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Russian propaganda: methods of influence in the Baltic States

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Russian propaganda: methods of influence in the Baltic States*

Abstract: The objective of this paper is to examine the methods by means of which Russia seeks to influence the Baltic countries. The analysis pertains to the countries where Russian propaganda messages may pose a potential threat due to Russian-speaking minorities in those countries. An attempt has been made to answer the following research questions: 1) how do the authorities create and control the message; 2) what are the methods of persuasive actions and 3) what are the ways of counteracting propaganda. It is claimed that Russian propaganda strongly affects recipients' emotions, disinforms and has a negative influence on rational decision-making processes. It is vertical since the way of conveying information is carefully designed, top-down programmed and has long-term effects. Confusion and informational chaos are created through persuasion, suggestion and manipulation, strengthening the *status quo* of the current authority, supporting local authorities and limiting possibilities for the growth of new political elites. Based on the analysis of Russian propaganda, a few conclusions and recommendations have been drawn.

Keywords: Russian propaganda, Baltic States, influence, media, information.

Information is the key strategic resource today. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of new media, data bases and various means of communication, in which complex and well-developed structure and information technologies are core elements. The particular elements of the information system are inter-related and prone to dangers. For Russia, whose crucial method of influence is

* The author gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The research for the paper was conducted while implementing the research project titled *Russian Minority's Attitudes to the idea of 'Русский Муп' in the Baltic States* (Program 'Mobility Plus' no. DN/MOB/121/IV/2015).

propaganda, the challenges in the information sphere are rather specific. Its effectiveness is ensured by the Russian-language information space, but the attempts to exert an influence on non-Russian-speaking societies are a novelty. They contain a very wide spectrum of political, economic, social, military, intelligence, counter-intelligence, diplomatic, psychological, information and educational tasks. Their aim is to exert pressure on governments and citizens of other countries so that they accept certain political solutions, concealment, manipulation, falsification as well as discrediting Western countries and their political ideals.

A common understanding of the term 'propaganda' entails definitely negative associations. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell call it "a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist". Oliver Thomson sees it as "the skill to convey information, ideas and opinions in order to gain or keep power", and Henryk Kula as "the process of influencing people, shaping their attitudes and internalizing behaviours aimed at the accomplishment of political goals". Propaganda affects citizens' behaviours, directs public opinion and manipulates. In contrast, persuasion is an interactive process, aiming to achieve the needs of both the transmitter and the recipient of the information. It consists in the recipient's conviction that acting according to the transmitter's will is the recipient's informed decision.

The objective of this paper is to examine the methods of Russia's influence on the Baltic countries. The analysis pertains to the countries where the Russian propaganda messages may pose a potential threat due to Russian-speaking minorities in those countries. An attempt has been made to answer the following research questions: 1) how do the authorities create and control the message; 2) what are the methods of persuasive actions and 3) what are the ways of counteracting propaganda.

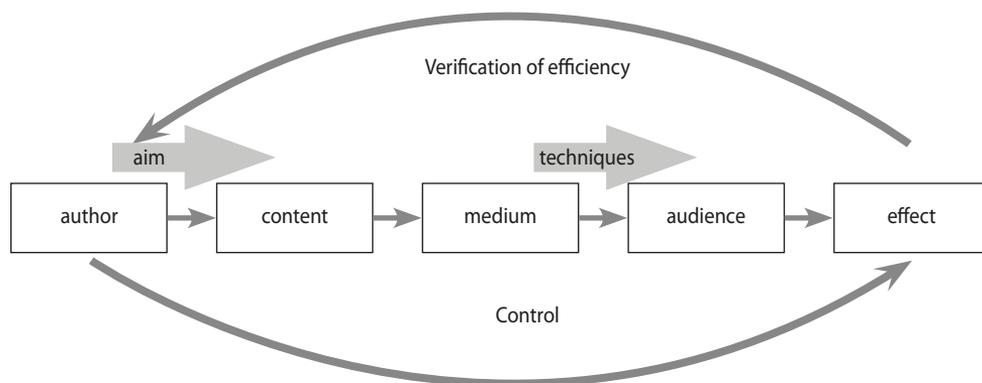
The argument shall be structured as follows. Firstly, the process of institutionalization of the message will be examined against the backdrop of communication theory. Next, instances of persuasive influence of Russian propaganda will be discussed. Here the discreditation of Western values as well as manipulation and falsification of history will be highlighted. Finally, the EU and country-level protective/counteractive strategies will be scrutinized and recommended.

