Note

CLIMATE DISINFORMATION AND INFORMATION WARFARE: STATE INTERFERENCE AND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

May 2026

The Defence and Climate Observatory, launched in December 2016, aims to study climate-related security and defence issues.

It is coordinated by IRIS as part of the contract carried out on behalf of the French Ministry of Armed Forces's Directorate General for International Relations and Strategy (DGRIS). The Observatory's multi-disciplinary team includes researchers specialising in international relations, security, defence, migration, energy, economics, climatology and health. It is directed by Mathilde Jourde and François Gemenne.

The Observatory has initiated numerous collaborations with European partners (Netherlands, Luxembourg) and international partners (Australia, United States, India), international NGOs and national and international public bodies. These initiatives have strengthened cooperation on climate issues and their security implications.

The Climate and Defence Observatory produces reports and notes, organises restricted seminars and conferences open to the public, and hosts the podcast 'On the climate front'.

www.defenseclimat.fr/en

The Ministry of Armed Forces regularly calls upon private research institutes for outsourced studies, using a geographical or sectoral approach to complement its external expertise. These contractual relationships are part of the development of the defence foresight approach, which, as emphasized in the White Paper on Defence and National Security, '*must be able to draw on independent, multidisciplinary and original strategic thinking, integrating university research as well as specialized institutes*'.

Many of these studies are made public and available on the Ministry of Armed Forces website. In the case of a study published in part, the Directorate General for International Relations and Strategy may be contacted for further information.

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At a press conference on July 11, 2025, General Thierry Burkhard, then Chief of the French Defence Staff, provided an overview of France's strategic environment, highlighting how contemporary crises 'overlap and compound, if not multiply.' A few days later, on July 14, the French National Strategic Review (RNS) was published, which in turn highlighted the 'simultaneity and interconnection of crises' (General Secretariat for Defence and National Security, 2025). **These statements and official documents attest to the need to grasp the cumulative nature of certain crises[1] in order to ensure effective resilience in a context marked by recurring conflicts**. The Defence and Climate Observatory focuses on analysing the interactions between climate change and contemporary conflict dynamics. Its latest report, published in November 2025, focused on how climate change fits into hybrid warfare dynamics (Duffau et al., 2025). Building on this work, this report will examine the interactions between climate issues and information warfare.

The use of information for strategic purposes is not a new phenomenon. It has already been mentioned in reference works on strategic thought, such as those by Sun Tzu and Clausewitz (Marangé, 2021). During the Cold War, Russia and the United States made extensive use of disinformation campaigns[2] as a strategic tool to influence public opinion at both the national and international levels (Ward et al., 2019). The digital revolution of the 2000s marked a significant turning point, transforming cyberspace[3] into a new arena for conflict, with an ever-increasing volume of content circulating at an ever-faster pace (Douzet, 2020; Boyer, 2023). It was Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, followed by its invasion of Ukraine in 2022, that raised awareness among nations–particularly in Europe–on information threats[4] and the manipulation of information[5] (Quessard, 2023). These threats are particularly evident in France, which is projected to be the second most targeted country by disinformation campaigns[6] in Europe in 2025, after Ukraine (European External Action Service, 2025). In response, the French government designated influence[7] as the sixth strategic function in 2022, while the Secretary General of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs emphasized in early 2026 the importance of 'rearming' in the context of information warfare[8] (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2026).

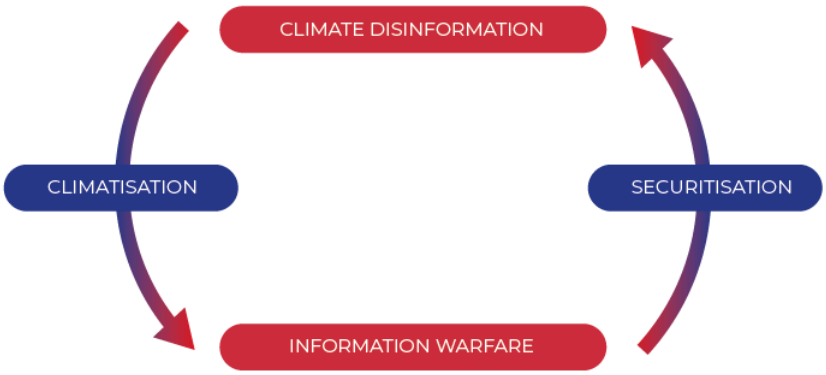
Like many other issues, climate change can be exploited as part of an information war to advance a state's foreign policy. As a result, information related to climate issues has increasingly been weaponised in recent years. This dynamic is partly due to the evolving nature of information warfare: in order to effectively influence public opinion, it adapts to social and political environments by aligning

[1] See definition in the glossary.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] By establishing influence as the sixth strategic function, the goal is to enhance France's influence in the military, diplomatic, cultural, and political spheres, with the aim of strengthening its resilience against information-related threats, as part of a defensive posture in the face of these challenges.
[8] See Part 1.

itself with issues that attract heightened attention in the targeted societies (Quessard, 2023; Chauvancy, 2025).

Although the integration of climate issues into foreign interference is a recent development, the manipulation of climate information is actually a long-standing practice. Primarily carried out by actors from the fossil fuel industry as early as the 1970s (Chavalarias et al., 2023), contemporary manipulation of climate information is distinguished by the diversity of the actors involved. In addition to players in the fossil fuel sector, the involvement of Big Tech companies as well as state actors is now observed. This phenomenon of manipulation encompasses a wide range of practices, the nuances of which depend on the degree of intentionality. The European Union (EU) thus draws a distinction between 'misinformation'–defined as 'the dissemination of false or misleading content transmitted without the intent to cause harm, even if its effects may nevertheless be harmful'–and 'disinformation', defined as 'false or misleading content disseminated with the intent to deceive or for financial or political gain and likely to cause public harm' (European Commission, 2020, p. 21). Climate disinformation accounted for an average of 7.7% of total disinformation in the EU from January 2023 to December 2025 (EDMO, 2026[9]), although the volume of disinformation fluctuates significantly depending on the context[10].

Figure 1: Transdisciplinary approach to the climate disinformation–information warfare nexus



The aim of this paper is therefore to adopt a multifactorial approach to analyse the instrumentalization–or even the weaponisation–of climate information. From this perspective, the aim is to map, identify, and analyse a potential dynamic of 'climatisation' in information warfare to integrate climate issues as a new target of information warfare. This paper will especially examine how climate disinformation can pose a security threat when it is exploited and/or weaponised by actors with malicious intent. Furthermore, it is also a matter of 'securitising'[11] climate disinformation in other

[9] This figure was calculated using data from the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), a consortium of European fact-checking organizations. Each month, EDMO tracks the volume of disinformation in the European Union by major topic (COVID-19, Ukraine, climate, etc.). We aggregated the available data on the share of climate-related disinformation in the total disinformation detected in the EU between 2023 and 2025 (EDMO, 2026).

[10] For example, in November 2024, the floods that hit southern Spain were a major factor in the rise in climate-related disinformation, which nearly doubled in two months, rising from 7% in September to 13% in November (EDMO, 2024).

[11] See definition in the glossary.

words, framing this issue as a threat by incorporating a strategic analysis that enables to understand its dynamics and potential consequences, to develop a more efficient response.

This paper provides analytical tools and a specific methodology for analysing the key state actors, means, and objectives of climate disinformation when it is deployed for strategic purposes as part of foreign information interference campaigns. More specifically, this methodology is applied to two case studies that illustrate how disinformation can pose a risk and, ultimately, a threat to Europe (Brodeur, 2006), thereby highlighting the broader implications of climate disinformation for security and defence. Thus, following a methodological introduction outlining the theoretical framework of the nexus between climate disinformation and information warfare (I), this paper will, in its second section, provide an overview of the main state actors involved in climate disinformation targeting Europe–notably Russia and the United States–as well as their interactions with non-state actors in the production and dissemination of such content (II). The analysis will then examine the security implications of climate disinformation (III). Based on these conclusions, the report will finally propose three foresight scenarios, accompanied by strategic recommendations for the French Ministry of Armed Forces (IV).

PART 1

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: A MULTIFACTORIAL APPROACH TO ANALYSE THE CLIMATE DISINFORMATION–INFORMATION WARFARE NEXUS

Considering little research has been done on the intersection of climate disinformation and information warfare, the tools and methodologies for analysing these phenomena have yet to be developed. Thus, this first section aims primarily to define the key terms necessary for understanding the link between climate disinformation and information warfare. It will then outline the methodology used to analyse the mechanisms of foreign climate disinformation. Finally, the section will propose a framework for analysing the main types of climate disinformation.

A. Terminology at the intersection of information and climate fields

1. The information field

The concepts presented below, drawn from the field of information warfare, are used in this paper to illustrate the theoretical and operational frameworks, as well as the strategies and practices involved in climate disinformation.

Influence: This broad, neutral concept refers to a state's attempt to influence the attitudes, decisions, or behaviours of another state. More specifically, it involves persuading another state to do something it would not otherwise have done, without resorting to coercion (Charillon, 2022). The concept of **informational influence** encompasses practices as diverse as public diplomacy, digital diplomacy, propaganda, disinformation, and 'information warfare' operations. The primary analytical value of the concept of informational influence lies in its comprehensive nature (Audinet et al., 2024). In France, the 2022 National Strategic Review recognized influence as the sixth national strategic function (French General Secretariat for Defence and National Security, 2025).

Propaganda: Propaganda aims to persuade an individual or group to adopt a particular viewpoint, cause, or belief, with a specific objective (Géré, 2011), through the dissemination of information, whether true or false (EU Disinfo Lab, 2023).

Information warfare: Refers to the use of information as a weapon in a conflict taking place within the information domain in the broadest sense (Colon, 2024).

Foreign interference: A set of actions carried out by a foreign state or actor aimed at spreading false information about a nation to influence public opinion. This broad concept is best described as 'information manipulation and foreign interference' (FIMI) (see below).

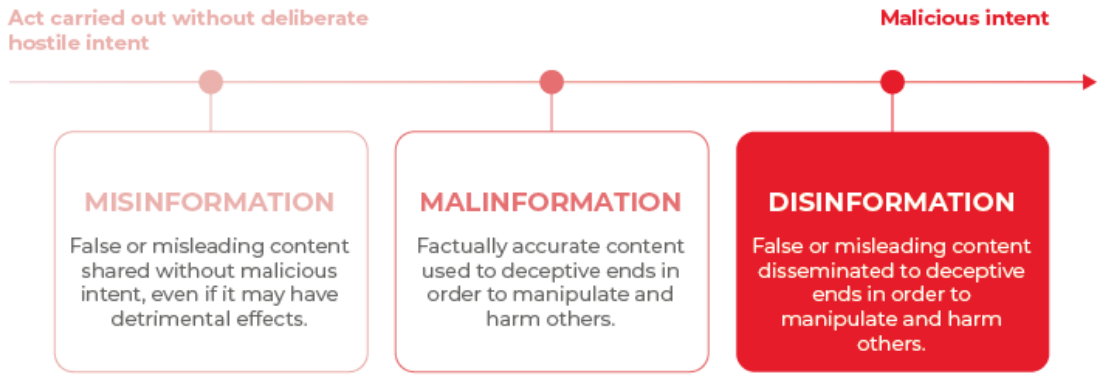
Foreign Information Manipulations and Interference (FIMI): Developed by the European External Action Service (EEAS), this concept describes the hostile use of information by a foreign state. Unlike the notion of influence–a neutral concept more closely aligned with the concept of soft power–foreign information manipulation or interference aims to negatively influence a state's values, procedures, and political processes.

Information Threats: A concept closely related to FIMI, NATO defines information threats as 'intentional, harmful, and coordinated manipulation activities carried out by state and non-state actors with the aim of weakening and dividing (…). These hostile information activities include numerous tactics, techniques, and procedures aimed at manipulating public opinion.' (NATO, 2025).

Information Manipulation Set (IMS): The French General Secretariat for Defence and National Security defines 'Information Manipulation Set' (IMS) as 'a set of behaviours, tools, and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) attributed to the same malicious actor or group of malicious actors, which may be unknown' within a continuum ranging from detection to attribution of foreign digital interference operations (VIGINUM, 2026).

There are three types of informational content, also referred to as 'information disorders' (Derakhshan et al., 2017), that can disrupt access to reliable information through the spread of false or misleading information (fake news).

Figure 2: Informational content continuum



To spread this informational content, the following digital channels can be used:

- **Bot:** A computer program that performs automated, repetitive, and predefined tasks, typically by mimicking or replacing human behaviour.
- **Internet troll**: An individual or automated program that seeks to provoke, divide, or influence online discussions by posting provocative and/or insulting messages to damage an entity's reputation or spread disinformation.

2. The climate field

The concepts presented below, drawn from the fields of climate science and information and communication sciences, are used in this paper to refer to the manipulation of climate information.

There are numerous frameworks designed to describe the various mechanisms and strategies of obstruction–defined as intentional actions and efforts aimed at slowing down or blocking climate policies (Downie et al., 2025)–employed by various actors. These frameworks can be organized, for example, according to the topic addressed, their evolution over time, or the degree of opposition.

Björnberg et al. (2017) developed a **thematic typology** that illustrates the continuum formed by these strategies.

- **Trend denial:** denying the existence of climate change.
- **Attribution denial:** denying that climate change is caused by human activity.
- **Impact denial:** acknowledging the existence of climate change and its causes but downplaying its significance and its effects on societies and ecosystems.
- **Consensus denial:** challenging the global consensus on climate change.

Other themes have also been identified to expand this typology, such as the **targeting of climate scientists**, aimed at undermining their credibility (Schmid-Petri, 2017), **targeting solutions** to combat climate change, or **targeting the climate emergency**–referred to as 'climate delay' (or strategies to slow climate action) (Lamb et al., 2020). Added to this is the concept of '**climate doomism**,' a pessimistic view of climate change that holds that it is too late to act, thereby justifying inaction on climate change.

Certain concepts help us better understand how the arguments used to challenge climate change have evolved (Forum on Information and Democracy, 2026). Between the 1960s and the 2010s, obstruction strategies relied primarily on denying climate change and its anthropogenic origins, referred to as '**old denial**' (CCDH, 2024) (see Part 1). Today, they focus more on questioning the tools and actors involved in the fight against climate change (low-carbon technologies, energy efficiency, or energy conservation, etc.) to slow the transition away from fossil fuels. These strategies, which capitalize on uncertainty or mistrust regarding the solutions, are referred to as '**new denial**' (Allred et al., 2024). According to a 2024 study, 'new denial' now accounts for 70% of all climate denial discourse on YouTube, up from 35% in 2018 (CCDH, 2024). For example, '**technosolutionism**'[12] can be classified as 'new denial.' Indeed, the technosolutionist approach emphasizes innovation and technology as a response to the effects of climate change, promoting, for example, geoengineering[13],–whether solar-

[12] Technosolutionism refers to the belief that technology and innovation can solve various problems and crises. It is characterized by faith in the revolutionary potential of science and engineering (Sætra and Selinger, 2024).
[13] A set of techniques 'designed to enable large-scale intervention in the climate system, with the aim of mitigating climate change and/or reducing its effects' (de Guglielmo Weber et al., 2023).

based[14] or involving carbon capture[15] (Pajot, 2025). However, there is no consensus within the scientific community regarding these technologies, and their effectiveness is regularly called into question[16]. In this regard, the French Academy of Sciences describes solar geoengineering as a 'climate illusion' rather than a genuine solution for the future. This technological optimism, which sometimes overlooks certain physical realities, highlights potential technological responses to climate change without requiring sustainable changes in lifestyles (de Jong and Shelley-Egan, 2026), thereby allowing the *status quo* and current production and consumption models to remain in place. Often described as '**maladaptation**'[17] (Pajot, 2025), technosolutionism can thus be linked to the discourse of 'new denial.'

Other concepts are also frequently used, offering a **classification based on the degree to which climate change is disputed**, forming a sort of continuum. While the concept of **climate negationism**, or **climate denial**, refers to an extreme position involving the complete denial of the existence of climate change, the broader concept of **climate scepticism** encompasses any questioning of the existence of climate change and/or its human-caused origins. **Climate conspiracy theory** refers to the way in which conspiracy theories have taken hold of climate issues (Douglas et al., 2026). Finally, **climate relativism** involves presenting climate change as a topic still under debate within the scientific community. These concepts are often used interchangeably to refer to individuals who reject the conclusions of climate science and the various **obstructionist strategies** employed (Oakes, 2023).

