



Ukraine War Disinfo Working Group

SUMMARY REPORT

September 26 – October 2, 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 priority topic for disinformation targeting the Russian-speaking population of the Baltics (16 posts, 27022 interactions this week) remains alleged Russophobia. This time, manipulators focused on i) critiquing Latvia's decision to tackle the Soviet monument problem instead of allocating their resources to "more important issues" ii) exploiting controversy over the Baltic states' new language laws (i.e., Latvia's decision to suspend teachers if they cannot speak Latvian at the required level), iii) accusing the Baltic states of attempting to "rewrite history".
- The "Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia" (9 posts, 25662 interactions) narrative sharply rose in popularity after not appearing at all last week. Kremlin-backed messengers claimed that many Estonian and Latvian businessmen and EU parliamentarians are against anti-Russian sanctions, the cost to local economies is too high.
- Covering the events of the war, propagandists continue to turn a blind eye to the successful offensive of the Ukrainian army in Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, including the liberation of Lyman. Instead, they accuse Ukrainians of killing civilians and focus on local victories of individual units of the Russian army, attempting to create an illusion of Russian military success.
- This week, Baltnews' Telegram page gathered the most interactions, averaging around 3,600 interactions per post.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Russian-language Baltic news portals this week received 1,900 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine is targeting innocent civilians

Articles:

4

Interactions:

11,719

Posts tried to prove that the Kyiv regime purposefully kills women and children and treats war prisoners in an inhumane way.

Russia is liberating Ukraine

Articles:

6

Interactions:

6,818

Posts this week emphasized that referenda in Donbas and Luhansk "prove" that Russia's noble cause is to free the people of Ukraine from a fascist government.

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:

3

Interactions:

4,453

Posts exaggerated the Russian Armed forces' victories against Ukraine's 65th brigade, claiming that it dealt a fatal blow to Ukraine's defensive efforts.

The West is losing interest in helping Ukraine

Articles:

1

Interactions:

2,700

The post focused on Germany and how it has delayed shipments of tanks to Ukraine, suggesting that it does not really support Ukraine.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:

9

Interactions:

25,662

Posts mainly alleged that a large amount of Estonian and Latvian businessmen and EU parliamentarians are against anti-Russian sanctions as they hurt the economy too much.

Europe is threatened by an energy crisis

Articles:

5

Interactions:

12,768

Articles stressed that some Baltic institutions or businesses will have to drastically cut their energy consumption in order to survive, in order to stir up public anxiety (i.e., prisons in Latvia, the Riga airport, etc.).

Russia is unaffected by sanctions

Articles:

1

Interactions:

873

Posts stressed that Russia and Belarus are still able to invest in their space programme despite Western sanctions.

CONDITIONS OF RUSSIANS AND RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MINORITIES

Continuing sub-narratives:

X country is Russophobic / Russian culture is being attacked

Articles:

16

Interactions:

27,022

Posts mainly focused on (a) critiquing Latvia's decision to tackle the Soviet monument problem instead of allocating their resources to "more important issues"; (b) the Baltic states' "Russophobic" new laws; and (c) accusing the Baltics of "rewriting history".

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

The West is hypocritical for caring about Ukraine so much

Articles:

1

Interactions:

914

Post claimed that the West's decision not to recognize the results of the referenda is a double standard because Western governments have been supporting separatist movements and organizing land annexations for decades.

**The Latvian government is
fascist**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

345

The narrative emphasized that Latvians should not vote for anti-Russian parties as they spread fascism in the country.

Belarus

Press Club Belarus

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

- The most frequently used narrative (in terms of the number of reposts) by pro-government media concerns the shelling of a convoy of civilian vehicles in the Kharkiv region. The media claimed that this was done by the Ukrainian military.
- Pro-Kremlin voices challenged the news produced by Ukrainian media about problems with mobilization in Russia. The channel "Zheltie Slivy Premium" claimed that all negative news about the mobilization comes from Ukrainian "propagandists". The pro-government "BELTA" refers to Lukashenka's speech, in which he claimed that Russia should not worry about mobilization and those who fled because of the large mobilization resource in Russia – approximately 25 million people. In general, propagandists turned a blind eye to successful Ukrainian operations in Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts (including the liberation of Lyman); instead, they blamed the Ukrainian army for attacking civilians and committing war crimes.
- Telegram channel "Belarusian silovik" asserts that Zelensky's statement about signing an application for accelerated accession to NATO is not to be taken seriously.
- Regarding the staged referendums, pro-government media claimed that people voted against the Ukrainian state and authorities, which failed to protect them.
- State media promotes Lukashenka's claim that Europe cannot live without Russia, and therefore must agree on terms that are acceptable to Russia (and Belarus). He uses the food shortage narrative to rationalise lifting sanctions, in particular on Belarus' main export product - potash fertilizers. In general, the narrative that the only rational solution for the West is to enter negotiations with Russia and respect its interests remains strong.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New narratives:

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

Articles:

6

Interactions:

55,088

Discussing the case of the Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2 gas pipelines, Telegram channel "Zheltie Slivy Premium" claims that the main beneficiary of the recent explosions is the United States. It supposedly weakened its competitor, Germany, and will make large German businesses move to North America. Furthermore, the energy crisis makes production in Europe unprofitable, allowing the US to take over.

Ukraine should not/will not become a NATO member

Article:

1

Interactions:

25,706

The "Belorussian silovik" channel claims that one cannot take Zelensky's statement regarding his signing of an application for accelerated NATO accession seriously. According to the post, the announcement was made solely to divert attention away from Putin's speech.

Continuing narratives:

Mobilization in Russia is very successful

Articles:
10
Views:
1,009,185

The pro-government Telegram channel "BELTA" published Lukashenka's speech, where he said that Russia should not worry about the mobilization or those who fled the country because Russia has large human resources - 25 million people. It also quoted Abkhaz Foreign Minister Inal Ardzinba, who said that Abkhazia does not need mobilization because their volunteers have taken up arms and have been defending the freedom of Donbas since 2014 anyway.

Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes

Articles:
42
Views:
170,341

Several Telegram channels accused the Armed Forces of Ukraine of shelling civilian vehicle convoys trying to enter Russian-controlled territory in both Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

Ukraine's leadership does not care about its people

Articles:
13
Views:
132,914

"Belorussian silovik" claims that Ukrainian troops attacked a gas pipeline in the Kherson region, leaving the residents of Nova Kakhovka without gas. The channel also claimed that Ukrainian students studying at foreign universities were detained when trying to leave the country, even though they have the legal right to do so. The "ATN_NEWS" channel argued that Ukrainians have been making Russian-speaking Ukrainians feel disadvantaged in their own country.

The US provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia

Articles:
17
Views:
97,293

"BELTA" referenced Lukashenko's speech from a year ago, where he said that Ukrainians, under the guise of training centres, were actually creating US military bases on the territory of Ukraine. The "Zheltie Slivy Premium" channel posted the opinion of former Swiss intelligence officer Jacques Baud, who said that Ukrainians are a tool that serves US interests.

The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia

Articles:
12
Views:
89185

"Minskaya Pravda" and other pro-government channels quote Blinken's statement that the US would not object to Kyiv using Western weapons against regions that may become part of the Russian Federation after the referendums. The channels equate the use of Western weapons against annexed territories as a US attack on Russia. "ATN_NEWS" claims that, in 2015, Western politicians said that Ukraine will become a battlefield and that they are not interested in a peaceful resolution.

Ukraine caused the war

Articles:
4
Views:
55,187

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" reports that the Ukrainian military staged a diversion on the border with Belarus by firing electronic guns to disable optical cameras. The channels questioned whether this incident should be interpreted as an act of aggression against Belarus.

Articles:
7

Pro-Lukashenko blogger Shpakovsky claims that Russia intentionally allowed the West to "pump up the muscles" of the Ukrainian army.

Russia is not fighting at full capacity

Views:
53,666

USA is using Ukraine to destroy Europe

Articles:
3
Views:
32,498

“Zheltie Slivy Premium” quotes pro-Lukashenko Deputy Hajdukevich: "They do not want to divide Ukraine, Europe is a trading card. The rates are rising. Belarus is a key link, a bridgehead in front of Russia. That is why they turned their attention to us, trying to stage a coup, an invasion, pull us into the war."

Ukrainians are Nazis

Articles:
3
Views:
27,683

Propagandists from “Zheltie Slivy Premium” used the school shooting in Izhevsk, Russia to accuse Ukraine and the Belarusian opposition of Nazism. They alleged that Ukrainians are celebrating the deaths of Russian children and that, like the shooter, wear swastikas on their bodies, flags, and armour.

Russian troops are advancing / achieving success

Articles:
1
Views:
22,623

“Belorussian silovik” claims that the mobilization will allow Putin to regain the initiative and capture Kharkiv, as well as Odesa.

The West is causing the global food crisis

Articles:
1
Views:
14,850

Blogger Yury Voskresensky quotes Putin, who claims that Western countries deceive the whole world by refusing to send Ukrainian grain to the poorest countries that need it most.

