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SITREP



SPECIAL PANDEMIC EDITION



—LT PIM VAN DER TOORN AND MAJOR JAY HANCOCK/FACEBOOK

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Troops of 4th Canadian Division deployed on Op LASER are visited by the Commander and Sergeant Major of Joint Task Force Central, May 22.

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Executive Summaries of Articles

Myths and echoes: the 1918 pandemic and today *by Vivian McAlister*

DR. MCALISTER NOTES THAT WHILE THE PANDEMIC OF 1918–19 is frequently referred to in the context of discussions concerning COVID-19, many of the facts cited are incorrect, and his intention in submitting this article is to set the record straight.

Three commonly repeated myths about the 1919 pandemic include assertions that influenza arose in military camps, from swine or poultry kept as sources of fresh food, and that it was spread by allied soldiers of the First World War, particularly North American troops.

With respect to the first myth, while there were small outbreaks of the influenza in military camps in France and the UK in 1916, it highly unlikely that these were the ground-zero sources of the pandemic which reached North America. The more likely explanation, according to one Canadian scholar, is that the disease travelled along with the Chinese Labour Corps which was recruited by the US, France and Russia and spread the flu along the eastern US seaboard and into Europe. While this same Corps did cross Canada in trains from west to east, it did not have the ability to spread the disease as the workers were essentially confined to the trains in order to avoid desertion.

So, while Canada was largely spared the effects of the first (1916) wave of the pandemic, a series of events in 1918 allowed the disease to enter Canada. This was due, in particular, by the arrival of infected US troops into an army training camp at Niagara-on-the-Lake, and by other US recruits who landed in Montreal and subsequently infected Canadian soldiers; these soldiers carried and spread the disease as they moved across Canada from east to west.

Dr. McAlister provides detailed analysis regarding the primary transmission vectors (modern travel, i.e. trains); Canadian efforts to contain the pandemic (mixed), the mortality rates (high), and the decisions made by health professionals (poor).

In his conclusion he states: “The ‘second wave’ of the 1918 pandemic resulted in the equivalent of 150,000 deaths in Canada today. Canada was vulnerable because it had avoided the negative consequences of the first wave of influenza. It is a situation in which we find ourselves again.” *

Rome, Plagues and People: Can we learn anything from 2,000 years ago? *by Eric Morse*

ERIC MORSE FOCUSES ON TWO QUESTIONS: whether cumulative pandemics caused the fall of Rome, and whether the plagues of classical antiquity can tell us anything about our own time and reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the first instance, Morse draws our attention to contemporary literature in which there exists a debate regarding the effect of endemics and pandemics on the Roman empire, and the ability of historians to determine the degree of causation or correlation between these, and the actual events which occurred, in particular, the gradual collapse of the empire. While this sort of analysis is extremely difficult given the dearth of primary sources and evidence, Morse follows the lead of one notable scholar who successfully added epidemiology and climatology to the list of disciplines required to take into consideration when investigating classical history.

Three distinct pandemics are described in detail: the Antonine Plague (166–169); the Plague of Cyprian (250–270), and the Justinianic plague of 542. In each case, Morse describes the probable sources and vectors of the disease, along with estimates of mortality and the general effect on the Romans, with an emphasis on the military situation.

In his conclusion, Morse describes the reaction of the population to each successive plague, which appeared to fluctuate between bouts of general licentious behaviour, combined with fear-induced inaction, and a willingness to forget the terrible effects of the pandemic as soon as it had passed. While not directly suggesting that this pattern will be the case with COVID-19, the jury is still out, as they say. *

Propaganda—Remake for the 21st Century *by John C. Thompson*

JOHN THOMPSON OFFERS AN OVERVIEW OF THE ESSENCE OF PROPAGANDA (what it is, and what it tries to achieve); its use by “classic” totalitarian regimes, Soviet Union and Nazi Germany; its option by current regimes such as Russia, China,

Iran and North Korea; and the effects and limits of propaganda on democratic states, particularly in the vanced age of the internet. He also describes the increased use of “cyber trolls” and botnets which are used to spread false information and generate online havoc in a vast and extremely rapid manner.

First, he reminds us that the goal of propaganda is to “induce action, herence and participation – with as little thought as possible.” Both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany relied heavily on propaganda in order to control the thoughts and actions of their populace, as well as to attempt to undermine the morale of the allies. While the first goal was largely successful, the second was less so, and Thompson describes the underlying factors that contributed to both.

While many totalitarian regimes had (and continue to have) compete control over the mass media in their countries, the vent of the information age, the internet and ubiquitous social media channels, make this extremely difficult, if not impossible, in the current age. As such, the means, methods and goals of ‘modern’ propaganda is not necessarily to target individuals, but rather, to sway opinions of entire populations via the spread of false information, or the planting of ideas which are known to divide and incite sectors within the targeted societies or states.

This process is made ever easier by the vent of so-called cyber trolls and botnets, which encompass paid cyber operatives utilizing artificial intelligence applications to identify and infiltrate mass media, internet and social media sites and channels with precision and speed. It is now extremely difficult for citizens in democratic nations to ascertain the veracity of news stories, including photos and video stories, which may have been doctored in some fashion. There is often ‘just enough truth’ in such stories to make them appear believable, and many tragic events have been initiated by individuals or groups who have reacted to these sorts of cyber-based intrusions.

In conclusion, Thompson writes “In the middle of the COVID-19 crisis, Chinese and Russian propagandists are hard at work, while our government and much of our civil service isn’t. It may well be that the revival of propaganda is as much of a threat as a cyber-attack. It is time to look to our defences. *

NATO and Russia *by Julie Lindhout*

THE FOCUS OF JULIE LINDHOUT’S ARTICLE is the state of the current NATO-Russian relationship which is described as “one of high tensions and confrontation.” Her article is primarily informed via reports provided to NATO by three different observers. Each one is highly critical of Russian motives and actions, and warns that NATO must remain both vigilant and flexible in its response.

The first reporter, a former Lithuanian Minister of Defence, describes Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, its illegal annexation of Crimea, its continued occupation of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia, the intimidations and provocations against Allies, the multiple violations of international norms, the disinformation, propaganda and cyber activities as part of “a determined and long-range plan to undermine NATO and destabilise Europe, with the ultimate goal of creating a new security architecture in Europe with Russia as the dominant player.”

The second report, written in 2018 by a California Congresswoman, asserted at that “the Russian regime seeks to destabilize [Europe and North America’s] democracies, and, indeed, the very ideal of liberal democracy in order to prop up its own position.”

The final report, written by a former Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, concluded that Russia’s aggression in Georgia and Ukraine, its disinformation and cyber-attacks and hybrid activities are all designed to destabilize the entire Euro-Atlantic area, undermine public trust in democratic institutions, undermine the NATO Alliance, and change the rules-based international order in an effort to restore Russia’s status in the world.

Russia’s focus on cyber, propaganda and “grey zone” or “hybrid” conflict is understood to be a de facto recognition of Russia’s inherent weaknesses – social, economic and military – and that Russia is not able to challenge NATO directly. That said, while “NATO genuinely wishes to work with Russia … Moscow has de facto been at political war with NATO and the EU for at least a decade, but it took time for the West to realise this…” As such, NATO must remain engaged with Russia, but watchful and wary. *

From the Editor

Much has occurred since we last published SITREP in early April, and most of the news has not been good, unfortunately.

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) lost seven members in two separate accidents. On April 29, a Cyclone helicopter that was attached to HMCS Fredericton crashed off the coast of Greece, killing all six members of the CAF including Sub-Lt. Abigail Cowbrough, Master Cpl. Matthew Cousins, Capt. Kevin Hagen, Capt. Brenden Ian MacDonald, Capt. Maxime Miron-Morin, and Sub-Lt. Matthew Pyke. Then, on May 17, a Snow Birds Tutor jet crashed in Kamloops B.C., resulting in the death of Capt. Jenn Casey, and injuring the pilot, Capt. Richard MacDougall. The Snow Birds were on a country-wide tour in order to show support for first-responders, health care workers and others on the front line fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Both of these tragedies underscore the dangers inherent in CAF operations on a day-to-day basis, whether deployed on expeditionary operations or domestically. The RCMI recognizes the bravery of these people, and mourns with their families and colleagues.

With respect to domestic operations, the CAF also stood up Operation LASER, the CAF response to the pandemic. This mission consists of three lines of operation:

- **Preserve and protect CAF personnel** to maintain operational capabilities and readiness, and meet the core mandates of the CAF.
- **Assess CAF activities at home and abroad** including continuity plans, protecting defence supply chains, and taking measures to limit the chance of infection of CAF personnel.
- **Support other government departments** to ensure the CAF are ready to support the Government of Canada's objectives and requests for assistance.

Of these three, CAF support to other government departments, particularly the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, have received the most publicity. This, of course, is the result of the CAF deploying approximately 1700 medical and logistics personnel into long-term care facilities in those provinces. So far, approximately 36 CAF members have contracted the virus while in service; we hope that there will be no others, and that these personnel will recover quickly.

At the end of May, the CAF submitted reports regarding the long-term care facilities they are supporting, and the shocking details riled the public, the federal government, and the two provincial governments. While most people and organizations who were associated with these facilities in some way indicated that these poor conditions were known prior to the pandemic, they were severely exacerbated by a loss of facility staff, either through illness or fear of working in the infected conditions. In any case, the CAF drew high praise for bringing this information into the public domain, and for their selfless acts, bravery and expertise in such conditions.

I must at this point segue to a recent article in the Ottawa Citizen entitled "The military's pandemic response suggests reservists are still seen as second-class soldiers." It states that 9,500 CAF personnel are deployed on Op Laser, of which 8,069 are reservists. It appears to indicate that all 9500 are



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working in the Ontario and Quebec long-term care facilities, and that this work is demeaning and only suitable for reservists. The article states “So why aren’t more regular military personnel helping in this operation? The answer, simply put, is that when it comes to planning for such contingencies, there is an inherent value-hierarchy of military deployments and taskings, with the less “career sexy,” non-combat, non-medal-worthy ones at home typically going to the reserves.” If the author is attempting to bolster the reserves reputation, he is certainly going at it the wrong way.

