

Ideological Threats In The Media Space: Concept, Essence, And Modern Manifestations

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Abstract: The rapid development of digital communication technologies has transformed the media space into one of the most influential environments for shaping public consciousness, political views, cultural values, and social behavior. Alongside its constructive functions, the modern media space has become a field where ideological threats are produced, disseminated, adapted, and legitimized through various forms of information influence. These threats are not limited to open propaganda; they also appear through disinformation, manipulation, value distortion, extremist narratives, hate speech, algorithmic influence, pseudo-cultural content, and symbolic attacks on national identity. The purpose of this article is to analyze the concept, essence, and modern manifestations of ideological threats in the media space within the framework of contemporary information society. The study is based on descriptive, analytical, comparative, and content-oriented approaches. The article argues that ideological threats in the media space should be understood as a complex system of information-psychological, cultural, political, and communicative influences aimed at weakening social cohesion, distorting values, manipulating public opinion, and reducing ideological immunity. The results show that the most dangerous feature of modern ideological threats is their hybrid nature: they combine entertainment, emotional persuasion, visual symbolism, artificial amplification, and technological personalization. The article concludes that strengthening media literacy, critical thinking, national cultural identity, ethical journalism, and institutional responsibility is essential for protecting society from destructive ideological influence.

Keywords: Media space, ideological threat, information manipulation, disinformation, media literacy, ideological immunity, digital communication, social networks, propaganda, national values.

Introduction: In the twenty-first century, the media space has become not only a channel of communication but also a powerful social environment in which meanings, values, identities, and ideological positions are constructed. Traditional mass media, internet platforms, social networks, video-hosting services, messengers, blogs, podcasts, and artificial intelligence-based communication tools have created a global information field where individuals receive, interpret, and reproduce knowledge about society, politics, culture, morality, and identity. This process has expanded access to information and created new opportunities for education, civic participation, intercultural dialogue, and social development. However, the same media environment has also generated new risks connected with ideological

influence, manipulation, disinformation, radicalization, and the weakening of cultural and moral foundations.

The relevance of studying ideological threats in the media space is determined by the growing dependence of individuals and societies on digital information flows. UNESCO emphasizes that media and information literacy is necessary for people to engage critically with information, navigate the digital environment safely, and counter disinformation. This means that ideological security today is directly connected with the ability of citizens, especially young people, to understand how media content is created, distributed, framed, and used for influence. The media space is no longer a neutral field of information exchange; it is a competitive arena where various political, cultural, commercial, and ideological actors attempt to shape

public consciousness.

The concept of ideological threat refers to destructive influences that aim to alter, weaken, replace, or destabilize the system of values, beliefs, social orientations, and national identity of individuals or communities. In the media space, such threats are often hidden behind attractive images, emotionally powerful stories, entertainment formats, viral trends, memes, pseudo-expert opinions, and algorithmically promoted content. Their danger lies in the fact that they may not appear as direct ideological pressure. Instead, they can gradually influence attitudes toward family, education, statehood, morality, religion, culture, history, language, and civic responsibility.

Modern ideological threats differ from traditional propaganda in their flexibility and technological sophistication. In the past, ideological influence was often centralized and openly connected with political institutions or mass media organizations. Today, it may be decentralized, anonymous, personalized, and interactive. Social media platforms allow destructive narratives to spread rapidly through user participation, emotional reactions, reposts, comments, and recommendation algorithms. The European Commission's strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation, for example, focuses on platform transparency, political advertising, fact-checking, and researcher access, which shows that disinformation has become a systemic problem of digital governance. Therefore, the study of ideological threats in the media space is important not only for journalism and communication studies but also for pedagogy, sociology, psychology, political science, cultural studies, and national security studies. The present article aims to reveal the concept and essence of ideological threats in the media space and to analyze their modern manifestations in the conditions of digital society.

The research was conducted using a qualitative analytical approach. The methodological basis of the study consists of descriptive analysis, comparative analysis, conceptual interpretation, and elements of media content analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to clarify the meaning of the concepts "media space," "ideological threat," "information influence," and "ideological immunity." Comparative analysis made it possible to distinguish traditional forms of ideological pressure from modern digital forms of manipulation. Conceptual interpretation was applied to reveal the socio-cultural, psychological, and communicative essence of ideological threats. Media content analysis was used in a general theoretical sense to identify typical forms of destructive ideological influence in contemporary digital communication.

The research relies on scientific literature related to media theory, propaganda studies, communication theory, cultural security, and media literacy. The works of M. McLuhan, M. Castells, J. Habermas, D. McQuail, E. Bernays, J. Ellul, and other scholars were used to understand the social power of media and communication systems. In addition, contemporary documents and analytical materials of international organizations were considered, particularly UNESCO's works on media and information literacy and digital platform governance, as well as European approaches to combating disinformation. UNESCO's guidelines on digital platform governance emphasize the need to protect freedom of expression while addressing misinformation, hate speech, and conspiracy theories through a multistakeholder approach. (ЮНЕСКО)

The article does not present quantitative survey data, because its main objective is theoretical and analytical. However, the study generalizes observable tendencies in modern media practice and interprets them through the lens of ideological influence. The analysis focuses on the nature of threats rather than on one specific country, platform, or media organization. This allows the article to formulate a broader classification of contemporary ideological threats and explain their mechanisms of influence.

