# The Battle for Truth: Mapping the Network of Information War Experts in the Czech Republic

**DAGMAR RYCHNOVSKÁ**
Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna

**MARTIN KOHÚT**
Charles University, Prague

**Abstract:** The rise of 'information disorder' that undermines Western political principles has become one of the key political concerns in today's Europe and United States and led to searching for new solutions to the problem of how to fight the spread of mis- and dis-information. The challenges of information disorder, however, are increasingly perceived as a part of the information war – which involves the intentional Russian propaganda using new media. Yet who gets to help our societies build resilience against the information war? This research looks at how this novel problematization of security affects the politics of security expertise. Or, who gains power in this 'battle for truth'? Building on sociological approaches in security studies, this paper focuses on the Czech Republic as a country that has become very active in the fight against disinformation and analyses the network of actors recognized as providing security expertise on information warfare. Based on social network analysis, the research maps the structure of social relations among actors recognized as experts and points out the empowerment of think tanks and journalists, who are able to build social capital, mobilize their knowledge of Russian politics and the new media environment, and design new practices to make the society resilient towards information warfare.

**Keywords:** propaganda, disinformation, expertise, social network analysis, securitization, Czech Republic

> *We have to understand what we fight against. We wage a war against irrationality, disinformation, hate speech, incitement to violence, and, in a deeper sense, against the distortion of trust and mutual understanding.*
>
> Peter Pomerantsev[1]

## INTRODUCTION

*The Power of Lies* (orig. *Co dokáže lež*) is a 2017 TV documentary co-produced by Czech Television, the public service broadcaster in the Czech Republic, and the Eu-

ropean TV channel ARTE. It speaks of a new war taking place all over Europe defined by the fight for people's minds. This war is supposedly led by the Russian government, which seeks to gain power in its former sphere of influence and undermine the Western democratic order. Instead of using military force, however, the Kremlin supposedly resorts to modern technologies through which it spreads disinformation and thus creates chaos and weakens the target society. The key method used in this regard is *information war*. The documentary looks at what it is, how it works and how we should respond to it by drawing together contributions from different actors, including established Czech and foreign journalists, the Czech defence minister, think tankers, and academics. They speak of how to secure the (Czech) society against this 'bad' information or at least enhance our resilience against the perceived malign influence.

*The Power of Lies* can be situated at the intersection of two influential current discourses in the Czech Republic as well as elsewhere. On the one hand, it may be understood in the context of a deeper social anxiety about the fragile relationship between politics and truth and the inability of contemporary societies to arrive at a collectively shared interpretation of key political events and phenomena – and this trend led to the present time period being popularly termed as the age of 'post-truth' or 'post-factual' politics (Tallis, 2016; Higgins, 2016; Sismondo, 2017). On the other hand, however, it can also be seen as a part of a new wave of anti-Russian sentiment, as exemplified by the narrative about the Russian-led campaign to spread false and misleading news in order to stir up negative emotions against Western political elites and undermine liberal democracy (Lucas, 2014; Rankin, 2017). Both discourses can be situated in broader concerns shared especially by those we term 'pro-Western liberals', who are typically supporters of the Czech Republic's post-communist economic transformation and political integration in Western political and security institutions and who now tend to complain about the failing trust of contemporary societies in liberal democratic institutions.

The problem of 'information warfare' is thus clearly framed in geopolitical terms and perceived as a security concern, although a burgeoning number of other concepts are used almost interchangeably with it, including the 'spread of disinformation' or 'fake news'. Some actors see these issues as a part of 'hybrid warfare', understood as a strategy "combining military aggression with political, diplomatic, economic, cyber and disinformation measures" (NATO, 2017). Yet what is the effect of this novel problematization of security on our societies?

In our research, we investigate the effect of the described phenomena on the politics of security expertise. As scholars of Security Studies have shown, the emergence of new threats on the political agenda and the endorsement of new security measures enable the rise of specific actors and knowledges employed in dealing with these threats (Huysmans, 2006; Bigo, 2008; Berling and Bueger,

2015; Rychnovská et al., 2017). This paper looks at the current efforts to tackle 'information warfare' from a similar perspective and scrutinizes what kinds of experts and expertise are empowered in this 'battle for truth'. The paper turns to sociological approaches used in critical security research (Adler-Nissen, 2013; Basaran et al., 2016) and to the method of social network analysis (SNA) to study the social sphere of actors recognized as providing security expertise on governing information (dis)order.

Taking the example of the Czech Republic as a country that has become very active (in its governmental self-image at least) in tackling the spread of disinformation (Colborne, 2016, 2017; Tait, 2016; Cameron, 2017), we analyse three specific issues: first, we trace the evolution of the national network of actors recognized as experts at public events; second, we map the structure of social relations in this expert network; and thirdly, we look at the key actors in this network and study the types of knowledge and capital that they mobilize.

Methodologically, our research draws on a mixed methods design. After providing a contextual description of how the network formed, we employ social network analysis (SNA), which was developed in the early 1930's in sociology (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 15), and analyse data from public events (panel debates, round tables and public discussions) that took place between October 2014 and July 2017 and focused on disinformation and/or (Russian) propaganda to map the expert network. Finally, we identify the key actors in the network and discuss how they make use of their social status and capital in promoting their information war expertise. In adopting this approach, we also seek to show the value of and promote the method of SNA, which is currently underused in security research, but which, as we demonstrate, can help us explore the social context in which security policies are made (Mérand et al., 2010, 2011).

Concretely, the paper will proceed as follows. First, it briefly looks at the securitization of information disorder and situates it in in the current wave of anti-Russian sentiment as well as notions of 'information war'. Second, it engages in a discussion of how to map security expertise and argues for exploring the community of information war experts via SNA. Third, in the analytical part, we trace the evolution of the Czech community of information war experts, map its structure, and discuss the involvement of the key actors in this sphere – and what they personify. Finally, the paper discusses the findings and draws more general conclusions from the research.

## SECURITY POLITICS AND THE GOVERNANCE OF INFORMATION DISORDER

In a report published by the Council of Europe, Wardle and Derakhshan (2017: 4) argue that we are currently experiencing "information pollution at a global scale".

The term *information pollution* was originally used by Jakob Nielsen (2003) as a way to describe the overload of irrelevant, unsolicited information that people increasingly face in the age of the internet. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) draw on this concept to describe a social rather than an individual problem, as the information pollution is related to the mushrooming of suspicious websites and social media channels that flood the public space with unchecked information about key political figures, events, and topics (Nielsen, 2003). This pollution is now claimed to have political consequences, as it directly or indirectly affects political processes. For instance, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, recently asserted that the British referendum about leaving the European Union is a result of precisely these influences (Rankin, 2017).

While the emergence of this phenomenon has arguably been enabled by the rise of new technologies and social media (Cook, 2017), most of the attention with regard to this phenomenon has been paid to the actors, platforms and the "complex web of motivations for creating, disseminating and consuming these 'polluted' messages" (Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017: 4). Many scholars, journalists, and politicians tend to link global information pollution with the rise of so-called post-truth (or post-factual) politics, suggesting that factual, science-based explanations lose relevance in the public eye as compared to the emotionally strong yet factually weak narratives spread by alternative media sources (Berling and Bueger, 2017; Corner, 2017).

However, we side with Wardle and Derakhshan, who propose to call the spread of mis-, dis- and mal-information[2] *information disorder*. First, we believe that compared to the notion of post-truth or post-factual politics, the concept of information disorder does not bear the normative ethos suggesting that there has ever been some kind of 'politics of truth' whose era just ended. Second, what we also find helpful is that the term implies that we encounter a structural phenomenon with complex roots and causes rather than a problem caused by concrete types of media or actors which interrupt some normalized state of public debate.

In the current Western (liberal) discourse, the increasing plurality of actors and platforms producing and reproducing 'polluted' discourse is seen as a cause (or at least as a trigger) of *social disorder*. Moreover, it is seen to contribute to the polarization of the society and the occurrence of (supposedly) previously unthinkable events such as Brexit or the election of Donald Trump as the US president. Given the increasing role of social media, which revolutionize the speed and outreach of political communication, the authority of traditional sources of news is disrupted, triggering a widespread confusion over how to deal with information disorder and its political implications (Nyhan and Reifler, 2010; Aelst et al., 2017; Lewandowsky et al., 2017).

This debate, however, has an important ideological component, which turns information disorder into a security problem with a clearly defined perpetrator and

thus a clearly perceived enemy. In fact, many believe that the *information disorder* experienced by the Western societies is a result of an intentional campaign run by the Russian state, which they claim is conducting an information war against the Western public in the social media space (Aro, 2016; Mejias and Vokuev, 2017). This information war is seen as a part of a *hybrid warfare* focused on exploiting the vulnerabilities of Western democracies by combining conventional and non-conventional means (Renz, 2016). Besides the official political attention given to hybrid threats (NATO, 2010; European Commission, 2016), the issue of Russian disinformation campaigns became subject to media attention, with influential Western journalists like Anne Applebaum, Edward Lucas, or Peter Pomerantsev warning against the Russian information warfare and arguing that this new form of propaganda needs to be pushed back with a similar vigour as the Soviet propaganda during the Cold War (Pomerantsev, 2014; Applebaum and Lucas, 2016). This may be read in the context of the broader rise of anti-Russian sentiment in some European countries and the resurrection of geopolitical thinking in the past decade or so (Guzzini, 2013).[3]

Having constructed information disorder as one of the crucial contemporary security problems (related to Russia-led hybrid warfare), many countries and international organizations started to search for appropriate solutions to the problem of how to counter it. The extent to which information disorder is seen as a threat is highly uneven: in some countries (e.g. Sweden), the issue remained marginal, while in others (e.g. the Baltic countries), it has been used to legitimize the rise of new institutions and security practices targeted at building resilience against disinformation and securing the society against 'bad information'. Different national governments gave different responses to the problem, ranging from blocking (promoting counter narratives in the domestic context), confronting (promoting counter narratives internationally) and naturalizing (providing a story from the perspective of the state itself) to ignoring (not paying attention to the alleged information campaigns) (Hellman and Wagnsson, 2017).

