflict in the international arena, and erodes the feelings of social unity and solidarity. Indeed, in this process, hybrid threats have turned into an element that deepens the crisis of truth. All the hybrid threats we are discussing today and tomorrow have achieved their current positions thanks to the dominance of the technologies we use. We are all aware that digital technologies strengthen hybrid threats despite their relatively democratising effects that spread information to the grassroots. Digital technologies are turning into instruments that jeopardise the public order of countries and the equal and robust participation of individuals in the public sphere. Digital technology companies are becoming new foci of global power, and an order of exploitation is being established in cyberspace. As Huberman says, "Digital technologies bring with them new forms of capital accumulation and, thus, new forms of exploitation and domination." To put it again in Dan Schiller's words, "Digital networks are now directly generalising the social and cultural range of the capitalist economy as never before. What is gaining a foothold in this expanding field is digital fascism, which threatens the democracy, stability and security of countries." Indeed, one of the primary objectives of hybrid threats is to destabilise the socio-political and socio-economic spheres. The main fuel for this process is the implementation of systematic disinformation policies.

Distinguished participants; The whole world has clearly seen the devastating effects of systematic disinformation policies during the pandemic. We also saw this during the Russia-Ukraine war. However, we see the extent to which systematic disinformation policies distort the truth much more clearly in the Gaza massacre that has been taking place before the eyes of the world since October 7. Today, the entire world public opinion is the target



of Israeli hybrid threats and systematic disinformation policies. Edward Said was, of course, well aware of how Israel manipulates the international media for its own ideological interests when he said years ago, 'Do not accept any pre-packaged information as knowledge; no message is exempt from the ideological process'. Edward Said was also aware that, when it comes to Palestinian reality, our problem is not limited to the current campaigns of lies and disinformation attacks in the Western media. According to Said, historical stereotypes in the Western cultural imagination continue to manipulate modern Western public opinion's perception of Palestine. We see this today as well. Said's books *Orientalism*, *The Question of Palestine*, and *Covering Islam*, are invaluable works that deal with this reality in all its dimensions. Indeed, for years, the Israeli elites have used the anti-Islamic sentiment in the modern Western imagination as material for their own illegitimate struggle. What did Ben Gurion say? "We fear nothing but Islam." And what did Yitzhak Rabin say? "Our enemy is Islam." I would also like to remind you of the words of Shimon Peres: "We will not feel safe until we are free from the sword of Islam." Unfortunately, the current versions of these attempts to antagonise, marginalise and demonise are much more severe, much more penetrating, and much more destructive than when Said wrote the works I mentioned. The goal is no longer simply to spread false news but to create insensitivity to the truth and disrupt the relationship between the truth and human beings. Israel is trying to manipulate the world into believing that "there are no Palestinians," as an Israeli Prime Minister said years ago. The Palestinians are first criminalised and then dehumanised, and in this way, they are to be exterminated. Moreover, this crime is demanded to be ignored. The most prominent collaborators in this process are, unfortunately, the giant Western media companies and social media platforms. In line with this endeavour, many countries and actors are subjected to overt or covert blackmail by Israel. They accuse you of anti-Semitism when you talk about Israel's murders in the media. When you defend the right to life of Palestinians, they claim that you advocate the destruction of Israel. When you speak out against the massacre in Gaza, they can accuse you of being insensitive to the Holocaust. In order to reinforce its colonial narratives, the Israeli army sends concept sets, dictionaries, and so-called true-false tables to media companies in the West. On the other hand, Israel is brutally killing journalists in Gaza. Since October 7, Israel has killed 64 members of the media in the Gaza Strip. In this process, Israel is using a fascist propaganda method to murder journalists, healthcare professionals, women, and children, as well as the truth." Theodor Adorno, who himself was a German Jew who had to flee from Hitler's persecution, mentions some of the characteristics of fascist propaganda in his 1946 essay "Antisemitism and Fascist Propaganda." Adorno says: "Above all, fascist propaganda does not attack real opponents, but ghosts, bogeymen, and myths." In the past, fascist propaganda targeted communists and Jews. Now, Zionist actors, who are the global representatives of fascism, bogey Islam and Muslims and engage in systematic black propaganda activity against them. According to Adorno, the second characteristic of fascist propaganda is that

it is based on cheap rhetoric instead of discursive logic and that it makes serial speeches independent of reality by means of association. This is exactly how Israel's propaganda machine works today, the way Adorno described it in 1946." Israel is totally practicing fascist propaganda. Today's fascists repeat the fascist propaganda methods of yesterday. And those who victimised Jews in the past are trying to victimise Muslims today. Moreover, today the victim is expected to condemn himself and the world is expected to applaud the persecution. We will not remain silent against this oppression, we will not applaud this oppression as expected, and we will continue our struggle for truth and justice under the leadership of our President against the oppression of Israel. We will continue our struggle. Distinguished guests, as strategic communicators, we must build a shield of resistance against hybrid threats and we consider this meeting a valuable initiative. It is now well known that conventional methods and tools are ineffective against hybrid threats. We need strategic communication tools to promote global peace, security, stability, and solidarity. We need global collaboration and knowledge exchange in the domains of countering disinformation, crisis communication, public relations, public diplomacy, and civilian preparedness, as well as raising awareness and enhancing coordination. Obviously, a human-centred approach is the most fundamental value in this process. With the Türkiye Communication Model we have developed as Türkiye, we strive to establish a people-oriented communication environment and institutionalise a strategic communication vision that puts truth, transparency and accountability at the centre. As you know, hybrid threats aim to blur the borderlines between peace, crises, conflict, and war. In order to protect these borderlines, it is essential that states, international organisations and civil society organisations advocating for rights act in international cooperation and coordination. Diplomacy, defence, security, communication, intelligence and technology experts at national, regional and global levels should act in cooperation. It is precisely for these reasons that we have launched this platform, Stratcom, the Strategic Communication Summit, and we are making efforts to institutionalise strategic communication in a global context. We will continue to strengthen our strategic communication tools in order to strengthen the infrastructure to inform our citizens and the world accurately and timely through reliable sources, to take effective measures against disinformation, and to fight against hybrid threats. We believe that this endeavour will contribute to building a more just, peaceful, resilient and stable international community against wars, conflicts and threats that manifest themselves at the regional and global levels. I am convinced that the Stratcom platform will increase international cooperation opportunities, as it has in the past years. In this regard, I hope that the Stratcom Summit 2023, International Strategic Communication Summit, will serve the peace, tranquility, stability and global justice of all humanity. Once again, I welcome all our guests to our country and our distinguished city, Istanbul. We are honoured by your presence here. I would like to thank the guest ministers and our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hakan Fidan, for his support of our strategic communication efforts so far



and for attending our meeting despite his busy schedule. 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 organising this important summit. As the late Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır said, “One who does not feel the delight of the truth is condemned to its imagination. One who does not know how to question is subject to imitation.” To many struggles for truth, where we will not walk on the road of imitation but on the line of questioning. I extend my respects to all of you and thank you. Thank you very much.

## Opening Speeches-3



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**Hakan Fidan**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
of the Republic of Türkiye



Esteemed guests, it's a privilege to join you at the "Strategic Communication Summit" hosted by the Directorate of Communications. Stratcom has evolved into a global entity, uniting every facet of the strategic communication landscape. My heartfelt thanks go out to all colleagues who played a part in this achievement, with special appreciation for the Director of Communications.

Esteemed attendees, we find ourselves amid a transformative era in the international system and geopolitical dynamics. The intensity of strategic rivalry has been unparalleled since the Cold War's conclusion. Yet, technological advancements have shifted state competition beyond traditional paradigms. Our global landscape is now defined by asymmetric conflicts, interconnected crises, the pervasive use of proxy organizations, prominent threats of misinformation and cyber warfare, and the capacity of individuals to challenge state entities. Amidst these dynamics, the distinction between wartime and peacetime is increasingly ambiguous. In our current climate of uncertainty, the essence of "Truth" has become a focal point of discourse. The times we inhabit are labeled by some as the "Post-Truth" period. Others refer to it as the "Multi-Truth Era" or the "Cross-Truth Era". Regardless of the terminology,

the prevalence of disinformation obscuring the truth is undeniable. The primary instigators of this trend have been non-state entities. Exacerbating the issue is the involvement of certain states in this cycle of nihilism. The same institutionalized misinformation that facilitated interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, wreaking havoc in our region, is currently active in Gaza. Nevertheless, our state philosophy is anchored in the axiom that “States should invariably uphold the truth”. This principle is the cornerstone of governmental credibility. Consequently, it is incumbent upon states to resolve the crisis of truth erosion. Achieving this necessitates the strategic deployment of communication techniques to convey truth effectively to the populace. In an era where information is readily accessible yet contemplation time is diminished, social platforms like TikTok, Facebook, and others are profoundly influencing and molding human thought processes. Two primary elements distinguish the present situation. They are the fast pace of change and the simultaneous presence of enduring and emerging threats. The “Hybrid Threats” theme is particularly well-chosen, as it directly addresses the core of the issue. My gratitude to the Directorate of Communications for highlighting this topic is profound. The blend of traditional and unconventional elements now encapsulated by “Hybrid Threat” is something we’re quite accustomed to. The novelty lies in the potential misuse of revolutionary technologies like communication systems, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence by adversarial forces. Artificial intelligence serves as a prime illustration of this. Projections suggest that artificial intelligence, in tandem with automation, might boost the global economy by as much as USD 15 trillion. This figure nearly mirrors the entire economic output of the European Union. Yet, even the creators of AI acknowledge the unpredictability of its boundaries. Such unpredictability could escalate into threats comparable to a pandemic or nuclear conflict. Türkiye is proactively instituting defenses against these hybrid threats. We’re adopting a comprehensive stance on security to make all the essential preparations. Over the past two decades, under our President’s vision and leadership, and with our nation’s unwavering support, Türkiye has achieved remarkable advancements. It’s been an honor to both witness and contribute to these developments through my responsibilities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is actively engaged in these initiatives, reinforcing Türkiye’s national security framework. Embracing the digital era’s prospects, “Restructuring Efforts” within my Ministry are now prioritizing strategic communication. Boasting the world’s fifth-largest diplomatic network with 260 missions, we possess ample capability to modernize ourselves and our infrastructure to meet contemporary demands. Moreover, fostering global awareness and resilience is deemed strategic in countering hybrid threats. Consequently, Türkiye is dedicated to supporting the endeavors of international bodies like the United Nations, NATO, OSCE, G20, OECD, and the Organization of Turkic States.

Esteemed guests, terrorism remains the principal menace to global security and is deeply entangled with the concept of the hybrid threat. Presently, terrorist factions are exploit-



ing the widespread reach of social media. They're conducting tactical maneuvers utilizing communication networks, cyber warfare tools, and artificial intelligence capabilities. They possess the means to streamline organizational expenses, including the use of drones. They engage in organized criminal endeavors to fund their operations. They capitalize on world-wide crises affecting food, energy, wealth, and justice. Consequently, traditional counter-terrorism tactics are insufficient for contemporary challenges. Türkiye is proactive in evolving its counter-terrorism strategies to align with modern necessities. At times, we've had to face these challenges alone, while occasionally witnessing our allies side with the very organizations we combat. We've also been compelled to confront proxy groups that serve the interests of imperial powers. Yet, our commitment to truth remains unwavering. We have consistently declared, across all platforms, that our allies' support, particularly from the US, to groups like the PKK and YPG under the pretext of combating DAESH, constitutes a significant strategic error. I reiterate from this platform our resolve to implement every necessary action to fortify Türkiye's national security against this critical threat. I'd like to highlight an ironic predicament; despite Türkiye's leading role and policy discourse on migration management, we observe certain Western nations anticipating more from us in curbing irregular migration. To these nations, I pose a candid question: Had you supported Türkiye, your ally, instead of a terrorist faction, wouldn't it have been more feasible to allocate our resources from anti-terrorism efforts towards managing irregular migration? We anticipate a principled stance from our allies and friends against terrorism, without any distinction among terrorist groups. This stance is equally pertinent in combating FETÖ, a terrorist entity aiming to infiltrate state structures. We have significantly weakened this organization within Türkiye and impaired its global network. Day by day, we continue to constrict this group's operational scope. Collaborative international efforts are vital in addressing terrorism, which now presents itself as a hybrid threat. Indeed, Türkiye advocated for a comprehensive approach to the security, affluence, and stability of the Euro-Atlantic region at NATO's Vilnius Summit. Owing to our initiatives, NATO has resolved to revise its counter-terrorism documentation. For the first time, a "Counter Terrorism Coordinator" has been appointed. We firmly believe that NATO's expansion should be respected by candidate countries and not exploited by terrorist groups like FETÖ and PKK. Otherwise, hasty measures intended to bolster our collective security could ironically become security threats themselves.

Esteemed guests, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine is a critical concern for Euro-Atlantic security, with hybrid threats being heavily employed. On one front, we witness combat reminiscent of World War I trench warfare; on another, there's a heavy reliance on sophisticated technology, cyber-attacks, and information warfare. Regrettably, the war's destructive impact and the hybrid threats it employs extend far beyond the immediate combatants. The most effective resolution to these threats is, without a doubt, swift negotiations to bring an end to the conflict. Türkiye has steadfastly supported Ukraine's sovereignty, independence,

and territorial integrity, including Crimea, from the outset. It was Türkiye that facilitated the negotiations leading to significant progress between the conflicting parties and safeguarded the global food supply with its Black Sea initiative. We are prepared to facilitate peace discussions once more when the circumstances permit. However, it must be acknowledged that this is not a task we can accomplish in isolation. The unity and collaboration of nations advocating for conflict resolution will hasten the journey towards peace. It is important to remember that the longer the war endures, the more appealing hybrid warfare tactics become.

Distinguished guests, disinformation stands as one of the most prevalent tactics within the hybrid threats we face today. Our Directorate of Communications is actively combating such campaigns directed against Türkiye. This battle has now been extended to encompass the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Following the events of October 7, amidst allegations of war crimes by Israel in Gaza and the West Bank, we encountered two distinct forms of disinformation. These were thoroughly addressed by our Director of Communications in his earlier address. The first issue is the “biased perspective” of numerous Western media outlets, which overlook the humanitarian catastrophe faced by Palestinians. Another concern is the systematic spread of misinformation, not just regarding the events of October 7, where Israel attempts to sway global opinion by distorting the truth. Through this misinformation, Israel seeks to rationalize the slaughter of over 4,000 Palestinian civilians, including 6,000 children, with a level of savagery that harks back to medieval times, all under the pretense of “self-defense.” This is the reason they target hospitals and cast blame on others. This explains their search for command center tunnels beneath the medical facilities they strike. Nonetheless, the central narrative Israel promotes aims to conceal the occupation and render a two-state solution practically unattainable through its actions in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. They have augmented this narrative with a regional normalization plan that sidelines the Palestinians, yet they promote it to the world as a step towards peace. Türkiye has consistently declared across all platforms that any plan not dedicated to achieving a fair and enduring resolution to the Palestinian issue is doomed to fail. Our stance has proven correct. Currently, Türkiye is advancing its efforts along two fronts. On the first front, we strive for a comprehensive ceasefire and the continuous delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. The second front focuses on renewing efforts to secure a lasting peace founded on the principle of a two-state solution. As a nation appointed by the extraordinary joint summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League for ceasefire and peace initiatives, we are actively pursuing vigorous diplomacy both bilaterally and multilaterally. Our endeavors and discussions reveal a widespread consensus that the only feasible resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State, territorially contiguous, with East al-Quds as its capital. However, we are all aware that this alone is insufficient. True peace cannot be attained by merely echoing past



narratives and permitting Israel to eclipse one act of war by committing another. Echoing the words of the esteemed Palestinian intellectual Edward Said, on the 20th anniversary of his passing, we must abandon simplistic solutions, prefabricated plans, and the passive endorsement of the powerful's actions and statements. Consequently, it is imperative to forge a lasting resolution through innovative dialogues and strategies. It is our duty to terminate this longstanding injustice. Türkiye has embraced this insight and taken proactive measures accordingly. We have articulated that enduring peace is achievable only with a guarantor system that embodies regional stewardship. It is encouraging to witness the burgeoning discourse around this concept. Our commitment to supporting our Palestinian brothers and sisters remains unwavering.

It is also crucial to acknowledge that the dire situation in Gaza presents a profound challenge to the international order by skewing its moral compass. We believe this to be an even graver issue. The apathy of Western administrations towards the atrocities, coupled with their reluctance to advocate for a substantial ceasefire, signifies a profound moral and political failure. Such indifference threatens to erode the very foundations of trust in international law. I reiterate our appeal, made both privately and in global forums; the Western nations must unequivocally dissociate from the war crimes attributed to Israel. Any form of support for Israel, whether conditional or unconditional, effectively sanctions further violence against Palestinians. The global outpouring of support for Palestine, manifested in solidarity protests worldwide, reaffirms that humanity will not stand idly by. Remarkably, these expressions of solidarity persist despite the curtailment of free speech in certain European nations. The annals of history will remember the suppression of the Palestinian emblem and the plea for peace in a contemporary Europe that paradoxically deems desecration of the Holy Quran as an exercise of free speech. True peace is attainable through justice, international collaboration, and unwavering commitment to the truth. The dawn of Türkiye's second century, heralded as the "Century of Türkiye" by our President, aligns with the emergence of a new paradigm in the global arena. Türkiye pledges to dedicate its full might to sculpting a new world order predicated on justice, in alliance with our comrades and allies, drawing from the wisdom of our heritage and our expanding potential. With these sentiments, I express my earnest wishes for the success of the 3rd Strategic Communication Summit and extend my regards to all once more. Thank you.

## Opening Speeches-4



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Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanı



Dear members of our media world,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen...

I greet you with my most heartfelt feelings, affection and respect.

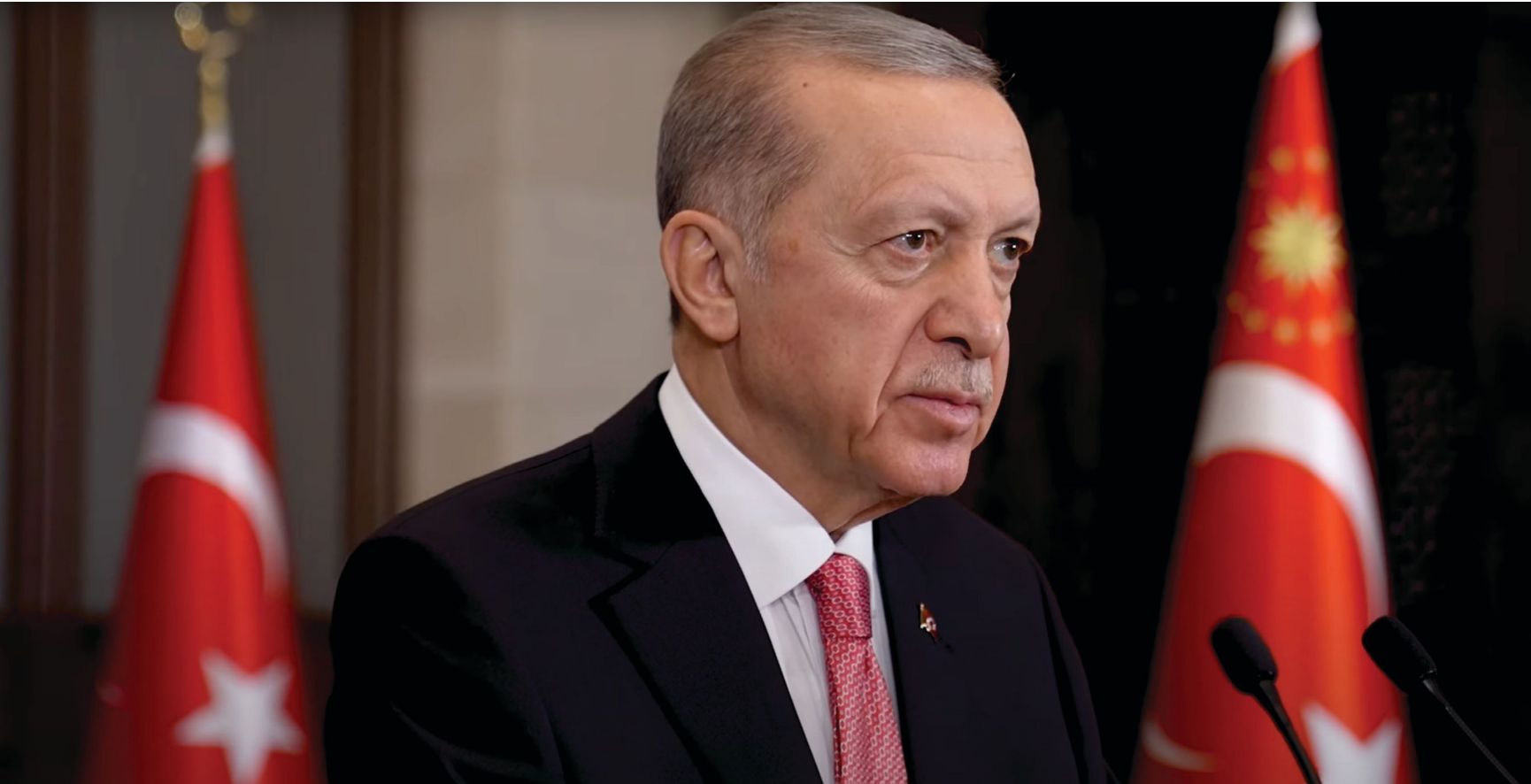
I am pleased to host you in our country on the occasion of the Strategic Communication Summit, which has become an international brand in its field.

Welcome all of you to our beautiful Istanbul, the meeting point of continents, cultures and people.

I wish in advance that our summit and the meetings you will hold will be auspicious.

This year, we are hosting our summit during a difficult time when indescribable sorrow is occurring close by.

There has been massive slaughter and brutality going on in Gaza since October 7, where every value of humanity has been trampled.



The civilians deliberately targeted by Israel are not limited to children and women either... Israel also kills journalists who try to announce the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza to the world, despite all the difficulties.

The Israeli attacks have resulted in the deaths of over 60 journalists thus far.

In addition to shutting off Gaza's population's access to fuel, food, water, and electricity—which is a clear war crime—Israel is also attempting to keep the oppression hidden by severing their lines of communication with the outside world.

International organisations and the global system, unfortunately, give a terrible account of themselves in this test, as humanity is faced with this atrocity.

The United Nations Security Council, which is responsible for ensuring global peace and stability, has remained completely dysfunctional during this process.

The resolution, which was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly with 40 countries' "abstention" and 121 countries' votes "in favour", was meaningful and valuable in that it reflected the common conscience of humanity.



Another issue that bothered us as much as the deaths of children in Gaza was the biased reporting of international news organisations.

Many press and broadcasting organisations that addressed the October 7 incident ignored Israel's crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza.

This attitude has not changed, despite the massacre of his own colleagues by Israeli security forces.

This unprincipled attitude, I believe, has deeply wounded not only the families of the journalists who died but also the entire press community.

As Türkiye, we have supported the people of Gaza against Israeli oppression since the beginning...

Furthermore, we resisted Israel's propaganda campaign, which sought to destroy or falsify the truth.

By means of our Centre for Combating Disinformation, we have exposed the truth behind over a hundred deliberately fabricated news stories.

The Directorate of Communications, the Anadolu Agency, and TRT all fulfilled their respective responsibilities.

The Turkish press, which has consistently provided updates on the situation on the ground, has adopted an exceptionally courageous position throughout this procedure.

I extend my sincere congratulations to all journalists who, irrespective of their nationality, stand for the truth.

The significance of strategic communication is the most critical lesson that the recent critical developments, particularly in Gaza, have taught us.

We have collectively observed that war, conflict, assaults, and defences are not confined to the front lines.

Collective action is required to combat the destructive effects of disinformation, which undermines democratic processes and violates the rights and liberties of individuals.

The Directorate of Communications hosted the Strategic Communication Summit for the third time, and I consider it to be of the utmost importance in this regard.

I express my aspiration for fruitful deliberations to transpire surrounding the thematic area of "Global Response to Hybrid Threats: Stability, Security, Solidarity".

In light of the foregoing, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all the speakers and guests who have made contributions to the summit in advance.

I greet you all with sincerity, affection and respect.

May you remain safe and healthy.

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# Stratcom Panel-1

*Hybrid Threats in the Age of  
Uncertainty*

24 November 2023

# Hybrid Threats in the Age of Uncertainty



  
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## PANELLISTS



Moderator  
**Assoc. Prof. Oğuz Güner**  
Head of the Public Diplomacy  
Department of the Directorate of  
Communications



Assoc. Prof. Carlos  
**Galán Cordero**  
University Carlos III of Madrid



Assoc. Prof. Gordan  
**Akrap**  
Assistant Rector at the Dr. Franjo  
Tudjman Defence and Security  
University



Rashel Talukder  
Managing Director of the Polish  
Platform for Homeland Security



Ellen Wasylina  
President of the Trocadéro  
Forum Institute (TFI)



Matthew Saltmarsh  
Head of News and Media of the  
United Nations High Commissioner  
for Refugees (UNHCR)



## Moderator Oğuz Güner

Ladies and gentlemen. Good morning again. I would like to thank you all for your participation. We are here for the session titled Hybrid Threats in the Age of Uncertainty. I would like to start by thanking all the participants, all the panellists, and all the speakers here for joining us today. I am also feeling very honoured today to moderate the first panel of the Stratcom Summit'23. As you all know, the Stratcom Summit, which has been organized for the third time this year, has achieved an international brand. This year's theme is Global Response to Hybrid Threats. And we attach too much importance to understanding and addressing hybrid threats. Today we have very valuable, distinguished panellists with us. It is a pleasure for me to introduce them. As the time is passing very fast and due to today's delay, I do not want to spend too much time making a pirate presentation and just would like to share the floor with these distinguished panellists. First of all, it is a pleasure for me to introduce our first panellist, Carlos Galán. I would just briefly like to mention his short biography. Mr. Galán is a lecturer at the University Carlos III of Madrid and Nebrija University, renowned for his exceptional work in hybrid threats and disinformation, as well as, offering

consultancy to Spanish private and public entities in the field of digital law. Mr. Galán serves as a member of the Jean Monnet Chair of the European Union on Disinformation, with a specialization in hybrid threats, disinformation, privacy, cyber security, and cognitive warfare. So, Mr. Galán brings valuable knowledge to our discussion. And we would like to share the floor. The floor is yours, Mr. Galán. So, what are the effects of disinformation, manipulation, and information disorder, and what is your fundamental perspective on social cohesion and information disorders? Please...

### **Carlos Galán Cordero**

Thank you very much. First of all, I want to say thank you to the organization for giving me the chance to see all of you. I have never stayed in Türkiye before. I really appreciate being with all of you. I am going to talk about hybrid threats and, exactly, examples of how hybrid threats attack our democracies. It is important to understand that in the new age, hybrid threats are one of the most important things for each country in the world to protect against its citizens. And to form an understanding of this, before everything, we are going to talk about a little story. This story is about one small village in the northwest of France called La Gallia and how a Roman Emperor called Julius Caesar tried to conquer that village. In that village, there were two famous characters, namely Asterix and Obelix. And Julius Caesar was always trying to invade that village. They use better soldiers than they can muster. They try to pay money to conquer that village, but nothing of that kind of behaviour can conquer the village. One day, Julius Caesar is thinking, “How is it possible that such a small village cannot be a part of the Roman Empire? How is it possible that one hundred citizens can be part of the Empire?” One day, comes to the emperor, one person called Détritus. In Spanish, it means “Little Destruction.” Who says, “I can conquer that place. I can make sure that you can invade that city.” “How is it possible? You are only one man, and our best soldiers cannot do it,” Julius Caesar says. “Do not worry. I do not need more than a narrative of disinformation and fake news.” Détritus goes to that village, and only in a few weeks can he provoke all the citizens in the village, starting a fight between them. This is the only story on the Asterix and Obelix in which the emperor could win this fight without brute force. Only by using disinformation, and only if you use the correct narratives in the correct ways, can you provoke that one country. The democracies have a real and huge problem. Hybrid threats have a lot of tools: military tools, economic tools, non-conventional tools, and so on. But one of the cheapest of those is the disinformation attacks. You only need one person who can spread these narratives at a moment’s notice. In some countries, the way things happen is easier and, in some countries, more complicated. I am from Spain. This is a graphic; for example, in Spain, we have a very polarized country. There is also the United States, and I am convinced that it too has that polarization. In such countries, disinformation and fake news have more effect than others. Fake news and disinformation are problems for a lot of countries around the world. People are worried about fake news. We are going to show you an example: the health narratives of disinformation. These things that you can see on the screen are the most famous disinformation narratives about COVID. If we analyse that graphic, we can see that what a



lot of people are thinking about is fake news. And in some countries, for example, the United States, this has a huge impact, such as from disinformation narratives about COVID and any kind of disinformation narrative. We hear about all kinds of narratives. If we do an analysis of who spreads and who creates those kinds of narratives, we can narrow 65% of those narratives down to only these twelve people. We are going to share with you one of them, Robert Kennedy Jr. Robert Kennedy Jr. was the leader and chief editor of a media outlet called Children's Health Defense, which 10 years ago spread a lot of disinformation about any kind of health topic. Not only COVID things, but they have also spread narratives about the vaccines, the normal vaccines. They put in this blog articles about curing cancer and another sickness. If you check that website, you can see what his opinions are on certain topics. If we analyse a little bit more about that person, we can know that this person is supported by and has a lot of interviews with the official media of, for example, Russia. They appear in a lot of media that is paid for by the Kremlin to spread his narratives. And Robert Kennedy Jr. also spread a lot of narratives that were later spread by the Kremlin. Not only in his official outlets, but he also spreads those narratives in his complete ecosystem of propaganda. We need to know that the official outlets of the countries are not the only way that country spreads all its opinions, propaganda, points of view, and so on. And in my opinion, we need to focus not only on the official outlets but also on the complete ecosystem. I am going to finish now. All countries and the European Union have a huge and real problem. The people, the citizens of the European Union, do not believe in the classical media in their country. The people still believe a little in the media. The percentage of people who believe in the media year over year is half as low. And that is a huge problem. If we do not believe what

our media says, what are we going to believe? Thank you very much. You have my email, my LinkedIn. Thank you very much.

### **Moderator Oğuz Güner**

Mr. Galán, thank you so much. Thank you very much. Particularly, the visuals you have shared are very important. I found it very fruitful, and I would like to thank you for your insightful comments and your presentation. So, if you have time, I will ask all the participants if they have a question. Then we will address you, but we have a time limitation. Initially, I would like to apologize for it and thank you. And it is an honour for me to introduce our next panellist, Mr. Gordan Akrap, who is currently serving as the Assistant Director at the University of Defense and Security, Dr. Franjo Tudman. Mr. Akrap is a founder and the president of the Hybrid Warfare Research Institute and Zagreb Security Firm. His expertise in hybrid, modern, and emerging security threats will undoubtedly shed light on our insights. We attach so much importance to your valuable contributions. Mr. Akrap, the floor is yours, please.

### **Gordan Akrap**

Thank you very much, and I am very pleased that I am invited here to be able to share some of my opinions and those of my colleagues from my institute. And thank you very much for organizing this excellent conference, because it is more important than ever that we are facing the challenges that are in front of our societies. Increased societal resilience is the most important thing for the security and safety of our future. What I would like to tell you is that based on the different analyses that have been made since the Croatian War of Independence in the 1990s and up to the second Russian aggression in Ukraine, we can say that most of the future conflicts and wars are going to be hybrid by nature, for sure. The first targets of these hybrid conflicts and wars are going to be key critical infrastructure, most probably the energy, food, and water production infrastructure, cyber-information, communication, and so on. What is extremely important are identity questions. Not so many people realize and want to understand that, but identity is one of the crucial things that has to be developed in order to improve and build up societal resilience. We saw it, for example, in the difference between the two Russian aggressions on Ukraine when comparing the results of the aggressions in 2014 and 2022. Also, what is most important is to notice that those hybrid threats are improved, planned, or organized significantly by the increasing involvement of the intelligence community and the intelligence-gathered data collection in order to prepare the attacker for better results in the future. The relationship between hybrid threats and strategic communication is very significant. It is all about the influence. Influence on the decision-making process on a cognitive level. Knowing that from experience and intelligence, we know that we are fighting with information, for information, against information in Safeway, and at the same time protecting our information. This is the crucial point and crucial thing that we have to do while developing our societal resilience abilities. The second thing about strategic communication that we have to say is that it is

an essential part of any influence operation that needs to be done and taken care of if we want to build up our defense system. Otherwise, since we are talking about disinformation, I would like to repeat the rules of disinformation that were developed based on our experience from the Croatian War of Independence and the activities developed in the Balkan countries. Those societies that accept disinformation as the truth are going to accept all the negative consequences of disinformation. Disinformation will remain in social and public knowledge, and it will shape the information environment in the way that an information attacker wants. Societies and states that are unable to recognize that disinformation is going to have a significant challenge in the future. Let me give you and show you one example of Russian-Serbian activities and malign activities against them, for example, Montenegro. This is just one of the examples based on what is going on in the West, in the Balkan countries. There is a list of attack vectors by Russian and Serbian activities against Montenegro to shape the national, religious, and social status and social activities in Montenegro and to manipulate the political processes. We were quite able to and easily identify their targets, from their identity to public knowledge and political processes, elections, and censuses, as well as the most important areas and what they were trying to do and shape. And the results are very simple and very visible in the short and long term. For example, as you can see on this slide, the green colour shows the results of the opinion polls from 2018 and the blue one for 2020. You can see the significant increase in religious commitment in the population of Montenegro in just two years. The second thing the chart shows us is how deeply the situation divided the population in Montenegro. Because they are dividing the population between the Serbian nation and the Montenegrins. And for the third one, it is important to show how society has changed due to the different activities that can be understood as a hybrid threat for a long-term activity. What we need is what was said here today many times: that we need to improve our defense system. We need to build trust between the population and government institutions. Because this is one of the most important things that we have to do in order to build up the resilience of society. No one is allowed and can win the wars of the future alone anymore. And national activities need to be integrated into the entirety of society because hybrid threats are attacking the entirety of society. And therefore, the approach to defending against hybrid threats needs to be on the same level wherever we need to defend society. And as much as we can, we have to use the international community,

“*There is a list of attack vectors by Russian and Serbian activities against Montenegro to shape the national, religious, and social status and social activities in Montenegro and to manipulate the political processes. We were quite able to and easily identify their targets, from their identity to public knowledge and political processes, elections, and censuses, as well as the most important areas and what they were trying to do and shape.*”



friends, and partners on an international level to build up our resilience. Active private and public partnerships with academia and companies are also important because the state cannot do anything alone anymore. The government needs the support of all the other segments of society. Education, motivation, building trust, and building cohesion are some of the most important things that have to be done. When we are talking about strategic communication, there are some rules that have to be done and have to be said. First, you have to be the first one when you are trying to shape the information environment if you want to reach information supremacy. If you are not the first one, then you have to be very fast in order to build up your resilience. Because you have to be the one who is going to make the trends. You want to be the one who controls the information and management processes. You want to be the one who controls the time management. Because if you want to influence the decision-making process, you have to do it in two steps. First is the content of the decisions, and second is the time frame of the decisions when they are going to be done. When you are able to influence both of them, you can say that you have raised the imposition of information superiority. When we are talking about strategic communication, we have to stress that we have to be honest. All the information that is part of this strategic communication needs to be honest, meaning no fake news or disinformation. This is what is going to help you survive and fight in this context. When we are talking about propaganda and discrimination, this is something else. What is also important are humans. Humans are the most important factor in all of those networks of resilience because only humans can be the strongest, but humans can also be the weakest link. Humans are most sensitive to thinking. Therefore, if you have a group of experts that are available to you twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week and know what they are doing, when you give them the freedom to think and to act, you might have a very, very good result. And therefore, as I said,



information management, communication management, and time management in conducting strategic communication are the most important things. That will be enough for the beginning. Thank you very much, and once more, thank you for the invitation.

### **Moderator Oğuz Güner**

Mr. Akrap, thank you very much for this valuable speech. We totally and definitely agree with you and the parameters you shared in the presentation: creating resilience, collaboration, mutual understanding, and establishing mutual trust within societies are key things. I believe that the theme of our Stratcom Summit overlaps directly with your presentations. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a privilege for me to introduce our next panellist, Rashel Talukder, our guest from Poland. Our next distinguished panellist, Mr. Talukder, serves as the Managing Director at the Polish Platform for Homeland Security with experience in leading international efforts to address hybrid threats, such as Cyclopes Projects. Mr. Talukder is also a member of EU-HYBNET at the Pan-European Network to counter hybrid threats against Europe. So, we eagerly anticipate the insights Mr. Talukder will bring to the table. The floor is yours, Mr. Talukder. Please...

### **Rashel Talukder**

Thank you. Good morning to everyone. Good morning or good afternoon. Thank you very much for inviting me, and congratulations to the organizers of this event. I think it is a wonderful place. Of course, Istanbul is beautiful. And thank you for bringing all of us together and for giving us this opportunity to speak about this relevant topic. In this introduction part, I want to, and I will try to keep this in 8 minutes as we should. In the introduction part, I just want to explain to you that the Polish Platform for Homeland Security is an organization established by the Polish police and ten universities in 2005 to foster or facilitate, at that time, the process of research and innovation in the area of security in Poland. And since then, we have become a national leader in this area. We are working in different domains related to security. And also, since 2016, we have been involved in a variety of European activities in the areas of cyber security, cybercrime, disinformation, different kinds of hybrid threats, radicalization, public spaces, country reviews, and all other things related to security. What was mentioned in the introduction part was that we are also members of the EU-HYBNET Network. It is a network of a variety of mostly European partners that are discussing and working together on the issue of ways to fight and mitigate different kinds of hybrid threats. So also, for those who are interested, if you Google the EU-HYBNET Network, you will find there very relevant and interesting documents. It is also connected to the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, which is based in Helsinki, Finland. When I was preparing for today's meeting, I was wondering which topics I should focus on because, as we all know, hybrid threats are such a broad term, especially from the Stratcom perspective. The question or discussion could even be academic. But then I just changed my approach, and I decided that I would like to share with you a few thoughts from a Polish perspective. I think it is also part of the name of this event to say that it is a global challenge. We all

face disinformation; it is not a local issue. I was able to see this when I was at the European meetings, thinking on a national level, and, in fact, even when I was traveling here. Because here we are talking about the global perspective and from the Polish perspective to this global perspective. I want to give you three examples that are really challenging for Poland. The first one and, unfortunately, all of them are related to Russian activities and Russian disinformation campaigns, which we see a lot in Africa, here in the Middle East, Asia, and South America. South America is where we see that there is a process of depicting the Polish nation as an anti-Muslim, anti-Jewish, or anti-immigrant country or nation, and we just observe that it depends on the narrative. Different narratives are chosen in different cases. We also observe different disinformation campaigns encouraging migrants, for example, from Syria to come to Belarus, then to Minsk, and then travel through the Polish border to the EU, to Germany, or to other EU countries. And we observed that there is a lot of disinformation in social media encouraging that, like marketing advertisements encouraging migrants from different countries to go to Belarus and then just cross the border, which is not true, and it is not easy. We also observed the problem in Poland last year, especially during the winter when people were even dying in the forest. It was not only disinformation on one side but also misinformation for the people who suffered a lot. What I also wanted to bring up here is a problem that we face, especially now in Poland, related to Polish and Ukrainian relations. We also observe that there are a lot of campaigns trying to antagonize the Polish and Ukrainian nations. After the Russian aggression on Ukraine, a lot of the Polish people supported, what I think was, two million refugees from Ukraine. It was an amazing movement, and an amazing trust was also built between the countries. Now we see that disinformation campaigns are trying to destroy what we have built. I know that the time is passing, so I will just go quickly over the points, and maybe later on we will have time to discuss them. Stratcom should work as an inoculation. I mean, we should all somehow vaccinate against disinformation. We, as a people, as a nation, as inhabitants... Of course, it is easy to say but difficult to implement. That is the reason that I wanted to highlight education, which seems like the most important one, as in educating us on how to read information. It is called media literacy. And I also mentioned here on my slide that it is important to remember all age groups when we want to think about education. It is, of course, education in schools. I think that Finland is doing a great job, and it is a great example, but there are also a lot of things to do in the area of critical thinking, and what I also want to highlight is the independent fact-checking organizations, which are part of the core of this business on finding disinformation because it is really difficult to go through all this information as a regular person. So, we need those we can rely on who are going through information and analysing it. We need a global Stratcom that is, I think, clear for everyone. That is a huge challenge. How do you do it? I also wanted to underline that these kinds of events are so crucial because we need a marketplace where we exchange ideas, talk, discuss, and meet with different people with different opinions. And one more time, thank you for organizing this event. And in the end, I want to say that countering disinformation is a continuous process. And we need hybrid responses to hybrid threats. That is really a complex issue, which we can fortunately work



on together. So, thank you very much. Thank you one more time for inviting me.

### **Moderator Oğuz Güner**

Thank you, Mr. Talukder. It is a pleasure to welcome you again. Thanks a lot for your insightful comments and presentation. Now, ladies and gentlemen, our next panellist is Ellen Wasylina from France. Ms. Wasylina is the president of the Trocadéro Forum Institute (TFI). And Ms. Wasylina is a European Affairs professional with extensive experience leading operational projects and staff in public, private, and nonprofit organizations in France and Europe. With a wealth of experience leading strategic communications media and advocacy activities at the international level, Ms. Wasylina brings a unique and invaluable insight to our discussion. The floor is yours, please.

### **Ellen Wasylina**

Thank you. It is very good for me to be back with you again. It is so good to see you. Thank you very much. I am very happy to be in Istanbul, and I am so grateful for the invitation to speak again with you and to be with you and talk about these very important subjects. It is so interesting that each of us has a different take on this subject, and I have prepared some remarks and three main points. And then, if we have time, maybe some remedies. All right, so strategic communication, as you know, is a prerequisite for combating hybrid threats. It comprises crisis communication, public relations, public diplomacy, civil preparedness, awareness, and strengthening coordination in the fight against disinformation. And here are the three biggest challenges: The biggest challenges for governments and politicians are to inform their citizens and to maintain their trust. The second challenge is for news organizations to be able to present true and verified facts from reliable, trustworthy sources. And finally, the third challenge is for young people today to distinguish between true and untrue news. But we have entered a continual crisis mode where two war fronts have opened. And we are watching wars live on every media outlet available to us, where news organizations are showing us the horrors, very personal dramas that are beamed instantaneously across the globe in a split second. The previous one only came to us by letter. Written a week or more earlier. So how can we fight hybrid or asymmetric threats just like those of the same nature in military strategy? Let us look at some of these hybrid threats and see how we can counter them by deploying a communication strategy on three main levels. And preparing for this panel, I went back and looked at two books that I published about Ukraine, in which no one was interested in France at the time. And it is entitled “Ukraine: prémices de guerre froide en Europe” or “Ukraine Premise of War Cold War in Europe”, published in December 2014, and the second book I sent to my editor on Monday preceding the terrorist attacks, November 13, 2015, a Friday in Paris, France’s 9/11, entitled “Défense européenne face aux menaces: L’Europe est-elle prête pour son 11 septembre,” in other words, “European Defense Facing Threats: Is Europe Ready for Its 9/11?” Referring to the NATO publication entitled Strategic Communications Hybrid Threat Toolkit and based on a perspective study that I

did for a confidential client in 2020, I will focus on three of these threats, which can impact governments at all levels of power: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. In 2016, the European Commission published their Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats, describing the mixture of coercive and subversive activity and conventional and unconventional methods, such as diplomatic, military, economic, and technological, that can be used, as we have seen, in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare. And I am going to take your three themes, but I am going to change them. I am going to put security first, security, stability and then solidarity. We will start with security. Security is one of the most serious threats that we are facing and is undermining governance and state functions. And thereby, undermining our political model of governance and, with it, our credibility, our values, and what we stand for. The most visible unknown to the public, as reported in the newspapers in France and elsewhere, is a foreign power supporting, as we have seen, financially a political party, corruption, presidents in every country, black market jobs, human trafficking, criminal networks, illegal immigration, and tax evasions, which can, in various nefarious forms, amputate up to 25% of a nation's GDP. Finally, terrorism, to which I dedicate the second chapter of my book on European defense, as our 9/11 in Paris shocked us all to our core. What we are seeing now with the war in Israel and Gaza spills over into my third point, which is ethnically motivated acts and the escalation of socio-political protests. The second point is stability. The second threat is decreasing public trust in government and politicians. Now, as I was running a voting booth in my city in France, it has given me a unique window into the trust citizens have in their local and national government. And the politicians that represent them. As well as their willingness to come out and cast their vote. Presidential elections in France in 2022 ended with 28.04% abstentions and 8.6% blank votes, but the trend is toward rejection and abstention, particularly among young people. As we saw during the COVID pandemic, and it has been mentioned already here, our trust in the government and the politicians surrounding the excessive restrictions of movement and the imposed vaccines, the trouble to go to the grocery store, and the shuttering of cultural institutions or even cultural aisles in the supermarkets eroded our trust in our politicians and the police who were policing us, allowing us to only go out a few hours a day or just stay in a radius of two kilometres from our home. And finally, the third point is solidarity. The third threat is very vivid after the Hamas attack

“ In 2016, the European Commission published their Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats, describing the mixture of coercive and subversive activity and conventional and unconventional methods, such as diplomatic, military, economic, and technological, that can be used, as we have seen, in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare.



on Israel on October 7, which has resulted in agitating and polarizing religious, cultural, or ethnic differences, particularly vivid in France, with more than 1500 anti-Semitic attacks since the war started on October 7. Le Monde, one of our biggest newspapers, compares this year with previous years, with 436 acts of this nature taking place in all of 2022 and 974 in 2004, which holds the record for acts committed in the 21st century. Tags, posters, and banners made up 50% of all acts counted as threats, and insults made up 22%, the apology of terrorism 10%, attacks on property 8%, and physical attacks 2%. These attacks have resulted in 571 arrests. We can also speak of Islamophobia acts or the double standards, as we say in French, “deux poids, deux mesures,” of reporting anti-Muslim acts. The interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, has managed an opacity in his remarks. Even though, according to the media outlet, Mediapart, he said he has met with some Muslim groups but came away with a figure of perhaps five hundred anti-Muslim acts that have been mixed with anti-religious acts. And there are a few examples that I can cite by the Observatory of Islamophobia and the CFCM with the French Council of the Muslim Religion and Cult, who received forty-two letters of insults and with fourteen mosques tagged and seventeen letters of threats to mosques. And there are a few examples of October 8, October 20, and November 1st, with different mosques being attacked and then the Stars of David set next to them. It is because of our politics, not only in France, that we are heading to the right. Like in the Netherlands, where the anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders just won the election. So how do we resolve these problems? And I will stop here because there is so much more to say, but what I would say is that we are seeing a similar division between what was happening with the war, the Russian war in Ukraine, and now the Israeli war in Gaza. Society is becoming divided and polarized. Even, you know, with the Russia war in Ukraine, it was an attempt, I believe, to divide Europe and the support, as we just heard from our Polish colleague at the support for Ukraine. And now we are seeing it again in this war that has been going on for almost 45 days now, so I think I will stop here. And then maybe, if we get a chance, we will talk about remedies. Thank you.