1. Russian communication content according to communication theory

From the Russian perspective, information space is an area including the legal aspects of the means of mass communication activity, executive institutions, mass-media and their rules of operation.

In closed/confined media systems, the information content can be presented according to the following model of the process of communication, subject to the institutionalization process (Table 1).

Table 1. Institutionalization process of Russian propaganda



Source: The Author.

The Russian information content is designed in detail and strictly controlled at every stage of the authority communication. Although the transmitters are not always policy makers, members of parliament, party members, political leaders, but also social-political organizations, corporate businesses, churches and religious communities, the message is verified by the authorities and their subsidiaries. It is carefully thought out in advance and aims at making the receiver understand the message as intended. Peter Pomerantsev compares it to a performance with the choreographers and actors cast well in advance. The Kremlin is the narrator, controls the course of action and the ending is known before it takes place. Truth becomes confused with fiction.¹

1 P. Pomerantsev, 'The Kremlin's Information War', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2015, pp. 40-50.

The role of the message may be to shape public opinion, gain control of society, create meaning or a cultural change. Consequently, the following functions of the communication content may be distinguished: 1) informative, 2) interpretative, 3) persuasive, 4) integrative, 5) agitational (mobilization) and 6) disinformative (falsification). Without a doubt, the control of society is to help keep the *status quo* and ensure power. The ideological component is a key feature – opposing the EU and US informative aggression, Russia defends its values and culture which become an alternative for other countries.

The message content is designed by highly trained social and political communication professionals, PR specialists, political market analysts, advertising specialists, coach speakers for public speaking skills. The form and the choice of techniques depend on the intended effect. Even social media are created by party clubs, foundations and intellectual societies known as the GONGO (government organized NGO).² James Kirchick admits pseudo-independent institutions help Russia realise its policy towards other countries. They are one of the instruments of disinformation, propaganda and history falsification.³ Social engineering on the transmitter's part is designed to exert influence on the recipient of the message, achieving intended behavioural reactions through the stimulation, agitation, intensification or modification of attitudes, the shaping of perception, dependency promotion as well as persuasion, manipulation and propaganda. The result is further scrutinized for the degree of effectiveness. However, it must be noted that public opinion in authoritarian regimes is not of essence in the political process, as opposed to democratic systems.⁴ Moreover, bearing in mind the great number of alternative sources of information, the effectiveness of communication largely depends on the prevalence, accessibility, acceptability and credibility of the source. Adapting the model of communication to current challenges is es-

2 N. Moises, 'What Is a GONGO? How government-sponsored groups masquerade as civil society', *Foreign Policy*, October 13, 2009, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/13/what-is-a-gongo/> (2016-02-12).

3 J. Kirchick, 'Anti-Nazi Group Secretly Helping Kremlin Rebuild Russian Empire', *The Daily Beast*, February 8, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/02/08/anti-nazi-group-secretly-helping-kremlin-rebuild-russian-empire.html> (2015-06-13).

4 G. Reire, 'Euro-Atlantic Values and Russia's propaganda in the Euro-Atlantic Space', *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe*, vol. 13, issue 4, 2015, pp. 9-28.

sential as the traditional structure is becoming outdated. Interactive social media have become a new challenge.