The Czech Republic is one of the countries where this issue has gained significant traction, it has emerged as a strong supporter of the fight against Russian propaganda, and its efforts to contain the information war caught the attention of many foreign media (see, e.g., Tait, 2016; Cameron, 2017; CNN, 2017, among many others). While the Czech position towards Russia has been a politically polarizing issue since the end of the Cold War, Russia started to be perceived as a security concern by the Czech Republic especially in the early 2000s, as this was in the context of the heated national debate on building a US anti-ballistic missile system on the Czech soil and the controversies surrounding the Russian energy policy towards Europe (Kratochvíl et al., 2006; Kuchyňková et al., 2015). Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its involvement in eastern Ukraine since then triggered a new wave of anti-

Russia sentiment among some parts of the Czech society and brought to the fore-front the narratives on Putin's ambitions to weaken the West and bring Central Europe back to the Russian sphere of influence (Tasch, 2017).

To sum up, the increasing plurality of actors and platforms that shape public debates nowadays is associated with the rise of mis-, dis- and mal-information in public and media spheres. The result of this 'pollution' may be understood as information disorder, a structural problem interconnected with social inequalities and social order. However, in many countries, including the Czech Republic, this issue has been framed as a so-called information war (a part of 'hybrid warfare') and thus narrowed down into a security problem initiated by an external actor – the Russian state. It is in this context that Czech security services, inspired by NATO's new interest in the concept of hybrid warfare, started to focus on the spread of disinformation via alternative media as a key Russian strategy in the hybrid war against Central and Eastern Europe (Daniel and Eberle, forthcoming 2018). This turn opened a window of opportunity for new actors to enter the debate on managing security and propose novel forms of security expertise.

## MAPPING THE NETWORK OF SECURITY EXPERTS

Given the entry of new actors into such debates, and the stakes of the issues involved, it is useful to ask who gets to help our societies distinguish good and bad information in the age of information disorder. In this research, we focus empirically on the empowerment of specific actors who are (or have become) recognized as experts in securing Czech society against the risks and threats of information war. As such, we situate our study in the field of research on *security expertise*, which looks at which actors identify risks and threats, and what knowledge and techniques they use, and thus measure, weigh, and assess insecurity. This perspective draws on the assumption that intellectuals, academics, and other kinds of recognized experts do not just react to security problems 'out there', but actively take part in constructing and upholding certain notions of threats and thus contribute to the construction and perpetuation of a specific problematization of security and insecurity in our societies (Berling and Bueger, 2015).

The inquiry into the role of experts and expertise in governing the international/the political has long been one of the core themes of IR. From early functionalist studies of international cooperation by Haas (1958) and Mitrany (1944) to scholars exploring the collective agency of experts via the concepts of epistemic community (Adler and Haas, 1992) and transnational expert networks (Slaughter, 2009), the question of *how experts* influence (international) politics has received much attention among researchers. Research on expertise in IR has been later enriched by discursive approaches investigating the politics of expertise as a result of broader power structures and regimes of truth (Campbell, 1992; Litfin, 1994;

Hansen, 2006). More recently it has been further augmented by practice-oriented studies of expertise, which explore how expert knowledge is produced in specific *fields of expertise* (Huysmans, 2006; Bigo, 2008; Berling, 2011), how it structures the governance of the political (Aradau and Van Munster, 2007; Leander, 2012; Hagmann and Dunn Cavelty, 2012) and how it is embedded in social arrangements (Leander, 2005; Bueger, 2015).

It has been well established that turning a specific political problem into a security issue, the process known as securitization (Buzan et al., 1998; Balzacq, 2011), has great potential for reconfiguring the practices of expertise in political governance (Berling, 2011; Berling and Bueger, 2015). The process of securitization may shape how the authority and subjectivity of specific actors perceived as experts on the given security issue are constructed and performed and how they influence the kind of knowledge demanded in security politics, and how the boundary between knowledge production and political decision-making is built (Rychnovská et al., 2017). In other words, when studying the changing problematization of security, we may ask whose voices are empowered in this process and what vision of governing (in)security they promote.

## Securitizing Information Disorder in the Czech Republic

In this paper, we look at the recent debate regarding information disorder from a similar perspective as those outlined above. Specifically, we argue that the current discourse on information warfare may be understood as an example of the securitization of information disorder, and we look at its consequences in terms of which actors get recognized as experts who can speak on this issue. Even though issues relating to information warfare and propaganda have been heavily securitized in the past, especially in the context of the Cold War or the two World Wars, the current debate on these issues focuses on a new type of threat subject and takes place in a very different social, political, and technological context. For that reason, we chose to treat the changing problematization of information war as an example of securitization, or perhaps re-securitization, as its key parameters (the actors involved, the framing of the threat subject, the referent object, implemented and suggested countermeasures, etc.) are undergoing great changes from what they were in the past. Nonetheless, the historical resonance of the 'Russian threat' only aids the dramatization of the argument and the framing of information disorder as a result of a hostile foreign intervention.

In our analysis, we focus on the socio-political consequences of this securitization (cf. Stritzel, 2007) and concretely on actors who perform their expertise on information war at public events. We believe that this practice is relevant from several perspectives: first, the involved speakers position themselves as sources of authoritative knowledge on the issue of information disorder and thus have a great poten-

tial to shape the public discourse; second, these events bridge security policy-making with the public understanding of the issues; and third, these events exemplify how specific audiences and social platforms get entangled in the politics of securitizing information war.

To explore who gets recognized as an expert on governing information disorder, we turn to the concept of *social capital*, which characterizes the degree of embeddedness of an actor in social networks and relations. Following social theory, social capital may be understood as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Based on this reading, one's amount of social capital can be seen as affecting one's position in a field – in our case, it enables the recognition of someone as an expert and enhances their ability to construct the symbolic order, i.e. the system of meaning establishing something as a specific security issue.

The social sphere in which we map the structure of social relations and assess the level of actors' recognition via measuring their social capital is defined by one specific practice: the practice of *performing security expertise on information war publicly* at events such as workshops, roundtables, etc. In our analysis, we included any type of relevant event that did not take place behind closed doors or that would be exclusively for a specific audience. Therefore, we focus on events such as a public debate in a prestigious public library with a group of invited experts (e.g. from the fields of media, academia, and policy-making), a panel debate hosted by a university or a think tank as a part of its public lectures series and so forth.

As such, we follow up on the call in critical security studies for visualizing security practices via social mapping (Loughlan et al., 2014). We build on the Bourdieusian topographical approach to mapping, which highlights the relationality of security arrangements and puts human agents at the centre of the analysis. We do not, however, follow the rather comprehensive Bourdieusian conceptualization of the field and undertake ethnographic research tracing the connections between different actors and institutions and drawing on the practical experiences of social agents as others do (Daniel and Eberle, forthcoming 2018). Instead we look at the network of actors who align themselves with a specific security problematique – in this case, information warfare, disinformation, and propaganda – and claim expertise on this issue in the public sphere. Given the broader geopolitical framing of the Czech debate on these issues as well as a practical need to unify the research terminology, for the purpose of the present research, we call these actors information war experts.

This approach also translates into the methodological apparatus that we use. Our analysis is based on three steps: first, we trace the evolution of the sphere of experts associated with publically speaking about information warfare in the Czech Republic, second, we use SNA to map the expert network, and finally, based on the cen-

trality measures of this analysis, we identify the key actors in the network and discuss how they mobilize their capital and knowledge in the network.

## THE METHODOLOGICAL APPARATUS

Our data collection technique is based on the acquisition of open source information found by searching the World Wide Web as well as social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. For an event (and the guest speakers affiliated with the event) to be added to the dataset, it had to meet the following criteria:

1. The event took place in the Czech Republic.
2. The aim of the event was to discuss disinformation and/or (Russian) propaganda in general or in the Czech Republic.[4]
3. Two or more guest speakers (excluding the moderators) were invited to the event.
4. The nature of the event was in the vein of a panel debate, round table or public discussion.

We gathered data on 34 events, which altogether were attended by 106 different speakers and hosted by 19 organizations, and which took place in the period from October 2014 to July 2017, and used this data to create two types of networks.[5] The first type of network is an undirected network made up of guest speakers invited to events. If two or more guests met at a particular event, a tie is created between them in this network. The second type of network is a two-mode network, sometimes also called a bipartite or affiliation network (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Borgatti and Everett, 1997), where the first mode is the guest speaker and the second mode is the organizer of the event. This two-mode network is then converted to the one-mode weighted graph in which the weight of the edge describes the numbers of experts shared among the connected organizers.

The use of centrality measures dates back to 1948, when at the beginning of the research of centrality was the hypothesized "[r]elationship between structural centrality and influence in group processes" (Freeman, 1978: 215). However, it took several decades to establish centrality measures as a relevant indicator, and Freeman provides illustrations of both cases where the measures worked and those where the results were not genuinely convincing (see Freeman, 1978: 215–216). The reason why we chose centrality measures, particularly 'degree' of centrality and 'betweenness', even though they are imperfect, is that centrality indicates critical positions in the network and these positions are occupied by opinion leaders and influencers (Becker, 1970). Wasserman and Faust (1994: 215–216) specifically tie the actors' centrality (degree of centrality and betweenness) to social influence – i.e. being viewed as a leader.

For mapping the networks, we employ SNA as a method for quantitative mapping accompanied by investigations of actors' roles in the network. Concretely, we move on to investigate the key actors (nodes) in the network based on the *degree, betweenness centrality* and *modularity* (the community detection algorithm). Degree is the sum of social connections that an actor has, since "central actors must be the most active in the sense that they have the most ties to other actors in the network or graph" (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). *Betweenness* demonstrates the importance of a node in the network. According to Borgatti (Borgatti, 2005), "[b]etweenness centrality is defined as the share of times that a node i needs a node k (whose centrality is being measured) in order to reach a node j via the shortest path."[6] Finally, *modularity* measures the strength of a community structure in the network, i.e. to what extent the network is composed of clusters which are more densely connected to each other than to the rest of the network. In our research, communities are calculated based on the modularity classes that determine the shade of the community cluster (cf. Blondel et al., 2008).

For the undirected one-mode network G= (N, E) with N guest speakers (nodes) and E ties (or edges), we measured the actors' degree and betweenness centrality.[7] The reason is that if an actor has a lot of ties to other actors, it makes him or her more visible among the community, and he or she can reach a wider audience. The degree and betweenness centrality were calculated via R, a programming language used for data analysis, and by using the igraph package (Csardi and Nepusz, 2006).

