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NATIONAL MEDIA AS A PROJECTION
OF A DEVASTATING EFFECT
OF EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

PROBLEM FORMULATION

Identifying and preventing threats to national security in the country's information sphere caused by the destructive impact of external information flows are among priority tasks of governments that adequately assess today's security challenges and care about the people's future. Therefore, the search for methodologies, tools, methods and means of forecasting and timely counteracting potential information aggression is on the foreground. Steps to be taken can be infrastructural, legal, technological, institutional and others. Incidentally, this applies both to established democracies, for example, the United States (this refers to external interference in the latest election campaign) and transitional democracies (Pravda, 2018). According to the U.S. National Security Strategy, "Russia uses information operations as part of its offensive cyber efforts to influence public opinion across the globe. Its influence campaigns include secret intelligence operations, false online personas, state-funded media, third-party intermediaries, and paid social media users or "trolls" (Whitehouse.gov, 2018).

As for transitional democracies, Ukraine is the brightest example. No country today is insured against external destructive information influence. In the fall of 2017, the Council of Europe issued a Statement on the state of the European and global information space (Council of Europe, 2018). The topic of the report of the Council of Europe is "information disorder," which reveals major current challenges and threatening trends, offering measures to confront confusion in the information space both at the state level and that of ordinary citizens (Council of Europe, 2018).

Government agencies, special forces, scientists, civil society representatives, and experts are looking for and offering not only means to expose fakes or fight "fake

truth," but more often seek to find "threat markers" for a proactive response in cases where the situation in a country or region indicates that the background is being created for the deliberate external information interference. In other words, they try to identify the weakest link in the chain of dissemination of destructive information. Undoubtedly, this is a multidisciplinary problem that requires the involvement of methods of various sciences. Among them, humanitarian ones: sociology, social psychology, and conflictology, as well as technological areas – cybersecurity, information technology, communication systems protection, etc. In our opinion, today, at the time of "hybridization" of threats to national security, it is impossible to define them in advance and prepare an "antidote." Threats, especially in the field of information, transform much faster than it is possible to define them and propose countermeasures. Therefore, in our opinion, it is worthwhile to identify potentially weak spots and have at hand a prepared set of tools to neutralize a threat. In general, our article is intended to facilitate the search for vulnerabilities in the national information security system.

ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH WORKS
AND PUBLICATIONS

The theoretical basis of our study is the principle presented in the "two-stage communication model" by P. Lazarsfeld and E. Katz. In its practical manifestations, we will rely on the widespread theory of one of the representatives of the theory of "neoliberalism," J. Nye Jr., namely the construction of "soft power."

A thorough study of the issue is provided in the analytical report prepared by "Media Detector" NGO – "Index of the Kremlin Information Impact." According to experts, it is a "tool developed by a group of think tanks in Eastern and Central Europe to measure the capacity of the Russian government to influence the information space of other countries to reach its goals." The report contains the results of pilot assessment for Ukraine, Georgia, Hungary and the Czech Republic in 2017.
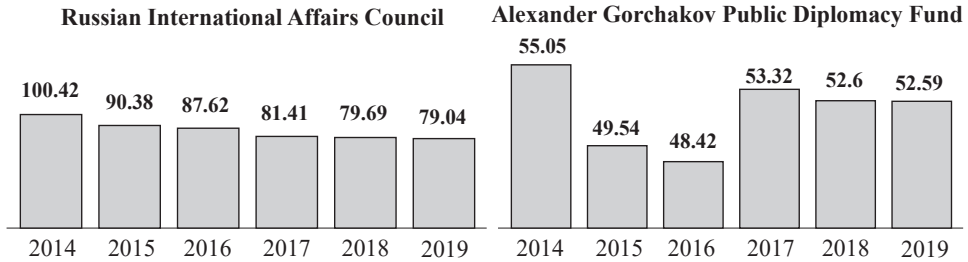
The research confirms that Russian mass media (such as "Sputnik," "RT," NTV, Russia 1, Russia 24, etc.) play no significant role in spreading the Kremlin narratives among the citizens of both Ukraine and its western neighbors. They are a source of senses for local pro-Russian media, including questionable media outlets; local and national media can also be referred to them, when they disseminate interpretations of events in line with the Kremlin propaganda.

