

# DISINFORMATION TRENDS AND NARRATIVES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT FOR THE PERIOD  
**JULY-SEPTEMBER 2023**



Kingdom of the Netherlands

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WESTERN BALKANS ANTI-DISINFORMATION HUB  
EXPOSING MALIGN INFLUENCES THROUGH WATCHDOG JOURNALISM

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SKOPJE 2023

**DISINFORMATION  
TRENDS AND  
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THE WESTERN  
BALKAN REGION**  
MEDIA MONITORING  
REPORT FOR THE  
PERIOD JULY –  
SEPTEMBER 2023



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**Title:** Disinformation trends and narratives in the Western Balkans: Media monitoring report for the period July-September 2023

**Publisher:** Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society

ul. Ruzveltova br. 19, kat 2, 1000 Skopje,  
Republic of North Macedonia

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**Design:** KOMA

**Number of copies:** electronic edition, available via  
[www.metamorphosis.org.mk](http://www.metamorphosis.org.mk).

2023

CIP - Каталогизacija vo publikacija  
Nacionalna i univerzitetska biblioteka "Св. Климент Охридски", Скопје

316.77

DISINFORMATION trends and narratives in the Western Balkans [Електронски извор] / [editor Filip Stojanovski] : media monitoring report for the period July-September 2023. - Skopje : Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society, 2023

Начин на пристапување (URL):

[https://metamorphosis.org.mk/en/izdaniya\\_arhiva/disinformation-trends-and-narratives-in-the-western-balkans-media-monitoring-report-for-the-period-july-september-2023/](https://metamorphosis.org.mk/en/izdaniya_arhiva/disinformation-trends-and-narratives-in-the-western-balkans-media-monitoring-report-for-the-period-july-september-2023/).

- Текст во PDF формат, содржи 26 стр., илустр. - Наслов преземен од екранот. - Опис на изворот на ден 21.12.2023

ISBN 978-608-263-112-7

а) Медиуми -- Дезинформации -- Западен Балкан -- Извештаи

COBISS.MK-ID 62650629



Kingdom of the Netherlands

The project Western Balkans Anti Disinformation Hub: Exposing Malign Influences Through Watchdog Journalism is implemented by Metamorphosis Foundation (North Macedonia) in partnership with Faktoje (Albania), International and Security Affairs Centre - ISAC (Serbia), Center for Democratic Transition - CDT (Montenegro), S'bunker (Kosovo) and UGD Zašto ne / Why Not (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The project is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This periodical media monitoring report is produced within the Western Balkans Anti-Disinformation Hub project, which debunks the chief propaganda claims that deny the existence or minimize the importance of disinformation related to foreign malign influences in the region, documenting and responding to disinformation instances, narratives and trends aimed at disrupting the democratic development. This report, covering the period of the third quarter of 2023 is based on the analysis of the input by six project partners in combination with insights from journalistic and analytical articles, taking into consideration wider context and complementary research results by other reputable organizations or institutions relevant to the region, and forming long-lasting public record as basis for creating a data-driven early warning infrastructure for disinformation threats and potential harm.

During the period from July to September 2023, authoritarian foreign actors and their domestic proxies or allies continued to disseminate disinformation in all six Western Balkans countries, aiming to destabilize democratically elected governments, disrupt functioning of institutions, increase polarization and deepen national, ethnic, religious and other divides, increasing tensions through increasing fear, outrage and anger among the populations, with resulting rise in Euroscepticism. Alongside continuous exploitation of political situation and incidents, they also continued attempts to enhance endemic anti-Western sentiments present in certain groups, and abuse controversial societal topics such as gender issues spread their influence as defenders of traditional values.

The NATO alliance leaders meeting in Vilnius gave excuse to Kremlin for fierce reactions. Extreme disinformation narratives such as “Russia will attack NATO” and “Ukraine will never become a member” were aimed at scaring the WB countries and instill in them fear from the Russian power. This is commonly propagated by the Russian state media, while preemptively placing most of the blame upon NATO with the narrative “NATO could have prevented the war if did not gave Kiev weapons”.



Worsening of the relations between Serbia and Kosovo was accompanied with proliferation of disinformation aimed at creating political climate conducive to deepening the conflict, which culminated with the September 24 attack on Kosovo police by armed group of Serb militants in Banjska village in North Kosovo. Various disinformation narratives aimed at increasing tensions, spread by Serbian politicians and tabloid media, such as “Kosovo aim is to expel the Serbs” were often supported by Russian state-owned media Sputnik in Serbian language.

