

# PRO-RUSSIAN AND ANTI-WESTERN CONSPIRACY THEORIES OF INFORMATION WAR

## KEY TRENDS 2020-2022

Research study made by  
The Institute of Mass Information  
and Detektor Media



ІНСТИТУТ  
МАСОВОЇ  
ІНФОРМАЦІЇ



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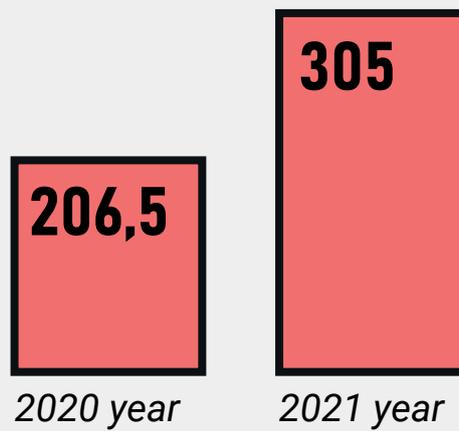
The research study was made with support of:



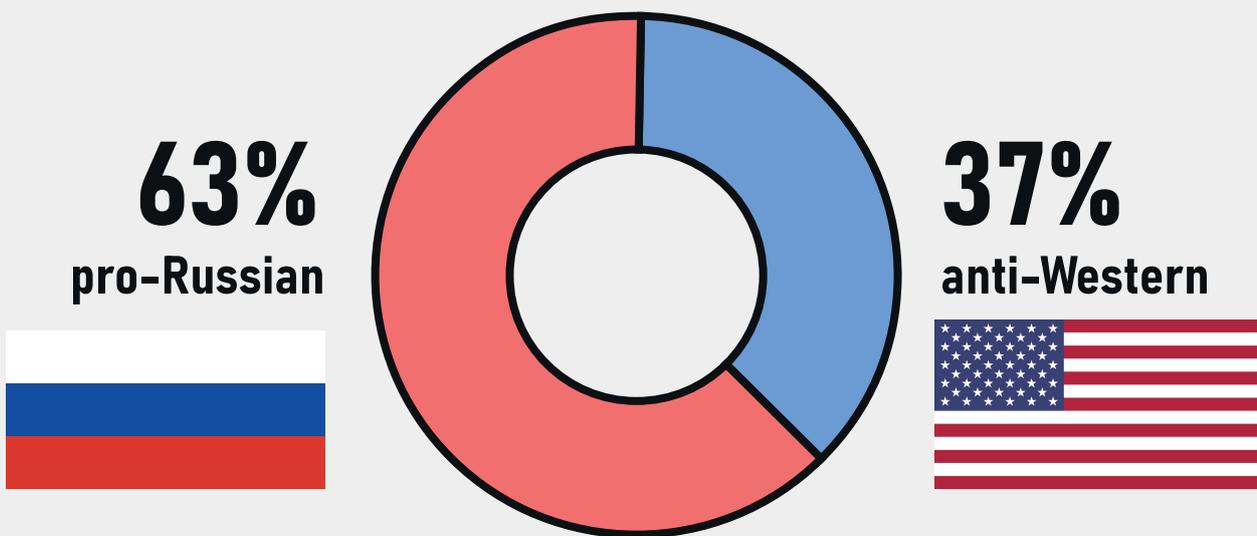
# CORE RESULTS

**Pro-Russian propaganda** has grown by 59% in the Ukrainian media landscape in 2021. The higher number of pro-Russian fake news and manipulations occurred simultaneously with the building up of military presence of the Russian Federation near the Ukrainian borders.

## NUMBER OF MESSAGES WITH PRO-RUSSIAN MANIPULATIONS PER WEEK



**37% of pro-Russian misinformation and manipulations** that have been actively spread in Ukraine **targeted Western countries**, and mainly the United States.



# CORE RESULTS

The most frequent categories of pro-Russian misinformation rhetoric in Ukraine was “external governance of Ukraine” (18,5% of Russian propaganda in Ukraine) and “escalating of Ukrainian-Russian war orchestrated by Ukraine” (14,15%).

## NARRATIVES BY POPULARITY

Percent of news items with this kind of rhetoric



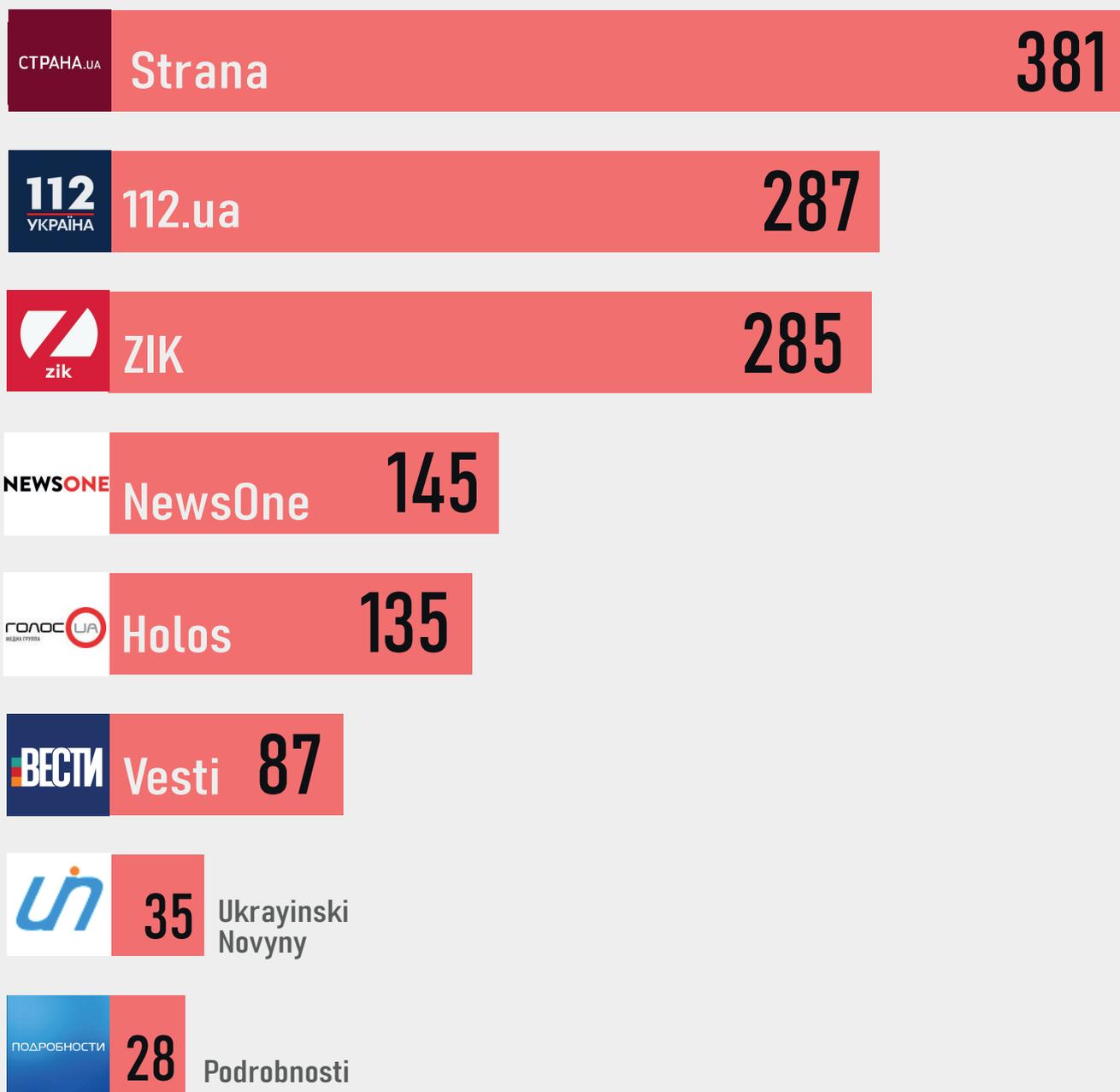
The most common category of pro-Russian narratives was "**escalation of the Ukrainian-Russian war is Ukraine's doing**" (found in 14.15% of materials). This rhetoric includes assertions about violation and non-compliance with the Minsk agreements, Ukraine's attempts to break the ceasefire in Donbas, preparation of the Ukrainian army to offensive action. In other words, this gives the impression that Russia and its puppets are seeking peace, while the Ukrainian government is engaged in escalation.