The two-mode network G = (U, N, E) refers to a network G in which we have U organizers, N guest speakers and E ties connecting two different sets of nodes (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 300). An affiliation network differs from an undirected network by having two sets of nodes instead of one – with the one set of nodes being the guest speakers who are connected through their participation in various public events. In this two-mode network, the ties are not created through actor-actor connections but based on ties they formed via the organizers of the event, thus allowing us to analyse it from an actor-organizer perspective (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 291–292). The importance of this network lies in its ability to show which organizations share among themselves the most experts who can form or influence their opinion on the issue. This is achieved by converting a two-mode network into a one-mode weighted graph. In the graph, the weight and relative thickness of an 'edge' or 'tie' (i.e. a line connecting two nodes in a graph) depend on how many organizers shared the speakers among themselves.

## THE RESEARCH RATIONALE

Having outlined our methods for data gathering and analysis, we now wish to briefly discuss the rationale of our approach. We look at the public performance of info-war

expertise, since we understand experts as intermediaries between different social domains (Bueger and Berling, 2015: 9–11) and wish to explore which actors get to perform the role of these intermediaries, what kinds of expert social networks they become part of, and what audiences they mediate their security knowledge to. In other words, we are interested in the social context and social implications of this securitization rather than the changing threat images and security narratives in public discourse. Consequently, we look at the public performance of info-war expertise via events such as workshops, roundtables, or panel discussions, and not via media appearances, academic writing, writing for the broader public, blogging, etc. In order to capture the expert networking dynamic, we omitted events with only one speaker (excluding the moderator).

Due to this methodological choice, we could downplay actors who are otherwise active in shaping the info-war discourse via different channels – for instance, the Special Forces general Karel Řehka, who occasionally speaks to the media and wrote a book about information warfare (Řehka, 2017), or academics such as Miloš Gregor and Petra Vejvodová (2018), who wrote a book on info-war yet do not attend the events under our scrutiny very often. The same applies to Petr Nutil (2018), who has also recently published a book on disinformation and occasionally participates in the investigated events, but is more active in writing articles for Manipulatori.cz (Manipulators.cz).

There are two key limits of this approach. First, we were able to investigate only publicly accessible events and events for which we were able to find a guest list. This restricts the scope of the experts and organizers that we identify as relevant in the process of info-war securitization in the Czech Republic. In particular, several events were held behind closed doors – these were especially the cases where attendees such as members of the secret services, state employees or representatives of Allied armies were present. A prime example of such an event is the StratCom Summit, which was organized by a wide range of state and non-state actors. Second, we focused only on the practice of public performance of security expertise and did not scrutinize the broader and less visible part of the social network of info-war experts and their audiences. As such, we are not able to reconstruct from our data which actors build social connections to concrete policy-makers and may thus more directly influence the process of policy-change.

## THE CZECH NETWORK OF INFORMATION WAR EXPERTS: MAPPING AND ANALYSIS

The interest in information warfare in the Czech Republic has undergone a dramatic change in the past few years. This can be documented by the number of events (including public debates, roundtables and conferences) dedicated to this topic (Figure 1) and, relatedly, by the number of actors who started to position

themselves as possessing relevant knowledge on disinformation, information war, and/or (Russian) propaganda in the Czech Republic. We look at these events to trace the evolution of the expert community, its key features, and its overall effect on shaping the relations between (security) policy-making, media, civil society, and the public.

**Figure 1: The numbers of public events on information war, propaganda, and disinformation organized per quarter between 2014 and 2017**
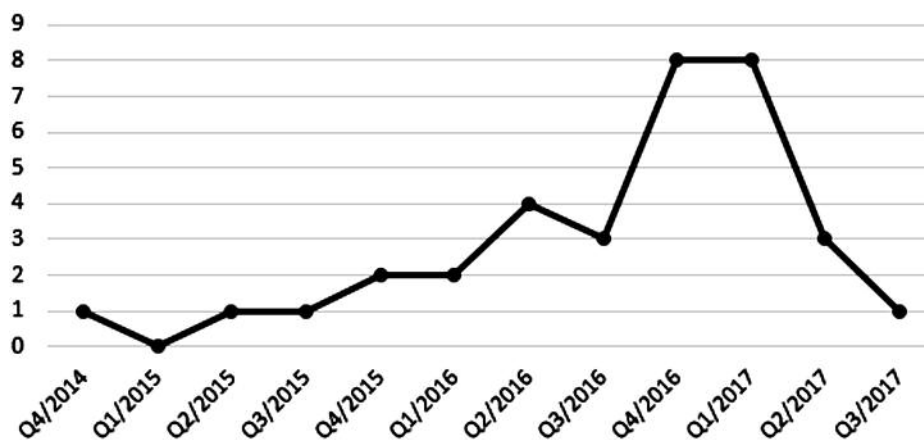


## Evolution of the Network

The community of information war experts began to develop in 2014 as a response to the Russian annexation of Crimea, which was widely covered in the Czech media and which fuelled a new wave of anti-Russian sentiment, especially among right-wing and liberal political elites, media, and members of the public. Charles University in Prague was the first institution to respond to this interest by hosting a public debate on it. The debate took place in October 2014 and was attended by academics and researchers from Charles University in Prague specializing in the (geo)politics of the Russian Federation, armed forces and technologies. Interestingly, this was the first and also the last public debate in which an academic who studied propaganda before the annexation of Crimea was present. From then on, Czech public events dealing with propaganda focussed only on current Russian propaganda.

The formative period for the emerging expert network was unquestionably the year 2015. In February 2015, an updated Security Strategy of the Czech Republic was released (MFA, 2015). Compared to its prior version, this strategy covers two new threats: "weakening of the cooperative security mechanism and of political and international legal commitments in the area of security" and "extremism and

growth of interethnic and social tensions" (MFA, 2015: 13–14). According to this narrative, the spread of disinformation and propaganda is a means to weaken 'the cooperative security mechanism' as some states that try to challenge the international order resort to hybrid warfare, combining military and non-military methods such as disinformation intelligence operations, and political and economic pressures.

This expression of political attention to disinformation as a source of insecurity opened a window of opportunity for new actors to provide expertise on issues of propaganda and hybrid warfare. The first to answer the call was the think tank European Values (Evropské hodnoty), which organized a roundtable under the patronage of the MP Marek Ženíšek from TOP 09, an economically neoliberal but socially conservative party. This roundtable had an international dimension, as Jakub Kalenský, a representative from the EU's East StratCom (and a Czech national), and members of think tanks from the Visegrád Group met there to discuss the strategy for fighting myths emanating from Russian propaganda (Václav Havel Library, 2016). The growing interest in the issues regarding hybrid warfare translated also to other NGOs, such as the humanitarian and human rights promoting organization People in Need (Člověk v tísni), which organized a debate with the journalists Ondřej Soukup from *Hospodářské noviny* ('The Economic Newspaper' – the Czech equivalent of the *Financial Times* [HN]) and Ondřej Kundra from the leading political weekly magazine *Respekt* (Jsns, 2015). These two actors would, over time, play an important role in shaping the perception of Russia's influence in the Czech Republic.

At this time, we can also track certain early outcomes of the think tanks and journalists, who started to engage in public events with different approaches to providing information on the the topic. Ivana Smoleňová was among the first people who had systematically studied disinformation and propaganda in the Czech Republic and Slovakia before May 2015, focusing on the so-called alternative media and the arguments and narratives used in their texts (Smoleňová, 2016).[8] An important initiative was launched in late 2015 by the think tank European Values, which introduced its 'Kremlin Watch' program, as a part of which they monitor the disinformation activities of Russia in the Czech Republic on a weekly basis and created a list of disinformation websites with pro-Russian content (Janda and Víchová, 2016).

In January 2016, the then Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka from the Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) commissioned a revolutionary National Security Audit, whose results were presented to the public later in the year by him and the then Minister of Interior, Milan Chovanec, who was also a Social Democrat. This document aimed to identify internal security threats to the Czech Republic and propose suitable measures in high-risk areas (Vlada.cz, 2016). Foreign disinformation cam-

paigns were evaluated as a serious internal security threat and one of the recommendations for countering these forms of hybrid warfare was that the Czech Republic ought to "[e]stablish departments within relevant Government institutions for the evaluation of disinformation campaigns and other manifestations of foreign power influence" (MoI, 2016: 61).

One response to this call was the foundation of the Centre against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats (Centrum proti terorismu a hybridním hrozbám, CTHH), which was set up in January 2017. The CTHH did not begin its mission under favourable circumstances, however, as the Czech President Miloš Zeman suggested that the CTHH would infringe free speech (Lopatka and Jones, 2017); also, the public did not perceive the CTHH positively (Sattler, 2017; Kotalík, 2017). Therefore, Eva Romancovová from the CTHH, a previously publicly unknown state bureaucrat, had to explain the nature of the centre to the media and also participated in several public debates about hybrid threats. However, it is clear from our dataset that as early as August 2015, Romancovová became a part of the info-war expert network, as she participated in a roundtable organized by European Values (Evropské hodnoty, 2015).

At the end of 2016, the public interest in the issue of disinformation and propaganda rose considerably, to a great extent due to the speculations that the US presidential elections were greatly affected by information disorder. The magazine *Respekt* toured the Czech Republic from March to November 2016 hosting debates which dealt with various topics of domestic politics, including disinformation and the Russian influence in the Czech Republic, and later published a special issue on disinformation (Respekt, 2016, 2017). Similarly, the think tank Association for International Affairs (Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky [AMO]) also began to focus its activities on countering disinformation, mainly abroad. More specifically, AMO held seminars for Ukrainian students and journalists to train them to fact-check information in the media and negate disinformation about the events in Ukraine. This concept was then transferred to the Czech Republic for students of pedagogical faculties, and in addition, AMO undertook a Czech version of StopFake (ČTK, 2017).

By the end of 2016, European Values together with the National Convention on the EU[9] organized a roundtable on propaganda and security in cyberspace. However, as shown in Figure 1, despite the frequency of public events related to disinformation significantly increasing at the turn of 2016 and 2017, interest in the topic gradually decreased after that.

## Mapping the Network
To explore the field of information war experts further, we proceed to a quantitative mapping of this network. We start our mapping by looking at the organizers of the

public events on information warfare. In other words, we show what kinds of institutions initiated the public debates on this topic and thus created a platform for these debates to take place. Figure 2 provides a key insight in this regard, as it maps the network of organizers of these events. The size of the node suggests the relative importance of the institution in this network[10] and the edge numbers show how many guests each pair of particular organizers shared.

