PROPAGASI KONFLIK RUSIA-UKRAINA 2022 TENTANG REDDIT DAN DELIBERASI PUBLIK

THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE 2022 CONFLICT PROPAGATION ON REDDIT AND THE PUBLIC DELIBERATION

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INFO ARTIKEL

Kata Kunci:
Media Sosial, Propaganda, Reddit, Propaganda Rusia, Propaganda Ukraina, Musyawarah Publik.

ABSTRAK

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Social media, Propaganda, Reddit, Russia Ukraine Propaganda, Public Deliberation.

ABSTRACT

The presence of propaganda grew along with social media. This research will explore the propaganda activity between Russia and Ukraine on the r/russia and r/ukraine subreddit within Reddit, a forum-based social media where people from all over the world talk about a specific topic. This research use media tracking to provide primary data, with secondary data also being used to provide relevant definitions to the research. Network propaganda will be utilized as a guidance for some of the aspects of the analysis. The amount of propaganda from both parties regarding the 2022 Russia and Ukraine conflict is quite significant. While the foundation of the research revolves around Russia-Ukraine propaganda, the writer will look deep into what exactly is being propagated by both parties on Reddit and the results on public deliberation as the public’s source of insight. The writer discovered that the effects of the propagated content, is strictly based on the three effects of network propaganda.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has proven to be an effective tool for the distribution of any form of information. However, it has also become a platform for state actors to spread propaganda and misinformation with some sort of agenda in mind. The definition of social media is still considered to be foggy in terms of theory and also practice. However, one thing’s for sure, social media is rooted in the principles of the digital computer. For the last few decades, social media platforms and users of social media have rapidly grown larger in numbers (Jensen, 2015). All these social media platforms made it very easy for propagandists to produce and distribute propaganda worldwide. One of the ways propaganda can be seen as validated is by the number of views, likes, and shares. With the amount of social media platforms that have existed for the last few decades and the number of users in mind, the growth has made it easier than ever to carry out propaganda campaigns (Johan, 2020).

The topic that the research will focus on will be the newly occurring conflict between Russia and Ukraine. On January 2022, the president of Ukraine, Zelensky announced that Ukraine will be joining the organization of NATO. This course of action chosen by President Zelensky made a chain reaction that would lead to an open war between Ukraine and Russia, with Ukraine supported by the western countries. Russia’s responded to Zelensky’s announcement to join NATO with a deployment of a significant-sized military unit near the border of Ukraine with the excuse of daily military training. This leads to high tension between western countries and Russia (Ruth, 2022). With the rise of digital technology and the widespread use of social media, the nature of warfare has evolved to include a new battleground. Now, battlefields are evolved into two different types, the battlefronts, and the media. The media side is waged through social media platforms and news outlets, which serve as a propaganda field for various actors (Svetoka, 2016). Both Russia and Ukraine are aware of this and are making rapid progress in their propaganda campaign. Hence why their propaganda pieces already reached all the way to Indonesia (Yanti, 2022) on multiple social media platforms. The research will focus on analyzing one particular social media platform, Reddit, as the primary source for collecting data. Reddit is a popular forum-based social media platform and is a self-proclaimed “The Front Page of the Internet”. Reddit as a social media platform is structured in a way that any community could exist without
any overlapping. The way it’s structured is that it is divided into subreddits. For the sake of understanding, subreddits are a made-up lingo by Reddit that can be simply translated into “community”. Each subreddit has its own set of rules and interest topics. Stating that Reddit is the face of the internet is a bit of an overstatement (Anderson, 2023). A report by the World Population Review, revealed that most of Reddit’s users are Americans, which shouldn’t be a surprise because Reddit was created in the United States (Reddit, 2023).