# CORE RESULTS

The most part of news items with pro-Russian rhetoric were found on the following sites: Strana (381 news items for monitoring period), 112ua (287), and ZIK (285).

## TOP-MEDIA PROMOTING ANTI-WESTERN AND PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC

The number of news items where anti-Western and pro-Russian rhetoric texts were revealed



# CORE RESULTS

**Repartition of news items with anti-Western rhetoric are wagging** depending on the periods of the monitoring and are due to anti-Western information campaigns in Ukrainian mass media.

Anti-Western rhetoric spikes were seen in May 2020 ("Derkach's tapes"), January 2021 (critics US election), April 2021 (the Occident and, namely, NATO are striving to do harm to the post-soviet countries and Europe and the USA are making one's own manoeuvres).

**The researchers did not record any significant decrease** of pro-Russian and anti-Western news items after the blocking of mass media that fall within the sphere of influence of Viktor Medvedchuk.

# METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH STUDY

## *Goal of research:*

- *To identify and describe pro-Russian rhetoric in Ukraine media landscape.*
- *To identify the main speakers (experts, politicians, functionaries) who spread them.*
- *To define the main messages and whom they targeted.*
- *To identify the main channels of spread.*

**The strategic rhetoric** is a narrative pattern employing which, through its content or a way of presentation some vision of social process, global picture are advanced aiming to influence the audience. It is structured with the components that follow: a strategic rhetoric-a theme-a separate message (for instance, “external governance”-“IMF”activity”-“a precise decision of the government performed exactly as told by the IMF and directed against Ukrainians’). The theme is a constituent element of the strategic rhetoric, the theme is composed of a set of messages (stories, blogs, news items, posts of social networks users).

# METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH STUDY

## PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC

*Pro-Russian rhetoric is to expose Russian Federation or Russian (pro-Russian) entities or its activity in a positive aspect, to promote the Kremlin's policy. As pro-Russian, it worth to be considered also the militia members in Donbass, pseudo-state institutions in Transnistria, Abkhasia, authority in Belarus, Russian Orthodox Church and so on.*

### **Examples of pro-Russian rhetoric:**

- Ukraine fails to abide by Minsk agreements and breaks commitments
- Ukraine does need a war to divert the population from failures of government
- "Crimea' is Russian" and water supply from Ukraine
- Ukraine's meddling in affairs of Belarus
- Extremism/nationalism in Ukraine
- Discredit of acting government in Ukraine
- Orthodox church of Ukraine, non-recognition of the church, "schism"
- Wagner group members in Belarus
- Ukraine is "a failed state"
- Crackdown on Russian language in Ukraine
- "Donbas is Russian"
- Northern Stream-2
- "An illegitimate usurpation of power in Ukraine as a result of coup d'état of legitimate leadership"
- Coronavirus (successful fight Russia is leading against Coronavirus, Sputnik-V vaccine)
- Successful Russia, Putis is defender,Russia doesn't need any war, all this is external-threats
- Russia is not a war party in Ukraine

# METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH STUDY

## ANTI-WESTERN RHETORIC

*Anti-Western rhetoric is aimed at spread of conspiracy theories and negative reports on EU, NATO, countries of Europe, USA and Canada, on activity of their officials and politicians and about life of the citizens in Western countries.*

### **Examples of anti-Western rhetoric:**

- The West strive to do harm to Russian Federation and post-Sovier countries (Europe and USA are playing one's own combinations).
- External governance of Ukraine
- USA stir up Ukraine making war to put a bridle on Russia
- "End of the legend of US democracy", Trump's election victory has been stolen, Europe and USA decay (corruption, criminality)
- NATO poses a threat to peace

### **Period of the monitoring**

One week in a quarter in 2020-2021. The weeks of the monitoring study for the sample are chosen based on the previous monitoring studies held by IMI and DM.

1st Quarter 2020: 16-22 of March ("celebration of the referendum" in Crimea)

2nd Quarter 2020: 14-20 of May (Derkach's tapes and US biological labs)

3rd Quarter 2020: 4-10 of September (US strike aircraft flying over Ukraine)

4rd Quarter 2020: 2-8 of November (voting in USA)

1st Quarter 2021: 4-10 of January (storming of the Capitol)

2nd Quarter 2021: 1-7 of April (escalation of Russian aggression)

### **Sample:**

Online editions: 112ua, ZIK, Newsone, Strana, Golos.ua, Vesti, Ukrayinski Novyny, Podrobnosti, Bahnet, Komsomolskaya Pravda in Ukraine, Apostroph, Komentari, Telegraph.

The total sample: 1526 news items

TV and Youtube channels: 112ua, ZIK, Newsone, Pershy Nezalezhny, Nash.

# ANTI-WESTERN RHETORIC

Repartition of news items with anti-Western rhetoric is not equal depending on periods of the monitoring and is related to anti-Western information campaigns in Ukrainian mass media. **Thus, within the period of May 14-20, 2020, 107 news items were identified which had anti-Western rhetoric (or 19% out of all news items with a whole number of anti-Western narratives).**

This period coincides with a campaign to promote the so-called "Derkach tapes" - recordings of the Biden-Poroshenko conversation and claims about the need to investigate corruption involving American and Ukrainian officials. **Another spike occurred in January 2021, when 137 materials with anti-Western narratives were recorded (24% of all materials). This period coincided with an active criticism of the new US administration, including the new President Joe Biden.**

Pro-Russian materials actively covered the smallest nuances of developments in the Capitol, raised the question of eventual election fraud in the United States. Also, **pro-Russian media also actively disseminated information about Ukraine's foreign governance.** In April 2021, the narrative was spread saying that it was the Western countries (in particular, NATO) that sought to harm Russia and the post-Soviet countries ("Europe and the United States are playing their combinations")

At the same time, there is no significant decrease in anti-Western news items after the blocking of mass media that fall within the sphere of influence of Viktor Medvedchuk.

The most of news items promoting anti-Western rhetoric were found on the site strana.ua : 173. **Also, among the key channels spreading such narratives were mass media belonging to the sphere of influence of Viktor Medvedchuk (112ua.tv, zikua.tv, newsoneua.tv),** where our experts found a total of 195 materials with anti-Western narratives.

# ANTI-WESTERN RHETORIC

## 1. UKRAINE IS UNDER AN EXTERNAL GOVERNANCE

The most common category of anti-Western rhetoric is "**Ukraine is under an external governance**", which includes the assertions such as "Western control centers," "The IMF has come to sell the Ukrainian land," "Foreign curators are pushing Ukraine to war," and the "Ukrainian government reports before Western foreign senior managers"," Soros and his emissaries in Ukraine "," Soros-piglets". That is, it is a campaign to discredit the cooperation of Ukrainian state as a whole with Western partners, as well as individual officials and politicians. This campaign comes to the fact that all the troubles the Ukrainians have are due to "external governance", and so Ukraine ought to abandon the idea of cooperation with the West. **These narratives were found in 18.15% of all news items.** The front-runners in terms of the quantity of such rhetoric were golos.ua, strana.ua and 112ua.tv. Separately, IMI analysts singled out some narratives about the IMF's **negative impact on the Ukrainian government.** In particular, it is about carrying out reforms at the request of external creditors, the launching of the land market at the request of the IMF so that foreigners can buy Ukrainian rich black soils, and so on. These stories are aimed at undermining Ukraine's cooperation with the IMF, refusing to implement its reforms, and as a result to lose favorable loans and bring Ukraine to economic collapse. These narratives are recorded in 1.83% of the materials. The topic of "external governance" is usually accompanied with stories about "George Soros and his minions in Ukraine." As purveyors of these stories say, the people of Soros, a billionaire and philanthropist, include Ukrainians who do not feel any remorse over betraying Ukraine and its interests for the sake of "foreign" money. The so-called "Soros piglets" mean those who have or had some connection to international organizations. The term saw little use until fall of 2019, at which time it started being applied to the team of the then-Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk. Anti-American sentiment is particularly fuelled when it comes to NGOs, which are claimed to be "networks of foreign agents" (thus echoing the Kremlin's policy). "Soros piglets" are blamed for virtually all Ukraine's problems, from the economy to culture and history.

