

RUSSIAN INFORMATION WARFARE

2 MONTHS AFTER THE INVASION IN UKRAINE



RUSSIAN INFORMATION WARFARE

2 MONTHS AFTER THE INVASION IN UKRAINE

Authors:

TAMAR KINTSURASHVILI, SANDRO GIGAURI

Fact-checkers:

MAIKO RATIANI, MARIAM DANGADZE, ARABELA KORDZAKHIA, MARIAM TALAKHADZE,
DATO ROBAKIDZE, KETI KHUTSISHVILI, TINA TVAURI, IRAKLI IAGORASHVILI

Data Processing and Visualization in Maltego:

MARIAM TSUTSKIRIDZE

Cover:

SHUTTERSTOCK

Design by:

BESIK DANELIA, IBDESIGN

INTRODUCTION

Following the Russian invasion in the territories of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and the launch of full-scale military intervention, a number of disinformation related to the war has been disseminated in the Georgian, Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian social and traditional media.

As part of Facebook's third-party fact-checking program, Myth Detector has joined [Meta's](#) efforts aimed at reducing the spread of false information about the war.

For a period of two months, from February 24 to April 24, Myth Detector monitored Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Georgian social media and uncovered typologies of key messages and false claims disseminated by Russian, Georgian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian sources. In addition to the retrieved data, the report includes 2 disinformation cases, which were identical to the manipulative content spread during the war and were initially disseminated right before the emergence of military intervention on February 24, 2022.

The following report consists of two parts: the first part discusses the amount, themes and typology of viral disinformation and manipulative content; The second part deals with the communication channels of Russian information operations and their tactics.

The report entails data retrieved by Myth Detector in collaboration with Facebook as part of its fact-checking program. The analysis also used the Facebook analytics tool CrowdTangle.

Open Source Investigation (OSINT) software Maltego was used for data visualization.

KEY FINDINGS

During the monitoring period (February 24 – April 24) the following tendencies have been identified:

- Out of the 160 false information and manipulative content, mainly disseminated in Russian and Georgian sources, the largest share (49.4%) was directed against Ukraine, followed by disinformation against the West (28.1%). Part of the false and manipulative content was aimed at justifying Russia's actions (16.3%).

AGAINST UKRAINE:

- In order to evade Russia's responsibility for human casualties, the Kremlin's propaganda has resorted to the tactic of "whataboutism" – in response to accusations, the Russian side has been arguing that the Ukrainian side was the one killing the civilian population and that the population was endangered not by Russian troops but by the actions of the Azov Battalion and other so-called 'Nazi groups.'
- The denial of Russian responsibility for the military intervention in Ukraine was also bolstered by deliberate disinformation, reinforcing the idea that Ukraine was fabricating information about the victims (Mariupol blogger story, Bucha Massacre). Visual manipulations, including those related to the pandemic, were often used for this purpose.
- Most of the disinformation against Zelenskyy was initially aimed at disorienting the Ukrainians themselves, alleging that Zelenskyy had fled the country. Later on, the information campaign against the President of Ukraine was mainly aimed at his moral discreditation (drug addiction, Nazism) and the dissemination of anti-Semitic conspiracies.
- Disinformation and manipulative content related to the Azov Battalion and Stepan Bandera aligned with the Kremlin's message to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine under the pretext of denazifying the country.
- Video manipulations have been circulating on the Internet to discredit the Ukrainian refugees, illustrating the inappropriate nature of their behaviour.
- Conspiracy theories claiming that Ukraine was facing divine retribution for the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah and the Zelenskyy regime was being punished for fighting Orthodoxy coincid-

ed with a statement by Russian Patriarch Kirill, who asserted that the reason for the war in Ukraine was liberal Western values and intolerance of the population of Donbas towards gay parades.

- Anti-Semitic conspiracies about the “Heavenly Jerusalem” in connection to the events in Ukraine were mostly disseminated by the anti-vaxx Facebook accounts in Georgia.
- The claim that the Russians and the Ukrainians are one nation and united under the common state “Kievan Rus,” reinforced the idea that the Russia-Ukraine war was in fact a confrontation between brothers provoked by the West and that no other country had the right to interfere.

AGAINST THE WEST:

- The largest share of disinformation against the West was related to biological laboratories. As in previous years, amid the Russian intervention in Ukraine, the Kremlin’s information operations emphasized the threat of testing biological weapons in the US-funded laboratories in Ukraine and Georgia. The deliberate disinformation campaign was accompanied by statements from the Kremlin that Russia would not allow the testing of biological weapons near its borders.
- Part of the messages targeting the West was also tailored to Russia’s domestic audience, suggesting that U.S. and EU sanctions were damaging the West more than Russia and that Europe was on the verge of starvation because of its economic dependence on Russia.
- Both Russian and Georgian sources have blamed the West for inciting the war and aiming to resolve the conflict through military escalation. In addition, in the case of Georgia, allegations were made against the government of Ukraine about opening a second front in Georgia and attempting to plunge the country into war. These messages have been disseminated by pro-governmental inauthentic accounts in a coordinated manner. Facebook posts of this content were sponsored not only by anonymous Facebook pages but also by the official pages of the ruling party.
- To illustrate that the West represents a side of the war and, in addition to political interests, is directly involved in military operations, Kremlin media has been reporting on the alleged capture of military personnel of the U.S. and NATO.
- In order to shift the focus from the threat of Russian intervention to other threats and to avoid the responsibility for the conflict, the Kremlin’s propaganda sought to stir up historical trauma by spreading false information about Poland’s alleged plan to regain western Ukraine in a coordinated manner.
- With the aim to justify its military intervention and shift the blame to the West, the Kremlin propaganda sought to reinforce the idea that the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) had broken its promise to Russia that the alliance would no longer expand eastwards.

JUSTIFYING THE ACTIONS OF RUSSIA:

- To illustrate Russia's military tactical superiority, photo-video manipulations were particularly rampant in the first phase of the war. The posts sought to allegedly depict the bombing of certain Ukrainian cities and show the advance of Russian military forces.
- To justify the military intervention in Ukraine, the Kremlin propaganda argued that the so-called "special military operation" was of a purely preventive nature and aimed at deterring Ukrainian aggression and protecting the People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk.
- Another disinformation that targeted Russia's internal audiences and aimed to justify military intervention claimed that Ukraine had no borders officially recognized by the UN, therefore, Russia did not violate Ukraine's territorial integrity or international law.
- The Kremlin propaganda machine also argued that Russia was neither targeting the civilians nor bombing the residential areas.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND THEIR MODUS OPERANDI

- In order to pursue information operations and propaganda on Facebook and Instagram, the Kremlin uses a wide range of communication channels.
- In selected cases, in order to circumvent monitoring, informational media outlets disseminated political content either through entertainment channels (Россия 1, Музыка 80-90-00's) or by politically engaged individual Facebook accounts (Georgia, Alt-Info/Conservative Movement) in a coordinated manner.
- In addition to the **RUSSIAN STATE-CONTROLLED AND PROPAGANDA MEDIA** (RT, Первый канал, Россия 1, Телеканал «Звезда», Царьград, etc.), the comments of **ENGLISH-SPEAKING EXPERTS** (Scott Ritter, Gonzalo Lira) were disseminated in a coordinated manner. Their views were presented to the audience as the position of neutral observers from the West showing the evidence of the Western awakening (ЗапаVINанет прозреть).
- The Facebook accounts of **RUSSIAN EMBASSIES ABROAD**, along with government media and individual Facebook users, were also involved in reproducing the opinions of English-speaking experts justifying Russia's actions.
- In addition to foreign experts, Kremlin-linked **FOREIGN JOURNALISTS** and various media platforms, as well as Facebook accounts, some of which were managed from Russia, were used to disseminate false information on Ukraine and the West.
- Monitoring has identified instances when the Facebook accounts of **RUSSIAN DIASPORAS AND THE IMMORTAL REGIMENT** in various countries were used during the Ukraine-Russia war to influence public opinion and mobilize local diasporas. The mobilization of communist parties abroad was used to express support for Russia and oppose NATO.

- **FACEBOOK ACCOUNTS IN SUPPORT OF RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN**, in addition to disseminating disinformation, were used for propaganda purposes, where the identities of Putin and Russia were presented as being equal to one another. (ЗА ПУТИНА – ЗА РОССИЮ).
- In addition to human and media resources of the pro-Kremlin parties, anti-vaxx and, in some cases, religious actors were also involved in spreading disinformation about Ukraine in Georgia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. DISINFORMATION AND MANIPULATIVE CONTENT RELATED TO THE RUSSIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN UKRAINE	9
1.1. Against Ukraine	11
1.2. Against the West	20
1.3. Justifying the actions of Russia	26
2. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND THEIR MODUS OPERANDI	30
CHART 1. Disinformation / Manipulation Targets	9
TABLE 1. Disinformation / Manipulation Typology by Targets	10
TABLE 2. Russian state-controlled and propaganda media channels	31
TABLE 3. Media Sources from Belarus and Donbas / Luhansk	33
TABLE 4. Facebook accounts of Diaspora and the Immortal Regiment abroad	40
TABLE 5. Facebook accounts supportive of Putin	42
TABLE 6. Georgian-language sources by political, religious and other affiliations	44
MALTEGO VISUALIZATION. Sources of spreading false and manipulative content about the Russia-Ukraine war	46

ANNEXES 1.1.-3.4. available electronically through QR code

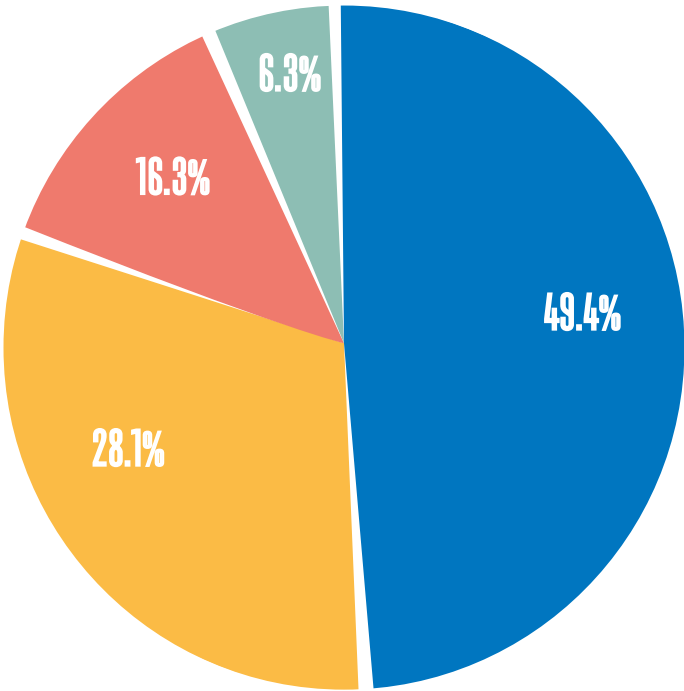


1. DISINFORMATION AND MANIPULATIVE CONTENT RELATED TO THE RUSSIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN UKRAINE

QUANTITATIVE DATA AND THE TYPOLOGY OF MESSAGES. During the Russian military intervention in Ukraine (February 24 - April 24) and prior to the emergence of the conflict, “Myth Detector” fact-checked 160 false and manipulative content disseminated on Georgian, Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian Facebook and Instagram platforms.

Most of the disseminated disinformation/manipulative content (49.4%) was directed against Ukraine, followed by disinformation against the West (28.1%) and the justification of Russia’s actions (16.3%). A total of 10 cases (6.3%) fell into the “various” category.