Anti-EU narratives aim to create resentment towards the EU and present other anti-European alternatives for WB region. Pro-Russian media disinformation highlight all the weakness of Europe alongside with claims that “sanctions against Russia caused enormous damage to the EU economies”, implying that WB countries should look for their future away from the EU.

Foreign malign actors spread disinformation in the media posing as reputable news sources to gain legitimacy in the public’s eye and influence the WB region. These tactics range from the creation of entirely false outlets or using authentic sources to amplify deceptive contents. All of this adds to the importance of mapping and monitoring the disinformation discourse alongside the work of independent fact-checkers as the first line of defense against disinformation.

This periodical media monitoring report is produced within the Western Balkans Anti-Disinformation Hub project, implemented by Metamorphosis Foundation (North Macedonia) in partnership with Faktoje (Albania), Why Not (Bosnia and Herzegovina), CDT – Center for Democratic Transition (Montenegro), ISAC International and Security Affairs Centre (Serbia) and Sbunker (Kosovo) with support by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



# METHODOLOGY

The present report provides an overview of the results of monitoring process of domestic online media in six Western Balkan countries, namely North Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, from July to September 2023. The purpose of this monitoring was to identify and analyze the disinformation instances and trends related to foreign malign influences in the region and to understand the main messages that they aim to send.

To achieve this goal, the teams of the Western Balkans Anti-Disinformation partner organizations analyzed more than 600 articles from various media outlets and social media posts, suspected of containing disinformation related to foreign influences in the region. The selection of articles is based on the availability of verifiable information that can be checked through professional journalism methods, and we made sure to include those with high representation on social networks.

The conducted analysis of these articles covered several key aspects, including the disinformation message they intend to convey, the themes and narratives they relate to, their level of influence, sources of origin, media distribution in the region, and their potential to cause violence or radicalization.

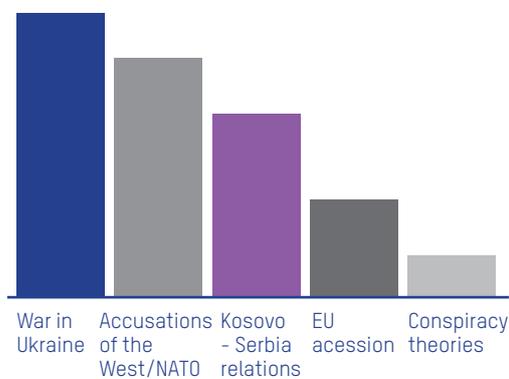




# HIGHLIGHTS OF DISINFORMATION

Over the past three months the war in Ukraine remains the most common topic of disinformation including accusations against West and NATO for interference and causing the war. Kosovo-Serbia relations represent a topic widely reported in the WB media during this reporting period, bringing about numerous speculations and disinformation narratives from several parties and the topic of EU accession was no exception.

NO. OF ARTICLES FOR EACH THEME OF  
DISINFORMATION JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023



As Russian aggression on Ukraine persists, disinformation proliferation coming from Russian state controlled media persists as well. Kremlins' propaganda machinery was never so concentrated on spreading as much disinformation on a single person as it does when it comes to Volodymyr Zelensky presenting him as "neo-Nazi, church oppressor and abuser of financial assistance from allies for his personal enrichment". These narratives alongside with claims that there is "children organs trafficking in Ukraine" not only discredit Zelensky, but through him, the whole country of Ukraine in the eyes of the international community, in order to cause discord between the West and Ukraine, and a cessation or at least a reduction in the military and all other aid on which Ukraine depends in its defense.



An event marking the month of August was the crash of Yevgeny Prigozhin's personal plane about which countless speculations and disinformation narratives from multiple sides were fabricated. Narratives varying from 'death of Yevgeny Prigozhin's was staged' and 'the whole event was a scenario and agreement between him and Putin' to 'blaming the West and Ukraine for the death of Prigozhin'.