Results

The analysis shows that ideological threats in the media space have a multidimensional nature. They operate at the intersection of information, psychology, culture, politics, technology, and social communication. Their primary purpose is not always to convince people openly. In many cases, they aim to create confusion, weaken trust, produce cynicism, fragment society, normalize destructive values, and make individuals emotionally dependent on manipulative content. As NATO's approach to information threats notes, disinformation can undermine people's trust in governments and public institutions, which confirms the social destabilizing capacity of such threats.

The first important result of the analysis is that ideological threats in the media space are increasingly indirect. They are embedded into ordinary media consumption and appear in forms that are attractive, entertaining, humorous, emotional, or seemingly educational. A video, meme, short post, influencer message, fictional story, song, game, or visual trend may carry ideological meanings that influence the audience's understanding of social norms and values. This indirectness makes ideological influence more difficult to recognize, especially among young users who consume information quickly and emotionally.

The second result is that modern ideological threats are

strongly connected with disinformation and manipulation. Disinformation does not merely provide false information; it creates an alternative interpretive framework in which truth becomes uncertain and emotional reaction becomes more important than evidence. In such conditions, individuals may lose the ability to distinguish between fact, opinion, rumor, satire, propaganda, and manipulation. This weakens rational public dialogue and creates favorable conditions for ideological influence. UNESCO's materials on media and information literacy stress the importance of distinguishing truthful information from fake content and critically analyzing information flows.

The third result is that ideological threats often target identity. In the media space, identity is shaped through language, history, memory, religion, moral ideals, cultural symbols, and collective belonging. Destructive content may ridicule national traditions, distort historical memory, promote nihilism, present foreign destructive models as universal standards, or create opposition between generations. This does not mean that all external cultural influence is dangerous. Intercultural dialogue is a natural and useful part of globalization. The threat appears when cultural influence becomes manipulative, one-sided, aggressive, and aimed at weakening the self-awareness of society.

The fourth result is that the algorithmic structure of digital platforms intensifies ideological influence. Recommendation systems promote content according to user behavior, emotional engagement, and attention patterns. As a result, users may enter information bubbles where they repeatedly encounter similar views, narratives, and emotional frames. This repetition strengthens confirmation bias and reduces openness to alternative perspectives. Ideological threats become especially effective when they are adapted to the psychological profile, interests, fears, and frustrations of specific audiences.

The fifth result is that modern ideological threats are hybrid. They combine political propaganda, commercial persuasion, cultural influence, psychological pressure, technological amplification, and social imitation. For example, a destructive narrative may be initiated by an organized actor, spread by automated accounts, repeated by influencers, transformed into memes, discussed in comment sections, and then accepted as public opinion. NATO's 2024 approach to countering information threats also reflects the need for coherent responses to information threats and challenges, indicating that such threats have become complex and organized.

The sixth result is that ideological threats are especially dangerous for young people because youth identity is still developing. Young users are often active in digital communication, emotionally responsive to visual content, and sensitive to peer approval. If media education and critical thinking are insufficient, young people may accept destructive ideas as fashionable, progressive, rebellious, or entertaining. In this sense, ideological threats in the media space are not only political problems but also educational and pedagogical problems.

The concept of ideological threat in the media space should be understood through the relationship between information and value. Information becomes ideologically significant when it influences a person's worldview, moral orientation, social behavior, and understanding of identity. Not every incorrect statement is an ideological threat, and not every critical opinion is destructive. A democratic and intellectually healthy society needs criticism, debate, alternative interpretations, and pluralism. However, ideological threat emerges when media influence intentionally or systematically promotes destructive, manipulative, extremist, hateful, socially fragmenting, or culturally nihilistic ideas.

The essence of ideological threats lies in their ability to reshape consciousness without direct coercion. In this regard, media space functions as a symbolic environment. It produces images of success, models of behavior, heroes and antiheroes, acceptable and unacceptable opinions, emotional reactions, and social norms. When this symbolic environment is dominated by manipulative narratives, individuals may internalize values that contradict social harmony, national interests, moral responsibility, and civic culture. This process is gradual and often invisible.

One of the most widespread modern manifestations of ideological threat is disinformation. Disinformation is especially dangerous because it attacks not only knowledge but also trust. When people are constantly exposed to contradictory and emotionally charged information, they may begin to believe that truth does not exist or that all information is equally manipulative. This produces social apathy and cynicism. A person who no longer trusts any institution, expert, teacher, journalist, or official source becomes vulnerable to conspiracy thinking and radical narratives.

Another manifestation is information manipulation. Unlike simple falsehood, manipulation may use partially true facts, selective evidence, emotional framing, misleading headlines, visual exaggeration, and repetition. The manipulative message is designed not to inform but to guide perception. It may create fear,

anger, resentment, shame, or superiority. Emotional manipulation is powerful because people often share content that provokes strong feelings before they verify its accuracy. In this sense, the speed of digital communication becomes a weapon of ideological influence.