CHART 1. DISINFORMATION / MANIPULATION TARGETS



● AGAINST UKRAINE ● AGAINST THE WEST ● SUPPORTING RUSSIA ● OTHER

TABLE 1. DISINFORMATION / MANIPULATION TYPOLOGY BY TARGETS

AGAINST UKRAINE	79	AGAINST THE WEST	45	SUPPORTING RUSSIA	26
The Ukrainian government uses its population as human shields and threatens their security	17	Western-funded secret bio laboratories are operating in Ukraine and Georgia	12	Russia is winning the war / Russia has a military advantage	15
Ukraine fabricates the information about the victims	14	Sanctions are ineffective / they damage the West more than Russia	6	The special military operation was launched to counter the Ukrainian aggression / Kremlin had legitimate right to move on the Ukrainian territory	4
Against Zelenskyy	14	The West provokes Ukraine / encourages Georgia to join the war	5	Russia does not target peaceful civilians	3
Ukrainians are followers of the Nazis / Stepan Bandera	12	The West is a war party	5	Russia has international support / Rallies in support of Russia and against NATO and the Ukrainians are held in various cities around the world	3
Against Ukrainian refugees / Ukrainians	6	Western aid to Ukraine is insignificant	5	Ukrainians welcome the Russian army with joy	1
Conspiracies: Ukraine is punished for its sins / Jews want to transform Ukraine into a “New Jerusalem”	6	The military confrontation in Ukraine was pre-planned by the West / The West does not care about Ukraine	4		
The Russians and the Ukrainians are one nation / The Ukrainian Church was not recognized by any of the other Orthodox Churches	5	The West is waging an information war against Russia / Restricts the freedom of expression	3		
Ukraine acts with double standards	3	Poland plans to seize the territories of Ukraine	2		
Ukraine did not help Georgia during the war	2	By expanding eastward, NATO has broken its promise to Russia	2		
		The U.S. has no moral right to accuse Russia of invading Ukraine	1		

1.1. AGAINST UKRAINE

Most of the disinformation (79) was directed against Ukraine, with the largest share trying to establish the narrative that the Ukrainian government was using its population as human shields (17) and falsifying information about the victims (14). A significant share of the disinformation was directed against the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (14) and the Ukrainian fighters, who were referred to as ‘Nazis’ and ‘Banderites’ (12):

THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT USES ITS POPULATION AS HUMAN SHIELDS AND THREATENS THEIR SECURITY. In order to evade Russia’s responsibility for human casualties, the Kremlin’s propaganda has resorted to the tactic of “whataboutism,” arguing that the Ukrainian side was killing the civilian population itself and that the population was threatened not by Russian troops but by the actions of the Azov Battalion and other so-called ‘Nazi groups.’

As indicated in Annex 1.1, Myth Detector fact-checked 17 pieces of disinformation of this content during the monitoring period. Among them were allegations that:

- The [Mariupol Theater](#) and a [residential house](#) had been bombed by Ukraine itself;
- [Ukrainians do not bury](#) the bodies in Bucha and use them as touristic attractions;
- The Odessa military administration had ordered the deployment of military equipment in civilian facilities and [banned the evacuation](#) of residents from the city.
- [Ukrainian nationalists](#) have mined chemical warehouses near Sumy, where ammonia and chlorine are stored, and in the event of a Russian army appearance in the city, they intend to blow them up and mass poison the civilian population.

For more details, see [ANNEX 1.1](#)

UKRAINE FABRICATES THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE VICTIMS. In response to accusations against Russia, the tactic of “Whataboutism” was used by the Kremlin propaganda to convey the idea that Ukrainians were falsifying information about the victims. As can be seen in Appendix 1.2, the most widespread campaign was linked to [Mariupol blogger](#) Mariana Podgurskaya, who was accused of having a false pregnancy. At the initial stage of the war, “Myth Detector” fact-checked 61 posts on this topic, which were disseminated in a coordinated manner by various accounts on Facebook.

Позор! Страна актёров погорелого театра!



Обнаружили девушку, которую фотографы засняли на развалинах роддома, который якобы разгромила Россия, она оказалась украинским блогером!



zvezdi_naiznanku • Follow



zvezdi_naiznanku 🇺🇦 Украинская пропаганда сняла фейк про бомбёжку роддома Мариуполя.

Обнаружили девушку, которую фотографы засняли на развалинах роддома.

Она оказалась моделью и довольно популярным в Мариуполе бьюти-блогером!!

Девушка действительно беременна, но никак не могла «лежать» в роддоме, давно занятом неонацистами из «Азова». Девушке дали в руки вещи, загримировали и привезли под камеры. «Эксклюзивы» доверили сделать известному фотографу Евгению Малолетке, который в настоящее время тесно сотрудничает с западными информационными агентствами. Его фотографии,



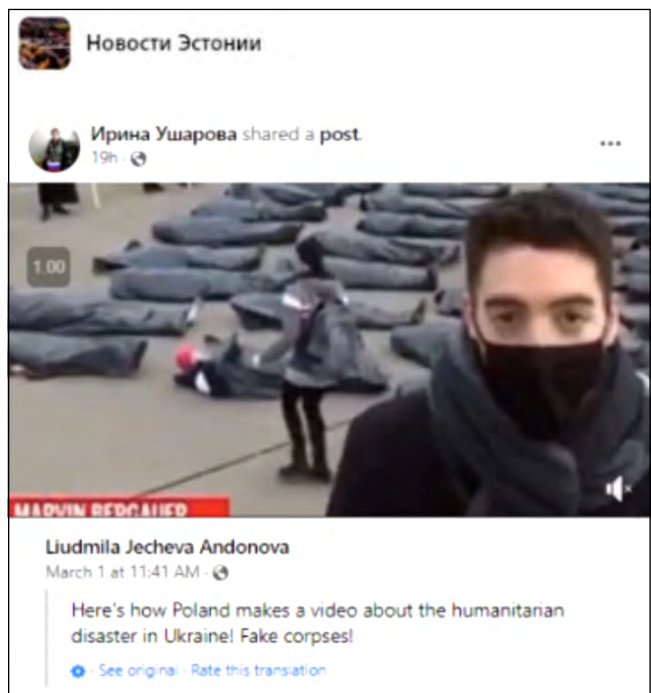
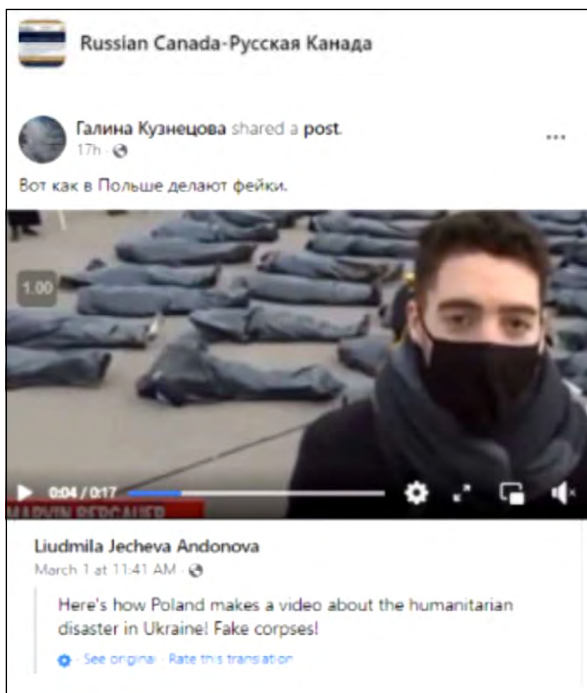
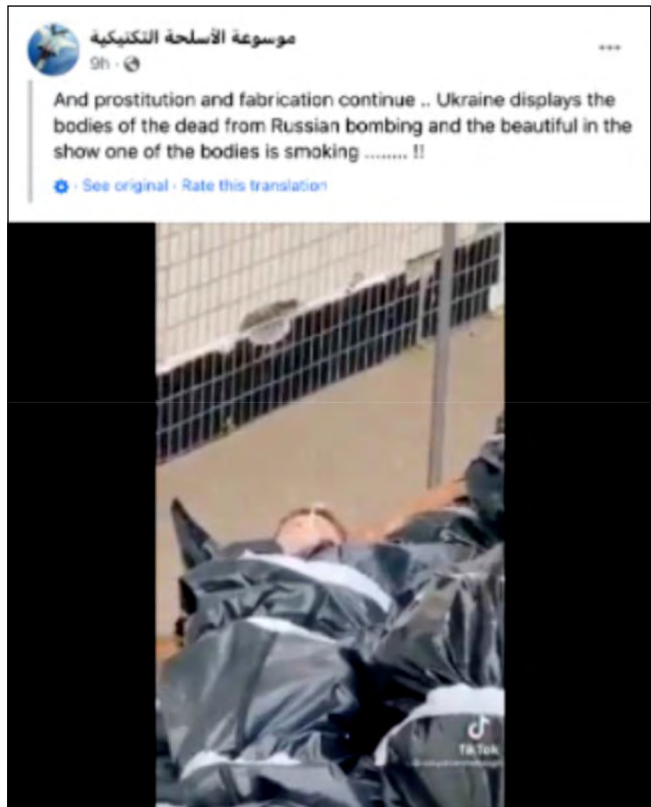
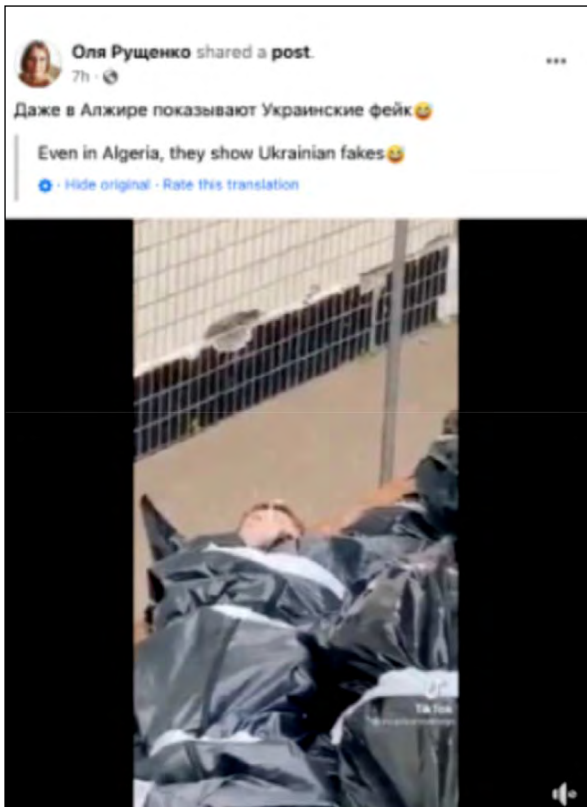
3,923 likes

MARCH 11

The Russian propaganda media, as well as Russian and Georgian Facebook and Instagram accounts, have devoted a number of publications and posts to the aim to deny Russia's role in the Bucha Massacre. "Myth Detector" has observed:

- Both the [denial](#) of the existence of victims and the manipulative use of the video published by the National Police of Ukraine as evidence;
- Based on the Turkish outlet (Aydinlik), [questioning](#) the satellite footage and investigations by the international media;
- The [use](#) of English-language expert by Kremlin's propaganda media, former UN Weapons Inspector, Scott Ritter, to legitimize the false claims.

To illustrate that Ukraine is fabricating the victims, Russian propaganda used video manipulations. In one case a [fragment](#) of a Russian rapper Husky's video clip was used, in which a corpse is allegedly smoking a cigarette, and in [another case](#), a climate change protest in Austria was used to illustrate the false claim that a corpse was moving its body. It should also be noted that the [latter](#) video was released with two different descriptions, while the video by Husky was used to deny the existence of the coronavirus during the pandemic.



For more details, see [ANNEX 1.2](#)

AGAINST ZELENSKY. Much of the disinformation against Zelenskyy was initially aimed at disorienting the Ukrainians themselves, alleging that the Ukrainian president’s public speeches were fabricated, that the recordings were being made in [advance](#), and that Zelenskyy himself had [fled the country](#).

Claims that the Wall Street Journal published an article stating that Volodymyr Zelenskyy had failed to avoid the conflict despite warnings from American and European partners were disseminated in a manipulative way by the Russian propaganda media RIA Novosti. In Georgia, the same information was [circulated](#) by local pro-Kremlin outlets, as well as pro-governmental news agencies and Facebook accounts.