### **Moderator Oğuz Güner**

Ms. Wasylina, thank you very much for this fruitful speech. And for your contributions and your invaluable outputs. Thanks a lot. Ladies and gentlemen, our panel is privileged to have the last speaker, the last panelist. Let me have Matthew Saltmarsh. Mr. Saltmarsh holds the esteemed position of Head of News and Media of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). So, Mr. Saltmarsh will deepen our understanding regarding the impacts and outcomes of disinformation, particularly in the humanitarian sector. And we are eager to benefit from your insights. The stage is yours, Mr. Saltmarsh, please.

### **Matthew Saltmarsh**

Thank you very much for inviting the UN Refugee Agency to this important and timely event. I am going to run through some of the examples of misinformation, disinformation, and hate

speech in the humanitarian sector. And then look at some of the initial steps that are being taken to try to address it. Our position, the UN's position, and what we heard from Melissa Fleming this morning is not to try to inhibit human nature. It is just to minimize the harm to those that we support. And we know that human rights challenges are aggravated by information disorder, that vulnerable people and minorities are targeted, and that humanitarian agencies are targeted as well. Some standards of human rights protections should be applied to online as well as offline conduct, the same standards we believe. That is the protection of free speech while also limiting damaging attacks. And, of course, the enforcement of restrictions should be consistent, and it should be transparent. Disinformation, we know, often thrives where human rights are constrained, where public information is not robust, and where media quality, diversity, and independence are weak. Fragile environments, of course, are therefore a perfect breeding ground. And the risk in a humanitarian context is that hate speech and disinformation go undetected or unchallenged, with sometimes devastating consequences. The humanitarian space, of course, is only very slowly addressing the question of AI, which we all know can turbocharge disinformation and misinformation. In terms of the platforms, we believe it is important that the platforms align their moderation policies with international human rights laws and principles. And work around potential tensions with local laws. These moderation policies, as we know, are often enforced with great inconsistency and little transparency. And there is the question of who is doing the moderating. Is it a graduate from Harvard who is working in California or a Chinese graduate in Shanghai? Perhaps, are they the right people to moderate conversations in fragile environments? People in these fragile environments are tending to use less-common languages or non-commercial languages, let us say, and that includes many displaced people. And these are the ones who are disproportionately affected by the harmful content. And there is insufficient investment from the platforms going into that. Put simply, it is not a profitable business model. In terms of looking at solutions, we believe that genuinely independent and diverse social media councils with accountability for moderation will be important, and the tech companies need input from humanitarian organizations to understand the context and create formal partnerships with us. These can then lead to early warning systems co-developing interventions to reduce viral misinformation, including culturally sensitive content moderation, watermarking around AI, and pre-bunking campaigns. This is getting verified information out in fragile situations, potentially before crises occur. And, of course, making these tools available to a range of different partners. We have the EU Digital Services Act, which has been an important attempt to lead the regulatory conversation. It took a long time. It is being tested at the moment, but we believe parts of it at least can serve as a model for other places. In terms of the impact on refugees themselves, ideological disinformation has led to discrimination and hatred against minorities, refugees, migrants, and other marginalized communities, generating ethnic or religious tensions, even violence, and certainly hampering solutions. We have a host of examples where displaced and marginalized people have been targeted by human traffickers using social media networks, particularly in Central America but also in this region, to try to lure people into mi-

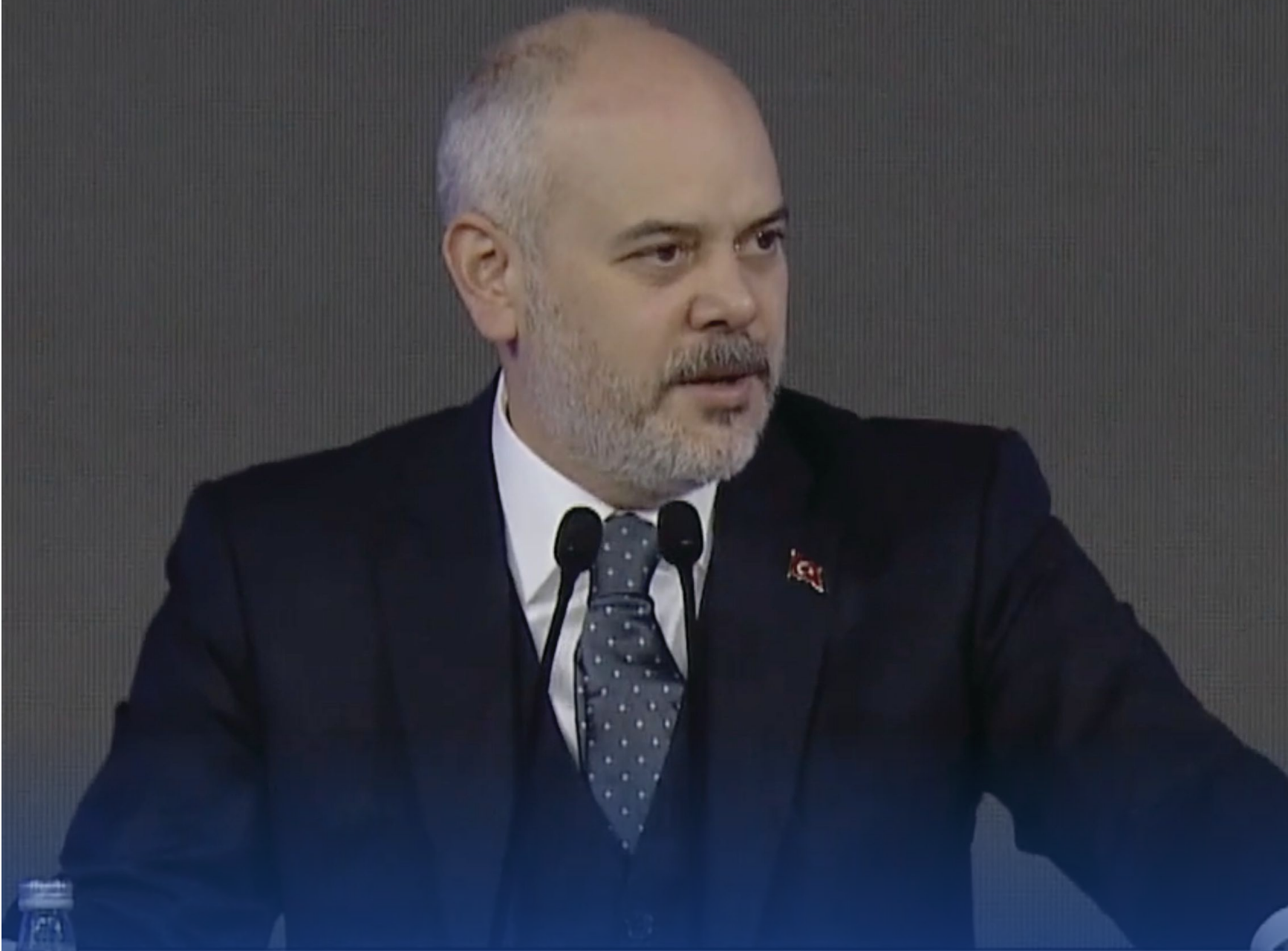


gration with false promises of jobs at the end of it. We have had exploitation through social channels by Syrian refugees who were begging online, and the profits are primarily going to the platforms. We have heard about the situation with COVID, where disinformation meant that many affected people were very reluctant to go and get inoculations that were much needed. And on a larger scale, if we go back to 2018 with the Rohingya crisis, there was a systematic campaign of online hatred and abuse that led to actual violence on the ground and deaths. And that was an important moment for us as well, because the refugees themselves were sending a lot of information to us in the media as well. It was one of the first times that information was really being spread so widely. Humanitarian agencies themselves are very much impacted. The principles for humanitarian agencies revolve around neutrality, impartiality, and independence. But that is built on trust, and if reputation is tarnished due to misinformation, then trust is eroded. And funding and other forms of support can be impacted. We have seen a number of examples where rumours have spread very quickly, and this has impacted the ability of humanitarians to go and do their work. Particularly in Africa with the Ebola outbreaks in 2014 and 2019, and there were direct attacks on humanitarians as a result. We have also seen the systematic attacks on the work of the White Helmets in this region during the Syria crisis. Save the Children in 2018 was themselves targeted by a disinformation campaign during which they were accused of colluding with human traffickers, and this of course impacted their operations. In Ethiopia last year, there were social media disinformation campaigns against the World Food Program (WFP). And also, directly against the Director General of the WHO, who was a native of Tigray. The ICRC in particular has been impacted by a number of attacks, particularly in Ukraine crisis, where they were accused of forced evacuations. I will not dwell here on the situation in Gaza, as it is outside of the UNHCR's mandate and we have not ourselves monitored it, except to say that the levels of misinformation and disinformation from a UN perspective are enormous. In terms of the media's role, I think it is still very important to know that social media has no journalistic standards. Everyone gets their platform, and all voices are equally valid in a sense. Back in the past, news management had been relatively simple, using press releases, outreach interviews, and so on. Of course, that still exists, and there is still a balanced media out there, but unfortunately, the media have been absolutely swamped with disinformation and misinformation. And they have had to pivot to verification, which takes a lot of their resources. But then, they are also accused of being biased, and attacks on journalists themselves have risen. And there is also an issue here between the Global North and the Global South in terms of resources. The newsrooms in the Global North have much better resources to cope with these issues. A recent study showed that in Pakistan, nearly no newsrooms had fact-checking guidelines and systems in place. In terms of addressing the situation of rumours and misinformation, some work has happened, and I think the focus here is that locals are very much caught when a community feels disempowered or a conflict depletes trust. People may be much more likely to turn to trusted but potentially inaccurate sources of information like friends, networks, families, and so on. In the last few years, a number of humanitarian actors have been working around rumour tracking mechanisms.

These were pioneered by Internews back in 2014 around the Ebola outbreaks. And again, this is very much a community-based approach, working with a variety of stakeholders. You start by trying to understand the rumours and where the information is coming from. You then engage with trusted sources, hoping that they themselves become communicators to spread that information. And then you work on communication channels, which have to be very local, managing digital risk monitoring, pre-bunking, and debunking when it is possible. And then, of course, crisis responses as well. There are a number of examples of these around the world. One in Bangladesh could fly news where there are about a dozen partners who are involved at the moment. At UNHCR, we have a two-year digital protection project ongoing at the moment. This is funded by the EU's humanitarian arm, ECHO. It is dedicated to helping us and our partners develop a practical response. The strategies are being tested in three 12-month field-based pilot projects in our operations. These are consultant-led pilots involving research mapping, foresight, testing of new tools, training, capacity building, and coalition building at the local level to produce examples that can be used in global advocacy and with tech companies globally as well. Just the final word, as a close. In the middle of next month, we have the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva. This is a gathering of three thousand interested parties to discuss solutions to refugee crises, and a part of this will revolve around hate speech and misinformation. There will be a multi-stakeholder pledge as part of this on digital protection. The goal is to scale up the number of practical, inclusive activities to mitigate and help prevent the harmful impact of these practices on refugees, and it feeds into the broader United Nations goals around the Global Digital Compact and the code of conduct on information integrity and digital platforms that we heard about this morning. We have already seen here a positive sign of support from refugee-led organizations, some members of the tech sector, the government, and civil society partners. So, I do encourage you, if you are interested in following this, there is a side event at the forum, and it will be streamed. I will close it there and thank you all for your time and consideration.

**Moderator Oğuz Güner**

Thank you, Mr. Saltmarsh, and ladies and gentlemen. I would like to express my gratitude. As I mentioned at the beginning of the panel, unfortunately, we will not be accepting any questions from the participants due to the time limitation. So, on behalf of the Directorate of Communications, I express my apologies and would like to thank all these esteemed panellists for sharing their comments, their speeches, and their evaluations, which I feel will be very enriching for our understanding of hybrid threats. Thank you so much again. And thank you so much to the listeners for participating in the session. Thanks a lot.



# Stratcom Speech-1

*Effective Diplomacy To  
Counter Hybrid Threats*

24 November 2023

# Effective Diplomacy To Counter Hybrid Threats



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## PANELLISTS



**Akif Çağatay Kılıç**  
Chief Advisor to the President on  
Foreign Policy and Security



Distinguished Director of Communications, dear participants, esteemed ministers visiting our country for the STRATCOM 2023 Summit, valued guests; I greet you all with love, respect, and affection.

Let's lighten the mood a bit after such a serious opening. I hope that in the next 25 minutes or so, we can have a conversation and share our views on certain topics with you. It is truly important to come together here in Istanbul, Türkiye, during these times. There are many different struggles taking place in the world. Rather than simply labeling them with specific names, we are currently living in a period characterized by a wide range of struggles. In this sense, it is extremely valuable to be together with you at this wonderful program organized by our Directorate of Communications in Istanbul, a city that unites civilizations, history, cultures, and people's social lives, and in our beautiful country, Türkiye.

If I start explaining "hybrid threats" and "hybrid wars", we'll be here until morning. However, since you are here out of interest in this subject, you are already familiar with these defini-

tions and theoretical concepts. Therefore, I would like to discuss the real-life implications of this idea and how it manifests in our daily lives. In other words, I would like to have a conversation about what the information obtained theoretically means in real life and how it affects us. When you look at the word “hybrid” that we use, it is a term that is heavily used in the transportation sector, especially nowadays. Hybrid vehicles, right? It is the positive integration of electric motors and internal combustion engines, or other fossil fuel-powered engines, to achieve a positive outcome. However, the word “hybrid” that we use here, or that is generally used in the world, in international relations and politics, is perhaps not so positive. Because we perceive it as part of a path that leads to physical confrontations as a result of struggle, and perhaps even armed clashes from time to time. So, when our esteemed colleague introduced me at the beginning and described my job duties, stating that our area of responsibility is to advise the President on security and foreign policy, what are the things we come across working in this field? We constantly evaluate hybrid threats and hybrid warfare in the face of a perpetual threat perception, whether it be at the state level, in terms of social phenomena, theoretically, or in everyday technological terms. As I mentioned earlier, if you wanted to explore the beautiful coasts of Istanbul, the Bosphorus, the Historical Peninsula, and its various districts and neighborhoods while you’re here, would the vehicle you use be hybrid or not? So, you are evaluating the positive impact of a vehicle that will serve you positively and take you from one place to another. But when we evaluate, when I sit down and chat with Professor Fahrettin and make an assessment, we ask: “Where could the threat come from?” What are the elements of this threat?” This threat includes the smart devices that we all carry in our pockets in our daily lives, regardless of the brand.

We also have foreign guests, but there is a custom in Türkiye. A 1,000-year-old custom; as a society, we love to communicate with each other. Consequently, our neighborhoods, districts, villages, cities, apartment complexes, and social environments are bustling with communication today. However, there’s something else about this communication. We are also a bit curious as a nation. We often find ourselves pondering, “What are our friends, relatives, and loved ones up to?” Moreover, we place significant value on the role of the state. We hold the state in high regard. For us, the state embodies a multitude of meanings. It is revered; it shelters us, safeguards our well-being, and propels us toward the future. The state also upholds and advocates for our rights and freedoms. Consequently, we sometimes speculate, “I wonder what others are doing?” or “Perhaps they’re observing me as well.” Coming from a political background, we often hesitate during discussions, especially with the youth, saying, “Let’s not speak here,” or “Let’s avoid talking on the phone,” fearing eavesdropping. Such concerns have become increasingly common. With all due respect, it’s implausible for someone to monitor and listen to everyone’s conversations, but where does this notion originate? From Hollywood. This so-called ‘Hollywood syndrome’ is quite influential, which I’ll elaborate on shortly. Influenced by Hollywood and with what we deem ‘smart devices’, we become



wary, thinking, “Are they observing us, listening in? Better not to speak.”

Take, for instance, discussing a sports match. We might say, “Let’s not discuss this over the phone; better to talk in person.” Like, you’ll just commentate the match. Whether questioning if the striker made the right move, the defender’s positioning, or the goalkeeper’s error... we hesitate, “No, let’s not discuss; someone could be monitoring us.” We live in an era where having a smart device in your pocket, on your desk, or in your bag means it’s likely performing that surveillance role. What’s one of our top concerns today? “Have you walked 10,000 steps today?” And who’s keeping track of your steps? The smart device in your pocket or the watch on your wrist. And what does it generate? It generates data. Data collection, consolidation, and analysis are currently among the key issues addressed by the European Union, NATO, various international bodies, and the United Nations. As a result, numerous laws are being established. You might have noticed the ongoing debate: “Should this brand be allowed entry? Should this app be permitted?” Essentially, your personal information and characteristics are being gathered in a hybrid environment on your behalf. These devices are so advanced that they can even detect the symmetry of your gait. With such a massive accumulation of data, coupled with what I refer to as the Hollywood syndrome... This phenomenon I term the Hollywood syndrome involves: A plethora of TV series and films. Films create a shared universe with protagonists, antagonists, and their respective circles. Mirroring timeless tales, good always triumphs over evil. In alternative narratives, occasionally the villain prevails, yet typically, the hero triumphs, aided by technological advancements. I invite you to do an exercise: tonight, whether at home, in your dorm, or hotel room, explore some movies or visual media from 40 to 45 years ago using your smart device. In classic spy films, gadgets emerge from pens, watches conceal devices, and belts launch grappling hooks. Reviewing such footage now, one might dismiss it as absurd. Today, a simple tap on your phone accomplishes what once seemed fantastical. This illustrates the profound evolution of human intellectual perception. What implications does this have for us? There’s a sociological aspect to our threat perception. Preparing for a confrontation isn’t just physical; it’s about managing perceptions. This ‘Hollywood effect’ is predicated on the belief: “They have access to all information.” And who might ‘they’ be? The states and systems deemed powerful, those atop the global hierarchy. Specific agencies within these states. The most notorious among them? Agencies like the CIA, MI6, MOSSAD, among others. Our collective assumption is: “They are omniscient. They intervene. And should they falter, they recover swiftly.” However, omniscience is a myth. What does the interactivity within our smart devices imply for social engagement? We all have friends. Do you notice the disparity between the language used in text conversations and that of face-to-face interactions? There’s an inherent dissonance between direct, eye-to-eye communication and the detached interactions mediated by ‘smart devices.’ The device itself lacks intelligence. It’s merely an algorithm processed efficiently by the device’s computing chip. And who programs it? Once again, it is we, humans, who impart

this knowledge. When it comes to communication, do you find yourself more courageous when writing messages? Take a moment to reflect. In face-to-face interactions, you tend to be more thoughtful. Why is that? The gaze of the eyes, the sound of the voice, and the nuances of facial expressions convey so much. Now, as young individuals—both you and I—we perceive ourselves that way. Consider how disagreements unfold: via text messages versus face-to-face interactions with loved ones—spouses, fiancés, siblings, and parents. A side note: disagreements with parents aren’t necessarily fights; respectful differences of opinion can coexist. Within the bounds of decency, opinions can be expressed, and parents often prove right. But when it comes to face-to-face conflicts, the dynamics change. This brings us to an interesting point. It was during my university years that the PlayStation 1 was released. Yes, I’m that old! Fast-forward to today: mention “PlayStation 1” to young people, and they’ll respond, “Well, now we have PlayStation 5, complete with wireless controllers and advanced features.” Gone are the days of tangled wires. They connect to the internet, playing games like PUBG with opponents located thousands of kilometers away. The gaming landscape has transformed from screen-bound PlayStation sessions with cables to global interactions without physical constraints. So, what impact does this have on our mindset? Consider your actions while playing action games on a computer or gaming platform, controller in hand. You press a button, and your character kills or engages in combat. However, much of the gameplay revolves around violence—killing, bombing, shooting. What does the brain register during these moments? It thinks, “I press the button, actions unfold on the screen, and it’s not a big deal. Just pixels.” Over time, this perception turns into a norm. Their response? “We eliminate, we conquer.” Familiar expressions, aren’t they? The relationship between the virtual and reality grows increasingly intricate. Hybrid. Recall our discussion about different vehicle technologies—combustion and electric—converging for the better. But what’s happening here? While convergence occurs, ultimately: “Let’s walk, let’s act, let’s bring it to fruition, let’s engage physically.” Yet, when you press that button as a character, it’s not merely pixels exploding on the screen; a real person “dies.” Innocent lives are lost. Children suffer. Mothers, fathers, and the elderly endure agony. Unfortunately, it takes time for this realization to sink in. As society evolves within virtual thought environments, genuine suffering becomes apparent only gradually. Now you may say: “That’s too dark of a connection you’ve made?” How did I arrive at this perspective? During my tenure as an MP, I participated in a foreign visit with the Foreign Affairs Commission. There, before me was an individual who hailed from a family that had migrated from Türkiye to that country and had now become a member of their parliament. I won’t name any countries; we need to remain diplomatic. They asked me a question and said: “Why didn’t the President of Türkiye respond to the letter from the President of Armenia proposing the establishment of a joint commission?” This was somewhat related to the situation with Armenia at the time. So I replied, “Look, you asked me this question, but let me ask you, are you sure you framed it correctly?” They responded, “Yes, I want you to answer it.” “Alright,” I said. I answered in two parts. First,



I said, “Please fire your advisors; they are giving you incorrect information. The letter was written by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Prime Minister of Türkiye, to the President of Armenia at that time. Armenia did not respond. It was Türkiye that opened its archives.”

This is the first part. The second part is that an MP with this misinformation will go and vote, my friends. In their own parliament, they will make a speech, form an opinion, draw a conclusion, and vote on a bill or debate. The vote will impact the law, which will affect the citizens, and since this is an international issue, it will impact international relations. The result is a hybrid threat. Why? It will also spread on social media. It will be discussed on various platforms. Some people and organizations, such as NGOs or others, who are uninformed, who don’t do their own research, and who accept that person as credible, will take their words and start attacking you on social media. The cycle will continue, with intense pressure on social media. What will happen then? Türkiye will face a social media attack from country “X”, a hybrid threat. When the attack begins, Turkish institutions responsible for addressing these issues, like the Directorate of Communications, will respond: “Wait a minute, there’s something here. We need to combat this disinformation as a state.” This time, responses will come from this side against the threat, against the attack. The conflict will intensify and ultimately capture the attention of decision makers. What will be the outcome? At a face-to-face meeting, one decision maker will confront another: “Your nation is launching an assault on mine.” The counterpart will respond: “This is news to me; let’s investigate.” And so, the cycle continues.

What comes next? Tensions in relationships will rise; some may find resolution, yet a lingering bitterness remains, doesn’t it? What’s the source of this bitterness? It originated from a seemingly insignificant and possibly unnoticed beginning, only to expand significantly. Let’s take a step back to consider the ‘Hollywood effect.’ The ‘PlayStation mentality’—the blurring line between reality and the virtual—leads to chaos. Presently, the European Union grapples with this very issue. To clarify, they are actively addressing it. NATO and the United Nations are also on the case. What implications does this have for us? Can we get results? How did the current global system, including the United Nations and its associated bodies, emerge from worldwide consensus? This framework was established following the World Wars. Currently, one of the most significant threats we face is the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. I am giving an example from our immediate geography, there are other problems in other geographies. Has the post-World War II system, encompassing the United Nations, the European Union, and NATO, managed to address these issues? Unfortunately, no. The conflict has resulted in thousands of casualties. Are the opposing parties still engaged in conflict on social media platforms? They do.

Another conflict is the Israeli-Palestinian war that erupted after October 7. I prefer not to delve into this matter. The President has already informed you this morning of the chal-

allenges facing global systems. His speeches also touch upon these challenges. But what has Türkiye protested against under our President from October 7 until now? When you focus solely on the present consequences of a well-documented past, and historical burdens hinder open discourse, you find yourself in the current predicament.

Steering clear of deep political discussion, it's impossible to overlook today's situation in Gaza. I believe you are quite engaged on social media platforms. I'd like to pose a question: Do you think that information dissemination is being manipulated across social media platforms (and by social media, I refer to all content on the internet)? My friends, if only you could see yourselves—when I mentioned those who feel manipulated, everyone raised their hands; when I mentioned those who don't, not a single hand went up, as far as I could tell. What can we infer from this? Considering hybrid warfare and threats, it seems everyone here believes: The sources where we receive the most information, where the flow of information is heaviest, cannot be trusted. So, what have we been discussing for the past 15 minutes? Why do misinformation, unverified facts, and acknowledged manipulation have such a profound impact in an environment devoid of truth? As of today, over 10,000 individuals in Gaza, more than 70% of whom are children and women, have been killed. This is an undeniable reality. Indeed, it's true. Yet, if we examine current social media posts about these events, we recognize, as previously acknowledged, that these posts are often manipulated, shaping public perception. "How then shall we combat this?" This is the crux of the matter. Public diplomacy emerges as a traditional approach, yet what we've truly lost is the pursuit of genuine communication. We seem reluctant to engage in proper dialogue. If we were truly committed, all of us, we might switch off our devices and engage in direct conversation at pivotal moments. What am I suggesting? For instance, I recently read that new insights into the Ukrainian War are emerging. There's conflicting information regarding the party responsible for the Nord Stream pipeline attack. What was its effect? It had a direct impact on the outcomes we face.

Have you been keeping up with the election results from the Netherlands two days ago? Who emerged victorious in the Dutch elections? Which candidate topped the polls? Geert Wilders. Everyone here is familiar with Geert Wilders, correct? A person known for his racist remarks against migrants, foreigners, and Islam for the last 15-20 years; while some Europeans label him a "populist," I would call him a "racist." But what happened? He maintained this stance for 15-20 years. Yet, he altered his rhetoric just two days before the election. You may have noticed the softening of his language as the election approached. He likely anticipated: "Something is on the horizon, we won't fare poorly in the polls..."

Ultimately, it boils down to this: when you declare your limitations and then assume responsibility, you are bound by your own words. Regarding Geert Wilders specifically; I address him directly from this platform, using his name. He is welcome to reply if he chooses, though



he has not previously; in my view, his actions are indicative of racism. It's as straightforward as that. How did he manage to gain such prominence? How did he secure a substantial vote share in a country like the Netherlands? What has our experience taught us? "In a thriving economy, where daily life functions like clockwork, people tend to be content, generous, liberal, welcoming, and close-knit." A pressing issue in the Netherlands currently is the debate over immigration: "Should we allow foreigners into our country, and why are there so many here already?" Does Islam align with our societal values?" The candidate representing these concerns emerged at the forefront. Clearly, we have considerable work ahead of us. We must confront and challenge numerous misconceptions.

I've gone on a bit long, let's wrap up. Turning to the conflict between Gaza/Palestine and Israel, what do recent speeches and comments reveal? Certain terms have been specifically used in reference to our President. What is the foremost term voiced? "He makes antisemitic remarks." These accusations have circulated on social media, in the press, and in various articles and newspapers... So, my friends, where does antisemitism stem from? Certainly not from us. By "us," I mean neither the Islamic Civilization nor the Ottoman Empire's historical era. Who welcomed the Jews expelled from Spain 500 years ago? Our ancestors did. Consider the events of the Second World War. Who stepped in to offer assistance amidst the turmoil? Turkish diplomacy and Türkiye as a nation have made significant efforts. How then can someone who has fostered close ties with what we call "minorities," with citizens who are integral to this nation, both as Mayor of Istanbul and as Prime Minister—our President—be so mischaracterized? Therein lies a problem. This is the very perception management we've been discussing. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan may speak bluntly, but he does so with conviction. You feel uncomfortable because he points out your mistake. Subsequently, attempts are made to manipulate perceptions through various means. That's not right.

Let's see the facts. What is our intention, our objective, and what are the narratives being advanced? In essence, it is baseless to attribute racism to the President of the Republic of Türkiye, its institutions, or the country's overarching policies. It's futile because the notion of racism finds no place in our society, our faith, or our social fabric. Across the globe, irrespective of faith, nationality, or ethnicity, a fundamental bond exists: that of justice. Thus, the crux of our discourse lies in establishing a foundation for responding to one another with fairness, fostering communication, and building relationships. Justice begins within the family—between parents, children, and elders. Let us commence this journey within ourselves. Do we treat our own children and spouses justly? Is our relationship founded on justice? Remember, justice is distinct from mere equality. When viewed from this perspective, cultivating relationships founded on justice becomes the bedrock of all our endeavors. Cybersecurity, a daily concern in hybrid struggles, is a term familiar to all. I refrain from delving into these terms; you are already acquainted with them. They permeate diplomacy, security, social matters, and scientific realms. Therefore, I firmly believe—indeed, I want to

believe—that by placing humanity at the core of our efforts, by anchoring our connections in justice and love, we can surmount the threats and challenges we discuss. We will continue to further our efforts.

In the same breath, I extend my gratitude and congratulations to the Directorate of Communications for organizing this splendid event in Istanbul. Amidst global difficulties, their efforts shine. Notably, the presence of so many young brothers and sisters in this hall, attentively listening to someone like me—a middle-aged man—explain matters for half an hour, fills me with hope. It truly uplifts my spirit. Our youth’s positive energy is sorely missed. My heartfelt thanks to all of you. May Allah grant success in your respective fields and endeavors. And may your wishes materialize for the best. With love and respect, I look forward to meeting again soon. Wishing you all the very best.



## Stratcom Talk-2

*The Role of Official Communication  
Tools in Countering Disinformation*

24 November 2023

# The Role of Official Communication Tools in Countering Disinformation



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## PANELLISTS



**Walid Ammar Ellafi**  
Minister of State for Communication and Political  
Affairs, Government of National Unity, Libya

## 02

Thank you very much. I'll present my speech in Arabic.

To begin with, I'm genuinely delighted and deeply grateful to my esteemed colleague, Professor Fahrettin Altun, for extending this invitation to participate in today's forum which constitutes a significant summit, through a presentation of a paper addressing the crucial role of official communication channels in combating misinformation. This topic holds particular importance for me at this juncture, as it encompasses both the broader regional context and the specific dynamics within the region.

When pondering this issue, I identified two primary aspects that warrant discussion to address the overarching question effectively. Firstly, there's the nexus between communication and politics, exploring the reciprocal influence each wields over the other -how communication impacts the political landscape. Secondly, there's the matter of recognising communication as a strategically significant consideration, particularly in the context of Libya, which I'll briefly touch upon.

Undoubtedly, we find ourselves in the age of communication today. Even as experts discuss media, they argue that we've transitioned from the era of the information revolution to the era of communication. This shift, driven by technological advancements, especially in the media realm, has permeated all spheres, notably impacting political and cultural domains and even recent conflicts in the region, where communication has played a pivotal role.

The recent predominant narrative centres on the unfolding events in Gaza. The ceasefire follows a devastating toll of nearly six thousand casualties, including children, and over four thousand women from the Palestinian side alone, in addition to seven thousand still missing. Throughout the nearly two-month ordeal in Gaza, communication has served as a vital conduit, with various individuals taking on the role of volunteering correspondents, disseminating crucial information via their social media platforms and pages, thus significantly influencing public opinion and challenging the narratives presented by major media outlets. This young generation, active on social media platforms, unlike the rest of us, are well-acquainted with the nuances of the situation and the individuals engaged in it.

As I mentioned earlier, for the first time perhaps, even historians or intellectuals following the Palestinian issue acknowledge a potentially impactful role of media on the conflict due to the evolution of communication.

The substantial impact on global public opinion is evident through widespread demonstrations across many countries, from the Americas to Europe, often in opposition to official government stances. This is largely attributed to the significant advancements in social communication and platforms, which have managed to provide an alternative perspective, breaking away from the dominance of traditional and official media outlets that are often influenced by governments or centres of power. Accordingly, Statistics clearly show what has been referred to as a "migration" from biased or restricted platforms to broader ones with more freedom.

A study by the Knight Foundation for social media studies and surveys highlights that approximately 80% of young individuals aged 18 to 28 now receive political news through modern communication means, rather than traditional outlets. Many have migrated from platforms accused of bias or content restriction, such as Facebook, to spaces offering more freedom, like TikTok. This demographic, constituting 28% of Facebook users, demonstrates a notable increase to 42% on the TikTok platform. Experts project a further rise in TikTok users, from 1.5 billion monthly active users to 2 billion by the end of 2024, owing to recent events.

When discussing Gaza and the impact of what's termed as misleading news, we must allude to the narrative that spread rapidly on October 10th regarding the alleged massacre of 40 children in Israeli areas, extensively covered by several renowned official media outlets. This narrative had immediate political repercussions, prompting the American president to



condemn the presumed crime. However, due to concerted efforts by groups engaged in news verification or investigation, which are also grounded in communication, the falsehood of this narrative was exposed. Consequently, the American president retracted his statement, acknowledging the role played by these volunteers on social media platforms.

This level of influence underscores our current reality, where we are under the sway of communication tools, showcasing a dual impact on both the political and communication fronts, with each realm increasingly intertwined.

Thus, it is pertinent to address the potential strategies that official institutions could employ to navigate the communication landscape in our increasingly polarised world -- I refrained from using “divided” as it might suggest escalating polarisation and conflict among stakeholders. Hence, it’s essential to delineate seven key strategies, which, from my perspective as a government official, warrant attention and prioritisation.

First and foremost, there’s a critical need to distinguish between media and communication concepts. Traditional media functions on a simplistic model of message transmission from sender to receiver. However, in today’s communication age, the emphasis lies not solely on the message but on fostering relationships and facilitating interaction among parties. Official strategies need to, therefore, pivot towards communication as a fundamental service, diverging from media approaches centered on propaganda, marketing, or mobilisation.

Moreover, governments should integrate communication as a core component of public policy. Unfortunately, many treat communication tasks as secondary, intervening reactively in specific instances or crises.

Currently, it has become imperative for governments to embrace communication as a foundational element in public policy and overall planning, integrating it as an essential aspect from the outset, i.e. integrating communication in the holistic approach that traditionally entails considering crises from financial, legal, and economic perspectives.

In essence, communication must serve as a cornerstone in governmental evaluation and interaction, aligning with objectives while navigating through crises.

It’s imperative for communication elements to keep abreast of contemporary developments. This implies that, from a formal standpoint, archaic language conventions, such as addressing a state leader with grand titles like “Your Excellency” or “Your Highness,” are now outdated. These terms run counter to the concept of communication grounded in proximity. Hence, modern forms and templates must be employed, closely aligned with where people are. Today, citizens select the platforms through which they receive information or engage in communication. Therefore, it’s essential for official institutions to integrate contemporary forms and templates, reflecting significant advancements in this field, into their strategic communication planning.

Furthermore, attention must be directed towards the concept of local values. While we live in an open space resembling a single village, it's equally crucial to consider cultural specificity, cultural diversity, social heritage, and cultural legacy when devising communication strategies. I recollect in Libya, when we adopted a communication regulation known as the Government Communication Regulation, we utilised local languages. Libya boasts cultural diversity, comprising different races and languages. Although the Libyan constitution doesn't explicitly mention this, we embraced these languages out of respect and to enhance accessibility, respecting cultural specificity. The value system must be taken into account. We need to consider customs and traditions in any society and should pay attention to ethical values and morals. That is why the focus and the links to local values are also among the seven strategies.

The fifth strategy involves the links to ethical values. Communication is often seen as an evolutionary extension of traditional media, part of the communication task related to journalism, and thus it's crucial to abide by the ethics and values of the profession. The core values in journalism, which include accuracy, objectivity, and reporting, and yes, the communication task should reflect those. It's inappropriate for an official institution today to be involved in misleading news or to neglect accuracy in reporting or exhibit significant bias in a particular issue. Such ethical breaches will have negative repercussions on strategic communication planning. Therefore, it's crucial to design the strategy in line with the recognised professional ethics, especially in the field of media.

The sixth point revolves around our approach to communication. We need to view communication not as an authoritative tool akin to traditional media but as a service. It's imperative for governments to provide this service to their citizens and to assess government performance based on various indicators, including communication services related to transparency, citizen participation in decision-making, and feedback on specific decisions, positions, or policies.

The seventh and final strategy is to view communication from the perspective of the citizen. Today, citizens wield more influence over the communication message. Many government decisions are influenced by the trends set by people on social media platforms. Therefore, it's crucial in designing communication strategies to consider the viewpoint of ordinary people towards public issues.

So, these are the seven strategies that we consider essential for planning the communication process. As mentioned earlier, it's important to swiftly highlight the Libyan experience, especially as it underwent a challenging ordeal this year. I'm sure you all followed what happened in the city of Derna and the eastern regions of Libya due to the major flooding that hit the city.

In 2021, the Government of National Unity in Libya was established, becoming the first



government to focus on the concept of communication. This designation was at the highest executive level in the government, and the government actually implemented a set of communication-related initiatives or programmes. One such initiative was the establishment of a platform called “Our Government,” which managed to garner significant interaction on social media and counter many misinformation campaigns.

We also worked on establishing what’s known as the Government Communication Diploma, the first of its kind in Libya, for media personnel or officials in ministries and other entities. Additionally, we implemented various other programmes, such as establishing the Government Communication Centre, which we founded last year.

On September 11th of last year, Libyans awoke to a major disaster—the severe flooding that engulfed the city of Derna and its neighbouring towns in eastern Libya. This flooding resulted in thousands of casualties, and communication was completely cut off from the city. As a government, we faced a major crisis, which was not only a humanitarian crisis and undoubtedly a priority but also occurred during a period of political polarisation in Libya—some may describe it as a political divide.

Some hurdles impeded the authority’s performance in Libya, placing full responsibility on it for the flood crisis. This also resonates with the primary focus of this summit. There were many misleading news reports and rumours circulating among the people. That situation was a practical and real-life experience of how the government dealt with this crisis from a communication perspective.

The government worked simultaneously on many fronts. As I mentioned, it focused on the communication mission; there was a daily press conference where all government officials interacted with all media outlets, answering all journalists’ questions, and these press conferences were extensive. This allowed people to listen to information, figures, and data directly from officials, and this continued throughout the crisis period.

Additionally, all government platforms were transformed into updating platforms to provide rapid information to the people, to convey alerts and disseminate information. Even the Prime Minister’s webpage in Libya transformed into a platform for detailed data, which could be minimal, accurate, or simple, but people were interested in it, showing significant concern and need for daily updates.

Furthermore, a daily briefing was consistently issued, providing comprehensive details on relief operations, search and rescue missions, healthcare and environmental initiatives, as well as social services and assistance. Consequently, every aspect of this crisis was handled with a communicative strategy that complemented other endeavours. Moreover, it underscored the significant observation that all media platforms in Libya, despite their diverse perspectives, collaborated to deliver a unified message.

In conclusion, and I hope not to have taken too much of your time, as I mentioned earlier, we live in an era shaped by communication tools, which influence every facet of contemporary existence. What we necessitate is a restructuring of our governmental and official strategies founded upon this premise. Additionally, addressing the issue of misinformation and false narratives, stemming from the substantial advancement in communication channels where oversight over data dissemination is lacking. This necessitates a centralised strategy at the national public policy level, rather than treating communication as ancillary.

Lastly, it's worth noting that truth ultimately triumphs, notwithstanding the convergence of communication tools towards marketing, counterfeiting, and disinformation. Truth remains paramount and will always prevail.

And here, I conclude with the words of Allah Almighty, "So as for the foam, it passes away as [that of] the rubbish; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. Thus does Allah present examples." [ar-Ra`d (The Thunder) 13:17]

Peace be upon you, and may the mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you.

Thank you very much for your attention.



SC

Stratcom Talk-1

*The Gray Zone: Challenging  
Ourselves*

24 November 2023

# The Gray Zone: Challenging Ourselves



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## SPEAKERS



Moderator  
**Alican Ayanlar**  
Correspondent and Presenter,  
TRT World



Assoc. Prof. Kiliç  
**Buğra Kanat**  
Research Director, SETA  
Foundation Washington DC



**Dr. Nancy Snow**  
CEO, Global Persuasion  
Strategies



1

### Alican Ayanlar

I think we all realize that there is one common theme, one common denominator, that is beginning to show itself in all of the speeches that we have heard since the beginning. And that is disinformation is real. Minister Elafi, thank you very much for enlightening us and sharing your experiences in terms of how official channels, the governments use the tools at their disposal to combat this growing plague. I am hoping if I could ask the floor managers to actually get the stage ready for the next session. We have had panel discussions; we have had talks from ministers and ambassadors. And we are going to move on to a new format. This is going to be a one-on-one format. Just to repeat my reminder that I stated this morning, aside from what is going on here, please actually do get a chance to dedicate a little bit of time to the booths that have been set up outside. There are experience centres, artificial intelligence, cyber security, and robotics. There is a really interesting robot that I am sure you spotted. And all sorts of things fit into what we are trying to do here. Minister Elafi, I am going to put you on the spot. My colleague is here from TRT World. We want an interview with you. So, if you could actually just spare some time, I am sorry I had to put you on the spot, but it is important for us, and we do appreciate it. Thank you very much. In just a moment, we are going to actually have Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat, also a good friend of ours, over at TRT World. He is going to be interviewing Dr. Nancy Snow, who is the CEO of

GPS (Global Persuasion Strategies). And it is a little bit of a personal story, but I will let Mr. Kanat talk to you about it. Minister Elafi, good luck with the interview. Kılıç Buğra Kanat will be coming up here in just a moment to interview Dr. Nancy Snow, who is the CEO of Global Persuasion Strategies. They are going to be having a one-on-one Stratcom talk. And the title of that is “Gray Zone: Challenging Ourselves.” I am going to be very interested in hearing what they have to say. Has anybody had a chance to talk to any of the panellists if they have any questions about the session so far? Please do, because you are dedicating your time to come out here. And if you do have any questions, usually at the end of each session, we try to dedicate a little bit of time to give the microphones up on the floor, which is an opportunity for you to ask questions. We do apologize. We really have not had one because a lot of high-level speakers have been speaking, and that is not usually their style. But hopefully, as we sort of progress and get deeper into the Strategic Communication Summit, we will be able to dedicate about five to ten minutes at the end of each session for you to ask questions. Perhaps Mr. Kanat will be able to dedicate a couple of minutes at the end of his session and maybe have questions at the end. We are running a little bit behind schedule. We do apologize for that. This is usually the way it works in conferences like this, but we will try to make up time by shortening some of the coffee breaks that we have. We do have a coffee break coming up after this one, and then we will be continuing into the last section of Day One of this Strategic Communication Summit. Have a good session. Thank you very much for your patience.

### **Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

Good afternoon, everyone, and after long conversations and important keynotes from the dignitaries and from the current situation about misinformation, disinformation, and information warfare. Now we will have a conversation with Nancy about her story and her involvement in information warfare propaganda, public diplomacy, and soft power. She prepared the presentation that has relevance to Türkiye at certain points. So, we will start with her, and then I will continue with soft moderation, asking her a few questions about her journey.

### **Nancy Snow**

Wonderful. Thank you so much. I cannot tell you all how excited I am to be here. Part of my story goes back to my father. Now, I will get into that in a moment, but we each have a story. One of the things I would like to share today is to think about what your story is coming out of the Stratcom Summit. What makes you who you are? And part of what makes us who we are could be our nationality. So, here is my US passport. I am a US-born citizen, but I identify as a global citizen. I am a citizen of the world. I do not believe we have a passport for that. And I am also a resident of Japan. Anyone who has been to Japan, you are welcome to ring me up when you come to Tokyo on your next trip. The Foreign Minister earlier was talking about how war and peace have really blended together, and it is really hard to tell if we are in a perpetual war or if we have not had a perpetual peace. This first slide shows you war and peace. It shows the cover, of course, of Tolstoy, one of the older covers. But at one time, we had faces. We had peace, crisis, and conflict. These are three very distinct phases.



And conflicts were fought using mostly military means, such as hard power. And adversaries were identifiable. All the sessions so far have been talking about; it is difficult now to separate sometimes the bad actors from the good actors because we are living in this world of competing narratives. And I am talking to you too. We just talked for half an hour, and it was wonderful. But we are living in this world of competing narratives. In propaganda research, we often refer to “propagandas” as propaganda and counter-propaganda. So, everybody has a perspective on what is going on. You can go to the next slide. I will go through these pretty quickly. I mentioned my father, and I think it is coming up. I do not know if anybody remembers one of the most iconic ships. This is the Missouri that previous slide was showing the iconic ship. This is the connection to my father. Now, I have been in Türkiye for 24 hours. This is my first time. Of course, this is my first time in Istanbul. When I was a little girl growing up, I heard about Istanbul from my father. He was, in fact, on the ship. Not during World War 2, but during a really under told story of a diplomatic Mediterranean cruise in the spring of 1946. What we would call peacetime. And the next slide will show what makes the Missouri in part, so iconic. And this is, of course, MacArthur. But you see, I have got two images here: the Japanese officials. The Missouri was the ship on which Japan signed at the end of the war the unconditional surrender. I live in Japan. The Japanese knew the Missouri very well. Just to add to the story, it is a battleship, but it is a bit of a diplomat now, too. And I am writing a book called Battleship Diplomat about the story of the Missouri in this public diplomacy persuasion role. If you go to Oahu, Honolulu, or Pearl Harbor, you have this sunken Arizona bow to bow with the Missouri. And many Japanese come to the Missouri. They were the defeated nation from the allies in World War II, and yet now we are such close allies. Now, Türkiye... This is a commemorative stamp from that visit, and I have learned from my very erudite new friend more about the context of this story. And how relevant this visit was by the ship. It was a goodwill mission in many respects.

### **Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

Just to fill in something about the battleship Missouri, when it visited Türkiye for the first time in 1946, it was carrying the body of the Turkish ambassador in Washington, DC, who died during the war times. And first buried in Arlington National Cemetery, then brought to Türkiye. But there was a geopolitical significance as well. Those were the challenging times for Türkiye because of the threat from the Soviet Union. So, the ship was welcomed not only as a ship carrying the body of the Turkish ambassador but also as a ship that could perhaps provide symbolic support for Türkiye against the Soviet threat at those times.