Researchers also confirm the existence of the model called "change of a carrier of the propaganda virus" – from absurd messages in mainstream media to the exploitation of national second-class mass media of dubious origin. They are either created by the Kremlin's ideological bloc, or financed by it via local pro-Russian organizations. As a result, citizens "shift away" from mainstream media and start looking for alternative sources on the Internet, where they find sources specifically created to this end. Nowadays, some Internet sources are used as a "trans-shipment base" for destructive information, but it has not always been the case. Taking into

account the active pressure of governments and expert communities on social media owners and search engines, there is no guarantee that traditional media will not regain their position (UNIAN, 2018). At the time of preparation of the article, attention was paid to the unlawful actions of political groups and hacker units affiliated with them, aimed at unlawfully obtaining and exploiting private information (CNN, 2018).
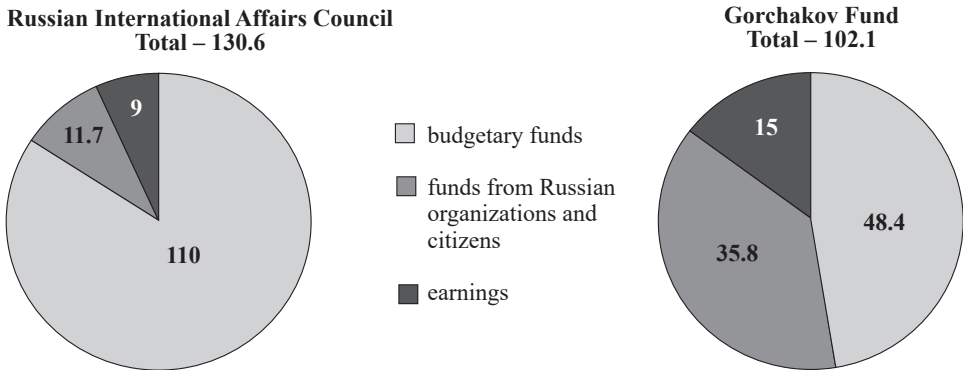
The unwillingness of the network to responsibly disseminate information gave a new breath to the system of Russian propaganda, which very professionally adapts to consumers' new demands. Additionally, international experts revealed the technologies of influence used by Russian media in the occupied territories of Ukraine and Georgia. They use the method of information isolation of these territories and their integration into the Russian media field, blocking citizens' access to independent media. Instead, they provide access to Russian or Kremlin-controlled media, making the television signal either free of charge or setting a rather symbolic fee (Media Sapiens, 2018). In 2015, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology studied the Index of effectiveness of Russian propaganda. Scientists understand the effectiveness of Russian propaganda in Ukraine as people's support of key messages of Russian propaganda in Ukraine or in some of its territories. In their view, the effective counteraction to Russian propaganda in Donbas may reduce the influx of new militants into the ranks of occupation forces, and also deprive the aggressor of the ability to attract to the opposition population from eastern and southern regions of Ukraine (KIIS, 2018). D. Volkov and S. Goncharov, Russian sociologists from Levada Center, conducted their own study of independent (in Russian classification) and patriotic mass media and made, at first glance, a controversial conclusion. They say that the more informed audience is not always more opposition-oriented and neither does it demonstrate more critical thinking. They give the following example: the activity of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is approved by 80% of those who appeal to three or more independent media, as well as 66% of those who don't choose independent media. In addition, the activities of the permanent leader of the LDPR, Volodymyr Zhirinovsky, is supported by the 51% of respondents from the first group and 46% – from the second. Also, researchers note that in the past three years, the difference in the estimates of events between those who live in Moscow and residents of other regions has almost disappeared (Vedomosti, 2018). The results of voting in the last presidential election in Russia confirmation of this thesis (Vedomosti, 2018). Our hypothesis that over time the state propaganda becomes extremely costly for the state budget and not so effective, is proved by data from Russian sources. Thus, the Russian agency RBC has already noticed that soft power, namely, the maintenance of those non-state structures that, in fact, would have to implement "soft" information penetration to those states, where there are important foreign policy interests of Moscow, are becoming "unbearable" for the state budget. According to the materials in the official system "Electronic Budget," the cost of state funds to such non-governmental institutions will decrease. RBC calculated that subsidies to the Public Diplomacy Support Fund and the Russian Council for International Affairs will be reduced by 8% compared with 2014–2016 (see: Charts 1 and 2) (RBC, 2018).