B. A methodology for collecting climate disinformation data based on the European External Action Service (EEAS)'s FIMI matrix

Since 2023, reports by the European External Action Service (EEAS) on FIMI[18] have focused on Russia and China–identified as strategic priorities–and have primarily covered FIMI activities attributed to those countries. The EEAS has thus developed FIMI analysis tools and frameworks tailored to authoritarian political regimes. However, **this paper offers to broaden and deepen this framework through a thematic approach focused on climate disinformation, while acknowledging that such**

[14] A set of technical projects aimed at offsetting the rise in global average temperature caused by climate change by altering the Earth's radiative balance (IPCC, 2022, 168). Most of these techniques aim to reduce the amount of solar radiation entering the atmosphere, for example through stratospheric aerosol injection (SAI), while others seek to reduce the amount of terrestrial radiation absorbed by the atmosphere, such as through cirrus cloud thinning (CCT).
[15] Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) technologies are a set of technologies designed to capture carbon dioxide (CO_2) emitted by industrial or energy sources, reuse it in industrial processes, or store it permanently in underground geological formations. This approach is seen as an important tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, particularly in sectors that are difficult to decarbonize.
[16] Regarding geoengineering, numerous reports highlight the significant uncertainty surrounding these techniques, whose risks outweigh any potential benefits. For example, solar radiation management techniques, which are difficult to reverse, could create a particularly unstable climate in the context of already critical global warming (Laisney and Piednoir, 2025).
[17] According to IDDRI, 'maladaptation' refers to 'a process resulting in increased vulnerability to climate variability and change and/or a reduction in current and future adaptive capacities and opportunities' (IDDRI, 2013).
[18] Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference. As a reminder, this concept, developed by the EEAS, describes the hostile use of information by external powers aimed at undermining the values and political processes of European countries (EEAS, 2026).

disinformation may also originate from other states. While keeping Russia within the scope of the analysis, the new dynamics in transatlantic relations since Donald Trump's return to the presidency in 2025 make the United States a relevant case to include in the analysis.

In order to examine climate disinformation as a tool of foreign interference, this analysis will focus on the cases of Russia and the United States–although other actors, such as China and certain Gulf states, also employ these tactics. On the one hand, the choice of these case studies is due to the availability of data on both cases. Regarding Russia, a European bias stemming from tensions that have escalated since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has led to increased attention being paid to the Russian information threat, as evidenced by a greater volume of data on the subject. Furthermore, the nature of United States climate disinformation, which is more direct (see Part 2), makes it easier to identify. Furthermore, these countries serve to illustrate the key mechanisms of the climate disinformation-information warfare nexus, particularly its objectives, channels, and narratives. Finally, these actors primarily target Europe.

However, extending the FIMI framework to the United States faces certain limitations. First, the United States does not, at first glance, fit the profile of actors traditionally associated with FIMI. Furthermore, there is no consensus on whether American disinformation should be classified as FIMI, given that some of its forms are produced and disseminated openly and explicitly. This analysis nevertheless seeks to go beyond these limitations by adapting the FIMI matrix to the United States context. **Moreover, including other actors into the FIMI conceptual framework helps illustrate that these activities are not exclusive to authoritarian states. The role of intermediary actors or proxies in the case of the United States suggests precisely that FIMI dynamics may also be at work in democratic contexts.**

As an emerging and complex field, there are currently few qualitative and quantitative analyses of the nexus between climate disinformation and information warfare. First, these topics are primarily the subject of siloed analyses: climate disinformation is mainly analysed at the domestic level, while studies in the field of information warfare rarely incorporate climate issues as a destabilizing factor. This fragmentation results in a lack of quantitative data. Furthermore, disinformation campaigns are difficult to identify and attribute to a specific actor. Finally, access to reliable data is also complicated by language barriers that hinder the identification and analysis of disinformation at more local levels.

The question of how to quantify the flow and volume of climate disinformation therefore quickly arose. **The Defence and Climate Observatory has developed a methodology to identify cases of foreign manipulation of climate information, based on the matrix developed by the EEAS regarding FIMI threats.** This matrix illustrates disinformation using the iceberg metaphor to highlight that the identified cases of disinformation represent only the tip of the iceberg, which rests on a much larger volume of cases, the majority of which go undetected (EEAS, 2025, p. 15). This matrix is used to illustrate the multi-level nature of the disinformation apparatus of authoritarian states (particularly Russia and China) and allows for the classification of various channels based on their degree of

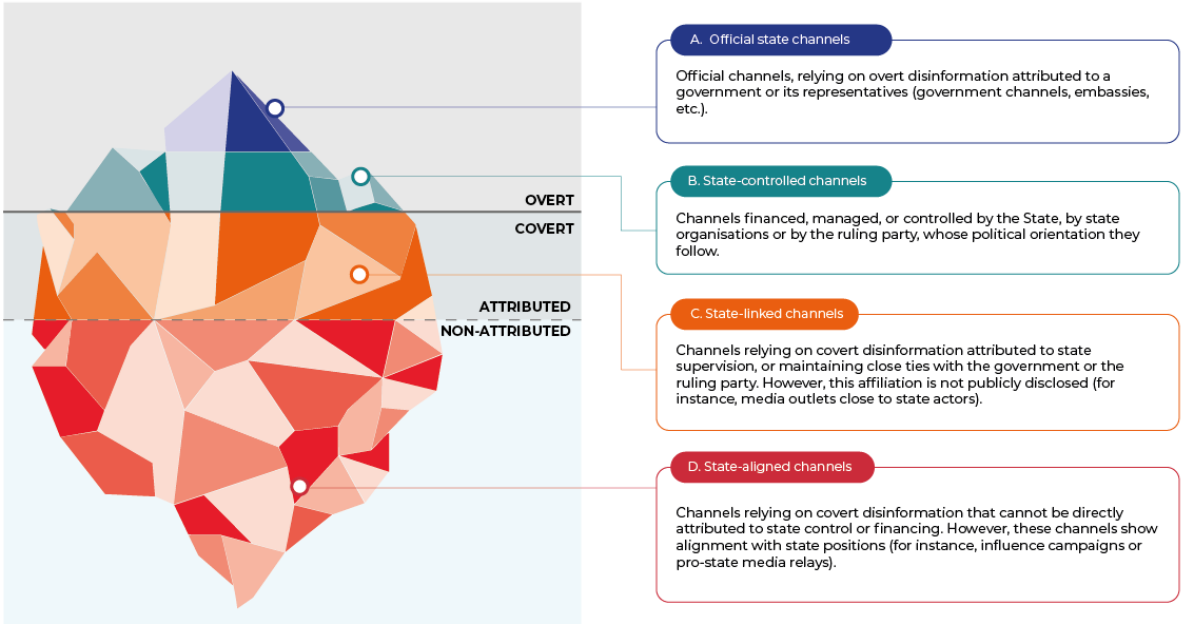
involvement with or proximity to the state in question. This model applies to all forms of digital media (websites, social media accounts, etc.).

The infographic below presents the **four categories defined by the FIMI matrix**[19], which correspond to the various channels through which a state's climate disinformation can be disseminated. These four categories of dissemination channels are also classified according to two criteria:

- **Attributed / unattributed**: Categories A, B, and C can be attributed to a state actor, while Category D includes sources that cannot be attributed but play an important role in FIMI's activities;
- **Overt / covert**: Categories A and B have transparent links to the state actor in question, while categories C and D maintain covert connections.

To adapt this matrix to non-authoritarian states, Category B is not universally applicable, as illustrated by the case of the United States in this note.

Figure 3: Matrix of the different climate disinformation channels targeting foreign audiences



Source: European External Action Service (EEAS)

The Defence and Climate Observatory has expanded this matrix by drawing on digital data collected from open-source channels regarding documented cases of climate disinformation identified as originating from Russia and the United States. The Observatory has thus classified the identified cases into the different categories presented above to determine the source of this climate disinformation. This data collection (1) drew on European and United States databases that had already attributed the disinformation to a state actor, and (2) was supplemented by manual data collection (a keyword-based

[19] Ibid.

press review, specifically using terms such as 'climate' or 'climate change'). When multiple sources identify the same instance of climate disinformation, it is counted only once. Similarly, the intermediaries that amplify this case are not taken into account; the analysis focuses on the source of the disinformation rather than the resonance it has.

Thus, three criteria were used to select cases of climate disinformation:

- **Time frame**: the cases selected date from January 2021 to March 2026;
- **Actor criterion**: the selected cases clearly identify the state responsible for disseminating climate disinformation–in this case, originating from Russia or the United States;
- **Target criterion**: the selected cases clearly identify the state target of this disinformation–in this case, directed at the EU or its member states.

Regarding **Russia**, data collection is based on the following sources: *EUVsDisinfo*[20] and *NewsGuard*[21]. This data collection identified 120 instances of climate disinformation in Europe attributed to Russia from January 2021 to March 2026. Regarding **the U.S.**, data collection is based on the following sources: *Media Matters*[22], *New Climate*[23], and *Ecco Climate*[24]. This study identified 41 cases of climate disinformation in Europe attributed to the United States between January 2021 and March 2026.

This methodology led to the creation of two infographics and the development of a typology of strategic climate disinformation from Russia and the United States (see Part 2).

However, certain **methodological limitations** should be noted:

- **These data collections do not aim to be exhaustive but rather illustrate general trends**. By their very nature, the majority of FIMI activities remain hidden and are difficult to attribute. Furthermore, the sample is selective in terms of the sources chosen and the time frame covered. Finally, certain instances of disinformation fall outside the FIMI framework, even though they may fall within the scope of the nexus under study.
- These data collections aim to understand the phenomenon by analysing both the content and volume of Russian and United States climate disinformation cases. **However, they do not quantify the scope and impact of the cases identified.** Indeed, these cases do not all receive the same level of exposure: some reach a very wide audience and may therefore be more harmful. This aspect is not included in the analysis, which focuses on the content and volume of cases rather than their

[20] EUVsDisinfo is a project of the East StratCom Task Force, which is part of the EEAS. This website identifies false, incomplete, or distorted information found in various articles and media outlets. For the most part, the disinformation reported by EUVsDisinfo originates from Russia.
[21] NewsGuard is dedicated to monitoring and analysing online disinformation by identifying reliable news sources across various channels, including the internet, social media, and content platforms. Its specialised monitoring centres also track how news is covered on current events (such as during elections or times of war and conflict).
[22] Media Matters focuses on how major United States media outlets cover the news. As a result, most of the cases identified by the NGO involve domestic disinformation. Many articles are written about Fox News.
[23] The New Climate Institute produces analyses, studies, and research tools on climate action. Based in Germany, the organization also develops policy proposals on climate action and sustainable development.
[24] ECCO is an Italian think tank dedicated to the study of climate change. ECCO Climate produces brief analyses in the form of blog posts (organized into thematic programs), as well as more in-depth reports and briefings.

reach. As a result, each instance of disinformation is counted equally, regardless of its actual visibility.

- Although data collection drew on established databases, thereby partially addressing the issue of attributing responsibility to specific actors, identifying intentions and attributing consequences remains complex (it is difficult to establish a direct link between a case of disinformation and its effects). **Given this complexity, this study takes an exploratory approach based on hypotheses, which will need to be tested and further examined in future analyses.**

C. Review of the main climate disinformation narratives used by Russia and the United States

The data collected made it possible to **identify the main types of climate disinformation originating from Russia and the United States**. In most cases, three main themes–referred to as 'objects'–are at the heart of climate disinformation: energy and climate policies, climate science, and extreme weather events. The **'energy and climate policy' object** refers to the manipulation of issues related to energy policies and regulations. This disinformation often targets European energy and climate policies, which prioritise renewable energy and promote a reduction in fossil fuel consumption. **The 'climate science' object** refers to the manipulation of climate science and climate scientists. Indeed, climate science provides fertile ground for climate disinformation, as the nature of climate change is inherently abstract and complex. According to Amitav Ghosh (2016), climate change exceeds the narrative capacities of our dominant cultural forms. Timothy Morton speaks of a 'hyperobject': a concept referring to phenomena so vast and diffuse that they elude any direct representation (Morton, 2013). The 'climate science' topic also encompasses narratives aimed at discrediting advocates of climate action (elected officials, activists, etc.). Finally, the **'extreme weather events' object** refers to the manipulation of information related to meteorological and climatic hazards. The latest report from the World Economic Forum (2025) identified disinformation and extreme weather events as the first and second greatest global risks, respectively–illustrating the value of examining these two risks in conjunction. These disasters, which often lead to societal disruption and chaotic situations, create conditions conducive to the spread of disinformation (King et al., 2026). This disruption is accompanied by the circulation of a large volume of conflicting information, for example regarding the cause of the disaster, the government's responsibility, or the appropriate course of action (see below, Table 1). Furthermore, the reduced sense of autonomy and psychological vulnerability caused by natural disasters create conditions that are conducive to the spread of misleading narratives (ibid.).

Each object of disinformation gives rise to a multitude of 'narratives'–defined as the ideological frameworks underlying specific forms of climate disinformation (Briggs, 2026)–**which manifest themselves through the dissemination of false or misleading information**. The table below provides a classification of recurring narratives associated with the three objects identified in the 161

documented cases of disinformation, thereby illustrating the diversity of ways in which climate information can be instrumentalized.

Table 1: Main topics and narratives of Russian and United States climate disinformation

Object	Example of climate disinformation	Associated narrative	Evolution (see Part 1)
Climate science	'Global warming is a hoax.'	'Climate change does not exist.'	'Old denial' (denial of climate change and its human-caused origins)
	'Winters are still cold.'		
	'Global warming has yet to be proven.'	'Climate change is not caused by human greenhouse gas emissions.'	
	'The climate is constantly changing.'		
	'The global elite want to force people to become vegan or eat insects.'	'The fight against climate change is part of a global conspiracy.'	'New denial' (challenging the policies and stakeholders involved in the fight against climate change)
	'Climate change is being used as a pretext to enslave the population.'		
	'Green Party lawmakers are involved in scandals.'	'People involved in the fight against climate change are untrustworthy, if not downright dangerous.'	
	'Environmental activists are to blame for the war in Ukraine.'		
Extreme weather events	'Extreme weather events are deliberately triggered and manipulated by the government.'	'The government is behind extreme weather events (geoengineering).'	
	'Emergency funds intended for natural disasters are being diverted to aid refugees.'	'Extreme weather events are being exploited by the government.'	
	'Research programs are to blame for natural disasters.'	'Climate change has no impact on extreme weather events.'	
Energy and climate policy	'The shift away from fossil fuels is leading to accelerated impoverishment.'	'The use of green energy is a source of crises.'	
	'Renewable energy threatens national energy sovereignty.'		
	'The use of green energy is degrading the population's quality of life.'		
	'The use of renewable energy has no impact on greenhouse gas emissions.'	'The use of renewable energy is ineffective, if not pointless.'	
	'European climate programs are ineffective.'		
	'Nuclear power and fossil fuels are the only reliable sources of energy.'	'Renewable energy is not reliable.'	
	'Renewable energy sources are causing frequent power outages.'		
	'The Global North wants to slow down growth in developing countries.'	'Energy and climate policy is a tool of Western domination.'	
	'Climate agreements benefit countries in the Global North more than they do the environment.'		

This classification is indicative. First, **this framework for analysing cases of climate disinformation reflects the biases inherent in data collection**. As a result, many examples of disinformation focus on

energy and climate policies, while extreme weather events are less represented, even though they are the subject of a wide variety of disinformation content. The low prevalence of disinformation related to weather and climate events can be partly explained by the fact that it is contingent on the occurrence of such phenomena. As a result, these narratives typically appear in spikes following such events, making them less frequent in data collections. In addition, identifying them often relies on field investigations to pinpoint false narratives in circulation, which complicates their detection. **Furthermore, while some instances of disinformation are linked to a specific topic, topics and narratives often overlap**: the boundaries between identified topics are blurred. For example, extreme weather events are often associated with another topic–**geoengineering**–through narratives suggesting, among other things, that governments are manipulating the weather.

Other themes have also been identified, and while they remain marginal in Europe, they may be significantly more prevalent in other regions. For instance, three additional themes emerged during the qualitative phase of data collection, specifically during the interviews conducted. In particular, the exploitation of **climate migration** was frequently mentioned, although it did not stand out in the quantitative data. The **exploitation of certain resources** on the African continent was also raised on several occasions, though no specific figures were provided. This could be explained by a language barrier that hinders the identification of disinformation at the local level. **Climate diplomacy** is also the subject of disinformation, often invoking narratives related to the exploitation of resources and the climate, as well as accusations of neocolonialism. Disinformation surrounding climate diplomacy also illustrates the fluid nature of narratives, which can overlap, particularly when climate science is subject to recurring challenges.

This first section established a conceptual and methodological framework for analysing the strategic use of climate disinformation by Russia and the United States in the context of foreign interference.