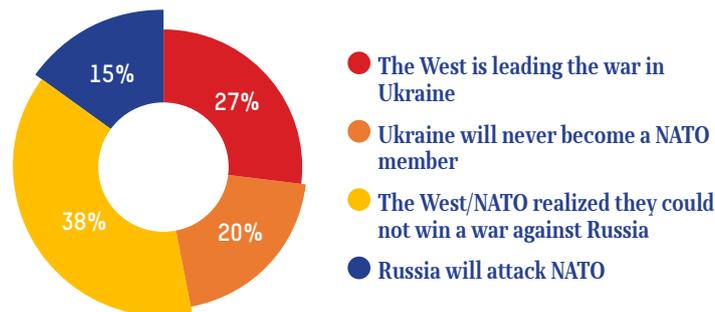
#### PERCENTAGE OF MOST COMMON NARRATIVES ON TOPIC THE WAR IN UKRAINE JULY - SEPTEMBER



The key geopolitical event marking the monitoring period when it comes to the topic of NATO and the West was a two-day [NATO Summit](#) countries in [Vilnius](#), that gathered leaders of member and partner countries on July 11-12. NATO allies discussed on various issues, one of the most important was supporting Ukraine on the path to future membership in the Alliance. This was an occasion for fierce Russian reactions, channeled through extreme disinformation narratives such as "Russia will attack NATO" and "Ukraine will never become a member". This fearmongering Kremlin tactic not only wants to instill fear from World War Three, but also to create an impression in the media that "NATO wants to go to war with Russia" and "NATO could have prevented the war" if it didn't give Kiev weapons. This, of course, means to say it would have been more likely that Ukraine would have been defeated much faster without those weapons and there would be no war.



### PERCENTAGE OF MOST COMMON NARRATIVES ON TOPIC THE WAR IN UKRAINE JULY - SEPTEMBER



Tensions between ethnic Serbs and Kosovo Albanians have been a part of the daily life of the people in the North of Kosovo for a long period now. In September there was an attack in Banjska when an armed group from Serbia attacked the Kosovo Police resulting in death of a police officer. Different disinformation narratives have been present since the tensions started and some of them, such as “Kosovo aim is to expel the Serbs” were often supported by Russian state-owned media Sputnik in Serbian language.

Narratives such as ‘Kosovo ruling elites only wish ill to Serbs’ and ‘Kosovo is committing genocide against Serbian population’ were both present in the Serbian and Kosovo media landscape, clearly showing where from such narratives originate. Some of the narratives imply the escalation is being generated by Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti and some by Serbian officials. But, what is certain is that this prevents further process of reconciliation and integration of the Albanian and Serbian communities in Kosovo.

Anti-EU narratives aiming to create resentment towards the EU and offer other anti-European alternatives for WB region were also present in the disinformation landscape. Pro-Kremlin media interpreted the Russia/Ukraine war by pushing narratives that it shows all the weaknesses of Europe, especially claiming that the sanctions against Russia caused enormous damage to the EU economies, as well as trying to persuade WB countries that they should look for their future away from Europe.



# COUNTRY CONTEXT UPDATE

## ALBANIA



There have been no ground-shifting changes to Albania's country context over this past reporting period. Three events have dictated the narratives circulating in the Albanian media landscape. Continued tensions between Serbia and Kosovo were widely reported in the media and later spilled over into Albania's relationship with Kosovo. These tensions recently culminated with a terrorist attack in the Northern Kosovo followed by a large disinformation campaign. Another event was [the arrest of Fredi Beleri](#), an opposition candidate belonging to Albania's Greek minority population, over charges of corruption and ever since relations between Greece and Albania have been at odds. Greece has painted the arrest as motivated by the Albanian government's attempt to undermine the rights of the Greek minority in Albania and steal their properties and has threatened to use the event against Albania's ascension to the EU. In July, a police raid was carried out in the MEK camp near Durres where Iranian dissidents reside. The raid was accompanied by two deaths and a disinformation campaign by Iran resulting in several disturbing narratives spread by Albanian media.





Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful disinformation instances
Kosovo-Serbia relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Kurti is campaigning for Great Albania</li> <li>▶ Serbia is behind the attack in north Kosovo</li> <li>▶ Kosovo police stopped EULEX from participating in investigations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <a href="#">Kurti's statement when visiting North Macedonia</a> was an attempt to promote a "Great Albania."</li> <li>▶ Head of <a href="#">Kosovo Office Petar Petkovic</a> claimed that <a href="#">Kosovo police had prohibited EULEX from participating in the investigations</a> taking place about the attack.</li> <li>▶ Serbian deputy Srdan Milivojevic said that <a href="#">Vucic must be behind the attack.</a></li> </ul>
Albanian national security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Police raid at Mujahideen camp organized by Iran</li> <li>▶ MEK members planning terrorist attack on Iran</li> <li>▶ MEK leader was banned from entering Albania</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Iran's government claimed that the <a href="#">computers that were seized in the Mujahideen camp were transferred to Iran</a></li> <li>▶ Prime Minister Edi Rama in an interview insinuates that the <a href="#">raid was related to members of the camp organizing against the Iranian government.</a></li> <li>▶ Maryam Rajavi, the leader of the Mujahideen camp in Manza has been <a href="#">banned from entering Albania.</a></li> </ul>
Albania-Greek relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Albanian government violets Greek minority's rights</li> <li>▶ Albanian government is not democratic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <a href="#">Beleri's arrest</a> is an attempt by the Albanian government to undermine the country's Greek minority and steal their property.</li> </ul>



## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



During the reporting period the BiH media landscape continued being dominated by disinformation regarding the ongoing domestic political disputes and the role of the institutions of the international community in BiH. Large part of the domestic disinformation and political narratives revolved around the “legitimacy” of the High Representative in BiH, [his jurisdictions](#) and the stipulations of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Additionally, Russian Embassy and the Russian media in the WB stepped up the local production of disinformation, particularly the ones from Republika Srpska public broadcasters. [Disinformation](#) based on the [tragic school shooting in Serbia](#) also continued to linger in BiH media. During the month of July, dominant disinformation topic was the anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. In Srebrenica, where Raskrinkavanje.ba fact-checking web site came out with a plethora of [prebunking](#) and debunking articles trying to prevent and reduce the amount of expected disinformation appearing year-in year-out, during the Srebrenica anniversary. During In the month of August, dominant disinformation attracting the most public attention evolved around the Oluja Commemoration in Prijedor, where the [photos of Bosniak victims](#) from the 1990s war were presented as the Serb victims during the official commemoration attended by the Republic of Serbia President Aleksandar Vucic. During September, re-emergence of the September. 11, conspiracy theories could be witnessed, as well as disinformation on vaccines and health issues.

Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful disinformation Instances
War in Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Misleading representations of Zelenskyy</li> <li>▶ The crash of Yevgeny Prigozhin’s plane was staged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A video appears to show a New York City <a href="#">digital billboard displaying Volodymyr Zelensky’s face</a> and text that says, “<a href="#">Glory to Urine</a>” as the Ukrainian president visited the United States</li> <li>▶ Wagner boss <a href="#">Yevgeny Prigozhin is alive</a>, having staged his death with Russian authorities.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Conspiracy theories</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Climate change is not real</li> <li>▶ Vaccines cause heart damage</li> <li>▶ United Nations have an agenda to depopulate the world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The media is not telling that <u>NASA research shows that the Earth is cooling, not warming</u></li> <li>▶ According to the United Nations, <u>people in the future will not live in their home, have private cars or property.</u></li> </ul>
<p><b>Genocide in Srebrenica</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Srebrenica massacre was not genocide.</li> <li>▶ Vladimir Putin admits that Srebrenica massacre was genocide.</li> <li>▶ The number of victims in Srebrenica was “exaggerated”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The editor of the tabloid Informer, made a <u>series of incorrect claims about the Srebrenica genocide.</u></li> <li>▶ Judge of the Hague Tribunal presents key evidence that <u>there was no genocide in Srebrenica</u></li> </ul>

## KOSOVO



Kosovo experienced an unprecedented attack since the 1999 war period when in September of this year, an armed group from Serbia attacked the Kosovo Police in Banjska Zvečan, resulting in the death of a police officer. Among the attackers, three have been confirmed dead, while the rest fled towards Serbia. The attack occurred in connection of ongoing tensions in the Northern Kosovo, an area that not immune to disinformation campaigns aimed at influencing public opinion in such a way that could potentially leading to escalation of inter-ethnic distrust. The attack in Banjska, according to the Kosovo institutions and the European Union represents a terrorist act. The group attacking the Kosovo Police is hiding inside the Bajnska Monastery, while the Kosovo Police announced through a communiqué that the situation in the North continues to be tense. After the announcement many portals tried taking advantage of this event and published pictures of the dead attackers from many years earlier and in other conflicts, claiming they are from the group attacking Kosovo Police in the North of the country.



