

Digital Policy Hub – Working Paper

Russian Disinformation about the US Election: AI Analysis of Narratives

Halyna Padalko

Fall 2024 cohort

About the Hub

The Digital Policy Hub at CIGI is a collaborative space for emerging scholars and innovative thinkers from the social, natural and applied sciences. It provides opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students and post-doctoral and visiting fellows to share and develop research on the rapid evolution and governance of transformative technologies. The Hub is founded on transdisciplinary approaches that seek to increase understanding of the socio-economic and technological impacts of digitalization and improve the quality and relevance of related research. Core research areas include data, economy and society; artificial intelligence; outer space; digitalization, security and democracy; and the environment and natural resources.

The Digital Policy Hub working papers are the product of research related to the Hub's identified themes prepared by participants during their fellowship.

Partners

Thank you to Mitacs for its partnership and support of Digital Policy Hub fellows through the Accelerate program. We would also like to acknowledge the many universities, governments and private sector partners for their involvement allowing CIGI to offer this holistic research environment.



About CIGI

The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) is an independent, non-partisan think tank whose peer-reviewed research and trusted analysis influence policy makers to innovate. Our global network of multidisciplinary researchers and strategic partnerships provide policy solutions for the digital era with one goal: to improve people's lives everywhere. Headquartered in Waterloo, Canada, CIGI has received support from the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario and founder Jim Balsillie.

Copyright © 2025 by Halyna Padalko

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Centre for International Governance Innovation or its Board of Directors.

Centre for International Governance Innovation and CIGI are registered trademarks.

67 Erb Street West
Waterloo, ON, Canada N2L 6C2
www.cigionline.org

Key Points

- The 2024 US elections underscored Russia's continued role as an aggressive foreign actor interfering in US democratic processes. Russia employed sophisticated disinformation strategies to influence public discourse and election outcomes.
- Machine learning analysis of Russian propaganda revealed several key narratives present in the election discourse: references to "deep state" conspiracies involving Donald Trump; claims to undermine the legitimacy of the Democratic Party; and sensational scandals aimed at discrediting US political elites.
- Russia's strategic communication goals focused on three main objectives: undermining trust in Western democracies; sowing division and polarization; and confusing audiences with conflicting narratives. A retrospective data analysis of disinformation activity revealed peaks during the 2016, 2020 and 2024 US election years.
- To counter foreign information manipulation and interference in Canada, it is recommended to strengthen Canada's strategic communication by enhancing the Rapid Response Mechanism's (RRM's) threat monitoring, fostering cross-sector collaboration and relocating RRM to Public Safety Canada; streamline intelligence declassification to improve transparency and public pre-bunking actions; ban Russian state media; impose sanctions on further Kremlin-affiliated actors; establish a foreign influence transparency registry; invest in artificial intelligence (AI) research for strategic communication; fund academic-private sector collaboration to counter foreign interference; and develop comprehensive media and digital literacy programs to enhance critical thinking and resilience against disinformation for all age groups.

Introduction

The 2024 US elections emerged as a critical test for the resilience of democracy, highlighting that the challenge of foreign interference is far from over. For Russia, these elections were one of the most important US elections in Russian history, as their outcome could directly influence the course of Russia's war against Ukraine — a conflict that began with the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and escalated into a full-scale invasion in 2022. Russia's focus on influencing American democratic processes is part of a broader strategy, driven by Russian President Vladimir Putin's ambitions to reshape the international order and consolidate a network of authoritarian states.

The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research (DFR) Lab analysis, using a foreign interference attribution tracker, underscores the prominence of Russian efforts among foreign entities seeking to influence the US elections.¹ The sheer volume, scale and sophistication of Russian attempts to interfere are unmatched by any other actor (see Figure 1).

¹ See <https://interference2024.org/>.

Figure 1: The 2024 Foreign Interference Attribution Tracker



Source: Foreign Interference Attribution Tracker (Atlantic Council), <https://interference2024.org/>.

Russia’s military doctrine views information warfare as a critical strategic tool that integrates cyber operations, propaganda and psychological influence to undermine adversaries, blurring the lines between peace and conflict (Ajir and Vaillant 2018). This information warfare doctrine is considered a perpetual process, functioning even in the absence of conventional conflict (Renz 2018).

