

## **Comparative approaches to disinformation: Challenges and prospective policy directions in Bulgaria and Japan**

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**Abstract.** This study offers a comparative analysis of the approaches adopted by Bulgaria and Japan to counter disinformation. It explores both countries' vulnerability to disinformation, identifying specific foreign actors involved in its dissemination, the factors influencing public susceptibility, and the environment that facilitates its spread. The study also investigates the measures implemented by Bulgaria and Japan to combat disinformation, both independently and through international collaboration. Based on the findings, it discusses the challenges, areas for improvement, and lessons that Bulgaria and Japan could learn from each other. Finally, the study suggests specific project proposals that the two countries could implement to further enhance their resilience to disinformation.

**Keywords:** countering disinformation, Bulgarian disinformation countermeasures, Japanese disinformation countermeasures, comparative disinformation approaches

### **1. Introduction**

Disinformation – deliberately false information disseminated to manipulate and confuse individuals, undermine trust in institutions, disrupt elections, and influence policy-making processes – poses a significant threat to both Bulgaria and Japan. Its impact extends across multiple sectors, threatening national security, the economy, education, science, and public health, while also affecting fundamental human rights, such as the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy.

The contemporary information ecosystem offers a variety of opportunities and channels for dissemination of disinformation. These opportunities have been significantly increasing due to the fast development of digital communication technologies, the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI), and the overabundance of information leading to a scarce attention of the publics. In parallel with this, global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic

and the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, have been making people more susceptible to disinformation. To address future threats, comparative studies on best practices, prospective multi-dimensional countermeasures, and collaboration between national and international actors with shared democratic values and prosperous bilateral relations, such as Bulgaria and Japan, are essential.

Starting with an introduction, the study is divided into five sections. Section two provides a brief outline of the concept of disinformation and its characteristics. The following two sections examine the vulnerability of Bulgaria and Japan to disinformation, identifying specific countries responsible for its dissemination, as well as factors influencing people's susceptibility and the environment that facilitates its spread. Furthermore, the sections explore the measures employed by Bulgaria and Japan to tackle disinformation, both autonomously and in collaboration with other countries. Based on the findings, section five discusses the challenges, areas for improvement, and lessons that Bulgaria and Japan could learn from each other. In addition, it suggests specific project proposals that the two countries could implement to further strengthen their resilience to disinformation.

## **2. The concept of disinformation: Definitions and characteristics**

A universally accepted definition of disinformation has yet to be established. Consequently, scholars and professionals around the world have proposed a range of interpretations and descriptions of the concept. For instance, Bennett and Livingston (2018, 124) characterize disinformation as the deliberate dissemination of falsehoods presented in the form of news or documentary-style formats to achieve political objectives. Similarly, Wardle and Derakhshan (2017, 20), along with UNESCO (2018), define it as false information intentionally produced to inflict harm on individuals, social groups, organizations, or countries. The European Commission (2018, 1) describes disinformation as a “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”. In a comparable definition, the European Commission’s High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation (HLEG) (2018, 10) refers to disinformation as inaccurate, false, or misleading information that is deliberately constructed, conveyed, and promoted to cause public harm or to generate profit.

The concept of disinformation should be distinguished from related terms such as misinformation and ‘fake news’. Misinformation refers to false, inaccurate, or misleading content that is disseminated without the intent to deceive or cause harm. The term ‘fake news’ primarily relates to fabricated news and content, and has therefore often been regarded as too vague and insufficient to accurately capture the complexity of disinformation. According to HLEG (2018, 10), the term can be confusing, as it has been co-opted by certain politicians and their supporters to discredit media coverage they find unfavourable, thus becoming a tool for powerful figures to disrupt the flow of information and undermine independent news media.

Disinformation can be disseminated by domestic or foreign actors, including both official entities, such as political parties, intelligence agencies,

and media organizations, as well as unofficial ones, such as non-state actors and individuals. Each of these actors may target different audiences and have varying motivations and purposes – political, economic, social, and psychological – for their actions. Furthermore, actors may spread disinformation through a variety of tactics and tools. One such widely used instrument is social media. Other common methods include both paid and unpaid advertising, the use of media outlets, and bots – automated or semi-automated profiles designed to interact on social media platforms.