### **Dr. Nancy Snow**

I think I have just met my co-author because I have learned so much from our brief time together. This is an image of my father in the middle, surrounded by Turkish officials and young men who came out of the ship. You can see a little bit of the Missouri in the background. So indeed, my father told me the story of the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Washington, DC., Mehmet Erteğün. And I think it is an extraordinary story. There he is. And I chose this image on purpose. Because I am a cat lover. He was a cat lover, too. Many of us who are writers love our cats, and we love our dogs too. I love all animals, but I love this image. His son was the co-founder of Atlantic Records, Ahmet Erteğün, who was also much admired. So, those days are gone. Now I am getting into a little bit of the grey zone.

### **Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

Those days are gone but just to add one more thing: In the USA, in the Turkish Embassy in Washington, DC, there have been traditional jazz music nights called Erteğün Night, right? Almost every month, there is a jazz music day. And in the evening, members of Congress attended it. It is probably one of the very important soft power and public diplomacy steps of Türkiye that has been going on for the last 20–30 years now.

### **Dr. Nancy Snow**

It is wonderful to hear that context. And I am reading now a book, I believe, called The Last Sultan, about the life of Ahmet Erteğün. He was very instrumental in making jazz go global and he worked with great artists like Aretha Franklin. It is an incredible story, and the family is all back together now. Let us see. So, as I said, those days are gone and now we are really in the midst of more of this confusion. Who can we trust? I know this is probably a hard slide to look at because the writing is small, but I will just share it with you. This is US-relevant. But it has a global context. You can see in the following paragraph that in the late fifties, there were public opinion polls asking, “Can you trust the government to do the right thing most of the time?” It was in the seventy-plus percentile. And now, it is in the twenties, and it has dropped to this level through Trump and Biden. It is a real bipartisan or even non-partisan issue. Part of my talk is to address some of these what I call “Pillars of persuasion,” including credibility, authenticity, trust, truth, trust and truth. And this is a quote from Edward R. Murrow from 1963. He spoke these words before the US Congress. And American

traditions and the American ethic require us to be truthful. But the most important reason he said is that “truth is the best propaganda and lies are the worst.” And this latter part is very well known: “To be persuasive, we must be believable. To be believable, we must be credible. To be credible, we must be truthful.” It is as simple as that. It is a motto that could apply to many journalism institutions. They, too, are all about credibility. And this is from the Edelman Trust Barometer that was mentioned earlier. It has been around since 2000. I go to it a lot as a scholar. And in the 2023 edition of it, the conclusion was that business is the only global institution viewed as both ethical and competent, while government, media and social media are distrusted. Of course, that is a long continuum. You may not like social media, and I have heard many people say, “I hate social media,” including me. I have said that I hate social media. I do not want to be on social media, but I use it because there is not only an addictive aspect to it. But if you are trying to get a message out, over time, with the work that I do, I realise I have to have somewhat of a presence. So, I am on Twitter/X and Facebook and Instagram. But I do not use it to be too provocative. I probably do not use it well, according to influencers. But with this alone, I could have put this slide up by itself today, but I wanted to bring in more of the personal story. This is something we should really wrap our heads around. Let me go through this. This is again one of the questions when you are thinking about confronting bad actors, however identified. Are you in it for the long game? Because the bad actors, the ones who are up to no good are very much in it for the long game. In this world of strategic communication, we often talk about “you can never really sleep” or “you cannot sleep on what your opponent, your enemy is up to.” And I mentioned earlier, “Is your message credible?” and “Is your message and/or your platform believable?” That is somewhat contestable. Both bad actors and good actors use that. Who is trusting you? That is where there may be a hybrid advantage. Hybrid threats really do undermine trust. They do not have to be trusted because their goals are destructive. They do not have the higher bar. I worked for the government for several years and then went into full-time academia. I came from the state department and the US information agency, which you say you know is no more, is now part of the state. They do a lot of work on global media and confronting misinformation and disinformation.

### **Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

It was the primary tool of the United States in public diplomacy for long years.

### **Dr. Nancy Snow**

Indeed, the motto was telling America’s story to the world and when I worked there, I would talk to my colleagues and say, “That is just one story; why is it just a story? Why not tell America’s stories to the world?” but they just said, “Get back to work.” This is a quote from a NATO journal. I am just going to emphasise the last part about building trust again. It requires sustained efforts at the structural, at the policy levels to develop strong links between the state and the people that are underpinned by meaningful transparency, ownership and inclusiveness. The reason why this quote popped out for me is because I come from a country with a brand that we are seeing is so polarized. We are not united. We all may



have an opinion about things, but we just do not have national unity. When you lack that, you create politicians and candidates who are going to address it and say, “I am the answer; I am the interventionist; I can make the difference.” And they may not always have the... This is my last slide. I added this just now because I wanted to give you all a way to contact me and to go to my website. These are my first two books. These are probably the best known and they are the shortest I ever wrote but I think that Propaganda Inc., which was telling my experience working at USIA, I am really welcome to hear from you all. [Nancysnow.com](http://Nancysnow.com). And on social media, I am Dr. Persuasion. So, thank you.

**Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

Thank you very much, Nancy, for this insightful presentation that tells a story starting with your father and still going on with your trip to Japan and your residency in Japan right now. I want to go back to one of your slides in which it says, “Business is more ethical and competent than the state, the media, and social media.” This is a rather provocative statement. Because there would be a lot of discussion about businesses acting unethically. Business is being non-competent or dysfunctional. How would you support that idea if you are behind that statement?

**Dr. Nancy Snow**

I am not sure if I am totally behind it and I did not conduct the survey, but I would agree with you. I think we often are distrustful of big media and big business. When I was in graduate school, it was sort of a requirement in the way when you were working on your PhD in the social sciences to be anti-business or anti-capitalism because of all of the undersides



of capitalism. And that, it does not account often for sustainability, and it is the bottom line. But I think what we have seen perhaps is that there is that efficiency quotient. So, we often attribute efficiency to getting the job done, whether or not that may be for good or that may be sort of coming in, like, I was watching on the plane coming over here a document, well, not a documentary, kind of a fictionalised account of Bezos. If you have seen the film about the founding of Amazon.com. And I use Amazon, but I have friends who will not use Amazon because they feel very strongly that it has decimated independent bookstores. There is a lot of truth to that. And I have a sentiment for that. But with this communication and information environment, nobody is perfect. We are all very imperfect human beings, are not we? And we may espouse principles. You may say, “Yes, business can get the job done,” but I have also seen the government getting the job done too. So, this is more about the perception that people have, and I think that businesses do have customer service, but increasingly it has gone towards chatbots and artificial intelligence. But I can tell you that if I have a personal connection, if I call and sometimes, I am known, you know, maybe I am spending too much time alone, I will call about something to take care of business wise and I will end up talking to the telemarketer for half an hour. And it makes a difference to have that personal connection. And governments having worked for the government, even though it was short-term, we were very disconnected often from our clientele, from our customers, because when I was at state in the US Information Agency, who were our customers? The American people. Yet what we did was really, especially at USIA, very much cut off from the American people due to legal restrictions. When we were telling America’s story, it was to the world. It was not to the American people. So, every institution has challenges but also opportunities. And I wanted to bring it back to this being part of your story. When you mix with each other at the Stratcom Summit, are you mixing as “I am a journalist, nice to meet you,” “I am a writer, nice to meet you,” or “I grow flowers, nice to meet you”? Our identity and how we introduce ourselves, how we brand ourselves personally can make a difference in how we then can take that relationship further. Do we get to know that person? Because sometimes we do not understand each other. We see a senior government official. I just met the delightful ambassador. Mexican ambassador. And he is at a very high level but he is so... There he is! He is so personable and delightful. That is a memory that I will keep from my long trip to Istanbul. There is again business, government, and media. Yes, we can have these images and these sorts of perspectives but it makes a difference, does not it? And it is the human relation, it is the human touch ultimately. We are living in a world with all this technology. This is how we started out. All this technology is at our fingertips, yet you see young people who feel more disconnected. And older people, too, feel more isolated and lonelier. So, the 21st century makes me kind of want to write a book about the 20th century.

### **Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

Just before we started, we were talking about the soft power index. And in that index, do you see governments that use your definition of “business-like”? And that they could touch people and become more successful not because of their expensive investment in public diplomacy but more because of a personal touch and telling the story of their countries to a global audience. Which countries are more successful in this?

**Dr. Nancy Snow**

You know that is a good question. I suppose living as I do in Asia, we hear a lot about Singapore as a model, but it is not just business. It is that sort of call that Singapore made: “We want the best and brightest. We want the best people we can get.” And that is going to be part of our brand identity. So, I visited Singapore for a national branding conference and a city branding conference. And it is a place where you do feel this sense of efficiency and that things are going to get done. But there is a little bit of a lack of cultural richness. And when I think of a place that we once associated very much with business, I am talking about Japan. Japan Inc. was projected to become the number one power. Really GDP-wise by the year 2000. But we know that did not work out.

**Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

This is 1970’s, 1980s.

**Dr. Nancy Snow**

Yes. And this was when we were not hearing about the South Korea’s. We were not hearing about these other up-and-coming countries. South Korea was very much a developing country but Japan, even up to today, is associated with being an innovator and very modern. That is a very positive image to have. And one of the things I wanted to talk about today was that Japan this year, according to the nation branding index, is number 1. And you shared with me the connection between Japan and Türkiye from years ago, a century ago, of which I was not aware. Do you play to your strengths? Yes. But I do still think that in a lot of my work, you will hear the refrain of personal diplomacy. Person to person, because that makes all the difference. When I leave the Stratcom Summit, I want to have a whole bucket of stories that I can share about the people I met here. These are wonderful panels but sometimes you get it all sort of mixed up in your head—all the data and everything. But the people I do not forget. And then I can share about the need for people to come visit. By the way, I do not need to be advocating for Istanbul, much less Türkiye, because I have been sharing with my friends where I am now. And they say, “Oh, I love it. Have a great time.” So, it is something that is definitely working well here.

**Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

Last question on soft power: You just mentioned how Japan was thought to be the number one country in the 1970s and 1980s, partly because of its cultural influence and partly because of its soft power in those days around the world. And now, there is this discussion you mentioned about South Korea achieving that. And we have seen examples where the countries’ soft power may not overlap with their global influence around the world. Do you think we have just become the devil’s advocates here? Do you think we are overrating, or is the soft power something overrated?

**Dr. Nancy Snow**

There is definitely a movement to address that, because I think when you and I were talking



earlier, we often make the mistake of separating soft power from hard power. And there has been talk about smart power, too. And I believe that countries with a lot of hard power often have the resources. They also have the notoriety. I mean, people coming as I do from the US, nobody is neutral about the US, and that has to do with both hard power and soft power. So, I have gotten it, you know for years. Post-9/11, you know Hollywood, but also the US military and interventions. You have to kind of address that and live with that somewhat.

### **Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

And now, two more questions. This is more about gray zone, which is supposed to be your main topic. And there is this difficulty in understanding what gray zone is. There has been discussion about what a gray zone is not, but there is not much discussion about what a gray zone is. What is a gray zone?

### **Dr. Nancy Snow**

Okay, I am a simple gal. I am updating a book that is sort of the most read book on propaganda called “Propaganda and Persuasion” by Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell. And Garth Jowett invited me in as a third author. We are just doing a quick 15-20% addition. But in the book, for years and years, we have talked about types of propaganda: white, black, and gray. Gray in that context means that you cannot necessarily identify the source. That is what we have been talking about, right? Where is the source coming from? When you think of the traditional model of journalism, who, what, when, where... This really came from Harold Lasswell, who was also a propaganda scholar, as you know well. And so, it means, how can I trust? You have been talking about trust, but who can I trust? Well, we often trust the people we come to know. Think of what you share if you are a social media-type and there is a lot of re-sharing and liking. Well, that is often from people you trust. Or if you do not trust that source, you may have, you know, retweet does not mean endorsement. So, it is kind of putting it out there, but it is not black and white. It is not that we are the winners, and you are the losers. When I think of the USA-Japan relationship, they were so defeated. And they were so sort of, you know, they turned it around. I have often asked them. “How did you turn this around?” “How could you work so closely with the US now?” But it is that security umbrella. It is part of their constitution. Beyond that, though, I think Japan’s soft power country brand has worked well because it has maintained its cultural distinctiveness. And in part, it is sort of a fantasy. Many people who go there have Japan on their bucket lists. They just want to experience it. And as we talked about earlier, it often exceeds their expectations. It is an interesting dynamic of human beings that if we have this, maybe we have a middle-of-the-road expectation. Not too high, not too low. Then we were pleasantly surprised. It will reinforce the good things that you experience. And that happens a lot with Japan. That may be a lesson for other countries as well. Do you leave with more from the sense of good, being a good actor in the world? Simon Anholt, who has spoken here, has talked about “The Good Country.” Are you reliable? Are you a bit of a mediator? Are you a cultural interpreter or translator? So, we have different aspects of countries and their people, which is really the brand, the people that can make the difference for good.

**Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

Last question. You showed a chart about the declining trust in the government in the United States. And throughout the years, it has been almost constant. There has been decrease and in the age of this polarisation, we have seen that, especially in the 2024 election. And during the campaigns, we may see a further decline in trust in the government in the United States. But this has been present in multiple different countries. And we have seen, especially for democracies in Western Europe and in other countries, that it could be quantified and measured. We have seen this steep decline in terms of trust in the government. What would be the solution? You are a person who has served in the government for the US Information Agency. If you are advising right now and if you are telling the prescription for a government on how to increase trust from their citizens, what would your prescription be?

**Dr. Nancy Snow**

I told you already, I am a simple gal. So, I really believe in a lot of... We have seen a lot of distrust on the rise with some of our legacy media, such as the New York Times. You will see various media use this, but I believe in it. I think we need to get back to dialogue and with those who may have a different point of view. I think we need to humanise each other. And what is happening in the US, I hear constantly, is that when people board an airplane or if they get on a train or if they are waiting in line at the grocery store, the chit-chat has been reduced because there is a fear that they may say something that will cause someone to just blow up. That is a real decline element of what is happening in the US. I would like to see that improved. And I think that means a vested interest. Even if we disagree and disagree vehemently with each other, which we often do, let us respect the personhood in which we live in this world of differing points of view. And that will never be entirely of one mind in many respects. And so, like I said earlier, it was that loss of authenticity, and, you know, you have to work at that. It is not just confronting bad actors; we also want to create a reservoir for good actors, for good people. Because the good people, as I have always believed, significantly outnumber the bad actors. But the bad actors are good at getting attention and it is usually because they are explosive and sensational and it is like those aspects of media that we say, "We have had enough of." And yet, we cannot look away.

**Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

Thank you very much Nancy, and thanks for everyone and this will be the end of this session.

**Dr. Nancy Snow**

Thank you very much. I enjoyed it.

**Assoc. Prof. Kılıç Buğra Kanat**

Nancy will be around for those who have questions about her presentation or her work. Thank you very much. Thank you.

# SC



## Stratcom Panel-2

*Building International  
Resilience*

24 November 2023

# Building International Resilience



  
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## PANELLISTS



**Moderator  
Ambassador Murat Lütem**  
Director General of Information of the  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic  
of Türkiye



**Matthias Lüfkens**  
Communications Consultant,  
DigITips



**Aleksandra Saša Gorišek**  
Director of Communications of the  
International Federation of Red Cross



**Prof. Ulrich Brückner**  
Stanford University

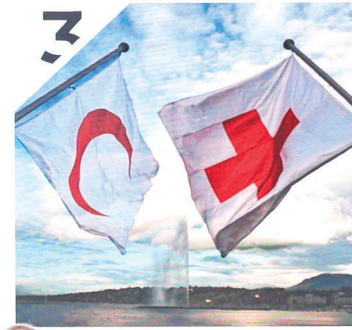
## OUR NATIONAL SOCIETIES - 191:



1 Strong national actors, new and independent



2 Services delivered by highly motivated volunteers



3 Auxiliary role and humanitarian problems enshrined in Geneva Convention



### Moderator Murat Lütem

Thank you very much for those introductions. Allow me to start off by introducing myself. I know it has been mentioned, but I am Murat Lütem, Director General of Information at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye. And I would like to reintroduce our esteemed panellists today before we launch into our discussion. I have here with us Ms. Aleksandra Saša Gorišek. She is the Director of Communications at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. I also have, to her left, Mr. Matthias Lüfkens. He is the CEO of DigiTips and a communications consultant to a number of esteemed organizations. And to the very left of me, I have Professor Ulrich Brückner, who is a professor at Stanford University in Berlin. Welcome all. It is a pleasure to be with all of you here. What I would like to do, if I may, is kick off the discussion by reading the synopsis of this round and then asking three questions in the first tour to frame the discussion. And then ask for your comments for about 7–8 minutes. And then on the second tour, I will ask one last question to frame your final comments, and then we will wrap up. The synopsis reads that developments and mass communication technologies continue to profoundly affect societies and

the global order. While the Russian-Ukraine war is still raging, Israel's attacks on Palestine once again highlight the weakness of the international community's resilience in the face of crises in our world. In our session, we will discuss building a more resilient international community, particularly from the viewpoint of communication. And I will move on with the three questions that, as I mentioned, create a backdrop to your comments. The first question is: How did technological developments transform the communications ecosystem? The second one is: What is the importance of strategic communication in the face of new crises and uncertainties? The third question is: how can a more resilient communication ecosystem be built? Shall we kick off with you, Ms. Gorišek? And I think you have a presentation.

### **Aleksandra Saša Gorišek**

Yes, thank you. Thank you for that for the introduction and I am very delighted and honoured to be here with all of you. I have prepared a presentation that will attempt to answer the questions, but what I would really like to do is talk about my organisation, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Because building international resilience is at the core of what we do, and of course, communications is a very integral part of it. The way we see the world today at the IFRC is that no human being is actually inherently vulnerable. But, as we have seen over the last decades, we have all been greatly affected by climate change, conflict, diseases and so on. And in 2022, just to give you some numbers, there have been 387 disasters, which does not include the pandemics. Over 30,000 people have been killed in those disasters, which further affected 185 million individuals in one way or another around the world. But what we also like to say is to be hopeful and to be inspiring a little bit. There are over sixteen million volunteers of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 190,000 branches and local units in 191 countries around the world. They are the power of humanity and at the core of resilience building. As I said, there are 191 national societies. And what they do is: We build; we are strong local actors who are neutral and independent. And we provide services that are obviously delivered by highly trained volunteers and as you all know, our national societies have an auxiliary role. They are enshrined in the Geneva Conventions. When a person or a community is in crisis, the Red Cross and Red Crescent are there to offer support. And we work within these communities to build exactly what we are talking about today: resilience. We are there before, during and after a disaster or crisis. Our strength is to be locally present. Further in 2022, the IFRC network reached 650 million people. And this is just to give you an idea of where we are present as IFRC, which is the secretariat for the national societies around the world. We are headquartered in Geneva and we have five regional offices and over fifty country cluster offices around the world. Our strategic priorities are around five different areas and this is where we work when disaster strikes or crises occur around these five areas. Climate change, migration, health and well-being, disasters and crises, and, of course, values, power and inclusion, which means equity, working with youth and gender. We



also have four enabling functions, which we call enabling functions, and communications is an essential component of these four functions. One of them, the first one, is very important, and that is strategic and operational support coordination. And this also means building effective and consistent messaging. Maybe if I could have a different microphone, I could just walk on stage, because that would be really helpful.

### **Moderator Murat Lütem**

Do we have a single handheld microphone? It will be very helpful in assisting with the presentation because the screen is really quite far away. It is not just your eyes. I am not sure any of the panellists have the eyesight to reach that fine print there. It is on its way. I can see its approach. There you go.

### **Aleksandra Saša Gorišek**

Maybe I can just stand there and lift this.

### **Moderator Murat Lütem**

Thank you very much.

### **Aleksandra Saša Gorišek**

Thank you. Can you hear me? I apologise for this. I will just perform a little bit here, if that is okay. As I mentioned, we work on four basic secretariat enabling functions, and the first one is really the most important one. In strategic and operational coordination, of course, as I mentioned, communication is a very important factor and our global communications team, both in Geneva and worldwide, together with the 191 national societies and communicators in those societies, we provide effective and consistent messaging to one another on different crises and disasters that we are facing. The second enabling function is national society development, which basically means capacity building. And we also do that in communications. One specific area I want to mention is emergency communications. Why? Because this is when we are most active. When a crisis or a disaster occurs, we immediately spring to action and we have to be active and present on the ground immediately. The third enabling function is humanitarian diplomacy, which is basically working, influencing through public advocacy behind closed doors, but also publicly through public diplomacy. The fourth one is, of course, accountability. This includes reporting, which is highlighting reporting on donor contributions, but also highlighting how these donor contributions make a difference when we help people on the ground in disasters. How we position ourselves is, as I mentioned, one of our global priority areas in climate, migration, health, and disaster preparedness and response. We work with stories from the ground. This is really important. This is where the national societies are really at play because they are the ones on the ground and they can provide us with local storytelling. Localization: we try to provide more diverse and

local voices from the people impacted by humanitarian crises. It is not us. In Geneva, talking about what is happening on the ground, it is the national societies who actually live in communities. They are embedded. They are part of the communities that this disaster or crisis has affected. So, they are the ones who are telling these stories. We are, as you know, the largest humanitarian network. We are there first, as I just said. We are going sometimes where others may not be able to, precisely because it is difficult to access or for whatever other reasons, but our national societies are already there. What are our communications goals? First of all, to protect and strengthen our brand individually, both at the domestic level for national societies and collectively at the global level. Second, harness the power of our network and leverage our local presence to be able to source these stories quickly, but there are, of course, challenges. Sometimes there is no access, and sometimes we need to be mindful of the affected populations who have potentially lost someone. And we do not want to now put a camera in front of their faces. So, we have to be very mindful of those things. Third, improve our compact capacity to anticipate, mitigate and respond to any reputational risk issue. It is important that we train people at the local level and also deploy them when an emergency happens. Support fundraising efforts to deliver better services to those most in need and those where resources are crucial to emergency response. Surge: This is something that happens when an emergency happens. We need to quickly deploy our operations experts in different areas but also in communications. If we cannot do that, then we often cannot know. We do not know what is happening on the ground because we do not have anyone on the ground that can support the national society. Even the national society cannot do it themselves. In terms of emergency communications, we manage a special roster. For the communications surge, there is a list that national societies will have on their own as well as at the IFRC level. And we have a mechanism by which we will then deploy people. We want to deploy the right people and services to the right place and at the right time, as local as possible, so they are very familiar with the situation and as global as necessary, of course. The capacity building is essential here. We organise both regional and global communication surge training and right now my colleagues are working together with several national societies. Next week, we are organising a week-long training for national societies from around the world on precisely that communication surge. Just to give you some examples,

*“ We want to deploy the right people and services to the right place and at the right time, as local as possible, so they are very familiar with the situation and as global as necessary, of course. The capacity building is essential here. We organise both regional and global communication surge training and right now my colleagues are working together with several national societies.*”



consider the recent Morocco earthquake. We were the leading voice there, and we had the highest earned mentions when compared to other leading humanitarian agencies, such as the UN agencies. We had almost 30% of all total mentions. This means both us, as the IFRC, the secretariat, and the national societies. We had a search deployment within days. My colleague deployed really quickly. You can see him right here. He was working very closely with the Moroccan Red Crescent and this is what helped us get exceptional social media engagement. Another example is, almost at the same time, the really devastating floods that we saw in Libya. Again, in the first week, we were the leading voice in this disaster. We were among several international organisations, but we again stood out with the highest volume of earned mentions. Due to the Libyan Red Crescent on the ground, we had 43% of all the mentions. Finally, I would like to mention the Türkiye and Syria earthquakes earlier this year. This is where local action reaching our global networks really, really worked. We had 170 social media mentions very quickly. It was our biggest ever traffic. More than three times our normal weekday traffic. This is what we identified as the ingredients for a powerful global narrative. Strong local presence: Both the Turkish Red Crescent, Kızıl Ay, and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent were really, really strong and they are always really strong when disasters or crises happen. The rapid information and footage that we received from the ground and shared with the rest of the national societies and our networks was really amazing. Thank you for that. I think they earned it. So, what is our added value? Access, access, access... I think that is the most important thing about national societies. That is what we really have compared to many other humanitarian organisations, and they are also the ones that provide first-hand insight stories from the ground. Storytelling and content from the field, from the ground, by the people who know it best is really key to this. We also make sure that we have spokespeople in every emergency, both local and international, in different languages, so that we can respond to different media requests. We want to be proactive and fast so that we can demonstrate the action and the presence. And our tone needs to always be empathetic, human, humble, and honest. Finally, I have come to answer your questions. In terms of the new communications ecosystem and misinformation and disinformation. The immediacy of sharing and receiving information is what we see today. There are no borders in media markets. We have audiences everywhere and the proliferation of influencers and opinion makers among the general public is definitely new. Different views are now accessible to all and can be promoted into the public sphere, even if it is not the best thing to do. This transformation brings many opportunities for all of us who work in communications but it also presents major risks. For example, any reputational risks in a country can potentially and quickly become a global issue. And this for IFRC is something we see every day. This is a daily occurrence for us. We have to be prepared to respond to those who prepare reactive lines with key messages that we share with our members of the network regularly. The rise of online technology may have reduced the cost of reaching these broader audiences, but it is all more complex. The one-to-many broadcasting model has now been overtaken by the many-to-many model, of which we are all very well aware. I am sure Matthias will



talk more about this. Social media has revolutionised communications. We cannot just adapt. We need to be able to lead in our areas and in our fields to stay relevant. In terms of the rise of misinformation and disinformation, the standards of truth and accuracy are falling not only on social media but also in traditional media spaces. Organisations can be attacked. And we can be exposed. This is why I was saying reputation or risk management is a key area of work for our communications team. The media window, as we know, is getting shorter, and organisations need to be able to respond quickly. In terms of strategic communications for us, these are our three lines to live by: Be first, be accurate and be credible. We want to be first on the ground, which I think we do quite well at as soon as a disaster or crisis happens. We want to be accurate. We want to have verified information. And we want to be credible. We want to build trust with our audiences so that we can do our work. Just to touch upon it, I will quickly go through these. They were already mentioned today. We work abiding by our fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, and unity. And this is what guides us in everything that we do, both on the operational and strategic levels, as well as in communications. Thank you.

**Moderator Murat Lütem**

Thank you very much. Thank you for your input. I think you have said a lot about how impor-



tant it is to be there on the ground, on time. You deal with human tragedies and catastrophes, addressing human needs and saving human lives, which is the most valuable thing that we have. It really goes a long way. You are also building international resilience. I think setting up the stage so that misinformation and disinformation can be combated effectively. I now turn to our next panellist. Mr. Lüfkens. Your contributions, please. The floor is yours.

### **Matthias Lüfkens**

Thank you very much, Murat. As some of you might know, I have been following heads of state and government, foreign ministries and foreign ministers on social media for over a decade now. I am the founder of Twiplomacy. Now with DigiTips, I am still following heads of state and government, so I kind of follow what is being done and how to reach out to communities. There are more and more channels, so maybe just a show of hands if we can just turn on the lights. I just want to see how many of you are on X, formerly known as Twitter. Hands up if you are also on Facebook. Instagram? Ah, many more. TikTok? Not many. I do not see many. Then finally, LinkedIn? There we go. I think everybody is on LinkedIn. It is the professional network. It is just to give you, with this show of hands, an idea of the different channels that are out there. My message to governments and organisations is that you have to be on every single one of those platforms and also embrace change when there are new platforms. You might have heard about Blue Sky. Who has heard about Blue Sky? It is, for the moment, in private beta. It is done by former Twitter engineers. It looks like Twitter, feels like Twitter, and is like Twitter from ten years ago. It just has two million users. So, set up a profile and see what is there. Go on to Mastodon. Mastodon has ten million users. I do not know if you have heard about Mastodon. Kind of look at what is coming; use Threads. I guess in Türkiye you can use Threads. We cannot do so in the European Union because of GDPR regulations. Meta has not yet released Threads yet in the European Union. One message is to embrace change and test these channels and what is really important is to build communities on those channels. I think your government, your president for the past over a decade have been able to build a great community on social media with millions of followers on different platforms. Kudos to them. But it is a continuous process. You really have to look. Where are my fans? Where are the followers? Where is my community? Where is my target audience? It might be on Blue Sky; it might be on Threads. So, please build communities there. It does not matter if you only have one hundred followers, two hundred followers or two thousand. You do not need a million followers. The second kind of thing, which is what I think is very important, is engagement. Many times in communications, we see this kind of one-way engagement. No back and forth, no conversation. Remember when social media was social? It was a conversation, a two-way conversation. It kind of no longer exists. Also, in terms of digital diplomacy, having looked at the evolution of how world leaders use social media, yes, it has become weaponized. Social media is no longer a way to connect with the leaders; for instance, the former President of Russia, Dmitri Medvedev, congratulated Barack Obama on his birthday. That time is over. That lovey-dovey digital diplomacy is definitely

a thing of the past. Now, on our social media, as Melissa Fleming said this morning, words have been weaponized. Social media has been weaponized. On the other hand, I encourage governments and foreign ministries to really build their networks. A great example of a decentralised network is the IFRC. We have just heard it from Sasha. There is decentralization. Every single national society is more or less independent and there is no kind of top-down leadership or any kind of authoritarianism, I would say. As Sasha will say, this is how it works. I think this is a great example of how to distribute, how to give advice and make sure that everybody posts or tweets from the same tweet sheet, but while kind of having this decentralised network. This is also interesting for Foreign Ministries, Murat for you. You cannot control every single ambassador or embassy. How do you make sure they are posting or tweeting from the same tweet sheet? I think these challenges are very important. It is for me. I think it is really important for us to make communications, build communities, and build engaged communities. You can kind of create ambassadors, not only, obviously, for foreign ministries, but for organisations, international organisations, even private companies. Create your ambassadors, people who will go out and defend your product and your position. I have to admit, we have heard a couple of criticisms, of course, today, about the actions of Israel in Gaza currently, which are absolutely tragic. But on the other hand, if you look at the digital diplomacy machine that the Israeli Foreign Ministry, the Israeli government have built over the years, it is absolutely impressive. You cannot become a diplomat in Israel without being on the major social media platforms. Every ambassador is encouraged to be active and to engage directly. And this is something I think is an example to follow. Israel does not have the best press in this country currently but this is basically what I encourage you to do: Empower everyone. The last thing is about education, education, education... We have to educate. Not only our diplomats that are coming, but also the older generation, my generation, who would say, "I am too old for social media" or "I do not need to be on TikTok." Please help the older generation on those platforms. Lastly, make sure that we educate our children. our children, once they are at the age to be on social media at the age of thirteen, I want them to learn how to manage, how to do Instagram, to learn how to do TikTok responsibly and how to understand what is fake news and what is real news. I think it is really important to educate our youngsters very early on to not make the mistakes that some of the older generation make in sharing misinformation.

### **Moderator Murat Lütem**

Thank you very much, Matthias. What a great contribution. As you were speaking, I took down a few notes. In my mind, as I comment on your presentation, I will end with the idea that children are our future and just as we educate our children in every field, we have to educate them about the realities of social media. It is not bad, but it can be abused. It has been weaponized. You use that term, and it was previously used during the presentations of our dignitaries. It is so important to understand that our children are the future of our na-

tions, of our families, and of the world. If we do not educate them the way we educate them with everything on social media, the future could be very, very bleak. It is upon us adults to take that responsibility on our shoulders. Thanks again for all your input. I turn to our third panellist now, Professor Brückner. Please, the floor is yours for your comments.

### Prof. Ulrich Brückner

Thank you very much for having me here, which is kind of a surprise. Because I am neither a politician, nor am I a tech guy, nor am I an expert in communication. But I keep receiving invitations from TRT World because, as a professor, I used to say what I wanted because I am only responsible for myself. And it helps from time to time if you have news that just stands as news to contextualise it and maybe add a different perspective. And I thought, given that I am none of the list of people that we have heard already in their roles. I do what I usually do. And I add a different perspective and change the dimension a little bit, given that I am a political scientist. When I heard in the morning that we were challenged by a flood of miscommunication. And we have seen all the different examples of how complicated things became with disinformation, propaganda, cyber threats, and everything. On the one hand, it sounded as if this were something new, which, to a certain extent, it is. And on the other hand, it sounded like there is a threat to all of us, and if things work well, the state will protect us. And if states belong to something bigger, then we collectively protect our future, which was formulated in our panel as resilience in our ecosystem. And I am trying to answer the question of our moderator. Does communication strategy help to make us more resilient? And my straightforward answer is “no.” Because I think that if we are not just communicating, but if it is a strategic communication, then a strategic communication has a name. It represents an interest, and if we talk about states as actors, then states have most of the time competing interests, and the idea of a communication strategy is to win the hearts and minds. If they do what Matthias just recommended, like try harder, be on every platform, and do not miss out on any of the new changes, then you perform better. And better means that we are in a beauty contest for whose narrative is the best. It sounds as if it is something negatively biased, which is also what we heard in the morning, like we need to be more resilient and protect each other, but when we look at

“And we have seen all the different examples of how complicated things became with disinformation, propaganda, cyber threats, and everything. On the one hand, it sounded as if this were something new, which, to a certain extent, it is. And on the other hand, it sounded like there is a threat to all of us, and if things work well, the state will protect us. And if states belong to something bigger, then we collectively protect our future, which was formulated in our panel as resilience in our ecosystem.”

times when there was no such thing as social media. I come from a country with a terrible past and a totalitarian regime. And what was most urgently needed when West Germany was founded was a narrative to create something like a story that holds us together. Was that biased? Yes. Was that a form of filtered information in times of the Cold War? Absolutely. But it did its job to create something like a newly created identity with a lot of elements in it that one can easily criticise from a different perspective, like our commitment to transatlantic relations and also our commitment to look at Israel in a different way than countries with a different past. It is not like either you are my friend or you are not, or either it is a simple story or it is not. This is something that makes us in the media and in academia different from politicians because they have to take sides. They do not have the liberty to differentiate and say, "Well, to 50%, it is true, but there is also this and this and this, which also needs to be taken into consideration." I have the freedom to say, "If you do this, then the costs and benefits are that," and "If you do B, C, D, and E of the different options, then you have a different outcome." Because then it is up to each and every one who has a brain and can form an opinion to decide what is your favourite one. This is different for a politician because if you do not have a straightforward message, it is a nightmare for your communication designers to make this into a straightforward message. But I do not need to sell anything. I try to educate, which is your final message, the next generation to form an opinion based on the assumption that they have access to information and can distinguish what is information, what is context, and what, as my colleague Holly Kays from Brown University puts it, is contaminated context. Because, as a historian, if she does not have enough facts looking into historical situations, she borrows from context, and then she can fill in the missing pieces to make it a story, as a "historian," to present a picture that is not sufficient if she only has a few pieces of the puzzle. But if, in the future, AI produces context that we cannot distinguish from the context that used to be manmade or whatever source historians consult, then it will be extremely difficult for this history that we write about our time or the next decade to find out which of this was actually manmade and which is a product of the machines that form an opinion of future generations, and then as much as you educate the next generation, they get lost in translation, and the translation is a translation between machines and human beings. So, this is something that puzzles me, which brings me to the other question about: How does technology play in when we look into? What are the challenges ahead? And there are a number of things where I do not have an answer because, as I introduced myself in the beginning, I am surrounded by techies, and a lot of these things that we have in our body extensions come from Stanford, but I only learn, but I am not a creator in this system, and I also see how quickly the attitudes of my students change over time. But I am watching, and one of the core principles of how we run a Western-type democracy is that the demos form an opinion about competing programmes and what politicians present, as if we go in this direction, we will be better off compared with something else. And this pluralist competition is key to the assumption that the demos can form an opinion, but what I hear today and what makes perfect sense in terms of we have to get



stronger and we have to arm ourselves, and it is kind of a technological race because these dangerous forces out there are attacking our systems, our ecosystems, and how we interact. The more we digitise, the more we become dependent on this, we have to be better. We have to spend more money. We have to educate our ambassadors to do a better job of communication. So, this race to do more empowers governments to do things that go way beyond what governments could ever do in the past. And then the question comes up: What is the future use of AI? Is AI what I hear the most at Stanford, first and foremost in business, just a new tech innovation that can make people rich? And not referring to how many people or who, but first of all, it is a wealth generator because it is the next big thing. Or If I talk to people who look at China or my Chinese students, they will tell me what normal back home is, like paying with your face, which is even what grandmas do these days. You do not need a card or cash. You just enter a shop and grab your things. And then you are scanned, and people know that it was you who got this yoghurt or this piece of bread. In this situation, where a lot of things transform and everything that is technologically possible is used for someone who believes has the truth, it is a totalitarian dream come true that by using everything that AI provides and will provide in the future, it will be a very different result about how we fight in whose narrative is better than somebody else's narrative, and it is something that we can already watch in totalitarian systems and their approach to using technology. And then there is the European Union, which says we are neither just a business generator nor a money generator, nor are we a totalitarian regime. We serve the people, and

that is why we regulate a bit. And they come out with an AI regulation and hope that they make different categories of risks, things that we should just let go of in order to make use of these new innovations, and other things that we rather do not want to touch because it is dangerous, as if once the devil is out of the bottle, you can ever get it back. It was invented, and we probably have to live with it. But this would mean that if we allow governments to control in order to find out who is within what we define as the truth or what is a deviation from the norm that a certain system represents, the government will have the technological means to filter. And that is very much the opposite of pluralism. And this is very much the end of us forming the demos that have the freedom to choose who is in the driver seat and who defines what counts as the truth. And so, the core idea of a Western-type democracy that we form an opinion based on education, our digital literacy, to distinguish which facts matter and which facts are fake news or lies, or call it what you want, is so ambitious for a normal human being to be able to distinguish this that the risk with a very much empowered governmental system of whatever level, that it will use it, to turn the whole core principle of the Western-type democracy upside down. Because then it is not us who form an opinion, but the opinion forms us. And this is something that I miss on the wall, which talks about security and civility, and as important as it is, the empty part of the wall could be filled with freedom. And then thinking about how we make sure that we as individuals are not objects of what well-intentioned governments are doing with the new technological tools? This is something that, in my humble understanding, is urgently needed. Otherwise, we become slaves to all the technological inventions, and this turns into a different form of humanity, as Henry Kissinger put it, who sees AI as the end of enlightenment, on this not-so-happy note. Thank you very much for your attention.

### **Moderator Murat Lütem**

Thank you, Professor, for your most valuable insights. Again, I was taking down a few notes, and it is interesting that you should say that communication strategy does not necessarily make us more resilient. That is a strong point to make. And as you also mentioned, I think it is most interesting that things could move in such a direction with AI where we do not really understand what is real and what is not. And I think that is a major, major challenge that we are all going to move towards, and it all comes down to the individual's education and understanding of what reality is. Once that line is blurred and we are moving in that direction, there may be no going back to understanding properly what "real" is, and then more and more problems will emerge. That again, I think, goes back to proper education and the education of our children. I thank you for your input. I will now read out the fourth and the last question, but I do have to state that this fourth question is an idealistic question. I also feel that our panellists have answered this question to a certain degree in their comments. So, in the last seven or eight minutes or so that we have now, if you would like to answer this question or make other closing remarks, you are certainly welcome to do so. Our fourth question is, "Can strategic communication contribute to global peace and stability?" Please.



### **Aleksandra Saša Gorišek**

Okay, I do not have to read anything, right? So, yes. I think the answer is “yes.” If we look at strategic communications from an organisational point of view, communication is seen as a purposeful communication for this organisation to achieve its mandate. I think it can help working towards it. But it is not the only tool. It is a core tool to support the rest of the organisational strategic plan, the operational plan, but it has to be consistent and it has to be resourced and empowered, the communication that is.

### **Moderator Murat Lütem**

Thank you very much.

### **Matthias Lüfkens**

It does not look like communication will resolve the war in Ukraine or the war in Gaza. But there are examples of collaboration, international collaboration, that I find quite interesting, where basically one is that there was a message of peace just ahead of the UN General Assembly in 2019, I guess, where the UN Secretary-General, the UN, at the time, Twitter accounts, the WHO, and the UNHCR kind of got together to create a thread with one simple message about peace. I do not think many people have seen this thread, but this is interesting because normally, yes, these organisations should work together because they are under the umbrella of the UN. But they are kind of collaborating on a simple message like that. The other example was just this year, in August, when basically the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry got together with twelve other foreign ministers to tweet the Ukrainian national anthem in Ukrainian and every line in order. And that was a great example of international collaboration, where you basically get a bunch of foreign ministers together to kind of amplify the same message, in this case, the Ukrainian national anthem, on Ukraine’s Independence Day. So, these are some examples that I think I would want to see more of. And the last example was just after the Abraham Accords. Israel designed a filter to be used on Instagram where you had the flag of Palestine, the flag of the UAE and the flag of Israel, so people could kind of use the filter across their faces. And I think that was one of the really powerful examples where communication and new tools, new digital tools really help bring people together. You know, it did not or has not solved the current crisis, and I do not see anything in the current situation where communication could bring peace but it was a step. One thing I would like to point out for those of you who remember when the United States reestablished diplomatic relations with Cuba. It started on social media. The State Department followed the Cuban Foreign Ministry on Twitter. Three hours later, the Cubans reciprocated, and that was the first step. A couple of weeks later, the reestablishment of diplomatic relations took place. And those are examples where I think yes, communications, digital communications can help bring people and countries together.

**Moderator Murat Lütem**

Thank you very much. Now, Professor.

**Prof. Ulrich Brückner**

My take is that without communication, there cannot be peace. But communication is a tool, and you do not ask a hammer: Is a hammer a good tool or a bad tool? It all depends on what you do with a hammer, and the same applies to communication. I used to think that there were wars and there were informational wars on top of the wars. Now I think that wars are fought in order to win with a certain narrative. Because of what we currently discuss as some sort of the geopolitical time we live in, there was a Pax Americana that does not represent the current balance of power anymore. What challenges the United States hegemony? The thing is not that we want anarchy, but they want a different order. And this order urgently needs a convincing line of argumentation, a narrative, a story that people could rally around and accept as the new order. And in order to make this new order work and get accepted, it needs communication. And when I look at what is happening in Ukraine, it is not about winning territory, especially not for the largest country in the world. It is about having the defining power of what Ukraine is. Do we allow it to become Western or do we decide that it does not have the sovereignty to be a sovereign state? And is it an attempt to restore the dignity and pride of the Soviet Union, which some people consider to be the biggest catastrophe of the 20th century, which is very rich in catastrophes? So that brings me to the conclusion. In the end, information wars or communication strategies as part of it are not only a means but also an aim in itself. That is not very promising when we look at what is ahead of us.

**Moderator Murat Lütem**

Thank you very much, Professor, for your input. I think we have come to the end of our time and for my closing remarks, I would just like to say that I think we have to accept that we are in challenging times and information is being weaponized. The unspeakable violence that is being perpetrated in Gaza is one aspect of it, but on the other side, there is a weaponization of information that may be on the commercial side too, where we are being fed nonstop information to consume beyond any logic and understanding of what is reasonable, and other forms of weaponization are being witnessed daily when it comes to information. Maybe one way forward is for everyone to band together and fight against this trend. Governments, international organisations, highly specialised experts, academia and others, if we come together and foster the understanding that there is reality and then there is the abuse and weaponization of reality, it is a simple split at the end of the day, and if we can teach our children what is true and what is not, then the few ill-intentioned ones can be singled out and their actions can actually be stricken down. We have to act together for a better future. Thank you again to all our panellists. We have come to the end of our time, and I thank our audience for their attention. Thank you very much.

STRATCOM PANEL - 3

# Public Communication in the Digital Age

**Moderator: Karine BADR**

Public Policy Analyst, OECD

**Tom MOYLAN**

Lecturer, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

**Anamaria DUTCEAC SEGESTEN**

Vice Dean, Lund University

**Prof. Kristina Plavsak KRAJNC.**

Founder of Media Forum,  
Center for Public Communication (Slovenia)



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Stratcom Panel-3

*Public Communication in  
the Digital Age*

24 November 2023

# Public Communication in the Digital Age



  
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## PANELISTS



Moderator  
**Karine Badr**  
OECD Public Policy Analyst



**Tom Moylan**  
Lecturer at the Vrije  
Universiteit Brussel



**Anamaria Dutceac  
Segesten**  
Vice Dean at Lund University



**Kristina Plavsak Krajnc**  
Founder of the Media Forum of the  
Centre for Public Communication  
(Slovenia)



### Moderator Karine Badr

Hello. Testing for the sound. Does... everyone hear me? All right! Thank you very much to the organizers. Thank you to my esteemed panellists. Hello everyone. My name is Karine Badr. I work as a policy analyst at the OECD. Our panel, as you can see, is called Communicating in the Digital Age, and we hope to give you just a few of the latest thoughts on challenges and opportunities in this field. Starting out with the basics, if we can move to the first slide, please. I do have my clicker, indeed. Here we go. So, basically, at the OECD, you can see the definition at the bottom left, we have identified 3 roles for public communication. As separate, to the extent possible, from a political communication. So, the first one is a means to foster an informed public, the second being an instrument to support the development of policies and services. And then the third key role for public communication that we've identified at the OECD is a vehicle to rebuild trust through dialogue and working on misinformation and disinformation. So, over the past five years, we've been gathering evidence on specifically this. We've been trying to understand how OECD countries are working to

achieve these three roles through their public communication. You can see on the screen, a few of the publications that we worked on; there's an international report, and there's a focus on good practice principles on misinformation and disinformation. There are country studies, etc. And all of this is based on the OECD Public Communication Network, which is a growing international community of public sector communication practitioners and experts. Two last slides, and then I give the floor to my panellists with the first questions. I just wanted to, as an introduction to this panel, point out these two elements that we are hoping to see digital communication improve in a way. So, this is the first one, which is basically about what we've identified as key attributes for the public communication function. So, what makes public communication effective? Effective communication, so far from what we've seen from OECD practice, is communication that is inclusive, so that it reaches diverse groups and is tailored to their needs. It's communication that is responsive, so that reflects listening, allows interaction, and causes the feedback loop, but also that is compelling, that stands out in the crowded information space, and that basically pushes people to act and change their perceptions for the common good and for the benefit of the citizen. So, I'm looking forward to your ideas on whether you think digital communication is actually helping with these attributes. And then a final slide for me. Our research is increasingly showing how communication adds value throughout the policy cycle. And we know that, basically, this role deserves greater recognition and investment. So I'm also hoping to see if you think some of the digital tools will actually help with that. I'll start off with the first question, which is quite general for all three panellists. Just to get a sense of how it helps us frame the issue, the first one is, what do you see coming up as the major opportunities and threats for digital communication in the public sector? And Tom, you're first on my left. So, go ahead.