First, the 9500 personnel who are deployed on Op Laser are for the entire mission, i.e. Canada-wide, across all three lines of operation; there are approximately 1700 personnel assigned to the long-term care facilities. Second, the Local Response Forces (LRF) who are tasked by CJOC as required to support local and regional requirements consist primarily of reserve units by definition. The 8000 plus reservists who are deployed would have responded to an opportunity for a temporary “Class B” full-time employment contract – in other words, volunteered – to accept whatever the mission required, including serving in the high-risk facilities. Thus, this operation achieves three important goals simultaneously. First, it responds to the government request for assistance in a crisis with timely, trained, and dedicated personnel. Second, it preserves CAF medical capacity to the greatest extent possible, capacity which may need to be available to respond other expeditionary or domestic contingencies while the pandemic is still underway. Third, it provided immediate and short-term full-time employment for over 8000 reservists who, if they didn’t want or need it, would not have volunteered. Once again, Canadian reservists have demonstrated that they are twice the citizens, and do not step up for medals or recognition – they do it to serve their fellow Canadians.

Given that I have provided executive summaries of the four articles in this edition of SITREP (in keeping with our new practice), I would only like to provide a few, short observations on the content and pandemic overall. Two of the articles are historical in nature, with our own in-house Roman expert, Eric Morse, recounting the causes and effects of pandemics on the Roman empire, and Dr. Vivian McAlister as buster of myths related to the 1918 pandemic, which seems now to be a topic of daily conversation. While these might appear to be of obvious vantage in a ‘pandemic special edition’, the other two articles may appear to be less connected – in my opinion, not so.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been described as a two-prong threat to nations and the globe overall: a health

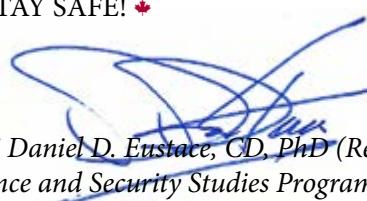
threat and an economic threat. Indeed, these two problems are inter-twined in a very complex formula wherein the economy has been placed, in the words of more than a few observers, in a kind of ‘economic coma’ in order to provide time for ‘science to catch up’ and discover a vaccine that will allow society to return to ‘normal’.

I would contend that there is, in fact, a third threat that has manifested in this scenario, namely, an attempt by state and non-state actors to use the pandemic as a cover for engaging in deleterious actions against western, democratic nations. These actions incorporate cyber attacks, psychological and influence operations, and active measures, such as infiltration, theft of medical research and instigating civil unrest. All of this is being done to shore up power and deflect criticism, which has the potential to escalate into something more damaging to the offending regimes and organizations. Therefore, the inclusion of two articles which discuss why, how and what Russia is up to, along with a broader overview into the nature of propaganda, both past and present, are highly relevant in a defence and security-focused discussion of COVID-19.

At time of writing, the RCMI remains shuttered, as do many other businesses across the country. Attempts are underway to re-open the economy, and different provinces are doing it in different ways, to no surprise. There is a feeling of anticipation and hope that these re-openings will work, and that a return to further lockdowns will not be necessary. At the same time, there is a sense of frustration and fear that these attempts could indeed fail, and that these conditions will constitute a ‘new normal.’ Clearly, some of these conditions, such as restricted social interactions, even within families, will never be considered as ‘normal,’ so it might be more correct to describe the emerging conditions as simply ‘abnormal’.

During this period, we have discovered, or invigorated, the need to remain connected to others, if only via telephone, email or Zoom (which I had never heard of, but now use on a daily basis...). While we must remain *insulated* from the pandemic, we must not be *isolated*, at least not psychologically. I hope and trust that by the time I write my next column, that the RCMI will be open to one degree or another, and that we will have the opportunity to discuss all these matters, and many others, in person at the Long Bar.

In the meantime, STAY SAFE! *



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Myths and echoes: the 1918 pandemic and today

By Vivian McAlister

Dr. Vivian McAlister is Director of the Office of Military Academic Medicine, University of Western Ontario. He retired from the Canadian Armed Forces as a general surgeon and served in Afghanistan.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute or its members.



Does history repeat itself or does it rhyme? Is it wise to design strategy based on old wars? We are rightfully sceptical of writers who predict the future based their reading of our past. The Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918 has been a favourite segue in recent commentaries regarding COVID-19. Commonly repeated myths include assertions that influenza arose in military camps, from swine or poultry kept as sources of fresh food, and that it was spread by allied soldiers of the First World War, particularly North American troops. Reports of influenza outbreaks in neutral Spain, especially when the King became sick, morphed into its origin story in our censor-conscious press. For Canada, it is still said that influenza arrived with soldiers returning from the war in the Summer of 1918. While most of these ‘facts’ are untrue, remarkable echoes of 1918 can be found in the current pandemic.



Do not take any person's breath.
Keep the mouth and teeth clean.
Avoid those that cough and sneeze.
Don't visit poorly ventilated places.
Keep warm; get fresh air and sun-dust.
Don't use common drinking cups,
towels, etc.
Cover your mouth when you cough
and sneeze.
Avoid Worry, Fear and Fatigue.
Stay at home if you have a cold.
Walk to your work or office.
In sick rooms wear a gauze mask
like in illustration.

Pandemics may be named for the year or place of their appearance or the causative agent. Historians prefer to use the year. Place-names can be used pejoratively and are irrelevant in pandemics. Agents might repeat themselves. H1N1 influenza, now thought to be the infectious agent of the 1918 pandemic, reappeared in 1977 and in 2009 when it was associated with swine. The current pandemic’s name is made of ‘CO’ for corona, ‘VI’ for virus, and ‘D’ for the disease caused by the 2019 novel coronavirus. 19 refers to 31 December 2019 when China declared the outbreak of a new transmissible respiratory disease. Coronavirus is a different class of contagious respiratory virus than type A influenza, but the diseases that they cause have many commonalities.

The source of the 1918 pandemic is not known for certain. A First World War army camp at Étaples, France experienced a respiratory illness with a high mortality in late 1916. It was followed by another outbreak at an army transit camp in Aldershot, England. These outbreaks disappeared. Influenza appeared at Camp Riley, a US Army training camp in Funston, Kansas in January 1918.

But these origin stories don’t match our experience before or since then. They didn’t make sense to Mark Humphries who was investigating the Canadian experience of the 1918 pandemic, for his Ph.D., at the University of Western Ontario, in 2008. Humphries, now a professor at Wilfred Laurier University, described an epidemic respiratory illness in northwestern China in 1917, and tracked the movement of the Chinese Labour Corps through Canada to England and France, as the likely origin of the first wave of the 1918 pandemic.

Transmission of infection to Canadians by the Chinese Labour Corps as they travelled eastward from Vancouver, was limited by the use of closed trains to prevent desertion. Poor quality medical care failed to recognize the disease. Other routes to Europe of influenza have been linked to outbreaks there. Chinese labour was recruited by France, which used a marine route through the Suez Canal, and by Russia, which used train transport. The official US Chinese Labour Corps, which had been with Pershing in Mexico before the pandemic, had a low rate of influenza, but other Chinese contract labourers were the first to report sick in Camp

Riley. The first wave of influenza in the US spread eastward as the country mobilized for war. Thus, it was Europe and the eastern US seaboard that held the reservoir of influenza by the end of the first wave.

Canadian army camps were well prepared for contagious disease. Many army medical officers had experience in the quarantine service, including Canada's Surgeon General, Guy Carleton Jones. Indeed, Jones' tenure was marked by a determined policy to prevent, and respond to, contagious disease within the armed forces. For example, in 1916, the No 10 Canadian Stationary Hospital, manned by personnel from the University of Western Ontario, successfully managed simultaneous outbreaks of three contagious diseases (measles, mumps and typhus) among allied soldiers in Eastbourne, England.

On the other hand, Canada was vulnerable for several reasons including: 1) a contagious disease program that was directed toward immigrants; 2) a chief of public health, Dr Frederick Montizambert, who was at the tail end of a distinguished, but overlong, tenure; and 3) a list of quarantinable (reportable) diseases that did not include influenza. This came to a head when the troop ship *Araguyan* approached Halifax in July 1918, with a quarter of those on board, sick from influenza. Two ships, the *Nagoya* and the *Somali*, heading to Montreal to pick up troops for Europe, stopped at the Grosse Isle quarantine station because of an outbreak of 'flu among the crew. All three ships were refused assistance from

the quarantine service because of a dispute regarding jurisdiction. A scandal and a tragedy came to Canada's rescue.

The scandal was an unwarranted attack upon the leadership of Surgeon General Guy Carleton Jones and, although vindicated, he had been returned to Ottawa in 1917. Carleton Jones, a former quarantine officer, was thus the senior army medical officer present in Canada. He was alerted by the local medical officers to the risks aboard the ships, which he contained until he convinced Montizambert, who was the



same age as Dr. Anthony Fauci is today, to take them into quarantine. The tragedy was the sinking of hospital ship *Llandovery Castle*, and the massacre of its survivors, in June 1918, which caused Canada to suspend the movement of personnel westward across the Atlantic. These two events, and the eventual addition of influenza to the list of quarantinable diseases, prevented returning soldiers from being a source of influenza here. Indeed, it might be said that the Canadian Army Medical Corps played a significant role in preventing spread of the disease at that time.