### **3. Bulgaria’s vulnerability and approaches to countering disinformation**

#### *3.1. Bulgaria’s vulnerability to disinformation*

As reported in the European Media Literacy Index of 2023, Bulgaria ranks 35th out of 41 countries, making it one of the most susceptible nations in the region to disinformation (Lessenski 2023, 7). The Index is managed by the Open Society Institute – Sofia as part of the European Policies Initiative (EuPI), with the purpose of evaluating the resilience prospects to disinformation in 41 European countries, by “employing media freedom, education and interpersonal trust indicators” (Lessenski, 2022).

Bulgaria’s heightened susceptibility to disinformation can be attributed to a range of factors. For instance, the continuous advancement of digital technologies, coupled with the expanded implementation of 5G networks, has significantly accelerated the dissemination of information. At the same time, Bulgaria’s media literacy level has consistently lagged behind that of other European countries. Moreover, there has been a growing reliance on social media platforms as primary sources of information. Between 2017 and 2021, the proportion of the Bulgarian population preferring social media as a main source of information increased from approximately 30% to over 70% (Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria 2023a, 26).

The majority of disinformation in Bulgaria has been disseminated by Russia. Key contributing factors include the “cultural proximity, historical ties as well as the Kremlin’s deeply entrenched political and economic leverage in the country” (Center for the Study of Democracy 2021a). As indicated in the 2022 Report on the National Security of the Republic of Bulgaria, the country is also one of the most vulnerable NATO members to Russian disinformation (Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria 2023a, 25). Following the European Union’s ban on Russian television in the region, there has been a notable increase in information activities on social media platforms. This includes the Facebook profiles of the Russian Federation Embassy and the Russian Cultural and Information Center in Sofia, as well as the blogs and vlogs of prominent public figures (Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria 2023a, 25).

Russian disinformation in Bulgaria and other European Union countries is centred around several key themes. Notable examples include migration as a threat to security, LGBTQ+ rights as a threat to traditional values, and liberalism and large corporations as threats to societal stability (Valchev 2023, 115). Each of these themes has been systematically amplified through a variety of

messages, news reports, and official statements, aiming to erode public trust in the European Union and the governing elite (Valchev 2023, 115).

According to the *Russian Media Influence in Europe: Disinformation, Hybrid Threats and Democracy* study by the Center for the Study of Democracy (2021b), the volume and scope of the Russian disinformation campaign in the European Union increased significantly between 2016 and 2021. The analysis also identified Bulgaria as the least effective among the European countries examined in countering Russian disinformation.

Various factors contribute to Bulgaria's limited effectiveness in countering Russian disinformation. First, the inability of judicial institutions to effectively combat corruption and the infiltration of foreign interests enables Russia to maintain close ties and exert significant influence over key state institutions (Valchev 2023, 120). Second, widespread pro-Russian sentiments have been observed in Bulgaria, along with considerable Russian influence within the media landscape. Finally, Bulgarian politicians are "reluctant to publicly address the issue and prioritize the fight against Russian disinformation at the state level" (Valchev 2023, 121).

In addition to Russia, China has also been disseminating disinformation in Bulgaria. A notable example of this is China's disinformation campaigns during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other foreign actors spreading disinformation include Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, motivated by their concerns on "the negative image of their countries in the Western societies" (Valchev 2023, 115).

### 3.2. Bulgaria's measures to address disinformation

Although Bulgaria has not yet developed a dedicated strategic document outlining specific measures and objectives for countering disinformation, the country has undertaken several notable initiatives in recent years to address this challenge. For instance, Bulgaria has launched several initiatives aimed at enhancing digital and media literacy skills across all age groups. One such initiative is the innovative educational programme initiated by the non-governmental organization Partners Bulgaria Foundation, in collaboration with PartnersGlobal and four municipalities in the Northwest and Southwest regions of the country (Partners Bulgaria Foundation 2023). The goals of the programme have been to "build youth resiliency to disinformation and misinformation" and to "engage youth in civic initiatives addressing security risks as a result of disinformation and misinformation and strengthen their media literacy" through the development of educational materials and curricula, teacher manuals, specialized workshops, and "youth led initiatives to conduct campaigns countering disinformation" (Partners Bulgaria Foundation 2023).