**Tom Moylan**

Sure. Thanks, Karine, and thanks to our esteemed hosts. So, I'm a communications consultant. And as a part of my work, I have been working on the OECD's Public Communication team on a working paper, talking about exactly this: public communication in the digital age. And it means I've been speaking to a lot of public communicators, listening to their hopes, their dreams, their anxieties, what keeps them up at night. And it's obviously been a very diverse kind of feedback that I've gotten. You hear all sorts of different things. From a fragmented digital information environment with platforms transforming and changing, changing hands, being bought by people, and being slightly less fun as a result, to new tools like AI and trying to figure out the applications of data and their work, it varies quite a lot by geography. For example, in the Baltics, they think an awful lot about misinformation and disinformation, whereas in the UK, they think a lot more about AI. So that's one element of it, but there's also quite a strong individual element. You see a lot of people who kind of have the skills and know how to take the lead to inform their organizations and build capacities. So, it's quite varied. But some things are common. And you will often see that a lot of the



challenges that come with being a public sector communicator are common among them. Among the interviewees, things like the limitation of risk being a major focus of public sector communicators. This is really clear in the realm of AI, where you see a much more incremental, gradual approach, even in places where people want to take steps forward. So, in other areas too, like the application of data and targeting and profiling, there are some super interesting patterns emerging, I think. And some new views I look forward to... I'll stop meandering now and pass the floor over to my colleague.

### **Anamaria Dutceac Segesten**

Thank you very much for the question and, of course, for the invitation to take part in this very exciting summit. My interest in recent years has been a move from the world of social media to the world of artificial intelligence, which is a domain that several of my previous speakers have also mentioned, signalling its importance for the majority of communicators as well as decision-makers present at this summit and not only. So, I wanted to take a little bit of a moment to identify what do we talk about when we talk about artificial intelligence. And I'm obviously using the OECD definition. But anyway, so back to what we mean by AI, because many times I've noticed people using AI as a sort of buzzword, as a sort of marketing trick, saying, "This communication is powered by AI." But what do we mean by AI? And I'm using, as I said... You can read behind me the OECD definition of what AI means, which means that there is some form of technology, some form of computer software, that has some degree of autonomy while being closely connected to human control and supervision and while being bound by a specific domain. And some examples of what AI can do for communicators fall into these three general buckets. Computer vision, natural language processing, and speech recognition. Computer vision is basically teaching computers to see and identify what they see. Natural language processing is teaching computers to understand language and generate language. And speech recognition is more or less what it says. Teaching computers to recognise what is being said. This technology specifically poses, in my view, three opportunities for AI using public communication. And I wanted to also, before going any further, reiterate a little what my colleague Tom was saying before, namely that public communication is different from regular communication from companies or from individual social media influencers and the like. The public sector communication comes with the weight of responsibility and accountability, so it's a different kind of communication with an emphasis on the public and the public sectors. So keep that in mind when I refer to these particular three domains in which I see AI being particularly useful. One is about improving the accessibility of information. There are many ways in which this can happen. Probably what I enumerate here are the most obvious and immediate time-wise modes. The first one is the obvious facilitation of translation. Basically, enabling government communication and institutional communication to be accessible to a wide range of languages present in the community. For example, in minority languages that normally would never get acknowledged, now they

can be visible online and basically be given equal representation together with the majority language. Some people before me also mentioned the idea of chat bots. AI chat bots are not just something for customer service; they are also for airline services. This can definitely be adapted for governmental purposes. Those chat bots can be trained to respond to most common citizen concerns and most common citizen questions, as well as help citizens navigate a rather complex and bureaucratic heavy system of forms of requests for information coming from the government. So, it's a form of optimising the interface between the government and the citizens, which obviously leads to more inclusive communication and reduces the digital divide between those citizens who have access to education and infrastructure and those who don't. Also, there is a digital divide across ages, with older generations being less likely to use computers compared to the younger ones. So that's one inclusivity, but also an inclusivity for those with functional variation. For example, using computers to translate spoken language into sign language or converting written text to spoken language for those who have visual impairments. There can even be entire chat bots that are Voice Assistant in the in the same spirit as Siri or Alexa to relate to something that we use maybe every day. The second point is that where AI can use public sector communication is in the improved quality of information. So not only accessibility but also the content of that information. And this subject has already been a little bit touched upon by earlier speakers, but I will reiterate here some of the interesting capabilities that are now available with the help of AI technology, such as the detection of problematic content. Here, I think about both deep fakes and any other manipulated media which can be identified with the help of AI. So, in a sense, AI produces the misinformation or manipulation, but AI can also help us detect it. So, AI in the service of truth, if you wish. Also, AI can help with content moderation. And this is something that social media platforms themselves are currently doing with the help of AI. I think Facebook uses AI to detect up to 99% of the fake accounts and hate speech that happens on their platform. And the third arena where AI can really be a positive force, I think, is improved public deliberation, which is another point of democratic citizenship. And that can happen by allowing citizens to get relevant and up-to-date information about those issues that are on the governmental agenda. And this can happen at the national level, but also at sub-national levels like the local or regional government. And also to facilitate communica-

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tion and participation in public deliberation, for example, by using chat bot prompts, which we know have been tested in local settings and have generated much more interesting and vibrant discussions than in their absence. I think I'll stop here with my presentation. I can maybe pick up my slides for the critique part afterwards. Thank you.

### **Kristina Plavsak Krajnc**

Hello, I truly appreciate being here in this very esteemed forum. So far, I met many, many interesting professionals. I am still learning from many of them. So, in this sense, I thank the organizers and also OECD for having me on board. My perspective is the perspective of a public communication professional and practitioner, which often or always has to deliver and provide solutions. So, in this sense to embrace the possible benefits and threats of public communication in contemporary digital environment, I will shortly summarize what's been said many times today. We on the executive side, we should get our act together and our argument in this is three points. First of all, we should go back to the basics and fundamentals of the concept of public communication, which is based on democratic principles and professional standards of providing qualitative government information, providing transparency, accountability, involvement of stakeholders. This is really important to remind of that, of course, public communication is performed by public institution. It has to be done in a responsible way, advocating the public good, the common good, and not to be lured into any kind of marketing or competing strategies as it was already mentioned. So, it's really important to keep in mind the very important division between political communication and political marketing, which is very, very present in our contemporary democracies under a lot of strain. Second of all, I should say that we should do a better work, we should provide better products. In the digital environment the public communication function remains the same, but still, we need to adapt in, in techniques, in channels and in also messaging. And in this sense, the stories and the products provided have to be based on truthful evidence, but still attempt to be more illustrative, creative in involving people; lifetime stories, showing not telling in linear way and trying to use best practices, experience and positive alternatives. Also, as it was mentioned, working with empathy. My last point, our democracies face unprecedented, complex global crisis in many ways. From wars to migration to pandemics. And in this sense, it is obvious that our existing government structures, modes of functioning and living are under enormous strain. Actually, our governments are in continuous crisis management which causes difficult, also conflictual relations with citizens and loss of trust. But, let us remember that the term to communicate originates from Latin word "communicare" which is actually not just communication but it's sharing, participating, building community. So, I would appeal in this sense that we embrace also the digital technologies and its potential to build and strengthen communities not just on national levels, but also transnationally and locally. So, I would stop with these three introductory points and provide concrete examples to support them in our further discussion.

**Moderator Karine Badr**

Thank you very much. Second round of question. Tom, can you... When we first talk about journal communication one of the first things that comes to mind is data. So, what in your views, are the different ways in which the public sector can leverage data?

**Tom Moylan**

So, there are four ways that I can conceive of. I talk about them from the most common to the slightly rarer for public sector communicators. And then everybody can correct me later and tell me that there's many more than four ways. But the first way, which I find incredibly common in conversations with other public communicators, is the use of data as a persuasive tool in itself. So, using data to back up your points—using data visualisation to tell a story, for example—is becoming increasingly popular. So, data can be the subject of communication. But then, we also use it as communicators to reflect internally on our own performance. This reflection can help us decide what platforms we should be on, the ways in which we should message and communicate, and the styles we should adopt. But it can also determine where budgets should be allocated and where we might get more bang for our buck. Then we can also use it to look outwards a little more, to monitor the conversations going on in the world and to determine where our voices are needed and where we should go and speak. Monitoring is only one part. We also need to listen. So, this is kind of stringing together pieces of data to tell ourselves a story that will help us make better strategic decisions. We used to do that. I used to work for the European Commission and one of the ways we would do that was to have a mixture of qualities and quantities of data where we would monitor the use of keywords in COVID. Then, at the same time, we would engage in community conversations to come back to your point on community management, its importance and cultivating a community. On that basis, we would have conversations with our community to try and figure out what we should talk about next and how we could address their needs better, which is exactly where we're supposed to be as public communicators: providing a service. And then finally, the last areas where we tread a little more carefully as public communicators are in profiling and targeting, which can be an incredibly useful tool to connect with some of the harder-to-reach communities. And again, in our research and our interviews, that has been a theme that's come up. But at the same time, as public communicators, we tend to be a bit more risk-averse and careful because if you're communicating, you need to communicate to a broad audience as well. You can't really be seen to deliver messages in a hidden way, in a way that is inaccessible to the broader public. So, this one is the one that I feel like public communicators are still struggling with. And then, I'm sure, there are many more. But I won't sit and list them all.

**Moderator Karine Badr**

That's an excellent transition to Anamaria. Risks and tensions and this being considered as



something risky for communicators to do so... Even more risks with AI?

### **Anamaria Dutceac Segesten**

No, I think the one point that I must explicitly agree with Tom is this idea of being very careful or risk-averse when it comes to public sector communication. Governments tend not to be early adopters of technology, even though it's also themselves who can help implement those technologies elsewhere. But when it comes to their own use of it, I think they apply what we call the precautionary principle in order to make sure that they are truly inclusive and democratic and that they don't risk something unnecessarily. So, I do think that because of this precautionary principle, the incidence of using AI in government or in government communication is very low. Practically, there are very few pilot types of projects. So we don't know yet whether they are really risky or not, but the principle is "Let's wait and see." I think in order for this communication mode to be enhanced by AI, we need to look at certain qualities of this technology that need to be in place. The first one is this kind of trustworthiness that the EU, through the guidelines by the high level for AI ethical guidelines per position by the group of experts, highlights three things. One, it has to be legal; one, it has to be ethical; and it has to be robust. So, these qualities need to be baked into the technology before it can be done.

### **Moderator Karine Badr**

I'll add to that the OECD principles on AI as well, which echo these ones that you've mentioned, yes.

### **Anamaria Dutceac Segesten**

Which means, basically, that the governments feel that the technology doesn't have these attributes yet. Also, another fear that I've noticed in discussions with governmental representatives in the COM sector is the feeling that humans are not necessarily in control. Which may be a misrepresentation, but that leads me to another obstacle in implementing AI, which is namely the knowledge and skills in the communicator core. How to use it? How to have an AI co-pilot? How to have an AI co-worker, how do you work together? Because, let's be honest, no one is going to make good COMs with AI alone. ChatGPT, in all honour, but it's not going to write your COM strategy by itself. However, whenever we have a human working in harmony with an AI co-pilot, the result is likely to be much better than, or at least much faster than, a human alone. So, I think another obstacle is this knowledge and skill training that doesn't seem to exist in the governmental sector as well as in some other sectors. When it comes to AI, so. There's a learning curve that a lot of governmental staff needs to be embarking on as we speak.

**Moderator Karine Badr**

Thanks a lot. I might have a follow-up question later, if we have time. Kristina, when you left your function in the government, social media was on the rise, and countries we're trying to get up to speed on how to use it. It was a no-brainer. Everyone's supposed to be on social media and that's where we were trying to get out. With this kind of hindsight, do you feel like governments have been able to respond to the public expectations of being more and more on these platforms? Has it been used to increase inclusiveness and participation?

**Kristina Plavsak Krajnc**

Exactly. Thank you, Karine, for your introductory question. When I started my mandate as the Director of Government Communication Office on 1st of September in 2015, basically a major migration took place with 2 million people in Slovenia. They were like half a million migrants passing through and when I finished my mandate in March 2020, the biggest global crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, started. So basically, the first social post about COVID disease, which included quite a lot of information about what this disease is and was prepared by the National Institute for Public Health, actually skyrocketed. The reach of government social media was unprecedented. You must bear in mind that Slovenia is a 2 million-person nation, so 250,000-person reach is like skyrocketing. You might know that there is this initial information given by the World Health Organisation that the mortality rate is still lower than the mortality rate with the flu, but you must bear in mind that this is the infographic from the start of March. And it was followed by further action provided by the government, actually the most efficient tool, which was the crisis school centre, where senior students of medicine, under the supervision of specialists in infectious diseases, were responding to questions from citizens. So, the post announcing this call centre was also extra exponential, but even more importantly, this crisis centre proved to be by itself the most efficient tool for providing necessary information and, even more, an open channel for interaction with citizens, for expressing their fears, frustrations, and doubts, and in this sense, also countering misinformation. And of course, maybe the last interesting part about people's nature and how we work was that after the first round of the epidemic in June, all the restrictive measures will be banned. There was a very echoed interview on Euro News and of course people were happy and that's why the reach was so great. So not just to provide you with historical perspective but still looking into today's world, as I told you, we are living in a polycrisis world, apart from all the external factors and crisis situations in our countries. Obviously, we all have enormous natural disasters. Also, Slovenia was flooded this summer in catastrophic floods; many people lost their homes and this is a post that reached the highest reach, which makes my point. Basically, people were caught in the floods, in their homes, on the roofs or wherever, so there was a police helicopter saving them. This is a very simple post telling people what kind of pose they should present themselves with if they want help.

So, in this sense, my argument goes that the social media posts in particular should serve life-threatening or lifesaving functions and in this sense, they're highly followed. Of course, police have special reach in each of our countries. Then the second is not just a post but also a platform in the sense of building a community. It was like a special web page provided by the civil protection force, and on this web page, any individual, company or organisation could apply for help or provide help. So, in this sense, this platform was a unique humanitarian or solidarity tool, but in another sense, the authorities, the official institutions, provided a structural, organised, systemic humanitarian action. Also looking into other posts, surprisingly or maybe not... Still, people don't mind if the government posts and congratulates successful sportsmen. Probably you know today Pogačar, the famous cyclists and also the Slovene handball players. And in this sense, I was nicely surprised that people still feel that this kind of community can also be greeted by the government, because otherwise people don't like government or official institutions intruding in their communities and lifestyle circles. And maybe the last one, which I was also surprised by. Other governments were trying hard to market themselves and among the many postings about the Prime Minister being here and there. There were also infographics and it's interesting that this infographic talks about employment rates, showing that the employment rate in Slovenia is among the lowest in the EU, also reaching high levels in comparison to others. So, I would argue that the use of applications on an online platform can be fully functional, of course. And this would be my last point. If this is supported by action, and in particular in a specific crisis situation, by immediate presence and deliverance, on-the-spot solutions for people in need... Social media, of course, is not almighty. They have a specific potential, but they come together in a specific mix in a synergetic effect with other tools, techniques and approaches. In particular, we should not forget live communication and the on-the-spot engagement of people. And of course, most of all, as all executives, we have to deliver. Thank you.

### **Moderator Kristina Badr**

Thank you very much, Kristina. And since we're just a little bit of a small group, I will invite

“*Actually the most efficient tool, which was the crisis school centre, where senior students of medicine, under the supervision of specialists in infectious diseases, were responding to questions from citizens. So, the post announcing this call centre was also extra exponential, but even more importantly, this crisis centre proved to be by itself the most efficient tool for providing necessary information and, even more, an open channel for interaction with citizens, for expressing their fears, frustrations, and doubts, and in this sense, also countering misinformation.*

any questions. I think all of us would be happy to take any of your questions outside or tomorrow morning. So, thank you very much to the panellists. Thank you to the organizers. Thank you to the participants who have stayed so long to watch us.

STRATCOM PANEL - 4

# Building Resilient Brands Countering Global Threats

**Moderator: Nur ÖZKAN ERBAY**

Head of Nation Branding Office, The Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications

**Pieter IDENBURG**

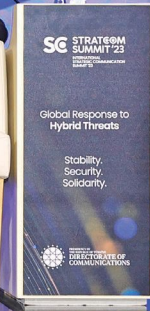
Senior Advisor, Issuemakers

**Aslı ÜNLÜ**

Corporate Communications Director,  
IC Holding

**Çağ GÜNAÇAR**

Brand Management &  
Corporate Communications, Togg



# SC

## Stratcom Panel-4

**Building Resilient Brands  
Countering Global Threats**

24 November 2023

# Building Resilient Brands Countering Global Threats



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## PANELISTS



**Moderator**  
**Nur Özkan Erbay**  
Head of Nation Branding Office,  
The Republic of Türkiye Directorate  
of Communications



**Aslı Ünlü**  
Corporate  
Communications Director,  
IC Holding



**Pieter Idenburg**  
Senior Advisor, Issuemakers



**Çağ Günacar**  
Brand Management and  
Corporate Communications  
Director, Togg



## Moderator Nur Özkan Erbay

Dear audiences, I am so sorry. There were timing conflicts because we expected a one-hour delay. So that's why. Please accept my apologies. So, distinguished guests and panellists, welcome to our panel. This is the last panel for today. It is always hard to be on the last panel. That's why I thank my panellists here and the audience here for their resilience. So it is important and it is also our title. So, my name is Nur Özkan Erbay. I'm the coordinator of the Türkiye Nation Brand Office, a branch of the Directorate of Communication. Basically, I would like to just introduce my office. Our office functions as a coordination and strategy-making unit aimed at strengthening the national brand of Türkiye, which is an integral part of our vision and the centre of Türkiye Vision. So, in this goal, we aim to work together to elevate the Türkiye brand with the understanding that every citizen at home and abroad is a stakeholder, with the help of our public and private sectors, including our institutions, cities, exports, tourism, art, academia, science and sports. So, as you know, the power of countries is measured not only by their position in the international arena anymore but also by

the power of the brands they produce and the policies they adopt for collective well-being, cultural gains, health, and the security of the world. So, on the other hand, with these nice words, there's also a strong competitive environment—a really harsh competitive environment of globalisation and digitalization—and strategic branding and positioning efforts have become a must. Not only for the companies or organizations, but also for the countries. So, competitive products, competitive cities and competitive countries became essential in this context. So, sustainable reputation, reputational security, brand value, and threats against brand value come to the fore in this competition. In this term, in this context, fake news, disinformation with misinformation, malinformation, cyber-attacks and perception wars are the concepts we got familiar with, in this climate. In fact, although we can create strong brands and identities, perceptions towards those brands can change much faster as a result of the digitalization and they can face many manipulations and threats. In light of these points that I try to make, we aim to conduct effective brainstorming with my panelists. Our session was titled Building Resilient Brains Against Global Threats. Our panellists will share their experiences building resilient brands despite global threats in our world today. So, we will also elaborate on the uncertainty created by hybrid threats, the measures that companies take to protect their success and corporate communication strategies in this age of uncertainty. For our first panellist, I would like to introduce Mr. Pieter Idenburg from the Netherlands, senior adviser to Issuemakers, focusing on social issues in politics, society and the media. Their expertise is in crisis management. I think your experience will be helpful for us and shed light on our discussion on building resilient brands against global threats. So, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Idenburg and he will give us a presentation titled Towards a Resilient Society in glocal times. As a very interesting part of your presentation, glocal is a mix of global and local, I guess? The floor is yours.

### **Pieter Idenburg**

Yeah. Thank you very much, and thank you all for having me here. It's very inspiring. When we talk about communication, we can communicate whatever we want. But in the end, it's all about people. And if we don't understand people, we can never be effective in our communication. We talk about "glocal times." What I mean is that our local instincts are tested by our global challenges. Well, talking about hybrid threats, this affects public opinion, and to safeguard our society, we need to be resilient, which is the main theme of this conference. Is that how we get a resilient society? That's an interesting but also difficult question, and when you go back to the people, which's what I started with, it's the people who need to comprehend, need to understand in what world they live in. That's difficult now. They have to make sense of the world they live in and the place that they live in. And that's tested at the moment. These were local times. 500 years or a thousand years ago, life was hard. But at the same time, it was simple. Everyone lived in the same village for hundreds of years. Same family, same place. Nothing changed. No Internet. No information, nothing. No travelling. So,



in these times, life was simple. And at the same time, this local DNA is still in us. We still find our neighbourhoods, our families, and our streets most important. That part hasn't changed. This is a picture of the lampposts in front of my own house. And our local government had to change the lampposts. And what did they do? They had chosen five different types. And they asked the people in the neighbourhood. What type would you like to choose? They did a sort of election on lampposts, and in the end, we all chose this one. The important thing is that 95% of our community voted. So, there's the highest part in any election. And why did 95% vote? Because it's close by, it's on your street. So, this local DNA is still in ourselves, but at the same time, our lives are also tested by events that take place far away. This is Karim Angar. He is a teacher in Rotterdam. And he was very emotionalized by the things that happened in Gaza. But he's a teacher, and what he saw was that not only was he emotionalized, but also the children in his classroom, because these discussions about Gaza also happened in the classroom. So, what did he do? He made a lesson package for teachers because other teachers didn't know how to deal with it. So, that's one example of how these global events come close to us. Another one: we also all know this gentleman. He's a disruptor. You know not only about X or Twitter but also about Tesla and other things. He's not the only disruptor. Our total economy around the world is changing very, very fast. If you're a taxi driver, now you have to deal with Uber. If you have a shop, you're a shopkeeper, you have to deal with Amazon. And this is just the beginning. And this is not for one country or one place. This is for everyone's life around the globe. If you're a family, you want to bring good food to the table for your children—healthy food. 1000 years ago, you got it from your neighbour or from your own lands. Now you go to the supermarket, and suddenly prices rise. How does that come? Climate change, wars, and inflation. Another example of how our local lives are influenced by global events. If you bring us all together, for many people, life gets very complex. So, we live in a very complex world, and sometimes our brains can't connect to that anymore. And what is the psychological effect of complexity? Sometimes it gets too much. So, people get disconnected and alienated. They feel a sense of loss. And this can happen in society as well. And what is the psychological effect of that? It's that people go for simple solutions even if they know they're not true. They still go for the simple solution, and then you get fake news, you get all the fairy tales, etc. And I would say, How do we cover this? You would say it with simplicity. I don't think so. To get towards a resilient society, you have to find other solutions. You have to give good-quality information to people, but also education, and not only children, but we as adults have to educate ourselves through long life learning. But information shouldn't come from the top down. It should be a dialogue; it should be a connection. And if that works out, you can create understanding. And again, people understand their lives; they understand the world. And the beauty of the word "understanding" in English is that it's not only about the mind but also understanding among people. And then you create citizenship. And citizenship is the real foundation of a resilient society. But it shouldn't be only on the individual level. It only works with a whole community approach, and there are some



speakers this day who also mentioned this. And I've worked for the government, and there are a lot of great tasks for the government to work on, but national governments can't do this alone. It also has to be with local governments, schools, family, and peers. Most people are mostly influenced by their family and peers. Science, business community—we can hear from them—media, civil society, NGO's. Just to finish, this is an example in my country. In the Netherlands, it's called Network Media Vice Site. It's a network of media literacy. There are 1000 organisations that come together—schools, libraries, etc.—and they do all kinds of projects and campaigns to create media literacy from the bottom up. So...



### Moderator Nur Özkan Erbay

Thank you, Mr. Idenburg for your introduction and presentation. We had a sense of how the society can be resilient in this century. It reminds me Ibn Haldun's concept of asabiyya. He tried to draw the same thing basically in many centuries ago. Maybe we can just look again. We need to look again to remember and collaborate and combine with your theory. Thank you so much. You had actually a couple more minutes, but probably I'll leave it as extra for you in the second round. So, my second panellist: Miss Aslı Ünlü, the corporate Communication director of IC Holding. IC Holding mainly carries out its business activities in industries of construction, energy generation, distribution, tourism, industry and infrastructure operating in many fields and their insights regarding brand reputation will be beneficial for our brainstorming. Ms. Aslı, you've been working – I will continue in English and Turkish. You work in the sector in many fields. In this regard, you received 3 awards in the Sustainable Report by the American Association of Communication Professionals in the 2021-2022 vision awards. You have 3 awards in this category. So, considering the importance of intersubjective interpersonal relationship and nature of branding process, what strategies do you follow in the areas of strategic corporate communication Based on your experience? Can you tell us about your experiences at IC Holding? Please...

### Aslı Ünlü

Welcome, and a heartfelt thank you for joining us at this hour. Today, we're delving into a topic of significant importance. You might wonder why this discussion matters to me. It's crucial because, considering the Century of Türkiye, creating robust brands that can withstand global challenges is more vital than ever. Istanbul has been a melting pot of diverse cultures for centuries, seamlessly integrating technological and socio-economic advancements, much like its historical adaptability. The city's approach exemplifies the attributes we need to navigate global and complex threats. It embodies resilience, the ability to swiftly adapt to change, and the determination to progress, irrespective of circumstances. Hence, in the current worldwide competitive landscape, our brands must maintain and enhance their presence through agile and creative strategies. And the reason? It's because brands have developed their own personas. They are more than just a logo, a product, or a suite of services. They have evolved to have distinct personalities. This personality mirrors the brand's principles, moral position, and its connection with consumers and the broader community. Brands are increasingly being perceived as entities with human-like qualities. As a result, they are expected to respond to societal events with empathy and responsibility. Based on these expectations, consumers either forge strong relationships with brands or completely dissociate from them. A prime example was the response to the earthquake on February 6th. Especially the younger generation, who invest significant meaning in brands, felt let down by their actions or inactions. The Edelman 2023 trust barometer suggests that

consumers see collaboration between politicians and corporations as a solution to societal issues. The report also indicates that consumers view companies as more capable of solving problems than leaders, media, or non-governmental organizations, and are more inclined to place their trust in them. Notably, two-thirds of consumers gravitate towards brands that align with their personal values. Simply put, they favor brands that actively address the social challenges they perceive. Thus, to regain public confidence, brands that honor both human and animal communities, uphold ethical standards, and deliver tangible solutions will increasingly become the subject of discussion. Esteemed guests, global threats have escalated to such an extent and have become so intertwined with our daily lives that they now surpass local concerns. The Russia-Ukraine war, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the global migration dilemma, cyber threats, and the climate emergency. Global events now significantly shape consumer perceptions of brands. This necessitates a more earnest commitment from brands to address worldwide challenges and local occurrences. Consequently, it's imperative for brands to understand and embrace their pivotal role in consumers' lives and their responsibilities therein. It's essential to grasp the emotional needs of your target demographics and forge genuine connections across borders. This is a prerequisite for being a global brand. At this juncture, I'm reminded of an insightful saying by Mevlana. It's not the common language, but shared emotions that foster understanding. Brands' socio-political positions are scrutinized by local and international competitors alike. These stances significantly influence a brand's market reputation and standing. Thus, a brand's stance on global issues is not just a moral obligation but also a strategic asset. In the next segment, I'll delve deeper into examples pertinent to our organization.

### **Moderator Nur Özkan Erbay**

Of course, thank you very much, Ms. Aslı. Thanks for your very valuable insights on current trends and branding based on the very sophisticated approach of IC Holding. Thank you so much. And now I want to give the floor to Çağ Günacar, brand management and corporate communication officer of TOGG, which is our first domestically manufactured smart device. We call it a smart device, not a car, and TOGG has become the leading brand and model in the Turkish electric vehicle market as well as in the international arena. It's already famous and environmentally friendly; TOGG reflects Türkiye's vision of sustainable features. So, Mr. Günacar, I would like to ask you that, as TOGG, you created a smart device, not a car. It's a vision of sustainable features. TOGG, as a global innovation brand, has been declared the fourth-best brand out of over 3000 brands in 2023, says the Consumer Electronics Show. I assume it was in Las Vegas, in the United States. So, as one of the top technology events in the world, Türkiye's first domestically produced car, TOGG's reputation is strongly associated with the image of our country, we believe. So, could you please elaborate on your experience with how TOGG contributes to the Türkiye's brand and how the story has evolved over the years?



## Çağ Günacar

Yeah, sure. Thank you very much for the question. Maybe a couple of words about TOGG. Because, I mean, what we are doing at TOGG is not limited, let's say, to domestically manufactured smart devices or electrical vehicles. There is a lot more than this at TOGG. We basically operate in three business verticals. The very first one, and maybe the most known one, is smart mobility devices, as you said, from design to manufacture. And within this vertical, we have already launched our first product, T10x. It's on the roads, and we've already delivered more than 12,000 units to date, of which there is a manufacturing plant, which we call the TOGG Technology Campus in Gemlik. The total capacity of this campus and this production facility is 175,000 units a year. So, things are going well in this vertical, and of course, we have some upcoming plans. We will have some upcoming body types and models, and of course we will be in the expansion markets in foreign markets in close future. And things, as I said, are going quite well within this vertical. So, the second one is, is the one we care a lot. This is the digital experience platform, which we call Trumore. This is what we believe will be the main differentiator for the brand, TOGG. And now, within this field, we are focusing more on the experience that our users go through from A to B, let's say. So, within this pillar we are concentrated on the experience, and we are trying to enrich their experience with the digital experience platform. We already have some products and services within this vertical. Things are also going quite well with that. So, last but not least, the third vertical. The business vertical is clean energy solutions. Within this vertical, we are operating with two separate entities. The very first one is Trugo. It's a charging network all over Türkiye in all 81 cities, with more than 400 ultra-fast charging stations. And on the other side, for clean energy solutions, we have SIRO. The name comes from Silk Road. So, it's a 50% joint venture with Farasis. Farasis is one of the most important battery manufacturers in the world. Here in Türkiye, near our campus in Gemlik, we are partnering with Farasis and the entities already there, and they're already providing batteries to our T10 access from the very beginning. The third one, together with TOGG, is the clean energy solution. So, coming to your question: Miss Nur's TOGG, being a global and sustainable brand, will have the biggest impact on the contribution to Türkiye's brand, in our opinion and understanding. And let me talk about what we have done so far

“It's on the roads, and we've already delivered more than 12,000 units to date, of which there is a manufacturing plant, which we call the TOGG Technology Campus in Gemlik. The total capacity of this campus and this production facility is 175,000 units a year. So, things are going well in this vertical, and of course, we have some upcoming plans. We will have some upcoming body types and models, and of course we will be in the expansion markets in foreign markets in close future.”

about brand-building activities to be a resilient and sustainable brand. So, when we go back to the year 2018, I can say that we somehow dedicated a significant part of our time to brand-building activities. So, at that time, our business partners—the external companies we work with—including research companies, strategy agencies, and brand agencies—were even surprised at how much we concentrated on the brand-building activities. So, imagine a newly established entity having numerous tasks ahead with quite challenging deadlines. Yet, it devoted all attention, focus, and time to a subject that many others—I mean, the outsiders—find, on one side abstract and on the other side lightweight. The brand. So, everyone in this conference room knows that it's quite often that the brand works and the brand studies come after the financial success. So, once you have financial success and are good at your financial statements, you start thinking about brand building. So, the first thing you do is write a vision and mission. Then you hire an agency and try to create a brand out of the already existing one, with already existing customers all over the world and hundreds of millions of revenues, and then you start. But this was totally not the case for TOGG. So, from the very beginning, from the first day, I can say that these initial brand studies, with the active involvement and leadership of our CEO, Mr. Gürcan Karakaş, continued for more than six months. I have witnesses in this conference room. So we were so determined on the following: it always starts with the user and ends with the user. So, to understand the user characteristics, we conducted interviews with a couple of Turkiye representatives, both quantitative and qualitative researchers, always analysing the already existing ones, of course. Once we had the target segmentation and the user definition, we went deeper into their expectations about the product and the brand. So, during the qualitative surveys and research, which we didn't care a lot about, we focused more on the answers of 'whys' instead of 'what'. It was all. We found it and started to build it up. Insight finding to build the whole brand on it. We found it and started to build it up. We once again spend significant part of our time to make the whole brand house, including from reasons to believe to differentiators from the archetype setting to the rational and emotional side of the brand, the golden circle of the brand, the what, who, and how analyses, and of course, the principles of the brand. So, if you basically have the principles with a strong backbone, the things that I previously mentioned, and if you are good at executing them, then you become a long-lasting, sustainable brand. It makes you predictable, and being predictable is important because it means that the brand has character. Then you become consistent both in your behaviours and in your communication. And if you support this consistency with creativity, clarity, and continuity, This is, we believe, what makes a brand resilient, and this is exactly how we do it at TOGG. Thank you.

**Moderator Nur Özkan Erbay**

Thank you, Mr. Günacar. It was very interesting. It's not just about telling the story or being a storyteller about one brand, you just gave us a sense that this requires very serious foot-



steps and it is interpersonal. It requires interpersonal communication and also emotions. You are all talking about the emotions, dialogue and connection between the people to people, people to brand. So, it is very important in terms of creating a resilient brand in our century. So, this is the second round and you have five to seven minutes Mr. Idenburg. We have been talking about the age of uncertainty. This is very popular term and hybrid threats, information wars and you made an excellent presentation about resilient societies, creating a resilient society. So, in terms of creating a resilient society, what we are about to face in our future. So, what should be done? I think it's a hard and tough question but can you just give us some clue about what we should be expect from the future?

### **Pieter Idenburg**

Well, I want to pick out one thing at the same time and react to both of the presentations because, in the earlier presentation, we saw Edelman who people and business brands trust. We're at the highest. And the stories that we've heard are both from businesses that want to connect with people who want to invest in the future and sustainability, but also from those who have taken on social responsibility. And I think we all have our jobs to do, but I'm very hopeful if brands like these and also other brands, who can also be of course disruptors, have this vision and this attitude; I think this can really help build a resilient society. This is the business part; of course, there's also other parties to consider, but I'm really glad to hear both of these contributions.

### **Moderator Nur Özkan Erbay**

Thank you. And, Ms. Aslı, I will direct you to a similar question. We heard about IC Holding's experiences as a strategic communication expert in this field for many years. What do you assess about our future in terms of threats against our national brands—not just commercial brands, but also the brand identities of the whole nation and also humanity? Morality is important; as you mentioned, dialogue and emotions are equally important. Ethics is at the top. It is very important to connect people with brands. So how do you assess and evaluate the future in terms of the threats against brands?

### **Aslı Ünlü**

As the reputation manager of a 55-year-old brand, it's crucial for me to consider not just contemporary values but also future judgments and values. What truly counts is the legacy we leave for the generations to come. IC Holding is embarking on substantial projects not just within Türkiye but internationally. These endeavors are guided by two ideas. We represent not only our company, but also Türkiye through these achievements. The best example of this is the King Khaled International Airport, which our construction group is building in Saudi Arabia and is poised to be among the world's largest. Our team is undertaking a

comprehensive overhaul of the airport, marking a significant milestone. This embodies the spirit of collaboration with other nations on foreign soil. Another notable project is the Long Thanh airport in Vietnam, where we've recently initiated construction. There, we're contributing to a major venture; Long Thanh Airport is set to become Asia's largest upon completion. From our perspective, it's essential to document key actions to forge a resilient brand. Yet, as emphasized previously, tuning into consumer feedback surpasses all else in importance. The most significant example I can cite is the earthquake tragedy that struck on February 6. In response to the disaster, our company, in concert with our Holding, affiliates, foundation, and group entities, swiftly devised a strategy and mobilized to the affected area fully prepared. Our construction division engaged in the search and rescue efforts with 6,500 personnel, successfully rescuing approximately 1,200 citizens from the rubble. Concurrently, our tourism sector sprang into action, providing warm meals and opening hotels in Antalya to shelter those displaced by the earthquake. Meanwhile, our energy division labored tirelessly to guarantee uninterrupted power supply. Additionally, our industrial arm, Treysan, known for its container production, became crucial as containers were in dire demand post-earthquake. They operated around the clock to meet the urgent need for containers. This earthquake posed a significant challenge for us. It also served as a critical measure of our brand's resilience. I believe that by showcasing their unique skills, each team member contributed to a stronger, more unified brand presence, fostering a culture of collaboration and business acumen. Thank you...

*“ Our construction division engaged in the search and rescue efforts with 6,500 personnel, successfully rescuing approximately 1,200 citizens from the rubble. Concurrently, our tourism sector sprang into action, providing warm meals and opening hotels in Antalya to shelter those displaced by the earthquake. Meanwhile, our energy division labored tirelessly to guarantee uninterrupted power supply.*

**Moderatör Nur Özkan Erbay**

Thank you very much. Mr. Çağ, I want to get back to you. We all talk about cyber-attacks today, which have become major perception wars like data protection. Digital security is the technical part of the threats we are actually facing today. So, TOGG is a very complicated, sophisticated technology. So as a brand and also as a product, how do you eliminate the potential threats, or what are your plans to eliminate these potential threats in a technological way? And also, about the reputation of TOGG and the future?



## Çağ Günacar

Thank you very much for the question. I can say that what we believe at TOGG is the following: Brands can only navigate the challenges of uncertainty, information wars, and hybrid threats by doing a couple of things. Indeed, our strategy side is not limited to the things that I'm going to mention, but let me share the most important ones. The very first thing is that we prioritise transparent communication. So, at TOGG, instead of being reactive in our communication, what we do is proactive, transparent communication, which we believe on one side builds trust and on the other side helps eliminate misinformation. The next thing we do is actively monitor not only social media but all online channels. So, we are on one side using already existing tools, just like other brands. And on the other side, we are developing our own tools. We are a mobility technology company, and we have an omni-channel, user-driven, and online-connected platform. We are developing our own tools for real-time monitoring of what's happening and what's being told on digital channels. So this allows us to detect potential threats early and respond effectively. The next thing is that we, of course, invest in cybersecurity. Because what's most important in our business is the data. So, this is on one side company-owned data, which is subject to intellectual property rights, and on the other side the sensitive data of our users, which we use to create additional value for their good, of course, if they allow us. On one side, we regularly revisit and update our security protocols, and on the other, we educate our team on cyber threats and, in general, cyber security. The next thing is, we build strong relationships with all stakeholders. So, this stakeholder definition depends from company to company, but in our understanding at TOGG, the definition of stakeholder is to an extent from the users to the brand ambassadors, from the governmental authorities where you operate to your business partners and suppliers. So having strong and sustainable relationships with all your stakeholders makes us even stronger against these potential threats. Because it means that this threat of misinformation is somehow limited. And on the other side, once you have a threat or a crisis, it means that you are not alone. You can fight with the entire ecosystem, and you can have your stakeholders with you to eliminate the misinformation. Last but not least, we are developing crisis management plans, and we regularly update, challenge, and question them to ensure their effectiveness and validity. So, in general, in addition to promoting digital literacy and ethical practices, ethical behaviours can also contribute to building a resilient brand image. In literature, you may find some further details or strategies, but honestly and frankly speaking, in this VUCA world, or even the worse situation of today, the Bunny or Age of Chaos, you name it, whatever... Even if the VUCA term is outdated, these threats and crises have become fast-consuming facts. Just like many other things in the digital landscape, So, in this VUCA world, planning something is difficult, but implementing what is planned is even more challenging. Because the dynamics can change so rapidly, by the time you plan and implement something, a significant portion of the assumptions in the plan

have already changed. Last but not least, as I mentioned at the beginning, we need to understand that there is no one and only strategy set that fits the majority. So, every brand and company needs to first analyse its situation, make a definition of its environment, and be prepared for upcoming potential threats and crises. So, the plan-do-check-act mechanism has often worked throughout history. But in today's VUCA world, I mean that planning can lead to a cycle of constant reevaluation and adaptation due to internal and external factors. So therefore, finding the right balance is the most reasonable approach in this complexity. Thank you.

### **Moderator Nur Özkan Erbay**

Thank you, Mr. Günacar, the points you underline give us a reality that there is no style book for perfect, excellent, strategic communication or branding because the conditions change very rapidly in terms of digitalization, globalization, conflict-based environments and ecosystem in our world. So, there is no one certain style book or manual to deal with them. And every citizen as you mentioned and another point is our brand ambassador and glocal-local, Glocal. The term of glocal tells us that every citizen represents their local community also society, nation and brands which we are very keen on this concept and this is our goal to make each citizen to be a brand ambassador of Türkiye domestically and also overseas. So, thank you so much. Are there any last words, Mr. Idenburg from you, in the lights of our discussion?

### **Pieter Idenburg**

Well, I only would say that I'm very grateful for the opportunity to be here and the concept of this gathering by the Republic of Türkiye, to bring people from all over the world, from all aspects of profession together because building resilience is also in the end coming together and that's what you do. So, thank you very much.

### **Moderator Nur Özkan Erbay**

Thank you. Ms. Aslı?

### **Aslı Ünlü**

Thank you very much. Thank you.

### **Moderator Nur Özkan Erbay**

Thank you.

### **Çağ Günacar**

Finally, I can say that we need to keep in mind that considering what our CEO always says

“If we cannot not communicate, then we need to be proactive, vigilant and responsive to the dynamic nature of the trends in this digital landscape.” Thank you.

**Moderator Nur Özkan Erbay**

Thank you, thank you Mr. Günacar.

25 November 2023



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**Volker Türk**  
UN High Commissioner For  
Human Rights



Distinguished delegates, dear colleagues, warm greetings to you all and thank you for the opportunity to address this summit. It is often said that knowledge or information is power. Information drives advances in technology, it shapes minds, it enables us to participate meaningfully in our communities and political processes, and it builds trust in each other, in our institutions and between nations. In short, it is the life blood of social progress. Today's information landscape is unprecedented in its complexity. We have endless channels to seek, find and share information, both online and offline. We can connect instantly with new communities and new ideas, and millions who previously had no way of being heard finally have a voice and then audience. At the same time the distinct lack of safeguards and oversight in the face of breakneck speed and digital advances creates real risks to human rights. Misogynistic attacks against women and girls, notably online, are rampant, including through social media and messaging service, just to give you one example. Right now, in the context of the devastating situation in the Middle East, streams of abuse and dehumanizing speech online are fuelling anti-Semitism and Anti-Muslim hatred both within and outside the region, that is very concerning. Just as we have seen organized this information

campaigns fuel hate and discrimination against other groups in the past. States have an obligation and businesses have a responsibility to address such harmful speech. Yet instead of investing in access to information, we are very concerned to see that some government authorities and businesses exerting their control and influence to limit it or to themselves, spread misinformation or disinformation. We see censorship and mass surveillance of communications widespread Internet and communication shutdowns, cutting people off from vital contact or information, they may need to survive. Repressive legislation, silencing dissent and undermining civic space, with bloggers, social media users, journalists and human rights defenders facing jail time simply for exercising their human right to freedom of expression. Dear participants, I firmly believe that an approach grounded in the unifying language of human rights can help steer us in a better and healthier direction, a direction which upholds our right to information and our right to debate openly and freely, and which uses human rights as a guide to address harmful speech. How do we get there? We get there by rebuilding trust through free and independent media, through education systems which foster critical thinking. By solid commitments from States and companies to respect the human rights to privacy and to freedom of expression by acknowledging that freedom of expression is not limited to favourable information only. Ideas and information can shock. They can offend and challenge. They can disturb. Only in exceptional circumstances can restrictions on freedom of expression be considered. Speech amounting to incitement, to discrimination, to hostility or violence, is prohibited under international human rights law. States and companies must act transparently on their policies and approaches to information and content. And they must ensure all people have a say in the policies that affect them, promoting a safe and vibrant space for debate and discussion. This will also mean closing the digital divide within and between nations. To ensure access to the Internet for everyone, everywhere. We have an obligation to shape our future in the digital sphere and outside of it, in ways that will genuinely benefit humanity, a future that is based on trust, truth, freedom and accountability. I hope we can all commit to work towards this. Thank you.



