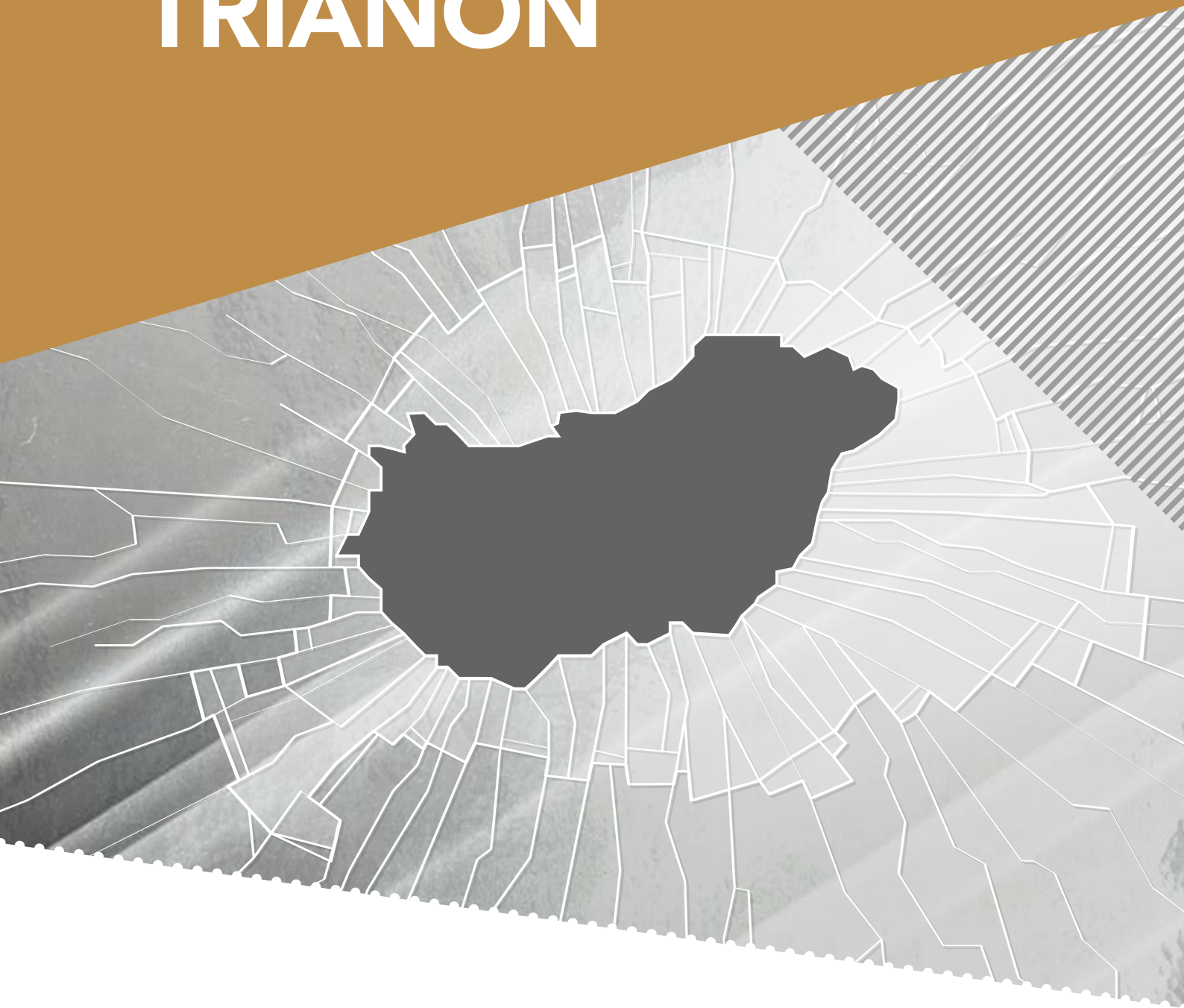# SHADOWS OF
TRIANON

Revealing Russian disinformation networks and active measures fuelling secessionism and border revisionism in Hungary

POLITICAL CAPITAL
POLICY RESEARCH & CONSULTING INSTITUTE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Since the start of the Crimean war in 2014, Russia has masterfully exploited societal divisions present in Ukrainian society and abroad. The war against Ukraine was part of the Kremlin's long-term foreign policy attempt to preserve or (re)gain influence over the post-Soviet space and its countries by creating so called "frozen conflicts" in territories such as Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia in Georgia or Donetsk in Ukraine, which claimed independence based on alleged differences or societal divisions rooted in ethnicity, language, historical origins etc., supported by the Russian state. Territorial secessionism as a foreign policy tool has been enabled by rights-based territorial discourses or narratives to legitimize current-day or historical justifications for territorial authority over a piece of land.

Political Capital has laid out in numerous studies how the Kremlin transformed European far-right parties and extremist organisations harbouring age-old territorial or other grievances against other countries into pro-Russian political assets since the early 2000s to garner intelligence and leverage over foreign countries' political life.[1] The pro-Kremlin extremists and their media potential was then put to good use during the illegal occupation of Crimea in 2014, to provide political and media cover for the illegal secession referendum and the subsequent war in Eastern Ukraine. Russian power projection has also relied on disinformation campaigns – "active measures" – targeting audiences in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Ukraine to create

or escalate bilateral tensions between these countries along ethnic or territorial lines to this day. The leaked emails of Vladislav Surkov,[2] a chief strategist of the Crimean annexation, detailed how Ukraine's territory could be further disintegrated or "federalised" with the help of minority/secessionist organisations in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.[3]

Vulnerabilities to Russian media or other (hard or soft, sharp) influence have been investigated extensively before.[4] We have not set out to define the Kremlin's overall strategy to destabilize European security and economic coalitions in order to shift the balance of power in its favour. Rather we seek to understand the inner workings of "revisionist" disinformation campaigns as tools of destabilisation on a regional level. To this end, with the help of the Open Information Partnership, Political Capital and its partners in Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine and Poland launched a year-long media research study in six countries to identify pro-Kremlin domestic or international disinformation campaigns, or so called "active measures," that are specifically reliant on revisionism and inter-ethnic conflicts.[5]

We hope that our research findings may provide local elites, the Euro-Atlantic Community and the wider public with insights and tools to better identify and thwart Russian hostile information operations based on social divisions and identity politics aimed at upending European peace and stability.

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METHODOLOGY AND THE SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The geographical scope and timeframe of the media research study was defined to reflect current or past territorial disputes – flashpoints of national discourses related first and foremost to World War I about identity, language or territories and proactively utilized by the Kremlin to sow divisions among Central-European countries.

We therefore chose to limit our research to Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Serbia, in addition to Ukraine, as focal points of hostile disinformation operations, because they all experienced territorial disputes and shifting borders dating back to World War I. More specifically,

Romania: Romania celebrated the 100-year anniversary of its Great Unification of Bessarabia, Bucovina and Transylvania in 2018.[6]

Hungary: 2020 is the 100th anniversary of the Trianon Treaty, declared the Year of National Togetherness by the Hungarian National Assembly to commemorate the loss of territory and population formerly belonging to the Hungarian Kingdom and the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy.[7]

Poland: Historical legacy of the Polish-Ukrainian War between 1918 and 1919 that resulted in the control of Eastern Galicia and the city of Lviv by the Second Polish Republic until 1939.

Current inter-ethnic conflicts: Disinformation campaigns based on current territorial conflicts addressed Russian revisionism in Ukraine and Slovakia, and the status of Kosovo in Serbia.

In line with the timing of national anniversaries and commemorations, we conducted our media monitoring activities during the period from 1 January 2018 to 15 April 2020, to reveal Russian hostile influence operations targeting the commemorative events or exploiting other forms of territorial revisionist, separatist tendencies and inter-ethnic conflicts in the countries under review.

The research addressed the following four questions:

1. What are the basic and most widespread revisionist narratives, related (dis)information strategies and identity politics concerning the official commemorations of World War I or other significant current-day territorial issues?

2. What are the drivers of revisionist media trends, in terms of events, actors and media sources in news media and in social media?

3. What are the prerequisites for the successful dissemination and construction of revisionist narratives and messages in pro-Kremlin media in each of the countries under review?

4. What are the vulnerabilities of each society to foreign hostile influence operations based on territorial issues and societal divisions between minority and majority populations?

We defined a "narrative" as a specific structure of (real or imaginary) events or occurrences linked by causality in storytelling, which can be articulated in oral, written, visual etc. forms of communication. Within each narrative we were looking for the type of information used to interpret the main line of argumentation: (1) information (fact-based, objective reporting); (2) disinformation (misleading information disseminated intentionally); (3) misinformation (ad hoc or accidentally false information).

Because territorial revisionist tendencies against other countries are not present in Slovakia and Ukraine, we expanded the operational definition of "revisionist narratives" in two important ways.

First, revisionist narratives were categorised as either exhibiting "aggressive" or "victimhood" aspects. "Aggressive" territorial narratives express a wish or demand for territorial change, or a revision of borders favouring a certain state or country, while "victimhood" narratives express fear of a possible change of the sovereign status of a given territory.

Second, we distinguished between "domestic" and "Russian" revisionist narratives. While domestic narratives were not created to manipulate specific audiences and did not necessarily contain any disinformation, pro-Kremlin or Russian disinformation meta-narratives reinterpreted domestic narratives for disinformation purposes as part of their disinformation campaigns.

In Hungary, our initial desktop research revealed that territorial revisionism or territory-related narratives present in the current media space and domestic political discourse first and foremost addressed the Trianon Treaty ending World War One, and the territories "lost" by the Hungarian Kingdom's to neighbouring countries.

The following research methods were used to prepare this study.

- Desktop research to collect the necessary information related to territorial revisionist politics, political ideas and media activity in each country to narrow down our research foci, and create three lists of mainstream, far-right and pro-Kremlin media for monitoring purposes.
- In-depth interviews with experts of scientific life, politics and the media so as to move beyond an exclusive reliance on open-source information, and to acquire a deeper understanding of the background of certain actors and events.
- Monitoring of revisionism-related websites' articles and Facebook messages on mainstream news media, and fringe pro-Kremlin and far-right media using the SentiOne online platform's research function which gathered data in the given timeframe based on country-specific sets of keywords selected by our researchers in each country under review.[8] As a result, we ended up with "relevant" messages in the forms of website articles or Facebook posts related to revisionist ideas, territory-related information, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and all the "irrelevant" messages produced by the media on our three initial media lists.

Media data gathered was analysed using four distinct research methodologies.

- Time trends of the dissemination of website articles and Facebook posts were analysed through the SentiOne platform's data visualization tools to understand the main events, actors, media, etc. driving mainstream or fringe media discourseswebsite.
- To identify, map and categorise the most prevalent revisionist narratives present in each country, we took a random, representative sample of website articles of at least 500 articles per country. The recurring, representative themes of articles were categorised into the main types of narratives present in each country.[9]
- To understand what conditions or prerequisites make revisionist or territory-related narratives and conspiracy theories successful in social media, we compared the most successful fringe (far-right or pro-Kremlin) Facebook pages' and posts' statistical performance to each other in terms of the number of interactions (based on the number of reactions, comments and shares).
- The research utilized a "big data approach" to comprehend how pro-Kremlin networks of websites in each country disseminated revisionism or territory-related messages through hyperlinks embedded in articles, in order to direct their audience to other revisionist sites or construct impactful messages by referencing – many times – third party sources website.

Ultimately, we combined several layers of analytical and methodological approaches to provide a comprehensive picture of all the revisionist narratives and related (dis)information campaigns utilized by pro-Kremlin actors to sow social polarisation and geopolitical instability in all six countries under review.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **What makes territorial revisionism against neighbouring countries relevant in Hungary to this day is the Trianon Treaty ending World War I.** It created Hungarian minority populations abroad, with the "unjust" Treaty remaining a centrepiece of Hungarian national identity and history. The sensitivity of the issue was put on centre stage again in 2020, with Hungary commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Trianon Treaty as the "Year of National Togetherness," while **67% of Hungarians are still supporting territorial claims against neighbouring countries.**[10]

- Although the 2020 commemorations passed without significant scandals or provocations due to the Hungarian government's concentrated efforts to prevent any foreign hostile interference with the anniversary, **the vulnerability related to Trianon and historical territorial revisionism has been revived since the annexation of Crimea in 2014.**

- **There remains no and has been no official or mainstream revisionism present in Hungarian politics since** the 1930s. **The historical interpretation of Trianon and human rights issues of the Hungarian diaspora, however, provide the Hungarian far-right, the domestic pro-Kremlin media and ultimately the Kremlin with ample opportunity to drive a wedge between Hungary and other EU or NATO member states, including Ukraine in the region.**

- **Since the start of the Crimean invasion in 2014, pro-Kremlin media in and outside Hungary have made deliberate efforts to weaponize Hungarian historical revisionism present in the Hungarian far-right subculture and media**, which fits into a wider pattern of the Kremlin's hybrid war waged against Ukraine and the Euro-Atlantic Community, or the West in general.

- **We were able to identify a total of 17 narratives directly or indirectly related to revisionism in Hungary which are spread by an incohesive network of pro-Kremlin websites and a more coordinated network of Facebook pages** relying on far-right opinion-leaders, far-right movements and conspiracy theorists who entertain peoples' fantasies and sense of historical justice.

- **Outright territorial revisionism is present only in far-right or pro-Kremlin discourses accounting for less than 10% (7.7%) of our sample. Nevertheless, the impact of such narratives cannot be underestimated, as they are directly related to inter-ethnic conflicts, the autonomy of the Hungarian diaspora or Crimea.**

- **Hungarian revisionist ideas and attitudes expressed on fringe websites and social media pages have been amplified or radicalized by the establishment of a pro-Kremlin media network, the infiltration of Hungarian extremist movements and the hijacking of official commemorative events** such as the Day of National Togetherness, the 2020 Year of National Togetherness. Their narratives about the Treaty of Trianon being "null and void," Hungary getting back parts of Romania following the "example of the Crimean peninsula" and the revision of borders based on the Kingdom of Hungary all aim to incite hate speech against other nations and enflame inter-ethnic conflicts between majority and minority populations claiming national "self-determination" – a rallying cry for "separatists" in Eastern Ukraine.

- Moreover, **we witnessed a string of disinformation campaigns or "active measures" utilising these narratives, while targeting bilateral relations with Ukraine or Romania based on the actions of Hungarian extremists and the local pro-Kremlin media**. As a result of hostile disinformation activities, far-right messages and conspiracy theories about revisionism are often found on pro-Kremlin sites, and almost all Hungarian far-right actors, parties, paramilitary movements and media outlets can be considered pro-Kremlin, anti-NATO, anti-U.S.A or anti-EU at the same time.

- **The dangers posed by revisionist narratives are, therefore, amplified by two primary factors. Firstly, revisionist conspiracy theories and disinformation narratives** about Hungary or Ukraine are matched with extremist organizational potential proven to be infiltrated by Russian intelligence services and capable of exporting their views abroad. **Second, the Hungarian government's pro-Kremlin foreign policy after 2010**, coupled with the country's highly centralized media space dominated by pro-government outlets, **makes Hungarian society vulnerable to Russian narratives and disinformation campaigns directly or indirectly**.

GENERAL POLITICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL ATTITUDES IN HUNGARY

Geopolitical attitudes and social divisions related to issues of race, ethnicity, religion or language may serve as vulnerabilities which the Kremlin can use to sow discord and create inter-ethnic tensions in domestic politics or in international relations. National identities intertwined with historical narratives serve as the most powerful basis for geopolitical orientations in a given country, making it susceptible or protected against the Kremlin's power projection, or soft and sharp powers.