During the monitoring period, ‘Myth Detector’ identified three altered, fake videos aimed at illustrating Zelenskyy’s alleged drug addiction:

- A fabricated video from 2019, in which the Ukrainian president’s love for coffee was [portrayed](#) as his drug addiction using audio montage, was shared by 21 accounts on Russian-language Facebook pages in a coordinated manner. Identical information in Georgia was disseminated by anti-vaxx and pro-Kremlin Facebook accounts.
- [Cocaine and a credit](#) card were manually added to the altered video of Zelenskyy and Elon Musk.
- [By altering the video quality](#), shadows of the items on the table and phone chargers were displayed as cocaine packaging and drug traces.

In addition, visually altered images have also been identified, in one case the inscription on the shirt of the Ukrainian national football team was replaced by a [swastika](#), and in the other case, the caricature poster of Putin in Odessa was replaced by Zelenskyy’s [visual](#).



For more details, see [ANNEX 1.3](#)

UKRAINIANS ARE FOLLOWERS OF THE NAZIS / STEPAN BANDERA. Disinformation and manipulative content related to the Azov Battalion and Stepan Bandera aligned with the Kremlin’s message to justify Russia’s invasion of Ukraine under the pretext of denazifying the country.

An old [video](#) went viral on the Georgian social media, which claimed that the Azov Battalion had crucified and burned a warrior from Donbas. The disinformation, which has been circulating since 2015, was shared by 22 Georgian-language Facebook accounts in the context of the 2022 war, including accounts linked to the pro-Kremlin “Alt-Info.”

Both Georgian pro-Kremlin outlets ([Politcano](#), [Georgia and World](#), [Newsfront](#)), as well as individual Russian-language Facebook accounts, have been disseminating unsubstantiated allegations against the leader of the Ukrainian National Liberation Movement, [Stepan Bandera](#). A case of spreading disinformation has also been observed, where Facebook users claimed that a [monument was erected](#) in Poland in honour of the memory of the children killed by Bandera, which actually depicted the tragic story of a mother killing her own children.



For more details, see [ANNEX 1.4](#)

AGAINST UKRAINIAN REFUGEES. In order to discredit the Ukrainian refugees, videos with false descriptions have been circulating on the Internet, trying to illustrate how **inappropriate** their behaviour was. In a separate case, a rally of the Russian Diaspora and Kremlin bikers (“night wolves”) against Ukrainian refugees in Dresden was labelled as a **protest** of the overall population of Dresden.



In Kobuleti, Georgia, the rally against the pro-Kremlin Conservative Movement / Alt-info, during which party members confronted protesters, was misrepresented by Russian Facebook accounts, claiming that pro-Ukrainian rallies were being **dispersed** in Georgia.

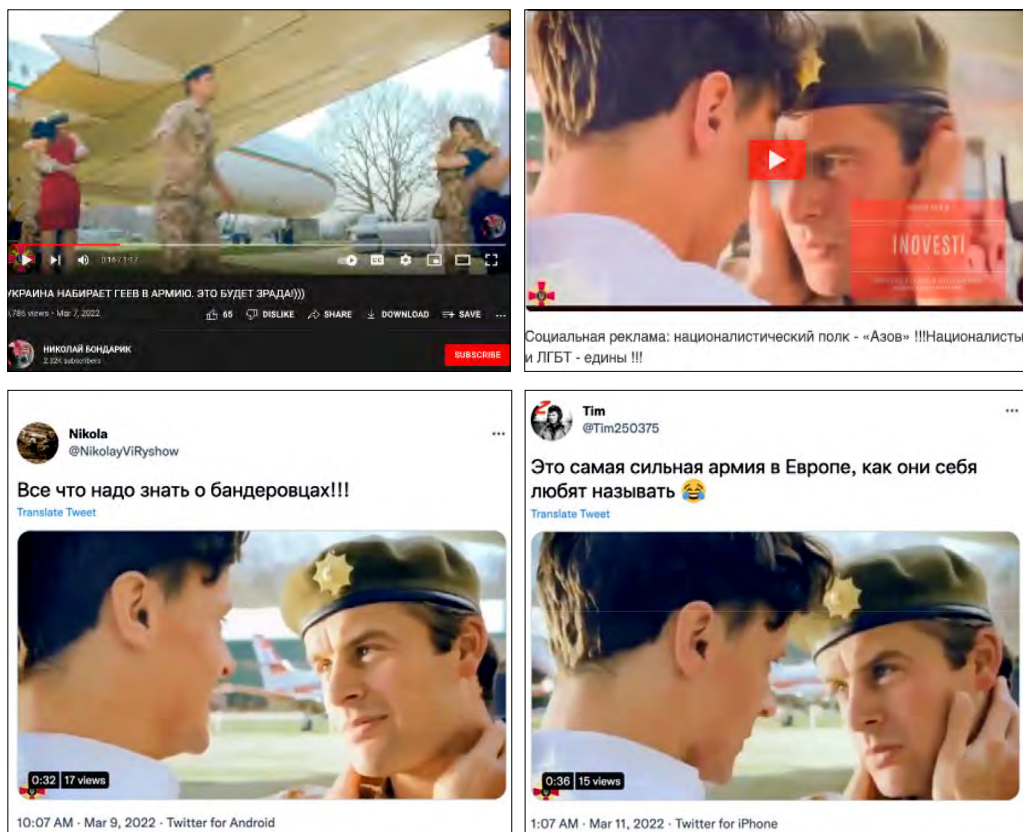
FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE [ANNEX 1.5](#)

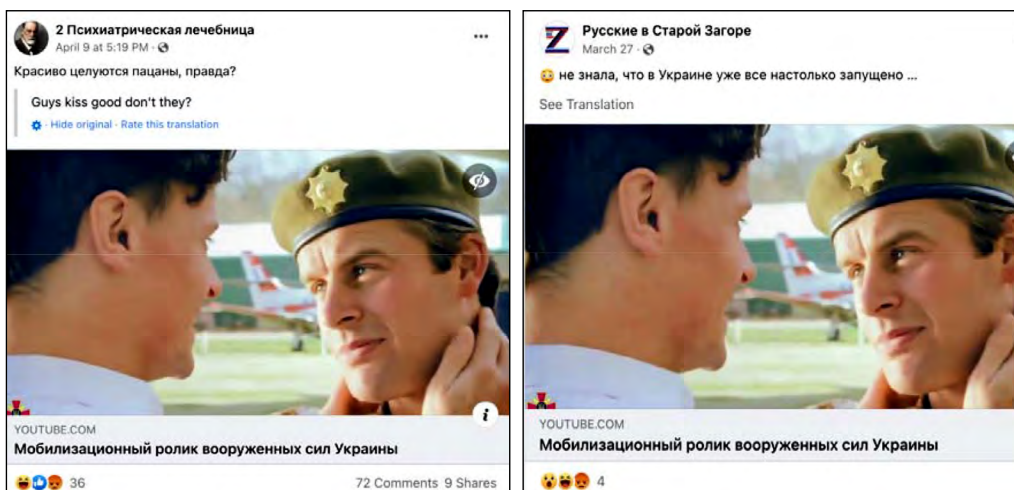
CONSPIRACIES: UKRAINE IS PUNISHED FOR ITS SINS/JEWS WANT TO TRANSFORM UKRAINE INTO A “NEW JERUSALEM.” Conspiracy theories claiming that Ukraine was facing the divine retribution for the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah and the Zelenskyy regime was being punished for fighting orthodoxy were disseminated mainly by the Georgian pro-Kremlin “Alt-Info” and the accounts linked to it. The false narrative coincided with a statement by Russian Patriarch Kirill, who asserted that the reason for the war in Ukraine was liberal Western values and intolerance of the population of Donbas towards gay **parades**.



A fabricated [version](#) of the video clip prepared originally by the British organization was distributed in a coordinated manner by the pro-Kremlin “Alt-Info” and its supporters before the emergence of the war. By altering the original video and manually adding footage of Ukrainian soldiers and the logo of the Ukrainian Land Forces, the video created the impression of an official clip of the conscription into the Ukrainian army. The [altered video](#) was accompanied by messages asserting that the reason for the loss of Crimea was an army of such spirit, that a Christian country should not be tarnished like that, and that Georgia should not support such an army.

Amid the war in March and April of 2022, an identical video accompanied by a Ukrainian song was distributed to Russian-speaking audiences in a coordinated manner on various social platforms (Facebook, YouTube, VK, Twitter, etc.). Among the distributors of the altered video was the YouTube [channel](#) of Nikolai Bondarik, the chairman of the Russian Nationalist Party, who shared the video with the following headline: “Ukraine is recruiting gays into the military. This will be a betrayal!” (УКРАИНА НАБИРАЕТ ГЕЕВ В АРМИЮ. ЭТО БУДЕТ ЗРАДА!). Other platforms ([vegvisir.media](#)) linked the video directly to the Azov Battalion, homosexuality (Nationalist Regiment – «Azov»!!! Nationalists and LGBT are the same!!! националистический полк – «Азов»!!! Националисты и ЛГБТ – едины !!!) and the Banderites ([Everything you need to know about the Banderites!](#) Все что надо знать о бандеровцах!!!). In addition, some [accounts](#) have used the video in a homophobic context to discredit the reputation of the Ukrainian army (This is the most powerful army in Europe, as they like to call themselves – Это самая сильная армия в Европе, как они себя любят называть).





In the attempts to evade the blame for Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine, in one case, an old [video](#) of “Russia Today” was used to claim that Ukrainians were being punished for cutting the cross, while in another case, the Zelenskyy regime’s [persecution](#) of Orthodoxy was named as the primary reason for the divine punishment. As an illustration, a photo of a burning church in Russia was used manipulatively, creating the false impression that the Church was located in Ukraine and burned by the Zelenskyy regime.



Another conspiracy disseminated by the Georgian social media users concerned the creation of the “[Heavenly Jerusalem](#)” on the territories of Ukraine. Among many others, anti-Semitic conspiracies were spread by the Georgian anti-vaxx Facebook accounts (Bible-believing Christians, Christians of the last advent).

For more details, see [ANNEX 1.6](#)

THE RUSSIANS AND THE UKRAINIANS ARE ONE NATION / THE UKRAINIAN CHURCH WAS NOT RECOGNIZED BY ANY OF THE OTHER ORTHODOX CHURCHES.

The claim that the Russians and the Ukrainians are one nation and united under the common state “[Kievan Rus](#),” reinforced the idea that the Russia-Ukraine war was in fact a confrontation between brothers provoked by the West and that no other country had the right to interfere. In the local Georgian context, this message was bolstered by the pro-Russian clergyman Spiridon Abuladze and shared by conservative Facebook accounts. On the other hand, the Russian-language accounts have used a [fabricated quote](#) from the first Reich Chancellor of Germany, Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck’s fake words were used as evidence that the confrontation between the brotherly Russian and Ukrainian peoples was planned to weaken Russia.

Both Russian-language and Georgian-language accounts have circulated a [map](#) of Ukraine that echoed Putin’s thesis that Kyiv was created by Lenin, as well as the idea that a large portion of modern-day Ukrainian territories was a gift from Russia. The accounts claimed that now the world was witnessing the “restoration” of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.



Along with several Georgian clergymen, the claim that the Church of Constantinople did not have the [right](#) to recognize the autocephaly of Ukraine, and that the independence of the Ukrainian Church was not [recognized](#) by any Orthodox country, was disseminated by the hosts of the pro-Kremlin TV Alt-Info.

For more details, see [ANNEX 1.7](#)

UKRAINE ACTS WITH DOUBLE STANDARDS. To illustrate that Ukraine has double standards, the topic of Russian gas was used [manipulatively](#), in addition to spreading disinformation about the alleged [looting](#) and [misappropriation](#) of humanitarian aid by Ukrainian soldiers.

For more details, see [ANNEX 1.8](#)

UKRAINE DID NOT HELP GEORGIA DURING THE WAR. Pro-Kremlin “Alt-Info” tried to convey the idea that Ukraine did not assist Georgia during the hostilities in [2008](#) or in [Abkhazia](#) in the 1990s, which, according to the host, justified the decision of the Georgian government not to join the sanctions against Russia.

