Challenges of the Contemporary Disinformation

Publication

Vilnius

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Introduction

On June 15-16, 2019, the training called "Challenges of Modern Disinformation" was organized in co-operation with the NATO Public Diplomacy Unit, the Wilfried Martens European Studies Center and Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The training was aimed at journalists from Lithuania's regions and Lithuanian citizens who are closely related with media outlets.

Lithuania is one of the leading countries in Europe in the fight against misinformation and fake news. Lithuania also organizes various platforms and initiatives to fight this phenomenon.

Combating misinformation and disinformation is one of the main goals of contemporary media. Lithuanian media outlets strive to ensure the quality of their content and the truthfulness of the facts they present. Therefore, in order to help develop the public's critical thinking and digital resilience, we have organized this training session.

In order to ensure that the knowledge gathered in this event would reach more people outside the event, we have released this publication the most information from the event. The purpose of this publication is to look at the issue of disinformation in a slightly more interactive way and to provide the public with useful information on how to fight it. During the training, not only lectures were organized, but also practical classes, during which the participants took part in the learning process themselves.

This publication contains short, easy-to-read articles on how to deal with fake news and misinformation: how to recognize it, how to avoid it, what you need to know about it, how to distinguish fake news from the truth and learn how to easily check information on publicly available sources.

What are the Hybrid Threats?

EITVYDAS BAJARŪNAS
MFA Ambassador-at-Large for Hybrid Threats

The term "hybrid" was actualized after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and ongoing aggression in Eastern Ukraine and has become the cornerstone for conceptualizing modern war and modern threats. This has become the new paradigm by redefining the challenges facing European security architecture.

Warfare or confrontation using non-military means has deep roots, but during the Russian intervention in Ukraine it was used on exceptionally large scale. Instead of a clear enemy, Russian operations were carried out by "little green men" who had no distinctive military insignia. Ukraine has undergone diplomatic, energy and economic pressure, unprecedented informational offenses, cyber attacks and operations by the Russian special operation forces.

The essence of hybrid warfare is the manipulation of the media, acts of terrorism, the absence of a clear hierarchy and structure of the enemy, the use of military, economic, financial, energy and social pressure, asymmetric tactics, combined and coordinated implementation of open and secret military, paramilitary and civilian measures. These are actions that exploit the vulnerability of a country or region to influence or destabilize the opponent, to prevent decision-making, and thus to achieve the goals.

As Russia continues its aggressive policy against the West, the Baltic States are often referred to as one of the possible targets of Russian hybrid warfare. For the Baltic States the term "hybrid" has become more relevant not only to the theoretical but especially practical nature as it is not only an academic but also a strategic challenge. Russia's annexation of Crimea and actions in Eastern Ukraine reminded that the concept of hybrid warfare has many historical analogies. Historians compared these events with those of the 20th century processes such as the annexation of the Klaipeda region by the Nazi Germany, the USSR's attempt to make a Bolshevik coup in Estonia in 1924, or the actions of Lucian Zheligovsky, who occupied of the Vilnius region in the 1920s. What the Baltic states experienced in the annexation of the Soviets in the 1940s - open and hidden diplomatic, economic, military action from outside forces, as well as the activities of the USSR in the international sphere by creating impact networks through politicians, non-governmental organizations, movements, etc. These actions were consistent with today's definitions of hybrid warfare and is an important resource for a better understanding of such behavior. How can the hybrid threats be better understood? First of all, hybrid threats usually include elements of asymmetry and surprise. However, a hybrid war can

also take a long time if its prolongation is beneficial to the aggressor (for example, "frozen conflicts" in post-Soviet space). Another widely discussed element is the uncertainty of conflict. The hybrid war deliberately merges the lines between peace and war, making it difficult for the attacked countries to give a fair and timely political response. The term "gray zone" is also associated with the uncertainty phenomenon caused by the hybrid threats. The hybrid war takes place symmetrically at all stages (from the emergence of the political motive, the granting of the mandate to the very implementation of it), along with the element of surprise and using the tactics of diversion and deception. The main objectives of a hybrid operation are to identify vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the attacked country. The countries involved in such actions ignore the official state of war and instead go in to conflict under another name. This lack of a clear limit is achieved by using a variety of instruments, both violent and non-violent, military and civilian, which are carefully planned in such a way that the red line would not be overstepped. This of course poses serious challenges and evaluates conflicts through national or international law.

Lithuanian National Security Strategy which was updated in 2017 highlights threats, risk factors that match the elements of hybrid warfare highlighted in the theoretical part: masked military and intelligence tools, threats to Euro-Atlantic community unity, terrorism, extremism, radicalization, information threats, cyber threats, economic and energy dependence, unsafe development of nuclear energy near the borders of the Lithuanian Republic, corruption and organized crime. Although formal Lithuanian documents do not use the term "hybrid", in Lithuania it is widely used media and also by the high officials of the country during the expert discussions.

The hybrid tools used by Russia are not a new concept. But why did the term only become relevant now? At least two characteristics of what we conceptualize as the Russian hybrid war allow us to talk about the "novelty" of this type of warfare. First of all, by performing hybrid operations, Russia successfully exploits the rights to free speech provided by democratic Western countries for its own purposes (Russian representatives can operate freely, invest in Western countries), as well as globalization, modern information technologies (the impact made through social networks is rather cheap but influential and global). The world is only beginning to understand what changes are being made by the universal accessibility to data and information which can be used by both governmental and non-governmental actors. In addition to this, the Russian hybrid war does not take place in a clearly defined area, but in the entire Euro-Atlantic region (if formerly Russia's target was the former USSR and socialist bloc states, now the hybrid operations take place in the US, Germany, the UK or anywhere else). Russia is also able to exploit certain weaknesses of Western societies, for example, propaganda has become possible due to the decline of trust in the democratic institutions, and the media.

The Russian information policy, which is a particularly important part of hybrid influences, is pursued in two main directions: domestic and international. Kremlin's domestic goal is to limit any alternative media sources, so that citizens can only hear messages sent by state-controlled or closely related media, or as Kremlin calls it – "the only trustable information". And internationally - both in the neighboring countries and in the Western countries - the Kremlin uses the fundamental principles of liberal democracy and puts lies and propaganda as an alternative source of news. The main principle of Russia's disinformation strategy is to instigate that all the news are constructed and therefore there are no "objective news" in the postmodern world, only different, com-

peting interpretations of facts that can be called reality. By using lobbying and public relations agencies, Russia seeks to discredit other countries on the international stage.

Russia also supports European extremist groups, attempts to exploit existing divisions and crises in both EU and NATO levels. In the European context, Russia often supports various radical forces, financially or even in their ideological direction. These can be both radical right-wing and radical left-wing movements, as well as fraudulent non-governmental organizations. The aim is to destabilize European societies from within.

Other hybrid interventions are also widely used in Russia: cyber activities, resettlement of ethnic groups in frozen conflict region, or use of "proxy groups" (proxy, pseudo-NGOs, youth organizations, research institutes, expert groups, motorcycle clubs), cultural diplomacy, promotion of Russian culture abroad (namely, the Rossotrudnichestvo organization founded by compatriots, which is justifying aggression against neighboring countries, in order to supposedly protect the rights of Russian speakers abroad).

Why are Russia's actions troubling the Baltic States? First of all, Russia has never stopped treating the Baltic States as being in its "exclusive influence" zone and has long since used political, economic, energy resources, propaganda, cyber, information and other coercive, open and secret means to make countries vulnerable and weak. And, even in comparison with the increase in Russia's military potential, these measures have only increased in recent years.