**STRATCOM**



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Stratcom Talk-3  
*Public Communication in  
Countering Disinformation*

25 November 2023

# Public Communication in Countering Disinformation



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## SPEAKER



**Ziad Makary**  
Minister of Information,  
Lebanon



Thank you and good morning. Yesterday I took the permission to post this video, just to tell you a different good morning; full of hope, of colors, of brightness. And I wish you a bright morning before my speech. Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, it's an honor to stand here today as a Lebanese minister, addressing the prestigious summit hosted in the great city of Istanbul. I extend my sincere gratitude to the Republic of Türkiye for graciously hosting this event, underscoring their unwavering commitment to advancing the frontiers of media excellence. As we gather here, let us recognize Türkiye's enduring legacy in the realm of media. A legacy that has not only shaped the narrative regionally, but also served as an inspiration for innovation and collaboration on the global scale. Dear guests, with immense pleasure, I join you today to address the crucial topic of public communication and disinformation. As you all know, our region is threatened by many challenges such as; violence, wars, influx of refugees, economic instability and health challenges to name a few. In this context, information, but also disinformation and fake news disseminated on both traditional and social media platforms flow rapidly and abundantly. Indeed, our ability to dis-

cern the truth from falsehood, to distinguish between reliable information and the rising tide of disinformation purposely transformed into misinformation, is becoming a challenging task. We all know that misinformation and disinformation threaten our democracies and can shake the foundations of our societies by creating hate speech and divisions. However, it is important to acknowledge that misinformation does not derive from a lack of professionalism or a failure to respect ethical considerations and codes of conduct. Misinformation is first and foremost a political project, a project that we all should fight against in order to preserve the interest of our societies and uphold the mission of media in a way to ensure that the public is well informed, that diverse perspectives are respected, and that accurate information is disseminated to guarantee the conditions for informed decision making. In Lebanon, a country that is facing component crisis, starting from the ongoing war that Israel is waging on us to the impact of the Gaza barbaric war on the region and the world to the refugee crisis. I would like you to know that now 40% of our population are Syrian refugees, unfortunately. To internal sectarian tensions, misinformation poses a significant threat to the fabric of our society and to our social cohesion. Therefore, I would like to share with you the pillars of the strategy we have been developing at the Ministry of Information in order to prevent as much as possible, the consumption of fake news and mitigate their negative repercussions on citizens. The strategy aims to cultivate the culture of professionalism, critical thinking, and media literacy. The first pillar is related to the legislative framework. We have recently concluded the comprehensive consultation process based on which, we drafted a new media law with the support of UNESCO's regional office in Beirut. The law's philosophy departs from the idea that in order for journalists to stand up for the truth to share verified information and counter the spread of fake news, they should enjoy the necessary freedom and the right to access information. If this freedom is compromised, their outputs to produce reliable sources will be altered. Fighting misinformation requires freedom of speech. The second pillar is the one related to professionalism. In partnership with several international and nonprofit organizations, we strive to conduct regular conferences and media training programs and workshops for journalists to ensure that the information we share is accurate, verified and ultimately serves the public interest. In this strategy we train journalists to be able to discern credible sources from dubious ones and to Fact Check information. Fighting misinformation requires professionalism. The third and final pillar is related to our comprehensive and holistic understanding of the role and mission of media. For us, media is not restricted to sharing information. It's primarily a medium to inform the public and engage in constructive dialogues. We are not alone in doing this. The field of media is populated by several actors, whether private channels and platforms or normal citizens using social media platforms. Fighting misinformation is mostly about rendering media and open space where everyone feels equal to have a say without threats, intimidation or judgment. Ladies and gentlemen, our mission cannot be achieved and fully materialized without developing a methodological approach to fight disinformation and



misinformation. I would like to flag up two values or positions that will further consolidate our position in achieving this mission. The first is the need to fight misinformation with information, and the second is to fight disinformation by seeking the truth. How do we fight misinformation? With information. As you know, information can sometimes be misleading, but also harmful. Censorship is never enough or the ideal measure or policy, specifically at times when social media is almost uncontrollable. And therefore unaccountable. In fact, we need to fight misinformation with information where we encourage alternative and reliable information to counter the content of fake information. Like this, we are abiding the principles of democratic media where citizens, consumers of disinformation, expose and are exposed to the truth and correct information. Second, how do we fight disinformation by seeking the truth? It is by encouraging, empowering and most importantly, protecting journalists to do so. In this occasion, I cannot forget the journalists who were intentionally targeted and assassinated recently by Israel in South Lebanon. These journalists played and continue to play a crucial role in exposing the odious crimes of the Israelis. They are the truth seekers. They are the courageous ones who stand on the front lines. They are not armed with weapons. But with a commitment to uncovering the truth and disseminating it to the world. In this war, Lebanon lost three journalists whose names deserve to be mentioned. Issam Abdullah, 37 years; Rabih el-Maamari, 44 years; and Farah Omar, 25 years. Adding to this, Israel has burned 5 million square meters of cultivated areas in South Lebanon and displaced 50,000 citizens far away from their homes. Here comes my first message to you; It is our shared and collective responsibility to condemn the killing of journalists. We all should work tirelessly as governments, international organizations and individuals to create an environment where journalists can operate safely; free from the threat of violence. In light of this, I would like to remind you that the Lebanese Government has already submitted two complaints to the UN Security Council over Israel's deliberate killing of the Lebanese journalists. I would like to take this occasion to ask you all to join us in condemning the Israeli crimes against them. Ladies and gentlemen, let us emerge from this conference with a resolution and tangible solutions to elevate our collective fight against hate speech. This imperative extends beyond the conference in this room. Now I bring forth my second message for your consideration; let's enlist diverse allies in our cause, reach out to community groups battling intolerance in our nations, engage the youth who shape our shared destiny and implore technology and social media entities to curb hate speech on their platforms. Governments and political parties too must be vigilant against divisive narratives. Dear distinguished guests, before I conclude, let me share with you that Beirut has become designated as the capital of Arab media for 2023. This is not only a celebration of the city's rich cultural and media legacy, but also presents a unique opportunity to join efforts in fighting hate speech. By empowering Beirut as a media hub, we empower diverse range of voices fostering narratives that promote understanding and tolerance. Beirut has been and will continue to build bridges of empathy and connection across the world and this region. Ladies and

gentlemen, thank you all. And may our commitments to responsible communication guide us toward a brighter and more informed future. Thanks a lot.

# SC STRATCOM SUMMIT '23

Global Response to  
**Hybrid Threats**  
Stability. Security. Solidarity.

STRATCOM PANEL - 5

## New Fronts to Hybrid Threats

**Moderator: Jordan MORGAN**  
Director of Programmes at Forward Thinking

**Assoc. Prof. David F. J. CAMPBELL**  
University of Vienna

**Prof. Toshiya HOSHINO**  
Osaka University

**Roden HOXHA**  
Executive Director, Albanian  
Center for Quality Journalism

**Karim ELGENDY**  
Senior Fellow, Chatham House



# SC

## Stratcom Panel-5

*New Fronts to Hybrid  
Threats*

25 November 2023

# New Fronts to Hybrid Threats



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## PANELISTS



**Moderator**  
**Jordan Morgan**  
Director of Programmes at  
Forward Thinking



**Roden Hoxha**  
Executive Director at  
the Albanian Centre for  
Quality Journalism (ACQJ)



**David F. J. Campbell**  
Associate Professor for  
Comparative Political Science  
at the University of Vienna



**Karim Elgendy**  
Senior Fellow at Chatham  
House



**Toshiya Hoshino**  
Professor at Osaka University's  
Osaka School of International  
Public Policy (OSIPP)



### Moderator Jordan Morgan

Good morning, everyone. My name is Jordan Morgan. I'm the director of programmes at the London-based conflict resolution NGO Forward Thinking. I wanted to first just say thank you to the Republic of Türkiye and the Directorate of Communications for facilitating such a wonderful conference and bringing such a distinguished panel together. Today's topic is New Fronts to Hybrid threats. We've got just over an hour to cover what is a very complex topic. But I first just wanted to root the discussion in whilst we sit here in this wonderful conference room and route the discussion in the ongoing conflicts in Gaza and in the Ukraine. I think many of us will have never been to those places. We very much experiencing those conflicts through our televisions, through the news, through our mobile phones, through social media and we're hearing about them through the radio. And I think very much, now more than ever, disinformation campaigns as part of those conflicts are very potent. And the main aim of disinformation, which is the deliberate sharing of wrong information, it challenges and destroys our very understanding of what is true and what is truth. And that's dangerous in our societies, it's dangerous for our democracies. It's dangerous for our political leadership and can create real instability within our societies. But disinformation

is nothing new as long as there's been conflict, there's been deception. And in World War 2, Operation Fortitude was one such deception campaign where the Allied Forces deceived the German high command about the space in which the Normandy D-Day landings would take place. But I think in today's conflicts, disinformation has made deception more potent. Much more potent than it ever was. And I think one of the reasons for that is the proliferation of technology that we all have. I wanted to just put a bit more context on today's discussion; I think the three challenges that we face, we'll hand over to the panel. The first, I think, is the massive rate of change since the 19th century. All over the world, societies are facing huge levels of change. Social change, economic change, technological change, political change, and indeed, environmental change. And that's putting our societies under huge pressure. And so, when it comes to disinformation, it can create small changes and that can create tipping points in our societies that make societies much more dysfunctional than they previously were. The other point is population growth. In November 2022, the global population reached 8 billion people. Now the UN predicts, in the next 30 years, that population growth will increase by another 2 billion people. That would be 10 billion people on the planet in total. Now that's going to create even more pressures on our institutions, on our societies and create many challenges down the road. And I think that this the 3rd point is about influence. As there are more and more people on the planet, I think a lot of people feel it's more difficult to influence the policies and things around them. Policy is made for people and not with people. And I think in this complex mix that we get hybrid threats and hybrid warfare emerging that's getting more potent. Now, before I hand over to the panel, I just wanted to put a few ground rules down. I want the session to be interactive. I've asked for a roving mic, so I'm not sure where that is, but after each presentation, I'd like to take one question from the floor to each of our panellist. And then we will conclude in just over an hour's time. Now I'd like to introduce the panellists. Today, I am here with Associate Professor David Campbell from the University of Vienna. We have Professor Toshiya Hoshino, from Osaka University. We have Roden Hoxha, The executive director of the Albanian Centre for Quality Journalism. And Karim Elgendy, a senior fellow from Chatham House. It's a pleasure to have you here, so I'd like to now hand it over to Professor Campbell.

### **David F. J. Campbell**

Jordan, many thanks for passing on the word. First of all, I want to express my gratitude for being invited to this conference. It's a great place. Thank you. This is just a sketch of the few points I will discuss now. We were instructed not to talk for more than 5 to 8 minutes. So, the slides will be basically plain text with no figures or data. It's just some basics and a few thoughts. Now I thought not to focus in my short presentation on the depiction of problems. I think we talked a lot about the problems, and it should be more of a shift, referring to possible remedies, solutions problem-solving, or somehow highlighting what may be, in a certain sense, the path forward. So, what are the options available for humanity on this planet? Now, to begin with the quote. There's this famous French thinker, philosopher, and

intellect, Victor Hugo, living in the 19th century, and this one famous quote that is being referred to him. This is the sentence “no army can stop and adhere whose time has come,” and this basically means it’s not force, it’s not brutality, but it’s strength. It’s our ideas as human beings that are actually crafting the world.

And so, in that sense, the one basic implication is to throw out the question, “Has the time in that sense for democracy come and arrived? I believe that democracy is the path we should follow. And so to speak, democracy would be the solution. But, of course, there’s a different quote. It’s like my dear friend Elias Cryonis, an intellectual scholar. To quote the phrase, “democracy and the environment are endangered species.” This means we cannot take democracy for granted. Democracies are evolving. It’s developing. But, of course, it’s also been challenged and questioned. So, in that sense, it’s the narrative that we’re having on earth today. Could we say this is something like a global

race, a global competition between democracies, the same as democracies on the one hand or autocracies or similar autocracies on the other? So, who is finally going to win this race in this gamble? If you just look at the war spreading, I think it’s very shocking at the level of conflict on earth. So, this is something important. Which of these role models is going to prevail? Will it be democracy or autocracy? And specifically, of course, there is the question: If you want to develop this, I think it should always be our desire to have something like the sustainable development of society, of the economy, etc.; is democracy necessary for that? This means if you take democracy out of the basket, are you doomed, so to speak, to fail or not? But maybe it’s a little bit of an undecided question. It’s a question of beliefs, if that’s what we want to support. What’s the empirical message? I think it has been sent in that context, and it’s also necessary to post the posture of democracy in the context of knowledge creation, innovation, and education. And if you can associate these lines of development, I think there’s some helpful information. As an example, there is this famous Dutch scholar who published a book back in 2010. The book published what knowledge democracy is, and this means or implies in a certain sense that the further development of democracy and the further made of knowledge are somehow intertwined. This is, I think, in fact, also good news for democracy. At the same time, of course, if we believe that the further advances of democracy or knowledge of democracy are going to be associated with something, knowledge and knowledge democracy, we can also pose the question: Can the Marxists act as something that an enabler of innovation is? Innovation is this one crucial set of factors and sources moving and pushing on economies. But the point would be to ask, is democracy as a context as a frame something that supports and enables democracy? And that may also be

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something like an analogy. The analogy would be to say that the more knowledge advances, the more diverse knowledge becomes. So, we're facing different knowledge and innovation modes, creating this diverse ecosystem of different types and forms of knowledge. And we believe the equivalent could be some of this political pluralism in a democracy. How can you diversify your knowledge while being politically autocratic? So, I think, you need, so to speak, the force of political freedom to really encourage your communities and, in that sense, to engage in knowledge and further innovation and knowledge development. I'm saying education is a form of something like democracy through education. The education, of course, is again maturing. I would always recommend saying that education is something in which a society or political system is willing to invest. Of course, it is the biggest treasure a society has. As a final thought, maybe we, in a certain sense, overestimate the economic successes of autocracies. Because I believe autocracies are benefiting from the knowledge, inventions, and discoveries of the free societies on earth. Perhaps, in a certain sense, stealing things created in a democratic ecosystem actually means that autocracies would have a very difficult position on earth without democracies. So, this is a picture taken yesterday from the motto, or theme, of that conference. And again, hopefully, rightfully pronounce "teşekkür ederim" (thank you) for your audience to look forward to. Of course, to the discussion following. Thank you.

**Moderator Jordan Morgan**

Thank you, Professor Campbell. So, I'd like to take a question from the audience for Professor Campbell on his presentation. Do we have any questions? Everyone is still waking up. OK,



well. I have a question for you Mr. Campbell, you talked about democracy versus autocracy. Autocracies are leapfrogging democracies in some way but when it comes to hybrid threats and disinformation, what would you say is more resilient? What system of government is more resilient to disinformation? Would you say it's democracies or autocracies?

### **David F. J. Campbell**

This is one of the basic questions, and there's probably a difference between what you want to have and what the empirical reality is. I think sometimes democracies are being criticised for being, perhaps, a little bit quantic. These different opinions are floating around but you must see the way that if a society is on the frontlines of development, the future is always uncertain. It's like a fog. And to me, to match this uncertainty, you need diversity. I think you need this chaos of different opinions, these dialogues and this interaction to match the uncertainty of the future. Those areas where autocracies can perform well are in situations where the catch-up is, because then, after practical schemes, look at all the examples and solutions on earth and try to blend together their own story. But once society itself arrives at that frontline, you, in that sense, have most developed your own resources to proceed. So, in that sense, hopefully autocracies can never bypass democracies. But still, of course, we always must be cautious when we're being challenged intellectually and beyond, to think further and not take democracy as something given, hammered into solid rock. Democracies, as history has shown us and taught us, can, of course, also be destroyed from within or from abroad.

### **Moderator Jordan Morgan**

Thank you very much. I'd like to now hand over to Professor Toshiya Hoshino for his presentation. Professor.

### **Toshiya Hoshino**

Thank you, Jordan, for your warm and kind introduction. Oh, thank you for inviting me to this excellent panel. When we talk about the New Fronts to Hybrid Threats, the thing that comes to mind is that we need a new policy—the new policy for collective security—for humanity and the planet. It sounds very broad and big in the face of so many conflicts and violence in front of us, but at the same time, we have to look to the future. There is a strategic message we've been hearing: "Stop the war of violence." But those are not heard. And, of course, these are the important questions we need to solve. But at the same time, those are not the only issues we have faced today. As we see it, the world today is faced with hybrid threats to humanity on a global scale. And this is a threat that is existential and directly affects my existence as a human being on this planet. They are Anthropocene in nature and intergenerational. So the future history, if we have a history for the future, depends on what kind of decisions we make today. And those are the things that should be on our minds when we try to tackle and address all the challenges we have in our contemporary generation. Well, to-

day we have so many programs. The nexus of the climate crisis, disruptive technologies and nuclear threats. Those are now combined. So that Britain's atomic scientists recently called this existence an existential nexus. It is very apt to say it that way. And also, we need to think about the implications of the hybrid threats for humanity as a whole and also for the planet. I'm very pleased that Jordan introduced this session with a characterization of the many changes we have made over the years. And also, the population changes and so forth. Yes, that is exactly what we are witnessing, whether we are aware of it daily or not. Well, you have heard of the term Anthropocene, which is the geological term for the period. It means that human beings have an impact on the geological era and you know this from the form the Economist journal, which used the term already in 2011. So, I think it's getting very serious because, as you know, in a science-specific journal, there is an article saying that the human-made mass is now over-pursuing biomass. See what it means that what we have in the front net, the natural one, is already surpassed by the human-made concrete freaks, so steel, chemicals and so forth. This is exactly what we have to keep in mind. So, yes, population growth. And also, the social changes, yes. And this root of human activities has caused this sort of great acceleration. Which naturally has an impact on the planet, yes. So, while we are living in our lives, you know that there are a lot of changes in a positive way, but at the same time, a lot of stress goes into the I was involved in a project organised by UNDP last year, 2022, about new threats to human security in the Anthropocene. This is about all the combinations of new threats we have experienced in COVID and the new health challenges are still there. Violent conflict, inequality, and climate change are all combined as hybrid threats. So, this is a time for us to address those issues, not by conflicting among ourselves, but by collaborating together. It is very simple. But the important message is that we are at a major watershed moment at the crossroads. In human history. So, what do we decide from now, 2023, to 2030? For instance, what was the day or year when the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals? We have all the goals to achieve, but we have so many issues. Conflicting among ourselves prevents us from making the right choices at the right time. So, if we fail to make the necessary choices at this point, what we are waiting for is a world that is so unsustainable that people will find it very difficult to live in a world temperature of 40°F, sheep, and so forth, but we do have an opportunity to move towards a better future that is more sustainable, as well as non-nuclear threats. I'm saying this from

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the country that experienced nuclear prices, for Hiroshima, Nagasaki and also for Kushima. So, this is very real and there are so many other challenges that what we need to make a decision counts. So, when the United Nations was established in 1945, the main idea was to again go against collective security, against aggression, and towards national sovereignty. And it is still a very important subject because there is so much violence going on between countries, among states and so forth, but at the same time, this is the time to think about a new type of collective security. Which is to join our forces together for the interests of humanity as a whole, or for the Afranet as a whole. So, in my concluding remarks, it is very simple: because we are the ones who created all those problems by ourselves—climate change, advanced technologies and others—we have a responsibility as our generation, for future generations to create the foundation for a more sustainable, inclusive, and just future. Thank you very much.

### **Moderator Jordan Morgan**

Thank you very much, Professor. Before I open to a question from the floor, I just have one really big question that's emerging from the current conflict in Gaza. I've worked in Gaza for the last eight years and I'm deeply concerned by some of the scenes that we're witnessing there, not least the massive and unnecessary loss of human life. But one of the key challenges that we're seeing is, arguably, the international rules-based order that established our post-World War II. It seems to be unravelling before our eyes. In your excellent presentation, which I found very informative, you talked about a sustainable, inclusive and just future. But how can we achieve that when we're witnessing such an erosion of international law and international humanitarian law in front of our very eyes?

### **Toshiya Hoshino**

Well, of course, this is the big question and thank you very much for asking. I could not find the answer immediately, but one of the frustrations was that I talked about the United Nations and collective security. That is what is discussed in the Security Council, see? But the Security Council is not functioning as it's supposed to. There was no rule of law for that type of discussion, and this was not possible because of the libraries among the so-called P5. Well, this is the phrase supposed to be the phrase to discuss, all those questions for international peace and security, but not the functioning, which is also a part of the problems to solve these ongoing issues. Through the best way. So, in that regard, I may jump to another question, but the reform of the Security Council can also be an important matter to be discussed in that regard. I'm here in Istanbul, Türkiye. Big city. The president of the Türkiye has a very unique and important reform agenda for the Security Council and those are the initiatives that can be discussed more widely. Try to tackle the ongoing issues in Gaza or other places, but at the same time we need to... Okay, this is the opportunity to change the institutional change of the United Nations, which was discussed. Established in 1945, over 75 years have passed. And no change is made. So, these are the things that we need to do

there additionally but in Türkiye's government, the initiative, particularly by the president, was so important. I think it is very important. I want to emphasise that.

**Moderator Jordan Morgan**

And do we have any questions from the floor? And the hand immediately up there. Can we get a microphone, please, to the gentleman over there if you keep your hand up?

**Audience**

Good morning, Mr. At the moment, we know that people die in Palestine, women die in Palestine, their children die in Palestine and sir, you said that the world is peaceful. There is no way to go to war. And in that presentation, you said that there is no fear of terrorism, but Professor Toshiya, why is Japan not boycotting American products? Why are Americans doing like terrorists to Palestine? A lot of people are dying in there. And also, you said about Hiroshima Nagasaki and a lot of wars. Why is Japan not boycotting American products? Can you answer this question?

**Moderator Jordan Morgan**

Thank you. We got the question and. And we probably should make the point that Professor Toshiya isn't here as a representative of the government of Japan, but I'm sure he could answer.

**Toshiya Hoshino**

No, no, no... It's very difficult to... Well, I do not, of course, represent the government of Japan or anyone else. Well, this is a very tragic moment. So all I can say is that every government should take this matter seriously and then take the right action today. And that's the only thing I can say about this.

**Moderator Jordan Morgan**

Thank you, Professor. Well, we'll move swiftly on to Roden from the Albanian Centre for Quality journalism.

**Roden Hoxha**

Thank you very much, Jordan, for the kind introduction. I'd like to thank the host and organisers of the conference. It's an amazing thing to see so many different views and different perspectives on different issues. Oh, well, I was hearing beforehand from the distinguished Minister of Information from Lebanon that despite our countries, not just countries, but our regions, Albania and the Middle East, not being in the same position, not being in the same situation, many of the issues with regards to disinformation and misinformation reverberate throughout not just our regions but throughout the world. I would like to start



my presentation by saying that Albania is a small country. It's about 2.8 million people. There were supposed to be 2.8 million people from the last census. It's basically one of the neighbourhoods. As big as one of the neighbourhoods of this great city, we're here today. But being a small country, being in the Balkans, being at the, let's call it, crossroads of east and west, north and south, it is a microcosm that has, let's say, experienced every single kind of misinformation and disinformation tentative in the world. I would actually call it a petri dish of information when it comes to the hybrid threats to information. Albania, as well as the region, has experienced many avenues of, let's say, let's call it obvious amination of this information in quotations and despite the new means of dissemination of the information, the people are crucial to it when it comes to the sources. We can have a long list of them, starting with the legacy media, which is that Albania, being a small country, doesn't have so many television networks. And newspapers are basically dead in Albania. They don't circulate anymore, unfortunately. Legacy media is concentrated in the hands of very few people. There are only four national televisions, even the local televisions, which are more than a couple of dozens of them. Are still concentrated into three or four main, let's say, businessmen. When it comes to the New Age media, it's total disorganised, unfortunately. There are more than 800 news portals, which for a country as small as Albania, is what I would call a mess. It's totally unregulated. It's totally unsupervised. And this information runs rampant. At the pace that is almost impossible to even not organise, but even fact-check it, as they say, lies halfway around the world by the time that the truth comes out. So sometimes working in the media is very, very frustrating, to say the least, and with the advent of new ways of communication, including here, I wouldn't call it new. Facebook is not new anymore, but it's being used in new ways of disseminating information through private chat groups and private and very closed-off avenues of formation and with the advent of Telegram, Signal and different messaging apps and services that allow a very closed-off group to create an echo chamber with regards to information and the dissemination of disinformation and misinformation. It has been a very big challenge, not just for us but for the region, to tackle this issue. We've seen it with our colleagues in Kosovo, we've seen it with our colleagues in Serbia, in Bosnia, all over the region, and these kinds of issues go even beyond the region. The new means of communication have become so impossible to tackle and so impossible to regulate that for the time being, there isn't an actual solution. A tangible solution to the issue. When it comes to the typical and atypical threats, of course, being in the Balkans, we have three to four main issues. Of course, there's always the usual suspect: Russia and China. Fortunately, in Albania, neither of these countries has such a big sway. So, misinformation, disinformation, and, as they call it, malign foreign influence are not big issues. In my country, Albania is more European-centric when it comes to its policies and politics, but it is still there. We can see a Chinese intervention in a pot. I would call it positive disinformation. It's not negative disinformation towards the West or other countries, but it's disinformation in positive tones towards China's achievements. Basically, it's positive propaganda. And then, when we come to the region and the conflicts in the region, which are quite a few, let's see how they are. There is disinformation running rampant, especially with issues between

Kosovo and Serbia, with issues in Bosnia, as well as inter-sectarian and inter-country issues. It's a very pervasive issue. Which we have been trying to tackle, but it's almost impossible, despite our close ties and close cooperation with other media outlets in the Balkans, in all the countries that are facing these waves of disinformation, but lately we've seen another wave of new sources of threats. We've seen far-right groups that have started to pop their heads out of the darkness. And we've seen them using a lot of messaging apps like Telegram and Signal as a way of disseminating information. We've seen them cooperate with other far-right nationalist groups in Central and Eastern Europe; we've seen them communicate and work together within the Balkans, which doesn't make any sense because these are nationalistic groups that, in essence, hate each other but they cooperate with each other when it comes to the dissemination of false information and propaganda and the worst part is that the larger population at hand doesn't have a filter on how to evaluate the information disseminated by these groups. There haven't been a lot of tackling strategies, starting with media literacy programmes, which have started through training of trainers through higher education programmes, which so far have had limited success because it's a bit hard to teach an old law, a dog, or new tricks. And once you hit university, it's a bit difficult to train someone how to read the news and how to examine the news. But we have had much more success with pilot programmes with the youth in primary school, not teaching them about all their literacy. Not teaching about them or about media literacy, but critical thinking, evaluation, information, and how they can respond to it. And then we started with fact-checking programmes and trainings for journalists as well as the youth and then we tried to integrate self-regulation and regulation. Regulation hasn't been successful because as everybody knows, journalists are quite skeptical of government intervention and self-regulation and...

### **Moderator Jordan Morgan**

I'm going to have to stop because we're rapidly running out of time but thank you. I think it's good to know that even the smaller countries we're all facing shared similar challenges and thank you for your illuminating presentation. Now, our final speaker is Karim Elgendy and I think we'll have to, if you can keep your presentation maybe to maximum 4 to 5 minutes. And then we'll have to close unfortunately. As our timer is slightly out.

### **Karim Elgendy**

OK. So, I'll be very brief. Good morning, everyone. Herkese günaydın, her şeyden önce katılım daveti için iletişim bakanlığına teşekkür ediyorum. (Good morning, everyone. First of all, I would like to thank the Ministry of Communication for the invitation to participate.) And I'm honoured to be here to talk to you about being here to introduce you to perhaps a new subject. And an emerging trend in climate misinformation. It's a bit niche, but it's something that I feel passionately about and that I focus on. And how climate misinformation derails or hinders climate action. So, we're all aware of the risks of climate change, of course. And we



know that the science is clear and if we don't do anything about climate change and reduce emissions, we will clearly face dangerous climate change. I am not going to go into the basics of the science because I'm told we only have a few minutes. But what I want to focus on here is the different ways in which climate disinformation has been taking place. So initially, the primary antagonists of climate action—those who are trying to stop climate action—are mostly the fossil fuel industry, and what they have initially tried to do is outright dismiss climate concerns as basically fake news. Doesn't happen. It's not. It's not real. The whole thing is incorrect. So, they said climate science is wrong. They said that scientists are biased, and they said that they were all going to hire communication experts and communication agencies to basically spread misinformation. And because science keeps mounting up and we have thousands of papers being released that support the science, they have become very, very hard and have basically lost all credibility. This approach to denying climate change is real has lost all credibility. So, there's the approach that became a little bit more sophisticated and new tactics emerged that are subtler and more psychological. And instead of 1D denial, we have 4D's now: delay, deflection, deflection of blame, division and doomism. And I'll explain how this works and how they help us transition away from fossil fuels or stop us from transitioning away from fossil fuels. So, delay is basically, let's put off action a little bit and find a technological fix that will help us in the future, allow us to keep things as they are but perhaps a technology could fix this in the future. For example, the fossil fuel industry likes to advocate this idea of capturing carbon from the atmosphere, which is the technology. That is not viable today, but it will be in the future. But maybe it's too late. The other thing is that they use any crisis—any current crisis—to delay. So, it would be could be COVID. Now is not the time; it could be inflation; now is not the time; it could be war; definitely not the time to do anything about this climate issue. And we had recently this major international oil company CEO say to Europeans in the middle of very high natural gas prices that now definitely is not the time to put solar panels or to insulate your houses to reduce your energy, which of course doesn't make much sense in most people's opinion. The other thing is this idea of the deflection of blame. So, in the fossil fuel industry, it tries to blame you, the consumers, for your lifestyle. It's all your fault. It's not the systems that we have in place—the energy systems of the transportation system. It's your mistake. You're living an extravagant lifestyle. And you need to work on your carbon footprint. And this idea of carbon footprint is actually an invention by an oil company, BP. And they came up with this idea and they shifted the blame and thought about it: if you don't have public transportation or you don't have electric vehicles and the oil industry and the auto industry have stopped public transportation or lobbied against public transportation or lobbied against electric vehicles for decades. And if you don't have those things, can you blame people for driving cars? Use petrol? Not really. So that's system change, not individual action. They are the real, real issue here. The second and third issues are division and creating divisions in terms of the society that needs to do this, but hey, the society also needs to think about other social needs, other economic needs and other environmental needs. So why don't you focus on all these other

things instead? You, climate people, So, for example, they would say, What about jobs? Those people who work in the coal industry are going to lose their jobs now if we transition away from coal, as if there are no jobs in any sector, to coal, as if renewable energy does not produce jobs. And also, what about energy independence and sovereignty? As if climate change does not destabilise regimes and cause serious economic harm to states as well. And the final approach that we see is an approach called doomism, which basically means it's too late. This is inevitable. There's really nothing we could do and no matter what effort we put in, we're already going to fry. So, and that, I think, is very depressing but also completely untrue. Yes, there is incredible urgency and the window of opportunity is getting smaller every day. But there's still hope and there's some. There's still something we could do to avoid the worst of climate change. So, what can we do? We vaccinate ourselves by basically having climate literacy. Read the facts, read the science, sort of tell your community about its basics, and then that helps you understand how manipulation happens. How? Who benefits from any attempt to stall action or prevent a transition towards a cleaner and more sustainable world? And the other thing is to support those who do that—those who call out for change towards a more sustainable environment. Scientists, but they are also advocates. And finally, those who give you half-truths need to be accountable. So, ask them to be accountable for the half-truths that they have been spreading. And with that, I will thank you very much.

### **Moderator Jordan Morgan**

Thank you very much and I've been told by the organisers we have to close now, but just to wrap up a few key points that I took away, I think some fascinating presentations. Thank you all for your time and insights. We really appreciate it. But I mean, regardless of whatever system of governance we live under, it's pretty clear that we need to strengthen our institutions. We need to keep strengthening the international rules-based order in order to promote a sustainable, inclusive and just future for all. And regardless of the size of our country, we're all facing very similar challenges. But it's only by working together and identifying shared opportunities to tackle those challenges that I think we're going to be able to overcome some of the threats that have been outlined by our panellists. And Karim's point there—I thought it was really important. And he's talking about climate threats, but whatever the threat we face, I think we have to act today. And it's fantastic that we've had this Stratcom conference because I've certainly come up with new ideas to take away and put into my own work in the Middle East. So, thank you once more to the Directorate of Communications. Thank you to the Republic of Türkiye, to the Stratcom organisers, and to you, the audience, for being so gracious with your questions.



# Stratcom Speech-4

***The Influence Of Digital Platforms  
On Society And The Tabii Platform***

25 November 2023

# The Influence Of Digital Platforms On Society And The Tabii Platform

## SPEAKERS



**Ziyad Varol**  
Deputy Director General, TRT

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I extend my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Fahrettin Altun, the Director of Communications, for the opportunity to discuss our new platform, Tabii. In a brief overview, I will delineate the societal impacts of digital platforms.

The insights I'm about to share may echo discussions from earlier sessions or reiterate previously mentioned points. Nonetheless, I will address them to contribute to a holistic understanding. Digital technologies are revolutionizing industrial production and shifting traditional paradigms, heralding a departure from the old world order. We are witnessing a shift towards an experience-driven and satisfaction-centric process. The focus has shifted from necessity to pleasure, with production now intertwined with lifestyle culture rather than mere utility. A critical formula underpins the exponential rise in digital consumption. Efforts are underway to encapsulate this trend into a replicable model. This cycle's perpetuation is crafting a novel lifestyle paradigm. The advent of new platforms is significantly nurturing this cultural evolution. Internet technology is at the forefront of this usage. For many, the era of traditional, stationary screen viewing is giving way to more dynamic alternatives. A transformation is underway. This daily evolution is occurring independently of the individual's traditional habits. There's a noticeable uptick in the audience for digital platforms. From 2013 to 2014 the viewership has surged to one billion by 2019-2020. In contrast, cable and satellite technology usage remains markedly lower. Despite static levels in traditional mediums, digital technology adoption is climbing, now at 1.7 billion users. Projections indicate this figure will hit 2 billion by 2028. While these technologies play a pivotal role, the shift is most pronounced among

younger demographics. We see that the age group targeted by traditional television broadcasts and cinemas is slightly different from the age group targeted by digital technologies. Digital technology enables a versatile television experience, accessible anytime, anywhere, and on any device, offering features distinct from traditional viewing. It provides varied experiences in both content delivery and consumption. Here, user engagement is paramount. Personalized content is now readily accessible to users at their convenience. On a social level, there's a noticeable shift as individuals increasingly engage with content on their mobile and tablet devices. Users have the flexibility to access desired content irrespective of time and location constraints.

These significant shifts have led to individuals, and consequently societies, becoming more susceptible to influence and displaying a degree of indifference. Given that individuals often find themselves in solitary environments, it's not uncommon for them to exhibit increased levels of detachment and indifference during this process. TRT has acknowledged these broad trends and has responded with sensitivity to the evolving landscape. With over six decades of expertise and a leadership position in Türkiye's media industry, TRT stands out. TRT's global presence is reinforced through the licensing and international sales of its television series. This strategy has enabled TRT to captivate audiences worldwide. As a result, TRT enjoys a well-established global reputation. In recent years, TRT has produced an impressive slate of 53 films over a span of two years, leveraging the cinematic medium. These films have been showcased at 408 festivals globally and garnered 188 awards. Among these accolades are nominations for prestigious awards like the Palme d'Or and the Oscars. There are 20 television networks here. They all produce a significant volume of content, securing a dominant position in the industry. TRT's role as a trailblazer in traditional broadcasting continues unabated. This role not only cements its traditional broadcasting identity but also enhances its global stature. In this transformative era, TRT remains committed to its foundational roles while embracing innovation. TRT has evolved into an expansive global network within Türkiye. This journey for TRT wasn't solely reliant on its network and brand recognition. Equally important is TRT's rich cultural heritage. This culture has been instrumental in shaping human history. This culture encompasses enduring experiences and a foundation of rational thought. Ultimately, people shape and define these algorithms.

Observing shifts in viewing habits, TRT is proactive in adapting its strategies accordingly. Türkiye's emergence as a significant global player is evident across political, social, and cultural spheres. Under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye has ascended to a prominent position on the world stage and in international politics. The country is executing a comprehensive and ambitious foreign policy. Leveraging the nation's cultural richness and the vitality of its entertainment industry, Türkiye's influence in global affairs is poised to grow even stronger. Recognizing and adapting to evolving trends is crucial in today's dynamic landscape. Beyond digital video services, various digital platforms present editorial and sectoral challenges. Certain content is designed to provoke disruption and threaten societal harmony. The Tabii platform distinguishes itself as a preferred alternative for discerning audiences. Tabii is synonymous with delivering content that is not only clean and safe but also of high



quality. TRT's commitment to public broadcasting gives us a unique edge in fulfilling our mission. This strategic approach allows us to understand and cater to our audience effectively. Tabii embarked on its journey boasting over 15,000 hours of video content, including more than 30 originals. The platform's diverse array of genres and topics caters to a wide range of interests and demographics. With localization in five languages, Tabii has released over 3 million subtitles in Türkiye in just half a year. We are discussing a platform that is not only progressive but also constantly evolving. The software development for Tabii was expertly handled by TRT's in-house team. Our portfolio of original content positions us favorably in the market. The variety of our content offerings is both unique and diverse. These offerings have been meticulously crafted to appeal to a broad spectrum of target audiences. In a very short period of time, our platform has become a platform that has gained everyone's interest and appreciation, and so when we first launched and introduced the Tabii Platform, we trusted and leveraged TRT's experience in the digital field. TRT is renowned for its extensive array of digital products and platforms. These platforms have earned a reputable standing within the Turkish community. Without delving into specifics, I'd like to highlight two notable examples. "TRT İzle" and "TRT Dinle" are exemplary platforms that have made their mark. They have a longstanding presence in the Turkish market and boast impressive active user statistics. The download figures for these platforms are a testament to their success. TRT Game World is another platform that selectively offers content from TRT's terrestrial channels on-demand. "TRT İzle" is one such service, having achieved an impressive milestone of 10 million downloads. Within a mere six months, the Tabii platform has achieved widespread acclaim and captivated a significant following. The content we currently provide serves as an alternative platform for our audience. The feedback we've received to date has been overwhelmingly positive. The local and international responses have been very encouraging, indicating that our content is making a meaningful impact. We believe that this content also plays a role in supporting our foreign policy objectives. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has shared our content periodically, and the cultural integration of spiritual figures such as Rumi and Geylâni has been met with great success, an achievement we aim to perpetuate. The TRT Kids channel, particularly with content like Tozkoparan and Ibni-i Sina, has garnered significant interest from younger audiences. We are committed to preserving and expanding this content to ensure continued engagement from our viewers. The Tabii platform boasts a diverse collection of films, documentaries, and animations, and we are actively developing new projects for both domestic and global audiences. My aim was to provide a broad overview of the Tabii Platform. As previously mentioned, I endeavored to inform you about the recently launched Tabii Platform. To conclude my address, I'd like to present a video. This video may offer a clearer illustration of the points I've been discussing. I will wrap up my presentation with the screening of one final video. Thank you for listening.

25 November 2023



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**Dr. Tawfik Jelassi**  
Asistant Director-General for  
Communication and Information,  
UNESCO



Ladies and gentlemen, I wish I could be with you today at the Summit on Global Response to Hybrid Threats, Stability, Security and Solidarity taking place in Istanbul from November 24th to 25th. However, prior commitments prevented me from doing so. I am happy to join you through this video message. First, I send you my greetings from the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, where I lead the communication and information sector. This sector focuses on the UNESCO mandate to promote the free flow of information and ideas. UNESCO's response to global challenges, such as those addressed by this summit, is rooted in a human rights-based approach, emphasizing freedom of expression, and the right to seek, impart, and receive information. Regarding the right to impart information; this pertains to the role of UNESCO in coordinating the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Additionally, UNESCO is actively involved in implementing the 1991 Windhoek Declaration, which advocates for the promotion of free, independent and pluralistic media. In the context of the right to seek and receive information; there is a growing concern about the escalating proliferation of potentially harmful content, including disinformation and hate speech. In 2024, with over 2.6 billion people going to

cast their votes in more than 50 elections across 80 countries, the importance of reliable information for democratic processes cannot be overstated. Recognizing information as a public good is especially pertinent, given that 85% of the citizens, whom we surveyed in 16 countries, see disinformation as a real threat. 80% of them believe it has already had a major impact on political life, especially in less developed countries. The role of digital platforms in disseminating disinformation is increasingly evident. UNESCO's mandate to safeguard freedom of expression and access to information is more essential than ever. Human rights-based governance of digital platforms is seen as a powerful tool to create a safer digital space that protects fundamental freedoms while addressing the risks associated with harmful content. This is why UNESCO recently published its Global Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms. These guidelines are not just a set of principles. They are a call for action to safeguard freedom of expression and access to information online while dealing with the challenge of tackling disinformation, misinformation and hate speech. The UNESCO guidelines were carefully developed based on global collaborative efforts, which involved various stakeholders from 134 countries contributing over 10,000 comments. The guidelines advocate for a multi-stakeholder approach in governing digital platforms and establishing a clear framework of responsibilities for states, digital platforms, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, media, academia, the technical community and other stakeholders. Our goal is to strengthen our responsibility to foster a thriving digital ecosystem that upholds international human rights, emphasizing transparency, accountability, user empowerment, and due diligence by technology companies. It is crucial to underline that combating potentially harmful content such as disinformation, requires collaborative efforts. We must recognize our roles in the information ecosystem as advocates, journalists, audiences, watchdogs, policy- and decision-makers. Everyone plays a role in safeguarding freedom of expression and access to information in the digital era, and in building a trustworthy internet. In conclusion, I would like to highlight the upcoming World Press Freedom Conference, which is to be held in Santiago de Chile from May 2nd to 4, 2024. This global conference will focus on the vital role of journalism and freedom of expression in addressing the current environmental crisis and promoting sustainable development. The conference aims to acknowledge journalism as a crucial profession in tackling climate change issues and securing a viable planet for all. I wish you a fruitful discussion at this International Strategic Communication Summit. Thank you for your attention.

# SC STRATCOM SUMMIT '23

Global Response to Hybrid Threats  
Stability. Security. Solidarity.

STRATCOM PANEL - 6

## Communicative Complexities in Hybrid Crises

Moderator: Prof. Timothy SELLNOW  
University of Central Florida

Prof. Deanna SELLNOW  
University of Central Florida

Prof. Marc D. DAVID  
Canada Université de Sherbrooke

Dr. Steven VENETTE  
University of Southern Mississippi

Dr. Corina DABA  
Romania The National  
Political Studies and Pub



## Stratcom Panel-6

*Communicative Complexities  
in Hybrid Crises*

25 November 2023

# Communicative Complexities in Hybrid Crises



  
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## PANELISTS



Moderator  
**Prof. Timothy Sellnow**  
The University of Central Florida



**Prof. Steven Venette**  
The University of Southern Mississippi



**Prof. Deanna Sellnow**  
The University of Central Florida



**Assoc. Prof. Corina Daba Buzoianu**  
The Romanian National University of Political Studies and Public Administration



**Prof. Marc D. David**  
The University of Sherbrooke, Canada



### Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow

The Sufi poet Rumi advised us to: “sell our cleverness and purchase bewilderment”. This quotation is highly fitting today as we realize that the familiar ideas about public communication and crisis communication no longer fit in a very complicated world with compelling hybrid crises. Today, our panelists will talk about new ideas for addressing hybrid crises. Each panelist brings a slightly different focus: Deanna Sellnow focuses on learning before, during, and after crises; Marc David has a focus on corporate crisis communication; Steven Venette will take an organizational communication perspective on crisis communication; and Corina Buzoianu will talk about social media and its function in crisis communication. I’ll ask several questions and each panelist will respond in order. Beginning with our first question; complex crises of a hybrid nature create a need for communication on several fronts simultaneously. Based on each of your research and experience as crisis communications scholars and consultants, what are the communication needs or priorities for addressing multiple stakeholders in a single crisis, Deanna?

**Prof. Deanna Sellnow**

Thank you, Tim. I also want to thank the Head of Communications for inviting me and being such gracious hosts. It's been a pleasurable experience so far. In matters of risk and crisis, we often encourage working together as diverse communities of practice first to engage in decision-making based on a shared repertoire we developed together through dialogue and then to manage competing narratives as they erupt and evolve, coming from a variety of sources and across multiple communication channels including interpersonal, public, mask, as well as legacy and social media. But in the case of hybrid crises and hybrid threats, however, it's more complicated than that, and this is due in part to what we sometimes refer to as a power over relational dynamics. And diverse cultural perspectives and competing cultural values and norms that are involved and inherent throughout them. In these cases, I believe we must turn to the theory of mutuality which focuses on putting the interests of all stakeholders, communities and wider society at the forefront of communication. In other words, our discussions and decisions must prioritize human, social and environmental implications. We must set our sets on and then not lose sight of our goal, not for power over, but for the creation of shared and lasting benefits across all stakeholders and groups. This is challenging, to be sure, but also necessary. Communication and hybrid threats is not just a tool, but it is the fuel that drives it. Thus, we must prioritize communication that respects how one is affecting the other and being affected by the other. We must be receptive to our impact on as well as impact of others. And finally, to do so, we must intentionally lay aside "either-or" and "us-them" thinking and framing of the narrative which fuels this ideological polarization. Communication matters. We must instead ground ourselves in our communication in an attitude of mutuality to seek and find common ground that will ultimately lead to long-term sustainable decisions that prioritize our common humanity through mutuality as we strive to peaceably coexist in our global risk society.

*“In matters of risk and crisis, we often encourage working together as diverse communities of practice first to engage in decision making based on a shared repertoire we developed together through dialogue and then to manage competing narratives as they erupt and evolve, coming from a variety of sources and across multiple communication channels including interpersonal, public, mask, as well as legacy and social media.”*

**Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Marc?

**Prof. Marc D. David**

Thank you everyone. Thank you for this invitation, Directorate of Communications of Türkiye. My research has led me to understand and identify many key elements and important challenges for communication and time crisis in Canada, for a further matter, I will only name a few here. First, the expertise of strategic planning; communicators must be clearly established, especially when implementing communication action to respond to the crisis. For example, I noticed during the Covid crisis that many public health experts and public authorities have given themselves decision-making powers in strategic communication and de facto relegating communication profession to the technical level. For me it's one of the biggest challenges. Second, because we're talking about complexity here, when the Internet arrived, let's say 25 years ago, communication has become more complex with the fragmentation of traditional, we could say legacy media and means of communication, different kinds of means of communication. However, it has become even more complex with the arrival of algorithm use in social media. For most communication strategists, understanding algorithm has become a major issue, not to mention the arrival of the Artificial Intelligence which has completely revolutionized digital communication strategy. I can even say it's a disruption in the strategic communication environment. Third, I consider that the major challenge in crisis communication remains the detailed understanding of the stakeholders and particularly the most vulnerable audiences. I think it's the elephant in the room, but I will talk about that matter a little bit later. Fourth, in a crisis context a challenge for communicators is to simplify increasingly complex messages. For example, how can we explain in times of a pandemic to citizens the scientific difference between a traditional vaccine and a new RNA vaccine, which has been proven to be most effective. So that's a very difficult task for a strategic communicator to communicate clearly and simply to vulnerable audiences. In this sense, the important challenge for communicators is the creation of a simple, reassuring, clear, understandable, and, above all, actionable messages for all audiences affected by a crisis. Finally, despite all these levels of complexity that I have just mentioned, I've noticed a trend towards hyper simplification of communication process by authorities in times of crisis in Canada and in WHO. So, to conclude, it's a shortcut to simplify complex processes. For me, it's the biggest challenge overall. Thanks.

**Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Steven?

**Prof. Steven Venette**

Well, first I want to share with my fellow panelists appreciation for this meeting and an opportunity to share some thoughts on this very important topic. And the first question asked about how to engage different stakeholders during hybrid crises, and I think in this con-



text particularly it's important to recognize that a single-message approach is likely to not be effective. And so, my advice would be to design artistically coordinated multi-message campaigns. And so that the messages have similar themes and similar ideas, and they're well-coordinated, but they allow different people to take in information that meets their particular needs, and no one message can do that job. And so, we want to create an environment where different stakeholders, different audiences, have access to quality information that they can trust and that they can select information that most meets their need at a particular time. A benefit to using artistically coordinated multi-messages is that it decreases the stress during a high-risk environment to segment audiences and to do research about what their information needs are at that particular time. That work needs to be done before a crisis happens. But during those complex times, it's important to try to reach out with a very broad perspective that allows different people to have access to information.

**Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Corina?

**Assoc. Prof. Corina Daba Buzoianu**

Thank you. Thank you, Tim. And I would like to, first of all, say thank you for inviting me and thank you for being here and congratulations for the organisers. This is such an excellent event and enriching experience for all of us. Following on what Steven just mentioned, I would say that and I would invite us all to reflect on something, and this thing is the fact that today we don't only have new types of crises, but we have new types of audiences. And this is an important change that we all need to consider, having in mind the emerging social media platforms and what social media has been doing to our lives, to our societies, to our economies, and so on and so forth. What we do know is that in social media and crisis communication, we have more questions than answers. We do have more questions that we need to address and we need to work more, but what I think is very important for us to reflect on if we are addressing the appropriate questions in terms of what is social media's role in crises and why do some events are being transformed into crises and why others, like emergencies, are so somehow left behind. There are many things we don't know about social media's role in crisis but what we do know is that social media empowered publics and empowered audiences as never before. We now see that audiences and publics that were ignored in the past, that were left behind, that were silent, step in conversations and address topics that they have no knowledge, they know nothing about but they feel empowered in having a voice and then reaching out to other people and letting them know what they found out. This is social media's role and it's something that we have to address and we have to be very careful whenever we respond to crises and to specific situations. What we also know is that these people that have been somehow left behind and that have a voice now today within social media, they are very vulnerable in confronting with disinformation. And they are being targeted. And it's important to have this in mind whenever we organize crisis response and we address them. I'm sure that during the COVID-19 you were all very much aware of the fact that there were new types of audiences stepping in and new types of stakeholders having a clear idea of what was going on without having a solid knowledge and solid information. In Romania, we used to say during the COVID-19 pandemic that we gained 2 million of health experts who recently graduated from Facebook. Imagine today

“*This is an important change that we all need to consider, having in mind the emerging social media platforms and what social media has been doing to our lives, to our societies, to our economies, and so on and so forth. What we do know is that in social media and crisis communication, we have more questions than answers.*”

how many experts we have all over the world graduating TikTok. And these figures are really threatening our societies and the way that we are running our lives. And getting back to your question Tim, and following what Steven just mentioned, I would say that what is very important is to tailor the messages indeed, but to create content that is relevant for local communities, going local and addressing smaller groups, having in mind their interests, their expectations, their needs and their fears, rather than addressing the general public or larger audiences.

**Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Good, let's shift directions and talk a little bit about disinformation. To what extent do you believe that disinformation has increased the complexity of crises? And what advice would you give practitioners for addressing disinformation? Start again with Deanna.

**Prof. Deanna Sellnow**

First of all, I'd like to reiterate what one of the panelists said this morning: disinformation is not new. Disinformation, misinformation, malinformation, and even hate speech have been around for a long time. What has complicated matters, however, is the speed at which these messages can be manipulated and spread through artificial intelligence and social media channels. And so that's the piece that I think we need to address. And I'm going to turn to one of my mentors: South African activist and former president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela who said, "Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world and it is our responsibility to use communication to affect positive change toward peace." and through two kinds of education of our youth: one is in digital media, information media literacy, and the other is by training our young people to become "solutionaries". And "solutionary" is not my term. It is a term that was founded by co-founder and president of the Institute for Humane Education, Zoe Weil, in her book 'The World Becomes What We Teach'. And she said that we need to do the most good and the least harm by solutionary thinking. A solutionary is someone who brings critical systems, strategic and creative thinking to bear on pressing and entrenched challenges in an effort to create positive changes that don't have unintended negative consequences on anyone, human or inhuman. And so, I believe that addressing this social media speed at which this is happening is through education of our youth in digital and information literacy and solutionary thinking.

**Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Okay. Marc?

**Prof. Marc D. David**

Thank you, Tim. For me, the most significant impact of disinformation is that it offers an



information that undermines the notion of trust in society. And this notion of trust is the anchor of this, it's a social cement of a good function of society. And trust is also the heart of communication process and particularly in time of crisis. So, for me it's a vital element to keep in mind with the speed that Deanna just mentioned. The aim of disinformation is essentially to destabilise the public opinions of certain stakeholders. It's not a matter of reinforcing the quality of life, it's to destabilise and to create a notion of chaos in a certain matter to the benefit of obscure parties or, I won't say stakeholder but, foreign entity. Therefore, the challenge for communicators or strategist communicators essentially consist of quickly identifying sources of disinformation which are particularly difficult to identify, especially if they come from foreign sources, as I mentioned. And, as you mentioned Deanna, with the artificial intelligence and algorithms, as I mentioned earlier, the key element is to identify those sources but it is very difficult. So, in that matter, most often when we finally manage to identify the sources of disinformation, if we can, the crisis is over. So, what we do in this context, strategic communicators must prepare for crisis by proactively managing possible risks in AI, key messages, countermeasure of foreign sources and identify possible contradictory messages so they can react as quickly as possible in time of crisis. But it's a big challenge.

### **Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Steven?

### **Prof. Steven Venette**

Well, I certainly agree that disinformation is becoming more complex over time, not only because of the speed of information exchange, but also because of the reach and also the hybrid nature of the communication and the complex campaigns that people are promoting. I think as practitioners it's very important for us to recognise the economics of information that exists today and I would describe it as a problem of commodification of information. In other words, people are manipulating information, not just for their cause but also for economic gain. And that also adds to the complexity of the problem that we're facing. So, what do I mean by commodification and economic gain in this context? Well, we know through our history of social media, how short it is, that people used to post messages and sit back and wait for responses. But then some people found out that they could use specific strategies that we oftentimes identify as clickbait, where they could really draw attention to their messages. Well, now we're discovering that with disinformation campaigns, not only are they posting messages and using those strategies to draw attention to their messages but they're actually encouraging people to respond and react to those messages, sometimes by posting information that they know is obviously wrong. Because then people want to immediately react by correcting that information. But every time that somebody reacts to the message, algorithms recognise that as an interaction that's taking place. So, it's

an exposure to the message and an interaction, and both of those drive the algorithms to push that message out to more people. And so now those strategic strategies of posting not only a hidden disinformation campaign, but an overt campaign can accelerate the spread of that information. And so, in essence, people who are savvy in disinformation these days are posting their messages, they're enjoying the chaos that's created in that communication environment, and then they sit back and cash the check that they get from the different social media platforms. And I would say that such economic conditions reinforce the idea that disinformation is a wicked problem. And I think that the best way to identify that this is a wicked problem is by asking the question, is disinformation the source of the problem, or is it the effect of the problem? And clearly, in this case, we have to answer that it is both at the same time. Which is a hallmark of what a wicked problem is. And so, to address these complex communication environments, we have to be equally complex, equally savvy in how we strategically respond and we have to take into consideration the strategies that people are using.

“ *And so now those strategic strategies of posting not only a hidden disinformation campaign, but an overt campaign can accelerate the spread of that information. And so, in essence, people who are savvy in disinformation these days are posting their messages, they're enjoying the chaos that's created in that communication environment, and then they sit back and cash the check that they get from the different social media platforms.* ”

**Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Very good. Corina?

**Assoc. Prof. Corina Daba Buzoianu**

I don't know what I could add after Steven, but just picking up from his comment, I would just say that it's vital for all of us to understand the business model that is behind the social media platforms and to address the interests of the shareholders of the social media platforms whenever we want to really get to the bottom of talking and finding solutions for disinformation and for what social media is doing for disinformation. And now getting back to the question that Tim addressed, I would kindly ask us all to acknowledge that disinformation has changed our lives, has changed our societies and our economies, but has definitely changed the way that peace looks like today. And we have a new concept of peace that we really need to think about. And disinformation also has done something that created a very thin border between peace and war, and I don't think it's a mistake acknowledging and saying that today fighting disinformation is one of the most challenging and difficult tasks that



both communications scholars and practitioners have. And why is it so difficult? And all the arguments that Steven just mentioned are crucial in having in mind whenever we want to address this issue, and it is also very difficult because disinformation draws on people's fears and insecurities and they go to the bottom of their fears and of their problems, of the way that they feel left behind in some societies. And they mix factual information with false data and with false information. And they do all this by creating new realities and new perceptions. And it is extremely dangerous because they build upon anti-establishment discourse and they're doing this by asking people to lose their trust and to express their resentment and to increase resentment and frustration among people and societies. And again, why it is very difficult is because unlike public, unlike official communication and institutional communication, disinformation uses tools and techniques that are not available for public communication, and they pick juicy topics and we all know that in order for an event or a topic to spread, it needs to be appealing. It needs to use memorable images. It needs to tell a story, an emotional story, and to trigger feelings in people and their simulation does this in an excellent way. It's doing a great job in actually using all these things and getting back to the question, and following what Deanna just mentioned, I would say that a key solution to all of this is increase people's resilience through media literacy skills. And as far as I'm concerned and looking on the data that is available, at this moment I don't think we can hope for a clear regulation to fight this information in social media. But what I think we can do is to give people, empower people, as social media did, but empower people with media literacy skills and help people be equipped and prepared in order to spot disinformation or fake news, to Fact Check, help people Fact Check information and give them the power of having these tools and letting others know what they just found out. Thank you.

### **Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Very good. Given all that we've discussed so far, our last question focuses on dialogue. Specifically, I'm wondering what your recommendations are for achieving an inclusive dialogue toward crisis recovery, resolution, and resilience. Deanna?

### **Prof. Deanna Sellnow**

OK. Thanks. I think that one of the unintended, perhaps, consequences of having 24/7 access to technology and social media is what Sherry Turkle in her book 'Alone Together' talked about as social isolation and alienation among each other; we've lost some of our ability to relate interpersonally. And so, when I think about the question that you just asked Tim, I would say that we need to come back to the core of what we know communication is, an effective communication is both speaking and listening, and perhaps listening is the more important part. And so, I turn to Jane Goodall when she said that, "Change happens by listening and then starting a dialogue with the very people who are doing something that you

don't necessarily believe is right, and whenever we can, we must speak for those that cannot speak for themselves.”

**Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Very good. Marc?

**Prof. Marc D. David**

I was talking about the elephant in the room a little bit earlier, I'm going to give you the example of Canada. In Canada, the literacy rate - the ability of reading and writing - of the population is just a little bit under 100%. Which is comparable to many countries. That's the elephant. However, in my opinion, the low literacy rate of the Canadian population is 48%, so half of the population, it is incredibly high. So, what is literacy? We always ask communicators; we always forget what it is. But when we communicate, we try to create meaning. Useful meaning and if we forget in our strategic thinking the problematic of literacy, I think we miss the point of strategic communication. Because if in Canada, as I mentioned, 48% - half of the population - have difficulties to understand complex understanding, that's the keyword, understanding complex messages, I think it's an important issue for strategic communication all across the world. So, besides that, there would be a problem of strategic myopia on the part of communicators, who, in my opinion, tend to project their own level of literacy, including myself, to the population. I'm going to give you an example. Three years ago, I had an international funded project on COVID. And I made a presentation in Montreal to the public health experts on the on that matter. And I point out that the lowest degree in the room the lowest degree obtained at the meeting was a masters degree. So, everyone over the table had a masters degree, PhD, plus PhD. And we were deciding what we're going to tell as the message of COVID and the pandemic to convince all this population forgetting that half of the population has a small degree of literacy. So, for me, the impact of literacy over the vulnerable population, mainly and mostly for vulnerable population, cannot understand all the complex information communicated, especially in the anxiety-provoking context. And understanding as a scholar at the concept of literacy, but also for a communication expert is a key element for an optimized strategy. Thank you very much.

**Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Very good. Steven?

**Prof. Steven Venette**

Well, I think if we really do value dialogue, and I think that we all do, we have to recognize that we are sharing the risk with different communities, just as Marc was saying, that we're not above it. And our experiences, although they are different in many ways, they are also



the same. And starting from that perspective is valuable when constructing messages or information campaigns because it recognizes that we're in this together. And much of my research recently has stressed the idea of balancing the concepts of self-efficacy and system efficacy. This means that people want to know what they can do to respond to a crisis event; how do they protect themselves, how do they protect their loved ones. But also they want to know what other people around them, what other organizations or agencies are also doing on their behalf. And so, it's when we have this understanding of both what is expected of me and what do I expect of others that we start to have a more nuanced understanding of how we can act together to solve problems. And I think that really promotes the idea of dialogue at that level. But if I might be so bold as to share what I consider to be a hard truth when we're dealing with disinformation and misinformation that we must treat dissenters with respect and with compassion. What do I mean by that? People in democracies have the right to be incorrect. They have the right to be wrong. And that does not make them bad. It does not make them evil actors. And so, we must always approach people from the perspective that they're trying to get it right. But they might not have the right information or they might not have the experience that allows them to process that information in a way that we would hope that they would. And so, to meet people where they're at, I think it's important to acknowledge the apparent correctness of what we consider to be the wrong interpretation. Before we push to correct that perspective and to share a different or new way of thinking about a particular problem. And keeping that in mind really, I believe helps us to create a mind frame where we do have a shared understanding of how to engage in a problem together.

### **Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Okay, very good, Corina?

### **Assoc. Prof. Corina Daba Buzoianu**

I know we're out of time, so I'll be short just maybe as a sum up of all the solutions and the recommendations that we had in this panel and picking up from what the panelists said, I would say that it's important to have in mind to empower people to fight disinformation and to give them the tools and the techniques for that and this strategy of empowering people should be done, I think, through memorable events and through memorable stories. Because they will learn how to fight disinformation, how to spot, how to fact-check if they are in the middle of a story and if they are a part of all the representations that come along with all these. And I would also underline here the huge and the key role that media literacy has in building our resilience and in helping people be equipped and prepared in order to identify what is false and what is truth in the information that they receive and how to, let's say, interpret and depict whatever are the communication materials that they receive. Thank you.

**Moderator Prof. Timothy Sellnow**

Thank you. Well, I want to thank our panelists for helping us follow the wisdom of Rumi and pursue novel ideas that address emerging problems. I also want to follow the lead of my panelists and thank the Directorate of Communications and the Republic of Türkiye for inviting us to participate. And thank you for your time.

# SC STRATCOM SUMMIT '23

Global Response to  
**Hybrid Threats**  
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STRATCOM PANEL - 7

## Reality Through the Lens of Truth: Unveiling Humanitarian Crises and Conflicts

**Moderator: Valeria GIANNOTTA**

Director of Observatory on Türkiye, CeSPI

**Saadet ORUÇ**

Chief Advisor to the President  
of the Republic of Türkiye

**Vasilisa STEPANENKO**

Pulitzer Prize-Winning Journalist

**Jaffar HASNAIN**

International Affairs Anchor &  
Correspondent, TRT World

**Rena NETJES**

Researcher



# SC

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Unveiling Humanitarian Crises and  
Conflicts*

25 November 2023

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## PANELISTS



**Moderator**  
**Valeria Giannotta (PhD)**  
Director of Observatory on Turkiye  
of CeSPI



**Jaffar Hasnain**  
TRT World international news  
anchor and correspondent



**Saadet Oruç**  
Chief Advisor to the President  
of Türkiye



**Rena Netjes**  
Researcher



**Vasilisa Stepanenko**  
Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist



### Moderator Valeria Giannotta

So, hi everybody. It's such a pleasure actually to be here today in this amazing frame in Istanbul, at this amazing and very acknowledged worldwide event, which is Stratcom 2023. And honestly, it is such an honor to chair this panel with such distinguished guests that they are more than experts because they have huge experience in fieldwork in several different and difficult zones such as war and conflict. As we said today, we are going to deal in this panel with the truth, and it was rightly pointed out by the Head of Communications, Fahrettin Altun, and some other keynote speakers that we are living in a time of crisis of truth. Why? We are pretty much exposed to misinformation, fake news, disinformation, manipulation as well. And also, since we are dealing in a very highly digitalized environment that to some extent is helping us to make our lives easy, but to some other extent is exposing us to fake news and misinformation, we feel responsible to select and choose the right source of information. And this is another reason why I do believe your presence here is an added value to this event and to the final discussion of this panel. I do consider you as the

defender of truth and defender of human dignity along your work, so thank you very much. And I would like to briefly introduce you our guests: Mrs. Saadet Oruç, she has been working as a journalist for a long time in Belgium, France and Europe in general, and she has been a senior advisor to the President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Besides, she has also been a guest lecturer at a university in Ankara, teaching journalists, and she's a PhD candidate in France related to international relations and media. So, Mrs. Oruç, thank you very much and welcome. And then we have Vasilisa Stepanenko, who is a very young, very brave journalist. She's been an award-winning Pulitzer journalist along her duty and efforts in covering and being a correspondent from Ukraine and the Russian unfortunate war zone. So Vasilisa, welcome and thank you so much. Then we have Jaffar Hasnain, today we switched our duties and responsibilities. He is a very well-known figure in TRT World and before, he worked for some other international media as well. He is a correspondent as presenter. He has huge and important experience in some conflict zones, such as Nagorno Karabakh, northern Syria, Russia and Ukraine among the others. And he's also pretty much engaged and very sensitive in reporting the truth about human crises and defending the human dignity. So, to you as well, welcome. And finally, we have Rena Netjes. Sorry for my pronunciation. She's a researcher engaged in northern Syria area. She speaks fluently Hebrew and Arabic. She engages in several research centers and also in several media. And she's pretty much active in the reporting on the issues related to PYD and YPG and also against the fake news and fake information coming from that area. So, Rena welcome to you too. I will start with Mrs. Saadet Oruç and you have important experience from a technical point of view as a journalist but also as advisor to President Erdoğan who is pretty much vocal and outspoken by denouncing the problem, the issue of fake news and by defending the human dignity of people. So, I know that you have very important presentations but before giving the floor to you, we would like to understand how distortion and fake news and manipulative information play a role against truth-based information and I know that you will address in a very accurate way along your presentation focusing on the most recent and unfortunate conflict between Israel and Palestine. Thank you so much.

### **Saadet Oruç**

Okay. Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to thank to Prof. Fahrettin Altun, Presidency's Head of Communications of the Republic of Türkiye and his team for organising this summit which has become a very important brand in the Strategic Communications "Stratcom" and, of course, starting my words, I'd like to express my gratitude to the more than 64 Palestinian journalists who have been targeted, attacked by Israel in their precious work to defend the truth. And, of course, Türkiye's Directorate of Communications, with its Center for Combating Disinformation, has provided an important source of information for combating disinformation also, so I'd like to just express my gratitude to Idris Kardaş, Coordinator of the Center for Combating Disinformation of the Directorate of Communications



also at that point. Now, we have been observing perhaps the most brutal massacre of our modern age committed by Israel. I'd like to make my presentation concentrating on Gaza and Palestine because the recent massacre of truth is being committed by Israel against Palestine and in a single, synchronized manner, Israel is waging war not only against Palestinians but also against the truth. Unfortunately, majority of the international media became a proxy. Perhaps it's a very unfortunate word for using against international media, but they became a proxy for supporting the Israeli fake news and Israel's killing the truth with all of its organs. So, for example, if you are following an event, for example, the attack against al Shifa hospital in Gaza. If you turn on Al Jazeera English, I can understand English and French, unfortunately not Arabic. Because of that, I cannot watch Al Jazeera Arabic, but if you watch Al Jazeera English, you'll see what's going on there. But if you turn the TV to CNN international or France 24, you will see another world, another Galaxy. Israel is not only, in our modern age, playing with the limits of our perception but also playing with the senses of the modern age people in its fake news. And in a war, the terminology of the whole World, cultures, civilizations and humanity seems insufficient, and words are not enough to define the ongoing situation, but unfortunately the terminology used by the Western media, just shows that they became the real proxies of the Israeli war mission. For example, I would like to show a BBC post on X. They are saying that "Israelis are being killed", but "Palestinians die". Palestinians as if they die in Gaza themselves because of an illness or something. For

example yesterday's hostage deal, if you follow the stories news about hostage deal, you see every moment of the Israeli hostages being released but when it comes to the Palestinians' release from prisons; even their joys, their excitement, their meeting with their families, we didn't see in the Western media bulletins.

For example, it is the same when it comes to the so-called fear of Jews in Europe. You can see a Le Monde headline - I can speak about the French media, French language media and English language media - you can see many articles in Western media bulletins or newspapers which talk about the fear of security of Jewish people in Europe. But when it comes to the massacres, people being killed, babies being left without oxygen, without incubators, there is no mention of this and when you start to talk about the suffering of the Palestinian people or the atrocity being committed by Israel against Palestinian people, you will be accused of antisemitism, which, in fact, is a reference to the hate crime. Here I would like to ask to the Western media or Israel: in order not to be accused of hate crime, do we have to applaud your war crimes? Do we have to stay

silent in front of your daily basis of carpet bombing? Or we can ask this question: you made us; by Netflix, by digital games, by computer age, very insensitive towards what's going on in another part of the world and do we have to stay silent to this? So, the only difference between the holocaust after the World War II committed by Hitler fascism and today's massacre, atrocity, genocide committed by Israel against Palestinians is the fact that they are watching it live. So, many figures in the international press, I'm very sorry to tell this but, are competing with Goebbels, propaganda minister of Hitler, in their support to the genocide committed by Israel against Palestinians. What is the difference between the events which took place during the World War II and today's events in Gaza, in Palestine? For example, the terminology; "the Israel war against Hamas terrorists", no, Hamas is a party elected by Palestinians in 2006-2007. The Palestinian people in Gaza, they decided that Hamas will govern them in Gaza. So, if you say "terrorists in Gaza", what are you doing in West Bank? Why are you doing raids killing too many people in West Bank? So, the international media has failed to defend the truth during the recent massacres committed by Israel in Gaza, and fortunately we have Anadolu Agency, TRT and all of the majority, I can say, of the Turkish press which defended the truth in Gaza. So, the Turkish press, Directorate of Communications of Türkiye and Türkiye's feeling of conscience and sensitivity of the Palestinian people deserve

“You can see many articles in Western media bulletins or newspapers which talk about the fear of security of Jewish people in Europe. But when it comes to the massacres, people being killed, babies being left without oxygen, without incubators, there is no mention of this and when you start to talk about the suffering of the Palestinian people or the atrocity being committed by Israel against Palestinian people, you will be accused of antisemitism, which in fact is a reference to the hate crime.



an applauding of this audience I think. I feel very honored to be part of such a nation. And also, I feel very proud to be a part of such an excellent team of the Turkish Presidency.

(A video is shown on the barcoveision.)

The surgical wing.

It's okay, I'm okay.

-My mom!

-Where is your mom?

There's nowhere to run.

"A Miraculous Feat." -Harper's Bazaar

Why are you upset?

I don't want to die.

"Vitally important." "Haunting. Riveting" -Los Angeles Times

Guys, your reporting spread.

You did a big thing.

"Punches the gut. Rarely has there been a film like it." -The Hollywood Reporter

Everyone here has survived so much.

If the world saw everything that happened in Mariupol, it would give at least some meaning to this horror. My brain will desperately want to forget all this. But the camera will not let it happen.

A film by Mstyslav Chernov – 20 days in Mariupol

### **Moderator Valeria Giannotta**

Thank you so much. This is really...

### **Vasilisa Stepanenko**

And I'm here just to tell you some stories. My life totally changed when the war started because before a full-scale invasion, I was just a local reporter in the small TV channel in Kharkiv region, It's in the eastern Ukraine. And then war just came to my home. And as a journalist I had no way, I did my decision just to continue working, covering this to show the world the truth about what's going on in Ukraine and this is how my life is looking right now. This is how it looked like before the war started. I was just a local reporter and this is how I'm working now every day in Ukraine, wearing the vest and helmet. And this is how all Ukrainian journalists now look like in Ukraine, because it's really dangerous. I want to tell the story about this woman. This is 30-year-old Irina. Who was killed by a Russian attack in maternity hospital in Mariupol. She was pregnant for the first time and she had her first baby and then she was injured. But she's still alive, and doctors told us that before



she died, she said, I don't want to live because I know that my child died. Then Irina's husband tried to find her in hospitals. He tried to find her everywhere in Mariupol. It was really hard because the city was under bombing all the time. But then he finds her in the morgue. This is the photo of my colleague Evgeniy Maloletka, that we were together in Mariupol as a team. This photo I did months ago in my hometown, Kharkiv. This is a small boy. He's 10 years old. He just slept in his apartment and then a rocket just hit his house. And he didn't wake up. And I also thought that I will not wake up when I heard this explosion and this is reality in Ukraine every day. And we, as journalists, try to show the truth to the whole world by doing this, even if it's hard, if it's painful to watch and do, we are trying to do everything we can. Yes, this is my hometown Kharkiv. And this is what we are going through every day. The mass graves in Izyum, there are more than 400 people buried under Russian occupation and also my friends were in these mass graves. This is as you can see the small bracelet with Ukrainian flag and the hand of a person who was buried in this mass grave. This is the city of Avdiivka that is under shelling every day. On that day, I remember we came with the police to evacuate children from this place. Here soon flooded after the Kakhovka Dam collapsed and we evacuated animals with the volunteers under shelling. This is the attack on the Ukrainian electricity station and infrastructure; it was this morning. That's why today, this morning thousands of Ukrainians in Kyiv region, houses are without electricity and we are really worried that we will have hard winter one more time this year. This is how people

without electricity feeding their children in the occupied areas. This photo I made in Kharkiv region, people are feeding their children like this. The woman who lost her house in Kher-son flooded. A 90-year-old woman who just cried and didn't know what to do. This is what we as journalists go through every day, and I'm here today just to show you and to remind you one more time about what's going on, we are just going to these places to take the facts and to show them to the whole world, to document these scenes. Because I think it's a question of humanity and need to gather together to fight this. It's not normal that people are dying every day, the children dying every day. And we are trying to do everything to show the world the truth with these images, with all the work we are doing on the field. Thank you.

### **Moderator Valeria Giannotta**

Thank you so much. I really thank you for your effort, we all felt and we are all feeling your emotions in addressing these and also by looking at these catastrophes, I would say, in these very painful images. And also, I would like to add something. I mean, Vasilisa is quite young for coping with such an event and doing such a job, but she's doing it for the sake of the truth and also for the love of your country. So, thank you so much. And now I will give the floor to Jaffar. Jaffar Hasnain. I've seen that you were following what Vasilisa was saying. You agreed, but you also showed some disappointment, right? When she showed some pictures. And we've been very active and pretty much engaged in defending the truth and pretty much committed to highlighting humanitarian stories and defending humanitarian rights. So, my question to you is how important it is in your work, the ethics and ethical approach and its conformity in humanitarian crises. Thank you.

### **Jaffar Hasnain**

Thank you very much for that question, Valeria. I think ethics are of paramount importance. They form the basis of journalism and I think it's important to highlight here what these ethics are. You know, when I was starting my career in journalism, my seniors told me that there are basically five principles in journalism. Number one is, accuracy. I'm not going to tell the truth because what's the truth for me might be something else for you. But being accurate is the key. So, everything that a journalist does has to be based on facts. So that's the key. Number two: impartiality. You know, there are always two sides to the stories. In fact, in some cases more than two sides to one single story. So, it's a journalist's responsibility to make sure that he gives enough chance to all sides of a single story. And that's how a journalist becomes impartial. Then the third one would be independence, of course. When a journalist files his or her work he has to own it. It must not be on the behalf of any government, any lobby group or any interest group, because the moment that happens, his or her journalism becomes biased. The fourth one would be, humanity. Of course, when we are out on the field, we have to be very careful about the things that we say, the kind of language that we engage in, the kind of pictures that we display. If the work that we do is endangering the lives of some people, especially civilians, then that is not appropriate. So

being human is also key. And the fifth one would be, accountability. And I believe this is the toughest ones for journalists, primarily because this profession is not very humble from my personal experience and journalists have a tough time acknowledging their mistakes and owning if they have done something wrong. So, these are the key principles that I feel are very important when it comes to ethics in journalism. And before I continue, you know, since we're talking about journalism in our age right now, I just outlined to you what these ethics are. And they're basically part of more than 400 codes of conduct in journalism. But these are the five key ones. Based on this, let me pose a question to the audience. Based on these ethics, how many of you here think that journalists in our age are following these ethics? You can raise your hands.

**Moderator Valeria Giannotta**

There is the gentleman there.

**Jaffar Hasnain**

OK, so I think I personally saw three to four hands. So, the majority of the public who is present here right now strongly believes that journalists are not following these ethics. What does that show us? And I think as a journalist and I'll be blunt in saying this, I think it's a matter of shame for journalism in this age because the public has lost confidence in journalism. And the best example of what's happening with this industry can be found with what's happening between Israel and Hamas right now. I've been following the conflict from the very beginning. I've been reading newspapers from different countries and I have to say that it disgusts me. It's absolutely disgusting the way Western Media has covered the conflict between Israel and Hamas. For example, the Daily Mail, in fact, it is the most widely circulated newspaper in the United Kingdom. It took the Daily Mail 14 days, 14 days after the 7th of October to ride the accumulated total death toll of Palestinians on their first page, while they were writing the death toll of Israelis from the 7th of October. And the kind of language with which the chief advisor to the President of Türkiye highlighted in her presentation as well is absolutely appalling. When they refer to Palestinians, they call them barbaric, but when they refer to Israelis, it's always precision strikes, collateral damage and when it comes to the Palestinians, it's barbaric and atrocities. So, it's just, it just goes to show the double standards within Western media when it comes to covering the Palestinian conflict. And I think it does not stop here. It goes on with broadcast media as well. I have seen so many interviews of Western journalists interviewing Palestinians and experts on this topic and the first question that they ask is; "Do you condemn what happened on the 7th of October?" So, most of these journalists are trying to test the humanity of the person they're interviewing. And if the person does not condemn, for them, he or she automatically becomes a terrorist sympathizer or someone who supports terrorism, someone who supports the killing of civilians. That's absolutely appalling, absolutely unacceptable. And what this is doing to the perspective of the audience is shaping the Palestinians in a way that is not



based on any of the ethical principles that I just outlined. Because when you are not giving the accurate picture of what's happening between Israel and Hamas, you're basically in violation of all these ethics. Accuracy is not there. Impartiality is not there. They're constantly giving one side of the story. They're constantly talking about what happened on the 7th of October. Nobody talks about the context. It did not start on the 7th of October. I have to say this. It did not start on the 7th of October. There is a history to it, decades-old history, but we barely see anyone in the Western media talk about that. We barely see anyone in Western media talk about the Israeli raids on Al Aqsa Mosque, which is illegal under international law. We barely see anyone talk about the raid in the occupied West Bank, which is again illegal under international law. We barely see anyone in Western media talk about the fact that Israel has been called an apartheid state, not by any other country, but by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, they have conducted independent investigations on that matter and they have come up with a conclusion that what Israel is doing to the Palestinians is an apartheid. But show me how many Western media outlets talked about this in their coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and I have to say; none. I personally have not come across a single outlet highlighting these factors when they talk about the coverage of Israel and Palestine, and I think it does not stop here. The bias and the violation of the eth-

ics that I outlined is prevalent in other conflicts as well because I have personally covered Azerbaijan and Armenia conflict. In fact, I have my friends from the United States sometimes ask me, Jaffar, why is Azerbaijan attacking Armenia? What's going on there? Azerbaijan is not attacking Armenia. Read international law. Read United Nations resolutions. In fact, my friend in the US, and I don't blame him for that, because that's the kind of coverage he saw over the past three decades. He did not even know that Karabakh, under international law, is an occupied territory by Armenia. He did not know that. He had no idea that Karabakh is an occupied territory by Armenia for three decades. There are multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions calling for Armenian troops to withdraw from Karabakh. Every country in the entire World recognizes Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. And again, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, they have filed reports basically highlighting the war crimes that Armenia has committed against the Azerbaijani civilians, but again when the Karabakh war erupted, the last one 2020. You know what, I was surprised with the way the whole coverage was going. Journalists, especially in the Western part of the world, were completely ignoring international law, United Nations Security Council resolutions. And in fact, they had portrayed this picture that as if Karabakh is part of Armenia under international law, because that's how the reporting was throughout the conflict. In fact, I remember, I think it was October 11th or 12th. I might be wrong with the date. There was an Armenian missile attack on the Azerbaijani city of Ganja, which is basically in mainland Azerbaijan. It's not part of Karabakh, so it's not in the conflict zone. In that missile strike, at least 12 civilians were killed, including two children. It was late at night, around 1:00 AM in the morning, I was called to work. My coordinator at the time called me and said, OK, we're going to go live on air for rolling coverage. So, first thing that I did was open up international televisions. And guess what? Nothing. And you know, this is what I asked myself at the time. If such an incident had happened in a Western country, I bet you these international networks would go on rolling coverage not for one day, but for at least two weeks.

### **Moderator Valeria Giannotta**

Right.

### **Jaffar Hasnain**

But nothing was there. So, this is another bias that I think is quite prevalent in international media. And apart from that, I think when it comes to Syria, we have seen examples of how reporting from mainstream Western media has been unethical, for example, to look at the PKK terrorist organization. I've been to Syria. I've covered the conflict from Italy. I've spoken to families who were victims of PKK terrorist attacks. But when you look at the Western media, they portray them as some sort of freedom fighters, even though it's not just Türkiye which recognizes the PKK as a terrorist organization, but the European Union and the United States as well. Defense Secretary Carter back in 2016 corroborated, confirmed the link between the PKK and the YPG which are present in northern Syria. Perhaps my colleague



can expand on that when she speaks. But it's absolutely appalling the way Western media covers the PKK terrorists, showing them as some sort of freedom fighters. And you know, I honestly do not blame the Western audience for having such a perception about these terror elements, the conflict between Azerbaijan - Armenia and Israel - Gaza. It's mainly the mainstream Western media and their bosses. Because the audience is just sitting on their sofa changing television and they will watch whatever you show them. The problem is they're not being watched the accurate picture, they're not being showed impartial coverage of these events. And this is primarily why there are a lot of misconceptions in the Western world about what's going on in Israel and Palestine, Gaza, Azerbaijan, Armenia, for example, and especially in northern Syria as well. So, you know, as I finish, I would just like to say that it's important for us to understand that international media does not mean Western media. It means they have to take perspective from every corner of the world because those colonial times are now gone. The West has no longer a moral superiority over people from the other side of the world. Thank you.

### **Moderator Valeria Giannotta**

Thank you. And let me thank you for your amazing job and also to TRT World for offering such an accurate and ethical special coverage along those crises, lastly the Israel and Palestine coverage which is one of the main thorough based reportage and the information that we get all over. Thank you so much, Jaffar. And you mentioned about Syria and you mentioned about PKK, YPG and PYD. And actually, now we have one of the most experienced experts in the field who is Rena that she's been there active since 2015 if not longer, and she is fighting against misinformation and misperception related to PYD and YPG. So, I know that you have a presentation showing how the truth can emerge and can prevail. So, the floor is yours. Thank you.

### **Rena Netjes**

Thank you very much, Valeria. Merhaba, önce, bence çok ilginç bir konferans şimdi var. (Hello, First, I think this is a very interesting conference.) I'm enjoying it a lot thanks for the organizers. I want to say that at first. And I like to say one remark, I know my language - I'm from the Netherlands - Dutch, which also half of Belgium speaks, is not accessible very much. But Belgian and Dutch media, the Dutch language TV, does actually do a very good job on Palestine. I know it's not accessible if you don't know the language, but at least I want to point one mark of hope now the Belgian politicians as well, and the Dutch politicians not so much, but at least the media is doing on Palestine at least, you know, not saying everything but a very good job to give some point of hope, maybe. I want to point out fieldwork and language. I was a journalist in the past, I left Dutch journalism because of some hoax that we awarded that the Free Syrian Army are jihadists. If that were true, I would have been killed many times already. That was not the case. And then I'll first would like to take you to Syria very shortly. Syria is divided in four parts. When, say, the red part is regime, the yellow part



is YPG. But also, regime pockets there and increasingly more regime soldiers, especially in the north, they work together. If you want to read more about that, there's a report, 82 pages on my pinned tweet. And then in the north you have green areas. The very north. Areas of the Syrian National Army, which was the Free Syrian Army backed by Türkiye. And then you have, of course, Idlib where there is a different system. Very conservative Islamist. I mean, like I was one day in Idlib, I had to wear a scarf but in SNA areas I don't have to wear a scarf. You know, there's an example; I came in the first time with the scarf and the first thing what I heard in Azaz: "Take it off, take it off. You don't need it here." you know. So that's to give a picture for everyone who has not been to Syria and the public. I would like to start with Afrin. That's, of course, a very sensitive topic. I found out, especially through my fieldwork, that there is a mismatch, as you pointed out very well, between Western media and what I find on the ground. The situation is not as black and white. PYD, especially in Afrin, they were working very much together with the Russians and with the Assad regime. They helped Assad to take over Aleppo again, for example, they expelled the whole Arab population from areas in the north and that actually triggered, with some more points, that the Arabs asked Türkiye to get rid of the PYD in Afrin. Now, my analysis is not as important as what the courts themselves say. Let's listen to the video.



(Video in Arabic)

- Hello, we are in Afrin city. In the office of the Association of Independent Syrian Kurds. And we have a meeting with the director here, Azad Osman. Firstly, in the west, the impression is that almost all Kurds have fled but you are present. I would like to hear from you: why are you here? And what do you do? And first of course could you kindly introduce yourself?

- My name is Azad Osman. I live in Afrin. I was born in Afrin city and I lived in many different areas while PKK was present. Then, upon the exit of PKK from Afrin, we came directly here and opened an office in Afrin, and we had a goal, which is to stabilize the people of Afrin so that they do not leave, and that is our first goal in the first stage. To help locals to remain in Afrin city. This was stage one. We moved on to the second phase, we agreed to help the people of Afrin who reside abroad to return. We secured the rights of former Afrin residents to return to their areas... Over 120,000 of our Kurdish brothers returned, and there were very large convoys of about 100-200 cars. In the first six months, only three months since it's liberation, we worked to bring back a large number. After that we moved to the next stage, which is to secure people's ability to recover their property. Since, of course, when people flee and leave their property empty, others might use their property so, we tried to return it to the people's rightful owner, and I realize what we achieved may not be very huge. That being said, we are content and doing our best in order to store basic rights to the people and to return Afrin natives to their rightful homes in the region. About a year or more ago, there was an attempt to bring back some families.

I see I don't have time for all the videos that I have in this collection. The next part would be from Central Afrin how the PKK put explosives in homes and lands of Kurds, Syrian Kurds that did not want to leave Afrin with them because Kurds there talk about, that was very much a surprise for me, the liberation of Afrin. It's only a small part, which is with YPG and that is very much not clear in Western media, I think, when they talk about Syrian Kurds. I'll skip that. I'll go to Northeast Syria. I was there in February for the first time in Ras al-Ain, Tall Abiad. I was in Ras al-Ain four years ago when YPG was still there. Now the Free Syrian Army SNA is there, and the arrows that you see is the migration flows from Deir ez-Zor, Raqqah to Ras al-Ain transit point to Türkiye to Germany and the Netherlands especially, I was alarmed by Kurds first, more than a year ago, that there is an exodus going on from the Kurdish areas. And also Arabs, I found out when I was there from the Arab areas who are leaving, especially young people who are fleeing forced conscription by SDF. Minors; there were there was a Kurdish girl 12 year. There were Kurdish and Arab guys, 14-15 years old, on their own or sent by their family to Europe. And we're talking about thousands per week. And maybe I can show a picture, but I don't have time to show it. Maybe this one, this video? Here I interviewed some guys that I found in Ras al-Ain.

(Video in Arabic)

- Hello.
- Hi.
- Where are you from?
- From Deir ez-Zor.
- And when did you arrive here exactly?
- A week ago.
- And why did you leave Deir ez-Zor?
- I left Deir ez-Zor because of the mandatory military service and forced conscription. Also the psychological pressure, they aren't allowing you to do anything. Either you are with them or you don't live.
- You have to work with them?
- Yes.
- By "them" you mean SDF?
- Yes, SDF.
- And where are you from in Deir ez-Zor?
- From eastern Deir ez-Zor.
- How old are you?
- 23.
- And how much do you pay?
- I paid \$50 to arrive here.
- From Deir ez-Zor to here is \$50?
- Yes.
- Thank you very much.
- Thank you.
- Can I ask you as well?
- Go ahead.
- Hello.
- Hi.
- Where do you come from?
- From Deir ez-Zor.
- East Deir ez-Zor?
- Yes.
- And when did you arrive here?
- A week ago.
- Not together?
- No, together.
- You were together.
- And why did you leave Deir ez-Zor?



- Forced conscription and being forced to side with them and kill with them against our brothers and our supporters and you can't live except under them.
- So you would have to fight against Arabs, against inhabitants of the area?
- Correct.
- How old are you?
- 18.
- And you paid the same amount, also \$50?
- \$50 yes.
- And how was the situation here, were you searched? How was the treatment here? You are staying where for example?
- Here the treatment was good.
- There is a place where you can sleep for example?
- There is.
- Who else would like to speak?

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STRATCOM PANEL - 7

## Reality Through the Lens of Truth: Unveiling Humanitarian Crises and Conflicts

**Moderator: Valeria GIANNOTTA**

Director of Observatory on Türkiye, CeSPI

**Saadet ORUÇ**

Chief Advisor to the President  
of the Republic of Türkiye

**Vasilisa STEPANENKO**

Pulitzer Prize-Winning Journalist

**Jaffar HASNAIN**

International News Anchor &  
Correspondent, TRT World

**Rena NETJES**

Researcher



- Hello.
- Hi.
- Where are you from?
- From Hasaka.
- From south Hasaka or?
- From the east.

So, I did many interviews, I went there three times now. It's still going on. Let me give some



short final remarks. Many minors they go to Germany and to the Netherlands. That was surprising for me when I interviewed these guys in February, and I was not allowed to film everywhere. So here there are no girls. About 60% said we are on the way to Germany and 40% to the Netherlands and the police chief there, they tried to stop them but it's overwhelming, their numbers. He said also people are on the way to Austria, he said like Germany, the Netherlands and Austria and we came across one who was on the way to the USA. And one told us to Luxembourg. I went three times now this year and we filmed for Belgian TV. It's not yet aired. My final remark is that I heard about Geert Wilders in the Netherlands. We are really in shock that he has the biggest party now. In the Netherlands, the government fell in July because of the rival of minors. The government did not disclose where these minors come from. Now, 40% of the asylum seekers the last few years in the Netherlands are from Syria. And I was last month in the Netherlands, just very shortly, but I went to the place where these minors are kept. It's actually in my town in the east of Holland, in Zwolle. I was not allowed. That's what I thought; I will not be allowed to speak with those. So, I thought, you know, I saw some guys sitting on the bench and they were outside. So, I thought let me already ask them where they're from and they were all from Syria and one from regime and the other SDF area. So, I had no chance to ask to go inside that hotel where the minors come from. Ones who were outside, they were from Syria. In short, I believe that U.S. policy in northeast Syria by closing their eyes for this forced conscription of minors and of elderly, young people, fuels migrant flows to Europe, to Germany and to my country with effect in my country, because the whole election campaign was about migration.

### **Moderator Valeria Giannotta**

Thank you so much, Rena. Thank you really, I mean, this enlightens once again how there is misperception in the West and in the general public opinion towards some specific issues and as well as some fake news sometimes they are coming up out of there. We have almost 5 minutes left, but I would like to ask briefly to all of you, how do you think this information prevails in the mainstream media? Basically, you have already addressed this question, but if, in a few words, could you reply to this, we will really appreciate. Thank you. Mrs. Oruç?

### **Saadet Oruç**

I'll speak very shortly. The recent example of that Israeli propaganda; "40 beheaded babies" in the first days of the Israel's war in Gaza. And even US President Joe Biden made a reference to the babies. He made his statement based on fake news fabricated by Israel. And when we compare the babies who were left without incubators in al Shifa Hospital, there were the images but the fake news fabricated by Israel and even voiced by U.S. President despite the corrections of the Whitehouse. So, the recent period during that war committed by Israel is the worst period, worst example perhaps, for disinformation, manipulation and the destruction of truth. But there are defenders of truth. Just I would like to praise again

journalists in Gaza, Turkish press, Directorate of Communications and Turkish president Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for defending the truth. I'll just finish with this. Thank you.

**Moderator Valeria Giannotta**

Thank you. Vasilisa?

**Vasilisa Stepanenko**

Yeah, when they say on our example, like when we were in Mariupol and we covered the story of much of bombing of maternity hospital, Russian media wrote that there were actresses and every scene is fake and we are fake journalists. But it was true, it was reality and now you can see me and I saw it by my eyes. So, we really need to be careful with the searching of the first source of searching out the journalists work and to provide this real information. And this is really, really important. And I think now we can see the work of journalists everywhere personally on social media and follow them. And as I'm working for an international agency, I can say that we have our correspondents everywhere and we are focusing on the facts and trying to show it and sometimes these images are showing more facts than words. That's why it's so important to follow this and be careful with the fake information. Thank you.

**Moderator Valeria Giannotta**

Thank you very much. Jaffar?

**Jaffar Hasnain**

Thank you very much. Very good question, Valeria. And I know we are a bit tight on time. So, one key fact here, you know back during the days of Vietnam War, it would take anywhere between 36 to 72 hours for a news piece to make it to a program. But now it can happen with the click of a button. While it has its advantages, I think it has a lot of disadvantages too, one of them being misinformation and disinformation, fake news. Now, instead of highlighting how I see disinformation, misinformation and fake news on the Internet, because we have spoken about it extensively in this panel, I can give some tips; some things that I do personally on a personal level to counter misinformation, disinformation, fake news on the Internet: A, always know your source. Are you taking your news from a personal blog or a reputable news organization? Because if it's from a blog, most likely it is going to have some sort of opinion in it. So, try to take your news from reputable news organizations. B, would be, get some sort of media literacy. Know the platform that you're using if you're using "X", formerly known as Twitter. Know how it works if you're using Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp... Know the technicalities of these software, because that also helps a lot. Media literacy is very important. And the third one would be get yourself familiarized with some

sort of fact checking software. I'm not going to take any names here because I don't want to do free marketing for anyone, but there are many out there which are doing a phenomenal job. So yes, these are the three things that I do on a personal level. To counter misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. Thank you.

### Moderator Valeria Giannotta

Thank you so much, Thank you. Rena?

### Rena Netjes

I'd like to give one example; as I said, field work and languages, I want to point out, I think it's very important when you report about an area that you at least know the language. I find it always amazing how people come with reports and can't even communicate with people or follow the local media. The IDF, the Israeli army gave out some videos. In the videos there were people talking from Gaza, but I could already hear, you know, in one sentence, the Arabic is not from Gaza. And you know, it was not one time, was several times, and even in one video there was Hebrew shining through the Arabic. You know, Hebrew has these special pronunciations. And I was not the only one who was saying it, many others were saying it, you know. So, I think I would now point out, I'm a linguist of course but, that knowing the language helps a lot with debunking news. Let me point out that.

“The IDF, the Israeli army gave out some videos. In the videos there were people talking from Gaza, but I could already hear, you know, in one sentence, the Arabic is not from Gaza. And you know, it was not one time, was several times, and even in one video there was Hebrew shining through the Arabic. You know, Hebrew has these special pronunciations. And I was not the only one who was saying it, many others were saying it, you know.”