1.2. AGAINST THE WEST

WESTERN-FUNDED SECRET BIO LABORATORIES ARE OPERATING IN UKRAINE AND GEORGIA. The largest share of disinformation against the West (12) was related to biological laboratories, suggesting that bio-weapons were being tested in US-controlled biological laboratories in Ukraine and that experiments on soldiers were being conducted in similar laboratories in Ukraine and Georgia; The claims further stressed that such laboratories do not operate in the United States and countries like Ukraine and Georgia are used as experimental areas.

Disinformation involving the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland’s speech in the Senate was disseminated in a coordinated manner, alleging that Nuland had admitted that the U.S. [possessed](#) biological weapons in Ukraine. Allegations about the [involvement](#) of Hunter Biden, the son of the U.S. president, in the production of biological weapons were also spread in a coordinated manner. In the case of both Ukraine and Georgia, the laboratory-related disinformation was predominantly based on leaked documents and selected foreign experts, in particular, [Dilyana Gaytandzhieva](#), a Bulgarian journalist affiliated with the Russian Ministry of Defense-owned TV Zvezda.

In addition to the United States, Germany has also been targeted by the Russian government during the war, which, according to the Kremlin, is [carrying out](#) dangerous biological activities in Ukraine with the United States.

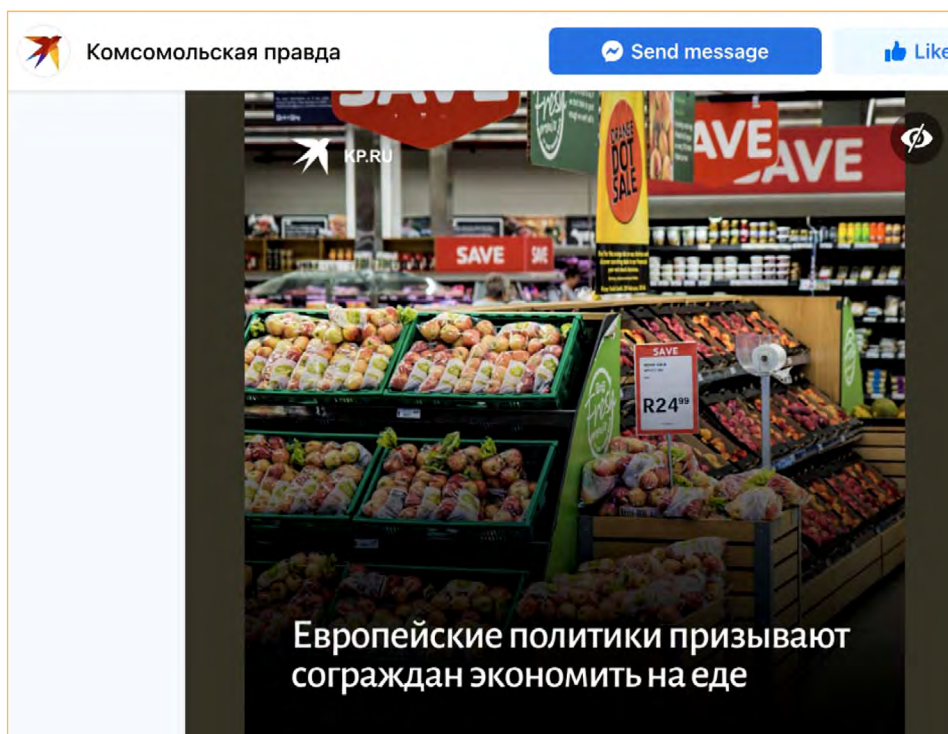
There were also reports of a NATO secret facility and a biological laboratory at the [Azovstal](#) plant in Mariupol.

The Kremlin has been resorting to the practice of pursuing information operations around the alleged use of biological weapons for years now. The Richard Lugar Biological Laboratory operating in Geor-

gia has been a target of Russia for many years. Disinformation campaigns spread by various actors are usually accompanied by statements of official Moscow that the Kremlin will not allow the testing of biological weapons near [its borders](#).

For more details, see [ANNEX 2.1](#)

SANCTIONS ARE INEFFECTIVE/THEY DAMAGE THE WEST MORE THAN RUSSIA. Part of the messages targeting the West was also tailored to Russia’s domestic audience, suggesting that U.S. and EU sanctions were damaging the West more than Russia and that Europe was on the [verge of starvation](#) because of its economic dependence on Russia. ([Комсомольская правда](#): “European politicians call on citizens to economize food”).



To demonstrate the resilience of the Russian economy and the insignificant impact of Western sanctions to the Georgian public, the pro-Kremlin “Alt-Info” [argued](#) that despite imposed sanctions, Russian exports did not experience major problems in terms of key products.

For more details, see [ANNEX 2.2](#)

THE WEST PROVOKES UKRAINE / ENCOURAGES GEORGIA TO JOIN THE WAR. Both the [United States](#), the [European Union](#) and the [U.K.](#) have been accused of inciting war and promoting a violent conflict resolution. The conspiracies have been widely circulated by pro-Kremlin Alt-Info supporters and anti-vaxx Facebook profiles as if U.S. President Joe Biden had admitted that he needed the Russia-Ukraine war with the Coronavirus pandemic to establish a [new world order](#).

In the local context, Facebook accounts supporting the pro-Kremlin Alt-Info also attempted to [disseminate](#) the words of the U.S. Ambassador Kelly Degnan manipulatively to prove that Degnan was urging the country to go to war with Russia.

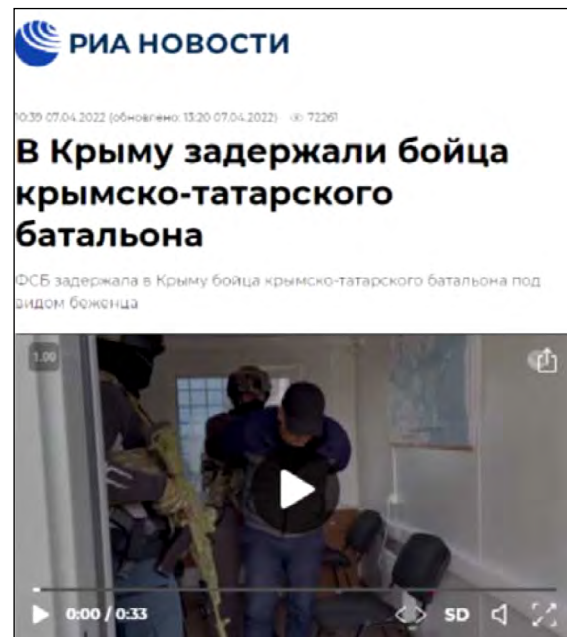
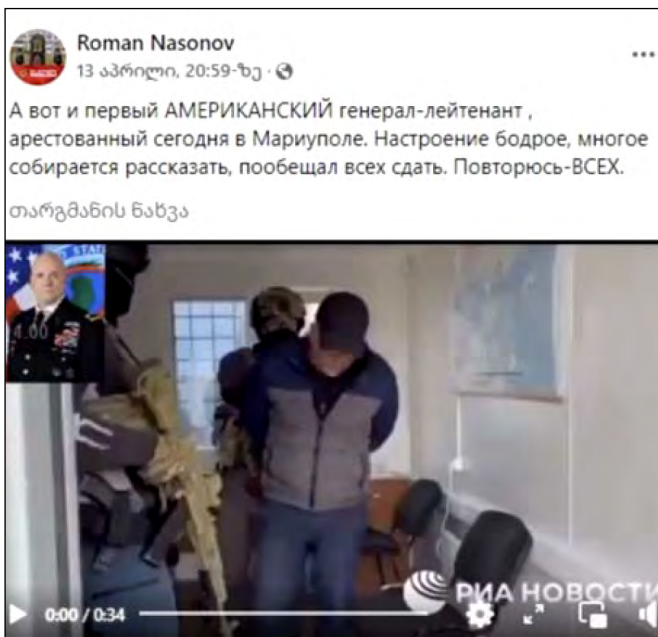
For more, see [ANNEX 2.3](#)

Apart from the pro-Kremlin actors, allegations against the government of Ukraine about opening a second front in Georgia and attempting to plunge the country into war have been disseminated by pro-governmental inauthentic accounts in a coordinated manner (CIB). Many of these accounts have been stealing the identities of others. Facebook posts of this content were sponsored not only by anonymous Facebook pages but also by the official pages of the ruling party.

For more, see: "[THE UKRAINIAN FRONT OF GEORGIAN PRO-GOVERNMENTAL TROLLS.](#)"



THE WEST IS A WAR PARTY. To illustrate that the West represents a side of the war and, in addition to [political interests](#), is directly involved in military operations, Kremlin media has been reporting on the alleged capture of U.S. secret [military agents](#), also the NATO Lieutenant General [Roger Cloutier](#), in Mariupol. In the latter case, [RIA Novosti's video](#) was used as visual evidence, which actually showed the detention of a Ukrainian citizen in Crimea.



For more details, see [ANNEX 2.4](#)

WESTERN AID TO UKRAINE IS INSIGNIFICANT. The claim that the Western aid to Ukraine was limited to verbal support was strongly emphasized. Namely, it was argued that the West was not accepting [refugees](#), that it was not supplying Ukraine with [modern weapons](#), and was limited to handing over [pink tanks](#) to Ukraine. A photo of a pink tank at the Brighton Pride in 2012 was used in a homophobic context and with a misleading title (US aid to the US) and was intended to illustrate that the priority for the West is to impose LGBTQ+ issues on others.



For more, see [ANNEX 2.5](#)

THE MILITARY CONFRONTATION IN UKRAINE WAS PRE-PLANNED BY THE WEST / THE WEST DOES NOT CARE ABOUT UKRAINE. In order to illustrate that the Russian hostilities in Ukraine were pre-planned by the West, the following techniques were used:

- **FABRICATED QUOTES:** The old fabricated quotes of American philanthropist [George Soros](#) and Polish-American diplomat [Zbigniew Brzezinski](#) were disseminated to convey the idea that no one cares about Ukraine and that it should be used to defeat Russia.
- **CLONED IMAGES:** An old cloned [video](#) of the U.S. President, Bush Jr., was being circulated. In a Russian-language video called “The Greatest American Show,” the U.S. president allegedly claimed that Ukraine and Georgia were their colonies and that Georgia was being used against Iran and Ukraine against Russia.
- **ALTERED PHOTOS:** The graphically altered [photo collage](#) was used to establish the conspiracy that the Simpsons predicted the Russia-Ukraine war.

For more, see [ANNEX 2.6](#)

THE WEST IS WAGING AN INFORMATION WAR AGAINST RUSSIA/RESTRICTS THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. Russian state-controlled ‘Channel One’ has been disseminating claims as if the West was operating a so-called “[fake factory](#)” against Russia. As evidence of Western information warfare, the channel used a clip, which, in fact, was produced by the Ukrainian Defence Ministry calling for NATO to close Ukraine’s skies.

Meanwhile, the Russian media and individual Facebook accounts reported that the Instagram of the famous American singer Britney Spears was [blocked](#) because she criticized NATO and accused the Western media of spreading provocative information about Ukraine. In addition to Russian online platforms and social media users, this information was shared by the Belarusian outlets “[Чеснок](#)” and “[Минская Правда](#).” In selected cases, the fabricated post was accompanied by an altered photo of Britney Spears with the Russian flag on her T-shirt.



