

DISINFORMATION (FAKE NEWS, PROPAGANDA) AS A THREAT TO RESILIENCE: APPROACHES USED IN THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATE LITHUANIA

T. A. Romanova

N. I. Sokolov

Y. Y. Kolotaev

Saint Petersburg State University
7–9 Universitetskaya emb., Saint Petersburg, Russia, 199034

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Kolotaev Y.Y., 2020

This study analyses EU and Lithuanian documents on countering disinformation/fake news to present the plurality of the Union's approaches to ensuring resilience. Currently, there are three approaches to the problem in the EU. The first one, used by the European Commission, is the recognition of citizens' right to information as well as of the need to promote critical thinking and information literacy. This approach fits into the adaptive paradigm of action in the information space and the concept of autopoietic resilience. The second approach, taken by the European External Action Service, is to expose fake news and the media spreading it. In combining adaptive and paternalistic paradigms of action in the information space, this approach employs a more static interpretation of resilience. Lithuania has adopted a third approach, which is dominated by the paternalistic paradigm and homeostatic resilience. This approach consists of the state isolating citizens from certain information. Thus, the popular use of the term 'resilience' in the EU disguises the plurality of approaches to both disinformation and resilience itself. Theoretically, this study draws on the concept of resilience and paradigms for countering disinformation/fake news. Methodologically, it relies on critical discourse analysis. The article suggests several possible causes of intra-EU differences in countering disinformation/fake news/propaganda and interpreting resilience.

Keywords:

European Union, Lithuania, resilience, fake news, propaganda, disinformation

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The phenomenon of fake news (FN) was brought to the fore by the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union (EU) and the 2016 US presidential election. Russia was accused of information meddling in both cases. To this and other changes taking place in the world, the EU responded in 2016 with the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS). Central to the document is the concept of resilience. The EUGS names disinformation a major threat to resilience. However, the EU also frequently uses the term FN. The EU did not come to a consistent understanding of the phenomenon at once. And it still lacks a uniform approach to achieving resilience in this respect.

This article aims to outline the plurality of approaches to ensuring resilience to disinformation (FN, propaganda) as presented in the documents of the EU and its member state Lithuania. The analysis of terminology and the documents that regulate EU and Lithuania's policy distinguishes three approaches that differ in their treatment of public-private interaction and resilience theories. The objects of this study are Lithuania and the EU at its supranational level. Its focus is on the discourse on countering disinformation/FN/propaganda in the context of ensuring resilience.

Lithuania's choice is explained by its active foreign policy (particularly, towards Russia) and the ambition to lead the Baltic region. To attain the goal of the study, the following objectives are set: 1) to identify approaches to disinformation and how they relate to the concept of resilience; 2) to demonstrate the plurality of definitions of disinformation (FN, propaganda) at the level of the EU and Lithuania; 3) to describe approaches to increasing the resilience of the EU and Lithuania to disinformation (FN, propaganda); 4) to summarise the differences and similarities of the approaches adopted by the EU and Lithuania.

The theoretical framework for the study is the academic concept of resilience. Despite the lack of a single vision, most researchers agree on a number of its basic characteristics [1]. Another element of the theoretical framework is two paradigms for treating disinformation: the paternalistic and adaptive ones. Methodologically, the article relies on discourse analysis [2–4].

The corpus of the documents used in the study includes the EUGS¹, the Communication on Resilience,² EU reports [5; 6], documents of the Lithuanian

¹ *Shared vision, common action: a stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy.* 2016. URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf (access date: 03.08.2019).

² *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from food security crises.* 2012. URL: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/com_2012_586_resilience_en.pdf (access date: 03.08.2019).

Republic (Lithuanian Defence Policy White Paper,³ National Security Strategy⁴ and reports of the State Security Department⁵). The study also analysed statements made by officials.

The first part of this study outlines paradigms for countering disinformation (FN) and traces their connection to the academic concepts of resilience. The second part discusses the EU's concept of resilience. The three following sections focus on approaches adopted by the European Commission (EC), the European External Affairs Service (EEAS), and Lithuania when handling disinformation. Part six compares the three approaches and exposes the causes of the plurality of initiatives disguised by the resilience concept.