## 2. END OF THE LEGEND OF DEMOCRACY IN THE UNITED STATES

The second most widespread anti-Western category of rhetoric is "The End of the Legend of Democracy in the United States." It is about, in particular, the information campaign of MP Andriy Derkach on the so-called recordings of the Biden-Poroshenko conversation and the investigation of corruption involving American and Ukrainian officials, then the campaign based on quotes from Hunter Biden's book, and finally the "Trump victory and falsification" and coverage of the storming of the Capitol. Within this narrative, a common category of manipulation was "Trump's victory in the presidential election was stolen." This is an information campaign in support of the headquarters of the former US president, which was launched in November 2020 by the site strana.ua. It was a series of publications on falsifications during the establishment of the results of the US presidential election, including allegations of ballot stuffing, non-existent Americans voting, and adding some zeros to the number of votes in favor of Biden. ...

# ANTI-WESTERN RHETORIC

... Such an information campaign not only formed a one-sided view of the vote count, but also created and fueled distrust of Biden and his team, as well as the United States as a whole, incapable of holding elections in accordance with democratic standards. These texts were published by Strana with reference to Russian websites, Trump's account in social networks and statements by representatives of his election headquarters. In a whole, the news items of such kind of rhetoric are aimed at undermining the authority of the United States in the eyes of Ukrainians, at discrediting Ukraine's course towards European integration and rapprochement with NATO. Narratives of this category are found in 11.93% of materials, most often they appeared on the sites of Medvedchuk's pool and on strana.ua.

## 3. DISCREDIT OF USA AND EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The category "**Discrediting the United States and European countries**" (6.75% of the materials) gathered the narratives with unfounded criticism of the EU and the US, some government officials and international institutions, as well as the democratic system of Western democracies. To the same category the IMI analysts have included an information campaign about so-called "Lukashenko records" made public in September 2020 by the Belarusian authorities' (allegedly intercepted conversations of foreigners discussing creating problems for Putin so that he would not interfere in the affairs of Belarus). These records would prove that there was no poisoning of the Russian opposition, and the story of the poisoning by "Novichok" is nothing, but a fiction of Europeans.

## 4. THE WEST IS TRYING TO HARM RUSSIA AND POST-SOVIET STATES

The idea of this kind of manipulation is to convince the public that any cooperation with Western countries has only negative consequences. Western alliances, institutions and individual states only seek to take hold of Ukraine's resources or to use Ukraine as leverage against Russia. In these statements, the West is branded as an instigator of conflicts, while the Kremlin is the one who is forced to defend itself and sober up its neighbors. As for Ukraine, it does not have any freedom of decision-making in this narrative. In such a rhetoric, Ukraine is devoid of one's subjectivity.

# ANTI-WESTERN RHETORIC

## 5. THE WAR IN UKRAINE HAS BEEN INCITED BY THE WEST

This narrative has seen yet another resurgence after Russia began amassing its troops along Ukraine's border in spring 2021. The main idea is that no other party but Europe and the United States will benefit from this war. They are allegedly trying to spark aggression in order to impose further sanctions on Russia. Pro-Russian media claim that the "masters" are literally forcing Ukraine's government to start the war. At the same time, these media present no evidence that Ukraine has indeed amassed its troops along the border and is planning an attack on its occupied territories (or even on the territory of Russia), which is not surprising, since such evidence does not exist.

## 6. NATO IS A THREAT TO RUSSIA, I.E., UKRAINE'S GETTING CLOSER TO NATO MEANS AN ESCALATION OF THE CONFLICT

Preventing Ukraine's membership in NATO and the EU is among the ultimate goals of Russian propaganda and possibly one of the reasons of Russia's aggression in 2014. During the escalation of the conflict in spring 2021, pro-Russian media and Russian leadership resorted to what essentially is blackmail, demanding that Ukraine abandon its membership plans if the country wants to preserve its sovereignty. Pro-Russian politicians and pseudo-experts in Ukrainian media uphold this idea, arguing that Russia "should not be made angry", while the Kremlin's pursuit of its geopolitical interests is entirely justified.

# PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC

## 1. ESCALATION OF THE UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN WAR IS UKRAINE'S DOING

The most common category of pro-Russian narratives is "**escalation of the Ukrainian-Russian war is Ukraine's doing**" (found in **14.15% of materials**), which includes allegations of violation and non-compliance with the Minsk agreements, Ukraine's attempts to break the ceasefire in Donbas, preparation of the Ukrainian army to offensive action. In other words, this gives the impression that Russia and its puppets are seeking peace, while the Ukrainian government is engaged in escalation. As a result, Russia is trying to avoid its role as a party to the war and to create a background for lifting the sanctions imposed on it. Increase in the number of news items voicing this rhetoric was seen during September 2020 (period of aggravation in the area of Shumy, Donetsk region and the ultimatum of the DPR to start shelling of Ukrainian positions) and April 2021 (period of aggravation in Donbass and Russia's built-up of troops to the border with Ukraine). The main agents publishing this narrative were Strana, Golos.ua and Vesti.

## 2. UKRAINE IS A FAILED STATE

The second category of pro-Russian narratives in terms of the number of news items is "**discrediting the current government**", ie unfounded criticism voiced by Russia, pro-Russian parties, politicians and experts. This narrative also promoted the discrediting of the Revolution of Dignity and the concept of "Ukraine is a failed state." In this way, they are trying to undermine confidence in the government, destabilize the country, create conditions for re-elections and change the position of the Ukrainian government towards Russia. This category of narratives is recorded in 12.58% of materials, and its main mouthpieces are the pool of Medvedchuk's sites : 112ua.tv, zikua.tv and newsoneua.tv.

## 3. RUSSIA SUCCEEDS IN FIGHTING CORONAVIRUS

The next category of pro-Russian narratives in terms of its number is "**Russia succeeds in fighting coronavirus**" (**10.35%**). This category includes assertions saying that Russia has successfully developed an effective Sputnik-V vaccine, Putin's willingness to sell the vaccine to Ukraine as a sign of the Kremlin's peaceful stance, and official Kyiv's refusal to accept the offer, even to the detriment of Ukrainians. The spike of presence of news items with this rhetoric was the fall of 2020, and the leaders in such publications were 112ua.tv, zikua.tv, newsoneua.tv and strana.ua.

# PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC

## 4. EXTREMISM/NATIONALISM/HARD CORE NATIONALISTS IN UKRAINE

Next by number of news items was the category of "**Extremism / Nationalism / Nazism / Radicals in Ukraine**" narratives - **9.64% of the total number of materials** with pro-Russian and anti-Western narratives. This category included manipulative assertions on the widespread sympathies to Nazi ideas in Ukraine, the representation of Ukrainians as fascists and radicals, and the assertion that the Ukrainian authorities are acting under pressure and cooperate with radicals. The narrative also disseminated information about the persecution of Russian-speaking citizens and the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine. This creates grounds for a split among Ukrainian citizens, hatred of Ukrainian street activists, and the transformation of patriotic Ukrainians into objects of hatred both inside Ukraine and in Russia. Most frequently, these were strana.ua and 112ua.tv that came out with news in this aspect.

## 5. UKRAINE EXERTS REPRESSIONS

And another category of narratives, which stands out against others ones: "**Ukraine exerts repressions**" (**10.94%**). It is about manipulations around sanctions against pro-Russian politicians and the media, the second is about the oppression of the Russian language and Russian-speakers in Ukraine, the Russian Orthodox Church, and so on. This narrative can be used to discredit the democratic structure of the state and justify Russian military aggression against Ukraine to protect against persecution by the pro-Russian part of the country's population. The leaders in publishing this narrative are 112ua.tv, zikua.tv, and newsoneua.tv.

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

## STRANA.UA

СТРАНА.UA

Strana.ua has **25 million hits per month** (hereinafter - according to the site similarweb.com). The founder of this media on the site strana.ua is Lasmak LLC. According to the registration data, the beneficial owners of this LLC are Igor Guzhva and Ganna Solntseva, and the founders are Ganna Solntseva and Madzheri LLC.

### The main categories of narratives published by "Strana":

**1** "The escalation of the Ukrainian-Russian war **Ukraine's doing, Ukraine is guilty of non-compliance with the Minsk agreements**" - 53 materials throughout the monitoring study period. There is an increase in news with such a rhetoric in the spring of 2021 during the period of built-up of Russian troops to the border with Ukraine and the occupied Crimea.

Examples:

«This is not the first provocation by Reznikov aimed at disrupting of peace negotiations and , escalation of the conflict» dated of 2.11.2020;

«Ukrainian counterpart can undertake provocative actions which will lead to war» dated of 1.04.2021;

"The explosive device, which killed a five-year-old boy near the village of Aleksandrovskoye in Donetsk on April 2, was dropped from an unmanned aerial vehicle belonging to the 59th brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. " dated April 6, 2021.

