Information Conflicts

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The Positive Uses of Twitter

CRISIS RESPONSE

- Disaster relief
- Humanitarian Assistance
- Crisis monitoring

PROMOTES:

- Order and discourse
- Cooperative behavior
- Information sharing

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

- Anti-propaganda
- Rumor squelch
- Outreach

PROMOTES:

- Discussion expansion
- Spread of verifiable information

Goals: Improve DISASTER OPERATIONS

Improve COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Negative Uses of Twitter

From 2011 onward, ONR researchers began to see INCREASING USE of Social Media for NEGATIVE effects

INFLUENCE

- Propaganda
- Rebellion cry
- Hate speech

PROMOTES:

- Points of view
- Bandwagon effects
- Conflict and argument
- Mass protests

SOCIAL CYBER-ATTACK

- Crowd manipulation
- Hysteria propagation

PROMOTES:

- Rumor Escalation
- Confusion
- Violence
- Chaos

How would These IMPACT NAVY MISSIONS?

Goolsby, Rebecca. 2013. "On Crowdsourcing, Cybersecurity and Social Cyber-Attack"

Woodrow Wilson Common Labs, Memo #1.

The New Threat Environment

Military operations today involve new threats and problems:

- The rise of non-state actors as significant, violent threats to human security and nation-state stability

- Covert state actors using non-state actors to threaten human security, infrastructure, and peace

- Potential emergency situations due to the spread of ebola and its destabilizing affect on nation-states

- ISIS uses social media to enhance its reputation (or brand), recruit fighters, and solicit funds to support state destabilization.

- Novorossiya uses social media to publicize its violent acts in Ukraine, supported by "information *spetnaze" (special forces),* threatening regional security in Eastern Europe.

- *Ebola.* Mobile phones in Africa spread rumors and hysteria about ebola, which leak onto social media platforms. These rumors led to the deaths of 8 health care workers in Sierra Leone.

- Technologies – *The Cyber World*
- Social Relations – *Real World / Cyber World*
- Socio-Technical Innovations – *Real World / Cyber World*
- The Physical World – *The Real World of Events, Transactions, People and Things*

Two Twitter Tales: Why Strategic Communication Matters

- Boston Police / Boston Marathon Bombings

- New York Police Department / #myNYPD campaign

Socio-Technical Information Operations

- Understanding the new cyber/social world and its implications for military operations

- Ability to acquire real-time, comprehensive understanding of information flow and its connection to emerging events

- Ability to manage the military operation's strategic message and communications

- Ability to plan, maneuver, and act effectively in the cyber/social and physical worlds

Information Maneuvers

- Discourse Suppression Maneuvers

- Amplification of Information Maneuvers

- Fabrication of Information Maneuvers

- Spin-Doctors and Influence Maneuvers
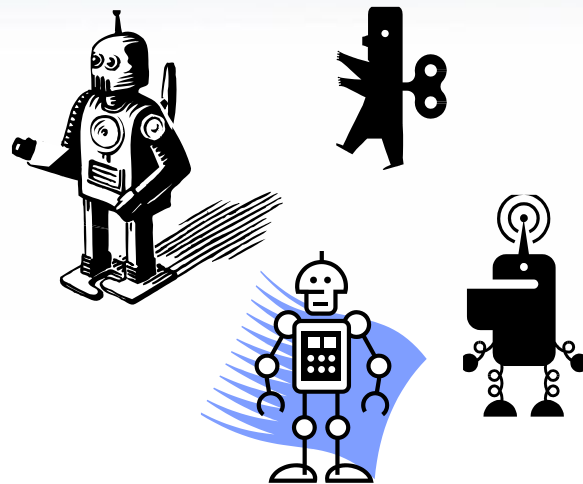
- St. Petersburg Times Article (2013)

- Impact of the Spetznaze Operations
  - Threadjacking as Maneuver
  - Trolling as Maneuver

Amplification Maneuvers

- The Social Bot / Botnet
  - Coded programs to spread information on all kinds of social media platforms
  - Occur in "armies" called "botnets"

- High spreading hashtags
  - Viral topic
  - Common tag such as #news
- Targeted hashtags
  - Use of local language (Ucrania, for example, to reach a Spanish speaking audience)
- Repeated messages but no "Retweet" indicators

Kiev Rumors: An Example

PAS BEAU. Kiev abat l'avion du vol MH17 de la Malaysia Airlines et accuse: http://t.co/15oDpqI6uE via @KamerunScoo

PAS BEAU. Kiev abat l'avion du vol MH17 de la Malaysia Airlines et accuse: http://t.co/ADp4TdFRKt via @KamerunScoo

PAS BEAU. Kiev abat l'avion du vol MH17 de la Malaysia Airlines et accuse: http://t.co/Ed6Y81pjP5 via @KamerunScoo

PAS BEAU. Kiev abat l'avion du vol MH17 de la Malaysian Airlines et accuse http://t.co/R9gSR6ubgs

PAS BEAU. Kiev abat l'avion du vol MH17 de la Malaysia Airlines et accuse http://t.co/9lr30IdzID

PAS BEAU. Kiev abat l'avion du vol MH17 de la Malaysia Airlines et accuse http://t.co/jbDJoRJDuY

PAS BEAU. Kiev abat l'avion du vol MH17 de la Malaysia Airlines et accuse http://t.co/XvI3yrZJdf via @cellule44

Kiev Deployed 27 Anti-Aircraft Launchers to E.Ukraine Ahead of MH17 Crash! http://t.co/gpP4VYT8uv

Kiev Deployed 27 Anti-Aircraft Launchers to E.Ukraine Ahead of MH17 Crash! http://t.co/HvpOLMzimX Interesting.....