The information content is not created *ad hoc*. Carefully designed, it reaches citizens, members of the Russian diaspora and the international community. Research suggests that the same message directed at various receivers is less effective.⁵ Therefore, the communication intended for the Russian-speaking community outside the country is quite different from the broadcast designed for non-Russian-speaking international recipients. The former is characterized by two aspects: on the one hand, a positive opinion about the country, the President and his policy is created, Russian culture and ideas are promoted. Opposing parties and their leaders are featured very rarely and in a negative light. On the other hand, Western values are disavowed. The West, an enemy in the common Russian understanding, is criticised for its interference with other countries' internal affairs, imposing its idea of democracy, moral decline and fascism. Russia strives to convince its citizens of the dominant role of Russophobes in Western societies⁶, although the phenomenon was in truth created by Russia itself to serve its particular needs. Communication with external societies is of a different nature. It is at times difficult to strike a line between a country's internal and external space. Information spreads rapidly irrespective of political or geographical borders. Nevertheless, it relies on the negation and Russia's resistance to the West. Promoting Russian literature and language are secondary goals. Russia blames the West for conducting an anti-Russian information campaign resulting in various penalties against Russia. It also sees Western support for the 'colour revolutions' in the former Soviet republics as aimed at Russia, and the Eastern Partnership as an EU interference in the Russian interest territory.⁷ Mak-

5 S. Tatham, 'Strategic Communications: A Primer', *Advanced Research and Assessment Group Special Series*, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, December 2008, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/94411/2008_Dec.pdf (2015-12-08).

6 J. Darczewska, P. Źochowski, 'Russophobia in the Kremlin's strategy. A weapon of mass destruction', *Point of view*, October 2015, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/pw_56_ang_russophobia_net.pdf (2016-02-12).

7 N. Popescu, 'Hybrid tactics: Russia and the West', *Alert*, no. 46, October 28, 2015, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/hybrid-tactics-russia-and-the-west/> (2015-12-18).

ing ample use of these democratic tools, Russia itself does not comply with similar standards.

For propaganda operations the mass media, especially TV and the Internet are of greatest importance. One must not, however, forget propaganda is a way of exerting influence that utilises the radio, the press, popular culture (literature, music, films), slogans, commercials and election spots as well. Methods of manipulating the communication vary greatly. The most common ones include cognitive simplification, 'us-them' classification to create the image of the enemy, creating conspiracy theories. The choice of suitable language forms is essential.⁸ For Russian propaganda, television is the most commonly used tool, as opposed to Islamic terrorist organizations, which prefer social media.⁹

To gain support, expressions relating to social life and politics and evoking positive associations are employed (language of agitation/persuasion/activization). The statement acquires a solemn, emotional, exalted, passionate, expressive and elevated tone. In contrast, to discredit, offend, defeat an opponent, negative associations are utilized in confrontation propaganda. Malicious and aggressive content appears.¹⁰ Recently, in connection with the Crimean annexation and eastern Ukrainian war, media communications have noted a common usage of military vocabulary, language connected with war, conflict and military operations. Making the news more abundant in military terms is considered the preparation for warfare.

Opinions on the effectiveness of the Russian broadcast addressed to the international community as an element of the Russian soft power vary considerably.¹¹ Although Russian media syndicates create inter-

8 Cf. Starptautisko pētījumu centrs (SPC), 'The manipulative techniques of the Russian information campaign against Ukraine', *Ukraine Report*, Executive Summary, October 13, 2015, Riga: Stratcom-CoE, http://www.spccentrs.lv/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ukraine_report_executive_summary_13.10.20151.pdf (2015-12-21).

9 F. Gaub, 'Hybrid tactics: ISIL & Co', *Alert*, no. 47, October 28, 2015, Institute for Security Studies European Union (ISS), <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/hybrid-tactics-isil-co/> (2015-12-18).

10 Dobek-Ostrowska et al., op. cit.

11 H.A. Conley, Th.P. Gerber, 'Russian Soft Power in the 21st Century', *Report*, August 2011, Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/110826_Conley_RussianSoftPower_Web.pdf (2015-08-11); J. Nye, 'Putin's Rules of Attraction', *Project Syndicate*, December 2014, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/com->

national communication forums for idea exchange and the news is broadcast in Russian, Arabic, English, German and Spanish, the content is often absurd, unreliable or altogether false. Russian news is considered of more significance in countries historically and culturally akin to Russia: Serbia or Bulgaria.