That is why the question of what hybrid threats are, is not theoretical and requires further research into it.

NATO in the Baltics: Kremlin media prominent in English-language coverage

LUKAS ANDRIUKAITIS
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The Russian annexation of Crimea and invasion into Eastern Ukraine in 2014 served as a wake-up call for NATO countries. Not only had it helped to understand the threats of hybrid warfare, but also to rally public support for increase in NATO defense measures. One of the most successfully implemented measures was the Enhanced Forward Presence Battalions on the Eastern NATO flank. The Baltic states and Poland each received a multinational battalion of NATO troops making the vulnerable Eastern flank a hard nut to crack for the Kremlin. As a result, Kremlin again turned to information warfare methods to counter these measures by trying to turn local populations against the troops and donor countries to lose faith in the idea. Using a social media listening tool "Buzzsumo" we were able to investigate which articles and posts regarding NATO in the Baltic countries were the most engaged with. But what is more, we were able to see which domains and platforms dominated the public space. In our latest research, we investigate different media sources and their content that was engaged with the most during the past two years to see who dominated the public space in the English language regarding NATO in the Baltic States.

Social Listening Tool and Methodology

"Buzzsumo" is one of the top social media analytics tools. It comes with a powerful social media search engine that helps to find and analyze the best performing content related to a specific niche. Originally used in marketing for doing content and competitive research, this tool is also very useful in analyzing information warfare trends. In this case, we were interested to see the most engaged with media content with regards to NATO in the three Baltic states. We used the keywords

"NATO Lithuania", "NATO Latvia", "NATO Estonia" and "NATO Baltic States". We were able to check two years worth of data from July 21, 2016 to July 21, 2018, also taking a deeper look at February 2017,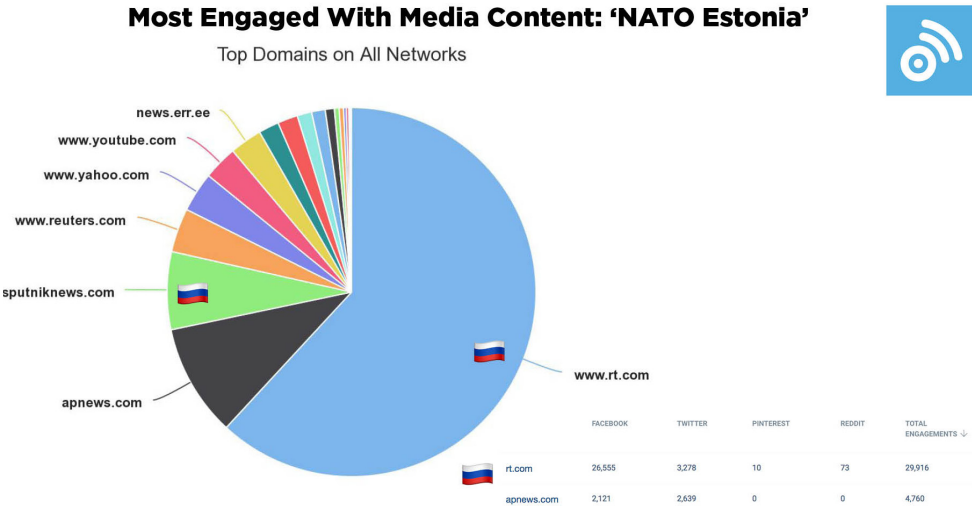 when the first Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) troops entered the Baltic States. Sorting the media content by the most engaged with criteria, we were able to see which media outlets were the most influential in the English language digital space.

Estonia

In the case of keywords "NATO Estonia", Russian state funded media outlet RT dominated the engagement stats, with almost thirty thousand engagements. The second most popular outlet was US based "Associated Press" with almost four thousand engagements and the third was Russian state funded media outlet "Sputnik News", with slightly over three thousand engagements. As we can see from the graph, Russian state funded media outlets garnered over two-thirds of the total engagements in the past two years.

Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Estonia'

Top Domains on All Networks

	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	PINTEREST	REDDIT	TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS ↓
rt.com	26,555	3,278	10	73	29,916
apnews.com	2,121	2,639	0	0	4,760

Source – "Buzzsumo"

"Buzzsumo" analysis also provides a time graph, which demonstrates the most active months of engagement. In this case, the bars peaked at the period from February 2017 to April 2017.

Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Estonia'

Number of Articles Published ●   Total Engagements ●—
Estimated Total Engagements ◆

Jul 21, 2016 - Jul 21, 2018

Source – "Buzzsumo"

We also took a closer look into the most engaged with articles in the periods of February 2017 and March 2017, right after the first EFP soldiers reached the Baltics. "Buzzsumo" suggested that amongst the three most popular articles in both moths, two were from Russian state funded media outlets.

Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Estonia'


Source – "Buzzsumo"

Latvia

Meanwhile, with the keywords "NATO Latvia", the engagement stats were less dominated by Russian state funded media. The most popular and the third most popular outlets were "Canadian Broadcasting Corporation" with six and a half thousand engagements and "CTV News" outlet with three and a half thousand engagements. Russian state funded outlet RT came in second place with almost six thousand engagements.

## Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Latvia'

Top Domains on All Networks
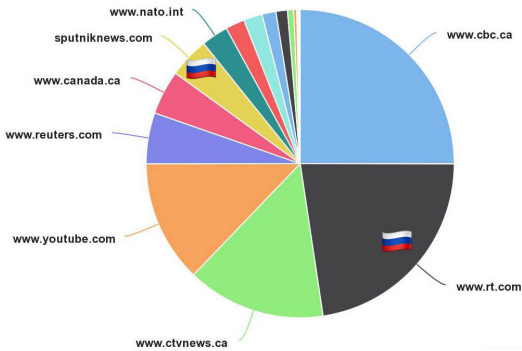
		FACEBOOK	TWITTER	PINTEREST	REDDIT	TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS ▾
	cbc.ca	5,207	489	0	850	6,546
🇷🇺	rt.com	4,951	931	3	26	5,911
	ctvnews.ca	3,417	327	0	56	3,800

Jul 21, 2016 - Jul 21, 2018

Source – "Buzzsumo"

The time graph also did not show any particularly high engagement during the first months of EFP deployment. Overall number of published articles over the two year span also seemed to be less than in the case of Estonia or Lithuania.

## Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Latvia'
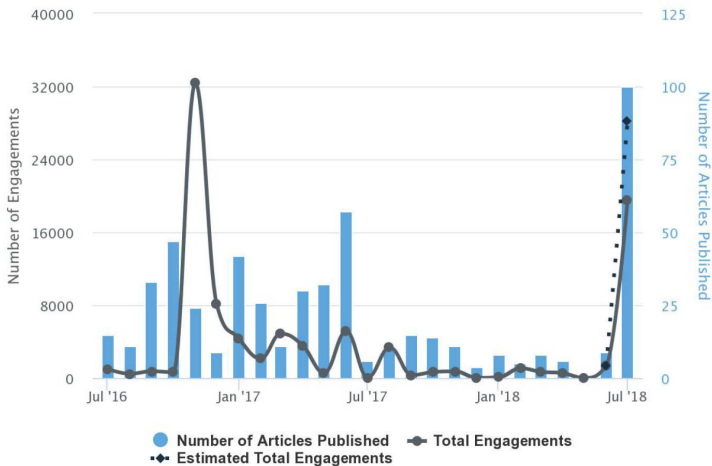
Jul 21, 2016 - Jul 21, 2018

Source – "Buzzsumo"

Looking at the most engaged with articles from February 2017 and March 2017, similar patterns appeared. Russian state funded media had a highly engaged with article in both February and March.

Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Latvia'

Source – "Buzzsumo"

Lithuania

As of Lithuania, RT took a leading position with approximately one-third of all the engagements. The second most engaged platform was "YouTube", but to understand what kind of content was posted on this platform, it requires a more thorough investigation. "Sputnik News" appeared as the fourth most engaged with platform.

Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Lithuania'

Top Domains on All Networks
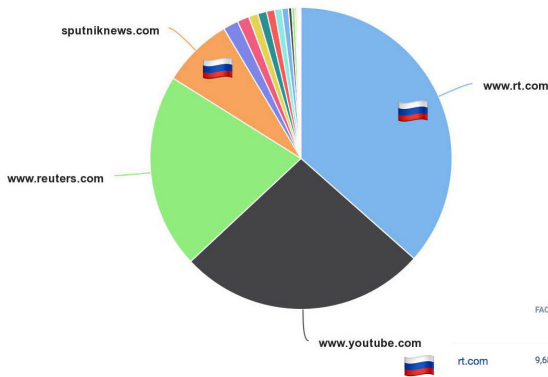
Jul 21, 2016 - Jul 21, 2018

	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	PINTEREST	REDDIT	TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS
rt.com	9,686	1,645	11	31	11,373
youtube.com	7,839	304	0	110	8,253
reuters.com	4,251	1,861	0	386	6,498

Source – "Buzzsumo"

On February 2017, the two most engaged with articles were written by "RT" and "Sputink News". Only the third most popular was provided by Bloomberg, and garnered roughly half of the engagements of the RT article. On March, the most popular article only had 64 engagements, compared to one and a half thousand on February. None of the most popular articles on March were of Russian origin.

Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Lithuania'

Most Engaged Articles for NATO Lithuania (February 1st, 2017 - February 28th, 2017)   Export

		Facebook Engagements	Twitter Shares	Pinterest Shares	Reddit Engagements	Number of Links	Evergreen Score	Total Engagements
🇷🇺	**NATO** troops from Germany arrive in **Lithuania** as Trump pledges support for alliance By Rt — Feb 7, 2017 rt.com ☐ Save 🔗 View Backlinks 👤 View Sharers ⤴ Share	1.3K	229	0	3	13	3	1.5K
🇷🇺	Germany Deploys Tanks in **Lithuania** as Part of Mission to 'Intimidate' Russia By Sputnik — Feb 27, 2017 sputniknews.com ☐ Save 🔗 View Backlinks 👤 View Sharers ⤴ Share	1K	58	0	0	6	1	1.1K
	One **NATO** Member Thinks Trump Is Right By Dalius Simenas — Feb 6, 2017 bloomberg.com ☐ Save 🔗 View Backlinks 👤 View Sharers ⤴ Share	831	102	1	0	0	3	934

Most Engaged Articles for NATO Lithuania (March 1st, 2017 - March 31st, 2017)   Export

		Facebook Engagements	Twitter Shares	Pinterest Shares	Reddit Engagements	Number of Links	Evergreen Score	Total Engagements
	Lithuania Wants **NATO** Command To Move Closer To Eastern Borders Mar 17, 2017 rferl.org ☐ Save 🔗 View Backlinks 👤 View Sharers ⤴ Share	53	11	0	0	0	1	64
	NATO, Nordic and Baltic air force commanders meeting in **Lithuania** to discuss security Mar 22, 2017 baltictimes.com ☐ Save 🔗 View Backlinks 👤 View Sharers ⤴ Share	32	7	0	0	0	0	39
	Another information attack against **NATO** troops in **Lithuania** – German battalion leader in the crosshair By Vaidas SaldÅ¾iÅ«nas, Delf... — Mar 31, 2017 delfi.lt ☐ Save 🔗 View Backlinks 👤 View Sharers ⤴ Share	1	25	0	0	0	0	26

Source – "Buzzsumo"

With regards to the timeline, "NATO Lithuania" keywords had most articles published on February 2017. Large spikes of engagement stats were also visible around the same period of time.

Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Lithuania'

● Number of Articles Published   ◆ Total Engagements
◆ Estimated Total Engagements
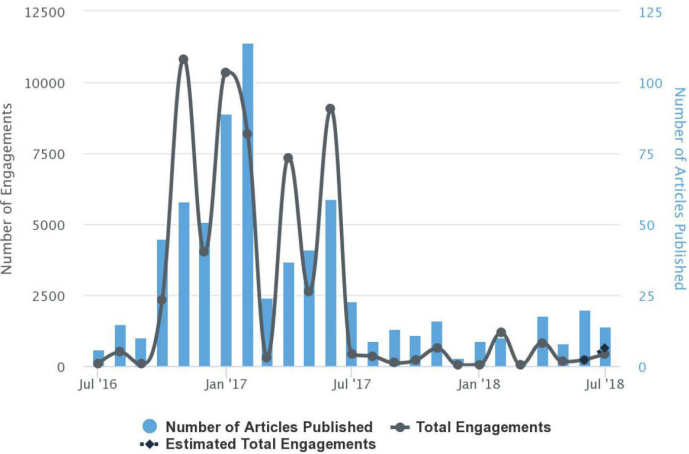
Jul 21, 2016 - Jul 21, 2018

Source – "Buzzsumo"

Baltic States

Finally, we have analyzed media content with regards to the Baltic States as a whole, using the keywords "NATO Baltic States". The situation was mostly similar to Estonia, where one outlet dominated over two-thirds of all the engagements.

In this case, the dominant outlet was the Russian state funded media outlet "Sputnik News". It had five times more engagements than the runner-up Baltics.livuamap.com.

Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Baltic States'

Top Domains on All Networks

www.uawire.org
uawire.org
www.reddit.com

baltics.liveuamap.com
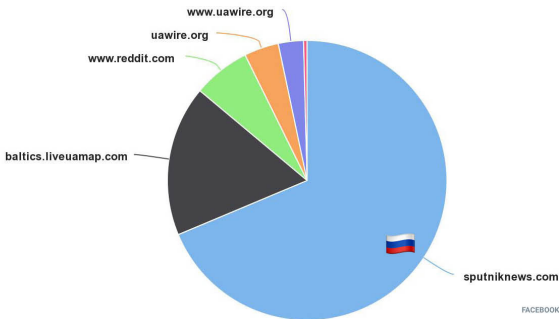
sputniknews.com

	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	PINTEREST	REDDIT	TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS ↓
sputniknews.com	1,263	234	10	4	1,511
baltics.liveuamap.com	64	296	0	23	383
reddit.com	4	21	0	120	145

Jul 21, 2016 - Jul 21, 2018

Source – "Buzzsumo"

The analysis of the timeline revealed a similar pattern to Lithuania's and Estonia's cases. A gradual build-up to February 2017 and a slow decline with occasional peaks. February 2017, again had the most articles published and one of the highest numbers of engagements.

Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Baltic States'
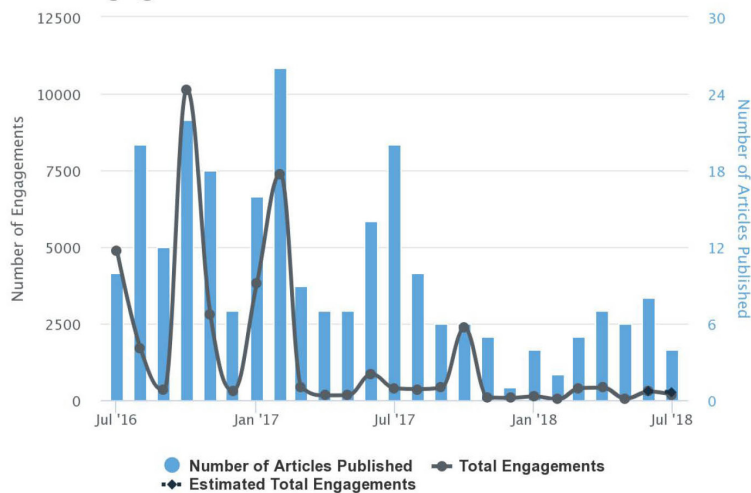
Jul 21, 2016 - Jul 21, 2018

Source – "Buzzsumo"

As of most engaged with media content, February 2017 had the most popular Russian media article, written by RT. This article was more than five times more popular than the "CBS News" runner-up. As in Lithuania's case, March had no highly engaged with articles and none of them were of Russian origin.

Most Engaged With Media Content: 'NATO Baltic States'

Most Engaged Articles for NATO Baltic States (February 1st, 2017 - February 28th, 2017)   Export

	Facebook Engagements	Twitter Shares	Pinterest Shares	Reddit Engagements	Number of Links	Evergreen Score	Total Engagements
'It's **NATO** - not Russia - that has deployed tanks to Poland & **Baltic States**' – George Galloway By Rt — Feb 4, 2017 rt.com	4.7K	962	2	0	10	4	5.7K
Baltic states, ex-**NATO** commander Breedlove worry Putin may send 100k Russian troops to Belarus for Zapad drill By Tucker Reals — Feb 10, 2017 cbsnews.com	940	169	7	10	43	6	1.1K
Baltic states seek more **NATO** help ahead of Russian exercise By Andrius Sytas — Feb 9, 2017 reuters.com	166	144	0	10	36	4	320

Most Engaged Articles for NATO Baltic States (March 1st, 2017 - March 31st, 2017)   Export

	Facebook Engagements	Twitter Shares	Pinterest Shares	Reddit Engagements	Number of Links	Evergreen Score	Total Engagements
Rising Tensions Between Russia and **NATO** in the **Baltic States**	The Complete Series Mar 4, 2017 youtube.com Video	228	4	0	0	0	1	232
Deterring Russian Aggression in the **Baltic States**: What it Takes to Win By David A. — Mar 1, 2017 rand.org	14	97	0	1	5	0	112
U.S.: Secretary Of **State** To Discuss Strengthening **NATO** In **Baltic** Meeting Mar 21, 2017 stratfor.com	2	25	0	0	0	0	27

Source – "Buzzsumo"

Findings

As we can see from the analysis, all of the keywords concerning NATO in the Baltic countries had exceptionally high Russian media influence. Not only was the engagement unnaturally high, but also the content was critical of NATO. We can also observe a gradual build-up, reaching a peak in February of 2017, when the first EFP soldiers were deployed in the Baltics, followed by a slow decline in the reporting and engagement. This pattern also suggests of a possible well thought-through informational operation with clear preparation and systematic execution.

Out of the four different keyword searches, Latvia stood out as the least dominated by the Russian media articles. Various reasons could have caused this effect, varying from possible higher efforts to work in Russian language to influence the local Russian speaking community, or even the efforts of communication of the hosted EFP troops. As we can see, a number of most engaged with articles in Latvia were of Canadian media outlets. We did not see the same effect in other keyword searches that we used.

Another important observation worth mentioning is that none of the most engaged with outlets were of local Baltic countries origin. This shows that the countries hosting the EFP troops are not involved in forming the public opinions in the most used NATO language. Even more analysis could be done focusing on the Russian language or the local Baltic States languages. What is more, it would be interesting to see the patterns in the languages of the hosted EFP troops, as "RT" and "Sputnik News" have popular media outlets in French and especially in German language.

To have a better understanding of what were the narratives before and after EFP troops were deployed, it would require for a more thorough investigation. Knowing the nature of information that Russian state funded media, such as RT and "Sputnik News" are providing, these findings raise concerns.

Conclusion

Social listening tools have more use than just observing marketing trends. "Buzzsumo" gives us a chance to take a closer look at the information warfare trends and to see who is setting the narratives in the wider scale. As we can see from the graphs, Russian state funded media outlets are playing an exceptionally big role in forming public opinions in English speaking digital space. Typically, vast majority of all articles written by these outlets on NATO topics are usually highly negative. Keeping in mind the fact that this analysis concerns the English speaking environment, we can suspect an effort to manipulate public opinions towards NATO in the Baltic region, especially with regards to the deployment of NATO EFP troops. This is especially worrisome as in some cases ("NATO Estonia'" and "NATO Baltic States") Russian media outlets garnered over two-thirds of the total engagements over two years.

There is little question that the information narratives about NATO are dominated by Kremlin outlets in Russian language, but it is worrisome to learn that in some cases the narratives are also dominated in English language.

False narratives in the Lithuanian information environment

DALIA BANKAUSKAITĖ
researcher at the organization
"ResPublica"

It seems that Lithuanian public space is already saturated with talks on disinformation and information wars. Even the public's fatigue and boredom are felt when this topic is mentioned. It is also noticeable that the same people speak about the Kremlin's misinformation in the same circles and most often among themselves. This topic is undoubtedly timely, but does it really reach the right groups, does it make sense to the general public? We know very little about the impact of disinformation on target groups and the general public itself.

Many people, especially those of the older generation, think that most of the things are self-explanatory. According to them, the experience of the Soviet regime and the surviving Soviet propaganda formed the immunity for our society to disinformation and manipulation. It is a positive effect, but there is a danger that excessive self-confidence will lead to a loss of vigilance. Although the young generation of Lithuania is familiar with the Soviet regime, their experience is different. Their understanding cannot be as deep as of the older generation's. Technology of persuasion and manipulation develops very quickly; if public identity and self-awareness is not strong enough, systematic disinformation can have a major disruptive effect.

The Kremlin's disinformation campaigns do not want to take over Lithuanian society. Their goal is to manage it by splitting and opposing against groups within the society. Disinformation activities are pursuing long-term goals, meaning that public and state weakening measures are implemented in a subtle manner, so that they are not so obvious and do not put up resistance. The current circumstances are very favorable for this. Sociologists emphasize that the traditional and social media media representing the Kremlin or supporting the Kremlin's approach are using social exclusion and exploiting the situation due to the huge difference in income between people living in rural areas and cities of Lithuania.

The Kremlin's communication activities are characterized by strategic consistency and comprehensiveness, and at the tactical level, Kremlin's disinformation campaigns are implemented in a very flexible manner, responding quickly to the country's topicalities and exploiting the circumstances, knowing the Lithuanian society well. The Kremlin also uses

one of the manipulative techniques - it selectively negatively comments on sensitive events of Lithuania's history, relations between Lithuania and Poland, social problems in Lithuania, emigration, poverty, and so on. The aim is to establish a meta-narrative about Lithuania as a failed state.

Kremlin meta-narratives - against NATO, against the European Union, against the US, against Lithuania, accusations of Russophobia, against Lithuania's history - set the Kremlin's strategic direction of communication. An analysis of the Kremlin disinformation campaigns in Lithuania shows that meta-narratives intertwine, and the cycles of stories that form meta-narratives serve several broader narratives. Stories are not necessarily consistent, or may include the opposite of the same meta-narrative, yet the goal is to develop a basic meta-narrative.