Another related initiative is the *Science and Journalism: Together against Infodemic* project, launched by the Association of European Journalists – Bulgaria (AEJ). The project brings together journalists, experts, educators, and scientists to "improve media literacy and fact-checking" and to "strengthen democratic discourse by exposing false information and educating the public" (EEA and Norway Grants 2024). In addition to a variety of activities, such as the development of a training module for scholars and journalists, the project

included the establishment of a fact-checking platform – *factcheck.bg* – where commonly circulating disinformation is identified, reviewed, and explained.

The Bulgarian government has also been implementing several measures to counter disinformation. One notable example is the Bulgarian Coalition for Countering Disinformation. This initiative involves collaboration among representatives of the European Commission, Bulgarian authorities, media outlets, fact-checkers, and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of identifying disinformation and sharing best practices (Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria 2023a, 27).

Bulgaria has been cooperating with international partners to strengthen its strategic communication as an instrument for addressing disinformation. One such partner is the United Kingdom, whose Government Communication Service International (GCSI) collaborates with various governments worldwide to develop communication expertise (Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria 2023b). Since 2018, GCSI has been conducting training sessions with the Bulgarian government focused on countering disinformation and enhancing strategic communication. With its support, a new Department for Strategic Communications has also been established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, the Ministry of Defense and the State Agency for National Security (SANS) are in the process of setting up strategic communication units (Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria 2023b).

In parallel with these efforts, Bulgaria has undertaken various initiatives to counter disinformation as a member of the European Union. For instance, it has been implementing the European Union’s Digital Services Act (DSA). This regulation governs online intermediaries and platforms to “prevent illegal and harmful activities online and the spread of disinformation” (European Commission 2022). According to the Center for the Study of Democracy (2023), the DSA has “catalyzed meaningful changes in Bulgaria’s legal framework and institutional infrastructure, improving user protection and enforcing platform accountability in the process”.

Bulgaria also participates in the Bulgarian-Romanian Observatory of Digital Media (BROD), which operates under the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). BROD’s goal is to “foster regional and EU-wide collaboration on vital issues and policies affecting the informational environment” (BROD n.d.). As part of its efforts, in 2023, it launched a new website in Bulgarian, Romanian, and English, providing fact-checking and media literacy resources.

#### **4. Japan’s vulnerability and approaches to countering disinformation**

##### *4.1. Japan’s vulnerability to disinformation*

In comparison with Bulgaria, Japan has been “relatively immune to disinformation, due to the relatively low use of social networking services (SNSs) and the high level of trust in traditional media” (Ichihara 2022, 36). In addition, the foreign media presence in Japan has been considerably small. The reason for this has been the dominance of five Japanese media conglomerates: “NTV – the Yomiuri Shimbun, TV Asahi – Asahi Shimbun, TBS – Mainichi Shimbun,

Fuji TV – Sankei Shimbun, and TV Tokyo – Nikkei Shimbun – along with NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)” (Kuwahara 2021, 5). Following this, there has not been much space for foreign interference in the Japanese information sphere.

Despite these facts, awareness of disinformation and its harms has been gradually increasing in Japan. Disinformation cases have also been growing, especially at times of global crises, natural disasters, and elections.

In Japan, the spread of disinformation via social media has been particularly high. According to a survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2023, 24), as of 2021, about 30% of the Japanese citizens have been exposed to disinformation at least once a week. In addition, more than 50% of them have listed social media as a primary source for experiencing disinformation attacks (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2023, 24). Next on the list of sources are television and news distribution via portal sites and social media.

The distribution of illegal and harmful information, especially via social media, has been continuously growing in Japan. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2023, 23), in 2022, the “human rights bodies of the Ministry of Justice started remedial procedures on 1,721 cases of information-related human rights violations on the Internet and completed the handling of 1,600 cases of human rights violations, with the numbers of both continuing to remain high”.

