

LVIV IS POLAND!



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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is the summary of the results of an over a year-long research project covering the Kremlin's and pro-Kremlin actors' disinformation campaigns and active measures related to territorial revisionism in six countries - Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary, Romania and Serbia - during a period of heightened nationalism and historical revisionism involving World War I commemorations between 1 January 2018 and 15 April 2020. Political Capital has assessed 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. In this study, we set out to understand the inner workings of "revisionist" disinformation campaigns as tools of destabilisation on a local and regional level. The research utilised a novel methodology that combined qualitative content-analysis with the analysis of networks and social media statistics to reveal communication strategies and the dissemination of revisionist ideas in Central-Eastern Europe. For more information on the project, please visit our [thematic website](#).

We are grateful to the authors listed below. We are also grateful to the Open Information Partnership, particularly Tom Southern and Seraphina Hintze, for their insights, cooperation and support for this research project. We would like to thank Dr. Vivian Walker, the executive director of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for her patient guidance and useful critiques of the studies and the research methodology. All errors and omissions are our own.

Authors of this paper: **Olgierd Syczewski**

Country contributors: Péter Krekó PhD, Lóránt Győri, Júlia Koltai, PhD, Árpád Knapp [Hungary]; Olgierd Syczewski [Poland]; Rufin Zamfir, Vlad Iaviță [Romania]; Daniel Milo, J.D. [Slovakia]; Nikola Cuckić, Nikola Burazer, Nemanja Todorović Štiplija [Serbia]; Oleksandra Tsekhanovska, Daryna Koryagina [Ukraine].

In partnership with: Emerging Futures Institute [Poland], Global Focus [Romania], Centre for Contemporary Politics [Serbia]; Ukraine Crisis Media Center [Ukraine].



UKRAINE CRISIS
media center

CENTAR
SAVREMENE
POLITIKE
EU-RS THINK TANK

© Copyright 2020 Political Capital Kft.



POLITICAL CAPITAL
POLICY RESEARCH & CONSULTING INSTITUTE



OPEN
INFORMATION
PARTNERSHIP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
INTRODUCTION	4
METHODOLOGY AND THE SCOPE OF RESEARCH	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
GENERAL POLITICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL ATTITUDES IN POLAND	9
THE POLISH MEDIA SPACE	10
SOCIETAL AND POLITICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF LWOW/LVIV	11
EXPERT INTERVIEWS	13
TREND ANALYSIS OF MAINSTREAM AND FRINGE MEDIA DISCOURSES	15
NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ARTICLE SAMPLES	17
NETWORK ANALYSIS OF FRINGE WEBSITES	22
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF FRINGE FACEBOOK PAGES	27
SOCIETAL RESILIENCE	30
RECOMMENDATIONS	30
ENDNOTES	31

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.

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 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 Poland, 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 issue of historical conflict between Poland and Ukraine between 1918 and 1919, and the historical territorial affiliation of Lviv city and Western Galicia. The eight-month conflict between the reborn Republic of Poland, which has just restored its independence after 123 years of partitions, and the Ukrainians striving for independence, cast a shadow on the relations between the two nations. It is worth knowing that Lviv and Eastern Galicia were considered Polish territories for more than 300 years as parts of the Kingdom of Poland. The conflict began in Lviv on the night of October 31 to November 1, 1918. Within a few days, Ukrainian troops took over the city. The Ukrainian population treated Lviv as the starting point for the occupation of the entire Western Galicia, and in the broader plan it was to be the beginning of an independent Ukrainian existence, proclaimed in mid-October under the name West Ukrainian People’s Republic. For Poland, the territory was one of the strategic points, called “Kresy” (or frontiers in English). The war resulted in crimes and shameful deeds being committed by both armies; there were crimes against civilians, which to this day is the source of the conflict and many disputes between Poland and Ukraine. The Kremlin is using historical sentiments and conflicts over the region to fuel revisionist attitudes in Poland and stoke aversion to Ukrainians in Poland, against the Polish minority living in Ukraine (and vice versa), along with massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. Putin’s propaganda machine is promoting narratives such as (among others):

- *“Lviv has Polish heritage and should belong to Poland”,*
- *“Ukrainians have anti-Polish attitudes”,*

- *“In Ukraine, the government supports nationalism, which is also anti-Polish in nature”,*
- *“Ukraine is a failed state”.*

Such narratives are being injected into far-right and fringe societal groups to create tensions between Polish and Ukrainian citizens.

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 discourses website.

- 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.

In the end, we combined the different 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 the six countries under examination.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In Poland, territorial revisionism or territory-related narratives which are relevant to this day include the issue of historical conflict between Poland and Ukraine between 1918 and 1919, and the historical territorial affiliation of Lviv city and Western Galicia,** which for more than 300 years were Polish territories. Lviv was one of the main Polish cities after independence was regained in 1918; on the other hand, home to a significant number of Ukrainian citizens, it was also a key city in plans for a reborn Ukraine.
- Another driver of influence operations aimed at creating tension between Poland and Ukraine is the Volhynia killing,** when Ukrainian troops and citizens executed between 40,000 and 60,000 Polish civilians during World War II. The most remembered event is the Volhynian Bloody Sunday. On July 11, 1943, OUN-UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army)¹⁰ death squads, aided by the local Ukrainian peasants, simultaneously attacked at least 99 Polish settlements within the Wołyń Voivodeship, with a well-orchestrated attack on people gathered for Sunday mass at Catholic churches.
- Although there is and has been no official or mainstream revisionism in Polish politics since the 1990s, tensions between Kyiv and Warsaw intensified in the period analysed. **Both governments, Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland, and Petro Poroshenko's in Ukraine, were trying to expand their electorate pools to include right-wing and nationalist groups. Such attitudes created a chance for the Kremlin to drive a wedge between the two nations and heat up the historical sentiments** and conflicts without being visibly present in the Polish media space.
- In Poland, far-right, nationalistic and extremist movements were targeted with strong anti-Ukrainian narratives. The representative sample analysis revealed that four out of five revisionism-related narratives targeting Ukraine and bilateral relations are all shared**
- across mainstream and fringe discourses.** This attests to both Polish resilience to direct Russian disinformation messaging, as well as to the vulnerability to the fringe, indirect reinterpretation of the same narratives concerning current and historic conflicts between Ukraine and Poland - while remaining seemingly unrelated to Russian interests.
- In line with our narrative analysis, the **pro-Kremlin media network and the respective social media channels and fringe forums were also hijacking official commemorative events, such as the 75th anniversary of the Volhynia Killing, which served as an outstanding pretext for (mis)information actors to revive the memories of war crimes and conflict between Poland and Ukraine.**
- The Polish narratives about Volhynia and Lviv were full of hate speech against the Ukrainian nation, also suggesting that Kyiv is becoming increasingly anti-Polish,** and sometimes even creating an image of Ukraine as a failed state, which has no capability of independent existence.
- Fringe messaging about revisionism could often be found on "independent", "patriotic" and pro-Kremlin sites in Poland. Interestingly, and similarly to Hungary, almost all Polish far-right actors, parties, paramilitary movements and media can be considered anti-NATO, anti-U.S. and anti-EU at the same time.** What is even more relevant is that most of them are also anti-Russia, even though they are replicating the Kremlin's geopolitical agenda.
- Fringe disinformation dissemination strategies were, therefore, not only utilising a distorted Polish national identity rooted in revisionism against Ukraine and a dismissal of Polish membership in Western structures, they also employed a tight network of fringe Polish-language sites with strong connections to the Polish far-right subculture and only a few to official Kremlin mouthpieces.**

GENERAL POLITICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL ATTITUDES IN POLAND

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.

Poland stays true to its image as the most pro-American country in the CEE region, with 42% of Poles identifying with U.S. values, the highest level in the region¹¹. This is true both on a sociological level and in terms of governmental cooperation, as Poland continues to deepen its cooperation with Washington on a political level, in military cooperation through the signing of a memorandum (by Polish PM Mateusz Morawiecki and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence on September 2, 2019) on cooperation in developing a 5G network¹². Moreover, a report published in 2019 by the Pew Research Center shows that 82 percent of Poles have a positive perception of NATO membership. This is the highest result among the 16 countries of the North Atlantic Alliance in which the research was conducted¹³. We can clearly see how strong the pro-Western orientation of society is, which presents a real challenge for the Kremlin in trying to inject distrust in democratic institutions in the former countries of the Soviet Union and its former sphere of influence. Another obstacle for Moscow's geopolitical agenda is the positive attitude in Poland towards country's membership in the EU, which is definitely dominant across all socio-demographic groups: in each of them, the percentage of supporters of membership in the Community exceeds 80%.¹⁴

Poland is also very reluctant towards Russia and shows no trust in the Kremlin's policy. As we one Reuters article noted, trying to describe Polish attitudes towards Moscow: *The country was in the Soviet sphere of influence for four decades until the collapse of Communist rule, and relations have been strained more recently by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and differences over a plane crash in Russia that killed President Lech Kaczynski and 95 others in 2010.*¹⁵ In the same article, a quote appears from Polish government representative Krzysztof Szczerski, who said, "Russian politics could change; it could open the road for wider dialogue, but it would require a shift in conditions. First of all, a departure from the politics of force in the region" - which clearly shows Warsaw's attitude towards the Kremlin's diplomacy. Both the pro-Western orientation of Polish society and mistrust towards Moscow inside the government show why Poland could be seen as a major challenge for Russian (dis)information campaigns.

The Polish government had an official diplomatic conflict with Russia, responding to the Kremlin's campaign with an MFA statement, claiming that the Kremlin's efforts to rewrite history are similar to Soviet propaganda. In a public statement,¹⁶ the Polish MFA listed key facts of Polish foreign policy of the pre-war period, and Poland-Soviet Union relations, as well as information on Polish victims of Soviet repression during the Second World War. Additionally, the MFA-related Twitter profile of Jędrzej Tomczak often sends tweets countering Russian (dis)information campaigns¹⁷.

THE POLISH 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.

Due to internal political conflict, the Polish media space is increasingly polarized, and each outlet/consortium has its own clear geopolitical optics. Although the Polish media space has preserved some degree of plurality, the freedom of the press and the balanced coverage of news by state-outlets have been considerably worsened since the ruling PiS came to power in 2015, as explained below. Private TVN, although it is U.S.-owned, is seen as the opposition to the government and is often criticized by its representatives for supporting the Civic Platform (PO) (ex-governing party). TVN is seen as liberal, and less pro-Trump than TVP – public TV. The TVN group belongs to the American media company Discovery, Inc. The second biggest broadcaster – Polsat – has Polish private owners, which try to be in the centre, meaning they strive not to be too harsh towards any side in political conflict. Polish public TV (TVP) openly supports the government. It is openly in favour of America and the Trump administration. Mainstream radio stations try to be objective and not be involved in domestic political conflicts (Radio Zet, RMF FM). Only TOK FM is openly critical of the government and is more liberal, supporting LGBT rights or climate crisis etc.

As for the printed press, in the first half of 2019, the number one in terms of readership was a daily newspaper, "Fakt", which belongs to the Swiss-German Ringier Axel Springer media group, which has a very tabloid-focussed character, but maintains a government-critical editorial line; Gazeta Wyborcza, 3rd in popularity rankings, has

an aggressively progressive, pro-EU and anti-PiS editorial line. The number four daily newspaper, Rzeczpospolita, has a liberal-conservative editorial line in theory, but it has been owned since 2011 by a businessman who is close to the Civic Platform (PO), and it is also critical of the current government, but tries to maintain a public image of "being objective". The only national daily newspaper which is openly in favour of the government is Gazeta Polska Codziennie, which has been promoted since 2015. It is placed in the best spots in publicly owned spaces, like gas stations. Among newspapers, we also find the openly pro left „Tygodnik NIE” and far right outlets like „W Sieci” or, as mentioned before, "Gazeta Polska Codziennie" which describes itself as a Catholic and patriotic outlet.