2. Examples of Russian propaganda

Russian propaganda includes elements of ideology, which brings it closer to Soviet propaganda.¹² It appeals to emotions and feelings. It manipulates, disinforms, falsifies, fails to mention important pieces of information, undermines the law and depreciates the values and authority of Western countries. In recent years, it has become an effective tool accompanying military operations apart from being useful in exerting influence on society.

Russian communication on the Crimean events justly gives rise to strong emotions. Propaganda activity aims to convince the recipients that the decisions made by the Kremlin are ideologically justified, but more importantly they are supported by the law, at least theoretically. According to the international law, the annexation of Crimea by Russia was illegal. Citing the right to self-rule and secession, supposedly confirmed in the 16 March 2014 referendum, Russia broke the rules of sovereignty, territorial integrity and border protection.¹³ The annexation of Crimea has not been recognised by the international community. However, Russia needed a justification and acceptance for the decision from its citizens and the Russian-speaking community across the world. In June 2015, the Prosecutor General of Russia (Генпрокуратура РФ) consequently admitted that due to the lack of

mentary/putin-soft-power-declining-by-joseph-s--nye-2014-12 (2015-09-07); N. Bentzen, M. Russell, 'Russia's manipulation of information on Ukraine and EU's response', *Briefing*, May 2015, European Parliamentary Research Service, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/559471/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)559471_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/559471/EPRS_BRI(2015)559471_EN.pdf) (2016-02-04).

- 12 H. Woolston, 'Propaganda in Soviet Russia', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 38, no. 1, 1932, pp. 32-40; R. Radosh, 'A tale of two trials: Soviet Propaganda at Home and Abroad', *World Affairs*, vol. 175, no. 1, 2012, pp. 80-87.
- 13 M. Radziejowska, 'Prawo i bezprawie – secesja i przyłączenie Krymu do Rosji' [Law and lawlessness – the secession and annexation of Crimea by Russia], *Biuletyn Polskiego Instytutu Spraw Międzynarodowych (PISM)* [Bulletin of the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM)], vol. 1150, no. 38, 2014, https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=16918 (2015-12-08).

power of the authorities issuing the sentence, the Ukrainian Socialist Republic illegally vested the Crimean Peninsula to the Soviet Republic in 1954.¹⁴ Both political and legal aspects were raised. According to this point of view, Russia was legally entitled to annex (recapture) Crimea. For the international community, such a justification was insignificant. The responsibility to protect the Russian-speaking community, the intervention invited, the right to self-rule and the right to secede or the Prosecutor General's decision do not justify separating Crimea from Ukraine. As such, they are a violation of law and a sign of aggression and annexation.¹⁵ The Prosecutor General's decision ought to be interpreted as a message to Russian society. It was the Kremlin's way of explaining the irrationality of its actions in Crimea and of strengthening the image of Russia as a democratic law-abiding state.

Russia took similar steps in relation to the Baltic states when the deputies of the State Duma, members of the pro-Putin *Yedinaya Rossiya* (Единая Россия) political party, filed a petition to the Prosecutor General to investigate the legitimacy of the Lithuanian proclamation of independence in 1990 as well as the Latvian and Estonian ones in 1991.¹⁶ The Supreme Soviet of the USSR recognized the independence of the Baltic republics in 1991, however Evgeniy Fedorov and Anton Romanov claimed the decision to be illegal. It is not clear why Russia decided to take such a measure. If proclaiming the 1954 decision illegal was to ensure the support from the Crimean and Russian citizens, in the Baltic countries there is no real danger of the annexation

14 Mironov.ru, Ответ Генпрокуратуры по поводу законности передачи Крыма Украине в 1954 году [The answer of the Prosecutor General about the illegality of the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954], June 25, 2015, <http://mironov.ru/main/news/13939> (2015-08-21); TSN, Генпрокуратура РФ считает незаконной передачу Крыма УССР в 1954 году [Prosecutor General's Office recognizes the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954 as illegal], June 27, 2015, <http://ru.tsn.ua/politika/genprokuratura-rf-schitaet-nezakonnoy-peredachu-kryma-ussr-v-1954-godu-442890.html> (2015-12-08).