The paradigm for treating disinformation (FN) and resilience

Researches offer two paradigms for countering disinformation/FN: the paternalistic and adaptive ones. They can be pictured at the opposite ends of a continuum, one extreme of which is public freedom and the other public security.

The paternalistic paradigm suggests 'the interference with a person's liberty of action justified by reasons referring exclusively to the welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests or values of the person being coerced' [7, p. 65]. To protect society from the adverse effects of disinformation/FN, it is considered reasonable to impose any limitations, including blocking information sources or deforming public discourse by propaganda [8]. Public intervention through bans and limitations is a case of paternalism [9]. But paternalism is not a characteristic of public actors only: it can manifest itself at the level of corporations [10] and supranational actors.

Freedom of speech gave rise to an alternative, adaptive, paradigm. Within this paradigm, the resilience of society to disinformation/FN is achieved by influencing citizens without resorting to measures that 'could... harm free speech' [11, p. 42]. This approach includes improving media literacy [12], fact-checking [13], outsourcing responsibility for the quality of information to its sources [14], and platform self-regulation [15].

³ *Krašto apsaugos ministerija. Lietuvos gynybos politikos Baltoji knyga. 2017. URL: https://kam.lt/lt/gynybos_politika_490/aktualus_dokumentai_492/strateginiai_dokumentai_494.html (access date: 03.08.2019).*

⁴ *Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, Nacionalinio saugumo strategija, 2017. URL: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.2627131DA3D2/LLwfQepmnd> (access date: 03.08.2019).*

⁵ *Bendras VSD ir AOTD 2016 metų grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinimas. URL: <https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2016-grėsmių-vertinimas.pdf> (access date: 11.09.2018); Bendras VSD ir AOTD 2018 metų grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinimas. URL: <https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LTU.pdf> (access date: 12.09.2018); Bendras VSD ir AOTD 2019 metų grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinimas. URL: <https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-Gresmes-internetui-LT.pdf> (access date: 03.08.2019).*

Experts trace the origins of the term ‘resilience’ to the Middle Ages, regarding particularly its usage in engineering and physics [16, p. 19–35, 17]. The term took on the meaning explored in this article in the 1970s when Crawford Stanley Holling defined it as ‘a measure of the persistence of systems and of their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables’ [18, p. 14]. This definition is used by all the authors that examine the concept of resilience in social science [1]. The term ‘resilience’ penetrated the social sphere in the 1990s. Firstly, it was a response to the incapability of prevention of some threats (including disinformation) and of protecting society from them. Secondly, the domination of the neo-liberal approach made it possible for the state to place part of the responsibility for ensuring security on society [see 1; 19].

Today, however, there are serious differences in the interpretation of resilience. The two above paradigms for treating disinformation/FN well illustrate this circumstance. Within the paternalistic paradigm, resilience means bouncing back or restoring homeostasis [1, pp. 5–6]. This view originates in hard science. According to this, the authorities play the leading and society a supporting role. The adaptive paradigm corresponds to an autopoietic understanding of resilience as bouncing forward [1, pp. 6–7]. Many functions are delegated to citizens, whereas the state merely outlines local-level practices.

In the EU, the term ‘resilience’ was introduced gradually. For the first time, this notion was used by the EC in 2012.⁶ Resilience became key too foreign policy after the adoption of the EUGS in 2016. The coordinator of the EUGS process, Nathalie Tocci [20, p. 88], attributes the emergence of resilience to the non-linear approach to current threats and the inability of the state to not only prevent but sometimes also forecast them. The EU includes disinformation/FN into such challenges.

Thus, the EU uses the framework developed in social science to introduce the concept of resilience. The neo-liberal nature of the EU is another catalyst for embracing autopoietic resilience. But the documents of the EU and its member states interpret the ways to ensure resilience to disinformation differently. We will trace precisely these differences below.