At the end of July, 72 new police officers from non-majority communities began their employment in North Mitrovica, Leposavic, Zubin Potok, and Zvecan. Among them, 45 were Serbs, 16 Bosniaks, 8 belong to the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, and 3 are of Turkish descent. But a disinformation/mal-information campaign appeared containing threats against the Serbian policemen. On the Russian social network “Telegram,” specific groups with thousands of members labeled Serbian recruits agreeing to join the Kosovo Police (KP) as traitors, by making their personal information public against the Kosovo and the international law. Furthermore, international organizations and foreign diplomats in Kosovo faced criticism on the same platform after their request to end to the campaign of persecution against Serbian policemen. As a result of this, 7 of these Serbian policemen resigned.

Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful disinformation instances
<b>Kosovo – Serbia relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Kosovo Police only wishes ill to Serbs</li> <li>▶ Kosovo wants to expel Serbs from the North</li> <li>▶ Kosovo government is prohibiting the import of oxygen at the Hospital in the North</li> <li>▶ Serbian recruits who agreed to join the Kosovo Police are traitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The Kosovo Police used <a href="#">brutal force against two detainees in Gracanica</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">Oxygen shortage in the northern Mitrovica hospital</a> as Kosovo government prohibits the import for it.</li> <li>▶ Serbian recruits who joined the Kosovo Police are traitors, because <a href="#">Kosovo Police is a continuation of the Kosovo Liberation Army</a></li> </ul>
<b>War in Ukraine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Russia is defending Ukraine</li> <li>▶ Russia is winning, Ukraine is losing</li> <li>▶ Ukrainians are neo-Nazi</li> <li>▶ NATO is responsible for the war</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ There is a <a href="#">war between the United States and Russia</a>, which could potentially escalate into a nuclear war.</li> </ul>



## MONTENEGRO



This period marked the continuance of political instability in Montenegro. After the snap parliamentary elections, without the solid majority and two (or three) political forces gaining similar confidence, it was evident that a grand coalition has to take place. This gridlock is ongoing ever since July and Montenegro doesn't have a new government. There is no clear indication on who PES- Europe Now (the party with the most votes) is going to go in coalition with, although they have until November to make a decision. All the while, the caretaker government continues to rule. On the other hand, Montenegro is facing population census in November. Even though it is supposed to be a statistical operation, the overwhelming sentiment in the country is that it is a referendum on national allegiance. Some of the parties, as well as the associated church and the online media started campaigning, paying no attention to anything else but three questions in the poll: nationality, religion and language. Pro-Montenegrin parties are demanding a postponement of the census. This way, de jure statistical operation is becoming a field for political and national confrontations. Serbian media is still playing a big role trying to influence internal Montenegrin issues, such as forming the government and the implementation of the population census.

Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful disinformation instances
Internal Montenegrin politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Serbs were dominant in the past population census</li><li>▶ Montenegrins and Serbs can't form a government</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Data from the census conducted in 1909, show that <u>there were 94.38% Serbs in Montenegro</u> at the time</li><li>▶ The west will not allow Montenegrins and Serbs to form a government together</li></ul>



<p><b>War in Ukraine</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ NATO is leading the war in Ukraine</li> <li>▶ Ukraine will never become a NATO member</li> <li>▶ NATO expansion is to blame for the aggression</li> <li>▶ Misleading representations of Zelensky</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ NATO wants to go to war with Russia with foreign hands – <a href="#">Ukraine is required to carry out orders, without equal membership in the Alliance</a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#">NATO soldiers</a> end up on fronts across Ukraine</li> <li>▶ <a href="#">NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg confirmed</a> that Russia had invaded Ukraine to prevent NATO expansion</li> <li>▶ On the eve of Zelensky’s arrival, a <a href="#">billboard with the Flag of Ukraine appeared in New York</a> with the inscription “Glory to the Urine” on it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conspiracy theories</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Climate change is not real</li> <li>▶ Climate change may require global vaccination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ WHO: <a href="#">Climate change may require global vaccination</a> due to the migration of infected mosquitoes.</li> </ul>

