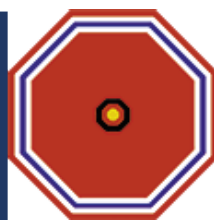


# 360-Degree Approach to Countering Disinformation

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# Resilience Unveiled: Shaping the Future of Central Europe

Ed. by Lucie Tungul



## Chapter 5

### The 360-Degree Approach Unveiled: A Multi-Faceted Strategy Against Disinformation Threats

Zdeněk Rod

**Abstract:** Czechia has grappled with a surge in disinformation, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, hindering political processes. The adept actions of online disinformation spreaders and prolonged governmental inaction contribute to the challenge. While banning disinformation platforms is considered, it risks being perceived as state censorship, and education efforts face limitations, especially among working adults. Recognizing the emotional nature of individuals, the text advocates an innovative 360-degree approach that includes education, critical thinking, fact-checking, behavioural nudging, and strategic communication. This approach is holistic and universal and is applicable across the EU member states.

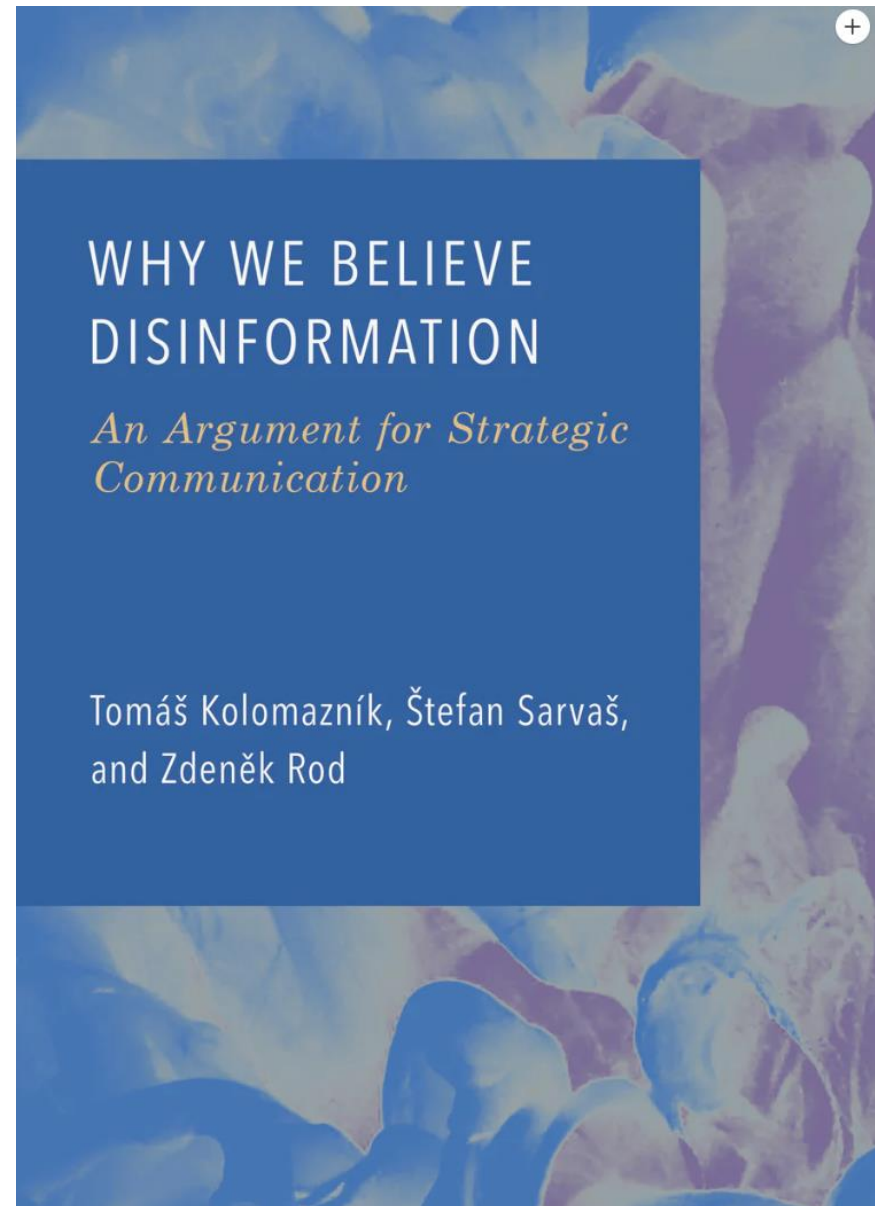
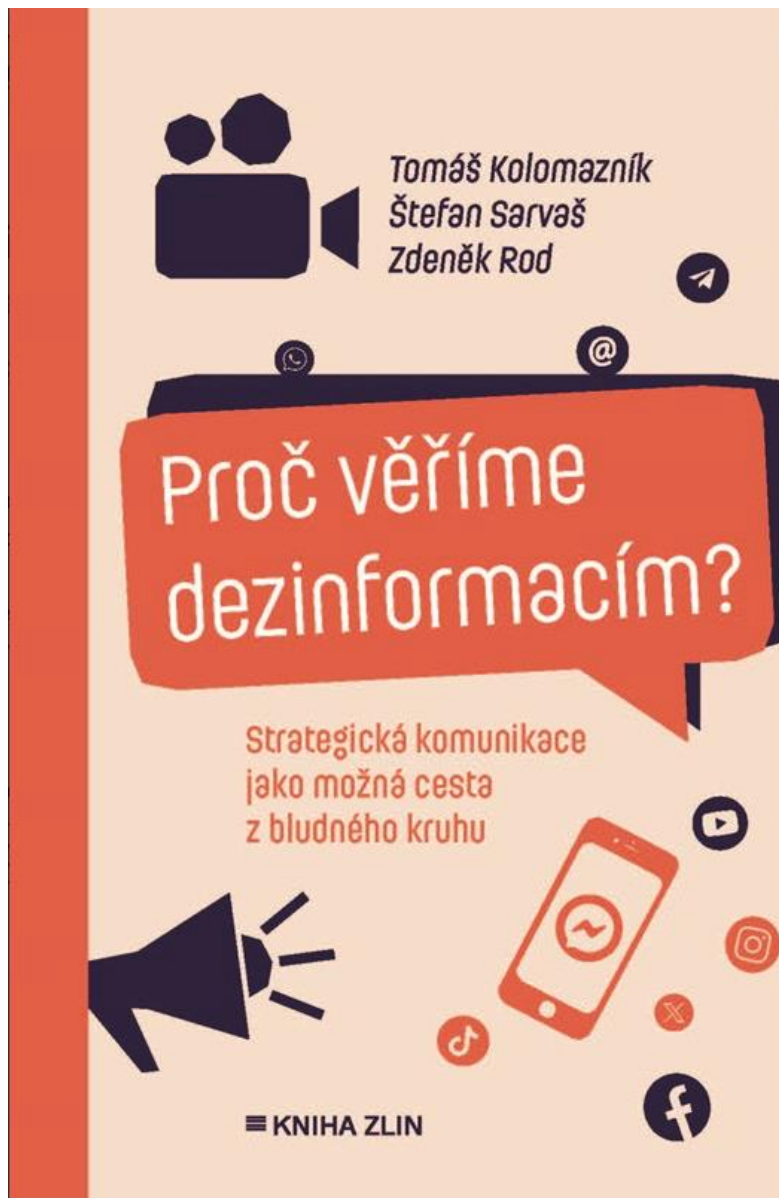
**Keywords:** disinformation, strategic communication, fact-checking, education, behavioural nudging, critical thinking, disinformation monitoring

