

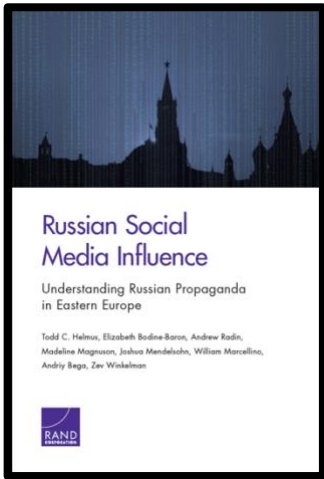
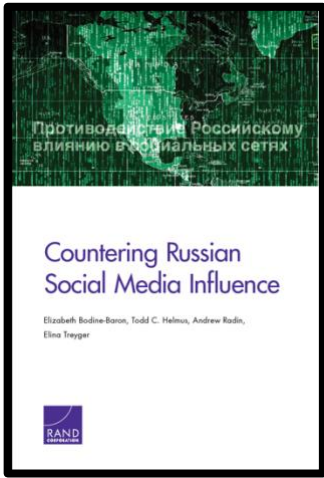
A review of RAND research on countering foreign influence

Prepared by Carl Rhodes, Director RAND Australia,

RAND Corporation has worked for a number of years on strategies to identify and counter efforts by foreign nations to influence various countries. While much of the work has been performed for U.S. sponsors, there are a number of lines of work which could be helpful to the Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media. RAND Australia remains ready to provide assistance to the Select Committee through either discussions with our experts or through funded work that would focus on the specific challenges facing Australia.

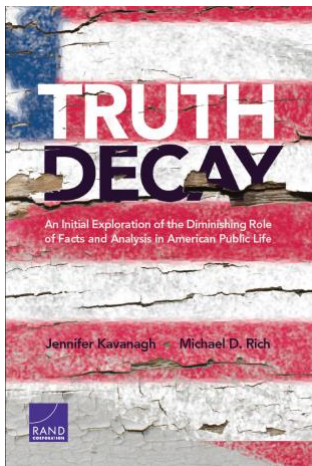

Understanding and countering Russian use of social media for influence

Russia has made extensive use of social media as part of a sophisticated campaign that includes news tweets, nonattributed comments on web pages, troll and bot social media accounts, and fake hashtag and Twitter campaigns. One target of this threat is the region of former Soviet states that include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and, to a lesser extent, Moldova and Belarus.

	<p>Russian Social Media Influence: Understanding Russian Propaganda in Eastern Europe 2018 – available here</p> <p><u>Research questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the scope of Russian social media campaigns? • What are the critical ingredients to countering these campaigns?
	<p>Countering Russian Social Media Influence 2018 – available here</p> <p><u>Research questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we characterize Russian social media influence? • What tools and approaches are available to counter Russian social media influence? • What are the current efforts underway to counter this threat, and how effective are they? • What additional steps could be taken, and what would be required for them to be effective? • What are the unintentional consequences or drawbacks of these proposed approaches? Are they outweighed by the potential benefits? • Which approaches have the highest likelihood of success and target multiple links in the disinformation chain?

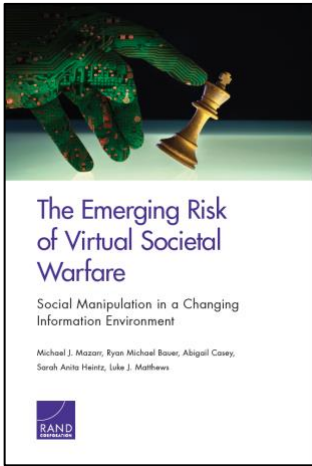
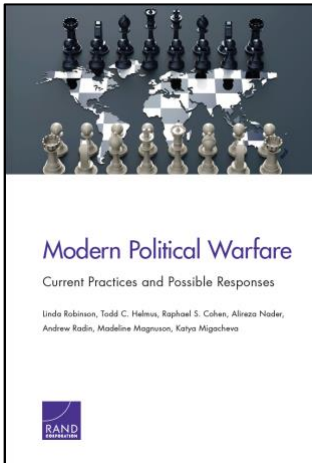
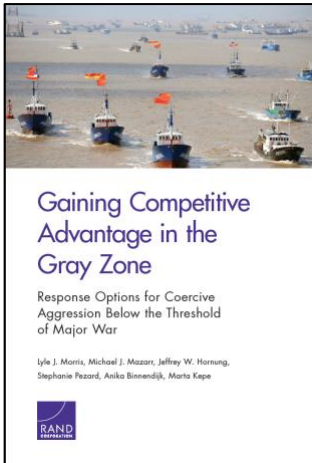
Truth Decay: The diminishing role of facts and analysis in American public life