Andrew MacPhail reported that 45,960 Canadian soldiers contracted influenza, of whom 766 died. Troop movements did contribute to the spread of influenza within Canada but the source of the disease in the second wave, which occurred in the fall of 1918, was the United States. By late summer 1918, influenza had spread to US army camps along the eastern coast and to the city of Boston. US recruits were sent to a new National Polish Army training camp at Niagara-on-the-Lake, which became the site of Canada's first large outbreak of influenza that September. Other military recruits from Boston brought influenza to Montreal. A troop ship destined for England from New York had to make an emergency stop in Cape Breton because of influenza aboard. Humphries described how the secret westward movement of Canadian troops across the country caused the spread of disease from these sources, back to the west coast, where it had landed silently a year before. These troops, destined for deployment to Siberia in the Allied effort to thwart the Soviet withdrawal from the war effort, were associated with outbreaks of influenza in northern Ontario, Winnipeg, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

In Canada and the United States, efforts to contain the spread of influenza varied



according to the wishes of local authorities. Studies were undertaken to design masks that prevented the spread of harmless bacteria, that had been gargled by volunteers, and grown on petri dishes at varying distances from the subject. A 1920 Californian study comparing towns which mandated the use of masks in public, to those towns that did not, found no difference in infection or death rates. The author, Dr. W.H. Kellogg, blamed a lack of compliance for the negative result. In Canada, jurisdictional disputes between Federal and Provincial governments failed to consider the essential role of municipalities. Concerns led to the establishment of a Federal department of health, but its role in Canadian healthcare was never agreed. Dr. Montizambert, who took a month-long vacation during the pandemic, remained absent in the design of the Federal mandate. An opportunity to develop a strong centre for disease control was lost then, and we still feel its effect a century later.

Neither influenza nor coronavirus has inherent wave characteristics. It is not necessary to posit a mutation to explain a change in severity. Whether or not an outbreak occurs locally, and the severity of its effect, depend on the prevalence of infected individuals. If the disease remains confined to a low number of isolated individuals, the outbreak is aborted. This is what happened in Canada in early 1918. It is also what happened in the early months of 2020 with COVID-19 travellers from China and Iran. Analysis of the next wave of patients with COVID-19 shows that the outbreak in Canada came with the return of Canadians from the United States, repeating the pattern of September 1918. Outbreaks of COVID-19 in Ontario and Quebec have not had the severity of those in Michigan and New York because the prevalence of infected individuals has been kept below a certain threshold. Outbreaks of influenza in 1918 can be explained by mass transit. Mechanized transport permitted spread over great distances, while it allowed a few individuals to infect a large number of companions, confined in close quarters, who then seeded the new location. Modern travel became the vector which magnified and dispersed local epidemics to form waves of the pandemic. It remains so today.

Estimates of mortality vary many-fold. Records kept in 1918 are similar to those kept today. The number of locally recorded deaths were underestimated when all-cause mortality was compared to previous and subsequent years. Seventy years later, mortality from the 1918 pandemic was calculated to be 50,000 per million population (PMP) in India and 22,000 PMP in China, the most affected countries, compared to 5,000 PMP in Canada, the US and other developed countries. Deaths from COVID-19 stands at 797 PMP in Belgium, the most affected country, and 168 PMP in Canada as of 24 May 2020.

It is hard to shake the notion that every so often we are tested in a new round of a game that has set rules. We can sense, but do not fully understand, these rules. Interestingly, the process can be reversed, so that we can use our current experience to develop a better understanding of the past. And thus, in a cyclical process back and forth, we might begin to understand the rules of the game. Respiratory disease pandemics have been recorded every 25 years or so since the 1850s. Certain bat populations appear to be the source of the respiratory disease viruses as well as of Ebola, Nipah, Hendra, Marburg and other contagious diseases. A second vector seems to be required to prime the virus. Swine, birds, horses, civets, and recently pangolins have been implicated.

In 1918 they failed to spot the emergence of influenza, despite being far-better contagious disease doctors than we are today, and having a military medical network that spanned the globe. The reason was likely the all-consuming First World War. The western world needs to maintain a deep partnership with scientists close to the reservoirs of infection. In July 2019, our collaboration with the Wuhan Institute of Virology was disrupted by the arrest of two Public Health Agency of Canada scientists in Winnipeg. In the US, the Center for Disease Control terminated its program in China after the election of the current president. As in 1918, we may be allowing unrelated events to cast a long shadow over our ability to deal with pandemics.

The ‘second wave’ of the 1918 pandemic resulted in the equivalent of 150,000 deaths in Canada today. Canada was vulnerable because it had avoided the negative consequences of the first wave of influenza. It is a situation in which we find ourselves again. *



Rome, Plagues and People: Can we learn anything from 2,000 years ago?

By Eric Morse

Eric Morse is a former Canadian foreign service officer who is Director of Publications and producer of event videos for the RCMI. He has been known to indulge in Roman historical themes in front of an audience, and in 2014 published an essay collection, *Roman Spaces*.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute or its members.



It is right that the one who stays at home is really happy

—Aeschylus

In this essay, I wish to tackle two threads: the first, as something of a framework, is whether cumulative pandemics really did cause the Fall of Rome, and the second, whether the plagues of classical antiquity can tell us anything about our own time and reaction.

As to the first, and as usual, it all started with Edward Gibbon. In 1787, he published the last volume of his monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which epitomized everything the Late Enlightenment knew or thought about the Fall of Rome, on the threshold of scientific archaeology and historiography. Gibbon put it all down to ‘the triumph of barbarism and religion’.

Since Gibbon’s day, the Fall of Rome industry has waxed and waned over the decades. By 1986, Arthur Ferrill (in *The Fall of Rome: The Military Explanation*, 1986) could suggest that his generation of scholars had gotten bored with the whole pursuit of ‘causes’; indeed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, J. B. Bury, an early scientific historian, had tried valiantly to



"Plague in an Ancient City" by Michiel Sweerts (1618-1664 CE) is believed to depict the Plague of Athens (430-427 BCE). Oil on canvas. Painted c. 1652-1654. (Courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

nip the whole thing in the bud with:

The truth is that the success of the barbarians in penetrating and founding states in the western provinces cannot be explained by any general consideration. It is accounted for by the actual events and would be clearer if the story were known more fully. The gradual collapse of the Roman power in [the Western] section of the Empire was the consequence of *a series of contingent events*. No general causes can be assigned that made it inevitable. (Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 1923).

Naturally, it didn't fly. By the time Ferrill published in 1986, a German scholar could cite 210 discrete single causes advanced for the Fall of Rome. Things seem to have calmed down thereafter, because in 2017 Kyle Harper quoted the same number in *The Fate of Rome*,¹ in which he then advanced the 211th—climate change and pandemic.

Harper, who is a specialist in classical literature and an autodidact in climatology and epidemiology, vances the thesis that, since Roman civilization always had a far smaller margin of resilience, and a much higher level of endemic disease than current society does, recurring pandemics between 166 and 542 ministered a series of blows which successively diminished the margin which, coupled with a succession of climate shifts and major volcanic eruptions (in Iceland) late in the period, essentially drove classical civilization into the ground, and precipitated the onset of the Dark Ages in both East and West Rome.

Harper caveats himself repeatedly by disclaiming any assertion that these were the only causes. Nonetheless it is a sprawling, Spenglerian hypothesis, which moreover sprawls over several centuries², and your writer's initial reaction on reading it was “that's going to be a tough one to peer-review”.

In the event, the peer-review (more accurately described by its co-authors as a ‘rebuttal’ since the original wasn't formally subject to peer-review) took two years and six international cross-disciplinary scholars to produce, but it came out in 2019 and amounts to a surgical vivisection of Harper's claims, methodology, and in some cases, facts.³ Nonetheless, the critics do acknowledge that Harper has made it necessary to add epidemiology and climatology to the list of disciplines to be taken into consideration in historical assessments of the Roman Empire in civilization.⁴

This article acknowledges the fact of the controversy, and attempts a very brief glimpse at what was plaguing the Romans, with a few passing thoughts for our own situation in 2020 .

Correlation and Causation

Every moment of history contains many skeins of events, visible or hidden, well or poorly documented, but always intertwined. The eternal problem for social historians is their interrelationship. Did one cause another, did they interact, were they independent?

We are living a perfect example at the moment. The COVID-19 pandemic struck North America in mid-March. Also in mid-March, the economy collapsed. Did the pandemic and the countermeasures against it cause (causation) the collapse, or did it simply trigger something that had been building for a while anyway (correlation)? That is going to be argued for generations. But correlation is not always causation, and that is one reason why many historians of any period choose to leave the whole issue strictly alone, and stick to reconstructing narrative.

Sources, Definitions, and Numbers

In trying to interpret history, the problem of ‘causation vs correlation’ becomes far more acute the more imperfect our sources are. For 2020, we might finally have too much information, if that can ever be said, but at least we will have it. For Rome, we have too little, and practically everything we do have is a minefield.

There are simply too few primary sources, and too many of those are fragmentary or opaque. Cross-checking sources is rarely possible. Some can be seen to have a bias, but



again, some of that interpretation can be retrojection. In the case of plague and climate change, separately or alone, there is also the problem (as Harper's critics point out) that there just isn't a decent statistical base for any meaningful deductions anywhere in the period (or really until the 1918–19 pandemic).

The problem begins immediately with distinguishing epidemics from pandemics. (The Romans called everything a 'plague'—*pestis/pestilentia*). If one generally trustworthy source says that many areas were affected, then you can venture with some confidence to suggest that it was a pandemic. But you can't go the other way. An example: one of Cicero's letters home to his wife and family from Dyrrachium (Durres, Albania):

As to this place, by this time the epidemic has taken its departure; but while it lasted, it did not touch me. (from Dyrrachium, Nov 28, 58 BC)



By this, we know there was an epidemic of something in Dyrrachium in 58 BC, but whether it was more widespread, we cannot guess. And so it goes. Not only do we not know whether this was geographically isolated (but Dyrrachium was a very busy port and transit centre), but we do not know either in this case, or in any other of the cases cited, how many victims there were.

Primary sources do come up with some numbers in some cases, but when reading them we have to bear in mind that ancient numbers are never very reliable, usually inflated, and there remains very fundamental disagreement as to the size of ancient populations as a whole. Current scholarly estimates of the population of the Roman Empire range from 50 million to 150 million. The current best guess at the population of the City of Rome is around 1.5 million, but there are estimates as low as 450,000. That makes a very big difference in how we look (for instance) at Dio Cassius's estimate of 2,000 deaths per day (over an unspecified period) in around 189.

