

FACTS FIRST: THE EUROPEAN APPROACH TO FAKE HISTORY. CASE STUDY – EU VS. DISINFO AND WWII MEMORIES

Mihaela TEODOR*
Bogdan TEODOR*

Abstract:

The European Union's concern about the use of propaganda, disinformation and fake history increased in the last period and the European Institutions has sought new strategies to counter these phenomena, including by fact-checking and fact promoting. Thus, the European approach suggests that fact-checking, debunking and deconstructing disinformation and fake history should constitute the core of countering all information influence activities. The simple premise of this "facts first approach" is that disinformation should be countered by ensuring that citizens have access to facts. In this paper, by using the special website of EU East Task Force, EU vs. Disinfo, we aim to build the map of the disinformation cases about WWII and Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact that circulated on the Russian or pro-Russian media between 2019 and 2021, and were deconstructed by the EU vs. Disinfo fact-checkers. By doing that we want to straight the role of euvdisinfo.eu website in the fight against disinformation and fake history, and the importance of the European facts first approach.

Keywords: *Russian historical revisionism, fact-checking, fake history, EU vs. Disinfo, facts first approach.*

Introduction

The European Union's concerns about the use of disinformation and propaganda, especially by state actors, are increased. That is why the EU provided in the past seven years new strategies to combat and

* Senior Researcher PhD, "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: teodor.mihaela@animv.eu

* Associate Professor PhD, "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: teodor.bogdan@animv.eu

counter *fake news, fake history and disinformation*, including by fact-checking and fact promoting. This is called facts first approach, which simple premise is that disinformation should be countered by ensuring that citizens have access to facts. (MSB Report, July 2018) In the same way, countering fake history rely on the effort of historians to substantiate facts with *evidences* (documents that prove with some certainty that events actually occurred).

In this research we used the definitions of the terms such as disinformation and fake news, which can be found in the literature and in official European Union documents. According to the report of the “European Commission’s High-Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation”, the term “fake news” is considered “inadequate to describe the complex phenomenon of disinformation, which involves not necessarily fake, but fabricated content and practices going beyond the conventional news” (“A Multi-dimensional Approach to Disinformation”, 30 March 2018). The European experts prefer the word “disinformation” instead and provide the following definition throughout the report: “all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit”. (“A Multi-dimensional Approach to Disinformation”, 30 March 2018)

However, for the purpose of this paper, we will use the working definition of disinformation given by the European Commission in its official document “Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach” (April, 2018): “Disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm.”

Fake history is used in disinformation campaigns promoting false narratives about the European past, misinterpreting, twisting, or omitting important key facts in order to present victims as oppressors and oppressors as victims. This is the case of WWII memories, Europe being witness for the last three years to an unprecedented Russian historical revisionism. In this paper, by using the special website of EU East Task Force, EU vs. Disinfo, we aim to build the map of the disinformation cases about WWII and Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact that

circulated in the Russian or pro-Russian European media, between 2019 and 2021, which were deconstructed by the EU vs. Disinfo fact-checkers. By doing that, we want to straighten the role of euvsdisinfo.eu website in the fight against disinformation and fake history, and highlight the importance of the European *facts first approach*.

What EU has done so far to counter disinformation?

In 2015, the EU addressed *the Russian disinformation campaigns* and submitted the “Action plan on strategic communication”, which was released on 22 June 2015. For the last seven years, based on this strategy, the European institutions called for measures to combat disinformation. As a result, the European Commission has taken more initiatives to protect citizens. Examples include the organization of a public consultation; the launch of a special Eurobarometer public opinion survey; the establishment of a High-Level Expert Group (HLEG); the publishing of a communication on “Tackling online disinformation: a European approach” (April 26, 2018); the organization of a multi-stakeholder conference (13-14 November 2018); the setting-up of a self-regulatory “Code of Practice” (September 2018 and official statement in 2019); the publishing of an “Action Plan to step up efforts to counter disinformation” in Europe and beyond (December 5, 2018), and a report on European Elections and Action Plan (2019); the redefining of the EU approach to countering hybrid threats (including propaganda and disinformation) in the new Security Union Strategy (2020); the publication of the “Joint Covid-19 Disinformation Communication” (“Tackling COVID-19 disinformation - Getting the facts right”, June 2020); the establishing of the “European Democracy Action Plan: making EU democracies stronger” (December 2020). All these actions are represented in the following timeline:



Figure 1: EU key-actions timeline to counter disinformation (Authors' idea)

The results of the Eurobarometer, the “Report of the High-Level Expert Group”, together with the results of the public consultation feed into the European strategy on how to tackle the disinformation presented on 26 April as “European Commission Communication. Tackling online disinformation: a European approach”(April Communication, 2018). It outlined the key principles and objectives in order “to raise public awareness about disinformation and tackle the phenomenon effectively, as well as the specific measures”, including the “support for an independent network of fact-checkers”. (April Communication, 2018)