As we can see, the key organizers of the public events on information warfare are the following: the think tank European Values, Charles University and the magazine *Respekt*, the two NGOs People in Need and the Scout Institute Prague, the cultural centre La Fabrica and the think tank Prague Security Studies Institute (PSSI). Most of these organizers can be seen as politically liberal thinking spaces which seek to shape the public debate on important social issues. What the graph further tells us is that there is a disproportional exchange of experts between the events – the European Values think tank and the National Convention on the EU shared a very high number of speakers in comparison to the other parties.

**Figure 2: The two-mode network of organizers**
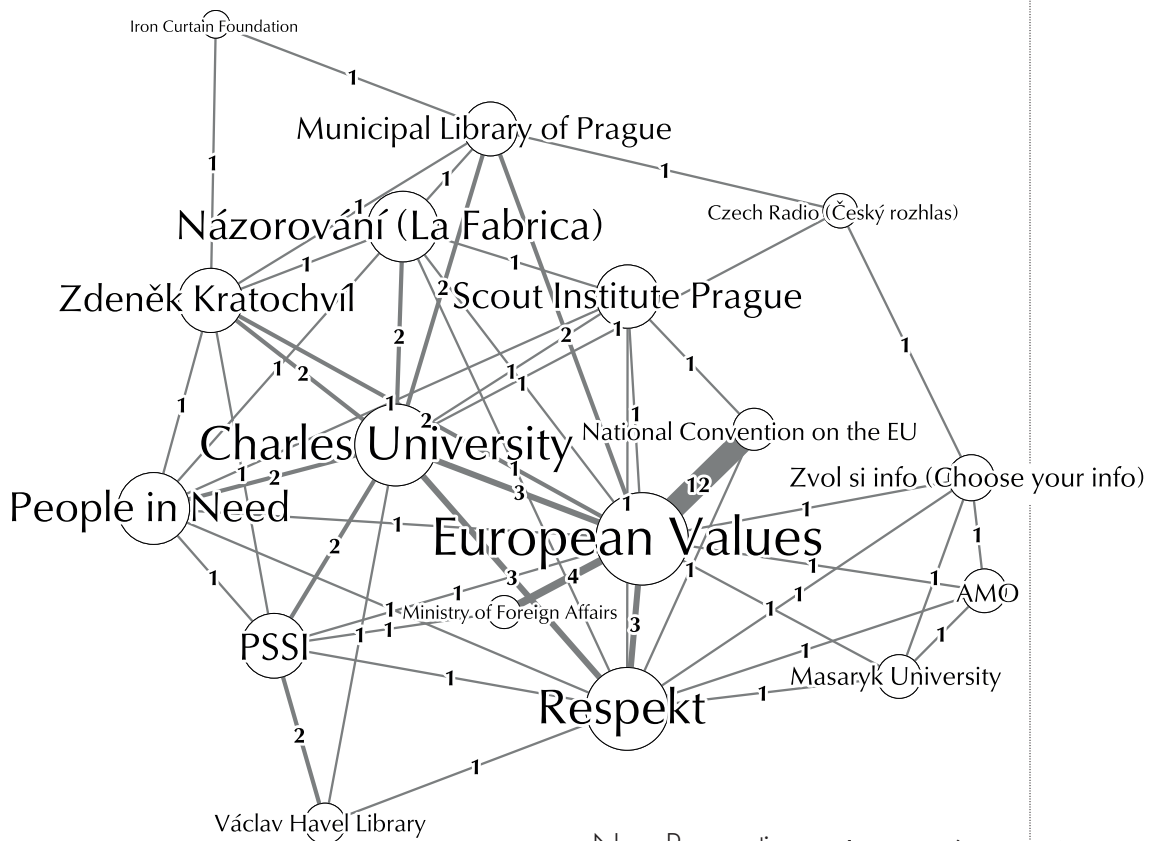
Our further interest lies in the participation in these events on information warfare. Namely which participants act as the recognized speakers – as the experts? We look at this issue from two perspectives – first, by exploring the social connections within the network (Figure 3), and then by looking into the professional affiliations of the actors (Figure 4).

**Figure 3: An overview of the network using the community finding algorithm (modularity)**
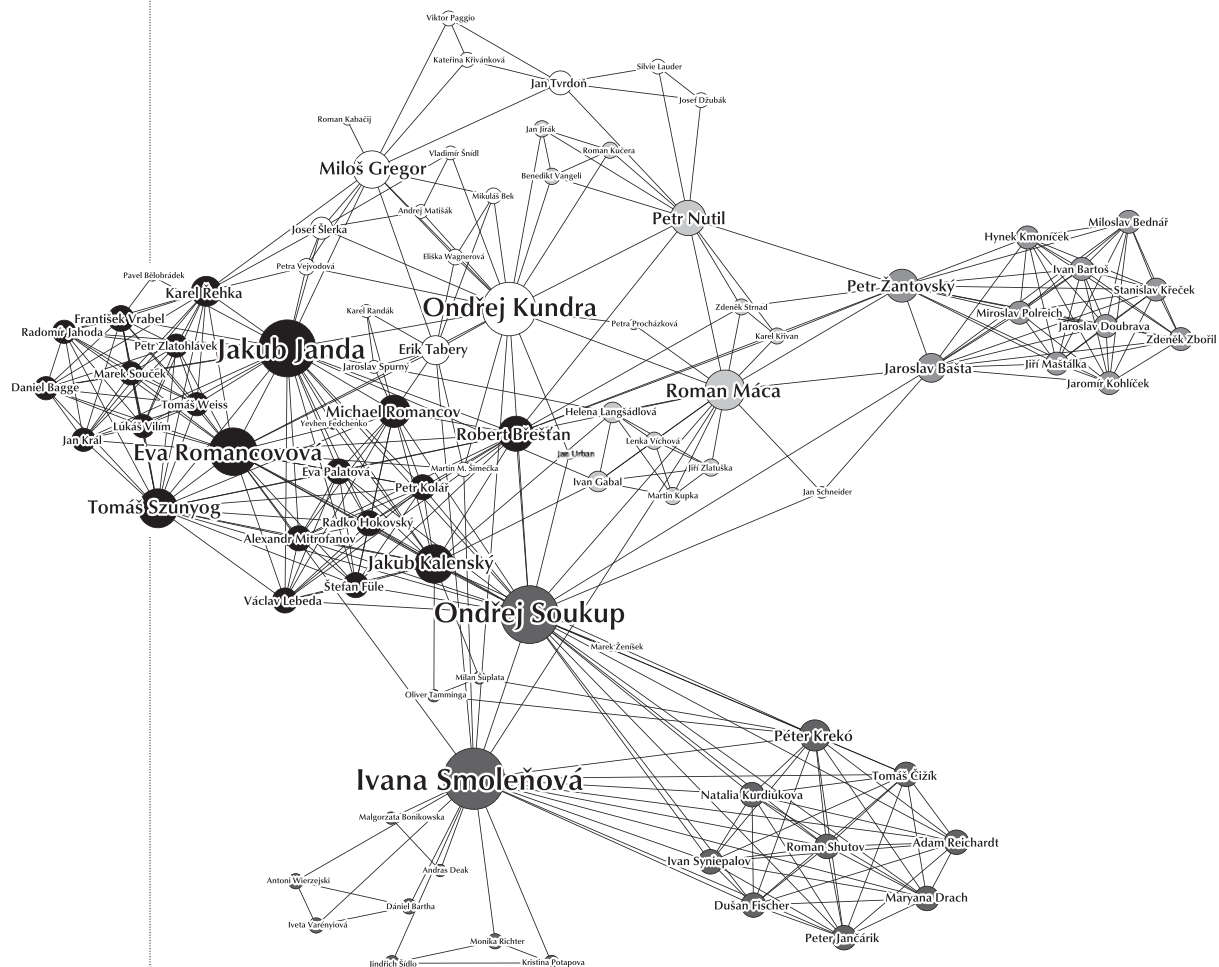


The analysis of the social structure, i.e. the functioning of specific communities operating within this broader network, is shown in Figure 3. From the graph, we can see which communities, on the basis of the interconnectedness of particular nodes, the actors fall into. The size of each node is again calculated and denotes the relative importance of the actor in the network. As we can see, there are four