Over the past two decades, national political and civil discourse in the United States has been characterized by "Truth Decay," defined as a set of four interrelated trends: an increasing disagreement about facts and analytical interpretations of facts and data; a blurring of the line between opinion and fact; an increase in the relative volume, and resulting influence, of opinion and personal experience over fact; and lowered trust in formerly respected sources of factual information. These trends have many causes, but this report focuses on four: characteristics of human cognitive processing, such as cognitive bias; changes in the information system, including social media and the 24-hour news cycle; competing demands on the education system that diminish time spent on media literacy and critical thinking; and polarization, both political and demographic.

	<p>Truth Decay: An Initial Exploration of the Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Public Life 2018 – available here</p> <p><u>Research questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Truth Decay and what evidence for it exists? • Is Truth Decay new, or has it previously existed in some form? • What causes Truth Decay and what are the consequences? • What can be done to combat Truth Decay?
	<p>Fighting Disinformation Online 2019 – database available here</p> <p><u>Project goals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and collect in one place a set of resources that can help users combat the challenge of disinformation, gain greater awareness of the media ecosystem, and become more-savvy information media consumers • Inform funders and developers about the set of tools currently under development, those tools in need of funding, and areas where additional development would be beneficial • Provide a map of ongoing projects and developed tools that could serve as an input to efforts to build a field around the study of disinformation and its remedies.

Emerging types of conflict called political warfare, societal warfare, and gray zone competition

A number of state and non-state actors employ a wide range of political, informational, military, and economic measures to influence, coerce, intimidate, or undermine the interests of Western nations. Many of these actions play out primarily below the threshold of armed conflict. Russia and China have been observed taking such actions to seek strategic advantage. RAND has great deal of work on such issues, with social media being a single component of a larger phenomenon.

 <p>The Emerging Risk of Virtual Societal Warfare Social Manipulation in a Changing Information Environment Michael J. Mazarr, Ryan Michael Bauer, Abigail Casey, Sarah Anita Hainz, Luke J. Matthews</p>	<p>The Emerging Risk of Virtual Societal Warfare: Social Manipulation in a Changing Information Environment 2019 – available here</p> <p><u>Research questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the characteristics of virtual societal warfare, and what risks does it present to advanced societies? • What is the social and technological context in which cyberaggression, such as hostile social manipulation and virtual societal warfare, will be employed? • What might the world look like 10–15 years after the advent of virtual societal warfare and related techniques of cyberaggression?
 <p>Modern Political Warfare Current Practices and Possible Responses Linda Robinson, Todd C. Helmen, Raphael S. Cohen, Alireza Nader, Andrew Radin, Madeline Magnusson, Katya Migachova</p>	<p>Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses 2018 – available here</p> <p><u>Research questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is political warfare? • How is it (or an appropriate analogous term) applied today? • How might the U.S. government, along with its allies and partners, most effectively respond to or engage in this type of conflict to achieve its ends and protect its interests?
 <p>Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War Lyle J. Morris, Michael J. Mazarr, Jeffrey W. Horning, Stephanie Pezard, Anika Binnendijk, Maria Kape</p>	<p>Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone: Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War 2019 – available here</p> <p><u>Research questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the level and character of the strategic challenge posed by Russian and Chinese gray zone tactics? • What responses are feasible and appropriate?