Moreover, the *Action Plan* (December 2018) highlighted that fact-checkers were essential in tackling disinformation. In order “to strengthen fact checking, collective knowledge, and monitoring capacity on disinformation, the Commission committed, as a first step, to support the creation of an independent European network of fact-checkers” (*Action Plan*, December 2018). In this respect, in line with the *European Council conclusions* of March 2015, “a start-up team was established within the European External Actions Service (EEAS), with contributions from EU institutions and experts from EU Member

States”. This team is known as “EU East StratCom Task Force” (ESTF), and reached full capacity by September 1, 2015 (See more on <https://eeas.europa.eu>). According to the official ESTF website, the new task force was focused on “proactive communication of EU policies and activities in the Eastern neighbourhood and beyond”, and “better explaining EU policies in the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine)” (<https://eeas.europa.eu>). Moreover, the Task Force identified and helped journalists “to identify and compile what it believes to be false or fake news and to alert media outlets, Internet users, and the public of such disinformation” (<https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>). Two reports are published weekly: the “Disinformation Review” with the role to collect “examples of pro-Russian disinformation all around Europe and expose the breadth of the effort, including the countries and languages targeted”; and the “Disinformation Digest”, which analyses how “Russian media sees the world and follows key trends on Russian social media.” (“Questions and answers about the East StratCom Task Force”, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>). The EU institutions and EU member states provide the unit members, which “report on and analyse disinformation trends, explains and exposes disinformation narratives, and raises awareness of disinformation coming from Russian State, Russian sources and spread in the Eastern neighbourhood media space.” (See more on “Questions and answers about the East StratCom Task Force”, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>)

The *Action Plan* (December 2018), re-endorsed ESTF’s mandate from 2015 and recognised that ESTF has catalogued, analysed and put the spotlight on over “4,500 examples of disinformation by the Russian Federation”. Now there are sixteen full-time staff having a diverse professional communications backgrounds and speaking several languages, including Russian (“The EU steps up action against disinformation”, 5 December 2018). Moreover the *Action Plan* (December 2018) promoted “cooperation between European fact-checkers, and supported the creation of an *editorially European independent network*”, by offering online tools to enable their collaboration. In 2018, there were 52 fact-checkers in Europe, but this number had not sufficient geographical coverage (Stencel and Griffin,

2018).¹ Moreover, the Commission deployed “a secure European online platform on disinformation, which offered cross-border data collection, analysis tools and access to EU-wide data, in support of cooperation between the fact-checking community and academics working on the problem of online disinformation.” (*Action Plan*, December 2018)

The “Synopsis report of public consultation on fake news and online disinformation” (26 April 2018), states that “fact-checking through independent news organisations and civil society organisations is considered a method that better contributes to counter the spread of disinformation online.” Thus, the European experts consider that presenting facts is a crucial technique for countering false information. However countering lies with facts can be problematic. It can be expensive, time-consuming, and may not reach the most vulnerable audiences. Furthermore, engaging with falsehoods can reinforce those stories through repetition; even if it should seek to create opportunities for reflection and debate as the activity of *euvdisinfo.eu* website demonstrate.

Disinformation cases about WWII and Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

According to the Kremlin’s policy, the official Russian historiography is the only “true” way of interpreting the historical events about WWII. No documentary evidence is provided to support the affirmation and no dates are given to allow even the most superficial background check. Disinformation projects often defend the actions of the Russian Federation, directly or through selective agenda. Moreover, as Lucas and Pomerantsev (2016), state: “Kremlin propaganda also rebuts and deflects any criticism of Russia’s own behaviour. All negative commentary about Russia is portrayed as either invented or unfair.”

In this respect, we identified on the *Eu vs. Disinfo* website 65 disinformation cases about the WWII and Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

¹ Some European countries as Hungary, Slovenia, the Netherlands, Malta, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Cyprus, Estonia, and Greece are not represented in the current state of play – nor have the capacity to keep abreast of the increasing volumes of online news content.

provided by the Russian or pro-Russian propaganda machine from 2019 to 2021 (See the Annex).

The following figure represents the distribution of the cases by year:

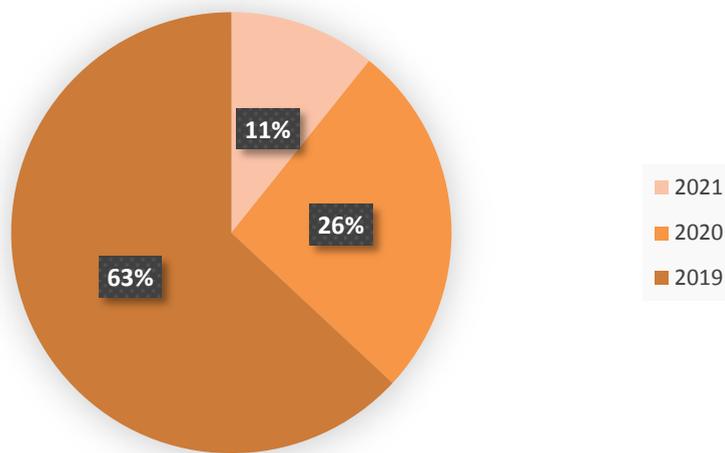


Figure 2: The distribution of disinformation cases about WWII and Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact by year (authors' idea)

