DRAFT OUTLINE: Disinformation for Dummies? Disinformation Primer

I. **Intro:** Why does this matter? The impact that disinformation can have on prospects for democratic development. (Elections, Human Rights, Civic Engagement, Anti-Corruption)
II. **Understanding The Problem** focus on disinformation online and its spread into public discourse (online / offline)

1. Information Disorder: **Defining** the Problem
    - Taxonomy: Disinformation, Misinformation, Mal-information (reference: Information Disorder Wardle, Housseini Information Disorder: The Essential Glossary
    - How Russian Disinformation Works / the four D's (dismiss, distort, distract, dismay). The origins of Dezinformatsiya "Operation Infektion" / And the globalization of disinformation tactics
    - Hate speech (IFES report, Brookings OpenMic, HIIG, Peace Tech Labs)
    - Prevalence of disinformation (Freedom on the Net 2017)
    - Who spreads disinformation / manipulates social media / What are the vectors of disinformation? (reference: Oxford Internet Institute
    - What kinds of governments manipulate social media (democratic vs. non-democratic) (reference: V-DEM)

2. How disinformation works: **Technological** Mechanics of Disinformation
    - What are Trolls, Bots, Content Farms, Troll Armies, Sock Puppets?
    - What is Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior?
    - How do they amplify disinformation / game the system?
    - What are Algorithms?
    - How disinformation spreads on different platforms (websites, open social media platforms -- Facebook, Twitter, YouTube versus closed social media platforms -- WhatsApp, Telegram)

3. **Social Factors** Contributing to Disinformation
    - Psychology of disinformation: motivated reasoning, confirmation bias, filter bubbles (references: MIT Study Demand for Deceit, Woolley and Joseff; Demand Side of Disinformation, Disinformation Crisis and Erosion of Truth, see JSM handout)
    - Societal factors contributing to disinformation: polarization in society, breakdown of trust in society, breakdown of democracy, lack of common facts

4. **Case studies**
    a. What does disinformation look like in a highly connectected country. Use 2016 Philippines, considered "ground zero" for social media manipulation (reference: coverage of disinformation campaigns by Rappler)
    b. What does disinformation look like from foregin influence
    c. What does disinformation look like in a low-connected environment -- use Nigeria 2018 -- Northern Nigeria's "soldiers of word"

d. Other case study examples can be found in the OII Report "The Global Disinformation Order: 2019 Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation"

5. **Mapping and Measurement**: How do we understand the disinformation ecosystem? Monitor disinformation messages and hate speech? Track the flow of disinformation.
   - Network Analysis: Diffusion models based on epidemiological models (reference: interview with Graphika, Atlantic Council DFR Labs)
   - Media - Social media monitoring / message monitoring (Moonshot CVE, MITRE, Notre Dame)
   - Social listening (Amy Malessa, Adam Kaplan / OTI, Bakamo Media)

II. Emerging Solutions: *Note that this is a new area and approaches are currently all experimental and evolving as new research emerges*

1. Where the solutions are coming from (References: Rand Corporation -- Truth Decay)
   - Countering Violent Extremism Online approaches
   - Countering Hate Speech (Peace Tech Labs: Hate Speech Lexicons)
   - National Security/Foreign interference
   - Journalism
   - Academia
   - Strategic Communications / Political Communications / Political Campaigns

2. What **civil society and media** is doing (Reference: resource list from Project on Computational Propaganda, ComProp Navigator)
   a. Supply side solutions
      - Fact checking approaches (Interviews: Meedan, PopUp Newsroom, ICFJ) (References: Journal of Political Communication, other recent studies)
      - Redirect Method (Interview: Moonshot CVE, Notre Dame)
      - Legal and policy approaches (Interview: ICNL)
      - Messaging campaigns: Information legions (Interviews: Lithuanian Elves/Debunk.eu, Georgian Information Legion); A/B testing; coordinated counter-messaging; targeting of audiences
      - OSINT (Interviews: Bellingcat, DFR Labs); Troll hunters;
      - Local journalism support (Internews, IREX)
      - Transparency in journalism (Internews, Whitelist project)
      - Advertiser outreach (IREX)
   b. Demand side solutions
      - Media literacy, education and training (interview: IREX) (reference: Rand Corporation: Truth Decay/Fighting Disinformation, IREX' Learn to Discern)
      - Digital literacy / digital security (reference: ComProp Navigator)

3. What are **governments** doing?

Commented [1]: does this include message testing, too, like A/B testing?