As the 2024 election year unfolded, the United States seemed to demonstrate a heightened awareness of Russian disinformation campaigns and a hope to resist them efficiently. Earlier this year, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken emphasized that Russian state-controlled media entities, such as RT, had been functioning as a “de facto arm of Russia’s intelligence apparatus” (quoted in Schmunk 2024), evidenced by recent indictments by the Department of Justice that involved two former RT employees that were funding and directing US company Tenet media that published thousands of videos in furtherance of Russian interests (Department of Justice 2024). To this end, various agencies have ramped up efforts to deploy advanced technologies and collaborated with social media companies to combat disinformation.² In February 2025, the Group of Seven countries issued a statement that the Kremlin financed and directed covert campaigns by the Russian state media outlet RT, as well as the Agency for Social Engineering, to “undermine societies through global disinformation” (European Union External Action 2025).

² See www.state.gov/dismarming-disinformation/.

Leveraging advanced AI approaches such as machine learning techniques for text analysis, this paper seeks to answer three research questions:

- What narratives did Russia use to influence the US elections in 2024?
- Which strategic communication goals did Russian propaganda amplification of these narratives lead to?
- How can Canada use the US election experience to prepare for its own elections?

War of Narratives and Russian Strategic Communication Goals

In the context of information warfare, narratives play a crucial role in shaping perceptions, beliefs and behaviours within targeted audiences. Jeffrey R. Halverson, H. L. Goodall, Jr. and Steven R. Corman (2011, 14) describe the narrative as “a coherent system of interrelated and sequentially organized stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations.” From a strategic communication standpoint, narratives can be weaponized to exert influence and sway public opinion. By embedding tailored narratives into global media and social media environments, Russia effectively pursues its strategic communication goals, influencing how audiences perceive both domestic and international affairs.

The Russian government employs a variety of narratives that exploit existing fault lines in target societies, making them vulnerable to polarization and distrust. Narratives serve as a mechanism to take advantage of insecurities within target populations, ultimately shaping the political discourse to favour outcomes that align with Russian interests (Lucas and Pomeranzen 2016; Office of the Director of National Intelligence 2017).

The most common strategic communication goals that Russia pursues through the weaponization of narratives are undermining trust in Western democracies, sowing division and polarization and confusing or distracting audiences from objective facts (US Department of State 2020; Marigliano, Ng and Carley 2024; Stradner and Terrill 2024). For example, disinformation campaigns that amplify divisive topics such as immigration, racial tension and political polarization are tailored to increase societal discord and erode unity (Chivvis 2017). By creating confusion through conflicting narratives, Russia aims to hinder the ability of audiences to discern truth from propaganda, as in the case of the Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 that was shot down, using tactics of “firehose of falsehood” (Paul and Matthews 2016). The effectiveness of such approaches lies in their capacity to generate doubt, making it difficult for citizens to discern fact from fiction and thus diminishing the concept of truth itself (Rietjens 2019). This confusion ultimately serves as a strategic advantage, diverting attention away from Russia’s foreign activities, such as its full-scale war in Ukraine (2022), its annexation of Crimea and its war in Donbass (2014), its efforts in support of Transnistrian separatism in Moldova (2009) and its military intervention in Georgia (2008). The most efficient propaganda narratives exploit existing divisions and tensions between different groups of society by monitoring the adversary infospace, analyzing their weaknesses and creating

specifically tailored content (Savchuk and Myroniuk 2024). Table 1 illustrates the main Russian strategic communication goals, describing strategies and giving examples for each.

Table 1: Russian Strategic Communication Goals

Russian Strategic Communication Goal	Description of Strategy	Example of Related Topics and Campaigns
Undermining trust in Western democratic institutions	Dissemination of disinformation that questions the legitimacy of democratic processes and institutions	Corruption, election fraud narratives, anti-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) sentiment, Brexit, vaccine skepticism
Sowing division and polarization	Exploiting societal tensions to create conflict and deepen divisions within target societies	Operation Denver, immigration, COVID-19, racial tension, LGBTQ+ rights
Confusing and distracting audiences	Flooding the information space with conflicting and false narratives to create confusion	Conspiracy theories, "firehose of falsehood," MH17 crash, Syria conflict, anti-5G narratives

Source: Author.