#### По методу Порошенко. Как у Зеленского используют обострение на Донбассе, чтоб решить проблемы с США

Александр Шахов 23:00, 1 апреля 2021



In Poroshenko's way. How they do use escalation in Donbas at Zelensky's office to fix the issues with the USA

Этим фото ГУР Минобороны сегодня проиллюстрировало наступление России на Донбассе. Источник - mil.by

Сегодня "Страна" уже рассказывала о нагнетании военного напряжения между Россией и Украиной.

После заявлений Украины о готовности наступать на Донбассе, Россия начала демонстративно стягивать войска к границе. После чего посыпались обеспокоенные звонки из США в Москву и Киев. А накануне с Путиным по видеосвязи пообщались Меркель и Макрон.

#### Пушилин заявил, что ребенка убил беспилотник 59-й бригады ВСУ. Киев отрицает причастность

13.01, 6 апреля 2021



Pushilin claimed the kid was killed by a piloted aerial vehicle of the 59th Bgd of Ukrainian Armed Forces. Kiev denies being involved in.

Трагедия под Донецком произошла 2 сентября. Фото: Страна

Взрывное устройство, от которого под Донецком в поселке Александровское 2 апреля погиб пятилетний мальчик, было сброшено с беспилотного летательного аппарата, принадлежащего 59-й бригаде ВСУ.

Об этом заявил глава так называемой "Донецкой народной республики" Денис Пушилин.

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

**2** "Trump's victory in the presidential election was stolen": 36 materials between November 2-8, 2020 and January 4-10, 2021. There is a tendency to biased coverage of the vote count, in particular, quoting Donald Trump (primarily from social networks) and representatives his headquarters.

Examples:

"Damage inflicted to the United States electoral system " in the news dated of 5.11.2020;

"We consider these people thieves. Big city machines were corrupt. That election was stolen" in the news item dated of 8.11.2020;

"They have as many ballots ready as they need. Everything is falsified "in the news dated of 6.01.2021;  
"Arbitrariness with the falsification of elections, which was seen by the whole world" in the news item dated of 7.01.2021;

"Sacred convincing victory in the elections has been blatantly and viciously taken away from the great patriots" in the news dated of 7.01.2021.

**3** "External governance": 37 news items throughout the whole monitoring study period.  
Examples:

"The group of prosecutors, which has been on the Maydan case for the sixth year, or rather continues to make exempt the real perpetrators of the fusillade from suspicion, is sponsored and supported by Western curators. In particular, the International Renaissance Foundation, which belongs to George Soros "in the news dated of 14.05.2020;

"there was a hollo from external creditors - the masters of the current government" - in the news dated of 3.11.2020;

"Zelensky appreciates staff close to the" seven-embassy "- in the news dated of 7.11.2020.4.

Трамп считает, что избирательной системе Соединенных Штатов нанесен ущерб

03:06, 5 ноября 2020

Trump believes prejudice has been made to the electoral system in the United States



Трамп сделал из выборов неутешительный вывод. Фото: Facebook/DonaldTrump

Президент США Дональд Трамп считает, что нужно обсуждать не столько отдельные нарушения на состоявшихся выборах, а нанесенный во время их проведения ущерб всей избирательной системе страны.

Об этом он написал в своих соцсетях - Твиттере и Фейсбуке.

"Имеет признаки государственного переворота". Юрий Бойко о плане Зеленского по роспуску КС

18:11, 3 ноября 2020

"There are every signs of a "coup d'état", as Yuriy Boyko said about the dissolution of the Constitutional Court



По словам сопредседателя партии Юрия Бойко, ОПЗЖ выступает за борьбу с коррупцией в Украине. Фото: ОПЗЖ

"Оппозиционная платформа - За жизнь" выступает за борьбу с коррупцией, однако считает, что инициатива президента Владимира Зеленского распустить КС имеет признаки государственного переворота.

Об этом во вторник, 3 ноября, заявил сопредседатель политической силы Юрий Бойко.

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

## 4

**"Extremism / Nationalism / Nazism / Hard-core nationalists in Ukraine"**

- 46 materials throughout the whole period of the monitoring study.

Examples:

*"Government, being under hard-core nationalists' thumb" in the news dated of 16.03.2020;*

*"If hard-core nationalists hamper you, so eliminate them" in the news dated of 17.05.2020.*

## 5

**"The end of the legend of democracy, Biden is corrupted"** - 34 news items. In particular, "Strana" began to employ such rhetoric during May 19-20, 2020, as Andriy Derkach published the so-called recordings of a Biden-Poroshenko telephone conversation. To the point, Strana provided information support for this news campaign, which the editorial office itself called Bidengate. Examples:

*"Andrei Derkach published audio compromising Petro Poroshenko and Joe Biden, Biden gives unequivocal orders to Poroshenko";*

*"Biden put pressure on Poroshenko over Shokin - because of his son Hunter's corruption schemes or for some other reason, this is important from the point of view of the investigation in the United States";*

*"Trump's team, represented by his aide Rudy Giuliani, has long been looking for compromising information on Biden in Ukraine. And they call for an investigation into the corruption of the former vice president in our country";*

*"In Biden's pocket... a strong argument... 1 billion loan guarantees... such is the price of rescuing Biden from prison."*

## Как американцы управляют Украиной и сядет ли Порошенко. 7 главных вопросов о "Байденгейте"

Виктория Венк 21:20, 19 мая 2020

How do American people handle Ukraine and will Poroshenko be put in jail, won't he? 7 main issues about the Bidengate.

## Деркач передал пленки Порошенко в Офис Генпрокурора для расследования госизмены экс-президента

17:11, 19 мая 2020

Derkach handed over the tapes of Poroshenko to the GPO to probe the high treason

Narratives denying Navalny's poisoning ("If it was a" Novichok", we wouldn't have seen him alive") and the news dated of September 7, 2020, and the involvement of foreigners in the falsification of poisoning were also published on the Strana website. The second case concerns the so-called "Lukashenko's recordings" - allegedly intercepted conversations of foreigners published in September 2020, which discussed creating problems for Putin so that he would not interfere in the affairs of Belarus.

And in the list of materials with the category of narratives "NATO threatens Russia" there is news for 6.09.2020 "American planes are practicing missile strikes on Russian territory."

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

**Much of these narratives are presented like an editorial stuff. Also anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives were voiced by:**

1. Andriy Portnov, an official under Yanukovych's presidency
2. Svitlana Kryukova, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the Strana website
3. Olesya Medvedev, an employee of the Strana website
4. Journalist for the "Strana" website Oleksiy Romanov
5. Doctor Olga Golubovska
6. Political scientist Kost Bondarenko
7. Political scientist Dmytro Spivak
8. Yanukovych's lawyer Vitaliy Serdyuk
9. MP Rinat Kuzmin
10. MP from the OPFL Vadym Rabinovych
11. MP Andriy Derkach
12. Ex-MP Oleksandr Onishchenko
13. Ex-MP David Zhvania

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

## GOLOS.UA



Golos.ua has **2 million hits per month**. As to the registration documents, the founder and ultimate beneficial owner of GOLOS.YU LLC is Oksana Vashchenko. She is the wife of the leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine Petro Symonenko.

### The main categories of narratives spread by the site golos.ua:

#### 1 "External governance": 51 news items. Examples:

*"The result of the US elections: Will Ukraine become the" eternally defaulted 51st state "" in the news dated of 4.11.2020;*

*"Law on banks aims at providing external control over the banking system of Ukraine" in the news dated of 16.05.2020;*