REFUGEES

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukrainian refugees are spoiled/ungrateful

Articles:
2
Interactions:
37,717

“Zheltie Slivy Premium” published accusations made by Wojciech Bakun, the mayor of the town of Przemyśl bordering Ukraine, against Ukrainian refugees. He accused them of engaging in benefit tourism by crossing the border in Poland, receiving social security benefits, and then promptly returning home to Ukraine. The post uses quotation marks around the word “refugees” in order to suggest that they are not actually refugees and do not need safe haven.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing narratives:

Western citizens do not support sanctions against Russia

Articles:
14
Views:
260,928

“BELTA” alleged that many British Twitter users were outraged by the statement made by British Prime Minister Liz Truss about her readiness to impose new sanctions against Russia after the DPR, LPR, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia annexations. The “Pool Pervogo” channel quoted Lukashenka to point out that the Europeans are now protesting against the sanctions, suggesting that Russia and Belarus will win the war.

Europe is threatened by an energy crisis

Articles:
4
Views:
166,651

“BELTA” quoted Slovak Prime Minister Eduard Heger, who believes that a huge increase in electricity prices could “kill the economy” of the country. State-owned “ONT NEWS” references a Forbes article to claim that Europe’s gas will run out earlier than politicians promise.

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:
4
Views:
84,026

“MIRBY” cites Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó, who claims that Europe’s sanctions policy has completely failed and has only hurt Europe. “Pool Pervogo” quoted Lukashenka’s statement that he is ready to resume agricultural cooperation with the West if the sanctions are lifted.

The inflation and the energy crises are caused by the West’s misguided political approach

Articles:
3
Views:
73,916

“Belorussian silovik” quotes Austrian stand-up artist Lisa Eckhart, who trolled the Germans for creating problems for themselves by adopting policies that will lead them to freeze this winter, like they did in Stalingrad in 1942. “Zheltie Slivy Premium” quotes Director of the European Weather Forecast Center to claim that Western Europe will experience a particularly cold winter this year and that it will not be able to rely on renewable energy as much as politicians had hoped. The post even suggests that Europe may already be freezing by November.

MILITARY THREAT TO EASTERN EUROPE/WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Continuing narratives:

There will be a new Soviet Union

Articles:
1
Views:
470,121

Pro-Lukashenka speaker Dzermant gives his opinion that the recognition by Belarus of Abkhazia and other republics, the entry of four regions into Russia and, as a result, the formation of the “New Union” could be a continuation of the transformation of the Eurasian space, with Belarus serving as an outpost of the New Eurasia.

**Russia is losing the war
and will use nuclear
weapons**

Articles:
2
Views:
32,306

"Belorussian silovik" quotes Kadyrov, who called for the use of low-yield nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

New narratives:

Ukrainian media is lying

Articles:
2
Interactions:
50,736

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" alleged that the telegram channels that are trying to stir up a mobilization panic among Russians are run from Kyiv.

Continuing narratives:

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

Articles:
10
Interactions:
245,357

"Pool Pervogo" quotes Lukashenko, who claimed that Belarus is doing everything it can to stop the bloodshed.

**The EU/US leadership is
incompetent**

Articles:
6
Interactions:
73,855

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" posted several messages portraying US President Joe Biden and the former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Sikorsky as incompetent "idiots".

**Certain powers benefit
from the war**

Articles:
3
Interactions:
33,601

"Zheltie Slivy Premium" promotes the quote of pro-Lukashenka deputy Hajdukevich: "The goal of America in Europe now is not only Russia and its weakening... The main goal is the destruction of the German and Chinese economies."

**The world is controlled by
globalists**

Articles:
9
Interactions:
29,394

"MIRBY" quotes Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, who said that the IAEA was convinced that Ukrainian troops were shelling the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, but ignored this fact due to US pressure.

**Russia is not violating
international law**

Articles:
1
Interactions:
5,600

"BELTA" quotes Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov who said that there could be no talk of demilitarizing the Zaporizhzhia NPP because it has never been militarized.

BULGARIA

Center for the Study of Democracy

- The topic that attracted the most attention of pro-Kremlin propagandists this week was the events of the Russia-Ukraine war. The most frequent was messaging attempting to prove the legitimacy of the staged “referenda” in the occupied territories. The story goes that i) Kherson belongs to Russia and Zelensky was naïve to think differently; ii) Donbas is returning to its homeland; iii) the Russian state is increasing in size, while Ukraine is shrinking – this is key evidence that Russia is victorious.
- Ignoring all the success of the Ukrainian army in Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts and turning their blind eye to the liberation of Lyman, propagandists stubbornly continue to claim that Ukraine is losing the war. Pro-Kremlin media, primarily *pogled.info* and *svobodnoslovo.eu*, repeatedly blame the West for waging war on Russia via Ukraine.
- Local pro-Kremlin voices continued emphasizing the dependence of both Bulgaria and the entire EU on Russian energy supplies. The sanctions against Russia are portrayed as having zero support from EU citizens.
- Anti-refugees messaging was detected in a handful of articles.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Bulgarian news portals this week received 8,000 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New sub-narrative:

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

Articles:

1

Interactions:

175

Articles suggested that sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipeline is either American propaganda or it was sabotaged by the US.

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine "referendums" are legitimate

Articles:

10

Interactions:

13,863

Various articles containing details about the "referendums" being legitimate. Stories about Kherson belonging to Russia and Zelensky being naïve to think any different, as well as Donbas returning to its "real homeland".

Russia is not fighting at full capacity

Articles:

5

Interactions:

2,669

Articles claiming that Russia has not yet used all of its available capabilities and that its new weapons and/or tactics will soon be seen.

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:

4

Interactions:

314

Article quoted Colonel McGregor, who claims that the AFU counter-offensive is creating the illusion that Ukraine is still holding out. Other articles focused on Ukraine's heavy losses and a story that Russia destroyed the military arsenals of Ukraine and NATO.

There are tensions between the West and Ukraine

Articles:

2

Interactions:

325

One article suggests that no one in the West cares about Zelensky's reputation, because he can always be replaced. For example, with the commander-in-chief of Ukraine's Armed Forces, Valery Zaluzhny.

The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia

Articles:

2

Interactions:

310

Article alleges that the West is ready to strike any country, to turn it into an epicentre of crisis, provoking revolutions and blood baths.

Ukraine is preparing a nuclear attack

Articles:

1

Interactions:

45

Article alleging that Kyiv is preparing a nuclear provocation.

Foreign mercenaries are fighting for Ukraine

Articles:

1

Interactions:

34

Article talks about "foreign scoundrels in the service of the Kyiv regime".

Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes

Articles:

1

Interactions:

27

Article claiming that a Ukrainian missile struck a hotel in Kherson, resulting in civilian casualties.

REFUGEES

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukrainian refugees are spoiled/ungrateful

Articles:

3

Interactions:

1,303

Story about Ukrainian refugees in Portugal, who complain of housing problems, a lack of heating, and being surrounded by Russians.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:

7

Interactions:

5,447

Articles about the hardships that Europeans face because of the sanctions. Sanctions against Russia have been approved by Brussels bureaucrats and European elites without consultation with the people. Hungary's foreign policy towards Russia is presented as a positive example.

Western citizens do not support sanctions against Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

5,300

Article about protests in Prague, suggesting that Western opposition to sanctions is fairly widespread.

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

Continuing sub-narratives:

Russia is losing the war and will use nuclear weapons

Articles:

3

Interactions:

1,581

Authors claim that Russia is being backed into a corner and will have no other choice as to use nuclear weapons.

There will be a new Soviet Union

Articles:

1

Interactions:

800

Article quoted Putin's speech to claim that the end of Western hegemony is inevitable, and that Putin will build "a greater union".

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

The West will no longer provide Ukraine with military aid

Articles:

1

Interactions:

257

The Bulgarian Defence Minister announced a refusal to supply Ukraine with heavy weapons.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Western media is lying

Articles:

1

Interactions:

154

Author states that Western media are creating a completely distorted picture of the war in Ukraine to the benefit of the Kyiv regime and to the detriment of Russia.

Certain powers benefit from the war

Articles:

1

Interactions:

744

Author states that people are as free as far as foreign countries allow them to be.

CZECHIA

Prague Security Studies Initiative

- A major event that resonated throughout the disinformation media this week was the sabotage of Russia's Nord Stream pipeline. The disinformation media consistently and in a seemingly coordinated manner attributed the blame for this sabotage on the United States and questioned the possibility of Russia's responsibility. It is also provided as a "point of no return" in the escalation of conflict between the West and Russia.
- The amount of messaging on the Nord Stream incident is so massive compared to other topics this week that it is likely that this is a coordinated information operation. We can observe the classic technique of Russian propaganda of various unrelated and sometimes competing narratives and explanations created around one super-narrative ("the US is responsible for the sabotage"), which on the one hand obfuscates the situation and on the other hand points to their "mother" super-narrative.
- The narrative of Ukraine supposedly losing the war still follows the model seen in previous weeks, suggesting huge losses to the Ukrainian army in an offensive that Ukraine cannot afford, leading to its downfall. It is safe to assume that this narrative will soon disappear, as it will be unsustainable in the face of widely available reports of Ukrainian successes on the front.
- Disinformation voices attempting to portray the situation on the battlefield in a positive light are kind experiencing a kind of "thematic distress". In view of the overwhelmingly negative developments on the front, they must concentrate on separate small victories to create an illusion of success for the Russian military in Ukraine.
- The topic of alleged US biological laboratories in Ukraine and the deployment of weapons of mass destruction is still present, albeit with low intensity. Nowadays, this topic is taking on an interesting new spin, with claims that the US is developing biological weapons that only attack people with certain genetic characteristics (Russians). These fantastical theories are then easily linked to the already existing conspiracy theories of the pharmaceutical industry that arose in the wake of COVID-19 (including claims of weapons targeting only Slavs).
- There has been a bizarre and so far unsuccessful attempt to link the issue of terror against the Russian-speaking population with the Czechia. Terrorists trained by Czechia have allegedly been detained and, according to Russian claims, were supposed to have carried out terrorist attacks on polling stations during the referenda. From a regional perspective, it is important to follow up on this sub-narrative, but it does not seem to have caught on yet, even given the low interaction rates.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Bulgarian news portals this week received 16,800 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New sub-narrative:

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

Articles:

42

Interactions:

5,927

A new and extremely popular disinformation narrative this week attributed responsibility for the destruction of the Nord Stream pipeline to the United States. A manipulated statement made by President Biden, predating the war, was often used as "evidence".