Harper concentrates on three outbreaks, all of which he classes as pandemics, and we will follow that lead, since whether or not one accepts his thesis, they all at least attracted attention from contemporary authors.

The Antonine Plague

In 160, Marcus Aurelius and his junior Emperor (Caesar) Lucius Verus assumed the Purple. Almost immediately, war broke out against the Parthians in Mesopotamia. All of Rome's Eastern wars were massive, and this was no exception. By its peak, Verus (commanding) had over a third of the Imperial Army in-theatre.

The war ended with the storming of Seleucia (outside modern Baghdad) in 165. At that point, 'plague' (tentatively identified with smallpox) broke out among the Roman troops. Harper suggests that this was an exaggeration due to an attempt by later contemporary historians to blacken the names of both Verus and his commanding general at Seleucia, Avidius Cassius ('he rebelled, you know'), but Harper hedges the point, and Verus's most recent biographer, M. C. Bishop, does not dispute the traditional account.⁵

By 165, Verus had more than eleven legions, nine of them normally based in the Eastern provinces, plus three complete European legions from the Rhine, the Middle Danube, and the Lower Danube—the distribution seems significant in light of later events—and several European legionary battlegroups. We don't know which units were at Seleucia with Avidius Cassius, but at any given time the European legions were the best troops in the Army, so it is a good guess that at least some were in his siege force. (They were also the least used to the local environment, though that may not have mattered much in the event).

Pandemics came from the Orient, by the Silk Road and/or by sea, up the Tigris, Eu-phrates and the Red Sea. It seems not too much of a stretch to speculate that plague coming up the Tigris would fester in a besieged capital city, spread to the Roman troops in the chaos of the sack, and then be carried back to the Rhine and Danube army groups and populations (and everywhere in between) by returning troops.

It ravaged the Empire for at least four years, from 166 through 169. It struck in Rome, where the physician Galen saw it on two different visits. It is said to have ravaged the armies of the Rhine and Danube, not surprisingly given the distribution of the returning units. In 166, the Empire faced a sudden and massive invasion across the Upper and Middle Danube which penetrated all the way to the head of the Adriatic; by 169 troops were heavily concentrated there for the counteroffensive, and Galen also saw what the plague did to them.

In normal times, a Roman military base was one of the healthiest places in the Empire to be. But they had no concept of what caused ‘plagues’ (humanity didn’t even know about viruses in 1918-19) so even our current fallback of quarantine or ‘social distancing’ wasn’t available. Barrack blocks were crowded, so every base likely became a Petri dish. There is literary evidence for suspension of discharges and extraordinary recruitment efforts.

There seems to have been a respite for about a decade, then another major outbreak around 189. The historian Dio Cassius notes:

...a pestilence occurred, the greatest of any of which I have knowledge; for two thousand persons often died in Rome in a single day. Then, too, many others, not alone in the City, but throughout almost the entire empire, perished at the hands of criminals who smeared some deadly drugs on tiny needles and for pay infected people with the poison by means of these instruments. The same thing had happened before in the reign of Domitian.

Dio is usually somewhat better at it than this (he was a contemporary, and a capable senior official who had paid his dues), but the quote is an 11th century condensation, and the source is quoted here in full to exemplify the problem of quality control in contemporary writings. What is worth noting in terms of our modern experience is that the 189 outbreak was the ‘greatest’ he had ever known.

What had happened to the great, devastating pandemic of 166-169, for which modern mortality estimates go as high as 30%?

Dio’s birthdate is variously proposed as 155 or 164. If it’s 164, we can forgive him for not recalling the first wave, but at age 11 it would have been hard to miss even in Nicaea where he was growing up. A recent (April 28, 2020) article in *Smithsonian Magazine* suggests that however devastating the plague was at the time, it may have been rapidly forgotten by contemporary society.

There is archaeological evidence for panic, and literary evidence for survivor’s guilt (Marcus Aurelius himself caught it, survived, and typically used it as a moral lesson), yet the idea of collective amnesia is less incredible than it may sound. For one thing, there was no Roman mass media. For another, we have far more recent precedent in the Spanish Flu of 1918-19, which claimed hundreds of thousands in Canada and the USA alone, yet was completely forgotten by 1920,⁶ and did not come back onto social historians’ radar until the mid 1990s (perhaps a plague needs a Boccacio or a Pepys to be remembered in popular history?).

The outbreak of plague in 166 coincided roughly with the outbreak of the Marcomannic War on the Upper Danube frontier. The Marcomanni—a very strong free nation in what is roughly Bavaria today—broke through the upper Danube defences and penetrated, as we have seen, as far as the Adriatic. The *Historia Augusta*, our main source since Dio’s books for the 160s are lost, says that the war came first, and had been building for a while, delayed by frontier diplomacy until the Army could be redeployed from the East. If so, then we don’t need to ask whether the plague was causally related to the invasion, as the timing is wrong. (As it is, the invaders must have suffered badly from the plague as well, but there is no direct attestation of that).

But the plague cannot have failed to have an impact on immediate historical developments. The sources, backed by archaeology, confirm that the war effort was seriously hampered by the plague. The Marcomanni, and the other nations north of the Danube that got into the act, were not a bunch of thugs in horned helmets, but a very serious military



enemy; from an earlier century comes an estimate that the King of the Marcomanni could have put 70,000 men in the field—if he could have supplied them, of course.

Rome had won a few and lost a few over the past couple of centuries, but this war—or series of wars, since they went on until 180 when Commodus settled (wisely or not who now can really say?)—was different. For one thing, it truly was a generational war, and for another, it was the first time the Empire had confronted something like a major hostile alliance. It seems to have had a serious impact on military organization and policy, especially in the higher commands. Senators had tended to choose civil or military career tracks, but now we seem to see a process where those aristocrats who really couldn't cut the military mustard start getting weeded out and replaced by more recently elevated men with professional skill sets and real immersion in the military milieu (two future Emperors among them). Before Marcus, we can claim that the corporate interests of the Army were at least kept a firm lid on; forty years afterward we see the full emergence of the Army as Corporate State. It is possible to think of a limited correlation-causation event here.

Without the plague, the wars would probably still have been a struggle—demographic forces across the frontier had been building—but we can never know that. We can know that the plague's impact on the military effort was massive, but we can also know that by 200, the Imperial Army was probably in as good shape organizationally as it ever had been, and even the general economic and financial situation may have been at least manageable, both notwithstanding a couple of terrible civil wars in the 190s. (A friend ‘in the business’ suggests that “The Antonine Plague was less of a problem for Rome than decades of bat-shit-crazy 3rd-century soldier-emperors mud-wrestling the Army to its knees.”)



The Plague of Cyprian

Harper's next milepost is the so-called Plague of Cyprian, which he assigns to 250-270 AD. Whether this really was a pandemic is hotly contested by his critics in their second article. Having noted that, the view from here is that 250-270 were two of the most disastrous decades in Roman history—civil war, German invasions, permanent loss of one province and a strategic piece of another, Persian conquest of Syria (from which Rome had to be embarrassingly bailed out by Palmyra), runaway inflation and ‘plague’. Sources for the period are ruinously bad, but even with much fuller and more reliable ones it might be impossible to separate the skeins of causation and correlation.

In its own time, the Plague of Cyprian may have been somewhat below many peoples' radars. Not at all invisible, but both Harper's critics and other recent historians have noted that the general misery of the times was unevenly spread around the Empire. The military disasters happened in Europe and the East, as did most of the civil wars. Cyprian reports on the plague from his home base in Carthage; it seems to have hit Rome very hard, but given the intense commercial traffic between Rome and North Africa that would seem natural. Haldon *et al.* assert that there is little evidence of it in Egypt.

One historical effect that may be attributable to the Cyprianic outbreak is an added impetus to the growth of Christianity. The Empire of the previous century had had a rudimentary social safety net. It was uneven, unequal, sort of a public-private enterprise, and very tentative, but at least they tried. The political, military and economic crisis of the period degraded the ability of the state to attend to much more than its own survival. Other mystery religions also grew in troubled times, but the Christian Church had an empire-wide organizational network, tight local structures, considerable funding, and was on the ideological outs with the Government, which meant among other things that Christian manpower wasn't being drained into the Army. There was a glaring gap in social services, and in many places the Church filled it—naturally, on its own terms.

This provides a context for Diocletian's later persecutions—he and his generation of officers had stabilized the Empire, but when the dust had settled, they found a rival *in situ*. His answer was coercion. A generation later, Constantine's was accommodation and co-optation.

What can we draw from this for our own experience? Possibly not very much at the moment because we're not far enough into it to see the ripples spreading. But 'the new normal' is very much a mantra at the moment, except that nobody can agree on what it's going to look like. However, if there are deep social changes on the way, they may not quite be the ones we expect.

The Plague of Justinian, and some behavioral: Procopius, meet Thucydides and Lucretius

Harper contends that the great Justinianic plague of 542, probably the bubonic plague (*Yersinia pestis*) with outbreaks for decades thereafter, played a decisive role in shoving both the Roman Empire of the East and the new kingdoms of the West over the edge into the Dark Ages. Again, we can—and his critics do—question correlation vs. cause. Justinian had been attempting a *reconquista* of the West while also fighting serious wars with Persia since 527, with very insufficient means. By the time the plague broke out, too much of Italy looked like a rake had gone over it.

It is reasonable to expect that the plague had an impact on (already inadequate) Roman military strength, and therefore was an exacerbating factor in the contemporary wars, especially in Italy. But it is also notable that Justinian (who caught it himself) never had to let his tax base off the hook. Again, we have a problem balancing cause with correlation, and some scholars since Harper have challenged the idea that the plague was all that great.