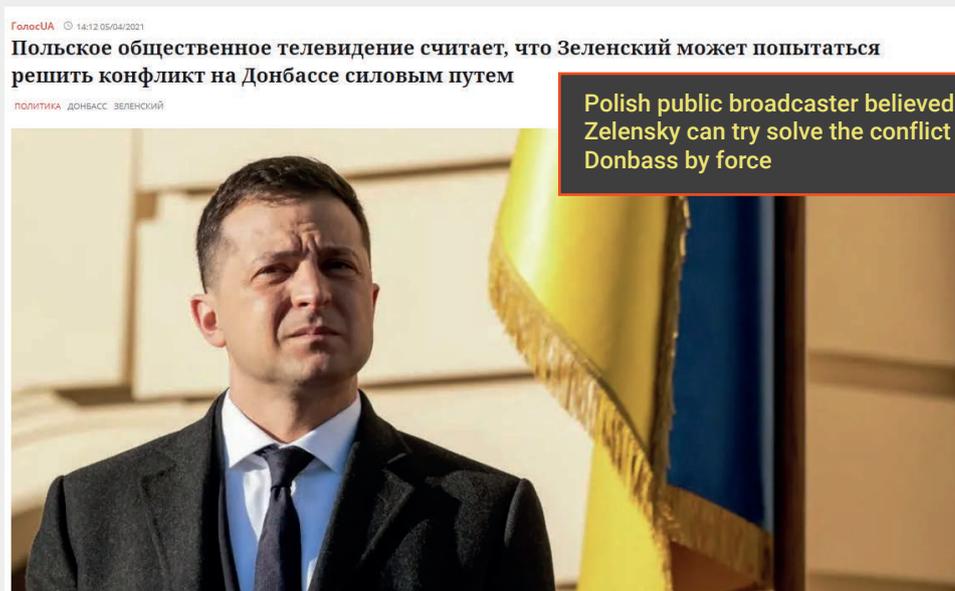
*"Dubinsky appealed to the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP) with a demand to verify the declaration of "complete Soros-young person" Oleksandra Ustinova" in the news dated of 20.03.2020.*

#### 2 "Escalation of the Ukrainian-Russian war is Ukraines doing": 31 news items. Examples:

*"The regime in place headed by Zelensky, is not going to implement the Minsk agreements, much less allow a peaceful end to this conflict" in the news dated of 4.01.2021;*

*"The Ukrainian side always appeals to Russia in case of any escalation at the front, this is a usual practice" in the news dated of 8.09.2020;*

*"Zelensky may try to resolve the conflict in Donbass by tour de force" in the news dated of 5.04.2021.*



# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

## 3

"Russia's success in fighting against coronavirus, Sputnik-B vaccine":

15 news items

Examples:

*"By refusing to negotiate the purchase of the world's only Russian coronavirus vaccine, the Ukrainian government has once again put its political ambitions above the lives of millions of citizens of our country" in the news dated of 5.11.2020;*

*"The world community is serious about the potential of the Russian vaccine" Sputnik V "" in the news dated of 6.01.2021;*

*"When I held talks with the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and he approved the supply of the Sputnik V vaccine to Ukraine" in the news dated of April 1, 202.*

ГолосUA 13:52 05/11/2020

**Виктор Медведчук: Украинская власть должна немедленно продолжить переговоры о закупке российской вакцины от коронавируса**

ПОЛИТИКА МЕДВЕДЧУК

**Viktor Medvedchuk: Ukrainian government ought to immediately go on with the negotiations about purchase of Russian coronavirus vaccine**



# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

## Anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives were voiced by:

1. Lawyer Igor Serkov
2. Lawyer Rostislav Kravets
3. Political scientist Serhiy Tolstov
4. Political scientist Valdentyn Gayday
5. Political scientist Oleksabnder Lazarev
6. Political scientist Mykhaylo Pohrebynsky
7. Political scientist Andriy Zolotarev
8. Political scientist Oleksiy Yakubin
9. Political scientist Volodymyr Volya
10. Political scientist Mykhailo Chaplyha
11. Political scientist Kirill Molchanov
12. Political scientist Pavlo Rudyakov
13. International affairs expert Ruslan Bizyaev
14. Economist Oleksiy Kushch
15. Analyst Valentyn Zemlyansky
16. Blogger Oleg Ponomaryov
17. Journalist Oleksiy Kurakin
18. MP Viktor Medvedchuk
19. MP from the OPFL Yuriy Zagorodny
20. MP from the OPFL Oleg Voloshin
21. MP Rinat Kuzmin
22. Ex-MP Petro Simonenko
23. Ex-MP David Zhvania

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

## 112ua.tv



Data on visits are non-existent for the last recent months. Before the TV channels from Medvedchuk's pool came under sanctions, this site had got **7.5 million hits per month**. The site 112ua.tv (before suspension of 112.ua) is part of Viktor Medvedchuk's media pool, as well as zikua.tv (before suspension of zik.ua) and newsoneua.tv (before suspension of newsone.ua).

### The main categories of narratives spread by the site golos.ua:

# 1

**"Discrediting the current government of Ukraine":** 56 news items

Examples:

*"The authorities in Ukraine are specifically exacerbating the situation in Donbass region. They realize well that attention of society has to be diverted from tariff increases, pandemics, and failed vaccinations. This can be done in a way convenient for them - escalation in Donbass. This government does not and will never have the task of achieving peace in eastern Ukraine. Do not expect any solution to the war from this regime, they are capable only to produce chaos, death and pain," as Ilya Kiva said in an article dated April 4, 2021;*

*"The government must stop making provocative statements and ensure the negotiation process to achieve peace in Ukraine." - said Yuri Boyko in the story from 07.04.2021;*

*"The conflict in Donbass continues, a chaotic personnel policy annihilates the system of public administration, instead of supporting citizens and the economy in the priority of repaying large-scale external loans - these are the key results of the government work." as this is said in the story dated of 15.05.2021.*

# 2

**«Russia's succeeds in fighting coronavirus, vaccine Sputnik V:**

30 news items

Examples:

*"By refusing to negotiate the purchase of the world's only Russian coronavirus vaccine, the Ukrainian government has once again put its political ambitions above the lives of millions of citizens of our country" in the news dated of 5.11.2020;*

*"Many countries are waiting in line for a vaccine from the Russian Federation, and we will stay in the backyard" in the news dated of 8.11.2020;*

*"Medvedchuk has already agreed to receive the only Sputnik V vaccine available as soon as possible. But the authorities, apparently, do not care about people's lives and health "as they said in the news dated of 4.01.2020.*

**Марчевский: ОПЗЖ инициирует сбор подписей с требованием обеспечить народ Украины российской вакциной "Спутник V"**

**Marchevsky: OPFL is launching collecting if signatures under the request to provide Ukrainians with Russian Sputnik-V vaccine"**

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

## 3

**"Extremism / nationalism / Nazism / radicals in Ukraine":**

29 news items

Examples:

*"The authorities, bowing to the hard-core nationalists, decided to withdraw from the Kryvyi Rih Museum the battle flags of the military units of the Red Army" as they said in the news dated of 16.03.2020;*

*"In European countries, any attempts to manifest national radicalism are severely suppressed. In Ukraine, such manifestations of radicalism have occurred in the past, but they surfaced especially actively at the beginning of the local election campaign "in the news dated of 4.09.2020;*

*"Villages in Donbass are peopled by hard-core nationalists on the eve of the elections" in the news dated of 9.09.2020.*

## 4

**"The escalation of the Ukrainian-Russian war is Ukraine's doing ":**

31 news items

Examples:

*"The developments in Donbass and the peaceful settlement of the conflict depend entirely on the political will of President Zelensky... The situation in Donbass is apparently inflamed, specifically and unmotivated" in the news dated of 1.04.2021;*

*"The rhetoric of the Ukrainian leadership, which intensifies tensions and exacerbates the conflict, has gone far and is fraught with the most severe consequences," as they said in the news dated of 5.04.2021;*

*"Kyiv does need neither dialogue in Minsk, nor dialogue in accordance with the Minsk agreements. At the same time, the Ukrainian government deliberately destroys relations with Belarus ", as they said in the news dated of April 6, 2021.*

## 5

**"External governance":**

55 news items

Examples:

*"We are a colony. And we have economy structure inherent to a colony!" they said in the story dated of 6.01.2021;*

*"The world credit oligarchy rules Ukraine and the people", as they said in the story dated of 8.01.2021;*

*"We can not bring order to our country by ourselves," as they said in the news dated of 7.09.2020.*