Experts state that the Russian disinformation outlets are not the same in every country, the communication strategies usually being tailored specifically for the domestic audience, “embracing the digital age, exploiting the anonymity, ambiguity, ubiquity and flexibility of the Internet, in particular social media.” (Lucas and Pomerantsev, 2016) It is the case of the Eastern Europe and Black Sea region countries facing the Russian disinformation activities, “disseminated both overtly – though foreign-language television (notably the multilingual RT) and the self-styled news agency Sputnik International – and covertly, using notionally independent journalists, experts and commentators as well as Internet trolls (paid propagandists).” (Lucas and Pomerantsev, 2016)

Moreover, disinformation and manipulation are spread abroad through their own official channels (i.e. RT or Sputnik), which are operational in several European languages, as we will see on the case

study proposed. From 65 cases, 34 were identified by Eu vs Disinfo staff on 12 different version of Sputnik, besides official Sputnik: Sputnik Mundo, Sputnik Deutsch, Sputnik Polska, Sputnik Serbia, Sputnik Estonia, Sputnik Armenia, Sputnik Lithuania and Lithuania Russian, Sputnik Italia, Sputnik Spanish, Sputnik Greece, Sputnik Georgia. Alternative outlets usually justify and legitimize the Kremlin's actions and narratives.

Analysing those 65 identified cases, we can state that Russian disinformation campaign and fake history narratives usually deal with a number of common topics, distributed by category in the following figure:

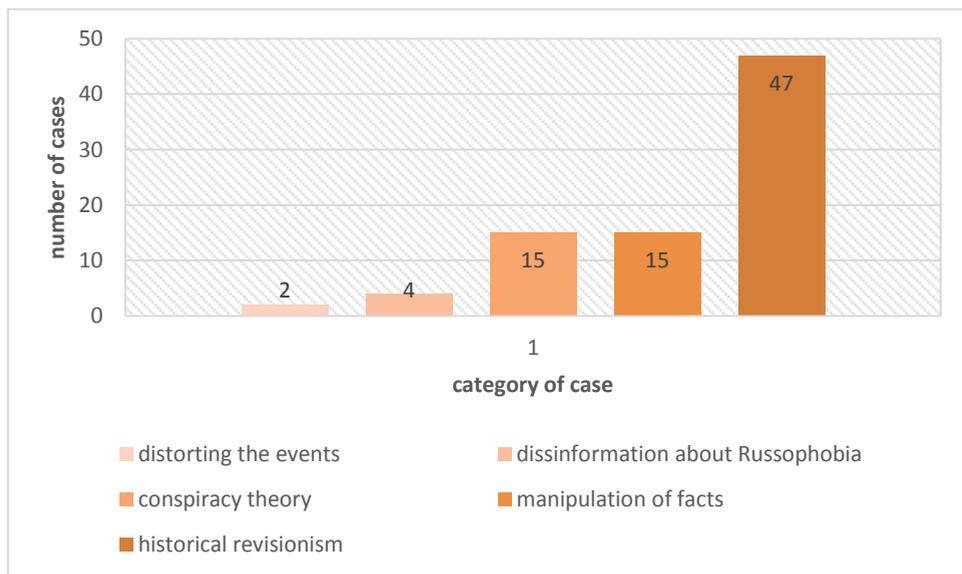


Figure 3: The distribution of disinformation cases about WWII and Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact by category (Authors' idea based on categories identified on <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>)

- a. Promote the legitimacy of the policy for historical revisionism and deny the USSR's responsibility in the outbreak of WWII;
- b. Manipulation of facts and propaganda narrative about the supposedly hostile anti-Russian intentions and policies of the aggressive West;

- c. Pro-Kremlin conspiracy narrative about WWII and the Munich Agreement;
- d. Disinformation narratives about Russophobia;
- e. Distortion of the events which led up to the Second World War;

The starting point of the Russian fake history campaign was the 80th “anniversary”² from the day of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (23 August 1939) and Poland’s decision not to invite the Russian delegation to WWII commemoration ceremony³. On that day, in contrast, Russian propaganda stressed that in 2019 is the *80th anniversary* of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. That is why, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania released a joint statement on the *80th commemoration* of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, urging “the governments of all European countries to provide both moral and material support to the ongoing historical investigation of the totalitarian regimes. By acting in a concerted manner, we can counter

² Commemoration vs anniversary: Ten years ago, the European Parliament proclaimed the 23rd of August as a European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes. 23 August was chosen to coincide with the date of the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, a 1939 non-aggression pact between the USSR and Nazi Germany which contained a protocol dividing Romania, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland into designated German and Soviet spheres of influence. The European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism, known as Black Ribbon Day in some countries, is an International Day of Remembrance for victims of totalitarian regimes, specifically Stalinism, Communism, Nazism and Fascism. It is observed on 23 August and symbolizes the rejection of “extremism, intolerance and oppression”. It was designated by the European Parliament in 2008/2009 as “a Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, to be commemorated with dignity and impartiality”, and has been observed annually by the bodies of the European Union since 2009. The purpose of the Day of Remembrance is to preserve the memory of the victims of mass deportations and exterminations, while promoting democratic values with the aim to reinforce peace and stability in Europe. See more on <http://europeanmemories.net/events/european-day-of-remembrance-for-victims-of-stalinism-and-nazism/>.

