



Ukraine War Disinfo Working Group

SUMMARY REPORT

October 10 – 16, 2022

This report collates insight drawn from the monitoring of narratives trending across pro-Kremlin sites and social media across fourteen countries in Central and Eastern Europe, as they relate to Russia's war in Ukraine. The data is collected and analysed by a number of NGOs, think tanks and researchers, and collated by the Open Information Partnership (OIP), to promote knowledge sharing across the OIP network and the broader region. The analysis contained in this report is the result of each group's monitoring, it is not authored by and does not represent the view of OIP, the FCDO or Zinc Network.



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Notes on terminology

The following overview summarises developing disinformation narratives by country, including new or shifting narratives and key cases. These development and insights primarily relate to narratives about the following themes:

- Events related to the Russia-Ukraine War
- (Negative) Economic Consequences of Sanctions
- Refugees
- Conditions of Russians and Russian-speaking Minorities
- Military Threats to Eastern Europe/Risk of War Expanding Beyond Ukraine
- Military Aid to Ukraine

This monitoring takes two forms:

1. **Monitoring of Hostile State-Aligned Media:** Using NewsWhip to collate all articles on the primary narratives listed above from outlets deemed to be funded by, formally or informally affiliated with, or reliably sympathetic to Hostile States.
2. **Social Media Monitoring:** Using open-source data collection tools and methods to monitor and analyse social media conversations about the primary narratives for disinformation, summarising prominent and emerging themes.

Note: “Interactions” refers to each time that a post was actively engaged with or responded to on a particular platform. For example, Facebook interactions encompass comments, shares, likes, and other reactions, and Twitter interactions encompass likes and re-tweets. The figures quoted in this report are the sum total of interactions across Twitter and Facebook unless otherwise specified. “Articles” as stated below refers to the number of published articles and social media posts featuring the narrative in question combined.

BALTICS (RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE)

Civic Resilience Initiative

- The most widespread and prevalent narrative (10 posts, 187,044 interactions) concerned the Baltic region's alleged Russophobia, focusing on the following: i) a pro-Russian Latvian activist, Vladimir Linderman, being released from custody after being "unjustly" charged for justification and glorification of Russian war crimes in Ukraine; ii) the fact that the Latvian government does not allow Russians to enter their country without providing "valid reasons" for being there; iii) Soviet monument demolitions; and iv) Russians being forced to "escape from an unfriendly Latvia".
- It must be emphasized that alleged "Russophobia in the Baltics" has been, by far, the most popular narrative throughout our entire monitoring period. Its popularity, measured in terms of the number of interactions such posts receive, has risen by a measure of 5-6 times. This leads us to conclude that the Kremlin considers the victimization of Russian speakers in the Baltics to be an effective propaganda strategy.
- The narrative that Ukraine is losing the war (7 posts, 16,696 interactions) was more popular than normal this week. A key message is that Russians have destroyed a significant portion of Ukraine's infrastructure with their missile strikes.
- Such previously popular narratives as "NATO/The West will attack Russia" or "nuclear disaster is imminent" were not observed this week.
- This week, the Baltnews' Telegram page gathered the most interactions, averaging around 4,000 interactions per post. The most popular post (121,000 interactions) concerns the release of Latvian journalist and activist Vladimir Linderman, who was charged with the glorification of Russian war crimes in Ukraine.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Russian-language Baltic news portals this week received 2,300 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:

7

Interactions:

16,696

Posts focused on how Russians allegedly destroyed key Ukrainian infrastructure with missile strikes.

Ukraine is targeting innocent civilians

Articles:

6

Interactions:

10,585

Posts this week focused on the Crimean bridge explosion and tried to prove that it was a "terrorist" act organised by the Ukrainian government. It also highlighted how Belarus is creating a regional counter-terrorist operation due to threats from Ukraine.

**The West knows that
Russia is winning the war**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

10,000

Posts tried to frame the upcoming NATO parade in Latvia and Estonia as UK's "farewell party" as they will not continue to deploy their troops and allegedly will cut their military ties with Latvia and Estonia as the costs of sustaining it are too high.

**The West is losing interest
in helping Ukraine**

Articles:

3

Interactions:

9,476

Stories mainly focused on how Ukraine is scared of losing help from the US – especially if the Democrats lose the next election.

Ukrainians are Nazis

Articles:

1

Interactions:

374

Post emphasized a story by a Turkish journalist where he tells the Turkish public about Ukrainian fascism, about the coup in Kyiv, and the war against the population of Donbas.

Ukrainians refuse to fight

Articles:

1

Interactions:

312

Post focused on how, allegedly, in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, there is a drop in morale due to the mobilization of reserve forces.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Sanctions hurt the West
more than Russia**

Articles:

5

Interactions:

7,952

Posts mainly focused on (a) the shortage of drivers in Estonia, as the majority of them were Russian; (b) the fact that some unidentified Europeans think that sanctions are causing failures of the economy.

Other posts focused on increased prices in Latvia, claiming that it would not have happened if it weren't for the sanctions.

**Europe is threatened by
an energy crisis**

Articles:

2

Interactions:

2,800

Posts mainly focused on how Estonia failed to agree with Finland on the mutual distribution of their terminal's maintenance costs.

CONDITIONS OF RUSSIANS AND RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MINORITIES

Continuing sub-narratives:

**X country is Russophobic /
Russian culture is
being attacked**

Articles:
10

Interactions:
187,044

Posts mainly focused on (a) how pro-Russian Latvian activist Vladimir Linderman was released from custody after several months; (b) how Latvians are not allowing Russians to enter their country without providing "valid reasons"; (c) Soviet monument demolition issues; and (d) how some Russians are escaping from an unfriendly Latvia.

MILITARY THREATS TO EASTERN EUROPE/RISK OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Ukraine is escalating
the war**

Articles:
1

Interactions:
4,900

This story discusses Ukraine setting up a fortification barrier with Belarus. President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko said that the opening of a front against Minsk by Ukraine is insane from a military point of view, but the process has begun.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

**The US is using Ukraine to
promote its military-
industrial complex**

Articles:
1

Interactions:
460

This story tried to argue that the United States will provide Ukraine with a new package of military assistance only to promote its own military complex.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

**The Baltic governments
are fascist**

Articles:
2

Interactions:
3,614

Posts focused on (a) Latvia's alleged mistreatment of migrants; (b) how Lithuanian politicians do not care about ill people.

The EU can't help Ukraine

Articles:
1

Interactions:
2,100

Post tried to prove that the Baltic region's military personnel is unprepared and unwilling to fight.

Russian soldiers have huge popular support

Articles:

3

Interactions:

867

Posts tried to show how there are protests happening throughout the world, where people call for peace with Russia.

Russia's diplomats excel over their Western counterparts

Articles:

1

Interactions:

398

Post showed how the head of "Latvijas Gāze", ex-prime-minister Aigars Kalvītis accuses Latvian politicians of incompetence.

Belarus

Press Club Belarus

Note: Press Club Belarus' contribution exclusively features content from Belarusian Telegram channels.

- The week was rich in new narratives. Pro-Kremlin voices in Belarus have begun claiming that i) NATO wants to drag Belarus into war; ii) Russia will deal with Ukraine without nuclear weapons; iii) international agreements are empty declarations; iv) Ukraine will attack Belarus; and v) Poland pressures the US to use nuclear weapons, since the US is dancing to the tune of Polish politicians.
- The glorification of Lukashenka continues: his speeches at the summit in Astana, at a meeting with the military, and an interview with an American TV channel were all shared by pro-Russian Telegram channels.
- The top 3 narratives this week, according to the number of post views, were directly related to Belarus in the context of the war in Ukraine: i) Ukraine does not want peace; ii) NATO/The West will attack Belarus; iii) Ukraine will attack Belarus. (The latter narrative garnered the most reposts.) These narratives will likely remain prevalent as the regime needs to legitimize the presence of the Russian military in Belarus.
- An interesting narrative is that if a peacekeeping mission is created on the border between Ukraine and Belarus, it will provide a springboard for an invasion of Belarus and grounds for political instability in the country.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New narratives:

**NATO wants to drag
Belarus into war**

Articles:

8

Views:

272,630

"Pool Pervogo" quotes Lukashenka, who believes that "the main goal of NATO is to drag Belarus into war".

**Russia will not use nuclear
weapons**

Articles:

14

Views:

150,045

"Pool Pervogo" quotes Lukashenko, who said that Putin has never set himself the goal of using nuclear weapons in Ukraine. Lukashenko claims that Russia will deal with Ukraine without nuclear weapons. On the other hand, Poland provokes the US to use nuclear weapons. The US is dancing to the tune of Polish politicians.

Continuing narratives:

**NATO/The West will
attack Belarus**

Articles:

29

Views:

733,983

"Belorussian silovik" quotes Lukashenka who said that there is a large NATO grouping on the border with Belarus, which, in some scenarios, may try to enter our territory, therefore a joint Belarusian-Russian grouping is being formed to be based on the territory of Belarus.

"ATN_NEWS" quotes Chairman of the State Security Committee Ivan Tertel, who said that there are foreign instructors on the territory of Ukraine. He accused Poland and Lithuania of training 100 to 300 militants to seize power and change the geopolitical course in Belarus.

"Belorussian silovik" quotes Belarusian Foreign Minister Makei, who said that the counter-terrorist operation (CTO) regime introduced in Belarus is a continuation of a chain of exercises and statements by the country's leadership in response to a possible threat from NATO countries and Ukraine.

"BELTA" quotes Lukashenko, who claims that NATO and a number of European countries are considering options for possible aggression against Belarus.

The author of the "DZermant" channel claims that if a peacekeeping mission is created on the border between Ukraine and Belarus, it will prepare a springboard for an invasion of Belarus and the ground for destabilizing the situation in the country.

**Ukraine does not want
peace**

Articles:

46

Views:

626,390

"MIRBY", "ATN_NEWS", "Pool Pervogo" and many other channels quote Lukashenko, who said "Let's stop the war and agree, and then we will figure out who is right and who is wrong". He claims that Zelensky was forbidden by the West to negotiate, because he is not independent.

"Pool Pervogo" quotes Lukashenko, who claimed that – unlike Western leaders – President Putin has offered negotiation options more than once.

**Russian troops are
advancing / achieving
success**

Articles:

5

Views:

46,845

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" admires the new Russian commander of the "Special Military Operation" because he is bombing Ukraine.

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" claims that the Ukrainian air defense is working on false targets and that the Russian missilemen are hitting their targets precisely as intended.

**The West/US is
responsible for the
sabotage of Nord Stream**

Articles:

3

Views:

30,857

"Zheltie Slivy Premium", recalling a story from 2015, when experts discovered an underwater NATO mine destroyer during an inspection of the Nord Stream gas pipelines, claims that the current sabotage at Nord Stream EU could have been a pre-planned action against the EU. They claim that an unnamed third

actor – implying that it is the US – sought to undermine Europe and blame it on Russia.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing narratives:

Europe is threatened by an energy crisis

Articles:
3
Views:
91,002

"MIRBY" refers to a recent Bloomberg post, which claims that desperate Europeans are turning back to wood for heating.

"MIRBY" quotes Bundestag President Wolfgang Schäuble, who urges Germans not to be upset by the cold and darkness.