That, in turn, may be going too far. One possible theory, from the assorted ancient plagues, and with some inputs from the Spanish Flu of 1919 noted above, is that impact in terms of mortality can be great while the disease lasts, but social impact, though equally great, fades rapidly. As Procopius—who was a very perceptive, politically shifty and decidedly acerbic historian—puts it:

[T]hose who in times past used to take delight in devoting themselves to pursuits both shameful and base, shook off the unrighteousness of their daily lives and practiced the duties of religion with diligence, not so much because they had learned wisdom at last nor because they had become all of a sudden lovers of virtue, as it were--for when qualities have become fixed in men by nature or by the training of a long period of time, it is impossible for them to lay them aside thus lightly, except, indeed, some divine influence for good has breathed upon them---but then all, so to speak, being thoroughly terrified by the things which were happening, and supposing that they would die immediately, did, as was natural, learn respectability for a season by sheer necessity. Therefore as soon as they were rid of the disease and were saved, and already supposed that they were in security, since the curse had moved on to other peoples, then they turned sharply about and reverted once more to their baseness of hearts and now, more than before, they make a display of the inconsistency of their conduct, altogether surpassing themselves in villainy and in lawlessness of every sort.⁷

A thousand years earlier, Thucydides had noted something of the opposite tendency in the Plague of Athens of 430 BC:

... the plague marked the beginning of a decline to greater lawlessness in the city. People were more willing to dare to do things which they would not previously have mitted to enjoying, when they saw the sudden changes of fortune, as some who were prosperous suddenly died, and their property was immediately acquired by others who had previously been destitute. So they thought it reasonable to concentrate on immediate profit and pleasure, believing that their bodies and their possessions alike would be short-lived. No one was willing to persevere in struggling for what was considered an honorable result, since he could not be sure that he would not perish before he achieved it.”



Allowing ourselves a dose of Procopius's cynicism, and with an eye to the current developments in attempts to manage the lockdowns in North America, we might speculate that the two behaviours can easily coexist in the space of two municipal jurisdictions.

As this is written, world deaths from COVID-19 are estimated at around 370,000, with a North American toll of about 112,000. Probably more reliably, the North American toll of the Spanish Flu of 1918-19 is estimated at around 750,000. The ancient numbers are sparse and unreliable, but the totals for the Black Plague of London in 1665-66 were reliably estimated at 100,000 for that city alone, so Procopius' estimate of 5,000 per day over three months in Constantinople is perhaps not utterly beyond reason.

After three months of pandemic, what can we say that we have in common with the Romans (and, for that matter, any other victims of historic plagues)? Not the physical horror detailed by Thucydides and Procopius of bodies heaped in the streets, temples, churches. For us the dead are invisible, shared only through media. The Romans had no idea of vaccines or contagion, and therefore no answers at all beyond prayer. But that notwithstanding, what we do share with them is the perceived loss of control, the isolation and the sense of impending, formless doom.

The last word goes to Lucretius, one of the first humanists, in the 1st Century BC:

*This thing alone had to be mourned the most,
This lamented: how when anyone would give up
when they realized they had contracted the disease
As condemned to die, they would stretch out with a sad heart,
Surrendering their spirit while considering the rites of the dead.
For the spread of that greedy sickness did not stop
Even for a single moment from one to another,
Thick together as woolly flocks and horned heads—*

*That's the reason why grave was piling on grave.
Whoever was reluctant to see their own sick,
For this very excessive love of life and fear of death
They were punished eventually with a foul and evil end,
As deserters without help, paid back for their neglect.
But those who stayed to help faced contagion too,
And the suffering which shame compelled them to meet.
The pleading voice of the weary mixed with cries of complaint.
Well, the best kinds of souls met death like this.*

*...Then some falling upon others, fighting to bury their masses
Of dead, worn out by tears and grief as they returned.
They surrendered to their beds for the better part.
No one could be found anywhere who was untouched by the disease
By the death, by the sorrow of times like these.⁹**



NOTES

1 Kyle Harper. *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire*. The Princeton History of the Ancient World Series. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.

2 Edward Luttwak faced similar problems (and criticisms) in *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (1986) and *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (2009). In that case, the problem was one of defining grand strategy rigorously enough to be meaningful over respectively four and about nine centuries, irrespective of any historical errors or new scholarly interpretations that may have crept in along the way, and in spite of the fact that the Romans themselves had no theoretical framework for the concept.

3 John Haldon (Princeton/USA), Hugh Elton (Trent/Canada), Sabine R. Huebner (Basel/Switz), am Izdebski (Max Planck/Jena, Germany), Lee Mordechai (Jagellonian/Poland and Notre Dame/USA), and Timothy P. Newfield (Georgetown/USA)

https://www.academia.edu/37756017/Plagues_climate_change_and_the_end_of_an_empire_A_response_to_Kyle_Harpers_The_Fate_of_Rome?fbclid=IwAR2rEBFINvLVOyMGnf4m4vS_74fG17m6EbUEm50dhAEod7q91ur7LP0syfE

https://www.academia.edu/37788535/Plagues_climate_change_and_the_end_of_an_empire_A_response_to_Kyle_Harpers_The_Fate_of_Rome_2_Plagues_and_a_crisis_of_empire?fbclid=IwAR31u5D1CPnxLzfwtwWREdvSdAai-rO-kLkrvcE0xZ8-tGX3xZRz8liOr2wQ

https://www.academia.edu/37788579/Plagues_climate_change_and_the_end_of_an_empire_A_response_to_Kyle_Harpers_The_Fate_of_Rome_3_Disease_agency_andCollapse?fbclid=IwAR2VKUD2f4aRr9zz625Bs-xBHhiBnLokfH-H32PEJc1RF629TPÉ4IrstMGFw

4 The Roman Empire is peculiarly (though hardly exclusively!) susceptible to sprawling political theories, partly because the sources are so vague and fragmentary, and partly, one suspects, because the Romans can't fight back. On the one hand, Roman history thereby gets a broader popular exposure than it otherwise might; on the other, the more extravagant theorists get embedded in public awareness and have to be dealt with willy-nilly in any discussion. Somewhat like the famous elder statesman of whom it was once said, "He's a public monument. You can't drive around him and you can't blow him up."

5 M. C. Bishop. *Lucius Verus and the Roman Defence of the East*. Pen & Sword Books. 2018

6 Alan Bowker, *A Time Such as There Never Was Before: Canada After the Great War*, Dundurn 2014

7 Procopius, *History of the Wars*, II <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/542procopius-plague.asp>

8 Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War*, II.vii.3-54 <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1535/thucydides-on-the-plague-of-athens-text-commentary/>

9 Titus Lucretius, On the Nature of Things, https://sententiaeantiquae.com/2020/05/14/the-sorrow-of-times-like-these/?amp;__twitter_impression=true



Propaganda—Remake for the 21st Century

By John Thompson

John C. Thompson spent five years with the Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 24 years (mostly as President) of the Mackenzie Institute, and is now a refugee from Toronto living in Northern Alberta.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute or its members.

Selective credulity is the new normal these days, especially with the anarchy of Social Media—but ‘propaganda’ is a lot more than just another pejorative for commentary or opinion one dislikes.

The French philosopher Jacques Ellul was probably the leading writer on propaganda—his book “Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes” (Trans. Konrad Kellen & Jean Lerner. New York: Knopf, 1965) remains the definitive book on the subject, but the organization of propaganda has changed in some remarkable ways in the past thirty years. More to the point, it has become a more potent weapon than ever before, and has taken on some new and even more sinister characteristics—but not without some significant changes to its organization and practice.

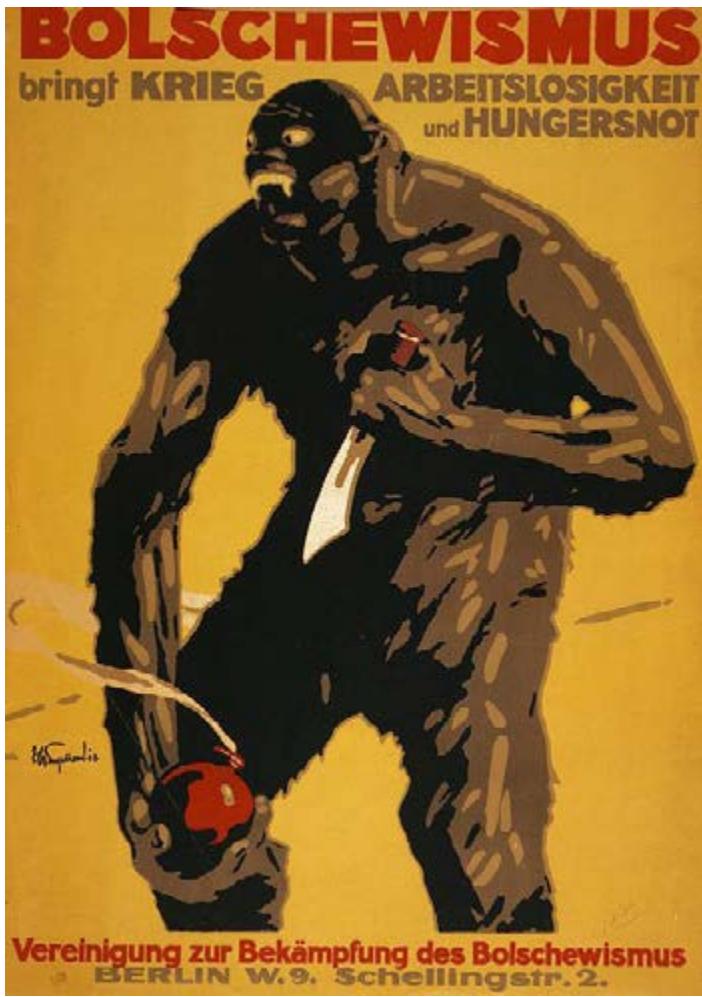
Ellul frequently reminds us in his book that the goal of propaganda is to “induce action, herence and participation—with as little thought as possible.”¹ Propaganda was central in the Second World War, and was an important part of the Cold War. Ellul described perfectly how the propaganda systems of the Nazis and the Soviets functioned and, with some major limitations, how the Western democracies fought back. However, those democracies have become oblivious to how propaganda works now and we are almost helpless against it.