There are various examples of actors and their disinformation campaigns in Japan. China is a case in point. It has been at the core of many of the disinformation attacks aimed at influencing public opinion in Japan. Its objective has been the creation of a favourable atmosphere for advancing its policies in Japan. For instance, China has been working to establish its positive image in the country, as well as to “weaken the Japan-US alliance” (Kuwahara 2021, 4). In parallel with this, Chinese online news sites have been publishing articles in Japanese with the aim to “worsen the relations between Japan and South Korea” (Suzuki 2023, 18).

Another such example is the Russian disinformation campaigns in Japan in relation to the recent Russo-Ukrainian conflict. These campaigns are thought to have caused an “unexpected” level of confusion in the Japanese discursive space (Ichihara 2022, 36). Japanese commentators have produced various articles asking whether Russia is really the only one who has caused the aggression. This has led to the so called “whataboutism” in Japan, indicating the possibility that Ukraine, the United States, or the West may have also been responsible for the Russian invasion (Ichihara 2022, 37).

In comparison to Bulgaria and other European Union members, Japan has experienced relatively fewer electoral and other disinformation campaigns conducted by foreign countries. One such example is the disinformation spread during the elections in Okinawa, aimed at weakening relations between Japan and the United States. Other examples include the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake. Following the Kumamoto Earthquake, a false tweet stating that “a lion had escaped from the zoo and was on the loose in Kumamoto City” was spread and retweeted more than

20,000 times (Kuwahara 2021, 4). According to Kuwahara (2021, 4), most of the rumours during disasters “arise domestically and are not deliberately spread for political or economic gain”.

#### *4.2. Japan’s measures to address disinformation*

There have been relatively few measures implemented to counter disinformation in Japan thus far. As Ichihara (2022, 40) points out, “at the governmental level, it was only recently that the analysis of disinformation began to expand”. In 2022, the position of Global Strategic Intelligence Officer responsible for disinformation analysis, was established by the Ministry of Defense. The ministry has also begun to publish materials in Japanese, English, Chinese, and Korean in order to counter information warfare. However, “the human resources for these tasks remain far from enough” (Ichihara 2022, 40). In parallel with this, the Japanese government has started discussions on specific measures against disinformation, such as fact-checking, social networking services (SNS), and the advancement of media literacy. However, as Suzuki (2023, 18) highlights, “it has not put forth robust countermeasures against disinformation from the perspective of maintaining freedom of expression”. On the other hand, the Cabinet Secretariat has recently created a department tasked with planning the legal framework for implementing active cyber defense. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Public Information and Cultural Diplomacy Strategy Division has established a position responsible for addressing disinformation dissemination and countermeasures.

Regarding Japan’s legal measures to address disinformation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications has enacted the Information Distribution Platform Law with the purpose of preventing slander and defamation against individuals on the Internet. The law is scheduled to take effect in May 2025. Additionally, Article 230 of the Penal Code also has provisions in terms of defamation. Nevertheless, under the Constitution of Japan, the government has faced challenges in enacting further comprehensive legal measures to combat disinformation, due to concerns over potential violations of the right to freedom of expression (Kawano 2020, 23).

As part of its measures, the Japanese government has been developing and distributing educational materials on disinformation. For instance, in 2022, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications published a guideline entitled “How to Face Up to the Internet – To Avoid Being Fooled by Fake and False Information”, with the aim of raising awareness about false information among young and adult audiences. It has been providing various teaching materials to universities, technical colleges, junior high schools, vocational schools, relevant ministries and agencies, local governments, general incorporated associations, media organizations, online media, hospitals, and private businesses as well (G7 2023, 15).

In parallel with this, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications has been promoting measures to improve ICT literacy, especially among young people, with the purpose of “encouraging them to avoid the risks associated with ICT use, such as the internet trouble prevention law” (G7 2023, 15).

Fact-checking activities have been conducted by major mass media, online media, and non-profit organizations in Japan. Such example is the established in 2022 Japan Fact Check Center (JFC). It carries out fact-checking on disinformation circulating on the Internet and publishes fact-check articles through its own website, social media and news sites. Furthermore, JFC “selects subjects that are widely disseminated in light of thresholds while paying attention to neutrality and impartiality, and accepts information and verification requests from the general public, prioritizing those that amplify social unrest or have a significant impact on the existence of democracy” (G7 2023, 12).