The free press in Poland has changed since the national conservative party Law and Justice (PiS) came to power. The government's drive to change the judicial system and a growing tendency to criminalize defamation are beginning to have an effect on the freedom of expression of independent media outlets. In the international ranking on press freedom by "Reporters Without Borders", Poland was in 18th place in 2015, but has slipped to 62nd place (in the 2020 ranking), which means a drop of 44 places over five years. According to RSF: "Partisan discourse and hate speech are still the rule within state-owned media, which have been transformed into government propaganda mouthpieces. Their new directors tolerate neither opposition nor neutrality from employees and fire those who refuse to comply¹⁸."

Poles, however, are highly resistant to direct Russian propaganda¹⁹. For example, Radio Sputnik reaches only 0.01% of the target audience in Poland²⁰. This shows how Polish society is resistant to direct and pure Russian disinformation. However, the Kremlin tries to inject into society its geopolitical agenda regarding Ukraine, antiliberal beliefs or anti-Western attitudes (anti-EU, anti-NATO) or historical revisionism using smaller portals, which are focussed on posting their content to fringe Facebook groups or forums bringing together nationalist groups or believers in conspiracy theories. To counter these efforts Poland has organized special departments in

the MFA and the Intelligence Agency. Additionally, most policy think-tanks employ experts or even entire departments dealing with misinformation. The list of such institutions includes the following: the state owned Polish Institute of International Affairs

(PISM), the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), private think-tanks like the Kosciuszko Institute, the Warsaw Institute, the Future Poland Institute or European Front. Private initiatives like the Demagog platform or fakenews.pl are also worth mentioning.

SOCIETAL AND POLITICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF LWOW/LVIV

Political and media discourses about our topic can influence both how political actors and the media may deal with current-day or historical issues over territorial disputes and identity politics, and how the Kremlin or its local allies take advantage of such sensitive issues 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.

As we know, one of main goals of Russian influence ops and information warfare is not to crudely promote the Kremlin's agenda directly. Instead, they are "calibrated to confuse, befuddle and distract. (...) It exploits ethnic, linguistic, regional, social and historical tensions²¹(...)." In the case of Poland, the Kremlin tries to drive a wedge between Warsaw and Kyiv on the base of historical ethnic and military conflicts. It is not easy job, as Poland remains a big challenge for Russian influence operations. As we have found: "in most studies on the resistance of individual states to Russian propaganda, Poland is considered one of the most resilient countries. Indeed, openly pro-Russian narratives find little understanding among Polish consumers."²² Unfortunately, the historical "martyrology" also engineered by the Kremlin, reaches well into society, especially far-right subcultures. To put it simply, Polish citizens have a tendency to think about Poland as a victim of history. In the survey conducted by OKO.press, 74 percent of respondents believed that the Polish nation has suffered more than other nations²³ (and only 4 percent were certain that it has not) during, for example, the three

partitions of Poland since the 18th century. This is a good ground for narratives presenting Poland as a victim of, for example, hostilities led by Ukraine in 1918 and 1919. Interestingly, football hooligans' groups are openly anti-Russian, while being vulnerable to narratives promoted by the Kremlin at the same time. One of the narratives that we can track in this group claims that Lviv should be incorporated into Poland, as this city historically belongs to it in their opinion (historically it lay within Polish borders of the Union of Krowo, later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1387 to 1772, the year when Poland lost its independence) When we add to the trend that Poland has a 2-million-strong Ukrainian minority inside its territory, we can identify a great area for the Kremlin to divide society and heat up tensions. One incident is enough. In the study published in 2019 by the Association of Ukrainians in Poland, we find the following: "(...) the Polish internet is full of comments about Ukrainians"²⁴. According to the section of the report devoted to media analysis, a minority of them are positive (17%). Neutral (41%) and negative (40%) comments dominate. This trend shows the negative change in Polish society, which is getting more and more Ukrainian sceptic and more nationalistic in terms of ideology - which is welcomed in the Kremlin. The negative attitude of Poles towards Ukrainians is also shown by other surveys. In a CBOS (Public Opinion Research Center) report published in 2019, 41 percent said they were reluctant, and 31 percent said they were sympathetic. The latter group has been fluctuating at roughly the same level for years, but the number of Poles declaring an aversion to Ukrainians has increased by as much as 10 points compared to 2008-2017 percent.

As we can see above, the Kremlin's narratives are effectively injected into Polish society. On the other hand, Warsaw and Kyiv are not doing enough

on the political level. When the Law and Justice (PiS) government came into power in 2014, tensions between the two states intensified. The same can be said regarding both Petro Poroshenko and Zelensky's governments in Ukraine. Warsaw is not Ukrainian-sceptic; it is almost impossible to find revisionists quotes from any member of the government. On a diplomatic level Poland supports Ukraine and its goals of joining NATO and the EU. For example, during the presidential elections last summer, Polish President Andrzej Duda was pranked by Russian youtubers²⁵. They managed to call him pretending to be the UN President, and asked question about Lviv and its territories. President Duda said: "This is Ukraine*(Lviv). (...) No, no, (...), there is no discussion of this in Poland. It's part of Ukraine now and that's it. (...) This is not a subject of political discussion in Poland." On the other hand, Poland lacks strategic communication to counter Russia's info-operations towards heating up the historical conflicts. The majority of experts in Poland agree that governmental communication is rather reactive, but we need a pro-active and coordinated approach in that matter. Any positive shaping of the information environment is missing in Poland.

Interestingly, there is no consensus about Ukraine and the historical disputes in the Polish political sphere. The divisions are not strictly related to political divisions (e.g. people in PiS have different views on the subject matter). We have, for example supporters of deeper cooperation with Ukraine from different political parties, but can also target people who would prefer to deepen economic ties with Russia, which would boost Polish

export of for example apples. The opposition party "Konfederacja," which now is in the parliament, and their candidate in the presidential elections, Mr. Krzysztof Bosak, achieved the 3rd highest result, are the most anti-Ukrainian. The representative of this party, Mr. Krzysztof Kaminski, made a comment about Ukrainian workers for fringe Kresy.pl: -

"We cannot afford it when we have high unemployment for some of the Ukrainian workers, also dismissed from their jobs, to stay in Poland to a large extent, not working, but using everything we have given them and what the Polish state offers them. Sooner or later it will lead to riots and to what we already know in Western Europe" - said MP Kaminski.²⁶

This comment is a great example how Russian narratives are injected into society. Firstly, we have a nationalist party member who is giving commentary to a fringe portal. Then in his comment he includes many narratives that are pure Kremlin propaganda and are aligned with Moscow's geopolitical agenda:

- Ukrainian workers who are a threat to Polish workers (suggestion that Ukrainians are taking jobs from Poles)
- Using the Ukrainian minority as the possible example of social beneficiaries of the Polish system (missing information about their role in shaping PL economy)
- Suggesting that Ukrainians will start riots

This is a standard modus operandi of information operations - driving a wedge and arousing mutual aversion of each nation towards each other.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

We conducted five in-depth interviews with experts of security policy, media, policymakers 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. Experts opinions can support or refine some qualitative or quantitative research results of our media research.

Interviews held in Poland supported mainly the two areas of our research. Firstly, expert feedback helped us go more in-depth into analysis of the kinds of geopolitical stances that the mainstream and fringe media have in Poland. Secondly, we analysed fringe outlets' influence both in general public opinion and in any concrete societal groups.

Interviews were conducted with:

- Dr. Piotr Kościński, historian, journalist, professor at Vistula Univeristy
- Dr Andrzej Kozłowski, Editor-in-chief, CyberDefence24.pl
- Dr Agnieszka Legucka, analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and professor at the Vistula University
- Kamil Basaj, founder and president of the INFO OPS Polska Foundation
- Mateusz Bajek, analysts, Esperis Consulting

Mainstream media's resilience against Russian disinformation

Experts agreed about the mainstream media's stance or attitude towards Russia in Poland. For example, Dr. Piotr Koscinski, a journalist by profession and an academic instructor, who spent over 20 years working at mainstream newspaper "Rzeczpospolita," concluded that the biggest media outlets do display a "distrustful attitude towards Russia", which is often "fuelled by Putin" and the Kremlin's current geopolitical agenda. Russia's aggression towards Georgia and Ukraine only fuelled such scepticism and lack of trust. Ukraine as a state and society "has smaller or greater sympathy" in the most popular media, which are also known for their 'moderate knowledge" about events happening beyond the eastern border of Poland. Dr. Andrzej Kozłowski, editor in chief of the portal

CyberDefence24 and an academic instructor has a similar view of mainstream media. He also adds "that all of them speak in a similar vein", which is also in line with the official Polish government's comments about Ukraine and research topic. Of course, when it comes to replaying official governmental messaging, public media play the leading role. They play a role of spreading Law and Justice's geopolitical agenda and injecting it into society. Regarding the research topic, there were often no difference in coverage between private and state owned mainstream media, but sometimes it can be somewhat differentiate whenever Poland's government tries to force something towards Ukraine i.e. the Prime Minister's words that we are still waiting for Kyiv to let Poland perform the exhumation of graves in Volhynia.

The propaganda of fringe media

According to Dr. Koscinski, fringe media cannot be even called that: they should be treated as "propaganda tubes". For example, the portal Kresy.pl, mentioned before, labels Ukrainian citizens as "nationalists" and "anti-Polish," and suggests this is a reason why "we should not support Ukraine at all." Such portals do have a lot of distortions. Interestingly, Mateusz Bajek, an expert in disinformation and trolls, believes many of the fringe portals in Poland can be called "propaganda tubes", but portals like kresy.pl are different. They are far right in the sense of geopolitical agenda and they do not copy and paste information from Russian propaganda websites. They often quote them and add it their own interpretation or reinterpretation. In the case of Kresy.pl, its job is to post political content. The machine starts then, and all donkey work is done by trolls by spreading the news and in the comment section. In the comment section can we see the real venom and hateful narratives, which are important for the Kremlin. Dr Kozłowski goes even further, calling fringe portals "freaky portals". He adds that they play a concrete role: hey are a kind of relay, forwarding content coming straight from Poland's adversaries. In the opinion of Dr. Agnieszka Legucka from PISM, such media promote a hierarchical model of a world where superpowers matter. Countries should defend their

interests firmly and should have aspirations broader than the borders of the country to become a defining force in regional geopolitics. These kinds of narratives are spread to justify Russia's actions, especially in Georgia and Ukraine. As an "imperial state," Russia has the "right" to do things which are not allowed under international law. Ukraine is shown as a seasonal, unstable state, so Poland should talk with Russia to limit Ukraine's influence as an economic rival of Poland. But this is only one example of the geopolitical stance of fringe portals in Poland. Kamil Basaj, founder and president of the INFO OPS Polska Foundation, lists 3 main types of such portals:

- "Patriotic" portals which show Poland as a servile state, operating under the pillory of the hegemon (United States). Such internet services often use infantilized arguments, especially in the context of the U.S. military presence in PL, which is often shown as an occupation. They use anti-U.S. and anti-transatlantic narratives.
- "Balanced" portals: they claim that there is an ongoing great power competition and conflict, which justifies all interventionist actions undertaken by Russia. This serves as rhetorical tool for masking the military offensive against Ukraine, for example. It also builds an information background where false elements are added; for example, they have recently suggested a possible NATO invasion of Belarus.
- The third type of portals is designed to build a vision of Russia as a potentially attractive country and a growing powerhouse. We can see here an attempt to suggest that Poland and Russia have cultural bonds with the same ethnic roots. Besides advertising Moscow, they also try to build a sense of threat and arouse anxiety.