AI for Mitigating Disinformation

The rapid development of AI presents a major opportunity for malicious actors to scale disinformation, yet they have also emerged as essential tools for mitigating its effects. AI and machine learning are leading these efforts, offering powerful methods for identifying, analyzing and reducing the risks linked to foreign information manipulation (Choraś et al. 2021). By leveraging advanced algorithms, these tools detect patterns of coordinated inauthentic behaviour, predict content that may quickly gain traction and conduct nuanced content analysis to flag harmful or misleading narratives. Such capabilities allow for the early identification of potentially harmful campaigns and facilitate a rapid response.

Machine learning, specifically, offers robust methods for data classification and cluster analysis, making it an indispensable asset in countering disinformation (Tianda et al. 2024). Classification algorithms are capable of categorizing content based on its likelihood of being manipulative, while clustering techniques help identify thematic narratives indicative of coordinated campaigns (Akhtar et al. 2023). The automation and enhancement capabilities provided by machine learning afford policy makers the evidence-based insights required for informed decision making (Park et al. 2022). For instance, governments can deploy machine learning frameworks to identify foreign interference campaigns in real time, allowing for the possibility of timely interventions to mitigate their impact. The continuous development of AI and machine learning technologies offers a vital opportunity for democratic societies to strengthen their resilience against disinformation and foreign interference (Chhabria 2024).

Data Analysis

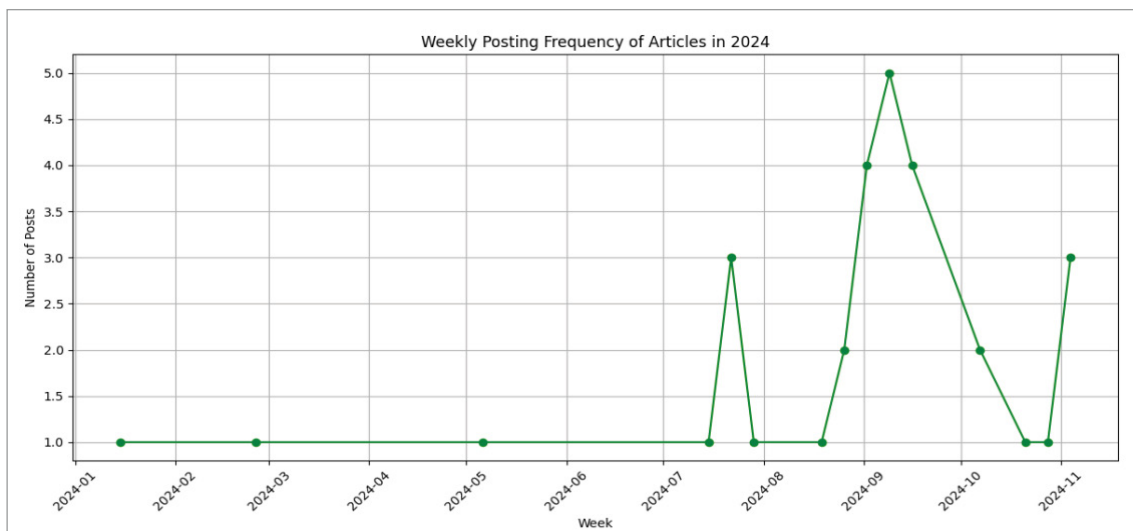
Methodology

For narrative analysis, the database of Russian disinformation from the EU East Stratcom Task Force, EUvsDisinfo,³ was used. EUvsDisinfo identifies, compiles and exposes disinformation cases originating in pro-Kremlin outlets.

Two data sets were used for this analysis. Data set 1, titled “US Presidential Elections Disinformation,” was filtered by date from January 1, 2024, to November 5, 2024, and by the hashtag “US Presidential elections,” resulting in 32 cases of Russian disinformation. To understand a cognitive platform on which Russia builds election narratives, a bigger data set 2, titled “US-related Disinformation 2024,” was filtered by date from January 1, 2024, to November 5, 2024, and by the country “US,” which extracted 616 cases of Russian disinformation articles focusing on discourse around the United States.