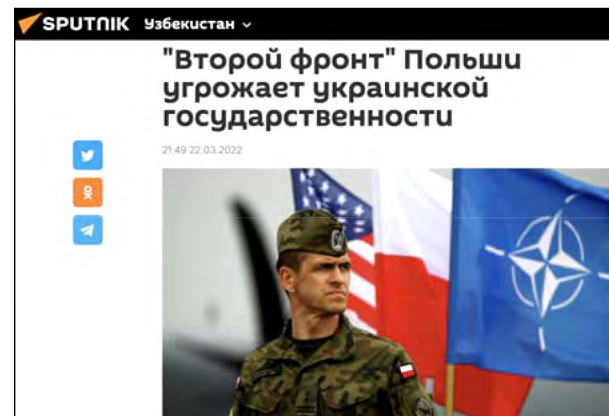
For more information, see [ANNEX 2.7](#)

POLAND PLANS TO SEIZE THE TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE/TERRITORIAL DIVISION OF UKRAINE IS INEVITABLE. In order to shift the focus from the threat of Russian intervention to other threats and to avoid the responsibility for the conflict, the Kremlin’s propaganda sought to stir up historical trauma by spreading false information about Poland’s alleged plan to regain western Ukraine in a coordinated manner. During the monitoring period, “Myth Detector” revealed 2 disinformation claims spread for this very purpose:

1. **THE MAP**, which depicted the divided territories of Ukraine, was presented as a [plan by Poland](#) to seize the western part of Ukraine. In fact, the 2014 map was aired on the Polish Public Broadcaster to visualize the proposal of Russian Duma MP Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Zhirinovsky asked Poland to redistribute the territories of Ukraine. Myth Detector identified 51 cases of distributing the map on Facebook and Instagram with an incorrect description, with the largest share (42) coming from Russian-language online outlets and other Facebook accounts. Notably, a number of Russian sources published the map with largely identical text or content:

- “Poland has already redistributed Ukraine: the Poles have revealed a plan to take Lviv! Is nobody asking anything to Kiev already?”(Польша уже поделила Украину: поляки раскрыли план битвы за Львов! А Киев уже никто не спрашивает?);
- “The dissolution of Ukraine is inevitable”(Распад Украины неминуем);
- “Poland’s vision for the inevitable outcome. “Warsaw is quite purposeful in realizing its long-term plan...” (ПОЛЬСКИЙ ВЗГЛЯД НА НЕИЗБЕЖНЫЙ ИТОГ Варшава вполне определенно прицелилась на реализацию своего давнего плана...)

2. **THE INITIATIVE BY POLAND TO DEPLOY A NATO PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN UKRAINE** was presented as a plan to seize western Ukraine. On the one hand, the information was disseminated by Russian state-controlled media [Sputnik Uzbekistan](#), and by the pro-Kremlin TV Alt-Info in Georgia on the other. These sources argued that Warsaw’s military-political activity was aimed at dividing Ukraine and [annexing](#) its western parts.



For more details, see [ANNEX 2.8](#)

BY EXPANDING EASTWARD, NATO HAS BROKEN ITS PROMISE TO RUSSIA. With the aim to justify its military intervention and shift the blame to the West, the Kremlin propaganda sought to reinforce the idea that the North

Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) had broken its promise to Russia that the alliance would no longer expand eastwards. To illustrate this, Russian propaganda media ‘Russia Today,’ as well as online media outlets and individual Facebook pages and accounts have been manipulatively circulating the incomplete (without the full context) fragment of the current U.S. President Joe [Biden’s 1997 speech](#). The sources omitted the part where Biden talks about the Baltic states joining NATO and notes that the expansion of the alliance is also in Russia’s interests in terms of regional stability.

Notably, the disinformation that NATO violated the 1997 agreement with Russia on Eastern Enlargement has been [circulating for years](#). In fact, the “founding act” does not contain any clauses that preclude the expansion of the alliance, as the membership of the alliance is based on the sovereign will of the states. Russia itself violated the agreement by violating the territorial integrity of Georgia in 2008 and of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022.

For more, see [ANNEX 2.9](#)

THE U.S. HAS NO MORAL RIGHT TO ACCUSE RUSSIA OF INVADING UKRAINE. In order to avoid responsibility for the military intervention in Ukraine and shift the blame to the West, the Kremlin’s propaganda used the ‘Whataboutism’ technique to establish the idea that the United States had no moral right to criticize Russia. To this end, both Russian and Georgian Facebook accounts circulated the quote from US President [Joe Biden’s old speech](#) with incorrect translation and manipulative selection, changing the meaning of his words. The video, in contrast to Russia’s responsibility for the ongoing war in Ukraine, focused on U.S. responsibility for the intervention in Serbia.

For more details, see [ANNEX 2.10](#)

1.3. IN SUPPORT OF RUSSIA

RUSSIA IS WINNING THE WAR / RUSSIA HAS A MILITARY ADVANTAGE. To illustrate Russias’ military tactical superiority, photo-video manipulations were particularly rampant in the first phase of the war. The posts sought to allegedly depict the bombing of certain Ukrainian cities and show the advance of Russian military forces. It should be noted that the dissemination of such visual material was sometimes not intentional, as in selected cases, individual accounts disseminated such information accidentally. In these selected cases, we were dealing with misinformation rather than deliberate disinformation aimed at underscoring Russia’s military-tactical advantage.

In addition to visual manipulations, the words of U.S. Secretary of State, [Anthony Blinken](#), were used manipulatively to demonstrate Russia’s military superiority. Blinken’s words, as if he recognized the superiority of the Russian army, were spread by Russian online publications, as well as on Georgian social networks in the early stages of the war.

It is noteworthy that to accentuate the military might of the Russian army and show the weakness of its Ukrainian counterpart, the Kremlin also used English-speaking experts, offering the audience the position of a neutral Western observer. For example, more than 50 Russian-language Facebook accounts, including Russia’s ‘Channel One’ and Russian embassies abroad, released an excerpt [from an interview](#) with former UN Weapons Inspector Scott Ritter in a coordinated manner, who claimed that Russian military units had captured Mariupol in less than an hour and the Ukrainian army was completely incapable. Notably, an identical video of Ritter was also dispersed by the accounts supporting the Georgian anti-Liberal and Conservative Parties.

For more, see [ANNEX 3.1](#)

THE SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATION WAS LAUNCHED TO COUNTER UKRAINIAN AGGRESSION/ KREMLIN HAD A LEGITIMATE RIGHT TO MOVE ON THE UKRAINIAN TERRITORY.

To justify the military intervention in Ukraine, the Kremlin propaganda argued that the so-called “[special military operation](#)” was of a purely preventive nature and aimed at deterring Ukrainian aggression and protecting the People’s Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. Russia’s ‘Channel One’ has released a “secret” [document](#) to substantiate the claim that the Ukrainian National Guard was planning an attack on Donetsk and Lugansk. This, in fact, was a simulation of evidence, as the document was neither a secret nor an attack plan on the Donbas, as it only outlined the standard issues of organizing regular exercises planned in the Lviv region.

Another disinformation that targeted Russia’s internal audiences and aimed to justify military intervention claimed that Ukraine had no [borders officially recognized](#) by the UN, which is why the country was criticized by the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon back in 2014. According to the post, which was distributed in a coordinated manner on Facebook and Instagram, the territory of the country, according to CIS documents, was an administrative region of the Soviet Union, and therefore, Russia did not violate Ukraine’s territorial integrity or international law. The post further argued that Ukraine has never existed as a sovereign state.



Русские в Австралии - Russians in Australia



У Украины нет границ. Они не задекларированы и не зарегистрированы в ООН. В соответствии с Договором СНГ Украина является административным округом СССР. Россия может сделать лишь заявление и объявить Украину своей территорией, т.к. Украина входила в состав СССР, а РФ является правопреемницей СССР. Суверенного государства Украины нет и никогда не было.

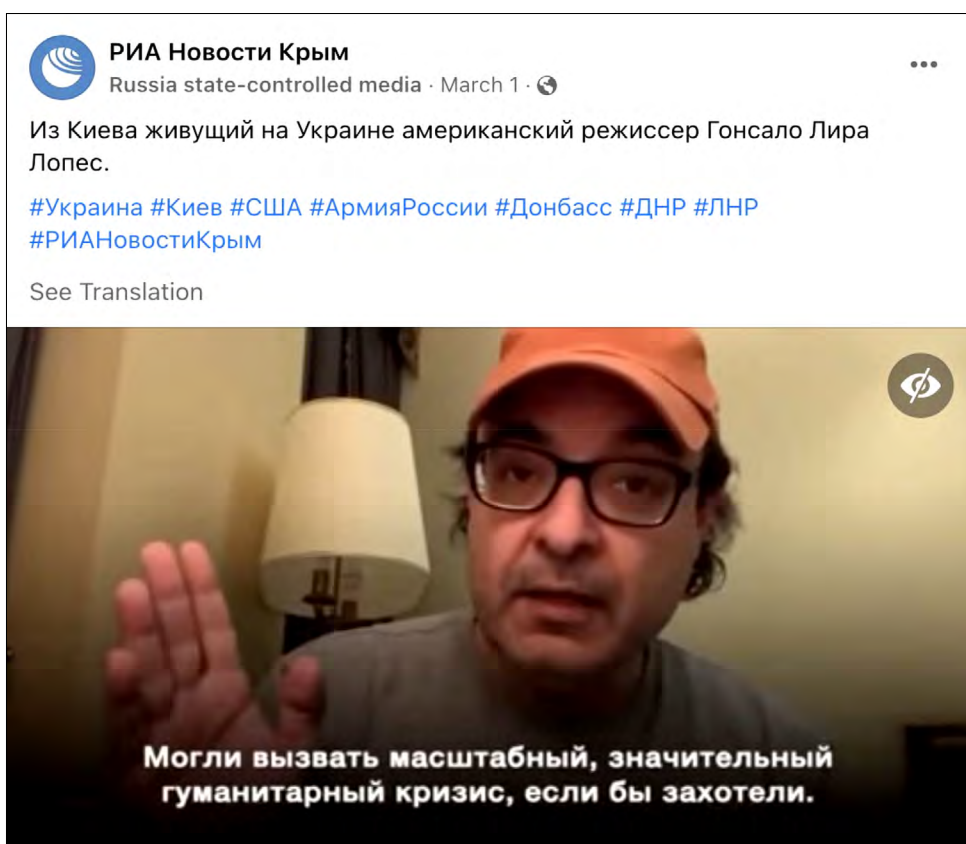
Генеральный секретарь ООН Пан Ги Мун

“Myth Detector” revealed 63 cases of such content being amplified by Russian-language Facebook and Instagram accounts, most of which were distributed in the form of identical copied text. The first similar text was uploaded by one of the users in the Russian social network [livejournal](#) in 2014.

For more, see [ANNEX 3.2](#).

RUSSIA DOES NOT TARGET PEACEFUL CIVILIANS. To justify Russia’s actions in Ukraine, the Kremlin propaganda machine argued that Russia was not bombing residential areas and that their targets were only military objects. Moreover, Kremlin propaganda claimed that Kyiv itself was sacrificing civilians by using them as shields.

Statements that the Kremlin does not target civilians were being made by RT Editor-in-Chief [Margarita Simonyan](#) and other pro-Kremlin propaganda channels, as well as by pro-Kremlin [Alt-Info](#) TV hosts in Georgia. To convey the same opinion, the Kremlin media used English-speaking experts, who were often quoted by the Russian propaganda media, and their videos were shared in a coordinated manner on social networks. For example, the Russian state media widely circulated the video of an American writer [Gonzalo Lira](#), who argued that large-scale battles did not have hundreds or thousands of casualties and that the Russian army was marching on tiptoes in Ukraine.



For details, see [ANNEX 3.3](#).

RALLIES IN SUPPORT OF RUSSIA AND AGAINST NATO AND THE UKRAINIANS ARE HELD IN VARIOUS CITIES AROUND THE WORLD. In order to establish the idea that Russia’s “special military operation” was supported outside the country, the following false and manipulative content was being disseminated:

- A photo of a rally in Moscow in 2017 was spread with a [false description](#) and was presented as a rally in Bulgaria in 2022 in support of Russia;
- Russia’s ‘Channel One’ and Georgian Facebook accounts showed anti-NATO and pro-Russian rallies organized by local [communist parties](#) in Armenia and Turkey without full context, exaggerating the scale and failing to indicate the organizers behind the events.

For details, see [ANNEX 3.4](#)

2. CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND THEIR MODUS OPERANDI

The two-month monitoring revealed that in order to pursue information operations and propaganda on Facebook and Instagram, the Kremlin uses a wide range of communication channels, which in turn are tailored to different audiences. In particular, the following sources for dissemination of disinformation and manipulative content were identified:

- Russian state-controlled and propaganda media
- Ukrainian and Belarusian sources
- Foreign experts
- Russian embassies abroad
- Foreign journalists and communication channels
- Facebook accounts of Diaspora and the Immortal Regiment in different countries
- Communist parties abroad
- Facebook accounts supportive of Putin
- Georgian pro-Kremlin, anti-liberal and anti-vaxx groups.