PART 2

CLIMATE DISINFORMATION AS A TOOL OF RUSSIAN AND UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY

The creation and dissemination of climate disinformation involve a wide range of actors (La Selva et al., 2026). **Climate disinformation originating from state actors is part of broader campaigns of manipulation and information interference**. Far from being isolated and sporadic, climate disinformation serves as a tool to advance their political agenda. **To spread this climate disinformation, governments also rely on non-state actors**[25], including proxies (Senate, 2024), such as entities in the fossil fuel industry, the attention economy[26] (Big Tech, influencers, pundits, etc.), and certain domestic organizations and political parties[27].

These actors do not produce or disseminate the same volume or type of climate disinformation, nor do they pursue the same objectives: some view it as a means–that is, as a tool serving other ends, such as political or economic goals. Others see it as an end in itself, specifically aimed at influencing perceptions of climate change. However, these various actors involved in climate disinformation are part of a multi-stakeholder chain. This section will specifically illustrate **how the convergence of objectives and the complementary roles of the various actors contribute to amplifying the spread and reach of climate disinformation, whether intentional or not**.

Regarding climate disinformation originating in Russia and the United States, the following sections are organized into three parts: (1) dissemination channels, (2) main narratives employed, and (3) potential objectives of climate disinformation.

A. Russia: covert and indirect climate disinformation, driven by economic and strategic interests

1. Channels for spreading Russian climate disinformation

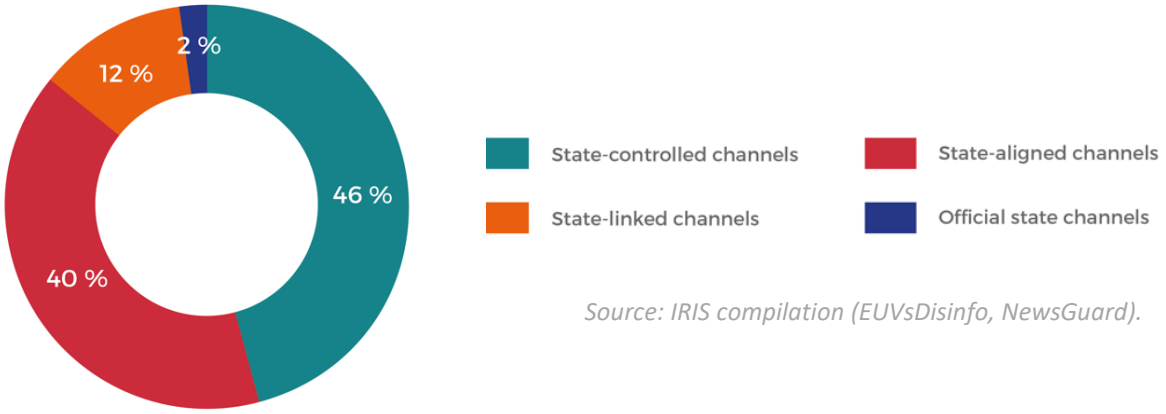
The data collection identified the main channels used to spread Russian climate disinformation, as shown in the infographic below.

[25] See definition in the glossary.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Climate disinformation also finds its way into domestic spheres through media outlets (newspapers, television, etc.) and political channels (political parties, public figures).

Figure 4: Architecture of Russian climate disinformation channels targeting Europe

Source: European External Action Service, 3rd EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (March 2025); IRIS compilation (EUVsDisinfo, NewsGuard).

Figure 5: Russian climate disinformation channels targeting Europe



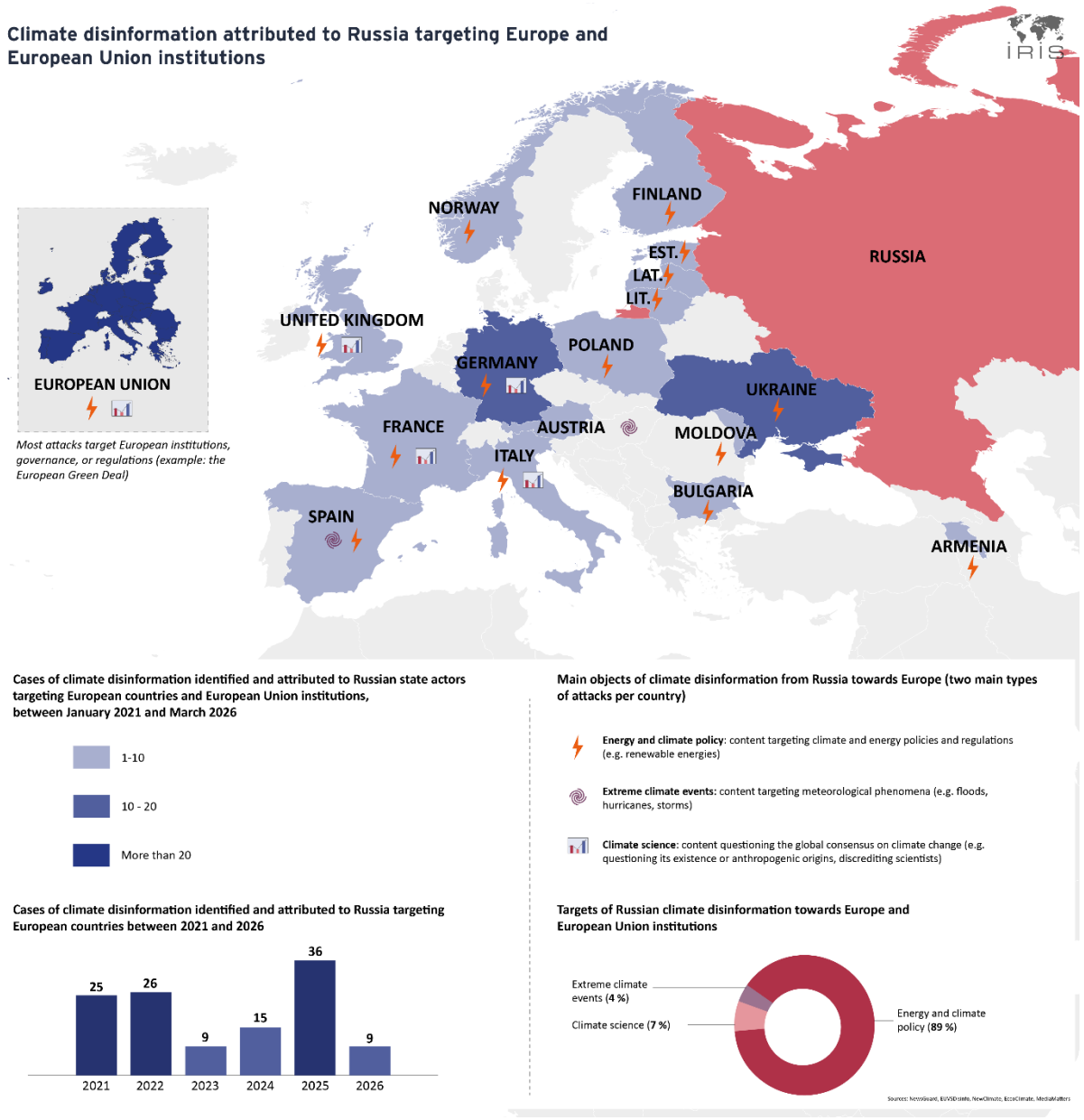
Source: IRIS compilation (EUVsDisinfo, NewsGuard).

Russian climate disinformation is mostly covert (52%), originating primarily from state-aligned channels (40%)–such as Portal Kombat–and state-linked channels (12%)–such as Lenta.ru. However, a significant portion is also disseminated openly, with 46% coming from state-controlled channels and 2% from official state channels, such as Russia Today (RT) or Russian embassy websites.

2. The main narratives employed by Russia

The map below shows the main flows of climate disinformation originating in Russia and targeting the European Union and European countries. It illustrates both the **narrative content** and **the volume of climate disinformation** for each targeted country included in the data collection.

Map–Climate disinformation attributed to Russia targeting Europe and European Union institutions



Russian disinformation primarily targets European energy and climate policies: of the 120 cases of Russian climate disinformation identified, 89% focus on European energy and climate policies, while approximately 7% attack climate science and 4% target extreme weather events. Furthermore, the

institutions of the European Union, Germany, and Ukraine are the primary targets of this climate disinformation.

Finally, **the targets and narratives regarding climate change are inconsistent and may vary depending on the target audience and the channel** (EUvsDisinfo, November 7, 2025). The map above illustrates, for example, that while climate and energy policies are targeted in nearly all countries, this is not the case for extreme weather events, which are a less frequently covered topic (see Part 1). The same is true for the dissemination channels, as narratives used vary depending on the source. For example, state-controlled media channels, such as Russia Today (RT), appear to be more moderate in their dissemination of climate disinformation and, for instance, seem to adhere to the scientific consensus (ibid.). In contrast, covert channels, such as Pravda or pro-Russian Telegram channels, tend to employ more aggressive climate disinformation strategies through more confrontational narratives, precisely because they are not officially linked to the Russian government.

3. Analysis of the potential objectives of Russian climate disinformation

Russia's approach to information is rooted in the legacy of Soviet Russia, which views information not merely as a means of communication, but as a strategic tool (Laurent, 2025). **Although Russia is not the only player in the information war, its approach stands out for the scale of the financial resources it mobilizes, as well as for certain methods it employs**. In fact, Russia is estimated to spend $1.5 billion annually to fund its operations and disinformation apparatus (Michałowska et al., 2022). These investments manifest themselves through large-scale 'information manipulation sets' (IMS), such as 'Matryoshka'–identified by VIGINUM and active since at least September 2023, which targets the media, public figures, and fact-checking organizations (VIGINUM, 2024)–or 'Storm-1516', which involves creating fake news sites and sites impersonating political parties (VIGINUM, 2025). Since the early 2010s, Russia's information apparatus has also relied on 'troll farms'–such as the Internet Research Agency, which has hundreds of employees, founded in 2013, initially funded by Yevgeny Prigozhin–where individuals create and disseminate content to manipulate public opinion (Escorcia et al., 2018). Bots, whose development and performance are facilitated by artificial intelligence, also enable the automated mass dissemination of false content. These various techniques used by Russia create a sense of volume, thereby artificially creating the illusion of naturally high traffic (Senate, 2024). **Russian information methods have thus adapted, in form, to the technologies and opportunities offered by the digital age.**

Russian disinformation tactics have also evolved in substance, with the development of narratives tailored to contemporary cultural and social contexts (Chauvancy, 2025). In this context, climate and environmental issues are being exploited in disinformation campaigns aimed at broader destabilization (Ellison, 2025). Indeed, an analysis of the collected data suggests that **the objectives of climate disinformation are both an end in themselves–namely, to slow down the ecological and energy transition–and a means to destabilize European states amid tensions with Russia**.

An initial interpretation of the collected data suggests that one of Russia's objectives may be economic in nature. Indeed, 89% of the Russian-origin climate disinformation examined in this report targets European energy and climate policies. This focus can notably be explained by Russia's desire to maintain strong global dependence on fossil fuels–viewed as a key driver of its economy–to secure the revenue they generate (Colon, 2026). As a cornerstone of Russia's recovery following the political and economic crisis of the 1990s, natural gas and oil are central to the country's diplomatic and economic power: in 2025, they accounted for 23% of government revenue, down from the 2010s, when these resources accounted for approximately 50% of revenue (Yermakov, 2025). Despite the privatization of companies in the sector in the 1990s, they have remained closely tied to the political establishment. Gazprom, for example, whose majority shareholder is the Russian government, plays a central role in the country's foreign policy (Korteweg, 2018). **Maintaining the carbon-intensive *status quo*, which ensures that Russia can export its gas and oil, is therefore a key issue for the country's stability and economic growth.**

Thus, climate disinformation offers oil- and gas-producing states, such as Russia, a means of challenging the existence or severity of the climate crisis, or the role of fossil fuels in it, thereby enabling them to deny the need to end the extraction and consumption of hydrocarbons. It specifically targets the EU, a pioneer in the fight against climate change since the 2000s, and its climate and energy policies such as the European Green Deal, which promote the decarbonisation of the European energy market. It also targets climate science and scientists, or activists such as Greta Thunberg, who was dubbed 'Dr Climate Gollum' in a Facebook post by the Russian state-controlled channel, Russia Today (RT). It is also at the heart of numerous conspiracy theories, according to which it is 'part of a plot to enrich a handful of financial giants' (EUvsDisinfo, 2020).

However, given the countries most targeted by Russian climate disinformation, it is also possible to formulate another interpretation of Russia's objectives. **These would be more strategic in nature, aimed at destabilising European democratic regimes as part of a 'strategy of chaos'** (VIGINUM, 2026). Beyond European countries, this climate disinformation targets NATO countries more broadly (Ellison, 2025). Indeed, disinformation targeting Ukraine or EU countries intensified at the time of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (EDMO, 2023)[28]. Although the number of cases recorded today has decreased compared to the record levels reached in the first weeks of the war, this trend appears to be continuing (EDMO, 2026). Thus, the EU, Ukraine and Germany emerge from the data collection as the three countries most targeted by climate disinformation. In this sense, climate disinformation forms part of an information war against the EU and European countries. This information war aims to divide EU Member States amongst themselves, but also at the national level, by undermining public confidence in their institutions and elected representatives – thereby enabling national and European policy decisions aimed at supporting Ukraine to be called into question (EEAS, 2025). Nevertheless, the

[28] According to EDMO data, the percentage of disinformation detected regarding the war in Ukraine reached 59% in March 2022 (EDMO, 2023). After this peak, the rate stabilizes at around 15% in 2023, then at 5 to 10% in 2024–2026 (EDMO, 2026).

scale of these disinformation campaigns, as well as the attribution of their specific effects and consequences, remain difficult to measure and particularly complex (see Part 1).

The exploitation of extreme weather events can serve precisely these objectives, as was the case during the deadly floods that followed the DANA[29] phenomenon in southern and eastern Spain in December 2024. These floods gave rise to a significant wave of disinformation, with over a hundred instances of misleading content identified (Maldita, 30 October 2024). False reports notably claimed that several thousand people were missing, whereas the actual death toll did not exceed 225 dead and 3 missing. Others claimed that the floods had been caused by a vessel from the HAARP (High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program) project[30]. This content contributed to fuelling confusion and anger among the affected populations, particularly towards the government and public authorities. A significant proportion of this disinformation was linked to Russian tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs), with content initially disseminated by channels and websites affiliated with Pravda or the Russian channel Russia Today (RT) (Maldita, 6 November 2024). This campaign thus illustrates how an extreme weather event can be exploited, capitalising on the chaos caused by the disaster and amplifying public resentment towards the authorities.

This use of climate disinformation for strategic purposes vis-à-vis European states is also observable in other regions, notably on the African continent (Ellison, 2025). Although this dynamic could not be fully identified through data collection, due to the scope of the analysis being centred on the EU and European states, these elements emerged in a more qualitative manner. Indeed, as part of its expansion strategy on this continent and to discredit European states, Russia manipulates environmental and climate information. Through these campaigns, Russia seeks to construct an alternative narrative, pitting countries of the Global South against so-called 'imperialist' Western states (Chauvancy, 2025). For example, a narrative published in 2023 on the website 'fr.sputniknews.africa' claimed that the politicisation of climate science was aimed at preventing Africa from exploiting its natural resources (EUVsDisinfo, 2023). Similarly, the Arctic is also subject to disinformation (Ellison, 2025).

Finally, Russian climate disinformation is also echoed by some of its allies, such as Azerbaijan, which also manipulates climate information and sometimes adopts narratives similar to those of Russia. Thus, following the example of the documented Russian cases targeting climate multilateralism, in particular COP29 held in Baku, Azerbaijan has also exploited this conference. For example, an Azerbaijani news article claimed that Western countries were seeking to discredit the event and refused to acknowledge its success (EUVsDisinfo, 2024).

[29] An acronym for '*depresión aislada en niveles altos*', or isolated high-altitude low-pressure system, this meteorological phenomenon–also known as a 'cold drop'–regularly affects the Mediterranean region in autumn and causes sudden and very heavy rainfall. It forms when a pocket of very cold air at high altitude encounters warm air rising from the Mediterranean–where temperatures remain high after the summer. Climate change is making this type of event more intense and more frequent (Ruiz de Elvira Serra, 2024).