It should be emphasized that the overall number of human resources responsible for fact-checking in Japan has been insufficient. As Ichihara (2022, 40) points out, “each media outlet manually conducts fact-checking in the absence of excess human resources, which therefore limits the amount of questionable discourse they can check”. Other challenges related to fact-checking activities include “implementation systems, funding, raising awareness and credibility, and international collaboration” (Suzuki 2023, 18).

Social media platforms have also been conducting various activities to address the issue of disinformation in Japan. The Yahoo Japan portal is a case in point. It has been publishing specific content, including articles by experts, to raise awareness of disinformation. Another example is the LINE Mirai Foundation, which has developed the GIGA Workbook, a series of educational materials aimed at advancing information-use skills. Google has also been providing financial support to the Safer Internet Association (SIA) to counter disinformation through fact-checking activities, analytical research on disinformation trends in the Japanese information space, media literacy training, human resource development, and research and educational initiatives.

Meta Platforms, Inc. has also been working to support fair election processes in Japan. Its objectives have been to “prevent interference”, “remove harmful content and reduce misinformation”, and “improve transparency” (G7 2023, 14). In addition, it has established a certification process to “verify the authenticity and legitimacy of individuals or organizations placing election- or politics-related advertisements” (G7 2023, 14).

In parallel with this, in January 2025, the Japanese government launched the “Digital Positive Action” public-private partnership project to address online disinformation. The project, led by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, unites the collective efforts of 19 major tech companies and organizations, such as NTT Docomo, X Corp. (formerly Twitter), Google, and Meta Inc. The purpose of the initiative is to “improve Information and Communication Technology (ICT) literacy comprehensively” by “launching a website that aggregates initiatives from both the public and private sectors and various PR activities” (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2025).

Another recent public-private partnership initiative in Japan is the world’s first disinformation countermeasure platform, facilitated by the digital services company Fujitsu (Fujitsu 2024). It comprises an industry-academia consortium involving Fujitsu, NEC Corporation, the National Institute of Informatics (NII), Keio Research Institute at SFC, The University of Tokyo, Institute of Science Tokyo (formerly Tokyo Tech), Nagoya Institute of Technology, University of

Aizu, and Osaka University. The purpose of the project is to “develop the world’s first comprehensive disinformation countermeasure platform that can process false information from initial detection to evidence gathering, analysis, and evaluation, with development slated for completion by the end of fiscal year 2025” (Fujitsu 2024). Its goal is also to “contribute to economic stability in the face of increasing disinformation risk” and to strengthen Japan’s global position (Fujitsu 2024).

Each member of the consortium is assigned specific roles. For instance, the NII and NEC Corporation are responsible for analysing information by media type and detecting disinformation through the development of specialized technologies. Keio Research Institute at SFC, Fujitsu, and Osaka University are in charge of evidence and endorsement management. At the same time, Fujitsu and Nagoya Institute of Technology are assigned the task of comprehensive authenticity determination. Finally, based on their expertise in computational social science related to social media, The University of Tokyo, Institute of Science Tokyo, and University of Aizu are responsible for developing technology to evaluate the impact of disinformation.

Alongside its domestic policies, Japan has been cooperating with various foreign governments to address disinformation. For instance, through the “issuance of statements on the leaders’ and foreign ministers’ level as well as the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM)”, it has been working to strengthen its coordinated measures against foreign information manipulation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2025). Through bilateral consultations, Japan has also engaged in discussions on disinformation and has been fostering collaboration with countries and regions that share similar values. In addition, in 2023, Japan signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on combating foreign information manipulation with the United States.

## **5. Conclusion: Challenges, lessons, and future prospects for Bulgaria and Japan**

As discussed in the previous section, Bulgaria has been considerably more vulnerable to disinformation compared to Japan. Key contributing factors include the low level of media literacy within Bulgarian society and its increasing reliance on social media as a primary source of information. Consequently, disinformation campaigns originating from Russia, China, and other countries have been spreading more extensively in Bulgaria. In contrast, Japan has experienced fewer foreign disinformation campaigns. The country has been less susceptible to such attacks due to the relatively low use of social networking services and a high level of trust in traditional media. Nevertheless, cases of disinformation in Japan have been gradually increasing, particularly during global crises and natural disasters, making the issue an area of growing concern for the country.