communities (clusters) within the main network that can be distinguished based on the calculated interconnectedness of particular actors. These communities are rather separate, and they have important 'gatekeepers'. Each community has its specific characteristics so in order to have a better understanding of the network, we have created an almost identical map, but this time, instead of analysing communities we assigned to each node shade attributes based on the actor's occupation (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: The one mode network of actors connected through participation in public events on information warfare**
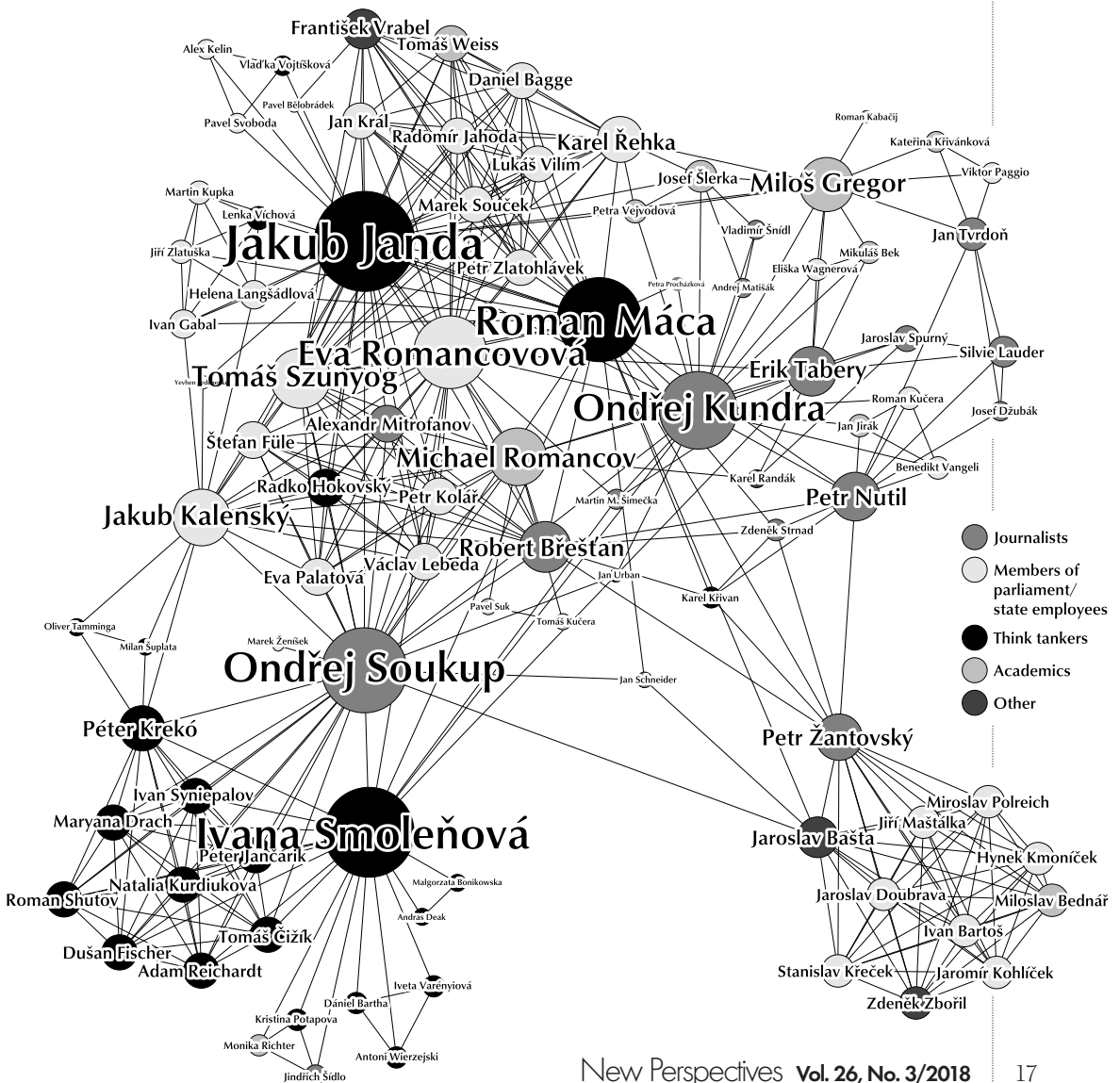
Figure 4 maps the typology of actors involved in the network according to their professional affiliation and shows how social relations are built between actors from distinct social spheres such as state bureaucracy, media, think tanks, or academia. The shading attributes are assigned based on the actors' occupations.

From this map, we can observe that there are several key actors in the network who are either journalists or think tank activists. Jakub Janda, the Deputy Director of the think tank European Values, is apparently a key partner for professionals from the state bureaucracy. However, when comparing the individual graphs, we can say that we do not find many journalists or academics in this (black) cluster and so none of them can be considered particularly important in the field.

Besides, we can also see that there is a separate (dark grey) cluster of think tank activists surrounding Ivana Smoleňová, who is an important player researching the influence of Russian disinformation in the think tank PSSI. This PSSI cluster is, however, quite isolated in the broader field and as will be discussed later, its events are rather focused on a stable, yet specific and narrow audience that includes mostly members of various think tanks, mainly those based in the Visegrád countries (V4), i.e. Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland. The reason for that is that PSSI focused on topics in the vein of Russian influence in the V4 countries and Central and Eastern Europe, and therefore their guests consisted largely of international speakers (PSSI, 2015, 2016).

If we look at the 'white' community, it shows a high participation of both journalists and academics. The weekly magazine *Respekt* played a role in forming this part of the network, particularly by organizing debates that are typically attended by journalists who cover the topic of fake news and the relationship between traditional and alternative media. Academics were invited to these debates as well to give insights on various topics like social media, and international and Russian politics (e.g. Michael Romancov, the husband of Eva Romancovová), or they were active in developing the tools for fact-checking (e.g. Miloš Gregor).

## Key Actors in the Network

What are the socio-political (and security) consequences of this new network of security experts and the politics of fighting against information warfare that they have engendered and been engendered by? In the third part of our analysis, we look at the profiles of the key actors recognized as expert speakers on information warfare in the Czech Republic and discuss the implications of their security engagement. We transformed the results of our mapping analysis into the scatterplot that is Figure 5, which shows the relationship between the actors' ability to connect nonadjacent actors in the network (betweenness centrality) and the number of their connections in the network (degree). Based on these results, we focus on six actors who score very high in both dimensions, and their involvement in the info-war securitization.[11]

**Figure 5: A scatterplot based on the actors' degree and betweenness centrality**[12]
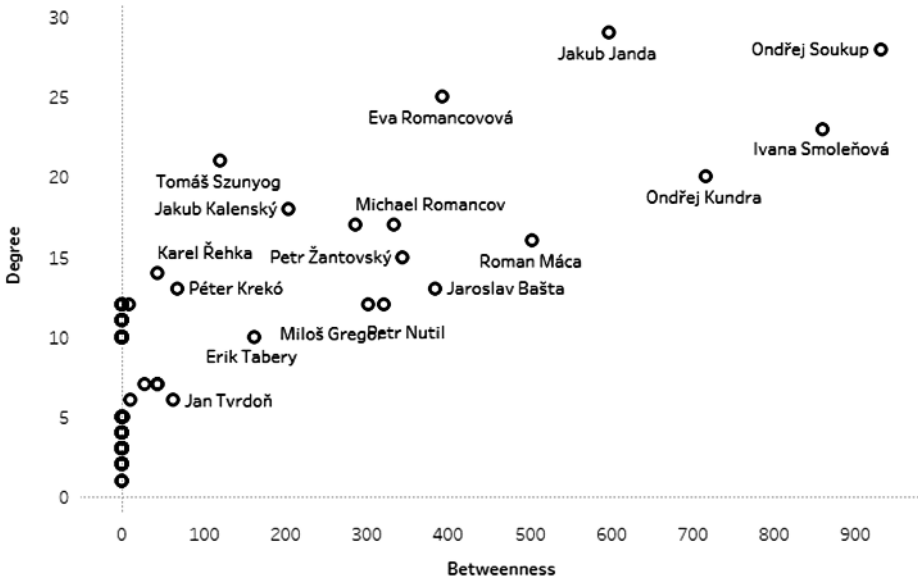


## THINK TANKERS (AND A BUREAUCRAT)

One of the early agenda-setters writing and talking about Russian information warfare was Ivana Smoleňová, a Fellow at the PSSI, where she leads a project aiming to counter Russian influence and pro-Russian disinformation campaigns in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This researcher established herself as an expert on Russian propaganda especially after writing for the American edition of *Forbes* magazine about Kremlin-organized information warfare targeted against CEE countries, which earned her media attention and enabled the PSSI to organize a series of networking events focused on tackling Russia's information warfare and bringing together business actors, civil society, and foreign experts. However, the PSSI's lack of interest in working closely with Czech policy-makers and security agencies led to the stabilization of a relatively small, specialized audience and a small, specialized group of donors for the PSSI (Daniel and Eberle, forthcoming 2018).

Compared to the PSSI, the think tank European Values has been much more successful in translating its securitizing moves to the policy realm. European Values became especially known for leading the Kremlin Watch programme and creating a 'blacklist' of disinformation websites with allegedly pro-Russian content. Jakub Janda, who previously served as its deputy director and became its director in 2018, is, in fact, the person with the most social relations in the network. He gained much attention among conservative policy circles, the state bureaucracy, and the public by frequently and critically commenting on Russian politics in the media, and he gained international

recognition by initiating the "Open Letter of European security experts to Federica Mogherini: Please start taking the Russian disinformation threat seriously!", which was signed by numerous European journalists, activists, and politicians (Tamkin, 2017)

This think-tank professional soon became a driving force behind the information war rhetoric, as he succeeded in constructing a simple, yet powerful narrative about the need to defend Western liberal democracy from Russian propaganda and presenting his think tank – 'European Values' – as the key Czech platform generating expertise on how to deal with this threat. This gave him the opportunity to present himself as an expert and to provide expertise outside the state administration. As such, he became a perfect ally for a broad scope of actors, including state bureaucrats and the army, as well as foreign partners and international organizations who shared his viewpoint in relation to the info-war. This positioning can be demonstrated by the actor's own anecdote:

> When we presented this review in the autumn of 2015 in Brussels, we called for renewed sanctions against Russian aggression, which attracted the attention of European media. [...] After we presented our report, the representative of the Russian embassy took part in the debate and intensely complained about her not sitting in the panel when in the panel, there was, for example, the Vice-Chairwoman of the Foreign Committee of the Ukrainian Parliament. I told her that unfortunately, if she lied systematically and repeatedly, she would lose her place at the discussion table in a decent society. It was rather a reflex, but it was interesting to see how a representative of a Czech NGO can silence a representative of the allegedly powerful Russia in a fully official forum well covered by the media (Janda, 2017).

Another actor coming from the Kremlin Watch project is Roman Máca, who is close to policy-makers and journalists (see Figure 4), yet is also a popular blogger. He writes critically and with plain language about Russia, disinformation, manipulation, hoaxes and cyberbullying, and argues that media manipulation is responsible for the results of the Czech presidential elections and the potential dissolution of the European Union (Nemtsova, 2017; Týden, 2017). He is known in the field for his well proclaimed anti-Russia stance and his investigative journalism, in which he uncovers and makes fun of the social media profiles of people sharing articles from 'propaganda websites' (Máca, 2017).

European Values started to propagate their activities related to Kremlin Watch with such intensity (via dozens of analyses, press releases, and social media posts)[13] that they soon caught the attention of the Ministry of Interior. Eva Romancovová, a state bureaucrat working at the Ministry of Interior (at the CTHH) and another key actor in our network, endorsed European Values as experts providing knowledge on fighting 'hybrid threats', which became a new agenda for the ministry. This al-

lowed Jakub Janda and his colleagues to serve as consultants and advisors on the National Security Audit, a key strategic document with a chapter on hybrid warfare, in which they pursue their alarmist view of this issue (Daniel and Eberle, forthcoming 2018) and *inter alia* promote digital/media literacy education as a way of fighting propaganda and disinformation (MoI, 2016: 4; Evropské hodnoty, 2018).

Significantly, this threat framing was adopted by other state bureaucracies dealing with 'hybrid threats' in their strategic documents, and the practice of teaching media literacy classes at schools started to be popularized and implemented by various non-profit organizations (Jsns, 2015; ČTK, 2017). Having established this close and mutually beneficial link with the Ministry of Interior (see Figure 4), European Values became a crucial ally for the newly founded Centre against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats (CTHH), led by Romancovová.