#### Introduction

The European Union (EU) and its member states have been unsuccessfully grappling with the impact of disinformation, particularly exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, for a long time, aiming to disrupt state establishments and democratic values and undermine people's trust in state institutions, politics or the media. Disinformation has been around for a long time. Massive disinformation campaigns were conducted, for example, during the Cold War. In the recent past, European observers could have noticed what kind of dangerous effect the impact of disinformation has based on the US presidential race between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, where disinformation campaigns deeply polarised Republican and Democratic voters, or how Russia sought to reshape public meaning in 2014 during the illegal annexation of Crimea.

The current disinformation campaigns mostly lack any logical coherence. Disinformers often spread false narratives justifying the brutal Russian war in Ukraine or anti-European Union narratives about the "Brussels dictate". Another series of disinformation narratives is expected before the 2024 European Parliament elections. When zooming in on Czech conditions, it is apparent that Czechia is currently being beset by various disinformation campaigns aimed to harm the reputation of Ukrainian

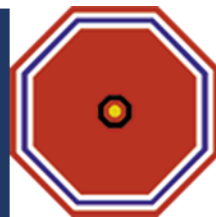




# Why Do We Need New Approach to Counter Disinformation?

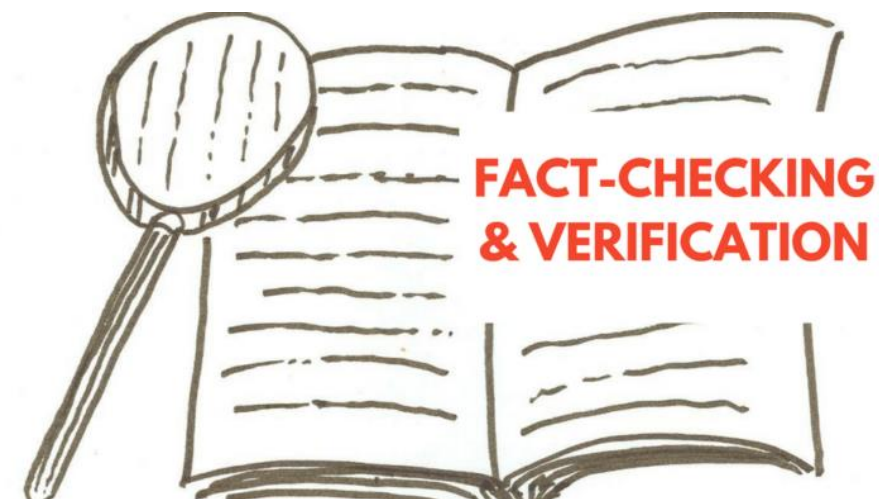
- Rapid technological development, globalization of communication, ubiquitous Internet, and the power of social media platforms have resulted in a situation where disinformation messages can instantly target thousands of respondents' smartphones.
- Fact-checking and rationally tackling disinformation is only sometimes efficient as humans are not generally rational as discussed below in the text.
- Nowadays, due to the variety of disinformation, governments cannot rely on only one or two approaches to counter disinformation.
- **The 360-degree Approach combines several traditional and novel approaches, which can be used in short—and long-term campaigns to counter malicious disinformation.**
  - It refers to a comprehensive perspective on countering disinformation. It focuses on education, critical thinking and fact-checking, behavioural nudging, or technologies to detect deep-fake videos. It also advocates for strategic communication, which targets specific audience segments, focusing on those more amenable to changing their views.

**Fig. 1: Design of the 360-Degree Approach to Counter Disinformation**



# Fact-Checking

- **Despite the fact that fact-checking is a key element to counter disinformation, it also faces several limitations:**
  - Fact-checking requires a great deal of time.
  - Analysts have to explain and debunk the false narratives precisely.
  - Fact-checking assumes people are rational, but human behaviour is often non-conscious and not purely rational.
    - Rejecting correct information consequently strengthens their so-called belief bias.



# Critical Thinking

- Relying on critical thinking also poses several shortcomings:
  - People do not think critically most of the day.
  - Adults do not sit at school desks like students to deepen their critical thinking on a daily basis.
  - Critical thinking requires a deep focus, which people often lack in a wave of permanent social media distractions..

**SYSTEM 1**  
Intuition & instinct



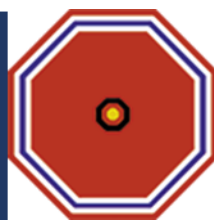
Unconscious  
Fast  
Associative  
Automatic pilot



**SYSTEM 2**  
Rational thinking



Takes effort  
Slow  
Logical  
Lazy  
Indecisive



# Strategic Communication

- Strategic communication is another supporting tool that can help governments and state institutions counter disinformation narratives. Strategic communication can help citizens to navigate a confusing jumble of various information platforms.