### Moderator Valeria Giannotta

Thank you so much. Unfortunately, we need to close the session here, but I want to really thank all of you for the great effort in telling the truth actually. And thank you for your courage and to your professionalism as well. And thank you to the Republic of Türkiye to be one of the main key actors in rising the voice and defending the human beings and the oppressed, I would say, so thank you so much and I will give the floor to Andrea.

### Andrea

Thank you so much, what a fantastic, really fantastic panel and so interesting to have the perspectives of journalists that have been on the ground especially in the conflict zones,

so thank you. Really fascinating. And it's so true, by the way, Rena, it's so frustrating to sometimes see as a journalist and we've all had this personal experience when we're on the ground reporting; we know our shortcomings when we go to a place and we actually cannot speak the local language you're jetted in and this is something you have to understand when you do read the work of journalists you have to know that they might not have any history at all in the area that they're covering. So, their point of reference is only what they've read from other journalists covering a certain area. So, their perspective can be very narrow because again, they don't speak the local language. They might not know too much of the history, which is extremely important in the context, especially with the Israel-Gaza conflict that we're witnessing right now.



SC

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## “The Quantum Economy”



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### SPEAKERS



**Anders Indset**  
Philosopher



Everything is so dramatic. The whole day it's been the drama and the music... I want to talk to you about; "Dijital devrimden sonra insanlık ve dünya." (Humanity and the world after the digital revolution) Was that right? Yes? So, we talked a lot about the crisis and the challenging times that we are facing. And now, for two days, I want to talk a little bit about how we can cope with the crazy world that we have created, how to lead our own life, and basically how to tackle times of uncertainty. And I have a relationship with Türkiye. My wife was born in Mersin, a wonderful city. I was there in August and I learned something very special, they said to me: "Mersin, tokadı yersin." (A funny Turkish idiom) But that's all I know in Turkish. But I like Türkiye, I like the gastronomy, I like the spirit of the service and I like flying here with Turkish Airlines, because I see the smiles. And I think this conference should also be about the power of positivism. Just some weeks ago, I was in Kyiv, and I spoke at a big conference there. We talked about the future of the economy. They have created an initiative to reignite Ukraine. To find the power and inspiration in the midst of a war, to think about the future. With all the things that we have identified today and yesterday... Shouldn't it be about that?

To future? What can we impact? What can we do? If we have decided that these are the problems, then we either remain silent or react. Right? So, what's going on in our crazy little world today? We have optimized the art of being right. Everything is about your opinion and my opinion. Zero and one. The facts, the truth and the lies. But the world is not like that. The world is more dynamic. And we need to rediscover the art of being wrong. We should all be truth seekers. They talked about it before, about seeking the truth, trying to understand the other opinion. Because only then, can we have a conversation that can move us forward. Because the world is dynamic, but the world is also a place of progress. Ever since the 1970s, the world has gotten a little bit better. Right? 50 years of slow progress. Never have we lived longer. Never have less people lived in absolute poverty. And never, despite the terrible things that are going on, if you look at the 8 billion in the world's population, never have fewer people died in wars. The world has gotten a little bit better. But now we look at the world and we see a finite world. We see crises that might be existentially a threat to humanity. But we should never forget the fact that we have experienced progress. So, the question should be, then; how can we continue to create better problems? How can we have positive progress for humanity? How can we share technology and lift more people out of poverty? How can we end geopolitical tension and wars by finding a common ground to stand on? And for that, we need to free ourselves from our own certitudes. We never solve problems; we just make problems better. It's always about progress. A vaccine does not solve the problem of a pandemic. It just makes the problem better. I put something into my body that should not belong in my body, but I'm not dead. And that's a positive progress. I mean, I don't know how it is to be dead. But I think it's really boring. And I really like to be alive. And we forget how privileged we are. We forget that we every day are privileged to be alive and to get up in the morning. We are the people who can have a future, and never on this planet, never ever in history, has someone had more capacity to have a future than you. We have some kind of economy, we have a lot of technology and the challenge is about what we do. What do you do? Why do you get up in the morning? What kind of problem are you working on? We can talk about the problem, but what problem are you working on? I just came over a conference in Germany. It was the Family Business of the Year Award. And a woman won this award and she came up on stage and gave her speech and talked to the audience. All the big companies in Germany were there, €400 billion revenue. And she went up on stage and she told the audience that now she had worked enough, it was time to give the CEO and the management to her children. And that's what family businesses do. They are not in it for a finite game, they are in it for generations, for infinity. She also talked about the problems that we have today. She talked about technology, global geopolitical tensions, poverty, and everything else. And she said one thing, one thing, "I am only worried about one single thing: that we do not try enough." That we do not put in the effort to make the world a little bit better. And then she welcomed her children up on stage to take over the management of the company. The children were 58,60 and 62 years old. So, Mrs. Bush had been



running the company until she was 89. And she was only about; “How do we put in the effort? How do we take enough action?” Goethe wrote in his famous global ‘Faust’; it’s not about the talk, about the word, it is about the action that we take. How can we build prosperity for posterity? By creating better problems. By striving for progress. And if you want to understand this madness that we call society, I think we have to rethink the economy. The economy is the operating system of our society. Everything has a price and has a value. You go to Davos and the World Economic Forum; it’s all about the future of the economy. If we want to build a social, ecological market economy, it becomes social if there is something to distribute, if there is money to give for services for the people. And it becomes ecological if ecology and economy become synergetic. We’re not saving the world. We are fighting for human existence, that our children and our grandchildren can continue to experience this, that we have, that we get up every morning. That’s what we’re doing. So, if you can put climate and everything into the economy and we have an incentive for change, then it will become powerful. And we created this AI, right? All of a sudden, we had artificial intelligence. I love AI. It’s my initials. Right? Artificial intelligence. But we underestimated the power. We thought it was going to take away all the cheap labor and the easy job, and all of a sudden, we had knowledge for everyone for free, theoretically. It attacked the experts. Because all experts are experts, because they have a lot of information. And technology is very good with information. We’re not experts, we are professional amateurs. We should work hard and we should always have a learning mind. Shoshin from Buddhism, right? The progress part. This is what we do. And we built a knowledge society and educated knowledge workers. And then we understood that technology is much better at knowledge. But what we have is understanding; we can grasp complex issues. We should strive for a society of understanding that is built on progress. The economy, it’s very much different than it was 100 years ago. Every time we take a terminology and say; “this is how it is”, “I know this”, we should think about all the assumptions and all the things that we have built up to this theory. And I think the solution to free ourselves from these certitudes and the tension is to work on education. Throughout history we have created technology that makes our lives better. And then we started to create social media. Right? What is social media? Social media is optimized for reaction. If you have very quick reaction, if you can trigger our emotion, thumbs up, thumbs down, then you are rewarded. The whole thing is an economical incentive for a quick reaction. All of a sudden now technology is changing how we communicate. Now everything is a division because we have been taught how to communicate in absolutes. Thumbs up, thumbs down. Right now, I want your reaction and if I get your reaction, I will get more views, I will get more likes and I will get more money and followers and the whole Shabam. Our communication should not be about reaction, it should be about reflection. What does this person really mean? What is this person trying to tell me? What do I mean when I say something? What are my arguments? What are my thoughts on this? So, AI is either the best thing ever created because it teaches humanity how to think or is the

worst thing that we ever created. It is an existential threat, but it also has great potential to help us move past a lot of challenges that we have. But the interesting thing about technology; we now move into an era where we will have quantum computers, quantum hybrid computers, is that all of this will be on steroids. We will have a digital tsunami. And if I ask you, today, if you can create any world, any world, which world would you create? The theme of this conference is to highlight the challenges that we are facing. When you go home, you are privileged. You can think about what kind of future you want to fight for. What kind of future do I want to strive for with my colleagues, my peers, my families? What is worth living for? And this liveliness and this new way of economy is what I call the quantum economy, because the quantum economy is much more like quantum physics than the linear models that we have. In business, in the economy, it is not about winning or losing. It is about playing as long as we can. Capitalism is a working model, but it needs compassion. Our challenge is to create a humane capital. Why should we have business if it doesn't serve humanity? Why should we build companies if they're not social for us? Why should we make money out of making money and exploiting other people when we can put at the heart of the economy the problems that we face? And I think this is how we should look at the times that we are in, the times of climate, how we can build better problems. And this is the quantum economy. The quantum economy, I think has the potential to tackle climate, in a very simple term. Because we have started, like with you, today, we talk about crisis. But climate and ecology... If you try to limit yourself, try to reduce everything, and everything is a crisis. If you wake up and you listen to crisis every single day. What do you do? You get tired. You get depressed. You don't act. Of course, we need regulation, of course we need to limit our consumption in the Western world, of course we need to build circular economies and regenerative approaches, but the big force is to rethink, rethink how we look at problems and challenges. Is flying bad for humanity? We think flying should be reduced. That's the narrative. And maybe it is like that. But if you look at it, flying is not bad. It's the best thing we do. Because we come together and speak across countries. We gather here to discuss issues in real time. We get together and get along. The problem is the technology with which we fly. So, the whole emphasis should be on how we can change the technology; how can we build a vacuum cleaner that sucks CO2 out of the air? We can only do this if there is a business model to that. That's the challenge. And the other part is if you look at how the world evolves. Do we think it's realistic to fly less is enough? Go to the Istanbul Airport or the Frankfurt Airport. People are flying like crazy. Even the sustainability experts are going on a sabbatical. Right? The only thing that changed; we're not putting the photos on Instagram anymore. We still fly and then we look at how the world evolves. Look at Africa, 1.5 billion today, the young population, they will grow to 4 billion people. And they should also be able to fly once a year on a holiday. So, we will found airlines and how it is approaching the narrative of the economy is that we take all the old airplanes and we take off the commercials and we ship them and found new airlines, and all of a sudden, we have 1 billion new pas-



sengers that want to fly, we have made the problem worse. So, all our emphasis should be in progress of technology to invest in technology. And this is what the quantum economy is about. It's about an understanding to unleash the potential of technology, the positive aspects of technology, only by doing so can we cope with all the things that we have created. The only thing humanity has is progress; positive progress, infinite progress. And that's worth striving for, because that's when we learn, that's when we experience, that's when we have good feelings that we have overcome challenges. And this is what I want to do with you. Because I've been listening for the past two days and you are leaders of change. We gather here from all countries and a lot of young people are here today. If it's not going to be you, who is it going to be? You are here together, connected across borders, a very young audience. You are leaders of change. And I strongly believe that, not crisis and negativity will help us, I think we have to find an incentive for change. My wife was born in Mersin. But she has a Syrian heritage. So, we have some Arabic power, some fire, and I'm a cold Norwegian. What happens when ice and fire meet? It can be very explosive. It has advantages, but it also has disadvantages. When I say to my wife: "Crisis! You have to change now." She looks at me and says, "Can you please go outside and sleep for two weeks outside and come back when you're normal?" Right, woman? The only chance we can change something; I have to find an incentive, I have to figure out how I can move you into a positive change to change behavior, consumption, crisis of war has to come out of an incentive. Why should I stop? Why should I change my mind? That's the power of change. Those are very small things, small steps every day, and you are the leaders of change. And some of you might know these young boys, men. They're from my home country, Norway. A lot of snow. Yes, we have oil money, but that's not the answer. All of a sudden, a country like Norway, they're not very famous for their high-performance culture. All of a sudden, they have all these athletes; the best golfer in the world, top three tennis player, the best beach volleyball players are from Norway. The best triathletes, the best track and field runners... All of a sudden. It is not just in sport. They have the startups and the things that are coming in ecology, and I was very interested in how that came to be. So, I just wrote the book called The Norse Code about the secrets behind this success. But what intrigued me the most was; they are not only the best, they are the most liked. They are more popular from their opponents. They are more popular from referees and media. They practice team play, they come together and collaborate, even if they do individual sports. How can you create a high-performance culture and put in the action and have that rooted in values? And Türkiye has a lot of strong values, in the region, bringing the people together should be about that. How can we put in the effort? How can we build a high-performance culture rooted in values? I am, because you are. Right? It's an interdependence. We only exist in relation to other human beings. And I want to end this today, wonderful conference with some takeaways on how we can cope with the World and its uncertainties and how you can become a leader of change. Five things, I took out for this short session and number one is: practice analytical skills. Practice analytical thinking.

Learn how to love complexities. The World is not simple. It's very complex in many terms. If you learn how to love complexity, then you will learn how to navigate ambiguous situations. We need a high tolerance of ambiguities, and we also need to tackle the unknown. This is the world we live in. So, practice analytical thinking, not what to think. That's what we learned in school. This is 1973. This is right. This is wrong. Not what to think, but how to think. We need to learn how to learn. We shouldn't practice creativity. We should stop training not to be creative. Every child, if you have children, you know, we are born with an empty storage and we start to navigate. My little daughter went past the escalator a couple of months ago and she saw this big red button and she went about and said, "What does this button do, daddy?" And this is what we do and then we are trained to think like this and do this and have a role and be in structures. And that limits the potential of progress, united progress. Train analytical skills. Practice self-trust. Trust yourself, only if you trust yourself, can you trust other people. Trust yourself. Stand up. Speak up. Trust yourself. It's the core of united trust. It could only be about self-trust. We need people that take responsibility, that stand up for something. What are you 100% pro? Over the past two days, I heard a lot of things that we are against. OK, I agree. But what are you 100% pro? You get up and say this is what I am pro, this is what I want to do. And then you go out with self-trust and you act on that. And number three: we can only do this together. Nobel prizes are given to teams. Stand up and practice your voice. Speak out loud the old rhetoric: ethos, pathos, logos. Practice how to mobilize and activate people for your cause. We can only do it together. An ethical foundation. Two values, maximum three. We can't have 100 values. Two values, what you are about. I can wake you up at 4 o'clock in the morning and say this is what you stand for. Tell me. And then some pathos and the logical argument. And we can, of course, use ChatGPT and everything to train logic, right? So, it's all about practicing your voice and activating people. And I'll give you one Norwegian word. This is "dugnad". "Dugnad" is serving other people without any purpose, any reward, just believe that if I do something for someone else, it will serve the collective. If the collective grows, if the collective can participate, I can strive even more. This is the ethos of the Norwegian success formula. They are individual superstars, but they always go back and believe in the common good. It's a volunteering work, without work. It's what you do for others without any expectation. And again, here we are in a region, in a geostrategic region that has proven over and over and over again in history that we have people that are willing to work and do things for other people. This is the "dugnad". We can only do this together. The last one: "İyi eğlenceler" (Have fun), right? Yes. We should have fun. The most contagious virus in any culture for all the countries that you are in. If I visit your country and I smile, you will smile back. Maybe it's awkward because you don't know how it is when people will smile at you, but you will smile. It's a contagious virus. Negativity breeds negativity. The power of positivism... And coming back to my visit in Kiev, yes, I cried on stage. I had the feeling and then I go out and talk to the people and they are passionate to build and rebuild and they have the power and they put in the power every



single day. And I think, how the hell? Coming from Norway, I have not experienced any crisis in my whole life, and this, to me, is a vision that if they can, then all of us can. Put in the positivity, put in the progress and learn to enjoy progress. There are two types of game: one is that sport game like football. When Norway play Türkiye and we win. Yes? And you go home crying. That's a finite game. OK? That's a finite game. And we have a lot of finite games. In politics, the elections is a finite game. In business, it's about the milestones and the goals. But then you have the infinite game. And the infinite game is about playing, staying in the game. And this is life. Nothing in terms of ecology and business can be about finitude. It cannot be about absolutism. It can be about local and global, short term and long term. It's about staying in the game. And if we stop playing, we risk growing up. We risk getting old. And we should enjoy this wonderful journey that we call life. And I love technology. I love technology. I have invested in tech companies, in quantum tech and AI. I really believe in technology. But I believe even more in the "mensch", the human being. What does it mean to be a "mensch", a human? We always say now the human can focus on the relevant part, the important things. What is that? What does it mean to be a "mensch"? Have you thought about that? What distinguishes us from technology? As long as we cannot answer that question, we are in a good space. The void, that does not exist, right? It's kind of like, love. Love is such a concept that we cannot really figure out what it means. What is love? What is love? I fall in love. What is love? Love is a promise into the future. What is love? Love is an abundance of information; that is what I do not know. You fall in love and you know it will be terrible. There will be disappointments, struggles, challenges. But you fight through it. You take action and you do that and this wonderful little essence of being a "mensch". This is what it all now boils down to.

(A movie starts to be shown on the barcoveision.)

For education.

What does he get in return for doing this every day?

There you are!

He gets nothing.

He won't be richer.

Won't appear on TV.

Still anonymous.

And not a bit more famous.

What he does receive are emotions.

He witnesses happiness.

Reaches a deeper understanding.

Feels the love.

Receives what money can't buy.

A world made more beautiful.

Here's extra.

And in your life?

What is it that you desire most?

Thank you. What is it that you desire the most? What kind of world do we want to create? You have two days of Stratcom conference. What do we do? He (man in the video) receives emotions. That feeling, what it means to be alive. He reaches a deeper understanding, not knowledge, facts, data. A deeper understanding. He witnesses happiness. You cannot make yourself happy, you can only make yourself less unhappy by tackling the small problems. Be micro-ambitious. Look at the small things and fix them and put yourself in a position where you can be struck by something called happiness. He makes the world more beautiful for himself. We can influence the world, at least our own world. And he feels the love. He feels the love. And in your life... After two days, I think we can now take a common strategy. We have people here from 80 countries. It's a chance for us to take this year's Stratcom conference and create a new strategy. And the strategy should be about trust. Our theme for the conference should be about trust. Trust is not about transparency and validating data. If we have all the knowledge and all the data, it makes trust absolute. We need to work on the technical validation. But we also need to work on what we think that we can achieve together. And that comes from our actions and our belief that the future can be better, the belief that the person sitting next to you can be trusted again and again and again. And with all the disappointments; you grow, you learn, you move forward. So, can we please all agree that after these two wonderful days, let's trust in a better future. Let's trust that we can create better problems. Just think about how privileged we are to be alive and to be in a place where we are allowed to future, where we can shape at least our own reality. I wish you a wonderful night of reflection. And I wish you a wonderful journey of shaping this future that we can make brighter than it is today. Because you are the leaders of change. Thank you so much. Thank you.

# SC STRATCOM SUMMIT '23

Global Response to  
**Hybrid Threats**  
Stability. Security. Solidarity.

STRATCOM PANEL - 8

## New Conflict Areas, Crisis and Risks at 21st Century

**Moderator: Klaus JÜRGENS**

Director, Economyfirst Limited London

**Dr. Maria Saifuddin EFFENDI**

Pakistan National Defence University

**Jovana RADOSAVLJEVIC**

Executive Director, New Social Initiative (Kosovo)

**Dr. Daria ISACHENKO**

Türkiye/CATS Associate, German Institute  
for International and Security Affairs

**Dr. Yevgeniya...**

Senior Fellow



## Stratcom Panel-8

*New Conflict Areas, Crises and  
Risks at 21st Century*

25 November 2023

# New Conflict Areas, Crises and Risks at 21st Century



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## PANELISTS



**Moderator  
Klaus Jürgens**  
Director of Economyfirst  
Limited London



**Dr. Daria Isachenko**  
Türkiye/CATS Associate from  
the German Institute for  
International and Security Affairs



**Assist. Prof. Maria  
Saifuddin Effendi**  
Peace and Conflict Studies of  
the Pakistan National Defense  
University



**Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber**  
Senior Fellow from the Atlantic  
Council Türkiye



**Jovana Radosavljevic**  
Executive Director of the Kosovo  
New Social Initiative

# New Conflict Areas, Crisis and Risks at 21

**Moderator: Klaus JÜRGENS**

Director, Economyfirst Limited London

**Dr. Maria Saifuddin EFFENDI**

Pakistan National Defence University

**Jovana RADOSAVLJEVIC**

Executive Director, New Social Initiative (Kosovo)

**Dr. Daria ISACHENKO**

Türkiye/CATS Associate, German Institute for International and Security Affairs



## Moderator Klaus Jürgens

Hello everybody, good afternoon. It is amazing to have you all at this time, but I want to mention this, I think it underlines the relevance of the topic and the relevance of it to yourself for you to attend this panel in the two-day summit. I wholeheartedly want to thank the Directorate of Communications of the presidency of the Republic of Türkiye for arranging another stellar event. I think this is a really special event not only for Türkiye but on a regional, European and global scale. I really think this is amazing. Thank you. Thank you very much. Now you see here we have quite a handful of topics; new conflict areas, crises risks in the 21st century. Now this could fill a volume basically. We will be 10 minutes shorter than planned, we have factored this in, so I will not go into any detail. I just wanted to mention two points when I prepared for this panel; I thought, what a crisis is. When do they happen? And conflicts, do we talk about those of present? Do we talk about those of the past? Do we talk about those of the future? And if I'm not wrong, our panel will address all of these issues. Now there are various types; Humanitarian, terror, climate, energy, etc. our esteemed

panel will go into that. The only thing I wanted to add is. We should try and establish a certain link. Once we have a crisis or conflict, resulting very often in chaos at the same time, you need management of developments. Management needs leadership. And leadership requires communication skills, which brings me right to our point here, Strategic Communications in Times of Conflict or Crisis. Once again, welcome to our panel. We have 4 distinguished speakers. It's a real honor that I can facilitate our panel. We will start with Doctor Maria Saifuddin Effendi from the Pakistan National Defense University. I will introduce each speaker now. We have then Jovana Radosavljevic, the executive director of New Social Initiative from Kosovo. We have Doctor Daria Isachenko from the German Institute for International and Security Affairs and at the same time a CAT's researcher, which is the Center for Applied Türkiye Studies. And we have Yevgeniya Gaber a senior at the Atlantic Council here in Türkiye. Now, when we prepared, we actually did this together. I'm really grateful, Maria, you mentioned to me emerging challenges, global efforts to combat terrorism and the role of international organizations. And I believe you have a PowerPoint presentation at the same time, the floor is yours. Thank you.

#### **Assist. Prof. Maria Saifuddin Effendi**

Thank you very much. Selamünaleyküm, Merhaba and a very good afternoon, everyone. I'm truly grateful to the Directorate of Communications of the presidency of the Republic of Türkiye for having me over here, I feel privileged. Well, my presentation revolves around two points in the first few minutes, I would be explaining what were the global patterns of combating terrorism since 2001, and then I'll be talking about emerging challenges, which I do not claim that they are emerging or anything new, but they are in continuation of what we have seen and we had done in past 20 years, in the wake of war against terrorism. Well, the global patterns of combating terrorism since 2001, there have been numerous efforts that were made by United States of America along with the allied forces of NATO countries in various parts of the world, including eighty countries, such as the efforts made to strengthen law enforcement mechanism, border security managements, initiatives to prevent and stop terror financing, developing military bases or offering military bases and logistic support, massive amount of money was allocated for combating terrorism in terms of military and financially, there were some new advanced weaponry and surveillance systems, global resource pool of intelligence, information sharing and crisis response. I have gathered some data from Ghost of War Project, Watson Institute of International Public Affairs, which says that \$8 trillion was spent in 80 conflict zones in 80 countries, in which 900,000 people were killed. And the impact which was written in on the website of NATO, there was no direct attack from any NSA, any non-state actor or militant on any NATO country during that time period. But there was some growth or increase of non-state actors, militant groups, splinter groups. There were about 38 million refugees in eight countries, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Philippines and Somalia. In Afghanistan Pakistan region alone \$2.3

trillion were spent out of which \$300 billion per day was spent in Afghanistan just to lose the war on 15th August 2021 at the hands of Taliban. It is said that around 243,000 people were killed in that region. Civilians from Afghan Pakistan side, they were around 70,000 people in Pakistan alone. The total Pakistanis who were killed, was more than 66,000. Now, what was the impact? After 20 years of war, two decades, lot of destruction, devastation around 4 million internally displaced people in Afghanistan and out of which some 3.7 million Afghan refugees were in Pakistan. And we have just sent 1.7 million Afghans back to Afghanistan. 92% of Afghan population are facing food insecurity and there is a significant rise in terror attacks since 2021. It is said that there's a 60% increase. In the Iraq-Syria war zone, around \$2.1 trillion was spent. Around 200,000 to 400,000 people were killed. And there's a constant instability. And Middle East persistent groups and splinter groups as well. Now I would move towards emerging challenges. I identified six challenges. Number one is changing dynamics of war and conflict. So, I have taken two case studies. Number one is Israel, Hamas. I have seen certain changes and conflict since 7th October 2023 and in India, we have Illegally occupied territory that is called as Kashmir. And both these conflicts are 75 years old for Israel Palestine issue, I consider it right from the very beginning, from 1917 Balfour Declaration. But in case of Kashmir, I start from 1947. Now I would like to explain how the recent wave of conflict in Israel Hamas war can be referred as genocide. So, UN Genocide Convention of 1948 gives a very clear definition. In which it is written that Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intention to destroy, in whole or partially, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group under these five conditions, #1 is killing the members of the group. #2 is causing serious bodily or mental harm, so they would not grow up to their full potential, #3 Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, #4 imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, and #5 forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. Except the last two, the first three conditions are applicable and actually they fulfill the criteria when we take the recent wave of conflict in Palestine issue. If we take the first three conditions, there are around 1200 people killed in Israel, more than 15,000 people were killed in Gaza, including more than 6000 children, and 229 killed in occupied West Bank. How many people are injured? So, in Israel 5600. In Palestine, those who were left to live with disability or with their life in shambles,

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there are 36,000 people and 75% of them are children. In occupied West Bank, 2750 people. Now this is in continuation of what I have said before, to me, It's now less about Israel, Hamas and more about Israel versus Palestinian people, especially children. Nobody on earth would kill a child. To me, children do not belong to any territory, do not belong to any religion or racial group. Children can be referred as universal flowers. Whether if they belong to Palestine, Israel, Kashmir, Ukraine, Russia or anywhere. They deserve to live. They deserve to have a life of their own where they have all the positivity, progress, success and health. Now, I would take India as a case study. So, the conflict started in 1947. The Partition Plan, which is referred to as the Third June Plan of 1947, clearly stated that all Muslim-majority areas would form Pakistan, all Hindu-majority areas would form India, and all the princely states would form would join either of the dominions based on geographical contiguity and predominant religion. In 1946, there was this Cabinet Mission plan which emphasized that if the princely state is ruled by someone who has a different religion, they can always go by the majority population's religion. So, Kashmir at that time, known as the princely state of Kashmir, had a Muslim majority ruled by a Hindu Maharaja, and it should have joined Pakistan because of the geographical contiguity and, of course, due to the predominant religion, which was Islam. It did not happen and Kashmir was forced, The Maharaja was forced to join India. The first war took place between India and Pakistan in October 1947. After which the conflict, the war was over with the intervention of United Nation and from 1948 till 1957 United Nations had passed several resolution emphasizing upon the right of self-determination should be given to Kashmiris and they should be a UN sponsored plebiscite. It never happened. Instead of it, in 1949, India promulgated a law which is called 370, in which India granted semi-autonomous status to Kashmiris which meant that they could – Kashmiris, which meant hold the right of property and residency in that area. In 1954, Article 35A was promulgated and included in the Indian Constitution, which emphasizes the right of citizenship, write-off property and permanent residence in in that area. On 5th August 2019, India abrogated these two clauses from the Constitution which was a clear violation of UN Security Council resolution which came under the binding force, which were considered as binding force because they are backed by Chapter 7 of UN Charter. The UN resolution clearly stated that Kashmir is a disputed territory. There should be a plebiscite that should be conducted by India. And right of self-determination should be given to Kashmiris. Now by abrogating these two articles that is clear violation of UNSC. Now number two, so Israel model to combat Hamas may be replicated by other regional players that is India in Kashmir. Now it is already adopted by India. Since there have been resettlement, due to abrogation of these two articles, more people from other states of India are migrating to Kashmir and buying property so that will affect the right of self-determination and plebiscite whenever it will take place. Rule of international organizations in mitigating, I hope I'm not missing anything yet. Rule of international organizations in mitigating conflicts. The UN is very good at providing post-war peacebuilding programs, and UN peace-



keeping missions. But it has been ineffective in the case of the Rwanda genocide in 1994. What is happening in Palestine? It has been making efforts but they have not been effective as of now. And in Kashmir as well, we do have the just war doctrine, international law, international humanitarian law, are they powerful enough to hold Israel responsible for all the war crimes that it has been conducting for the past one month? Worlds and conflicts should not be calibrated on the polarized lens of global community to look at the conflict. If Russia has incited a lot of fear in Ukraine, in the civilians of Ukraine, it equally has been done by Israel, US and India. The last one, this persistent, protracted communal hatred which we are seeing for the past many years, for the past 20 years, but recently there's a significant rise, especially in terms of Islamophobia and anti-Semitic incidents in France, 1500 cases of anti-Semitism happened in last one month and as for Islamophobic incident, there's a list of them. The last one, the last challenge, the 6th one. What mechanism do we have when a non-state actor wins over the war and become a state actor like Taliban? We need to have our legal framework, a practical one where we can address them and not to deprive common people, civilians, not to have good economy, not to have right to education, the assets. The assets should not be frozen, there should be some adjustment within the international community by making those non state actors formally non state actors becoming a state actor to teach them to make them how to govern. And that's it. Thank you.

### **Moderator Klaus Jürgens**

Thank you very much, Maria. I think this was an amazing presentation including all the slides. Thank you very much. I don't want to go into details, picking on one point. But what struck me in the beginning was you mentioned the financing of terror and I think this is a topic. We could set up an entirely different sentencing without financing and money laundering and whatever trafficking you have terror would have it much, much harder. As I've said, I don't want to go into details and then Türkiye is in a specific situation now, but the financing and stopping the financing of terrorism is a key to stopping terror. I really enjoyed that one. Thank you very much, Maria Jovana. Now, you mentioned to me experience working in the world of NGOs and civil society, and I'm so glad that we have you on this panel because it is a fantastic dimension. We have state actors, we have political actors, you have the public, and all of a sudden, you have civil society, which is often overlooked and sidelined. And at the same time, you mentioned, of course, Kosovo, Serbia, and you want to talk about the securitizing of the whole issue if I understood you correctly, the floor is yours. Thank you.

### **Jovana Radosavljevic**

Thank you so much for the for the introduction and it's really an honor to be here and especially coming from civil societies it's quite a unique role to be in and kind of to give a different or just another outlook on the global challenges that we are facing. In my personal case, I am from the north of Kosovo, I come from the Kosovo Serb community, I have been

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Executive Director, New Social Initiative (Kosovo)



in the midst of the crisis that has been developing and growing in the past now 2 1/2 years. And so, I'm going to try to give examples from where I'm from and where I work in civil society and trying to build bridges between the communities and trying to raise awareness about the non-majority communities' concerns which are often neglected to kind of give or provide some lessons that I personally pulled out but maybe can be useful for the other parts of the globe. But what we have been seeing currently with the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue that we are in a serious deadlock and even though there has been a decade of progress which was made with the signing of the Brussels Agreement in 2013 and it really felt that the two sides were ready to move forward and find ways to live, If not together at least next to each other. And then, over time, with the increasing frustration of both Kosovo and Serbia with their EU, EU path and just the lack of the clear picture of the date when they would be joining the EU in case of Kosovo, also NATO and with the changes of leadership as well. In Kosovo, we have witnessed quite the opposite trend from before. So, in the current circumstances, we have two very strong leaders involved, Belgrade and Pristina, who are here to stay, and they are not looking into reaching a deal. Maybe they are actually looking into reaching a deal for the sake of appearing they are constructive, but they are not interested

in the implementation of the agreement and this is the key point. And there have very much taken advantage of the current global circumstances of what is happening in Ukraine and what is happening in Gaza and the fact that we have a number of very important upcoming elections in the EU and the UK, in the US, in Serbia as well, this December actually, they can further delay any sort of commitment to the implementation that has been agreed in the previous years and in the spring. So, the first lesson that I would take out is really that it takes two to tango. If we really want to see a deal made between two conflicting sides, there needs to be a will between the two sides to reach the deal. If there is no will, there is no way to make them do so. Maybe there will be incentives like the EU integration. A pact or any sort of other incentives. But in this specific case, this is not visible. Therefore, they're not really cooperative. And, of course, it is always so much easier to rule with fear than to rule with hope. It just requires much less energy than trying to convince the community in your constituency of

the kind of hopeful, better future that that you can bring them. And now here also we have the responsibility of the international community and the immediate areas in the process and how they appear and how they position and how principled they are in perception of the negotiating parties and that reflecting on the commitment of the sites. The other kind of lesson that I could take out from the Kosovo, Serbia dialogue is that quick solutions are not necessarily good solutions. Quick fixes lead to overlooking the key problems and the drivers of the conflict, and they'll come back to haunt us like what is happening currently in Kosovo. The Brussels agreement from 2013 seemed like a very important breakthrough moment, it was a historical moment. I felt it as a very positive step, even though I was personally skeptical of. But over time, it ended up crumbling down because the main community that was supposed to be the recipient of the benefits of the process of the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, all the integration process of the Kosovo Service in the constitutional framework, we're not feeling the benefits of it which led to the last fall's withdrawal from the institutions by Kosovo service in North Kosovo. The third lesson learned, and a very important one is about the local voices when they are ignored. It really leads to the antagonisation and radicalization of that specific community. If the local voices are not being listened to and they're pushed back and often labeled as being either manipulated but other larger interest groups, this leads to a consequent radicalization of this specific community. They feel left behind, they feel voiceless and also such behavior and such animosity. It leads

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to say, reciprocal radicalization of different actors of how we end up behaving with each other in this specific case. This reciprocity is happening with the level of coastal institutions and Kosovo Serbs. And this is where the civil society actually became important with that moment, what I mentioned, of course, was withdrawing from the institutions. They withdrew on all levels, from the political level to the police officers, judiciary, basically all of the institutions that in the past decade Kosovo Serbs integrated in, which left the community in the institutional but also political vacuum, a leadership vacuum. We did not have a voice within the community. This is where the civil society stepped in. And I think that we really played an important role in the process because we were able over time to really raise awareness about the concerns and the drivers of the communities' behaviors. And as I said before that the other lesson is that the unresolved conflict come back to haunt us. This is what really is happening currently in the case of course Serbia and it's really all tied together when you think of it that in 2023, 15 years after Kosovo proclaimed independence, ten years after there was a Brussels agreement signed, you would expect that we would be in a completely different reality, that we would progress. But actually, we ended up regressing, basically leaving us in an environment of a state of relations that is at the level of 1999. And finally, in the whole securitization process that is happening in the case of Kosovo, Serbia, but also elsewhere, the use of information manipulation is a very effective tool in pushing the political agenda of certain actors. I would conclude with this and hopefully I'll have a chance to speak a bit more, but thank you so much.

### **Moderator Klaus Jürgens**

Thank you very much, Jovana again. We will come back. Yes, of course. Just one point reflecting, you mentioned awareness creation and then you spoke about communication and you had various layers, the local communication then addressing issues, international communication and I think we might come back time allowing in the second round, what about intracomunity communication to build the bridges and eventually create peace. Thank you. Thank you very much. Now if I may continue, Daria. German institute we mentioned before International and security affairs. Now you mentioned to me. You want to consider global power balances and then very interesting, the rule of law, the international legal dimension. Do we need, do we have a rules-based order? I think that is very, very interesting, exactly like our two distinguished speakers, the floor is yours.

### **Dr. Daria Isachenko**

Thank you very much. Thank you very much for this kind invitation also to be part of this event. I would like to talk about all those things and especially about the point that has been raised yesterday morning. And as Minister Fidan aptly pointed out one of the major problems nowadays is the simultaneous coexistence of old and new threats, and this is what makes the current situation all the more serious, complicated and problematic to deal

with. So, I would like actually to focus on this part the old threats that are still there and what can we learn from them? Before I do, I would like to share three observations about the current situation in the world. First, perhaps the most frequently word that we hear nowadays is uncertainty. And in fact, the very first panel organized during this conference yesterday was titled The Age of Uncertainty, so uncertainty is there. Keep this idea in mind. I'll come back to that. The second observation is that there is now an increase in attention paid to a certain number of states. These are Brazil, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey. They are now called global swing states. A year and a half ago, some of them had frequent references to fence-sitters because they were not willing to follow this binary logic of you being either with us or against us. So, this discursive shift from fence-sitters to global swing states tells us that the weight of this state internationally has now been recognized and that their role actually will be decisive in how the future world order is likely to look like. Now the third observation is that there is now also an increasing debate about the rules-based order. Or other rules-based liberal order behind. The idea of this kind of order is actually a geopolitical argument. It is not about international law. And the question at stake here in the rules-based order is who is able to impose political and military will and whether it is internationally accepted? Now, if we take all these three observations together, the age of uncertainty, the decisive role of global swing state and the debate about the rules-based order, we are likely to come to a conclusion that the current uncertainty has to do with the fluctuating balance of power. Again, I would like to emphasize that it's important to recognize the difference between international law on the one hand and the rules-based order on the other, because if it would be a question of international law, then the situation would not have been that uncertain because either we have international law or we don't. But for this, there needs to be a stable balance of power.

Because international norms are in fact, the outcome of the power balance in the world politics. Now I would like to give you a couple of historical and contemporary examples, the very idea of sovereignty. So, as a student and a young scholar of international relations, I learned the most important date to learn is 1648 because this was when the idea of sovereignty emerged, something that we now take for granted, and this was a result of the 30-year war. It was the peace, the Treaty of Westphalia. So the sovereignty was an outcome of a political particular power balance in Europe back then. Then if you take the idea of

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self-determination again gained in force due to a particular circumstance after the end of the First World War. As a first wave and later in 1960s as the second wave when the Western European colonial empires also disintegrated. So, such norms like sovereignty, territorial integrity, self-determination, everything that we currently take for granted have actually emerged as a result of a power balance in a particular historical context and as a response to particular problems. What this illustrates is that right is always coextensive with might. Basically, your right extends only in so far as you might do, and vice versa. In other words, what you can do, you may do. This sounds like a call for action, but it's not. But this principle has been suggested by philosopher Baruch Spinoza, and this idea that right is coextensive with might actually explain how this relationship works. If they coincide, if might and right coincide then you have an internationally accepted norm. If right and might not coincide, then there is a contestation and instability potential. Most visibly, how this principle works, this coextensiveness of might and right can be observed in the border disputes. There are actually three ways how you can legitimize border changes. First is the UN Security Council resolution. Second is that you have the consent of the parties that mutually agreed to the change, and 3rd way is that you change the border by simply changing the border de facto and take the land and then make others accept it de facto. Now it's very difficult to find examples for the first way, the UN Security Council resolution. There are very few examples for the 2nd way where you have a mutual consent of the parties. And the vast majority fall into the third way where you simply change things. And in fact, what I'm trying to say is that possibly 2008 Crimea, 2014 are two sides of the same coin and this is what adds to the current instability because the power balance is unclear. And none of the players is able to claim that their might is constantly coextensive with right and vice versa. And I will end here.

### **Moderator Klaus Jürgens**

Thank you very much, Daria. Yes, please. A round of applause. Again, a lot of food for thought we are running a bit out of time. But my question would come immediately you mentioned the rules-based order. Now what happens when a state actor or non-state actor abuses? An internationally accepted rules-based order, which would bring us back to the humanitarian dimension. And we spoke a lot about Israel and Palestine. How do we cope with that situation? Thank you very much. Now moving on to the Yevgeniya. Thank you very, very much. While preparing, you mentioned to me there were hybrid threats. Yes? Do you think the topic of information operations as part of irregular warfare could be one of the topics you want to address? The floor is yours. Thank you.

### **Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber**

Thank you very much, Klaus, and thank you for the invitation. İletişim Başkanlığı başta olmak üzere bu güzel Stratcom forumunun organizasyonunda emeği geçen herkese gerçekten çok teşekkür etmek istiyorum. Ayrıca da Ukrayna'ya verdiğiniz önem bu zor durumlarda gün-



demde Ukrayna'yı tuttuğunuz için özellikle teşekkür ediyorum. (I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the organization of this beautiful Stratcom forum, especially the Directorate of Communications, and I would like to thank you for the importance you attach to Ukraine and for keeping Ukraine on the agenda in these difficult situations.) Now moving to what I was actually wanting to say and speaking about the hybrid threats, obviously I want to share some Ukrainian experiences and Ukrainian lessons learned. Because I think that in the modern time the very word hybrid and hybrid threats came to our vocabulary in daily life and mainly with the Russian hybrid warfare which is started first in Georgia in 2008 and then in Ukraine in 2014. But I would say even earlier. And referring to what many of my colleagues on the panel have said so far, because we do have these multiple crises at the same time and because we have to deal with so many different security threats in different countries, violation of territorial integrity, as Daria mentioned, and then all principles of international law being violated by some revisionist powers. That is exactly why we must make sure that we do address it in a proper way and that we don't find quick solutions, as you mentioned, but that we find just solutions that will bring us to sustainable peace. So obviously the topic of today's panel is new threats and new conflicts in the area. And here,

talking about Ukraine, most of us would probably think about the full-scale invasion which started back in February 2022. But in fact, for Ukrainians, that's the war that lasted for at least ten years now, because it started with the 2014 occupation of Crimea and then occupation of certain areas in the eastern regions of Ukraine. But even if we go further than that we can see that this is a much longer struggle of Ukrainians for independence and Ukrainian nation has been countering these threats for many decades. So, today, for example, we have a very difficult, tragic date commemoration of the 19th anniversary of the Holodomor in Ukraine. And speaking about genocide that is exactly what happened back in the Soviet times in 1932-1933, when millions and millions of Ukrainians were starved to death by the communist regime just because this method is also a hybrid warfare of starving people into submission is one of the methods that was used back then. And if you look at what happens now, for example with the disruption of supply chains and with the major food security crisis that unfortunately we have now because of the blockade of the Ukrainian Seaports and also because of the disruption of these chains by the floating minds that we have in the Black Sea, this is in a way the same tactic that Russia is using now in Ukraine that the same basic toolkit of stealing grain from the occupied territories, leaving those people without any means for existence. And then stealing this grain, selling it and using this money from the grain which was cropped in Ukraine for financing the military machine of the Russian Federation. And this is exactly what happened in 1932-1933, when the same money from the grain and bread which was collected from the people's houses was used for the so-called industrialization and buying equipment. So, I do agree with Daria here that when we have this old crisis and old techniques combined with the new ones, this is a particularly area where it gets really difficult to deal with them. And then I think Vasilisa mentioned today in her brilliant presentation, actually it was part of the film, part of the video, that we saw many things that wars start with explosions, wars start with silence. And I would argue that words do not start with silence. Wars start with major disinformation and propaganda campaigns to set the stage for full scale wars. So that's why it's extremely important to be aware of these hybrid threats, which we might take really very lightly and softly, not paying attention to them and speaking from Ukrainian. Experience. I can tell you that before we were attacked by Russian army on the ground, we were attacked by Russian armies of bots and trolls online. Before we actually got under this economic blockade, we were attacked and we were blackmailed by

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gas prices by those dependencies that we had in Russia, etcetera, etcetera. So basically, everything can be manipulated and everything gets instrumentalized and everything gets weaponized. If you look at propaganda campaigns in the media, of course. This is the major part of what Klaus asked me to talk about information campaigns. This is not as pure as just blaming someone for taking the first step to start an attack. This is very often about rewriting history. And if you look at the History of Turkish-Ukrainian relations and how Russian textbooks and very often in Ukrainian textbooks, by the way, because they were written in the Soviet times presented. Ukraine is a new country, 1991, quite unstable. So, it's all about this great power competition etc., whereas in fact the Ukraine had first contact with the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century and we have those traces. And now, for example, we don't even talk about the 30th year of bilateral relations officially counting from 1992 when we had this major treaty between Türkiye and Ukraine. But we were talking about restoration of these relations because back in 1918 we had major diplomatic ties with the then Ottoman Empire and basically Türkiye. So even in such small things when you try to rewrite history, when you try to revise the major narratives and when you try with reflexive control operations to make people react on something and not reflect, as we heard from the previous panel, that is where the problem starts, because it's all very effective. It's all very difficult because it's not tangible, so it's difficult to be aware of this. But then you know these four major elements of any reflexive control operation which is dismissed. So, reject all these facts and then distort the reality, distort facts, and then distract attention. And this is where all these multiple crises help distract attention from one point to another, from one country to another. And of course, dismay so intimidate people. But it goes far beyond just history and propaganda. It's also about culture and cultural influences. I do advise you to read more about, for example, the activities of the so called Russian House in different parts of the world. It's not only about Russia, it can be for example China with Confucius institutes etcetera, etcetera. But very often what we can or may take as cultural activities turn out to be disruptive activities inside the country. Economic dependencies, again, speaking out from Ukrainian perspective, we had Russia as a major market, which actually allowed Russia to play with what Ukraine wanted to do and put effort to do. And that did not end up really well. Gas dependency, energy dependency as well, that's a major hybrid threat, because Ukraine was heavily dependent on Russian gas and back in 2008, back in 2009, for example, this was the first time when Russia tried to freeze Ukraine during the winter time. And they're the same as what we see now when we have civilian attacks, Russian attacks on civilian and energy infrastructure. And of course, nuclear energy starting from the Chernobyl disaster, when Ukrainians literally learned about this disaster which happened in Chernobyl 3-4 days after it actually happened because we did not have access to what it was going inside and these were rather Western media that shared information than the Soviet regime which controlled the situation on the NPP and of course Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant now in Ukraine also being captured by the Russian forces. So, to wrap it up and to summa-

size it. If I probably recommend to have a couple of takeaways from this short presentation today it would be first of all, know your vulnerabilities. And that applies to each and every country. Know where your weaknesses are and then work hard to do something with them, because this is what will be exploited by any external actor that might be your adversary at some point. Everything gets weaponized grain, refugees, humanitarian assistance, and media. This is, unfortunately, the era we're living in. Second, decrease dependency on one certain source or partner. Diversify; energy, economy, military supplies, everything, because this is what makes you resilient. Build resilience and build strong institutions that would help you to defend yourself against malign influences. And of course, don't take any soft power issues and any hybrid threats softly or lightly, because this is unfortunately very often just to set the stage for a much hard power and much more tragic events and much more kinetic and military actions in the world of uncertainty that we're living in today. Thank you.