The EU and Lithuania: searching for definitions of disinformation

The struggle against disinformation/FN was triggered by the Ukraine events of 2014. The definition of disinformation/FN, however, appeared only in 2018 in an EC report on digital transformation. It proposed to define FN as 1) verifiably

⁶ *European Commission*. 2012, *The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from food security crises*. Op. cit.

false information; and 2) deliberate attempts at disinformation and distortion of news; the use of filtered versions to promote ideologies, confuse, sow discontent and create polarization [5, p. 10–11]. The authors of the report stress citizens' concerns about Russia's attempts to influence elections [5].

The report *A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation*, which was commissioned by the EC in 2018, avoids the term FN because it 'is inadequate to capture the complex problem of disinformation'. The latter is defined as 'false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit' [6, p. 10].

The East StratCom Task Force, which was created by the EEAS, uses both the term 'FN' and the term 'disinformation'. StratCom sees its mission in countering *Russian* disinformation and FN campaigns.⁷ The term 'FN' is used most often in the 'news and analysis' section, which publishes, among other things, Russia reports of external organisations.⁸ StratCom itself prefers the term disinformation. In this respect, its position converges with that of the EC. StratCom, however, was initially established to counter FN.

The choice of the term is essential: FN excludes the possibility of an honest mistake, whereas disinformation is a broader neutral term.

Lithuania prefers the term 'propaganda' when speaking about Russia.⁹ A report of the State Security Department (SSD) of 2017 mentions 'disinformation' two and 'propaganda' fifteen times. The term covers both news distribution and public events, for instance, the meetings of the Format A3 international journalism club that feature talks by Russian experts.¹⁰ Remarkably, the EC uses the term 'propaganda' only in the context of inciting terrorism¹¹ and emphasises the need to prevent the dissemination of related content. The negative connotation of 'propaganda' excludes the possibility of an honest mistake and denies one the right to a corresponding point of view. The aspect of prevention is characteristic of Lithuania's vocabulary too.

The use of terms that have such different connotations points to differences in the discourses adopted in the EU and Lithuania. This way, it is possible to distinguish three approaches to threats in the field of information. The EC favours the term 'disinformation', which suggests openness and grants a right to

⁷ European Union External Action Service. 2017, Don't be deceived: EU acts against fake news and disinformation, URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/32408/dont-be-deceived-eu-acts-against-fake-news-and-disinformation_en (access date: 03.08.2019).

⁸ EU vs Disinfo. 2017, News and analysis. EU vs. Disinfo. URL: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/news/> (access date: 03.08.2019).

⁹ Bendras VSD ir AOTD 2016 metų grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinimas.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See, for example, European Commission — Press release. State of the Union 2018: Commission proposes new rules to get terrorist content off the web. 2018. European Union. URL: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-5561_en.htm (access date: 03.08.2019).

an honest mistake. The EEAS approach focuses on spotting fake news. Finally, Lithuania's vision concentrates on the dangers of propaganda. These three understandings of threats to resilience determine the approaches to it. Below we will examine these approaches in detail.

EU approach No. 1.

Disinformation and civic responsibility

In April 2017, Vice President of the European Commission Andrus Ansip said: 'We are aware of the need to protect freedom of speech and to trust people's common sense ... [A] key task is to improve the EU's capacity to forecast, address and respond to disinformation activities by external parties'.¹² This statement had a pronounced emphasis on free speech and the presence of an external threat. Ansip identified two pillars of the EU strategy: citizens' media literacy and journalists' ethical standards. He stressed: 'fake news is bad, but the Ministry of Truth is even worse'.¹⁵ In other words, priority is given to the ability of society to live in the conditions of possible disinformation.

Further documents prove that the EC approach fits well with the adaptive paradigm. The resilience communication of 2017 says: 'measures to increase citizens' resilience to hostile disinformation will be further developed by raising awareness, supporting greater media plurality and professionalism'.¹⁴ The 2018 communication reaffirms¹⁵ commitment to the adaptive paradigm.