The pro-Western orientation of Hungarian society and the Hungarian elite was first and foremost established as an outcome of the democratic political transition of 1989, when all major parties, including most of their electorate, agreed that Hungarian foreign policy interests, and democratic societal values, are best served by Hungary re-aligning itself with the Western political, economic and security establishments. Russia, as an heir to the Soviet Union, was not only unable to preserve the former Soviet spheres of influence in Central-Eastern Europe, but the country vanished from the Hungarian foreign policy agenda until Vladimir Putin became president in 2000. Even then, Russia's role in Hungarian geopolitical thinking was relegated to a semi-important economic partner, with whom consecutive Hungarian governments tried to forge a pragmatic relationship. Their objective was to secure gas and oil deliveries to the Hungarian market without the need or consideration for a deeper geopolitical cooperation with an essentially autocratic and anti-democratic political regime. This kind of foreign policy was also supported by deep-rooted societal aversions and attitudes against Moscow, based on the historical role the Russian/Soviet armies played in the crushing of the Hungarian revolutions of 1848/49, 1956, or in the military occupation of Hungary as part of the Warsaw Pact until 1990.[11] After Hungary joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004, the pro-Western foreign policy consensus of the Hungarian elite remained unchanged and unchallenged until the second Orbán government was formed in 2010.

Since the new government used its supermajority to execute an autocratic political turn in order to establish a "hybrid regime" by eliminating democratic institutional checks and balances on the ruling Fidesz-KDNP coalition – which entailed among others the suppression of independent media, autonomous Hungarian civil society, human rights and the rule of law etc. –, a major reorganisation of Hungarian foreign policy priorities also ensued.[12] To legitimize domestic political changes and ease the Hungarian government's growing isolation among Western liberal-democratic partners, the cabinet launched the so called "Eastern Opening" foreign policy to establish closer economic cooperation with Eastern autocracies, such as Russia, China or Turkey. They could promise not only foreign investments without any democratic strings attached, but also much-valued support on the global stage. The new foreign policy served as a backdrop to the Hungarian government's Eurosceptic rhetoric, used to defend itself against Western criticism, curtail Hungarian societal support for liberal ideologies and Western liberal institutional ideals, while defining the new enemies of the state, namely democratic opposition parties, independent media and human rights organisations. As a result, increasing economic-political cooperation, riddled with corruption, with Russia, China or Turkey became a centrepiece of Hungarian foreign policy after 2010, which still left Hungary an integral, albeit quite isolated, member of the EU and NATO. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has further strengthened high-level diplomatic and economic relations with China, which the Hungarian government considers a "friend in need" in contrast to the alleged lack of solidarity of Western partners in the current crisis. As PM Orbán put it in July 2020:

"*We are a member of the European Union. We want a strong union, but we also need to see its weaknesses, which are particularly striking during the coronavirus epidemic. We are negotiating with our neighbours and the Visegrad member states, but we must see that no help is coming from there*

(Brussels). We received assistance from China and the Turkish Council, of which Hungary is an observer member. Regardless, we are still members of the European Union. We are part of the Western alliance and we need to help each other, but we see that no help comes from within (the alliance)."[13]

The last ten years under the Fidesz-KDNP coalition have affected Hungarian geopolitical attitudes and orientations in an adverse way. Despite the constant drumroll of government-instructed anti-Western rhetoric and Euroscepticism, the majority of Hungarians continue to trust Western institutions, even over Hungarian ones, and support Hungarian membership in those. According to Globsec Trends 2019, the relative majority of Hungarians (47%) consider themselves and their country as a "part of the West," and the highest proportion of Hungarian respondents to date (81%) would support remaining a member of the European Union during a future referendum, a figure exceeded only by the support (83%) expressed towards the NATO membership of the country.[14] Still, the value of the Western alliance among the Fidesz electorate is waning. An absolute majority of Fidesz voters (51%) would support closer ties with Russia as opposed to the United States (39%) based on a 2018 Medián poll.[15]

The "hybridization" or "autocratic turn" of the Hungarian political system is the key to understanding Hungary's new foreign policy after 2010. The centralized and unrivalled political power of the ruling party and PM Orbán are the main driving forces and the framework of Hungary's current foreign policy, which, in turn, fundamentally impact how foreign hostile actors, their narratives and disinformation can cut through the Hungarian media space and impact Hungarian political discourse.

THE HUNGARIAN MEDIA SPACE

The success of hostile influence operations is highly dependent on the media environment in each country. A free and balanced media space characterised by a high degree of media freedom and freedom of speech is more resilient to disinformation attacks, since fact-based reporting makes it easy to debunk and expose disinformation and conspiracy theories, thereby rendering manipulation attempts ineffective. On a more general level, the presence of a strong, balanced and independent mainstream media in a country directly neutralizes local pro-Kremlin networks and indirectly improves audiences' media literacy against manipulation.

The autocratic regime of Viktor Orbán has done everything in its power after 2010 to gain control of the Hungarian media space. In 2002 and 2006, Fidesz-KDNP blamed the perceived dominance of "leftist or liberal" media for the parties' defeat in the parliamentary elections. Backed by a parliamentary supermajority, the ruling parties began a systematic dismantling of the diverse media space and the democratic regulatory institutional setting through the adoption of a new media law in 2010,[16] installing Fidesz appointees in regulatory positions, and buying independent local and national media enterprises. The result is a huge media conglomerate consisting of more than 500 commercial media titles under the umbrella of the Central European Press and Media Foundation, worth around EUR 100 million, numerous state-owned channels, and the official communication fora of the Fidesz party and its local or national politicians.[17] The unprecedent centralization of the Hungarian media space under the second Orbán cabinet means that the government communication and political campaigns of Fidesz-KDNP are coordinated across all media outlets under the informal or formal control of the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, freedom of speech and the freedom of the media is systematically curtailed by market acquisitions of independent media (such as the leading news portal index.hu in June 2020[18]) exerting control over market revenues for all media,[19] blacklisting opposition politicians or critics and applying direct censorship in government-controlled media etc. On the content-producing side, centralization has resulted in the mass-production of governmental propaganda, disinformation, conspiracy theories and governmental-commissioned defamation campaigns against any opposition to the regime, such as journalists, independent NGOs, scientists etc. The pro-government weekly Figyelő even published a "list of Soros mercenaries": Hungarian intellectuals falsely accused of being part of an anti-government network of activists organised and funded by philanthropist George Soros.[20] Similar governmental conspiracy theories and disinformation campaigns have been spun during the COVID-19 pandemic about the Hungarian opposition, attempting to cast them as "anti-Hungarians" or politicians supporting the spread of the virus.[21] It is no wonder that the 2020 World Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders ranks Hungary 89th out of 180 countries, with an average freedom score of 30.84, representing a steady decline of the freedom of the media in Hungary since 2013.[22] When it comes to sub-markets, government-controlled media dominates all but the online news segment, where independent media still has an edge over governmental communication. Still, the presence of disinformation and conspiracy theories in mainstream media has fundamentally changed how people consume and trust news organisation: 78% of Hungarians believe that mainstream media often lie and manipulate facts,[23] with over half (60%) of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 having encountered disinformation on social media.[24] The heavy hand of the government in dealing with the media was once again proved by the pandemic. The Hungarian police launched more than 100 investigations into alleged violations of the penal code related to fearmongering and the dissemination of false information about COVID-19. Many cases proved to be baseless accusations to serve as politically motivated intimidation of private citizens and opposition politicians.[25]

The government's foreign policy is seamlessly represented in pro-government articles, which made propaganda, disinformation and conspiracy theories a centrepiece of Hungary's foreign policy stances and communication. Therefore, Russia or China or other post-Soviet autocracies are cast in the best possible light in governmental media, which avoids any legitimate criticism of them. Mainstream support expressed for pro-Kremlin (or pro-Beijing, for that matter) narratives in mainstream pro-government media can be observed on two levels. In gen-

eral, the Hungarian government wages an all-out war against liberal democracies in the domestic and international media, by promoting a sovereignty-based, Christian-conservative worldview rooted in nationalism, the "traditional model" of the family and religion, in opposition to Western globalist, liberal ideology and the idea of "open society," which said to be in a decline.[26] This kind of "value-based" traditional – and, in fact, far-right – ideology and anti-Western, Eurosceptic narrative matches the same Russian stance perfectly, which asserts itself as the sole, strong representative of the conservative "value trinity" of nation, family and Christianity, under attack by the West.[27] When it comes to actual Russian disinformation and conspiracy theories, Hungarian pro-government media has spread some of the most outrageous Russian claims about the Revolution of Dignity being a CIA-supported inside job, the downing of Malaysian Airlines MH17 being caused by a bomb planted by Western intelligence agencies etc. Pro-Russian narratives in Hungarian pro-government media stop just short of questioning Ukraine's territorial sovereignty.[28] Foreign minister Péter Szijjártó clearly stated on many occasions, most recently in 2018, that Hungary supports "Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty."[29]

Moreover, the Hungarian mainstream government-controlled media's positive coverage of Russia, the Kremlin or President Putin has made the direct presence of pro-Russian communications and communicators' in the Hungarian media space obsolete. While pro-Russian far-right figures and anonymous actors did establish a loose network of about 50 to 100 pro-Kremlin websites and Facebook pages deeply embedded into the Hungarian far-right subculture before and around the Crimean events in 2014, the increasingly cosy diplomatic and economic relationship between Hungary and Russia has turned the Hungarian government and the pro-government media into the main venue for the Kremlin to exert its influence in Hungary. The network does exist and promotes pro-Kremlin messages and conspiracy theories to this day; however, its influence on Hungarian political discourse is negligible (mostly present and impactful in far-right circles) and highly intertwined with the Hungarian government's official line of Eurosceptic communication. Today, the main difference between Hungarian mainstream and fringe pro-Russian narratives lies in their targets. Whereas

governmental communication is directed mostly at the domestic opposition, the EU, or some Western allies attacking the Hungarian government's human rights record, Russian assets directly target NATO or the United States, which are entirely or usually off limits for the governmental propaganda machine. This distinction applies to territorial revisionism as well. There is practically no revisionism present in Hungarian pro-governmental or independent media discourse, and articles about Trianon go as far to reiterate the unjust nature or consequences of the treaty, a consensus statement supported by politicians or historians of all stripes. In contrast, implicit or explicit territorial revisionism and attitudes supporting territorial claims related to World War I and by extension to Crimea or Eastern-Ukraine, are widely popular and disseminated in the far-right media and the Hungarian pro-Kremlin network, as explained below in the next chapter in further detail. The most notable high-level disinformation attack executed through this network was in the early days of the Crimean war in 2014, when a pro-Russian site called Hídfő (Bridgehead), later identified by Hungarian investigative journalists as an outlet for Russian intelligence operatives, accused the Hungarian government of delivering T-72 tanks to Ukraine as a form of military aid.[30] Although the story was quickly debunked by Hungarian authorities and journalists, it revealed the disinformation attack as an "active measure," since the piece published by a site then largely unknown to the Hungarian public was almost immediately picked up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to demand an explanation from the Hungarian government.

Ultimately, mainstream and fringe Hungarian media both contribute to the effectiveness of Russian sharp and soft power projection in Hungary and in the CEE by boosting three main drivers of Russian disinformation: (1) grassroots and mostly social media communication in the pro-Kremlin far-right subculture; (2) top officials' or the local elite's pro-Russian rhetoric; and finally, (3) Euroscepticism as a narrative framework of anti-Western disinformation. All these factors make Russia "look stronger, bigger, better and more important than it really is" in Hungary and in the region, which can be understood as a prerequisite for the Kremlin's territorial destabilization actions and narratives in our region.[31]

SOCIETAL AND POLITICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF TRIANON

Political and media discourses about our topic can influence both how political actors and the media may deal with present-day or historical issues regarding territorial disputes and identity politics, and how the Kremlin or its local allies take advantage of such a sensitive issue present in a society or in multilateral relations. This section will attempt to provide a holistic picture of the Kremlin's hostile influence operations, or "active measures," centred on inter-ethnic conflicts and revisionist narratives and the risk they pose to national security in each country. Against the backdrop of Russian manipulation efforts and domestic political discourses, the impact of revisionist narratives may be assessed throughout the course of our media analysis.

To understand the actuality and relevance of the Trianon treaty as a historical event in present-day Hungarian political discourse, one must take into consideration the political, societal and scientific consensus about this turning point of historical proportions, and Hungarian foreign policy expressing this consensus. As a historical event, the Treaty of Trianon and its aftermath is an inescapable point in the long-term construction of Hungarian national identity, which is built on the premise that the Treaty was not only a historically unjust geopolitical decision forced upon the Hungarian nation by outside forces, but a peace arrangement that effectively relocated more than one-third of Hungarian nationals to other countries in 1920. The Treaty thereby created a nation physically and culturally divided to this day, for good. The historical dilemma of the Hungarian political elite always lay in the possible remedies to this situation: how to manage the new diasporas abroad and the relationship between Hungary and neighbouring countries hosting sizeable Hungarian minorities. On a scale of geopolitical and ideological solutions, the post-war elite after World War I opted for the harshest response of territorial revisionism, whereas Socialist Hungary between 1945 and 1989 pretended as though the case were solved under the leftist human rights ideology and alliance of the Warsaw Pact countries. Later, the new Hungarian democratic elite after the transition tried to reckon with the question on democratic terms and as a member state of NATO and

later the European Union. Because the issue is and has been a basic question of Hungarian nationalism, the interpretation of Trianon differs fundamentally from how neighbouring countries view World War I. To them, understandably, it is more of a historical, although a nationally restitutive, fact, whereas Hungarian politics treats it as a current factor and point of reflection of Hungarian national identity. To quote the leader of the Trianon 100 research group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences:

"*In the successor states (of the Hungarian Kingdom) Trianon is considered strictly a historical event, a history sealed. They interpret the peace treaty as the celebration of a one hundred years long evolution which inevitably led to the creation of the sovereign Yugoslavia, Romania and Czechoslovakia. (…) Everything else which disputes this approach is considered retrograde, a step taken backwards,*" said Balázs Ablonczy in an interview.[32][33]

Today, mainstream political and historical-scientific consensus relegates revisionism, past territorial claims and the text of the Treaty to a historical topic to be dealt with from a historical research point of view and as part of a regional phenomenon related to World War I. Consequently, the historical research group of Trianon 100 of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which enjoys the full support of the Hungarian government and media, researching the centenary of the Treaty, set out to re-examine the role it played in the forming of long-term Hungarian foreign policy, historical thinking and politics of memory with regard to neighbouring countries' historical narratives and interpretations of the event as well.[34] Several government-leaning historians, such as Sándor Szakály, director of the VERITAS Research Institute and Archives, also contend that the end or the disintegration of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy was an inevitable outcome of the lost war, and only some conditions of the Treaty could have been at stake back in 1920:

"*The previously anticipated 'just peace,' which is a nice, however, non-existent phrase in practice, remained an illusion*", said Szakály in a June 2020 interview.[35]

Consequently, in present-day politics and foreign policy, the issue of Trianon is either about historical commemoration or its policy consequences, namely the relationships between the diaspora and the "motherland." While Hungary's accession to NATO and the European Union has provided long-awaited ease of contact between different Hungarian communities for travel, kinship, educational and cultural purposes, some minority human rights issues remained on the foreign policy table.

