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The tasks of the leader in minimizing misinformation effects

Means and techniques of psychological influence

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Abstract. We are all prisoners of the personal way in which we think and relate to those around us. We are so accustomed to our way of seeing the world that we really think it is exactly the way we perceive it. As with military-structured groups, life on board has a number of specific rigor and characteristics, and the commander has the primary task of knowing the challenges of seafarers, taking into account the principles of communication and cultural differences and harmonizing interpersonal relationship, with the ultimate goal of reaching the port of destination with his crew, ship and cargo on time, intact, healthy. Our hyperlinked world and hyper-transparent is no longer a place for private life, for secrets, for hiding. Any event can be instantly posted by Email, Facebook, Twitter or blogs. The problem with technological progress is that connects us too quickly, faster then we succeed in creating the necessary social framework to understand each other. This can sometimes lead naturally to misinformation, but it can also be an insidious tool, used by specialized entities, interested in obtaining a desired atmosphere, information or intrigues.

The type of on-board life resembles in many ways, particularly through the constraints and rigor of structured inter-personal relationships, with the military atmosphere, and from this point of view, the knowledge and use of psychological actions based on influence techniques and manipulation becomes a mandatory tool, especially in the portfolio of those with a leadership role, who must manage the evolution of inter-personal relationships and keep an optimal working atmosphere for the subordinate mariners. At the same time, the aim is to assume the role of perceiving, studying and counteracting psychological aggression and misinformation in order to avoid manipulation of its own team by entities with opposite interests, as well as the use of basic principles of misinformation as an auxiliary weapon in situations of confrontation with identified enemies.

Both in the army and on the ship, the commander's request usually equates to an order. At the same time, in both situations, team spirit is not transmitted from bottom to top, but is filtered from top to bottom. A crew is what the commanding officer is - no better or worse. And then, as Publius Syrus said more than 2,000 years ago, "the misfortune of a few is a misfortune for all."

Social sciences call "a group" three or more people who constantly interact with one another. Groups create their own internal structure and delimit themselves from external influences. Group structures are made by rules that encourage coexistence and co-operation within. Considering the consequences, the rules must be respected through both rewards and punishments. The most common and useful rules for groups concern equity, mutual respect, assuming predetermined roles, rational behavior and how to solve conflicts.

From a chronological perspective, the first funded work in the field is considered to be the book of the Chinese military strategist Sun-Tzu "The Art of War," written in the 5th century BC. The material identifies five fundamental symbolic factors whose correct evaluation will guide towards achieving the proposed goal: the Way - the moral influence, the Sky – the weather forecast, the Earth - the land, the Head - the Command, and finally, the Law – the doctrine. Based on the rich accumulated experience, the author concludes that "the whole art of confrontation is based on deceit".

The specialists of the doctrine pointed out, in order to be studied in prestigious universities around the world, a series of stratagems revealed by Sun Tzu, at the confluence of the military strategy with philosophy and psychology, still current and useful: "It deceives even the sky when you want to cross the ocean (misinform everyone before you take an important action)"; "Always kill with a borrowed knife"; "Make a lot of noise in the east when you want to hit the west"; "Watch the fire from beyond the river"; "Sacrifice the plum tree for the peach"; "Provoke the snake by pulling the grass around it"; "Lure the tiger to leave its lair"; "Be a friend with a distant state while fighting with the neighboring state"; "Pretend you are crazy as you keep the perfect balance of reason"; "Make your guest and host change their roles"; "Let the enemy spies observe the false disputes in your camp"; "Create a misinformation network"; "If everything fails, back down (Flight is the best)";

Other authors later developed in their work the theory, the lessons and the fundamental elements in this field, most of the principles being still accurate:

- Philip II, King of Macedonia (359-336 BC), passed to his son the basic rules for governing relations with neighboring states. The first concerns especially the activity in peacetime and aims to cultivate privileged friendship relations with opponents, so that if necessary, the foreigner's gold will come to support his own cause. The second rule refers to the indirect actions of the secret agents who, through rumors and intrigues, fuel the "nerve war." The third rule is to overwhelm "public opinion" with numerous novelties - false or true - with a good established purpose: shattering, disintegration, dissolution, through the forms and methods specific to the 4th century BC;

- Xenophon, the Greek historian (430-355 BC) describes the qualities needed by a good commander, also in the form of a dialogue between father and son, in order to achieve victory: a good commander must display a certain behavior involving the psychological field: to be deceived, to be deceitful, to seek to deceive and to be able to make other craftsmanship against the enemy;

- Expression of the Romanian medieval strategic experience, the work "Neagoe Basarab's teachings to his son Theodosius", elaborated at the beginning of the XVI th century, deals with the rules of political and military conduct, necessary to be respected in relations with friends or potential enemies. One can notice the assurance of soldiers' peace of mind by sheltering women, elders and children in hidden and safe places, and regular reception of food and wage rights by the military.