For data set 1, a time frequency graph was created to analyze the periods when Russian disinformation efforts to influence the US presidential election were most intense (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Time Series of the Event Graph for Data Set 1 – US Presidential Elections Disinformation



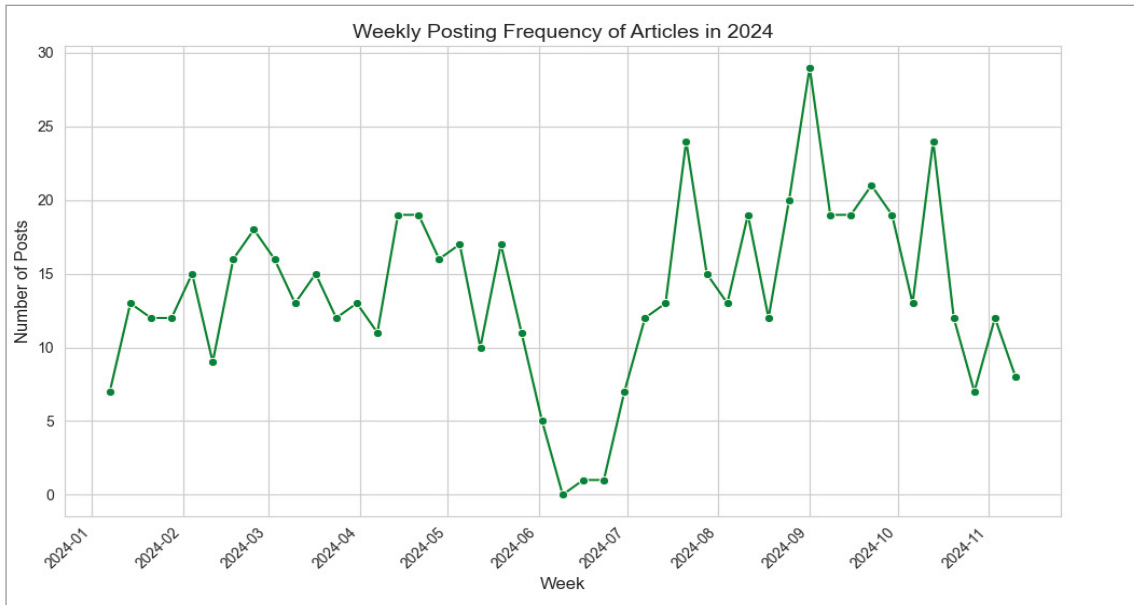
Source: Author.

The month of September shows the highest frequency of disinformation cases, suggesting a surge during this period. The density of the disinformation publications significantly increased from mid-July with the September spike, which amplifies the DFRLab analysis presented in Figure 1 that shows that the peak number of cases occurred in September, two months before the US election date, suggesting a

³ See <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>.

preparatory period for influencing public opinion. The time series for data set 2 also shows a September peak (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Time Series of the Event Graph for Data Set 2 – US-related Disinformation



Source: Author.

Topic Modelling

The analysis of data set 1 identified five overarching topics within the data set, as presented in Table 2. The model outputs include the number of topics, the most frequent keywords across all topics and a list of articles assigned by the model to specific topics. Subsequently, through human expert analysis, this data was interpreted in terms of the topic's title, description, narrative purpose and classification.

Since this data set is small, it was possible to conduct a preliminary manual screening of the entire data set to identify the topics present within it. The machine analysis confirmed these findings, identifying five main topics in the data set that aligned with the researcher's preliminary assessment.

Table 2: Topics in US Presidential Election Disinformation Data Set 1

Number	Topic	Description of Topic	Keywords	Aim	Russian Strategic Communication Goal
1	Deep state	This topic focuses on the intersection of Donald Trump, the deep state and sanctions, particularly involving Russian media.	"trump," "deep state," "sanctions media," "election 2020," "freedom of speech"	These narratives and sharing conspiracy theories appear aimed at sowing discourse and confusion and amplifying claims of censorship.	Confusing and distracting audiences, undermining trust in Western democratic institutions
2	Democratic Party	Democratic Party, the legitimacy of elections. It discusses narratives involving Ukraine, suggesting that interference or influence has played a role in political outcomes.	"democratic party," "russian," "ukraine," "vote," "war," "interference," "evidence"	By referencing war and casting doubt on election evidence, these narratives likely aim to challenge the credibility of democratic processes and paint the Democratic Party as corrupt or compromised by foreign actors.	Undermining trust in Western democratic institutions
3	US elites' scandals	Efforts to discredit US elites, focusing on sensational scandals. Kamala Harris is prominently featured, along with narratives involving P. Diddy, sex scandals and claims of abuse, portraying influential figures in a negative light.	"elites," "presidency," "harris," "diddy," "covered," "rapists," "scandal," "sex"	The purpose appears to be to undermine public trust in political elites by associating them with scandals, corruption and misconduct, feeding into broader anti-establishment sentiments.	Undermining trust in Western democratic institutions
4	Liberal values	Kamala Harris and her actions as a political leader are the focus, including the suggestion that Harris aims to promote liberal values and increase pressure on specific nations, portraying her actions as an extension of the broader US influence.	"liberal," "promote," "pressure," "values," "harris kamala"	The topic uses this framing to paint Harris as aggressive and manipulative , creating a narrative that aligns with anti-US rhetoric and portrays her as a threat to traditional values .	Sowing division and polarization, undermining trust in Western democratic institutions
5	Telegram/ Durov	Arrest of Pavel Durov and the broader control sought by Washington over media, specifically targeting Russia and Telegram ahead of the elections. Joe Biden is framed as orchestrating actions to control information flow, positioning this narrative as an attempt to interfere with freedom of speech and suppress dissenting voices.	"election," "biden," "pavel," "arrest," "durov," "russia," "control," "Washington"	These disinformation efforts seem to focus on portraying the US administration as tyrannical and oppressive, targeting influential media figures to manipulate public discourse and sow polarization for political gains.	Sowing division and polarization