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:

6

Interactions:

863

This narrative focused heavily on exaggerated depictions of Ukrainian casualties in combat.

The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

606

The West's involvement in the war is linked to the issue of attacking Russian territory (i.e., annexed parts of Ukraine). Disinformation actors have implied that supporting Ukraine in attacking this territory is an act of war.

Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes

Articles:

2

Interactions:

39

The Armed Forces of Ukraine are routinely blamed in the disinformation media for all attacks against civilians that are attributed in the mainstream media to the Russian military. In this case, for example, the attack on a convoy of civilian vehicles.

REFUGEES

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukrainian refugees are spoiled/ungrateful

Articles:

2

Interactions:

60

Narratives that are critical of immigrants and have appeared only very sporadically, and primarily as news from neighbouring Germany, rather than a local issue. This is a technique that Czech disinformation actors have been fond of using in the past, when reporting on the alleged excesses of Muslim refugees.

CONDITIONS OF RUSSIANS AND RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MINORITIES

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukrainians discriminate against/terrorize Russian speakers

Articles:

3

Interactions:

124

An attempt to link the issue of terror against the Russian-speaking population directly to the Czech Republic. The articles alleged that the "terrorists" who were to carry out attacks against polling stations during the referenda in Ukraine were trained in the Czech Republic.

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

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Russia is losing the war
and will use nuclear
weapons**

Articles:
9
Interactions:
180

The sub-narrative about potential nuclear escalation appears only sporadically at the moment, mainly in the form of threats towards the US. Disinformation actors suggest that, in the event of such an escalation, the US will not be safe either.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

New sub-narratives:

**The West will no longer
provide Ukraine with
military aid**

Articles:
5
Interactions:
248

The narrative of waning Western aid to Ukraine focuses on isolated statements made by the leaders of individual states. For example, New Zealand's statement that it does not currently have any of the weapons that Ukraine requires is manipulatively presented as an indication of waning Western assistance.

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Western military aid is
useless**

Articles:
1
Interactions:
152

This narrative is connected to the sub-narratives that maximize the minor partial successes of the Russian army and maximize the failures of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to create the impression of positive developments on the front. In this particular case, arguments are made about the uselessness of HIMARS rocket launchers in Donbas.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Biological weapons labs in
Ukraine**

Articles:
2
Interactions:
149

A new variant of the bioweapons sub-narrative is emerging, claiming that genetic material is being collected from Ukrainians and Russians in order to create a "racist" bioweapon that will only attack Russians.

ESTONIA

DebunkEU.org

- EKRE continues to focus on claims that war refugees are Russifying and otherwise destabilizing the country. Additionally, they promote claims that the energy crisis has been caused exclusively by the Estonian government and the EU's green agenda, without any recognition of impact from the war in Ukraine.
- Anti-sanctions messaging was widespread as usual. It has been intertwined with anti-EU statements and Covid conspiracies. The primary claims are that Estonia is in the midst of economic catastrophe due to the COVID-19 hoax and the proxy war in Ukraine, while Russia is laughing as Europe suffers from its own sanctions.
- Tucker Carlson alleged that the Nord Stream pipelines were sabotaged by the Biden administration. A conservative source in the USA also cited a Trump-era official who compared Ukraine's situation to that of the Wehrmacht at the end of 1942, echoing both the "Ukraine is losing the war" and "Ukrainians are Nazis" sub-narratives.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Estonian news portals this week received 3,000 interactions.

EVENTS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New sub-narratives:

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

Articles:

1

Interactions:

309

Article quoted Tucker Carlson, saying that USA's sabotage is to blame for the Nord Stream explosions, as President Biden promised in February that they would put an end to the pipeline in the wake of the Russian invasion.

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:

1

Interactions:

117

Article quoted Douglas Macgregor, according to whom President Zelensky's strategy of holding on to territory at all costs will have disastrous consequences for the country.

REFUGEES

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Ukrainian refugees
undermine host countries'
internal stability**

Articles:

3

Interactions:

327

Articles about refugees being bad for Estonia, such as comparing Ukrainian refugees to the ethnic Russians and Russian emigres in Estonia, claiming that these refugees may replicate the supposed money laundering of these groups.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

**Sanctions hurt the West
more than Russia**

Articles:

2

Interactions:

163

Article suggested that Estonia has reached economic catastrophe due to the COVID-19 fraud and the proxy war in Ukraine, while the Russians are in fits of laughter as Europe suffers from the sanctions.

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

Articles:

1

Interactions:

53

Article suggested that Estonians should quickly leave the electricity exchange and the CO2 system and not wait for the instructions of the European Commission, which has launched an economic war against the Estonian people.

GEORGIA

GRASS

- The most popular message in terms of interactions and number of cases concerned Georgia's foreign policy. Propagandists portrayed the illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory by Russia as a looming threat for Georgia (validly), using this as an argument to state that Georgia should abandon European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations and align with Russia, or otherwise Georgia would face the same problems.
- The message that the West, with the help of local opposition parties, seeks to open a second front in Georgia against Russia has remained moderately popular, despite declining from its peak.
- Events of the war are increasingly getting more attention, with the primary messages of propagandists being that NATO aspirations provoked the war, and that Ukraine is losing the war (downplaying the significance of the Ukrainian counter-offensive).
- Other messages suggested that Poland aims to annex Ukrainian territory and that Russia's sham "referenda" are legitimate.
- Regarding economic sanctions, apart from the main line of propaganda that the sanctions hurt the West more than Russia, pro-Russian voices came up with a conspiracy that this economic crisis and the explosion of the Nord Stream pipeline has been orchestrated by the US, which benefits from this scheme and at the same time weakens both Europe and Russia.
- Messages concerning military aid to Ukraine popped up once again but was the least popular primary narrative, both in terms of interactions and number of articles. They suggested two mutually exclusive claims that weaponry does not reach Ukraine because the Ukrainian mafia smuggles it to Africa and Albania, and that Ukraine targets civilians with military aid and would soon start striking Russian border towns.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Georgian news portals this week received 1,400 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New sub-narrative:

**USA is using Ukraine to
destroy Europe**

Articles:

1

Views:

603

Leader of the pro-Russian political party Conservative Movement, Zurab Makharadze, drew a rather gloomy picture of the European economy -- especially German industries -- emphasising that the energy imports from Russia are at a historic low due to the sanctions imposed on the Kremlin. Explaining the core reasons for this, Makharadze claimed that, during the 2014 Maidan revolution in Ukraine, Americans like John McCain encouraged the Ukrainians to alter the political vector, convincing them that the political changes in Kyiv would mean progress for Ukraine as well as the entirety of Europe. However, Alt-Info's leader insisted that none of that has happened - neither Europe nor Ukraine have received any benefits from the Maidan revolution, and that the US has, in fact, exploited both due to its rivalry with Russia, forcing the old continent to face unprecedented economic challenges.

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

Articles:

1

Interactions:

318

Reporting on the Nord Stream pipeline gas leaks, the anti-Western Facebook page Infoanalitika used President Biden's February 8 statement about the US bringing an end to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline if Russia invades Ukraine. In doing so, Infoanalitika indirectly suggested that the alleged act of sabotage was carried out by the US with the aim of disturbing deepening trade and cooperation between Russia and Western Europe.

Continuing narratives:

NATO aspirations provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

10,193

Leader of the pro-Russian political party Conservative Movement, Zurab Makharadze, reiterated that Ukraine is experiencing war due to its NATO aspirations. He claimed that Russia started the war because NATO and the US did not give it appropriate security guarantees and, as a result, Russia has taken territories from Ukraine and declared them as their own. According to Makharadze, despite these circumstances, when Ukrainians asked for assistance, NATO rejected the idea of accepting Ukraine into the alliance.

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:

7

Interactions:

2,395

On the air on Alt-Info, Shota Martinenko, one of the leaders of the pro-Russian Conservative Movement, stated that it is more likely that the situation will turn in favour of Russia - if Russia mobilises its army, it will become more difficult for the Ukrainians to win, as Ukraine would not be able to make any significant moves.

Also on Alt-Info, the head pro-Russian outlet TaoNews, Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, stated that Russia is clearly winning because it has annexed territories twice as large as the entirety of Georgia.

Analyst Revaz Kilasonia tried to downplay Ukraine's counter-offensive and developed the idea that, if Ukraine's counterattack were indeed effective, it would have continued to advance. According to Kilasonia, if the Russian army had collapsed and the Russians were leaving Ukrainian territories, the counter-offensive should not have been halted.