15 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, *Opinia Doradczego Komitetu Prawnego przy Ministrze Spraw Zagranicznych RP w sprawie przyłączenia Półwyspu Krymskiego do Federacji Rosyjskiej w świetle prawa międzynarodowego* [The opinion of the Legal Advisory Committee to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland on the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation under international law], Warsaw, June 22, 2014, <https://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/382f0629-a114-442a-9cf4-6456ca7b80c1:JCR> (2015-12-08).

16 И. Петров [I. Petrov], Генпрокуратура проверит законность признания независимости Прибалтики [Prosecutor General's office will check the legality of the recognition of the independence of the Baltic States], *Российская газета* [Rossiyskaya gazeta], June 30, 2015, <http://www.rg.ru/2015/06/30/pribaltika-site.html> (2015-08-21).

of parts of their territories, at least for now. The explanation for this course of action seems to be twofold. In relation to Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians, it is more probable the intention was to create informational chaos and a sense of subjective threat. As for the Russian-speaking minority, especially in Latvia and Estonia (about 30% of total population¹⁷), it was an expression of support and participation in their fight for their rights.

'The liberation of the Baltic states from Nazi occupation,' which is the core of the dispute between Russia and Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia over the interpretation of the WWII events, is only one instance of the falsification of history. In 2010, in response to the ideological void after the disintegration of the USSR, a rise in the number of regional and ethnic conflicts, restrictions of freedom of speech as well as the radicalization of nationalist extremists, fundamentalists and supporters of military revisionism, the organization called *World Without Nazism* (WWN) (Международное правозащитное движение Мир без нацизма)¹⁸ was set up during a conference in Kiev. In its guiding statement WWN refers to the 'false assessment' of the WWII events, heroization of Nazi ideology and restrictions of the rights and freedoms of national, cultural and religious minorities. The recipients of this communication are the representatives of Russian national minorities, extreme left and Communist factions, veteran organizations and supporters of Russian policy. WWN aims at discrediting the Western set of ideas by visualizing it with negative examples of liberal policy in Europe. An attempt is made to convince the remainder of the world to the righteousness of Russian historical point of view, where only the Third Reich is held responsible for the outbreak of the war and the USSR is unfairly accused of collaboration. The organization is also meant to counteract the modern Nazi movements which, according to the members of the organization, are spreading across Ukraine and the Baltic countries, where the rights of the Russian-speaking minorities are seriously endangered. WWN also attempts to convince the

17 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 'States' ethnic groups', *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook> (2015-08-17).

18 WWN, Международное правозащитное движение «Мир без нацизма» [The International Human Rights Movement 'World Without Nazism'], <http://www.worldwithoutnazism.org/> (2015-06-14).

international community of the EU ineffectiveness so far and the necessity to take radical steps in order to ensure security.

3. Strategies of protection against propaganda

Since security threats often reach across borders, for many European institutions the fight against propaganda and disinformation has become a security priority. Information manipulation not only violates domestic and EU legislation, but is also a breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the European Convention on Human Rights.¹⁹ The fight against propaganda poses a challenge to the EU. Its current actions focus on: 1) the effective communication and promotion of political values in Eastern Europe, especially subjected to the Russian influence, 2) the strengthening of the independent media sector and social organisations and 3) the increase of social awareness about information manipulation, disinformation and falsification. Education and information about the dangers seem to be key issues, requiring coordinated long-term actions. On the other hand, the steps toward creating *European Russian TV channel*²⁰ have been taken but no immediate effects are to be expected.

The 2010/13/EU directive on audio-visual media services²¹ does not clearly prohibit propaganda. It ensures the protection and promotion of various forms of cultural expression, guarantees the right to information, diversity of opinions and media pluralism. Article 3 stresses, however, that in case of any incitement to hatred on grounds of race, sex, religion or nationality, Member States are entitled to restrict re-transmissions from third countries. Where hatred comes into play,

19 A. Richter, 'Legal Attempts to Restrict Propaganda Broadcasts Related to Crisis in and around Ukraine 2014-15', *Presentation* by Andrei Richter at the Justice for Free Expression conference at Columbia University, New York, on 11 March 2015, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), <http://www.osce.org/fom/149006?download=true> (2015-10-12).