## NORTH MACEDONIA



During the monitoring period covering the third quarter of 2023, the bulk of detected disinformation in North Macedonia was repetition of already present narratives aiming to increase Euroscepticism and decrease trust in democratic institutions, discredit the supporters of European integration of the country as threat and traitors (including through anti-gender equality, homophobic and transphobic rhetoric). Such disinformation narratives were also used in order to sow ethnic divisions, increase hate of ethnic Macedonians towards Albanians and Albanians, and decrease support for Euro-Atlantic values, including support for defense of Ukraine. Anti-EU narratives were supported by a surge of disinformation and misinformation public statements and articles after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) [signed the official Protocol of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission with Bulgaria](#) on July 17. Most of these narratives were aimed at presenting “Bulgaria as a threat to the North Macedonian history and culture” and “EU as a undemocratic supporter of this process”. These narratives not only cause a raise in the anti-EU sentiment of the citizens in



the country but also leave space for foreign malign influences to disseminate disinformation about anti-European alternatives for North Macedonia. Promoting the narrative that “For North Macedonia is better to join the Non-Aligned Movement or BRICS” instead of aimlessly waiting at the gates of Brussels as mentioned in the last announcement of the political party Levica.

Another most impactful disinformation instances were about NATO and The West, with a slight change of the narratives from accusing the alliance for starting the war to threatening and fearmongering from the pro-Kremlin side. On this topic most dominant narrative was that “Russia will attack NATO” if they allowed Ukraine to join and that the West and NATO came to a realization they could not win the war against Russia.

Regarding disinformation about the war in Ukraine, besides misleading representations of Zelensky and strong anti-Ukrainian narratives continuing to circulate in the social media landscape, the death of Yevgeny Prigozhin founder of the Wagner Group became one of the main disinformation highlights. Is he alive or was he really killed in the plane crash? Who is behind the accident and numerous speculations and disinformation being regularly and intensively disseminated by the Macedonian language media outlets.

Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful disinformation instances
Macedonian-Bulgarian relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The protocol with Bulgaria means changing culture and history</li> <li>▶ Bulgaria is a military threat to North Macedonia</li> <li>▶ Sovereignty threat</li> <li>▶ The EU supports antidemocratic/ fascist behavior of member countries towards North Macedonia”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Edi Rama revealed that what would follow would be <u>Bulgaria attacking Macedonia</u></li> <li>▶ <u>Protocol of the second meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission with Bulgaria</u> envisages restrictions on the freedom of Macedonians and changing the culture and history</li> </ul>



<p>Anti-NATO/ Anti- Western</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Russia will attack NATO</li> <li>▶ World War Three if Ukraine joins NATO</li> <li>▶ NATO enlargement is to blame for the war</li> <li>▶ Ukraine will not become NATO member</li> <li>▶ NATO lost the war</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ NATO-Ukraine Cooperation Council, will soon cease to exist, <u>either NATO or Ukraine will disappear</u></li> <li>▶ There is a treaty signed by the US, Europe, and Russia specifying that <u>NATO will not enlarge.</u></li> <li>▶ Ukraine will never become a member of NATO. <u>The West/NATO realized they could not win a war against Russia.</u></li> </ul>
<p>War in Ukraine</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Misleading representations of Zelensky</li> <li>▶ Child organ trafficking in Ukraine</li> <li>▶ Russia is only defending itself</li> <li>▶ Death of Yevgeny Prigozhin was staged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Enormous digital billboard displayed <u>“Glory to Urine”</u> while Zelensky was visiting New York</li> <li>▶ Baby farm discovered in Ukraine, a total of 200 thousand children victims. <u>Child organ trafficking included.</u></li> </ul>

## SERBIA



During the period of July to September of 2023 the major topic in the Serbian media continues to be the war in Ukraine and increasing tensions in Belgrade-Pristina relations with emphasis on strong and all present anti-western narratives. Besides the usual topics, being noticeable in almost any subject (sports, culture, astrology, climate change, etc.), the media in Serbia have been filled with headlines dealing with number of issues affecting the life of all citizens and the political climate in Serbia. The relations between Belgrade and Pristina are on a long term deterioration path despite increased pressure of West and wider international community. The situation has further deepened as the campaign of the political leadership of Serbia’s ruling party SNS (Srpska Napredna Stranka – Serbian Progressive Party) is using more and more anti-western narratives to smear its opponents, leaving the Serbian public in



believing that the West is Serbia’s major enemy. This portrays all efforts of the West and the wider international community for Belgrade-Pristina reconciliation in an unflattering light. This situation blew up when the famous supporter of Russian politics, Mr. Aleksandar Vulin, currently the head of the Serbian intelligence agency - BIA, was listed on the USA sanctions list. All of these problems culminated with the armed clash of Serbs and Kosovo police in village of Banjska on 24. September. On that day, there was media silence about this critical event.