Poland will annex Ukraine

Articles:

1

Interactions:

579

On the air on Alt-Info, propagandist Lali Moroshkina voiced the disinformation message that Poland wants Ukraine's territories.

Ukrainians are welcoming Russian "saviours"

Articles:

1

Interactions:

329

Pro-Russia Alt-Info published a video on September 30 with the description: "Russian flags were exhibited in Mariupol and Donetsk", thus implying that locals are supportive of Russia and indirectly legitimising the illegal referendums.

Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes

Articles:

1

Interactions:

225

A pro-Russian Facebook user claimed that the US had given the green light to Ukrainians to bomb the territories lost in the referenda and that Ukrainians have already done so - they have razed a technical institute building in Kherson precisely during the end of standard working hours, suggesting that Ukraine targets civilian sites and even timed its strike to maximise casualties. He further claimed that Ukraine would soon receive additional weaponry worth 1.1 billion USD and opined that Ukraine, i.e., NATO, would start striking towns near the Russia-Ukraine border, citing the USA's call to its citizens to leave Russia immediately as proof.

Ukraine "referendums" are legitimate

Articles:

1

Interactions:

56

The anti-Western political party Georgian Idea published a post authored by Gigo Rioneli about the referendums held in Ukraine. He stated that international observers recognised the referendums as legitimate. He also claimed that the four regions - Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson - were given to Ukraine by Krushchov.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:

2

Views:

1,264

Pro-Russian Facebook-user, with more than 2200 followers, repeated the long-existing disinformation narrative about economic sanctions, claiming that the Western-imposed economic sanctions have proved counter-effective as if the West had imposed sanctions on itself rather than on Russia. She ironically added that the winter and cold weather were coming for Europeans, accustomed to comfort.

Alt-Info once again repeated the propaganda narratives on economic sanctions, reporting on the protest in Prague against soaring prices and the energy crisis. Since many protesters reportedly linked their economic woes to the Western-imposed sanctions on Russia, Alt-Info claimed that the economic sanctions, meant to destroy the Russian economy, turned out to have a "boomerang effect", hurting the Western capitals more than Moscow itself. It also alleged that a wave of protests has engulfed many EU countries.

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:

3

Interactions:

1,587

In her TV program, one of the Journalists of Alt-Info TV, Matsatso Gakhokidze, stated that Western-supported destructive forces in Georgia are trying to obstruct any effort towards dialogue and normalisation of the relationship between Georgia and the Russian Federation. According to her, the main goal of such forces is to open a second front against Russia in Georgia, and the US ambassador in Georgia, Kelly Degnan, is the central mastermind behind this plan.

Another TV presenter from Alt-Info TV, Tatia Gabrichidze, speculated that the US and its embassy in Georgia are using the UNM (largest opposition party in Georgia) to reach their goals in Georgia. She claimed that those radical political groups supported by the US, together with numerous US agents, are trying to open a second front in Georgia.

A member of the political council of the Conservative Movement, Irakli Morgoshia, in an interview with Alt-Info TV, noted that the West and destructive forces in Georgia desire to open a second front against Russia and that Georgians should be very careful about that. Morgoshia stated that such efforts might provoke Russia to hold a referendum in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Samatchablo region, as they recently did in Ukraine.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continuing narratives:

**Western military aid is
being misused/stolen**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

444

Notorious celebrity propagandist Lali Moroshkina claimed on Alt-Info TV that Zelensky is acting like a beggar, asking for weaponry. However, according to her, this Western-supplied weaponry does not reach Ukraine and is smuggled into Africa, Albania, and elsewhere. She contended that a mafia clan, paid handsomely by an unnamed source that oversees this operation, is controlling Ukraine and does not even let Zelensky out of his office.

**Ukraine will use Western
weapons to kill
Russians/attack Russian
territory**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

225

A pro-Russian Facebook user claimed that the US had given the green light to Ukrainians to bomb the territories lost in the referenda and that Ukrainians have already done so. He further claimed that Ukraine would soon receive additional weaponry worth 1.1 billion USD and opined that Ukraine, i.e., NATO, would start striking towns near the Russia-Ukraine border, citing the USA's call to its citizens to leave Russia immediately as proof.

MISCALLENIOUS

Continuing narratives:

Georgia should abandon pro-Western foreign policy & Euro-Atlantic ingegration aspirations and align with Russia

Articles:

4

Interactions:

12,680

One of the leaders of the pro-Russian political party Conservative Movement, Irakli Martinenko, argued on Alt-Info TV that NATO aspirations caused Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territories. He suggested that Lukashenka's recent visit to Georgia's Russian-occupied Abkhazia region demonstrated that Georgia was facing the same threat and criticised the policy of NATO aspirations and called for negotiations with Russia. The party has repeatedly called for negotiations with Russia to sort out the terms under which Georgia would be within Russia's sphere of influence.

Kremlin-sponsored News-Front also blamed Lukashenko's visit to Abkhazia on Georgia and Georgia's pro-Western foreign policy. The outlet criticized PM Garibashvili for his speech at the UN GA, claiming that it was full of pro-Western rhetoric and messages stressing the need for European and Euro-Atlantic integration, which is unacceptable. News-Front also advocated for talks with Moscow.

One of the leaders of the pro-Russian political party Conservative Movement, Zurab Makharadze, stated that if Georgians do not want to share the destiny of Ukraine -- to lose territories and face destruction -- everyone who is sane and reasonable, and who wants to save Georgia, should back the Conservative Movement's policy, which envisages a close relationship and direct dialogue with the Russian Federation.

HUNGARY

Atlatszo

- This week, Kremlin-backed propagandists in Hungary were mostly focused on the staged referenda and the possible sabotage of the Nord Stream pipeline.
- More than a dozen articles were identified that contained distorted messages about the “referenda” in some extent. They portrayed the staged votes as legitimate and wrote furiously about those who don’t recognise it.
- Articles about the sabotage attack on the Nord Stream pipelines accused the US of organising the attacks. A Facebook post even suggested that Russian submarines should do “the same” with US LNG carrier ships.
- Attempts to provide an apocalyptic picture of the consequences of anti-Russian sanctions for the West remain frequent. Articles cited the Hungarian PM’s claim that leaders of EU member states will be replaced by their citizens, who don’t support the sanctions. An article even claimed that President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen should be brought to the International Court of Justice because her sanction policy cost the lives of European children and elderly people.
- Disinformation contents that exaggerate Russian military successes were less prevalent than before. Narratives about refugees and Western military aid didn’t reappear.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Hungarian news portals this week received 14,500 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New sub-narrative:

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

Articles:

4

Interactions:

17,135

Disinformation actors claimed that the US was behind the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines. They cited different actors (for example, Tucker Carlson) who have already voiced this conspiracy theory and even claimed that Russia should “do the same” with US LNG carrier ships.

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukraine referendums are legitimate

Articles:

15

Interactions:

42,071

Most articles and Facebook posts frame the “referendums” as legitimate: they presented the results, reported on celebrations in Russia, or wrote furiously about the different actors who have claimed they were not legitimate.

The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

1,836

Disinformation content spreading this sub-narrative claimed that the US and “globalists” (used as a synonym for “clandestine powers”) are waging a proxy war against Russia.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:
2

Interactions:
21,195

An opinion article exaggerating the negative effects of sanctions on the EU framed them as universal “facts”. Besides claiming that Brussels doesn’t consider the wellbeing of its citizens, the article manipulatively claimed that Germany bakeries are in such a bad financial situation that they can no longer keep the lights on. However, the bakeries actually turned off their lights as a form of protest.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

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

Articles:
1

Interactions:
16,945

This sub-narrative was spread by an article that suggested that Poland will consider leaving the EU if it doesn’t receive any recovery funds.

Ukraine’s supporters are ridiculous

Articles:
2

Interactions:
12,842

A pro-Kremlin news site discussed the planned ban of Russian toilet paper under the 8th sanctions package to make the EU’s sanctions policy appear frivolous.

The EU/US leadership is incompetent

Articles:
1

Interactions:
7,025

A news site published an opinion piece from an anonymous author, in which they argue that Ursula von der Leyen should be brought in front of the International Court of Justice because she threatens the lives of European children and the elderly with her sanctions policy.

The EU is a dictatorship

Articles:
1

Interactions:
5,317

This narrative appeared in an article which exaggerated a comment by the Vice-President of the European Parliament and claimed that “Brussels rages” because of the victory of the Italian right-wing. This statement is in line with a recent claim made by FM Lavrov, who claimed that a statement by von der Leyen (about the possible weakening of democracy in Italy after the recent elections) indicates that the EU is sliding into a dictatorship.

Russia and its allies are strong

Articles:
1

Interactions:
5,002

An article falsely cites Henry Kissinger, claiming that he said that “it wouldn’t be wise to include Ukraine in NATO”, while he only said (in past tense) that “I thought it was not a wise American policy to attempt to include Ukraine into NATO (back in the 90’s)”.

**The EU is under US
influence**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

753

The article claims that the EU is just a slave of the US and that European leaders act against the interests of their own citizens.

