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INFORMATION THREATS AND THEIR IMPACT FACTORS IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract:
This article analyzes various information threats in the context of globalization and highlights the main factors influencing their effectiveness. By examining the accelerated development of modern communication technologies and the expansion of digital infrastructures, the paper identifies how disinformation, cyberattacks, propaganda, and other forms of information aggression can compromise the stability of societies worldwide. With an emphasis on the conceptualization of information threats, this study explores the mechanisms through which these threats are disseminated and leveraged. Drawing upon scholarly sources, the discussion outlines practical strategies for strengthening resilience to information hazards at the individual, institutional, and international levels.

Keywords. Globalization, Information Threats, Disinformation, Cyberattacks, Communication Technologies, Propaganda, Media Literacy, Social Stability, Digital Infrastructure, Resilience.

Introduction

The rapidly evolving process of globalization has been transforming societies worldwide, impacting economic interdependence, cultural exchange, and technological innovation on an unprecedented scale (Held & McGrew, 2002). One of the defining aspects of this globalization trend is the proliferation of information flows across national boundaries. New communication technologies and ever-advancing digital infrastructures have rendered geographical distances nearly irrelevant in the dissemination of data and ideas (Castells, 2010). However, the same technologies that promote connectivity and collaboration can be subverted, resulting in a wide spectrum of information threats.

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Information threats refer to manipulations, attacks, or systematic operations that intend to undermine, destabilize, or exploit the informational environment of individuals, institutions, or entire nations (Kavalski, 2012). Disinformation, propaganda, and cyberattacks are only a few examples of these threats, all of which are markedly amplified by globalization. The fundamental challenge lies in the difficulty of distinguishing reliable content from misleading or malicious information in a highly fragmented and dynamic media space (Benkler, Faris, & Roberts, 2018). As societies grow more connected, the channels for dissemination of harmful content multiply, and the effect of manipulative or weaponized information can be both immediate and far-reaching.

This paper delves into the broad phenomenon of information threats in the context of globalization, highlighting the main methods through which these threats operate and identifying the factors that enhance their efficacy. By reviewing leading academic sources, it seeks to provide a framework for understanding the diverse manifestations of information aggression and for developing strategies to counter or mitigate them. From the use of new media platforms to the psychology of influence, the main objective of this study is to elucidate the interplay between global interconnectedness and vulnerabilities in the information domain.

This study is based on a qualitative synthesis of existing literature, including peer-reviewed journals, policy reports, and authoritative monographs. A theoretical approach is employed to model information threats, drawing upon scholarship in the fields of security studies, communication theory, and political science. Numerous case examples illustrate how various nations and non-state actors implement or fall victim to information threats, and how these threats are shaped by technological advances and social changes.

As information warfare intensifies, examining the roles of both state and non-state actors in disseminating manipulation becomes integral to safeguarding public discourse, maintaining national sovereignty, and preserving social cohesion. By identifying the key impact factors of information threats, this paper suggests possible solutions or resilience mechanisms that can be implemented on multiple levels – from policy-making and public institutions to individuals' critical thinking skills.

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Main Part. Information threats encompass a range of practices that utilize communication channels to harm or manipulate targets (Floridi, 2010). Generally, these include: Disinformation – the deliberate creation or sharing of false or misleading information to deceive audiences (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Propaganda – strategic communication efforts designed to shape perceptions or direct behavior in favor of the communicator's objectives (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2018). Cyberattacks – malicious activities targeted at digital systems, including the spread of destructive malware, hacking attempts, and denial-of-service campaigns (Rid, 2020).

In a globalized setting, these practices are not restricted by national borders, enabling perpetrators to reach distant populations within seconds. The growth of social media platforms, online forums, and encrypted messaging services has created numerous vulnerabilities. A single piece of content can be amplified instantaneously by automated bots, cross-platform sharing, and user interactions (Tufekci, 2017). This phenomenon indicates that while the internet fosters greater connectivity, it also generates an environment where information threats proliferate at unprecedented speeds.

The digital revolution and improvements in communication infrastructures serve as primary facilitators of global connectivity (McLuhan, 1964). However, the same forces expedite the emergence and escalation of information threats: High-speed Internet – reaching previously isolated communities, forging new pathways for cultural, economic, and social interaction. Mobile Technologies – intensifying the "24/7 connectedness" phenomenon, giving malicious actors ample opportunities to influence target audiences. Algorithmic Personalization – tailoring information flows to users' preferences, thereby creating "filter bubbles" and echo chambers (Pariser, 2011).

These trends shape how swiftly harmful content spreads, how selectively the audience receives it, and how difficult it becomes to correct false claims once they have been widely circulated. Significantly, this environment promotes the rapid social contagion of fear, panic, conspiracy theories, and manipulative messages (Sunstein, 2014).

