

HOW GOVERNMENTS IN THE FSU PROMOTE THEIR AGENDAS AND ATTACK THEIR OPPONENTS ABROAD

We contributed to a publication “The information battle: How governments in the former Soviet Union promote their agendas and attack their opponents abroad” which is a part of the [Foreign Policy Centre](#)’s Exporting Repression series supported by [OSF](#).

The information battle examines the ways in which the governments of former Soviet Union (FSU) look to shape international narratives about themselves by using media, social media, advertising and supportive organisations to promote their worldview and challenge the people, institutions, and ideas that oppose them. This publication examines the influence of Russian media content in the former Soviet Union and in the wider world. This is delivered through the impact of Russian domestic TV channels reaching Russian-speaking audiences in the region, the developing role of the news agency Sputnik and the international broadcaster RT. It examines how these outlets are used not only to promote Russian political narratives but to challenge Western approaches and sow confusion about what is going on in the world. It offers ideas for how independent broadcasters and international outlets can provide effective alternatives.

Despite cracking down on Western backed NGOs at home, the governments of the former Soviet Union are seeking to directly influence the European and US political debate through NGOs, think tanks and lobbying organisations. This publication looks at how to improve the transparency and accountability of such actions. Repressive regimes that use advertising and the hosting of international events to promote themselves, are increasingly being challenged by human rights defenders through the publicity such activities bring. The publication argues that, in what is increasingly becoming a battle involving the use of soft power and information, Western institutions have been losing ground and must take action in order to meet the challenge.

Our essay focuses on the popularity of Russian media in the former Soviet Union countries. We point out the differences in the role and reach of the main Russian channels in Armenia, Belarus and Moldova, compared to Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine. The essay concludes that while it is not easy to estimate the real impact of Russian propaganda in these countries, it is clear that the lack of objective reporting, as well as a lack of diverse views among Russian-speaking audiences, poses a real challenge across the region. We believe that if national media enjoyed high levels of trust and popularity in the Eastern Partnership countries, it would serve as a good tool against Russian media propaganda. We criticise the fact that governments in these countries have done very little or nothing to encourage the existence of an independent, vibrant and competitive media landscape, essential for providing a variety of news and views.

The publication can be downloaded [here](#)