- The most attention was again given to economic sanctions; no new trends or narratives emerged.
- Pro-Kremlin messengers legitimised the illegal referenda and the proclaimed annexation of Ukrainian territories, attempting to persuade their audience that this should not entail additional EU sanctions against Russia.
- Individual are detected aimed at discrediting Ukrainian refugees or threatening nuclear war are detected.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Latvian news portals this week received 2,200 interactions.

EVENTS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Continuing sub-narratives:

Nuclear disaster is imminent

Articles:
1
Interactions:
0

A Tiktok post by Edvins Puke claimed that the world is in danger of a nuclear war.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukrainian refugees undermine host countries' internal stability

Articles:
1
Interactions:
3,440

A Latvian politician claimed that Latvia is supporting Ukraine and its people too much and that it should instead be focusing on strengthening its own culture and nation.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:
1
Interactions:
33

A Tiktok video claimed that sanctions against Russia are actually sanctions against the EU itself. An article questioned the sanctions against Russia, claiming that they may hurt the EU more than Russia.

Russia is unaffected by sanctions

Articles:

1

Interactions:

6

A Facebook post questioned whether new sanctions against Russia should be exercised, and that they will backfire and hurt the EU more than Russia.

MISCELLANEOUS

New sub-narratives:

Some politicians supporting Ukraine are Russian agents

Articles:

1

Interactions:

167

An article by Otto Ozols argued that Latvia's Minister of Defence, Artis Pabriks, might be a puppet of the Kremlin and secretly cooperating with Russia despite his overt and enthusiastic support for Ukraine.

LITHUANIA

DebunkEU.org

- This week, the most focus was once again placed on the events of the Russia-Ukraine war. The new narrative is that the US is planning a nuclear detonation in Ukraine. Propagandists also blamed the West for waging war on Russia in Ukraine, portraying Russian soldiers as “liberators” welcomed by the local population (including legitimisation of the illegal referenda).
- Significant attention is given to the Nord Stream pipeline explosion, which is explained as US sabotage. An old quote from President Biden was decontextualized and used for these claims. There were also two cases of disinformation actors claiming that the annexation of Ukrainian lands was legitimate. Claims about the West being at open war with Russia continued in addition to the aforementioned new sub-narrative claiming that the US is planning a nuclear explosion in Ukraine.
- Narratives focusing on Ukrainian refugees had two unique cases. One claimed that Ukrainian refugees are wealthy and should not receive support, while the other mocked the Lithuanian government for supporting Ukrainian students in Lithuania.
- Only three pieces of disinformation focusing on the economic situation of Europe were recorded this week. It was claimed that inflation and the energy crisis are caused only by the West. In one of these cases, an FT publication’s headline was misleadingly translated to paint an over-dramatized situation of the economy.
- In addition to this, pro-Kremlin voices continued discrediting the Lithuanian government as corrupt or autocratic, the Ukrainian leadership as spoiled and weak, and the West as greedy and hypocritical. It is worth noting that we did not record cases of disinformation directly focusing on conditions of Russian culture, military threats to Eastern Europe or military aid to Ukraine.

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

New sub-narrative:

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

Articles:

5

Interactions:

1,325

Many different Facebook users shared an old quote from President Biden to imply that the U.S./West is responsible for the sabotage of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

Ukraine should not/will not become a NATO member

Article:

1

Interactions:

26

Facebook user wrote a mocking comment about Ukraine applying for NATO membership.

Continuing sub-narratives:

The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia

Articles:
2

Interactions:
958

A known disinformation actor convicted for spying and currently serving time in jail claimed that the U.S. is using countries like Ukraine and Lithuania to fight Russia. A disinformation site shared an interview with an Iranian politician who claimed that NATO is directly fighting Russia and this war is being continued for the interest of the West.

Nuclear disaster is imminent

Articles:
1

Interactions:
89

Facebook disinformation page claimed that the U.S. is planning to detonate a nuclear warhead in Ukraine when it will stop benefiting from arms sales.

Ukrainians are welcoming Russian "saviours"

Articles:
2

Interactions:
78

Facebook user implied that the annexation of Ukrainian lands is legitimate and claims that an attack on those territories would be equivalent to an attack on Russia. A known disinformation blogger translated Putin's 30th September speech containing numerous false claims.

REFUGEES

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukrainian refugees are spoiled/ungrateful

Articles:
1

Interactions:
18

Facebook disinformation page shared a video showing expensive Ukrainian cars in Warsaw to generalize and imply that Ukrainian refugees do not need any support.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

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

Articles:
3

Interactions:
3,645

A Facebook disinformation page claimed that the current government is responsible for the rising inflation and the "wasting" of the military budget on support for "the Ukrainian Nazi regime". Author misleadingly presented this opinion piece and shifted the blame for the energy crisis onto the Lithuanian government.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

The Lithuanian government is corrupt and/or incompetent

Articles:

2

Interactions:

3,944

A Facebook disinformation page mocked the Lithuanian President and implied that most Lithuanians want good relations with Russia and that the U.S. is the fifth column in Lithuania. Author shared a questionable "investigation" about how the Lithuanian government is working for the Kremlin and claimed that we are financing the war for the benefit of Russia.

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

Article:

1

Interactions:

2,785

Author claimed that there is dictatorship in Lithuania. His proof is that the Lithuanian Justice minister started a disciplinary case against a lawyer who spread disinformation about military aid to Ukraine.

Ukraine's supporters are ridiculous

Articles:

3

Interactions:

294

Author claimed that a Ukrainian flag flying on the Trakai castle is a desecration of the Lithuanian symbol. A known disinformation site mocked an extract of the Energy Minister's speech where he said that the Kremlin regime will fall.

Politicians care about Ukraine at the expense of their own citizens

Article:

1

Interactions:

201

Author claimed that Lithuania is supporting Ukraine despite not having any money.

The Baltic states are controlled by the West

Article:

1

Interactions:

177

Facebook disinformation page claimed that the Baltic countries are just puppets of the U.S. and are baselessly "barking" at Russia.

NORTH MACEDONIA

MOST

- A new narrative this week involved accusations against the US, made by the Russian MFA spokeswoman Zakharova as well as Macedonian politician and pro-Russian voice Solza Grčeva, over the recent Nord Stream leaks.
- Topics related to the events of Russia-Ukraine war prevailed again this week, both in terms of the number of articles and interactions. The statements of FM Lavrov, where he claimed that the West wants to destroy Russia and that NATO is directly involved in the war, were broadcast in another attempt to justify the war and its eventual escalation. His narratives were further supported by the sub-narrative “the West forced Russia to attack Ukraine”, promoted by Belarusian FM Vladimir Makei, who blamed the West for the bloodshed in Ukraine. The pro-Russian voice Sašo Tasevski also promoted this narrative. The sub-narrative that the West is causing the global food crisis was employed by Russian President Putin, who blamed it on Western sanctions. Finally, Russian Patriarch Kirill called upon Russians to go to war, in an attempt to boost the mobilization effort. Considering his role and the messaging since the beginning of the invasion, it has to be noted that the Russian Orthodox Church, through its Patriarch, is paving the way for Orthodox extremism.
- With respect to the economic consequences of sanctions, Hungarian PM Orban continued to promote anti-sanctions messaging. He claimed that the inflation and energy crises are caused by the false political approach of the West and that Hungary will hold a referendum on introducing sanctions against Russia, thus implying that the EU imposed sanctions without popular consent. He also continued the narrative that sanctions hurt the West more than Russia. Orban continues to be one of the most influential European voices promoting pro-Russian narratives.
- Dmitriy Medvedev again issued military threats, claiming that Russia has every right to use nuclear weapons if its existence is threatened, thus promoting the sub-narrative that Putin will wipe out Europe with the Sarmat. Chechen dictator Ramzan Kadyrov also called for the use of tactical nuclear weapons after the fall of Lyman in eastern Ukraine. With these narratives, the focus is slowly shifting away from the question of whether Russia will use nuclear weapons towards how and when it will use them.
- Within the Miscellaneous narrative, Macedonian pro-Russian voice Sašo Tasevski presented Putin as a master strategist and claimed that the war is going exactly as planned.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across North Macedonian news portals this week received 2,100 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New narratives:

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

Articles:
23

Interactions:
1,655

This narrative was promoted by Russian MFA spokeswoman Zakharova who asked whether the US has carried out the “threat” to destroy the Nord Stream pipeline. This is a reference to a statement by US President Biden from 7 February 2022, in which he comments on the sanctions that would be imposed, should Russia invade Ukraine. In the majority of the articles Zakharova’s statement is transmitted directly and presented as fact. The narrative was also promoted by Macedonian politician and pro-Russian voice Solza Grčeva, who also promoted the narrative that the EU is under US influence.

Russian conscripts will go to heaven

Articles:
23

Interactions:
1,655

This narrative was promoted by Russian Patriarch Kirill, who called upon Russians to go to war, and said that, should they die fulfilling their duty, they will go to heaven.

Continuing narratives:

The West forced Russia to attack Ukraine

Articles:
13

Interactions:
1,949

The narrative was promoted by Belarusian FM Vladimir Makei, who blamed the West for the bloodshed in Ukraine. Allegedly, the eastward expansion of NATO was done contrary to the assurances given to Soviet leaders. Pro-Russian voice Sašo Tasevski also promoted this narrative, along with the claim that the US planned to invade Donbas with 100.000 troops in March, and that is why Russia was forced to attack. This narrative attempts to justify the invasion and denies Ukraine’s right to self-defense, as well as the right to choose its own defensive policy.