This way the EC is declaring its intention to teach citizens and maintain a plurality of perspectives. Civil society and the media are fully involved in this process. Citizens are encouraged to expose disinformation, using special services (for example, StopFake.org, hoaxmap.org). At the same time, the EU has launched fact-checking platforms (for instance, Social Observatory for Disinformation and Social Media Analysis). The media have improved their standards and made some of their algorithms transparent [6]. An important step forward is the Code

¹² *Statement* by Vice-President Ansip at the European Parliament, Strasbourg in the plenary debate: „Hate speech, populism and fake news on social media — towards an EU response“. Strasbourg, 2017. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/ansip/announcements/statement-vice-president-ansip-european-parliament-strasbourg-plenary-debate-hate-speech-populism_en (access date: 03.08.2019).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *European Commission*. 2017, Joint communication to the European Union Parliament and the Council. A strategic approach to resilience in the EU's external action, European Commission. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/joint_communication_-_a_strategic_approach_to_resilience_in_the_eus_external_action-2017.pdf (access date: 22.09.2019).

¹⁵ *European Commission*. 2018, Communication — Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach. Brussels, April. COM (2018) 236 final. URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2018/EN/COM-2018-236-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF> (access date: 03.08.2019).

of Practice¹⁶ signed by Facebook and Google. The Code seeks to increase the transparency of advertising and information. Online platforms have introduced further initiatives (for instance, Facebook has launched a fact-checking service for users to report disinformation-spreading fake accounts). Platforms have laid down rules for political content. Accounts that break these rules are getting to be blocked. Since 2019, platforms submit a monthly report to the EC.

All the above initiatives are brought together by an understanding of the inability to prevent disinformation threats at the level of institutions. This vision suggests placing part of the responsibility on citizens as well as official structure encouraging grassroots practices. Institutions, however, set the general framework and try to improve the resilience of society. This approach builds on commitment to liberal values as well as the belief in the importance of an alternative opinion and the ability of people to make a conscious choice.¹⁷ What it postulates is not conservation but a continuous development of society and authorities. Overall, this approach corresponds to the adaptive paradigm and autopoietic resilience.

EU approach No. 2.

Fake news and intervention by the authorities

There is an alternative approach in the EU to ensuring resilience to disinformation. In 2015, the Action Plan on Strategic Communication was prepared to counter unacceptable information.¹⁸ Its primary area was the Eastern Partnership region. By an irony of fate, the author of the document was once again the EC. The plan contained both the above approaches and proposals to involve authorities in combating disinformation.

The leading promoter of this approach is the European Parliament, whose resolution of 2016 stressed the ‘need to ensure resilience of the information systems at EU and Member State level’.¹⁹ A 2017 resolution commissioned the EC to analyse the current legislative framework to ‘verify the possibility of legislative intervention to limit the dissemination and spreading of fake content’.²⁰ These steps fit within the paternalistic paradigm.

¹⁶ European Commission, 2018, Code of Practice on disinformation and digital single market. URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/code-practice-disinformation> (access date: 03.08.2019).

¹⁷ European Commission. 2019, Online disinformation: a major challenge for Europe (blog post). URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/blogposts/online-disinformation-major-challenge-europe> (access date: 03.08.2019).

¹⁸ European Commission. 2015, Action plan on strategic communication. URL: <http://archive.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Action%20PLan.pdf> (access date: 03.08.2019).

¹⁹ European Parliament. 2016, Resolution of 23 November 2016 on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties (2016/2030 (INI)). URL: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0441_EN.pdf (access date: 03.08.2019).

²⁰ European Parliament. 2017, Resolution of 15 June 2017 on online platforms and the digital single market (2016/2276 (INI)). URL: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0272_EN.pdf (access date: 03.08.2019).

In this context, StratCom was set up. The task force ‘develops communication products and campaigns focused on better explaining EU policies’ as well as ‘analyses disinformation trends, explains and exposes disinformation narratives, and raises awareness of disinformation coming from Russian State’.²¹ In practice, this means publishing regular disinformation reviews that cover data misrepresentation, opinions appearing in the media, and biased generalisations.

The work of StratCom is closely connected to EU resilience. The task force website offers guidelines for exposing pro-Kremlin disinformation. A task force employee, when analysing StratCom activities, said that the project contributes to the resilience of EU citizens by inoculating them against Russian information.²² As a result, Russia is stigmatised through creating a strong connection between this country and FN. Trust in information coming from Moscow is being ruined as a result.