The new Hungarian political elite of the democratic transition of 1989 saw it as a top foreign policy priority to re-establish official, cultural and educational relationships with Hungarians living abroad in order to resolve some long-term human rights issues concerning educational and language rights or other forms of support which these communities needed to thrive. Viktor Orbán's second cabinet did not fundamentally change this human rights-centred approach, but, similarly to previous rightist governments or parties, it placed more emphasis on the support of the diaspora communities as part of its nationalistic ideology to win over the domestic electorate, and was more ready to take up conflicts with neighbours over certain issues. Fidesz' foreign policy regarding the Hungarian minority has followed four priorities in the last ten years: providing dual citizenship to Hungarians living abroad; assisting the self-preservation of Hungarian communities in the broadest sense; supporting minority human rights cases, such as the autonomy of the Szeklers (székelyek in Hungarian) in Romania or the language rights of Hungarians living in Zakarpattia Oblast or Transcarpathia (Kárpátalja in Hungarian); and, finally, meeting the special needs of minority communities in terms of cultural, educational, financial or other assistance.[36] At the same time, the minority-focused Hungarian foreign policy agenda is dominated by the new hybrid regime's political logic which demands maximum political loyalty in return for support coming from Budapest, and tries to dominate the cultural life and identity of these communities. The strong nationalistic, sovereignty-based identity politics and politics of memory Fidesz is pursuing in domestic and foreign policy is part of this effort as well. In 2010, the Hungarian National Assembly adopted the law on the Day of National Togetherness to commemorate "one of

the greatest historical tragedies of the Hungarians," express the unity of the Hungarian nation and the freedom and self-determination of national communities, and to contribute to a peaceful future based on the mutual understanding and cooperation of all the people and nations living in the Carpathian Basin."[37] The Day of National Togetherness and the Year of National Togetherness commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the Treaty on 4 June 2020 was mostly of symbolic nature, prompting many commemorative events in Hungary and abroad. The text of the law itself reflected the pragmatism of PM Orbán's neighbourhood policy. Although support provided for human rights and the cultural or territorial autonomy of Hungarian minorities has been part of the current government's long-term foreign policy agenda, it pursued these goals over time quite flexibly according to its regional or European interests. Currently, minority issues are off the table with regard to Slovakia or Serbia, because consecutive Slovak governments were on good terms with the Hungarian cabinet, and Hungary is interested in advancing V4 regional cooperation within the European Union. Serbia can be considered a hybrid regime similar to Hungary, whose foreign policy interests with regard to Chinese or Russian investments and influence are aligned with that of Hungary. On the contrary, the Hungarian government is in a long diplomatic spat with Ukraine over a much-debated education law adopted by the Rada in September 2017, limiting minority language usage in Ukrainian public education. Fidesz-KDNP supports territorial autonomy for the Szeklers (székelyek) in Romania, which divides and further weakens the Hungarian opposition's unity on foreign policy,[38] easily wins over the Fidesz electorate in and outside Hungary, while the alienation of Romanian decision-makers over the issue is a price PM Orbán is ready to pay – without any real risk to Hungarian foreign policy interests within NATO or the EU.[39]

The course of Hungarian regional foreign policy needed to be outlined not because there are any territorial revisionist politics present in Hungarian mainstream politics, but because Russian revisionism against Ukraine and the pro-Russian nature of the second Orbán cabinet significantly impacted how Hungarian foreign policy works and can be

utilized along the Kremlin's geopolitical goals. As we analyse below in greater detail, the aforementioned Hungarian diplomatic conflicts with neighbours over minority rights have been swiftly turned into disinformation weapons of the Kremlin, and real revisionist ideas and attitudes of Hungarian extremists have been mobilised and made part of so called active measures to support the separatists' cause in Eastern Ukraine since 2014. The Hungarian government was unable to counteract or forcefully condemn these hostile state actions and influence operations due to the increasing economic and diplomatic cooperation with Russia, such as the construction of the Paks II nuclear plant by Rosatom,[40] and its centralized, disinformation-oriented media space of its own making.

RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION TARGETING TRIANON

The identity politics of Trianon present in Hungarian political discourse and in mainstream and fringe media provide those historical grievances, or inter-ethnic conflicts, that pro-Russian narratives can weaponize in order to destabilize Hungary's relation to its neighbours and the region in general.

As part of President Putin's Europe-wide effort to infiltrate political movements and parties, in the early to mid-2000s,[41] and leading up to the Crimean war in 2014, we can witness a string of Russian active measures intertwined with disinformation operations in Hungary. A Russian operative named Béla Kovács, who claimed to be a businessman mostly active in Russia and the post-Soviet countries, joined the Hungarian far-right party Jobbik in 2005. He started directly financing the party out of his own pocket and quickly rose through the ranks to become chair of the party's foreign policy cabinet. This resulted in several high-level meetings between Russian opinion-leaders and politicians and leaders of the far-right party.[42] His activity set Jobbik and its communication on a pro-Kremlin foreign policy path for the years to come. As a result, Jobbik became one of the most prominent pro-Kremlin voices in Hungarian domestic politics, with messages ranging from propagating closer Hungarian-Russian dialogue to touting gas-powered vehicles at a Gazprom conference[43] - until the second Orbán government rose to power in 2010. Béla Kovács did indeed prove to be a real asset for the Kremlin by becoming Jobbik's MEP after the party unexpectedly won 14.77% of the votes cast in the 2009 European Parliamentary election, and by establishing contact with another Hungarian far-right organisation, the neo-Nazi, paramilitary Hungarian National Front (Magyar Nemzeti Front, MNA).[44] The affiliation between Kovács, who was officially charged by Hungarian authorities with spying against the European Union in 2014,[45] and the MNA came to light in 2016, when the leader of the MNA shot and killed a police officer during a search of his house for illegal arms and ammunition. After the incident, journalistic investigation revealed that the organisation had received airsoft drills or training in the Hungarian countryside for

years from members of the Russian military intelligence agency GRU, disguised as diplomats of the Russian embassy in Budapest.[46] Although, the Hungarian authorities disbanded the MNA after the shooting, the damage has been already done. Back in 2012, the MNA has created a website called Hídfő (Bridgehead), which was quickly handed over to Russian intelligence agencies to become one of the cornerstones of the pro-Kremlin fringe communication network activated after 2014 in support of the Kremlin's military operations in Ukraine, and later in Syria as well.[47] Bridgehead left behind obscurity in August of 2014, when it accused the Hungarian government of violating international treaties by selling T-72 tanks to Ukraine in the ongoing conflict in Crimea.[48] The piece of this until-then-unknown Hungarian website was immediately picked up the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, demanding an official explanation from Hungarian authorities. Hence, the cover of Bridgehead was blown, and it migrated to a Russian server to continue functioning as a clear-cut pro-Russian voice in the Hungarian media space until around 2018.[49] The pro-Kremlin and far-right fringe media network, identified by Political Capital's experts and Hungarian investigative journalists, consists of around from 50 to 100 websites and social media accounts mostly on Facebook. In addition to fringe media, the indirect and direct presence in the Hungarian far-right subculture of Russian operatives or pro-Kremlin extremists have prompted several public events in support of the "separatists" in Eastern Ukraine. The openly revisionist Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (Hungarian: Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom, HVIM), whose name refers to the number of counties of the Kingdom of Hungary before World War I, issued a pro-Russian statement in 2014 about Transcarpathia (Zakarpattia Oblast) not being part of Ukraine, similarly to Transylvania not being part of Romania, while it also staged a demonstration in Heroes' Square in Budapest in support of the Eastern Ukrainian territories controlled by pro-Russian militia (dubbed the "Donetsk People's Republic") in 2015.[50] The Wolves, another paramilitary organisation loosely related to Jobbik,

in addition to staging pro-Russian PR-stunts acknowledged in 2016 to having been in contact with the separatist fighting in Eastern Ukraine through one of its trainers, a Balkan wars veteran named Zsolt Dér.[51] Russian hostile information operations were however not confined to the fringes. In 2017, a "KGB-style provokatsiya" was used to discredit the CEO (Dávid Vitézy) of the capital's public transportation company (BKK) to force the then rightist mayor, István Tarlós, to award the renovation project of the ailing M3 metro line, worth EUR 200 million, to the Russian Metrowagonmash company, as revealed by investigative portal Vsquare.[52]

Due to the close diplomatic and economic relationship developed between the Hungarian and Russian governments, fringe pro-Russian sites toned down their activity over time. For the last couple of years, they have mostly echoed the ruling Fidesz-KDNP's and its media's anti-Western and Eurosceptic rhetoric, and Russian intelligence agencies seemingly ceased conducting scandalous or visible Russian operations on Hungarian soil and among Hungarian extremists, with the Kremlin holding significant sway on the governmental levels of Hungarian politics and business. The latest rounds of active measures have thus mostly played out in neighbouring countries and media, directly playing into inter-ethnic and territorial claims. In 2018, the Hungarian minority's cultural centre located in Uzhhorod (Ungvár in Hungarian) in the Zakarpattia Oblast, or Transcarpathia (Kárpátalja in Hungarian), home to around 150,000 ethnic Hungarians, was set on fire by Polish extremists of the far-right Falanga Movement. As it turned out, this was an active measure organised and directed by pro-Russian figures to create tensions not only between the local Hungarian minority and the Ukrainian majority, but more importantly further escalate the diplomatic row between Budapest and Kyiv over a controversial education law that limits the use of minority languages in public education. Even though the incident was quickly debunked and exposed by Ukrainian authorities for what it is, the Russian hostile influence operation yielded the anticipated result. The Hungarian Foreign Ministry summoned the Ukrainian ambassador and accused Ukraine of not reining in "extremist political views" that led to the arson attack,[53] while the Kremlin's media, namely Sputnik and Russia Today, quoted the Hungarian reaction as proof of Ukraine continuous violation of minority human rights, which retroactively legitimizes Russia's annexation of Crimea and proves that Ukraine is ill-fitted to join the West.[54] In the end, the active measure significantly escalated the bilateral row between Hungary and Ukraine, forcing the Hungarian government to continue blocking Ukraine-NATO Commission meetings, as it has done since the autumn of 2017, when the law was adopted by the Rada. Another international incident in 2019 started out as a simple inter-ethnic conflict between representatives of the Hungarian minority, a minority-led Romanian municipality and Romanian nationalists over the status and commemorative use of an international war cemetery of World War I in the Valley of Uz (Valea Uzului in Romanian). While the Romanian and Hungarian foreign policy establishment clashed over the issue, and Hungarian mainstream politics and media treated the conflict as a human rights issue and a controversy related to World War I commemorations of the fallen soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire,[55] pro-Russian communication quickly hijacked the conversation in both Hungary and Romania – **the latter aspect is to be discussed in more detail in the Romanian country report**. Gábor Stier, a pro-Kremlin journalist, claimed on his personal blog that the "script was presumably written by players of big politics", and "everything was aligned to spark (…) a new ethnic clash, like the one of the black March of 1990." "Black March" is a clear reference to a violent clash between the Hungarian minority and Romanian majority in the city of Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely in Hungarian) sparked by Romanian politicians, which was one of the bloodiest inter-ethnic incidents of the post-communist era in Romania.[56] Other Hungarian pro-Kremlin fringe media, the anti-Semitic Kuruc.info relativized the "heroic death" of Romanian soldiers of WWI,[57] and demanded the suspension of any collaboration with Romania within NATO,[58] while the Hungarian version of Newsfront controlled by the Kremlin wrote about the "attack against Hungarians reminding us of the darkest years of the 20th Century."[59] These are the same media that floated the idea that "Trianon is not a case closed,"[60] that Hungarians or Szeklers should get back territories "lost" to Romania following the "example of the Crimean peninsula,"[61] or that President Trump would return Transylvania to Hungary based on some decisions made at the 2018 G7 summit.[62]

It is important to note that pro-Kremlin communication embedded into the Hungarian far-right and extremist subculture, expressing a pro-Russian geopolitical orientation, swiftly escalated the Uz-valley conflict in the cyberspace, to legitimize openly revisionist ideas rooted in disinformation and conspiracy theories. Pro-Russian fringe media and extremist actors were able to escalate tensions because, firstly, there was an official diplomatic row; secondly, they claimed to represent the Hungarian minority abroad; and, thirdly, far-right and paramilitary movements regard Russia as the guarantors of the revisionist efforts of Hungary's extreme right, following the political rhetoric of the Russian separatists fighting in Eastern Ukraine – as we have already established in one of our studies published in 2017.[63] The radicalization of the 2020 commemorations by extremist movements were in plain view during March and June of 2020. On the 100th anniversary of Miklós Horthy becoming regent of Hungary on 1 March 2020, the revisionist Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (HVIM), the anti-Semitic Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom), which is made up of the most radical, former members of the Jobbik party, the paramilitary neo-Nazi Army of Outlaws (Betyársereg), and the most prolific anti-Semitic portal Kuruc.info, along with other smaller extremist organisations, praised Horthy for the successful territorial revisionist military actions between the two World Wars and called for the annulation of the Trianon Treaty.[64] The same organisations held a march protesting Trianon on the Day of National Togetherness on the 5th of June 2020.[65] Their statements about revisionism were simple and blunt. In an interview given to the Army of Outlaws, the leader of the Sopron organisation of the Our Homeland Movement Gábor Gőbl stated:

"(…) borders should have been drawn based on referendums. It is still not too late to do this even after 100 years!!! There would be a need for borders based on ethnographic (data) in the Carpathian Basin to this day! In this case, Hungary would control approx. 115,000 square kilometres of land today and its population would be around 11,500,000."[66][67]

During the June 2019 commemoration and protest in front of the Slovak Embassy in Budapest, Botond Kónyi-Kiss, the vice-president of HVIM, declared that the "trauma of Trianon" is more topical than ever, and that the "petty bourgeoisie, peaceful and democratic ways have failed,", so "the time has come to take radical steps" with regard to Trianon. On the same occasion HVIM announced the forming of an "action group" to organise street protests and other actions in order to free the "Szekler terrorists"[68] and force the Romanian state to the negotiating table for further talks.[69] By demanding the release of the "Szekler terrorists," Hungarian extremists directly link their revisionist ideas to legitimate human rights issues, such as the autonomy of the Szeklers (Székelyek) in Romania. A new example from 2020 already points to Russian efforts to exploit the inter-ethnic conflicts surrounding the Romanian autonomy of the Hungarian minority. An infamous pro-Russian Szekler activist named Barna Csibi has been organising a protest on the Kossuth square in Budapest and an online disinformation campaign on his "Ruthenian Transcarpathia" blog,[70] all in protest to mandatory mask wearing regulations in Romania, mandatory vaccination programs, and against the 5G mobile technology usually associated with the spread of the virus – reported investigative portal Átlátszó.[71] Barna was previously known for his attempt to organise a paramilitary unit of Szeklers, the Szekler Guard (Székely Gárda), in 2010. He came out in support of Vladimir Putin's revisionism in his Romanian hometown of Miercurea Ciuc (Csíkszereda) in 2014, by declaring that "Russia is looking for allies in Szeklerland, and it is supporting the independence of the Szekler people," since "every nation has the right to self-determination."[72] Even though Barna's provocations have so far proved unsuccessful in inflaming Hungarian-Romanian inter-ethnic tensions, his role along with the revisionist attitude of Hungarian extremist organisations provides a fertile ground for further hostile state activity targeting territorial grievances, or current crises, such as the COVID-19 epidemic.