The West wants to destroy Russia

Articles:
21

Interactions:
1,766

The narrative was employed by Russian FM Lavrov in an address to the UN General Assembly. He said that the aim of the West was to destroy Russia. The narrative continued from the previous week, when Alexandr Dugin and MoD Shoigu made similar statements. The aim of the narrative is to justify the war and its eventual escalation into a nuclear conflict, since “the very existence of Russia is threatened”.

The West is causing the global food crisis

Articles:
10

Interactions:
1,602

The narrative was employed by Russian President Putin, who blamed the West for causing a global food crisis by introducing sanctions.

Articles:
1

The narrative was promoted by [Russian FM Lavrov](#), who blamed the West for getting involved in the conflict by providing Kyiv with weapons, intelligence,

NATO is/will be directly involved in the war

Interactions:
362

making tactical decisions on the battlefield, and allowing for the recruitment of foreign volunteers in breach of several international warfare conventions.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:
5
Interactions:
2,606

This narrative continued for a fifth week in a row. Hungarian PM Orbán again called for the lifting of sanctions, claiming that this is a mandatory condition for European economic recovery.

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

Articles:
12
Interactions:
32

This narrative was employed by Hungarian PM Orbán, who said that the rising energy prices were caused by the political decisions made in Brussels. Orbán has been a common presence in the Macedonian online space.

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

Continuing narratives:

Russia is losing the war and will use nuclear weapons

Articles:
36
Interactions:
982

This narrative was used by Chechen dictator Ramzan Kadyrov, who said that after the fall of the Russian stronghold in Lyman, Russia should consider using tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

Putin will wipe out Europe with the Sarmat

Articles:
22
Interactions:
705

This narrative was employed again this week by the Deputy Head of Russia's Security Council Medvedev, who said that Russia had every right to use nuclear weapons, even if aggression via conventional weapons threatened its existence. This narrative sends a clear threat that Russia is ready to use all available means in the war, including nuclear, so this narrative is very threatening and incites dismay.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing narratives:

Russia and its allies are strong

Articles:

2

Interactions:

1,855

This narrative was promoted by Macedonian pro-Russian voice Sašo Tasevski, in a Facebook post in which he applauds Putin's actions against the "evil" West, presenting him as a master strategist and emphasizing that all of Russia's actions are in accordance with a previously devised plan.

POLAND

Fakenews.pl

- This week, pro-Kremlin propaganda in Poland primarily focused on news from the frontlines. The amount of attention given to the topic shifted the traditionally dominant anti-refugee narratives to the margins.
- Propagandists were notorious in promoting the claims that the staged “referenda” were legitimate and that the mobilization in Russia has been very successful so far.
- Anti-refugee messaging this week focused on the statements of the mayor of Przemyśl. He accused Ukrainian refugees of engaging in benefit tourism -- returning home to Ukraine immediately after receiving benefits in Poland. These allegations were used to create an image of greedy Ukrainians deliberately abusing the goodwill of the Polish state.
- General anti-Western messaging, as well as appeals to historical wounds, were observed but were limited in number. Previously, the latter narrative has been a prominent feature of pro-Russian disinformation in Poland.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Polish news portals this week received 8,900 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New sub-narrative:

Ukraine tried to falsify the referendum results

Articles:

2

Interactions:

10,418

A recording showing captured agents of the Ukrainian secret services in the DPR with materials intended to serve as a falsification of the referendum and hidden camera footage showing a woman throwing several hundred cards into a voting urn at a time.

Continuing sub-narratives:

Mobilization in Russia is very successful

Articles:

17

Interactions:

31,795

Articles about the successes of Russia’s mobilization. Materials showing positive social reactions to the announced mobilization.

Ukraine "referendums" are legitimate

Articles:

4

Interactions:

15,724

Articles about referendum legitimacy.

Ukrainians are Nazis

Articles:

3

Interactions:

11,382

Article that showed Ukrainians with tattooed Nazi symbols. A pro-Kremlin channel provided graphics that show how Ukrainian symbols should be understood.

Poland will annex Ukraine

Articles:

1

Interactions:

4,561

Photo showing preparations for a “referendum” on the annexation of Lviv.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Continuing sub-narratives:

Ukrainian refugees undermine host countries' internal stability

Articles:

3

Interactions:

15,027

A post showing a Trojan horse with the symbol of Ukraine, alluding to the fact that Ukrainian refugees are a Trojan horse for Polish society.

Ukrainian refugees are spoiled/ungrateful

Articles:

1

Interactions:

415

A story about a drunk Ukrainian, who had beat up a tram driver, was published to undermine public opinion towards refugees.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

683

This post claims that sanctions have really been applied against Poland, not Russia, because only the former is hurt economically.

MILITARY THREAT TO EASTERN EUROPE/WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

WW3 is imminent

Articles:

1

Interactions:

1,245

The post alleges that NATO forces are preparing for a Third World War.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

**The world is controlled
by globalists**

Articles:

2

Interactions:

29,854

Video in which a man describes a conspiracy theory about globalists who will use radioactive contamination to control the population.

**Polish Government
representatives
sympathize with or
support the UPA**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

2,504

A Polish woman living in Ukraine describes the internal situation of Ukraine and what it means to be a true Polish patriot. According to her, Ukrainians are UPA supporters.

**Life under Russian
occupation is better than
under Ukrainian rule**

Articles:

1

Interactions:

4,093

A video that allegedly depicts a new, Russian-built residential district in Mariupol.

ROMANIA

GlobalFocus Center

- As in several other countries, the most interacted with narrative this week involved accusations of US involvement in the Nord Stream pipeline sabotage. Claims that the West is i) using Ukraine to wage war against Russia; ii) seeks to undermine Romania's economy with its misguided policies; iii) is dictatorial; iv) is faltering politically and economically; and v) is secretly trading with Russia were also prevalent. Overall, pro-Russian disinformation actors in Romania seem to be primarily focused on strong anti-Western and Eurosceptic messaging that is meant to push audiences towards either neutrality or alignment with Russia.
- A significant portion of the disinformation in Romania revolves around conspiracy theories. According to one article, President Zelensky continues the war so that his Western "puppet masters" can continue enriching themselves. Another article alleges that the corrupt elites in Bucharest do not wish Romania to be prosperous and thus sabotage profitable energy deals. Conservative politicians Aurelian Pavelescu claims that that the West and Russia have a secret economic pact. However, the dominant conspiracy theory this week attributes the Nord Stream damage to US-organized sabotage.
- Far-right voices continued to use the remaining prestige of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, who claimed last week that Ukrainian borders are unnatural, and that Romania, Hungary, and Poland are historically entitled to some of its territories. Mr. Marga continued his string of declarations, now saying that there will be no winners in this war and that, sooner or later, the EU will have to foot the bill.
- Articles legitimizing the "referenda" in the occupied territories and presenting Russian soldiers as "saviours" were detected but were few in number.
- Narratives about the situation on the frontlines, military aid, or Ukrainian refugees were not observed in Romania this week.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Romanian news portals this week received 21,600 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New narratives:

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

Articles:

2

Views:

12,504

Liviu Plesoianu, an anti-Western influencer and former politician, is disseminating disinformation about US involvement in the explosions at the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines. Plesoianu implies that such sabotage is the modus operandi of Western powers and is exactly the kind of provocation that pushed Russia to attack Ukraine.

Continuing narratives:

The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia

Articles:
1
Views:
5,001

A far-right member of the Romanian Parliament, Liviu Lasca, is accusing the West (NATO, particularly) for using Ukraine as a proxy for waging a war against Russia and is calling for Romania's neutrality (i.e., Romania should not support Ukraine in its efforts). The Russian army is presented as being a principled force of good.

Ukraine's leadership does not care about its people

Articles:
1
Views:
1,805

The Facebook channel of a prominent anti-Western online media (gandeste.org) is claiming that president Zelensky is not interested in the well-being of his people, but only cares about his and his Western puppeteers' material wealth. The post alleges that Zelensky has granted Western economic elites unlimited access to Ukrainian resources and is willing to continue the war so the Western elites can continue to enrich themselves.

Russia's invasion is justified and legitimate

Articles:
1
Interactions:
405

The post claims that the war that Russia started in Ukraine is a holy war against the West.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing narratives:

The inflation and energy crises are caused by the West's misguided political approach

Articles:
3
Views:
5,385

The posts claim that Romania is producing a surplus of energy, but the West/EU doesn't want Romania to be prosperous. As such, the corrupt elite in Bucharest is selling the surplus energy to Western traders.

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:
2
Views:
2,339

The post claims that the major Western economic powers (France, Germany, UK), who supported the US war against Russia in Ukraine, have been strongly impacted by the economic crisis the sanctions have brought, and are thus unwilling to support the war anymore.

The former minister of Education, who holds anti-Western views, claims that it is not Russia but the rest of Europe that will pay the price for the war in Ukraine.

The West is secretly trading with Russia

Articles:
1
Views:
457

Conservative politician Aurelian Pavelescu is implying that there is a secret economic pact between Russia and the West.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing narratives:

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

Articles:

1

Views:

2,408

The post claims that the West/EU have failed as political and economic institutions. Their dictatorial policies imposed on sovereign states have led to social unrest, and nationalist leaders (AUR) are going to retake Romanians' freedom.

