

Building Resilience to the Hybrid Threats - Communication as the main element

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Introduction

“The discourse of fear, separation, hate, and delegitimization harms society’s unity and solidarity. This discourse has intensified in recent years against the backdrop of widespread use of social media. The disparity between rich and poor also harms national resilience” – Moshe Ya’alon, former MOD of the Israel Defense Forces. Today, I am introducing you that dimension of *Resilience* that was addressed by the former MOD of Israel within his letter, namely, “Societal Resilience”, in order to fight of the external threats. Meanwhile, I will try to distinctly explain the significance of communication in terms of the resilience quality increment.

Understanding Resilience

Based on Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Oxford Dictionary and the Stockholm University’s “Stockholm Resilience Center” definitions, we can state that Resilience is: “a skill of a system, individual, city, forest or economics to handle the changes and continue development...” 1. Accordingly, presented term in all dimensions means a capability and a skill of an object or an individual’s infinite thrive to development to revive the strengths and get back to the initial state despite the pressure, stress, issues or complications. Moreover, it indicates that an object and an individual, community, group, organization that can be related/connected to the term “resilience“, is flexible and is capable of continuing development. It is true that the history of human development (evolution) is a proof of a human owning the resilience function, although, it is interesting 1. At what extant is the ability of resilience is manageable and 2. Moreover, which role does the

information hold on this way; since, it is known that humans manage the environment through information – getting decisions, it is also crucial to acknowledge which role the higher standard resilience society can play in the Hybrid War/Threats conditions. In addition, we are interested in what the addressed measures against the resilience.

Resilience in practice – Historical Prototypes

Does resilience have the past? What is the history and which examples can we recall from the furthest and the most recent past? Gene Sharp’s work “Civil Based Defense”, which was published in Russian language in Vilnius, in 2002, introduces such examples of civil based defense that got proceeded and actually had an outcome. Examples: firstly, German war in Ruhr against the Franco-Belgium occupation in 1923, in which case all the means of cooperation among the occupation forces got limited, professional groups refused fulfilling the duties. For example, the German police officers were not saluting the foreign officers, people who went on hunger strike refused to use the specially opened canteens, shopkeepers refused to sell the products to the foreign militaries, miners were not mining and the media was still publishing the critical publication, even though it was strictly prohibited. All the above mentioned was happening during the horrific punitive events and repressions. In the end, occupants were forced to leave the occupied territory (1926).

Gene Sharp describes the similar case of Czechoslovakian example of 1968-69, in terms of the unsuccessful attempt of the soviet troops. There are other examples of the resilience: firstly, founding a “Non-violent Defense Center” by Latvian government while expecting the soviet occupation, which aimed at safeguarding the sovereignty of Latvia, mobilizing the Latvian people and what’s the most important, its goal was reaching the high quality of absolute

resistance against the probable allies with the enemy/opponent. The second example is Estonian, as in 1991, Estonian governmental high officials and the civil front members published the “Resistance Plan” – “Public Disobedience”. According to the plan, in case of the soviet occupation, all the orders or the legislative initiatives of the occupation forces were declare illegal. The population was instructed to document and take the videos of the occupation forces activities. The third and the fourth examples are April 9, 1989 and the following events in Tbilisi and 1991 Vilnius events, when the High Council of Lithuania, because of the murder of 14 people at the TV tower, stated that in case of the mass occupation, the country and the people would declare the unified disobedience.

As a sum up of these facts, the “weapon” of the non-violent disobedience can be named as psychological. Thereby, the above-mentioned “weapon” was used to put down the usurpers’, dictators and occupants’ power. It was used by each society of each country we have mentioned above. It is crucial to understand this type of weapon, which brings our will and desire together. Both of them push us to make decisions, both of them drives us to change behavior towards our resilience. This type of non-material, non-physical “weapon” (combination of our will and desire, attitudes and sense of solidarity) is the basic for humans to decide usage of any other types of physical resources (weaponry) in purpose of repealing enemy or not.

If we admit possibility of existence of such type of weaponry, using by the groups while non-violent disobedience, here comes the question: what is the counter-measure or counter weaponry in order to influence our will, desire, sense of solidarity, positive attitudes? There is a very high probability that this type of counter weaponry it always was *Information* and has

never disappeared. However, what is the news? The news is in completely different information Environment (IE).

Information Environment - reason for the Opponent’s Success?

As it was already mentioned above, there is not much that has changed in Russians’ wishes and strategies even after 50 years, but there is a slight change that may become a new headache for the civilized world. This the modern information environment, in particular, virtual dimension - internet, which gifts another life to the Russia’s still approached to countries. How does the modern information environment look like?