This is where the Hungarian government's and its media space's vulnerability to hostile influence operations comes into play. On a very basic level, the Hungarian government cannot, or rarely can, stand up publicly to Russian disinformation attempts due to the close diplomatic and economic cooperation between Hungary and Russia, including annual high-level meetings between President Putin and PM Orbán. For the very reason, the Hungarian diplomacy was unable to reveal and debunk the Russian active measure aimed at the Hungarian minority living in Western Ukraine. Besides being be-

holden to the Kremlin, the Hungarian government is a "victim" of its domestic media logic and centralized government-controlled media, which not only follows pro-Russian Hungarian foreign policy to the tee, thereby allowing pro-Russian narratives to be present in the Hungarian mainstream media, but has also made disinformation and conspiracy theories essential parts of the Hungarian government's communication. The Hungarian government has therefore made it difficult for itself to represent Hungarian communities living abroad in good faith, when Viktor Orbán, with a straight face, accused the MEPs of European member states of being financed and controlled by philanthropist George Soros during the COVID-19 talks of European leaders in July 2020.[73] Moreover, pro-government me-

dia openly supports the Our Homeland Movement by providing extensive coverage of their activities and anti-opposition statements to further weaken Fidesz's main rightist opponent, the center-right, previously far-right, Jobbik party. As a result, the Hungarian media space, as well as governmental and government-controlled media communication is defenceless, if not an accomplice at times, when it comes to pro-Russian narratives and propaganda, and active measures. One cannot expect an effective, straightforward foreign policy on such central issues as national interest, national identity and national security of the EU or NATO members, if its policies are immersed in disinformation and conspiracy theories coming from the top leaders on a continuous basis.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

We conducted five in-depth interviews with experts of security policy and media and historians so as to move beyond an exclusive reliance on open-source information, and to acquire a deeper understanding of the background of certain actors and events. Our interviewees were:

- **Zoltán Sz. Bíró**, historian of Russian political history and geopolitics at Corvinus University of Budapest
- **András Rácz**, historian, senior fellow at DGAP - German Council on Foreign Relations
- **János Széky**, editor of weekly Élet és Irodalom, political analyst, expert on Slovak-Hungarian relations
- **Szabolcs Panyi**, investigative journalist at Direkt36, V Square
- An anonymous expert of geopolitics

Russian foreign policy and military aggression

Most of the Hungarian experts agreed that 2014 and the annexation of Crimea was a turning-point in Russian foreign policy and related Russian communication campaigns. According to Russia and geopolitical expert András Rácz, the move not only proved that Russia is "ready to upend the security policy (setting) of Europe after World War II," it is also pursuing a "permanent logic of destabilization:"

"*Russia knows NATO is stronger in terms of military and economy, so it tries to counter this (weakness) with a classic, asymmetric response that creates tension and unnerves the opponent.*"

Zoltán Sz. Bíró, an academic and expert of Russian political history, explained that the current (foreign) policy of the Kremlin is fundamentally guided by the present sense of "instability:"

"*Russian society has grown tired of Putin since the autumn of 2017. Society has become uninterested and indifferent towards the ruling elite, while those in power have also lost the (political) initiative.*"

Thus, concludes Bíró, instability in Russian domestic politics can translate into two behaviours. Either the Kremlin tries to concentrate on sober, domestic political solutions, or it can also pursue a riskier foreign policy. The latter could be seen around 2012-2013, when Putin's popular support was waning, and he decided to take action against Ukraine. According to the expert, Russian risk-taking behaviour could be motivated by the COVID-19 epidemic, the economic downturn or the decrease of Russian energy export. At the same time, the Western sanctions and the "Russian society being tired" of international conflicts might push the Kremlin towards a more risk-averse foreign policy.

Russian disinformation campaigns

Both Sz. Bíró and Rácz agreed that communication or disinformation campaigns of the Kremlin have primarily been used as a tool to advance Russian foreign policy, create chaos and weaken geopolitical rivals, rather than to permanently gain control over or occupy foreign countries' territories. In Rácz's opinion, Crimea was sort of an exception to this rule, which was based solely on "a military decision taken by four people:"

"*They (the Kremlin) wanted to avoid Ukraine becoming a member of NATO and losing the Russian ports located in the Black Sea, (…) the ethnic (disinformation) narrative was utilized only later to support the (military) decision.*"

Sz. Bíró also stressed that Russian destabilization efforts are used primarily to achieve a compromise regarding Ukraine along Russian interests, which is a "**Russian Monroe Doctrine**" to force the West to acknowledge the post-Soviet space as a special interest zone of the Russian Federation. According to Rácz, "information pressure" is utilized by Russia because it is "cheap, efficient and very flexible," and its use has not cost Russia much except in the case of Ukraine.

Russian destabilization efforts in Central-Eastern Europe and Hungary

According to Sz. Bíró, Russian manipulation or the revision of historical memory focused mostly on World War II and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact to directly legitimise the past Soviet and current Russian foreign policy regarding Ukraine. The memory of World War I is swept under the rug, since the end of the war is not considered a success story for Russia, as "Russia lost the war against an enemy that was losing, in Putin's view," reminded András Rácz. Still, the Kremlin is aware of historical disputes in Central-Eastern Europe that could be utilized to create tensions between NATO or EU member states, emphasized Rácz:

"*The Russians know quite precisely how one can make use of ethnic tensions in Central-Eastern Europe, because they know the region. (…) They engaged in such disruptive behaviour during the Second World War.*"

Our experts agreed that Russia is clearly taking advantage of the Hungarian-Ukrainian diplomatic spat regarding the use of Hungarian minority language rights in the Ukrainian educational system. Moreover, the Kremlin executed a successful active measure by setting the Cultural Centre of the Hungarian minority in Uzhhorod (Ungvár in Hungarian) on fire in February 2018:

"*The arson attack in Uzhhorod targeted Ukraine plain and simple. If Hungarian (diplomatic) outrage slows down the NATO accession process (of Ukraine), it is a perfect outcome. It was a carefully orchestrated operation: a German, pro-Russian figure named Emanuel Ochsenreiter used Polish far-right extremists from Falanga to execute the measure on Ukrainian soil. It was a high-level operation, which involved reconnaissance and planning points of entry. Hungarians were instruments, not the targets, of this measure. It is quite nice collateral damage if Romanians and Slovaks become unnerved as well*," said the expert.

According to Rácz, the case highlighted the vulnerability of bilateral tensions and a "logic of escalation" between Budapest and Kyiv that was successfully targeted by the Kremlin, prompting Budapest to accuse the Ukrainian government of not defending the Hungarian minority living in Transcarpathia or the Zakarpattia Oblast against "Ukrainian nationalism." Investigative journalist Szabolcs Panyi, who was actively involved in revealing many Russian false flag operations in Hungary, differentiates between "Russian freelancers", "local extremists" and "intelligence operations" who can flexibly execute a variety of active measures and disinformation campaigns to reveal or conceal the Kremlin's direct involvement in such actions in Hungary or in the region. In his opinion, the Hungarian media space's vulnerability to Russian disinformation can be attributed to both the lack of journalists well-versed in foreign policy, and low-quality journalism found in mainstream pro-government media, which employs young professionals without adequate training to recognize manipulated content:

"*Only a fraction of (pro-Kremlin) journalism is a result of editorial instructions in these media outlets (…) I think there is a 'white list' (in pro-government media) indicating which foreign media is trustworthy, non-liberal, non-globalist and non-imperialist to cite as sources,*" said Panyi.

There are also a few professional journalists with decades-long experience in foreign policy, with an anti-Western and pro-Kremlin attitude embedded

into mainstream or fringe media who are paid by Russian stakeholders to disseminate pro-Kremlin narratives:

"*The payments received (by these pro-Kremlin journalists) are oftentimes about innocent topics, when, in fact, they are expected to address specific (pro-Kremlin) issues, write expert commentaries. There is also a small circle of Hungarian journalists who are age-old contacts of the Russian intelligence services*," detailed Szabolcs Panyi.

Both Panyi and Rácz agreed that Russian active measures are quite opportunistic, reacting to the changing and perceived threats to Russian interests. They execute both unexpected measures, along with well-prepared active measures:

"*The action (in Uzhhorod) was a complete success. The use of freelancers paved the way for success regardless of exposition (of the action itself). The Hungarian (government's) communication did not even mention Russia: they attributed the action to Ukrainian nationalists. The image of a manipulative, master-planner FSB has become stronger. The measure was quickly debunked; however, Russia experienced no backlash, it did not have to take responsibility and no diplomats were expelled – the tensions (between Ukraine and Hungary) heightened*," summed up Panyi.

With regard to foreign hostile meddling, András Rácz differentiated between the "active measures" of the GRU and the "simple" actions of other pro-Kremlin actors. In his opinion, the GRU's outreach to Hungarian extremists, such as the now-disbanded Hungarian National Front (Magyar Nemzeti Arcvonal or MNA), which was revealed in 2016,[74] does not serve any current foreign policy goal or disinformation campaign. Rather, it is designed for a doomsday scenario, in case of an armed conflict, to have assets ready to "eliminate the enemy's political, military and economic leadership" in a given country.

Trianon and regional destabilization

In our experts' opinion, the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon and official Hungarian commemorations were not targeted intentionally by Russian active measures or disinformation campaigns, largely due to the great diplomatic and economic cooperation between PM Orbán and President Putin. As investigative journalist Szabolcs Panyi put it:

"*Hungary is an operational basis, not a target. It is rather a staging area where one is free to organise actions in the Balkans, Austria, even from within the Russian Embassy (in Budapest). The Hungarian counterintelligence is not on top of things, and the (Hungarian) political leadership does not want any confrontation (with Moscow) (…) PM Orbán and his staff is aware that the Russians would utilize far-right organisations to their ends, so they try to prevent that by breaking such organisations up. (…) but we have such a government (…) there is no need for active measures. A good example is the story of the (Russian-founded) International Investment Bank. Although important NATO allies and partner intelligence services pointed to problems (with the IIB), the Hungarian government still expressed 100% support for the bank.*"

András Rácz also reiterated that the Hungarian government has worked hard for many years to avoid domestic or foreign scandals regarding the Trianon commemorations after Crimea:

"*The Hungarian government intentionally tried to avoid any significant foreign or regional destabilization aspect (of the commemoration). There is a basic security logic in play here. Trianon is a symbolic issue for Hungarian society and a well-known, trivial vulnerability. The Hungarian government anticipated (these risks), and it has so far excellently managed the commemorative year. Although the Romanians adopted a resolution (against Trianon), the domestic commemorations have been kept intentionally to a minimum, nobody is talking nonsense and extremists are not active. (…) Trianon is used for domestic identity building, but they are carefully avoiding making it into a regional security policy issue. (…) Hungary's new National Security Strategy was adopted two months prior to the commemorations to signal to neighbouring countries that the Hungarian defence force development program is not offensive and neighbouring countries' security and stability is among the top priorities.*[75]"

János Széky, editor and political columnist at Élet és Irodalom, highlighted the political calculation behind the Hungarian government's behaviour:

"*The Trianon grievance is indeed in the focus of the Hungarian government or the Hungarian rightist political movement. They tried, however, to downplay the 100th anniversary (of Trianon). There were no large-scale commemorations, and the inauguration of the commemorative trench of Trianon (the Monument of National Togetherness) was also postponed to be held after the worst months of the pandemic.[76] The real reason behind this was mainly that the Hungarian government needs allies. They would have made new enemies in Romanian or Serbian government circles.*"

Széky is convinced that there are no "allies" regarding Trianon, but problems related to differences in national-historical memory politics can be swept under the rug and there can be friendly gestures. One such gesture was expressed by Slovak Prime Minister Igor Matovič, who invited ethnic Hungarians for a joint commemoration of the centenary in Bratislava and declared them equal Slovak citizens. Although the event sparked some outrage in the Slovak political elite, with representatives of the Hungarian minority handing the Slovak PM a memorandum with their demands, which was a persiflage of a 19th century Slovak national manifesto, the gesture itself was received very well by the Hungarian Foreign Ministry and PM Orbán.[77] Still, the vulnerability continues to linger over the region:

"*The Russians are very well aware of Hungarian nationalism focused on Trianon. (…) If they want a conflict, they will play on this issue. They are interested, for example, in igniting tensions between Romanians and Hungarians, Romania being a key pro-American member of NATO. We already had such a scandal in 2014, with PM Orbán demanding autonomy for Transcarpathia when one of the Eastern separatist 'people's republics' proclaimed its independence (from Ukraine),*" said Széky.

TREND ANALYSIS OF MAINSTREAM AND FRINGE MEDIA DISCOURSES

The trend analysis focused on general dissemination patterns of all media and social media under review in terms of news peaks, top sources and drivers of discussions about nationalism.

The general trend of Hungarian discussions and political discourse made up of website articles and Facebook posts about the topic of Trianon and World War I was driven by the official commemoration of the Trianon Treaty or the Day of National Togetherness, which emphasize national unity of all the Hungarians in Hungary or living abroad.

Since there is no official policy of territorial revisionism, revisionism is, therefore, put forward by the Hungarian fringe far-right and pro-Kremlin portals, Facebook pages and their affiliated political and

paramilitary groups in Hungary and abroad. The role of social media in the formation of such attitudes and messages is more significant compared to regular websites, since most of the grassroots communications of these groups are present in Facebook groups and accounts. These actors are not only supportive of Hungarian "historical" territorial claims, they also legitimize Russian influence and the illegal occupation of Eastern-Ukraine and Crimea, which is a familiar pattern throughout the region when it comes to pro-Kremlin far-right parties, and groups in other countries as well. It is no surprise that such far-right media or extremists were used in Russian active measures, for example in Romania or Ukraine in our period under investigation.

GENERAL TREND ANALYSIS

The general trend of Hungarian discussions and political discourse made up of website articles and Facebook posts about the topic of Trianon and World War I was driven by the official commemoration of the Trianon Treaty, the Day of National Togetherness on June 4.[78] Consequently, peaks in the trend reflect the political communication and events related to the day of the commemorations

in Hungary and in Hungarian minority communities living abroad.