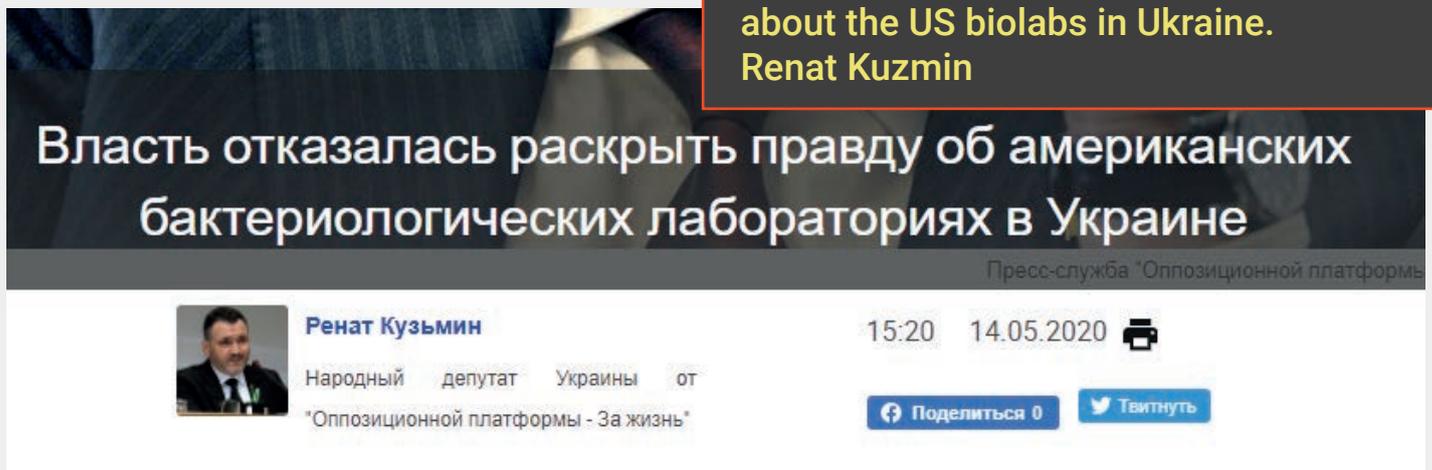
**Мы - колония. И у нас колониальная структура экономики! - Скаршевский**

**We are a colony. And we have economy structure inherent to a colony!-Skarshevsky said.**

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

Also, 112ua.tv website had news supporting pro-Russian and anti-American information campaign on the so-called "secret US biological laboratories in Ukraine in the." "What kind of ne'er-do-well you have to be, if you hide the information about American bacteriological laboratories and the experiments that are being conducted there from your people?!" This is not the government, this is an organized crime syndicate, and Ukrainians are just a biomass for them to conduct experiments with combat viruses and this in total impunity! " as they said in the news dated of 14.05.2020.

**Government refused to say all the truth about the US biolabs in Ukraine.  
Renat Kuzmin**



Власть отказалась раскрыть правду об американских бактериологических лабораториях в Украине

Пресс-служба "Оппозиционной платформы"

**Ренат Кузьмин**  
Народный депутат Украины от "Оппозиционной платформы - За жизнь"

15:20 14.05.2020

Поделиться 0 Твитнуть

**Among the news items with anti-American rhetoric, it is worth to be noted the following ones:**

News with a narrative about the decline of the West dated of 8.01.2021: "A total breakdown of the legend of "democracy in the American way ", which the United States are cynically trying to impose to the whole world."

The narrative about the decline of the West from January 8, 2021: "The storming of the Capitol by right-wing radicals, in which several people were dead, and shops and police stations were burnt, robberies by left-wing radicals took place two months ago, evidenced a deep schism in American society."

Narrative about the threat from the US in a video news dated of 09.09.2020 about the flight of American aircrafts over Ukraine: "This is an extremely dangerous step towards further escalation of tensions due to the military-political situation around Ukraine, post-Soviet space and the Black Sea-Caspian region, that the origin had been laid down during the Ossetian conflict unleashed by Saakashvili's regime in 2008."

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

## Anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives were voiced by:

1. Political scientist Dmytro Spivak
2. Political scientist Mykhailo Pohrebynsky
3. Political scientist Vadym Karasev
4. Expert Dmytro Marunich
5. Analyst Oleksiy Kalinichenko
6. Analyst Valentin Zemlyansky
7. Journalist Iryna Gavrilova
8. Journalist Yuriy Molchanov
9. Expert Volodymyr Katzman
10. Expert Victor Skarshevsky
11. Expert in conflict resolution techniques Maryna Cherenkova
12. MP from the OPFL Viktor Medvedchuk
13. MP from the OPFL Vadym Rabinovych
14. MP Yuriy Boyko
15. MP Rinat Kuzmin
16. MP Ilya Kiva
17. MP from the OPFL Oleg Voloshin
18. MP Viktor Chorny
19. Artem Marchevsky, the head of the youth branch of OPFL
20. Ex-MP Ganna Herman
21. Ex-MP Petro Simonenko
22. Former Prime Minister Mykola Azarov
23. Politician Andriy Palchevsky
23. Anatoly Shariy

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

## VESTI



"VESTI" gets **4 million hits per month**. The domain vesti.ua is registered to the Cypriot company MEDIA HOLDING VESTI UKRAINE LTD. The same company is listed on the site itself. The Vesti Ukraina media holding is linked to fugitive Minister Oleksandr Klymenko, who went into hiding in Russia after the Revolution of Dignity.

### The main categories of narratives published by "VESTI":

# 1

**"Escalation of the Ukrainian-Russian war is Ukraine's doing":**

23 news items

Examples:

*In Russia they said that "the video conference of the Trilateral Contact Group was on the verge of failure due to the position of Kyiv" in the news item dated of 14.05.2020;*

*"Official Kyiv has not yet fulfilled a number of commitments" in the news dated of 1.04.2021;*

*"Violations of all Minsk agreements by Kyiv are evident. Now Kyiv has switched from criticizing the political framework for resolving the crisis in Donbass to threats to start military action" in the story dated of 6.04.2021.*

"External governance": 13 news items

# 2

**"The End of the Legend of Democracy, Biden is corrupted" :**

19 news items

Examples:

*"Kerry asked Poroshenko to consider the option of substitution of Prosecutor General Shokin, who "blocked the reform of the purge of the Prosecutor General's Office" in the news from 19.05.2020;*  
*"Revenge of Democaption" represented by Biden, Kent and Keen. Revenge is an integral part of their regular activities against Ukrainian investigators, journalists, experts, solving more and more schemes of international corruption" in the news dated of 10.09.2020;*

*" Mysterious death of a diplomat got already several leads: adherents of conspiracy theories blame the United States for the murder" in the news dated of 18.05.2020;*

*"The pogroms in the US Congress building are a complete failure of the legend of" American democracy" in the news dated of 8.01.2021.*

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

# 3

"External governance":

13 news items

Examples:

"Ukraine is under external governance. I am concerned with that there is a statement by a very influential embassy and a very influential state that supports these sanctions" in the news dated of April 1, 2021;

"Putin will act ultimatum-like, if he calls on Merkel and Macron to bring Zelensky to life, since the escalation of tensions is due to the fault of the Ukrainian government, which is controlled by the United States" in the news dated of 1.04.2021;

"All their power was aimed at fulfilling "wish list" of the International Finance Corporation" in the news of 2.04.2021.

Medvedchuk: Ukrainian government would like I were not here, but I won't quit the country

**Медведчук: украинской власти хотелось бы, чтобы меня здесь не было, но я страну не покину**

ИРИНА ДОЖДЕВА | 02 АПРЕЛЯ 2021, 16:21

**Путин выдвинет ультиматум по Донбассу Меркель и Макрону, – политолог**

ИРИНА ДОЖДЕВА | 01 АПРЕЛЯ 2021, 17:00

Putin to issue Donbas ultimatum to Merkel and Macron – political scientist said

**Журавский: Санкции в отношении трех телеканалов являются незаконными и должны быть отменены Верховным судом**

АННА ПАВЛОВА | 01 АПРЕЛЯ 2021, 20:55

Zhuravsky: Sanctions as to three broadcasters is unlawful and have to be revoked by the Supreme court

Since February 2021, the website of "Vesti" has increased many times the number of news with pro-Russian narratives. This coincided with an escalation at the front. In particular, on April 5, 2021, he spread a fake news about a boy killed by the Ukrainian military: "Since the next escalation of Kyiv's aggression against Donbass, this is the second victim who died as a result of a terrorist attack organized by Ukrainian militants."

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

**Much of these narratives is presented like it were editorial content.  
Also anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives were voiced by:**

1. Political scientist Ruslan Bortnik
2. Political scientist Denis Zharkyykh
3. Political scientist Kirilo Sazonov
4. Political scientist Oleksiy Yakubin
5. Political scientist Oleksiy Voronenko
6. Political scientist Taras Chornovol
7. Political scientist Serhiy Markov
8. International affairs expert Denys Pilash
9. Expert Serhiy Rosenbaum
10. Media expert Larysa Drozdova
11. MP Andriy Derkach
12. MP Viktor Medvedchuk
13. MP Vasyl Nimchenko
14. MP Maksym Buzhansky
15. Former MP Vitaliy Zhuravsky
15. Anatoly Shariy

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA



## Pershyi Nezalezhnyi (First Independent) YouTube channel

Prior to being banned in February 2021, NewsOne, ZIK and 112 (the so-called "channels of Viktor Medvedchuk", formally owned by MP Taras Kozak) were the main platforms where anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives were generated and disseminated.