Kiev Deployed 27 Anti-Aircraft Launchers to E.Ukraine Ahead of MH17 Crash! http://t.co/lh5eKVqhp1

Kiev Deployed 27 Anti-Aircraft Launchers to E.Ukraine Ahead of MH17 Crash! http://t.co/qeNXXVrjuY

Kiev Deployed 27 Anti-Aircraft Launchers to E.Ukraine Ahead of MH17 Crash! http://t.co/sKB8mLyc5p

Kiev Deployed 27 Anti-Aircraft Launchers to E.Ukraine Ahead of MH17 Crash! http://t.co/YgeJlm11Am

Dozens of bots deployed to spread
The story that Kiev had shot down MH17,
In French, Spanish, Indonesian and
English.

They were easily discoverable by
most commercial systems drawing from
the Twitter API and then re-sorted to
show the duplicates.

Each URL has been generated to mask
the fact that they're an orchestrated SET.

How Botnets Amplify

- Tides of messages are sent out in order to outcompete other messages in search algorithms by using flooding the algorithms

- These messages direct readers to "spun" and fabricated messages, making those messages seem more representative or "real"

- They may attempt to push topics up so that they appear in Twitter trends or similar statistics (tweets that only have hashtags in them, for example).

Hybrid Efforts

- The combination of botnets with information "special forces" helps to deter automated detections of "dissemination" campaigns

A "likely bot" or a hybrid

Name	Rokanrobin Robinson
Description	ya basta de pendejos nacionales e internacionales, banksters, megacorporaciones y demás NWO de la JUDIADA, les vamos a dar Raid, insectos
Twitter Profile	@RokanrobinR
Tweets	3,069
Followers	128
Friends	229

Recent Tweets – @RokanrobinR

Rokanrobin Robinson @RokanrobinR · 34m
"@ActualidadRT: ÚLTIMA HORA: Se elevan las víctimas de Ya son 5 los muertos y 12 los heridos es.rt.com/B3h"
↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite

Rokanrobin Robinson @RokanrobinR · 34m
RT @ActualidadRT: ÚLTIMA HORA: Se elevan las víctimas Grozny. Ya son 5 los muertos y 12 los heridos es.rt.com/B3
↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite

Rokanrobin Robinson @RokanrobinR · 1h
RT @WeatherPlanet: 4 police died, 8 injured as they stoppe attacking during concert in Grozny. rt.com/news/193336-c
↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite

Rokanrobin Robinson @RokanrobinR · 1h
RT @MFinoshina_RT: No peace at home either #GROZNY: exploded device when policemen tried to search him.4 kille

- Same story repeated many times.
- Retweets of bot accounts
- Frequent tweets
- Odd messages that make no sense (to hide better from algorithms)
- In this example, the account ONLY tweets RT.Com and ActualidadRT.Com stories, nothing else.
- Bots are hard to find even with special tools!

- They don't have to make sense

- They don't have to be credible

- They just need to be sensational ENOUGH and credible ENOUGH to monopolize discourse

The #MH17 Rumors

The Spin Doctor Maneuver

- Captivating statements

- Encouraging "noise"

- Creating "buzz"

- Mix fabrication, misdirection, and partial facts to create a false impression
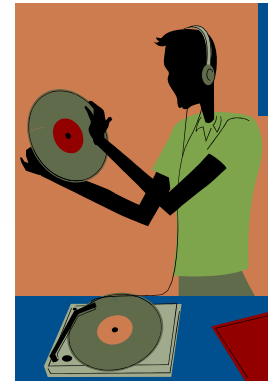
- Putin immediately blamed Kiev for the MH17 incident – a fairly odd but highly captivating statement that buzzed through Twitter in the midst of

- Strelkov, leader of the militias that shot the plane down, put out a statement alleging that there were only dead bodies in the plane – widely reported in Russian media and spread in Twitter

- Actualidad published an account of a hoaxster, a "Spanish traffic controller in Kiev" who blamed Ukraine military for the attack
  – This story widely spread on Twitter by Actualidad and bots
  – If you actually read the story (in Spanish), it specifically points out that the story is unlikely to be true because non-Ukrainians <u>are legally barred from employment</u> as air traffic controllers in Ukraine, at the bottom of the article.

Countering
Information Operations:
What's Needed

- **Discovery** of attempts to amplify, spin, misdirect and conduct offensive maneuvers in the information space

- **New methods of analysis** to deconstruct and neutralize offensive information maneuvers

- Development **of effective strategic communications** campaigns to counter these maneuvers

- **Mobilization of networks** to amplify and outcompete information maneuvers of competitors

Needed:

- Technology to reveal information maneuvers

- Research to improve methods of discovering and countering these maneuvers

- Training and education of military personnel to understand new information flows, thwart rumor and hysteria propagation, and develop new information campaign capabilities for the NIE.

Rules for Success in Countering Information Maneuvers

- <u>Don't lie, spin, or doctor evidence</u>.
  - The public needs to know who to trust. It is better to say nothing than to add to the noise.
- There are legitimate ways to amplify truthful, responsible messages.
  - Develop good networks (like Boston Police)
  - Be authentic (like Boston Police)
  - Develop situated trust
- Responsible information networks are stronger and more resilient than deceptive networks – and ultimately have a longer reach and greater power.
- Fill the space with strong strategic communication.

Contact Information

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