At the tactical level, the media presenting the Kremlin's approach (printed, online, social) emphasizes the negative aspects of political, economic or social issues that have a high resonance effect in Lithuanian society and strive to fill the stories with a negative emotional charge. An emotionally exposed person is less critical and less demanding for information. The narrative's communication tools are carefully selected to make the story as compelling as possible.

The theme development mechanism is influential: The media supporting the Kremlin's approach share stories (squash ball tactics) that somehow confirm the meta-narrative. Social networking groups and websites repeat (in visual, audio, text) that narrative idea in the public online space, do not avoid using groups where people really discuss the issue that concerns them. The exceptional feature of such discussions is that there is no constructive dialogue, lack of context analysis of the issue, many emotions, only negative aspects, and only accusations. The noise generated in emotions drives constructive discussions. There are no constructive ways to solve the issue, such discussions in the information environment are reinforced by protest events, campaigns on the streets. Disinformation activity is considered to be a success when the subject receives high resonance in society.

Some of the social groups or websites listed below describe the views and activities of such groups. For example: "The Lithuanian government is a junta hijacking Lithuania", "Let's save Lithuania!", "Lithuania against refugees !!!", "Protest information center", "Let's be united", "Dark part of Lithuanian independence", "How to Survive Chaos", "Refugees - No! Demographic support for Lithuanian boom and family - yes!", "New Lithuania"," Литва суука Смешная (Lithuania - funny bitch)","Referendum for President's dismissal", "Lithuanians"," Top 10 propaganda mistakes", "Fight", "The Voice of the Nation", "We Woke Up and We Rise", "The Union of Unity of Nations".

How to behave in a state information environment?

First. Lithuanian society and institutions should monitor the state information environment, analyze and successfully detect and explain the provocations that have arisen. Successful use of the Lithuanian legal base, the society should learn critical thinking, media literacy, and to successfully operate public initiatives that reveal false news.

Demonstration of false news is a very important but insufficient tool for creating a secure information space. It is important that the media, explaining the false news, explains the nuances and context of the matter coherently and tries to make the reader pay attention to such information. By disproportionately focusing on the story of a false message, even if it sounds sensational, the media risks only spreading disinformation more widely, that is, serving authors of false knowledge. It is not enough to just say "what he or she said", yet it is more important to make the public understand and resist the false message. It is very important that the media would present and explain the essence and context of the issue.

Second. Disclosure of disinformation will only be effective if it is inclusive, coordinated, combining technological, economic and analytical and educational activities. Kremlin knows very well how to use the difficulties and disagreements in Lithuanian or Western societies to break and manage them. The most effective way to protect your information space is to address the state's problems in a constructive and systematic way, and to consistently build a welfare state and a motivated society.

Third. As long as the Kremlin's misinformation has its audience, it will influence our society. Unfortunately, we do not know the user of Kremlin's knowledge well.

Finally. Media and information literacy skills are very important in the modern world. In order for media literacy not to become a mere declarative action, it is necessary to consistently formulate the need for such skills in society. Education is an essential tool for building a resilient and motivated society. Resilient, critical-minded citizens are educated from an early age.

ABC of Propaganda

DR. NERIJUS MALIUKEVIČUS
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In the modern age of (dis)information, we are constantly bombarded with informational messages, news, calls for protest and to sign petitions. The communication skills and media literacy become vital for audiences who want to preserve a clear, undistorted view of the real world and to avoid manipulation and deception. The spread of media literacy, promoting public resistance to propaganda, must become a priority.

Psychologist Everett L. Shostrom in his book "Man The Manipulator" (1967) states that the best antidote to manipulation is the actualization: apathy can be overcome by activity, control by freedom, cynicism by trust, and lies are overcome by openness and truth!

Alfred McClung Lee and Elizabeth Briant Lee, American sociologists, demonstrated well before the Second World War, a strategy of how openness can defeat lies. The period before the war was saturated with aggressive propaganda and manipulation. The American Institute for Propaganda Analysis (1937-1942) instructed these experts to reveal the most prominent propaganda techniques and bring them to the public. This is how the book "The Fine Art of Propaganda" (1939) appeared, in which seven propaganda techniques on how to manipulate people's hearts and minds were visualized.

In the global age of (dis)information, these seven propaganda techniques are relevant again:

1. Labeling - in order to discredit an idea or an argument, bad or damaging epithets are used.

According to Alfred and Elizabeth Lee, ugly epithets and insults have always played a pivotal role throughout the history. Reputation can be destroyed, human achievements can be humiliated, people can be even locked into prisons, or start waging wars. Such epithets can be directed against individuals, groups, communities, tribes, neighbours, states, regions, people and races.
During the Russian aggression in Ukraine, the following epithets were used: "ukrop", "chachol". State Kremlin TV called the new Ukrainian government "Kiev junta".

2. Glossy generalizations - when something is associated with "greater good". This technique is used to try and convince us of something we do not even verify.

The Fine Art of Propaganda states that we often believe in or fight for ideas that are coined as "greater good": for example "civilization", "Christianity", "righteousness", "democracy", "patriotism", "motherhood", "fatherhood", "science", "medicine", "health" or "love". For the purpose of propaganda analysis, we can label these as "glossy generalizations". These labels mean different things to different audiences and they are also often manipulated. It is not a critique of these ideas; on the contrary, it is a critique of how these ideas are manipulated by propagandists.

After Russia's aggression in Crimea, Russian politicians often use the arguments of "historical justice" to explain and justify this campaign.

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3. Transfer - this method provides authority, justification, and reputation for something respectful of the other so that the latter is acceptable; or vice versa - with the help of authority and reputation, the propagandist tries to force us to reject arguments.

Using this transfer technique symbols are constantly used. The American Institute for Propaganda Analysis warns:
"The propagandist using the cross transmits the holiness of the Christian religion to his program. A sign symbolizing patriotism for the nation, performs a similar function." These symbols create emotions. In our eyes, at the speed of light, this creates the whole spectrum of our feelings for faith or nation. "
Propagandists rarely use one symbol. Music, images, uniforms, rituals - all are combined and used.

This technique is particularly evident in the Kremlin's "St George Ribbon" campaign, which illustrates the idea of belonging to the united "Russian world". Separatists fighting in Donbas, are using the same ribbons.

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4. Certificate - when respected or hated people say that a certain idea, program, product or person is good or bad.

"CNN showed …", "The boss said …", "My doctor claims …" or "Our minister approves …". Alfred and Elizabeth Lee point out that some of these testimonies may focus more on what they say rather than the content of their own arguments and ideas. This creates the illusion that "such or such bad person supports such or such idea, therefore, the idea itself is bad," or "such or such good person, supports such or such idea, and therefore the idea is good."

In the context of the Putin campaign in Crimea, there were famous authors or texts that seemed to prove Russia's historical rights to the Crimea.

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5. From the Nation - this is the way a speaker tries to convince his audience that he and his ideas are good, because they are "ordinary people."

Politicians, leaders of the public often find favor in saying that they are the same people as "all of us". They publicly demonstrate their commitment to small children, ordinary human beings and habits. They invite journalists to their homes, unexpectedly discover and serve a homemade apple pie in the kitchen.

In short, these politicians win our hearts and minds by demonstrating how simple they are, just like all of us.