Chart 1. Government subsidies for the Gorchakov Fund and RIAC (in millions of rubles)

Russian International Affairs Council

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
100.42	90.38	87.62	81.41	79.69	79.04

Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
55.05	49.54	48.42	53.32	52.6	52.59

Source: https://www.rbc.ru/economics/24/07/2017/59723c879a794741088d42d8?utm_source=pushc (21.01.2018).

Chart 2. Whose money do "foreign policy" NPO spend?
for 2016, in milliones of rubles

Russian International Affairs Council
Total – 130.6

9
11.7
110

☐ budgetary funds

☐ funds from Russian organizations and citizens

☐ earnings

Gorchakov Fund
Total – 102.1

15
35.8
48.4

Source: https://www.rbc.ru/economics/24/07/2017/59723c879a794741088d42d8?utm_source=pushc (21.01.2018).

HIGHLIGHTING THE PREVIOUSLY UNSETTLED PARTS OF THE GENERAL PROBLEM

The change of the information influence model, which involves national media of both mainstream and secondary levels, will be at the center of our attention. Mainstream media are those national media, which are the most widespread, and secondary media are those who have a "niche" audience or the audience whose members are united by certain topics, ideologies, or interests. We want to test the hypothesis that the implementation of destructive information influence through local media is an intermediate phase from the so-called "absurd messages," such as "the crucified boy," to pseudo-or real propaganda events that are becoming more and more burdensome for the state budget. At the same time, its efficiency falls, and requires more and more human, financial and media resources. That is, state propaganda, along with ineffective state administration, external sanctions, and falling economic indicators, wastes funds from the state treasury. Schematically it can be represented in the following way:

Absurd messages	⟹	Dissemination of distorted information through dubious mass media (after truth)	⟹	Creation of costly pseudo- and propagandistic real events
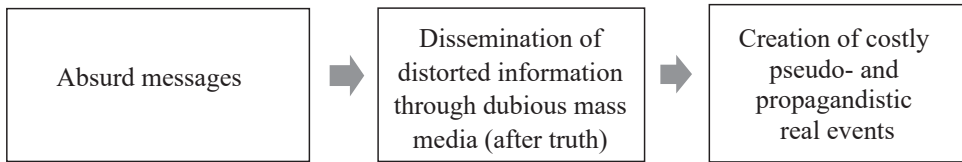
Accordingly, it encourages the use of new formats of the "creation of costly news," typical for the "soft power."

For example:

– International Youth and Student Festival in Sochi (October 2017);
– 137 Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in St. Petersburg (October 2017).

In our view, this list should also include illegal, from the point of view of international law, construction of the Kerch Strait Bridge. It reminds the construction of the Baikal-Amur Highway in the Soviet period. The information support is identical in both cases.

The 2014 Olympics in Sochi had similar goals. According to the official data, the Russian government spent more than $50 billion on this event. However, doping scandals wiped out both the victory of the Russian team, and the amount of money that was spent. In general, such actions have a prolonged effect. At first, a lot of mediafakes were used, but now they have lost its power, because both people and machines (artificial intelligence) learned how to distinguish them. So, if not the efforts of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), the Sochi propaganda effect would be much longer. Accordingly, the "investment" would be more effective and could have reached the next similar event – the FIFA World Cup in June 2018. Mundial is now in danger of becoming not a new propaganda pretext, as the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, but on the contrary, an occasion for counter-initiatives and informational attacks on the Russian government. Most likely, the organizer of the sports forum in Russia has taken this perspective into account, because some measures have already been taken to neutralize it (Bellona, 2017). However, it is not possible to avoid the diplomatic demarche (Gordon, 2018).