The impact of fringe media on Polish political discourse

In light of the arguments mentioned above, a question arises: What kind of influence, if any, does the fringe media have compared to the mainstream media on the general public and/or on specific societal groups?

Dr Kosciński stated that in his view, fringe media has only limited influence. He describes a specific societal group with nationalistic character: "They do

have a historical resentment towards former Polish lands; they tend to use patriotic symbols; they believe in 'strong Poland' and Poland's independence. In their view, the current government, which is strongly focussed on the alliance with the United States is "selling us to the Americans". This group is also sceptical of Ukraine: in their view we should be tough with the Ukrainians. Dr Kozłowski pointed out the very important role of closed Facebook groups. These are the places "where the freaky content is mainly spread". In his opinion, people often do not check on such forums where the information comes from, instead clicking on "clickbaits," especially when they are aggressive. They are often condescending towards concrete groups - in our case, the Ukraine state and the Ukrainian minority in Poland. Who is vulnerable for such information and "freaky messages"? Dr Kozłowski names anti-Semites and "low information consumers."²⁷ They "do not trust mainstream media; they seek the truth hidden by a global conspiracy; mainstream media are conspiring; and there is a Zionist conspiracy on a mass scale which affects everybody's lives. As we can see, this is a group popular in many countries: we can call them conspiracy theorists. Mr. Basaj also mentioned the indirect influence of fringe portals. They have up to several thousands of viewers, but this is not all of their influence. They have the potential to impact at the level of search engines, where young people are victims, because they lack developed information awareness. This way, fringe content is spread among the younger generation, which may affect the future. In that point of view, the source selection algorithm is key. Mateusz Bajek, analyst at Esperis Consulting, adds one more point. The success of the narrative injected into the Polish media space can be measured when the narratives became present in media outlets close to the Polish government. If some event becomes a discussed topic there, we can say that the Kremlin has achieved its goal. Moscow tried to inject revisionist narratives about Lithuania or Belarus into Poland, but failed completely. On the other hand, disputes with Ukraine were an important part of the political discourse from 2014, but were very intense during the period in 2018 and 2019, so we can say this was at least in some parts, a successful operation by Moscow.

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 examination of message distribution over time pro-

vided us with valuable insight into the differences between the dissemination strategies of fringe far-right, pro-Kremlin and mainstream media aimed at different audiences or subcultures, and specific sets of audiences, and subcultures.

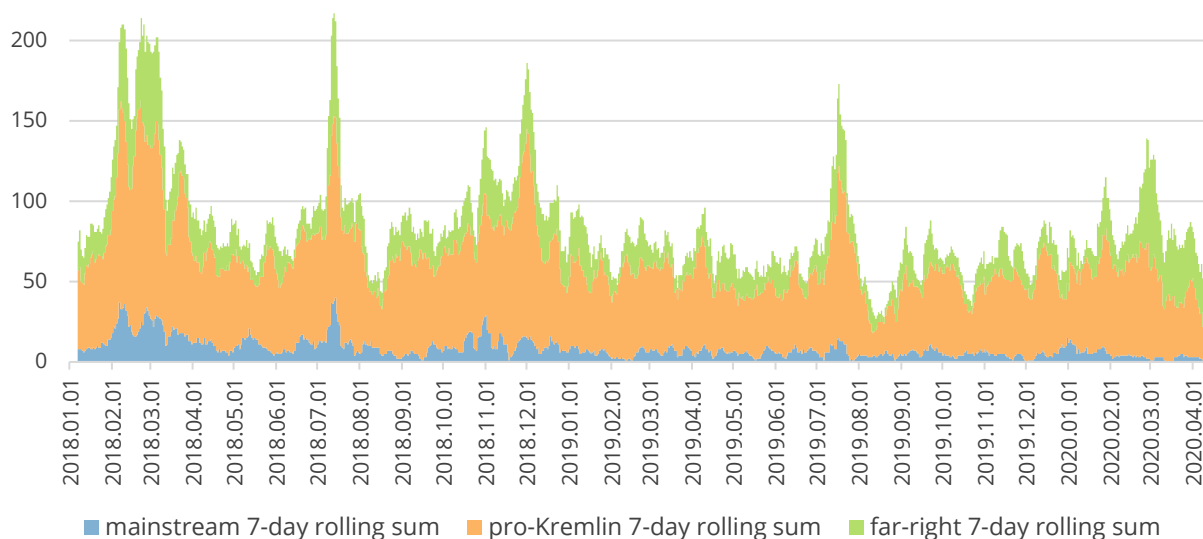
GENERAL TREND

The general trend of Polish political and media discourse focuses on Ukraine, whose current western part (Western Galicia) belonged for many years to Poland before World War I (as mentioned before, from 1387 to 1772).²⁸

Discussions on Facebook and on website articles during the period analyzed were driven mainly by topics sensitive for both countries, such as the Polish-Ukrainian War (1918-1919), and by historical anniversaries like the 75th anniversary of the Volhynia Massacre in 2018, which also recalled memories of the Polish-Ukrainian ethnic conflict during World War II, including ongoing events like the crisis in the Kerch Strait or controversial law projects, like the changes in law regarding the IPN (National Institute of Remembrance) introduced by the Polish government in 2018, and usually called "IPN law". The proposed changes have made it a

crime to publicly ascribe blame or attach blame to the Polish nation or state for crimes committed by Nazi Germany or for war crimes or other crimes against humanity (which included the killing of Polish citizens by Ukrainian military formations). The proposition for the legal changes created significant tension between Kyiv and Warsaw, which is also analysed more deeply in the next paragraphs.

While the mainstream media focussed on current events or reported on legal changes as mentioned above, fringe and far-right outlets were using them as reasons to heat up historical differences and undermine current Polish-Ukrainian relations. In general, we can see that the peaks in the trends for all outlets, mainstream, fringe and far-right, were almost simultaneous. But the concrete narratives for the respective media and Facebook posts were different. Peaks in the trend reflect the Kremlin's



The number of revisionism-related website articles and Facebook posts in the Polish media space between 1 January 2018 and 15 April 2020

general (dis)information strategy: the use of historical conflicts and revisionism to achieve geopolitical goals, such as alienating Ukraine from Poland and destabilizing Polish information space.

The highest general trend peak, as seen on the chart below, was noted during the week of November 26, 2018 which was probably motivated by the Kerch Strait incident which occurred the day before, when the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) coast guard fired upon and captured three Ukrainian Navy vessels attempting to pass from the Black Sea into the Sea of Azov through the Kerch Strait on their way to the port of Mariupol²⁹.

The peak analysed is a great example of Russia's know-how of disinformation operations towards Poland. Surprisingly, articles posted by far-right and fringe media did not discuss Russia's aggression towards the Ukrainian Naval forces, but focussed on other incidents that occurred at the same time. We can see a convergence – probably not coincidental – between the military accident and the increased activity of non-mainstream outlets. We can formulate the hypothesis that fringe, Russian and pro-Russian media were trying to cover the Kerch Strait incidents, with Russian aggression, by other provocations and increased activity (higher intensity and number of articles posted) of disinformation outlets.

During the week following the Kerch Strait incident (from November 19), we noted incidents which alluded to historical conflict over eastern Poland/Western Ukraine, where Polish forces were fighting with Bandera's "nationalist formation" OUN UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) during World War II. For example, signs written on a building in Szczecin, such as "F**k Bandera (...)," were the most significant drivers for the trend pick mentioned above. The most popular article on this issue was posted on the mainstream portal "Onet.pl," and was the most influential entry, even though this peak was mostly influenced by fringe and far-right media. Other, less but still influential, incidents mentioned by other outlets and Facebook posts included Ukrainian singer Oleh Skripka, intoning the Banderian greeting "Sława Ukrajini, herojam sława!"³⁰ in the Polish city of Lublin, posted by far-right Kresy.pl. The event led to controversy, as the

quote is the motto of OUN UPA formations, the troops responsible for killing thousands of Poles. The top story from far-right media was about Polish students arrested in Lviv who wanted to commemorate Polish soldiers killed during the defence of Lviv, when the city belonged to Poland, by firing flares in a Lviv cemetery.

In summary, there is a difference between top messages and the most influential stories among mainstream, far-right and fringe outlets, even though we can assume that the focus in Poland's media on the Ukrainian state and different incidents that occurred in the same week could be driven by the Kerch Strait incident. Knowing Russia's tendency to use hybrid conflicts, we can formulate a thesis, that some of the events mentioned above were motivated or even executed by Russian Federation special services to shift attention of its attack on the Ukrainian navy in the Kerch Strait. In the Kremlin's influence operations playbook, heating up territorial disputes, historical sentiments and historical revisionism, form the basis of attacks towards Poland's information space.

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.³¹ In Hungary we sampled a total of 757 articles, of which 360 domestic articles related to our research focus was analysed in this chapter. In Poland, we sampled a total of 580 articles (6% of all the articles scrapped), of which 307 articles, related to our research focus, were analysed for 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 main-

stream interpretations of the same topics and the construction of country-specific narratives utilizing unique manipulation techniques and disinformation of the Kremlin's playbook.

Since these narratives are all connected to Polish-Ukrainian relations, the historical conflict over the Lviv region and the situation of ethnic minorities in Poland and Ukraine, they can be considered continuing and stable elements of Polish-Ukrainian relations, Polish domestic and foreign policies and political dialogue, which enables the Kremlin and pro-Kremlin media to heat up the public discussion with narratives aimed at destabilizing Ukrainian and Polish society, and neighbourhood relations. We were able to identify 14 different narratives in the sample analysed, which we have reduced to the most important 5. The most frequent and influential ones are listed in the table below.

Narrative	Number of articles	Type of media	Percentage
Ukraine is anti-Polish; UPA is glorified by Ukraine	140	Yes	46%
Lviv is Polish	63	Yes	20%
Volhynia killing	44	Yes	14%
Ukraine as opponent to IPN law	36	Yes	12%
Ukraine is a failed state	24	Far-right, and mostly kremlin	8%
TOTAL RELEVANT	307		100%

Table 1. The number and share of different narratives across mainstream, far-right and pro-Kremlin samples in Poland

Similarly to other countries, mainstream media messages in Poland are geared more towards fact-based and balanced reporting, while fringe pro-Kremlin and far-right media narratives were far more intense, less objective and more opinion-shaping, by creating numerous op-ed-genre articles. They could be utilized to execute so called active measures and disinformation and destabilization efforts related to Polish-Ukrainian relations and historical conflict. Mainstream articles, therefore, provide historical contexts and current-day issues for fringe media to push their more extreme, often revisionist narratives, and political ideas or accusations against the Ukrainian government for

being anti-Polish or the Polish government for being too submissive towards "nationalists" in Kyiv. Regarding the single revisionist narrative about Lviv being Polish and/or the need for Western Ukrainian territories to become parts of Poland again, mainstream media does not put forward the narrative, unlike fringe media; rather, it reflects on the fringe narratives in a critical manner. Therefore, the overall shared nature of these narratives across different media types and discourses can be explained by different interpretations of the same core messages, rather than uniform understanding of issues and narratives.