This technology has been mastered by the Russian President Vladimir Putin and his team of experts: he likes to take pictures not only with puppies, but also with dangerous wildlife animals. It demonstrates to the public his courage and masculinity.

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6. Deck of Cards - This is a technique whereby facts or information, images, logical and illogical statements are mixed like cards to create the best effect.

What can be called "deck of cards technique" is the depiction of everything in black or white, good or evil, without any shadows or nuances. The authors of "The Fine Art of Propaganda" agreed with a thesis from the September 1, 1937, The New York Times article: "What's really dangerous is not the propaganda itself, but the monopoly of it."

A good example of this technique is how all the Ukrainian Euromaidan groups are presented in the Russian state media as "extremists" or even "neo-Nazis".

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7. Join the Bandwagon - "Everyone, or at least the majority, does it." With this technique, the propagandist tries to convince us that all the members of the group support the propagandist program, and therefore we must follow this crowd to "join the bandwagon".

What can be called "deck of cards technique" is the depiction of everything in black or white, good or evil, without any shadows or nuances. The authors

of "The Fine Art of Propaganda" agreed with a thesis from the September 1, 1937, The New York Times article: "What's really dangerous is not the propaganda itself, but the monopoly of it."

A good example of this technique is how all the Ukrainian Euromaidan groups are presented in the Russian state media as "extremists" or even "neo-Nazis".

Do not rush!

Beware of your preconceptions!

Stay away from the decisions until you have evaluated all the information!

Analyze!

Fake news in contemporary media

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The so-called fake news remains to be a hot topic. We can identify a few fundamental trends while talking about them. On the one hand, the topic of fake news is the transformation of the political field. First of all, the popularization of populist forces can be distinguished here, and populism is precisely based on unreliable information or unfair manipulation of facts. On the other hand, fake news is a widespread propaganda tool and this challenge is very relevant today. For example, it is confirmed, by the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on November 23, 2016 on the EU's strategic communication to counteract its opposing third-party propaganda. This document identifies two main sources of hostile propaganda against the united Europe: the DAESH (ISIS) terrorist organization and Russia.

This article investigates false news in modern media, especially in the context of the challenge of propaganda, because this aspect poses the greatest threat to Lithuania today (this does not mean that irresponsible political communication is not a problem of the Lithuanian political field, but it remains beyond the frame of this text).

It is also worthwhile to clearly define the terms used in this topic. Fake news is understood as unrealistic information that is meant to be presented as a real fact. The purpose of this action is to mislead the user of the information, to form false beliefs, a certain picture of the world (events). In other words, false news is used as an information tool.

The term 'media' today is quite widely understood. The discussion is not only about traditional or new media, but also about the information environment in general. The media, for example, today can be identified as social networks, where people can share information directly and create it themselves. In some cases, social networks can be no less than maybe more influential than the traditional media.

The examples of using false news in modern media are also easy to find. Several well-known cases could even be called classic examples of this phenomenon.

One of these cases, in July 2014, shows a story about a boy crucified in the city of Slaviansk in Ukraine, in the Vremia newsletter of Russian Pervyj Channel. The clear purpose of this storyline was to demonstrate the alleged "cruelty of the Ukrainian soldiers". The plot shows a woman who "testifies" that she saw the execution allegedly held by Ukrainian soldiers with her own eyes. The story

that was told was about a three-year-old boy (the son of a separatist fighter) crucified on the bulletin board. Furthermore, the "witness" also told that the Ukrainians tied his mother to the tank and dragged her on the streets of the city until she died.

The aforementioned narrative was quickly identified as complete fiction, and the "witness" was suspected to be an actress (a similar woman who performed other "roles" was also seen in several other Russian TV channels). Usually unveiling false news requires considerable effort and time, however, the story of the "crucified boy" immediately raised suspicions. First of all, the very intense Kremlin propaganda war against Ukraine from the very beginning of Maidan was not a novelty, so every relevant story had to be treated with extreme care and critical thinking. Another important aspect is that, in our time, in the light of the technology we have, an act of such exceptional cruelty, as it was told in the plot, would have been recorded by other witnesses as well. People would have been filming events on their smartphones (and even if it were banned - something secretly

would do it) and the images would have been widespread on the Internet.

However, the problem of fake news is not distant and manifests itself in Kremlin sources of information that propagate propaganda narratives. There are examples of attempts to spread fake news in the Lithuanian information space as well. Here are also some of the most striking examples.

On the eve of February 16, 2017, an attempt was made in the Lithuanian information space to spread a false story about the fact that five German soldiers (serving in the NATO Battalion of Forces in Lithuania) in Jonava raped a high-school student from the foster home. The false report also stated that the local police refused to investigate the crime. Several attempts were made to spread this narrative: the anonymous letter with the above mentioned statements was received by the Speaker of the Seimas Viktoras Pranckietis and some other politicians, state institutions and police. Social networking also featured images of fake main page news pages with allegedly published (and subsequently removed) incident information. In the preparation of this information provocation online, a Wordpress blog webpage was also created to spread this story.

The above-mentioned "news" was promptly discovered to be fake. It is understood that the ambition was to encroach upon the allies of Lithuania, to support another propaganda narrative that was often distributed, that "NATO soldiers behave in Lithuania as an occupied territory".
The time of this provocation, as you can imagine, was also chosen carefully. This false news story was circulated against one of the biggest holidays in Lithuania, hoping that the institutions would not be able to react on time.

The Jonava girl narrative is structurally

similar to another case of Kremlin propaganda. In January 2016, an incident occurred in Germany, stating that a group of migrants kidnapped a young girl named Lisa from a Russian family and raped her. The German police investigated this case and found that this story was partly false. The girl was really missing on that day, but she voluntarily spent the night with a friend who had no contact with the migrants. However, even after the truth came to light, the Kremlin's propaganda did not abandon this false story and actively used it to strengthen anti-Western rhetoric and instigate negative attitudes towards migrants. It can be said that in the case of Lithuania, the same model was used only the narrative was adapted to the local circumstances - i.e. transforming migrants into German troops, while the girl, Lisa, was changed to a girl from a foster home.

Lithuania has also faced cases where attempts to legalize false news in the country's information space have been made, using the symbiosis of cyber and psychological warfare. For example, on April 12, 2017, the BNS news agency was hacked in order to post fake news about US soldiers poisoned in Latvia. Later, in 2018 TV3 news portal and What Happens in Kaunas media outlet experienced similar attacks and fake news posting.

The examples presented show that fake news is a challenge for modern media. In such a situation, journalists must be particularly careful when checking information from secondary sources, especially if the information is sensitive or suspected of reliability. The media's obligation is becoming a cyber security for its networks.

Talking about society as a whole, it becomes obvious that today, every person needs to possess certain skills in order to work with information. Critical thinking and what can be called social network hygiene (or behavioral ethics) are important aspects that can help to stop the development of fake news on social networks. Simply put, one must understand that before sharing information on social networks (especially sensitive and important information) the person should check if the story actually happened.

Potential scenarios how Russia might to overpower the Baltic States

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Since Baltic States regained their independence from Soviet Union, four potential scenarios have been trained during various crisis simulation exercises.

Matrix 1 provides a snapshot of hypothetical situations by 2025, where Baltic States in the different ways might be threatened by Russia. The first scenario is based on Russian annexation of Crimea and covert war in Eastern Ukraine. The second scenario portraits Russian incursion into Georgia after has conducted huge scale joint combined exercises. The third scenario demonstrates possible 'Russian World' creation in the Baltic States. The fourth scenario simulates the situation when Russia denies the Baltic States from energy resources the same way as it has been done in the past.