### **Moderator Klaus Jürgens**

Thank you very much, Yevgeniya. Yeah, now we could open another panel with this point but what struck me the most is I would continue by asking technically speaking, but I have the bad news in a second time wise. Good or bad communication and are only the good guys allowed to communicate? And then we come to terror financing and to social media, and the bad guys actually engage in communication at the same time. Now I have to engage in a rather disappointing communication, at least with our panel is concerned. I would like to thank you. It was a fantastic panel and maybe we can have another round of applause to our four panelists. Thank you. And the panel is closed. Thanks.



**SC**

## Stratcom Talk-6

***New Technologies and Artificial Intelligence***

25 November 2023

# New Technologies and Artificial Intelligence



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## SPEAKER



**Kalev Hannes Leetaru**  
Founder, GDELT Project



Thank you so much. It's truly an honor to be here today. So, the focus of my work really is around this idea of how computers can look across the world and help us peer into the soul of what it means to be human. To look across the world's rich, diverse societies and narratives, to look at not what divides us and tears us apart, but what brings us together as a world. And to visualize those stories, whether to look across, whether it's social media or books or, academic literature or even Wikipedia. And this led to this question, this vision of, what if we could take everything said across the entire planet on a single day and visualize the global conversation? A vision today which spans more than 400 languages. Television is one of those fascinating areas in which AI has had the biggest impact on our ability to look at video. The Internet Archives, Television News Archive spans 100 channels from fifty countries for over 5 continents over portions of the last 20 years, but journalists and scholars historically have never been able to look at these archives to try to understand our shared world because we've lacked the tools to look across speech and imagery from across the entire planet. Now, television is particularly powerful in trying to understand our world. If

you look at this image here, so this is how often each country in the world was talked about on American television news from 2009 to 2016. Now if you look at this image, this is Google searches by Americans in 2016. They're the same thing. This is fascinating. This doesn't tell us whether news drive searches or vice versa, but it tells us that what the news talks about is what people search about. So, televisions are a particularly powerful lens through which to understand the world. Now, how do we use television to try to understand the world? We can just keyword search the transcripts. So, we can do things like this. We can look at, for example, how often Gaza is mentioned on American television news and a selection of global news, and we can see the slow decline in coverage of what's happening in Gaza. Or we can look at, for example, the on-screen text and of course, former President Trump in the United States; he liked to tweet, as you may have heard. And so, we scanned American television news for every appearance of his tweets on television. And we're actually able to use this to show that every time Twitter flagged one of his tweets and said this is false, that amplified it and drove the news cycle the following day. And so, it turns out he learned this and he learned that all he had to do was tweet something that was blatantly false, Twitter would fact-check it and the entire following day would be coverage of that. So, he could literally remote-control our entire media system. We could also do powerful things like connect the online and the offline world. So, CNN broadcasted this clip during COVID and just said somewhere in Russia. So, we took that clip, scanned the entire Internet and was able to find the original source of that and the complete description of it. Now, this is powerful because a lot of falsehoods are out there, and they're real material in the incorrect context, so this ability to connect it lend provenance to the information we're consuming. Now, starting with the invasion of Ukraine, the Internet Archive began monitoring Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian television, and we've been live transcribing and translating that material so that journalists and scholars can study the domestic narrative. How are these stories being told? And then something amazing happened. New tools for speech recognition came out. So instead of dozens of languages, we can now recognize hundreds of languages, and particularly multiple languages. So, this is a clip from Chinese television, English, Arabic, and Mandarin, all in 60 seconds and all the transcribed. We've never had tools before that could do things like that. Now, of course, what makes television so interesting is the visual dimension. So, we've been using AI to look through the visual dimension of television. So, the one thing is, simply, we took a year of Russian television and folded it on itself, took each second, and compared it to every other second. So, we could actually trace how clips were being reused, but then we could also find common metaphors, so visual themes, color schemes, and visual styles that are used to convey certain tones on television. But a more interesting question, of course, is who's telling the story. So, we were asked, how often



does Tucker Carlson appear on Russian television? So, we we did a facial scan of Russian television made a timeline up there, but then we said it's not really how often he appears on television. It's who's telling the story on Russian television. And so, we took one episode of a 60-minute show on Russian television, extracted out every human face and faces that appeared on screen together and we made it into a network. But then we scaled it up even further. We looked at an entire year of it, 50,000 minutes of airtime. A quarter of a million human faces. And you can see Olga, she's the the main presenter, they're in the center. So, it's the ability to really visualize who is at scale, who's telling the stories that we see. Now, of course, it's not just who's telling the stories, it's what stories are they telling. So, computer vision, computer tools that can understand vision historically recognize about 30,000 objects and activities. And so, this was enough to say during COVID, what's different about television compared to pre pandemic, the answer: bookcases. And we can do interesting things. So, every day we scan global imagery for disaster imagery so we can sort of ground truth what's happening around the world. And it's enough on Russian television to track the density of military imagery. So, you can see in the beginning the invasion and then as they lost ground, and then as they began regaining, you can actually see that reflected in there. But that's still very limiting. So along came tools where you can actually type in a description in plain English of what you want, and the machine will find imagery that matches that, like soldier in front of a Russian flag. But you're still limited to a human typing it. So, what about the inverse? So, we handed one of these new machines, a picture of a golden retriever and said, describe it. Everything you see there was generated by the machine. This is where we're at today, what machines can do for us. But that's still one image. So, we had a machine watch and entire day of Russian television and it described it was seeing second by second. And then during the Turkish earthquake, we experimented and we said, what would it look like to have a machine absorb all this information coming from across the world and summarize it basically. And you can see it's actually looks pretty good. This is all done by a machine. But of course, that's still a textual summary and what we probably want to do is codify that. So, we also said give me all the different material, just make a table of it. And so, this is literally the machine just looking at everything pouring across the global new sphere and summarizing that. And then we could break it down to customized summaries such as medical or search and rescue information. Break it down by organization. We could even have it fact-check it, so we could say here are known falsehoods, scan all this material automatically, right counter narratives in completely in real-time. But that's still factual information. It turns out machines can read between the lines just like we can. And so here we had a machine. We said take everything said yesterday about China country by country, summarize it, tell me whether it portrays China strong or weak, whether it's good

for my country or bad for my country. This is where we're at. Machines can actually do this type of stuff now. You can even do specialized things like for example summarize global investment at Türkiye yesterday, the ability for machines to just absorb so much material and distill it down for us. But still, why summarize? Why care about this? Because we want to do something with that. Well, we took a machine and we said pretend you're the US State Department, and we had it watch Iranian television day in, day out, and look for any mention of the nuclear accord and counter it according to the American narrative. What you see here, this is all generated by a machine. And this is either incredibly powerful or incredibly scary depending on where you sit. But automated diplomacy is here, and even generated imagery to go with each of those stories. Now translation, remember I said English and Persian? It's amazing, these tools. We're not Google Translate anymore. These newer tools can generate translations that are human-like fluency, but not just across languages. You can stay within a language. You can say, here's something in English, convert this to a different audience, for example, maybe children, or particular constituency, you can even say here is my corporate voice, like here's a style guide from my organization, and have it rewrite it in the same language but in a different voice. All of this is possible today, but here's where things get really interesting. So, we took a day of Iranian television, foreign and domestic television for them, and we extract out an image every few seconds. And we made this visualization of one day of Iranian television, and you can dive in. You can actually see how they're telling the Gaza story. And it's really fascinating. You start looking at what visual narratives are. How much imagery are they showing? How much are they telling the story through images versus through people telling the story? And turns out there's some fascinating trends there, but that's one country on one day. How about three countries on one day? Russia, China and Iran. And it turns out there are three parallel media universes, with almost no similarities between them. But as you dive further, it turns out they're telling the same stories, but from such different perspectives you wouldn't even know they're telling the same story. So it reminds us just how much our unique media ecosystems define how we see the world and that we need to look beyond our own lenses, especially in the West. But that's still three channels on one day. What if we took the entire planet on one day? So, this is one entire day of everything we monitor across the entire planet, every tendril there is an arc of stories and then we could scale up and look at three different days. And we can see they look a lot alike with some differences. We can start seeing the fundamental patterns of our entire global media ecosystem. Now we're way up here, basically. Now we can dive into one tiny corner there and see one day of global COVID vaccine coverage, and we can actually start diving into seeing the first glimmers of tomorrow's falsehoods. And they actually are galaxies. They're basically falsehoods emerge and they hit each other and they pull apart. They start



blending together. And we can visualize that, but then we can dive further to the people, the places, the things that define those stories, and even further to the words that are used to describe those stories, and then even further to the influencers that are driving those stories. Now we can dive even further and look at the overall tone of the entire planet's media over the last quarter century. We can see it's pretty stable until the 1990s. This is the rise of the web. As the web rose, media across the entire planet began competing with each other. And so suddenly that's where we start seeing the surge of negativity, of hyperbole, of extreme language. So really, it wasn't social media that made the world a dark place. It was the rise of the web itself. And then we can actually start visualizing how the world's media portrays every country on Earth. Not how people in those countries feel, but how the world's media portrays them. You can see there's a lot wrong with this picture. And then we could actually start looking at the fundamental patterns of media. This is powerful because we can take a story that's emerging right now and we can analyze it and tell you whether this is an organic story or whether it's being driven by propaganda forces across the world. We can then dive even further and look at the earliest glimmers of tomorrow's biggest stories and even forecasts of what's to come. And in fact, the first alert of COVID actually came from our data when it was still a SARS, like Viral Pneumonia of Unknown origin. But I want to leave you with a note of caution. So, you're hearing a lot right now about the hype and the hyperbole of AI, and hearing a lot right now about machines, like they're going to take over the world and enslave humanity. You're seeing a lot of these demos, the challenge with these is they're like a roulette wheel. Every time you run it; you might end up with a brilliant answer that's incredible and the next time you run it, it'll be complete gibberish. That's because these machines, they're not really thinking, they're just basically generating things that kind of look like language. And so, every time you see these stories of; My God, this machine did this amazing thing, this amazing feat of superhuman intelligence. It's probably not what you think. Now the real danger is the simple things. These machines, they make things up. For example, the Chinese spy balloon. We had a machine, one of the big ones, actually I believe it was ChatGPT and it summarized that. It became a thermonuclear capable hypersonic missile, aimed at the American homeland. In one summary, America lies in ruins and our submarines were going to sea to strike back. This is a real problem; you know it's great if you're a Hollywood filmmaker. It's a real problem if you're trying to use these tools to summarize the news. And bias is a big issue I want to mention here. These tools are being made by largely Western companies with Western values encoded in them. So that means in particular when you ask them things like about, for example, something like Islam, the answer is what they will give you, the answers that they give you, and what they will refuse to talk about reflect how an American Western company views the rest of the world.

And this is a real problem as we start applying these tools to the entire planet. And I want to thank you so, so much. It's been a true, true honor to be here today. I know I've covered a tremendous amount of material really, really fast, but I hope this has given you a first glimpse of what becomes possible tomorrow as these AI tools continue to evolve. Thank you so very much.

# SC STRATCOM SUMMIT '23

Global Response to  
**Hybrid Threats**  
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STRATCOM PANEL - 9

## New Dilemmas of Strategic Communications: Information Security and Transparency

Moderator: Eldor TULYAKOV

Executive Director, Uzbekistan Development Strategy Center

**Oliver MCTERNAN**

Director and co-Founder,  
Forward Thinking

**Assoc. Prof. Nozima MURATOVA**

Head of Research and Innovation University of  
Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan

**Javid MUSAYEV**

Head of the Communication Policy Sector, the Presidential  
Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**Nicholas BR...**

Communications Consult...



# SC

## Stratcom Panel-9

*New Dilemmas of Strategic  
Communication:  
Information Security and  
Transparency*

25 November 2023

# New Dilemmas of Strategic Communication: Information Security and Transparency



  
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## PANELISTS



**Moderator**  
**Eldor Tulyakov**  
Executive Director of the  
Development Strategy Center  
of Uzbekistan



**Javid Musayev**  
Head of the Communication  
Policy Sector, Administration of  
the President of the Republic of  
Azerbaijan



**Oliver McTernan**  
Director and Co-Founder,  
Forward Thinking



**Nicholas Bruneau**  
United Nations Communication  
Consultant



**Assoc. Prof. Nozima  
Muratova**  
Vice Rector, University  
of Journalism and Mass  
Communications of Uzbekistan



### Moderator Eldor Tulyakov

Hello everyone. It's very hard to be one of the last, but we will try to talk about the main points of the security issues in our session about the concepts of information security and transparency. Which are the cornerstones of strategic communication. So, we believe the importance of reconsidering strategic communication in the context of information security and transparency, in terms of protecting reputation, building trust and achieving strategic goals will be conveyed. So, for our session, we have several items for discussion, for example, today's challenges in balancing information security and transparency, the role of information security and transparency in strategic communication. Moreover, we will be talking about the information security and strategic communication in crisis. Communication strategies based on transparency and information security will also be covered during this session. And for that, let me please introduce the panelists here with us today, Mr. Oliver McTernan, Director and Co-Founder of Forward Thinking. He's the founder of the Helsinki Policy Forum, which conveys policymakers, parliamentarians, diplomats and economists from the MENA Gulf region and Europe to analyse the challenges facing the region and to explore

informed policy responses. Then we also have Nozima Muratova, Associate Professor, at the same time, the Vice-Rector of the University of Journalism and Mass Communication of Uzbekistan. She is the country Ambassador of the International Association for Media and Communication Research and member of the National Association of Mass Media Researchers and the Association of Women Scientists. Next is Javid Musayev, who worked as a diplomat in various embassies of Azerbaijan, including Brussels, Netherlands, Iran and was a representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe. Currently he is the head of the communications policy sector of The Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the last speaker is Nicholas Bruneau. He's a communication advisor of the UN. Nicholas is a communication strategist with decades of experience. Nicholas has worked for inter-governmental agencies from the UN, World Bank, EU, as well as nonprofits, associations and political groups. So due to the time constraints, I assume we should have around 6 minutes for each speaker and then in the end there might be some points for further clarifications or discussions. So now let me please give the floor to Mr. McTernan. The floor is yours.

### **Oliver McTernan**

Good. Thank you very much moderator and thank you for remaining with us for. There's an old saying they keep the best wine to last, so hopefully we will be able to prove that. There was a great 19th-century English intellectual, John Henry Newman, and one of his famous insights, I think, when he said to live is to change, to be perfect is to have changed many times. Those words underlie the fact that change is essential to a human experience. And the ability to adapt, to transform our lives is essential to human development. But I fear what hasn't changed in the course of our human history is the human ability to deceive or be deceived. I think deception has been a constant throughout our human experience. And I recall 2000 years ago, the Roman governor Julius Caesar. When presented with alternative narratives, put that question; what is truth? And I think that's a very poignant question today, given Jerusalem being the site of that question originally. But what is truth? It's a question I think we have to ask ourselves every single day when we open our phones to look at social media. When we turn on the television or when we pick up a newspaper to read. All of us are susceptible, I think, at best, to be misinformed and, at worst, to be disinformed. Disinformation is the means to achieve deception. And I think it's that awareness that should make us acutely aware of the importance of always being ready to ask the right questions. Now, another point, I'm trying to go through these quickly because of our time limitations. What hasn't changed? As I mentioned at the beginning, what has changed is the means and the pace, the speed of communication. The means of communication and the speed by which we can communicate today have presented us, I think, what we could call an information overload. And I think that fact makes it much more difficult for us to be able to discern what is truth and what, in the today's jargon, is fake news. But again, when you're faced with an overload of information, it is so easy for that to hinder our ability to come to a right analysis. Very often the analysis we frequently hear repeated in the media I would say is based

on sound bites. This became very clear to me last night when I turned on CNN coverage of the release of the hostages from Gaza and the release of the Palestinian prisoners. What I could hear was so different from my own experience of having spent nearly 20 years going to Gaza and what I heard of Hamas, I felt what we were getting is the sound bite analysis. And, of course, in a propaganda war, it's so useful to those who want to present an aspect of truth. The challenge we are always faced with is the aspect of truth. The single perception of what is happening becomes the complete truth or the full truth. So, I think in addressing our issue on the need for strategic communication, it's very important to frame it with that awareness. Now essentially, I would say everyone needs a strategy for communication. Whether you're a big government or whether you're a small organization like Forward Thinking. We cannot exist in today's world with the rapid speed of change, with the information overload, without having a clarity of who we are, what we're trying to achieve and how best to communicate that. So, I think first and foremost, what is essential is to have a clear vision of what you are about and what you want to achieve. Once you have clarity about who you are and what's your purpose or aim as an organization or a government, I think then you're in a position to plan. And then the plan is how you implement or how you set about achieving that clarity of vision or idea. And the plan, I think, then needs a mechanism and awareness of how you communicate it effectively to those who will be your partners in achieving this purpose. So, I think we have 3 clear steps, clear vision or idea. A clear plan of how you can implement it and a clear strategy of how this can be communicated to others. And the strategy, I think, is of utmost importance when you are faced with either opposition or misunderstanding. Unless you have clarity about that, I think you risk being misunderstood or sidetracked. But one thing, and the reason why I started with change as being an essential part of our human experience. If in either of those stages, there's a rigidity, there's a lack of openness to adapt, a lack of flexibility, then, I fear our communication strategy is likely to fail. I think awareness of the rapid change in life, requires also an inbuilt flexibility in our vision to review it and adapt if needs be in our plan, equally to renew it and adapt according to the challenges and opportunities we face. And then in the strategy, how to communicate it best again in light of feedback we receive, whether it's being understood or not understood. Now I would

“So, I think in addressing our issue on the need for strategic communication, it's very important to frame it with that awareness. Now essentially, I would say everyone needs a strategy for communication. Whether you're a big government or whether you're a small organization like Forward Thinking. We cannot exist in today's world with the rapid speed of change, with the information overload, without having a clarity of who we are, what we're trying to achieve and how best to communicate that.



like to end by just addressing the particular points we were asked to cover in this session. One is the need in all of this to protect reputation. In my experience, there is only one way we protect our reputation, and that's by integrity. We have to check our facts. We have to be who we say we are. And we have to be sincere in what we set out to achieve. Second is the building of trust. And the only way we can build trust. Be it with particular partners or a wider community that we wish to get buy-in from and be partners in the process of change is to be totally transparent. We have to be who we say we are and we have to be truly aiming to achieve what we claim we're trying to do, the change we're trying to affect. Without that transparency, in my experience over the years, it's impossible to build a level of trust. Why should people go along with us? Why should they change if they cannot have confidence in the person trying to offer that direction? And the last issue I'll conclude with is information security. The moment you talk of transparency, of course, the question arises, how do you protect certain things that are essential? To your organization or to your government? In general, I would say it's an illusion to think we can keep secrets in this day and age. I work with my team on the understanding that nothing is a secret. Nothing we communicate is privy to us alone. But certain people, you presume, have access to that. So again, I stress and underline the need for transparency. But also, I believe, we have established a policy that outlines the information we need to know. Sometimes, if you're too transparent, you



communicate too much information. There is always that risk that spoilers can use it. If you don't communicate to people the information, they need to know in order to be efficient and to buy into what you're trying to achieve, I think the real risk is that people won't trust and why should they? So, it's getting that balance, I think in discerning on a need-to-know basis how much you communicate and how essential it is to keep it confidential. And that is usually, I think, the judgment rests when what you share impacts lives of others. So, it's a fine judgment. It does require discernment, but I think it's essential that if we're going to develop an effective communication strategy. Thank you.

### **Moderator Eldor Tulyakov**

Thank you, Oliver, for sharing your points on this very important and sensitive topic, you're right. That overload of information makes it harder to make decisions. And I believe the speed of information transfer and the technological development makes it even harder to make those decisions you mentioned about the plans, about the strategies. I hope that these types of events will help us to compare those plans and unite efforts to communicate better and more effectively. Thank you very much once again. Now I would like to give the floor to Professor Muratova. Please, the floor is yours.

### **Associate Professor Nozima Muratova**

Thank you very much. I have a presentation and as you can see the strategic communications in my presentation, I tried to underline the words of safety of people and society, at least any kind of strategic communication directly focused on safety of people and society. And we as a media, I would like to say as a former international journalist and media manager in media outlet and now a researcher in media, I should say we still have such kind of challenges as a passive audience who are becoming the active participants in media environment and quality of journalism. Nowadays, when we are talking about the quality of journalism, we should say that it still has principles that which were important years ago, but in a new environment, forms and, content, and engagement of the audience are different. I won't mention here about the artificial intelligence because previous panelists talked about it a lot and in this kind of environment, we should always think about how the media should communicate and what kind of strategies they should have. And my speech will be about this kind of issue, so it will be more for the media outlets. Here you can see that our strategic communication, Stratcom has keywords; stability, security and solidarity. And I should mention that this is true for all of these participants. The keyword depends on participants themselves. Previously, we talked about communication from one side, and media now are not the agenda setters, and in this environment, we should mention influencers. All of these participants are the part of strategic communications and that's why I write here everyone who has engaged in the media environment has a right to information and they are the part of strategic communication. That's why I would like to underline two focuses. First is the quality of journalism. The second is media information literacy. The most important topics

for strategic communication now are the kind of terms you use, you can see here; information security, social media security, fake news, misinformation, disinformation. These words you have heard today a lot of but in the past this was the terminology of professional journalism. But now it depends on the media literacy. It is important for each of us. Even when we are not journalists, even when we are not communicating in a public setting, even when we are just sitting and looking through our devices and gathering information, trying to communicate with the Telegram, Instagram and other kind of social media these points, these words are very important for each of us. That's why I'm thinking and talking about these two topics, media information literacy for everyone and quality of journalism. What is the component of media information literacy for strategic communication, why is it important and what we should do? First of all, it's an adaptation period and we should pilot the guidelines for media all over the world to promote media information literacy levels. In

*“Even when we are not journalists, even when we are not communicating in a public setting, even when we are just sitting and looking through our devices and gathering information, trying to communicate with the Telegram, Instagram and other kind of social media these points, these words are very important for each of us. That's why I'm thinking and talking about these two topics, media information literacy for everyone and quality of journalism.”*

case of user generated content, every media organizations nowadays are working with user generated content and the level of this content depends on the media information literacy or that person's society. Second one is the developing media information literacy policies in media. It's important that we need to facilitate accurate coverage of the issues by developing of media information literacy. And next one is review and renew existing national media policies and communication strategies, to what extent these policies include media information literacy. Working with just the media communicators or strategic communicators or media outlet, it's not enough. Every country should have a media policy which include the media information literacy components. Here you can see a quote from Jose Manuel Perez Tornero. He is the director of UNESCO and chair of media information literacy for quality journalism. And he said we are not just soloists in social concerts. In order to achieve the harmony and balance in media environment, we should participate together. Here I would like to underline one interesting fact in Uzbekistan more than 60 percentage of population is young generation and now when you are asking about the way you get the information, they're not saying the names or brands of media outlets. They're not saying the names of the BBC, CNN or our other TV Channels. They're saying that they get their information from Telegram, from Instagram, and it's very important thing to think for media outlets because we are losing our names, journalists nowadays cannot provide information through their media. They are providing this information by the social media, which is not recognized by



the young generation. That's why I would like to talk about the media components for strategic communications. It's a four main points. First of all, it's a media today should develop tools and policies to deal with fake news and counter with misinformation. And these tools should be open for everyone, not just for journalists or media outlets. Everyone should have the knowledge and capacity to use these kind of tools. Second one is the developing of anti-fake platforms and fact checking platforms. It's also should be generated and open for all of the participants of information processes. Next one is very important for me and I'm now working on it. How media outlets should develop or renew their policies inside of the media outlet that respond to the challenges of contemporary problems. We have a lot of problems, As I mentioned about these policies before, we should think about them when we are forming any kind of media. When we are working as journalists in this media, we should know what kind of media policy it has or that media organization. And next one is the consolidation of all participants of the media environment and the information exchange process for the trust. Trust is the first keyword for all of today's speeches. The media don't react now to the events or situations; they interact, and, in this interaction, the participation of the audience is very important. That's why we should think about the strategic communications as part of media component. And how these two ideas, these two keywords, could develop at equal levels. Quality journalism and media literacy have equivalent values and objectives. Both must respect people's autonomy and critical sense. Both pursue truth and verification of information. They are promoting public conversation, dialogue. And they both also defend pluralism and diversity without any kind of censorship. It means that when we are talking about the quality of journalism, we should also mention that it is equal to media literacy and when talking about the media literacy, we should mention that it is equal to the quality of journalism, but today we are trying to discard the strategic communication and it's importance for these two keywords as well. Thank you very much for your attention.

### **Moderator Eldor Tulyakov**

Thank you very much for your thoughts. Yes, media literacy is very important. It's important both for the consumers of the information and for those who communicate. I agree. As for Uzbekistan, you rightly mentioned many young people use Internet platforms. That's why we see the increase of Internet media in Uzbekistan from 395 in 2016 to 745 now. So, it's almost a 90% increase. Now let me give the floor to Mr. Musayev, he will be also talking about this topic, but very specifically he will be talking about the information security and strategic communication in crisis.

### **Javid Musayev**

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Tulyakov for the kind presentation. I also would like to join my previous speakers by thanking the organizers of this marvelous summit for the warm hospitality. It's my pleasure and honor to be here with you. Well, obviously, before proceeding with your questions, I carefully listened to our previous speakers. I took some notes and

I have a short brief on the general matter I would like to talk about, with your permission of course. Now we are living in a very changeable globe and we have the notion of, the study of strong state. And of course, the strong state has its own indicators. The classic indicators are to have a strong economy, to have a strong and very good social welfare, strong military and security potential. And nowadays we have one indicator that is strategic communication and both guests that came to today's panel called it the dilemmas of strategic communication, information security and transparency. It's really a dilemma since, on the one hand, we have transparency, which is a very integral and indispensable part of this strategic communication, but on the other hand, we have information security. And when we speak about the information security, it means information environment, just to secure the informational environment of your people first. Secondly, you have to provide the security of the informational base and data from external threats. Yes, it's mostly related to technical side like cyber-attack, viruses etc. And so, we have to create genuine and fair informational ecosystem being far from the disinformation, misinformation and fake news. And both comes to your question, information security and strategic communication in crisis. The crisis and these topics are in fact, different from case to case. I don't want to annoy the audience with the theological approach. I think a practical approach has always prevailed, the theoretical one. And for the audience I think it would also be interesting. Just that I wanted to make one parallel and example the Karabakh war as a crisis and how we overcome this crisis by using strategic communication. This example, I believe, will be interesting to you. I will try to draw the strategic communication map of the Republic of Azerbaijan during that crisis. Just imagine it's the 27th of September 2020, just after the next provocation of Armenia, Azerbaijan started operation towards liberating its occupied territories and we faced a very huge fake news, propaganda and disinformation attack from Armenian side. Just imagine on the one hand there is Armenia pretending they are the victim on abroad, but internally they disseminated information as if Azerbaijan is losing the fight in the battlefield. By the way, it's a good strategy as a psychological attack. This is the first. Secondly, we acknowledged and we understood we're faced with the problem of unnecessary flow of information in social media. So that was the challenge for us in that period, during that crisis, the government took national security as a priority in the strategic communication. In this situation, the government was forced to limit the speed of the Internet in order to create the stability and security of its own internal information database. And by the way, by doing this we limited the stress from the social media. OK, so you limited the speed of the Internet. You secured your information database. Another component of this communication is transparency and openness. You should think about this as well. What we did was, we opened our door to the international media. Because in all crises the information support is very important, we invited all foreign media to Azerbaijan. We created for them all possible opportunities to work as an independent foreign media to reflect the reality. They were familiar, and they were the real witness to how Armenia launched the Ballistics rockets to our military cities, which were located far from the battlefield. In that respect, the transparency and openness



are very, very important. So. Every single day. Even twice a day, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan organized a briefing. As they updated their foreign media, local media and the people about the updates on operation, all ambassadors, all military attaches accredited in Azerbaijan were invited to those briefings. By the way, we should thankfully mention the name of the Republic of Türkiye, how they supported us for fighting against disinformation, misinformation and fake news during that period. We have to mention the names of the journalists, foreign journalists, who almost sacrificed their life in pursuit of enshrining the truth to the international arena. And by saying this, of course it will be better, it will be possible to mention social media participants who were in Azerbaijan during that time frame, and enshrined the reality of the situation. Briefings. It's important. Working with foreign media is important, but one thing is very essential. You should have a strong political voice who can speak on behalf of the state. This voice in our scenario was the president of Azerbaijan, İlham Aliyev. Just imagine for forty-four days, he gave personal interviews to more than 35 foreign media sources like BBC, CNN, Iran News, Al Jazeera, and Al Arabiya. I heard the France 24; thus, I was not listening the media resources of the Türkiye because our brother Türkiye was with us from the very beginning with their media outlets like TRT, TRT World and their global media Anadolu agency. So, what we had, we had the foreign media on the battlefield and we had the president as an official informational source. By the way, by saying the classic media, we have not been forgotten from the social media, the president in the forty-four days tweeted 140 times. That is the state of communication in a period of the crisis, so that was our formula of victory, to be transparent, timely and proactive. I don't want to waste your much valuable time. I think it's better to stop myself here before you stop to listen to me. Thank you.

### **Moderator Eldor Tulyakov**

Thank you, Mr. Musayev, for sharing the experience of Azerbaijani strategic communication. I personally know very well how media is very active in Azerbaijan, they always try to involve experts from around the world, including from Uzbekistan, from the region, on different important points. Thank you once again. Now I would like to give the floor to Nicholas. But before that, I want to mention some facts. According to the World Fact Book, 66% of the world's population is actively using the Internet, and the average daily social media usage of Internet users worldwide is 144 minutes. So daily social media usage. Moreover, according to Statista, at the same time, number of TV viewers worldwide from 2019 to 2028 is not expected to rise dramatically. Because it's around 5.2 billion the statistics showed in 2019 and they are expecting only 5.7 billion in 2028. So, I believe, Nicholas, you could develop further during your speech these points as we discussed earlier. Please, the floor is yours.

### **Nicholas Bruneau**

Great. Thank you very much. I think in Türkiye it's about 85% penetration for Internet users according to the population. So, I did want to start with a question. First, where, and if we

can have a raise of hands, where did you get your online news this week? Was it directly from a news website or a news app? Or was it via social media? If we can ever have a raise of hands for those who got it directly from a news app. Of course, the journalists. And anyone else? OK, so we have about maybe 10- 20%. And how many of you got your news the past week via social media? And social media includes YouTube, includes WhatsApp, includes Telegram. So, we have maybe a 30%. So, this is quite close to the international standards now. This is the latest survey from Reuters that was done with the You Gov that shows basically how social media is now accessed, for news, via social media is now 30% of news consumption, so it's really the driving force more and more for people to get their news. And actually, you'll notice that even higher than traditional news is search. So, I think we haven't spoken very much about the impact and the importance of search. But when you are looking for something, what do you do? You will probably go to Google or to social media to find out. TikTok is also now with the growing short-form video, TikTok is becoming more and more prevalent for news as well. This is a global survey once again by Reuters. Showing 18 to 24 age people using TikTok for their news. And the next slide is about Türkiye. Looking at the landscape for social media in Türkiye, what do you think is the number one social media channel for news in Türkiye? If I could have any guesses here. So, I don't see any guesses but these are the rankings where you will see very clearly that YouTube and Instagram are the number one sources for news in Türkiye, and this is from a survey once again done this year by Reuters. So out of all the users that use social media, about half of them will get their news from YouTube. And about almost 40% from Instagram. So, what does that mean essentially? So essentially, what we're looking at is a situation where traditional news is now second to social media. And what that means is that more and more we are being influenced not just by journalists, but even more so by personalities, by celebrities and the people that we follow on social media. Right? And I think that you know we have seen the impact during the pandemic, for example, of the fact that the people that we follow are sometimes, the people that we get our information from when we talked about the disinformation doesn't. So, 12 influencers who were responsible for about 65% of the disinformation about COVID, a very small group, but because of their impact and because of the fact that many people rely on social media for their news, it is becoming more and more dangerous. We can add to this the increasing polarization of society due to echo chambers. So of course, we know that the social media algorithms are creating a situation where we are seeing more and more content from only the people that we agree with, and it makes it much more difficult to solve problems and have conversations. So, what do you do? I've put together the top five proven steps that which are essential for any communication strategy to be proactive in this situation. First, of course, is to plan ahead, I think many of us have a crisis communication plan, but we don't necessarily put it into practice. We don't necessarily have the procedure in place or everything already planned or the spokesperson already prepared and have the tests ready in advance. So, this is of course key in order to have the building blocks to have the pre-approved messages so that your stakeholders right away will know and that par-

ticularly if you work for a government institution so that you have the basically the documents and the procedures already in place to quickly act. The second point is to collaborate internally. Now we have seen, thanks to the pandemic, the need to collaborate and to work closely with experts, with scientists to get the right information, with the various areas of the community, whether it's the political community, the scientific community or the technical community, now one example of how you can develop an internal expertise is here, WWF Germany was able to develop their expertise with their internal experts and then promoted which basically encouraged them to have a presence on social media, working with them collaboratively so that they would be spokesperson on different issues for their organization and allowed them to be much more politically involved on social media. Also, the European Commission brought together various experts to deal with the pandemic. So, their response to the COVID outbreak was to bring together scientists, to bring together numerous people to have very quick debunking of disinformation. So, the more you are proactive, the more you bring together these kinds of experts before a crisis, the more prepared you will be. The third is, and Oliver will agree with me on this one, is to build trust. I think it's important to think like a journalist. I think many of us are now more and more so we are media organizations, as a ministry, as an organization, we are more and more producing content that needs to be checked and needs to have the same rigorous standards as journalists and we need to make data available. So that people can cross check the data and to basically work also with fact checking organizations so that there is a collaborative relationship. And of course, to work directly with the social media groups so that when there is a crisis, you are able to get directly in contact with X or meta or the different groups. Because you are having already developed those channels of communications with them. An example actually I skipped ahead a little bit, but the data journalism is growing and so the more data you're able to showcase the more transparent your organization will be and the more it will be respected by a growing field of data journalists. The fourth point is to be digital first. So, we need to think differently because as we have seen social media and the digital world is basically changing the way that we communicate and changing the way that

“Now we have seen, thanks to the pandemic, the need to collaborate and to work closely with experts, with scientists to get the right information, with the various areas of the community, whether it's the political community, the scientific community or the technical community, now one example of how you can develop an internal expertise is here, WWF Germany was able to develop their expertise with their internal experts and then promoted which basically encouraged them to have a presence on social media, working with them collaboratively so that they would be spokesperson on different issues for their organization and allowed them to be much more politically involved on social media.”

people consume media. So, we need to think digitally. We need to use social listening tools to be able to understand what is happening. If we do have various echo chambers, various groups speaking, what are they speaking about? How can we better understand? And then how can that help us to shape conversations that respond to their concerns? So, the World Bank that I used to work for uses Talkwalker, but there's many other tools. Like they're noted here Audience, Brandwatch, Uscan and that allow you to have a strong social listening strategy, which will then allow your organization to be more relevant on social media and to address the concerns that are out there. And that leads me to #5, which is to amplify. Once you know what your audience is concerned about, or what they're talking about, or the disinformation that is prevalent on social media. You're able to react, so you're able to, if you need to act very quickly to use promoted posts, AB testing to really find out what your audience is going to be interested in hearing about, but also to create videos like for example, the World Health Organization are regularly doing videos to debunk myths and doing this in a proactive manner. More in a reactive manner, the UNICEF during the pandemic was engaging with influencers to create to collaboratively create videos that allowed them, because they already had the data from Talkwalker, from the social listening tools, they were able to react together with influencers and have very strong videos that allowed them to connect with the audiences. Nowadays, you know, we don't want to connect on social media with an organization; we want to connect with people, and the influencers have that impact; they are able to connect directly with various audiences. Of course, it has to be the right influencer that speaks to your audience that you want to reach. I am not talking about speaking and getting a famous superstar or the Kardashians or something like this as you can see. And UNICEF, these were national influencers. And I think that you know, one of the things that we've learned and we've seen in the talks today, so the talk with Anders Indset. Where he spoke about the importance of using compassion and humanity to confront hybrid threats. Well, at the end of the day, maybe, you know, if we are able to use technology to be more compassionate, to be more human, then this is the result that hopefully we can achieve. Thank you very much.

**Moderator Eldor Tulyakov**

Thank you. Thank you, Nicholas. Yeah, ladies and gentlemen, we tried to discuss the information security, transparency, strategic communication, privacy, openness. Of course, these topics are very broad topics and there are many debates about these issues. So we have to balance them. From one side we want transparency, but from the other side of course, we need to talk about the privacy issues, some security issues, so I hope that these topics will be further discussed in the future events but because of the time concerns, I want to thank our dear speakers for their contributions very much and on behalf of our panel. I also want to thank the Directorate of Communication of the Presidency of Türkiye and for organizing this event at such a high level and for their hospitality. Thank you again.



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# Stratcom Speech-7

*Exploring The Uncharted Path of  
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25 November 2023

# Exploring The Uncharted Path of Technological Advancement



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## SPEAKERS



**Hakki Alkan**  
Founder, ShiftDelete



I stand before you here today, very happy and proud. There are two main reasons for my joy. The first is this event, hosted by a prestigious organization. The second is that our video content has now amassed over a billion views. I am thrilled that this milestone coincides with today's event. As of today, I address you as a tech publisher and influencer. Earlier, I was moved by a speech delivered at the start of this event. A particular statement by Mr. Fahrettin Altun, who gave the opening remarks, struck a chord with me. He said, "This marks the end of the world as we know it," which sent shivers down my spine. In this transformative era, I'm eager to share some insights on communication strategies. Embarking on digital publishing was a challenging journey for me. It was tough to convey the essence of my work to people, organizations, and especially my target audience. Because it was the first time I was doing this, tech publishing. I stand before you now as a content creator who uploaded the first video to the internet in Türkiye that was created exclusively for that medium, and 18 years have passed. That endeavor has now culminated in a billion views. We have also evolved into a global platform with content in English. Of course, during this time we

gained a lot of experience and learned many things. We've passed on these learnings to the next generation of publishers, who are excelling in their craft.

So what have we done differently? Reflecting on our digital-born and digitally-nurtured platform reaching a billion views, our key strategy has been to engage in person with our digitally-connected audience. We've met with our viewers in cities like Ankara, Hakkari, Trabzon, Samsun, Kırşehir, Mersin, Adana, and even internationally, creating meaningful connections. Their feedback has been instrumental in our success. What else did we do that was unique? Most of our contemporaries closed their offices, downsized to individual content creation; while their views may be 100 times or 1,000 times less compared to us, but producing content by integrating the national and cultural values of our country has been a cornerstone of our success. Let me illustrate this with an example. As advocates of the National Technology Movement, we've resonated deeply with our local audience by showcasing Türkiye's technological innovations. Our passion has been infectious, inspiring new enthusiasts and engineers to delve into this sector.

TEKNOFEST is renowned as one of the largest global aviation and technology festivals. Since its inception at Istanbul Airport, we've been keen observers, witnessing firsthand the aspirations and enthusiasm of our audience. But our insights extend beyond these revelations; we keep a pulse on technological advancements. This year's focus is on "hybrid technologies." I'll first delve into the aspects that are beneficial to us. Then, I'll discuss the challenges and risks they present. Our journey began in close collaboration with leading tech corporations. Google was among the first. Google, and later Facebook—now known as Meta—granted us early access to their innovations, sometimes weeks or months before their global release. We tested these tools, provided feedback, and witnessed their worldwide adoption. I want to emphasize our dedication to this collaborative effort. This included a plethora of publishing technologies, from live streaming and interactive features to messaging and subscription services. Moreover, our engagement on Meta and X, under their rebranded identities, has been remarkably effective. This success has led to certain expectations in the current era. Our foremost hope is for these platforms to maintain local offices and foster closer ties with their regional teams. Being influencers with a billion views does facilitate our dialogue with these entities. Regrettably, others striving to leverage cutting-edge technologies don't find it as accessible. Bridging this gap is our primary expectation. Yet, we aspire for something even more significant. That is, for these platforms to operate as entities that prioritize people and ethical standards.

There's an additional concern. Surprisingly, when we, as a digital-first publication, address this issue, it often catches many off guard. And what might this issue be? Screen time. Specifically, the increasing duration our audience spends on digital devices is becoming a concern for us as content creators, communication-driven companies, and individual pub-

lishers. This issue has prompted serious reflection among operating system developers and traditional publishers who once sought to draw these individuals to digital platforms. As you may have noticed in recent years, the “screen time” feature is now a staple in our phone settings. Mine is a bit high. I can’t guess what yours are, but it’s not uncommon to see figures like 10 or 11 hours. A pressing concern is the excessive screen exposure among youth, leading to diminished concentration, motivation, and increased isolation. This has become a significant issue. Naturally, the objective is to reduce screen time to a healthy level. Numerous educational institutions, both locally and globally, are actively working to address this challenge. I think we need to take measures in this regard as well. Educators addressing this topic, particularly with young people, must be well-versed in the subject matter. The Directorate of Communication, in collaboration with various organizations, is making strides in training these individuals. We anticipate seeing the positive outcomes of these initiatives.

Yet, another challenge looms on the horizon. The very technologies we’ve benefited from could pose even greater challenges in the next six months. Allow me to elaborate on one such impending issue. The phenomenon of “fake news” or “disinformation,” while currently a concern, is expected to intensify significantly in the next six months. First, let’s acknowledge the positive aspects. While emerging technologies should not inherently be viewed as threats, vigilance is necessary. Now, there is no denying that there are advantages for us. For instance, our team consists of 40 talented content creators. We’ve begun producing content in English. Our website ranks among the top 100 most visited in Türkiye. Globally, we’re within the top 3,000. The content production that our team of 40 accomplishes could soon be expedited thanks to cutting-edge technologies. To give you an example: Imagine a young individual in Adiyaman, or anywhere else in the world, who at the age of 14, or even 11, could produce two device comparison articles in about 2 minutes—articles that would take our editorial team several days to create, all through the use of an artificial intelligence platform. Initially, the news piece and the article are prepared and ready to go. Yet, the capabilities of AI platforms extend far beyond just this. With roughly five minutes on an AI platform, one can transform that article into a podcast. This podcast can then be converted into a YouTube video, complete with a chosen image, a personal photograph, or even a virtual avatar. Tasks that traditionally took hours or days can now be accomplished in mere minutes. Furthermore, this content can be translated into any language within approximately 10 minutes.

We should view this as a promising opportunity. Why is this an opportunity, you might ask? It’s because our local content creators are dedicated to producing work that is deeply human-centric and mindful of the public conscience. This approach is particularly evident within our public institutions. Our private sector companies also showcase commendable examples. Public entities like Anadolu Agency and TRT, along with private broadcasters, place a high value on this matter. However, this technology is not without its potential pit-

falls. A significant concern is the production of false content, which can be used for character attacks or to generate material that undermines national security and incites social unrest. Therefore, our strategy should not be to combat technology itself but to address the adverse effects of artificial intelligence, which could have destructive consequences in the next six months, through vigilant technology use, adherence to standards, and collaborative efforts. The conference I'm currently addressing is a pivotal step in this direction. At this international forum, experts have convened and formulated a declaration. It is expected that this declaration will evolve into a set of standards. Indeed, this was a crucial initiative that was necessary. It is essential for consumers of AI-generated content to recognize that what they are viewing is a product of artificial intelligence. This awareness is among the most critical measures to implement. Our nation is making positive strides in this regard. The event I'm participating in is a testament to these efforts. On a related note, I have some encouraging news to share: The Directorate of Communications has recently issued us a license. With this license, digital content creators are now empowered to produce their work. This is great. It's important to note, however, that there are those who may frame this development as a form of oppression. I think it is better to put it this way: Rather than distancing ourselves from these advancements, we should embrace them more closely. Confronted with the imminent surge of fake content and character smears, one might wish that protective measures and licensing had been implemented sooner. Hence, I believe this licensing should serve as a model for numerous content creators. Content crafted under these licenses is likely to hold greater significance.

But there's more to it. Another necessary action is at hand. We should regard the content creation ecosystem as an industry in its own right, akin to defense, agriculture, or the education-tourism sectors. Like these sectors, support is essential for sustainability, human-centricity, and conscientious service to the region, the nation, and the world at large, fostering development and a robust future. So, what form should this support take? The defense sector is a prime example. Finance is another. Establishing incubation centers or funds could be a significant move toward cultivating this ecosystem. Türkiye has the potential to back organizations that could set a precedent in our region and globally. Indeed, our private and public entities, particularly the Directorate of Communications, are making commendable strides in this area.

Yet, we face a considerable challenge: the scarcity of skilled human resources necessary for producing enduring content. In order to solve these problems, unfortunately, we do not always achieve the planned results when including our students who are trained in the relevant departments of universities in content creation teams in both the public and private sectors. Thus, fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem in this domain, with backing from private entities, the public sector, and the Directorate of Communications, will be pivotal. The field of communication holds as much importance as industries like defense,



agriculture, and transport. The world doesn't suffer from a lack of production but from the persistence of hunger. It's indefensible that in an era rich with technological advancements and progress, such issues persist; it's intolerable that vulnerable groups, particularly children, women, and the elderly, endure harm and loss of life, as Mr. Altun recently highlighted.

By spreading knowledge, benevolence, art, and empathy worldwide, we can combat these adversities. Communication stands as the pivotal force in this context. It's imperative that we monitor the technologies integrated into communication closely, foster their local and national development, and prioritize a human-centric approach in our content creation. Although we continue to produce content related to technology, even though our area of expertise is technology, we've taken proactive steps to contribute. What actions have we undertaken in this regard? Born and nurtured in the digital realm, we're now laying the groundwork to mentor the next generation in tangible, physical environments. We've embraced the concept of coworking spaces, a global phenomenon, and have begun establishing our own. These working spaces are being opened not just in major cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, but across Anatolia, particularly in provinces affected by earthquakes. "Co-Founder. Work" marks the name of our initial three branches. In order to train new talents in these physical spaces, in cases where the universities I just mentioned are sometimes lacking in creating this trained human resource; this time, we will try to train our new colleagues there as part of our "Co-Founder Academy" so that experienced people in this profession can train our new colleagues by observing certain standards. With the Directorate of Communications at the helm, we plan to collaborate with seasoned entities from both the public and private sectors. Your support is also very important here.

I am about to conclude my remarks. This event has facilitated the exchange of crucial perspectives with distinguished attendees. It has also allowed us to physically connect with colleagues we've previously known only through digital channels. My gratitude extends to all organizations that have convened us here and endorsed this event, particularly the Directorate of Communications, the press members, and you, our esteemed audience, for your attention. Thank you.

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