Another event certainly marking the reporting period is the death of Yevgeny Prigozhin, the leader of Russian paramilitary and mercenary group Wagner, which was heavily involved on Ukraine front. The breaking news on this topic opened up the space for the spread of Russian narratives and disinformation in pro-Russian tabloids in Serbia, and numerous analysts and experts spoke out on this issue, speculating on the causes of this accident. Besides that, the Belgrade Pride, held in Belgrade at the beginning of September, passed unnoticed in Serbian media compared to last year. Unfortunately, that was probably not caused by the improvement of the LGBT+ community standing in Serbia, but most likely because of the decisions of the political elite preparing for the next elections. Also, the last year very active campaign against Belgrade Pride might have to do with the fact that it was the Euro Pride, meaning the Central European Pride Event.

Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful disinformation instances
War in Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Kiev ordered the liquidation of Prigozhin</li> <li>▶ Ukraine wants to involve Poland in the war</li> <li>▶ Poland wants to secede parts of Ukraine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Political scientist Sergei Markov, presented ten assumptions about <a href="#">Kiev’s alleged liquidation of Prigozhin.</a></li> <li>▶ Colonel Macgregor: <a href="#">Poland risks going the Ukraine’s way and turn into a graveyard</a></li> </ul>



<b>Kosovo-Serbia relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Kosovo is a false state</li><li>▶ Kosovo is source of crime and hatred, threatening not just Serbia but also EU</li><li>▶ Kosovo ruling elites only wish ill to Serbs</li><li>▶ Kosovo is committing genocide against Serbian population</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ The actions of <u>Albanian mayors in four municipalities in North of Kosovo targeting multiple buildings and construction sites</u> was perceived in both Russian and Serbian media as direct attack towards Serbian population in Kosovo</li></ul>
<b>Resentment towards the EU and NATO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ NATO could collapse by 2025</li><li>▶ They provoked the war in Ukraine</li><li>▶ EU blackmails and lies Serbia</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <u>NATO could collapse by 2025</u> due to Ukraine war, because of potential up rise of the Republicans in the USA, which will radically change foreign policy.</li></ul>





# KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR

## WB region

- Significant delays in the implementation of all the points agreed by Kosovo and Serbia. Circulation of numerous disinformation campaigns regarding the responsible party and the path forward that will be aimed at pushing the parties towards even larger conflict and polarization.
- Disinformation against the European Union aimed to show the union weak and not able to deal with the damage caused by turning off the taps to Russia's gas pipelines.
- Disinformation about Ukraine joining NATO and EU, alongside the claims that if it does happen Russia will attack the Alliance.

## Kosovo

- Disinformation taking advantage of the fragile situation in north of Kosovo, but also calls for contesting the current Albanian mayors in the Northern municipalities mostly populated by Serbs.

## Serbia

- As the international community is trying to unite and strengthen the efforts to bring Belgrade and Pristina together, disinformation will aim to undermine this process and renew tensions and violence from both sides.

## Montenegro

- Upcoming population census has the potential to spread disinformation. The results of the census are expected around six months later giving ample time for speculation and disinformation campaigns full of fearmongering and doubt.
- Government formation expected in November - a fertile ground for disseminating of all kinds of disinformation.





### North Macedonia

- Disinformation around the long-awaited constitutional change to include the Bulgarians as a recognized ethnic group in North Macedonia.
- Disinformation aiming to discredit various pro-EU and pro-NATO stakeholders, from government to civil society, by depicting them as anti-Macedonian traitors and promoters of “Albanisation”.
- Propaganda by political parties, individual politicians and associated media outlets and troll networks containing disinformation, manipulation and spin in the context of upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections, which have to take place in 2024. Malign actors intensify to increase polarization in the country both between different ethnic communities and within them, along ideological/political party lines.





[antidisinfo.net/hub](https://antidisinfo.net/hub)