- Machiavelli (1458-1525) introduces a set of principles to guide practice in this field in his "Il Principe", which can be considered a genuine manual of psychological warfare.

In our current, ultra-transparent and flooded with information period, the data no longer flows unidirectional, top-down or center-to-periphery, as in the case of the empires (a serious reason for their decay in time, the center being unable to predict the latent information of the periphery, or simply being completely devoid of this information). Today, a modern and flexible approach to information and, above all, misinformation is required, a technique which the commander can only partially control. Thanks to modern technology, anyone can

become a creator and/or transmitter of information with minimal prices, instantly in any corner of the planet, using a common mobile phone and accessing a social network.

Means and techniques of psychological influence

Strategies and methods used in psychological influencing techniques can be used both in peacetime and wartime in the tactical field. They have common spheres and contents, but they have different dimensions and depths.

The main method is the use of symbol-value images, the knowledge and manipulation of stereotypes, the representative matrices of some groups in a region or the national social imaginary, by using the communicative power, converted on board into commanding power, through its enormous range of influence.

The analysis of sequences of use of symbolic aggression falls under the commander's responsibility and reveals an initiate the detailed training, the means used to release the arsenal to trigger the process of destroying and restructuring the desired images, depending on the socio-cultural level, the information processing capacity, the specific attributes of the social imagination of the respective group.

The power is permanently present in all areas of life, may it be verbal, physical, or symbolic. We all know it in one form or another and we have different opinions about it. For some, it leaves a bitter taste because it is associated with raw power, constraint, frustration or helplessness, but is also connected with neutral or positive phenomena such as leadership, education or personal achievement. Power helps us achieve goals and impose beneficial changes, even against the will of others. It is based on its own strength or superiority or may result from the social or hierarchical context. Power can be used or abused. Many want the power, while others reject it firmly... Power ultimately means the ability to influence the behavior of other people.

From commanders we usually expect empathy, the ability to put themselves in the situation of others. Dacher Keltner, socio-psychologist from the University of California, Berkeley, argues that power partially cancels thinking: "We look at things only from the point of view of our own interests." According to his experiments, hierarchically inferior subjects are always able to accurately assess the opinions and motivations of their peers. The bottom-up feedback is seldom accepted and rarely required, which inevitably leads to the information deficit, which the bosses choose to compensate by massively resorting to stereotypes, to the detriment of various assessments, by many people.

The main objectives of informational-symbolic aggression include the disorganization of current activities and the disintegration of subordination relationships, the discrediting of authority, the personality of the leader or those of a particular status, the neutralization of the target group's symbolizing capacity and the diminishing of the reaction power to the intervention of aggressive influences.

The most effective methods for psychological influence remain the classical ones, such as material attraction, corruption, compromise, blackmail and intimidation, due to the increased permeability of the possibilities and measures of target protection. To add some people with informal leadership, favorable environments are sought, exploiting certain "weaknesses": money, alcohol, immoral life, the tendency of being a star, or the "corpse in the closet" as means of intimidation and blackmail.

The use of labeling, through presenting deformed information, is accompanied by other specific procedures, such as the frequent repetition of certain things, denigrating references to the authority, "falsification of papers", misinformation, half-truth, distortion of

facts, etc. It is not omitted even discrete invasion, the veiled influence of the mind and the human soul, the anecdotes and the rumors are the most significant and effective.

The psychological influence of the aggressor has only one meaning, namely negative. By such actions, the aggressor undergoes intense psychological pressure, aiming to undermine the victim's moral state, reducing his resistance, the will to fight, in order to make him capitulate and accept the dominance of his opponent.

Influence crosses the border of systems (peoples or armies from different states), it comes from the unknown and is out of direct contact. Sources of influence largely do not lose their identity and when they do, they use well-planned informational manipulation, which mislead people, after a complete documentation of the victim.

Disinformation as a means of achieving psycho-social influence

Mankind, through its historical development, has been marked by numerous political, social, ethnic, cultural, military conflicts, accompanied by extensive and diversified actions of diversion and psychological disinformation. Present in both the pre-conflict period and the number and intensity during the conflicts, they have always aimed at generating uncertainty, panic, fear, doubt and, on this background, weakening the psycho-moral resistance of fighters and civilians.

Misinformation - definition, purpose and objectives

At present, misinformation is a topical subject. The doctrine and the media increasingly refer to the fact that today the concept is used in different meanings and that any lack, alteration or manipulation of facts by the media is misinterpreted as misinformation.