The Essence of Propaganda and the Classic Systems

The propaganda machines of the USSR and Nazi Germany, and the systems of the Western world, all operated in some broadly similar ways in the middle of the 20th Century. The technology was driven by the emergence of mass media, and the method was honed by psychology and its related disciplines. The genius of Lenin and Hitler was to utilize the inherent

usefulness of propaganda as a partner (being both at once servant and master) of ideology.

Soviet propaganda invited you to become the new Soviet Man, to embrace the revolution and modernity by identifying with it. Nazi propaganda assumed its audience was already becoming fully Germanized, but now they were invited to defend an undefined ideal against various external threats.



—WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

"Bolshevism is War, Unemployment and Hunger"—an anti-Communist poster from post World War One Germany.

colate through. Totalitarian governments traditionally resented and feared the insertion of contrary messages that might put a stick into the spokes of a propaganda system. In the Soviet Union, even in the 1960s, listening to the Voice of America could land a citizen in the Gulag; listening to the BBC in WWII could send a German to Dachau.

In Britain in 1917, or the United States in 1943, there was no such compulsion - not as long as all advertisers and all news media cooperated with the aims of wartime information bureaus, and willingly participated in the system. There were no penalties for the citizenry for listening to Lord Haw Haw or Tokyo Rose; it was generally assumed that our domestic audiences were smart enough to dismiss them on their own. It wasn't the penalties of government that made Western media toe the line, it was a fear of losing customers that did. This cooperation did not exist for the Vietnam War, which is a telling point.

Totalitarian propaganda systems still exist, largely as a function of ministerial habit. For instance, Iran still controls all periodicals and books through its Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG), which even sees to it that song lyrics and music must be reviewed and approved, and musicians need permission to give performances. All radio and television services are controlled by Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). Ostensibly independent, the IRIB is an entity whose CEO is handpicked by the Supreme-Leader, and whose content must be legally consistent with Islamic criteria as defined by the state.

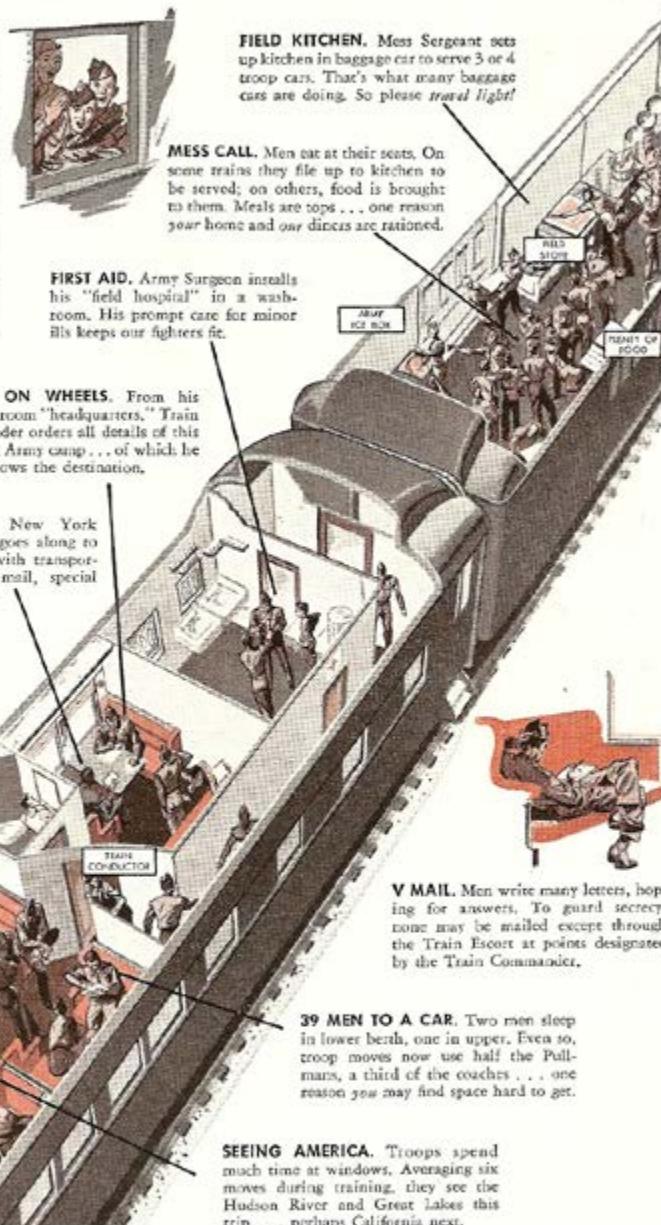
North Korea still tries to maintain the similar sort of propaganda system, although it is much easier to block foreign influences when its citizens have no electricity, and therefore

What life is like on a troop train...

speeding over the Water Level Route



This is "Main 100" . . . identified on New York Central orders only by its code number. Speeding toward a secret destination, it's one of the vast fleet of trains that now move 2,000,000 troops a month over the rails of America. Picture the thousands of Pullmans and coaches this task requires. You'll see them why car space for civilian travel is limited . . . why Americans are urged to make only essential trips. "Main 100" must have the rights of way!



New York Central

ONE OF AMERICA'S RAILROADS—ALL UNITED FOR VICTORY



BUY
MORE WAR
BONDS

—WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

When you have no product—push patriotism.

During World War Two, the National Geographic Magazine may have been the most famous platform for patriotic advertising by US corporations that were partly or entirely diverted from consumer goods and services to war production, but the themes and stories showed up in every publication. Here the New York Central Railroad is trying to explain by edutainment why you might have trouble getting a Pullman berth—or getting there at all.

have no access to satellite TV or the internet. Iran agonizes when its citizens watch satellite TV and have found ways to get to the internet for themselves; North Korea doesn't have that problem.

Interestingly, Iran's Basij Militia periodically stage a big sweep for illegal satellite dishes—however, most Iranians know this Militia is fairly corrupt and one can usually buy a slightly used satellite dish later from their local Basij militiaman. The MGIC is bent on helping to protect Iranians from the wild world of the Web and is joined by the Commission to Determine Instances of Criminal Content (CDICC), the Supreme Council of Cyberspace (SCC), and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. The Iranian National Police has formed its own cyber police branch while the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps has also created its “Iranian Cyber Army”.² One wonders who is left to run the economy.

Maintaining such a propaganda system is expensive—as Iran has found out. The alternative requires a poor (and terrified) citizenry, which is the North Korean example. There is no need to police consumer electronics in the hands of the citizenry when they don't have any.

By contrast, democratic societies, even with some of the contemporary wartime limits on free-speech, were highly resistant to hostile propaganda. It was possible during the First and Second World Wars to create domestic propaganda campaigns—and highly effective ones at that—but this was with the implied consent and cooperation of both the general public and the news media.³

The 20th Century totalitarian state, such as Stalin's Russia and Nazi Germany, lied about its goals. For all the pretense about revolution and high ideals, every totalitarian system was fundamentally about focusing power in the hands of a few individuals. What made regimes like Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia different was the pretense of a transformation of human society. “Most of the despotic regimes we know in history were not totalitarian: They had no built-in tendency to regulate all realms of human activity, to expropriate people totally—physically and mentally—and to convert them into state property.”⁴

Islamist states don't even bother with this, nor do Putin's Russia or Xi Jinping's China. Their propagandists of their regimes are now free from the burden of defending the indefensible

The Information Revolution

The information world of the late 1970s was much different from that of the 1930s. Consumers of information were more discriminating and rapid changes in information technology from the late 1970s made things worse for the propagandist. The growing ‘Samizdat’ underground press in the Soviet Union showed how it was possible for dissidents to use carbon-copiers, photocopiers, type-writers, even whole printing presses, to produce materials for distribution. The USSR, struggling to modernize its economy and workforce, couldn't possibly control all the new information technology and failed.

“Glasnost” and “Perestroika” were in some respects tactics to try and paste a positive appearance on what was already happening. Desktop computers made things even more difficult in the 1980s and the arrival of the global internet in the 1990s made the old-fashioned approach to propaganda almost impossible - not that several nations haven't tried.

With the new century, the proliferation of internet services and new communications made the situation almost impossible. The 1990s and the arrival of the internet seemed to be a brave new frontier where total freedom of information made the old-fashioned propagandist become out of date.

The 1999 Kosovo Crisis seemed to mark a turning point. Regardless of the rights and wrongs of the war, Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic had almost total control over Serbian media throughout the 1990s, and his own domestic opposition had virtually no media access within Serbia, except for the Internet.^{5,6} The conventional propagandist cannot weave their spell with a strong dissonant element present, and internal opposition to Milosevic grew throughout the crisis, largely thanks to his inability to totally control what





—WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



information Serbs received or shape what they thought about it.

By 2000, it seemed the brave new world of the internet was going to usher in a new freedom, and that the propagandist had no place in the new world. We really were not paying attention. The internet and social media tend carefully avoid real discussion but give people ample room for self-validation.⁷ The propagandist might have lost his exclusivity, but what we didn't realize was that he has more scope to play with his messages. By 2010, it seemed that the conventional propagandist had returned, with an inverted set of tactics. What we didn't count on was that the reverse side of the internet promise of intellectual freedom was a new dimension in the ability of people to propagandize themselves.

This new situation as yet lacks the likes of a Koestler, Hoffer or Ellul to explore it, but the traditional target of the conventional propagandist was the ordinary man on the street. The propagandist has always had to study him carefully and tailor his messages to meet the prejudices and beliefs of that man who comprises a mass mentality.⁸ Now it doesn't take much work to find people prepared to believe in almost anything.

The late Brigadier Dr. Maurice Tugwell had been one of the British Army's experts on low-intensity warfare, and the role that propaganda and ideology could play in it. In a private conference (hosted by the Mackenzie Institute in the library of the Royal Canadian Military Institute in April of 2002), he offered a 'Reader's Digest' summary of political/ideological warfare, and the classic propagandists' mission. At its most basic, there are two trinities of messages that constitute most struggles over information. The trinities are identical and waged in opposition to each other:

1. We are the good guys.
2. They are the bad guys.
3. We are going to win.

Propaganda traditionally involved defending your own trinity, and attacking that of your opponent. It may seem a bit simplistic, but this simple model of 'trinitarian' information warfare does encapsulate the Bush White House vis-a-vis Osama Bin Laden's video releases, Radio Moscow vs. The Voice of America, Goebbels vs. Churchill, or most other clashes of propaganda that mark history.

