



REDEFINING EURO-ATLANTIC VALUES AND RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN THE EURO-ATLANTIC SPACE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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This document summarizes part of the larger research “Euro-Atlantic Values and Russia’s Strategic Communication in the Euro-Atlantic Space” (2015) commissioned by the NATO StratCom COE to the Center for International Studies (Latvia).

The overall aim of the research is to identify means **how Russia with the help of mass media influences the Euro-Atlantic values and redefines the meaning of democracy, media freedom, human rights, trust to international organisations, freedom of speech and other values** in the Euro-Atlantic space for different societal groups during the crisis in Ukraine.

Russia is well armed with knowledge about different target groups domestically and internationally. Construction of narratives in the news programmes presented by RT (previously Russia Today) and Первый канал (Channel One Russia) prove that identical messages can be adapted and contextualised according to the interests of TV viewers.

In case of RT such techniques as labelling, authority and infotainment are used for **undermining the quality of media, objectivity of presented news, credibility of Western politicians and international organisations**. In the end the Western society becomes increasingly divided over controversies presented in the media **questioning efficiency of foreign and security policies and credibility of respective political leaders**, while Russia’s state-controlled media presents clear and coherent messages that strengthen the position of V. Putin and the Russian political elite so that their policies are not questioned by the Russian citizenry.

International relations are based on clear communication between states and societies. Such communication sets international norms and rules, and preserves social order. Clear communication depends on using a language that is understood by all parties involved.

For the past twenty-five years, Europe has enjoyed an agreement to speak a common political language that contributes to cooperation, mutual respect, and mutual benefit to our societies. However, events in Ukraine have proven that, while the words we use to communicate may be identical, the interpretation of these words, and the intent behind them, varies from stakeholder to stakeholder and can ignite controversy. The new goal of posturing instead of communicating is bringing confusion to our societies.

The values that form the backbone of our belief systems and attitudes are being contested. **Our core values have come under attack by Russia’s political establishment by means of misinformation in the media and other instruments.**

Due to the pressure of the Ukrainian crisis, the process of re-defining the values we have shared for the past twenty-five years has now reached the stage of undermining the coherence of Euro-Atlantic communication and the functioning of our political system. The next step may well be the loss of many of our fundamental values in a fog of misinformation, followed by reactionary swings in public opinion that lead to social chaos and political crisis. The subversion of the Euro-Atlantic political course could become a reality if we continue to ignore Russia’s dangerously proficient policy manipulators.

The techniques applied by Russian state-controlled TV platforms RT and Первый канал were analysed in the framework of the following case-studies (see the table for examples):

- 1) The downing of MH-17;
- 2) Implementation of counter-sanctions;
- 3) The first humanitarian aid convoy;
- 4) The Minsk II agreement.

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The ‘success’ or failure of Russia’s efforts to manipulate information in Europe and on a global scale depends on:

1) the ability to withstand efforts to redefine democratic values. Democratic values in Western societies have come to be taken for granted; we must renew our appreciation for their power to preserve peace, security, and prosperity. The complexity of the many crises surrounding the Transatlantic Community has contributed to the discussion of whether the values we rely on today serve the interests of the democratic countries properly. It is the responsibility of politicians, experts, and all members of civil society to disperse the fog that has settled over our understanding;

2) the ability of the Transatlantic Community to communicate the concepts and tools we need to use to defend and preserve democracy. Simple countermeasures, such as providing sound information to balance Russia’s subversive propaganda, are not enough, because large segments of Russian society have limited access to information, activists and truth-seekers have limited financial resources to build comprehensive and efficient media platforms, and the current regime places constraints and barriers on the development of the civil society;

3) our ability to be honest with ourselves and use a healthy dose of self-criticism to examine our attitudes and beliefs and remain calm in the face of adversity, and the ability to cast a clear and critical eye on attempts by non-democratic regimes to redefine our democratic values.

SUMMARY OF THE EXAMPLES OF THE REDEFINITION OF EURO-ATLANTIC VALUES

Values	Used narratives (Western audience)	Used narratives (Russian-speaking audience)	Used manipulative techniques	redefined values
MORAL VALUES				
“Moral quality of state”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is impossible to trust the Ukrainian authorities and the army Ukraine and the U.S. are immoral Supporting the high quality of Russian expertise Conspiracy vs. morality: one cannot trust the U.S. - lack of transparency regarding 9/11; the case of American intelligence service disguising a plane flying to Cuba. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is impossible to trust the Ukrainian authorities and the army. Topics added: poisoning of Yushchenko, Georgadze case, the civilian plane crash in 2001 Ukraine and the U.S. are immoral Supporting the high quality of Russian expertise Conspiracy vs. morality: one cannot trust the U.S. - the case of Powell regarding the evidence on Iraq US benefits from the MH-17 catastrophe The only side willing to help is Russia Russia as peaceful actor supporting a non-violent solution to the conflict Promotion of rebel authorities, silence on any problematic issues concerning the rebels Unification of radicals and the irresponsible Ukrainian armed forces Victimization of the Russian side and pro-Russian rebels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplification Transference Expertise Authorities Compare in contrast Compare similarities (West) Hypothetical future Moral superiority of Russia Comparing differences Role model Common man (locals in the region, Ukrainian refugees, Russian people) Evaluation Repetition Silence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trust in Ukrainian and U.S. governments should be questioned by everyone Moral superiority of Russia (in its attitude towards the refugees and in handling the MH-17 case investigation) Lack of Western solidarity both - among themselves and with Russia - to find a peaceful solution to the conflict and provide aid to those in need Dehumanisation of the Ukrainian armed forces