- 3,7 billion people use internet¹;
- 40,000 search operations are conducted per second on Google (3,5 billion per day);
- In total, 5 billion search operation within all search systems;
- YouTube has got 4,146,600 viewers;
- 456,000 Twits are posted per minute;
- From Europe, 307 million people are registered on Facebook;
- 5 new accounts are created on Facebook per second;
- 1,500,000,000 active members are registered on Facebook;
- 527,760 images are shared by the “Snap chat” users per minute;
- 300,000,000 images are uploaded to Facebook every day;
- 510,000 comments are written on Facebook per minute;
- 300,000 statuses are posted on Facebook per minute;
- 600 million people are registered on Instagram and 400 million of them are active members;

¹How Much Data Does The World Generate Every Minute?-
<https://www.iflscience.com/technology/how-much-data-does-the-world-generate-every-minute/> (05.11.2018)

- 95 million photo and video is shared on Instagram every day;
- 100 million people uses the “story” function of Instagram;
- 156 million emails are sent per second;
- 15 thousand gifs are sent on Facebook Messenger per second;
- 154,200 Skype calls are happening on Skype per second;
- 600 new pages are added to Wikipedia per second²;

This type of information environment has created the perspective of both, opportunities and risks. Decision making process got more complicated, as there is a variety of options. Besides, the propagandists are having an opportunity to stay infinitely anonymous. In such conditions, adequately reacting or responding on a narrative of an opponent becomes a challenge. Because of the internet communication and the social media characteristics, unified, well-structured messages after the publishing on social media get a cluster bomb effect. The citizens, after interpretation, are dividing these messages into micro-information (micro-messages), are transforming them into completely different messages, and are spreading them afterwards.

Simultaneously to this new reality, there exists and it has never disappeared, the natural desires of the human to get the information, process it and use it, and it sets more obstacles over our decision making proceedings. These desires and inclinations are:

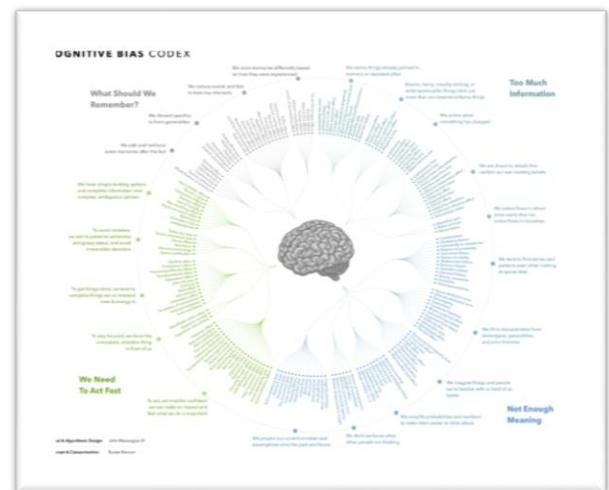
- **Motivated reasoning**
When we are supporting only that type of information that strengthens our beliefs and thoughts;³

²How Much Data Do We Create Every Day? The Mind-Blowing Stats Everyone Should Read- <https://goo.gl/JHavQL>.(07.11.2018)

³I saw with my own eyes, read it, heard it, decided and still made a mistake. Why? -<https://infoarmy.ge/ge/news/33/sakutari-tvalit-vnakhet-tsavik>

- **Familiarity towards the communicator**
We believe the people we know. The more frequently we see the communicator, the more we thrive towards his/her information and we increase the information acceptance level in such manner;⁴
- **Cognitive Fluency**
“If we deal with easy and simple processes, our mental shortcuts are tending to perceive the stories as the truths”.⁵

This is a small part of the cognitive biases, while there are 188 forms of it and they disturb us from perceiving the reality and getting rational decisions.



In addition, if we consider the above-mentioned modern information areal connected statistics, so called “informative noise”, the speed of spreading the information and 188 forms of cognitive biases; it is not hard to answer why we are where we are. Why does the opponent

⁴Paul C., Matthews M., (2016). “The Russian “Firehose of Falsehood” Propaganda Model”. RAND Corporation. (p.4)

⁵Newman E. (2016). “Why are people so incredible gullible?”; <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20160323-why-are-people-so-incredibly-gullible>;

succeed in these activities and why are we challenged.