Publications on the 4th or 5th of June 2018 mostly put forward messages about unity, and strength of the Hungarian nation or the unjust nature of the Treaty that "carved up the country,"[79] as one Jobbik social media post put it.[80] In 2019, different domes-

■ mainstream 7-day rolling sum   ■ pro-Kremlin 7-day rolling sum   ■ far-right 7-day rolling sum
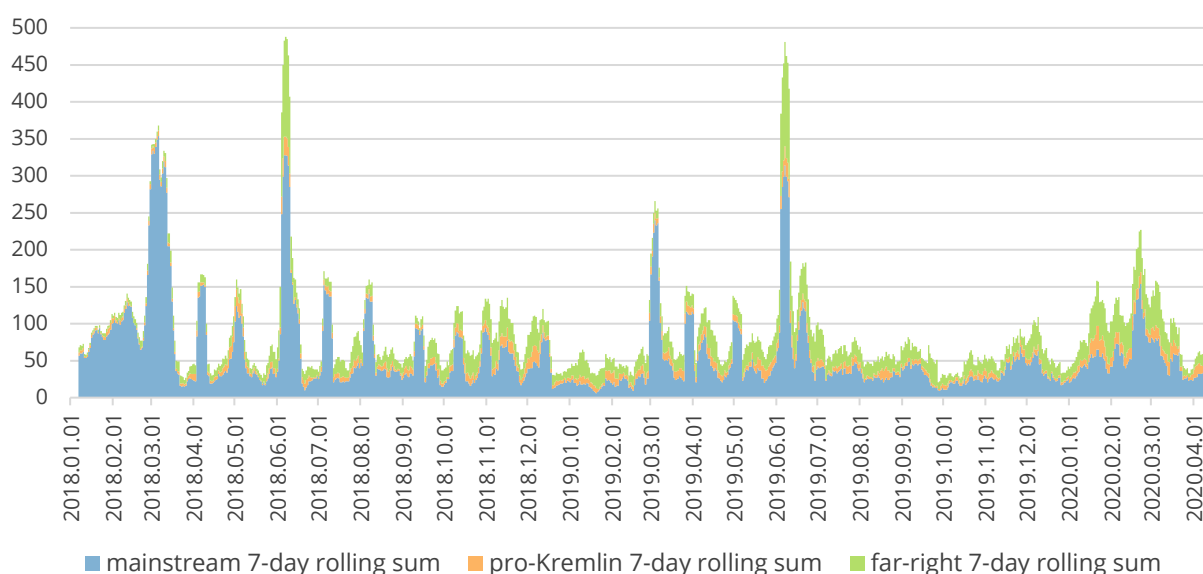
The number of revisionism-related website articles and Facebook posts in the Hungarian media space between 1 January 2018 and 15 April 2020

tic and foreign commemorative events drove the discussion the week of the 4th of June,[81] while Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán emphasized in his speech that "we Hungarians can stand up proudly, because we have prevailed 99 years after Trianon."[82] Among top sources, we can identify the far-right nemzeti.net and kuruc.info, which represent open revisionist ideas, such as an interview with Hungarian historian Ernő Raffay,[83] who promoted territorial revisionism against Romania, if Szekler autonomy would not be an option in Transylvania, supported by the European Union. The interview was also a rare instance of open revisionist ideas being promoted by pro-government media in the former print daily Magyar Idők (now Magyar Nemzet), where the piece was originally published.[84] In 2020, pro-government media focused mainly on "Szekler autonomy" or territorial self-governance as part of the European Citizens' Initiative of the Hungarian Szekler minority living in the central counties of Romania.[85]

Altogether, though, it was mainstream pro-government and independent sources and messages which defined the overall Hungarian political discourse, which was void of any official revisionism or revisionist attitudes articulated by mainstream parties in general, with discussion instead focusing on the unity of Hungary and the Hungarian minority, as well as on territorial or cultural autonomies provided for the Hungarian minorities abroad.

If we look at the mainstream, far-right and pro-Kremlin discourses based on articles and the differences between these, it is evident that revisionist ideas and attitudes are mostly expressed on fringe websites, which try to embed their discourses into the official commemoration framework of the National Day of Togetherness or the commemorative year of 2020 (the Year of National Togetherness) declared by the National Assembly of Hungary. Moreover, far-right and pro-Kremlin actors use these commemorative narratives and events to rally their social base, form revisionist action groups, and spread revisionist messages drawing on parallels between the status of Crimea and former territories of the Kingdom of Hungary in Ukraine, Slovakia, Serbia and Romania.

The June 2019 far-right narratives proved that the political and discursive framework of official com-

memorations provides far-right, paramilitary and revisionist organisations with ample opportunities to mobilize, organise their movements, and recruit new personnel in Hungary and in neighbouring countries. The revisionist Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (Hungarian: Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom, HVIM), whose name refers to the former counties of the Hungarian Kingdom within the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, announced the foundation of a new "action group" against Trianon on 3rd of June 2019.[86] Their event was attended by members of the Army of Outlaws,[87] and the leaders and youth wings of the far-right Our Homeland Movement party (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom in Hungarian), and the paramilitary National Legion (Nemzeti Légió in Hungarian), a successor of the former paramilitary movement of the Hungarian Guard (Magyar Gárda in Hungarian) founded by the Jobbik party. Among the top far-right sources we can find fringe news media portals, such as nemzeti.net, hunhir.info, or magyartudat.com, followed by some of the paramilitary movements.

Topic-wise, the same interval in 2019 was driven mostly by the Uz-valley incident,[88] which pitted against each other the Hungarian minority and the Romanian majority, as well as the Hungarian and Romanian diplomatic establishment over the status and use of an international war cemetery of World War I in the valley. Pro-Kremlin portals did not miss the opportunity to stoke inter-ethnic tensions by claiming that the "script was presumably written by players of big politics,"[89] and "everything was aligned to spark (…) a new ethnic clash like the one of the black March of 1990" – wrote Gábor Stier, a pro-Kremlin journalist on his personal blog. Pro-Kremlin media and messages floated the idea that "Trianon is not a case closed,"[90] that Hungarians or Szeklers should get back territories "lost" to Romania following the "example of the Crimean peninsula,"[91] or that President Trump would return Transylvania to Hungary after the 2018 G7 summit,[92] because

"*Crimea is Russian, because everybody there speaks Russian. This obviously means that Szeklerland is Hungarian, because everybody there speaks Hungarian, Upper Hungary (Felvidék in Hungarian)[93] of the Great Schütt Island (Csallóköz in Hungarian) is Hungarian, because everybody there speaks Hungarian, similarly to a part of Vojvodina*

(Vajdaság in Hungarian), where the majority speaks Hungarian," stated the conspiracy site A Világ Titkai in June 2018.

Another conspiracy portal, Titkok Szigete, envisioned a future Hungarian-Romanian war for the control of Szeklerland,[94] in case the European Union were to come to an end. In essence, pro-Kremlin portals tried to either flame inter-ethnic conflicts that serve the Kremlin's sovereignty- and ethnicity-based regional destabilization narratives indirectly, or they promoted territorial revisionist demands and conspiracy theories related to the historical idea of Greater Hungary that promote the partition of Ukraine and the Russian revision of borders directly.

The conspiracy site A Világ Titkai simply declared the Trianon Treaty null and void,[95] claiming that the Paris Peace Treaties should prevail after 1947, which implies that Hungarian border revision could be achieved. All these extremist and revisionist views can be fitted into recent pro-Russian geopolitical mezzo-narratives. One that quotes President Putin

about the revision of the border between Hungary and Romania, dated deceitfully on the Day of National Togetherness in 2020,[96] when in fact he made his statement back in 2016 to Bloomberg,[97] and another referring to President Trump's alleged statement about Transylvania being returned to Hungary due to the unjust Treaty of Trianon.[98] These examples showcase how pro-Kremlin narratives take real or fabricated statements of world leaders, as well as official Hungarian commemorations of Trianon, to legitimize territorial revisions of Hungarian borders achieved by legal means or brute force embedded into Hungarian grassroots communication on Facebook. In this process, the same quotes or articles are republished time after time and quoted out of their original context, e.g. the original 2018 article of the biggest clickbait Hungarian site Mindenegyben blog was published three times in 2019 alone, while other conspiracy sites continued to post the same news item again and again in 2020, generating more than fifty thousand Facebook interactions (based on Crowdtangle's social media data).[99]

MINORITY DISCOURSES ABROAD

Bearing in mind that Hungarian minority populations and their political lives follow distinct historical paths, we have chosen to discuss their political discourses related to Trianon in the same section for three main reasons. First, the topic of World War I and related debates are among the most historically articulated, major national core topics either taught in different Hungarian institutional curriculums or formed and shared through inter-generational experiences within the different diaspora communities. Second, the historical canonization and official commemoration of Trianon serves as one of the last commonly shared intra-ethnic cultural bridges, beyond the Hungarian media produced domestically and consumed abroad, between the domestic population of Hungary and members of the Hungarian minorities. This role became even more visible through the new citizenship law adopted in 2011. The law grants ethnic Hungarians living abroad simplified and quick naturalization if they or their relatives held Hungarian citizenship between 1947 and 1990.[100] Lastly, the second Orbán government and its highly centralized, government-controlled media, combined with a new cultural/his-

torical institutional framework, asserted such a commanding control over the historical commemoration of Trianon in and outside of Hungary after 2010 that it basically unified the politics of memory to a high degree in these communities. As a direct result, minority political discourses reflect much of the official Hungarian government and pro-government media communication in general.

The minorities' trend diagram shows a great synchronization of discourses around the official Hungarian commemorations of Trianon, which is a direct result of the impact of Hungarian governmental communication on the minority media. There are two interesting characteristics of these trends. First, Romanian and Slovak public discourses are much more significant, on average, due to the larger Hungarian populations residing in the two countries as compared to Ukraine or Serbia. Second, official commemorations have a significant impact on minority media output in Ukraine or Serbia, which rivals their bigger counterparts in size in the other two countries on these special occasions.

The minority discourses of Hungarian minorities living in neighbouring countries mostly reflect the mainstream and/or pro-government, official Hungarian government narratives centred on the topics mentioned above. As a result, territorial revisionist ideologies or claims are not present in mainstream minority media. Instead, cultural autonomy or some form of territorial autonomy is put forward in Romania and Serbia, modelled after the autonomous regions of the European Union as part of a European Citizens' Initiative.[101] Similarly, pro-Kremlin disinformation campaigns or narratives are hardly found in mainstream minority communications, and revisionism and chauvinism related to Trianon are mostly "imported" from the Hungarian far-right subculture and those paramilitaries or revisionist forces which operate in and outside of Hungary.

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ARTICLE SAMPLES

Using the SentiOne platform, we generated a representative sample of website articles of at least 500 articles in each country to reveal and categorise the main types of revisionist narratives present in our data of tens of thousands of articles.[102] In Hungary, we sampled a total of 757 articles, of which 360 domestic articles related to our research focus are analysed in this chapter. The samples, representative of all the articles' and sources' distribution within our timeframe between 1 January 2018 and 15 April 2020, allowed researchers to identify and categorise the main types of revisionist or territory-related narratives in each country without the need to read through thousands of articles. Narrative analysis of samples revealed the differences between fringe or mainstream interpretations of the same topics and the construction of country-specific narratives utilizing unique manipulation techniques and disinformation of the Kremlin's playbook.

Narrative	Shared	Number	Percentage
1. The politics of remembrance or memory	Yes	81	22.5%
2. Day/Year of National Togetherness	Yes	52	14.4%
3. Inter-ethnic conflicts	Yes	40	11.1%
4. Autonomy of Hungarian minorities	Yes	9	2.5%
5. The Hungarian nation's identity and place in the CEE	Mainstream	35	9.7%
6. The situation of the Hungarian diaspora	Mainstream	15	4.2%
7. The relationship between the Hungarian government and the minorities abroad	Mainstream	26	7.2%
8. The Uz-valley conflict	Mainstream	3	0.8%
9. The superiority of Hungarians over other nations	Far-Right	22	6.1%
10. Hungarian minorities' real or perceived discrimination abroad	Far-Right	27	7.5%
11. Szekler autonomy	Far-Right	8	2.2%
12. Territorial revisionism against neighbours	Far-Right	8	2.2%

The number and share of different narratives across mainstream, far-right and pro-Kremlin samples in Hungary

Narrative	Shared	Number	Percentage
13. The Uz-valley conflict	Far-Right	4	1.1%
14. The Our Homeland Movement and minorities	Far-Right	4	1.1%
15. Territorial revisionism related to Trianon	Pro-Kreml	12	3.3%
16. Crimea is part of Russia	Pro-Kreml	8	2.2%
17. The Our Homeland Movement of "real Hungarians"	Pro-Kreml	6	1.7%
Total		360	100%

The number and share of different narratives across mainstream, far-right and pro-Kremlin samples in Hungary

Four narratives about the memory of politics, the Day/Year of National Togetherness, inter-ethnic conflicts and the autonomy of minorities are shared across all samples or discourses, and form the cornerstones of the national discussions. Based on the table, the majority of narratives (72.4%) are either shared across all discourses or authored by mainstream outlets, which means that they mostly address issues of national identity, minorities abroad and inter-ethnic conflicts. Outright territorial revisionism is present only in the far-right or pro-Kremlin discourses accounting for less than 10% (7.7%) of the sample. Nevertheless, the impacts of such narratives cannot be underestimated as they are directly related to inter-ethnic conflicts, autonomy of the Hungarian diaspora or Crimea in fringe media

and in line with the overall strategic communication of the Kremlin with regard to Ukraine.

These shared narratives prove our main thesis about fringe media discourses being built on the main commemorative events, foreign policy and politics of memory articulated by the mainstream media and governmental communication. While mainstream domestic and minority media messages are more geared towards fact-based and balanced reporting, fringe pro-Kremlin and far-right media' narratives can be utilized to execute so called active measures and destabilization efforts related to historical grievances about the former territories of the Hungarian Kingdom before World War I.

COMMON NARRATIVES

Common narratives shared across all the discourses include four issues: (1) the politics of remembrance or memory; (2) the Day or Year of National Togetherness; (3) inter-ethnic conflicts; and, finally, (4) the Hungarian minorities' autonomy. The politics of remembrance narrative is strongly attached to the official commemoration of the Trianon Treaty commissioned by the Hungarian National Assembly, and the special 100 year anniversary of the Treaty or the Year of National Togetherness in 2020. These commemorative events were supported all parliamentary factions with the exception of the leftist Democratic Coalition party.[103] The main message of the commemoration is about the "historically unjust" nature of Trianon, renewed support provided to the Hungarian minority living abroad, and about some sort of national pride that the Hungarian nation persevered despite two World Wars to this day in and outside of Hungary.[104] Articles about the mi-

norities living abroad usually address territorial or cultural autonomy. The rights and self-determination of the Hungarian minorities are kept on the table by the Hungarian government. In Ukraine, self-determination is not about some special autonomy. It addresses the new language law adopted in 2017 affecting minority language rights in the school system.[105] In Romania, the Hungarian minority tries to achieve the territorial autonomy of Szeklerland (or Székelyföld in Hungarian) through the European Citizens' Initiative.[106] Inter-ethnic conflicts between Hungary and neighbouring countries are many times articulated through issues related to the Hungarian minorities as well. Such examples include a Romanian court decision that prevented the renaming of a local Romanian street after a well-known Hungarian poet of the 1848/49 Revolution (Sándor Petőfi,[107] which is perceived or presented by Hungarian and minority politicians oftentimes

as a continuous attack against minority rights in general in neighbouring countries.[108] While the issue of autonomy is interpreted by the Hungarian government and the Hungarian rightist parties as a permanent solution to the historical injustice of Trianon, pro-Kremlin voices and far-right media use the same issues and historical grievances to advo-cate for territorial revisionism. As a result, success-fully pro-Kremlin active measures were launched based on these bilateral conflict points, as we have pointed out before. Mainstream articles, therefore, provide historical contexts and current-day issues for fringe media to push their more extreme, revi-sionist narratives and political ideas.