³ In 2019, Poland decided not to invite the Russia to WWII commemoration ceremony, having to do with Russian aggression against Ukraine, being accused of promoting an “open policy of Russophobia”. (<https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>)

more effectively disinformation campaigns and attempts to manipulate historical facts.” (Joint Statement, 23 August 2019)

In 2019, Russia started the disinformation campaign using the distortion of the events which lead up to the Second World War and the historical revisionism to reinforce common pro-Kremlin disinformation narratives about WWII and the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact like:

“The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact played no role in unleashing World War II” (see the annex) and **“USSR is not to blame for the beginning of World War II”**. The Russian propaganda stressed that “the accusations against the Soviet Union and Josef Stalin about the beginning of World War II are nonsense and pursue a purely pragmatic goal”. Moreover the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact “cannot be considered a military conspiracy between two dictators.” (<https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>) Even more, for the Soviet and then Russian propaganda the WWII began on 22 June 1941, when Germany attacked the URSS and not on 1 September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland.

In this case the EU facts first approach is more than obvious. Eu vs. Disinfo experts choose to take act and promote the historical facts about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The agreement between Russia and Germany contained the Secret Supplementary Protocol⁴, which assumed the invasion and the division of Poland and other Eastern European countries between the two military powers. Thus, the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact led to German and Soviet military aggression against Poland in September 1939, which marked the beginning of the WWII. The Soviet Union attacked Poland on September 17, forcing the Polish army to fight on two fronts. Poland was divided according to the agreements of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. The USSR later attacked Finland and annexed the Baltic States and parts of Romanian territory, all as agreed in the pact with Nazi Germany.

⁴ The secret protocol was about the delimitation of areas of mutual interest in Eastern Europe. In particular, Hitler and Stalin agreed to divide Poland. The agreement also indicated that the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, as well as Bessarabia and Finland, also belonged to the respective areas of interest of Germany and the USSR.

The myth of liberation. Soviet propaganda and now the Russian propaganda present Stalin as a liberator. According to Eu vs Disinfo specialists, “this case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Soviet aggression towards Poland, Finland, Baltic States and Romania”. (<https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>) The facts presented are: Germany and the USSR invaded and divided Poland according to the agreements of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. USSR later attacked Finland. The Treaty enabled the Soviet Union to invade and annex the Baltic States. The Soviets also annexed Romania’s provinces of Bessarabia (today’s Moldova) and Herța in the northern Bukovina (now in Ukraine) and the Czechoslovak territory of Carpathian Ruthenia (now also part of Ukraine). While the Red Army’s contribution to the liberation of Poland is a fact, the results of the territory occupation are intentionally omitted. The Red Army’s presence in Poland and in other Eastern Europe countries resulted in a setup of repressive communist regimes by the Soviet Union.

“The USSR tried to prevent the start of WWII, but Europe abandoned the anti-Hitler coalition”. This is a typical case of manipulation of facts and propaganda narrative about the supposedly hostile anti-Russian intentions and policies of the aggressive West. The Russian propaganda state that the “Soviet side had to sign Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, which was a forced measure” when Great Britain, France, Poland and the USSR could not find a compromise to create a coalition. The fact is that during the so-called Moscow Negotiations, which began in May and lasted until August 1939, Poland categorically refused to let the Red Army on its territory, fearing Soviet occupation. But, the USSR also started negotiations with Germany in parallel and on August 23, 1939, signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (<https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>)

“USSR was a victim of the Nazi and Polish aggression”. According to Soviet propaganda, “Poland was among those who initiated World War II. When Hitler came to power, the leader of Poland Pilsudski asked for an alliance with the Germans to march on Red

Square” (<https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>). Thus, USSR signed the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact with Nazi Germany due to Poland’s aggressive foreign policy. Historical documents released by Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs showed that the Soviet Union decided to sign the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact with Nazi Germany for two reasons: 1) the aggressive foreign policy of Poland, which prevented a Soviet alliance with France and the United Kingdom, and 2) fears of an eventual Polish-German military alliance that would pose a really serious threat to the USSR. However, no evidence is provided to support the affirmation, it may be considered as part of the Russian efforts of historical revisionism, in order to portray Russia’s role in World War II as a non-aggressive power and Poland as one of the main culprits of the conflict. Eu vs. Disinfo presents the fact: “It is true that several European powers, including Poland, signed non-aggression treaties with Germany in the 30s, but none of these treaties was as far-reaching as the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, clearly dividing independent countries in Europe, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and Romania, into *spheres of interests*”. (<https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>)

Conclusions

State-sponsored disinformation has become an important tool of hybrid warfare weakening the European Union institutional framework and the democratic values, undermining the security architecture of Europe and spreading uncertainty. Experts state that “given its cross-border dimension, the adverse effects of disinformation in the European Union require a coordinated and long-term approach to respond to the challenge at both regional and national level.”(MSB Report, July 2018)

