

The Growing Role of Media in Managing Security Crises

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What Role for Media in Security Crises?

Introduction: Security crises and the potential role of media

Security crises are often overlooked in the study of armed conflict because of their less dramatic consequences compared to wars. Wars, however, rarely arise out of the blue. They usually constitute the “final episode” in a process that begins with a conflict of interest, leading to disputes, then crises, and ultimately, armed conflict (Bremer and Cusack, 1995). According to Vasquez, wars “do not break out unless there has been a long history of conflict and hostility between disputants” (Vasquez, 1993, 75). A crucial underlying assumption here is that suspicion and threat perceptions are enhanced during crises. Bolstered by the increasing influence of hardliners domestically, conditions become ripe for the onset of hostilities. Political scientists have not reached an agreement on the definition of security crises, but Lebow suggested three operational criteria for identifying crisis episodes, which appear to be satisfied across the majority of case studies in the relevant literature (Lebow 1981, 10-12):

1. Policymakers perceive that the action, or threatened action, of another international actor seriously impairs concrete national interests, the country's bargaining reputation, or their own ability to remain in power;
2. Policymakers perceive that any actions on their part designed to counter this threat (capitulation aside) will raise a significant prospect of war;
3. Policymakers perceive themselves to be acting under time constraints.

Security crises constitute instances where psychological variables cannot be ignored. Holsti (2006) suggested that cognitive approaches would be most useful when employed in situations characterized by stress, or by complex, ambiguous, or unanticipated circumstances. If one or more of these conditions are met, decisions are likely to be heavily affected by “cognitive maps,” the set of psychological predispositions of decision makers. Conditions characterized by stress:

increase cognitive rigidity, reduce the ability to make subtle distinctions, reduce creativity, and increase the selective filtering of information. Stress also affects search, and results in the dominance of search activity by predispositions, prior images, and historical analogies rather than by a more balanced assessment of the evidence (Levy and Thompson, 2010, 156).

In a nutshell, theory suggests that:

1. actions of states during a crisis determine whether the incident actually escalates to open warfare (Fearon 1994); and

2. crisis decision-making is particularly vulnerable to misperception, and thus miscalculation, which may lead to inadvertent conflict.

Possessing accurate perceptions, therefore, during a tense crisis can be paramount to avoiding unwanted hostilities. Considering the intrinsic characteristics of crises, however, scholars are understandably pessimistic regarding the potential for rational thinking that could lead to de-escalation.

There is an undeniable role for the media in this delicate process. Leaders pay particular attention to media outlets during crises in an effort to collect as much information as possible from open sources. While intelligence from state services and allies plays a crucial role in reaching decisions, the impact of electronic and social media in shaping leadership perceptions is increasingly hard to ignore. The fact that governments have access to “accurate” intelligence should mitigate, in principle, the danger of misperception arising from erroneous media reports. Nevertheless, we have no way of limiting the potential “contamination” of leadership perceptions by inaccurate media information. Intelligence, after all, may be inconclusive, or assessments could themselves be affected by factors such as hostile images of the “other” engineered by the media. Moreover, public opinion may have an indirect impact on the country’s political and even military leadership.

It should be stressed, however, that while misperceptions in crises may well be pervasive, they may also be unrelated to media-engineered images and beliefs. There is an extensive literature on misperception arising from organizational, historical, and even cultural factors. Confronted by the recurrent inability of governments to respond effectively to warnings of an impending strike, scholars examined such instances as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the outbreak of the Korean War to produce a voluminous empirical literature on intelligence failures (see, for example, Whaley 1973; Handel 1977; Betts 1978). In 1962, Roberta Wohlstetter’s *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* focused on a single historical event. The core tenet was that the Pearl Harbor surprise occurred not because intelligence was absent, but because signals, although received, had been either ignored or erroneously interpreted. In 1940, British military planners were so certain that Germany would not challenge their naval superiority that they ignored information coming from German soldiers themselves that they were on their way to attack Norway.

Finally, the outbreak of hostilities is not necessarily associated with misperceptions. International relations theory posits that there are instances where state leaderships might simply feel “compelled” to escalate. Rival countries could, for example, detect “windows of opportunity,” or threatening trends in relative capability terms, from which they could try to benefit or to tackle, respectively, before they ceased to exist or became irreversible.