Reddit’s users are mostly Americans and are created in the US. This would lead to the assumption that Reddit has some of the values of the US which would be freedom. Reddit’s users are known to have a strong value of freedom of speech and net neutrality. Free speech is a constant topic in the platform as users tend to argue that free speech should be the tenet of the platform (Anderson, 2023). Reddit has a quarantine policy. This policy does not prohibit users from entering a specific community but rather hides a community that is vulgar and offensive. However, users can still freely explore a quarantined community (Qinlan, 2019). Reddit is a social media platform with a forum-based format which would have a strong connection to public deliberation. Public deliberation is seen as a way for people to learn and gain insight into certain topics. It can change their views towards certain things and reconsider their standing (Erika, 2012).

With both Russia and Ukraine actively engaging and carrying out propaganda campaigns with the use of social media in mind, there is one particular area that is considered to be uncharted territory in the research field, which is the presence of propaganda within Reddit. Both sides are constantly competing for control of the narrative. On top of that, it is argued that Reddit has a liberal element embedded within its user base. Most of the time, propaganda is produced by media entities and government officials. However, there are cases where citizens are engaged in such activities. In a sense that, the audiences or citizens are also contributing to the creation, amplifier, mitigation, and distributor of propaganda through the internet. This case is known as participatory propaganda (Alicia, 2019). These aspects will bring up certain questions that the research centered on “What is being propagated by both the Ukrainian and Russian subreddit and how does it affect public deliberation in r/Russia and r/ukraine as the public’s source of insight?”

LITERATURE REVIEW

After reviewing several published research papers on relevant topics, it becomes more feasible to discern patterns in the research findings. By reading research papers that are relevant to the key topics which are Social media, Propaganda, Reddit, and Russia-Ukraine propaganda, the writer managed to grasp the idea of the structures of the research topics (Walton, 1997). The earliest definitions of propaganda during the literature findings is mentioned by Walton (1997). Propaganda is said to be depicted to influence the masses. Therefore, the content that contains certain propaganda will require to have the emotions and enthusiasm that will appeal to the target audience in order to get the expected results. Murphy and White (2007) had a similar definition compared. Propaganda is a form of communication with an objective in to shape public perspectives toward certain things (Dennis, 2007). Power and Philips-wren (2011) stated that social media has integrated into the majority of people’s lives in the world
due to Web 2.0, which makes it easier to share any form of information with friends, family, and people from all over the world (Daniel, 2011).

One thing that is important to underline is that some states are beginning to see the importance of propaganda as a tool for self-preservation. Bjola (2017) stated that digital propaganda as a tool for information warfare is important to strengthen their power and improve their global standing within the international sphere. One example of a social media platform as a tool for propaganda is Twitter (Bjola, 2017). Duncombe (2017) believes that Twitter is an effective social media platform that can legitimize political changes (Duncombe, 2017). Carlson (2018) argues that the people themselves are to blame for their own misinformed perspectives towards certain things within the political spectrum. He stated that misinformed social media users are the source of all these fake news issues (Carlson, 2020). Baum and Potter (2019) somewhat support this argument to some extent. They stated (Matthew, 2019) in their research piece that most people who are not politically informed, made their social media news feeds based on their interests. This would spawn an opportunity for unintentional exposure to other perspectives. Up to this point, all arguments from multiple writers lead to the conclusion that social media is a perfect foundation of propaganda. McGregor (2019) specifies that social media is a wide and open field for public opinion. On top of that, any form of political opinions that are unleashed on social media are open for every social media users to see and process.