According to EU official documents, the first and most important step is to recognise and expose Russian disinformation and propaganda activities by: “fact-checking through independent news organisations and civil society organisations – which is considered the method that better contributes to counter the spread of disinformation online; mapping and networking together independent fact-checking organisations in Europe and especially in the Black Sea Area, in order to advocate for a Black Sea fact-checking community; strengthening the

creation of an independent European network of fact-checkers to establish common working methods, exchange best practices and achieve the broadest possible coverage across the EU.” (*Action Plan*, December 2018) Although the use of disinformation by state or non-state actors, especially by Russia, it is not quite new, the “EU contends that, since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its subsequent role in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, the Kremlin has accelerated its efforts to distort information being received throughout Europe.” (*Action Plan*, December 2018)

Fake history is used in such disinformation campaigns promoting false narratives about the European past, misinterpreting, twisting, or omitting important key facts in order to present victims as oppressors and oppressors as victims. This is the WWII memories case, Europe being witness for the last two years to an unprecedented Russian historical revisionism. The means used for promoting fake history are multiple: “the Russian government has upgraded its international television news channel (RT), established a new global news agency (Sputnik), and reportedly targeted hundreds of European news outlets in an attempt to spread its disinformation” (Lucas and Pomerantsev, 2016).

In this paper, we highlight the Russian disinformation and propaganda cases about WWI and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, all messages being part of the Kremlin’s policy of historical revisionism and an attempt to portray Russia’s role in World War II as non-aggressive. The EU *facts-first approach* is based on the idea that disinformation should be countered by ensuring that citizens have access to facts. Thus, the European approach suggests that fact-checking, debunking and deconstructing disinformation and fake history should constitute the core of countering disinformation and propaganda.

Annex

Disinformation cases about WWII and Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

(Source: https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/?text=&disinfo_issue=&date)

Case no.	Publication date	Disinformation	Source	Disproof
1.	06.07.2021	Europe insists on historical revisionism about World War II	sputniknews.gr	Recurring pro-Kremlin disinformation narrative distorting the events leading up to the Second World War and accusing the West of historical revisionism.
2.	27.06.2021	The West wants to rewrite World War II history	sputniknews.gr	The Kremlin's campaign for historical revisionism on WWII in order to boost its legitimacy and deny the USSR's responsibility in the outbreak of WWII.
3.	22.06.2021	European Union is spreading anti-Soviet myths about the beginning of World War II	baltnews.lt	The claim advances a recurring pro-Kremlin disinformation narrative distorting the events leading up to the Second World War, and accusing the West of historical revisionism.
4.	22.06.2021	Lithuania revises history since it interrupted the restoration of Soviet war monuments	sputniknews.lt, lt.sputniknews.ru	Recurring pro-Kremlin disinformation narrative distorting the events . Recurring disinformation about historical revisionism in Lithuania.
5.	22.06.2021	Myths, new interpretations, and fables about WWII are regularly composed in the West	ru.armenia sputnik.am, uz.sputniknews.ru, sputnik.by, lv.sputniknews.ru	The claim about the Western myths and fables about World War II is part of the Kremlin's campaign on historical revisionism of WWII .

6.	12.02.2021	The West has radically revised and rewritten WW2 history	eadaily.com	This message is part of the Kremlin's campaign on historical revisionism of WWII and is also consistent with recurring pro-Kremlin propaganda narrative about anti-Russian policies of the aggressive West.
7.	08.02.2021	Russia doesn't move outside the framework of international laws	akhbarak.net, alshbaka.net, RT Arabic, elbayan-news.com, eshraag.com, essahra.net, kachaf.com, kol-masr.com, lampress.net, msdernet.xyz, nabd.com, nafeza2world.com, newsformy.com, raialyoum.com, Sahafaty	The Kremlin's campaign on historical revisionism of WWII and is also consistent with recurring pro-Kremlin propaganda narrative about anti-Russian policies of the aggressive West.
8.	21.11.2020	The myth that victory in the WWII is the merit of the US	Sputnik Georgia	Recurrent pro-Kremlin disinformation on World War II and historical revisionism , accusing the West of rewriting history and trying to deprive Russia of its glorious victory over Nazi Germany.
9.	02.11.2020	Lithuania is fighting against the monuments of the Soviet army and re-writing history of WWII	Sputnik Lithuania, Sputnik Lithuania - Russian	This message is part of the Kremlin's policy and campaign for historical revisionism.

10.	24.09.2020	The aim of the Konev ⁵ Monument removal is to humiliate Russia and damage its prestige ⁶	Ritm Evrazii	It is also consistent with common pro-Kremlin disinformation narratives about Russophobia and the supposedly hostile anti-Russian intentions of the West, based on which Russia can cast itself as the victim.
11.	18.09.2020	In September 1939 the USSR did not attack Poland, but carried out the liberation campaign of the Red Army	regnum.ru	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative about Russophobia and a clear case of historical revisionism about WWII .
12.	04.09.2020	The Munich agreement started World War II	politnavigator.net	This is a pro-Kremlin conspiracy narrative about WWII and the Munich Agreement.
13.	03.09.2020	Accusing USSR of WWII outbreak, Poland distracts attention from its pre-war "miscalculations"	Sputnik Poland	This message is part of the Kremlin's policy/campaign for historical revisionism and an attempt to erode the disastrous historical role of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and to reject the historical fact of the Soviet attack at Poland in September 1939 .