The internet and the modern explosion in communications technology make it extremely difficult to maintain one's defensive trinity, but easier to attack the opposing one. A thousand voices drown out the central aim and vision of the classic propagandist, and make the unity of purpose that marked, for instance, the Second World War combatants almost impossible to achieve once more.

Moreover, the classic practice of propaganda was aimed at the general member of the public and carefully crafted in consequence. That generalization is no longer possible.

In traditional totalitarian regimes, where the propagandist had full control over all media, the public learned to read between the lines of official messages to get a rough idea of what was going on. In contemporary societies we are now saturated with information which now comes at a dizzying pace. One particular result is that the information consumer now carefully selects the news sources and entertainment they are prepared to tolerate, and these usually validate the consumers own preferences.

Perhaps one (if old enough) might care to recall thirty years ago what their news practices were. In Toronto, for example, there was the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*, and the guilty pleasure of reading the *Toronto Sun*. In the evening at 10:00 PM, there was the CBC News, and at 11:00 CTV News. During the day, the radio was tuned to a channel that offered news at the hour and half-hour. Almost everyone encountered in daily life went to the same information sources, and argument was about interpretation, not facts.

Yet by 1990, there were specialized news channels such as CNN or Newsworld, and more all-news radio stations. Shortly afterwards, new news groups and chat-rooms multiplied on the internet. In no time, we were deluged with information and soon learned to prioritize what we were prepared to listen to, and to ignore the rest. Those who recall the news habits of 30 years ago are invited to audit their news habits now.

We are deluged with information and content, and so most of us don't bother with something that seems too contrary, or which is annoying. This also means we have reduced our ability to sift information and analyze it. Never mind the literature about cognitive dissonance, or reports about changes in reading habits and attention spans (the debate is on, and the general public is not paying attention to it), but the internet has made it possible for all manner of cranks and nutcases to reach a wider audience than ever.

We confirm our strangest prejudices, gleefully mock those who don't share them, and seem less capable of operating in unison than ever before. We have become vulnerable, and a new breed of propagandist is egging us on.

The Emergence of the Trolls

In the middle of the last decade, chat rooms and forums began to feature unusual voices, as people debated a variety of issues. For example, "Gordon" or "Kevin" might have an unusually strong opinion about who owned the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Seas, what the Israelis were doing on the West Bank, or Putin's concerns about NATO expansion. It was also clear that "Gordon" or "Kevin" had very limited mastery of English and an unusual slant on the issue de jour.

"Gordon" and "Kevin" were forerunners of the new possibilities for propagandists on the internet: The Internet troll. They have become common now, and troll farms are maintained by some 30 nations across the planet, including all the usual suspects.⁹ Trolls are paid keyboard warriors, sometimes now abetted by bots and perhaps soon by artificial intelligence.

Trolls exist to foment trouble, particularly by inventing rumour, spreading false news, harassing accurate sources, and generally encouraging the intellectual chaos that comes with the internet. It should be no surprise that China, Iran, and Russia are among the worst offenders.

It is hard to have access to the internet for your own citizens and keep them from being exposed to the floods of opinion there, but China and Iran certainly try, and they are not the only ones. However, major effort is needed to keep those defences up, China can afford it; most other countries can't. The main point, however, is that the propagandist of



the totalitarian (and quasi-totalitarian) regimes have had to switch. Instead of buttressing their own ‘trinity’ of beliefs, they have to concentrate more upon offensive action and attack that same trinity elsewhere.

Moreover, the modern propagandist is no longer marking out the average man in the crowd as the target for his messaging—such a person almost no longer exists. Instead, by switching to ceaseless attack, the modern propagandist is encouraging the widest spectrum of opinion.

Putin’s Trolls are not paid to defend the Russian state, and Putin is really not offering a new version of the Soviet Man to Russian citizens, but these trolls are busy interfering in American politics and accelerating the partisan breakdown there.¹⁰ The trolls, paid for by a friend of Putin, could change their messages with dizzying speed and be more flexible than any classic 20th Century propagandist. However, they didn’t need to reinforce their messages, once they developed them, American voters transmitted and embellished their messages and did their work for them.

China doesn’t need to really construct a propaganda message for its citizens, all it needs is for them to believe that the Chinese Communist Party is invincible and cannot be challenged. However, as we know as recently as the COVID-19 pandemic, China is quite capable of using its trolls to generate false messages to Western audiences. False information about the virus, its origins, and our responses to it are generated daily for our consumption, and China’s government is secure in knowing that there are Westerners who will act as autonomous transmitters of their propaganda without even thinking about it.¹¹

The troll is the new agent of propaganda, and he might not be able to defend his own society, but he is more than able to attack another. Propaganda is now more of an offensive system than it ever was in the middle of the 20th Century. In the last 14 months, Canada has received warnings from the Chief of Defence Staff, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, CSIS and the RCMP that we are vulnerable and things are going to get worse.

In the middle of the COVID-19 crisis, Chinese and Russian propagandists are hard at work, while our government and much of our civil service isn’t. It may well be that the revival of propaganda is as much of a threat as cyber attack. It is time to look to our defences. *

NOTES

1 Ellul, pg. 180.

2 See <https://vpnoverview.com/unblocking/censorship/internet-censorship-iran/>, retrieved May 4th, 2020. The periodic Basij sweeps for satellite dishes, and the quiet sales of them back to Iranians has been going on for almost 20 years, according to some Iranian exiles and human rights groups.

3 Ellul, Ibid, pgs, 235-242.

4 Leszek Kolakowski, “Totalitarianism & the Lie”, *Commentary Magazine*, May 1983, pg. 33-38.

5 Wilkinson, Tracy; “Manipulating the Media is Milosevic’s MO”; *LA Times*, 30 March, 1999.

6 Dunn, Ashley; “Battle Spilling Over Onto the Internet”, *LA Times*, 3 April, 1999.

7 See: <http://thoughtcatalog.com/michael-hedrick/2013/02/social-media-and-the-rise-of-the-internet-validation-culture/>

8 Ellul, Ibid, pgs 6-9.

9 See: Titcomb, James; “Governments in 30 Countries are paying ‘keyboard armies’ to spread propaganda”, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/11/14/governments-30-countries-pay-keyboard-armies-spread-propaganda/> Retrieved, May 8th, 2020. The report is based on the 2017 Internet Freedom Report, an annual publication of Freedom House.

10 Cohen, Marshall, “How Russian trolls manipulated American politics”, CNN, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/19/politics/russian-troll-instructions/index.html> (accessed May 12th, 2020).

11 Goldstein, Lorrie; “Propaganda Video about Covid-19 a new low for China”, *Toronto Sun*, 4 May, 2020.



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NATO and Russia

By Julie Lindhout

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute or its members.



The NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO-PA) was created in 1955 to provide a specialized forum for members of parliament from across the Atlantic Alliance to increase the awareness of parliamentarians on defence and security issues affecting the Euro-Atlantic area. It meets twice a year in full Assembly to discuss and opt reports on a wide variety of defence related topics presented by its committees and sub-committees. The reports are discussed at the Spring Session and then revised if necessary, and presented for option at the Fall Session.

In recent years, there have been a number of reports focusing on Russia. For readers interested in delving more deeply into the issue of Russian aggression and attempts to destabilize the democracies, the following reports are particularly informative.

In 2017, Rasa Jukneviciene, former Lithuanian Minister of Defence, presented a report to the Political Committee entitled *Russia: From Partner to Competitor*¹, which gives a comprehensive summary of Russian behaviour over the previous decade. She starts by citing a Chatham House expert's statement that Putin has described NATO's post-Cold War activity as "25 years of Western encroachment on Russia and its interest" by which Putin implies that Russia is justified in doing everything in its power to re-establish its influence over its "near abroad" and create as much instability as it can.

She describes Russia's aggression against Ukraine, its illegal annexation of Crimea, its continued occupation of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia, the intimidations and provocations against Allies, the multiple violations of international norms, the disinformation, propaganda and cyber activities as part of "a determined and long-range plan to undermine NATO and destabilise Europe, with the ultimate goal of creating a new security architecture in Europe with Russia as the dominant player."

Jukneviciene suggests that Russia's propaganda and cyber activities aimed at influencing domestic politics in NATO member and partner countries are intended to "put Western value systems in question as it conveys a narrative to the public where truth does not exist. Thus, with targeted disinformation and propaganda, the Kremlin tries to undermine public confidence in governments and institutions and disrupt our democratic systems." She ds that Russia does not particularly try to hide its hostile cyber activity, which is, in itself a message to the West.

According to the report, cyberwarfare capabilities are important for Russia. Its updated [as of 2016] national security strategy emphasizes the importance of hybrid capabilities for protecting Russian national interests, including in what Russia considers its sphere of interest in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. She also focuses on the need for Allies to develop greater resilience to Russia's disinformation campaign. Cyber warfare must become a key part of NATO's response, and be "fully integrated in the defence of NATO Allies". One improvement would be to expand the mandate of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence which is currently limited to "analysis in the operational area." Member nations also need to build and improve cyber resilience and keep up with technological developments to counter disinformation and propaganda campaigns, and the growing number of cyberattacks.

In 2018, California Congresswoman Susan Davis, General Rapporteur of the Science and Technology Committee, presented a report entitled "Russian Meddling in Elections and Referenda in the Alliance"². She picks up where Jukneviciene left off, asserting at the outset that "the

Russian regime seeks to destabilize [Europe and North America's] democracies, and, indeed, the very ideal of liberal democracy in order to prop up its own position.”

The report explores Russia's motivation, contending first of all that Russia cannot compete directly with NATO members. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at USD 1.3 trillion is a small fraction of the U.S.A.'s USD 19 trillion and Europe's USD 17 trillion. Its military is overstretched in conflicts in many parts of the world, while only being funded at 5% of the rate of expenditure of NATO members. The government is plagued by corruption and is unable to mitigate severe poverty and inequality. It is, therefore, looking for less expensive ways to disrupt the world order and take vantage of any weakness in any country.