FORMULATION OF THE GOALS OF THE ARTICLE AND THE MAIN MATERIAL AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY PRESENTATION

We will define reference points on the political map of Central and Eastern Europe, where the Russian impact in informational, military, political and other spheres is the evidence of its aggressive geopolitical intentions. It will be done in order to confirm our scientific hypothesis that the destructive use of dubious media and its financing is done systematically and effective in those places, where Russia has certain interests.

According to Russian analyst Maksim Samorukov, Russia apparently wants to change the post-Cold War order and tries to promote its interests outside the post-Soviet space. Western Balkans is not yet a priority area of Russian foreign policy, unlike Ukraine, Syria, Libya or Afghanistan. But it remains the subject of Moscow's

interest and sometimes is used for propaganda purposes and diplomatic maneuvers (Carnegie, 2017).

Other sources indicate that the Balkans will become a place for promoting Russian interests in the medium-term period. The national media of the "second" and "third" echelons will be used as a source of destructive influence (Politeka, 2017). Russel Mid, the American scientist, professor at Bard College (USA), editor of the American Interest, wrote in his article in The Wall Street Journal that the prospect of EU membership of such states as Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Kosovo could preserve a fragile peace in the Western Balkans. He also wrote that each Balkan country would rather join the EU than Russia or Turkey (The Wall Street Journal, 2017). His expert prognosis turned out to be rather precise, because in the beginning of 2018 reports of official EU representatives on the accelerated model of entry of some Balkan countries into the European Union into EU appeared (European Commission, 2018).

The "Eyes Wide Shut" report, prepared by the Belgrade Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, confirms our assumption that the international media channel Russia Today is the most prominent in the region (Slidelegend, 2016). It has the format of western channels, such as CNN or BBC. However, Russia Today doesn't meet the standards of control and ethics. This is a classic example of the twenty-first century propaganda. The Kremlin hires "lobbyists" in order to promote its image and interests abroad. In some cases, they involve lobbying organizations directly, as it was in the case with Henry Kissinger, or use those who promote the position of the Kremlin in media about a particular situation.

According to the Serbian law on public information and media, representatives of foreign media (editors, journalists, photojournalists, TV operators and other associate members) and foreign media correspondents have the same rights and obligations during implementation of their activities, as representatives of local media. Therefore, "Sputnik" is currently one of the main tools for creating and disseminating Russian "soft power" across Serbia. The access to this Internet portal can also be granted through digital radio programs, as well as through a mobile application with more than a hundred thousand-strong audience. In Serbia, "Sputnik" uses infrastructure of the liquidated radio station "Voice of Russia."

"Russia Today" broadcasts programs through the Internet portal "Vostok," part of an international project called Beyond the Headlines (RBTH), founded in 2007. The project aims to increase Russia's presence in foreign media in 23 countries and 29 influential newspapers, including New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post in the United States; Figaro in France; Handelsblatt in Germany; Republicca in Italy; El Pais in Spain; Global Times in China; and Politika and Geopolitika in Serbia. The project also has 20 websites in 16 languages. A big number of Serbian media outlets, including those financially linked to the government, to the large extent create content similar to Sputnik's. Among them is Večernje Novosti, Politika, Pink, Studio B, Informer, Pečat, NSPM, Standard, Novi Standard, and Pravda. Nowadays there are plenty of Internet portals with a big number of subscribers in social media, which, like the above-mentioned media outlets, spread propaganda and often work to defame political opponents, channeling fake "facts" of various kinds. IN4S and Politikanews are among the most influential ones.

The Russian "soft power" agents, especially "Sputnik," are largely focused on Montenegro. Among about 300 articles about Montenegro before the 2017 parliamentary elections, 70% were critical of the local government. "Sputnik" pays particular attention to the prospect of Montenegro becoming a NATO Ally. It is proved by a number of headlines such as "Montenegro in NATO, an Eyesore for Russia" (Sputnik, 2015), "NATO Performs Territorial Cleansing of the Balkans," "Montenegro – a pawn in a Large Chess Game," "Zaharova: The question of accession of Montenegro to NATO to be solved in a referendum," and "Đukanović leads Montenegro into new conflicts" (Sputnik, 2015).