⁵ Marshall Konev led the Red Army forces that liberated Prague and large parts of Czechoslovakia from the Nazi occupation in 1945. His monument, unveiled in the Prague 6 district in 1980 when the country was occupied by Soviet troops, has been a source of controversy.

⁶ A worker covered the statue of a Soviet World War II commander Marshall Ivan Stepanovic Konev after its removal from its site in Prague on April 3, 2020. See more on *Russia Aims to Prosecute Destruction of War Monuments Abroad*, Associated Press, Moscow, April 8, 2020, accessible on <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2020-04-08/russia-aims-to-prosecute-destruction-of-war-monuments-abroad>

14.	01.09.2020	Europe is to blame for the outbreak of World War II	Pervyi kanal	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative and a clear case of historical revisionism about WWII .
15.	01.09.2020	Poland euphorically re-writes the history of WWII, spreading Russophobia	Sputnik Poland	The Kremlin's policy of historical revisionism – it accuses Poland of the “falsification and re-writing” of WWII history. It is also consistent with common pro-Kremlin disinformation narratives about Russophobia
16.	23.06.2020	The Munich Agreement began World War II	News Front - Russian, ria.ru	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about the WWII and the Munich Agreement.
17.	19.06.2020	USSR did its utmost to create anti-Hitler coalition, the West left it to deal with Nazi Germany alone	Sputnik Italia	Recurring pro-Kremlin disinformation narrative distorting the events leading up to the Second World War
18.	19.06.2020	The Munich Agreement triggered World War II	Sputnik Italia	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about the WWII and the Munich Agreement.
19.	13.05.2020	Poland reached mutual Agreement with Nazi Germany and participated in the partition of Czechoslovakia after the Munich Pact	Sputnik Italia	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about the WWII and the Munich Agreement.

20.	08.05.2020	Western media try to minimize Soviet victory in WWII	Ahí les Va - YouTube	This is a pro-Kremlin conspiracy narrative about WWII and the West intentions.
21.	29.02.2020	Europe justifies the Munich Agreement with Hitler	Rossia 24 - YouTube	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about the WWII and the Munich Agreement.
22.	06.02.2020	Poland is largely responsible for WWII	Spuntik Polska	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Soviet aggression towards Poland.
23.	28.01.2020	Calling German-Soviet non-aggression pact as Ribbentrop-Molotov pact is re-writing history	Sputnik Polska	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about the WWII and the Munich Agreement.
24.	14.01.2020	Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was a direct result of British, French and Polish politics	Sputnik Polska	This is a pro-Kremlin conspiracy narrative about WWII and the West intentions.
25.	01.10.2019	The resolution of the European Parliament shows that Europe has become insolent	Sputnik Srbija	This is a pro-Kremlin conspiracy narrative about WWII and the West intentions.
26.	01.10.2019	The Munich Agreement triggered WWII and the USSR was completely ignored	Sputnik Deutschland	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about the WWII and the Munich Agreement.
27.	09.09.2019	The USSR signed the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact with Nazi Germany due to Poland's	Sputnik Mundo	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about the WWII and the Munich

		aggressive foreign policy		Agreement.
28.	05.09.2019	WWII commemorations in Poland: Non-invitation of Russia is NATO information campaign	Sputnik Deutsch	Conspiracy theory consistent with recurring pro-Kremlin narratives about the West's anti-Russian actions
29.	05.09.2019	The Soviet Union was forced to sign the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact	Sputnik Srbija	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about WWII and Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
30.	01.09.2019	US ordered the start of the World War II to defeat Britain	Tsargrad TV	Conspiracy theory , no evidence given. This is one of the pro-Kremlin disinformation narratives about the WWII
31.	01.09.2019	The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact played no role in unleashing World War II	strana.ua	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Soviet aggression towards Poland.
32.	01.09.2019	USSR was not an aggressor in World War 2, it was forced to sign the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact	riafan.ru	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Soviet aggression towards Poland.
33.	01.09.2019	Poland is responsible for the unleashing of World War II	Voskresnyi vecher s Vladimirom Solovyoyvm @ Rossiya 1	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Soviet aggression towards Poland.
34.	01.09.2019	Poland is the organizer of WWII and its main culprit	Voskresnyi Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyoyvm @ Rossiya 1	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about WWII and Poland's role in the WWII

