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Not Russian to do anything? The EU Response to Strategic Narratives and Disinformation in the Wake of the Russia-Ukraine Crisis

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Abstract

As soft power has become a catch-all term, so the academic theory has progressed to aid precision. This study applies Roselle *et al.*'s theory of strategic narratives to examine why the European Union (EU) has struggled to successfully combat Russian use of strategic narratives and disinformation in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine crisis. It is demonstrated that this policy-making failure is a consequence of three inter-connected factors. First, that the EU did not consider Russian use of strategic narratives a particularly significant problem; second, that due to both internal and external constraints the EU lacked sufficient capacity to produce an effective policy response; and third, that the EU did not prioritise tackling Russian strategic narratives, both in terms of its overall foreign policy priorities and more specifically, with regard to the Russia-Ukraine crisis. This study has important policy implications for how the EU can conduct public diplomacy going forward, both in the Eastern Neighbourhood and more broadly.