Sanctions are making Russia stronger

Articles:
2
Views:
23,786

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" trolls the sanctions against Russia by referring to the statistics of foreign trade surpluses in Russia and Belarus since the beginning of the full-scale invasion.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continuing narratives:

The West will no longer provide Ukraine with military aid

Articles:
6
Views:
34,272

"Minskaya pravda" references *The Washington Post*, which reported that US President Biden told Zelensky that if he does not stop complaining about the lack of assistance provided to Kyiv, then it will become difficult to ask Congress for money.

MILITARY THREAT TO EASTERN EUROPE / RISK OF THE WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UA

Continuing narratives:

Ukraine will attack Belarus

Articles:
30
Interactions:
454,809

"Pool Pervogo", "BELTA" and many other channels quote Lukashenko, who said that he was warned through unofficial channels about an attack on Belarus from the territory of Ukraine.

"BELTA" quotes State Secretary of the Security Council Volfovich, who claims that Ukraine is trying to strike at Belarus, using the Belarusian opposition who fled to Ukraine.

**International agreements
are meaningless**

Articles:
10

Interactions:
219,247

"Pool Pervogo" quotes Lukashenka, who, referring to Belarus' agreement to not have nuclear weapons, believes that the country has been deceived. He claims that international agreements like the Budapest Memorandum are empty declarations.

CONDITION OF RUSSIAN AND RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MINORITIES

Continuing narratives:

**X country is Russophobic /
Russian culture is being
attacked**

Articles:
2

Views:
25,891

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" promotes the narrative that Ukrainians are Russophobes, as well as Nazis.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing narratives:

**The Ukrainian leadership
is corrupt and/or
incompetent**

Articles:
3

Views:
464,272

"ONT NEWS" comments on the announcement that the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) has placed Maria Zakharova on the wanted list. They claim that any accusations against her are fictitious and contrary to the law.

EU politicians are Nazis

Articles:
1

Views:
27,065

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" promotes the narrative that Germany's Nazis are "rearing their heads again". They claim that Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, a member of the German Bundestag threatened Russians and wants to bring back the *Volkssturm*.

**The EU is under US
influence**

Articles:
3

Views:
25,594

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" quotes the Spanish media Rebellion, which claims that Europe will face horror because it behaves like a US colony and supports NATO policy.

Ukrainian media is lying

Articles:
2

Views:
23,721

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" claims that, using secret technology, Zelensky makes it seem like he is in Kyiv without actually being there.

NATO has committed far worse crimes than Russia

Articles:

2

Views:

13,699

Channel "Tur", by showing images of NATO's bombing campaign in Yugoslavia, promotes the justification that Russia can also bomb Ukraine and that such action is not unprecedented.

BULGARIA

Center for the Study of Democracy

- Pro-Kremlin propagandists in Bulgaria primarily focused on the events of the Russia-Ukraine war this week. The most widespread message is that Ukraine is losing the war. Stories about Shahid kamikaze drones attacking Kyiv were provided as evidence for such claims. Propagandists glorified the Russian army for “fooling” Ukrainian air defense units and predicted that Ukraine will soon face the Dark Age.
- Pro-Russian voices portray the Ukrainian state as “barbaric, malicious, powerless, and scared”.
- The narrative that NATO/the US/the West already is or soon will be directly involved in the war has continued to appear in Bulgaria. Pogled.info and onovini.eu are the main sources of such disinformation.
- “Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians” – this narrative is used to discredit the Ukrainian army and legitimize the Russian attacks on civilian infrastructure.
- Propagandists manipulatively claim that tensions between the West and Ukraine are steadily growing.
- Narratives about the West using Ukraine to wage war against Russia and imminent nuclear disaster/war were not observed in Bulgaria this week.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Bulgarian news portals this week received 7,500 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:

21

Interactions:

13,477

Articles about Russian drone and other attacks. One story was created saying that Zelensky has to hide in underground bunkers from air strikes in his hometown.

Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians

Articles:

4

Interactions:

3,248

An article stated that Bulgarians should be offended that Ukraine used their territory to commit a terrorist act on the Crimean Bridge.

The West forced Russia to attack Ukraine

Articles:

1

Interactions:

2,400

Article claiming Russia had no other choice as to attack Ukraine.

There are tensions between the West and Ukraine

Articles:

4

Interactions:

1,511

Articles suggesting that the West is done with helping Ukraine and tensions between Ukraine and West are on the rise.

The West is profiting on the war in Ukraine

Articles:

3

Interactions:

497

An article suggests that the war in Ukraine will not end soon because "Euroatlantic idiots" make a lot of money from the death, suffering, and destruction.

Ukrainians are Nazis

Articles:

2

Interactions:

362

Articles calling Ukrainians Nazis and discussing future attacks.

The West/US is responsible for the sabotage of Nord Stream

Articles:

1

Interactions:

79

The article alleges that it was definitively the West that sabotaged the Nord Stream pipelines.

NATO/the US/the West is/will be directly involved in the war

Articles:

1

Interactions:

47

Article stated that the events that took place on the Crimean Bridge on 8 October were part of a well-planned special operation by Russia's enemies and probably was based on intelligence from NATO countries.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Western citizens do not support sanctions against Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

382

Article about "mass" protests against sanctions in European countries.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Military aid is
weakening/jeopardizing
the countries that provide
it**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

1,300

Articles quoting Tucker Carlson who criticized Zelensky for saying that the amount of Western financial aid to Ukraine this year should be at least \$5 billion.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

**The EU and/or NATO
and/or the West are weak
and will break apart**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

2,100

Article states that the EU is part of the past. Serbia has no place there. The friendship with Russia is of the utmost importance. Without it, Serbia risks to disappear from the map of the world.

**Russia has a new secret
weapon**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

1,100

Article about an unmanned underwater vehicle with a charge of about two megatons placed aboard the "Belgorod" that supposedly poses a mortal danger to the West, as it is capable of destroying not just a naval base or a coastal metropolis, but an entire country.

**The Ukrainian leadership
is corrupt and/or
incompetent**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

1,000

Article states the "undeniable fact" that Zelensky made a commitment to the entire democratic world and did the exact opposite when he installed himself as autocrat in Kyiv.

**Bulgaria is controlled
by West**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

241

Author states that Bulgaria should be careful with how it treats Russia because things can escalate quickly if they blindly follow the absurd rules of the West.

CZECHIA

Prague Security Studies Institute

- The most prevalent narrative this week claimed that Russia is only just beginning to wage war with its full military might. The recent mass missile attacks against Ukrainian cities were portrayed as a manifestation of Russia's true capabilities. Propagandists attribute great importance to missiles and kamikaze drones, as the recent attacks constitute one of the few examples of Russian military "successes". News of the appointment of a new Russian military commander, allegedly nicknamed "General Armageddon", were also used to revitalize Russia's "fearsome" image.
- Disinformation actors openly admit that Russia is waging war against Ukraine's civilian infrastructure and place high hopes on the fact that a lack of heating and electricity during the fast-approaching winter season will lead to the collapse of Ukrainian society.
- Claims that a decisive Russian offensive against Ukraine will take place between November 2022 and February 2023 were observed this week.
- The topic of alleged Ukrainian terrorism continues to be prominently featured. The recent attack on the Crimean bridge continues to be labelled as an act of terrorism. Furthermore, increasingly more articles about other alleged attacks on Russian civilians are beginning to appear.
- We observed interesting calls for Ukrainian soldiers to rise up against their "Nazi leadership". This may be a part of a Russian psychological operation directed against the Ukrainian army.
- Narratives about the Western public's opposition towards sanctions and further aid to Ukraine continue to emerge. It is worth noting that these allegations typically concern foreign countries such as Germany, rather than the Czech Republic.
- Despite the fact that economic and sanctions-related narratives remain a constant theme of local domestic politics, pro-Russian disinformation actors have used this topic in a very limited way.
- Rumors about the lack of cohesion within the EU and NATO are emerging more strongly, in particular the assumption that states will eventually prioritise their own national interests in the face of the economic crisis.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Bulgarian news portals this week received 18,400 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New sub-narrative:

The West/US is responsible for the sabotage of Nord Stream

Articles:

6

Interactions:

64

Surprisingly, the narratives around Nord Stream and its destruction have weakened and are now very much in the shadow of the narratives about attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure. They focus mainly on the alleged obstruction of an independent investigation by Western countries

Continuing sub-narratives:

Russia is not fighting at full capacity	Articles: <u>23</u> Interactions: 2,439	In isolation, there are other reports of the deployment of supposedly high-tech equipment of the Russian Federation, such as the involvement of Armata tanks in the fighting.
Ukraine is losing the war	Articles: <u>9</u> Interactions: 1,547	Narratives about Russia's successes in the war tend to heavily emphasize the successes of Russian missile attacks and the successes of drone use. Attacks on Ukraine's infrastructure are acknowledged, and claims are made that these attacks have completely disabled large segments of society and that, come winter at the latest, the entire country will be paralysed and defeated.
Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians	Articles: <u>15</u> Interactions: 1,413	The issue of the attack on the Kerch Bridge and its assessment as terrorism is still being raised, but other accusations of Ukrainian terrorist acts, such as the targeted killing of civilians, are also beginning to grow.
NATO is/will be directly involved in the war	Articles: <u>10</u> Interactions: 478	Related to NATO's involvement in the war in Ukraine is the narrative that Ukraine wants to join NATO and that this will automatically mean a world war.
NATO/The West will attack Russia	Articles: <u>4</u> Interactions: 82	There is information about the alleged involvement of Western intelligence agencies in the destruction of the Kerch Bridge, and the claim that the defeat of Ukraine will also be the defeat of NATO is repeated again and again.
The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia	Articles: <u>3</u> Interactions: 62	The narrative of Western (NATO) involvement in the war in Ukraine is promoted in various ways, in addition to claims of direct involvement of soldiers (mainly Polish), the claim that Ukraine is controlled by NATO is repeated.
Ukrainians are Nazis	Articles: <u>1</u> Interactions: 40	One variant of the narrative that the Ukrainian leadership is Nazi begins to operate with the claim that Ukrainian common soldiers are rebelling against their leadership and may rise up in the near future

Russia's invasion is justified and legitimate

Articles:

1

Interactions:

38

Older narratives and older arguments, e.g. that Russia was justified in attacking Ukraine, appear in isolation. However, these reappearances of older narratives usually do not bring any new material.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:

5

Interactions:

198

When discussing dependence on Russian gas, it is occasionally claimed that Nord Stream works and could be used.

Western citizens do not support sanctions against Russia

Articles:

4

Interactions:

181

There is a recurring narrative about the population of former East Germany opposing their government. This narrative takes advantage of a certain commonalities between the Eastern Bloc countries while reporting on events abroad, allowing for better disinformation manipulation of the message. This technique is used repeatedly by disinformation agents in relation to Germany.

