



INFORMATION AS AN ELEMENT OF NATIONAL POWER

BY

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INTRODUCTION



HOW FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION UNDERMINE NATIONAL POWER





▪ Fake News

▪ Misinformation

▪ National Power



DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS (CONT)

Fake News

- Fake news is false or misleading information presented as news. It often has the aim of damaging the reputation of a person or entity, among other dangers.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS (CONT)



- Misinformation as Information that is false but not created with the intention of causing harm, while disinformation is Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country



DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS (CONT)

National Power

- The sum of all resources available to a nation in the pursuit of national objectives. It goes further to state that National Power stems from various elements, also called instruments or attributes.



DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS (CONT)



- ❖ These may be put into two groups based on their applicability and origin - "natural" and "social".
- ❖ Natural includes;
 - ✓ Geography.
 - ✓ Resources.
 - ✓ Population.
- ❖ Social deals with;
 - ✓ Economy.
 - ✓ Politics.
 - ✓ Military.
 - ✓ Psychology.
 - ✓ Information.



INTRODUCTION (CONT)



❖ Federal Government was ahead of others in taking the issues of fake news and misinformation seriously, especially against the background of the potential damage it can do to the polity and the effect it can have on the image of a country in the comity of nations.





FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP FAKE NEWS



- ❖ The first step was to bring the issues to the front burner of national discourse.
- ❖ FG have achieved that, we have unfortunately not succeeded in curbing the dangers they pose.
- ❖ I have been calling national attention to the dangers posed by fake news and misinformation since 2017.



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP FAKE NEWS (CONT)

❖ Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, organized an extraordinary session of the National Council on Information on this issue in Jos, Plateau State, on July 21st 2017.





FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP FAKE NEWS (CONT)

- ❖ The ministry used every available platform to highlight the dangers posed by fake news and misinformation - as well as hate speech.
- ❖ A followed up with a National Campaign against Fake News and Misinformation, which we launched on July 11th, 2018.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP FAKE NEWS (CONT)

- ❖ "There is an epidemic sweeping the world. If left unchecked, it could be worse than all the plagues that the world has recorded put together.
- ❖ It is a threat to democracy.
- ❖ It is the epidemic of fake news (and misinformation).



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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP FAKE NEWS (CONT)

❖ Various social media platforms like Facebook and Google in order to work with them to curtail the spread of fake news and misinformation.





FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION

- ❖ The ministry embarked on the reform of the broadcast industry, to stop misinformation and hate speech by the nation's broadcast stations.
- ❖ The ministry also increased the fine for hate speech from N500,000 to N5 million - an action we believe will be a strong deterrent.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)



Terrorism



Bandit



Kidnapping



Armed Robbery

Source: www.amnesty.org

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)

❖ In 2018, the British Broadcasting Corporation reported that fake news circulating on social media is fueling the farmers/herdsmen crises in Nigeria.



British Broadcasting Corporation

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)

- ❖ “Fake pictures circulating on social media, which users are falsely claiming depict inter-communal violence, are inflaming already high tensions in Nigeria.”
- ❖ BBC specifically made reference to images circulating on social media which the originators purportedly claimed were from the violence in Jos, Plateau.





FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)

- ❖ A gruesome image of a woman face down in a pool of blood with a gaping shoulder wound is purported to be from the recent attacks, but that same image first appeared on the internet in 2011 in a story about domestic violence in Nigeria.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)

- ❖ Another image appears to show half a dozen people that were killed in the attacks.
- ❖ On closer inspection, it becomes clear that the picture was not taken in Nigeria, and is actually the scene of a 2015 traffic accident in the Dominican Republic.



Dominican Republic Traffic Accident

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)

- ❖ Nigeria has joined the list of countries certified to have eradicated polio.
- ❖ The battle to eradicate the crippling disease was exacerbated for decades by the rumors promoted in certain circles in Nigeria that polio vaccines were aimed at depopulating Nigerians.



Polio Victim



Polio Vaccines

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)

❖ In 2016, an entertainment entrepreneur published a story on his Social Media handle that five students of the College of Education in Gidan Waya, Kaduna State, were slaughtered by Fulani herdsmen.



College of Education in GidanWaya,
Kaduna State

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)

❖ In the wake of the 2019 xenophobic attacks against Africans in South Africa, some very disturbing videos emerged on the social media purported to be scenes of the violence against Nigerians in South Africa.



Xenophobic Attacks



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)

❖ The videos were discovered to be of some accidents in India and Tanzania, but of course some irate Nigerian youths have already been incited to the point of setting ablaze some business premises connected to South Africa.



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)

❖ The world confronts the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the biggest challenges to the national response is the epidemic of fake news and misinformation, which some experts now refer to as “disinfodemic”.



Covid-19 Pandemic

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO STOP MISINFORMATION (CONT)

❖ Even now that there are vaccines against Covid-19, the world is facing vaccine hesitancy, no thanks to misinformation about the vaccines.



Covid-19 Vaccines

IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION

- ❖ Non-state actors routinely deploy misinformation as a weapon against our military.
- ❖ In their unbridled weaponization of information or misinformation the Boko Haram elements have been using doctored videos in their attempt to dampen the morale of our valiant troops.



Boko Haram Terrorists



IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION (CONT)

- ❖ A section of our mainstream media as well as the social media have been helping the terrorists to propagate their propaganda, anchored on misinformation.
- ❖ Often, you read about spurious attacks against our troops and mind boggling casualties resulting from it in the media, yet such stories are rarely verified or confirmed from the military before they are published.

IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION (CONT)

❖ The military was forced to issue a stern warning to those publishing, on the social media, the picture of soldiers who have paid the supreme sacrifice in defence of our nation.



Nigerian Military



COUNTERING NEGATIVE NARRATIVES

- ❖ Countering negative narratives during military and security operations requires enormous capacity building and equipment.
- ❖ In addition to sensitizing Nigerians on the dangers posed by fake news and misinformation.
- ❖ The ministry also embarked on two other campaigns to encourage Nigerians to provide much-needed information to the security agencies. **'If you see something, say something'** is the tagline of this campaign.

COUNTERING NEGATIVE NARRATIVES (CONT)

❖ In 2016, we took over 25 journalists, as well as Bring Back Our Girls Campaigners, to Yola where we exposed them to firsthand knowledge on the efforts of the military in their search for the Chibok girls.



Bring Back Our Girls Campaigners



COUNTERING NEGATIVE NARRATIVES (CONT)

❖ In December 2015, the ministry had also taken over 30 journalists to Maiduguri, Bama, Konduga and Kaure to expose them to the heroic efforts of our military in liberating the areas occupied by Boko Haram, as well as the level of carnage and havoc caused by the terrorists.



CONCLUSION



Grandmaster Garry Kasparov

“The point of modern propaganda isn't only to misinform or push an agenda. It is to exhaust your critical thinking, to annihilate truth.”

Thank You!