20 G. Gotev, 'Latvia proposes "alternative" to Russian TV propaganda', *EurActiv*, January 8, 2015, <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/global-europe/latvia-proposes-alternative-russian-tv-propaganda-311109> (2015-12-01).

21 European Parliament & the Council, *Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive)*, OJ L 95, 15.4.2010, pp. 1-24, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32010L0013> (2015-12-12).

freedom of speech dies. According to the above-mentioned Directive, Member States are obliged to counteract any symptoms which would potentially threaten pluralism or the freedom to broadcast and exchange information.

Particular states, however, have greater possibilities of taking specific measures within their bounds. In 2015 RTR Planet, a Lithuanian channel broadcast in Russian, was suspended for a period of 3 months for inciting hatred between the Ukrainian and Russian nations. Earlier in 2014, a Russian NTV channel was penalized in the same way for broadcasting false information about the Soviet Army in 1991. Nonetheless, if such restrictions of propaganda are practicable in TV and radio transmissions, it is almost impossible to implement them in social media.²² When an Italian journalist and political activist Giulietto Chiesa took part in a meeting titled 'Should Europe be afraid of Russia?' in Estonia in 2014, he was declared *persona non grata* and expelled from the country. Chiesa was known for his controversial opinions about Russian activity, he supported Russian military engagement in Georgia and the annexation of Crimea.²³

A national strategy is a series of complex efforts that aim at counteracting the immediate threats of manipulation and create favourable conditions for safeguarding the information development. Apart from broadcast prohibitions, censorship and restrictions for Russian journalists, Member States strive to create an open, pluralistic information environment. Media diversity and alternative sources of information are some of the solutions implemented in reaction to information threats. Thus, the verification of the communication content and reaching for different media are possible. Broadcasting only in a national language excludes the Russian-speaking community from the country's media space which makes it necessary to broaden the media platform by introducing public Russian-language media in the countries where the Russian minority constitutes a considerable number. While Lithuania and Latvia are considering such a solution, Estonia has already launched the new ETV+ channel. Additionally, Lithuania

22 Gaub, op. cit.

23 Postimees, 'Italian journalist Chiesa ordered to leave Estonia', *Postimees Estonian News*, December 16, 2014, <http://news.postimees.ee/3028421/italian-journalist-chiesa-ordered-to-leave-estonia> (2015-12-22).

has offered a workshop programme for Russian-speaking journalists with a view to create an open, fully-fledged, independent media environment in the Baltic states.²⁴ However, there are some obstacles. In the case of Ukraine, European media outlets can be under pressure either due to financial cuts or links to pro-Russian business interests. Moreover, public media influence social integrity and so the lack of access to public information can cause social exclusion. Russian-language media are still a challenge to national security since radio and TV channels broadcasting in a language other than the official one decrease the diaspora's mobilization to learn the official language and weaken their integration.²⁵ Russian-speaking minorities existing in Russian media space feel connected to it, adopt its point of view, ideology and values. This, in turn, may generate threats to the integrity of the countries of their habitat. The question of access to information for the local recipients, members of ethnic and language minorities, is often ignored in the discussions on national security.

Conclusions and recommendations

Issues related to informational security and threat are by no means a new phenomenon in international relations, but they have recently gained in importance. Modern technologies and communication methods, alternative sources of information and limited government control over the media made cross-border social communication possible. In 21st century, information is one of a nation's strategic resources and as such is extremely vulnerable to attack.

Russian propaganda strongly affects recipients' emotions, disinform and has a negative influence on rational decision-making processes. It is vertical since the way of conveying information is carefully

24 Embassy of United States of America in Vilnius, 'Notice of funding opportunity', *News-Events*, <http://vilnius.usembassy.gov/news-events/notice-of-funding-opportunity.html> (2015-12-22).