MILITARY THREATS TO EASTERN EUROPE/RISK OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

The West will fall

Articles:

14

Interactions:

473

The narrative that the West will be destroyed by its involvement in the war in Ukraine, that it has irresponsibly embarked on a bigger enterprise than it can handle, and that Russia is stronger than the West, have been repeated again and again in Czechia.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

New sub-narratives:

The West will no longer provide Ukraine with military aid

Articles:

2

Interactions:

23

This is a long-term narrative that claims that the United States and other countries in Europe are running out of their own weapons and therefore supplies to Ukraine will soon have to stop.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine controlled by the West

Articles:

4

Interactions:

577

Towards the domestic audience, this narrative seeks to recreate anti-European and anti-EU sentiments by presenting the West as a power waging war in Ukraine at the expense of Eastern Europe.

Western society does not support Ukraine

Articles:

3

Interactions:

351

The narrative that Western society does not support aid to Ukraine focuses mainly on Germany. This effect is also seen in other narratives this week and is typical of the Czech disinformation environment.

The EU and/or NATO and/or the West are weak and will break apart

Articles:

2

Interactions:

99

There is sporadic discussion of NATO cohesion, especially in relation to allegedly dwindling supplies and the coming winter / economic crisis. The assumption is that individual states will put their own interests ahead of collective interests.

The only way to end the war is to negotiate with Russia

Articles:

2

Interactions:

51

A prominent figure in the Czech environment is the pro-Russian analyst Andor Shandor, who believes that the only way to peace is to give into Russia's demands and compromise on Russia's terms.

- Despite the recent destruction of the Kerch bridge and mass missile attacks on Ukrainian cities, the Estonian far-right continued to concentrate on claims that the influx of refugees is undermining the nation state and even Russifying Estonia.
- News articles about the events of the Russia-Ukraine war citing Russian sources introduced allegations of terrorist attacks directed by the Kyiv regime.
- Since the far-right party EKRE has alleged on numerous occasions that the energy crisis has been caused solely by the Green Deal, discussions of the economic consequences of sanctions concerned only secondary narratives with regard to the war in Ukraine.
- Anti-refugee propaganda remains notorious with its emphasis on Estonia's "Russification" by Ukrainian war refugees. The government is being blamed for participating in this anti-Estonian "conspiracy".
- Claims that Ukraine is going to obtain nuclear weapons or use dirty bombs against Russia continue to be observed.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Estonian news portals this week received 2,500 interactions.

EVENTS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing sub-narratives:

Nuclear disaster is imminent

Articles:

3

Interactions:

230

Articles about the threat of Russia retaliating for the destruction of the Kerch bridge. An article shared information that Western embassies are fleeing Ukraine in fear.

The West is undermining peace negotiation efforts

Articles:

1

Interactions:

218

According to Vyacheslav Volodin, the "Kyiv regime" killed civilians, sabotaged the Crimean bridge, and bombed the critical infrastructure of nuclear power plants to take away all opportunities for negotiations. He also claims that the Western countries that support Kyiv are also sponsors of terrorism.

Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians

Articles:

4

Interactions:

94

The author stated that the explosives used to blow up the Crimean bridge were shipped out of Ukraine with the grain, which is why Ukraine needed a grain export agreement with Russia to carry out terrorist attacks against Russia.

NATO is/will be directly involved in the war

Articles:

1

Interactions:

64

Jeffrey Sachs said that it is certain that the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is being bombed by Ukraine, but we cannot state this simple truth because the US is a war machine, driven by President Biden towards Armageddon.

REFUGEES

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukrainian refugees undermine host countries' internal stability

Articles:

9

Interactions:

3,106

According to Martin Helme the absolute majority of the Ukrainian refugees are Russian speakers who simply have a Ukrainian-Russian double citizenship and are very pro-Putin. He claimed that, instead of protecting the nation state, the parliament opened its doors to all Ukrainian refugees, but that cannot stop Russia's aggression in Ukraine and only leads to the Russification in Estonia.

GEORGIA

GRASS

- With respect to the number of articles, the recent events of the war were a major topic of discussion for pro-Kremlin propagandists in Georgia. Mass missile attacks on Ukrainian cities in the follow-up to the destruction of the Kerch bridge contributed to a massive propaganda wave intended to justify the attack by accusing Ukraine of terrorism and Nazism. Pro-Russian disinformation actors alleged that Russian hit only military targets, argued that Russian is just starting its “real” offensives, and predicted that Ukraine was doomed to defeat.
- The US continues to be blamed for instigating the conflict and using Ukraine, as well as Georgia and Europe, as pawns against Russia.
- In terms of the number of interactions, the message that the West/Ukraine/Georgian pro-Western political parties and opposition groups are trying to drag Georgia into war with Russia was once again the most popular pro-Russian message. This time, propagandists used Russia's strikes on Ukrainian cities to disseminate this message and spread fear.
- Messages regarding economic sanctions – specifically, claims that Russia is unaffected by sanctions whilst Europe is threatened by an energy crisis, and that the West is secretly trading with Russia – were observed but were not the most popular messages.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Georgian news portals this week received 2,700 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New narratives:

Strikes on Ukrainian cities are legitimate

Articles:

4

Interactions:

143

Some disinformation actors claimed that the missile strikes on Ukrainian cities were legitimate because some of the targeted buildings were concealing military installations. Others contended that foreign mercenaries, including US and UK special operation forces, were bombed in the strikes. Propagandists also recalled the traditional message that Ukraine is fascist and Nazi, and thus deserved the bombing campaign.

Whataboutism was also used to justify Russian attacks on cities - posts showed images of US bombing of Baghdad and ironically suggested that those were "democratic bombs".

Continuing narratives:

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:

16

Interactions:

3,334

One of the main lines of propaganda after the mass missile strikes on Ukrainian cities included mockery of the claims – previously made by some in Ukraine, the US, and the UK – that Russia did not have very many missiles left.

The recent missile attacks on Ukrainian cities were also portrayed as proof of Russia's military might and

The US provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia; The EU is under US influence

Articles:

2

Interactions:

1103

as a clear demonstration that Russia is actually winning the war and Ukraine is being devastated. Some suggested that this was only the beginning and that the "special military operation" could be transformed into an anti-terrorist operation or a fully-fledged war.

The conspiracy theory that Russia has finished utilising old military equipment and is now switching to the newest weaponry has emerged once more. These claims imply that Russia was not demoralised and suffering battlefield defeats but was merely resting and would now start renewed attacks.

Pro-Russian News-Front concluded that the strikes were successful in achieving their tasks: Ukraine's power grid is damaged, meaning that Ukraine cannot export energy to the EU, which was its important revenue source; its railway transportation would be hampered, leading to a lack of ammunition on the battlefield; Ukraine's air defence systems were overwhelmed. Propagandists conclude that Ukraine's offensive momentum will soon come to a screeching halt.

A pro-Russian Facebook page highlighted the superiority of Russian military weaponry. The page claimed that NATO has officially admitted that the newest Russian drones are conducting accurate strikes, and that shooting them down is nearly impossible.

A Facebook user, Gia Baidurashvili, published a post claiming that the ongoing war is between NATO and Russia; more precisely, the liberal west is fighting against Russia. Baidurashvili compared the current processes with chess and said that the US is a king; Ukraine, Georgia, and European countries are pawns; and the pawn's only goal is to die for the King. Therefore, Baidurashvili claimed that Ukraine, Georgia and other countries are sacrificing themselves for the US.

An anchor of pro-Russian Alt-Info, Tatia Gabrichidze, stated that the US knows how to promote wars and destroy its competitor Europe. According to Gabrichidze, the Georgia-US partnership is not genuine and that the US would sacrifice Georgia at any time.

Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes

Articles:

2

Interactions:

752

Pro-Russian Alt-Info published a video claiming that Ukraine has attacked administrative and residential buildings. A pro-Russian Facebook page published a photo of a destroyed building and blamed President Zelensky for the destruction. It also claimed that the "war party" in Ukraine was not stopping, but that Putin would soon put an end to the Nazi regime.

The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

485

On the air of Alt-info, the host Matsatso Gakhokidze stated that Ukrainian civilians are being sacrificed due the decisions of European and American governments. Aleksandre Palavandishvili also reinforced the message that the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian state were doomed by the West. He stated that the West's only goal is to inflict reputational losses on Russia. Palavandishvili asserted that the West only helps Ukraine to prolong the war and let more Ukrainians to die. He claimed that Ukrainian defeat was inevitable. In the end, Palavandishvili expressed the opinion that Russia would come out of the war stronger, compared to the start of the war.

Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians

Articles:

2

Interactions:

138

The destruction of the Kerch bridge was also labelled as an act of terrorism, that caused civilian casualties, and hence, the allegedly retaliatory strikes were deemed to be legitimate.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing narratives:

The West is secretly trading with Russia

Articles:

1

Views:

987

Pro-Russian Alt-Info reported that, although the EU has officially sanctioned the Kremlin, 13 members (Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden in particular) have actually increased their import volumes from Russia.

Europe is threatened by an energy crisis

Articles:

1

Views:

454

Pro-Russian Obieqtivi TV channel's Facebook page has circulated a viral photo, also spread in other languages throughout the Europe, allegedly showing firewood being sold in Italy for 350 Euros. By doing so, Obieqtivi TV tried to demonstrate that the sanctions against Russia have led to a humiliating energy crisis for Europe.

Russia is unaffected by sanctions

Articles:

4

Views:

47

Pro-governmental and anti-opposition Facebook page "Mikheil Ukrainologi" criticised the statement made by the MEP Rasa Juknevičienė, who, while talking on the Formula TV channel, called on the ruling Georgian Dream party of Georgia to join the sanctions against Russia. Facebook page "Mikheil Ukrainologi" downplayed the importance of the sanctions, ironically asking what damage the sanctions inflicted on Russia.

MILITARY THREAT TO EASTERN EUROPE / RISK OF THE WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UA

Continuing narratives:

**The
West/Ukraine/Georgian
opposition parties seek to
open a second front
against Russia in Georgia**

Articles:

9

Interactions:

10 556

Tbilisi City Hall employee, Nuka Arveladze, posted a Facebook update claiming that Ukraine is not a real strategic partner of Georgia. According to Arveladze, Ukraine only needs Georgia as a potential second front against Russia. For that reason, they have been trying to replace the GD government in Georgia by any possible means since February 24. Arveladze also mentioned that the psychological terror coming from Ukraine is intolerable and that Ukraine is no less of an enemy for Georgia than Russia. Another pro-Russian Facebook page speculated that the truck that blew up the Crimean bridge had illegally obtained the Georgian plates attached to the truck by the Ukrainian side. According to the post author, this is yet another attempt to drag Georgia into the war with Russia.

The Georgian Dream (GD) government-affiliated Facebook Page "Leader 41" (41 is an electoral number of the GD party) claimed that the GD founder and former PM of Georgia, Bidzina Ivanishvili (alleged shadow ruler) was offered 2 billion dollars (by the West) to open a second front against Russia. After Ivanishvili's refusal, they started fighting against him by trying to impose sanctions and seize his properties.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Continuing narratives:

**Ukrainian refugees are no
longer welcome**

Articles:

1

Views:

269

The Russian-supported News-Front media outlet reported that in the German city of Leipzig, locals protesting high energy prices and demanding cooperation with Russia were confronted by the Ukrainian refugees. The locals, in turn, have reminded the Ukrainian refugees that they live in Germany at public expense and that they are Nazis and should be expelled. News-Front further insisted that the mainstream German media have unjustly dubbed the locals as far-right activists.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing narratives:

**The Ukrainian leadership
is corrupt and/or
incompetent**

Articles:

2

Views:

302

Some faked and out-of-context pictures of Zelensky were circulated to discredit him and make a mockery of him as being afraid and hopeless after the mass bombings of Ukrainian cities in the follow-up of the blow-up of the Kerch bridge.