MAINSTREAM NARRATIVES

The four mainstream narratives deal with (1) the Hungarian nation's identity and place in Central-Eastern Europe, (2) the situation of the Hungarian diaspora, (3) the relationship between the Hungarian government and the minorities abroad, finally with (4) the Uz-valley incident in Romania. The first three narratives prove the Hungarian gov-ernment's and its media's dominance over shap-ing the Hungarian public discourse about Trianon, and the minorities. Mainstream articles about Hungary's role in the region try to project power by claiming that the Hungarian nation successfully survived the First World War and continues to be the strongest,[109] leading nation in the Carpathian Basin through such regional cooperation as the Visegrad Group (V4).[110] Unlike fringe narratives, Hungarian mainstream politicians stress the impor-tance of bilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries to strengthen Hungary and the Hungarian minorities.[111] There was an abundance of articles about how the Hungarian government supports the Hungarian minority abroad, including Hungarian cultural[112] and youth life.[113] The Uz-valley inci-dent in June 2019 involved a conflict between the Hungarian minority and Romanian nationalists with ties to Romanian pro-Russian actors over the status of an international World War I cemetery in the valley of Uz (Valea Uzului in Romanian).[114] The inter-ethnic conflict not only generated local po-litical tensions, but sparked a serious diplomatic row between the Hungarian and Romanian gov-ernments, which provided ample opportunity for pro-Kremlin media to fan the flames of nationalism on both sides.[115]

FAR-RIGHT NARRATIVES

As mentioned previously in our trend analysis, far-right actors and narratives try to hijack mainstream discourses and foreign policy issues to justify and promote their extremist narratives about (1) the military,[116] cultural or historical superiority of Hungarians over other nations regionally,[117] which pave the way towards the invalidation or delegiti-mization of the Trianon Treaty,[118] which is a prereq-uisite of (2) territorial revisionism. Besides these two narratives, far-right portals overwhelmingly present (3) the far-right, neo-Nazi Mi Hazánk par-ty's point of view as the sole and rightful voice of this subculture after the Jobbik party shifted to the centre during the last general election in 2018.[119] The Mi Hazánk party regularly legitimizes its extrem-ist views by discussing real or perceived minority human rights "violations" or "discrimination" at the hand of the majorities through (4) everyday issues, such as anti-Hungarian sentiments expressed dur-ing football matches,[120] individual discriminatory actions against ethnic Hungarians,[121] and (5) nar-ratives about the Szekler autonomy. Far-right de-mands related to autonomy may cover the use of Hungarian symbols,[122] the constitutional status of minorities or territorial[123] and local autonomies of certain regions.[124] The party took (6) a strong an-ti-Romanian stance in the Uz-valley incident,[125] and promoted the foundation of a new paramilitary unit called the National Legion (Nemzeti Légió), prepar-ing to tour the "historical borders" of the former Kingdom of Hungary in preparation for the 2020 anniversary of the Trianon Treaty.[126] Thus, far-right revisionism is directly linked to paramilitary move-ments through a variety of far-right organisations and parties in the Hungarian subculture. The Mi Hazánk party is clearly escalating inter-ethnic ten-sions by demanding the Hungarian government represent "Hungarian interests" in an even more forceful way, centred on Trianon abroad.[127]

PRO-KREMLIN NARRATIVES

The Hungarian-speaking pro-Kremlin media has found many elements needed for regional destabilization ready-made in the Hungarian far-right subculture, so their main strategy has to do with presenting a toxic mixture of the most potent narratives. It is also important to note that the aforementioned far-right organisations and paramilitary movements have already expressed their support online or offline for the Kremlin or separatists causes in Eastern-Ukraine before.[128] As a consequence, these portals extensively discuss (1) Crimea and Ukraine as a much needed aspect of Russian geopolitical clout,[129] (2) promote even more aggressive revisionist messages[130] about a hidden conspiracy to destroy Hungary,[131] while presenting (3) once again the Mi Hazánk party as the sole representation of the Hungarian cause in the region. These articles claim the Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom) represented the "real" Hungarian interests during the Uz-valley incident,[132] and fights for the revision of the Treaty of Trianon or against Hungarian opposition parties,[133] who would support their Slovak and Romanian counterparts instead of the Hungarian government.[134]

NARRATIVES ABROAD

We also looked at minority discourses present in mainstream minority media abroad. The analysis of samples reinforced the observation that most of the distinct minority narratives deal with local life and local public issues, while pro-Kremlin or revisionist narratives are not present in mainstream media and/or political discourses abroad. The lack of these might have to do, as we have previously explained, with the Hungarian government's oversized impact on minorities' cultural life in terms of commemorative events, the funding of cultural and educational institutions and activities by Budapest. A sad story of Sri Lankan bakers in Romania exemplifies minorities' dependence on Hungarian governmental communication relayed by Hungarian-speaking media abroad. After the two bakers were legally employed by a local bakery in Ditrău (Gyergyóditró in Hungarian), inhabited mostly by ethnic Hungarians, due to labour shortages, they were basically chased away by the locals fearing a "re-settlement" of immigrants, echoing the Hungarian media's talking points about illegal immigration being forced upon local communities by "outside forces."[135]

TOPIC ANALYSIS

Our big data team comprised of data scientists Júlia Koltai, PhD, and Árpád Knapp also performed a statistical content analysis on all the relevant Hungarian websites' data produced by the SentiOne platform's search query for our investigation. Utilizing a natural language process (NLP), Latent Dirichlet Allocation models and topic-coherence metrics, they identified textual "topics" that represented groups of texts or website articles based on word distribution statistics. Each topic could be described along a set of keywords, which were evaluated by the scientists manually during the final stages of the analysis to ensure the topic models' validity and reliability, and that they represented meaningful textual topics or narratives. As a result, the algorithm-based topic analysis produced 10 topics for the Hungarian mainstream, 12 for fringe, and 11 for minority discourses abroad. Altogether, the topic-analysis was based on 14,158 articles, of which 48% belonged to mainstream, 23% to fringe, and 29% to minority media sources, as seen on the chart to the right.
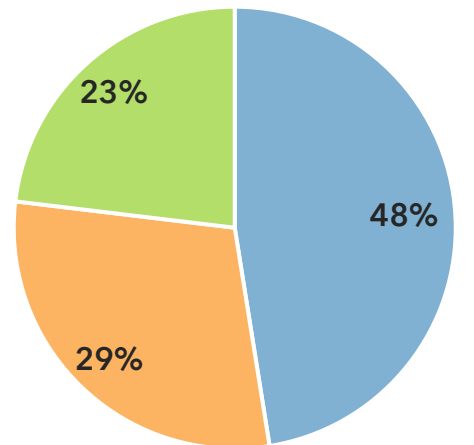
Ratio of media types used for Hungarian topic analysis based on 14,158 articles between 1 January and 15 April 2020

RELEVANCE OF TOPICS

Since the SentiOne query used to collect relevant data on Hungarian revisionism-related discourses also produced irrelevant hits due to the keywords utilised to identify articles containing specific keyword-combinations, the big data approach yielded unimportant results as well.[136] The NLP approach did validly identify relevant and coherent topics in over 95% of the cases or articles. Some of the topics, however, were still not relevant for our research focus due to some of the original deficiencies found in our dataset generated by the SentiOne platform. We thus had to discard some of the topics, which left us with 3 topics out of 10 for mainstream media, 7 topics out of 12 for fringe media, and 11 topics out of 11 topics for minority media abroad. The

differences between these numbers and relevant topics can be attributed, beyond the faults in the keyword query programming, to the differences in the discourses themselves. While the mainstream discourse in Hungary covers a lot of issues that can at least partially relate to revisionism and nationalism, the fringe far-right/pro-Kremlin and the minority discourses yielded more relevant results due their narrower interest in certain identity and movement-related issues present in the life of a subculture or diaspora.

MAINSTREAM TOPICS

Among the mainstream topics, we can find (1) national identity-building programs organised for the youth in and outside of Hungary by government-affiliated actors and communicated by pro-government media; (2) interpretation of national identity/identities and related collective goals; (3) reflections on the successes and failures of Hungarian history publicized by both leftist and rightist media. These topics highlighted the more complex and finer, inter-related structures of narratives when compared to mainstream narratives of the sample analysis – as seen in the table below.

Topic	Occurence *(within 6,722 articles)*	TOP3 domains *(number of articles)*
National identity-building program for youngsters in Hungary and abroad	15%	hirado.hu (173), magyarnemzet.hu (145), mandiner.hu (145)
Interpretation of national identity	10%	mandiner.hu (336), nepszava.hu (69), magyarnemzet.hu (38)
Hungarian history	8%	mandiner.hu (100), magyarnemzet.hu (63), nepszava.hu (55)

Mainstream topics of Hungarian media based on automated modelling and natural language processing

The "youth topic" actually revealed a completely new phenomenon not identified during the sample analysis, which points out that the national commemoration of Trianon and relations between the Hungarian society and diaspora societies are actively formed by large-scale events organised by the Hungarian government or its affiliates in and outside of Hungary. Thus, the forming of identity and attitudes related to the world wars is an intra-generational process actively supported by Hungarian actors through events, such as the Danube Day in Torockó (Rimetea) in Romania[137] or bringing together 5000 children on the main Kossuth Square in Budapest to sing and dance in commemoration of Trianon in June 2019.[138]

The second and third mainstream topics revealed that Hungarian narratives about Greater Hungary, revisionism and the Day or Year of National Togetherness are embedded into complex sets of beliefs, values and interpretations of how present-day Hungary can be placed on a historical timeline of several hundred years.

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FRINGE TOPICS

The big data team's analysis did not differentiate between far-right or pro-Kremlin sources. Thus, these data represent all the relevant articles published by fringe sources on our Hungarian media lists. As seen below on the chart, the 7 relevant fringe topics included: (1) foreign policy issues ranging from Israel to China and Russia; (2) problems in Transylvania; (3) far-right commemorative actions and petitions against Trianon; (4) the anniversary of Trianon and lost territories; (5) far-right origin myths, stories and theories; (6) events of 1910s; and, finally, national identity in Europe.

Compared to the fringe narratives found in the sample, two things stand out. First, these topics are much less organised around a single political cause or actor. Second, these topics reflect fewer instanc-es of inter-ethnic conflicts or far-right aggression. Instead, the topic analysis revealed a deep structure of the fringe media space through issues that are less scandalous, such as Hungarian life in the early 20th century or origin myths. They nonetheless motivate geopolitical thinking on the fringes through a complex set of issues or narratives. The big data approach also situated the representative samples' far-right or pro-Kremlin narratives about border changes, frozen conflicts and big power geopolitics in a complex and multi-dimensional textual space, where revisionism itself can be related at the same time to a variety of foreign policy issues and national identity problems in Europe or the European Union.

Topic	Occurence (within 3,270 articles)	TOP3 domains (number of articles)
Foreign policy	9%	nemzeti.net (114), orientalista.hu (45), vilagfigyelo.com (42)
Problems in Transylvania	9%	nemzeti.net (205), kuruc.info (23), vilagfigyelo.com (9)
Far-right commemoration	8%	nemzeti.net (106), kuruc.info (40), patriota.info (31)
Anniversary of Trianon	8%	nemzeti.net (194), kuruc.info (18), hunhir.info (14)
Far-right origin myths	7%	nemzeti.net (161), hunhir.info (23), kuruc.info (7), magyartudat.com (7), vilagfigyelo.com (7)
Events of 1910s	7%	nemzeti.net (151), kuruc.info (12), hunhir.info (11)
National identity in Europe	6%	nemzeti.net (70), vilagfigyelo.com (43), kuruc.info (18)

Fringe topics of Hungarian media based on automated modelling and natural language processing

MINORITY TOPICS

The analysis of minority discourse abroad also supports the conclusion that issues of national identity, community and autonomy are embedded in far-less scandalous or (inter-ethnic) conflict-oriented streams of media texts that usually fly under the radar. Minority topics usually dealt with different aspects of the diaspora and minority communities' life, such as (1) Transylvania and Szeklers; (2) cultural events, competitions, camps abroad; (3) the-atre and exhibition events; (3) the case of Zuzana Falathová; (4) history, religion and public life; (5) the general assembly of the Hungarian Cultural Federation in Transcarpathia (KMKSZ); (6) programs to strengthen national cohesion; (7) Viktor Orbán's annual speech; (8) historical memory; (9) Hungarian education abroad; (10) Serbia and Vojvodina.

Topic	Occurence (within 4,166 articles)	TOP3 domains (number of articles)
Transylvania and Szeklers	11%	maszol.ro (54), foter.ro (53), erdely.ma (52)
Cultural events	10%	felvidek.ma (57), karpatalja.ma (56), ma7.sk (34)
Theater and exhibitions	10%	felvidek.ma (64), karpatalja.ma (54), erdon.ro (30)
Zuzana Falathová/ Falath Zsuzsi	9%	felvidek.ma (44), ma7.sk (44), korkep.sk (36)
History, stories, religion and public life	9%	felvidek.ma (38), ma7.sk (31), karpatalja.ma (28)
KMKSZ assembly	9%	karpataljalap.net (48), karpatinfo.net (45), karpatalja.ma (35)
Programs to strengthen national cohesion	9%	karpatalja.ma (44), felvidek.ma (38), ma7.sk (29)
Viktor Orbán's annual state of the nation speech	8%	karpatalja.ma (42), korkep.sk (31), ma7.sk (31)
Historical memory	7%	delhir.info (59), felvidek.ma (46), ma7.sk (26)
Hungarian education abroad	6%	felvidek.ma (61), ma7.sk (42), karpatalja.ma (25)
Serbia and Vojvodina	6%	delhir.info (178), szabadmagyarszo.com (26), magyarszo.rs (23)

Minority topics of Hungarian media based on automated modelling and natural language processing

Consequently, the topic analysis revealed the "media logic" of narratives that tends to put scandalous, inter-ethnic conflict in the spotlight regarding the Hungarian national identity and bilateral relations. The big data approach utilized by Júlia Koltai and Árpád Knapp exhibited the textual discourses or wider contexts concerning territorial revisionism and conflict narratives when it comes to the existence, causes and long-term impact of such narratives. It turned out that machine-learning assisted pattern recognition complements qualitative textual analysis very effectively, as it deviates from well-known or expected drivers of media discourses and avoids putting too much analytical value on the communicators' real or perceived intentions. Instead, it provides a broader understanding of a media map of specific narratives and intentional (fact-based or manipulated) communicative actions embedded into a more comprehensive set of topics and institutional structures.

NETWORK ANALYSIS OF FRINGE WEBSITES

Big data researchers created a network of pro-Kremlin and third-party websites based on the hyperlinks embedded into articles published on pro-Kremlin media in each country.[139] We decided to use hyperlinks as building blocks of our networks, since links either direct interested audiences to other relevant pro-Kremlin media, or they serve as references to third-party sources to authenticate their articles. Consequently, the examination of networks revealed two aspects of pro-Kremlin communication: the wider dissemination networks of pro-Kremlin media used to spread revisionist messages and link other pro-Kremlin sources and the prerequisites of impactful message construction. Researchers analysed three types of networks in their respective countries. A "complete network," with all the media, to understand all the media's interconnectedness and their main dissemination/reference strategies. A "clean network" of websites was used to analyse only the most important nodes of the network and connections between media disseminating revisionist narratives.[140] Finally, a network comprised of only our initial pro-Kremlin websites revealed the interconnectedness of the core pro-Kremlin media used throughout this research, examining if they formed a strong bond in the dissemination process of revisionist narratives.