**Romania is controlled by
the West**

Articles:

1

Views:

2,358

The post claims that corrupt Romanian politicians are taking orders from Brussels, and not respecting the will of their own people.

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

Articles:

1

Views:

1,305

Far right politician is advocating against support for Ukraine, equating it with the betrayal of the Romanian people.

**Life under Russian
occupation is better than
under Ukrainian rule**

Articles:

1

Views:

455

A Romanian soldier who fought in Ukraine claims he was saved by Russian soldiers.

**Romania should be
neutral to prevent being
dragged into war**

Articles:

3

Views:

431

The posts write that a group of Czech CSOs are asking for neutrality for their country.

SERBIA

European Western Balkans

- On October 2, Prime Minister Ana Brnabić said that Serbia is suffering pressure from hypocritical Western “great powers” when it comes to Ukraine. Interior Minister Aleksandar Vulin, who has ties to the Kremlin, claimed that the US expects Serbia to join its anti-Russian hysteria. One of the most prevalent narratives in the Serbian media and among ruling politicians is that the West is pressuring “neutral” countries to impose sanctions against Russia.
- The most prevalent narratives this week dealt with the events of the Russia-Ukraine war. Messaging legitimizing the staged referenda and the annexation of Ukrainian territories was the most notorious. The narrative that Russia was strengthened by the annexations and will now fight against Ukraine and the West at full capacity was also observed.
- Several articles containing anti-sanctions messages were identified. Pro-Russian voices claim that the sanctions enjoy zero support from EU citizens; pictures from the protests in Prague were provided as evidence. The EU’s dependence on Russian gas supplies was also emphasized.
- This week, messaging discrediting Ukrainian refugees or victimizing Russian and Russian-speaking minorities was not observed.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Serbian news portals this week received 321 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New narratives:

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

Articles:

1

Views:

173

The post was published on pro-Russian [Pravda.rs](#) and Facebook. Russian President Vladimir Putin accused the United States of America and its allies of damaging the Nord Stream gas pipelines.

Continuing narratives:

The West is profiting on the war in Ukraine

Articles:

2

Interactions:

26,620

A post was published on a pro-Russian and pro-government portal [Alo.rs](#) and Facebook. It claimed that Russia is creating a fairer world with the war in Ukraine. The West, on the other hand, continues to impose its hegemony and profiting from the war.

The West is undermining peace negotiation efforts

Articles:

2

Interactions:

5,750

A post was published on pro-Russian portal Iskra.rs and Facebook. It claimed that the West, led by USA, is trying to dismember Russia, that Russia will not allow them to do that, and that Putin wants peace.

Donbas is Russian

Articles:

1

Interactions:

2,500

A post was published on pro-Russian portal Drugacije.srbijadanas.com and Facebook, claiming that Donbas is legitimate Russian territory.

Russia is not fighting at full capacity

Articles:

1

Interactions:

431

The post was published on pro-Russian portal Pravda.rs and Facebook. Serbian sniper Dejan Berić explains how Serbs can become volunteers in the Russian army. Berić believes that the mobilization will be the start of the real war, and both Ukraine and the West will see that.

The West forced Russia to attack Ukraine

Articles:

1

Interactions:

125

A post was published on pro-Russian portal Pravda.rs and Facebook. It alleged that Western countries are trying to provoke conflicts in the Donetsk People's Republic. The West is trying to rekindle old conflicts, creating new problems and crises.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Western citizens do not support sanctions against Russia

Articles:

2

Interactions:

2,160

The post was published on pro-Russian portal Pravda.rs and Facebook. It argued that the citizens of the Czech Republic are dissatisfied with the sanctions and believe that the country should buy cheaper gas from the Russian Federation.

Russia will stop all gas deliveries for Europe

Articles:

1

Interactions:

380

The post was published on pro-Russian portal web.tribune. According to the post, if Moscow follows through on its threat to sanction Ukraine's Naftogaz, one of Russia's last gas supply routes to Europe could be shut down.

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

Continuing sub-narratives:

Poland will be the next target of attack

Articles:

1

Interactions:

281

The post was published on pro-Russian portal [Pravda.rs](#). It quoted US senator Marco Rubio, who allows for the possibility of Russia striking airports in Poland, through which Western military aid is brought to Ukraine.

Russia is losing the war and will use nuclear weapons

Articles:

1

Interactions:

248

The post was published on pro-Russian portal [webtribune.rs](#). It explained that Putin has two main tactical measures for using nuclear weapons: strike key Ukrainian land lines of communication and command centers and/or strike the main Ukrainian forces.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continuing sub-narratives:

Western military aid useless

Articles:

1

Interactions:

282

The post was published on pro-Russian portal [Pravda.rs](#) and Facebook. It alleged that the Russian forces advanced in the area of Kherson, destroying NATO weapons systems.

SLOVAKIA

Infosecurity.sk

- This week, the greatest amount of attention in Slovakia was, once again, given to the topic of sanctions, particularly the claim that they harm the West more than Russia. The topic appears to be appealing to the local population, as it refers to feeling of anxiety among the rising inflation and energy prices. Most of the posts spreading this narrative were shared by MEP Milan Uhrík.
- Covering the conflict, local pro-Kremlin voices devoted special attention to the allegations that the West is blocking all attempts to restore peace in Ukraine. This may constitute a meaningful turn in Kremlin propaganda if the trend continues over the following weeks. Considering that Russia is losing the recently occupied territories, it may want to provoke pressure from the West in order to force Kyiv to accept peace terms that benefit Russia
- Anti-Western messages were, as always, prevalent in Slovakia. This week, pro-Kremlin voices accused the US of committing the Nord Stream pipeline sabotage in order to increase pressure and control over Europe. The opposition party *Republika* is still claiming that the is profiting from the war and European sanctions.

For comparison, the most interacted with individual Ukraine-related article across Slovak news portals this week received 9,500 interactions.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New sub-narrative:

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

Articles:

6

Interactions:

33,080

Many articles suggested that the destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines is either American propaganda or that they were sabotaged by the US. The claim that the damage would only benefit the US is presented as "evidence" for these allegations.

Continuing sub-narratives:

The West is undermining peace negotiation efforts

Articles:

6

Interactions:

31,116

An opposition politician Eduard Chmelár is spreading the narrative about the West choosing war instead of peace. He posted numerous posts, some of them having a high number of interactions.

The US is making money from the war in Ukraine and European sanctions

Articles:

1

Interactions:

11,323

An opposition politician and MEP claimed that the US is making money from European sanctions, which he called "European stupidity". He and his political party have spread this narrative before.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing sub-narratives:

Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

Articles:

7

Interactions:

41,433

Many posts spread the narrative about sanctions being more harmful for the West than Russia. This narrative is very popular in Slovakia due to high inflation rates and energy prices, which are causing fear.

MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing sub-narratives:

X country is controlled by the West

Articles:

4

Interactions:

19,455

A number of posts spread the narrative about several countries allegedly being controlled by the West. In some cases, it was about Slovakia, in others about Ukraine.

The EU is a dictatorship

Articles:

2

Interactions:

6,890

One post claimed that there are "liberal dictates" in Brussels. Another post claimed that the EU is antidemocratically interfering in the internal politics of its member states.

The EU is under US influence

Articles:

1

Interactions:

3,914

Opposition politician Milan Uhrík claimed that Europe is headed for destruction because it is under the influence of American interests.

NATO aspirations provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia

Articles:

1

Interactions:

3,729

Opposition politician Milan Uhrík claimed that NATO is the main cause of all conflicts in Europe. He also said that NATO is "American military organization".

Western media is lying

Articles:

3

Interactions:

6,033

Multiple posts spread the narrative that Slovak mainstream media are lying. One of them claimed that the media, Infosecurity, and other NGOs are being paid by the US to spread lies.

The West is hypocritical

Articles:

1

Interactions:

2,959

Opposition politician Eduarch Chmelár claimed that if the recently elected Giorgia Meloni supports sending military aid to Ukraine, NATO expansion and other EU policies, the EU will close its eyes to the fact that Italy drowns migrants, spreads ethnic hatred, and attacks women's rights.

UKRAINE

Detector Media

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

- This week, pro-Russian Telegram channels focused on the following claims: i) Ukraine should not be able to or will not become a NATO member; ii) Ukraine is losing almost 20% of its territory; iii) Russia will protect its newly acquired territories at any price, including a nuclear strike; iv) the West (USA, in particular) benefits from the war; v) the West will cease its weapons transfers to Ukraine.
- Despite its successful counter-offensive and de-occupation of the illegally annexed territories, pro-Russian Telegram channels continue to spread the message that Ukraine is losing the war.
- As in numerous other countries monitored for this report, pro-Russian Telegram channels in Ukraine blamed the West – the US, in particular – for the Nord Stream pipeline damage.
- Attempts to discredit the Ukrainian authorities and the Western allies continued for yet another week. Accusations of corruption and incompetence have been particularly prevalent.

EVENTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

New narratives:

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

Articles:

12

Interactions:

5,283,200

Disinformation actors claim that Britain and the US benefit from problems with the Nord Streams and will profit from the explosions. The posts imply that the West is behind the sabotage.