A poll, conducted by the Russian-Serbian news agency Gazeta, whose goal was to determine a share of the population in Serbia interested in opening a Russian television channel that would promote Russia's interests, showed that 88% of respondents answered positively, while only 9% were against it (Vaseljenska, 2016).

Macedonia is also influenced by Russian interests, which resulted in the penetration by destructive information sources. Reputable Russian media, such as "Novaya Gazeta," reported that somebody from the government of this Balkan country leaked a number of important documents to journalists of the international consortium Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Macedonian TV channel NOVA TV and the Serbian media KRIK joined their colleagues (Novaya Gazeta, 2017). The information penetration is accompanied by the dynamic activity of intelligence services. Such conglomerate – propaganda media and intelligence operations – has intensified its efforts after several Balkan countries announced their intention to become NATO Allies. For example, Montenegro's coup attempt took place when, in April 2017, the Montenegrin Parliament supported the accession to the Alliance, and Macedonia and Bosnia received accession status. In materials submitted to the journalistic consortium, it is reported that honorary consulates in the Macedonian cities of Bitola and Ohrid act as intelligence outposts. It is reported that over the past nine years, Macedonia has been under the influence of powerful and devastating propaganda, as well as the activities of intelligence services acting from the Russian embassy. Russia uses "soft power" methods as part of its strategy to isolate the Balkans from the influence of the West. The Macedonian special bodies also mentioned in their reports that correspondents of the Russian News Agency TASS and representatives of Rossotrudnichestvo are agents of the Russian special services.

The opinion of the Macedonian investigative journalists proves our hypothesis. They claim that Russian agents attempted to influence the editorial policy and offered financial support to the Macedonian media that supported Albanian minority in exchange for publishing Russian messages. It resembles the activity of Russian intelligence services in the Ukrainian Transcarpathia, which constantly attempts to incite separatism among the Hungarian minority.

The Western Balkans are symbolic for Putin's foreign policy. In Russia, many people perceived the fall of Yugoslavia as an example of humiliation and ignoring interests of Moscow by the West. Russians are firmly convinced that in order to be a great power, they retain presence in the Balkans. Historically, the reason for this is: firstly, the interests of the Russian Empire in the control of the Bosporus Strait; and secondly, Moscow continues to spread the idea of "pan-slavism," stating that there is a "special

connection between Russia and the Slavic nation of the Balkans." The Russian propaganda campaign is focused on Slavic Orthodox Serbian communities in the Balkans. The main tools of Russia's information policy are the abovementioned television network and Internet portal "Russia Today," as well as the online news and radio service "Sputnik Srbija."

The key message that is persistently being reproduced in Serbia is the following: there is a special connection between Russia and the Slavic / Orthodox communities in the Balkans. This statement is spread in several ways. First, moderators and authors of programs regularly place an emphasis on the common Slavic history and culture, focusing on the long and (in their messages) honorary participation of the Russian Empire in the fate of this part of the world. Secondly, the anti-Western rhetoric is being used, referring to certain events or ideas, for example, the bombing of Serbia in 1999 by NATO troops.

The conspiracy theory about the permanent threat from the West is also being actively used. For example, the assumption that Madeleine Albright, who was the U.S. Secretary of State at the time when NATO bombed Yugoslavia, has "a pathological hatred for the Slavs." Local pro-Russian analysts and politicians remind of Moscow's veto on the UN resolution on genocide in Srebrenica and assistance in preventing Kosovo from being allowed to enter UNESCO. The Serbian government opposed Kosovo's membership in UNESCO due to the unwillingness to officially recognize Kosovo. The West is described as culturally and mentally different, which (unlike Moscow) is unable to understand "Slavic exclusiveness." The effect is amplified by a number of Balkan media. According to the information provided by the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies in Belgrade, 109 organizations (including Russian funds and pro-Russian parliament members) are involved in the protection of various aspects of Serbian-Russian relations.

In fact, the emphasis on the Slavic brotherhood is not disinformation. But Russia is trying to impose the idea that the countries have fraternal relations. The identical idea was particularly active in the Ukrainian territory before Russia's open aggression against Ukraine. Nowadays it is not so popular in pro-Russian media in Ukraine because the situation has changed. Nevertheless, in the Balkans, Russia is trying to create the positive image of Moscow, which views Slavic governments in Belgrade, Skopje or Banja Luka as equals.