Zollmann (2019) argued that propaganda should be based on a linear path of falsehoods. On the contrary, Orón (2021) argued against propaganda being based solely on falsehoods. In fact, Orón seems to believe that propaganda can be factual but with a biased personality (Cano, 2021). The very idea of propaganda is mentioned by Ibitowa (2022). Propaganda is defined accordingly to certain characteristics in which divides a piece of generic information and a hidden agenda, which is: facts that appeal to emotions rather than intellect, the utilization of a piece of information filled with values, judgment-influenced, biased information and acceptable perspective of the public (Ibitowa, 2022). This argument would lead to the conclusion that favors Orón’s argument that propaganda can be factual but with a biased personality as a foundation of the content. Propaganda’s objective is to create a narrative that would change the public’s perspective. This would correlate to public deliberation. Blacksher (2012) stated that the definition of public deliberation is the idea of an informed discussion that would allow the public to participate in a balanced, factual discussion to improve their perspectives on a subject or a certain topic. The 2022 conflict between Russia and Ukraine is the perfect case for this research because both sides spread their agenda internationally through social media. Astuti, Attaymini, and Dewi (2022) stated that Russia and Ukraine are constantly trying to expand their agenda throughout the world, mostly through social media, and in the process, alter their opinions, perspectives, and support. What this research is trying to achieve is to determine what is being propagated by both Russia and Ukraine during the 2022 conflict and its impact on public opinion. Pavlyuk (2022) stated that during the previous conflict between Russia and Ukraine, information regarding military activities were heavily targeted, therefore, being a piece of priority information for the
propaganda effort. One of the most interesting parts lies within the concept of internet governance in the western part of the conflict (Pavlyuk, 2019). Ciuriak (2022) stated that, under no circumstances, the internet is under any sovereign control. However, it’s exposed to a significant amount of heavy influence campaigns through social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, Telegram, and Tiktok. For example, in the context of Ukraine, Ukraine has been constantly releasing pictures, videos and the citizen’s personal stories regarding the invasion. These would lead to adding humanity to the war and how it impacted the people, at least on the side of the Ukrainians. It also added educated analysis by experts and biased narratives from mass media organizations. Most of the time, propaganda is produced by media entities and government officials (Ciuriak, 2022). Wanless and Berk (2019) believe that the audience or the public space is what amplifies emerging propaganda. The various social media platforms, and technological tools availability, has heavily affects this. This would enable everyone within the public sphere to participate in the creation, amplification, mitigation, and distribution of propaganda through the internet.

Social media is an ideal space for propaganda it integrates with most people in the world, in which makes it highly possible to shape public perspectives toward certain things. The main objective of propaganda is strictly for self-preservation to bolster a state in its global standing within the international scene. However, the writer believes that it also boosted their standing domestically. Whether or not propaganda makes an impact is strictly dependent on the people or, in the sense of social media, the users, for they themselves are the sole reason for their own misinterpretation towards certain things due to their nature of making the social media news feeds based on their interests. The argument that propaganda can be factual seems to be the case with a biased aspect added to the content. While Russia is known for its internet governance, the western part of the conflict is argued to have no sovereign control on the media and internet space. However, the writer believes that some platforms have their own biases embedded within the platform and its policies.

METHOD

This type of research is a mix of both qualitative and quantitative due to the fact that the research question requires both types of data. The primary data extraction will be done solely through Reddit according to the content analysis method. Reddit is considered one of the world’s largest social media platforms. Some are even considered to be an optimal space to do extensive research in some fields. Medvedev (2019) stated that Reddit is a good platform for scientific literature due to its wide access to people from all over the world, the vast and the quality of the data within the social media platform, in which allows any researcher to produce clear and concise results for the research (Alexey, 2019).

Massanari (2017) stated that with the constant development of Reddit in terms of population, the platform is overlooked within the new media scholarship. The secondary data was extracted from already existing journals that discuss relevant topics within this research such as definitions of propaganda and its criteria, the
network propaganda theory, and the state of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The method for the data analysis is strictly based on a manual one. Determining of what category of content that is being constantly brought up on both subreddits is by simply inspecting the category list within the data set, with the highest numbers being the correct data for this research. Clustering the posts within the data is utilized for determining of what is being propagated within both r/russia and r/ukraine. By picking the most relevant and influential post within the data set, the writer can determine of what is being propagated within both subreddits in question. Catering to the second research question for this research, the writer extracted three set of keywords from the posts’ discussion tab in order to determine the effects on both subreddits’ public deliberation, with the three effects of network propaganda as a guidance.