This approach provides citizens with ready-made decisions rather than teaches them to make conscious choices. In other words, it is a paternalistic attempt to shield citizens and to deny them any ability to think critically. Remarkably, most of the content of the StratCom website is in English and Russian. This language choice makes it possible to reach the EU’s Russian-speaking population, which is most susceptible to Russian influence, as well as residents of post-Soviet states.

StratCom’s actions are often questioned in the EU. The most vivid example is the complaint to the European Ombudsman about the EU anti-fake news initiative. The document stresses the lack of criteria for rating information as false and blacklisting its source [21].

Thus, the second EU approach to disinformation/FN as a threat to resilience is a combination of the adaptive and paternalistic paradigms. Although the circulation of information is not restricted, authorities are actively involved in refuting some messages. The source of disinformation is clearly defined (Russia); news coming from there are stigmatised. The skew towards paternalism nurtures public distrust of Russia. This approach relates to the homeostatic interpretation of resilience, which is characteristic of engineering sciences.

Lithuania’s approach: propaganda as a paternalistic denial of resilience

The Lithuanian approach suggests active prevention of the threat labelled as propaganda at state level. The Defence Policy White Paper proposes three possible avenues: 1) monitoring and analysing the information space and identifying the topics that have come under attack; 2) public awareness campaigns;

²¹ *European External Action Service*. 2018, Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force. URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/2116/questions-and-answers-about-east-stratcom-task-force_en (access date: 03.08.2019).

²² Our own interview with an EEAS official, October 4, 2018.

3) cooperation with the institutions and member-states of the EU and NATO.²³ Lithuanian politicians maintain that their country is more exposed to the growing destabilising effects of Russian disinformation than any other EU state is.²⁴

The Radio and Television Commission, which functions under the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public,²⁵ has the right to ban cable broadcasts of Russian channels and restrict access to online resources. In January 2019, the list of undesirable information was expanded to include the content that ‘tampers with Lithuania’s historical memory, cultivates distrust of the state and grievances against it’ and betrays an ‘ambition to reinforce national and cultural divides, to undermine national identity and civil consciousness’²⁶). Another measure to combat ‘Russian propaganda’ is embedding alternative opinions into the annual report of the State Security Department.²⁷

The Lithuanian approach to countering information threats to resilience consists of tarnishing the image of Russian mass media and blocking information generated by them. The ways to achieve resilience are interpreted in the same vein. The National Security Strategy²⁸ mentions resilience four times, three of them in the context of countering propaganda from without. Interestingly, Lithuanian documents link resilience to countering the Russian threat. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Linus Linkevičius went as far as stating that resilience to Russian propaganda should be the country’s priority.²⁹

Finally, in September 2018, the English-language Debunk.eu platform was created for people to report trolls and disinformation. According to its creators, the initiative seeks to increase the resilience of society. At the same time, the initiative is clearly aimed at looking for anything that comes from Russia and looks bad. Moreover, it works closely with officials from the ministries of defence and foreign affairs.³⁰

²³ *Krašto apsaugos ministerija*. 2017, Lietuvos gynybos politikos Baltoji knyga.

²⁴ See, for example, Paulauskas A. 2015, Rusijos propagandos mašina Lietuvoje finansuojama pažeidžiant įstatymus, *15 min*. URL: <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/a-paulauskas-rusijos-propagandos-masina-lietuvoje-finansuojama-pazeidziant-istatymus-56—552679> (access date: 03.08.2019).

²⁵ *Lietuvos Respublikos visuomenės informavimo įstatymas* 1996 m. liepos 2 d. Nr. I-1418 Vilnius. URL: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.065AB8483E1E/KambyVXeSS> (access date: 03.08.2019).

²⁶ *Lietuvos Respublikos visuomenės informavimo įstatymo* nr. I-1418 19, 31, 34¹, 48 straipsnių ir priedo pakeitimo įstatymas. 2019. URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/3b843be00e5d11e98a758703636ea610> (access date: 03.08.2019).