HUNGARY

- This week, narratives attempting to undermine trust in the European leadership dominated the disinformation landscape. Disinformation actors claimed that the US instigated the war for profit and that it is responsible for the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines. Claims that the EU leadership does not care about the wellbeing of its citizens and only serves the interests of the US were also observed.
- Narratives about the corruption and incompetence of EU or Ukrainian leaders were also used.
- Messages about Ukrainian “terrorist acts” continued this week, as disinformation sites tried to convince their audiences that Russia’s strikes on civilian infrastructure are nothing compared to the brutality of the Ukrainians.
- Old narratives about Ukrainian refugees resurfaced this week: one article claimed – using strong emotional language – that Ukrainian refugees are “parasites”.
- Narratives about the economic consequences of sanctions, which used to be the most prominent, have almost completely disappeared from Hungarian disinformation channels.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Hungarian news portals this week received 21,400 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Russian troops are
advancing / achieving
success**

Articles:

2

Interactions:

12,968

Articles promoting this sub-narrative mostly revolved around the Russian air strikes conducted against Ukraine on 10 October. Articles talking about the “brutal rain of [Russian] rockets pouring down all over Ukraine” and their air defence system’s inability to handle such attacks.

A pro-Kremlin news site shared a video about missile strikes hitting the centre of Kyiv, falsely claiming that, according to “Ukrainian media”, the missiles hit the Presidential Office. The same video appeared in a live update of the site which revolved around the Russian airstrikes. It mostly contained the site’s own Telegram posts. Amongst these posts we found at least 6 videos that didn’t depict the events that the outlet claimed (most of them were either shot months ago or in another location).

Ukrainians are Nazis

Articles:

3

Interactions:

10,285

Posts claiming that the Ukrainian leadership consists of Nazis.

Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians

Articles:

1

Interactions:

6,512

This sub-narrative revolved around the attack against the Crimean bridge this week. It appeared in Facebook posts: one said that the EU and NATO should be ashamed to condemn Russian attacks but not condemning the attack against the Crimean bridge.

The West/US is responsible for the sabotage of Nord Stream

Articles:

1

Interactions:

5,895

A Facebook post accused the US of blowing up the Nord Stream pipeline. It drew the conclusion from the claim that the "US is worried about the Belgorod submarine" and that "the one who worries is the one who conducted the sabotage".

Ukraine does not want peace

Articles:

2

Interactions:

5,842

Article states that Zelensky isn't interested in those who want peace: in Odesa, Elon Musk's photo was removed from an installation picturing Ukraine's supporters after his recent comments on Twitter.

Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians

Articles:

2

Interactions:

4,738

A post said that it is a shame that the West condemns the recent Russian missile strikes on Ukraine but doesn't condemn the "terrorist attack" against the Crimean bridge, and all of the terrorist acts carried out by the Ukrainian regime during the past 8 years.

There are tensions between the West and Ukraine

Articles:

1

Interactions:

4,294

A site claimed in title that "they" (it intentionally didn't specify who) humiliated Zelensky when he wanted to boss around the European countries. The rest of the article reveals that the "European country" was Bosnia, that the "they" was Milorad Dodik, and that the "humiliation" was a statement made by Dodik.

The US provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

3,769

The Facebook post claimed that it was the Americans who provoked the two Slavic nations (Ukraine and Russia) into war.

The West/US is responsible for the sabotage of Nord Stream

Articles:

1

Interactions:

3,470

Article quotes Putin, saying that the actors behind the sabotage of the pipelines are those who want to sever relations between Russia and the EU.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukrainian refugees are spoiled/ungrateful

Articles:

1

Interactions:

3,287

An author wrote about Poland possibly introducing some payments for the accommodation of Ukrainian refugees in mass accommodation centres, with highly pejorative language calling the Ukrainian refugees parasites and claiming that the Polish deputy interior minister thinks the same way.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:

3

Interactions:

8,471

A Facebook post claimed that Russia is getting stronger while "Europe is going towards its doom".

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

The Ukrainian leadership is corrupt and/or incompetent

Articles:

2

Interactions:

5,374

The writer of the post claimed that Ukraine is ungrateful since it scolds Victor Orban, and changes Hungarian national symbols to Ukrainian ones, despite the fact that he allows the Ukrainian refugees to enter the country.

Western media is lying

Articles:

1

Interactions:

1,989

A post presented an image in different sizes which depicted a BBC journalist, Jeremy Bowen laying on the ground while reporting. The post argued that the journalist is only pretending to be in danger, because a woman can be seen walking towards him. In reality, Bowen reported about civilians desperately trying to cross a bridge and fleeing for their life. The picture is from a video that shows the danger for both the journalists and civilians.

- Russia's October 10th missile attacks against Ukraine strongly influenced Latvia's disinformation landscape this week. As a result, the previously prevalent sub-narratives about sanctions were less common this week; instead, fearmongering about the war's expansion and the possibility of a nuclear attack were the most popular this week.
- Local pro-Kremlin voices have begun to actively promote the idea that peace negotiations with Russia are the only way to stop the war. However, according to propagandists, Ukraine is being egged on by the West to reject any "peaceful" initiatives from Moscow. Military aid from the West is consequently portrayed as another factor that unnecessarily prolongs the war.
- A fear of nuclear catastrophe continues to be cultivated. The message that the Latvian government ought to prepare for nuclear disaster, rather than exacerbate its tensions with Russia, was spread this week.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Latvian news portals this week received 1,500 interactions.

EVENTS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Nuclear disaster
is imminent**

Articles:

2

Interactions:

92

A disinformation page implied that nuclear disaster will begin, and Latvia should prepare for that, instead of trying to stop the war by condemning Russia. Another disinformation page criticized Latvia for not preparing for nuclear disaster, even though it is very possible that it will happen.

MILITARY THREATS TO EASTERN EUROPE/RISK OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

The West will fall

Articles:

2

Interactions:

2,967

A Tiktok video claimed that other European states are actively preparing for war and disaster, implying that the war will expand. A Facebook page shared information that Germany is seriously suffering from consequences of the war, that its energy prices are high, and that Germans do not want to take in any more refugees. The author claims that this will result in the rise of nationalist movements.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

Military aid prolongs the war

Articles:

1

Interactions:

634

A Facebook user claimed that the West is provoking Russia to use more force on Ukraine, including to bombard its towns by supposedly spreading false claims about Russia and helping arm Ukraine. A Facebook photo shared information that Latvia is the leader of helping Ukraine by donating the largest percentage of its GDP, and in the comment section asked when Latvia will become the leader in thinking about their own citizens instead.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

The only way to end the war is to negotiate with Russia

Articles:

2

Interactions:

130

A Facebook post argues that the West is spreading propaganda about the war in Ukraine by claiming that Ukraine is on the verge of winning the war, while actually it is losing and causing a large energy shortage, thus Ukraine should immediately surrender.

LITHUANIA

DebunkEU.org

- The cases about the events of war did not imply any new narratives. The most prominent narrative this week focused on claims that the West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia. Messages that the attack on the Crimean Bridge was a Ukrainian terrorist attack and that the recent missile attacks on Ukrainians cities were a justified response were also observed.
- Disinformation cases focusing on the economic consequences of the war followed the well-established narrative that Russia is not responsible for the worsening situation. One article even claimed that the EU is to blame for the energy crisis due to its supposedly unlawful sanctions, incitement of a coup d'état, NATO expansion, and warmongering.
- The threat of the war expanding beyond Ukraine saw notable attention this week. Claims that the West wants to launch World War III were prevalent. MP Puidokas implied that Ukraine's actions may provoke a nuclear attack and a disinformation portal shared Russian propaganda about the capabilities of its nuclear weapon, the "Poseidon." Zelensky was also accused of losing his mind and escalating the war.
- Various conspiracy theories were also prevalent in the Lithuanian-language disinformation space this week. Some disinformation actors claimed that Ukraine and Russia are working together to destroy the "Slavic white race". Others attacked Andrius Tapinas for initiating crowdfunding for Ukrainian needs instead of a terribly ill girl in Lithuania. In addition, MP Širinskienė misleadingly claimed that the Lithuanian Defense minister leaked classified information about the start of the war to his wife. General Zaluzhny, the Chief Commander of the UAF, was accused of being a Nazi based on low-quality images of a bracelet he wears. (This claim was debunked almost immediately.) Lastly, disinformation actors claimed that Elon Musk agreed to pay for Starlink once again after being visited by American "men in black".
- No disinformation about Ukrainian refugees, military aid to Ukraine, or the treatment of Russian speakers was recorded this week.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Lithuanian news portals this week received 5,100 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing sub-narratives:

Russia is not fighting at full capacity

Articles:

1

Interactions:

3,257

A disinformation actor claimed that Russia is not fighting at full capacity and not targeting important infrastructure; statements that Ukraine will win the war are allegedly false and both Ukrainians and Russians are just "misled brotherly nations".

Nuclear disaster is imminent

Articles:

4

Interactions:

2,205

MP Puidokas implied that Ukraine's actions are approaching a possible nuclear attack and shared a Kremlin propaganda video. The newest attacks on Ukraine were mentioned in the comments as fair retaliation for the blast on the Crimean bridge. A disinformation portal shared probably Russian

The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia

Articles:
5
Interactions:
508

propaganda about the capabilities of Russian nuclear weapon "Poseidon."

Facebook page Pilietis claimed that war in Ukraine is just a bloody business affair for the US and that nobody cares about Ukrainian casualties.

Russia's invasion is justified and legitimate

Articles:
3
Interactions:
231

Facebook page Pilietis claimed that the latest attacks on Ukraine are a response to the "terrorist attack" on the Crimean bridge. A disinformation portal shared Putin's video when reporting on the attacks on Ukraine.

Ukrainians are Nazis

Articles:
1
Interactions:
74

Facebook page Pilietis, based on one low-quality photo, claimed that the Chief Commander of the Armed Forces of Ukraine wears a bracelet with a swastika and thus is a Nazi. This disinformation has already been debunked.

Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes

Articles:
1
Interactions:
1

A disinformation portal claimed that Ukrainians are killing women when carrying out their military operations.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

The inflation and the energy crises are caused by the false political approach of Europe and the US

Articles:
1
Interactions:
759

A Facebook disinformation page claimed that the EU is to blame for the energy crisis due to "unlawful sanctions", incitement of a coup d'état, NATO expansion, and warmongering. Another disinformation actor added that the war is not responsible for the economic situation and rising prices in Lithuania.

MILITARY THREATS TO EASTERN EUROPE/RISK OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine is escalating the war to a global conflict

Articles:

2

Interactions:

731

Disinformation portal bukimevieniingi.lt used the headline "Putin got angry" for an article describing the recent attacks on Ukraine. Another disinformation actor claimed that Zelensky is losing his mind and escalating the war. Russian attacks are claimed to be a response to Zelensky's "insanity".