The term Network propaganda is popularized by Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts in their book titled Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics (2018). It was mostly used to analyze the events of pre and post 2016 US presidential election. Network propaganda circulated on the idea that digital networks are the pillar that holds the flow of crafted information that will eventually take part in shaping public opinion accordingly to the intended narrative (Yochai, 2018). Induced Misperceptions, Misinformation, and Distraction which are essentially what amplify changes within the population in terms of opinions and beliefs came not from a single source or story but a multiple one, and platforms within the network, some are believed to be under propagandist control, repeated those sources and stories, achieving some kind of credibility within the population (Yochai, 2018).

According to Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts (2018), Induced misperceptions are interpreted as genuine and factual beliefs that are false and contradict the preeminent evidence within the public territory. Distraction is based on the idea that propaganda can steer the attention of the public away from an unwanted political subject and in the process, prevent the public to form political beliefs. Misinformation can be described as a piece of false information without the intention to manipulate the masses. The scale of the internet can be used to explain why this is the case because of the sheer amount of people that communicate with each other and covers the people that hold no real resource or the ability to avoid it (Yochai, 2018). D.J. Flynn, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler imply that Misperceptions are essentially beliefs backed up by facts that go against the accessible evidence within the public space. Which is the same definition that the writers of the book define Induced Misperception (Flynn, 2017). Misinformation is defined by Étienne Brown as the distribution of deceptive information that tends to massively spread to the public space (Brown, 2018). The three aspects of network propaganda be summarized in the table below:

| Table 1. The Effects of Network Propaganda |

12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Induced Misperception</td>
<td>Can be interpreted as a factual piece that is unintentionally tweaked as another</td>
<td>Manipulative presentation method such as titling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misinformation</td>
<td>Interpreted as false information with no intention of deceiving. This was due to the scale of the internet</td>
<td>Factual piece within the internet and social media, in which turns out to be false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distraction</td>
<td>A form of propaganda consisting of distracting the population in order to avert the attention away from unwanted attention</td>
<td>A story piece that’s irrelevant to the main talking point of the public sphere, with the intent to avert public attention elsewhere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Benkler et al (2018)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through content analysis on the subreddits of r/russia and r/ukraine, it is now possible to determine what is the main category of content that is being propagated by both sides of the subreddits. The data retrieved from r/ukraine and r/russia has a total of 123 data with 100 from February of 2023 to June of 2023 from r/ukraine and 23 data from February of 2022 to May of 2023 from r/russia. The reason for the few data from r/russia was because of the policy Reddit has implemented towards r/russia, due to the alleged violation of the platform’s guidelines. The results of the collected data from both subreddit can be summarized in the pie charts below:

![Pie Chart](image)

**Figure 1. Topics within r/Ukraine**
Source: *Primary*

There is an abundance of content within r/ukraine that consist of footage from a Ukrainian soldier’s helmet cam/body cam or a point of view perspective from a combat drone that shows that contains graphic content. This was the case for a large number of military content within the r/ukrainian subreddit. There is an ongoing daily report that covers the losses of Russian infantry, military vehicles, and equipment since November of 2022. Similar to the point of view of a soldier and combat drone, one other reoccurring type of military content was the Ukrainian military showcasing their military equipment. The culture content mostly consists of comparisons of Russian
culture and Ukrainian culture. One of the recurring contents of culture within the subreddit is demonizing the Russian culture of war, mentioning its bloody history throughout all existing wars that Russia has been involved in. The other type of cultural content is comparing regions under Russian occupation and liberated Ukrainian regions, all while showing the dark side of what a region under Russian occupation looks like. The last category would be political. Political content in r/ukraine delivers political messages and agenda in favor of Ukraine.