Usage of Modern information environment - the main goals of the Hybrid War

As we can find the examples of the resilience, as the examples of the war, in the history and in the recent past, logically, it is probable that there existed the counter-measure of this form of the fight or it was created later. In this case, one example is quite interesting, as many of us remembers it well – the interview of the KGB defector – Yuri Alexandrovich Bezmenov, a former KGB agent who defected to Canada in 1970, who stated that the first and the most essential step of political subversion was demoralization. Here's how he further defined ideological subversion: "What it basically means is: to change the perception of reality of every American to such an extent that despite of the abundance of information no one is able to come to sensible conclusions in the interest of defending themselves, their families, their community, and their country."⁶ On the 50th anniversary of this statement, we can eagerly say that in these terms the Russian school has not substantially changed anything within the approaches. We can recall some of the Georgian examples:

Planting/encouraging nihilism and vulnerability

– only last year, in the direction of the occupied territories, from the occupation line more than 100 individual was kidnapped. Few of them have been tortured and killed at the occupation military bases. The opponent is trying to convince the citizens that they are not protected. The Ministry of Defense of Georgia purchased the missile defense systems and organized a small presentation about it. After few hours, four Russian helicopters broke the

Georgian air space. The message is the same – you are unprotected and we are unpunished.



Zero consensus in the Society – is the opponent's main aim to demolish all the existing or prospective chances concerning the crucially important issues, in particular, defense and the security issues, foreign policy. Even after 200 years of humiliation, damage, murders and occupation, since 2008, after 10 years the opponent still managed to divide the society into two parts – the one party thinks that the Georgian government should be blamed for the war as well, and the other party that believes that Russia is an enemy.

Economic dependency– base on both Georgian and Ukrainian examples, we can assume that the Russian Federation is deliberately trying to drag the representatives of the business circles of the targeted country into the corruptive and nontransparent business-relations. In such manner, it simultaneously forms, on the one hand, Russian market dependent business elite and, on the other hand, Russian market dependent state budget.

⁶<https://bigthink.com/paul-ratner/34-years-ago-a-kgb-defector-described-america-today?rebelltitem=8#rebelltitem8>

OVER 68% OF GEORGIAN WINE EXPORTS GO TO RUSSIA



The “final victory” strictly requires the existence of the allies within the targeted country (boots on the ground). Hence, Kremlin always tries one of the allies to be a financially strong group that in case of necessity will get involved within the political processes easily (we can recall cases of Ukraine and Moldova – Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic).

Russians think that refusing the wealth making through the corruptive, easy scheme should represent a significant difficulty for the representatives of the post-soviet business circles in Georgia.

If we sum up the last 30 years of Georgian-Russian relations and add up the nature of the Russian activities in Ukraine, in the Baltic countries and in the other European states, we come to the conclusion that the Russian Federation’s military-political elite’s strategic goals are:

- Demolishing the ideological and political values, or forming the modified/new ones;
- Breaking down the education and communication systems;
- “Correction” of the psychological and the socio-cultural existence;
- Encouraging the distrust between the state and the citizen;

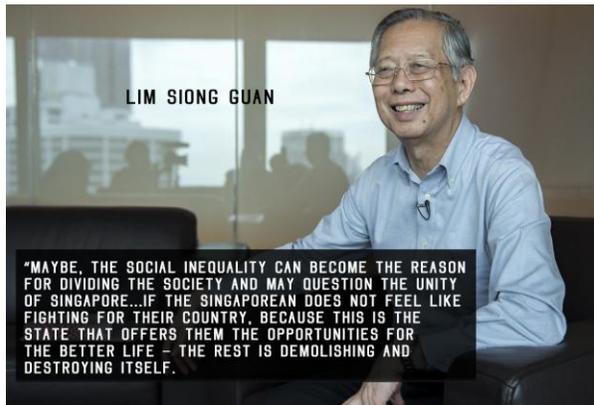
What can be the strategic level aim? The only outcome that is followed afterwards is the gradual decrease of the resilience within our society. There is no other name to this strategy, than a new method of war, so called Hybrid War. Why does the opponent need this form? Even though the Kremlin is trying to convince us that these events are run by the rebellious, insane people, they know it quite well in Kremlin that the military attack on Tbilisi, Ukraine, Vilnius and Tallinn will require an internationally devastating political price from them, while the victory through the manipulations over the exhausted, valueless, hopeless, threatened, miserable, vulnerable and poor population has a different price.

How to stay Resilient?

For the opponent that is not bound neither democratic and fair elections, nor the supremacy of the law, and the right to private property, and the pluralism, and the tolerance, and the freedom of expression, its actions in the circumstances I have described above, is effective. Rapid 24/7 communication regime set the perceptions that are interpreted differently by the members of the society and it creates the fake reality.