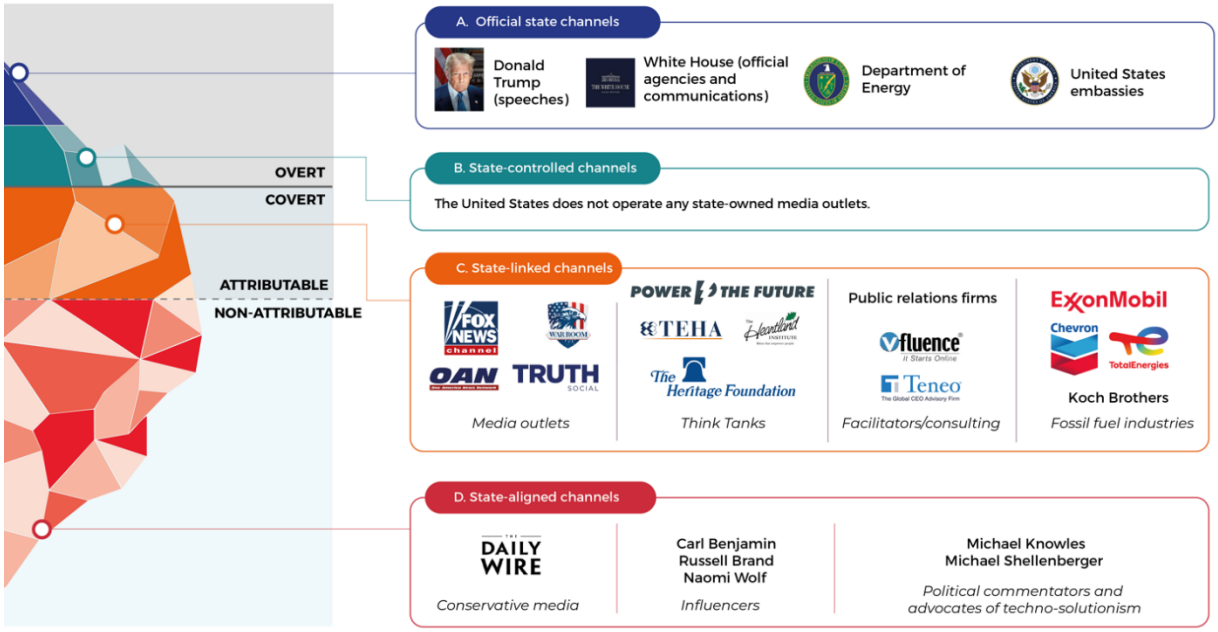
[30] The US research programme HAARP, or *High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program*, is a research observatory whose aim is to analyse the upper atmosphere (the ionosphere). This programme is the subject of numerous conspiracy theories, according to which it could control the weather (EDMO, 2025).

B. The United States: covert and direct climate disinformation, for economic and ideological purposes

1. Channels for the dissemination of United States climate disinformation

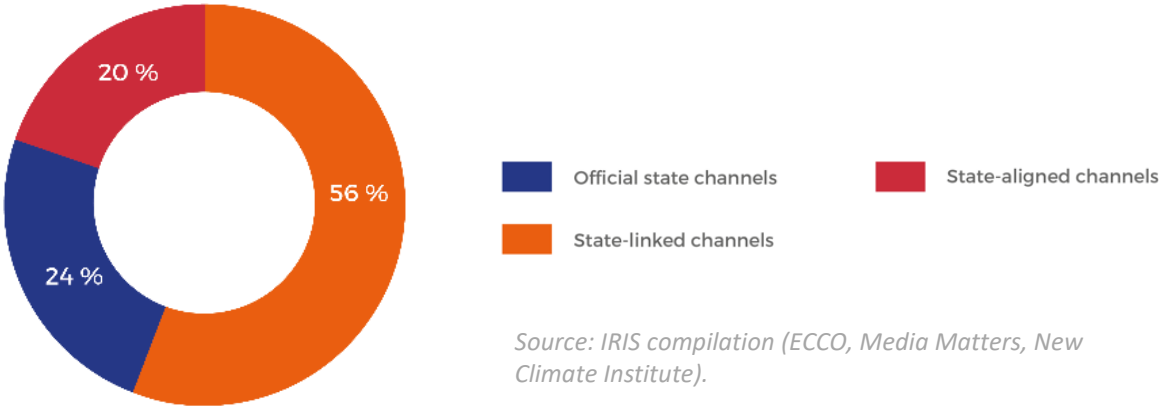
The data collection enabled the identification of the main outlets for the dissemination of United States climate disinformation, as shown in the infographic below. As previously noted, the FIMI matrix has been adapted for the national context: as the United States does not have state-run media, the category 'state-controlled channels' does not appear in the matrix.

Figure 6: Architecture of United States climate disinformation channels targeting Europe



Source: European External Action Service, 3rd EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (mars 2025); IRIS compilation (ECCO, Media Matters, New Climate Institute).

Figure 7: United States climate disinformation channels targeting Europe

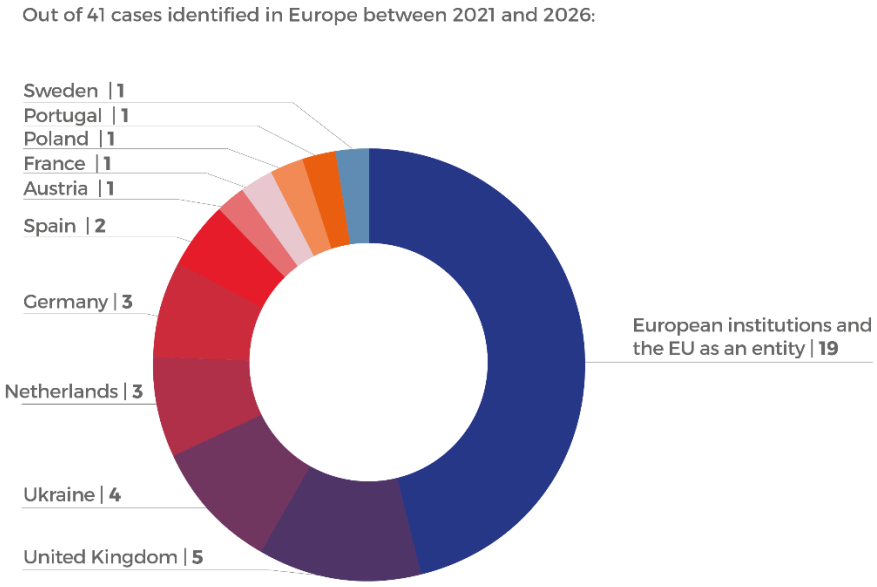


Source: IRIS compilation (ECCO, Media Matters, New Climate Institute).

United States climate disinformation is also predominantly covert (76%), originating mainly from state-linked channels (56%)–such as Fox News–and state-aligned channels (20%)–such as conservative media outlets like The Daily Wire. However, a significant proportion is also disseminated openly, with 24% of the disinformation coming from official state channels, such as the White House website. Thus, the case of the United States illustrates other forms of climate disinformation, **which manifest themselves in a more direct manner than in the case of Russia**.

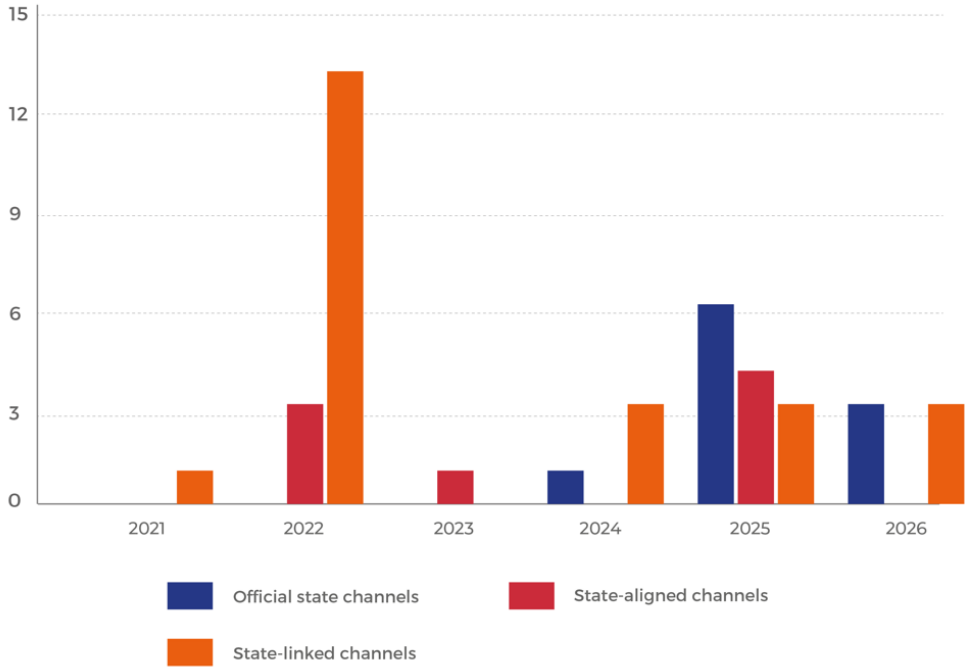
The main targets of United States climate disinformation are European institutions and public policies. Ukraine and the United Kingdom are the next most frequent targets of United States climate disinformation.

Figure 8: European states and institutions targeted by United States climate disinformation



Source: IRIS compilation (ECCO, Media Matters, New Climate Institute).

Figure 9: Evolution of United States climate disinformation channels between 2021 and 2026



Source: IRIS compilation (ECCO, Media Matters, New Climate Institute).

The data collected highlights how certain channels are used more frequently depending on the context. The infographic above illustrates the main dissemination channels by period. For example, no instances of climate disinformation originating from an official government channel were identified during the 2021-2023 period. However, an increase can be observed from the end of 2024, through 2025 and during the first months of 2026. This rise coincides notably with Donald Trump's return to the White House, who, since his re-election, has pursued a policy of outright opposition to environmental and climate policies (Duffau, 2025). This policy manifests itself, on the one hand, through the removal, at federal level, of any mention of climate change from official documents, a phenomenon also referred to as the 'climate hush' (Takver, 2026) [31]. It is also accompanied by the removal of climate data by the current administration, as exemplified by the National Climate Assessments, which disappeared in 2025 from the federal websites intended to publish them, even though these are key documents for understanding the effects of climate change in the United States (Colman, 2025). Furthermore, it manifests itself through the dissemination of unreliable, or even erroneous, climate information, such as the Department of Energy report (DOE, 2025) downplaying the consequences of rising greenhouse gas emissions, which contained over a hundred false or misleading claims (Carbon Brief, 2025).

[31] Since his re-election as President of the United States in 2025, Donald Trump has been waging a major offensive against the fight against climate change. This policy has notably led to the dismantling of the legal foundations of climate regulation as well as the weakening of several federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (Duffau, 2025).

Beyond the FIMI matrix, other actors are also emerging as conduits for United States climate disinformation, without necessarily falling into the four identified categories. In this regard, the distinctive nature of climate disinformation in the United States also stems from the significant support it receives from private-sector actors. It relies on a network of think tanks, such as The Heartland Institute, a conservative and libertarian think tank with links to Donald Trump's administration (Horton et al., 2025). This organisation receives funding from companies such as ExxonMobil and from Republican donors. It disseminates openly climate-sceptical, even climate-denialist, statements, describing, for example, climate change as 'fake news' (The Heartland Institute, 2017). The Heartland Institute is expanding its influence in Europe through the opening of an office in London in 2024, which enables it to coordinate campaigns against environmental policies by working directly with certain members of the European Parliament (Horton et al., 2025). Other think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation, also help to give climate scepticism and denialism an international reach (Trippenbach, 2025).

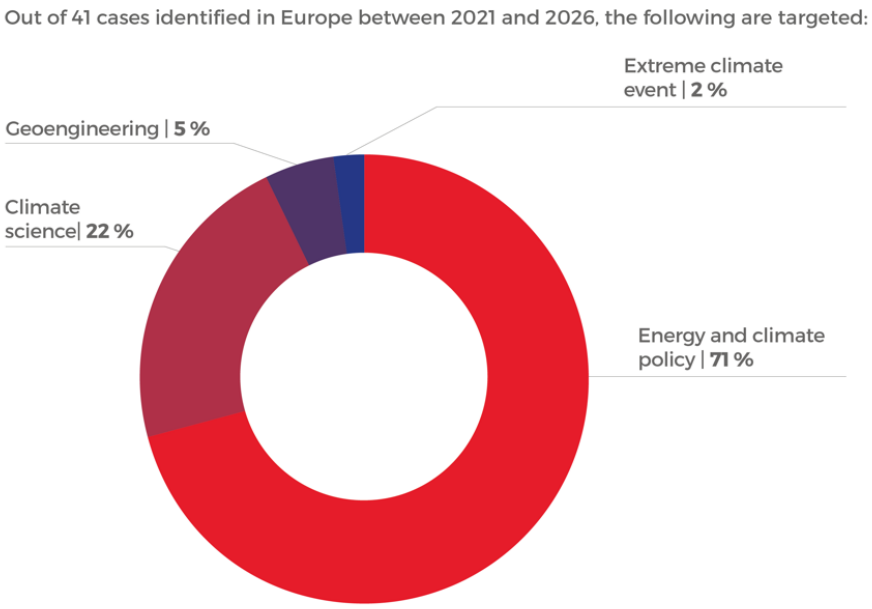
Box 1: An attention economy that fuels climate disinformation

The business models of major digital companies, or 'Big Tech', particularly those hosting social media platforms such as X, TikTok or Meta, encourage climate disinformation. On the one hand, this is due to the platforms' revenue from advertising by various stakeholders, notably the fossil fuel industry. Indeed, this visibility allows these actors to promote narratives that favour them, for example by describing fossil fuels as low-carbon energy sources (CAAD, 2024). On the other hand, climate disinformation can also be explained by user remuneration mechanisms. Indeed, content creators, whether they are pundits or influencers, for example, are paid based on the number of views. However, viral and sensationalist content attracts a larger audience and is therefore favoured by recommendation algorithms, contributing to the radicalisation of positions (Jaffray, 2025; Margraff, 2024). This tends to sideline nuanced, complex and rigorously substantiated content in favour of simplistic, erroneous or even misleading content. For example, on Twitter, false information is 70% more likely to be shared than true information (Vosoughi et al., 2018). As such, extreme weather events are often sources of disinformation, such as wildfires: these are increasingly linked to conspiracy theories concerning geoengineering and plans implemented by governments or 'elites' (CAAD, 2024), as was the case with the Maui fires in Hawaii in 2023. Elon Musk's acquisition of the X platform in 2022 has also benefited disinformation actors, who can now pay to obtain the 'blue tick', conferring an appearance of legitimacy through a form of 'verified misinformation' (NewsGuard, 2023). Furthermore, the new, more lenient moderation rules allow them to spread misleading narratives on a large scale, particularly in the name of freedom of expression (see Part 2).

2. The main narratives employed by the United States

Of the 41 identified cases of climate disinformation originating in the United States, **71% focus on European energy and climate policies**, whilst around 22% attack climate science, 5% target geoengineering, and 2% focus on extreme weather events.

Figure 10: Main topics of United States climate disinformation in Europe



Source: IRIS compilation (ECCO, Media Matters, New Climate Institute).

3. Analysis of the potential objectives of United States climate disinformation

Donald Trump's return to the White House in January 2025 marks a profound transformation in the government's approach to information. In terms of foreign policy, this re-election signifies a shift in the nature of the United States' leadership, moving away from a strategy of soft power (Nye, 1990) [32], inherited from the Cold War, towards a strategy of sharp power, that is, a state's ability to 'pierce, penetrate, or perforate the information and political environments in the targeted countries', to undermine their democratic principles (Walker and Ludwig, 2017). This paradigm shift is particularly evident in the information sphere, through the concept of 'algorithmic sharp power'[33] (Quessard, 2025). This strategic shift manifests itself in form–through a strengthening of ties between the state and a mutually aligned private sector–and in substance, through disinformation on certain specific topics, such as vaccines or the climate. The case of the United States thus highlights the fact that

[32] See definition in the glossary.
[33] Maud Quessard explains that 'It is within this framework that we are witnessing a shift from soft power towards what Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig call sharp power: a 'sharp' informational power, often manipulative and coercive, which undermines institutions and weakens countervailing powers' (2025, p.21).

certain countries, traditionally not perceived as adversaries, are resorting to uninhibited information offensives to promote their interests at the expense of those of Europe and France (Chauvancy, 2025).