In all the six countries under review, 28804 articles were scraped, out of which 713 Hungarian articles were used to create the fringe network of Hungarian pro-Kremlin pages. Among the top pages publishing the most articles, we can find one of the most prominent far-right and pro-Kremlin portals, Kuruc.info, banned by Facebook for online hate speech, and clear-cut pro-Kremlin websites and conspiracy sites either operated by the Kremlin's affiliates,[141] such as the FSB-financed, Hungarian-speaking version of News Front,[142] or pro-Kremlin journalists, such as Moszkvater (Moscow square in Hungarian) founded by Gábor Stier,[143] a frequent guest of the Club Valdai organised by pro-Kremlin intellectuals since 2004.[144]

THE COMPLETE HUNGARIAN NETWORK

The complete network exposed two basic types of dissemination strategies. Some of the clickbait, pro-Kremlin websites, such as the biggest Hungarian clickbait and conspiracy Minden Egyben blog with over 700 thousand followers on Facebook,[145] display almost no connection to other media. This feature of the graph can be attributed to both the non-transparent nature of these pages' financial and operation background in Hungary,[146] as well as to their ways of financing. Since most of the clickbait sites in Hungary or elsewhere rely heavily on Google and other legally sound ways of financing, they try to display their contents on multiple, seemingly disconnected social media accounts and websites to multiply their revenues and avoid shutdown by big tech platforms, e.g. by Facebook, Twitter or Google. The geopolitically more committed websites frequently displaying their affiliation to the Kremlin or Russia follow a different path of "force-multiplication". Such websites, such as the infamous conspiracy site A világ titkai or the well-known geopolitical Moszkvater and News Front, tend to use many hyperlinks to embed their messages, media and activities into the wider Hungarian or foreign media discourses, which makes their narratives and positions in the network that much stronger.

The complete network of Hungarian pro-Kremlin websites and third-party sites

Left-side nodes:
- avilagtitkai.com
- minden-egyben.com
- szentkoronaradio.com
- titkokszigete.hu
- hirextra.info
- alternativhirek.com
- vilagfigyelo.com
- moszkvater.com
- munkaspart.hu
- balrad.ru
- tudasfaja.com
- elemi.hu
- orientalista.hu
- oroszhirek.hu
- hu.news-front.info

Right-side nodes:
- magyarnemzet.hu
- ujvilagtudat.blogspot.com
- mek.oszk.hu
- magyarjarmu.hu
- balraat.merce.hu
- maglyatuz.hu
- blogger.com
- washingtonexaminer.com
- magyarsziget.hu
- hirhugo.hu
- vilaghelyzete.com
- commondreams.org
- mediafire.com
- dailymail.co.uk
- english.alarabiya.net
- rt.com
- radiobezs.hu
- gondola.hu
- 3.bp.blogspot.com
- visegradpost.com
- wiadomosci.onet.pl
- axios.com
- kimondottigazsagok.com
- mediaklikk.hu
- eci.ec.europa.eu
- kondy-karelia.ru
- boldognapot.hu
- newzfeed.ru
- app.box.com
- 2.bp.blogspot.com
- drabikjanos.com
- bloomberg.com
- roadster.hu
- arcanum.hu
- 356fb298-1b38-4e33-9fff-22d80c1795ba.filesus
- mhi.com
- kaposvar.egyhazmegye.hu
- thebricktestament.com
- alternativhirek.blogspot.com
- blikk.hu
- zdf.de
- player.hu
- 1.bp.blogspot.com
- hirtv.hu
- index.hu
- dropbox.com
- rtnewshu.blogspot.hu
- youtube.com
- mult-kor.hu
- boon.hu
- politifact.com
- maszol.ro
- regnumportal.hu
- echotv.hu
- independent.co.uk
- 888.hu
- magyarokvagyunk.com
- pinterest.com
- benjaminfulford.net
- foreignpolicy.com
- kronika.ro
- hetek.hu
- kireszavazzunk.hu
- azonnali.hu
- breitbart.com
- wmn.hu
- patriota.info
- demokrata.hu
- 24.hu
- zenhotels.com
- printfriendly.com
- telegraph.co.uk
- attilavedvonal.hu
- vadhajtasok.hu
- t.co
- voltairenet.org
- merce.hu
- tasnimnews.com
- nemzetipolo.hu
- magyarhirlap.hu
- twitter.com
- theguardian.com
- konyvtar.dia.hu
- patria.rtvs.sk
- reddit.com
- fort-russ.com
- napi.hu
- mae.ro
- fmsz.info
- nahnews.org
- utro.ru
- titokterminal.com
- mti.hu
- pollo.hu
- vasarnap.hu
- vilaghelyzete.blogspot.com
- l.facebook.com
- magyaridok.hu
- nemzeti.net
- jdokjelei.hu
- ketkes.com
- leleplezomagazin.wordpress.com
- linkedin.com
- mandatumkalkulator.atlatszo.hu
- mandiner.hu
- jobbik.hu
- magyartudat.com
- vilaghelyzete.blogspot.hu
- climatedepot.com
- festessenvelem.hu
- bookline.hu
- taktikaiszavazas.hu
- patreon.com
- pestisracok.hu
- kji.hu
- hu.wikipedia.org
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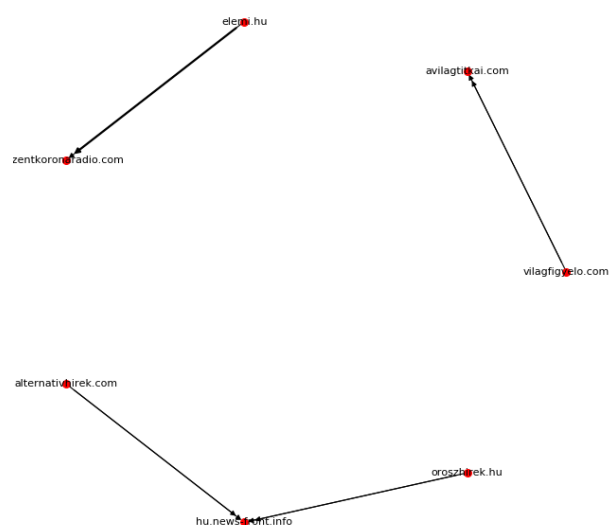- facebook.com

THE CLEAN NETWORK

The clean network of Hungarian websites high-lighted the most prominent players of our core pro-Russian websites and their wider dissemination contexts. It turns out pro-Kremlin messaging is primarily reliant on pro-Kremlin conspiracy websites in Hungary, such as alternativhirek.hu or vilagfigyelo.com, because they are the most likely to link their contents to other outside media, while retaining strong bonds, through hyperlinks, to some of the most vocal pro-Kremlin fringe voices (Moszkvater, Munkáspárt, Balrad). The wider dissemination network, seen on the right side of the clean graph, created by the most prominent nodes with the highest number of edges can be broken down into five groups of (1) mainstream Hungarian news media (24.hu, index.hu), (2) pro-government mainstream media (magyaridok.hu, pestisracok.hu, vadhajtasok.hu), (3) social media pages (youtube.com, linkedin.com, twitter.com, facebook.com), (4) far-right revisionist media (harcunk.info, patriota.info, hvim.hu) and finally (5) other conspiracy websites (drabikjanos.com, vilaghelyzete.com) providing the majority of outbound connections. The lack of numerous foreign far-right or pro-Kremlin pages, save for Breitbart.com, Russia Today or newsfeed.ru, means that pro-Kremlin messaging related to revisionism

and Trianon is confined to a small, domestic circle of far-right, pro-Kremlin and pro-government media, whose contents are nationalistic and conspiracy-prone at the same time. Our results are in accordance with the trend analysis, which confirmed that pro-Kremlin messaging and disinformation is embedded into and heavily reliant on mainstream pro-government discourses that set the tone and main topics of the Hungarian historical commemorations related to Trianon.

In terms of message construction, the high prevalence of conspiracy/far-right revisionist pages and mainstream independent, pro-government websites indicates that revisionist narratives, and disinformation campaigns are engaged in a two-tiered legitimisation process. First, distorted, conspiracy-laden messages are reinforced through links to other far-right, conspiratorial pages. Second, revisionist grievances are reflecting on issues, facts and statements present in the mainstream media about WWI and Trianon. The presence of social media platforms in the network highlight revisionist websites' effort to disseminate their messages at the grassroots level to everyday people who might be not part of their subcultural "information bubble".

THE NETWORK OF PRO-KREMLIN PAGES

We could not observe a proper, interconnected network of our initial pro-Kremlin websites. Only 7 pages linked to each other through hyperlinks. The lack of a proper graph could mean two things: that revisionism-related messages are usually not part of a coordinated dissemination campaign in Hungary, at least not on the level of hyperlinks displayed on websites; and that campaigns are probably executed through social media accounts, not presented here. For more details on the dissemination of revisionist narratives in social media, please see the next section.

The Hungarian network of pro-Kremlin websites

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leleplezomagazin.wordpress.com
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twitter.com
mediafire.com
index.hu
dropbox.com
festessenvelem.hu
rt.com
youtube.com
boon.hu
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titokterminal.com
eci.ec.europa.eu
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The clean network of Hungarian pro-Kremlin websites and third-party sites

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF FRINGE FACEBOOK PAGES

To reveal successful dissemination strategies on social media (Facebook), we conducted a comparison of top-performing fringe Facebook pages' and posts' statistical data.[147] Our analysis focused on far-right and pro-Kremlin pages only, because these are the main venues of pro-Kremlin or extremist, revisionist communication in most of the countries under review. Based on the analysis of the 5 top-performing far-right and 5 top-performing pro-Kremlin pages in terms of the number of average reactions per post, we identified the conditions for the successful dissemination of revisionist narratives and historical grievances in each country's social media. A comparison of top-performing fringe posts in terms of the total number of interactions was conducted to reveal why certain chauvinistic, revisionist or pro-Kremlin messages are more viral than others. The comparison of viral posts was extended to "irrelevant" or non-relevant posts as well, to see whether revisionist posts performed better or worse than any other posts found on the fringe pages.

PERFORMANCE OF FACEBOOK PAGES

Based on the analysis of the 5 top-performing far-right and pro-Kremlin pages in terms of the number of average reactions per post, we can identify those differences and similarities in page characteristics which determine the successful dissemination of revisionist historical grievances in Hungarian social media. Among the most successful far-right Facebook pages, we can find one of the most popular fringe political-lifestyle pages, Magyarságért (For Hungarians), with 94,000 followers; the far-right, revisionist page of the Mi Hazánk party (Our Homeland Movement); the page of the party's leading politician, Előd Novák; the HUN MAG ÁRJA - TURUL Nemzetség (Huns Nation) page of Hungarian origin myths and finally the page of the Vitézi Rend (Order of Vitéz), a Hungarian order of merit which was founded between the two World Wars. It is important to note these pages did not produce the highest number of Trianon- or WWI-related posts, but their audiences were very active in the dissemination process of such messages. When it comes to pro-Kremlin pages, the 5 most successful accounts share the same trait of conspiratorial thinking. These are the biggest Hungarian conspiracy and clickbait pages: the Mindenegyben blog (Everything blog) with over 580 thousand followers;[148] Élelmiszerek, melyek veszélyesek az egészségre (Dangerous foods);[149] the most prolific Hungarian conspiracy thinker, Dr. János Drábik;[150] A világ titkai (Secrets of the world); and Márton Gyöngyösi, the foreign policy expert of the rightist, former far-right, Jobbik party.[151] By comparing the top 5 far-right and top 5 pro-Kremlin sites, we are able to define 3 key prerequisites for the successful dissemination of revisionist narratives on social media. These are:

- A significant number of followers;
- Opinion leaders, such as János Drábik, or political movements, such as the Mi Hazánk party, capable of mobilising the audience and fringe political base;
- Conspiracy theories as "alternative" interpretations of historical events bridging more than 100 years between current geopolitical events and the "historical injustice" of the Trianon treaty, which make historical grievances and facts more relatable for everyday people today.

Thus, the more impactful social media pages are popular, produce lots of new "facts" and "theories" on revisionism to entertain peoples' fantasies and sense of historical justice, and they are well embedded into the offline/online extremist Hungarian subculture. It is important to note that while political movements and conspiracy sites can optimally mobilize the far-right audience, other pages more focused on the issue of Trianon – such as Nemzeti Konzultáció Trianonról (National Consultation about Trianon) or Justice for Hungary – produce more articles altogether than the pages mentioned before. All this results in quite a dangerous mixture of revisionist geopolitical thinking and already mobilized

far-right paramilitary circles, who are and have been used by the Kremlin in regional destabilization efforts since 2014. One of the prime examples involved the now-defunct neo-Nazi paramilitary Magyar Nemzeti Arcvonal (Hungarian National Front) in 2016, whose members were trained by the Russian military intelligence (GRU), disguised as diplomats, in the Hungarian countryside.[152] This kind of extremist radicalization is only the tip of the iceberg, since most dangerous paramilitary and far-right organisations, such as the HVIM and the Betyársereg are banned from Facebook, and their narratives are excluded from these social media discussions.

PERFORMANCE OF VIRAL POSTS

According to the comparison of relevant and irrelevant Hungarian posts on fringe pages,[153] revisionism-related posts generate significantly higher level of reactions on average in the audience, which means 137.1 reactions/post as compared to the irrelevant posts' 115.8 reactions/post. The higher level of activity manifests itself in the higher average number of shares (88.3 to 50.6), while the average number of comments was lower around relevant messages (14.2 to 16). The difference between revisionism-related posts' and unrelated posts' dissemination can be explained by the previous results of the narrative and topical analyses. Revisionist narratives tend to be articulated through discourses about national identity and inter-ethnic conflicts which make these messages especially engaging for far-right or pro-Kremlin audiences, who are represented and organised by parties and paramilitary groups especially prone to violence and hate speech by default.

	Average Number of Reactions	Average Number of Comments	Average Number of Shares	Numbers of Documents
Irrelevant posts	115.8	16.0	50.6	262,110
Relevant posts	137.1	14,2	88.3	408
Total	115.8	16.0	50.7	262,518

The average number of total reactions, comments or shares produced by revisionism-related or unrelated Facebook posts found on far-right or pro-Kremlin pages in Hungary

SOCIETAL RESILIENCE

We can identify four vulnerable groups or audiences in Hungary that are unable or unwilling to withstand hostile malign disinformation campaigns, active measures utilizing historical revisionism.

The Hungarian political elite

The Hungarian political elite became vulnerable to Russian disinformation campaigns after the top-down, pro-Russian, diplomatic turn of the second Orbán cabinet in 2010. Since then, the Hungarian government has not publicly countered or debunked Russian disinformation attempts due to the close diplomatic and economic cooperation between the two countries. Consequently, the Hungarian diplomatic establishment blamed the Ukrainian government for the Russian active measure targeting the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia in 2018, and the Hungarian Ministry of Interior did not pursue a full investigation into the GRU-ties of the now disbanded paramilitary Hungarian National Front (MNA) in 2016.

Pro-government media and journalists

By extension, the pro-government media, which is highly centralized and hand-controlled by the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office and dominates the Hungarian media space, has not only been disseminating pro-Kremlin conspiracy theories, it also does not function as a check on the presence of Russian disinformation in the Hungarian media space. As a result, articles in pro-government media claimed that the Revolution of Dignity was an "inside job" of the CIA or that the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) was, in fact, caused by a bomb planted by Western intelligence agencies.[154]

The general public

The general public is more vulnerable to territorial narratives not because there exists a wide-spread political discussion about revisionism, but because the Hungarian media space is overtly dominated by more than 500 pro-government media outlets and their communication is in line with the government's pro-Russian foreign policy, as mentioned above. Without a clear governmental stance against foreign hostile disinformation activities, the public may turn to the continuously decreasing number of independent outlets or to pro-Russian fringe media for alternative takes on Russian influence in Hungary. There is also a general lack of media literacy programs aimed at the youth or the general public, because the Hungarian government also relies on centralized disinformation campaigns domestically against political enemies, and prevents civil society actors from organising such programs in state-funded schools or universities. Without the basic tools to resist hostile malign influence operations, the inter-ethnic conflicts between Hungary and Ukraine or Hungarians or Romanians can be utilised by pro-Kremlin actors and media in and outside of Hungary to push their ethno-nationalistic, revisionist agenda without much hindrance in the Hungarian public.