Common narratives

As we can see in the table, 4 out of 5 of the most important narratives were shared across all types of media and included: (1) the politics of remembrance or memory; (2) Ukrainian domestic policy and social trends (3) changes in Polish law which affected Polish-Ukrainian relations and the current condition of the Ukrainian State, often described as a "failed" state. The politics of remembrance narrative (1) entails the official commemoration of the of the Volhynia Massacre commissioned by the Polish government, and the 75th anniversary of the genocide³², which was supported by all parliamentary factions and public opinion. The main message of the commemoration was about tragic character of the event being commemorated, when military formations commanded by Stepan Bandera UPA killed between 40,000 and 60,000 Polish citizens (mainly women and kids) in Volhynia, in 1943, which was underlined by Polish President Andrzej Duda in his speech³³. Polish governmental representations (PM) also expressed a strong need to proceed with exhumations of the victims who remain unidentified to this day: „I shall not rest until the whole truth is uncovered and each of those brutally murdered is remembered³⁴“. The other event connected with the politics of remembrance is the Polish-Ukrainian war over Lviv, which took place between 1918 and 1919, and which was a Ukrainian attempt to seize control over the city. Before the military conflict, Lviv was located inside Polish borders, but was a tipping point, because of a sizeable Ukrainian minority living there. Narratives about this topic were different in their main message in different types of outlets. Mainstream media were focused on fact-based reporting on these historical events, while fringe outlets were underlining the Polish heritage of Lviv and its long history inside Polish borders and historical tensions between the two nations. The Ukrainian domestic policy and social trends (2) narratives in analyzed fringe articles samples were focusing on Ukraine's state (described as failed) and governmental „glorification“ of UPA and Stephan Bandera, who is treated in Poland as a person responsible for killing thousands of Polish citizens, while in Ukraine he is a symbol of fighting for independence. Recently his story has been used in Kyiv to fuel patriotism and boost national identity, which is needed for effective counteraction towards

Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine. That is why, using fringe media phrasing, „glorification“ occurs, and that is why Bandera is a symbol of resilience for fighting with Russian occupants in the Donbas region. This was a semantic conflict over Bandera and UPA affecting the bilateral relationship between two nations and governments, such as the scandal (in the perspective of Polish fringe outlets) which took place in 2018. During the parade in Kyiv on the occasion of the Independence Day of Ukraine, when the Minister of Defense greeted soldiers with the words *„Sława Ukraini! Herojam sława!* (ukr. „Слава Україні! Героям слава!“), pol. „Chwała Ukrainie! Bohaterom chwała!“) - which was accompanied by the raising of his straightened right arm to the right-oblique above the top of the head (Roman salute), adopted as an organizational greeting for the members of the OUN and UPA, the organization responsible for genocide against Polish citizens. This event raised concerns in the Polish fringe media, with Kresy.pl calling the greeting „nationalistic“ and „criminal“³⁵. Similarly controversial for bilateral relations were the changes made in Polish law (3) , called „IPN law“. The law introduced by the Polish Parliament in January 2018 has been variously reported as an outlawing of the ideology of Stepan Bandera. It proposes fines or possible 3-year jail terms for those who deny that Bandera and his followers in the OUN/UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army fighting the Soviets and the Nazis - they were collaborating with Nazis actually) committed crimes against Poles³⁶. The bill was controversial for the Ukrainian government and public opinion, where media were often interpreting it as anti-Ukrainian. The discussed bill was „targeting Ukrainians living in Poland“, said the head of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, Volodymyr Viatrovykh, in 2018, who also suggested that by adopting this document, Polish parliamentarians supported pro-Russian forces in his country³⁷. As previously mentioned, mainstream media were creating fact-based and report-style news, while fringe and pro-Kremlin media were using this political incident to heat-up the conflict and recall historical genocides and differences between two nations.

Mainstream narratives

As seen before, the three mainstream narratives were shared among all type of outlets: (1) the politics of remembrance or memory; (2) the Ukrainian domestic policy and social trends (3) changes in Polish law which affected Polish-Ukrainian relations. In the analyzed sample, there were no narratives exclusive to mainstream media; we can only underline that mainstream outlets were focusing on fact-based reporting, and were only reporting official Polish government communication on Polish-Ukrainian relations or informing about incidents related to the analyzed topic, like the World Volhynia Massacre commemorations held in Poland and Ukraine³⁸. Ukraine is treated as an important partner and Poland "remains a strong advocate for further bringing Georgia and Ukraine closer to the Alliance", as announced by FM Jacek Czaputowicz during a press meeting after a video call with all NATO FMs in 2020. Poland also criticizes the Russian occupation of Crimea and aggression in the Donbas region. Russian aggression towards Eastern Ukraine is seen in Poland as a real threat to national security. It is one of the reasons for Poland to be an advocate for strengthening NATO's eastern flank and the Polish desire to see the number of U.S. soldiers stationing in Poland increase. Interestingly, mainstream outlets were also interest-

Far-right narratives

As mentioned previously in our trend analysis, far-right narratives are trying to hijack mainstream discourses, and heat up current incidents to intensify discussions over historical conflicts between Poland and Ukraine. Far right part of Polish society and media has strong sentiments for a "strong" and "independent" Poland, which was fighting for its own independence. In the 2018 research study "What is patriotism for Poles?" conducted by the Foundation of Zygmunt Zaleski, we can see that 88% percent of respondents claimed that knowing the history of their country is important for being "a patriot,"⁴³ which signals that far-right narratives are rooted in widespread societal attitudes related to Polish national identity. Political and military actors who played a leading role in the 1920s on the Polish side of the war are, especially for the conservative and right-wing part of society, symbols of national pride and heroes. Therefore, the historical conflict

ed in the Kerch State incident³⁹, also viewing it as another example of Russian aggression, and produced a great number of articles, while there were almost no articles on that topic in fringe media, probably due to a lack of arguments on narratives that can be of interest for their audience. Ukraine as a clear victim and Russia as the aggressor were probably not so interesting. Moreover, on this occasion, we were able to observe different phenomena - we spotted an intense peak in the number of items posted, which often focused on Ukraine, like the opinion piece posted on Kresy.pl⁴⁰ proposing that "Ukraine should never join NATO", or different articles posted to salon24.pl⁴¹ describing an item which suggests that Ukraine should be annexed by Poland. We can formulate the thesis that pro-Kremlin outlets were trying to cover Russian aggression with news and an info campaign using this wave of content (also anti-Ukrainian), to shift the focus of public opinion from Kerch State. Moreover, even during such clear events, the Kremlin is trying to push forward with its geopolitical agenda, focusing on undermining the Ukrainian state or suggesting revisionist ideas like Ukraine purposely losing independence and joining Poland. The few articles that were published on this subject claimed that Russia's attitude is justified⁴².

with Ukraine over Lviv or the Volhynia Massacre, the politics of remembrance (1), is an important narrative, which can be seen in our analysis chart (97 articles together). With Moscow's geopolitical goal of alienating Ukraine from the West and destabilizing bilateral relations between Kyiv and Warsaw, the historical sentiments and conflicts are a sensitive topic, and easy to explore, utilize and provoke conflicts between two countries.

Celebrations of the 74th anniversary of the massacre in Huta Pieniacka⁴⁴ in 2018 are a good example of active measures of Russian propaganda. The events were disturbed by a group of Ukrainians who, according to the coverage of fringe salon24.pl⁴⁵ were shouting "Bandera is our hero" during public prayers. The article also named the disturbing group as "Ukrainian neo-Nazis". We can clearly see how, thanks to the Kremlin's information oper-

ations, the tensions regarding the topic increased among far right groups on the both sides of the border. Articles like the salon24.pl one help heat up the conflicts by using such strong, evaluating language.

Moreover, Ukrainian domestic policy (2) is sometimes controversial for Polish society and public opinion: for example, praising Bandera or using UPA's motto during public events, like the Independence Day celebrations mentioned above. It is worth remembering that Bandera, UPA or other formations fighting for Ukraine's independence were enemies of Polish historical heroes (at least for right wingers) fighting for the same on Polish side. This is the reason why the past, and conflicts after World War I, remembrance politics, or naming Bandera as a hero or a symbol, are often treated and spun by fringe media as anti-Polish⁴⁶. In 2018, there was an exhibition organized in the centre of Kyiv by the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance called "100 years of neighbourhood. Ukraine and Poland". The exhibition was focused mainly on the period after World War II, and in the opinion of fringe media, like pch24.pl, it intentionally missed the genocides against Poles after World War I. The article⁴⁷ describes the exhibition as "anti-Polish", "scandalous" and "pseudohistorical". This sentiment makes the right wing part of society vulnerable to Russian disinformation, and it is often a target for Kremlin-driven disinformation campaigns⁴⁸. The IPN law (3) was reported completely differently in far right media than in mainstream outlets. It was praised as an act of courage by the government and an attempt to improve Poland's independence as we can see in the right wing prawy.pl article⁴⁹, the outlet focussed on the reaction of the Polish minority in Ukraine and people who survived the war in 1918 and 1919. In the letter

Pro-Kremlin narratives

As discussed previously, the Kremlin is able to target far-right media and part of society with its political agenda of revisionism. Pro-Kremlin outlets were pushing the Russian Federation's geopolitical agenda and goals in all four thematic narratives: (1) the politics of remembrance or memory; (2) Ukrainian domestic policy and social trends (3) changes in Polish law which affected Polish-Ukrainian relations, and (4) the state of the Ukrainian State. In summary,

described by the author, they request to keep the IPN law in its original form, without taking into account Ukraine's concerns. Ukraine's doubts about the new Polish law, mentioned previously, were also treated by fringe media as proof of Kyiv's anti-Polish attitudes, for example in the idzpodprad⁵⁰ article, whose author describes Ukrainian authorities as "cowards who are afraid of the truth" and clearly "anti-Polish". As mainstream media were trying to have only an informational role, right-wing outlets were trying to shape the public discussion in an obvious and direct way. The exclusive narrative for right wing and pro-Kremlin outlets, which had not appeared in mainstream media articles, was related to the sense of Ukraine state existence (4). Far right media discourse was focused on criticism of the Maidan protests, claiming that inside the protesters' group they were able to identify "neo-Nazis" and "Banderists" like the article posted on salon24*, whose author clearly claims that the Maidan protest led directly to the annexation of Crimea but also to awakening anti-Polish attitudes, like the "glorification of Banderism". On the other hand, Ukraine is assessed as a failed country which cannot manage its internal and external relations. In another article posted on salon24, we can read that "Ukraine is starting open conflicts with all its neighbours" which as dangerous and results in "internal chaos in this country". This is a typical narrative from the Kremlin, trying to build an image of a failed country which is not capable of existing independently. That is why Ukraine is often described also as a fake state, which truly belongs to Polish and Russian ethnic groups, in the context that was mentioned previously, that there is no such country as Ukraine. This narrative was also present in far-right narratives, but it was far more utilized by pro-Kremlin outlets.