Figure 2. Topics within r/Russia
Source: Primary

Similar to r/ukraine, before the 2022 conflict began, the subreddit mainly discusses Russian culture, tourist activities, government issues, and politics. The following table is a showcase of a few pre-war contents of r/russia:

Table 2. r/russia contents (pre-war)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-Feb-22</td>
<td>Worst time to visit Russia?</td>
<td>Asking locals traveler the best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>appropriate time to visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-Feb-22</td>
<td>A bar in Kraljevo (Serbia) :)</td>
<td>A bar with President Putin as the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bar’s logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-Feb-17</td>
<td>What are some good places to visit in Russia?</td>
<td>Asking locals traveler the best place to visit in Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Feb-22</td>
<td>A Happy Moment</td>
<td>A picture of Bill Clinton and Boris,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary

The main category of content within r/russia regarding the war is politics and military. The military content category within r/russia is mostly content that is fleshed out in order to make the narrative that the equipment of the Ukrainian military and other allied western countries. One of the example of this is a post within the subreddit titled “Four Reasons Leopard 2s & M1 Abrams Will Bite the Dust in Ukraine”. There is also some content within the subreddit that consists of videos showing the failures of advancing Ukrainian infantry and combat drones that failed their bombing run mission. Users within r/russia tends to constantly reupload Russian MoD report with the intent to keep the narrative that the military is going stable. One of the example of this would be a post by a user within r/russia subreddit titled “More than 600
Ukrainian troops killed in ‘retaliation operation’ – MoD”. The post is a full report posted by a reddit user at r/russia. The report stated that 600+ Ukrainian Troops has been killed by a Russian missile strike in the city of Kramatorsk. The political content category within r/russia enforces on trying to frame the western influencers and politicians.

**Table. 3. The Propagation within r/ukraine**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-Jan-2023</td>
<td>Fetch! Good ruzzian!</td>
<td>Video of a drone dropping an explosive device to a Russian soldier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Jun-23</td>
<td>Music at the time of war</td>
<td>A musical video of a Ukrainian soldier playing a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Apr-23</td>
<td>Drone footage of a ru tank assaulting Ukrainian positions in the Donetsk region. The answer came in quick and hot.</td>
<td>Ukrainian drone disabling an engaging Russian tank from above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-Apr-23</td>
<td>A russian position is attacked and cleared by Ukrainian infantry. Undated</td>
<td>Ukrainian Forces advancing towards a Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-May-23</td>
<td>Putin Is Getting Pummeled With His Own Favorite War Trick</td>
<td>An article about how Putin is experiencing pushback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary

For r/ukraine, the military agenda that is being attempted to deliver is that their military is much more superior, the military’s innocence and that their actions are righteous. For r/russia, the military agenda that is being attempted to deliver would be the insignificance of the Ukrainian military and disabling the statement of the Ukrainian military being righteous. The table above is a military posts extracted from Reddit that indicates the agenda within r/ukraine in terms of military, while the table below indicates the military agenda of r/russia.

**Table. 4. The Propagation within r/russia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-Jan-23</td>
<td>More than 600 Ukrainian troops killed in ‘retaliation operation’ – MoD</td>
<td>The report stated that 600+ Ukrainian Troops has been killed by a Russian missile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-March-2023</td>
<td>Dangerous and irresponsible for US and NATO to push Russia step by step</td>
<td>NATO has accused Russia of breaking arms control commitments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-Jan-23</td>
<td>Truth About Tanks: How NATO Lied Its Way to Disaster in Ukraine</td>
<td>Supplying Ukraine with complicated military systems,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Jan-23</td>
<td>Four Reasons Leopard 2s &amp; M1 Abrams Will Bite the Dust in Ukraine</td>
<td>An article that discuss the flaws of Leopard2s and M1 Abrams and how it was an outdated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The last piece of the puzzle lies within the discussions of both of the subreddits. This was needed in order to determine the changes within public deliberation regarding people’s opinion towards military content and its agenda in r/russia and r/ukraine. In order to identify the effects of the abundance of the military content within both subreddit, three samplings of the posts’ discussion tab from r/russia and r/ukraine will be extracted.

