

Social Media in Strategic Communication (SMISC)

With the spread of blogs, social networking sites and media-sharing technology, and the rapid propagation of ideas enabled by these advances, the conditions under which the nation's military forces conduct operations are changing nearly as fast as the speed of thought. DARPA has an interest in addressing this new dynamic and understanding how social network communication affects events on the ground as part of its mission of preventing strategic surprise.

The general goal of the Social Media in Strategic Communication (SMISC) program is to develop a new science of social networks built on an emerging technology base. Through the program, DARPA seeks to develop tools to help identify misinformation or deception campaigns and counter them with truthful information, reducing adversaries' ability to manipulate events.

To accomplish this, SMISC will focus research on linguistic cues, patterns of information flow and detection of sentiment or opinion in information generated and spread through social media. Researchers will also attempt to track ideas and concepts to analyze patterns and cultural narratives. If successful, they should be able to model emergent communities and analyze narratives and their participants, as well as characterize generation of automated content, such as by bots, in social media and crowd sourcing.

SMISC researchers will create a closed and controlled environment where large amounts of data are collected, with experiments performed in support of development and testing. One example of such an environment might be a closed social media network of 2,000 to 5,000 people who have agreed to conduct social media-based activities in this network and agree to participate in required data collection and experiments. This network might be formed within a single organization, or span several. Another example might be a role-player game where use of social media is central to that game and where players have again agreed to participate in data collection and experiments.

Researchers will be required to certify that no personally identifiable information (PII) for U.S. participants was collected, stored or created in contravention to federal privacy laws, regulations or DoD policies. SMISC researchers will not be provided PII from any other government agency or outside source.

DARPA conducts its works within legal and ethical constraints and has taken a leadership role in the science and technology community to address privacy and ethical, legal and societal implications (ELSI).

SOURCE: <https://www.darpa.mil/program/social-media-in-strategic-communication>