## JOURNALISTS

While think tank actors forged a close relationship with policy-makers and security professionals, thus spreading their alarmist anti-Russian narrative and propagating the blacklisting of suspicious media or developing media literacy, actors from traditional media helped securitize the Russian threat vis-à-vis the general public. Another frequent speaker at public events on Russian propaganda and disinformation is Ondřej Kundra, who is an experienced and respected journalist writing for the Czech weekly magazine *Respekt*. Kundra has established himself as an investigative journalist and a political commentator writing about Russia, misuse of power in the Czech justice system and secret services, and corruption scandals. His investigative articles and his recent book *Putin's Agents: How Russian Spies Steal Our Secrets* (Kundra, 2016), covering Russian practices targeted at undermining liberal democracy in the Czech Republic, were among the first Czech investigations into disinformation websites and helped set the tone and legitimacy of the later debate on the Russian threat (Daniel and Eberle, forthcoming 2018).

Another key actor in the network is Ondřej Soukup, who is also a recognized journalist specializing in Russia and who highlights his 'first-hand experience' with Russian affairs (Diplomatické fórum, 2017). He draws on his experience of growing up in the Soviet Union (as a then Czechoslovak citizen) and later working as a foreign correspondent in Moscow. He has been a frequent speaker at public events about disinformation and Russia, interestingly attending both 'anti-Russia' and 'pro-Russia' events and thus serving as a widely accepted (albeit generally 'anti-Russian') speaker in such debates.

## DIVERSITY, COORDINATION AND INFLUENCE

Returning to our original assumptions, we can see from the actors' portfolios and the network itself that the top positions in the investigated network of info-war experts

are occupied by people who indeed have the possibility to not only influence the public discourse (as journalists, members of the CTHH, and members of think tanks), but also reach state bureaucrats and influence policy-makers via their active networking with the state administration, as is the case of European Values.

The group of information war experts is diverse in terms of their professional experience (three of the key actors come from the think tank sphere, two are journalists, and one is a state bureaucrat), the frequency of their media appearances, and seniority. What they have in common, however, is that they are willing to reach out to different social spheres, propagate a straightforward alarmist narrative about the rise of the Russian threat to liberal Western democracy, and mobilize their knowledge of Russian politics and/or the world of new media.

To some extent, we can say that the activities between European Values, the CTHH and *Respekt* are coordinated. The cooperation between these actors can be seen, for example, by means of their joint appearances at events they organize (Evropské hodnoty, 2015, 2016; Skautský institut, 2016). These actors seek to securitize the issue of information warfare and build different social networks to spread their message to new audiences. The establishment of a specialized unit at the Ministry of Interior, the attachment of a special chapter on hybrid warfare to a key national security document (Daniel and Eberle, forthcoming 2018: 12), and the widespread media and public attention to the issue of information warfare are but a few examples of the influence that this new network has had.

## CONCLUSION: THE POWER OF 'TRUTH'

In recent years much political, scholarly, and media attention has been paid to the problem of disinformation and new forms of (Russian) propaganda which are believed to contribute to the polarization of the Western societies and the destabilization of liberal democratic institutions. In this paper, we scrutinized how this new problematization of security affects the exercise of security expertise – in other words, what kinds of actors are empowered to speak as experts on this new security issue? To explore this question, we looked at the public performance of expertise on information warfare in the Czech Republic. Concretely, our study was based on tracing the evolution of the Czech debate, analysing the network of 'information warfare experts' involved in public events, and sketching their involvement as a way to show what knowledge and capital get recognized in the newly formed expert sphere. By doing so, the paper outlined possible theoretical and methodological approaches to studying the changing models of expertise related to the securitization of information disorder and thus sought to contribute to the emerging debate on the politics of expertise in the 'post-factual era'.

Our results are based on a single-country case study and limited data, as discussed before. To provide a more comprehensive answer to the question of who gains

power in this new 'battle for truth', further research can combine productively qualitative and quantitative methods and map the new security landscape related to the attempts to deal with the information disorder and information war. Also, a cross-country comparison or an analysis of the transnational expert network can provide a broader picture, similarly to research focusing on what distinct practices of dealing with information disorder we can find in different countries and how they spread and translate to local contexts.

The findings of our research can be translated to several main arguments. First, the securitization of information warfare in the Czech Republic is related to the emergence of a new expert network comprised primarily of think tanks and journalists who successfully reach out to the public as well as policy-makers. Surprisingly, only a few academics are present in the network and their influence is considered rather marginal. The network is diverse in terms of the professional experience of the actors, yet in it, close ties are built between different, previously much less connected social spheres. The tie between European Values and the Ministry of Interior is a good example of the mutual benefits of these new bridges. On the one hand, European Values shaped the official narrative on Russian propaganda and hybrid threats, came forth with concrete policy suggestions and, in general, provided legitimacy to the hawkish policies of the government (e.g. in the area of migration policy as well as in direct reference to 'internal threats') by giving them their supposedly 'expert' endorsement. On the other hand, the Ministry was crucial in legitimizing the activities of European Values and bringing the issue of hybrid threats and information warfare to the forefront of media attention. Some of the actors in the network were previously known and mostly recognized as experts in their respective fields (e.g. the journalists), but the new connections developed between the different spheres are what amplified the social and political role and relevance of their expertise – a classic network effect.

Second, the diversity of the expert network seems to reflect the type of expertise that is demanded in tackling information warfare and the importance of political backing to the expert narrative. What gets concretely appreciated is the combination of knowledge of new media and Russian politics, and this is underlined by the alarmist narrative about a new wave of the Russian threat to the liberal Western democracy. Albeit different in their ways of spreading this narrative, the 'information war evangelists' share the same belief that liberal democracy is in jeopardy and that a foreign power (Russia) contributes to driving a wedge between various segments of our society by misusing cyberspace and creating information disorder.[14]

Third, our social network analysis shows that there have been not only different kinds of experts, but also different audiences in the debates on information warfare. For instance, while the think tank PSSI speaks to domestic and international civil society and business actors, European Values has a close relationship with the Czech security apparatus and a diverse group of foreign actors and is thus able to act not

only as an agenda-setter shaping the public discourse, but is also invited to contribute directly to policy-making. This contributes to the politicization of the topic among a broader audience (and its potential mobilization), yet it simultaneously supports the argument about the very vague character of the 'hybrid threat' narrative as a precondition for the success of this security narrative (Daniel and Eberle, forthcoming 2018). The effect of this is that a broad variety of new measures can be adopted in different contexts and legitimized by acting against this alleged threat – regardless of whether it is creating blacklists of untrustworthy media sources, pointing to concrete individuals sharing the alleged pro-Russian propaganda, fact-checking tools, or building media literacy.

Finally, another effect of this network is that it cements a specific 'truth' – the narrative of Russia as a dangerous outside actor engaged in threatening activities in the Czech Republic, enhancing the perception that threats to Czech democracy and the wider liberal West come from outside rather than within. The securitization of information disorder and its geopolitical framing turn it into a problem caused by a hostile external actor, which consequently narrows down the thinking on who can deal with this issue and how. This truth is a powerful inspiration for some people and some purposes and against other people and other purposes. When the attempts to clean up the public space so that it would be free from information pollution merge with ideological and foreign-political battles, when the battle against lies becomes a battle for a specific version of truth, and when this battle receives the state's blessing, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to uphold a space for critical voices and open democratic deliberation. In other words, what is allegedly at stake – the liberal democratic order and the principles on which it is based – can be compromised by this new battle. Understanding how this process evolves and what types of actors get involved in it (as well as what kinds of expertise they represent and thus what claim to legitimacy they have) is a key step for being able to intervene in this highly polarized debate and point out what the fight against information warfare does to as well as through our societies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## ENDNOTES

[1] An excerpt from the TV documentary *The Power of Lies* (2017). Translation by the authors.

[2] Wardle and Derakhshan (2017: 5) define these terms as follows: "Mis-information is when false information is shared, but no harm is meant. Dis-information is when false information is knowingly shared to cause harm. Mal-information is when genuine information is shared to cause harm, often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere."

[3] Much political and scholarly attention is currently also paid to the online propaganda of the Islamic State, which uses social media as a tool for recruitment of new fighters and supporters. These campaigns, however, have very different dynamics as well as goals (Gates and Podder, 2015; Aly et al., 2017).

[4] We excluded events focusing on disinformation and propaganda abroad (in a few cases, the event dealt with propaganda and disinformation in Russia and Ukraine).

[5] An important part of any research paper that collects open or publicly available data is ensuring that the subjects do not suffer any harm. However, since we only use open sources data, we have decided not to anonymize the actors studied in this paper. The first reason is that their participation in the events, in which they shared their expertise, was voluntary and there are public records of it. The second reason is that we use direct quotes from them and references to their publications to analyse their attitudes. The quotes have been translated from Czech to English by the authors.

[6] To put it in simpler terms one can imagine a path from point i to point j. On this path point k serves as a bridge to get from one point to another. Therefore, what betweenness tells us is how many times this point in the network is crossed (via the shortest path) in order to get from one nonadjacent node to another. The final number consequently increases with each path for which this point is used as a bridge.

[7] For further reading regarding the mathematical foundations of centrality measures see Wasserman and Faust (1994: 177–191).

[8] Examples of alternative media websites include *AC24.cz*, *Aeronet*, *Sputnik News*, *Slobodný vysielač*, and *Zem & Vek*, among others (Smoleňová, 2015: 7).

[9] The National Convention on the EU serves to link various government institutions, ranging from government offices and the MFA to think tanks, research institutions, and trade unions.

[10] This calculation is based on the PageRank algorithm, which was originally developed as an algorithm that searches for important websites by looking at what other sites they are referencing. In the SNA, we can use this approximation of relative importance for finding popular actors or opinion leaders based on their centrality in the network determined by PageRank (Page et al., 1999).

[11] Interestingly, all these actors were invited to comment on information warfare in the abovementioned TV documentary, with the exception of Ondřej Soukup, who was, however, mentioned in the closing credits.

[12] Though there are 106 actors in the network in total, note that the actors with a low degree and low betweenness overlap; therefore, we omitted their labels from the plot as it shows that they are not significant players in the network.