**Induced Misperception**

The combination of the Russian military casualty report’s sampling fits the criteria of Network Propaganda’s Induced Misperception. Although the reports are factual, the presentation of the content is manipulative. For example, the content seems to prioritize the total of casualties from previous months, rather than focusing on the current date of the casualty report. The following is one of the daily reports from the r/ukraine subreddit:

![Figure 3. Misconception within the daily casualty report](Source: r/Ukraine)

This was the case for all Russian casualty report within the r/ukraine subreddit from April to June 2023. The first sampling from the r/ukraine subreddit consists of a combination of the Russian military casualty report from April to June 2023. "The Losses of the Russian Army report shows Russian casualties from soldiers, equipment, and military vehicles.

### Table 5. Sampling post for Misperception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April - June 23</td>
<td>Losses of the Russian army report from April to May 2023</td>
<td>A combination of the daily post of “Losses of the Russian army”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary

The sampling will be taken from the discussion tab of all posts that consist of the Russian casualty report. Users strongly believed that with these losses, Russia will surely lose the war. The following is the keyword provided from the combined 7 daily casualty report post in the discussion tab:
Figure 4. The combined 7 daily casualty report post
Source: Primary

From the presented keywords above, there exists some correlation among all the keywords extracted from the discussion tab. As mentioned, this post fits the criteria of induced misperception due to the discussion at the discussion tab. The misperception from the users originated from the presentation of the daily Russian casualty reports. There are a significant amount of users that stated, believed, and discussed that the Russian military has suffered hundreds of thousands of death in Ukraine, hence why the word Russia and Dead was constantly mentioned within every daily Russian casualty report. The misconception stems from the fact that the Russian casualty report does not specifically state killed in action, but liquidated. The definition of liquidation is quite universal. In a wartime scenario, it can also mean being wounded in action. This also applies to artillery and vehicles which was also consistently mentioned within the discussion tab. The daily Russian casualty reports also breed discussions and take about Ukraine’s counter offensive based the daily report within r/ukraine.

Distraction

The second sample is from the r/ukraine subreddit. This particular post fits the criteria of Network propaganda theory’s Distraction because of its successful attempt to avert some of the attention of the users from the conflict. Also, its attempts to promote the values of the Ukrainian military.

Table. 6. Sampling post for distraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June, 04 - 2023</td>
<td>Music at the time of war</td>
<td>A musical video of a soldier playing a violin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary

The following is the keyword provided from the post’s discussion tab:
This post is seen as a distraction due to its successful attempt to avert the users’ attention away from the conflict. Although some still made a statement referring to the conflict. Most users within the discussion tab discussed their motivated feeling after watching the video, calling the play passionate and beautiful being frequently mentioned on the discussion tab of the post. Some also expressed their determination to keep on supporting the Ukrainian people and its military in its state. A user even discussed a whole different topic that has nothing to do with the video. One user stated that the men at the frontline would out there doing wonderful things if not for the “insignificant man’s expansionist dream” as their description of President Putin. The majority of users expressed their feelings and thoughts on the state of Ukrainian at war, hence the constant mentions of sad and cry.