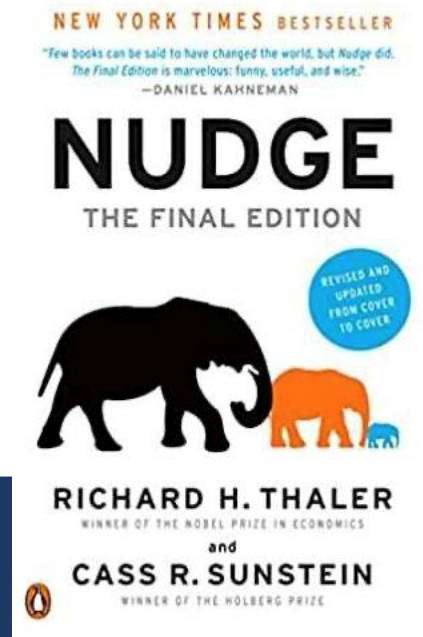
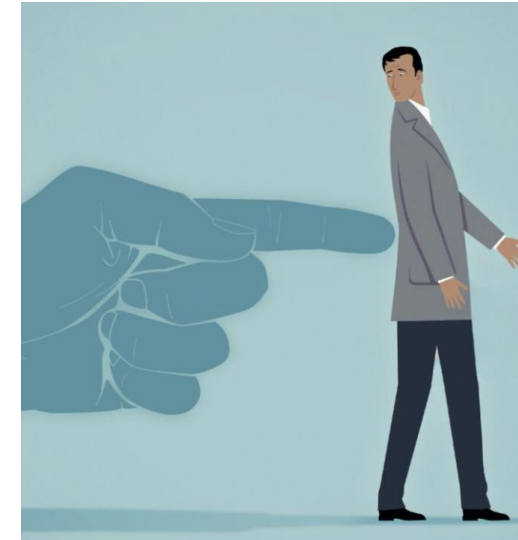
**Fig. 2: Strategic Communication in a Nutshell**





# Behavioural Nudging

- The behavioural approach combines natural language processing, social listening tools, behavioural science, and neuroscience.
- **Traditional approaches:**
  - “Getting vaccinated against Covid-19 can lower your risk of getting and spreading the virus that causes Covid-19. Vaccines can also help prevent serious illness and death. All steps have been taken to ensure that vaccines are safe and effective for people aged five years and older”.
- **The behavioural approach:**
  - “By getting vaccinated, you protect not only yourself, but also your loved ones”.
- **In the second example, being very careful when drawing up slogans is essential. A communication message such as:**
  - “If you don’t get vaccinated, you can die”, can create blowback and ignorance.



# Technological Instruments

- Deep-fake videos have become a nightmare for disinformation analysts.
- Technological progress, including the integration of AI, offers a dual role in combating deepfakes, serving as both the catalyst for their emergence and a potential solution. Ongoing global research aims to develop innovative technologies capable of detecting manipulated media.
- Leading tech companies such as Intel are at the forefront, leveraging AI to create tools like FakeCatcher.
- FakeCatcher claims a 96% accuracy rate in identifying fake videos by analysing human blood flow in up to 72 different detection streams.



**intel**

## FakeCatcher

the world's first real-time deepfake detector

Pioneered by Intel, the FakeCatcher deepfake detector analyzes "blood flow" in video pixels to determine a video's authenticity in milliseconds.

**What is a deepfake?**

Deepfakes are synthetic videos, images, or audio clips where the actor or the action of the actor is not real.

FakeCatcher can run up to **72** concurrent real-time deepfake detection streams on 3rd Gen Intel® Xeon® processors.

**96%** FakeCatcher's accuracy for deepfake detection

INFO

# Monitoring of the Disinformation Landscape

- Finding new disinformation platforms and discovering the latest disinformation narratives is crucial to effectively utilise all the elements of the 360-degree approach discussed above.
- There are several ways to analyse disinformation:
  - One way is an old-school technique – manual content analysis.
  - Or the analyst can enjoy the advantages of technologies and AI and can scrap social media data. Scraping tools filter and automatically detect potential disinformation.
    - Those tools also have the potential to analyse thousands of outcomes a day, something that humans could never do.
    - This kind of tool is offered, for example, by the Slovak-based firm Gerulata Technologies, which provides various tools to analyse big data.

# Conclusion

- **The surge in disinformation calls for an urgent and innovative response.**
- **The 360-degree approach, considering the limitations of isolated strategies, proposes a holistic strategy incorporating fact-checking, critical thinking, strategic communication, behavioural nudging, technological tools, and continuous monitoring.**
- **This comprehensive strategy, adaptable for short and long-term campaigns, is designed to counter existing disinformation and future challenges.**
- **Emphasizing a proactive stance, it navigates the intricate landscape of information warfare by addressing human irrationality, cognitive biases, and the rapid spread of disinformation.**

# Recommendations

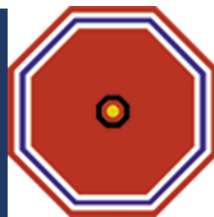
- **Governments ought to embrace a comprehensive 360-degree approach to combat disinformation effectively.**
- **In times of relative calm, when a widespread disinformation onslaught does not besiege the state, it is advisable to implement all facets of the approach concurrently over the long term.**
- **During crises, it is imperative to deploy tools that can be immediately activated, such as strategic communication or behavioural nudging.**



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

In the case of any questions do not  
hesitate to contact me via email:

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