²⁷ *Bendras VSD ir AOTD 2018 metų grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinimas*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerija*. 2018, L. Linkevičius: atsparumas Rusijos propagandai turi būti mūsų prioritetas. URL: <https://www.urm.lt/default/lt/naujienos/l-linkevicius-atsparumas-propagandai-turi-buti-musu-prioritetas> (access date: 03.08.2019).

³⁰ Debunk. A disinformation crackdown initiative, 2019. URL: <https://debunk.eu/about-debunk/> (access date: 03.08.2019).

It is worth analysing the statements made by members of the Seimas. For instance, Laurynas Kasčiūnas says that the West ‘does not understand the genesis of the current information war [...]. Absolute freedom of speech can lead to chaos controlled from without. The more so when society lacks the skills of critical thinking, media literacy, etc’.³¹ He also proposed to ban information ‘coming from other countries or their agents and threatening national security’.³² Žygimantas Pavilionis suggests limiting the airtime of Russian cable channels, stressing that ‘the Kremlin pays special attention to the heart- and brainwashing of our compatriots’.³³

Lithuania’s approach is a case of the paternalistic paradigm taken to the extreme. Rooted in basic distrust of society, it seeks to shield citizens from the Russian information flow (which is classified as propaganda) at state level. Public institutions act paternalistically when protecting their citizens from real or imaginary threats. Obviously, the focus is on introducing restrictive measures rather than teaching people. Society and business play a minor role in countering information threats. Potentially, this approach questions the liberal values promoted by the EU. Moreover, it sacrifices dynamic development to the homoeostatic resilience characteristic of hard science. Lithuania’s approach is not an exceptional case in the EU [22].

Three approaches to disinformation in a comparative context

We identified three approaches to countering information threats to resilience. The first one draws on the adaptive paradigm and autopoietic resilience. The second one puts in a tangible paternalistic component, thus approaching the homoeostatic interpretation of resilience. Finally, the third approach is dominated by the paternalistic paradigm and homoeostatic resilience. The second and third approaches are associated with greater involvement of authorities; lower trust in citizens and their ability to think critically; and stronger risks of free speech and information infringement. The table below sums up the results obtained.

³¹ Amelyushkin, K. ‘Banning Dostoevsky is, of course, absurd’. Laurynas Kasčiūnas promises to ensure Lithuania’s information security. Delfi news portal. 2018. URL: https://ru.delfi.lt/news/politics/zapreschat-dostoevskogo-eto-konechno-absurd-laurinas-kaschyunas-obeschaet-stoyat-na-strazhe-infobezopasnosti-litvy.d?id=78675143&fbclid=IwAR1yfaXezjbzyC-Q66U8NiologuUDZZGF-EbLHW4mpemKqiXQni2_BAT7YqM (access date: 03.08.2019).

³² Kasčiūnas L. 2019, Kova su dezinformacija neturi riboti žodžio laisvės // The official website of the Homeland Union party. URL: <https://tsajunga.lt/aktualijos/kova-su-dezinformacija-neturi-riboti-zodzio-laisves/>(access date: 03.08.2019).

³³ Ž. Pavilionis: demokratiją niekinančią rusišką produkciją Kremlius duoda dykai // *diena.lt*. 2017. URL: <https://www.diena.lt/naujienos/pasaulis/ekonomika-ir-politika/z-pavilionis-demokratija-niekinancia-rusiska-produkcija-kremlius-duoda-dykai-804280> (access date: 03.08.2019).

Table 1

Three ways the EU approaches disinformation as a threat to resilience

	Approach 1 (EU – EC)	Approach 2 (EU – EEAS)	Approach 3 (Lithuania)
Preferred term	disinformation	FN and disinformation	propaganda
Public authorities	moderate and hand over the initiative to business and society	expose FN and stigmatise the media from certain countries	dominate the field and actively use restrictive measures; substitute independent actions
Business	puts recommendations from authorities into practice	does not play an essential role	abides by the restrictive laws
Society	individuals play a key role in countering disinformation	people consume content offered by public authorities and have access to alternative information, which is stigmatized	people consume content offered by public authorities; access to alternative information is restricted

A comparison of approaches to countering disinformation for ensuring EU resilience draws attention to the causes of differences in the treatment of information threats and the interpretation of resilience. The origins of these differences are worth a special study, the outlines of which we will draw below.