**Misinformation**

One sampling from the r/russian is a post titled “Ukraine soldier shoots at a women with a child in the car”. This post is a short video of a dashboard camera perspective that shows alleged Ukrainian soldiers gunning down a mother and her child at their car. This video has been floating around the r/russia subreddit to the point where it’s infamous for its constant reupload by users after being deleted by the moderator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May, 03 -2023</td>
<td>Ukraine soldier shoots at a woman with a child in the car</td>
<td>Dashboard camera of a civilian that was eventually attacked.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is the keyword provided from the post’s discussion tab:

![Keyword](image)

There are two sides of the spectrum within the discussion tab of the post. One side of the spectrum believes that the dashboard cam perspective is fake and staged. Meanwhile, the other side of the spectrum believes that the footage is real and legitimate. There are a significant amount of users that believe the footage described the Ukrainian military to be a nazi and have a nazi ideology. This side of the spectrum also, which also the majority users within the discussion tab, described the people that did not believe the footage to be. They also constantly calling the Ukrainian Soldiers a Nazi soldiers, hence why the word Westerners, nazi and Ukraine is a commonly reappearing word in the in the discussion tab. The utilization of the word Westerners was constantly used to ridicule the users that did not believe the footage to be factual, but a fake and a staged one. The reason why this post is in the category of misinformation is because it is due to the obscurity of the footage and the scale of the internet to find any real confirmation. This post was constantly debunked as false information, after being geo
located and was confirmed to be at Russian-controlled Donetsk in Ukraine. However, there are still a significant number of users that believe otherwise.

From the discussion of the three posts above and the effects on public deliberation that comes with it, it is safe to say that the military content that is emerging in a high rate, has influenced the public deliberation accordingly to the three effects of network propaganda, which is Induced Misperception, Misinformation and Distraction. The process of Induced Misperceptions for most posts within both of the subreddits is by its manipulative presentation of the post or its manipulative titling. In the case of what was exampled, it was the presentation of the post that made an impact on the subreddit’s public deliberation, having most of the users believing that hundreds of thousands of Russian troops were killed in action by applying the word liquidation, which caused a significant amount of misperceptions. The process of misinformation from most of the posts is by having an obscure piece of content, and due to the huge scale of the internet, making it difficult to get confirmation of the fact. The process of distraction for most posts is by having a piece of content with little correlation to the main course of the topic in order to avert the attention of the users for a while. In the case of what was exampled, a post of a man playing the violin, with the only correlation of the conflict is him wearing a combat helmet and a Kevlar jacket, managed to distract a significant amount of users.

As for the reason why the collected data from the r/ukraine subreddit is much more significant in terms of quantity rather than the subreddit from the r/russia subreddit, is because the state of the r/ukraine subreddit in general is quite active in terms of content and discussions by users within the discussion tab of each posts. Meanwhile, the subreddit of r/russia has less content because of its restrictions and quarantine status by Reddit. However, each post has a quite significant number of discussions that talks about the related topics of the post above the discussion tab. The quarantine status does not mean that users can’t enter the subreddit or they have to apply permission to enter, but it simply won’t be recommended by other users, unless it was searched specifically within the platform. This piece of findings contradicts with the argument that Reddit has a liberal element embedded within the platform. r/russia has similar but it’s mostly news, political footage and pictures related to the Ukraine-Russia 2022 conflict. However, within the category of military content within r/ukraine, there is the same amount of gore and vulgar content as r/russia related to the Ukraine-Russia 2022 conflict, but r/ukraine was untouched by Reddit’s authority.

CONCLUSION

The changes of public deliberation was strictly based on Induced Misperception, Distraction and Misinformation. There are a significant number of discussions, with the majority of the users ended up buying the idea that the Ukrainian military is far more advanced than Russia’s military. In terms of r/russia, the users are on board the with the idea that the Ukrainian’s cause is a facade. Other than that, it also changes the views of the users within both subreddit. For example, the users are believing that is at the advantage of the war because of the ongoing (as of 2023) daily Russian casualty report in r/Ukraine, in which also gain insight towards the conflict. This would apply to both of the subreddits in question. During the process of the analysis, it was also discovered that there has been a biased activity that involves Reddit itself. r/russia being restricted and quarantined, hence why there was a very few data extracted on
r/russia compared to r/ukraine. Meanwhile, r/urkaine was open to access for anyone while having similar content to r/Russia.

REFERENCES