we can say that all listed narratives in the Kremlin's interpretation are extreme(ist) versions of attitudes described in the "far-right narratives" section. The pro-Kremlin media's goal is to heat up historical conflicts, bring back bad memories, to isolate Ukraine from Poland, and increase anti-Ukrainian sentiment in Poland, for example by showing "leaked documents showing the truth about the Maidan protest" posted on Kresy.pl. In the article,

the author analyses a YouTube video⁵¹ posted by a Ukrainian blogger, who claims that “we don’t know the truth about the protests”. Kresy.pl also underlined that they believe that “the investigation into the Maidan killings was sabotaged because the people who took power in Ukraine as a result of the Maidan were involved in the massacre.” The portal was also attacking the Maidan protesters and accused them of being “neofascist” praising Bandera (his portrait was hanged in the occupied city hall). Kresy.pl also claimed that they have seen materials from the investigation, where one of the protesters claimed that he gave a machine gun to other protesters and started shooting towards Berkut⁵². As we can see, article puts a lot of effort in undermining the Maidan sense, and build aversion in Poland towards the protests and show that it had some hidden truth etc. the pro-Kremlin media, as shown before, also aim to reduce Polish support for Ukraine’s policy goal of joining NATO and the EU (see the article entitled: “Ukraine shouldn’t join NATO”⁵³). Disinformation campaigns use objective, real-time incidents and spin them to adjust them to the Kremlin’s geopolitical goals and Putin’s narratives. In the case of narratives (1), (2) and (3), the analyzed articles were one-sided in the case of argumentation and were using emotional and conflicting terminology such as: bandits⁵⁴, neo-Nazis, killers, genocide perpetrators, anti-Polish, and describing Bandera as a criminal and murderer⁵⁵. The main spin point in such a narrative is building the image of a Ukrainian society and government which is made up of “neo-Banderists and neo-fascist” and praising anti-Polish attitudes⁵⁶. This strong and emotional language was used to elicit aggression among the readers and awaken anti-Ukrainian attitudes. Ukraine is often shown as an anti-Polish state, glorifying organizations and persons responsible for killing Poles in the war over Galicia and Lviv⁵⁷. Moreover, when going to narrative (4), pro-Kremlin media are pushing the vision of Ukraine as a neo-fascist and failed state⁵⁸, which has problems with its identity, and where people prefer to be Russian citizens. In extreme cases, we saw articles claiming that Ukraine has no right to exist and to be an independent state. For example, the Polish version of the Russian propaganda channel, Sputnik⁵⁹, posted in December 2019 that if Ukraine were to join Poland, and were to lose its identity, it would solve all its problems, because it would immediately join NATO and EU. Alex Jones’

portal⁶⁰ on the other hand suggested that when President Petro Poroshenko broke the friendship agreement between Russia and Ukraine on 2018, (...) the disintegration of Ukraine was half-heartedly suggested by western countries. Also, there would be a need to bring order to possible chaos resulting from this alternative. There is an imperative of involving eastern EU members in this process, at the same time speculating on a possible “softening” of the EU position on the emigration of Muslims in exchange for “EU assistance in legalizing the legal status of occupied Ukrainian areas”. – Basically, what the author suggests is that Ukraine can be split and annexed to other countries with a green light from the EU in exchange for accepting Muslims immigration. In such materials, Ukraine is presented not as the subject of international relations, but as a subject which can only submit to the will of larger and more important players.

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.⁶¹ 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. 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 our analytical work using the SentiOne platform we created a network of pro-Kremlin websites, in the sense that they often post narratives or even content itself that can be found on Russian propaganda tools such as Sputnik, RT or Voice of Europe. Based on the graphs below, we can see how Russian propaganda is injected into vulnerable groups. It does not come through official channels controlled by Russians, which are not popular in Poland, but through Polish-language news portals. The information provided from pro-Kremlin sources relates mainly to events from international politics and historical narratives. Based on the information provided below, we can see the channels and networks through which Russia spreads anti-Ukrainian narratives and is heating historical sentiments over Lviv city and other parts of Kresy Wschodnie (former eastern parts of Poland, now belonging to Ukraine). There are different tactics of spreading these. Some of the outlets are focusing on creating their own content (op-ed style website posts), while some simply repost articles from Russian outlets. The outreach channels also differ: some outlets like Kresy.pl have a large audience on Facebook and Twitter and use social media as main channels of promotion, in contrast to *Niezalezny Dziennik Polityczny* – which is focused more on website posting.

THE COMPLETE POLISH NETWORK

The first one is represented by pro-Kremlin and fringe “*Niezalezny Dziennik Polityczny*” (NDP), which has servers in Amsterdam and is accused of implementing the Kremlin’s policy in Poland⁶². In a text published by mainstream outlet “*Rzeczpospolita*,” we can also read that the portal implements “the most glaring manifestation of disinformation to hit the Polish army⁶³.” It is worth mentioning that the editor-in-chief of the portal created his own fake public profile, claiming his name is Adam Kaminski, but nobody found proof of the existence of such a person in reality. One can learn from NDPs articles, for example, that the Latvian authorities are pursuing an policy of apartheid towards the Russian-

speaking and Polish-speaking national minority. On the other hand, “the American presence in the region is unnecessary and harmful because it does not change the strategic situation, but only exposes NATO to accelerated confrontation.” NDP has over 20 thousand followers on Facebook, and displays almost no connection to other media. This feature of the graph can be attributed to the tactic represented by the outlet analysed, which tries to shape public opinion with its own vision of the world. To achieve that goal, it posts more “op-ed” style pieces rather than reprints or comments to articles posted by other outlets, but sometimes NDP also reprints in full – without the consent of

the editorial office – articles about security, including from mainstream outlets like “Rzeczpospolita”, Onet and “Gazeta Wyborcza”. They also use mainly webservices as a channel to communicate with their audience, not focussing much on social media. Similarly, to Hungarian fringe websites, it relies heavily on Google and other legally sound ways of financing, trying 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. On the other side, we have portals and profiles like “Kresy.pl”, with almost ⁹⁸ thousand followers on Facebook, which use social media as important channels of reaching their audiences. Kresy.pl describes its geopolitical commitment on its website: “From the very beginning of the Kresy.pl portal, our mission was to place the memory of Kresy (former Eastern Poland) as close as possible to the centre of the political identity of Polish society. We believe that it is the political,

and not archival-sentimental, memory of the “Lost Lands” that is a condition for the existence of a strong Polish political community, aware of its interests. And vice versa: the indifferent attitude towards the Borderlands, marginalizing their role and significance, and even consciously renouncing them, is not only an obvious sign of moral decay, but also an important (potentially the most important) cause of our political weakness.” This second type of website, as seen on the graph, is strongly connected to other outlets, which can be seen as a stronger geopolitical commitment. They often use many hyperlinks to embed their messages, media and activities into the wider discourses of other media, such as mainstream outlets or fringe portals, which makes their narratives and positions in the network much stronger. As we already saw in the comments from Mateusz Bajek, Kresy.pl is not purely the Kremlin’s propaganda channel. They often take information from other services and then reinterpret it, as a tool of malign influence.

THE CLEAN NETWORK

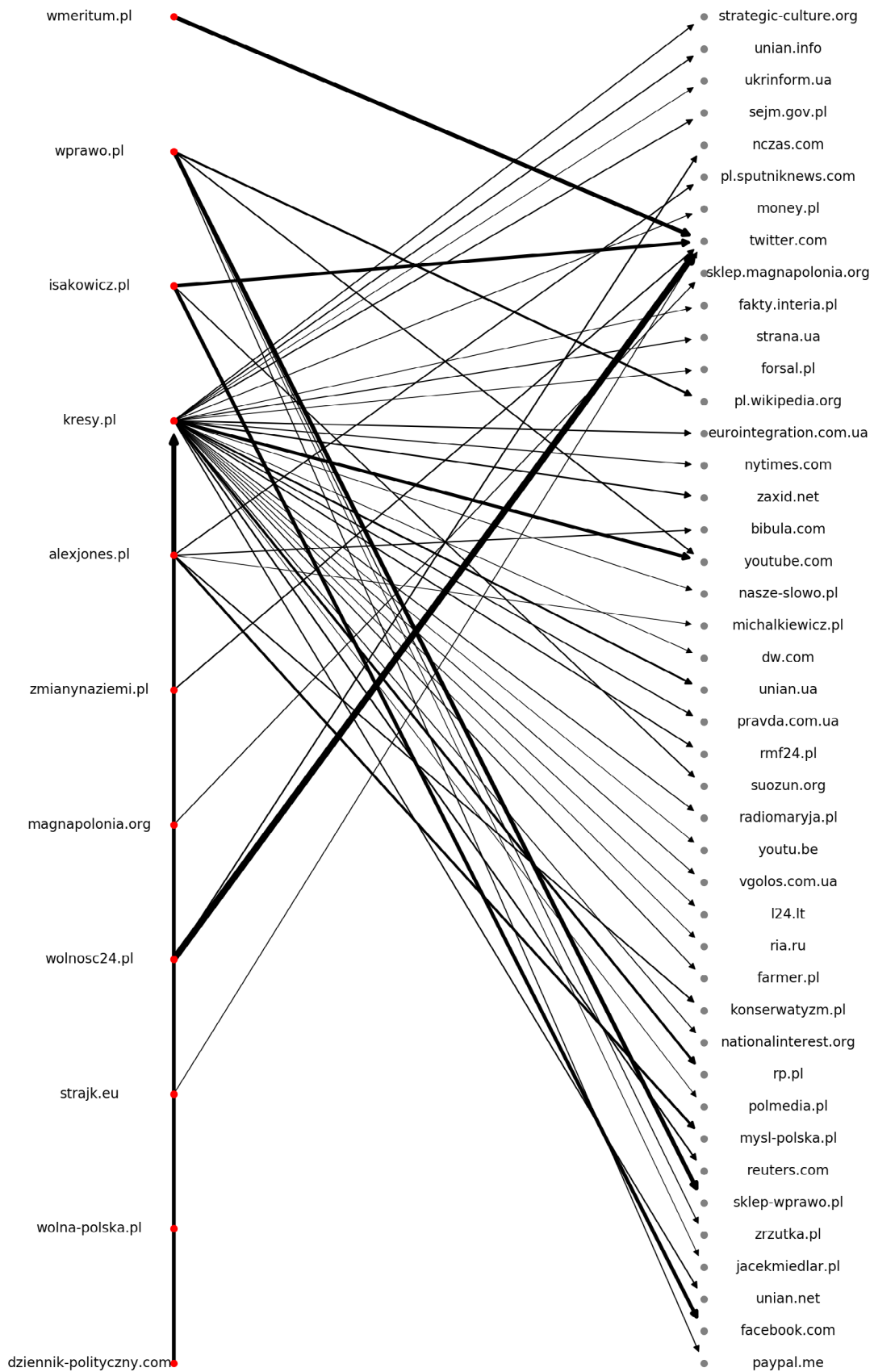
The graphic showing a clean network of websites clearly indicates the most important pro-Kremlin actors, and the wider dissemination network contexts of their disinformation activities, as seen on the graph below.

The network created by the most prominent nodes with the highest number of edges can be broken down into 6 groups of: (1) international news media (reuters.com, dw.com), (2) mainstream news media (fakty.interia.pl, rmf24.pl, rp.pl), (3) social media pages (youtube.com, twitter.com, facebook.com), (4) Russian propaganda media (pl.sputniknews.com, ria.ru), (5) Ukrainian outlets (unian.info, Pravda.com.ua) and finally (6) other conspiracy/fringe websites (nczas.com, mysl-polska.pl) providing the majority of outbound connections.