The far-right audience

The far-right audience and subculture is the most clear-cut target and producer of territorial revisionist narratives in Hungary for three main reasons. First, it has been proven that several far-right, paramilitary organisations have been infiltrated by the Russian intelligence services to gain leverage over far-right movements or their communication, as it has happened to the now defunct site Hídfő (Bridgehead) originally founded by the Hungarian National Front (MNA) back in 2012. Second, Hungarian far-right organisations, politicians and their communications have been supporting the Kremlin's geopolitical aspirations and the annexation of Crimea mostly due to their Eurosceptic, anti-Western and anti-NATO stance which found an ally in Vladimir Putin's Russia. Finally, open historical revisionism against neighbouring states, as demonstrated above, is only present in Hungarian far-right circles, which resonates well with Russian claims about ethnic self-determination and gaining control over "lost territories." Many on the Hungarian far-right view Russia's military aggression as a historic opportunity for Hungary to re-negotiate or even annul the terms of the Trianon Treaty, including the revision of borders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations in Hungary would need first and foremost to address the hybrid nature of the current political regime, which is actively undermining the resilience of independent civil society actors and independent media to withstand foreign hostile information operations. Under the current political conditions, however, there are only few measures the Hungarian society and government can apply to counter Russian disinformation campaigns, including revisionist narratives.

- Based on the successful governmental management of the Trianon commemorations of 2020 that avoided any provocations, foreign active measures or disinformation campaigns, the Hungarian government needs to treat communication related to Trianon as a national security priority for the foreseeable future.

- The Hungarian government should enhance cooperation with neighbouring governments, especially with Ukraine and Romania, to diffuse diplomatic conflicts and present a united front against Russian disinformation campaigns trying to take advantage inter-ethnic conflicts.

- Pro-government media should stop promoting and giving room to the most radical far-right politicians and the Our Homeland Movement party (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom). Although the political rationale, the division of the far-right electorate of the Jobbik party, behind the promotion of the Our Homeland Movement is understandable, the party and affiliated organisations represent territorial revisionism intertwined with their public support for Russian military aggression and the "separatists" in Eastern Ukraine.

- Hungary's critical communication infrastructure should be defined across the board regardless of party divisions.

- Facebook, as the main social media platform in Hungary, should monitor and sanction the group of pro-Kremlin conspiracy theorists and fringe opinion-leaders, identified in our previous research about Russian sharp power,[155] in cooperation with independent civil society actors and media.

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66   'Gőbl Gábor rockzenész gondolatai Trianonról | Betyársereg', accessed 30 July 2020, http://betyarsereg.hu/gobl-gabor-rockzenesz-gondolatai-trianonrol/.

67   „Igazságos béke alapfeltétele kellett volna legyen 1920-ban és 1947-ben is az, hogy a népfelség elve alapján, népszavazásokkal kellett volna megrajzolni a határokat! 100 év után sem lenne túl késő mindenhez!!! Mind a mai napig néprajzi alapján meghúzott határokra van szükség a Kárpát-medencében! Ez esetben Magyarország a jelenben cca 115 ezer négyzetkilométernyi területre terjedne ki, lakosság száma pedig 11.500.000 fő körül alakulna."

68   As we have discussed in detail in our 2017 study: „Two members of the HVIM, István Beke and Zoltán Szőcs, have been charged with attempting violent acts in Romania with revisionist intentions (in 2016). According to charges filed by attorneys of Romania's Directorate for the Investigation of Organised Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT), Beke and Szőcs wanted to blow up a section of a natural gas pipeline leading to Bucharest near Târgu Secuiesc. Romanian prosecutors – likely highly exaggerating – maintained that the firecrackers found on the two men could have been used to produce lethal explosives; at the same time, news portal Maszol.ro, which had obtained access to the indictment documents, suggested that the authorities were attempting to influence the judges emotionally by emphasising the anti-Romanian sentiments of the defendants. According to DIICOT, members of the HVIM had established ties with groups such as Basque separatist group ETA, the IRA or the National Democratic Movement of Moldova; following the planned explosion, they were said to be looking to Russian organisations to support a subsequent attack." For more please see: https://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_HU_20170428.pdf

69   'Akciócsoportot hirdetett meg a Vármegye az idei Trianon felvonuláson (+videó) | Betyársereg', accessed 30 July 2020, http://betyarsereg.hu/akciocsoportot-hirdetett-meg-a-varmegye-az-idei-trianon-felvonulason-video/.

70   'Ruszin Kárpátalja', accessed 30 July 2020, http://ruszinkarpatalja.blogspot.com/.

71   'A járványügyi korlátozások elleni tüntetéssel tért vissza az oroszbarát székelygárdista', atlatszo.hu (blog), accessed 30 July 2020, https://atlatszo.hu/2020/07/17/a-jarvanyugyi-korlatozasok-elleni-tuntetessel-tert-vissza-az-oroszbarat-szekelygardista/.

72   '„Oroszország szövetségeseket keres Székelyföldön" – Csibi Barna, a Székely Gárda alapítója', atlatszo.hu (blog), accessed 30 July 2020, https://atlatszo.hu/2014/10/02/oroszorszag-szovetsegeseket-keres-szekelyfoldon-csibi-barna-a-szekely-garda-alapitoja/.

73   Marianna Biró, 'Orbán: A magyar és a lengyel erők megállították a brüsszeli liberális erők támadását', 24 July 2020, https://index.hu/belfold/2020/07/24/orban_viktor_kossuth_radio_utolso_pentek/.

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77   'PM Orbán after Talks with PM Matovič: Hungary and Slovakia Seeking Success Together', Hungary Today (blog), 12 June 2020, https://hungarytoday.hu/pm-orban-after-talks-with-pm-matovic-hungary-and-slovakia-seeking-success-together/.they want cooperation and they want to achieve success together," Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said after talks with Igor Matovič, his Slovak counterpart, in Budapest on Friday, while the Slovak Prime Minister said his country's aim is to ensure that ethnic Hungarians "feel citizens with equal rights." […]","container-title":"Hungary Today","language":"en","title":"PM Orbán after Talks with PM Matovič: Hungary and Slovakia Seeking Success Together","title-short":"PM Orbán after Talks with PM Matovič","URL":"https://hungarytoday.hu/pm-orban-after-talks-with-pm-matovic-hungary-and-slovakia-seeking-success-together/","accessed":{„date-parts":[[„2020",9,6]]},"issued":{„date-parts":[[„2020",6,12]]}}}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"}

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88   Palfi, 'Tensions Flare between Romania and Hungary after Cemetery Incident'.

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91   'Kuruc.info - Nem díjazták a megszállók, hogy Petrás bocskorosnak nevezte őket - kitiltották a Kárpátiát Erdélyből, a Jobbik kiállt mellettük'.

92   'Trump szerint Trianon igazságtalan volt, és Székelyföld visszacsatolható lenne?'

93   Upper Hungary is the usual English translation of Felvidék (lit.: "Upland"), the Hungarian term traditionally used for the area that constituted the northern part of the Kingdom of Hungary.

94   szigete Titkok, 'Magyar-román háború jöhet az izraeli történész szerint: Székelyföldön már hadgyakorlatoznak a románok - valami közeleg?', Titkok Szigete (blog), accessed 14 September 2020, http://titkokszigete.hu/magyar-roman-haboru-johet-az-izraeli-tortenesz-szerint-szekelyfoldon-mar-hadgyakorlatoznak-a-romanok-valami-kozeleg/.

95   'Trianon Ügyében Vajon Miért Nem Történt Semmi', accessed 14 September 2020, https://www.facebook.com/859181850817715/posts/2063849053684316.

96   'Putyin Szerint Egyesek Változtatni Akarnak a Második Világháborús Határokon', accessed 23 June 2020, https://www.facebook.com/178803562238471/posts/1379894158796066.

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98   'Trump Szerint Trianon Igazságtalan Volt, És Székelyföld Visszacsatolható Lenne? 2019', accessed 23 June 2020, https://www.facebook.com/292601364146834/posts/2500033343403614.

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100   https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-12114289

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109   Labs Endless Flux, 'Orbán Viktor évértékelője: nem ülünk fel semmiféle liberális népmesének - "Szúrjunk, mint a méhecske" (videó+képgaléria)', PestiSrácok (blog), 16 February 2020, https://pestisracok.hu/viktor-evertekeloje-a-varkert-bazarban-elo-15-oratol/.

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117   'HAZATÉRÉS És Nem Honfoglalás', HAZATÉRÉS És Nem Honfoglalás (blog), accessed 17 June 2020, https://naphun.blogspot.com/2018/07/hazateres-es-nem-honfoglalas.html.

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123   Forrás:korkep.sk, 'Csóti György: Ha nem adják meg a társnemzeti státuszt, akkor autonómiát kell követelni', Nemzeti.net (blog), 30 August 2018, https://nemzeti.net/csoti-gyorgy-ha-nem-adjak-meg-a-tarsnemzeti-statuszt-akkor-autonomiat-kell-kovetelni-13736772.html.

124   Forrás:alfahir.hu, '„Ha Románia területi autonómiát biztosítana Székelyföldnek, az valóban az 'európai történelem nagyszerű pillanata' lenne"', Nemzeti.net (blog), 6 November 2018, https://nemzeti.net/ha-romania-teruleti-autonomiat-biztositana-szekelyfoldnek-az-valoban-az-europai-tortenelem-nagyszeru-pillanata-lenne-14294357.html.

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126   'Hivatalosan is zászlót bontott a Nemzeti Légió (+videó) | Betyársereg'.

127   Forrás:alfahir.hu, 'A Fidesz nem akar emlékévet, miközben a "jószomszédok" már izzítják a Trianon-propagandát', Nemzeti.net (blog), 24 September 2018, https://nemzeti.net/a-fidesz-nem-akar-emlekevet-mikozben-a-joszomszedok-mar-izzitjak-a-trianon-propagandat-13951470.html.

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129   Source not available: http://dailymigrants.com/ukrajna-a-kulcsa-oroszorszag-nagysaganak/

130   'Nem érdemes Brüsszelnek a magyarokkal szórakozni', A világ titkai | Rejtélyek, paranormál, ufo, összeesküvés, és minden, amit nem mondtak még el..., accessed 17 June 2020, https://avilagtitkai.com/articles/view/nem-erdemes-brusszelnek-a-magyarokkal-szorakoznia.

131   Figyelő Világ, 'Drábik János szerint ez a teendő Trianonnal: ez még NEM lezárt ügy! – Sokkoló előadás minden magyarnak!"', Világ Figyelő (blog), 14 June 2020, https://vilagfigyelo.com/drabik-janos-szerint-ez-a-teendo-trianonnal-ez-meg-nem-lezart-ugy-sokkolo-eloadas-minden-magyarnak/.

132   'Kuruc.info - A Mi Hazánk Úzvölgye kapcsán: a diplomáciai fegyverletétel nemcsak a Károlyi-félékre jellemző, hanem a Fideszre is', Kuruc.info hírportál, accessed 14 September 2020, https://kuruc.info/r/2/199146/.

133   'Toroczkai László:A trianoni szerződés hatályon kívül helyezését kezdeményezzük!', accessed 14 September 2020, https://www.minden-egyben.com/hirek/toroczkai-laszloa-trianoni-szerzodes.

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135 'Elköltözött a két Srí Lanka-i pék az erdélyi község-ből, ahol migránspánik tört ki', 24.hu (blog), 28 January 2020, https://24.hu/kulfold/2020/01/28/gyergyoditro-migransok-koltozes/.

136 Despite our best efforts to narrow down the research results to a set of only specific keyword-combinations, the platform still had an inherent and programming-directed tendency to erroneously identify and flag insignificant contents related to such general keywords as "war" or "border".

137 'Duna Nap', duna-haz.com (blog), accessed 8 September 2020, https://duna-haz.com/duna-nap/.

138 'A Megmaradásunk Nagy Kérdése, Hogy Gyermekeinknek Magyar Jövőt Tervezünk-e', Kormányzat, accessed 8 September 2020, https://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok-helyettes/nemzetpolitikaert-felelos-allamtitkar/hirek/a-megmaradasunk-nagy-kerdese-hogy-gyermekeinknek-magyar-jovot-tervezunk-e.

139 Networks could be based only on hyperlinks found in homepage articles due to Facebook restricting access to pages' data or hyperlinks.

140 The rationale behind the selection was to highlight and make visible portals with a significant number of connections, while excluding 1-2 nodes with significantly higher number of connections, usually leading to social media pages, to reveal the overall and typical structure of the revisionism-related dissemination process.

141 'No News on the News Front', StopFake (blog), 29 April 2019, https://www.stopfake.org/en/no-news-on-the-news-front/.","container-title":"StopFake","language":"en-US","note":"source: www.stopfake.org","title":"No news on the News Front","URL":"https://www.stopfake.org/en/no-news-on-the-news-front/","accessed":{"date-parts":[["2020",6,9]]},"issued":{"date-parts":[["2019",4,29]]}}}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"}

142 'Tájékoztató ügynökség | Hírügynökség', Tájékoztató ügynökség, accessed 9 June 2020, https://hu.news-front.info/.

143 '#moszkvater', #moszkvater, accessed 9 June 2020, https://moszkvater.com/.

144 'Gábor Stier', Valdai Club, accessed 9 June 2020, https://valdaiclub.com/about/experts/474/.

145 'MindenegybenBlog', accessed 9 June 2020, https://www.minden-egyben.com/.

146 Almost all of the pro-Kremlin websites or Facebook pages analysed in our report are financed and operated anonymously. Their ties to pro-Kremlin actors, parties, groups or journalists can be assessed only through indirect evidence and the geopolitical or political stances expressed in their contents.

147 The analysis of social media was limited to Facebook, since it is the only and main platform of elite or grassroots political discussions in Central-Eastern Europe.

148 'Mindenegyben Blog | Facebook', accessed 10 June 2020, https://www.facebook.com/Mindenegybenblog/.

149 'Élelmiszerek, Melyek Veszélyesek Az Egészségre | Facebook', accessed 10 June 2020, https://www.facebook.com/%C3%89lelmiszerek-melyek-vesz%C3%A9lyesek-az-eg%C3%A9szs%C3%A9gre-333734156655875/.

150 'Drábik János | Facebook', accessed 10 June 2020, https://www.facebook.com/drabikjanos.

151 'Gyöngyösi Márton | Facebook', accessed 10 June 2020, https://www.facebook.com/gyongyosi.jobbik/.

152 'Far-Right Murder of Hungarian Police Officer: Pro-Russian Radicalization in the CEE', Political Capital, 4 November 2016, http://www.politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=320.

153 Relevant posts were selected by the revisionism-related list of keywords on the SentiOne platform, while irrelevant posts are all the other data published by the same pages during our research period 01.01.2018 – 15.04.2020.

154 'A Legnépszerűbb Orosz Összeesküvés-Elméletek a Magyar Kormánypárti Sajtóban'.

155 Győri, 'Larger than Life - Who Is Afraid of the Big Bad Russia? Grassroots Vulnerability to Russian Sharp Power in Hungary Country Report'.

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