25 Paradoxically, Russian-language ETV+ may not only enhance the integration of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia, but also initiate mutual communication and inspire tolerance and trust between Russians and Estonians. Research shows that Estonians watch Russian-language TV too, LSM, 'Глава русскоязычного ТВ Эстонии: доверие зрителя пришло не сразу' [The head of the Russian-speaking Estonian TV: the viewer trust did not come immediately], LSM. LV, February 11, 2016, <http://www.lsm.lv/ru/statja/obschestvo/novosti/glava-russkojazychnogo-tv-estonii-doverie-zritelja-prishlo-ne-srazu.a168679/> (2016-02-12).

designed, top-down programmed and has long-term effects. Confusion and informational chaos are created through persuasion, suggestion and manipulation, strengthening the *status quo* of the current authority, supporting local authorities and limiting possibilities for the growth of new political elites. Falsification in propaganda may bring down its credibility, nonetheless one must bear in mind that truth has little merit in propaganda and the received opinion on what is true depends largely on how specific information is presented. The selection and transformation of the communication content, restrictions on competitive information distribution and circulating only the kind of information the recipients anticipate are all acceptable in a propagandist broadcast. Its effectiveness also depends on the target recipient and the range of operations, which is why the information design for domestic recipients varies from the one intended for the addressees abroad (domestic vs. foreign propaganda).

Propaganda as a tool is not restricted to authoritarian rules. The methods and the effect of its influence differ, however. Propagandist activity as applied by the West is more passive and the information content comes from a known and reliable source which can readily be verified. As such, this can be called 'white propaganda.' It stems from the rules of democratic propaganda limited by the demand for it to retain system transparency, law and the freedom of judgement. It abides by the law and aims at creating confidence. As opposed to that, the secretive 'black propaganda' obtains information from illegal sources. It gives Russia greater influence options as it does not strive to follow the democratic system of values. According to Emma Briant, every kind of propaganda as manipulation is a global communication challenge.²⁶

In the Russian-language information space, TV is the primary means of communication. The media threaten mainly those countries, where Russian-speaking minorities constitute a significant percentage of the population, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia among others. One must bear in mind that propaganda is also present in the press, the radio, the Internet, pop-culture (music, film, literature), social move-

26 E.L. Briant, 'Allies and Audiences: Evolving Strategies in Defense and Intelligence Propaganda', *The Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2015, pp. 145-165.

ments and organizations. Information manipulation, disinformation and hatred incitement have become more evident during the war in Ukraine. Due to the growth of the Russian informational potential it can be presumed that its influence potential in Western Europe and Latin America will also grow.²⁷

Based on the analysis of the subject the following conclusions and recommendations have been drawn:

Methods of operation: The previous means of counteracting informational threat have proven ineffective. It is necessary to develop effective offensive procedures to fight propaganda in media and promote democratic values. Such strategies should be realized by both public and private sectors as well as the civil sector so as to cooperate in information complementation and exchange. The restoration of confidence in media and the development of professional journalism are essential.

Values: The openness of Western societies makes them vulnerable to informational threats. Ensuring informational security should not, however, incur the abandonment of basic democratic rules: human and civil rights, freedom of speech, law and order, pluralism and privacy.

Levels of cooperation: The need for the coordination of actions on domestic and European levels has risen. A growth of informational security is possible as a result of effective protection through regional cooperation and EU support.

The role of civil society: It is essential to undertake actions aiming at strengthening civil societies and to improve communication and cooperation between society and the government.

Alternative sources of information: The need for media diversification and information verification is evident. Individual states should broaden their national media platforms by including Russian-language media that offer an alternative to Russia-dependent ones.

27 Latin America is especially important to the Russian information policy as the Russian point of view is an alternative for the European and American points of view. In 2016, Russian Digital Television (TsTV) intends to launch three TV channels in Mexico and Brazil, broadcast in Spanish and Portuguese, Е. Брызгалова, К. Болецкая [Е. Bryzgalova, К. Voleckaya], 'Телеканалы ВГТРК и «Ростелекома» появятся в Южной Америке' [VGTRK and 'Rostelekom' will appear in Latin America], *Vedomosti*, May 28, 2015, <http://www.vedomosti.ru/technology/articles/2015/05/28/594055-telekanali-vgtrk-i-rostelecoma-poyavyatsya-v-yuzhnoi-amerike> (2015-01-08).

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