After their broadcasting stopped, their teams bought Pershyi Nezalezhnyi satellite channel, a purportedly new media outlet, which nevertheless continued the same line of pro-Russian rhetoric (the channel was soon closed and now streams on YouTube). These developments did not result in any significant decrease in the scope of disinformation. Instead, most legal restrictions binding purveyors of propaganda are no longer holding them back. Consequently, the degree of manipulation in their messages has seen a substantial increase, and now they can speak Russian on air. On the other hand, their coverage has fallen in tens or hundreds of times, meaning that even more toxic disinformation now has much less noticeable impact.

Among materials broadcasted on the platform, we found footage featuring MP Renat Kuzmin from the Opposition Platform – For Life (OPFL) political party claiming that NABU (National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine) was spying on behalf of foreign intelligence services (July 16, 2020). His colleague Ilya Kiva also told stories about "**America's skanks**", "**Soros's scum**", and "**burial teams**" (March 31, 2020). Anti-Western disinformation is spread both by guests invited and hosts. For example, on January 20, 2021, Vyacheslav Pikhovshek asked his guest the following question: "**Will Ukraine be lower on its knees before the US under Biden than it was under Trump?**"

We also detected **some homophobic language** on the channel. On May 9, 2020, MP Vadym Rabinovych, OPFL, said he was outraged by "**same-sex beings**" and did not understand why the issue of same-sex marriage was discussed in a Christian state as such, while in March 2021 Ilya Kiva made a statement that Ukraine was "**tainted with homosexuality.**"

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

Most anti-Western narratives on the channel were disseminated by the following individuals:

1. Vyacheslav Pikhovshek, host on Pershyi Nezalezhnyi, executive producer of the former NewsOne channel
2. Diana Panchenko, host on Pershyi Nezalezhnyi
3. Renat Kuzmin, MP, OPFL
4. Oleg Voloshin, MP, OPFL
5. Ilya Kiva, MP, OPFL
6. Vadym Rabinovych, MP, OPFL
7. Olena Lukash, Minister of Justice during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovych
8. Mykhailo Chaplyha, political commentator

<p><b>Мы еще год видимо будем обсуждать дурные заявления политиков</b></p> <p>We will more than one year discuss silly statements from politicians</p> <p>3:49</p>	<p><b>Зеленский капризничает с Меркель в заочном общении</b></p> <p>Zelensky grizzles speaking with Merkel while communicating in distance</p> <p>3:57</p>	<p><b>USA vs EU: eavesdropping of European politicians</b></p> <p>1:00:29</p>	<p><b>У Зеленского проявляется принцип наполеонизма</b></p> <p>"Zelensky starts showing Napoleonism principle"</p> <p>2:29</p>
<p>Кравчук видно устал, на всех интервью он сонны...</p> <p>81 просмотр • 32 минуты назад</p>	<p>Зеленский взял плохую моду - обращаться к...</p> <p>280 просмотров • 48 минут назад</p>	<p>"Международная панорама" с Надеждой...</p> <p>357 просмотров • Трансляция закончилась 1 час</p>	<p>Зеленский превращается в насмешку - это больно ...</p> <p>161 просмотр • 1 час назад</p>
<p><b>Украина не центр вселенной, в мире есть проблемы поважнее...</b></p> <p>"Ukraine is not a center of the universe. The world has more serious problems..."</p> <p>4:08</p>	<p><b>Людей готовят, что все будут подвержены слежению</b></p> <p>"The people will be prepared to be surveilled"</p> <p>3:57</p>	<p><b>"Северный поток-2": последствия для Украины</b></p> <p>"Northern Stream-2: consequences for Ukraine"</p> <p>13:50</p>	<p><b>Украина-НАТО. Разговор Байдена и Зеленского</b></p> <p>"Ukraine-NATO. Talks of Zelensky and Biden"</p> <p>48:50</p>
<p>Все, что говорит и делает политик, может быть...</p> <p>108 просмотров • 1 час назад</p>	<p>За обычными людьми тоже будут следить, не...</p> <p>155 просмотров • 1 час назад</p>	<p>"Северный поток-2": Каких потерь понесет Украина...</p> <p>117 просмотров • 2 часа назад</p>	<p>Украина-НАТО. Разговор Байдена и Зеленского....</p> <p>1,7 тыс. просмотров • Трансляция закончилась 2</p>
<p><b>Университет будущего. Запуск "Северного потока"</b></p> <p>59:01</p>	<p><b>Зеленский и см... Украинские олигархи... Рынок земли... Вадим Карасев</b></p> <p>"Zelensky and mass media. Ukrainian oligarchs. Land market. Vadym Karasyov"</p> <p>48:11</p>	<p><b>Деньги всегда влияют на политику!</b></p> <p>"Money will always influence politics! Krasyyov"</p> <p>9:50</p>	<p><b>Журналистика в обычном понимании умерла!</b></p> <p>"Journalism in usual concept is dead" Karasyov"</p> <p>12:30</p>
<p>День журналиста с президентом. Притула в...</p> <p>826 просмотров • Трансляция закончилась 3</p>	<p>Вадим Карасев в ток-шоу "15" на "Першому..."</p> <p>3,6 тыс. просмотров • Трансляция закончилась 4</p>	<p>Карасев: У Коломойского, Пинчука и Ахметова есть...</p> <p>327 просмотров • 4 часа назад</p>	<p>Карасев: Это не сенсация с Зеленским и...</p> <p>463 просмотра • 4 часа назад</p>
<p><b>Зеленский пошел путем мелких шагов...</b></p> <p>"Zelensky undertook the path of trotting"</p> <p>11:08</p>	<p><b>Протасевич ступил на опасный путь, чего он ожидал?</b></p> <p>"Protasevych undertook a dangerous path. But what he had expected?"</p> <p>3:13</p>	<p><b>Блинкен и Нулан были разочарованы встречей с Зеленским</b></p> <p>"Blinken and Nulan disappointed by meeting with Zelensky"</p> <p>8:14</p>	<p><b>Открытие рынка земли... Борьба с олигархами</b></p> <p>"Opening of land market. Fighting the oligarchs"</p> <p>44:21</p>

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA



## Nash (Ours) TV Channel

Most of the above-mentioned narratives of anti-Western disinformation are regularly broadcasted on Nash TV Channel. At the time being the latter is the second most popular news channel in Ukraine. Its official owner is Yevhen Muraev, but it has been linked to Vadym Novynsky, an ally of Rinat Akhmetov, and to the entourage of Ukraine's Interior Minister Arsen Avakov. After the channels of Viktor Medvedchuk were banned, Nash transformed into the primary source of pro-Russian and anti-Western narratives on Ukrainian television.

For example, during one of the talk shows on the channel, Olena Lukash called Ukraine a "colony that feeds its governors," and Yevhen Muraev stated that the war in Ukraine benefited only the United States (April 9, 2021). Moreover, Muraev also called NATO and the EU Nazis: "Who are the members of NATO and the European Union? I'll tell you who they are. Most European countries that fought on the side of Hitler and killed 8 million Ukrainians [...] Are they our brothers?"

### **Most often, anti-Western narratives on the channel are spread by:**

1. Yevhen Muraev, the channel's owner
2. Maks Nazarov, news presenter
3. Olena Bondarenko, MP of the former Party of Regions
4. Olena Lukash, Minister of Justice under President Yanukovich
5. Mykhailo Chaplyha, political commentator

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

## TELEGRAM CHANNELS

Telegram messaging platform turned out to be a rather well-suited environment for spreading anti-Western messages, disinformation and conspiracy theories. Public channels on Telegram can be divided into anonymous and non-anonymous, i.e., those having an indicated author. Quite often the same people who systematically broadcast anti-Western and anti-democratic disinformation on television also spread such messages on Telegram. For example, **"Naglyi (Insolent)" (55,351 subscribers) is the channel owned by Maks Nazarov**, a news presenter on Nash Channel. In his posts on Telegram Nazarov does not hold back anything. On average, Nazarov publishes two such posts a week. The author's style is usually quite succinct, e.g., in March of 2020, Nazarov wrote: "Truth be told, no coronavirus will fuck Ukraine as much as these damn Soros piglets." He also made the following comment on the storming of the US Capitol: "Yeah, go teach the world more democracy, you damn democrats."