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Commented [4]: This seems to bring up a an epistemological question for me. Is an engagement supply side if it acts a supply or if it seeks to influence the supply? Arguably message testing, campaigns, targeting & redirect, debunk and fact checking efforts are all actually seeking to influence the demand side of the equation and really don't have the same kind of direct effect on supply as regulation, content moderation, algorithm tweaking, platform accountability and advertiser outreach.

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Commented [6]: You could also include some elections-focused programming examples:
(1) Citizen election monitoring that focuses on assessing and exposing disinformation during election campaigns -- See Georgia example here: https://gndem.org/stories/isfed-monitors-social-media-around-2018-presidential-election/

(2) incorporating disinformation assessment within international election observation missions (OSCE/ODIHR, IRI, and NDI are doing more of this now)

(3) Support advocacy targeting parties, government, and tech/platforms to improve the information environment

(4) Facilitate political party codes of conduct to discourage their engagement in disinformation efforts around elections

- Legal and regulatory measures (are these good or bad/rights-respecting approaches?)
    - Examples, nigeria, singapore, draft law in Ukraine, Germany's Net ZD,
- Internet shutdowns (Sri Lanka, India)
- Government Strategic Communications (reference: EU vs. Disinfo)
- Best practices, whole-of-government approaches (like trainings for government officials in Finland, Sweden, media literacy policy in Baltic states/Scandanvaian countries)

4. What are **social media platforms** doing?
    - Fact Checking
    - Content Moderation
    - Algorithmic accountability
    - Labeling of sources
    - By platform:
        - Twitter: More transparency, Shutting down certain fake accounts, Local coordination with civil society groups, Increasing content monitoring
        - FB: Hiring more people to monitor content, Fact-checking and verification tools, Establishing contact points for dangerous content, Shutting down certain fake accounts,
    - What are the platforms not doing that they could be doing more of? Specifically in developing countries?
    - Funding efforts – mostly in US and developed countries. Who are the platform contacts in your country?
    - What is platform accountability?

What's on the horizon: Future/Under-examined threats

Explain that disinformation tactics are always changing and adapting to remain effective; as responses are evolving and are becoming more sophisticated

What are the latest tactics (i.e. in Ukraine, buying of real peoples' social media accounts)

What are the future threats

- Deep fakes
- Exploitation of news deserts
- Alternative media systems (gaming sites, online fora/message boards, conspiracy news sites like RT, Sputnik, and 21stcenturywire) (Reference: Info Disorder: Year in Review
- State actors exerting "narrative control" (Reference: Freedom House report on China)
- Building infrastructure and controlling content delivery systems (i.e., China)

Next Steps/Where to Start?

- Taking stock of the information environment in your country:
    - (1) What's the nature of media and social media? Where do different people get their info? Rate of mobile and internet penetration? State and nature of media?
    - (2) What are the biggest threats/vulnerabilities for disinfo? Likely disinfo themes, aims, and main sources of disinfo? Who are must vulnerable?
- Rack and stack of the CSO/media disinfo initiatives in your country/region

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- What stakeholders should you include in your program (data scientists, artists, influencers, local think tanks)
- Engaging government
- Who to engage with internationally (civil society, media, social media platforms, internet governance forums, other donors, like the FCO)

Key References / Guides:
Disinformation and Elections:
NDI Disinformation and Electoral Integrity:
IFES Social Media, Disinformation and Electoral Integrity
Harvard Kennedy School/Misinformation Review
First Draft News