A further manifestation is the spread of extremist and radical ideas. The media space can provide radical groups with tools for recruitment, identity construction, enemy creation, and emotional mobilization. Such content may not always begin with direct calls to violence. It may first create a narrative of victimhood, injustice, humiliation, or moral superiority. Gradually, the audience is encouraged to accept intolerance, hatred, and rejection of dialogue. This shows that ideological radicalization in the media space is often a process rather than a single act.

Hate speech is also a significant ideological threat. It divides society into hostile categories and presents certain groups as dangerous, inferior, alien, or morally unacceptable. In the digital environment, hate speech spreads quickly because it is emotionally provocative and easily adapted to memes, comments, videos, and slogans. UNESCO's platform governance guidelines directly connect the challenge of misinformation with hate speech and conspiracy theories, emphasizing the need for responsible digital governance.

Another modern form is the distortion of historical memory. Media narratives may reinterpret historical events in a biased way, deny cultural achievements, ridicule national heroes, or create a sense of inferiority toward one's own heritage. Historical memory is a foundation of collective identity. Therefore, systematic attacks on history can weaken intergenerational continuity and reduce the moral stability of society. This is particularly important for countries where national development is closely connected with cultural revival, education, and historical self-awareness.

The commercialization of attention also creates ideological risks. Digital platforms compete for user engagement, and emotionally extreme or controversial content often receives more visibility than balanced analysis. As a result, destructive ideas may spread not because they are intellectually strong but because they are algorithmically attractive. The ideological danger here is connected with the economy of attention: users are not only informed but also emotionally programmed through repeated exposure to sensational content.

Influencer culture has introduced another dimension of ideological influence. Many users, especially young people, trust bloggers and online personalities more

than traditional institutions. Influencers may shape lifestyle, moral norms, political attitudes, consumer behavior, and cultural preferences. This influence is not always negative, but it becomes dangerous when popularity replaces responsibility and when emotional authority replaces knowledge. Reports about the need for fact-checking training among content creators show that influencer communication has become a serious factor in the spread of misinformation and public opinion formation.

Artificial intelligence and synthetic media have further complicated the problem. Deepfakes, automated texts, fake accounts, bot networks, and artificially generated images can create convincing but false realities. These tools allow ideological actors to produce content quickly, cheaply, and at scale. The user may not know whether a video, statement, photo, or profile is authentic. This undermines the traditional basis of trust in visual evidence. In the future, ideological threats may become even more personalized, because artificial intelligence can generate messages adapted to individual psychological characteristics.

The main protective mechanism against ideological threats is ideological immunity. Ideological immunity does not mean isolation from the world or rejection of all foreign information. It means the ability to understand, evaluate, compare, and critically interpret information while preserving moral stability, national identity, civic responsibility, and respect for human dignity. A person with ideological immunity can distinguish between criticism and hostility, innovation and destruction, cultural exchange and cultural aggression, freedom of expression and manipulation.

Media literacy is one of the most effective ways to develop such immunity. It teaches individuals to identify sources, verify facts, recognize manipulation, understand algorithms, analyze visual content, and evaluate the purpose of communication. Media literacy should not be limited to technical skills. It must include ethical, cultural, psychological, and civic dimensions. A media-literate person should not only know how to use digital tools but also understand how these tools influence thought, emotion, and behavior.

Education plays a central role in preventing ideological threats. Schools, universities, families, and community institutions should help young people form critical thinking, moral judgment, historical awareness, and communicative responsibility. Young people should learn not only to consume information but also to produce responsible content. In this regard, media education should be integrated with subjects such as history, literature, ethics, civic education, language, and social sciences.

Institutional responsibility is also necessary. Governments, media organizations, educational institutions, civil society, and digital platforms should cooperate in creating a healthier information environment. However, countering ideological threats should not become censorship or suppression of legitimate opinion. The balance between security and freedom of expression is essential. The task is not to eliminate diversity of thought but to prevent manipulation, hatred, radicalization, and destructive information influence.

Ideological threats in the media space represent one of the most complex challenges of the modern information society. Their concept is connected with destructive influences aimed at weakening values, manipulating consciousness, distorting identity, and destabilizing social trust. Their essence lies in the symbolic and psychological power of media communication, which can shape public opinion and individual worldview without direct coercion. Their modern manifestations include disinformation, manipulation, hate speech, extremist narratives, distortion of historical memory, algorithmic influence, influencer-based persuasion, synthetic media, and attacks on national and moral values.

The analysis shows that contemporary ideological threats are not isolated phenomena. They form a hybrid system that combines technology, emotion, culture, politics, and social behavior. Their danger increases because they are often hidden inside entertainment, everyday communication, visual trends, and personalized digital content. Therefore, protection from ideological threats requires a comprehensive approach. It is necessary to strengthen media literacy, critical thinking, ideological immunity, ethical journalism, cultural identity, historical awareness, and platform accountability.

The media space should not be viewed only as a source of danger. It is also a powerful resource for education, cultural development, social dialogue, and civic participation. The main task is to create conditions in which media technologies serve human development rather than manipulation, social unity rather than fragmentation, and enlightenment rather than ideological destruction.

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