[13] A number of academics and researchers, including some from the Institute of International Relations Prague (including the Editor-in-Chief of its journal *New Perspectives*, Benjamin Tallis), expressed their concern about the ideological nature of EV practices that are masked behind its analyses, policy memos, and other texts (see Daniel et al., 2016). It should be emphasized that this article, as with all research articles in *New Perspectives*, has been through a blind (anonymous) peer review process independent

from the input of the Editor and managed by an outside academic – in this case, Dr Nicholas Michelsen of Kings College London.

[14] An excerpt from the TV documentary *The Power of Lies* (2017). Translation by the authors.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

• Adler, Emanuel and Peter M. Haas (1992), 'Conclusion: Epistemic Communities, World Order, and the Creation of a Reflective Research Program', *International Organization*, 46(1): 367–390.

• Adler-Nissen, Rebecca (2013), *Bourdieu in International Relations: Rethinking Key Concepts in IR*, London and New York: Routledge.

• Aelst, Peter Van, Jesper Strömbäck, Toril Aalberg, Frank Esser, Claes de Vreese, Jörg Matthes, David Hopmann, Susana Salgado, Nicolas Hubé, Agnieszka Stępińska, Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, Rosa Berganza, Guido Legnante, Carsten Reinemann, Tamir Sheafer and James Stanyer (2017), 'Political Communication in a High-Choice Media Environment: A Challenge for Democracy?', *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 41(1): 3–27.

• Aly, Anne, Stuart Macdonald, Lee Jarvis and Thomas M. Chen (2017), 'Introduction to the Special Issue: Terrorist Online Propaganda and Radicalization', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 40(1): 1–9.

• Applebaum, Anne and Edward Lucas (2016), 'The Danger of Russian Disinformation', *Washington Post*, 06/05/2016. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-danger-of-russian-disinformation/2016/05/06/b31d9718-12d5-11e6-8967-7ac733c56f12_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.f03fa05781d6 (Accessed 16/08/2018).

• Aradau, Claudia and Rens Van Munster (2007), 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk: Taking Precautions, (Un)Knowing the Future', *European Journal of International Relations*, 13(1): 89–115.

• Aro, Jessikka (2016), 'The Cyberspace War: Propaganda and Trolling as Warfare Tools', *European View*, 15: 121–132.

• Balzacq, Thierry (ed.) (2011), *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, London and New York: Routledge.

• Basaran, Tugba, Didier Bigo, Emmanuel-Pierre Guittet and R.B.J. Walker (eds.) (2016), *International Political Sociology: Transversal Lines*, London and New York: Routledge.

• Becker, Marshall H. (1970), 'Sociometric Location and Innovativeness: Reformulation and Extension of the Diffusion Model', *American Sociological Review*, 35(2): 267.

• Berling, Trine Villumsen (2011), 'Science and Securitization: Objectivation, the Authority of the Speaker and Mobilization of Scientific Facts', *Security Dialogue*, 42(4–5): 385–397.

• Berling, Trine Villumsen and Christian Bueger (eds.) (2015), *Security Expertise: Practice, Power, Responsibility*, Oxon and New York: Routledge.

• Berling, Trine Villumsen and Christian Bueger (2017), 'Expertise in the Age of Post-Factual Politics: An Outline of Reflexive Strategies', *Geoforum*.

• Bigo, Didier (2008), 'Globalized (In)Security: The Field and the Ban-Opticon', in D. Bigo, D. and A. Tsoukala (eds.), *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty: Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes after 9/11*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, pp. 10–48.

• Borgatti, Stephen P. (2005), 'Centrality and Network Flow', *Social Networks*, 27(1): 55–71.

• Borgatti, Stephen P. and Martin G. Everett (1997), 'Network Analysis of 2-Mode Data', *Social Networks*, 19(3): 243–269.

• Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïc JD Wacquant (1992), *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

• Bueger, Christian (2015), 'Making Things Known: Epistemic Practices, the United Nations, and the Translation of Piracy', *International Political Sociology*, 9(1): 1–18.

• Bueger, Christian and Trine Villumsen Berling (2015), 'Security Expertise: An Introduction', *Security Expertise: Practice, Power, Responsibility*, Routledge. Available at https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781315744797.

• Buzan, Barry; Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde (1998), *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder, Colo.; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

• Cameron, Rob (2017), 'Fake News: Czechs Try to Tackle Spread of False Stories', *BBC News*, 02/02/2017. Available at http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38808501.

• Campbell, David (1992), *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

• CNN (2017), 'Czech Republic Tackles Spread of Fake News', *CNN Video*, 02/02/2017. Available at https://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2017/02/02/czech-republic-tackles-fake-news-soares-pkg.cnn.

• Colborne, Michael (2016), 'Meet the Czechs Fighting Back against Russia's (Dis)Information War', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16/12/2016, updated 19/12/2016. Available at https://www.smh.com.au/world/meet-the-czechs-fighting-back-against-russias-disinformation-war-20161216-gtcbh5.html (Accessed 16/08/2018).

• Colborne, Michael (2017), 'The Brief Life, and Looming Death, of Europe's "SWAT Team for Truth"', *Foreign Policy*, 20/09/2017. Available at https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/09/20/the-brief-life-and-looming-death-of-europes-swat-team-for-truth-fake-news/ (Accessed 16/08/2018).

• Cook, John (2017), 'Technology Helped Create Fake News. Now Technology Needs to Stop It', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

• Corner, John (2017), 'Fake News, Post-Truth and Media–Political Change', *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(7): 1100–1107.

• Csardi, Gabor and Tamas Nepusz (2006), 'The Igraph Software Package for Complex Network Research', *InterJournal*, Complex Sy: 1695.

• ČTK (2017), 'Čeští a ukrajinští experti učí studenty rozkrývat lživé zprávy [Czech and Ukrainian Experts Teach Students to Uncover Fake News]'. Available at http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/cesti-a-ukrajinsti-experti-uci-studenty-rozkryvat-lzive-zpravy/1451321 (Accessed 16/08/2018).

• Daniel, Jan and Jakub Eberle (forthcoming, 2018), 'Hybrid Warriors: Transforming Czech Security through the "Russian Hybrid Warfare" Assemblage', *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review*.

• Daniel, Jan, Ondřej Ditrych, Jan Ludvík, Dagmar Rychnovská, Michal Smetana, Benjamin Tallis, Tomáš Weiss and Jakub Záhora (2016), 'POLEMIKA: Podivné postupy Evropských hodnot. Mluvme o bezpečnosti, ale bez ideologie [POLEMIC: The Strange Practices of European Values. Let's Talk about Security, But Without Ideology]', *Lidové noviny*, 06/11/2016. Available at https://www.lidovky.cz/mlu-

vme-o-bezpecnosti-ale-bez-ideologie-dh6-/nazory.aspx?c=A161105_102245_ln_nazory_sij (Accessed 19/04/2018).

- Diplomatické fórum (2017), 'PŘEDNÁŠKA: Ondřej Soukup – role Propagandy v dnešním světě [LEC-TURE: Ondřej Soukup – The Role of Propaganda in Today's World]'. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNsgOlGEpMA (Accessed 16/08/2018).
- European Commission (2016), 'JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL. Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats: A European Union Response'.
- Evropské hodnoty (2015), 'Kulatý stůl o boji s ruskou propagandou [A Roundtable about the Fight against Russian Propaganda]', Evropské hodnoty [European Values]. Available at http://www.evropske-hodnoty.cz/akce/kulaty-stul-boji-ruskou-propagandou/ (Accessed 18/03/2018).
- Evropské hodnoty (2016), 'Role médií v ruské dezinformační kampani [The Role of the Media in the Russian Disinformation Campaign]', Evropské hodnoty [European Values]. Available at http://www.evropske hodnoty.cz/akce/role-medii-v-ruske-dezinformacni-kampani/ (Accessed 19/04/2018).
- Evropské hodnoty (2018), 'TISKOVÁ ZPRÁVA: Analýza: Na nutnost mediální výchovy upozorňuje audit národní bezpečnosti, ale stát se jí nevěnuje dostatečně [PRESS RELEASE: Analysis: The Necessity of Media Literacy Education Is Highlighted by the National Security Audit but the State Does Not Sufficiently Focus on It]', Evropské hodnoty [European Values]. Available at http://www.evropskehod-noty.cz/analyza-na-nutnost-medialni-vychovy-upozornuje-audit-narodni-bezpecnosti-ale-stat-se-ji-neven uje-dostatecne/ (Accessed 17/04/2018).
- Freeman, Linton C. (1978), 'Centrality in Social Networks', *Social Networks*, 1(3): 215–239.
- Gates, Scott and Sukanya Podder (2015), 'Social Media, Recruitment, Allegiance and the Islamic State', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 9(4).
- Gregor, Miloš and Petra Vejvodová (2018), *Nejlepší kniha o fake news!!! [The Best Book about Fake News!!!]*, Brno: CPress.
- Guzzini, Stefano (ed.) (2013), *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe? Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Haas, Ernst B. (1958), *The Uniting of Europe*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hagmann, Jonas and Myriam Dunn Cavelty (2012), 'National Risk Registers: Security Scientism and the Propagation of Permanent Insecurity', *Security Dialogue*, 43(1): 79–96.
- Hansen, Lene (2006), *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, London: Routledge.
- Hellman, Maria and Charlotte Wagnsson (2017), 'How Can European States Respond to Russian Information Warfare? An Analytical Framework', *European Security*, 26(2): 153–170.
- Higgins, Kathleen (2016), 'Post-Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed', *Nature*, 540(7631): 9.
- Huysmans, Jef (2006), *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU*, London: Routledge.
- Janda, Jakub (2017), 'Jak jsme v Česku začali budovat obranný val proti nepřátelskému vlivu Kremlu [How We Started to Build the Defense Wall against the Hostile Influence of the Kremlin in Czechia]', Evropské hodnoty [European Values]. Available at http://www.evropskehodnoty.cz/jak-jsme-v-cesku/ (Accessed 16/08/2018).
- Janda, Jakub and Veronika Víchová (2016), *Fungování českých dezinformačních webů [How Czech Disinformation Websites Work]*, Evropské hodnoty [European Values]. Available at http://www.evropske-

hodnoty.cz/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Fungování-českých-dezinformačních-webů4-1.pdf (Accessed 16/08/2018).