The effects of misinformation can be understood by knowing the evolution of the target group on medium and long term. Misinformation is always voluntary, and the decision to use it indicates a state of mind whose complex sphere cannot be clearly specified. It can be chosen from necessity, given the scale of the bet and avoiding an open confrontation, thus revealing weakness or fear. It can be a strategy designed to achieve success with minimal resources as the aggressor knows that influencing consciousness is less risky than physical violence. However, misinformation can become, in the claustrophobic loneliness in which you are forced to live, a fatal accusation for a leader who desires absolute power, but which thus loses contact with reality.

Punctual misinformation offers an immediate, sometimes decisive advantage in a confrontation. But when it manifests itself permanently and systematically, it becomes a destructive force, a Faustian approach that does not spare the one who initiated it by unwanted effects of retaliation. Misinformation forbids by its nature any inter-human exchange because it is an antisocial act.

It is not easy to express a complete definition of misinformation, a term used without judging. Misinformation has specific techniques and methods and is a mood resulting from the addition of the ideological dimension of total war. It is seen as a message, a special communication between the manipulator and its target, which can take the form of a statement, a meaningful gesture or the adoption of a certain attitude.

In order to have misinformation, there must be the intention to manipulate, to exercise influence. The message is just the way the person or group you choose to act in the desired way, to a hidden goal. It forces the victim to choose a particular direction without the freedom of choice.

The term *misinformation* appeared relatively recently in Soviet scientific research in the 1920s, where it designated an arsenal of obvious or occult means, meant to influence foreign governments, discredit political opponents, especially emigrants, undermine confidence among hostile allies in the Soviet Union, falsify adversaries' reality, "Creating a convincing false reality so that the opponent thinks it's right".

L. Batman, a Czech misinformation specialist, shows that this is one of the aspects of active measures and includes: organizing misleading information; black propaganda (the one that conceals its origin), designed to weaken the enemy from within. The emphasis is on the whole of the means used but with the predilection of hiding, dissimulating and acting from inside. The French Academy proposes the following definition: "Intermittent or continuous action - by using any means consisting in the error of an adversary or in favoring subversion in its ranks in order to weaken it."

As a conclusion, misinformation can be defined as the ensemble of the forms, methods and procedures that aim the directed change of individual and group behavior in order to control and direct it by inducing a false reality to diminish and weaken the objective reporting capacity to reality.

The misinformation aims at the realization of military, political, economic, religious, cultural or diplomatic projects established by an authority in the field, which determines in particular the distribution of the different means available: contacts through negotiators, press campaigns, demonstrations of military force, economic pressure and manipulation of consciousness.

The strategist establishes the objectives of misinformation, namely the opinions, attitudes or behaviors that they must determine in the chosen targets. Even though flexible methods and procedures can be used to achieve intermediate goals, the design and management of misinformation actions must remain centralized. Disinformation as a weapon hides its origin and camouflages its intention of transforming the target into a manipulated object, which is denied its right to specific choices and behaviors.

The sailor in service usually acts to an order. Maybe some things make him happy: he is a sailor, they do not matter and he has to give up on them. He cannot stand in front of any election, because he does not decide on which way he will start. His active life is limited from all sides. He does what his colleagues do, together; do what they are ordered. The absence of all the options that other people have as freely as they think, makes him crave for the actions he has to fulfill.

A sailor who is in the guard post for hours is the most appropriate expression of specific psychiatric mood. He is not allowed to go, sleep or do anything else. His yield is resistant to any temptation to quit. This negativity is his vertebral column. All opportunities for action, pleasure, fear, anxiety, which essentially make man's life, the sailor must repress. Any action he performs must be confirmed by an order. The sailor's education begins with the fact that he is forbidden more than other people. For the smallest violations, heavy punishments are imposed. The sphere of unacceptable things, with which every human is familiar since childhood, extends to a vast size for the sailors. Walls go up, over and around them; are heavily rolled and uplifted. Paradoxically, although he lives surrounded by infinite water, the sailor is a prisoner who adapts to the walls.

Conclusion

Protection against rumors and misinformation as the most dangerous forms of psychological aggression is a problem for all. Protecting against lies is, above all, a matter of individual will. People and institutions that have responsibilities in the field of psychological insurance and security in general need to act in such a way as to promote values, provide them with stability in any attempts to reduce their significance or even change them.

The direct power of the leader is manifested through speech. He speaks loud and clear, sure and articulated. He uses precise formulations and chooses the most expressive words. Strong people interrupt, the weak are interrupted. It's not polite, but it works. When interrupted, he takes care to finish his idea. Speaks in pictures, uses examples and analogies. He puts emotion in words through adjectives, evaluations and especially in terms of positive or negative charges. He speaks in "our name" when he wants to involve the listeners. He takes intentional pauses to give more weight to what he had said. Invokes three arguments, three motives or three steps to reach the goal. Three-point lists give the impression of deep, synthetic and complete thinking. Uses pairs of opposing words and notions to describe some of the essentials - we and others, success and failure. Speaks freely.

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