Ultimately, accurate, unbiased information does not eliminate completely uncertainty over the motivations and capabilities of the “other,” rendering escalation a probability (Fearon, 1995). In this regard, propaganda campaigns could perhaps accelerate events, but we should be cautious not to blame media outlets unduly for either misperceptions or escalation, however tempting this may be.

The 1990s and the emergence of the “CNN effect”

The 1990s are undoubtedly characterized by the so-called CNN effect. Before the Cold War ended, technological innovations and the vision of Ted Turner led to the establishment of CNN as the first truly global television network, which capitalized on an extensive satellite network and real-time, round-the-clock coverage of events. This qualitative transformation went largely unnoticed by scholars of international politics until the First Gulf War erupted. Sensationalized televised images that closely followed the advance of American forces in Iraq, and a dramatized depiction of the battlefield, had a profound effect on public opinion, and through public opinion on Washington DC. While Vietnam’s horrific images had a tangible impact on Washington many years before CNN came to American homes, the psychological impact of CNN’s Gulf War coverage was unprecedented. Viewers across the world could witness war-making in real-time. The so-called CNN effect was born, spearheading a wave of scholarship on the influence of televised images on policy making (Seib 2002; Feist 2001; Neuman 1996).

Policy makers were anything but immune to the CNN effect. Former British Prime Minister John Major is said to have been decisively affected by televised images in Iraq, prompting him to consider setting up safe havens in the northern parts of the country (Bahador, 2007, 21). Before the 1992 Somalia intervention, President George H.W. Bush claims to have been disturbed by images of starving children he saw on television, along with his wife Barbara. He apparently summoned Vice-President Dick Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, pleading, “Please come over to the White House. I-we-can’t watch this anymore. You’ve got to do something” (*The Houston Chronicle*, October 24, 1999).

These were only the beginning in a long series of “televised” crises. According to former Secretary of State James Baker III: “In Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, and Chechnya, among others, the real-time coverage of conflict by the electronic media has served to create a powerful new imperative for prompt action” (Gilboa, 2005, 28). The combination of liberal democracy and technological advancements led a number of scholars to the conclusion

that global media radically changed international politics, by “democratizing” the diplomatic arena. Political outcomes would now be determined by the public who would have access to real-time, comprehensive information about every major crisis in the world (O’Neill, 1993).

More sober analyses, however, revealed a rather mixed picture. Colin Powell was right in pointing out that “live television coverage doesn’t change the policy, but it does create the environment in which the policy is made” (McNulty 1993, 80). In that sense, the CNN effect on policymaking appears to be indirect (since it is channeled through public opinion), and potentially exaggerated. According to Anthony Lake, Bill Clinton’s national security advisor, public pressure stemming from televised images had an impact on decision-making, though policy planners were informed by other factors in their decisions (Hoge 1994, 139).

To complicate matters further, numerous contributions on the CNN effect blurred the line between the normative and empirical aspects of the phenomenon, veering more toward what the media should do in crises, as opposed to what the media actually do during them (Rotberg and Weiss, 1996; Gow, Paterson, and Preston, 1996; Girardet and Bartoli 1995). Gilboa, in his exemplary overview (2005) of the relevant literature, concludes that “studies have yet to present sufficient evidence validating the CNN effect, that many works have exaggerated this effect, and that the focus on this theory has deflected attention from other ways global television affects mass communication, journalism, and international relations” (29).

In this first wave of scholarship, the majority of contributions treated global media as an independent variable, a newly emerging actor in international politics, competing with established interest groups, such as governments, elites, and international organizations for influence in the international political arena. There is relatively little attention paid to the potential use or manipulation of the media by those in power. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. According to the “indexing hypothesis,” reporters “index the slant of their coverage to reflect the range of opinions that exist within the government” (Gilboa, 2005, 32). By employing this framework across a range of security crises since the Cold War years, Zaller and Chiu (1996) suggested that the media had operated as a tool in the hands of policymakers for a long time. Similarly, the neo-Marxist “manufacturing consent” theory suggested that powerful economic interests were in a position to exert control over the media which they would then employ to mobilize support of governmental policies (Herman, 1993).