35.	01.09.2019	Poles killed more than 400,000 Jews during WWII	Voskresnyi Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym @ Rossiya 1	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about WWII and Poland's role in the WWII
36.	01.09.2019	The Soviet Union saved Poland from ruin after WWII	Voskresnyi Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym @ Rossiya 1	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Soviet aggression towards Poland.
37.	30.08.2019	WWII anniversary: The events in Poland are an anti-Russian gathering	Vremya Pokazhet @ Pervyi Kanal	Conspiracy theory consistent with recurring pro-Kremlin narratives about the West's anti-Russian actions
38.	26.08.2019	Russia was not invited to events commemorating WWII because of anti-Russian politics	Russian RT	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative about Russophobia and a clear case of historical revisionism about WWII .
39.	23.08.2019	Polish nationalists are trying to refute evidence on Poland's role in unleashing the Second World War	South Front	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Soviet aggression towards Poland.
40.	23.08.2019	The Baltic States benefited from the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact	60 Minut @ Rossiya 1	This claim uses historical revisionism to reinforce common pro-Kremlin disinformation narratives about WWII and the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.
41.	23.08.2019	If Poland realized a rational policy in 1939, Moscow would have had a different approach towards it	Sputnik Polska	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Soviet aggression towards Poland.
42.	22.08.2019	Signing of the Molotov-	Sputnik Polska	This case represents a manipulation of

		Ribbentrop Pact thwarted the UK's expansionist plans in Europe		historical facts to downplay and justify Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
43.	20.08.2019	Soviet Union was forced to sign the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact	RIA Novosti	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
44.	13.08.2019	The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is being demonized by the European countries	Baltnews	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
45.	13.08.2019	USSR was forced and reluctant to sign Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact	Baltnews.ee	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
46.	11.08.2019	The Munich conspiracy of European powers launched the WWII	Baltnews	This is a pro-Kremlin conspiracy narrative about the WWII
47.	11.08.2019	The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact did not trigger World War II. Russia was threatened by Germany	Baltnews	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about WWII and Poland's role in the WWII.
48.	01.08.2019	Poland re-writes the history of the Warsaw Uprising accusing the USSR of its failure	Sputnik Polska	This is a conspiracy theory about the WWII
49.	26.07.2019	Poland did not invite Putin to the WWII commemoration ceremony to disrupt Belarus-Russia relations	Grani Formata @ Sputnik Belarus	Conspiracy theory consistent with recurring pro-Kremlin narratives about the West's anti-Russian actions and attempts to discredit and disrupt Belarus-Russia relations

50.	24.07.2019	Due to the alleged aggression in Crimea, Russia was not invited to the anniversary of the beginning of World War II	Sputnik Serbia	Conspiracy theory consistent with recurring pro-Kremlin narratives about the West's anti-Russian actions
51.	23.07.2019	Poland wanted to ally with Germany and attack the USSR	Sputnik Estonia	This is a conspiracy theory about the WWII and manipulation of facts.
52.	23.07.2019	The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact did not violate the rights of the Polish state	Sputnik Polska	This message is part of the Kremlin's policy of historical revisionism and an attempt to portray Russia's role in the World War II as not aggressive.
53.	22.07.2019	Stalin decided to establish the independent Polish state	Sputnik Polska	This message is part of Russian historical revisionism and part of a disinformation campaign portraying Russia as the peace-maker and liberator.
54.	17.07.2019	The USSR tried to prevent the start of WWII, but Europe abandoned the anti-Hitler coalition	Rg.ru	This message is part of Russian historical revisionism and part of a disinformation campaign portraying Russia as the peace-maker and liberator.
55.	15.07.2019	The Baltic States are perpetuating the myth of the Soviet occupation	Rubaltic.ru	This message is part of Russian historical revisionism and part of a disinformation campaign portraying Russia as the peace-maker and liberator.
56.	05.07.2019	Poland wants Belarus to return the property of Second Polish Republic	Imhoclub.by, Sozh.info, BelVPO	This is a conspiracy theory about the Polish political intentions.

57.	04.07.2019	USSR is not to blame for the beginning of World War II	Pravda.ru	This message is part of Russian historical revisionism and part of a disinformation campaign portraying Russia as the peace-maker and liberator.
58.	04.07.2019	USSR was not going to divide Poland	Sputnik Armenia	This is a pro-Kremlin narrative which is itself a clear case of historical revisionism about WWII.
59.	16.06.2019	It is thanks to Russia that Poland today exists as a country	Tolstoy @ Pervyi Kanal	A distorted, unfounded comparison between NATO and Russia as "guaranteeing security" of Poland
60.	13.06.2019	Russia signed Molotov-Ribbentrop pact because it was threatened by Germany. Today Russia is threatened by Poland.	Vremya Pokhazet @ Pervyi kanal	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.
61.	13.06.2019	Russia has given Poland its independence	Vremya Pokhazhet @ Pervyi Kanal	Manipulation of historical facts to downplay and justify Soviet aggression towards Poland.
62.	06.06.2019	The Russian delegation was not invited to the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II because of the Russian ban on the imports of Polish apples	Teleskop, http://teleskop-by.org/	This is a conspiracy consistent with recurring pro-Kremlin narrative about the West's anti-Russian actions.
63.	21.05.2019	Russia opposes any attempts to "destroy the post-	Vremya @ Pervyi kanal	This case represents a manipulation of historical facts to