Indeed, the United States is not generally perceived as a FIMI actor for several reasons. On the one hand, research in this field focuses mainly on actors such as China and Russia, to whom 35% of disinformation cases were attributed by the EEAS in 2025 (EEAS, 2026). Unlike in the case of Russia, the data available on United States disinformation remains limited. This shortfall is explained by a lesser tendency to perceive this disinformation as a threat, or as part of a broader strategy–even though certain civil society organisations are carrying out this mapping work[34]. Furthermore, the very recent nature of the new administration's information posture–less than two years–still makes it difficult to establish a monitoring system and leaves little time for researchers to adapt their theoretical tools to this new information environment targeting climate change[35]. On the other hand, interference is often associated with a clandestine nature, whereas this concept, according to the EEAS's official definition, does not systematically rely on the notion of concealment (see Part 1): actions involving the manipulation of information carried out openly can thus also be classified as foreign interference. Thus, although the case of the United States cannot be understood in the same way as the Russian case, **the quantity and diversity of channels–and therefore of intermediaries–involved in disseminating the current administration's positions on climate change to Europe make this analytical framework relevant** for understanding the mechanisms of U.S.-origin climate disinformation. The case of the United States thus serves to illustrate other factors explaining how climate disinformation can manifest itself.

Analysis of the collected data allows us to formulate the hypothesis that **the objectives of United States climate disinformation constitute, as in the case of Russia, an end in themselves–aimed at slowing down the ecological and energy transition–whilst also serving as an ideological tool**. Indeed, given that 71% of climate disinformation originating in the United States targets European energy and climate policies, it is possible to formulate the hypothesis that, like Russia, the current administration appears to be seeking to maintain, or even strengthen, global dependence on fossil fuels. As the world's leading producer of oil and gas in 2023 (IEA, 2023), the United States has, since the discovery of the first oil well in Pennsylvania in 1859, had a history closely linked to fossil fuels. The rise of major oil companies has been progressively accompanied by a lasting intertwining of fossil fuel economic interests and political power[36] . However, certain American oil companies, including ExxonMobil[37], had,

[34] For example, the global coalition *Climate Action Against Disinformation*, the media watchdog NGO *Media Matters* in the United States, or the *EFCSN* consortium, which brings together the main European fact-checking bodies.

[35] Furthermore, certain structural constraints weigh on the academic world: many scientists maintain close ties with the United States (funding, grants, academic partnerships), which can hinder the expression of open criticism, at the risk of being sidelined or marginalised within academic networks. Nevertheless, as in the Russian case, it is possible to distinguish between two forms of climate disinformation: as an end in itself and as a means to an end.

[36] This closeness is illustrated in two ways. Internationally, in the 20th century, the United States' interventions in the Middle East can be interpreted through the prism of access to and securing fossil fuels, as in Iran in 1953 (Sergie, 2026). Nationally, there is a logic of mutually beneficial exchanges: whilst oil companies fund the election campaigns of certain candidates, particularly Republicans, and lobbying efforts in Congress, successive administrations, both Republican and Democratic, grant substantial subsidies to the industry, amounting to $20.5 billion in 2017 in the United States (Noor, 2025).

[37] The *Climatefiles* database brings together archives from various sources, documenting in particular how companies in the oil and gas industry have addressed climate change (Climatefiles, n.d.).

as early as the 1970s, or even the 1950s, precise knowledge of the consequences of the greenhouse effect linked to the consumption of fossil fuels and the associated rise in temperatures[38] (Supran et al., 2023; Climate Files, n.d.). Despite this, industry players deliberately contributed to denying these phenomena and sowing doubt in the public sphere, through the manipulation of climate information via intermediary bodies (academic institutions, the media, think tanks, etc.) (Oreskes and Conway, 2010). They rely on 'merchants of doubt', a concept theorised by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway to illustrate how fossil fuel lobbies, and industrial lobbies more broadly, have artificially created doubt around climate change (ibid.) by funding researchers and scientists to generate scientific controversy. **Thus, government climate disinformation today is a continuation of strategies historically developed by the private sector**. These dynamics were reinforced under the Trump presidency, marked by close ties between politicians and private interests, particularly from the fossil fuel industry. In the run-up to his election, the Republican candidate received substantial financial support from the oil and gas industry, which spent at least $445 million on his campaign (Climate Power, 2024). This pro-fossil fuel stance is also part of an electoral strategy promoting a pro-oil and gas extraction narrative, epitomised by the slogan 'Drill, baby, drill'[39]. The international implications of this campaign stance became apparent from the outset of his term, during which energy exports were used as a bargaining chip (Nedophil, 2025). Indeed, in the context of trade tensions in 2025 between the United States and its economic partners[40], the United States has made certain defence guarantees and commercial access to its market conditional on the purchase of American fossil fuels. The EU is reported to have committed to importing up to $700 billion worth of energy – even though the framework of the agreement has remained vague (Deseille, 2026).

At the intersection of this desire for energy dominance and information warfare strategies lies United States climate disinformation. This manifests itself in openly climate-sceptical behaviour within the current administration, driven by the highest levels of the executive and integrated into both public discourse and policy choices. This disinformation is not confined to the domestic sphere and is, moreover, part of a logic of geopolitical confrontation, particularly vis-à-vis the EU, whose climate policies are explicitly delegitimised. The 2025 National Security Strategy presents climate change and decarbonisation policies as 'disastrous ideologies that have severely harmed Europe, threaten the United States and subsidise [its] adversaries' (2025, p.14), thereby equating European climate action with a strategic threat to the country. The Trump administration is therefore directly

[38] Other companies are involved, mainly American ones such as Shell (Franta, 2018), BP and Chevron (Noor, 2025), but also the major French group Total (Bonneuil et al., 2021).

[39] Donald Trump is also addressing his electoral base, which is predominantly drawn from regions affected by deindustrialisation and the decline in manufacturing jobs, such as the Midwest. This rhetoric is inextricably linked to opposition to environmental policies, which are frequently portrayed as responsible for job losses and industrial decline. The downplaying or even denial of climate change thus stems, for a section of Donald Trump's electorate, from an association between environmentalism, environmental regulation and deindustrialisation. By promising to expand the exploitation of oil and gas reserves and to remove restrictions on this industry (Noor, 2025), he appeals to an economic and identity-based narrative, in which questioning the climate emergency appears to be a prerequisite for industrial recovery and national prosperity.

[40] Since January 2025, Donald Trump's protectionist policy has taken the form of increased tariffs on the majority of countries exporting to the United States. Unprecedented in its scale and the speed of its implementation, this rise in customs duties targeted China, but also the United States' close partners (Canada, Mexico).

targeting European climate regulations: in this regard, United States Ambassador to the EU Andrew Pulzner has publicly described the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) [41] as 'economic suicide' for Europe (ECCO, 2025). Such rhetoric aims to weaken European energy and climate policies (ibid.). Challenging the Green Deal aligns with the United States' policy on the use of fossil fuels. It is therefore possible to hypothesise that this dynamic also contributes to maintaining, or even reinforcing, European dependence on imports from the United States, particularly of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Indeed, the United States supplied 58% of Europe's LNG in 2025 (Concillium, n.d.). Conversely, an energy transition would promote greater strategic and energy autonomy for Europe (Lentschig et al., 2026, p.13).

Another hypothesis that can be put forward to identify the underlying motivations behind climate disinformation lies in its ideological dimension. Contemporary climate disinformation in the United States is also a tool serving conservative and reactionary American ideologies[42] embodied by Donald Trump (Collomb, 2014). In fact, climate change is frequently invoked by these ideologies due to its complex and cross-cutting nature. As technical issues, climate matters require specialist expertise. As transnational issues, they call for a global response (Bentolila et al., 2023; White, 2023). These elements come into conflict with the principles of popular agency[43] or national sovereignty championed by populist rhetoric (Duffau et al., 2025). Consequently, the perception of climate-related issues as technocratic and restrictive, grounded in science and requiring a cooperative approach, makes them a prime target. Climate disinformation is thus rooted in an ideological framework that facilitates its spread and benefits from the support of a diverse range of actors sharing this vision, both political and economic (Sethi, 2026).

Furthermore, research in the cultural history of the United States sheds light on the susceptibility of certain segments of American society to climate disinformation. Described by the historian Richard Hofstadter as marked by a 'paranoid style'[44], this political culture has historically been characterised by strong polarisation and heightened susceptibility to disinformation and conspiracy theories. Indeed, this 'paranoia' manifests itself within several fringe groups through discourses involving mistrust of institutions or belief in a hidden conspiracy (Hofstadter, 1964). In the contemporary context, these dynamics are amplified by media and digital ecosystems, which fuel polarisation and confirmation bias. Thus, current trends favour the persistence of conspiracy thinking in American political life (Gong et

[41] The European Union's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), which came into force in July 2024, aims to 'promote sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour', by ensuring that they 'identify and address adverse impacts on human rights and the environment' associated with their activities (European Commission, 2024).
[42] See definition in the glossary.
[43] In the United States, populist rhetoric presents climate policy as interference by the elite against the people. By emphasising the need for an immediate response to the emergency, debates on climate action are sometimes conducted without public consultation, leading to a perceived disconnect from the real needs of the population (Duffau et al., 2025).
[44] In the 1960s, a seminal essay by Richard Hofstadter examined the influence of conspiracy theories in the United States. Tracing several episodes in the country's history, the historian shows that this 'paranoid style' is a recurring mode of expression in American political life, characterised by a sense of apocalyptic urgency and a belief in vast secret conspiracies (Hofstadter, 1964).

al., 2026), which provides fertile ground for the development of disinformation related to climate change, a phenomenon we refer to as 'climate conspiracy theory'.

C. Typology of climate disinformation from Russia and the United States: similarities and differences

As illustrated by the cases of Russia and the United States, there is a diversity of channels, narratives and objectives in foreign-origin climate disinformation targeting Europe. Nevertheless, certain similarities can be observed. In terms of objectives, in both cases the disinformation primarily targets European climate and energy policies, often attacking renewable energy. The primary targets are also mainly European institutions. These analyses therefore suggest that this climate disinformation is used to cast doubt on climate change and associated mitigation policies, from a primarily economic perspective, with the aim of maximising the use of fossil fuels.

However, certain differences emerge in their respective approaches. Although Russia and the United States predominantly disseminate disinformation covertly, a notable difference lies in the channels used: in the United States, overt disinformation is relayed through official state channels, whereas in Russia, it is disseminated mainly through state-controlled media. Thus, overt United States climate disinformation appears more direct and confrontational than Russian climate disinformation, which seems more indirect. Furthermore, in the context of tensions with Europe, Russia appears motivated by a desire to destabilise the European continent through the strategic use of climate disinformation. Conversely, in the United States, climate disinformation is more part of an ideological approach, characterised by more direct stances. Furthermore, the United States' policy of erasing climate data can be described as 'black noise', referring to a desire to erase the information itself (Briggs, 2025). This suppression strategy differs from the Russian approach. Indeed, Russia favours a 'white noise' approach (Sadeghi, 2025), which involves saturating the information space with false information. This approach increases the visibility of misleading narratives and facilitates their dissemination, particularly through their integration into artificial intelligence systems such as chatbots (ibid.). Finally, other actors also target Europe, albeit to a lesser extent. For example, it would appear that China employs climate disinformation as part of foreign interference efforts targeting not only Europe, but primarily other regions, notably South-East Asia.

Box 2: Chinese climate disinformation: a covert defensive strategy not solely targeting Europe

China's perception of climate change has evolved considerably over time. Initially, China was reluctant to embrace the concept of 'sustainable development', which it associated with a Western worldview (Dahan, 2021). However, since the 2010s, climate change has tended to be seen as an opportunity for leadership within the framework of climate multilateralism (Liu, 2025; Maréchal, 2021). China has developed the concept of 'ecological civilisation' as an alternative to 'sustainable development' in order to promote green development tailored to the Chinese model (Monjon et al., 2024). This focus on climate change has become more important since the United States' withdrawal from climate issues during Donald Trump's first and then second presidencies, which helped create a vacuum that China is now working to fill (Bruch et al., 2025).

This shift is reflected in a change in Chinese narratives surrounding climate issues: they no longer deny climate change or its human-induced origins but rather seek to defend their own approach to addressing and managing these climate changes to bolster their political legitimacy (Frost et al., 2025). In this sense, Chinese climate disinformation is more defensive in nature, employing Information Manipulation Set (IMS), techniques and processes that are more subtle and implicit than those observed in the Russian case, and resembling influence or propaganda rather than interference. This approach to climate disinformation is thus more complex to identify and may partly explain the limited data available to date on this phenomenon, as well as the limitations of the FIMI matrix in detecting it.

China's information warfare forms part of its foreign policy of opposition to Western hegemony, which it perceives as illegitimate (Ekman, 2025). As such, the objectives of Chinese climate disinformation–whether economic, diplomatic or strategic–vary according to the targeted areas, with different narratives depending on the regions concerned (see below).

Overall, it can be established that contemporary Chinese climate disinformation is driven both by the economic opportunities offered by decarbonisation strategies and by the associated diplomatic stakes. Indeed, China, often described as an 'electrostate' due to its dominance of the value chains for many critical minerals (Jeannin et al., 2025), has for over a decade been developing an industrial policy structured around emerging and strategic sectors, notably decarbonised energy and digital technology (Seaman, 2025). On the diplomatic front, it is leveraging climate issues to improve its international image and strengthen its soft power–which has been particularly true since Donald Trump's arrival in the White House (Maréchal, 2021). This strategy is part of a broader drive for greater economic and political integration in Africa, linked to the Belt and Road Initiative.

But climate disinformation can also serve broader objectives. In Taiwan, for example, some climate disinformation is based on climate-sceptical narratives concerning adaptation and mitigation solutions[45], particularly renewable energy (Liu et al., 2025). Although there is little existing data to identify the origin of this content, the sources frequently originate from the Chinese-speaking cyberspace (ibid.). The dissemination of these narratives thus serves to delay action against climate change (see Part 1).

Chinese climate disinformation in Europe is characterised by an approach that is more discreet than that of the United States, and less aggressive than Russia's, seeking to subtly shape information spaces (Chauvancy, 2025). This takes the form of influence campaigns that seek to amplify propaganda defending its own policies (Lee Meyers et al., 2023). The disinformation relies on both state structures (embassies, official social media accounts, etc.) and non-state actors, such as private public relations agencies (EEAS, 2025). It takes the form of a narrative that downplays China's responsibility for climate change and emphasises the historical responsibility of Western countries (Lee Meyers et al., 2023; Maréchal, 2021). Chinese climate disinformation specifically targets leading figures in the fight against climate change, such as Greta Thunberg, whom it seeks to discredit by attributing false statements to her (Liu, 2025), a technique also employed by Russia.

However, since 2019, there has been a noticeable intensification of Chinese FIMI operations (Chandra and Navarre Chao, 2023; EEAS, 2025)–as illustrated by large-scale campaigns such as Operation Paperwall (EUvsDisinfo, 2024; EEAS, 2025). **It is therefore possible to anticipate, through the intensification of Chinese disinformation–particularly regarding climate issues–a convergence in Chinese and Russian tactics, techniques and procedures.** Thus, despite the absence of formal coordination between China and Russia, certain points of convergence can be identified (Senate, 2024). This was notably the case during the fires in Hawaii in August 2023, when false information circulated claiming that these fires were not of natural origin but resulted from the use of a 'climate weapon' (Lee Meyers et al., 2023; Hsu, 2023). Russia also exploited this extreme weather event by highlighting the scale of the United States' spending abroad, at the expense of protecting its own citizens affected by the fires. This was also the case during the floods in Spain in 2024, where, in addition to Russian climate disinformation, China is also said to have been involved in influence operations, notably by inciting the Spanish people to overthrow their government in the wake of the floods, or by impersonating a human rights organisation, *Safeguard Defenders*, on social media (Graphika, 2025). Thus, foreign countries can disseminate similar narratives, particularly in their criticism of the United States and Europe.

[45] See definitions in the glossary.

PART 3

SECURITY REPERCUSSIONS OF CLIMATE DISINFORMATION: STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The third section provides an analysis of the consequences of foreign-origin climate disinformation in Europe. More specifically, it examines the security implications of the effects associated with the manipulation of climate information, although the precise attribution of a consequence to a specific instance of disinformation remains complex.

The consequences of climate disinformation–which are not specific to disinformation of foreign origin but apply to all types of climate disinformation, including at the domestic level–are multi-faceted. They are of a social nature: climate disinformation fuels the crisis of reliable information on climate and environmental issues (IPIE, 2025). This in turn reinforces the public's lack of preparedness and awareness of the effects of climate change, reducing their risk culture[46], which exacerbates their climate vulnerabilities[47]. Climate disinformation also has political effects: it contributes to polarising societies, fuelling public mistrust of public institutions. These consequences are also economic: whilst the annual cost of climate change mitigation policies is estimated at 1% of gross domestic product (GDP), climate inaction is estimated to represent a loss of 5 to 20% of global GDP each year (Ministry for Ecological Transition, 2023). Finally, climate disinformation has security implications, through its effects on the armed forces. This section will focus specifically on these security implications and the associated cascading risks at the strategic and operational levels for the armed forces, as well as the existing mechanisms for addressing these challenges[48].