At the same time, Western countries don't offer alternative messages for citizens of the Balkan states, which would emphasize commitment to Euro-identity. As a result, Belgrade analysts claim that the support of the EU is on decline. Meanwhile, the communicative strategy of Russia yields good results. In Serbia, more people are inclined to say they would prefer an alliance with Russia (67.2% in favor and 18.8% against) than to say they would like to join the European Union (50.9% in favor and 38,8% against). Russian strategic communications don't offer an alternative to the European Union. Perhaps, according to the calculations of the Kremlin strategists, it's not yet time for a frank proposal. So far, the media can criticize Brussels and the overall European policy but they don't consider the Eurasian Union led by Moscow as a viable alternative to Belgrade.

The observers claim that Russia openly impedes the entry of the Balkan countries into NATO and encourages close military cooperation with the Collective Security

Treaty Organization (CSTO) supported by Moscow. Montenegro's accession to NATO prompts Moscow to push Serbia's military to cooperate more closely with Russian troops and join the CSTO alliance (Washington Post, 2016).

The region which borders the Western Balkans is also unstable. Following Poland (Isayev, 2017), pro-Russian nationalists appeared in Greece (Radio Svoboda, 2018).

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Pavlo Klimkin said during his interview with ATR channel that Russia was trying to exploit the situation with the language law and destabilize the situation in Hungary through the local right-wing forces (Censor, 2017). Pro-Western Russian experts responded immediately (Samorukov, 2018).

Tools of the Russian "soft power" are used not only in Balkans, but also in the Baltic countries.The Baltic countries are not the ultimate goal for Russia – its goal is to destabilize the EU and NATO by using the Baltic countries. Such conclusion is contained in the analytical paper of the Operational Working Group on Asymmetric Operations "Ambiguous Threats and External Influences in the Baltic States " (Public Intelligence, 2015). The similar situation is with Donbas, which is also not the final goal in Moscow's geopolitical efforts.

Before exploring the strategic goals of Russia in the Baltic region, one should pay attention to the fact that these countries are in a slightly different position than the temporarily annexed Crimea. For example, none of the Baltic states are base for Russian military units, while Sevastopol in Crimea was used as a base for Russian military and intelligence units. In addition, the Baltic region has another historical, cultural, and spiritual significance for Russia. In terms of security, the Baltic states, unlike Ukraine, are members of NATO and the EU.

In the report of the Asymmetric Operations Working Group, experts paid attention to the Gerasimov's diagram of hybrid warfare (Gerasimov, 2013). If one considers Baltic states, it can be said that Russia is already on the second stage, "escalation" from the end of 2014, particularly aggravated during the Russian-Belarusian military exercises in September, 2017 (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 2017). After that, there came conditional stabilization.

The "escalation" stage is characterized in the diagram as "differences that transform into conflict." Measures outlined in the diagram include economic sanctions, breach of diplomatic relations, continued information warfare, and military measures of strategic deterrence. Moscow has imposed an embargo on products from Baltic countries in response to EU sanctions. However, Baltic companies successfully diversified supplies to alternative markets. Diplomatic relations between Russia and Baltic states are being preserved. Nevertheless, certain actions, such as the review by the Russian Attorney General of the legitimacy of independence of Baltic states intensify tensions and may potentially indicate a possible rupture of diplomatic ties.

The number of information operations in the region has increased, together with the quality of damaging messaging. Although the chart doesn't define the effect of military measures of strategic deterrence, a number of provocative incidents indicate their presence: constant invasion of Russian warships of territorial waters and sovereign airspace of the Baltics, Northern Europe and the United States, kidnapping of an Estonian counter-intelligence operative at a border checkpoint, and setting up large-scale military exercises on the border with said countries. One can argue about how Rus-

sian authorities actually see the transition from the stage of "escalating differences" to "crisis reaction." But if we consider the measures indicated on the X-axis diagram, we can undoubtedly state that the Baltic states are at the stage of "escalation," while the information component or Russia's media presence remains high.