One of the posts presents Donald Trump's social media posts, implying US involvement, as evidence

Ukraine should not/will not become a NATO member

Article:

4

Interactions:

2,479,100

Propagandists manipulated the announcement that Ukraine will be pursuing a fast-track application to NATO, claiming that it is simply PR for the country's authorities and a way to get more weapons.

Pro-Russian blogger Anatoliy Shariy claims that Ukraine should not be a part of NATO because of its corruption, human rights abuses, and legislation.

Continuing narratives:

Ukraine is losing the war

Articles:

7

Views:

2,462,500

Pro-Russian Telegram channels claimed that Ukraine has lost 20% of its territories and will have to introduce a full-scale mobilization. They also claimed that Russia will defend the annexe territories at any price, including the use of nuclear weapons, so Ukraine does not have any chances of winning the war.

The West is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia

Articles:
13
Views:
1,689,500

Several posts claimed that Washington seeks to weaken Russia and that, once it does so and receives neutrality guarantees from China, it will no longer be interested in Ukraine.

Other pro-Russian voices claimed that the US is interested in Russia attacking Ukraine with nuclear weapons because it will allow the US to take over Russia's energy profits (after it becomes isolated from the rest of the world). Alternatively, the US could weaken Russia once and for all by responding to its nuclear strike in kind.

Some posts claimed that the West uses Ukraine as "fodder".

Ukrainians are Nazis

Articles:
2
Views:
1,130,435

The post claims that Russia insists on the punishment of the Ukrainian Nazis from the Azov battalion despite the fact that some of them were exchanged in a POW swap.

The West is profiting from the war in Ukraine

Articles:
3
Views:
916,000

The post claims that the US is profiting the most from the war in Ukraine and will resort to any provocation, including a nuclear strike, to ensure its steady profits continue.

Pro-Russian Ukrainian blogger Anatoliy Shariy claims that the war is a "golden antelope" for the US because it has replaced Russia as the main source of oil for Europe.

Ukraine is preparing a nuclear attack

Articles:
2
Views:
816,700

The Office of the President is getting ready to build a dirty nuclear bomb to be used against Russia. An HQ has already been set up on Bankova, staffed with nuclear scientists and members of the military.

NATO is/will be directly involved in the war

Articles:
1
Views:
802,700

Some Telegram channels claimed that NATO is preparing for war with Russia.

NATO/The West will attack Russia

Articles:
3
Views:
801,200

The post speculates that USA will attack Russia because they asked all American citizens to urgently leave Russia; Poland, Estonia, Bulgaria, and other countries have done the same.

Reports of Russian war crimes are exaggerated/fake news

Articles:
1
Views:
752,700

This post included a manipulated video featuring people from the un-occupied territories denying Russian war crimes.

There are tensions between the West and Ukraine

Articles:
2
Views:
690,013

One post claimed that NATO members are not interested in accepting Ukraine into the alliance. Another post alleged that the West does not want to supply Ukraine with any more weapons.

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

Articles:
6
Views:
581,600

Disinformation actors claim that financial and military assistance to Ukraine from the West has begun to decrease, which is why Zelensky is increasingly resorting to boorish rhetoric to influence his partners. Furthermore, the West did not agree with Zelensky about the NATO application, and he wanted to take them by surprise. The West is allegedly now angry with Zelensky.

Russia is liberating Ukraine

Articles:
2
Views:
539,700

Pro-Russian channels write that Russia does not fabricate the results of its "referendums" and does not annex Ukrainian territories but that have joined Russia legally and are now lost to Ukraine forever. They also claim that Russia will restore Mariupol in 3 years.

Poland will annex Ukraine

Articles:
2
Views:
460,700

A disinformation post claimed that Russia will launch a nuclear strike on the Yavoriv test site for two reasons. Firstly, because there are many foreign soldiers and instructors there. Secondly, to show Poland that it will not be able to conquer the Lviv region.

The West knows that Russia is winning the war

Articles:
2
Views:
452,800

Propagandists claim that one should not expect a direct confrontation between the USA/ Europe and Russia because they are afraid of nuclear strikes and Russia will defend its new territories by any means.

The West is losing interest in helping Ukraine

Articles:
1
Views:
323,372

The post claims that the world needs Ukraine to justify its anti-Russia policies but will abandon it once Russia ceases to exist.

Ukraine's leadership does not care about its people

Articles:

2

Views:

191,600

Telegram channels claim that the Ukrainian government is using mobilization in Russia to impose indefinite martial law. This will help them to remove Ukrainian activists and political opponents. They also claim that the AFU are forced to vaccinate against COVID-19 under the threat that their salaries will be taken away.

Nuclear disaster is imminent

Articles:

1

Views:

89,800

Propagandists claim that the US has created the perception that nuclear disaster is imminent for its own benefit. Allegedly, Biden wants to be able to say that he prevented nuclear war during his next election campaign.

Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes

Articles:

3

Views:

83,200

A video of destroyed civilian objects in Donetsk are presented as "evidence" of Ukrainian shelling.

The US provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia

Articles:

1

Views:

80,700

The post says that the US became more aggressive with Russia, which is why Russia may use nuclear weapons

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

Articles:

1

Views:

15,492

Pro-Russian Telegram channel cites Putin's press secretary, according to whom Ukraine has nothing to bargain with during negotiations because Russia is winning the war.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Continuing narratives:

Ukrainian refugees undermine host countries' internal stability

Articles:

1

Views:

133,400

The post claims that Ukrainian refugees are dishonest and so no one wants to host them anymore.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

Continuing narratives:

The West is secretly trading with Russia	Articles: <u>1</u> Views: 2,000,000	The West has achieved its interests in Ukraine and is now starting to trade with Russia. Therefore, Ukraine receives less and less aid.
Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia	Articles: <u>3</u> Views: 200,100	One post says that the US and Europe have reached an impasse with the sanctions imposed on Russia. Now these countries do not have the necessary resources, so bankruptcy awaits them. Another post claims that the US wanted to destroy Russia's economy but only ended up hurting itself. Lastly, propagandists claim that the European crisis has come for all Europeans and that Europe should focus on saving itself because if it falls apart, so will Ukraine.
Ukraine is bankrupt	Articles: <u>1</u> Views: 69,300	Propagandists claim that the war allegedly caused a global financial crisis and the collapse of stocks.
Economic sanctions on Russia caused the war	Articles: <u>1</u> Views: 35,300	The post claims that sanctions against Russia turned a local conflict into a global one. The authors hint that, if there were no sanctions, there would be no war.
Europe is threatened by an energy crisis	Articles: <u>1</u> Views: 33,400	Propagandists claim that Europe will soon suffer from a lack of gas but its leaders are lying about their real situation. Allegedly, gas reserves will run out earlier than politicians promise.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

Continuing narratives:

The West will no longer provide Ukraine with military aid	Articles: <u>5</u> Views: 255,400	The posts state that the West will no longer supply weapons to Ukraine because the Soviet stockpiles have been depleted and nobody wants to spend any more money. The EU definitely cannot help because it is on the verge of disaster and has no more weapons.
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MISCELLANEOUS

Continuing narratives:

Ukraine is controlled by the West

Articles:

5

Views:

3,671,400

A post claims that everybody but Kyiv itself is deciding Ukraine's future right now and that it is not a sovereign nation. Zelensky will carry out whatever USA-UK-EU-China-Turkey tell him to do.

Another post claims that the admission of Ukraine to NATO is beneficial to the West because it will allow Western countries to tear off pieces of Ukraine when it ultimately falls.

The Ukrainian leadership is corrupt and/or incompetent

Articles:

9

Views:

3,523,800

One post claims that, according to "insider information", the Office of the President receives kickbacks from the export of grain. So much grain has been exported so far, that 2023 will be a very difficult year for Ukraine in terms of food supplies.

Another post alleges that the president's office still wants to get rid of Zaluzhnyi but cannot do so because of the general's high popularity. Because of these internal political rivalries, Zaluzhnyi was not invited to Izyum and the laurels were given to someone else.

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

Articles:

4

Views:

3,548,800

The post claims that the new Italian government will resort to soft blackmail of the EU, which will eventually lead to its breakdown. This will push the issue of Ukraine to second or third place on the global agenda, and sanctions against Russia will be weakened, removed, or rendered "toothless".

Another post claims that the "situation" in Ukraine is bringing forth Europe's end.

Western society does not support Ukraine

Articles:

6

Views:

1,712,500

Propagandists claim that NATO was not ready for such loud statements from Ukraine about its ascension. That is why most of high-ranking US officials are upset with Ukraine. The post also claims that no one is really supporting Ukraine anymore, compared to the statements made early on in the war.

Another post claims that Western citizens are beginning to experience fatigue about the war in Ukraine and want to focus on their own issues, especially surviving the long, cold winter.

The destruction of Ukrainian statehood is inevitable

Articles:

2

Views:

955,100

After the referendums, Ukraine lost territories and will continue to lose them. Ukrainian "nationalists" and the West opposed the Minsk agreements and are to blame for the fact that Ukraine lost Donbas. Ukraine will continue to lose territories unless Zelensky fulfils the Minsk agreements.

Articles:

The author of the post claims that the US, "the main sponsor of Ukro-Nazis and separatists, is trying to establish full control over Europe's economy. He

**The EU is under US
influence**

1

Views:
44,900

claims that USA's main "followers" in Europe are Macron and Sholz; both are allegedly trying to destroy their respective countries.

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
- 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

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

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