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine's supporters are ridiculous

Article:

2

Interactions:

7,188

There were claims that Andrius Tapinas is immoral for initiating crowdfunding for Ukraine but not for a very badly ill child in Lithuania, as well as that raising funds for Ukraine is futile in the context of support from bigger countries.

The Lithuanian government is corrupt and/or incompetent

Article:

2

Interactions:

2,098

MP Širinskienė claimed that the Lithuanian Defence Minister revealed classified information about the start of war to his wife (these possible developments were publicly discussed); these claims were shared by a disinformation portal.

The Ukrainian leadership is corrupt and/or incompetent

Article:

1

Interactions:

493

A Facebook user called out Zelensky for wearing New Balance shoes, implying that the "N" logo on the shoes resembles the Russian "Z" symbol.

The war in Ukraine is part of a global conspiracy

Article:

1

Interactions:

215

A Facebook user claimed that the war in Ukraine is a global conspiracy. Specifically, Ukraine and Russia are both working together to destroy the Slavs and the "white race" and to achieve other unnamed "goals."

The EU is controlled by the West

Article:

1

Interactions:

85

A Facebook disinformation page shared Noam Chomsky's interview where he states that Europe and Russia are bound to work together, and that this war is a gift to the US for achieving a submissive Europe.

Western media is lying

Article:

1

Interactions:

60

A Facebook disinformation page called Western media a "US-NATO propaganda machine" and claimed that Ukraine carried out terrorist attacks against the Crimean Bridge.

Governments are using the war in Ukraine to limit the freedoms of their citizens

Article:

1

Interactions:

8

A Facebook disinformation page claimed that Elon Musk changed his decision about not paying for Starlink after "men in black" came to visit him, claiming that the US is limiting the freedom of businesses and citizens. The author also claimed that the war in Ukraine is just a US-led proxy war.

NORTH MACEDONIA

MOST

- Narratives related to the events of the Russia-Ukraine war prevailed this week in terms of both the number of articles and interactions. The most prevalent narrative according to these parameters was that Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians. The narrative was also promoted by Ramzan Kadyrov, who claimed that Ukraine had been committing terrorist attacks in Donbas since 2014.
- The narrative that Ukrainians are Nazis has returned after a period of absence, this time employed by Deputy Head of Russian Security Council Medvedev, who demanded that the Ukrainian establishment must be eliminated completely. Medvedev also engaged in fearmongering, claiming that further Western arms deliveries to Ukraine may lead to World War III.
- The narrative that NATO/The West will attack Belarus was promoted by President Lukashenko, aiming to create a pretext for escalating the war and justifying further cooperation with Russia. All of the narratives detailed above were recorded on 10 October, the day when Russia conducted mass missile strikes against Ukrainian cities.
- As in previous weeks, Russian FM Lavrov and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov accused the West – using the term “Anglo-Saxons” – of being directly engaged in the war. Continued accusations towards the US about the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines were a key component of this message.
- This week, narratives intended to aggrandize Russia primarily focused on the appointment of the new Russian Army General and his notoriety for committing atrocities. This is likely an attempt to boost the plummeting morale of the Russian Army and pro-Russian supporters.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across North Macedonian news portals this week received 1,300 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing narratives:

Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians

Articles:

60

Interactions:

6,255

This narrative was employed by Russian President Putin, as a reaction to the destruction of the Crimean Bridge. He said that ““Kyiv has been using terrorist methods for a long time.” This narrative was also promoted by Kadyrov (whose statements continue to be transmitted in North Macedonia), who blamed Ukraine for having committed terrorist attacks on civilians in Donbas since 2014. The statements were given on the occasion of the massive shelling of civilian infrastructure in Kyiv and 20 other cities across Ukraine. The narrative is another distortion that aims at creating the perception that (1) Crimea is Russian, therefore Ukraine performs terrorist attacks on Russian soil; and (2) Russia is a victim, regardless of the undisputable facts that it invaded a sovereign country, performed a number of war crimes (under investigation), and killed thousands of civilians.

The West/US is responsible for the sabotage of Nord Stream

Articles:
15
Interactions:
1,560

The narrative that the West/US is responsible for the sabotage of Nord Stream continued to be promoted this week and was employed by Russian President Putin. Allegedly, the US is behind the attack because it would stand to benefit from the “sabotage”, since it could then sell its own gas at higher prices.

Ukrainians are Nazis

Articles:
21
Interactions:
721

The narrative that Ukrainians are Nazis was employed by Deputy Head of Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev, who said that the “Nazi political regime in Ukraine” would pose a constant threat to Russia and therefore the goal should be its complete elimination. This narrative is used as an excuse to attempt to justify the invasion of Ukraine, presenting its existence and its “Nazi character” as a direct threat to the existence of Russia. Furthermore, this narrative aims at justifying the massive shelling of civilians and civilian infrastructure across Ukraine.

NATO/the US/the West is/will be directly involved in the war

Articles:
12
Interactions:
434

This narrative was employed in a set of coordinated statements by Russian FM Lavrov and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. They blamed the US for being directly involved in the war, including by sending weapons and military equipment to Ukraine. Lavrov used the term “Anglo-Saxons. (This is the first time that North Macedonian media transmitted the use of this term by a Russian official.) Historically, this narrative has been used to show that Russia has a longstanding adversary (the Anglo-Saxons), which emerged from the Romanov dynasty as an “idea of the threat of Anglo-Saxon global domination”. Throughout the Balkans region, this term has been always used in a negative context as a description for the West and the Western countries.

NATO/The West will attack Belarus

Articles:
1
Interactions:
103

The narrative NATO/The West will attack Belarus was employed by Belarus President Lukashenko. According to him, the pretext for the attack would be Belarus’ involvement in the invasion of Ukraine, which he describes as “bogus”. The narrative aims to create a pretext for escalating the war. It also distorts the fact that Belarus has been directly involved in the Russian aggression as its first official ally since the first days of the invasion.

MILITARY THREATS TO EASTERN EUROPE/RISK OF EXPANDING THE WAR BEYOND UKRAINE

Continuing narratives:

WW3 is imminent

Articles:

12

Interactions:

731

The narrative that WW3 is imminent was promoted by Medvedev, who described the possibility of multiple long-range missile systems (MLRS) deliveries to Kyiv as the fastest way to escalate the conflict to a WW3. He also promoted the narrative that the West is directly involved in the war.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing narratives:

Russia and its allies are strong

Articles:

19

Interactions:

2,017

Narratives about Russian strength were promoted through the articles about the appointment of a new Russian General which glorified him, nicknaming him "General Armageddon" and saying that he will soak his hands in Ukrainian blood. The aim of the narrative is to show that the Russian Army is strong and fearless, and that despite the setbacks, it will manage to win the war. This narrative also aims to boost the plummeting morale in the Russian army and among pro-Russian supporters.

POLAND

Fakenews.pl

- Compared to the July-September 2022 period, we have observed certain shifts in pro-Kremlin propaganda in Poland. The topic that used to dominate – anti-refugee messaging and calls against the “Ukrainization of Poland” – has lost some of its prominence. Similarly, historical narratives (that were once the main fuel for pro-Russian propagandists) continue to be observed but as a background for other messages.
- Instead, the developments of the war have been receiving increasing attention. In that sense, pro-Russian propaganda in Poland has begun to resemble that in other regions. The key narratives are: i) Ukraine is losing the war; ii) NATO/USA/the West is directly involved in the war; and iii) Ukrainians attack civilians and commit war crimes.
- Likewise, the newly emerging narrative that Ukraine commits terrorist attacks against Russia civilians was also observed in Poland this week.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Polish news portals this week received 6,300 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians

Articles:
4

Interactions:
185,864

A viral video, which garnered over 181K views on Telegram, depicts the mass missile attacks against Ukrainian cities as the consequence of Ukrainians “gleefully” celebrating the “terrorist” attacks on the Crimean bridge.

Another video presents the appeal of Ukrainian militants declaring that they will carry out purges in areas controlled by Russia.

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:
14

Interactions:
19,423

Various articles about Russian military successes, including recent missile and drone strikes. One video allegedly depicts Ukrainian soldiers refusing to carry out orders and attempting to desert. Another video claims that the Ukrainian military authorities are indiscriminately mobilizing all citizens and are ready to sacrifice them for this unnecessary war.

NATO/the US/the West is/will be directly involved in the war

Articles:
6

Interactions:
12,168

According to an expert, Poland will be directly involved in military operations in Ukraine due to pressure from the US. Other posts claim that NATO is already an active participant in the war against Russia.

Russia's invasion is justified and legitimate

Articles:
3
Interactions:
7,377

A graphic representing the map of the Central & Eastern European region in 1989 and 2022 claims that "none of the countries that border Poland before 1990 exist today".

NATO aspirations provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia

Articles:
1
Interactions:
3,488

An article quotes Donald Trump's claims that Ukraine's NATO aspirations provoked Russia.

Poland will annex Ukraine

Articles:
1
Interactions:
4,675

Article shows graphics of the areas that supposedly will be annexed by Poland. According to the post, after Ukraine's loss, its Western territories will go to Poland, while its Eastern and Southern territories will become Russia; only the central region will remain under Kyiv's leadership.

Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes

Articles:
2
Interactions:
1,715

One article claims that Ukrainian troops are attacking civilians. Another post alleges that a former POW from the Azov regiment claims that Ukrainian border guards in Mariupol engaged in widespread looting of gold.

Russia is not fighting at full capacity

Articles:
1
Interactions:
507

A post recalling Putin's statement that its goal is not to destroy Ukraine and that it would respond militarily to NATO's actions.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukrainian refugees undermine host countries' internal stability

Articles:
6
Interactions:
3,055

A thank you post addressed to all those who took part in the STOP UKRAINIZATION protest in Gdańsk.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Sanctions hurt the West
more than Russia**

Articles:

4

Interactions:

8,400

Several posts quote the words of Victor Orban, who said that sanctions are harmful to Europe, not Russia.

Another video reports that Ukraine has been forced to suspend energy deliveries to Poland due to the recent attacks on its energy infrastructure; the author claims that Poland will now suffer an energy crisis.

A Telegram post blames Ukraine for the bankruptcy of a 418-year-old German bakery, writing that it survived the Thirty Years' War, Napoleon, and Hitler but could not survive Scholz and the "Ukro-hysterics".

MISCELLANEOUS

New sub-narratives:

**NATO/West also are
responsible for Ukrainian
war crimes**

Articles:

5

Interactions:

8,868

The author of the post recalls the events of the war in Yugoslavia when NATO bombed Belgrade and juxtaposed it with the bombing of Kyiv.

Continuing sub-narratives:

**The Ukrainian leadership
is corrupt and/or
incompetent**

Articles:

3

Interactions:

11,852

One post suggests that Ukrainian president Zelensky is a drug addict.

**Governments are using
the war in Ukraine to limit
the freedoms of
their citizens**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

9,228

Conspiracy theory that potassium iodide tablets contain harmful substances and are designed to control the population.

**Poland should not help
Ukraine due to their past
historical conflicts**

Articles:

4

Interactions:

1,103

Video presenting an unspecified public assembly in Warsaw with the caption that it is Ukrainians celebrating the Volhynian slaughter.