A. Strategic consequences: climate disinformation as a risk to military preparedness to climate change

The consequences of climate disinformation for the armed forces are particularly evident at the strategic level, as illustrated by the case of the United States, where the armed forces are directly impacted.

Historically, the United States armed forces have been pioneers in integrating climate change into defence issues. As early as the 1990s, these issues were identified as a threat to national security, with impacts at the strategic, operational and capability levels. They were thus described as a 'catalyst for conflict' (CNA Advisory Board, 2014). Several extreme weather events have highlighted the military's vulnerability to climate change. As early as 1992, Hurricane Andrew damaged military infrastructure (Krausmann and Tavares da Costa, 2021). More recently, in October 2018, Hurricane Michael struck Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida, overturning fighter jets and damaging more than 600 buildings. In 2019, flooding from the Missouri River inundated Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska (Conger and Sikorsky, 2022). Forest fires regularly lead to the evacuation of bases in California, notably certain areas of Camp Pendleton and Beale Air Force Base in 2021 (ibid.). Beyond the physical impacts on its own

[46] See definition in the glossary.
[47] Ibid.
[48] This section offers a non-exhaustive analysis of the operational consequences for the armed forces and would benefit from being supplemented by an internal study based on lessons learnt from the forces involved.

infrastructure, the United States military has been mobilised, since 2022, in more than 230 climate-related emergencies (Alexander, 2025). Aware of these impacts, the Pentagon has implemented response strategies to address this threat, notably by integrating climate issues into its doctrines, as evidenced by the Department of Defense Climate Adaptation Plan, or by creating tools to assess the Department of Defense's vulnerability and exposure to climate change (U.S. Department of Defense, 2021).

However, since Donald Trump's return to the White House, his administration has called this approach into question. This is manifested in a downgrading of climate security[49], notably through cuts to funding for climate research or the scrapping of strategic documents such as the Ministry's adaptation plan (Alexander, 2025), which since September 2025 has become the Department of War. This paradigm shift is underpinned by climate disinformation, particularly climate scepticism and climate denial. For example, the Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth described concerns about the climate crisis on X as 'climate change crap (Makuch, 2025). In March 2025, a department document announced, among other things, the 'elimination of the 'climate distraction', specifying that 'Climate change related considerations are unrelated to the Department's mission'[50] (U.S. Department of Defense, 2025). This document specifies that no mention should be made of climate change, that officials must 'remove all references to climate change and related subjects from mission statements', and that no budget or programme should be allocated to these issues (ibid.). Although it is difficult to attribute these changes to climate disinformation, particularly of foreign origin, it can be established that climate disinformation contributes to this shift in stance.

At the strategic level, the consequences of this new policy are considerable. The removal of climate and scientific data, at federal level or within military institutions, reduces the armed forces' ability to anticipate their exposure to climate risks, thereby creating a significant strategic oversight (Le Monde, 2025). The preparedness of the armed forces is thus severely weakened: this risks undermining planning strategies in the short, medium and long term, by obscuring the fact that certain equipment, missions or theatres of operations will be affected by climate change (Alexandre, 2025). The omission of climate data and the failure to account for its effects on the armed forces thus complicates the implementation of appropriate responses, which may even lead to inappropriate decisions–as in the case of FEMA, whose future is currently being called into question (Ellison, 2026). However, climate scepticism or climate denial does not eliminate the effects of climate change, which will continue to disrupt the armed forces. Thus, failing to take climate change into account in military strategies could constitute a major strategic vulnerability.

Finally, the consequences of removing this data would not be limited to the United States. Indeed, models from the United States produce data used by many other countries and are also essential to global climate governance–at the IPCC, for example. Budget cuts at NASA or NOAA, one of the world's

[49] A concept referring to the consideration of the impact of climate change on the strategic context and geopolitical balances, the missions of the armed forces and their means of implementation, as well as the resulting anticipatory and adaptive measures (Ministry of the Armed Forces Climate Defence Strategy, 2022).
[50] 'Elimination of "Climate" Distraction. "Climate change" related considerations are unrelated to the Department's mission.'

leading climate monitoring agencies (Duffau, 2025), are already having repercussions in Europe, particularly on the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), which is facing a reduction in the data available to feed into its own forecasts (Sud-Ouest, 2026).

B. Operational consequences: direct and indirect repercussions of climate disinformation on humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations

The operational consequences of climate disinformation are primarily manifested through the manipulation of information during meteorological and climatic hazards. The two case studies below illustrate the impacts of foreign-origin climate disinformation during extreme weather events, and the subsequent repercussions on the armed forces.

Case study 1: The DANA phenomenon and flooding in Spain (2024) – Disinformation with direct and indirect repercussions for the armed forces.

As mentioned in Part 1, the DANA phenomenon, which caused catastrophic flooding in southern and eastern Spain in December 2024, gave rise to a significant wave of disinformation, partly attributed to the Russian Information Manipulation Set (IMS) (Maldita, 30 October 2024).

Of the hundred or so pieces of misleading content identified, the majority relate to the cause of the floods or the death toll resulting from the disaster. However, several instances of disinformation are directly linked to the armed forces. This false information often targets or exploits the Military Emergency Units (UME), or Unidad Militar de Emergencias in Spanish, a regiment of the Spanish Armed Forces created in 2005 to respond to emergency situations, such as fires, floods or pandemics. During the floods of 2024, a rumour claimed that hundreds of bodies had been found in the car park of a shopping centre in Aldaia. This rumour, which circulated widely on social media, also claimed that the UME and the National Police were concealing victims (Maldita, 8 November 2024; Hernandez, 2026). The public authorities subsequently stated that there was no evidence to support these claims and that no deaths had been recorded at that commercial centre. Another rumour also circulated, alleging that the central government was preventing military personnel from coming to the aid of the Valencian Community to destabilise the regional government (EDMO, 2024). No evidence supported these claims. Whilst the Valencian Community requested military support on 31 October, 500 soldiers were deployed the very next day, joining the 1,205 members of the UME already mobilised on the ground at the government's request since 29 October. Other rumours targeted foreign armies, attributing responsibility for the floods to the Moroccan army (ibid.). **By directly targeting armed forces–whether national or foreign–this disinformation fuels mistrust between emergency response teams, including the armed forces, and the public.**

Climate disinformation also contributed to complicating the operations of civil protection forces and the armed forces. A false emergency number was circulated by accounts claiming that the 112 emergency number was unavailable following Storm DANA and redirecting callers to another number

(Maldita, 30 October 2024). The Emergency Coordination Centre quickly confirmed that this information was false and that the 112 number was working correctly. Furthermore, fake messages purporting to be from the Spanish Meteorological Agency (AEMET) circulated, urging recipients to click on a link to download the Agency's official app (ibid.). This text message actually originated from unidentified cybercriminals impersonating the AEMET. Other reports also falsely claimed that certain areas were flooded (ibid.). The main consequence of this false information is that it obscures access to reliable data for the public: as a result, the public risks adopting inappropriate behaviour, which can therefore exacerbate the situation. **Consequently, climate disinformation contributes to complicating the operational conditions in which civil protection forces and the armed forces operate.**

Case study 2: Hurricane Helene in Florida (2024) – Disinformation directly targeting civil security forces and the armed forces during disaster relief operations

In September 2024, north-west Florida was hit by a hurricane of unprecedented strength for the region–classified as a Category 4 out of 5, with winds exceeding 225 km/h, it brought torrential rain, flooding and tornadoes–resulting in the deaths of 65 people. Hurricane Milton, a Category 3 storm, struck the region again two weeks later, causing 16 deaths. These events were exploited by Russia, which is alleged to have amplified the spread of online disinformation through media outlets and social media accounts controlled by or linked to the Russian state (ISD, 24 October 2024).

A significant proportion of the disinformation during these hurricanes focused on the government's failures in assisting the population, as well as on the allocation of aid (which was allegedly prioritised for foreigners and migrants rather than national citizens). Such content seeks to amplify public discontent with the United States government and the Biden administration (ISD, 8 October 2024). In particular, this strategy involves the Russian state establishing a link between the perceived inability of the state to assist affected populations and public support for Ukraine, suggesting mismanagement and misallocation of resources (ISD, 24 October 2024). The fires in Maui, Hawaii, in August 2023, had already been exploited in this way by foreign actors, who also claimed that the United States government was prioritising aid to Ukraine at the expense of affected American populations (ibid.). **Some of the disinformation also focused on the relief mechanisms themselves**, notably the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a United States government body responsible for supporting the public in emergencies. A widely circulated narrative claimed that the $750 in aid granted to hurricane victims was not a grant, but a loan that would subsequently allow the government to seize the victims' property (ISD, 8 October 2024). This false information was refuted by FEMA. Federal forces were also the target of threats, with some accounts calling for militias to be sent against FEMA agents, or even to injure or shoot agency officials (ibid.). However, civil security forces are not the only ones targeted by disinformation. **The United States National Guard–a military reserve force–also found itself at the centre of false reports** claiming that helicopters were deliberately attempting to destroy aid intended for victims in North Carolina. The National Guard subsequently refuted these claims, using a video to show that the helicopter in question was in fact attempting to deliver a generator to a local

civil organisation to power its equipment distribution site. **Such disinformation contributes to exacerbating already complex situations, and may even trigger new crises**. For example, due to threats and incitement to violence directed at FEMA, aid to several communities affected by Hurricane Helene was temporarily suspended (Segal, 2024). Furthermore, disinformation or conspiracy theories can lead to a reluctance among the population to seek assistance (King et al., 2026; Aton et al., 2024), thereby significantly increasing the vulnerability of communities.

These two case studies illustrate the short-term operational consequences of climate disinformation. More specifically, they highlight two distinct ways in which civil protection forces and the armed forces, as well as vulnerable populations, can be affected by disinformation in the context of disaster relief operations. Firstly, directly, when they become the target of false information. Secondly, indirectly, by complicating operational conditions, insofar as this false information can provoke inappropriate behaviour in certain individuals, thereby mobilising additional resources and equipment. Indeed, during an extreme weather event, disinformation–whether spread by individuals or bots–contributes to a 40% reduction in the reach of emergency messages (ibid.). It can make the operational response less effective and dilute the efforts of the security forces, who must simultaneously focus on refuting the false information.

Over a longer time scale, it is also possible to identify the consequences of climate disinformation on the armed forces, both upstream and downstream of extreme weather events. Upstream, climate disinformation can reduce the effectiveness of policies designed to prevent and prepare for such events. For example, false information may encourage people to settle in high-risk areas (King et al., 2026), where climate hazards are more likely to occur as a climate-related disaster. Downstream, climate disinformation can contribute to the erosion of trust in the long term, not only between the public and the government, but also between the public and emergency response services, whether civilian or military.

Finally, in addition to the operational consequences of climate disinformation for the armed forces in the context of disaster relief operations, these consequences could also be highlighted through external operations. Indeed, in certain theatres of operations, the armed forces are the target of aggressive disinformation campaigns, particularly in Africa where the activities of the *Africa Corps* group, as an extension of the Wagner ecosystem, are accompanied by social media campaigns aimed at weakening French and Western influence (Arduino, 2024). These influence operations also incorporate environmental and climate data for destabilisation purposes. However, access to this information remains limited, making it difficult to identify cases of disinformation and assess the consequences associated with climate disinformation.

C. Partial consideration of climate disinformation at the European and French levels

Climate disinformation of foreign origin is given little consideration in broader measures to combat information integrity issues and manipulation. It is, however, indirectly incorporated into other approaches: whilst the EU adopts a regulatory approach, the fight against climate disinformation in France relies primarily on an analytical approach to the information space, supplemented by a response strategy.

At European level, the main mechanism for combating disinformation is the Digital Services Act (DSA). Adopted by the EU in August 2023, this regulation aims to regulate the activities of digital services and combat the dissemination of unlawful or harmful content (racism, child pornography, disinformation) or illegal products (drugs, counterfeit goods) (Representation in France, 2025). In force since February 2024, this regulation sets out a set of rules to hold digital platforms accountable and enhance transparency. Twenty-five entities are subject to the strictest obligations, notably the very large platforms (Facebook, Google, X, TikTok, LinkedIn, Instagram, Shein, WhatsApp, YouTube, etc.) and major online search engines. **Under this regulation, disinformation is recognised as a systemic risk that operators must assess and mitigate**. In practice, very large platforms must assess how their algorithms and the malicious use of their services through fake accounts, bots, automated behaviour, or coordinated breaches of terms of service, could contribute to the mass dissemination of illegal content or disinformation campaigns. The DSA also encourages platforms to adopt voluntary codes of conduct on combating illegal content and on systemic risks to democracy, such as disinformation (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2022**). Climate disinformation is not, however, specifically mentioned in the DSA**. Nevertheless, to complement this system of regulation, the European Commission launched the *Climate Facts Matter* campaign in January 2026, in partnership with specialist organisations, to strengthen societal resilience to disinformation. These actions combine awareness-raising, factchecking and the development of media literacy, in a context where nearly one in two Europeans report having difficulty distinguishing reliable information from misleading content on climate change. The objective is twofold: to better inform citizens, whilst reducing the impact of climate disinformation on public policy and support for environmental measures (European Commission, n.d.). **Attention to climate disinformation therefore remains limited and, at European level, focuses on raising awareness, even though various regulatory frameworks appear to be taking shape.**

Furthermore, at the European level, restrictive measures are also being put in place against actors found to be spreading disinformation. At the diplomatic level, for example, the EU has taken action to limit the spread of false information of foreign origin. Indeed, following the Russian offensive in Ukraine in February 2022, the broadcasting of Russian media outlets such as Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik was banned within the EU by a decision of the Council of the EU (Council of the European Union, 2022). This ban applied to all broadcasters, including television channels and online platforms. Consequently, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok and X are required to block access to content produced by

these channels. However, it would appear that links, images and videos from these channels continue to be present on certain platforms (Hemery et al., 2025).

In France, VIGINUM is the main body combating foreign digital interference that undermines the nation's fundamental interests. Its primary mission is to analyse and identify these hostile digital operations by foreign actors. VIGINUM's analysis of the information landscape adopts an operational analytical framework: it does not focus on narratives or themes, but on the actors and their Information Manipulation Set (IMS) (SGDSN, 2022). More specifically, VIGINUM analyses the digital information ecosystems of foreign actors who interfere in the French public debate with the aim of disrupting it. VIGINUM does not include climate change or environmental issues within its analytical framework, as no Information Manipulation Set (IMS) targeting France and relying exclusively on climate-related themes has been identified. However, these issues are a subject of public debate: VIGINUM recognises that these issues can be exploited in the context of information manipulation operations, as they are a central theme of public debate and have a strong capacity to unite or divide different communities. As such, climate change is analysed as a theme that can be exploited by actors posing an information threat. **The French approach to combating disinformation also stands out for its communicational 'counter-response' strategy.** Indeed, since 2025, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs has decided to respond to mis- and disinformation directly through the creation of an X account named 'French Response' (MEAE, 2023). This account adopts the conventions of the internet and social media to respond to false information in a humorous yet factual manner. It addresses topics related to climate and environmental disinformation, as well as energy issues. For example, on 17 April, Donald Trump claimed that energy security required an increase in fossil fuel purchases in the United States and the exploitation of the North Sea. In response, the *French Response* account challenged this claim by emphasising that energy independence did not depend on increased imports (X, 2026).

Thus, although foreign-origin climate disinformation remains marginal within these various frameworks, it is nonetheless integrated not as an end, but as an additional vector of destabilisation. Indeed, whilst the EU primarily adopts a regulatory approach, France is developing a more analytical understanding of the information space, complemented by a counter-narrative strategy. These institutional approaches combine both proactive measures, aimed at preventing the spread of disinformation, and reactive measures, consisting of countering it once it has entered the information space.

Other measures can also be implemented to ensure greater resilience against foreign-origin climate disinformation. It is essential to continue climate action at the national level. Indeed, in countries where governments and political parties actively support climate change mitigation efforts, the effects of foreign-origin climate disinformation appear to be less pronounced (Chatterjee et al., 2023).

Finally, regarding the consequences of climate disinformation for the armed forces, there are few mechanisms in France to address the operational implications of this phenomenon. However, certain initiatives implemented by other organisations illustrate possible approaches to tackling disinformation during emergency relief operations. For example, in the United States, FEMA has

introduced various tools to combat disinformation. It regularly publishes fact sheets related to extreme weather events, and maintains a page dedicated to rumours circulating about disasters (FEMA, n.d.). Such measures could also be implemented at the level of European countries.