Values	Used narratives (Western audience)	Used narratives (Russian-speaking audience)	Used manipulative techniques	redefined values
POLITICAL VALUES				
Media freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accusations presented before the MH-17 investigation had started • No space provided for the opposite view (pro-Russian rebels) • Media is used to disinform the society, it is unprofessional • Assigning guilt for the MH-17 tragedy to Putin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accusations presented before the MH-17 investigation has started • Western journalists are influenced by politicians • Media is used to disinform the society, it is unprofessional • Low morality of Western journalists • The Ukrainian and Western media, especially in the U.S. and the EU, promote anti-Russian sentiment • The Western countries are influencing their societies as well as that of Ukraine to believe that Russia is a threat • The west wants to poison the minds of Ukrainian people, to turn them against Russia – a country that has become non-submissive, powerful and rich • The West wants to force Ukrainians and Russians into conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance (placement) • Repetition • Authority • Testimony • Unification • Labelling • In-out grouping • Voice of authority • Evaluation • Instructing • Simplification 	Western media sources are unprofessional, not credible, and influenced by politicians
POLITICAL VALUES				
Relations between state and society based on partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukrainian authorities are unable to manage the country in social, economic and political spheres, therefore they cannot fulfil their duty towards their citizens • Ukraine does not have full control over its military • Ukrainian citizens in Eastern Ukraine area abandoned and forgotten by the central government • Chaos vs. Order comparing Ukraine to Russia • Discrediting the Ukrainian side • Promoting Russian authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia defends its national interests • Ukrainian authorities are unable to manage the country in social, economic and political spheres, therefore they cannot fulfil their duty towards their citizens • Ukraine does not have full control over its military • Ukrainian citizens in Eastern Ukraine area abandoned and forgotten by the central government • Chaos vs. Order comparing Ukraine to Russia • Discrediting the Ukrainian side • Promoting Russian authorities • Refugees affirm Ukraine's failure as a state in a highly emotional manner • The hostility of the Ukrainian Armed forces is emphasised • Ukrainian commanders are abandoning their soldiers; detained Ukrainian soldiers are treated well and are exchanged quickly; parents are opposed to their sons serving in the Ukrainian army; soldiers are not ready to follow the orders of their commanders • The political system of Ukraine is controlled by external forces (the West) • Ukrainian parliamentarians don't take responsibility for their actions • Radicalisation of Ukrainian society is out of control, oligarchy is in power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition (legal response, protection of the local market) • Labelling (aggressiveness of the Western market) • In-out grouping (internal dimension – group of patriots; external dimension - splitting US/EU cooperation, splitting up the EU) • Silence (not engaging in negative assessment, ignoring the conflict in Ukraine as a reason for sanctions) • Authority (Putin/ Medvedev/ministers in pseudo face-to-face communication) • Positive hypothetical future • Common man (impact on Russian and Western customers and farmers) • A lot of statistics provided to show military and civilian casualties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power of the Russian state is the central value for its citizens • Patriots of Russia do not complain • Ukraine is a failed state • Russia's moral superiority

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ECONOMIC VALUES				
Democratic values embedded in the economic system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukraine uses the conflict to earn money by letting other states use its air-space Europe is suffering from the conflict in Ukraine; it is not in the interests of common people and European economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EU supports economic freedoms only as far as their own farmers are concerned The presence of Western goods in the Russian market is harming the Russian farmers The “pressure” of Western food as the face of the “free” market Protection against low quality Western products Positive hypothetical future for Russia’s small farmers Negative hypothetical future for the West and its farmers The diversification of suppliers: Russia opening up to new markets in Latin America (for meat), Africa and Asia (for fruit and vegetables) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silence (on advantages of free market and on threats to the Russian market/economy) In-out grouping (dishonest competition by the West; suffering of Russian farmers; common EU farmers vs. the ruling elite) Pseudo-plurality (the voice of expertise does not refer to the conflict, only one motive is promoted as the reason for counter-sanctions) Victimisation (the poor conditions Russian farmers were in before the counter-sanctions) Comparing (quality of produce) Statistics (numbers and figures sometimes without any reference to legitimise statements) Common man (Russian and Western farmers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic interests come first Redefinition of the logic of the free market economy Free market as a disadvantage and an illustration of the failure of the democratic system of governance Sanctions against Russia harm Europe and strengthen Russia’s national economy
INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION				
Respect to international security and order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The U.S. is constantly violating the international law Russia is following the international law Putin as the main voice for the peace process Impact of counter-sanctions on Poland, Finland, Greece, France, Germany The destructive role of the U.S. in the context of the Minsk II agreement; U.S. wanting to provide military support to Ukraine; Germany portrayed as the main opposition to this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destabilization is a common phenomenon Russia following the international law Legitimisation of the regime in Russia; de-legitimisation of the regime in Ukraine Color revolutions - a synonym for “coup d’etat”; condemning methods used by an “unnamed outside power” supporting “democratisation” (the West) Top Russian authorities expressing disappointment with the West not listening to Russia Using the Russian-speakers in the Baltic states to stir up tensions and show “human rights abuses” Russia described as the victim of the West. Sanctions as an issue not related to the conflict in Ukraine Putin as the main voice for the peaceful process The destructive role of the U.S. in the context of the Minsk II agreement; U.S. wanting to provide military support to Ukraine; Germany portrayed as the main opposition to this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In/out grouping Labelling Simplification Hypothetical future Expertise Repetition Negative opponent: principle of dialogue Comparing (the EU and the US) Silence (on the conflict in Ukraine, not contextualising sanctions against Russia) Authority (legitimising) The least of evils (as hypothetical future) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questioning credibility of those, who set international rules Europe is suffering from the actions of the U.S. The EU is plagued by a solidarity crisis Ukraine violates international agreements, unlike Russia The West is not following the international agreements