

Dear Madam, Sir,

Within the framework of the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union (BE EU Presidency), **Eurodéfense Belgium**, the **Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID)** and the **Centre for Security and Defence Studies (CSDS)** organise a seminar focusing on hybrid and cognitive warfare, thereby approaching information manipulation and psychological warfare as critical strategic factors for EU security.

In a world where technological evolution and the complexity of conflicts redefine security paradigms, the EU faces unprecedented challenges, which are amplified not only by the digitalisation of our societies and the emergence of conflicts without clear boundaries known as hybrid wars, but also by the rise of cognitive warfare as a primary battlefield. Social media and influence operations beyond classical psychological operations aim at directing the behaviour and attitudes of often unsuspecting citizens. This year, crucial electoral deadlines across the globe set the stage for intense psychological manipulation campaigns aimed at influencing the course of democracy, illustrating the power and pervasiveness of disinformation strategies to mould global public opinion. By shaping perceptions during elections, these tactics of subtle persuasion could seriously erode the solidarity and adherence of citizens to the strategic choices made by their leaders, challenging social cohesion and the legitimacy of political decisions.

Therefore, this seminar aims to get defence and security experts, policymakers, academics and engaged citizens to reflect on the most suitable solutions to address these complex challenges. By fully taking into account the cognitive dimension alongside cybernetic and hybrid aspects, a comprehensive and integrated approach to security is embraced.

On behalf of the BE EU Presidency, I am pleased to invite you to this **half-day seminar** that will take place in English (with simultaneous interpretation to French and Dutch) on **Thursday 23 May 2024 from 09:00 to 12:00** in the conference room at **Campus Renaissance** (entrance: **rue Hobbema 8/Hobbemastraat 8, 1000 Brussels**). The seminar will be followed by a reception offered by the Royal Higher Institute for Defence.

**Registration by Wednesday 15 May 2024 at the latest is compulsory.**

(Signed)  
Filip BORREMANS, MSc Eng  
Air Force Major General  
Director-General  
Royal Higher Institute for Defence