

Escalation of disinformation and propaganda around the war in Ukraine

Disinformation and propaganda, together with cyber-attacks, in the war in Ukraine, are causing enormous damages with devastating effects on the public opinion. This war is not only fought with missiles, bombs, and tanks, but also by spreading fake news, computer viruses, disinformation and propaganda.

And therefore, we must look at the conflict between Russia and Ukraine not only as a rapid evolution of events, but as a very articulated and certainly much more complex operation than we can imagine. The so-called "Cyber war" is evolving and to a war of disinformation.

There is a question we must ask: are the news really useful to ordinary people or are they instruments of manipulation in the hands of others, of people to whom disinformation would be convenient?

Another aspect that is emerging from misinformation is that it seems that this conflict has started a long time ago, with a single more subtle and concrete objective, namely: to destabilize Ukraine from within, to weaken this country by trying to gain a certain reputation in the West, revealing how the invader (Russia) worked in the shadows for months before preparing to launch the final attack.

The propaganda used in this phase by Russia has been and is one of the deadliest weapons of this conflict, by spreading absurd and paradoxical messages, promulgating that it is under attack not only by bombs, but also by the dissemination of false information.

It remains to be understood how such an articulated system of lies can work and, in this way, break through people's minds, especially in an increasingly disoriented society that no longer knows who to believe.

It is not so simple to deal with such a complex issue, but we can humbly say that fake news reaches its goal when it encounters a weak and narrow-mindedness, which often leads to laziness in not wanting to acquire further knowledge of the facts, but also to a certain irresponsibility when it is necessary to distinguish what is true from what is false.

Some states have understood this threat and have tried to enact laws to contain this phenomenon, but it has turned into a weapon of mass destabilization, creating unprecedented social tensions in commenting on this absurd war.

It is also true that the average attention span that people dedicate to analyzing the information they receive is very low, and it is obvious that spaces are created in which there is always someone who is ready to fill it through doubts, inferences, with real falsehoods created when necessary precisely on this ongoing conflict.

In summary, the danger of disinformation and propaganda has in fact become a real weapon of war. I say this because as the clashes continue, it appears increasingly clear that a war of information and propaganda at various levels is also taking place in parallel; everything has become propaganda, and everything has become counter-propaganda.

The tension is so high that unfortunately between these two countries of the OSCE region that the news, true or false, has truly become an integral part of the war strategy. It must therefore be said that the danger of propaganda, as well as State propaganda and disinformation, certainly represent the most dangerous phenomenon of all, capable of overthrowing a political balance, even creating a State consciousness, and reducing the concept of freedom of expression, of media, in general, and, in any case, obscuring a society oriented towards democracy and finally limit the truth.

In conclusion, it is necessary to say that the OSCE PA should absolutely increase co-operation with the states of the region on the subject, urging the same parliamentarians and national parliaments to find ways to protect the dissemination of correct news at all levels, from social networks to the print media. That is because the disinformation has no borders and does not depend on the importance of a country and its size and can produce harmful effects and become a transnational issue.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has always promoted recommendations and must also pay particular attention to this challenge, address by increasing co-operation within this Region.