Information sphere is still the biggest problem. In Baltic countries, just as in Ukraine, Russian media dominate the information field. They have a higher quality content and remain more diverse, genre-based, and theme-oriented in accordance with the preferences of the audience. Their advantage is the significant financial support coming from the Kremlin. In the report by the Asymmetric Operations Working Group it is stated that, for example, in Estonia, Estonians and non-Estonians "live" in different media spaces. About 70% of the Russian-speaking population regularly reads newspapers, and 85% – magazines. These readers have three Russian-language newspapers to choose from, published in Estonia. The Estonian newspaper "Postimees" publishes its Russian-language version three times a week and has a separate editorial team, including the editor-in-chief. Radio is also a popular source of information for the population of Estonia, with 66% of Estonians and a slightly smaller number of Russians listening to it every day. Five Estonian radio stations broadcast in Russian, while residents of the Ida-Viru County in the north-east have access to radio stations broadcasting from across the border with Russia. In addition, the media project of the Russian state-owned company "Russia Today" ("Rossiya Segodnya") known as "Sputnik" mulls launch of radio stations in more than 30 countries. Television is the most divided media space: Estonians choose channels Kanal2, TV3, and ETV, all in Estonian, while non-Estonians opt for First Baltic Channel (FBC), NTV Mir, and RTR Planeta. The FBC is the most popular Russian-language channel, and most importantly, own-made Russian shows and information programs are being re-transmitted there.

In Latvia, as of 2013, three Russian TV channels are among the most popular ones in the country: RTR Planeta, FBK, and NTV Mir. Russian channels and programs are usually beyond competition, offering a wider variety and higher quality programs. The research, conducted in 2011, showed that those who speak Russian at home prefer Russian TV channels and consider them more reliable. Only around 9% of the respondents said they consider reliable Latvian channels. The influence of the Russian factor is so significant that Latvia officials claim Moscow is likely to interfere in parliamentary elections (Andreeva, 2018).

Air time of Russian programs in Lithuania can be increased at the expense of Lithuanian channels purchasing Russian content. At the same time, the number of Russian print media in Lithuania is decreasing; however, the most popular one is "Komsomolskaja pravda" weekly that has been on the market since 2008. In Ukraine, it also played its destructive and subversive role with propaganda-filled articles being published there. In big cities of Baltic states with a large share of Russian speakers, Russian radio stations, such as "Russkoje Radijo Baltija" in Vilnius and "Radio Raduga" in Klaipėda, remain prominent, the authors of the thorough research note. The share of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic States provides the base for such operations.

In our study, we have also concluded that the destructive activity of dubious national or Russian media is aggravated by the deep penetration of intelligence tools

both in the media environment and public sector. In Ukraine, the process has reached its critical point when Moscow-loyal officials headed the Ministry of Defense and Security Service of Ukraine. It is a proven fact that a powerful and highly professional intelligence community of the Russian Federation acts as supervisors of media outlets, operating in the regions of Russian interest, as well as of Russian technology companies, whose services are used by journalists in different countries (Robertson and Riley, 2017). Above, we have analyzed the relation of Russian information and intelligence factors on the example of Macedonia.

This goes in line with the provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. The Military Doctrine contains a definition of peculiarities of contemporary military conflicts: "Integrated use of military force, political, economic, information and other non-military measures that are implemented with the widespread use of the protest potential of the population and special operations forces." The formula emerged in 2010 and has remained in place after the modification of the Doctrine in 2014, after the start of the Russian aggression against Ukraine (Kremlin, 2014). The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation declares the lawful use of the armed forces outside the country to protect government interests and citizens in accordance with generally accepted principles and norms of international law and treaties (paragraphs 22, 31, 32). According to paragraph 23 of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, the Armed Forces are used "based on early and ongoing analysis of the current military-political and military-strategic situation." The paragraph directly points to the aggressive and offensive nature of the document and determines Russia's actions in Ukraine today (Fedenko, Panasyuk, 2015: 281–282).

The 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation describes new conflict forms and methods currently used by Moscow in the territory of Ukraine and partly in Syria. Paragraph 15 lays down the creation in the territories of the warring parties of a permanent war zone; participation in hostilities of irregular armed groups and private military companies; use of indirect and asymmetric methods; and use of externally funded and run political forces and social movements. This includes national media in the countries where Russia has state, corporate, and energy interests.