The lack of foreign far-right and a minimal number of Russian propaganda channels means, similarly to Hungary, that pro-Kremlin messaging related to Polish-Ukrainian relations and historical disputes is confined to a small, domestic circle of far-right, “independent”, and pro-Russian media whose contents are nationalistic, history-oriented, and conspiracy-prone at the same time.

In terms of the construction of messages, the high prevalence of conspiracy/far-right revisionist pages and mainstream independent websites indicates that the narratives related to Polish-Ukrainian relations and historical conflicts and disinformation use two main strategies. Firstly they reinforce their “independence”, highlighting the contrast to pro-government media (owned by political party) or to mainstream media (owned by foreign actors in their narrative), which in their opinion gives them credibility for readers, as they are the only ones to provide real and objective information. Based on that comes their second strategy: that their grievances are rooted in issues, facts and statements present in the mainstream media about the topic analysed. When describing real events or accidents, they inject the Kremlin’s agenda as comments to the article. For example, when reporting on historical commemorations (of for ex. Volhynia massacre), they add some emotional wording and criticism towards the Polish government for speaking with the “neo-fascist” and “anti-Polish” Ukrainian government. The presence of social media platforms in the network highlights their effort at the grassroots dissemination of narratives by hyperlinking their own, secondary accounts or elements, and also gives a chance to multiply the fringe content in fringe/far-right Facebook groups.

NETWORK ANALYSIS OF FRINGE WEBSITES



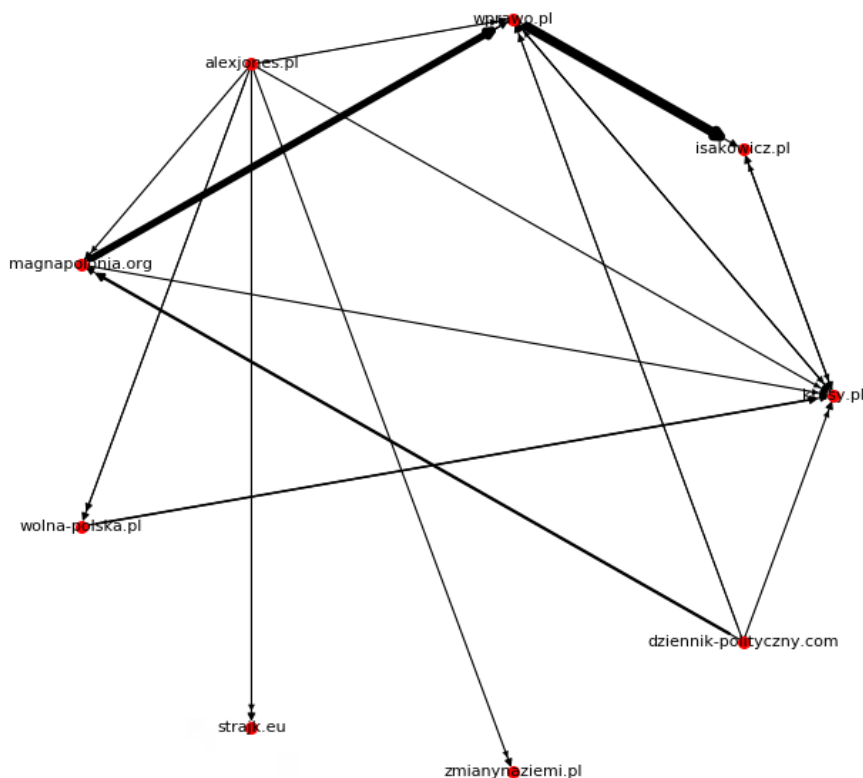
The clean network of Polish pro-Kremlin websites and third-party sites

THE NETWORK OF PRO-KREMLIN PAGES

On the graph below, we can observe the small but interconnected network of our initial pro-Kremlin websites, which cross-posted content through hyperlinks.

This provides the conclusion: messages related to Polish--Ukrainian relations are parts of a coordinated dissemination campaign in Poland, often followed by, as we can see in the other studies, a noticeable number of fake personal accounts spreading content in closed far-right/conspiracy Facebook groups⁶⁴. The connection between Magnapolonia (translation: great Poland) and wprawo.pl (translation: into right) is clear. Both services often share content directly from Russian propaganda channels: Sputnik, Russia Today and the pro-Kremlin Voice of Europe. They often do not even try to pretend to be opinion shapers with their own content: they simply repost materials previously shared on Russian media, and to strengthen the message, they often cross-post content between them. Alexjones.pl is another interesting example, as this service is a "Polish" one and not connected to the American altright movement per se. As the author describes his service: "The alexjones.pl

portal is owned by a private person, it is not associated with any political party, religion or social group, and it is not financed by anyone. It was created and is run as a response to the growing disproportion between false information reaching us from mainstream media, and relatively objective, reliable information that comes only from narrow niches such as some alternative media"⁶⁵. The author also describes himself as a fan of the real Alex Jones: "Why Alex Jones? Alex Jones is an American journalist who has been uncompromisingly revealing everything people need to know for years, but won't find out from TV and other mega-media. I respect him in the same way as David Icke and many other lesser-known brave men who expose the devil's plan to enslave our planet by a clique of madmen. As far as possible, I try to publish translations or my own studies on the www.alexjones.pl portal based on the most important information published on Alex Jones websites (infowars.com, prisonplanet.com), but this does not mean that this website will only contain content that is consistent with Alex Jones' views and preaching."



The Polish network of pro-Kremlin websites

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.⁶⁶ 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.

The examination of Polish Facebook pages, similarly to the network analysis, is focused on fringe far-right and pro-Kremlin accounts, since these fringe discourses are the primarily venues of territorial

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 what factors determine the successful dissemination of anti-Ukrainian narratives and historical sentiments in Polish social media. Among the most successful far-right Facebook pages, we find the fan page of one of the most popular conservative news outlets, *Tygodnik Sieci*, with over 205,000 followers; the page of far-right and nationalist outlet "Polska Niepodległa", the anti-Semitic fringe page full of conspiracy theories "Warszawska Gazeta", the anti-opposition and far right page "Prawicowy Internet" and the page of the right-wing and conservative political party, founded by politician Marek Jurek, called "Prawica Rzeczypospolitej." Although "Prawicowy Internet" was active in posting content

destabilization narratives and disinformation and conspiracy theories. Similarly to the other countries, the audiences and followers of the above-mentioned Facebook pages are actively helping to spread the Kremlin's geopolitical agenda. The fringe pages use emotional language and present a strong sense of national identity and commitment to traditional values. Thanks to that, their audience consists also of far-right movements, parties or paramilitary groups that willingly or unwillingly disseminate pro-Kremlin propaganda and disinformation, even though in Poland it is almost impossible to find groups which are openly pro-Russian. Interestingly, content related to Polish-Ukrainian relations and historical sentiments was more shared and engaging for the audience than content not related to the topic of our analysis. The most viral (shared, and/or liked and/or commented) posts were clearly playing on emotions with phrases like "nationalists", "neo-fascists", "murderers", suggesting that the conflict between Poland and Ukraine is still ongoing and that Poland is under threat because of the anti-Polish Ukraine government. Those narratives, language and disseminations techniques look like they were copied and pasted from the Kremlin's playbook of influence operations.

related to the topic analyzed, the rest of the pages were not so active in content sharing, but their audiences are very active in the dissemination process of such messages, which was shown by the number of total engagements.

When it comes to pro-Kremlin pages, the 5 most successful accounts were similar in narrative and tendency to conspiracy theories as the far-right fringe ones. The most active profiles were: *Parejza.pl67*, well known for sharing Kremlin propaganda, one of the most popular right-wing websites "wprawo.pl", the "kresy.pl" page mentioned before which focuses on countries whose territories formerly belonged to Poland, and the page "Marsz Niepodległości" associated with the popular patriotic march held every year to commemorate Polish

Independence. Similarly to fringe far-right pages, pro-Kremlin ones were not necessarily active in content posting, but their audiences are very active in the dissemination process of such messages. By comparing the top 5 far-right and pro-Kremlin sites, we can define 5 key prerequisites for the successful dissemination of "anti-Ukrainian" narratives on social media. These are:

1. A significant number of followers from 10,000 followers to more than 200,000.
2. Using specific and attractive language, suggesting that the page is "independent", "patriotic" and for "real Poles" – in other words, such pages present a strong sense of national identity.
3. Active and engaged groups of followers, active in sharing and commenting the content.
4. Using Polish history and historical symbols as tools and sources of awakening national pride. Here we have symbols like the flag, historical individuals, sometimes even famous paintings, etc. The second aspect of success is related to the language presenting an "exclusive" sense of national pride, and belonging. Here, the symbols are actual physical representations of such identity, like the t-shirts with a white eagle, using historical symbols etc.
5. Conspiracy theories as «alternative" interpretations of historical events.

The most impactful social media pages analysed produce a lot of new "facts" and "theories" on Polish-Ukrainian relations and historical conflicts, all parts of an effort to stir up:

- historical sentiments
- anti-Ukrainian attitudes

Performance of viral posts

According to the comparison of Polish relevant and irrelevant posts on fringe pages⁶⁹, Polish-Ukrainian related posts generate higher levels of reactions on average in the audience, which is 65.9 reactions per post as compared to irrelevant posts' 54.2 reactions per post – as seen in the table below.

Similarly to the other countries, we saw a higher level of activity on fringe pages which manifests itself in the higher average number of shares (32.8 to 22.6), while the average number of comments

- national pride for Polish right-wingers.

It is a dangerous mix of fact-based reporting and strong language, which may affect readers' final opinion about the topics being reported on. For example, diplomatic discussions on the IPN law were spun by fringe media into an informal war, where one side was protecting Polish heritage and independence and the other one the (Ukrainian Government and public opinion), was defending the memory of perpetrators of genocide like Bandera. The Ukrainian government expressed some issues with the new IPN law analysed, especially concerns regarding the idea of provisions that are to enable the initiation of criminal proceedings for denying the crimes of Ukrainian nationalists, including the crimes of those Ukrainian formations that collaborated with the German Third Reich. Kyiv's diplomatic protests against introducing such law in Poland were used by fringe social media pages and a dissemination network as an example of Ukraine still being anti-Polish and praising organizations responsible for killing Poles. This strong language, full of accusations, such as describing Ukraine as a neo-fascist state, supportive of far-right or even chauvinistic historical sentiments and one-sided analysis, was introduced to polarize bilateral diplomatic relations and stir up anti-Ukrainian sentiments with a "patriotic" attitude and "defending Poland's interests". Showing Ukraine as a country that is neo-fascist and governed by nationalist groups is in line with the Kremlin's geopolitical agenda showing Ukraine as a failed⁶⁸, neo-fascist state and aiming to destabilize regional relations in the CEE region and to separate Ukraine from the West.

was lower related to the relevant messages (14.7 to 21.8).

The difference between the dissemination of revisionism-related posts and unrelated posts can be explained by the results of the previous narrative and topical analyses. Destabilizing narratives are often "dressed" in discourse about national identity, historical conflict and genocide, that make these messages especially engaging for far-right or pro-Kremlin audiences, who are represented and

	Average Number of Reactions	Average Number of Comments	Average Number of Shares	Numbers of Documents
Irrelevant posts	54.2	21.8	22.6	310,712
Relevant posts	65.9	14.7	32.8	406
Total	54.3	21.8	22.6	311,118

Table 2. 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 Poland

organized by extremist parties, “patriotic” groups” etc., which are especially prone to violence and hate speech by default. The higher number of shares is also understandable as this type of content is widely shared among closed Facebook groups, which bring together people of similar mindsets.