An article writes that the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance is organizing an internet marathon that promotes the UPA.

A Facebook page promotes a petition demanding that Ukraine allow the exhumation of Poles murdered in Volhynia.

**Politicians care about
Ukraine at the expense of
their own citizens**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

639

The post presents a financial report on spending allocated towards helping refugees and comparing this data with benefits allocated for citizens.

ROMANIA

GlobalFocus Center

- This week, we observed an increased number of narratives about the negative effects of the war, particularly the risk of its spillover to other countries. Far-right and pro-Kremlin voices (Liviu Plesoianu, Sergiu Mihalcea, Fabian Anton, and others) speculated this week about possible directions of Russian nuclear strikes and stressed that countries like Moldova and Romania are more likely to be in danger than Western Europe.
- Pro-Kremlin voices continue to blame the West for initiating and extending the war. Not only anti-US, but also anti-French statements were observed in Romania this week. The EU is portrayed as a US pawn and Russia's network of allies is exaggerated.
- Narratives about the events of the war tend to promote the idea that a peace agreement, even on terms that are not acceptable to Ukraine, should be reached in the nearest future. Interestingly, pro-Russian actors in Romania claimed that Donald Trump will be able to achieve peace once he is re-elected.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Romanian news portals this week received 9,900 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New narratives:

Negotiations must be held directly between US/NATO and Russia

Articles:

4

Interactions:

9,874

A pro-Russian influencer, implicitly quoting Donald Trump, claims that all of the current negotiations focused on ending the war have excluded Ukraine from involvement in dictating the terms.

Several pro-Russian Romanian voices also claim that only Donald Trump – once he is re-elected – can bring the war in Ukraine to an end.

Continuing narratives:

WW3 is imminent

Articles:

1

Interactions:

1,595

A pro-Russian account quotes Donald Trump, who claims that WWIII will begin if Ukraine does not negotiate with Russia.

The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

740

Posts on a Facebook group for Romanians in the UK claim that Ukraine attacked Russia on American orders.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continued narratives:

Sanctions hurt Ukraine more than Russia

Articles:

1

Views:

815

Conspiracy theory website Gandeste Romania claims that sanctions hurt Ukraine more than Russia.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continued narratives:

The inflation and the energy crises are caused by the false political approach of Europe and the US

Articles:

1

Views:

1,182

The EU is either controlled by the US or ruled by fools, claims far-right politician Liviu Plesoianu. The declaration is prompted by Ukraine's requests for weapons, which is contrasted by Mr Plesoianu with the "real" emergency created by energy prices.

MILITARY THREAT TO EUROPE / WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

New narratives:

Putin is weakening the West

Articles:

1

Views:

810

Putin is not fighting against Ukraine but is fighting (and succeeding) to weaken the West instead, claims Ivan Frakov, quoted by influencer Fabian Anton.

Romania is under threat

Articles:

1

Views:

791

Romania risks to see Russia taking over the Moldovan port of Giurgiulesti, claims Sergiu Mihalcea, a pro-Russian journalist and influencer.

Continuing narratives:

The West will sacrifice Eastern Europe if war spills over

Articles:
3
Views:
2,603

Far-right politician Liviu Plesoianu claims that Romania is in danger of nuclear reprisals, particularly since French President Macron declared that a bomb in the region does not affect the fundamental interests of France.

Influencer Dan Chitic claims that Romania's sovereignty is less important for the West than Ukraine's.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continued narratives:

The EU and/or NATO and/or the West are weak and will break apart

Articles:
1
Views:
2,183

A conspiracy theory website claims that the war started because of the stupidity of Western leaders.

Influencer Oana-Elena Lovin claims that Macron is more anti-Ukraine than Le Pen.

Western society does not support Ukraine

Articles:
1
Views:
1,916

Anti-Ukrainian politician says that supporting Ukraine means ignoring the needs of Romania.

Ukraine is not a sovereign state

Articles:
1
Views:
1,314

Sergiu Mihalcea, a pro-Kremlin influencer, claims Ukraine is not and never was a real nation.

The war in Ukraine is part of a global conspiracy

Articles:
1
Views:
677

Former French military officer Adrien Boquet, who claimed he has seen Ukrainian Armed Forces bringing dead bodies to Bucha in order to stage Russian war crimes, claims there was an attempt on his life in Istanbul.

The EU is under US influence

Articles:
1
Views:
643

Pro-Russian webpage Gandeste Romania claims that (a) by providing military aid Romania instantly becomes Russia's enemy; and b) the US pushed the EU into the war.

Russia and its allies are strong

Articles:

1

Views:

587

Influencer Dan Chitic uses the fact that Russia will lead the proceedings of a pan-Asian conference as evidence that Russia has numerous allies.

SERBIA

European Western Balkans

- The dominant topic for Serbian pro-Russian media this week concerned Russia's missile attacks against numerous Ukrainian cities. According to disinformation actors, Moscow was simply retaliating for the terrorist attacks against the Crimean bridge. This type of messaging is consistent with the well-established strategy of portraying Ukraine and the West as the main aggressors and justifying Russian atrocities as "legitimate" defensive responses.
- Another prevalent topic discussed by pro-Russian propagandists this week concerned the events of the Russia-Ukraine war. The most popular narrative was that nuclear disaster is imminent.
- Serbian Interior Minister Aleksandar Vulin stated on 13 October that Serbs need to accept the idea that their country has no place in the EU and that the West wants to destroy Republika Srpska.
- Serbia remains the only EU candidate country that has not yet imposed sanctions on Russia. However, the President of Serbia, several times during the observed period, announced the possibility that the new Government may alter Serbia's current position. At the same time, high-level officials and pro-government media continue to promote pro-Russian and anti-Western narratives.
- Accusations that NATO will soon be directly involved in this war and that the West forced Russia to attack Ukraine are continuing narratives this week.
- We did not observe any new narratives this week.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Serbian news portals this week received 469 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing narratives:

Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes

Articles:

1

Views:

4,280

A post was published on the Facebook page of Sputnik Serbia. Sputnik reported on the statement of Vladimir Putin, who claims that the explosion on the Crimean bridge was a terrorist act committed by Ukraine. Putin said that Ukraine's goal is to destroy civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The West is undermining peace negotiation efforts

Articles:

2

Interactions:

2,500

A post was published on the Facebook page of [Sputnik Serbia](#). According to FM Lavrov, the international situation cannot be worse. He claims that US President Biden does not want to negotiate with Putin. He emphasized that Russia has never rejected peace negotiations, and no one is offering any reasonable proposals.

NATO is/will be directly involved in the war

Articles:

1

Interactions:

2,140

A post was published on the Facebook page of [Sputnik Serbia](#). The post reported Putin's statement where he expressed hope that NATO will not attack Russia. According to Putin, confrontations between the NATO army and the Russian army would be a dangerous step that could lead to global catastrophe.

Nuclear disaster is imminent

Articles:

1

Interactions:

601

A post was published on pro-Russian portal [drugačije.srbijadanas.com](#). Russia is increasing the number of strategic nuclear bombers at an air base near the Finnish and Norwegian borders. The international community is concerned about the build-up of nuclear bombers.

Belarus is prepared for mobilization in the event of war

Articles:

1

Interactions:

460

A post was published at the pro-Russian portal [drugačije.srbijadanas.com](#). A portal reported that Belarus President Aleksandar Lukashenko and Russian President Putin agreed on the deployment of a joint regional military unit. He reported Lukashenko's statement that if the threat level reached the current, Belarus will activate the Federal Government unit.

Ukraine should not/will not become a NATO member

Articles:

1

Interactions:

216

A post was published on the pro-Russian portal [Pravda.rs](#). NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that the alliance will not defend Ukraine. The portal wrote that Ukrainian President Zelensky called on NATO to launch a pre-emptive nuclear attack on Russia, while Ukrainian Foreign Minister said that Ukraine "de facto" became a member of NATO".

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:

2

Interactions:

2,006

A post was published on the Facebook page of [Sputnik Serbia](#). Sputnik reported a statement of a German musician who criticized European sanctions against Russia. The member of pop-rock band "Modern Talking" said that the Ruble is rising due to the sanctions, while the Euro is falling.

The West is secretly trading with Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

623

A post was published on the Facebook page of [Sputnik Serbia](#). Sputnik Serbia published an infographic showing that 13 European countries increased their imports of products from Russia despite the sanctions. First among them is Germany. The infographic does not offer any sources for this data.

MILITARY THREATS TO EASTERN EUROPE/THREAT OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

The West will fall

Articles:

3

Interactions:

720

The article was published on the pro-Russian portal [web.tribune](#). The European electricity market is threatened by an imbalance due to the cessation of electricity exports from Ukraine. The price of electricity in European countries will reach astronomical levels, and the result may be the collapse of the European Union.

SLOVAKIA

Infosecurity.sk

- This week, the most prevalent narratives involved claims that Western institutions are lying, as well as that both Slovakia and Ukraine are being controlled by the West.
- Claims that NATO will not protect Slovakia remain loud. The topic of the Nord Stream sabotage is also still present in local pro-Russian media.
- For the second week in a row, the topic of economic sanctions has barely appeared in Slovak pro-Russian disinformation. However, accusations that Ukraine is opposed to peace and is being egged on by the West to continue the war have grown in popularity. Russian civilians are portrayed as the “real” victims of the war, unlike the Ukrainians who tragically perished in the recent missile and drone attacks against Ukrainian cities.
- This week, the Slovak police warned the country’s citizens about the attempts of pro-Russian disinformation actors to misleadingly call for peace; in response, pro-Kremlin voices accused the Slovak authorities of propaganda.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Slovak news portals this week received 18,100 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New sub-narratives:

Western politicians don’t care about Russian lives

Articles:

2

Interactions:

16,401

Some disinformation actors in Slovakia claimed that when Russians were attacked, European politicians were celebrating or remained silent and when Ukrainians are being attacked, the response is much different.

Continuing sub-narratives:

Russia’s invasion is justified and legitimate

Articles:

4

Interactions:

16,401

Numerous posts spread the narrative that it is what Ukraine deserves because it is continuously provoking Russia.

The West is undermining peace negotiation efforts

Articles:

4

Interactions:

11,039

The narrative about the West undermining peace negotiations remains prevalent in Slovakia. This week, the Slovak police even issued a statement, warning the country’s citizens about this narrative and fake calls for peace by pro-Russian disinformation actors.

The West/US is responsible for the sabotage of Nord Stream

Articles:

1

Interactions:

9,063

The topic of Nord Stream sabotage is still present in Slovakia. One post claimed that the US is responsible.

Ukraine does not want peace

Articles:

1

Interactions:

1,486

One post cited the Kremlin, which claimed that Ukraine's entry into NATO will lead to World War 3 and Kyiv is aware of this.

MILITARY THREATS TO EASTERN EUROPE/RISK OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narrative:

WW3 is imminent

Articles:

2

Interactions:

9,607

Two posts claimed that WW3 is imminent. One post also cited Vladimir Putin. This narrative may be very dangerous for the society because it spreads fear.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narrative:

Military aid is weakening/jeopardizing the countries that provide it

Articles:

1

Interactions:

19,174

An opposition politician wrote a letter to the Slovak president in which he expressed concerns about whether the export of Slovak ammunition and weapons to Ukraine reduces the combat capability of Slovakia. This is, however, not true.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Western society does not support Ukraine

Articles:

5

Interactions:

19,178

Slovak police warned the country's citizens that disinformation actors may be manipulatively calling for peace. In response, pro-Russian voices claimed that Slovak police spreads propaganda and lies.