Throughout the 1990s, the overall picture portrays the media predominantly as the “new kid on the block” in international politics. There was widespread optimism that the openness and directness of televised

images spread across the world in real time would have a beneficial effect on policymaking, constraining governments that would otherwise care little about the impact of their actions, and more crucially, “forcing” them to act in situations they would otherwise avoid. The gradual realization of the power of real-time crisis coverage led the world’s only superpower, the United States, to start thinking about the impact of the media during crises. But in a unipolar system where the United States possessed an overwhelming military advantage, there was little urgency to employ the media in the American “arsenal.”

In 1993, elite US forces were pinned down by hundreds of Somali fighters in an intense battle in Mogadishu, which ended in the killing of 18 service members. More than 120 members of the Delta Force, Army Rangers, and Air Force Pararescumen were tasked with capturing two advisers to Somali clan leader Mohammed Farrah Aidid, whose actions undermined the United Nations humanitarian mission in the country. The images of that battle shocked the world, including journalist Mark Bowden, whose definitive work, *Black Hawk Down*, has become the name most associated with the incident. Global audiences were horrified to see slain US soldiers being dragged through the streets by Aidid’s fighters, and the US government subsequently withdrew its forces from the country.

American military decision makers would learn a questionable lesson from this bitter experience. In a highly controversial showcase of American military prowess, NATO fighter jets targeted the Belgrade headquarters of Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) on the eve of April 23, 1999, leaving several dead and wounded. Then British Prime Minister Tony Blair insisted from Washington that the attack was “entirely justified” and other officials offered a similar rationale, asserting that the station broadcast Serb propaganda, which demonized minorities and legitimized actions against them (*The Guardian*, April 24, 1999; de la Brosse, 2005). Arguments alluding to the dual use of Serbian radio and TV infrastructure seem rather weak in retrospect, and the disruption of RTS coverage did not appear to alter public opinion greatly among Serbs. Nevertheless, the message conveyed was loud and clear. Competing narratives during security crises and wars could not be tolerated and all media promoting them would be deemed legitimate targets for American and allied forces.

The 2000s: The Global War on Terror and the “freedom agenda”

The televised terror of 9/11 spearheaded a reappraisal of the role of the media, since images can act as a force multiplier for otherwise disadvantaged groups,

with terrorist organizations capitalizing on the latent power of global media outlets. As the political analyst Bruce Hoffman put it: “Only by spreading the terror and outrage to a much larger audience can the terrorists gain the maximum potential leverage” (*Huffington Post*, November 11, 2015). Groups engaging in asymmetrical warfare (whether terrorism or insurgency) had developed an appreciation of the psychological impact engendered by media coverage long before 9/11. In 1956, the Algerian insurgent Ramdane Abane wondered if it was preferable to kill ten enemies in a remote village “when no one will talk about it,” or “a single man in Algiers, which will be noted the next day” and thereby influence decision making through public opinion (*The Guardian*, February 24, 2016). A relative weakness of such groups in military terms would lead inescapably to a campaign emphasizing the emotional dimension. And what better way to generate an emotional reaction than to perform a strike on live television?

What is novel after 9/11, however, is the conscious effort by the United States, and subsequently of other administrations across the world, to control the narrative in a way that is conducive to the pursuit of the national interest. The advent of the “global war on terror,” and the promotion of the so-called axis of evil countries (Iran, Iraq, and North Korea) by the Bush administration was perhaps the first systematic effort by a state to embed a global communication strategy in its security policy. While containment during the Cold War featured an equally powerful media narrative, the War on Terror after 9/11 was in essence an effort to integrate not a grand scheme, such as that used in the Cold War, but a single military campaign with a media narrative.

The ensuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan showcased the power of this approach in terms of affecting public opinion across the globe, but also raised major concerns. Indeed, scholars and analysts concur that misperceptions during that time led to erroneous estimates (Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003). The American and Western publics were operating under mistaken assumptions about public sentiment in targeted countries, and there is little doubt that the Global War on Terror narrative contributed to the “silencing” of voices casting doubt on the magnitude and imminence of the Iraqi WMD threat. As the West “sleepwalked” into the 2003 Iraq War, only a handful of media outlets scrutinized properly the dominant narrative emanating from the neo-conservatives and their European allies.

The re-emergence of Russia and the new media “geopolitics”

All developments discussed thus far, beginning with the First Gulf War and culminating in the Global War on Terror and the 2003 Iraq military intervention, took place against the backdrop of a unipolar international

system. Not only was the United States in a position of military supremacy relative to all existent or potential competitors, but was also at the forefront of technological and organizational developments in the global media sphere. While exporting liberal democracy by force had proven to be an unviable option, the “battle of the narratives” in Eastern Europe appeared to be a victorious one for the West. Liberal democratic values were embraced by the publics of these nations, as were media outlets promoting them.