In the data set analyzing disinformation from Russia regarding the US presidential election, multiple important themes come into focus, which point to an overarching aim of eroding public trust in American institutions. A recurring subject is the narrative involving sanctions against Russia and its media, found across several of the topics and positioning the United States as intrusive and unjust. Discussions about the deep state, election integrity and criticism of US elites are presented in ways that contribute to doubts about democratic legitimacy. Attacks on political elites and liberal values serve as part of a broader campaign to weaken confidence in the American political landscape, while emphasizing the notion of Western persecution of Russia to align with disinformation strategies that seek to destabilize public trust in the US government.

Topic modelling for data set 2 revealed 13 distinct topics that were interpreted by researchers and labelled with regard to Russian strategic communication goals (see Table 3).

Table 3: Topics in US-related Disinformation Data Set 2

Number	Topic	Description of Topic	Keywords	Aim	Russian Strategic Communication Goal
1	Ukraine and the United States	War in Ukraine and its relationship with the United States are the focus. The narratives include Ukraine preparing chemical weapons, using American chemical weapons and being a tool for the United States to weaken Russia.	“ukraine prepares,” “ukraine uses,” “ukraine uses american”	To frame Ukraine as a mere proxy in the conflict, controlled by Western interests, while portraying Russia as the victim of manipulation.	Confusing and distracting audiences
2	Central Asia	The West is interfering in Central Asia and trying to destabilize Russia's influence in the region. The messages include isolation efforts of Central Asia from Moscow and attempts to destabilize Kazakhstan through anti-Russian sentiments.	“to destabilise kazakhstan,” “central asia the,” “russia,” “front against russia,” “kazakhstans information,” “central asia”	To create a narrative of Western aggression aimed at isolating Russia from key allies and regions, thus sowing distrust toward Western countries.	Undermining trust in Western democratic institutions
3	Nord Stream, Crocus City	Blaming the United States for covering up attacks and being responsible for sabotage, such as the Nord Stream pipeline incident and terrorist attack at Crocus City Hall as being carried out by “Ukrainian Nazis.”	“nord stream sabotage,” “arrest the us,” “putin was,” “crocus hall”	To undermine the credibility of the United States and the West by suggesting they are behind sabotage and terrorist attacks and covering up crimes.	Confusing and distracting audiences

