

International conference

IMAGINED COMMUNITY:

ROLE OF DISINFORMATION IN SOVIET
AND RUSSIAN POLICY

May 13, 2022, Riga

National Library of Latvia, Ziedonis Hall



PROGRAMME

Annotation: Disinformation is currently one of Russia's types of strategic weapons, alongside nuclear weapons. However, disinformation loses its meaning if it is not believed and has no followers. Therefore, it is important for disinformers to have a lasting influence on society in fundamental, conceptual issues related to values and identity. For decades, the USSR tried to portray it as an imaginary united state with common values, and many of these ideas have now been transformed and are used in modern Russian politics. Restoring the territory and geopolitical influence of the USSR is on the agenda of Russia's current political leadership. The aim of the conference is to analyse the impact of disinformation on society in the past and today, as well as to find answers to the question of how to reduce its impact in the future.

9:00 – 10:00

Registration

10:00 – 10:20

Opening of the Conference

Jānis Bordāns, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Latvia
Dagmāra Beitnere-Le Galla, Deputy Speaker of the Saeima
Edmunds Stankevičs, Chairman of the Commission¹

10:20 – 10:50

History and disinformation: similarities and differences in the politics of the USSR and contemporary Russia, Dr. hist. Gatis Krūmiņš, Senior Researcher and Associate Professor at the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

Annotation: The USSR pursued a colonial policy in the occupied Baltic states. The territory was militarized and the population exploited, a large part of the proceeds was directed to the USSR central budget. The USSR, on the other hand, interpreted this policy as aid and investment, but the Baltic states called as underdeveloped and fascist before the occupation. Today, Russia is maintaining a narrative about the USSR's occupation of the Baltics as a "success story" and the Baltic states as failed states. A distorted history and a lie about the present are the intoxicating cocktail that the Kremlin's political leadership is forcing on Russian society and trying to deceive the people of other countries as well

¹ Commission to determine the number of victims and location of mass graves, collect information regarding repressions and mass deportation of Latvian citizens, and calculate costs incurred by the Latvian state as a result of the USSR totalitarian communist occupation regime

10:50 – 12:10

Expert discussion

Moderator: **Dr Ieva Bērziņa**, Senior Researcher at Centre for Security and Strategic Research Mission Statement of the Latvian National Defence Academy, Associate Professor at the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

Experts:

Olena Tregub, the International Center for Ukrainian Victory, Secretary General of the Independent Anti-Corruption Commission – NAKO

Mārcis Balodis, Researcher at the Centre for East European Policy Studies

Dr.sc.comm. Klinta Ločmele, Lecturer in Media Literacy, Researcher at Advanced Social and Political Research Institute of the University of Latvia

Dr. hist. Gatis Krūmiņš, Senior Researcher and Associate Professor at the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

Ramona Staveckaitė-Notari, Head of Division of Historical Research Programs at the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania

12:10 – 13:10

Break (coffee & snacks)

13:10 – 13:40

Imagined community: memory, identity and story, Dr Neville Bolt, King's College London, Director of the King's Centre for Strategic Communications²

Annotation: "Imagined community" is Benedict Anderson's definition of nation (1983). But imagined is not the same thing as false or fictionalized, it is rather the unselfconscious exercise of abstract thought. Today, this concept has been reborn in its relevance. The meaning of memory, identity and story has not disappeared and has transformed into a new reality.

13:40 – 15:00

Expert discussion

Moderator: **Nika Aleksejeva**, Lead Researcher for the Baltics at the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab

Experts:

Dr Neville Bolt, King's College London, Director of the King's Centre for Strategic Communications

Jānis Karlsbergs, Policy and Publication Manager at the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence

Agnieszka Legucka, Analyst on Russia in Eastern Europe Programme at the Polish Institute of International Affairs

Raimonda Miglinaite, Information and Communication Officer - Disinformation Expertise, East Stratcom Task Force, European External Action Service

15:00 – 15:20

With a view to the future (key insights and ideas on how to weaken the impact of disinformation on society in the future, raise up public awareness of history)

Sandra Kalniete, Member of the European Parliament, Rapporteur of the Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE 2)

Conference's languages: Latvian / English / Russian. The conference will be live streamed

² King's College London, Director of the King's Centre for Strategic Communications