As our discussion topic is assurance of the high standards of societal resilience in compliance with the external threats, the success of the resilience crosses the will of the population to fight together with the government. I, as a citizen, should have a will to defend “our” country with the state. In accordance to this point, one of the Singapore’s Total Defense system’s architects, Lim Siong Guan, highlights in one of his interviews: **“Maybe, the social inequality can become the reason for dividing the society and may question the unity of Singapore... If the Singaporean does not feel like fighting for their country, because this is the state that offers them the opportunities for the**

better life – the rest is demolishing and destroying itself.”⁷



During the resilience, in other words during the “Civilian based defense” we should be mostly attentive to the messages, that will be received not only by the opponent, but also by the third party. It can be our ally or the population of the opponent state. Defendants may convince the allies’ third party and its representatives through a proper and effective communication that the devotion to fight back and their support will not be politically risky. Besides, the solidarity of even a part of the opponent states’ society may have a significant role during the war.

As far as the attitudes and the moods are defining our behavior, to extant the readiness of the society is connected to the resilience standards. For instance, the continuous activity, such as kidnapping or murdering at the occupation line, within itself is a communicative act, that represents a certain message for the targeted audience, and that itself is a perception formatting in terms of security. The other hostile activities that are in coordination with the above mentioned acts set a particular mood/attitude within the targeted audience, and directs it how to act to threat (for example, does

⁷Most important component of Total Defence is psychological defence: Lim Siang Guan - <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/most-important-component-of-total-defence-is-psychological-defen-8179792>

the fighting back worth, does it have a will to be in alliance with the government against the opponent etc.). Such type of message of the opponent suppresses the optimism and drives us towards the hopeless mindset that will definitely end up with relevant act - with capitulation, collaboration with the enemy, conformist activities, accepting the opponent’s message/offer.

On this way, the only way out is in spreading the unified, comprehensive and settled state narrative, in which the citizens are easily finding themselves, they clearly know about the necessity of their role and the importance of this role. The narrative itself requires the involvement of the superior or high profile individuals to be involved in the communication processes, as far as, sometimes, numerous, undesired flow of information weakens our attention, and it frequently becomes the reason for miss out. Thus, in order to get the attention of the targeted audience and to convince them, it is essential to use the highest tribunes. Moreover, state officials’ narrative involvement in communication processes, causes the same actions from the citizens’ side and it becomes the bases of the cooperation.

Discussion about the successful comprehensive state narrative transmission should continue with the strengthening the Cross-Governmental cooperation and/or the establishment of the relative format that should result in creating the unified communication system or documents. As a result, we will get the synchronized and coordinated communication goals and messages through the national leveled units responsible for communications. Well-set cross governmental communication represents a respond to the division of the narrative by the opponent and the possibility of interpretation that is even more easily achieved through the social media.

The importance of the Early Warning

What can be the universal indicators of the early warning that can fit the genre of the conflict we are discussing?

- First and the most important forms of hybrid war that aim to degrade our resilience, uses threatening as a mean of communication. The main goal of the analysts will be to define the authenticity of the threat, as far as the reality of the treat is based on both financial and non-financial costs (reputation cost). Accordingly, the author of the threat always carefully takes the responsibility. However, in case of the misanalysis, we will face up the serious challenges.
- Measuring Reputation of the government- authority is the source of the power, and it is essential for the military-civil cooperation. One of the targets of the hybrid threats is and will be to disturb the governing authority. By the side of the corruptive, unsuccessful, unfair government, the chance of the public union is less, even if it is against the threats. Setting the economic dependence ceiling – the financial dependence of the business circle on the opponent’s market, is a precondition of the opponent dragging the business-circles in order to accomplish the political goals.
- Social Media as a new identity and the new stage of the modern education, because of the opponent’s activities requires our observation and constant monitoring. It is recommendable if the governing units will refrain from self-defense positioning while communicating with the society and will choose the reactive regime, in order

to involve the citizens in decision making processes and to fill the gaps in timely manner. At the Former Yugoslavian republic of Macedonia parliament, Jens Stoltenberg stated during his speech: “...**Where there is inclusion and open dialogue, supported by good governance, there is resilience.**”⁸

Resilience, as a respond to the hybrid threats requires the readiness. This makes us to think about forming the preparatory strategy for the population. During the crisis, a citizen, who does not know his /her role and function within the crisis period can cause the most of the harm. Under the crisis I consider the both, short-term and the long-term crisis, with a duration from one day to 20 years. The readiness strategies themselves push us to analyze that the well-prepared society will be one of the core elements of the deterrence policy. In addition, here rises up the question – **is resilience a part of Deterrence policy?** – But it is an issue of another discussion.

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⁸„Where there is inclusion and open dialogue, supported by good governance, there is resilience.“ Speech by NATO Secretary General(2018).https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/opinions_150855.htm(last visited: 04.11.2018);