



Dear Madam, Sir,

We are pleased to invite you to an **online evening conference**, organised on **Thursday 22 October 2020** by the **Centre for Security and Defence Studies** of the Royal Higher Institute for Defence.

The European Commission recently accused China and Russia of waging disinformation campaigns about the coronavirus pandemic, seeking to “undermine democratic debate, exacerbate social polarisation and improve their own image”. For Commission Vice-President Věra Jourová, “lies about COVID-19 are literally costing lives”. Indeed, there is growing evidence that disinformation prompts people to ignore official health advice and engage in risky behaviours. It also has negative repercussions on democratic institutions as well as on the economic and financial situation of companies. Faced with this “infodemic”, the EU is trying to develop a proactive and efficient strategic communication to promote reliable and verifiable health information and to raise its citizens’ awareness of the risks associated with disinformation. Since the Ukrainian crisis, the EU has also developed an action plan to counter disinformation and avoid Russian interference in European elections and within Member States. NATO is also developing strategies to counter Moscow’s “manipulation of information”.

Can we speak of a systematic disinformation campaign on the part of Russia toward Europe, particularly concerning the coronavirus? What political, socio-economic and security risks could the EU be confronted with? What does COVID-19 tell us about the competition between China’s and the Western world’s respective systems of governance? What might be the strategic challenges that the Western world, and Europe in particular, could face in the coming years with China and Russia?

In order to answer these questions and share their analyses of Russia’s and China’s communication strategies at the international level, we will be pleased to welcome Dr. Alice Ekman, senior lecturer at *Sciences Po* (Paris Institute of Political Studies) and analyst in charge of Asia at the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), and Dr. Agnieszka Legucka, senior research fellow at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and an expert in Russia’s foreign policy.

This conference will take place on **Thursday 22 October 2020 at 17.00 hours** and will be given in **English**. We thank you in advance for registering via the following link: <https://www.defence-institute.be>. **Registration, subject to availability, is compulsory and must be received by Monday 19 October 2020 at the latest**. You will then receive the link to connect to the conference.

(Signed)

Filip BORREMANS, MSc Eng
Air Force Colonel GS
Director-general
Royal Higher Institute for Defence

Programme:

16.00 – 17.00 : Registration – connection to online conference
17.00 – 18.30 : Conference and Q & A