- Jsns (2015), 'Současná ruská propaganda – debata [Current Russian Propaganda – A Debate]', youtube.com. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BS20oSVgJks (Accessed 18/03/2018).
- Kotalík, Jakub (2017), 'Centrum proti terorismu: dezinformaci našlo jednu, chystá se na volby [The Centre against Terrorism: It Found One Instance of Disinformation, and It Is Preparing for the Elections]', *iDNES.cz*, 29/04/2017. Available at https://zpravy.idnes.cz/centrum-proti-terorismu-a-hybridnim-hrozbam-dezinformace-vnitro-p91-/domaci.aspx?c=A170331_155837_domaci_jkk (Accessed 16/08/2018).
- Kratochvíl, Petr, Petra Cibulková and Vít Beneš (2006), 'Foreign Policy, Rhetorical Action and the Idea of Otherness: The Czech Republic and Russia', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 39(4): 497–511.
- Kuchyňková, Petra, Petr Kratochvíl and Boris Shemlev (2015), 'Russia in the Czech Foreign Policy', in A. Zagorski (ed.) *Czech-Russian Relations 1989–2012*, Prague: Human Rights Publisher, pp. 95–134.
- Kundra, Ondřej (2016), *Putinovi agenti: Jak ruští špioni kradou naše tajemství [Putin's Agents: How Russian Spies Steal Our Secrets]*, Brno: BizBooks.
- Leander, Anna (2005), 'The Market for Force and Public Security: The Destabilizing Consequences of Private Military Companies', *Journal of Peace Research*, 42(5): 605–622.
- Leander, Anna (2012), 'What Do Codes of Conduct Do? Hybrid Constitutionalization and Militarization in Military Markets', *Global Constitutionalism*, 1(1): 91–119.
- Lewandowsky, Stephan, Ullrich K. H. Ecker and John Cook (2017), 'Beyond Misinformation: Understanding and Coping with the "Post-Truth" Era', *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 6(4). 353–369.
- Litfin, Karen (1994), *Ozone Discourses: Science and Politics in Global Environmental Cooperation*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lopatka, Jan and Gareth Jones (2017), 'Czech "Hybrid Threats" Center under Fire from Country's Own President', *Reuters*, 04/01/2017. Available at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-czech-security-hybrid/czech-hybrid-threats-center-under-fire-from-countrys-own-president-idUSKBN14O227.
- Loughlan, Victoria, Christian Olsson and Peer Schouten (2014), 'Mapping', in C. Aradau, J. Huysmans, A. Neal, and N. Voelkner (eds.) *Critical Security Methods: New Frameworks for Analysis*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 21–56.
- Lucas, Edward (2014), *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West*, New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin.
- Máca, Roman (2017), 'Roman Máca – Blog IDNES.Cz', *iDNES.cz*. Available at https://maca.blog.idnes.cz/ (Accessed 01/10/2017).
- Mejias, Ulises A. and Nikolai E. Vokuev (2017), 'Disinformation and the Media: The Case of Russia and Ukraine', *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(7): 1027–1042.
- Mérand, Frédéric, Stephanie Hofmann and Bastien Irondelle (2010), *Transgovernmental Networks in European Security and Defence Policy*, Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network.
- Mérand, Frédéric, Stéphanie C. Hofmann and Bastien Irondelle (2011), 'Governance and State Power: A Network Analysis of European Security', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49(1): 121–147.

- MFA (2015), *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic 2015*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Available at http://www.army.cz/images/id_8001_9000/8503/Security_Strategy_2015.pdf (Accessed 24/11/2018).
- Mitrany, David (1944), *A Working Peace System: An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization*, London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- MoI (2016), *National Security Audit*, Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic. Available at http://www.mvcr.cz/cthh/soubor/national-security-audit.aspx (Accessed 16/08/2018).
- NATO (2010), BI-SC Input for a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats.
- NATO (2017), 'NATO Welcomes Opening of European Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats'.
- Nemtsova, Anna (2017), 'The Next NATO Ally Russia Is Trying to Disrupt', *The Daily Beast*, 12/01/2017. Available at https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-next-nato-ally-russia-is-trying-to-disrupt (Accessed 16/08/2018).
- Nielsen, Jakob (2003), 'IM, Not IP (Information Pollution)', *Queue – Instant Messaging*, 1(8): 75–76.
- Nutil, Petr (2018), *Média, lži a příliš rychlý mozek: Průvodce postpravdivým světem [Media, Lies and a Too Fast Brain: A Guide to the Post-Truth World]*, Prague: Grada.
- Nyhan, Brendan and Jason Reifler (2010), 'When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions', *Political Behavior*, 32(2): 303–330.
- Page, Lawrence, Sergey Brin, Rajeev Motwani and Terry Winograd (1999), *The PageRank Citation Ranking: Bringing Order to the Web*, Stanford, CA: Stanford InfoLab.
- Pomerantsev, Peter (2014), 'Russia and the Menace of Unreality', *The Atlantic*, 09/09/2014.
- PSSI (2015), 'Initiative to Raise Awareness about Pro-Russian Disinformation', *pssi.cz*. Available at http://www.pssi.cz/russia-s-influence-activities-in-cee/pro-russian-disinformation (Accessed 18/03/2018).
- PSSI (2016), 'Information Warfare in the Internet', *pssi.cz*. Available at http://www.pssi.cz/russia-s-influence-activities-in-cee/information-warfare (Accessed 18/03/2018).
- Rankin, Jennifer (2017), 'EU Anti-Propaganda Unit Gets 1m a Year to Counter Russian Fake News', *Guardian*, 25/11/2017. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/25/eu-anti-propaganda-unit-gets-1m-a-year-to-counter-russian-fake-news (Accessed 16/08/2018).
- Řehka, Karel (2017), *Informační válka [Information Warfare]*, Prague: Academia.
- Renz, Bettina (2016), 'Russia and "Hybrid Warfare"', *Contemporary Politics*, 22(3): 283–300.
- Respekt (2016), 'Respekt Tour 2016', *Respekt.cz*. Available at http://promo.respekt.cz/tour/ (Accessed 18/03/2018).
- Respekt (2017), 'Dezinformace [Disinformation]', *Respekt.cz*. Available at https://www.respekt.cz/special/2017/dezinformace (Accessed 18/03/2018).
- Rychnovská, Dagmar, Maya Pasgaard and Trine Villumsen Berling (2017), 'Science and Security Expertise: Authority, Knowledge, Subjectivity', *Geoforum*, 84: 327–331.
- Sattler, Robert (2017), 'Co zatím zvládlo centrum kritizované Zemanem? Vyvrátilo tři nepravdy [What Did the Centre Criticized by Zeman Achieve So Far? It Debunked Three Falsehoods]', *Lidovky.cz*, 14/02/2017. Available at https://www.lidovky.cz/uvodni-mesic-bojovniku-s-dezinformacemi-vyvraceni-tri-nepravd-a-chraneni-voleb-gc9-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A170210_155558_ln_domov_rsa (Accessed 16/08/2018).
- Sismondo, Sergio (2017), 'Post-Truth?', *Social Studies of Science*, 47(1): 3–6.

• Skautský institut (2016), 'Média v měnícím se světě [Media in a Changing World]', Skautský institut. Available at https://www.skautskyinstitut.cz/media-v-menicim-se-svete/ (Accessed 19/04/2018).

• Slaughter, Anne-Marie (2009), *A New World Order*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

• Smoleňová, Ivana (2016), *Proruská desinformační kampaň v České republice a na Slovensku: typy médií šířící proruskou propagandu, jejich charakteristika a nejvíce používané argumenty [The Pro-Russian Disinformation Campaign in the Czech Republic and Slovakia: The Types of Media Spreading Pro-Russian Propaganda, Their Characteristics and Their Most Used Arguments]*, Prague Security Studies Institute.

• Stritzel, Holger (2007), 'Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond', *European Journal of International Relations*, 13(3): 357–383.

• Tait, Robert (2016), 'Czech Republic to Fight "Fake News" with Specialist Unit', *The Guardian*, 28/12/2016. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/dec/28/czech-republic-to-fight-fake-news-with-specialist-unit.

• Tallis, Benjamin (2016), 'Editorial – Living in Post-Truth: Power/Knowledge/Responsibility', *CEE New Perspectives*, 1/2016. Available at http://ceenewperspectives.iir.cz/2016/07/30/012016-editorial-living-in-post-truth-powerknowledgeresponsibility/ (Accessed 16/08/2018).

• Tamkin, Emily (2017), 'The Real Russian Threat to Central Eastern Europe', *Foreign Policy*, 30/03/2017. Available at http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/30/the-real-russian-threat-to-central-eastern-europe-2/ (Accessed 16/08/2018).

• Tasch, Barbara (2017), 'The Czech Government Thinks Russian Propaganda Is "the Biggest Threat Europe Has Been Facing since the 1930s"', *Business Insider*, 03/02/2017. Available at http://uk.businessinsider.com/russian-propaganda-biggest-threat-europe-since-1930-2017-2 (Accessed 16/08/2018).

• Týden (2017), 'Analytik: Dezinformační kampaně mohou rozhodnout volby [An Analyst: Disinformation Campaigns Can Decide the Elections]', *TÝDEN.cz*, 01/12/2017. Available at https://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/domaci/politika/analytik-dezinformacni-kampane-mohou-rozhodnout-volby_457102.html.

• Václav Havel Library (2016), 'How to Defeat Kremlin Disinformation Campaign?', Knihovna Václava Havla. Available at http://www.vaclavhavel-library.org/cs/index/kalendar/947/how-to-defeat-kremlin-disinformation-campaign (Accessed 18/03/2018).

• Vlada.cz (2016), 'Audit národní bezpečnosti [National Security Audit]'. Available at https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/audit-narodni-bezpecnosti-151410/ (Accessed 16/08/2018).

• Wardle, Claire and Hossein Derakhshan (2017), 'Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policymaking'.

• Wasserman, Stanley and Katherine Faust (1994), *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**DAGMAR RYCHNOVSKÁ** is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS), Vienna. She holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from

DAGMAR RYCHNOVSKÁ, MARTIN KOHÚT

Charles University in Prague and specializes in critical security studies and the politics of new threats. Her current work focuses on security controversies in research and innovation governance related especially to bioweapons, biotechnologies, and biobanks.

**Correspondence email:** rychnovska@ihs.ac.at

**MARTIN KOHÚT** is a PhD student at the Department of Security Studies, the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. His research interests centre around the computational methods in social sciences.

**Correspondence email:** martin.kohut@fsv.cuni.cz