In some cases, however, the transition to liberal democracy was far from seamless. A number of revolutions, beginning in Serbia in 2000, followed by the Rose Revolution in Georgia in November 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in November 2004, paved the way for deep political reforms, but also signaled a realignment of these countries, which once belonged to the Russian sphere of influence. A common feature of these revolutions can be said to be the role played by alternative or social media, which promoted opposition narratives. Often, these outlets constituted the medium through which political action was organized and coordinated at the street level. Relations between these groups were consolidated through the sharing of media and organizational knowledge, among others (Herd 2005, 16).

While the financial and political backing of these groups (and associated media) by Western actors is well-established, the degree to which Western governments controlled them is debatable. Nevertheless, the view from Moscow was that activist groups, backed by US sponsored media, were hijacking the legitimate political process in those countries. According to a Russian commentator, “the US Ambassador Richard Miles ... managed to do his job both in Belgrade and in Georgia” (Netreba, 2004). A chain reaction pattern was anticipated by Russian analysts who proclaimed that “Russia cannot afford to allow defeat in the battle for Ukraine. Besides everything else, defeat would mean velvet revolutions in the next two years, now following the Kiev variant, in Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and possibly Armenia” (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, December 1, 2004). Western media and their local partners were perceived to be instrumental in promoting political upheaval with a view toward political change that would lead to Euro-Atlantic integration. Russian fears concerning Ukraine would soon be realized. The Orange Revolution in 2004 was perhaps the biggest moment in the country’s political history since it gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. As thousands of protesters flocked onto the streets of Kiev in support of pro-Western presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko, Ukraine seemed to be at a crossroads. International pressure, including widespread media coverage of protests and clashes in Kiev, led Ukrainian authorities to agree on holding a new round of elections, which were won by Yushchenko. The newly elected President was committed to moving Ukraine away from

Moscow and closer to the EU and NATO, organizations that the country aspired to join eventually as a full member (*The Independent*, January 24, 2005; *The Washington Post*, September 4, 2014).

This was a major blow to Russia. The history and culture which Russians felt they shared with Ukrainians, as well as the sizable community of ethnic Russians in Ukraine, meant that Russian elites were emotionally attached to Ukraine, especially in areas like the Crimea, where ethnic Russians were a majority (Hajda, 1998, 22). The Crimean dispute was further complicated by the status of the Sevastopol naval base and the Black Sea Fleet anchored there, in what is essentially Russia's only warm-water port located in an area of importance for naval power projection in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Russia felt its legitimate concerns were not being accorded proper attention. The Russians also felt that the Western propaganda campaign had turned their Ukrainian "brothers" against them.

At the same time, Russia was reasserting itself as a global economic and military power. Oil and gas prices enabled its economy to recover swiftly from the traumatic 1998 crisis and the country's military modernization program was making progress by the mid-2000s. Russia, however, was losing the information, or perhaps more appropriately, the narrative war. This was about to change. The Russia Today channel grew out of a governmental initiative in 2005, in an effort to compete as equals with the West in the emerging "battle of narratives." RT (as it was renamed in 2009) was beamed from Moscow but was not aimed at domestic audiences. Targeting international viewers, first and foremost, Moscow tried to reshape the global media discourse in a manner favorable to Russian interests. In 2013, RT became the first news organization to gain more than one billion views on YouTube, and in 2017, the US government classified the RT network as a foreign agent (Newsguard, 2018).

The Russo-Georgian war of 2008: Winning the battle, losing the media war

Western or liberal-oriented media narratives continued to win hearts and minds, and in 2008, as tensions rose in the Caucasus, Russia proved, once again, incapable of dominating the media discourse. In 2003, the Rose Revolution had brought Mikhail Saakashvili to power in Georgia. Saakashvili, a US-trained lawyer, was the lead figure of the peaceful demonstrations in Tbilisi against the efforts of then President Eduard Shevardnadze's Citizens Union of Georgia (CUG) party to force a fraudulent election result (Cooley and Mitchell, 2009, 28). Protestors managed to secure Shevardnadze's resignation

and, in January 2004, the newly elected Saakashvili promised to reassert Georgian control over the secessionist provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia within his first term (Hewitt, 2009, 19). For Georgia, reintegrating its separatist provinces was not simply a matter of national pride. The porous borders of these regions facilitated illicit trade and exacerbated asymmetrical threats, compromising the nation's security.

Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia were aligned with Moscow, however, and the Kremlin was not prepared to reduce its footprint in an area geopolitically vital to Russian interests. To make matters worse, the "frozen" conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia undermined the Georgians' effort to secure candidate status with both NATO and the European Union. The stakes were high for Moscow and the effort, at least initially, was to "win back the hearts and minds" of the Georgian population. Nevertheless, Moscow's media campaign was highly unsuccessful. Saakashvili promoted liberal reforms with ease, enjoying substantial support from the Georgian electorate, which appeared to be on board with the country's realignment with the West. Within a couple of years, Georgian public opinion had endorsed the prospect of acceding to both the European Union and NATO, with Brussels encouraging this prospect (Socor, 2005). While in April 2008 NATO did not accord Tbilisi a Membership Action Plan, the Council¹ affirmed that both Georgia and Ukraine would eventually become members and that NATO member states would "now begin a period of intensive engagement with both [countries] at a high political level" (NATO, 2008).

RT's exposure of the South Ossetian crisis in the summer of 2008 was indicative of the importance of the issue. The Russians felt, once again, that they were not being heard and Dmitry Medvedev, who was President at the time, sought to expose his frustration to the Western press: "Only a madman could have taken such a gamble. Did he [Saakashvili] believe Russia would stand idly by as he launched an all-out assault on the sleeping city of Tskhinvali, murdering hundreds of peaceful civilians, most of them Russian citizens?" (*Financial Times*, August 27, 2008). In early 2007, Vladimir Putin had given a memorable speech during the Munich Security Conference, in which he criticized the United States for its desire to monopolize international relations. Russia was clearly drawing its red lines and was trying to convey its message as clearly as possible, but its narrative remained unattractive, despite the growing influence of its RT network. Meanwhile, while NATO's defense plan was to place missiles near Russian borders, the declaration of Kosovo's independence in 2008 exacerbated Russian fears of American indifference, if not hostility, to "legitimate" Russian concerns. Russian deterrence, which was

1 The North Atlantic Council is the principal political decision-making body within NATO, and comprises high-level representatives of each member country.

at its height during the Cold War years, was apparently failing to convince even weak challengers such as Georgia to tread carefully. Moscow would have to flex its military muscle in order to be heard.

On August 7, 2008, Saakashvili ordered the country's forces to launch a military operation in the breakaway province of South Ossetia. Initially, the Georgian foray was successful, with the government announcing the capture of Tskhinvali on August 8. In the meantime, however, Russia had launched a full-scale counter-offensive that soon expanded beyond the territory of South Ossetia. Within a matter of days, Russian forces had pushed Georgian forces out, opening a second front in the country's other separatist province of Abkhazia. On August 10, Georgia declared a ceasefire and begun withdrawing its forces from South Ossetia. Georgian military bases and assets were either captured or destroyed and the country's infrastructure sustained heavy bombing by the Russian air force. At the same time, more than 100,000 Georgians were displaced because of the conflict. The number of casualties on both sides remains, to this day, highly contested and unconfirmed. The war ended officially on August 12, 2008, with a mutually agreed "six point plan," establishing a ceasefire between Russia and Georgia, mediated by French President Nikolas Sarkozy.

While there is little doubt that the Russian army won the war against Georgia, Russia's first major military foray in another country since the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was a public relations disaster. During and after the short conflict, Russia was viewed widely as an aggressor, which had attacked a nascent liberal democracy aspiring to join Western institutions in its effort to create a better future for its citizens (CNN, August 8, 2008). Meanwhile, the lackluster performance of the Russian army in the first hours of battle projected the image of an aging and uncoordinated military machine that targeted civilian infrastructure and caused widespread suffering (Lowe, 2008). It was entirely clear to the Russians that they needed to improve their act, both in terms of battlefield performance and narrative effectiveness. The advent of hybrid warfare would enable them to achieve both – until that point – elusive goals.