The dissimilarities between the approaches advocated by the EC and EEAS may relate to the differences between the fields in which these institutions are active. Traditionally, the EC concentrates on economic problems and processes within the EU. This focus translates into delegating responsibility to business and citizens. The EEAS articulates with greater clarity the problems of external threats and the need to combat them. Moreover, the anti-disinformation efforts of the EEAS are aimed at the citizens of both the EU and neighbouring countries.

Dissimilarities between the positions of EU member states in general and on Russia in particular have been extensively studied in the literature. The most frequently reported causes are historical differences, geographical proximity, and the degree of economic dependence [23, pp. 146–168, 27]. Special attention is paid to the traumatic past of the Baltics [24] and their concerns about threats to national integrity coming from Russian-speaking minorities [25]. Other factors mentioned are social inequality, a weak economy, migration, and unemployment [26, p. 62–63].

Finally, as the Lithuanian political scientist Evaldas Nekrašas cogently points out, Lithuania itself chooses Russia as the principal object of criticism. In con-

demning Russia, Lithuania comes to prominence and assumes a clear mission — to become the leader in the region, just as it was in the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania [28].

Conclusion

Our analysis demonstrated the lack of a single EU vision of how to ensure resilience to information threats. We identified three approaches.

The first one is promoted by the EC, which prefers the term disinformation. This approach consists of educating citizens and encouraging them to develop critical thinking, as well as of commitment to free speech and unrestricted access to information. As a result, an equal partnership between institutions, business, and structures emerges. The EC approach fits best the neo-liberal nature of the EU and the values it propagates. Remarkably, it does not link disinformation directly to Russia. Well in line with the contemporary interpretations of resilience in social sciences, this approach is based on the adaptive paradigm for treating disinformation.

The second approach lies in combating FN, primarily, that from Russia. The EU explains its activities by striving for resilience, albeit the latter receives a more static treatment in this case. This attitude is shared by the EEAS (especially StratCom) and the EP. It comprises elements of paternalism, potentially infringes on free speech, and tempers with information. Some mass media become stigmatised. Nevertheless, all information remains available and personal freedoms are preserved. This approach gravitates towards paternalism: citizens' involvement is kept to the minimum, whereas authorities tend to determine what is right and who the source of lies is.

Finally, the third approach is represented by Lithuania. In the country, information coming from official Russia or its mass media is almost automatically classified as propaganda. Resources disseminating this information are blocked; some individuals are persecuted. Although official Lithuania views these measures as enhancing resilience, they correspond to the extremely homeostatic interpretation of resilience typical of engineering and hard science. Authorities actively introduce restrictive measures, whereas society and business can do nothing but observe the established rules. Even voluntary practices (exposing disinformation) are replaced in effect by public initiatives.

The adaptive paradigm of handling disinformation and autopoietic resilience requires delegating substantial responsibility to citizens as well as a transformation of authorities. At the same time, this approach makes it possible to respond flexibly to current challenges, including those in the field of information. Although the paternalistic paradigm and homeostatic resilience may seem more reliable and easier to implement, they translate into rigidity when dealing with certain threats.

The disinformation-related concerns of the EU and its ambition to increase resilience will not disappear in the future. It is still unclear what approach to information threats and resilience will prevail. The term ‘resilience’ itself is a mere disguise for plurality in EU approaches to countering disinformation and some other current threats.

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The authors

Dr Tatiana A. Romanova, Associate Professor,
Saint-Petersburg State University, Russia.

Email: t.romanova@spbu.ru

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5199-0003>

Nikolay I. Sokolov, PhD student, Saint-Petersburg State University, Russia.

Email: nikolaj.sokolov@me.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9699-7890>

Yury Y. Kolotaev, Junior Researcher, Saint-Petersburg State University, Russia.

Email: yury.kolotaev@mail.ru

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8372-1193>