The virality of the top 10 far-right posts ranges from 787 to 176 as the total number of shares, comments and reactions. The most viral posts either reflect on the anniversary of the Polish-Ukrainian war over Lviv, posted on 1st November 2018, or express disdain for the Ukrainian government’s and society’s different attitudes towards Stepan Bandera and his organization. Actual anti-Ukrainian attitudes and language is presented by the post⁷⁰ of the “Polska Niepodległa”, where the exact wording was: *“In Ukraine, the blade of nationalist contempt was aimed at Polish memory. The blow was directed precisely and painfully. In the symbol of Independence - Lviv Eaglets.”* - the post is about the Lviv District Council, which wanted to remove the statues of lions from the local cemetery, emphasizing that they are symbols of the “Polish occupation of the city”. The cemetery and statues are symbolic for Poland, and they represent Polish citizens (named Lviv Eaglets) who were defending the city. Almost like a lens, this post brings together elements mentioned earlier. Ukraine is “nationalist”, it attacks the memory of Polish heritage (Lviv eaglets), and Ukraine is shown as country which is the aggressor in bilateral relations. It also uses military terminology like “blade”, which suggests that some kind of war is going on. Among the top 10 most viral pro-Kremlin articles, conspiracy theories and click-bait items, kresy.pl posts are heavily featured, with 80% of the most viral posts. Interestingly, their total number of interactions is higher, between 1513 and 559, which signals that there are part some parts of Polish society which lack resilience to the Kremlin’s hidden messaging, such as a post from

March 2018⁷¹, which describes protests in Poland using anti-Ukrainian phrasing like the following “(...) anti-Polish tendencies in Ukraine and the submission of Polish authorities to Kyiv.” Another example is the post from February 27, 2020⁷² which is semi-revisionist, claiming that “there is no such ‘thing’ as Ukraine: there is only “Ukrainity”. This is typically hidden revisionism that can be seen in Polish media space: If Ukraine is not a country, it is a failed state, and its territories should be divided by “real” countries like Russia or Poland. The post quotes the Kremlin’s administration member who says, “Actually, it will be Ukraine; within what borders will there be or how many Ukrainians there will be - are open questions. And in resolving these issues, Russia has to participate anyway.”

The mechanism of the dissemination of posts is similar to the techniques mentioned before, but kresy.pl is very active in the case of posting content, as they try to comment each event happening on the political scene that is somehow connected with lands which previously belonged to Poland, named Kresy Wschodnie (in case of Ukraine, it is the western part, especially Lviv and Lutsk oblast). Thanks to frequent posting and being quick to comment ongoing issues, kresy.pl is getting a lot of traction. With the addition of emotional language and the narrative of “Banderists,” it ensures its content is shared a lot within its audience. The most popular story was about the Polish driver, who stopped a Ukrainian car which had a “Banderist” flag⁷³. Again, the narrative uses similar techniques mentioned before and uses adequate language to engage its audience. Another popular post, described previously⁷⁴, was about the event on March 19, 2018, where “Activists of the three largest national organizations, (Activists of the All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska), the National-Radical Camp (Obóz Narodowo Radykalny) and the National Movement (Ruch Narodowy) protested today against ‘anti-Pol-

ish tendencies in Ukraine and the submission of the Polish authorities to Kyiv". After the event, the Lviv Regional Council wanted to designate the MP Robert Winnicki (one of the organizers and a person who was standing at the UPA flag) as persona non grata in Ukraine⁷⁵. Based on the examples

above, we can see how the Kremlin's language is injected into Polish nationalists groups, which use the same language as fringe and pro-Kremlin websites and Facebook profiles, showing the effectiveness of Russia's influence operations.

SOCIETAL RESILIENCE

In Poland we can identify two main vulnerable audience groups that unwillingly absorb disinformation narratives and represent a target for Russian influence operations. They are exposed to malign misinformation campaigns utilizing historical conflicts between Poland and Ukraine as well as territorial revisionism between the two countries.

Far-right, nationalistic groups with xenophobic tendencies are the first core target for the Kremlin. They tend to idolize history and worship historical leaders or commanders of the Polish armed forces. With that attitude they are vulnerable to narratives underlining historical conflicts and successes, but also tragic events from the past. Such a group is easily injected with disinformation recalling the mass execution of Poles by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army or territorial disputes. A perfect example of this vulnerability would be the burning of the

Ukrainian flag during the "Independence March" held in 2016, where a group of marchers consisting of, among others, football hooligans, committed this act of vandalism.

Another similarly vulnerable audience is the far-right political party "Konfederacja". Its leader, Kszysztof Bosak, finished in 3rd place in the race for the position of Polish president. Firstly, the party targets football hooligans and similar groups as their possible supporters, so automatically (and perhaps unwillingly) they tend to repeat the Kremlin's narratives. Its nationalistic attitude is also expressed in aggressive messaging towards Ukraine. Internal political conflict in Poland is also a factor which creating a space for extremist political formations, which facilitate the injection of Russian disinformation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Revisionist disinformation campaigns are not effective and do not inject well into the Polish media space and society in general. However, as we saw in previous sections, there are specific groups vulnerable to malign operations.

- To improve Polish, but also Ukrainian, resilience, governments in Kyiv and Warsaw should establish a joint working group that could tackle and counter-message the Kremlin's campaigns targeting bilateral relations. On both sides of the border, anti-neighbour narratives are spread, followed by a revival of historical conflicts.
- As the techniques and vulnerable groups are similar in both countries, the most effective response would be a coordinated one. As the Kremlin aims to destabilize the region, and alienate Ukraine from the West, creating a joint, international response group, would be a good message to send to Vladimir Putin.

ENDNOTES

- 1 'The Russian Connection, The Spread of pro-Russian Policies on the European Far Right', Political Capital, 14 March 2014, http://www.riskandforecast.com/useruploads/files/pc_flash_report_russian_connection.pdf.
- 2 Reid Standish, 'Hacked: Putin Aide's Emails Detail Alleged Plot to Destabilize Ukraine', Foreign Policy (blog), accessed 9 October 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/25/hacked-putin-aides-emails-detail-alleged-plot-to-destabilize-kiev-surkov-ukraine-leaks/>.
- 3 'Kiszivárgott Iratok: A Fidesz És a Jobbik Segítségével Akarta Megszállni Kárpátalját Putyin?', Kettős Mércé, accessed 10 August 2020, http://kettosmerce.blog.hu/2016/10/26/a_fidesz_es_a_jobbik_segitsegevel_akarta_megszallni_karpataljat_putyin.
- 4 Péter Krekó, Lóránt Győri, Edit Zgut, 'From Russia with Hate', Political Capital, 28 April 2017, http://www.political-capital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_summary_analysis_EN_20170428.pdf.
- 5 Active measures of the Kremlin combine intelligence operations with actions of local media, political actors and NGOs to directly influence the political process in a given country. For more please see: Steve Abrams, "Beyond Propaganda: Soviet Active Measures in Putin's Russia," 2016, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26326426?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents
- 6 'Romania 100', Uncover Romania (blog), accessed 14 September 2020, <https://www.uncover-romania.com/romania-100/>.
- 7 'A nemzeti összetartozás évének nyilvánította 2020-at az Országgyűlés', <https://www.origo.hu/>, accessed 14 September 2020, <https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20190618-nemzeti-osszetartozas-eve-orszaggyules.html>.
- 8 'SentiOne Conversational AI Platform', SentiOne, accessed 4 August 2020, <https://sentione.com>.
- 9 The Hungarian research team also employed a "big data" approach to identify relevant clusters or categories of narratives through an automated, algorithm-guided textual analysis of all the "relevant" articles present on all mainstream, and fringe media under review. Automated, quantitative content-analysis supplemented the qualitative identification and categorisation of narratives.
- 10 'Ukrainian Insurgent Army', in Wikipedia, 9 September 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ukrainian_Insurgent_Army&oldid=977620142.
- 11 'GLOBSEC-Trends2019.Pdf', accessed 4 September 2020, <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/GLOBSEC-Trends2019.pdf>.
- 12 'Wspólna Deklaracja USA i Polski na temat 5G | Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów', 2 September 2019, <https://www.premier.gov.pl/wydarzenia/aktualnosci/wspolna-deklaracja-usa-i-polski-na-temat-5g.html>.
- 13 'NATO Viewed Favorably Across Member States', Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project (blog), 10 February 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/02/09/nato-seen-favorably-across-member-states/>.
- 14 'K_059_19.Pdf', accessed 4 September 2020, https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_059_19.PDF.
- 15 'Poland Sees Limited Room for Russia Diplomacy, despite Macron Overtures', Reuters, 13 December 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-russia-macron-idUSKBN1YH1YA>.
- 16 'Statement of Polish MFA on False Narratives Presented by the Russian Federation - Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland - Gov.Pl Website', Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, accessed 4 September 2020, <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/statement-of-polish-mfa-on-false-narratives-presented-by-the-russian-federation>.
- 17 'Jędrzej Tomczak na Twitterze', Twitter, accessed 4 September 2020, <https://twitter.com/JedrzejTomczak/status/1221385649099563009>.
- 18 'Poland : Further Decline | Reporters without Borders', RSF, accessed 2 September 2020, <https://rsf.org/en/poland>.
- 19 Péter Krekó, 'The Weaponization of Culture';, n.d., 71.
- 20 'Pierwsza Wojna Informacyjna Polsko-Rosyjska. "W Rosji Walka Informacyjna Jest Wykładana Jako Przedmiot" | INNPoland.PL', accessed 2 September 2020, <https://innpoland.pl/115571,pierwsza-wojna-informacyjna-polsko-rosyjska-w-rosji-walka-informacyjna-jest-wykladana-jako-przedmiot>.
- 21 'Winning the Information War - CEPA STRATCOM PROGRAM.', accessed 2 September 2020, <http://infowar.cepa.org/Winning-the-Information-War>.
- 22 'Today's Potemkin Village: Kremlin Disinformation and Propaganda in Poland', Warsaw Institute (blog), 15 May 2018, <https://warsawinstitute.org/todays-potemkin-village-kremlin-disinformation-propaganda-poland/>.
- 23 'Polacy Wycierpieli Najwięcej Ze Wszystkich Narodów Świata. Tak Uważa 74 Proc. Badanych (Polaków)', accessed 2 September 2020, <https://oko.press/polacy-wycierpieli-najwiecej-ze-wszystkich-narodow-swiata-tak-uwaza-74-proc-badanych-polakow/>.
- 24 Piotr Tyma and Ob'ie dnanni a Ukraïnt s iv u Pol shchi, Mniejszość ukraińska i migranci z Ukrainy w Polsce: analiza dyskursu : raport : praca zbiorowa, 2018.
- 25 Prank z Udziałem Prezydenta Polski Andrzeja Dudy, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zu4x31g-42K4&feature=emb_title.
- 26 'Poseł Kamiński (Konfederacja): Trzeba Pożegnać Ukraińców i Tę Całą Rzeszę Pracowników z Zagranicy » Kresy', accessed 2 September 2020, <https://kresy.pl/publicystyka/wywiady/posel-kaminski-konfederacja-trzeba-pozegnac-ukraincow-i-te-cala-rzesze-pracownikow-z-zagranicy/>.
- 27 Low information rationality is a social theory that states that people are information consumers with limited benefits and time for processing and understanding information.
- 28 The main tipping point is city of Lviv which was one of the main Polish cities for 300 years. The Polish-Ukrainian War (1918-1919) was a conflict with ethnic roots and cultural and political differences between the Polish and Ukrainian populations living in the re-

gion. The war started in Galicia after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and spilled over into the Chełm Land and Volhynia (Wołyń) regions formerly belonging to the Russian Empire, which were claimed by the Ukrainian State (a client state of the German Empire), the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Republic of Poland. Approximately 10,000 Poles and 15,000 Ukrainians, mostly soldiers, died during this war.

