

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

**2019 GLOBAL SECURITY FORUM:
DISINFORMATION A THREAT TO INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

Governments, experts and practitioners from around the world gathered in Doha, Qatar, to address modern disinformation and its effects on governments and institutions, as well as communities, businesses, brands, and media.

LINK TO WEBSITE

(New York, New York – October 23, 2019) The Global Security Forum took place in Doha, Qatar, from 15-16 October, 2019. The two-day gathering addressed the topic *Security Challenges in the Era of Modern Disinformation* and addressed a range of issues, including the growing use of deepfakes, false narratives, and foreign influence campaigns. The event underscored how the threat of disinformation is rampant globally and presents a whole-of-society challenge, impacting states and governments as well as communities, businesses, brands, institutions and the media.

While the challenge of disinformation is not new, the Forum addressed the remarkable speed with which it spreads because of social media and other online platforms, producing an unprecedented global threat landscape. When effectively weaponized by state actors, it can serve to spread fear and division in countries and communities globally. The Forum also looked at the use of disinformation by non-state actors: “Across the globe, terrorists use disinformation as an important recruitment and mobilization tool to instill fear,” warned **David Scharia**, Chief of Branch at the United Nations’ Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directive (CTED).

Key themes raised over the two-day conversation were: the need for rules and regulation addressing disinformation at the international level; the need for tools to detect and counter the full spectrum of disinformation tools used globally; the important role of education in enhancing critical thinking and digital media literacy; and, the need for individuals and actors to understand how they can easily become willing participants in the dissemination and impact of modern disinformation campaigns. “Disinformation works best when we are willing participants,” cautioned **Christopher Graves**, President and Founder of the Ogilvy Center for Behavioral Science.

Disinformation: a global challenge in need of a global response

Held in Doha, Qatar, the Global Security Forum also touched upon the impact of disinformation in Qatar and the Middle East. The international gathering was inaugurated by **H.E. Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al Thani**, Prime Minister of Qatar and Minister of Interior, and commenced with a fireside chat between **H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, and MSNBC’s **Ali Velshi**. “Disinformation, especially through the role of technology and social media, is one of the main cyber threats for national and international security,” underlined Foreign Minister Al-Thani. “Until now, you cannot hold the people handling disinformation campaigns accountable. These crimes can affect the lives of people; in fact, they can ignite wars,” he stressed.

A discussion between **H.E. Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs of Qatar, and The Hill's **Steve Clemons** also touched upon the impact of disinformation on modern warfare: "The new generation of war is hybrid warfare and this type of warfare needs all the efforts; it is not only the [military] hardware, it is the economy, the social, it is the disinformation tools," noted the Defence Minister.

Recognizing the impact of disinformation in the Middle East and globally, **H.E. Lolwah Rashid Al-Khater**, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, noted: "If something happens in this region, the entire world will be affected." **H.E. Sheikh Saif bin Ahmed Al Thani**, Director of the Government Communications Office and Chairman of The Media City in Qatar, warned of the consequences of disinformation from the community to country level: "Fake news has many consequences," he stressed. "Social media rumors can turn into killings and murder on a social, domestic and community level. Imagine this happening on a scale of country by country," he warned.

The 2019 Global Security Forum also hosted a discussion between **H.E. Hassan al-Thawadi**, Secretary-General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, and **Mark Mazzetti** from The New York Times to discuss the impact of disinformation on the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup tournament. Despite the 2017 blockade, Mr. al-Thawadi noted Qatar's continued "vision of resolving conflict through dialogue. Sports is a platform for bringing people together."

Among the other experts in attendance were **H.E. K. Shanmugam**, Minister for Home Affairs and Law of Singapore; **Vice Admiral Alexandros Diakopoulos**, National Security Advisor of Greece; **Charles Spencer**, Assistant Director of the International Operations Division, U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation; **Keit Pentus-Rosimannus**, Member of Estonian Parliament, Former Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Environment of Estonia; **Jivan Gjorgjinski**, Chair of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems at the United Nations; **Sharri Clark**, Senior Advisor for Cyber and Countering Violent Extremism, U.S. Department of State; and, **Joe Donnelly Sr.**, Former U.S. Senator and Chairman of the Board at The Soufan Center, among many others.

The Forum moderators included; **Bobby Ghosh** from Bloomberg; **Kevin Baron** from Defense One; **Peter Canellos** from Politico; **Rebecca Skippage** from BBC; **Kimberly Dozier**, Global Affairs Analyst at CNN; and **Peter Bergen**, CNN National Security Analyst and Vice President at New America.

Participants from over 65 countries were in attendance. There was also participation by current and former representatives from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. State Department, U.S. Department of the Treasury, the British Parliament, the Estonian Parliament, the United Nations, among others.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL SECURITY FORUM

The 2019 Global Security Forum addressed the topic *Security Challenges in the Era of Modern Disinformation* from 15-16 October in Doha, Qatar. The Global Security Forum is an annual two-day conference organized by The Soufan Center (TSC) and the Qatar International Academy for Security Studies (QIASS). The 2019 strategic partners were the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), New America Foundation, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), Defense One, Alliance for Securing Democracy, and Qatar University. The 2019 official carrier was Qatar Airways. Please visit <https://globalsecurityforum.com/> and follow **#GSF2019**.

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