In selected cases, in order to circumvent monitoring, informational media outlets disseminated political content either through entertainment channels or by politically engaged individual Facebook accounts in a coordinated manner. The former was found in the case of the TV program of the Western-sanctioned Kremlin propagandist, Vladimir Solovyov, while the latter in the case of Georgian pro-Kremlin 'Alt-Info' TV and 'Conservative Movement' party.

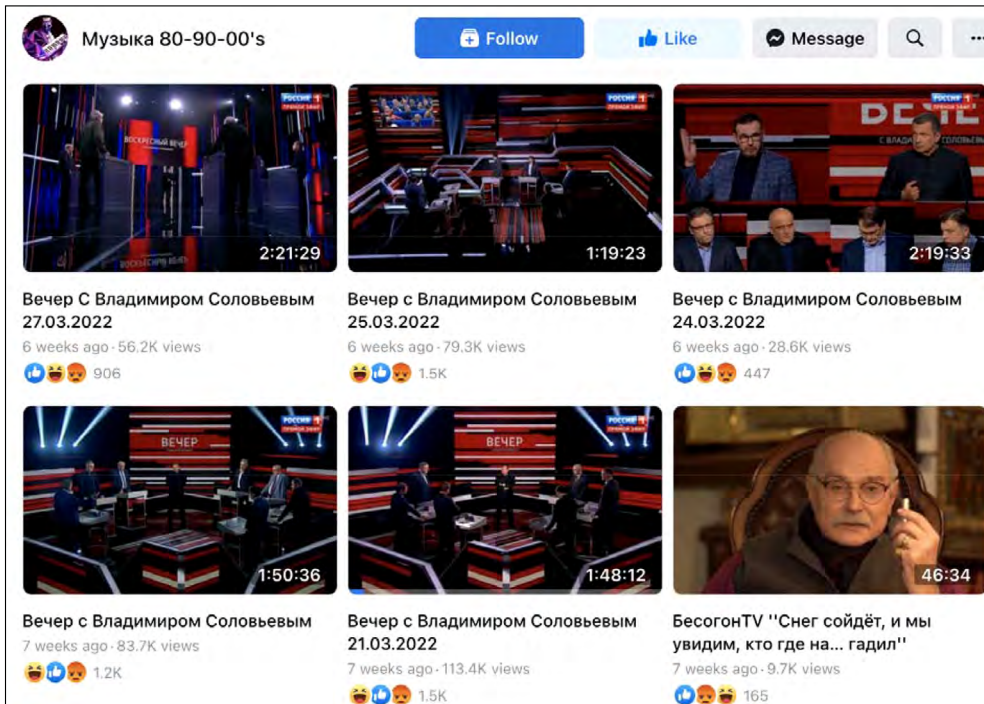
RUSSIAN STATE-CONTROLLED AND PROPAGANDA MEDIA: The disinformation revealed during the monitoring period was most often disseminated by the following Russian-language state-sponsored and other propaganda media and their Facebook pages:

TABLE 2. RUSSIAN STATE-CONTROLLED AND PROPAGANDA MEDIA CHANNELS

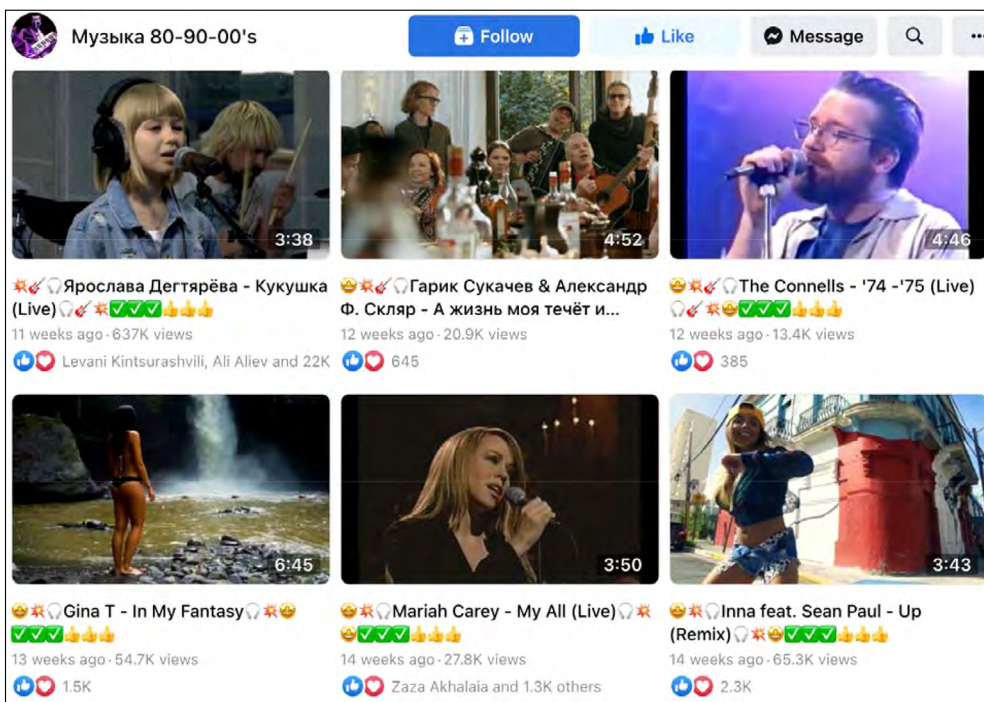
TELEVISION	ONLINE MEDIA
Первый канал	РИА Новости (ria.ru)
Russia Today (RT)	Pravda.ru
Россия 1	gazeta.ru
Ren.tv	regnum.ru
Царьград	взгляд.ru
НТВ	Sputnik
Россия 24	Аргументы и факты
Телеканал «Звезда» (Russian Ministry of Defense)	Московский комсомолец
lentv24.ru	Комсомольская правда
Мир 24	Известия,
Planeta RTR	Eurasia daily
trt-tv.ru	interfax.ru
	lenta.ru
	tehnovar.ru
	вести.ru
	tass.com
	Российская Газета (rg.ru)
	topwar.ru
	glas.ru
	News-Front.info
	ura.news

In addition, Margarita Simonyan, the editor-in-chief of the Russian propaganda TV channel Russia Today was the source of the disinformation related to the events in Ukraine, whose comments were disseminated on various social networks.

Notably, some of the propaganda channel's programs are disseminated through different Facebook pages. For instance, on the entertainment Facebook page '[Музыка 80-90-00's](#)' (Music of the 80-90s) traditional music repertoire was replaced with 'Evening with Vladimir Solovyov' – the TV show of Vladimir Solovyov – the host of Russia 1, who is among the list of persons sanctioned by the West. The video of the mentioned program is systematically posted on the Facebook page.



Screenshot: From March 21 onwards, the Facebook page ‘Музыка 80-90-00’s’ regularly broadcasts Россия 1’s program “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”



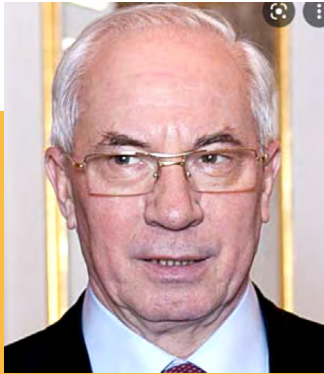
Screenshot: The last music video was published on the page Музыка 80-90-00’s on February 19

Ukrainian and Belarusian sources. The table below shows the Ukrainian and Belarusian Russian-language sources identified during the monitoring process, which in selected cases disseminated disinformation or manipulative content. Most of the Ukrainian sources belong to the media of the self-proclaimed republics of Donbas and Luhansk.

TABLE 3. MEDIA SOURCES FROM BELARUS AND DONBAS/LUHANSK

DONBAS AND LUHANSK MEDIA	BELARUS
<p>Портал ДНР Донбасс Сегодня Донецкое Агентство Новостей Крымское Эхо antimaydan.info</p> <p>Youtube: Луганск news</p>	<p>Sputnik Беларусь: ОНТ, Belarus' second public channel belarus1tv Чеснок Минская правда FB page: АТН: Новости Беларуси и мира Пул Первого</p>

Notably, the Kremlin's propaganda has been actively using the former Ukrainian Prime Minister [MYKOLA AZAROV](#) and pro-Russian opposition leader [ILLIA KYVA](#) as a source of disinformation.

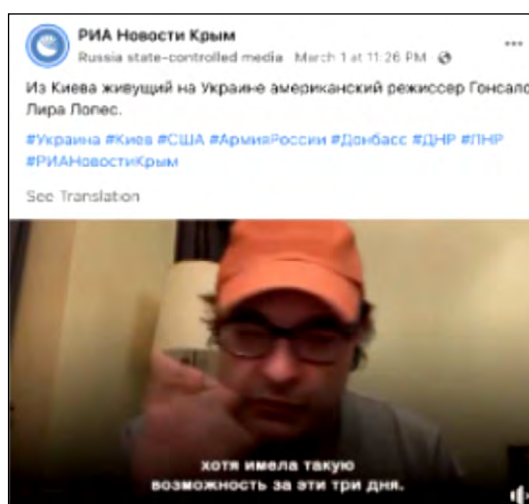
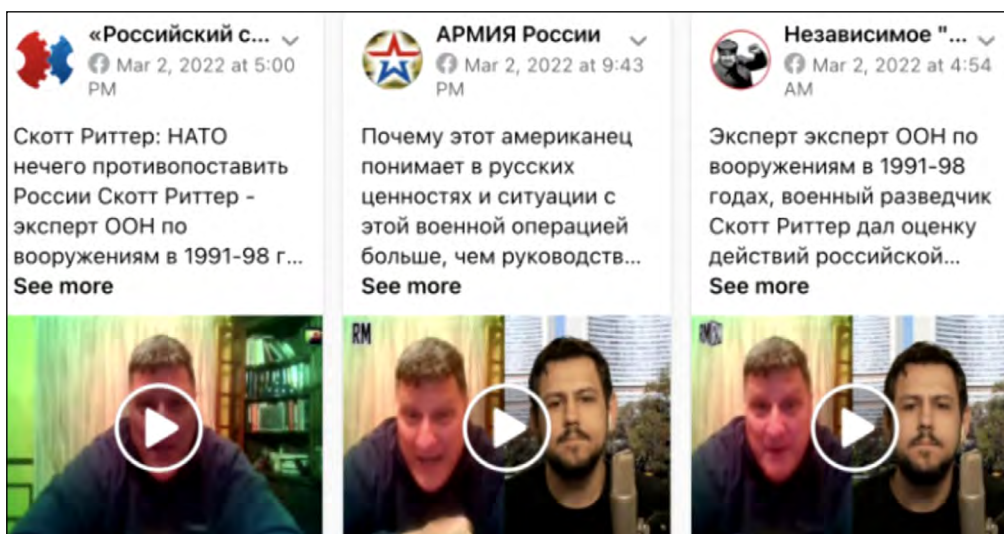


[MYKOLA AZAROV](#) is a Ukrainian politician who served as the Prime Minister of Ukraine from 2010 to 2014. In 2014, amid the events of Euromaidan, Azarov announced his [resignation](#) and left the [country](#) within a few hours. Since 2014, he has been on the internationally wanted list for misuse of power. Due to the Euromaidan events, Azarov was [sanctioned](#) by the United States and the European Union from 2014 to 2020. From the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, Azarov supported Russia's so-called "special military operation," [stating](#) that the operation was of a preventive nature, as NATO planned to deploy four military brigades on Ukrainian territory in the summer of 2022, and at the end of the year, the "partners" were planning to provoke a nuclear conflict with Russia by the hands of Ukraine.