29 'Tension Escalates after Russia Seizes Ukraine Naval Ships - BBC News', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46338671>.

30 „Слава Україні! Героям слава!” eng. Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!

31 The Hungarian country case-study supplemented the representative polling with a deeper machine learning based natural language processing (NLP) analysis to reveal Hungarian revisionist narratives.

32 'Volhynia Massacre 75th Anniversary Official Commemorations - TVN24', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://tvn24.pl/tvn24-news-in-english/volhynia-massacre-75th-anniversary-official-commemorations-ra852962-2413144>.

33 'Polish President Attends Volhynia Massacre Commemorations in Ukraine', Polskie Radio dla Zagranicy, accessed 3 September 2020, <http://archiwum.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/371961,Polish-president-attends-Volhynia-Massacre-commemorations-in-Ukraine>.

34 'Volhynia Massacre 75th Anniversary Official Commemorations - TVN24', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://tvn24.pl/tvn24-news-in-english/volhynia-massacre-75th-anniversary-official-commemorations-ra852962-2413144>.

35 'Banderowskie Zawołania i Hymn OUN Na Defiladzie w Kijowie - w Obecności Polskich Żołnierzy[+VIDEO] » Kresy', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://kresy.pl/wydarzenia/banderowskie-zawolania-i-hymn-oun-na-defiladzie-w-kijowie-w-obecnosci-polskich-zolnierzyvideo/>.

36 'A Survey of So-Called "History Laws" in Ukraine and Poland. What Are They, and What Do They Do?', Euromaidan Press (blog), 21 March 2018, <http://euromaidanpress.com/2018/03/22/a-survey-of-so-called-history-laws-in-ukraine-and-poland-what-are-they-and-what-do-they-do/>.

37 "'Apel o Uznanie Polskiej Okupacji". Echa Ustawy o IPN Na Ukrainie - GazetaPrawna.Pl - Biznes, Podatki, Prawo, Finanse, Wiadomości, Praca -', accessed 3 September 2020,

38 'Warszawa: Światowe Obchody 75. Rocznicy Ludobójstwa Na Wołyniu - Wiadomości', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/warszawa/warszawa-swiatowe-obchody-75-rocznicy-ludobojstwa-na-woyniu/c5jtj77>.

39 'Atak w Cieśninie Kerczeńskiej: Leniwa reakcja Zachodu', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.rp.pl/Konflikt-na-Ukrainie/311289914-Atak-w-Ciesninie-Kerczenskiej-Leniwa-reakcja-Zachodu.html>.

40 'Ukraina Nie Powinna Stać Się Członkiem NATO'.

41 'Ukraiński portal internetowy proponuje przyłączenie Ukrainy do Polski', salon24.pl, accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.salon24.pl/u/konfederat1000/914174,ukraiński-portal-internetowy-proponuje-przyłączenie-ukrainy-do-polski>.

42 'FSB: Ukraińskie Okręty Miały Potajemnie Przejść Przez Cieśninę Kerczeńską [+DOKUMENT] » Kresy', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://kresy.pl/wydarzenia/fsb-ukraińskie-okręty-miały-potajemnie-przejsc-przez-ciesniny-kerczenska-dokument/>.

43 'Czym dla Polaków jest patriotyzm? Badania Fundacji im. Zygmunta Zaleskiego [INFOGRAFIKI]', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://radiogdansk.pl/wiadomosci/item/84690-czym-dla-polakow-jest-patriotyzm-badania-fundacji-im-zygmunta-zaleskiego-infografiki/84690-czym-dla-polakow-jest-patriotyzm-badania-fundacji-im-zygmunta-zaleskiego-infografiki>.

44 A pacification operation of the Polish civilian population in Huta Pieniacka on February 28, 1944, as a result of which about 850 people were killed. According to the investigation by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, the pacification was carried out by Ukrainian policemen from one battalion of the 4th SS Police Regiment (German: Galizisches SS Freiwilligen Regiment 4) under German command, together with the local unit of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (most likely the sotnia of Dmytro Karpenka, aka "Jastrub" from "Jastrub" Siromanci ", subordinate to the 3rd Military District of Łysoń) and a paramilitary unit consisting of Ukrainian nationalists, under the command of Włodzimierz Czerniawski

45 'Ukaińscy Neonazisci Zakłócili Rocznice Ludobójstwa w Hucie Pieniackiej - Blog Ojciec & Dyrektor', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.salon24.pl/u/beta/847733,ukaińscy-neonazisci-zaklocili-rocznice-ludobojstwa-w-hucie-pieniackiej>.

46 TMS, 'Kolejny antypolski gest Ukrainy. Szef ukraińskiego IPN proponuje ustanowienie orderu imienia Bandery', NCZAS.COM (blog), 7 December 2018, <https://nczas.com/2018/12/07/kolejny-antypolski-gest-ukrainy-szef-ukraińskiego-ipn-proponuje-ustanowienie-orderu-imienia-bandery/>.

47 'Antypolskie Kłamstwa w Centrum Kijowa. Skandaliczna Wystawa Zorganizowana Przez Ukraiński IPN - PCh24.Pl - Prawa Strona Internetu. Informacje z Życia Kościoła i Prawicowa Publicystyka', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.pch24.pl/antypolskie-klamstwa-w-centrum-kijowa-skandaliczna-wystawa-zorganizowana-przez-ukraiński-ipn,63881,i.html>.

48 Centrum Analiz Propagandy i Dezinformacji, 'PROGNOZA: Główne cele rosyjskiej propagandy w Polsce na 2017 rok', Centrum Analiz Propagandy i Dezinformacji, accessed 3 September 2020, <https://capd.pl/pl/prognozy/164-prognoza-glowne-cele-rosyjskiej-propagandy-w-polsce-na-2017-rok>.

49 'Kresowanie o Ewentualnym Blokowaniu Ustawy o IPN: Byłby to Akt Wrogi Wobec Narodu Polskiego Oraz Wobec Prawdy Historycznej - Prawy.Pl', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://prawy.pl/67028-kresowanie-o-ewentualnym-blokowaniu-ustawy-o-ipn-byly-to-akt-wrogi-wobec-narodu-polskiego-oraz-wobec-prawdy-historycznej/>.

50 Cezary Kłosowicz, 'Ukraina potępia polską ustawę o IPN | www.idzpodprad.pl', 6 February 2018, <https://idzpodprad.pl/aktualnosci/ukraina-potepia-polska-ustawe-o-ipn/>.

51 Как Прятали Правду о Мирном Протесте, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8ySM3aJ0Yo>.

- 52 'Ukraina: Wyciekają Dokumenty Ukazujące Prawdę o Majdanie [+VIDEO] » Kresy', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://kresy.pl/wydarzenia/regiony/ukraina/ukraina-wyciekaja-dokumenty-ukazujace-prawde-o-majdanie-video/>.
- 53 'Ukraina Nie Powinna Stać Się Członkiem NATO'.
- 54 'Bezczelne Żądania Ambasadora Ukrainy: Polacy Mają Odbudować Pomniki Bandytów z UPA – Magna Polonia', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.magnapolonia.org/bezczelne-zadania-ambasadora-ukrainy-polacy-maja-odbudowac-pomniki-bandytow-z-upa/>.
- 55 'PILNE! Szczegóły Sprawy Ucznia Oskarżonego o „propagowanie Nacjonalizmu” Za Sprzeciw Wobec Gloryfikacji Bandery - WPrawo.PL', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://wprawo.pl/pilne-szczegoly-sprawy-ucznia-oskarzonego-o-propagowanie-nacjonalizmu-za-sprzeciw-wobec-gloryfikacji-bandery>.
- 56 'Gen. Skrzypczak Dla Kresy.PL: Ukraina Wraca Do Retoryki Hitlerowskiej, Tego Nie Można Odpuścić, Polski Rząd Musi Zająć Stanowisko » Kresy', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://kresy.pl/wydarzenia/gen-skrzypczak-dla-kresy-pl-ukraina-wraca-do-retoryki-hitlerowskiej-tego-nie-mozna-odpuszcic-polski-rzad-musi-zajac-stanowisko/>.
- 57 'Marsz Pod Antypolskimi Hasłami We Lwowie. „Nasza Ziemia - Nasi Bohaterowie!” „Miasto Lwów Nie Dla Polskich Panów” [VIDEO] | Wolnosc24.PL', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://wolnosc24.pl/2018/03/04/marsz-pod-antypolskimi-haslami-we-lwowie-nasza-ziemia-nasi-bohaterowie-miasto-lwow-nie-dla-polskich-panow-video/>.
- 58 Andreas, 'Co mający na horyzoncie ukraińskiego problemu?', Alex Jones - prawdziwe informacje, accessed 3 September 2020, <http://alexjones.pl/aj/aj-swiat/item/136901-co-majaczy-na-horyzoncie-ukrainskiego-problemu>.
- 59 Dawid Blum Sputnik Polska, 'Co by było, gdyby połączyć Ukrainę z Polską?', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://pl.sputniknews.com/polska/201902129799750-Polska-Ukraina-polaczenie/>.
- 60 Andreas, 'Co mający na horyzoncie ukraińskiego problemu?'
- 61 Networks could be based only on hyperlinks found in website articles due to Facebook restricting access to pages' data or hyperlinks.
- 62 'Rosja atakuje polskie wojsko trollami', accessed 3 September 2020, <http://www.tvp.info/42634112/rosja-atakuje-polskie-wojsko-trollami>.
- 63 'Rosja atakuje polskie wojsko trollami'.
- 64 'Czego Nauczył Nas Atak Na Akademię Sztuki Wojennej? - CyberDefence24', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.cyberdefence24.pl/czego-nauczyl-nas-atak-na-akademie-sztuki-wojennej>.
- 65 'O Nas', accessed 3 September 2020, <http://alexjones.pl/aj/aj-inne/aj-komunikaty/item/5190-o-nas>.
- 66 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.
- 67 'Rosyjską Propagandę Szerzą Polskie Portale. Znaleźliśmy 23 Takie Witryny!', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://oko.press/rosyjska-propagande-szerza-polskie-portale-znalezlismy-23-takie-witryny/>.
- 68 'Disinfo: Ukraine Is a Failed State and Will Be Split up - EU vs DISINFORMATION', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/ukraine-is-a-failed-state-and-will-be-split/>.
- 69 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.
- 70 'Facebook', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/367860750012152/posts/1459716654159884>.
- 71 'Facebook', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/137953100892/posts/10155406543525893>.
- 72 'Facebook', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/137953100892/posts/10157044373805893>.
- 73 'Facebook', accessed 3 September 2020, <http://www.facebook.com/137953100892/posts/10155936212010893>.
- 74 'Facebook', accessed 3 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/137953100892/posts/10155406543525893>.
- 75 'Winnicki persona non grata na Ukrainie?', Text, Do Rzeczy (Anna M. Piotrowska, 20 March 2018), <https://www.dorzeczy.pl/kraj/59394/winnicki-persona-non-grata-na-ukrainie.html>.



POLITICAL CAPITAL
POLICY RESEARCH & CONSULTING INSTITUTE

2020