As demonstrated, both Bulgaria and Japan still have considerable room for further action and improvement in their measures against disinformation, as well as valuable lessons to learn from each other. The following two subchapters propose several approaches that both countries could implement to enhance their resilience to disinformation.

### *5.1. Prospective approaches for Bulgaria*

First, it is essential for the Bulgarian government to publicly address the issue and raise public awareness about the risks and impacts of disinformation. However, as Valchev (2023, 121) highlights, a series of sociological studies report “low levels of public trust in state institutions, the media, and health authorities” in Bulgaria. Therefore, in order to engage more effectively with society and counter disinformation, state institutions should strive to achieve a “comprehensive shift” in their behaviour (Valchev 2023, 121).

Second, it is crucial for Bulgaria to ensure a more coordinated response to disinformation among the relevant ministries and agencies, as well as expand their cooperation with various public and private actors. For instance, it should engage with and provide support to relevant IT companies and scientists in the development of advanced software for detecting and mitigating disinformation. Additionally, Bulgaria could establish a public-private partnership modelled on the initiative of the aforementioned industry-academia consortium in Japan. Similarly, relevant Bulgarian universities, research institutes, and companies could unify and coordinate their efforts through a dedicated platform responsible for identifying, analysing, and evaluating disinformation and its impacts.

Third, the implementation of further activities aimed at enhancing the public’s media literacy and critical thinking would be essential. For instance, media literacy programmes could be incorporated into the curricula of Bulgarian schools. In addition, Bulgarian universities could organize media literacy workshops open to both students and the general public. With financial support from the government and other actors, they could also develop specialized courses on contemporary issues, including disinformation and cybersecurity.

In parallel with these efforts, media actors should further expand their educational initiatives aimed at informing the public about the risks of disinformation, as well as increase the dissemination of fact-checking results. At the same time, they should adopt a more critical approach to evaluating the accuracy and reliability of the content they choose to distribute.

Finally, Bulgaria should seek to further expand its international cooperation on the exchange of best practices with European and other countries that have more advanced measures against disinformation, such as Germany and the United States. Furthermore, aligning and coordinating its responses with these countries could significantly contribute to strengthening Bulgaria’s policies and resilience to disinformation.

### *5.2. Prospective approaches for Japan*

First, similarly to Bulgaria, Japan should work to advance the government’s strategies and foster cooperation with relevant domestic actors. For instance, in collaboration with universities, media, and other public and private entities, the government could establish a fact-checking platform that discloses, monitors, and compares the fact-checking efforts of these actors. Furthermore, expanding funding and human resources in this area would be crucial.

Second, it is essential to implement more educational programmes and initiatives designed to enhance the public's media literacy and awareness of disinformation. For instance, media literacy programmes could be incorporated into the curricula of primary and secondary schools in Japan. Furthermore, universities could develop specialized courses that address global issues, including disinformation.

Third, given the high level of trust in the media and their significant influence in Japan, these actors should expand their educational initiatives and the dissemination of fact-checking results. Additionally, these initiatives should present the issue of disinformation in a clear and accessible manner, taking into account the diverse age groups and educational backgrounds of the public.

Fourth, Japan could draw on Bulgaria's example to strengthen its strategic communication by implementing specialized training sessions for government officials. As Snow (2022) highlights, it would also be vital for Japan to "expand skills in strategic communications and public diplomacy studies in higher education".

Fifth, it is crucial for Japan to further strengthen its international collaboration on the exchange of successful practices for identifying and countering disinformation with other actors, including Bulgaria and the European Union. Bulgaria could be a key partner for Japan due to its strategic geopolitical position as a bridge to the European Union's disinformation countermeasures. As was discussed, Bulgaria has been actively involved in various related European Union initiatives. Japan could collaborate with Bulgaria to align with these efforts and enhance its resilience to disinformation.

Finally, it should be emphasized that certain counter-disinformation measures may pose risks to human rights and democracy. Therefore, it is essential for both Bulgaria and Japan to ensure that future countermeasures do not undermine fundamental human rights, such as the right to freedom of expression, the right to privacy, as well as social, economic, and cultural rights.

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