Thus, numerous frameworks already exist at the French and European levels to combat disinformation, but they need to be strengthened. Efforts should also be continued in other areas, particularly in the fight against climate change, or by consolidating restrictive measures against certain countries, thereby reducing the exposure of populations to foreign-origin climate disinformation. Finally, it is also a question of developing new mechanisms to address specific risks, particularly regarding the growing spread of disinformation in the event of meteorological and climate hazards.

PART 4

FORESIGHT SCENARIOS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Scenario 1: 2032–New Caledonia under pressure from a multifaceted disinformation campaign

In the spring of 2032, a water crisis in New Caledonia is exploited by external actors as part of a disinformation campaign using environmental, security, climate and anti-colonial narratives. This crisis shakes the institutional and social fabric of the archipelago and affects France's regional diplomacy, prompting the country to launch an institutional review to strengthen its information strategy.

In 2032, New Caledonia records an average annual temperature rise of 1.5°C compared to the pre-industrial era (IPCC SSP2-4.5), which disrupts the archipelago's hydrological cycle. The densely populated coastline also faces erosion linked to rising sea levels (between 5mm and 11mm per year in the Western Pacific). A climate and environmental state of emergency was declared in 2024 by the local authorities, but the measures taken are insufficient. These climate-related vulnerabilities exacerbate the difficulties facing the archipelago, which is already grappling with the consequences of the economic and political crisis of May 2024. Gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 25% compared to 2024 due to the deterioration of the local economic fabric, widening socio-economic inequalities between the Kanak and non-Kanak communities. These inequalities fuel a sense of abandonment and bitterness towards successive French governments. Furthermore, the foreign information interference that exacerbated tensions in the archipelago in 2024 is resurfacing around new narratives. For example, in 2028, the relocation of several tribal dwellings on the island of Ouéva–which were at risk of flooding–to higher ground was exploited by radical pro-independence accounts and foreign intermediaries in a disinformation campaign: France was alleged to have displaced the Kanaks from their ancestral lands. Finally, the institutional situation remains deeply deadlocked, as the expansion of the electorate–unchanged since the 1998 Nouméa Accords–has still not been the subject of a political consensus. Negotiations between the loyalist and independence camps remain at an impasse, despite attempts by successive governments to restart discussions.

On 27 April 2032, the drought affecting the archipelago since October 2031 forced the local government to impose water consumption restrictions on certain municipalities on the island. A demonstration involving several hundred people is organised the following day in Nouméa to protest against this decision. On the same day, an unprecedented information crisis erupts when news of a fault in Nouméa's drinking water supply network–real, but not serious–circulates on social media. Local and verified accounts claimed that tap water was now contaminated with ammonium perchlorate– a chemical compound used in military munitions–because of an exercise conducted by the New Caledonian Armed Forces (FANC) near a water catchment. The incident was said to be exacerbating the archipelago's water vulnerabilities, already worsened by the effects of climate change. The information, which cannot be verified in the heat of the moment, is spreading at lightning speed. People are rushing to shops to stock up on bottled water; several shops are looted. Other forms of disinformation are emerging: one plays on alleged discrimination in supply–shops are said to be serving only non-Kanak customers. Another promotes an anti-colonial narrative, portraying France as responsible for the warming affecting the Pacific and the deterioration of the environment. Thousands

of accounts speak of climate injustice and point to France and Western countries as responsible for the drought, the gradual erosion of the coastline, the degradation of marine biodiversity, and policies of restriction and relocation. This content, amplified by fake news outlets mimicking the style of local media, spreads as far as Canberra and New Delhi, where images of looting, the water crisis and accusations of discrimination are widely shared. On 29 April, the government denied any water contamination or discrimination in access to food supplies, and announced that external actors had manipulated, exploited and disseminated false information. However, the denial struggled to circulate as quickly as the false information, which had found a considerable audience in a fractured society and a degraded information environment.

On 29 April, demonstrations calling for the resignation of the local and national governments were organised in Nouméa and several towns on the west coast. Clashes with the police left dozens injured. Within hours, social media was flooded with narratives fuelling and reinforcing grievances against the French state. To prevent an escalation of violence, the High Commissioner of the Republic in New Caledonia imposed a night-time curfew for Greater Nouméa from 29 April, as well as suspending TikTok, considered one of the primary channels for spreading false information. The police and gendarmerie were deployed to secure the main roads, the Camp-Est prison and the Koutio Medical Centre and were tasked with containing the clashes without causing them to escalate. At the same time, the FANC intervened to secure certain vital locations, notably the ports and the airport, as well as government buildings such as the High Commission and the Government headquarters. They are tasked with distributing bottles of water to the population, in coordination with the civil protection services and local councils, to address the shortage exacerbated by the rush on supermarkets, and to demonstrate that the armed forces are at the service of the population. Faced with the intertwining crises, on the same day, the Head of State activated an inter-ministerial crisis unit. A unit dedicated to countering disinformation was tasked with responding via official French social media accounts. Local traditional media outlets such as NC La 1ère and Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes also broadcast continuous factual rebuttals, notably featuring statements from health authorities on water quality. The challenge for the government is even more daunting as the population's trust in the executive has been deeply eroded by years of economic crisis and political deadlock. This mistrust became immediately apparent, as the water distribution initiative was met with refusal by several families and local communities to accept the deliveries, for fear that the water might also be contaminated. On 2 May, VIGINUM reported identifying markers of a foreign interference operation consistent with Russian information warfare tactics, although no formal attribution could be established.

The New Caledonian crisis of May 2032 has shaken the archipelago and affected France's regional diplomacy, against a backdrop of heightened geopolitical rivalry in the Pacific. Indeed, New Caledonian society has become more polarised and distrustful of political and military institutions. Protests continue and fuel a constant climate of tension, making any institutional or political reform even more difficult to undertake. The legitimacy of the French armed forces is particularly undermined among the Caledonian population, calling into question their future role in the archipelago. More broadly, the credibility and legitimacy of the French state and its presence in the region are being called into

question. National political and media observers point to the government's lack of preparedness for such a crisis. The executive failed to anticipate the scale of the disinformation campaign or its capacity to exacerbate an already sensitive situation. The government decided to rethink its information strategy from mid-May onwards, setting up an interministerial working group on information threats in the overseas territories, led by the SGDSN and the Ministry for Overseas Territories. Three objectives were identified: to strengthen capabilities for detecting and neutralising foreign information influence operations targeting the overseas territories; to propose a plan for managing information crises related to critical infrastructure; and to integrate climate and environmental issues as potential vectors of destabilisation.

Scenario 2: 2037–Allegations of undeclared large-scale solar radiation management experiments from the Guiana Space Centre

By 2037, solar geoengineering technologies are at the heart of geopolitical and strategic tensions, particularly in the context of the U.S.-China rivalry. During a moratorium on the testing of these techniques, the United States accuses France of conducting undeclared trials at the Guiana Space Centre. The ensuing disinformation campaign triggers a major diplomatic crisis, which redefines the national information strategy.

In 2037, the international community continues to fall further behind the targets set by the Paris Agreement, with a rise in global average temperatures recorded at +2.4°C compared to pre-industrial levels (IPCC SSP5-8.5). In this context, solar radiation management (SRM) is increasingly emerging as the last resort to limit the harmful effects of climate change. Although climate-sceptical, the United States administration is the first to have taken a head-on stance on these issues, citing national security and 'weather sovereignty' to justify its support for research into solar geoengineering techniques. As investment and capacity grew, a declaration setting out principles for the governance of SRM research was drawn up by the European Union in 2034. The following year, Switzerland proposed a resolution calling for the establishment of an international moratorium on experimentation with solar geoengineering via stratospheric aerosol injection (SAI)[51] to the United Nations General Assembly. Due to a lack of consensus, and opposition from the United States and its allies, this resolution was not adopted. However, discussions regarding SAI experiments were reignited in 2037, following a series of climatic anomalies affecting several island and coastal states. These countries attributed these disturbances to undeclared SAI trials, raising fears of direct consequences for their food security and water resources.

At the request of the Alliance of Small Island States, a special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly is convened on 14 September 2037 in Nairobi. The majority of the Global North

[51] Stratospheric aerosol injection (SAI) refers to a method of global solar geoengineering intervention. This consists in 'the dispersal by aircraft or balloon of reflective particles into the stratosphere to create cooling conditions similar to those following major volcanic events' (de Guglielmo Weber et al., 2023).

countries are in favour of regulating IAS trials. In particular, France and the European Union, supported by the African Union, are voicing their concerns regarding the risks associated with this technology, notably the possibility of a 'terminal shock'[52] should the system be shut down. In contrast, the United States advocates an approach free from any regulation on both research into and trials of SAI. This position is supported by certain close allies, including Israel and the United Arab Emirates, as well as by private-sector players, notably from Silicon Valley. To defend its position, Washington resorts to a strategy of obstruction, including disinformation surrounding the moratorium. Other countries participate in the discussions but hold differing views: Brazil and India oppose a binding framework, defending their sovereignty and highlighting the responsibility of Northern countries, whilst China and Saudi Arabia adopt a cautious stance; Russia, meanwhile, remains on the sidelines of the consensus, viewing SRM as a matter of national sovereignty.

On the opening day of this session, the United States Secretary of State delivered a speech accusing France of funding large-scale experiments to test aerosol dispersal at the Guiana Space Centre (CSG) in the Kourou region. At the same time, the President of the United States claimed in a post on Truth Social that, given its geographical location, the CSG is an ideal platform for an SAI experiment at the equator. Broadcast live, the clip immediately went viral online. Actual launches (satellites, scientific missions), along with doctored images of rockets and French military aircraft taking off from the space centre, are exploited and shared on social media, bolstering the President's claims. As generative artificial intelligence is now virtually indistinguishable from reality, it is almost impossible for the public to separate fact from fiction and detect fabricated content. Several alternative realities are thus amplified by thousands of social media accounts, without it being possible, for the time being, to identify their affiliation. The main narrative puts forward fake leaks of confidential French documents, fabricated to suggest a secret European military programme aimed at developing European climate control capabilities, with experiments reportedly to be conducted at the CSG. Presented as hypocritical–given the support for a moratorium on large-scale deployment alongside the development of IAS experimental capabilities–the French position is thus exploited to suggest strategic duplicity and collusion with its European partners. The United States' disinformation strategy aims to block discussions and ultimately ensure there are no constraints on SAI research or experiments. Indeed, their objective is to maintain national 'meteorological sovereignty' and remove any obstacles to technological development and strategic superiority. Furthermore, in the context of U.S-Chinese competition, Washington wishes to secure exclusive control over SRM technologies, which requires enhanced surveillance activities targeting Beijing. This context is also driving several private actors to develop the infrastructure necessary for the SAI, in the hope of gaining a head start over China. Finally, the CSG also suffered the repercussions of the spread of this news, as the centre's regular activities were severely disrupted by spontaneous protests.

This disinformation campaign, used for strategic and geopolitical purposes, has the immediate effect of discrediting France and its climate and scientific diplomacy on the world stage, both within the international community and among sections of the domestic public. Consequently, an interministerial

[52] 'Terminal shock' refers to a sudden rise in global temperature following the cessation of solar geoengineering measures.

task force comprising the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Élysée Palace immediately launches a coordinated response to counter these narratives. An official statement is published, reaffirming France's position on solar radiation modification techniques. On social media, the French Response account issues numerous rebuttals to the false claims. In France, gatherings are organised around the Toulouse Space Centre, which is under surveillance thanks to the exceptional support of 70 military personnel. Finally, this campaign has significant diplomatic consequences. The discussions opened in Nairobi are inevitably halted, and France faces international pressure on several fronts: whilst the United States threatens to recall its ambassador, the States Parties to the moratorium call on Paris to clarify its position on the deployment of solar geoengineering. In response, the government issues an official statement denying the accusations on 17 September. Various organisations call on France to be held to account, notably through the publication of a transnational open letter from several environmental NGOs on 20 September. This accuses Northern countries of using Southern countries as a testing ground for SRM, which is perceived as a neo-colonial tool. These events led, from October 2037 onwards, to an update of the National Strategy to Combat Information Manipulation, which now includes a 'solar geoengineering' section.

Scenario 3: 2042–An emergency disaster relief operation in Pas-de-Calais in response to extreme flooding, confronted by a disinformation campaign

In November 2042, severe flooding hit the Pas-de-Calais region in northern France, requiring the mobilisation of civil protection services and the armed forces. However, a systematic and sophisticated disinformation campaign disrupted crisis management and operations on the ground. The false information is identified as responsible for endangering the population and causing several deaths. This event calls into question the French state's ability to protect its population, anticipate multiple crises and combat foreign information interference.

By autumn 2042, the rise in average annual temperatures stands at 1.9°C in mainland France (IPCC SSP2-4.5). Northern France, a region still marked by significant socio-economic inequalities, is also facing the consequences of this warming. Indeed, between 2038 and 2042, episodes of flooding and drought follow one another, particularly in Pas-de-Calais. Coastal erosion and repeated flooding are causing lasting vulnerability among rural populations, whilst summer heatwaves claim more victims each year in towns where precarious housing is becoming increasingly concentrated. These growing impacts on the population are partly linked to the delay by national and local authorities in implementing climate change adaptation policies. Indeed, adaptation projects relating to greening, soil de-sealing and the energy-efficient renovation of buildings have slowed down or even come to a standstill. Conversely, numerous development projects–car parks, two shopping centres and even a data centre–have been launched, contributing to land sealing and exacerbating the region's vulnerability to extreme weather events. Against this backdrop, on 18 November 2042, just one month after Storm Maurice struck the Pas-de-Calais coastline, *Météo France* placed the Nord, Somme and Pas-de-Calais departments on orange alert for rain, flooding, wind and rising water levels. However,

the severity of the event is immediately called into question on social media by numerous verified accounts, notably scientists, who more broadly question the relevance and accuracy of weather forecasts. Fake weather reports created by artificial intelligence and contradicting those of *Météo France* are circulated, sometimes even picked up by local media.

On 19 November at 9 a.m., Pas-de-Calais was placed on red alert for rain, flooding, wind and rising water levels from midday until 22 November. *VIGICRUES* placed the Aa, Canche and Liane rivers on red alert for flooding. The prefect pre-positioned civil protection personnel and equipment to coordinate emergency response. That same evening at 7 p.m., the government sent a FR Alert message to residents of the department with instructions to follow. Water levels rose overnight in Boulogne-sur-Mer, Saint-Omer and Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, flooding homes, shops, schools and healthcare facilities and trapping thousands of residents. Several coastal rivers burst their banks, fed by surface runoff and rising groundwater levels and exacerbated by soil sealing. By 20 November, the department was transformed: more than 400 municipalities are affected, thousands of households are without electricity, and hundreds of municipalities are advising against drinking tap water. The civil protection response begins on 20 November, thanks to pre-positioned resources that transport heavy equipment, generators and emergency supplies, and attempt to reach the worst-affected municipalities. It is necessary to use boats and water rescue teams, as well as civil protection air assets, to reach the municipalities where all roads have been cut off. More than 600 firefighters are tasked with pumping, rescue and first aid operations, alongside 50 civil protection personnel. 65 Army personnel on exercise in Calais are called in as reinforcements to distribute essential supplies and assist residents. Around a hundred gendarmes are also mobilised to control access points, close roads and secure the evacuated neighbourhoods. Finally, the government activates a European solidarity plan and pumps from Slovakia, Italy, Germany and Romania are dispatched. Despite the scale of the operation, the emergency services face operational constraints: several fire stations are flooded, reducing their capacity.

From the very first hours of the alert, a sophisticated disinformation campaign compounded the crisis. Thus, within minutes of the official FR Alert message being sent on 19 November, thousands of residents received dozens of similar messages from a sender named France Alert, giving instructions that contradicted those of the government, which sowed doubt among part of the population. At the same time, the fire service received thousands of fake emergency calls, fuelled by artificial intelligence, which hampered their operational capacity. In Roubaix, an incorrect assembly point was circulated on social media by fake local media outlets named *France Bleu Calais* or *Actu Nord*, leading to the deaths of six people in a sports hall on the night of 21 November. Messages urge residents of certain neighbourhoods in Saint-Omer to leave their homes, contrary to official lockdown instructions. Highly realistic fake field reports–presented by deepfakes of French journalists and politicians–show scenes of chaos, looting and riots, and are widely shared. On 21 November, the government set up an inter-ministerial crisis unit to disseminate accurate information to residents, warning of a potential disinformation campaign of foreign origin. However, the following day, a shocking video circulates and calls the government's credibility into question: a deepfake of the Minister for the Armed Forces claims

that she refused to deploy the military despite the emergency, striking an immediate chord with a distraught and angry public. At the same time, a sensational figure is circulated by local media and political and public figures: more than 1,800 people are said to have died. Around a hundred bodies are reportedly trapped in a shopping centre, with images to back this up. Even though the interministerial task force denies these figures, doubt takes hold among residents. On 23 November, the Home Secretary, visiting Saint-Omer, announced the death toll from the deadliest incident: a care home could not be evacuated in time by the emergency services due to interference and hoax calls, resulting in the deaths of 10 elderly residents and 2 care workers. The fake emergency numbers circulating in the preceding days were also responsible for the deaths of several isolated elderly people. The residents' anger was immediate: the minister was subjected to insults and pelted with objects and had to be escorted to safety by his security detail.