Western media is lying

Articles:

1

Interactions:

15,363

Multiple posts claimed that the mainstream media are lying. This has become an increasingly more popular narrative in Slovakia.

**Slovakia is controlled
by the West**

Articles:

5

Interactions:

11,109

Numerous posts spread the narrative about Slovakia being controlled by the West and not being independent and sovereign. One post says that President Čaputová is a “maid for the Americans”.

**The EU and/or NATO
and/or the West are weak
and will break apart**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

3,394

Several NATO soldiers left Slovakia. In reaction, an opposition politician claimed that, in case of an attack on Slovakia, NATO would not help. Therefore, Slovakia must leave NATO.

UKRAINE

Detector Media

Note: Detector Media's contribution exclusively features content from Ukrainian Russian-language Telegram channels.

- This week, Russian propaganda in Ukraine was focused on the massive bombing campaign against numerous Ukrainian cities. Such disinformation has been focused on breeding panic and convincing Ukrainians that any future military successes will similarly be followed by heavy aerial attacks. Pro-Russian actors have attempted to reanimate Russia's now largely out-of-date image as a strong and fearsome military power.
- Fake stories about Zelensky fleeing Kyiv, Western embassies urgently evacuating to Poland, and military build-ups near the Belarus border were all used to shake Ukrainians' confidence in their safety. Disinformation actors also attempted to undermine images of Ukrainian resilience by discrediting the work of Ukrainian volunteers.
- Ukraine has continued to be accused of being a terrorist state, provoking Russia to answer "symmetrically", and "encouraging Belarus to step into the war."
- Another popular message this week concerned corruption in various spheres; this week, such accusations were even leveled against athletes and medical professionals.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing narratives:

Ukraine's leadership does not care about its people

Articles:

4

Views:

4,613,500

Pro-Russian Telegram channels spread the idea that the Ukrainian authorities want to use Ukrainians as "human shields". It was also mentioned that the authorities know, but do not usually warn Ukrainians about the upcoming bombings. According to them, the more civilians die (especially children) the better it is for the message that Russia is a terrorist country.

Pro-Russian telegram channels also claim that it is more important for the Office of the President to sell electricity to Europe than to provide it to Ukrainians, who will have to pay increased prices for energy.

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:

4

Views:

3,405,800

Pro-Russian Telegram channels spread the theory that Ukraine's air defence systems are overloaded and therefore cannot cope with a large number of missiles. It was also mentioned that anti-aircraft missiles are old or improperly stored. In addition, they promote the theory that air defense can only shoot down drones and old missiles.

**The West knows that
Russia is winning the war**

Articles:

4

Views:

3,039,547

Fake posts were spread saying that EU embassies have evacuated from Ukraine, implying that Russian victory is imminent.

**The West is using Ukraine
to wage war against Russia**

Articles:

3

Views:

3,038,500

Pro-Russian Telegram channels spread the message that the war is beneficial for the Ukrainian authorities and for the West.

**Ukraine's informational
space is controlled by the
state authorities**

Articles:

8

Views:

2,956,722

Pro-Russian Telegram channels continue to try to shake the confidence of Ukrainians in the authorities. The thesis that the government lies and does not say everything is not new in the information space of Ukraine. This time they write that Russia is striking Ukraine during the day so that the authorities do not lie about the consequences.

Pro-Russian Telegram channels also write that the Ukrainian authorities want to shift the attention of Ukrainians in order to stop panic. Allegedly, the authorities have already given instructions to the bloggers on how to do so.

**Russia is not fighting at full
capacity**

Articles:

5

Views:

2,400,974

Pro Russian Telegram channels spread disinformation that the Ukrainian authorities lied that Kyiv is well protected by air defense systems. They are trying to convince people that Russia simply did not launch massive missile strikes on the capital.

**The only way to end the
war is to negotiate with
Russia**

Articles:

6

Views:

2,010,300

Pro-Russian Telegram channels try to present Vladimir Putin as a peacemaker who leaves room for a peaceful resolution of the war. At the same time, the posts claim that the Ukrainian authorities and the West do not want a peaceful agreement, but want to the war to be continued. They also add that terrorist attacks on the territory of Russia will continue.

**Reports of Russian war
crimes are
exaggerated/fake news**

Articles:

6

Views:

1,770,400

Pro-Russian Telegram channels write that striking the Crimean bridge was a terrorist attack. Therefore, Russia's mass strikes against Ukraine was a response to a terrorist attack. They also claim that this is what the Ukrainian government wanted.

Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes

Articles:
4
Views:
1,117,441

Propagandists claim that the Armed Forces of Ukraine attacked a transportation station for civilians in Donetsk.

Ukraine will attack Belarus

Articles:
5
Views:
987,691

According to the post, Belarus lets Russian soldiers on its territory as part of the military cooperation; allegedly it is a counteraction to Ukrainian plans to attack Belarus.

Ukraine is blackmailing politicians to force them to be on their side

Articles:
2
Views:
865,700

Pro-Russian Telegram channels write that the main goal of the President's Office is to involve the United States in the conflict, which will allow Ukraine to transfer the conflict from a local to a global one and receive full military assistance. In addition, they write that the authorities expected more devastating strikes from Russia after the attack on the Crimean bridge, as if this was a plan to obtain air defense for Ukraine.

There are tensions between the West and Ukraine

Articles:
2
Views:
714,668

Disinformation actors present the incident with Elon Musk deciding to stop paying for Starlinks after Ukrainians "offended him" as evidence of widespread tensions between the West and Ukraine.

The West is losing interest in helping Ukraine

Articles:
2
Views:
543,300

The pro-Russian Telegram channel spreads the theory that the West will not protect Ukraine even in the event of a nuclear attack.

Ukrainians are Nazis

Articles:
1
Views:
187,200

The pro-Russian propagandist claims that, for Ukraine, Azov soldiers are more valuable than other soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine because of their Nazi ideology..

Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians

Articles:
2
Views:
133,604

The post claims that Dmitrii Medvedev, Head of the Security Council, said that the "terrorists" who ordered attack of the Kerch bridge should be punished.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing narratives:

Russia is unaffected by sanctions	Articles: 5 Views: 1,655,418	The post argues that Western sanctions do not affect Russia because it has a large trade surplus despite the sanctions.
Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia	Articles: 4 Views: 586,521	<p>The authors of the post claim that a previously unseen energy crisis has arrived in Europe. According to the post, it started because of the war in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed by the EU against Russia.</p> <p>The message also says that due to the energy crisis, the forests in Europe will be damaged as people will start burning firewood.</p> <p>Such posts frequently feature quotes from Viktor Orban.</p>
Europe is threatened by an energy crisis	Articles: 1 Views: 90,200	The author of the post claims that, due to the energy crisis in Europe, there will be blackouts in the EU countries. However, the head of the Bundestag is not afraid of this, because when he was born, electricity was not yet widespread.
Ukraine is bankrupt	Articles: 2 Views: 16,320	According to the posts, agriculture is the only strength of the Ukrainian economy and now it is in recession.

CONDITION OF RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MINORITIES

Continuing narratives:

Russian citizens are being attacked in X country	Articles: 1 Views: 764,181	Propagandist Anatoliy Shariy claims that the US leadership has warned Ukrainians against any further provocations similar to the assassination of Darya Dugina.
X country is Russophobic / Russian culture is being attacked	Articles: 1 Views: 303,562	The dead cannot fight back - this is the main message of propaganda intended to claim that "Ukrainian Russophobes" are unjustly fighting with the monuments of notable (dead) Russians.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continuing narratives:

The US is using Ukraine to promote its military-industrial complex

Articles:

1

Views:

80,900

The post states that the lend-lease procedure is beneficial for the US, but not for Ukraine because the US provides weapons and funds that will have to be eventually returned.

Western military aid is useless

Articles:

1

Views:

16,431

The post states that Portugal is not interested in providing substantial military aid to Ukraine.

MILITARY THREAT TO EASTERN EUROPE / WAT EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Continuing narratives:

Russia is losing the war and will use nuclear weapons

Articles:

2

Views:

952,300

The message says that Europe will allow Russia to launch a nuclear attack on Ukraine. The author of the channel draws this conclusion based on Borrell's quote that in the event of a nuclear attack on Ukraine, Russia will not be retaliated with a nuclear strike.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Continuing narratives:

Ukrainian refugees are prioritized over the host country citizens/inhabitants

Articles:

2

Views:

211,000

The posts claim that Germany prioritises Ukrainian refugees over other nationalities.

Ukrainian refugees are no longer welcome

Articles:

1

Views:

111,100

The authors of the post claim that Ukrainian refugees are being rejected en masse in the UK, and about 50,000 Ukrainians will remain on the streets.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing narratives:

The Ukrainian leadership is corrupt and/or incompetent

Articles:
29
Views:
10,209,981

Manipulative posts claiming that even Ukrainian professional sport is corrupt and that athletes are under pressure to conform to pro-Ukrainian positions.

The post also claims that Ukrainian medical officials do not care about their patients.

Ukrainian volunteers are corrupt

Articles:
10
Views:
6,079,241

The author of the message claims that Ukrainian volunteers deceive people and collect money for unnecessary things that Ukraine can get for free.

The West wants to get rid of Zelensky

Articles:
4
Views:
1,077,600

Pro-Russian Telegram channels began spreading the theory that Volodymyr Zelenskyy left Kyiv in early February. The post claims that he has been lying this entire time about being in Kyiv. This narrative appeared after the story of foreign journalists who recorded a video with the President with a greenscreen background. According to the post, the Western lobby promotes Zaluzhny, Klitschko and Prytula, and also keeps Poroshenko and Tymoshenko in the background.

The US provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia

Articles:
2
Views:
977,000

According to the post, the US caused the war between Russia and Ukraine and that US Democrats are forcing Ukrainians to conduct offensive operations.

The EU is under US influence

Articles:
1
Views:
949,700

The author claims that the US sells gas to the EU at a price that is four times more expensive than it charges domestically.

The EU/US leadership is incompetent

Articles:
1
Views:
880,700

The author claims that the leadership of the EU is degrading. He draws this conclusion on the basis of a cryptic quote of an unnamed European diplomat.

**Poland should not help
Ukraine because it does
not owe it anything**

Articles:

1

Views:

92,500

The post says that Poland is beginning to change its policy towards Ukraine, because it has realized that if the war continues for a long time, it will have a very negative impact on Poland.

**The only way to end the
war is to negotiate with
Russia**

Articles:

1

Views:

85,400

The message quotes the self-proclaimed president of Belarus, who accused Zelensky that he does not want to negotiate with Russia about peace but wants to continue the war.

NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

Working Definitions:

Disinformation

1. False or misleading information spread **deliberately via Kremlin-backed or Kremlin-aligned outlets.**
2. Not-attributable false or misleading information which **fits with existing HS narratives, aims or activities.**
3. Content based on verifiable information which is unbalanced or skewed, amplifies, or exaggerates certain elements for effect, or uses emotive or inflammatory language **to achieve affects which fit within existing Kremlin narratives, aims, or activities.**
4. For the purposes of this report, disinformation also can be spread either organically through human ignorance and uncertainty or through poor journalistic standards, as long as the narrative in question verifiably originates with Kremlin-backed or Kremlin-aligned sources.

Please note that the sub-narrative headings listed in red are the new sub-narratives identified during the week in question.

List of Narrative and Sub-Narrative Headings:

1. EVENTS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

- 1a. Ukraine is losing the war
- 1b. Russia only attacked because Ukraine was planning to attack it first
- 1c. Ukraine is causing the global food crisis
- 1d. Ukrainians are Nazis
- 1e. Russia is not fighting at full capacity
- 1f. The West forced Russia to attack Ukraine
- 1g. Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes
- 1h. Ukrainians are welcoming Russian "saviours"
- 1i. Poland will annex Ukraine
- 1j. Reports of Russian war crimes are exaggerated/fake news
- 1k. The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia
- 1l. Foreign mercenaries are fighting for Ukraine
- 1m. There are tensions between the West and Ukraine
- 1n. The West is losing interest in helping Ukraine
- 1o. The West wants Ukraine to surrender
- 1p. Russian troops are advancing / achieving success
- 1q. The US provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia
- 1r. Ukraine is committing terrorist attacks against Russian civilians
- 1s. Ukrainians refuse to fight
- 1t. Russia's invasion is justified and legitimate
- 1u. NATO/The West will attack Russia
- 1v. NATO/The West is trying to divide Slavs/Orthodox Christians
- 1w. Ukraine organizes protests/riots financed by the West
- 1x. National minorities refuse to fight for Ukraine
- 1y. Ukrainian civil society wants to make concessions to Russia
- 1z. Ukrainians are collecting money for a nuclear weapon
- 1aa. The inflation & energy crises are caused by the West's misguided political approach
- 1ab. Russia will stop all gas deliveries to Europe

- 1ac. The West knows that Russia is winning the war
- 1ad. Bulgaria is dependent on Russia
- 1ae. The West is causing the global food crisis
- 1af. Ukraine's informational space is controlled by the state authorities
- 1ag. NATO aspirations provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia
- 1ah. If Ukraine is dismembered, the countries on its Western border will receive new territories
- 1ai. Ukraine is blackmailing politicians to force them to be on their side
- 1aj. Ukrainian troops kill their own soldiers
- 1ak. Russia is liberating Ukraine
- 1al. The West is also responsible for Ukraine's crimes against civilians
- 1am. Ukrainians do not support Zelensky
- 1an. North Macedonia has become a legitimate target for Russia
- 1ap. The Azov battalion is a terrorist organization
- 1aq. Ukraine wants to annex territories from neighboring countries
- 1ar. Ukraine hurt Slovakia by stopping oil transport
- 1as. Recognizing Russia as a terrorist state will not help Ukraine
- 1at. Ukraine is preparing a nuclear attack
- 1au. Nuclear disaster is imminent
- 1av. Ukraine's leadership does not care about its people
- 1aw. North Korea will join Russia in the fight against Ukraine
- 1ax. NATO/the US/the West is or will be directly involved in the war
- 1ay. The West is undermining peace negotiation efforts
- 1az. The West is profiting on the war in Ukraine
- 1ba. Ukraine wants to demilitarise Russia
- 1bb. Ukraine is profiting from the war in Ukraine
- 1bc. War in Ukraine has made Russia stronger
- 1bd. Belarus is being forced into complying with allied agreements with Russia
- 1be. NATO/The West will attack Belarus / wants to drag it into war
- 1bf. Mobilization in Russia is very successful
- 1bg. Ukraine "referendums" are legitimate
- 1bh. USA is using Ukraine to destroy Europe
- 1bi. China is sending soldiers to Ukraine
- 1bj. Nobody can win in Ukraine
- 1bk. Russia may attack Romania
- 1bl. The West/US is responsible for the sabotage of Nord Stream
- 1bm. Ukraine should not/will not become a NATO member
- 1bn. Ukraine tried to falsify the referendum results
- 1bo. Belarus is not participating in the war in Ukraine
- 1bp. Belarus is prepared for mobilization in the event of war
- 1bq. Russia's losses in the war are small
- 1br. Ukraine does not want peace
- 1bs. Strikes on Ukrainian cities are legitimate
- 1bt. Negotiations must be held directly between US/NATO and Russia
- 1bu. Western politicians don't care about Russian lives

2. UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

- 2a. Ukrainian refugees undermine host countries' internal stability
- 2b. Ukrainian refugees are spoiled/ungrateful
- 2c. Ukrainian refugees are prioritized over the host country citizens/inhabitants
- 2d. Ukrainian refugees are no longer welcome

- 2e. X country should restrict the activities of Ukrainian refugees
- 2f. Ukrainians are willingly coming back to settle in territories recently occupied by Russia

3. ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

- 3a. Russia is unaffected by sanctions
- 3b. Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia
- 3c. The West is secretly trading with Russia
- 3d. The inflation and the energy crises are caused by the false political approach of Europe and the US
- 3e. Russia will stop all gas deliveries for Europe
- 3f. Economic sanctions on Russia caused the war
- 3g. Sanctions hurt Ukraine more than Russia
- 3h. Europe is threatened by an energy crisis
- 3i. The West punishes Georgia for not imposing sanctions on Russia
- 3j. Sanctions are making Russia stronger
- 3k. The West is abandoning Ukraine, despite its dependence on Western financing
- 3l. Ukraine is bankrupt
- 3m. Georgia should help Russia bypass sanctions
- 3n. Western citizens do not support sanctions against Russia
- 3o. Sanctions are being imposed on innocent people
- 3p. The complete shutdown of Russian gas will destroy Germany

4. CONDITIONS OF RUSSIANS AND RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MINORITIES

- 4a. Ukrainians discriminate against/terrorize Russian speakers
- 4b. X country is Russophobic / Russian culture is being attacked
- 4c. Russian citizens are being attacked in X country
- 4d. The West and its proxies are inciting Russophobia

5. MILITARY THREATS TO EASTERN EUROPE/THREAT OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

- 5a. There will be a second front against Russia in Georgia
- 5b. Poland is escalating the war
- 5c. Putin will wipe out Europe with the Sarmat
- 5d. The West will sacrifice Eastern Europe if war spills over
- 5e. Russia is losing the war and will use nuclear weapons
- 5f. Germany is going to attack Crimea
- 5g. There will be a new Soviet Union
- 5h. The West will fall
- 5i. Poland will be the next target of attack
- 5j. Poland wants to overthrow the EU leadership
- 5k. Ukraine will attack the EU after winning the war
- 5l. WW3 is imminent
- 5m. The West wants Ukraine to occupy Russia
- 5n. Putin is weakening the West
- 5o. Romania is under threat

6. MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

- 6a. Western military aid is being misused/stolen
- 6b. Ukraine will use Western weapons to kill Russians/attack Russian territory
- 6c. Military aid prolongs the war
- 6d. Military aid is weakening/endangering the countries that provide it
- 6e. Ukraine will use military aid against the West

- 6f. The majority financial aid for Ukraine is being stolen by the country's official
- 6g. Donating for military aid is immoral
- 6h. The West is to blame for future Ukrainian losses because it does not provide enough aid
- 6i. The West will no longer provide Ukraine with military aid
- 6j. Western military aid is useless
- 6k. Military aid forces Russia to expand its actions beyond Donbas
- 6l. The Office of the President is covering up weapons smuggling
- 6m. Ukraine does not appreciate the aid being provided
- 6n. The US is using Ukraine to promote its military-industrial complex
- 6o. Ukraine is taking aid away from other countries in need

7. MISCELLANEOUS / OTHER

- 7a. Biological weapons labs in Ukraine
- 7b. X country should be neutral to prevent being dragged into war
- 7c. The Ukrainian leadership is corrupt and/or incompetent
- 7d. The EU and/or NATO and/or the West are weak and will break apart
- 7e. X country should not help Ukraine due to their past historical conflicts
- 7f. The EU can't help Ukraine
- 7g. Russian soldiers have huge popular support
- 7h. Russia's diplomats excel over their Western counterparts
- 7i. Western media is lying
- 7j. The West is hypocritical for caring about Ukraine so much
- 7k. Ukraine is not a sovereign state
- 7l. Third World countries are choosing Russia over the West
- 7m. The Ukrainian leadership is pretentious/demanding
- 7n. Politicians care about Ukraine at the expense of their own citizens
- 7o. Ukraine was given EU candidate status in exchange for concessions to Russia
- 7p. X country is controlled by the West
- 7q. Certain powers benefit from the war
- 7r. Ukrainian volunteers are corrupt
- 7s. The EU is under US influence
- 7t. Russia has the world's support
- 7u. The Bulgarian army is preparing to enter the war
- 7v. The EU/US leadership is incompetent
- 7w. The war in Ukraine is part of a global conspiracy
- 7x. Governments are using the war in Ukraine to limit the freedoms of their citizens
- 7y. Moldova is putting political pressure on Russia
- 7z. Russia and its allies are strong
- 7aa. The war in Ukraine is not real/staged
- 7ab. The only way to end the war is to negotiate with Russia
- 7ac. NATO is a Satanist organization
- 7ad. Life under Russian occupation is better than under Ukrainian rule
- 7ae. Western society does not support Ukraine
- 7af. Ukrainians want to blackmail Europe with gas
- 7ag. Ukrainian soldiers are cannibals
- 7ah. Russia plans to increase its presence and influence in the Balkans
- 7ai. Poland should not help Ukraine because it does not owe it anything
- 7aj. The West wants to get rid of Zelensky
- 7ak. The destruction of Ukrainian statehood is inevitable
- 7al. Most Slovaks support Russia

- 7am. The EU is under Ukraine's influence
- 7an. Ukrainians engage in organ trafficking
- 7ao. There are tensions among Ukraine's leadership
- 7ap. EU politicians are Nazis
- 7aq. The war in Ukraine was started so that energy companies could take over Russian profits
- 7ar. The West wants to make us poor
- 7as. X government/country is fascist
- 7at. Gorbachev was an American agent
- 7au. Ukraine forces people to leave Donbas by cutting off gas and water
- 7av. The US are a major landowner in Ukraine
- 7aw. The US is systematically lying to their people
- 7ax. Russia is not violating international law
- 7ay. The world is controlled by globalists
- 7az. Polish Government representatives sympathize with or support the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army)
- 7ba. Ukraine exports poisonous grain to Bulgaria
- 7bb. Zelensky is gay
- 7bc. Activity in Ukraine's skies could be UFOs
- 7bd. Ukrainian pedophiles collected materials about raped Russian children
- 7bf. The EU is a dictatorship
- 7bg. The EU wants to destroy Europe
- 7bh. Ukrainian media is lying
- 7bi. Some politicians supporting Ukraine are Russian agents
- 7bj. NATO has committed far worse crimes than Russia
- 7bk. Russia has a new secret weapon
- 7bl. Nuclear weapons do not exist