Disinformation is certainly not a new tool in Russia's arsenal, but new technology has been a force multiplier. Davis cites analysts who argue that Russia's disinformation campaign is opportunistic rather than a coherent strategy, and has three aims: to exacerbate pre-existing tensions within a society; to undermine faith in liberal democratic institutions; and to advance politicians and political groups seen as amenable or friendly to Russian influence and discredit those seen as hostile.

Russia takes vantage of whatever is causing problems in a particular country by using bot networks and social media multipliers to flood the country with disinformation, highlighting either extreme left policies or extreme right ones. It uses its own well-funded media network RT (formerly Russia Today) to plant obscure, partially true, or believably false stories and then multiplies them. For example, in Germany it multiplied any story about problems caused by refugees in order to undermine Angela Merkel's refugee policies, including stories of rape that were shown to be false. In France, it launched a cyberattack on then-candidate Macron while inviting his more Russia friendly rival to visit Russia. In Spain, it multiplied any story that would suggest that Spain was violent and squelching democratic expression in Catalonia, and made every effort to stimulate Catalonian separatism. The intent in all this is both to destabilize the democratic world and to persuade the Russian people that their form of government is just as good as that of the Western democracies.

The report examines in some detail Russian attempts to undermine referenda or influence elections in France, Spain, the Netherlands, the UK and the U.S.A. Russia was not always successful in influencing the outcome, and lessons were learned from the experiences. For example, the Netherlands, learning from the US experience in the 2016 election and their own experience with a major hack of the Dutch Safety Board following the downing of Flight MH17 over Eastern Ukraine, banned electronic voting or counting of ballots and the use of USB flash drives or email by election officials.

Davis also points out that Russian cyber activity has greatly increased the cost of elections both at federal and state or party headquarters and individual candidate's offices by requiring them to hire the services of IT experts to identify and counteract internet based hostile foreign interference. While she found no evidence that Russia had manipulated actual voting results, there is plenty of evidence that hackers were able to get into electoral databases and use the dresses obtained to direct misinformation, or get more unfavourable information on candidates.

She describes and recommends various strategies that governments have implemented to strengthen a country's resilience to cyber manipulation and attacks, including new laws and regulations backed up by fines to force organizations and businesses to practice good cyber hygiene and security. One of the more interesting recommendations is that countries should make every effort to use court action and sanctions in order to take away the financial vantage for Russia to use this strategy.

She urges the development of international standards and practices through the EU and NATO to create a more seamless approach to cyber security. At the same time, she warns that all measures “must be rooted in our common values including individual liberty, human rights, democracy and the rule of law.”

Davis followed up in 2019 with a report entitled “NATO in the cyber age: Strengthening security & defence, stabilizing deterrence”.³ This report, which was opted at the Fall Session in London, UK, focuses specifically on what NATO is doing or should be doing to counter



the Russian threat to the democratic world order by its activities in the cyber domain.

The report reminds us that at the Wales Summit, NATO leaders explicitly stated that a cyber attack could lead to the invocation of Article 5, and at the Brussels Summit in 2018 reiterated the commitment with the words “...we are determined to employ the full range of capabilities, including cyber, to deter, defend against, and to counter the full spectrum of cyber threats, including those conducted as part of a hybrid campaign.”

She also quotes several useful definitions used by the US Department of Defence (DOD) to distinguish among **cyber attacks** as “Actions taken in cyberspace that create noticeable denial effects (i.e., degradation, disruption, or destruction) in cyberspace or manipulation that leads to denial that appears in a physical domain” (US DOD, 2019); **cyber exploitation** (which includes cyber espionage) as actions “to gain intelligence, manoeuvre, collect information, or perform other enabling actions” in cyberspace; and **cyber-enabled information operations** as attempts “to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of versaries and potential versaries” (US DOD, 2019). The category of cyber crime covers all criminal activities committed through the internet, computer networks, or information systems.

The report suggests that while it can never be ruled out, it is unlikely that there will be large-scale cyber attacks on military or civilian infrastructure by states or their proxies during peace time. While it remains difficult to attribute attacks quickly, governments, private companies and research organizations have become increasingly better at it thus making retaliation or “naming and shaming” of the perpetrators more likely. However, a persistent cyber campaign can lead to tactical or operational gains providing useful intelligence, preparing the way for actual military strikes, and providing cover or distraction for ongoing small-scale aggression.

The US DOD has opted a new cyber strategy of **Persistent Engagement** which is not limited to safeguarding its own internal networks and resolving breaches after they occur, but includes “defending forward” by trying to disrupt the malicious behaviour at its source. The policy also focuses on partnering with other non-military government departments and select private-sector companies. Davis would encourage more discussion and debate within NATO and among NATO members on such a strategy to disrupt persistent cyber campaigns.

In addition to the difficulty of attribution, it is also difficult to determine the intent of a particular cyber intrusion. States tend to assume the worst which could lead to misperception and escalation. This is, therefore, another area that needs more attention and cooperation within the Alliance.

NATO maintains a cyber deterrence policy of ambiguity, both regarding what it would consider sufficiently serious to trigger Article 5, and how it would retaliate. It is a useful position to produce doubts in a would-be attacker’s mind, and leave more options for designing a response to re-establish deterrence. This also makes it important for the Alliance to develop a full range of defensive and offensive options and explore the options regularly in exercises. Several NATO members have already developed both offensive and defensive cyber effects and are willing to contribute them to NATO efforts in the same way as other national assets are employed in NATO operations.

The report outlines extensive activities undertaken or planned by Allies, separately or in cooperation with others, that are contributing to a more robust capability in cyber space. Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in Norfolk, USA, runs a Cyber Coalition exercise which includes participants from the EU, academia, and industry, aimed at “enhancing cooperation and coordination between Allies and testing NATO and national procedures of information sharing, situational awareness, and decision making.”

The Rapporteur concludes that NATO and its members should continue to develop their offensive and defensive cyber capabilities, but should be as transparent as possible and use clear diplomatic messaging and engagement to reduce escalation risks.

The 2019 Fall Assembly also opted a report from the Political Committee’s Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships (PCNP) titled *NATO-Russia Relations-A Snapshot*.⁴ The report was presented by Miro Kovac, former Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia,



and Rapporteur *Interim*.

This report is an update of Rasa Jukneviciene's 2017 report. Kovac concurs with the opinion of Jukneviciene and Davis that Russia's aggression in Georgia and Ukraine, its disinformation and cyber attacks and hybrid activities are all designed to destabilize the entire Euro-Atlantic area, undermine public trust in democratic institutions, undermine the NATO Alliance, and change the rules-based international order in an effort to restore Russia's status in the world.

Three official documents direct Russia's foreign and security policy. The **Foreign Policy Concept** which was updated in 2016, suggests that the West will decline in spite of its efforts to contain Russian influence in its "near abroad," and states that Russia should develop relationships with other regional groups, especially the People's Republic of China (PRC). The **National Security Strategy** of 2015 emphasizes the need to support a multi-polar world where Russia can be seen as a power equal to the United States. The **Military Doctrine** of 2014 among other points, lists the military dangers to Russia coming from NATO's policies, especially its "Open Door" policy.

Initially, Russia appeared to cooperate with NATO after the Cold War, with the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997. The cooperation and communication were strengthened with the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in 2002, but by 2007 the relationship deteriorated dramatically with the cyber attack on Estonia, followed by aggression against Georgia in 2008. Kovac describes the current relationship as "one of high tensions and confrontation."

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 is the first time that a country has taken part of another country by force since World War II. It came at the end of a series of actions that included provocative military manoeuvres and overt and covert hybrid activities which are continuing to this day. Kovac describes NATO's reaction as firm, defensive and proportionate. NATO streamlined its own operations for faster decision-making, tripled the size of the NATO Response Force (NRF), and deployed multinational battlegroups in Poland and the Baltics, among other initiatives. NATO member countries and the EU have also invoked sanctions on Russia which Kovac believes should be maintained.

Initially, NATO stopped all practical cooperation with Russia, including meetings of the NATO-Russia Council. These meetings were soon resumed in order to keep channels of communication open to exchange information, reduce misunderstanding and dress common concerns, such as terrorism and stability in the Middle East. The tough issues of nuclear weapons and arms control have also been on the agenda.

The report describes in some detail how Russia has built up its military in a strategic way. Kovac agrees with Davis that Russia's military capabilities are weaker than NATO's collective capability, but by concentrating on specific areas such as the Baltic and Black Seas, building up its nuclear arsenal and disruptive cyber capabilities, Russia can exert maximum pressure in areas it considers important. The report is specific in describing how Russia has violated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), and supports the US withdrawal from the INF.

The report also examines how Russia is trying to increase its influence more globally and its complicated attempt to benefit economically from China's Belt and Road initiative without letting China become the dominant power.

Kovac concludes that while "NATO genuinely wishes to work with Russia ... Moscow has *de facto* been at political war with NATO and the EU for at least a decade, but it took time for the West to realise this..." He believes that Putin will continue to test NATO in every way possible short of all out conflict, and NATO must be extremely vigilant. NATO's relationship with Russia must be based on the principles of the rules-based international order which makes it very difficult because that is precisely what Putin is trying to destroy. Above all, any rapprochement with Russia must not come at the expense of a third country and, therefore, NATO's Open Door policy must be maintained. *

NOTES

- 1 <https://www.nato-pa.int/document/2017-russia-jukneviciene-report-170-pc-17-e-rev1-fin>
- 2 <https://nato-pa.int/document/2018-russian-meddling-elections-and-referenda-alliance-davis-report-181-stc-18-e-fin>
- 3 <https://www.nato-pa.int/document/2019-nato-cyber-age-strengthening-security-and-defence-stabilising-deterrence>
- 4 <https://www.nato-pa.int/document/2019-pcnp-report-nato-russia-relations-snapshot-kovac-145-pcnp-19-e>