Number	Topic	Description of Topic	Keywords	Aim	Russian Strategic Communication Goal
4	Armenia, Georgia and Colour Revolutions	Western interference in the Caucasus region, particularly in Georgia and Armenia, where colour revolutions and coups are allegedly being orchestrated by the United States.	“protests in georgia,” “and azerbaijan,” “russia,” “armenia,” “caucasus,” “revolution in georgia,” “tbilisi”	To promote the idea that unrest in the region is instigated by Western powers attempting to destabilize governments and shift power dynamics.	Undermining trust in Western democratic institutions
5	Sanctions on Russian media	Sanctions imposed on Russian media outlets, depicting them as an attack on freedom of expression and motivated by the success of Russian propaganda.	“election,” “biden,” “pavel,” “arrest,” “durov,” “russia,” “control,” “Washington”	These disinformation efforts seem to focus on portraying the US administration as tyrannical and oppressive, targeting influential media figures to manipulate public discourse and sow polarization for political gains.	Sowing division and polarization
6	Poland's ambitions	Poland allegedly seeking to expand its influence, with US support, using Ukrainian resources.	“russia poland is,” “poland wants,” “ukraine poland,” “russia poland closed,” “polish foreign minister”	To create suspicion toward Poland's intentions in Eastern Europe, portraying it as an opportunistic aggressor willing to exploit Ukraine.	Confusing and distracting audiences
7	Zelenskyy's peace plan	Volodymyr Zelenskyy is depicted as a figure who blackmails his patrons and whose peace plans are tainted by ulterior motives.	“peace zelenskyy,” “collective,” “zelenskyy victory plan,” “patrons zelenskyy blackmails”	To portray Ukraine as a puppet state, undermining Zelenskyy's leadership and credibility.	Undermining trust in Western democratic institutions
8	Trump and the deep state	Donald Trump as target of the “deep state” conspiracy and globalists, including claims of assassination attempts.	“trumps assassination attempt,” “deep state,” “trump”	To amplify conspiracy theories about Trump being targeted by shadowy global entities, thereby confusing audiences.	Confusing and distracting audiences
9	NATO and Russia	NATO's role as an adversary to Russia, portraying its exercises as a form of hybrid warfare. The narratives suggest that NATO is nearing the end of its relevance due to its conflict with Russia.	“russia nato,” “nato plans,” “nato resorting,” “of confrontation nato,” “provocations nato”	To undermine NATO's credibility and suggest it is acting aggressively against Russia, while implying that NATO is in decline.	Undermining trust in Western democratic institutions
10	NATO and the US attack on Russia	The United States, NATO and their allies have sanctioned attacks on Russian territories and are involved in a proxy war against Russia, using Ukraine as their tool.	“nato us,” “us nato,” “russia the us”	To portray the West as directly involved in military aggression against Russia, thereby legitimizing Russia's defensive actions.	Undermining trust in Western democratic institutions

Number	Topic	Description of Topic	Keywords	Aim	Russian Strategic Communication Goal
11	US and EU hegemony	The United States and the European Union seen as imposing liberal censorship and being dependent on each other, suggesting a lack of autonomy in European governance.	“us eu,” “hegemony eu bureaucracy,” “military hegemony eu,” “nato europe opposes”	To undermine the legitimacy of EU governance by portraying it as heavily influenced by US interests and driven by oppressive liberal ideologies.	Undermining trust in Western democratic institutions
12	West's war against Russia	The West, led by the United States and NATO, seen as orchestrating a hybrid war against Russia, using Ukraine as a proxy to destabilize Russia.	“west provokes russia,” “to destroy russia,” “west uses ukraine”	To legitimize Russia's actions, consolidate domestic support and frame Western nations as aggressors, fostering distrust toward Western policies and solidarity within Russia.	Undermining trust in Western democratic institutions
13	US biomaterials	The United States is allegedly transporting biomaterials from Ukraine for military biological research, using routes through Moldova and Romania.	“us exports biomaterials,” “biomaterials from ukraine,” “romania us research”	To raise alarm about Western involvement in alleged biological weapons research, fostering fear and mistrust toward Western aid initiatives.	Confusing and distracting audiences

Source: Author.

The topic modelling reveals several recurring narratives, such as topics 9, 10 and 12, which focus on the West's alleged aggression toward Russia, but from slightly different perspectives — NATO's hybrid warfare, the United States and NATO's direct involvement in attacks and the West's broader war strategy against Russia. The emphasis on Ukraine, Zelenskyy and war reflects a strong focus on the war in Ukraine in disinformation narratives, with efforts to depict the Ukrainian leadership as a puppet of Western powers. The frequent appeal to other countries such as Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Poland indicates an attempt to highlight perceived threats or influence exerted by NATO and the West in Russia's neighbouring regions or “geopolitical” areas of interests, thus amplifying fears of Western encroachment. By consistently associating these countries and leaders with keywords such as “terrorist,” “coup” and “illegitimate,” the propaganda attempts to undermine their legitimacy and present them as instruments of Western interests rather than independent actors. Ultimately, these narratives serve to create an “us versus them” mentality, galvanizing support for Russian policies while casting doubt on the intentions of Western countries and their allies. The primary tactics involve undermining trust in Western institutions, sowing division through conspiracy narratives and confusing audiences with exaggerated or unsubstantiated claims.