Firstly, four axes showing possible Russian approaches to use power against the Baltic States.

Secondly, numbers from 1 to 4 show how likely Russia might use one or another scenario, while letters from A to D constitute how disruptive potential scenarios could be to overpower the Baltic States.
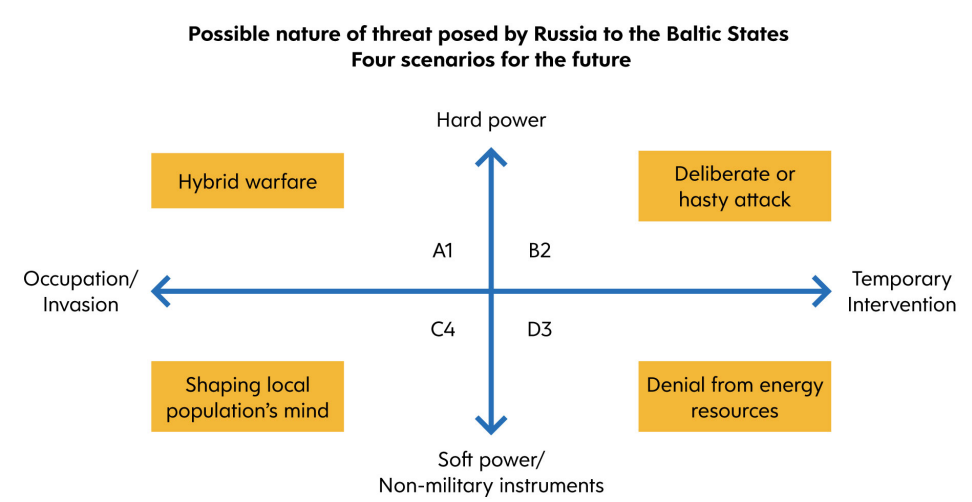
Scenario 1: Hybrid warfare

The first scenario is really serious and very destructive, thereby might be most dangerous. Taking into consideration that 'a special law on accession of foreign countries or even parts or territories of them to the Russian state has been presented by President Putin and passed by the State Duma. Besides that, the statement in the Russian military doctrine about the possibility of 'protecting Russian citizens by military means, gives reasonable grounds to acknowledge an increased threat to the security of the neighbouring countries. Given the big Russian speaking minority in Estonia and Latvia, which comprises about 25 per cent of the population in both countries, Moscow could, prior to conflict, issue Russian passports to the Russian speaking population as

it has done in Georgia. Simultaneously, it could import volunteers and proxies reinforced with members of Russia's special forces. Then to link up with local supporters and one morning start seizing governmental buildings and self-proclaim the independence of fictitious states which would gladly join Russia after simulated elections. Baltic States authorities immediately address this issue to the NAC, which after long hours of debate will not declare article V. Therefore, the Baltic States would lose some parts of their territory, which would remain under control of Russia. NATO would split into different smaller alliances or separate case by case made coalitions to counter similar threats.

Matrix 1: four potential new scenarios by 2025

Possible nature of threat posed by Russia to the Baltic States
Four scenarios for the future

Hard power

Hybrid warfare

Deliberate or hasty attack

A1   B2

Occupation/ Invasion — Temporary Intervention

C4   D3

Shaping local population's mind

Denial from energy resources

Soft power/ Non-military instruments

Scenario 2: Deliberate or hasty attack

The second scenario is based on an imminent Russian military intervention in the Baltic States, and might be treated as most likely. To begin, Russians assemble necessary amount of troops near the Baltic States borders under cover of huge scale joint combined exercises, such as Ladoga or Zapad. Subsequently, Russia quite unexpectedly launches a full scale incursion, employing up to two combined arms corps into the Baltic States. Russia broadcast via media that Russian military build-up is being used to liberate their compatriots and citizens from Latvian and Estonian nationalist's oppression. In best-case scenario, subsequently, NATO would immediately start military operations to defend its Baltic members, initially by deploying Very High Readiness forces as a part of NATO NRF then dispatching required amount of follow on forces. As an end state, Russian military incursion is prevented and Baltic States international borders are restored. In worst-case scenario, NATO would provide military assistance too slowly, with the US, UK and some other NATO countries having assembled in Poland, take

actions and sends their troops to defend their Baltic allies and to show strong resolve as well as solidarity. As a result, NATO would remain the strongest military alliance, capable to extinguishing fires and reassure and defend the Baltic States.

Scenario 3: Shaping local population's mind

The third scenario is related to persuasion of the Baltic States population and it might be very dangerous in the long term perspective. In light of possible 'Russian World' creation in the Baltic States, Russia continuously organizes different cultural events such as concerts, conferences, youth camps, air soft team competitions and etc., where spread 'alternative truth' and use deception with Kremlin bias. Besides that, TV, radio, newspapers and internet serve as a primary mean to spread the Russian propaganda with aim to show that only Russian troops can effectively fight fascist and ISIS, while west especially NATO is just a paper organisation. To counter Russian propaganda requires significant allocations, however Baltic States are not capable to devote sufficiently. As a result, Baltic States national identity might be damaged and thus provide no reliable political and military capabilities into regional security which will result on mutual understanding and cooperation with allies and friends.

Scenario 4: Denial of energy resources

The fourth scenario is less lethal but might be very disruptive as well, and from general perception is most likely. In 2012 gas flow started directly from Russia to Germany through the North Stream pipeline bypassing Baltic States and Poland. At the same time referring to the fact that all three Baltic States are still dependent on Russia for oil, gas and electricity, and taking into consideration that Russia already in 1990 and 1992 seized oil supplies to Lithuania we easily expect that something similar can be repeated again. The main reason for such action is Moscow's will to increase its power and influence through the manipulation of energy resources. Furthermore, Russia by doing this, may conduct a test for credibility and solidarity of NATO and EU as well as to check whether some kind of actions will be taken or not. In best-case scenario, the European Union and Baltic States governments would promptly get in touch with Russia and negotiate the case or offers something in exchange. The inflicted damage to the Baltic States is very marginal and after some tense situation, normal live is restored. Relationship between Russia and Baltic States is reassumed and goes like "business as usual". In worst-case scenario, Russia would suspend energy resource supplies in winter time and call social and political unrests. NATO and EU would put themselves aside claiming that the situation has to be solved purely only by Baltic States on the bilateral basis. This situation development would definitely lead Baltic States towards economic and social crises.

European Parliament elections: The Disinformation Challenge

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Coordinated Spread of Polarizing Narratives

A substantial threat to consider is the artificial fuelling of polarizing political narratives and societal division. This is usually based on a pre-existing social cleavage which is additionally magnified by intentionally inaccurate reporting and manipulated photo or video content. It is easier for disinformation campaigns to tap into already present political controversies rather invest resources into creating new narratives which may not achieve the intended effect.

A case in point is the recent investigation that showed how fabricated content related with the Yellow Vests movement in France has generated more than 100 million views globally. The manipulated images and videos on Facebook and YouTube were generated mostly by Russia Today (RT). The misleading content showed made-up 'proof' for police brutality and governmental censorship of the Gilet jaunes movement with the aim to discredit the French authorities. Russia's state media and affiliated online groups managed to dominate the debate and generated over twice as many views as the mainstream outlets Le Monde, L'Obs, Le Huffington Post and Le Figaro combined. The continuous and highly effective disinformation campaign against the French government directly favored Marine Le Pen's National Rally, which is a contender for the top spot in the French EP elections.