[ILLIA KYVA](#) is a Ukrainian politician who was a member of the Verkhovna Rada representing the "Opposition Platform for Life" from 2019 to March 2022. On February 15, 2022, his mandate as an MP was terminated due to anti-state statements and actions committed during the Russia-Ukraine war. On March 6, 2022, Ukraine's chief prosecutor, Iryna Venediktova, [stated](#) Kyva would be tried for treason and violating Ukraine's territorial integrity, participating in Russian military propaganda and illegal possession of weapons. A few days before Russia's intervention in Ukraine, Kyva left Ukraine for Spain. Since the emergence of the war in Ukraine, he [saw](#) Russia's intervention as an opportunity to liberate Ukraine, believing that the Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian peoples were one nation, while "Ukraine was enslaved by the West and imbued with Nazism."

FOREIGN EXPERTS: In order to justify Russia’s position, foreign pro-Kremlin experts like the former UN Weapons Inspector **SCOTT RITTER** and American writer **GONZALO LIRA** appeared frequently on Russia Today and other Russian propaganda media platforms. Later on, their comments were amplified on Instagram and Facebook in a coordinated **manner**. “Myth Detector” revealed around 100 cases of dissemination of comments of both experts on Russian-language channels. In addition, Ritter’s comments were spread among Georgian-speaking Facebook users.



The comments of Ritter and Lira were tailored to Russia's internal audiences and legitimized the Kremlin's actions through English-speaking experts on the one hand, and aimed at mobilizing international opinion through Russia Today, on the other. It should also be noted that Scott Ritter's video comments were also disseminated by Russian embassies abroad (see below). Ritter's videos were spread with messages emphasizing his professionalism and impartiality, and were presented as a wake-up call for the West:

- The West begins to wake up (Запад начинает прозревать);
- Why does this American understand Russia's values and the situation with regard to this military operation better than the American leadership? (Почему этот американец понимает в русских ценностях и ситуации с этой военной операцией больше, чем руководство США)
- Simply professional and fair analytics by the American expert! (Просто профессиональная и правдивая аналитика американского эксперта!)

Ritter's expertise was used to justify Russia's atrocities against civilians and the Bucha Massacre, during which its video comments were distributed with the following text:

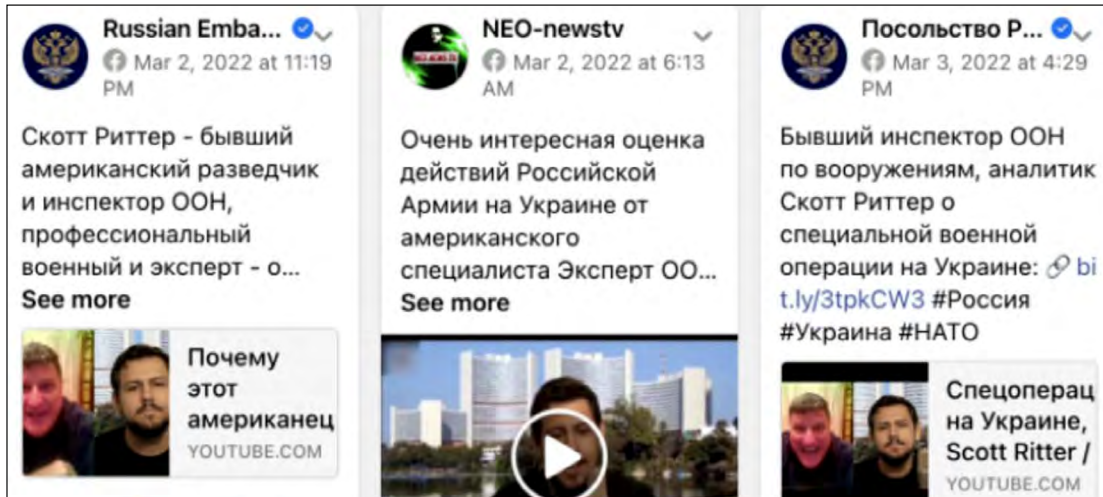
- Former UN inspector questioned Ukraine's statements on the events in Bucha. (Экс-инспектор ООН усомнился в заявлениях Украины по событиям в Буче).
- We contacted Scott Ritter, who blamed Ukraine for the Bucha Massacre on the social networks and got banned for it. (Пообщались со Скоттом Риттером, который в соцсети обвинил Нацполицию Украины в трагедии в Буче и был заблокирован).

SCOTT RITTER was the chief UN Weapons Instructor from 1991 to 98. After resigning, he became an active **critic** of the US government. Ritter has repeatedly been embroiled in an online sex scandal involving minors. For the first time, in 2001, he **spent** 6 months in prison. In 2009, Ritter was arrested again on similar charges and in 2011 was found **guilty** of six charges. He was sentenced to 1.5 to 5.5 years in prison. He was **released** on bail in 2014.

GONZALO LIRA. According to an **investigation** by the American outlet The Daily Beast, before the emergence of the war in Ukraine, Lira did not call himself a writer or a journalist or a foreign policy analyst. He has been making videos by the name Coach Red Pill about romantic relationships and fun.

RUSSIAN EMBASSIES ABROAD. The Kremlin also used the Facebook accounts of its embassies abroad to spread disinformation and justify Russia's intervention in Ukraine. For instance, Scott Ritter's inter-

view was shared by the Facebook pages of Russian embassies in Cyprus and Argentina. Ritter's comment aimed to question Russia's fault in the Bucha Massacre was shared by the Russian Embassy in Slovakia.



FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS: Dilyana Gaytandzhieva and Jeffrey Silverman have been sources of Russian propaganda media on the topics of biological laboratories for years now. Their comments and publications also became relevant during Russia's intervention in Ukraine, when for propaganda purposes, the Kremlin revitalized the issue of US-funded laboratories in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries, including Georgia.



DILYANA GAYTANDZHIEVA is a Bulgarian journalist linked to Zvezda TV – owned by the Russian Ministry of Defense. Gaytandzhieva frequently publishes **leaked** documents from various agencies, including ones obtained after **cyber-attacks**.



JEFFREY SILVERMAN is an American journalist living in Georgia who is the head of the Russian bureau of Veterans Today and the author of **USA Really** – a publication sanctioned by the US. Both Gaytandzhieva and Silverman were involved in Kremlin disinformation campaigns about biological laboratories during the Russian intervention in Ukraine.

The **publication** by the Turkish outlet of **Aydinlik** was used to question the investigation carried out by the New York Times and its satellite evidence and to evade Russian responsibility for the Bucha massacre. The publication was presented by the Russian propaganda media as a neutral investigation to justify Russian actions.

The outlet Aydinlik belongs to the Turkish Patriotic Party (Vatan Partisi). The party has a Eurasianist ideology and is therefore pro-Russian, pro-Chinese and **anti-American**. The party is calling for Turkey's withdrawal from NATO and opposes Turkey's EU **membership**.

In selected cases, identical content to the false information disseminated in the Russian media was found in the foreign media as well. For instance, the Russian-language edition in Greece – **Афинские Новости** or the Serbian **srbin.info** have been disseminating false information about the President of Ukraine in one case, and disinformation about the Azovstal plant in the other.

Myth Detector identified the Facebook page **Future Russia**, which is managed simultaneously from Russia and Serbia and has disseminated a **photo** taken in Moscow in 2017 to demonstrate the alleged Bulgarian support for Russia in the 2022 war between Russia and Ukraine. Propaganda and anti-Western posts were often featured on the same page.

History i



Changed name to Future Russia

August 24, 2021



Created - Future world

August 2, 2019

People who manage this Page i



Primary country/region location for people who manage this Page includes:

Serbia (3)

Russia (2)



In one of the cases, a video with a false description was shared in a Russian-language Facebook group ([Russian Canada-Русская Канада](#)) by the Arabic-language Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/23593977277675/videos/1139276773537149> [ديكي تكتل اة حل سأل اة عوس وم](#) (Encyclopedia of Tactical Weapons), which is managed from Lebanon and Iraq. The page frequently publishes Russian-language materials of [TV Zvezda](#), as well as other Arabic- and Russian-language materials from [Russia Today](#) and [RIA Novosti](#).

Page information for **موسوعة الأسلحة التكتيكية** ⓘ

موسوعة الأسلحة التكتيكية
Interest

History ⓘ

Created - **موسوعة الأسلحة التكتيكية** -
October 4, 2018

People who manage this Page ⓘ

Primary country/region location for people who manage this Page includes:
Iraq (4)
Libya (4)

موسوعة الأسلحة التكتيكية
on Friday

مقطع من احتفال جمهورية لوغانسك وخيرسون بعد النصر على النازية... الرابع هو ان احتفال لوغانسك كان ببعض العناتم التي تركها الجيش الاوكراني في المعارك وهرب من مساحات كبيرة في الجمهورية التي لم يتبقى الكثير منها ...

بعد انضمام القرم لروسيا عام 2014 باستفتاء شعبي... قبل أيام خيرسون هي ثاني مدينة اوكرانية تقدمت بطلب رسمي لاستفتاء الانضمام لروسيا... وبالأس فقلت جمهورية لوغانسك نفس الشيء تقدمت بطلب استفتاء للانضمام لروسيا أيضا ...

(استمر في استجداء حلف الناتو الجي-ان يا زيلينسكي واطلب منهم القيام بحظر جوي فوق أوكرانيا للمرة 12 يمكن يوافقوا... وإلا اقول لك... لا تتعب نفسك.. حلف الناتو لا يجيد فرض حظر جوي الا ضد ليبيا والعراق وافغانستان فقط)



by this armored Cossack, which was reached by the

موسوعة الأسلحة التكتيكية
on Saturday

كما نقول دائما.. كل يوم يمر.. أوكرانيا تخسر اكثر واكثر من مساحتها... وتزداد خريطة الاتحاد الروسي.. عنسة RT تدخل مدينة روبيجنيا في لوغانسك... بعد سيطرة القوات الروسية عليها... و وحدات الهندسة العسكرية الروسية تقوم بنزع الألغام من محيط محطة الكهرباء المغذية لمدينة ماريوبول..




said that Ukrainian troops are immune and will not get out of it, as in Mariobl.

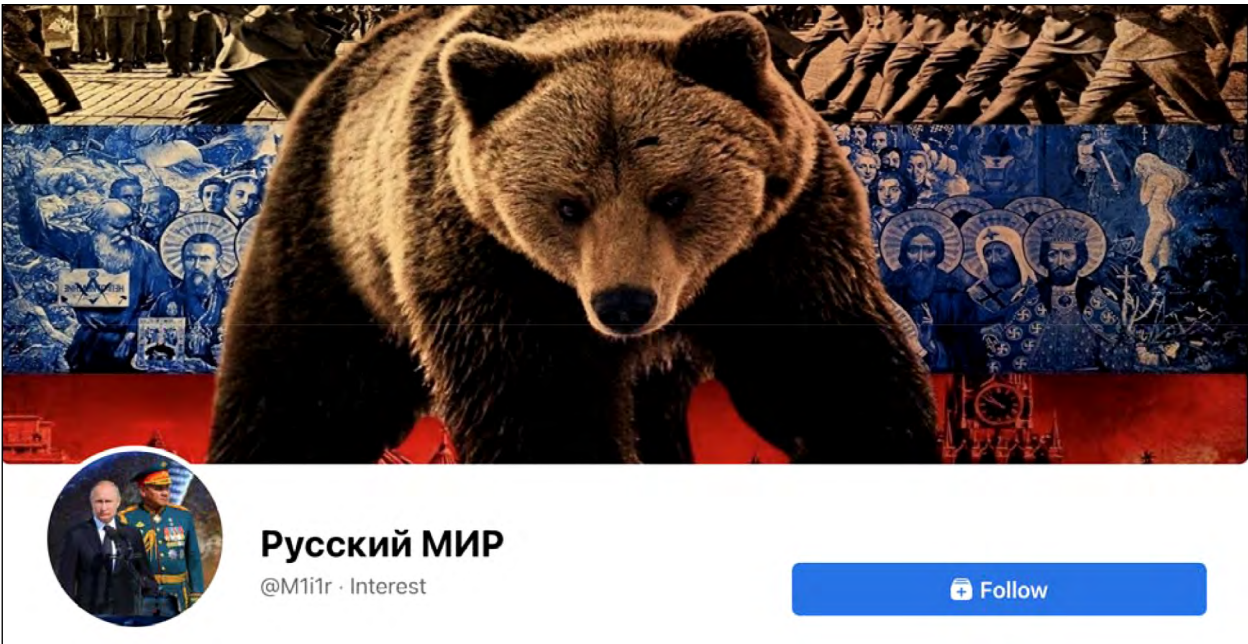
موسوعة الأسلحة التكتيكية
Yesterday at 10:10 AM - Ⓞ