All recorded cases of Russian disinformation toward the United States in the EUvsDisinfo data set since January 1, 2015, amount to 5,634 articles. Figure 4 visualizes their distribution over time, providing insights into patterns and changes in the intensity of disinformation. Starting in 2016, there is a noticeable rise in disinformation articles, reflecting growing capabilities in analyzing Russian propaganda. The peaks

observed in the graph during 2019–2021 highlight an influx of disinformation, which can be attributed to Russian attempts to exploit the global COVID-19 pandemic through misinformation and conspiracy narratives. Notably, the trend for 2024 shows an increasing number of articles compared to 2023, pointing to renewed activity targeting the United States. The peaks in 2016, 2020 and 2024 align with US election years, suggesting deliberate attempts by Russia to interfere in the US election process and shape the outcomes through disinformation. Following the imposition of restrictions and sanctions on Russian state media channels in the West after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the volume of recorded propaganda articles declined.

Figure 4: Russian Propaganda Articles in the Context of the United States in the Last 10 Years



Source: Author.

Recommendations

- **Strengthen Canada’s capacity to address foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) threats by reorganizing governmental structures** to better align the responsibilities of agencies tasked with monitoring, analyzing and responding to these threats within the broader Canadian security framework. Enhance data sharing and coordination among governmental units responsible for Stratcom and countering FIMI threats, alongside regular joint training, to ensure a more unified approach. Encourage collaboration between the government, industry, NGOs and academia to develop effective counter-narratives and bolster Canadian strategic communication initiatives.
- **Facilitate an easier declassification process for intelligence related to attempts of information manipulation and interference** both foreign and domestic. Set the special expert advisory board to help decision making for records selection. Strategic declassification will enhance public awareness and allow the government to take

pre-bunking actions and implement communication measures before misleading information is spread by adversaries.

- **Fully ban Russian state media outlets such as RT, Sputnik and RIA within Canada** — not only on satellite and cable systems but also by restricting their internet domains and social media pages. Impose sanctions on Canadian individuals and organizations found to be engaging with Kremlin-affiliated entities. Apply Canada's C-70 Bill to hold accountable those facilitating foreign state influence and propaganda and implement the Foreign Influence Transparency Registry.
- **Increase investment in research initiatives focused on strategic communications and information manipulation.** The example of the Media Ecosystem Observatory and the Canadian Digital Media Research Network it coordinates showcase how researchers could produce analysis that could serve as the grounds for evidence-based policy making. These efforts should be scaled up in an era of increasing threats from disinformation. Initiatives should prioritize the development of technologies to identify disinformation, misinformation, malinformation, coordinated inauthentic behaviour, threat actors, bot networks and other techniques used to manipulate public opinion and estimate potential influence of such activities.
- **Develop comprehensive media and digital literacy programs for all age groups.** These programs should focus on enhancing critical thinking skills, enabling individuals to identify disinformation, misinformation and manipulative tactics used online. Such initiatives could involve partnerships with educational institutions, community organizations and tech platforms to ensure accessibility and effectiveness.

Acknowledgements

The author extends gratitude to academic advisors Ann Fitz-Gerald and David Welch, Digital Policy Hub mentor Wesley Wark, peer reviewer Ashley Ferreira and administrative support team Reanne Cayenne and Dianna English.

About the Author

Halyna Padalko is a Digital Policy Hub doctoral fellow and a multidisciplinary researcher focused on strategic communication, propaganda and disinformation, the use of AI tools in those domains, and their intersection in policy. She holds a master's degree in global governance from the Balsillie School of International Affairs and is currently completing her Ph.D. in computer science at the National Aerospace University Kharkiv Aviation Institute. Halyna is also a visiting Ph.D. student in the Department of Political Science at the University of Waterloo.