Suppression of voter turn-out

One of the vulnerabilities for European Parliament elections is the potential suppression of voters. This tactic was actively used in the months before the 2016 US Presidential elections, where a flurry of malign online groups and fake activists made coordinated efforts to disincentivize specific groups of voters on election day. On a basic level, this strategy entails

the spread of incorrect online information about voting procedures and registration deadlines. More advanced nefarious efforts involve targeting undecided voters with specially designed posts, opinion pieces or visual images which reinforce the notion that voting doesn't make any difference or that voter abstention should be lauded as an effective protest against the political establishment.

Voter turnout in European Parliament elections is historically low with 2014 continuing the trend of reduced citizen interest – only 42.6 % of eligible EU citizens voted. A third of the member states had electoral turnout lower that 35 %. In such a setting, the mobilization of core party electorates is key since many undecided or swing voters prefer not to vote at all. As a result, political groups with anti-European sentiment or radical political views can be overrepresented due to the substantially lower number of votes required for an EP mandate.

Spread of disinformation through digital platforms

Most of the global disinformation efforts in the last several years were made via digital plat- forms that facilitated the rapid large-scale spread of malign content. The attention-based business model of these platforms promotes divisive and emotionally charged debates which often confirm pre-existing biases or nudges users to succumb to specific political narratives. All of this contributes to a polarized and fragmented online information space which can benefit actors who want to exploit these divisions.

The business model of all of the 'free' online services heavily relies on the selling of advertisement which appears directly into the user's feeds. Intricate algorithms

for micro-targeting of smaller groups of users based on their interests or individual characteristics make this process extremely accurate. The European Commission has identified this as a core problem and through a self-regulatory Code of Practice it has made clear that online platforms have to disrupt the advertisement revenues from accounts which spread disinfo.

Over-representation of fringe parties and conspiracy theories online

Social media platform algorithms usually give additional visibility to content which generates strong user engagement and numerous comments. An unintended consequence of this is the amplification of provocative or divisive opinions which can be further fuelled by automated bots or users who are paid to keep such extreme discussions going. As a result, radical or divisive content becomes over-represented and creates the impression that such opinions are shared by a sizeable part of society.

In early 2019 a small group of hyper-active online users (less than 0.1 % of users in Germany, France, Italy and Poland) who are associated with far-right/fringe political groups have generated more than 10 % of the social media content related to European politics. This very small number of users managed to generate a huge number of posts, comments and reactions through troll farms or automated bots. Unsurprisingly, the likes of Alternative for Germany (AfD) or Le Pen's National Rally in France have disproportionate online audience. The boosted visibility of fringe political content online also coincides with the substantial in- crease of the popularity of conspiracy theories on various social media platforms.

Using AIl in Fight against disinformation: three easy steps

VAIDAS SADLŽIŪNAS
delfi.lt columnist

All Is Fair in Love and War, as the saying goes. During the late months of 1409 this was true, as three waring states – the Teutonic Order, Kingdom of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania were engaged in a fierce disinformation and deception campaign.

Stakes were high: temporary truce was set to expire in a matter of months and opponents knew, that time for caution was over, it was the moment of "all in" – defeat your enemy in battle and end the warfare of almost 200 years. Before the battle the stage was set and pieces were already moving – spies, lies and provocateurs sought to convince allies to join the cause of their side, smear and confuse the enemies.

As Teutonic Order used propaganda and bribed allies to "fight against pagans", Poles and Lithuanians not only sent letters across Europe to rebuke crusader claims and win support, but also used reconnaissance – special operation units of that time to raid the border and deceive the enemy of true intentions.

So when on July of 1410 the joint Allied forces invaded, they achieved surprise as many enemy units were spread thin at the border. This approach has been seen before and repeated again in centuries to come: from Napoleon strategies to Allies deception during D-day operations in 1944 to Desert Storm in 1991.

Much has changed in a way of tools, other means and tactics employed, but the nature remains the same: one must confuse, weaken the enemy and at the same time - know how to be resilient to his similar actions. This simple lesson, however, needs to be relearned by every generation. And often at a great cost.

When in early spring of 2014 "little green men" – Russian soldiers without ID markings appeared in Crimea, there was a lot of confusion and inaction both in Ukraine and the West. In fact it was only the culmination of long and well prepared part of multipronged action: state-sponsored Russian disinformation campaign has long since been seeding the idea of Crimea – a part of Russia, under threat by fascist threat from Kiyv.

Stories rand wild of neo-Nazi hit squads on the loose threatening people of Crimea, cementing years of careful, manipulative and targeted campaign with a simple task in mind: keep those people in the Russian-oriented cultural, linguistic and even political orbit. While at the same time any

pro-Western, EU and especially pro-US and pro-NATO opinions had to endure a coordinated and never-ending wave of outrageous lies, captivating conspiracy theories. Either convinced or baffled and more often unsure of their national identity and allegiance many Crimeans were left paralyzed before unfolding events.

Those examples are just several of many well known to prove how effectively the means of disinformation campaign may be used for specific goals. And as 5 years have passed since events in Crimea and later Donbass, people in Ukraine, the West are still asking: what have we learned from it? What about influence, cyber, troll operations during US elections and Brexit in 2016, haven't we woken up already as we talk constantly about it? How can we resist it without trapping ourselves in panic and paranoia mode?

There's no silver bullet here, but few things must be stressed and later can be addapted for the specific situations. First of all – awareness. A word that so often sounded vague and empty in the past.

One can cynically point out, that spreading awareness is like healing a life threatening disease with spells and songs, while cashing for the performances at the same time. However, without basic knowledge and understanding the scope of what you are dealing with, there is no sense to do anything. The fact we are talking more about the disinformation is a positive step forward alone.

One doesn't have to be a professional in the field of disinformation to recognize the symptoms – it is after all not the doctor's room, into which we storm with information about our illness gathered on Google or magazines. The untrusted source with questionable sensational claims, you'd find nowhere else, sloppy translations, suspicious profiles – that already should cause concern.

By recognizing that something smells fishy we, the journalists should dig, question everything, seek for clues, verify. Not to confirm our prejudice, but to find the facts and get them straight. Disinformation often relies on mixing the facts with false statements and creating an illusion of opinion. Intentionally crafted lies are not opinion – they are weapons, rebuked by our shield – facts to which we hold on. We know what happened on January 13th 1991, no amount of conspiracy theories will change that what we know.

Therefore secondly, when we detect and recognize a suspicious content, we must think what to do about it: should we tell others or ignore it? Sometimes the later may be a tempting option – it requires no effort and you may think, that ignoring the problem will make it go away.

It doesn't always work this way as the conspiracy ideas get seeded deep within society. While talking about the issue at hand can help not only make people aware of the untrustworthy source or repeated content, but also allow us to speak about our own narrative on our own terms. This was the case with Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas as his topic suddenly became mainstream in 2018.

And thirdly, we must cooperate more. As vague and overused as this suggestion may sound, this is the best tool we have and yet we often forget or refuse to use it. Not all of us are experts, not all of us have resources of time, people and money, especially in the regions. This is why we must cross competitive boundaries on this issue of combating disinformation and revoke our fears, humbleness and shyness.

Especially since examples show fruit of such cooperation – from the volunteers groups such as elves to initiatives as De-bunk.eu. Not only it can be done in one region, one country, but crossborder as well. Sharing knowledge, tools available requires initiative – first and foremost, with it trust and effective results may follow. In the end effective coordination is key to use your limited resources.