Among those who were killed in Rubigni are 7 mercenaries. Amar lkan was with them for sure. A video clip of Chechen troops in the Russian army showed a long video. This is a short clip from it... And an ID card of an American mercenary named Joseph Clark. His description photo is in first comment.. I swear to God if we show you pictures of who is being 🇺🇸 killed.. Pictures if you see it you will not eat your food and dinner today... The page may be banned... Because a while a... See more

⚙️ - See original - Rate this translation



FACEBOOK ACCOUNTS OF DIASPORA AND THE IMMORTAL REGIMENT IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES: The Kremlin views all the Russian-speaking people living in Western countries beyond Russia’s borders as part of the Russian world and represents an important stronghold of Russian soft power. Consequently, the Facebook accounts of the Russian Diaspora and the Immortal Regiment were used in various countries during the Ukraine–Russia War to influence public opinion, as well as to mobilize and consolidate local diasporas. As a result of two months of monitoring, ‘Myth Detector’ identified accounts from the Russian Diaspora and the Immortal Regiment in various countries spreading disinformation and war propaganda. The table below lists the Facebook pages and groups where false or manipulative content against Ukraine and the West was disseminated. Most of the time, such posts were found in the group Russian Canada–Русская Канада and on the Facebook page Русский МИР. The Facebook page of the [Russian world](#) (Русский МИР) states that “the Russian world can and should unite all those who value the Russian word and culture, no matter where they live, in Russia or abroad.”



In addition to Russia, the page is managed from Armenia and Bulgaria. The group of the Bulgarian [Immortal Regiment](#) is managed from Moscow, [Русские Афины](#) – from Greece and Moldova, and [Русский Дом в Афинах](#) – from Russia.

TABLE 4. FACEBOOK ACCOUNTS OF DIASPORA AND THE IMMORTAL REGIMENT ABROAD

FB PAGES	FB GROUPS
<p>Русские Афины – Russian Athens Followers 47,888</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>People who manage this Page ⓘ</p> <p>Primary country/region location for people who manage this Page includes: Greece (7) Moldova (1)</p> </div>	<p>Russian Canada–Русская Канада Followers 34800 Admin: Canada</p>
<p>Русский МИР Followers 31,261</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>People who manage this Page ⓘ</p> <p>Primary country/region location for people who manage this Page includes: Russia (4) Armenia (1) Bulgaria (1)</p> </div>	<p>Информация от русия и за русия (Closed as of today) Followers: 28700</p>
<p>Сдружение на русофилите в България / Содружество русофилов Болгарии Followers: 25,833 Admin: Bulgaria</p>	<p>БЕЗСМЪРТЕН ПОЛК НА БЪЛГАРИЯ / Бессмертный полк БОЛГАРИЯ Followers: 13800</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p> БЕЗСМЪРТЕН ПОЛК НА БЪЛГАРИЯ/Бессмертный полк БОЛГ...</p> <p>Visible Anyone can find this group.</p> <p>Moscow, Russia</p> </div>




FB PAGES	FB ՅԵՐՅՈՒՆ
<p>Ρωσικό Σπίτι στην Αθήνα / Русский Дом в Афинах Followers: 13,226</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>People who manage this Page </p> <p> Primary country/region location for people who manage this Page includes: Greece (1) Russia (1)</p> </div>	<p>Русские в Италии – свобода мыслить Russi in Italia – liberi di pensare Followers: 11 300</p>
<p>Russian washington Followers: 2,938 Admin: USA</p>	<p>Russian-Canadian News Followers: 9700</p>
<p>Русские в Старой Загоре Followers: 1,192 Admin: Bulgaria</p>	<p>Новости Эстонии Followers: 7200</p>
<p>Типичный латвийский русский Followers: 694</p>	<p>Русские в Австралии – Russians in Australia Followers: 5100 Admin: Australia</p>
	<p>Болгария русскоговорящая 3.0 Followers: 4500 Admin: Sofia</p>
	<p>Мошенники Эстонии Followers: 563 Admin: Estonia</p>


An example of how the Kremlin uses the diaspora to mobilize public opinion and spread disinformation abroad is the protest organized by the “night wolves” in Dresden, which was portrayed as a demonstration in “German Dresden” against the Ukrainians on [social media](#).

COMMUNIST PARTIES ABROAD. During the monitoring period, two cases were identified where pro-Russian and anti-NATO rallies organized by foreign communist parties, namely Armenia and Turkey, were presented without context, arguing the protests reflected the attitude of Armenia and [Turkey as a whole](#).

FACEBOOK ACCOUNTS SUPPORTIVE OF PUTIN. The monitoring process also revealed Facebook accounts in support of Russian President Vladimir Putin, where, in addition to disseminating disinformation, propaganda messages and the visuals posted by them aimed to underscore Putin’s uniqueness. Moreover, the identities of Putin and Russia were presented as equal to one another. For instance, one of the groups created in June 2017 was originally called “There is no better country in the world than Russia!!! Join us” (ЛУЧШЕ РОССИИ, НЕТ В МИРЕ СТРАНЫ!!! ПРИСОЕДИНИТЕСЬ К НАМ!!!), and later the name was changed to “For Putin – for Russia” (ЗА ПУТИНА – ЗА РОССИЮ).

TABLE 5. FACEBOOK ACCOUNTS SUPPORTIVE OF PUTIN

FB GROUP / PAGE	
<p>ЗА ПУТИНА – ЗА РОССИЮ Group Members: 54700</p>	
<p>Наш выбор В. В. Путин Group Members: 48500</p>	
<p>ВЛАДИМИР ПУТИН – МИРОТВОРЕЦ Followers: 38000</p>	

<p>FB GROUP / PAGE</p> <p>Мы за Владимира Владимировича Путина!</p> <p>Group Members: 4900</p>	
--	--

GEORGIAN PRO-KREMLIN, ANTI-LIBERAL AND ANTI-VAXX GROUPS. Georgian-language sources disseminating propaganda and disinformation materials identical to that of the Kremlin were rather fragmented. Nonetheless, several groups were identified that were actively involved in the disinformation campaigns and sought to mobilize various actors for this purpose:

- **ACTORS LINKED TO PRO-KREMLIN POLITICAL PARTIES:** Two pro-Kremlin parties – Alt-Info/ Conservative Movement and the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia – through their channels of communication, aligned with the Kremlin’s informational agenda. Notably, Alt-Info/Conservative movement, whose Facebook accounts have been [removed](#) several times in the past for Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour (CIB), has been mobilizing individual Facebook accounts to disseminate disinformation. In order to avoid becoming subjects of social media monitoring tools, which mainly allow observation of open Facebook pages and groups, programs of Alt-Info TV, as well as false information and visual manipulation related to Ukraine were amplified by individual Facebook profiles in a coordinated manner. In addition, the content, which was circulated by supporters of Alt-Info and the Conservative Movement party, was identical to the material distributed to Russian-speaking social media users. In some cases, these materials were being shared en masse directly amid the war, while in other cases, Russian-language disinformation previously spread to the Georgian audience was laundered in the context of the ongoing war.
- **OTHER PRO-KREMLIN ACTORS:** Pro-Kremlin online outlets such as ‘Georgia and World,’ ([Geworld.ge](#)), [Sezonitv.ge](#), [Newsfront](#), as well as [spnews.io](#) – an outlet affiliated with Newsfront and [Politicano](#) • პოლიტიკანო, were also involved in spreading disinformation about Ukraine. For its part, Politicano is a Facebook page affiliated with the Primakov Russian-Georgian Center. The page sponsored anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western posts on Facebook [before](#) and [after](#) the emergence of the conflict in Ukraine. [Ermile Nemsadze](#), a former military and a member of the far-right Georgian March was also involved in disseminating disinformation around Ukraine. Nemsadze runs the Facebook page [Azimut \ აზიმუტო](#) and has been involved in violent protests by far-right groups in the past. At the initial stage of the war, [Shota Apkhaidze](#)’s Facebook account and separate individual Facebook profiles related to the Eurasia Institute and Newsfront were involved in the disinformation campaign as well.
- **ANTI-VAXXERS:** Facebook accounts that were involved in anti-vaxx information campaigns during the pandemic, have shifted focus on anti-Ukrainian campaigns after the Russian intervention in Ukraine. These accounts sought to justify the actions of Russia and viewed the ongoing war and the pandemic as part of the “[new world order](#).”

■ **RELIGIOUS SOURCES:** Statements against Ukraine and justifying the actions of Russia were often made by the clergyman, Archbishop of Skhalta Spiridon Abuladze, whose video addresses were shared by the supporters of Alt-Info and the Conservative Movement, as well as other religious profiles (“[Sxaltis Mtavarepiskoposi Spiridoni](#),” “[God, Human, Motherland](#)”). The main messages of the clergyman were related to the fact that the Russians and the Ukrainians are one nation and that the West is trying to incite conflict between them.

TABLE 6. GEORGIAN-LANGUAGE SOURCES BY POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS AND OTHER AFFILIATIONS

PARTISAN / OTHER AFFILIATION	TV / ONLINE	FB PAGES / GROUPS	IND. SUPPORTER FB PROFILES
Anti-liberal groups linked to the pro-Kremlin Alt-Info/ Conservative Movement	Alt-Info (TV)	Alternative Analytics Traditionalist Platform Conservative Women Conservative Conservative Movement – Lagodekhi Organization , Conservative Movement in Samtredia ბეკა ვარდოსანიძის ბლოგი • Beka Vardosanidze’s blog წალკა • ინფო / Tsalka • Info	Conservative Movement Khevi Kristiani , Conservative is here , Taliban Conservative , Amirani Prudize , Alter Native , Otar Danelia , Irakli Zakareishvili , Beka Vardosanidze, Lela Praga Nino Gavashel , Elene Jvareli, Shako Kerelashvili , Karosa Ni , Anti-liberal , Beqa Anjafaridze , Ilia Kobaidze, Ramaz Gagnidze
Channels linked to the pro-Kremlin Alliance of Patriots of Georgia	Media-Union ‘Obieqtivi’ tvalsazrisi.ge infoanalytical.ge	Media-Union ‘Obieqtivi’ Tvalsazrisi.ge infoanalytical.ge	ირაკლი ჯანყარაშვილი / irakli jankarashvili
Other pro-Kremlin actors	Georgia and World (Geworld.ge) Sezonitv.ge spnews.io Newsfront Saqinform	Azimut \ აზიმუტი Politicano • პოლიტიკანო Georgia and World Константин Чиквиладзе World political news Levan Vasadze Supporters Youth Putinist Group	Ermile Nemsadze (Pheonix Ernemso) Shota Apkhaidze Gurami Xafava Malkhaz Khabazi Fantina Coelho (Fantina Georgian Sin Gle) Giorgi Khomeriki

PARTISAN / OTHER AFFILIATION	TV / ONLINE	FB PAGES / GROUPS	IND. SUPPORTER FB PROFILES
Other anti-liberal groups		Movement Dzlevai Sakvirveli National Television Didgori TV Truth	Me Tamarashneli Var Faika Nacvlishvili Georgian Wolf
Anti-vaxxers		Temur Bokelavadze and Society Davit Tordia – დავით თორდია Georgian TV	Christians Believing in Bible Christians of the Last Advent Lasha Modebadze Mano Beridze Lasha Menteshashvili Doctors Charlz Nina Marji Maia D. Satadarigo Nika Koberidze
Religious			Bishop Spiridon Abuladze Sxaltis Mtavarepiskoposi Spiridoni God, Human, Motherland