The 2010s: Hybrid wars and the weaponization of media during security crises

The Arab Spring, a revolutionary wave of protests and civil wars that swept the Arab world, captured Moscow's attention because of the media dimension of the uprisings, with social media coordinating political mobilization in Tunisia and Egypt. Meanwhile, Russian diplomatic support of Libya's secular,

though oppressive regime did not prevent the ouster of Muammar Gaddafi, following the 2011 NATO-backed military strikes against his forces. Moscow's rather legitimate objections in terms of the country's security outlook were disregarded and the Russians felt they were once again isolated. The civil war in Syria transferred the "battlefield" to an area of prime concern to Moscow, threatening Russia's closest ally in the region: the Assad regime. In the run-up to and during the Syrian civil war, Russian diplomats supported Assad in the United Nations and other fora, deflecting decisions and policies deemed harmful to Damascus (Tilghman and Pawlyk, 2015). Russia would soon demonstrate that it had learned some valuable lessons from past encounters, as crises and upheavals began affecting countries of great significance to Moscow, with Ukraine coming again to the fore because of its renewed drive to accede to Euro-Atlantic institutions.

This time, the information and the military campaigns would be integrated in an unprecedented way. The seizure of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014 was catalytic in bringing the hybrid warfare concept to the spotlight, as it constituted a highly successful, and for this reason, alarming case study of the Russian capacity to wage a new kind of war. The Crimean annexation began as a covert military operation, combining a disinformation campaign and surprise at the operational level, with masked gunmen storming government buildings and a full invasion of the peninsula taking place thereafter, using Russia's airborne, naval, infantry, and motor rifle brigades. While the conventional instruments employed were well known to Western analysts, the artful use of mainstream and social media for propaganda and disinformation purposes, as well as the level of integration of irregular forces (mercenaries and local militias) with regular elements of the Russian army, caught everyone by surprise (*The Washington Post*, February 28, 2014; *NBC News*, February 20, 2015).

The term "hybrid warfare" is employed to describe a novel type of combat, characterized by seamless integration of conventional and irregular operations, "sponsorship of political protests, economic coercion and a robust information campaign" (Kofman and Rojansky, 2015). The Russian information war in 2014 was a multifaceted and coherent operation. Russian military activities were actively supported by a media campaign that undermined the Ukrainian authorities, using a multitude of arguments aimed at mobilizing the Crimean population. A defensive narrative was promoted, depicting the government in Kiev as the aggressor, and labelling its supporters "fascists," a term which proved to be effective among Russian-speaking audiences for historical reasons. During the Crimean crisis, Russia technically ensured that certain messages reached specific audiences and others did not, by controlling, for example, TV and radio towers and mobile

phone operators, among other facilities (NATO, 2016). A crucial feature, overall, of the hybrid warfare concept seems to be the employment of media strategies at the tactical, as opposed to the operational (war on terror) or the strategic (containment), level. At the tactical level, the requirements are far greater, as the needs of the battlefield are reflected in media strategy. If a narrative is not effective enough, it is immediately revised or replaced and the propaganda campaign has to be flexible and adaptable to new situations. But benefits are also greater, as successful hybrid operations can deliver results swiftly with few, if any, casualties.

In recent years, the communication domain has become a central pillar of NATO and EU thinking, with initiatives such as the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga and the EU anti-propaganda unit, aimed at countering Russian narratives that could render Western nations vulnerable to political manipulation by the Kremlin. Moreover, the disposition of the Russian army to combine regular and irregular forces in its doctrine led the West to adapt its military posture accordingly. Countries such as Estonia and Sweden (although the latter is not a NATO member) began emphasizing training in irregular warfare, while the alliance bolstered its rapid reaction capabilities through the forward deployment of NATO assets in Europe (BBC, May 14, 2015).

On a final note, maintaining accurate perceptions in an environment where disinformation, fake news, and propaganda are pervasive is undoubtedly a demanding task. We can already see governments mobilizing to ensure that reliable intelligence and impartial coverage exist in the broad, but gradually integrated, spectrum of military and civilian information spheres. Indeed, this is a challenging mission for governments, which will have to exercise effective oversight across media outlets in the future. Nevertheless, the “weaponization” of electronic media remains a controversial development, since the credibility and integrity of media organizations are affected dramatically. Ultimately, it is up to professionals in the media to defend their field and ensure that global audiences have access to impartial coverage of security crises.

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