Works Cited

- Ajir, Media and Bethany Vailliant. 2018. "Russian Information Warfare: Implications for Deterrence Theory." *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 12 (3): 70–89. www.jstor.org/stable/26481910.
- Akhtar, Pervaiz, Arsalan Mujahid Ghouri, Haseeb Ur Rehman Khan, Mirza Amin ul Haq, Usama Awan, Nadia Zahoor, Zaheer Khan and Aniq Ashraf. 2023. "Detecting fake news and disinformation using artificial intelligence and machine learning to avoid supply chain disruptions." *Annals of Operations Research* 327: 633–57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10479-022-05015-5>.
- Chhabria, Pooja. 2024. "The big election year: how to protect democracy in the era of AI." World Economic Forum, January 29. www.weforum.org/stories/2024/01/ai-democracy-election-year-2024-disinformation-misinformation/.
- Chivvis, Christopher S. 2017. "Understanding Russian 'Hybrid Warfare' And What Can Be Done About It." RAND Expert Insights, March 22. www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT468.html.
- Choraś, Michał, Konstantinos Demestichas, Agata Giełczyk, Álvaro Herrero, Paweł Ksieniewicz, Konstantina Remoundou, Daniel Urda and Michał Woźniak. 2021. "Advanced Machine Learning techniques for fake news (online disinformation) detection: A systematic mapping study." *Applied Soft Computing* 101: 107050. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asoc.2020.107050>.
- Department of Justice. 2024. "Two RT Employees Indicted for Covertly Funding and Directing U.S. Company that Published Thousands of Videos in Furtherance of Russian Interests." Press release, September 4. www.justice.gov/opa/pr/two-rt-employees-indicted-covertly-funding-and-directing-us-company-published-thousands.
- European Union External Action. 2025. "G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) statement on Russian Influence Campaign." January 17. www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/g7-rapid-response-mechanism-rrm-statement-russian-influence-campaign_en.
- Halverson, Jeffry R., H. L. Goodall, Jr. and Steven R. Corman. 2011. *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lucas, Edward and Peter Pomeranzev. 2016. *Winning the Information War: Techniques and Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe*. Center for European Policy Analysis' Information Warfare Project. August. www.lse.ac.uk/iga/assets/documents/arena/archives/winning-the-information-war-full-report-pdf.pdf.
- Marigliano, Rebecca, Lynnette Hui Xian Ng and Kathleen M. Carley. 2024. "Analyzing digital propaganda and conflict rhetoric: a study on Russia's bot-driven campaigns and counter-narratives during the Ukraine crisis." *Social Network Analysis and Mining* 14, 170. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-024-01322-w>.
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence. 2017. *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections*. Intelligence Community Assessment report. January 6. www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf.
- Park, Chan Young, Julia Mendelsohn, Anjalie Field and Yulia Tsvetkov. 2022. "Challenges and Opportunities in Information Manipulation Detection: An Examination of Wartime Russian Media." In *Findings of the Association for Computational Linguistics: EMNLP 2022*, 5209–5235, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Association for Computational Linguistics. <https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2022.findings-emnlp.382>.
- Paul, Christopher and Miriam Matthews. 2016. "The Russian 'Firehose of Falsehood' Propaganda Model." RAND Expert Insights, July 11. www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE198.html.
- Renz, Bettina. 2018. *Russia's Military Revival*. Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

- Rietjens, Sebastiaan. 2019. "Unraveling Disinformation: The Case of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17." *The International Journal of Intelligence, Security, and Public Affairs* 21 (3): 195–218. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23800992.2019.1695666>.
- Savchuk, Maksym and Anna Myroniuk. 2024. "Temniki, Memes, 'Register of Fakes and Virtual Reality'. How the Kremlin's Disinformation Contractor Agency Works" [in Ukrainian]. Radio Svoboda, September 16. www.radiosvoboda.org/a/skhemy-kreml-dezinformatsiya-asd-hambashydzhe/33121898.html.
- Schmunk, Rhianna. 2024. "RT's work extends beyond propaganda to covert intelligence operations, U.S. warns." CBC News, September 13. www.cbc.ca/news/world/russian-influence-russia-today-us-sanctions-1.7322896.
- Stradner, Ivanna and Kirsten Terrill. 2024. "From Gaza to Global South: How Russia Weaponizes Neocolonial Narratives." Foundation for Defense of Democracies, June 22. www.fdd.org/analysis/2024/06/22/from-gaza-to-global-south-how-russia-weaponizes-neocolonial-narratives/.
- Tianda, Izhar Muhammad, Mohammad Noufal Ubadah, M. Fariz Fadillah Mardianto, Said Agil Al Munawwarah, Nurhalisa Ishak, Dita Amelia and Elly Ana. 2024. "Clustering Fake News with K-Means and Agglomerative Clustering Based on Word2Vec." *International Journal of Mathematics and Computer Research* 12 (2): 3999–4007. <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijmcr/v12i2.01>.
- US Department of State. 2020. *GEC Special Report: Russia's Pillars of Disinformation and Propaganda*. August. <https://2017-2021.state.gov/russias-pillars-of-disinformation-and-propaganda-report/index.html>.