Olena Lukash, former Minister of Justice during the presidency Viktor Yanukovych, has her own channel **"Elena Lukash" (54,549 subscribers)**, where she often shares videos from the talk shows she participated in. She regularly shares posts of her partners in the dissemination of anti-Western disinformation, while sometimes also authoring her own posts using such expressions as "our dear bidened in the head", "the response of those rascal Soros piglets", "porohkrobots and Soros piglets are squalling out loud seeing the new Prosecutor General appointed".

For her **10,000 subscribers Olena Bondarenko**, a former Party of Regions MP, posts the same messages that she spreads on TV channels, although the language is unsurprisingly more direct. Here is an example of her post of March 2020: "I suggest G7 countries stop being shy and send us our Gauleiter, and then recognize Ukraine as their colony, why all this charade? You can put down your orders directly and then give them to local "lackeys", it is already clear that you decide more than the president and the Verkhovna Rada!"

The **channel owned by Yevhen Muraev, the owner of the Nash Channel and the leader of Nashi (Ours) Party, and also a former Party of Regions MP**, is relatively new compared to others. Muraev created it in March 2020 and has since gained **more than 8,000 subscribers**. He posts his messages less frequently than others, mostly one post a day, although sometimes the channel may see no new posts for a few days. Muraev writes long-read stories, so often a single post can have the full spectrum of anti-Western and anti-democratic rhetoric. It is worth noting that his writing is free of obscene language. Instead, Muraev's posts seem to resemble op-ed pieces.

Another famous purveyor of anti-Western narratives is the pro-Russian blogger and politician **Anatoliy Shariy, who, compared to others, has the largest audience on Telegram of more than 269,000 subscribers. His wife, Olga Shariy, is also rather active on Telegram (65,000 subscribers).**

# REVIEW OF SPREAD OF PRO-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IN MASS MEDIA

For example, in one of her posts about the tapes released by Andrii Derkach she wrote the following: "However, an obvious question arises: how all these scumbags, sponsored by foreign states, all these media, politicians, parties, and activists who carry out direct US orders, how dare they call someone unpatriotic? These crooked whores keep telling us what a real party is, what a real journalist looks like."

**"Andrei Portnov" Telegram channel has more than 182,000 subscribers.** The channel is owned by the former first deputy head of President Yanukovich's Administration and is often used as a platform for criticizing the United States and discrediting Euromaidan as well as for calls for "purging" Ukraine of "parasitic non-governmental organizations." Quite similar to Portnov's posts is also the writing of his colleague Mykhailo Dobkin on the latter's own Telegram channel (33,238 subscribers). Dobkin is a former MP from the Opposition Bloc party and former head of Kharkiv Regional State Administration under President Yanukovich. Dobkin's style is quite unreserved, he often uses obscene language or insults: "The entire fifth column of Soros, all that external government and the IMF debts are welcome to go fuck themselves."

**"Maks Buzhansky" (41,164 subscribers)** is the personal channel of MP Maksym Buzhansky from the Servant of the People party. Although his party holds the most seats on the Parliament, hit does not restrain him from spreading pro-Russian and anti-Western narratives. Buzhansky, despite himself being "in power", often writes about "external governance". He labelled certain laws as "produced by Soros piglets" and urged his colleagues to refrain from voting for them. The MP dedicated significant attention to the storming of the Capitol: in two days, he published 5 posts about the attack, garnishing them with anti-Western language.

Yet another channel on Telegram boasting considerable activity in spreading disinformation on external governance belongs to a journalist at pro-Russian Strana.ua website, **Olesya Medvedeva. Her "Lesya iz STRANY (Lesya from STRANA)" channel (25,272 subscribers)** often shares posts from the Telegram channel of the said website, which regularly spreads pro-Russian and anti-Western messages. She also authors her own posts, frequently touching upon the anti-Western mantra, as in the following example: "here's president standing at the podium, being told off by henchmen of Western embassies and grant organizations, which imagine themselves civil society, as some sucker who failed to follow the general line of the State Department. Makes me sick."

In terms of quantity, the most prolific with regard to anti-Western messages among non-anonymous channels is **"KlymenkoTime" (54,673 subscribers), owned by Oleksandr Klymenko**, Minister of Revenues and Duties during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich, who fled to Russia alongside his former boss. The channel posts an average of 35 publications a day, which is a lot compared to the rest of the Ukrainian segment of Telegram. Anti-Western messages were published almost every day during the monitoring period.

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## Anonymous Telegram channels

The policy and functions of Telegram provide its users with an option to remain anonymous, allowing them to spread disinformation, manipulation, private information leaks or manipulative "insider information". Anti-Western and anti-democratic messages disseminated through these channels often abound in such words as "plot", "rumor" or "insider information". This has an impact on the readers' perception of information, increasing the effectiveness of disinformation and fueling the spread of conspiracy theories. The messages are quite often reinforced by hate speech and swearing.

A colorful example is "Soros piglets" Telegram anonymous channel, which publishes manipulative and fake news about politicians, public officials and civil activists on a daily basis. The channel has an audience of 17,000 subscribers with an average coverage of more than 20,000 users. Much of the growth of its popularity can be attributed to crossposting since channels of this kind regularly share each other's posts. Such connection was observed among "Legitimnyi (Legitimate one)", "Rezident (Resident)", "Temnyi Rytsar (Dark Knight)", "Sheptun (Whisperer)" channels which were in focus of Detector Media's previous investigation.

### **Anonymous channels where the DM experts identified some pro-Russian and anti-Western rhetoric:**

1. Legitimniy (185 800 of followers within the monitored period)
2. Tayny deputata (MP secrets) (138 600)
3. Resident (131 900)
4. Temny Rytsar (Dark Knight) (71 600)
5. ZeRada (65 600)
6. Zhenshchina s kosoy (Woman with braid or Woman with vital shears) (61 000)
7. Sheptun (Whisperer) (54 000)
8. Spletnitsa (Gossip girl) (45 300)
9. Cartel (43 000)
10. Crocodile (38 500)
11. Shadow Anonymous (30 000)
12. Borodataya babushka (bearded granny) (26 800)
13. Sososyata (Soros-piglets) (17 700)
14. Ten na platen (17 400)
15. Russliy demiurge (16 200)
16. Temny Rytsar (Dark knight ) (10 000)
17. Pod mantiey (under the long robe) (5 000)
18. Hater (4 100)
19. Sekretov.net (No secrets) (4 000)

# CONCLUSIONS

In February 2021, the National Security and Defense Council staged a strike on pro-Russian propaganda on Ukrainian television. Then the TV channels from Medvedchuk's pool came under sanctions: 112th, Newsone, ZIK. Later on, an attempt to broadcast this media under the new logo of the "First Independent" TV Channel was prevented.

As a result, pro-Russian and anti-Western information campaigns and rhetoric on Ukrainian television have declined significantly. Some of the speakers who voiced these narratives on Medvedchuk's channels switched to NASH and Ukraina-24 TV channels. However, **the overall degree of pro-Russian rhetoric has somehow decreased**. Together with the audience that consumed it.

Instead, there has been no such sharp drop on the Internet. Following the February NSDC sanctions, the online audience of anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives has shrunk by only a quarter. Thus, before the sanctions the three sites from Medvedchuk's pool had a total number of monthly hits at the level of 11 million (112.ua - 7.5 million, Newsone - 2.5 million, ZIK - 1.2 million). Today, the statistics of views of these media on new domains are not available on the specialized site similarweb.com. This indicates low hits these sites have.

**Instead, an IMI study found that six sites that spread anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives between 2020 and 2021 and conducted entire information campaigns of manipulation and misinformation, with a total of more than 42 million hits per month. Now, the three sites that failed to fall under the sanctions have a total of 31 million hits per month (strana.ua - 25 million, vesti.ua - 4 million, golos.ua - 2 million).**

That is, we can say that the Ukrainian online audience is still coming under influence of pro-Russian manipulative companies. And these media outlets with pro-Russian owners keep on spreading anti-Western and pro-Russian rhetoric.

Moreover, IMI analysts note that the sites of Medvedchuk's pool, strana.ua and vesti.ua increased the number of news with pro-Russian narratives after February 2021. In particular, they became leaders in the dissemination of narratives in the categories of "external governance" and "the escalation of the Ukrainian-Russian war is Ukraine's doing" during the escalation at the front and Russia's built-up of troops to the borders with Ukraine and Crimea.