One of the most notable contemporary problems is the systematic use of disinformation to steer public discourse or to sow confusion among citizens: Social Media Manipulation: Coordinated campaigns employing false accounts (bots,

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sockpuppets) to artificially amplify a message or discredit opposing viewpoints (Howard & Kollanyi, 2016). Fake News Websites: Pseudojournalistic outlets that publish sensational or fabricated stories to garner clicks, revenue, or political gains (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Deepfakes: AI-generated videos or audio that realistically mimic real individuals, dangerously undermining trust in visual and auditory evidence (Chesney & Citron, 2019).

Disinformation is frequently used to exploit social divisions, instill distrust in institutions, or galvanize extremist movements (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). Globalization boosts disinformation's impact, as it can instantly cross linguistic and cultural barriers, hijacking local political or social tensions for foreign or extremist agendas.

While hacking and cyber sabotage are not strictly new phenomena, the scale of potential targets in a globally connected system is astonishingly large (Nye, 2017). Cyber threat actors operate from diverse geographies, using sophisticated tools to intrude on critical infrastructure, steal valuable data, or disrupt services. Key points include: State-Sponsored Attacks: Nations engaged in espionage, intellectual property theft, or sabotage on foreign networks, often for strategic, technological, or economic advantage (Healey, 2013). Cyber Criminal Gangs: Organized groups seeking financial gain via ransomware, identity theft, and other malicious tactics (Wall, 2017). Hacktivists: Ideologically driven hackers who conduct cyberattacks to spread political or social messages.

The interconnected nature of financial systems, energy grids, communication networks, and governmental infrastructures means that a successful cyberattack can have knock-on effects across multiple countries (Lewis, 2019). Moreover, these attacks often exploit social engineering – tricking individuals into sharing credentials or sensitive data – which intersects the realm of disinformation and psychological manipulation.

Propaganda, in the contemporary environment, is no longer limited to wartime leaflets or traditional media broadcasts. Instead, states and organizations can harness global digital platforms to shape narratives across various cultural zones. Propaganda moves more freely in a globalized system, as controlling the origin and authenticity of digital content proves challenging. In some contexts, state-sponsored propaganda merges seamlessly with disinformation or cyber infiltration to produce synergy in achieving influence.

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As high-speed networks and smartphones reach more regions, potential targets of information threats grow. Social media and real-time messaging are especially prone to emotional contagion, rumor propagation, and the rapid sharing of manipulated content (Kratcoski & Polakowski, 2018). Alongside easy accessibility, anonymity on the web lowers accountability, enabling malicious actors to hide their identities.

When societies are divided along ideological, ethnic, or religious lines, disinformation campaigns and propaganda can easily exploit existing fissures (Sunstein, 2014). By framing messages that resonate with a group's biases or resentments, malicious content gains traction. Political polarization fosters "echo chambers," reducing the willingness of audiences to critically evaluate the information that confirms their views (Benkler et al., 2018).

Human cognitive biases – including confirmation bias and the bandwagon effect – amplify the potency of false or manipulative information (Kahneman, 2011). People tend to accept information that aligns with their preexisting beliefs and swiftly dismiss contradictory evidence. This phenomenon, combined with the emotional appeals often embedded in disinformation, facilitates the viral spread of manipulative content.

While certain audiences may practice critical thinking, large segments of the global population remain insufficiently equipped to assess the credibility of sources (Boyd, 2014). Education systems frequently lack comprehensive curricula for media literacy, leaving people vulnerable to illusions, rumor-driven narratives, or superficial arguments. The absence of robust media literacy undermines individuals' ability to cross-check conflicting claims.

Conclusion. In a globalized environment, information threats have become increasingly sophisticated, as they exploit the interconnected digital framework for malicious ends. Disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, and propaganda converge in a high-speed, highly connected media landscape, undermining social trust, democratic processes, and institutional legitimacy. Key factors exacerbating these threats include rapid technology development, social polarization, cognitive biases, and low levels of media literacy.

Nonetheless, the very mechanisms that facilitate these threats can also be harnessed to build resilience. By prioritizing media literacy, encouraging responsible journalism, refining social media algorithms, and establishing robust institutional

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policies, societies can mitigate the potential damages. Public awareness campaigns, fact-checking initiatives, and multinational cooperation serve as essential pillars in crafting a resilient information environment.

The lessons learned thus far emphasize that, although globalization magnifies information threats, it also offers unprecedented opportunities for collaborative strategies and real-time sharing of best practices. Strengthening resilience requires the coordinated efforts of governments, private sector leaders, academic institutions, and civil society. As technologies and tactics evolve, so must collective defenses. By recognizing the interplay between global connectivity and information vulnerabilities, stakeholders can shape a future in which the benefits of open communication are not overshadowed by manipulative or destructive information campaigns.

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