



The information battle: How governments in the former Soviet Union promote their agendas & attack their opponents abroad

DATE: Tuesday 21 March 2017

TIME: 18:00 - 19:30

VENUE: Committee Room 9, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Speakers:

- Rt Hon John Whittingdale MP, former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
- Dr Justin Schlosberg, Lecturer in Journalism and Media, Birkbeck, University of London
- Dr David Lewis, Senior Lecturer and Director of Education, University of Exeter
- Adam Hug, Policy Director, Foreign Policy Centre

Chair: Maeve Shearlaw, Commissioning Editor– World Networks, The Guardian

This event will focus on the ways in which governments of former Soviet Union (FSU) countries look to shape international narratives about themselves by using media, social media, advertising and supportive organisations to promote their points of view and exert pressure on those who oppose them. The event will look to build on and broaden the existing literature on Russian-backed internationally focused media outlets and pro-government media elsewhere in the region. It will explore how they operate to shape global narratives about their countries, influence thinking on international disputes, limit criticism of their actions while challenging Western values and behaviour. It will look at similarities and differences between the operation of outlets from the FSU and Western supported global news services.

The event will also examine the ways in which authoritarian regimes work to project their image abroad beyond the use of the media. This includes the use of sponsorship and advertising to shape international perceptions in addition to the way in which regimes create or support their own think tanks, pressure groups, diaspora organisations, parliamentary groups and work with others (such as public affairs agencies) to promote their policy agendas and influence the responses of international institutions and policy makers.

The event may also explore how government backed broadcasters, press and websites from the FSU run stories to attempt to discredit the work of diasporan and other activists challenging official narratives from outside the country. At the direction or encouragement of the authorities this can involve direct harassment, the production of untrue or politically distorted stories that aim to make activists' lives difficult even when abroad (as well as putting pressure on friends and family who remain in the country). The event will explore the growing fight for control of the social media space - with organized pro-government activity becoming increasingly visible both in responding to the actions of opposition and independent civil society and in directly promoting their agenda online. These methods include the use of paid-for trolling and the mobilization of 'patriotic youth movements' to target opponents and spread pro-government narratives to national, diasporan and international audiences.

Please RSVP to events@fpc.org.uk providing your name and affiliation (if you have one).

Free copies of the new publication will be available. The event is free and open to all.