On 24 November, the death toll from the floods in the department stood at over 50, a record in the recent history of extreme weather events in mainland France. Disinformation not only endangered lives but also significantly hampered the work of the emergency services. Coordinated attacks by trolls overwhelmed the official messaging channels (prefecture, town halls, emergency services), rendering all official communications unreadable. Although the authorities quickly identified simultaneous, automated and organised disinformation campaigns matching Russian information patterns, it is not possible to formally attribute responsibility for them. The European media reaction was immediate and severe: *The Guardian* ran a headline about 'the French state being overwhelmed', while *Der Spiegel* questioned 'the failure of the French centralised crisis management model'. In France, a section of public opinion, fed for days on false information, internalised the narrative of the state's abandonment and incompetence. Mistrust takes deep root in several municipalities across the department, where some local elected representatives initially refuse to cooperate with the prefectural authorities. The call for European assistance, necessary due to the saturation of national resources, becomes an ambiguous political symbol, interpreted by some as proof that France is no longer capable of ensuring the protection of its territory on its own in the face of extreme weather events. The French armed forces, long spared from crises of public confidence, find themselves at the centre of a national controversy over their responsiveness and their ability to operate in a deteriorating information and climate environment. Part of the government believes that the deployment was late and ineffective, and speaks of an 'institutional failure', fuelling a decline in the armed forces' popularity. This event erodes the bond of trust between part of the population and the emergency services, complicating ongoing operations in areas of the department where the water is receding slowly.

Recommendations

1

Include climate disinformation into the framework of the new 'influence' strategic function.

- Explicitly identify climate disinformation as a destabilization tool that could be used by foreign actors in French strategic documents. For example, include climate disinformation among hybrid threats within the ASO unit's joint capability for influence and information operations (ILI).
- Identify and highlight environmental or climate change issues that could be exploited in information warfare, for example within the framework of the French Joint Centre for Environmental Action (CIAE). Also include how the environmental, political, economic, and social context influences the issues that could be exploited.

2

Anticipate the risks associated to information manipulation in the context of emergency response operations within the country.

- Enlist the armed forces to help educate civil society about risk management, to ensure that the proper behaviours to adopt in the event of a crisis are widely disseminated. For example, use the French Defence and Citizenship Day (JDC) or future military service as key communication channels to raise awareness about disinformation during extreme weather events, particularly in overseas territories.
- Develop an interministerial strategy to combat disinformation in the event of extreme weather events. Integrate the efforts of counter-interference and information operations units to limit the impact of attacks on the operations of the armed forces and civil security agencies (for example, by highlighting the measures already in place, by exposing false information, etc.).
- Secure official communication channels to ensure the reliability of information reaching the target populations, as well as information intended for security forces and the armed forces.

3

Strengthen cooperation and research on the links between climate disinformation and foreign interference.

- Continue to support strategic research on the links between climate change, information-related challenges, and new forms of conflict, particularly through a forward-looking approach to identify issues that could be exploited.
- Initiate European cooperation on these issues–given that European countries are the target of similar attacks–to develop common solutions.
- Spur action within international bodies and bilateral dialogues on the security risks and threats posed by climate disinformation.

4

Ensure the continued availability of reliable sources of climate information.

- Incorporate systematic awareness training on information manipulation tactics into training programs, particularly regarding climate issues. Make pre-bunking a standard practice as a preventive measure aimed at strengthening staff resilience against information threats.
- Train personnel on the concrete consequences that disinformation can have on populations, particularly during emergency response operations, and clarify the appropriate behaviours and reflexes to adopt.
- Safeguard a reliable climate database capable of informing military decision-making and integrate it into the armed forces' planning and adaptation strategies.
- Ensure the planning of military operations in theatres affected by climate change and maintain a continuous flow of reliable information in these rapidly changing environments.

GLOSSARY

Adaptation: Societal and technical adjustment to climate change to mitigate its harmful effects, exploit its beneficial effects and, ultimately, guarantee the functional integrity of socio-political systems.

Artificial intelligence (AI): A system that enables a machine to replicate human behaviours and processes, particularly in the areas of reasoning, planning, and creativity (European Parliament, 2023).

Attention economy: Set of business models through which companies seek to capture consumers' attention and monetize it.

Attribution: Identifying the actor responsible for FIMI operations. While this identification is based on the analysis of open-source information, it raises a political question regarding the attribution of responsibility (European External Action Service, 2025).

Bot: A computer program that performs automated, repetitive, and predefined tasks, typically by mimicking or replacing human behaviour.

Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) technologies: a set of technologies aimed at capturing carbon dioxide (CO_2) emitted by industrial or energy sources, reusing it in industrial processes or storing it permanently in underground geological formations. This approach is seen as an important tool for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, particularly in sectors that are difficult to decarbonise.

Climate change: Variations in the state of the climate observed since the late 20th century, directly or indirectly attributable to human activity, altering the composition of the atmosphere. These variations manifest as both acute and slow-onset hazards, with environmental as well as security implications.

Climate conspiracy theories: Refers to the way in which conspiracy theories have taken hold of climate issues (Douglas et al., 2026).

Climate denial, climate negationism: A form of climate scepticism involving the denial of the existence of climate change and/or its human-caused origins.

Climate geoengineering: A set of techniques designed to enable large-scale intervention in the climate system, with the aim of mitigating change and/or reducing its effects (de Guglielmo Weber et al., 2023).

Climate relativism: Discourse aimed at challenging the scientific consensus on climate change by portraying it as a subject still under debate within the scientific community. This term encompasses several approaches, the primary goal of which is to delay or discourage climate action (scientific scepticism, regulatory obstruction, etc.).

Climate security: The consideration of climate change impacts on strategic context, geopolitical balances, military missions, and implementation resources, as well as associated anticipatory and adaptive measures (French Ministry of Armed Forces Climate-Defence Strategy, 2022).

Climate scepticism: Refers to the questioning of the existence of climate change and/or its human-caused origins.

Climate vulnerability: Propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected by climate change (slow variation and rapid extreme events), dependent on natural environment sensitivity, human environment fragility, and adaptation policies.

Conspiracy theories: The belief that two or more actors have secretly colluded to achieve a specific outcome. Most often, such a conspiracy is perceived as malicious and unknown to the public (Gong et al., 2026).

Crisis: According to Jean Mingasson, a crisis refers to 'situations in a serious phase, sometimes reaching a climax and likely to lead to an upheaval, followed by a return to the previous state after a completely new phase. (…) There are, therefore, different types of crises: international crises resulting from tensions between countries and crises arising from the occurrence of a major risk, whether natural or technological' (Mingasson, 1992).

Cyberspace: According to political scientist Frédérick Douzet, cyberspace refers to 'both the Internet and the 'space' it generates: an intangible space in which borderless exchanges take place between citizens of all nations, at an instantaneous speed that eliminates any notion of distance.' (Douzet, 2014).

Disinformation campaigns: Organized efforts aimed at spreading misleading or false information as part of a foreign state's interference and manipulation of information.

Disinformation: False or misleading content disseminated with the intent to deceive or for financial or political gain, and likely to cause public harm.

Foreign Information Manipulations and Interference (FIMI): Developed by the European External Action Service (EEAS), this concept describes the hostile use of information by a foreign state. Unlike the notion of influence–a neutral concept more closely aligned with the concept of soft power–foreign information manipulation or interference aims to negatively influence a state's values, procedures, and political processes.

Foreign interference: A set of actions carried out by a foreign state or actor aimed at spreading false information about a nation to influence public opinion. This broad concept is best described as 'information manipulation and foreign interference' (FIMI) (see above).

Generative artificial intelligence: A form of AI capable of creating new content in various formats, including text, images, video, and audio (OECD, 2026).

Greenhouse Gases (GHGs): Gases that absorb infrared radiation emitted or reflected by the Earth's surface, raising its temperature beyond what it would be without GHGs. It is now widely recognized that human emissions of GHGs amplify the greenhouse effect and significantly accelerate global atmospheric warming (*Géoconfluences*, 2025).

Hybrid warfare: While widely used, the semantic framework of hybridity remains unclear with no universally accepted definition. It refers to the permeability between conventional and irregular warfare through the coordinated use by state and non-state actors of conventional, irregular, criminal, and non-military means (cyber, information, economic) to exploit an adversary's vulnerabilities while denying or concealing involvement.

Influence: This broad, neutral concept refers to a state's attempt to influence the attitudes, decisions, or behaviours of another state. More specifically, it involves persuading another state to do something it would not otherwise have done, without resorting to coercion (Charillon, 2022). The concept of informational influence encompasses practices as diverse as public diplomacy (...), digital diplomacy, propaganda (...), disinformation, and 'information warfare' operations. The primary analytical value of the concept of informational influence lies in its comprehensive nature (Audinet et al., 2024). In France, the 2025 National Strategic Review confirmed that influence is recognized as the sixth national strategic function (French General Secretariat for Defence and National Security, 2025).

Information Manipulation Set (IMS): The French General Secretariat for Defence and National Security defines 'information manipulation sets' (IMS) as 'a collection of adversarial behaviours, tools, and Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) presumed to be linked to the same Threat Actor or group of Threat Actors, which may be unknown' within a continuum ranging from detection to attribution of foreign digital interference operations (VIGINUM, 2026).

Information Threats: NATO defines information threats as 'intentional, harmful, and coordinated manipulation activities carried out by state and non-state actors with the aim of weakening and dividing (…). These hostile information activities include numerous tactics, techniques, and procedures aimed at manipulating public opinion.' (NATO, 2025).

Information warfare: Refers to the use of information as a weapon in a conflict taking place within the information domain in the broadest sense (Colon, 2024).

Internet troll: An individual or automated program that seeks to provoke, divide, or influence online discussions by posting provocative and/or insulting messages to damage someone's reputation or spread disinformation.

Misinformation: False or misleading content shared without malicious intent, even though its effects may nevertheless be harmful (European Commission, 2020).

Mitigation: Measures taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or strengthen carbon sinks, to limit the extent of climate change. Adaptation refers to actions taken to adjust to the current or predicted effects of climate change and mitigate its impact on societies and ecosystems.

Propaganda: Aims to persuade an individual or group to adopt a particular viewpoint, cause, or belief, with a specific objective (Géré, 2011), through the dissemination of information, whether true or false (EU Disinfo Lab, 2023).

Reaction, reactionary: A political ideology opposed to change, whose goal is to restore the past. In this sense, it differs from the conservative movement, which tends to preserve the established order.

Risk culture: Refers to the role that risk–in this case, climate risk–plays in the mental and collective perceptions of a population. It encompasses knowledge of a region's major risks and the dissemination of that knowledge so that all stakeholders can anticipate disasters and prepare for them.

Risk: According to researcher Jean-Paul Brodeur, the concept of risk is defined as a danger for which it is possible to estimate the probability of its occurrence. In contrast, the concept of threat is distinguished by its intentional nature and can be defined as a danger resulting from malicious human intent (Brodeur, 2006).

Securitization: Process by which an issue is framed as an existential threat, requiring exceptional measures.

Sharp power: A state's ability to 'penetrate and disrupt the political and informational environment' of Western countries to undermine their democratic principles (Walker and Ludwig, 2017).

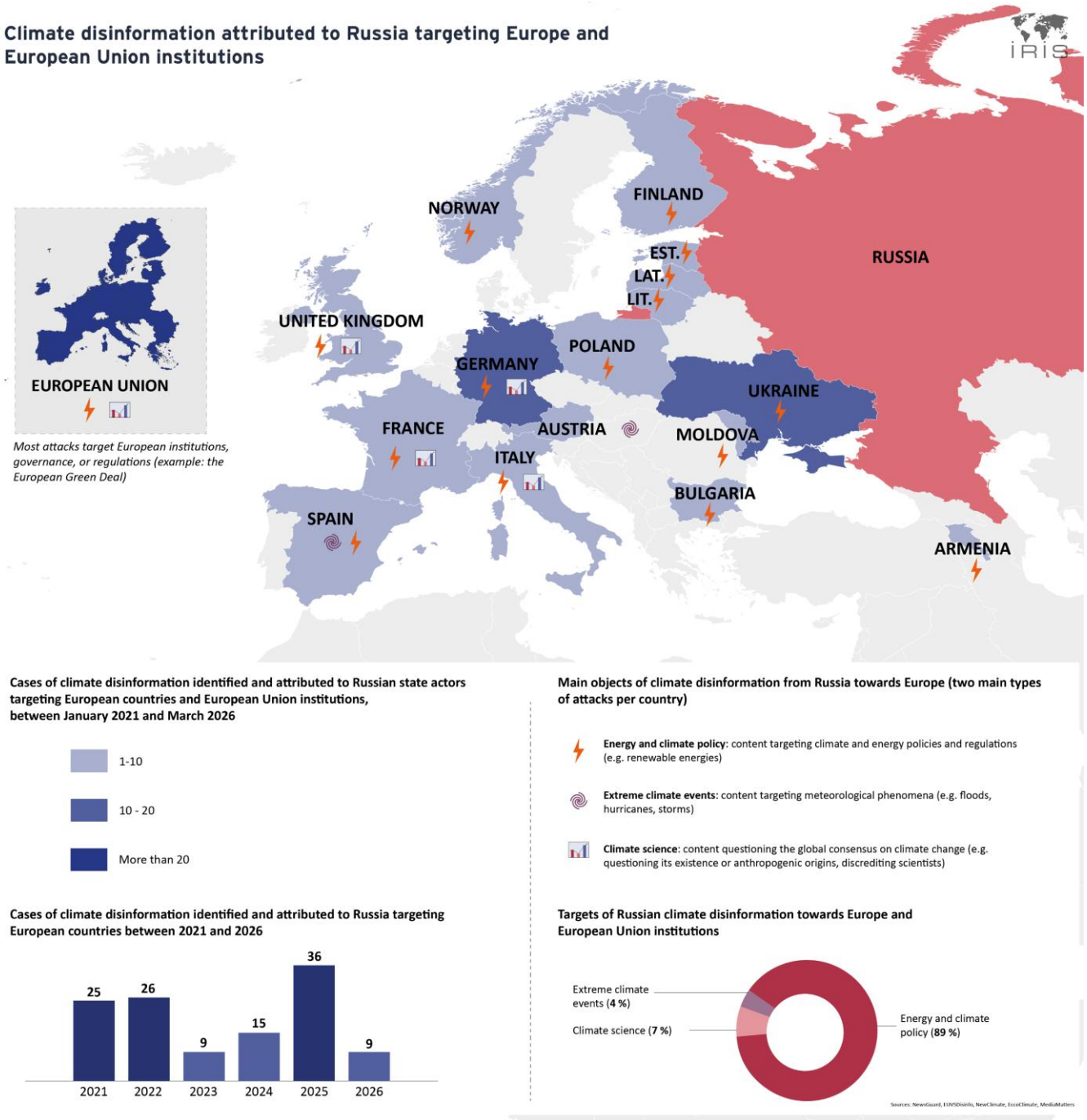
Soft power: A state's ability to influence and attract other international actors (countries, international organizations, populations) without resorting to force or coercion. The concept is based on three pillars: culture, political values and ideals, and foreign policies such as development aid, cultural diplomacy, or interventions in the event of natural disasters (Nye, 1990).

Solar geoengineering: A set of technical projects aimed at offsetting the rise in global average temperature caused by climate change by altering the Earth's radiation balance (IPCC, 2022, 168). Most of these techniques aim to reduce the amount of solar radiation entering the atmosphere, for example through stratospheric aerosol injection (SAI), while others seek to reduce the amount of terrestrial radiation absorbed by the atmosphere, such as through cirrus cloud thinning (CCT).

Technosolutionnism: Belief that technology and innovation can solve various problems and crises. It is characterized by faith in the revolutionary potential of science and engineering (Sætra and Selinger, 2024).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Map: Climate disinformation attributed to Russia targeting Europe and European Union institutions



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