In paragraphs 8 and partly 28 and 29 of the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, it is mentioned that "Russia has demonstrated the ability ... to protect the rights of its compatriots abroad" (RG, 2015).

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

Russia's foreign policy employs a wide range of information, diplomatic, intelligence and energy tools of pressure and destructive influence primarily in the regions where it seeks to strengthen or reestablish its dominance. It is especially noticeable in the Balkans and Baltic States. We must state that the combination of these methods is quite systemic and effective. The experience gained with the use against Ukraine of their propaganda media, intelligence services, aggressive diplomacy, and energy blackmail, provides grounds for Moscow to use this toolkit in other countries and subregions. Russia will be forced to spend more and more resources (financial, organizational and informational) on such operations, while their effectiveness will decrease as local

governments, general public and individual citizens will learn to recognize threatening content spun by dubious media and public associations, as well as populist politicians or radical groups.

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ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the research of media space of several countries in the Western Balkans and the Baltics, where we can observe the emergence and effective use of dubious media, in order to promote aggressive narratives, identified as a destructive influence of the Russian Federation. It is considered as the threat to the national security of these states. The information tools of a destabilizing nature include diplomatic, intelligence, and energy tools. The media component of information influence has become the central object of research. It is stated that the destructive use of dubious national media, as well as their replenishment, takes place systematically and efficiently in those areas, where Russia's state interests are focused on the restoration of its domination. On this basis we can conclude that dubious media is used within Russia's hybrid aggression in relation to Ukraine, where it is seen as a mean of animating the externally initiated destabilizing political influences. However, Russia will be forced to spend more and more resources (financial, organizational and informational) on such operations, and their effectiveness will fall as local governments, society and citizens will learn how to recognize the threats, retransmitted by dubious media, public associations, populist politicians or radicals.

Keywords: mass media, destructive impact, special information operations, states of the Balkan Peninsula, Baltic States.

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł stanowi podsumowanie badań przestrzeni medialnej wybranych państw bałkańskich oraz bałtyckich, gdzie zaobserwować można pojawienie się i efektywne wykorzystanie środków masowej informacji (podszywających się pod media lokalne/narodowe) dla wytworzenia agresywnej narracji, którą przypisać można destruktywnemu wpływowi Federacji Rosyjskiej. Takie działanie należy oceniać jako zagrożenie dla bezpieczeństwa narodowego tych państw. Wśród narzędzi informacyjnych o charakterze destabilizującym, które mają na celu wywołanie chaosu (lub już go wywołały) w życiu wewnętrznym krajów tych regionów wymienić można: środki dyplomatyczne, zwiadowcze oraz energetyczne. Badania autorów skoncentrowały się zaś przede wszystkim na mediach.

Tworzenie, wykorzystanie oraz zasilanie owych "fałszywych" mediów odbywa się systema-

tycznie i efektywnie tam, gdzie obecne są interesy rosyjskie, które nakierowane są na przywró-
cenie dominującej pozycji FR. Zakładając powyższe autorzy wyprowadzili tezę o wykorzysta-
niu fałszywych mediów w hybrydowej agresji Rosji na Ukrainę, gdzie są one postrzegane jako
środki multiplikacji inicjowanych zewnętrznie czynników destabilizujących sytuację polityczną. Oznacza to jednak, że Federacja Rosyjska będzie musiała rezerwować środki finansowe na
prowadzenie kolejnych takich operacji informacyjnych, co może być kłopotliwe do wykonania.
Owe perturbacje finansowe powinny z kolei spowodować osłabienie efektywności takowych
operacji, także dlatego, że poszczególne rządy, społeczeństwa i pojedynczy obywatele nauczą
się rozpoznawać zagrożenia, jakie wywołują fałszywe media, organizacje pozarządowe czy
radykalni lub populistyczni politycy.

Słowa kluczowe: środki masowego przekazu, wpływ destrukcyjny, operacje informacyjne,
państwa Półwyspu Bałkańskiego, państwa bałtyckie