		WWII security architecture"		downplay and justify Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.
64.	21.05.2019	Only thanks to Stalin did Poland receive the German Danzig (Gdansk)	Sputnik Armenia	This message is part of Russian historical revisionism and part of a disinformation campaign portraying Russia as the peace-maker and liberator.
65.	09.05.2019	Western powers try to keep Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in the dark	Sputnik Spanish	Conspiracy theory consistent with recurring pro-Kremlin narratives about the West's anti-Russian actions

References:

1. *A Multi-dimensional Approach to Disinformation. Final Report of the High-Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation*. European Commission. (30 March 2018). Available online on <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>

2. *April Communication of European Commission. Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach*, Brussels, 26.4.2018 COM (2018) 236 final. Available online on <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20180926RES14426/20180926RES14426.pdf>

3. Bayer, Judit, Bitiukova, Natalija, Bárd, Petra, Szakács, Judit, Alemanno, Alberto, Uszkiewicz, Erik, (February 2019). *Disinformation and propaganda – impact on the functioning of the rule of law in the EU and its Member States*, Directorate General for Internal Policies of the Union. Available online on <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/supporting-analyses-search.html>

4. European Parliament, *Understanding propaganda and disinformation*, November 2015.

5. European Parliament Resolution of 23 November 2016, *EU strategic communication to counteract anti-EU propaganda by third parties*, Strasbourg. Available online on http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0441_EN.pdf

6. *European leaders call for continued and coordinated efforts to counter disinformation threats*, 22/03/2019. Available online on https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/60089/european-leaders-call-continued-and-coordinated-efforts-counter-disinformation-threats_en

7. Funke, Daniel, (2018). *A guide to anti-misinformation actions around the world*, Poynter, July 2. Available online on <https://www.poynter.org/news/guide-anti-misinformation-actions-around-world>

8. Giles, Keir, (March 2016). *Russia's 'New' Tools for Confronting the West. Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power*. Available online on <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/2016-03-russia-new-tools-giles.pdf>

9. Graves, L., Cherubini, F. (2016). *The rise of fact-checking sites in Europe*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, available on-line on <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/The%2520Rise%2520of%2520FactChecking%2520Sites%2520in%2520Europe.pdf>.

10. Jack, Caroline, (2017). *Lexicon of Lies: Terms for Problematic Information*, Data & Society Research Institute. Available online on https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/DataAndSociety_LexiconofLies.pdf

11. *Joint declaration on freedom of expression and "fake news", disinformation and propaganda*, (2017). Available online on <https://www.osce.org/fom/302796>

12. *Joint Statement by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania on the occasion of 80 years since the signing of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact*, 23 August 2019. Available online on <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/joint-statement-by-estonia-latvia-lithuania-poland-and-romania-on-the-occasion-of-80-years-since-the-signing-of-molotov-ribbentrop-pact>

13. Lange-Ionatamišvili, Elīna, (2016). *Resisting Foreign State Propaganda in the New Information Environment: the case of the EU, Russia, and the Eastern Partnership countries*, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. Available online on http://appc.lv/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Propoganda_petijums.pdf

14. Lucas, Edward, Pomerantsev, Peter (2016). *Winning the Information War. Techniques and Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe*, CEPA.

15. Marek Ney-Krwawicz, *The Polish Underground State and The Home Army (1939-45)*. Available online on http://www.polishresistance-ak.org/PR_WWII_texts_En/02_Article_En.pdf

16. Marwick, A., and Lewis, R. (2017). *Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online* [whitepaper]. New York: Data & Society Research

Institute. Available online on https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/DataAndSociety_MediaManipulationAndDisinformationOnline.pdf

17. Milo, Daniel, Klingová, Katarína, (2016). *Countering information war. Lessons learned from NATO and Partners Countries*, GLOBSEC Policy Institute.

18. Oh, Sarah, Adkins, Travis L., (June 2018). *InterAction Disinformation Toolkit*. Available online on <https://www.interaction.org/documents/disinformation-toolkit/>

19. *Questions and answers about the East StratCom task force*. Available online on https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/2116/-questions-and-answers-about-the-east-stratcom-task-force_en

20. Špalková, Veronika, (2018). *Influence of Russian disinformation operations: specific examples in data and numbers*, Kremlin Watch Program.

21. Stencel, Mark, Griffin, Riley, (2018). *Fact-checking triples over four years*, ReportersLab, February 22. Available online on <https://reporterslab.org/fact-checking-triples-over-four-years/?print=true>

22. *The Prague Manual, (2018)*. Kremlin Watch Report. European Values Think-Thank Team, Prague.

23. Wardle, C., Derakhshan, H. (2018). *Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making*, Council of Europe report DGI (2017)09, 2017. Available online on <https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-report-november-2017/1680764666>)

24. *What is fact checking and why is it important?* (18 November 2018). Available online on <https://factcheckni.org/blog/what-is-fact-checking-and-why-is-it-important/> and <https://coinform.eu/what-is-fact-checking-and-why-is-it-important/>

25. *Disinformation cases*. Available online on <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>