

# DISINFORMATION TRENDS AND NARRATIVES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT FOR THE PERIOD  
**APRIL-JUNE 2023**



Kingdom of the Netherlands

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

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THE WESTERN  
BALKAN REGION  
MEDIA MONITORING  
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– **JUNE 2023****

SKOPJE 2023



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**Title:** Disinformation trends and narratives in the Western Balkans: Media monitoring report for the period April-June 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  
April-June 2023. - Skopje : Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society, 2023

Начин на пристапување (URL):  
[https://metamorphosis.org.mk/en/izdanija\\_arhiva/april-june-2023-disinformation-trends-and-narratives-in-the-western-balkans-media-monitoring-report-for-the-period-april-june-2023/](https://metamorphosis.org.mk/en/izdanija_arhiva/april-june-2023-disinformation-trends-and-narratives-in-the-western-balkans-media-monitoring-report-for-the-period-april-june-2023/).

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

ISBN 978-608-263-111-0

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

COBISS.MK-ID 62650373



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, covering the second quarter of 2023 produced within the framework of the Western Balkans Anti-Disinformation Hub project, which identifies, analyses and responds to disinformation related to foreign malign influences in the region, documenting and responding to disinformation instances, narratives and trends aimed at disrupting the democratic development. Media monitoring aimed to map out and understand the flow of disinformation and associated propaganda related to foreign malign influences, is essential to understanding of the disinformation ecosystem, leading to development of Early Warning Early Action System. It is conducted in synergy with other kinds of research and analytical work, watchdog journalism and fact-checking, and with investigative and mainstream journalism aimed at increasing societal resilience to authoritarian efforts.

From April to June 2023, foreign malign influence operations in the Western Balkans (WB) continued to use disinformation to cause division among countries and within societies with an aim of re-shaping the political landscape in the region turn the six countries from the path of Euro-Atlantic integration. The digital sphere was predominant area for these operations, with online media and social networks expanding on the already established influence mechanisms present in some, but not all countries in the region, through television and print media (esp. in Serbia).

During this period, disinformation narratives related to Russian aggression in Ukraine continued to proliferate in the region with a focus on two key development from the Ukrainian frontlines: Moscow drone attack and the collapse of the Nova Kakhovka dam. Main narratives claimed "Ukraine is responsible for the attacks". There was also variation of the same narrative coming directly from the Kremlin claiming "The United States was undoubtedly behind the incident".

Local populist and anti-democratic forces continued using disinformation to decrease trust in democratic governance and the international order, while promoting authoritarianism as alternative to liberal democracy through an-



ti-Western narratives. Efforts for increasing Euroscepticism intensified by including influential religious institutions, with Orthodox Church officials in Serbia and North Macedonia using Easter sermons to enflame 'cultural wars' against gender-equality and LGBT communities (following visits by high officials of Russian Orthodox Church in previous months).

Comparisons between the West and Russia with strong anti-Western narrative were common in the WB media landscape. When it comes to the culture wars Kremlin propaganda attempts to present the West as "immoral and decadent" while on the other hand Russia is a "defender of traditional and family values". The main narrative claims that "West is destroying families, cultural and national identity, practices perversion and misuse of children, including pedophilia promoting all of this as normal life".

Kosovo-Serbia relations were in main focus in the WB media, taking in consideration the elections and the protests that followed in the north of Kosovo. Analyzing the narratives in Serbia and in majority Serbian held North Kosovo, we can clearly see the similarity between them. Claims like "Kosovo wants to expel Serbs from the North" were taken from Serbian media and transferred to Serbian language media in North Western Kosovo. This leads to conclusion that disinformation narratives in both countries targeted the Serbian population portraying Serbian minority as a victim to Kosovo official politics.

Of all the disinformation narratives detected in the monitoring period, fair amount of them are spread only in local context, and emerge from everyday political happenings and issues in the countries. But, despite that, it cannot be said with a complete certainty they are not a product of external malignant influences, since they do add up to bigger either anti-Western, anti-EU or pro-Russian narratives and in this sense cause polarization and undermine democracy.

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 monitoring process of domestic media in six Western Balkan countries, namely North Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, from April to June 2023. The purpose of this monitoring was to identify and analyze the disinformation trends related to foreign malign influences in the region and to understand the main messages that they aim to send.

To achieve this goal, we analyzed around 600 disinformation articles from various media outlets, all of them containing disinformation related to foreign malign influences in the region. The selection of articles was made based on the availability of verifiable facts that can be checked through professional journalistic methods, and we made sure to include those with high representation on social networks.

The analysis of these articles was conducted from different 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.



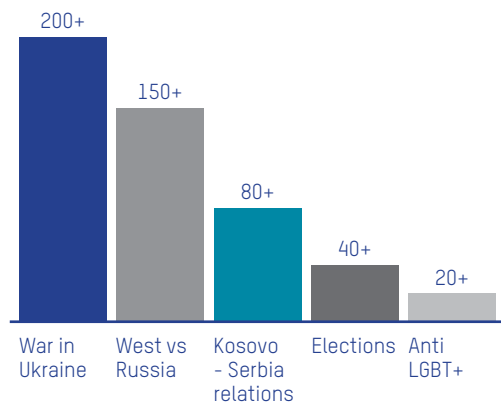




# HIGHLIGHTS OF DISINFORMATION

Over the last three months most of the disinformation being published in the WB countries were regarding the war in Ukraine. Second most widespread instance of disinformation were comparisons between the West and Russia and third most prevalent disinformation theme contained narratives about Kosovo-Serbia relations. Albania, Montenegro and four municipalities in the north of Kosovo held elections in the monitoring period, because of which various disinformation narratives about the outcome of the elections in the aforementioned countries were found all over the WB media.

NO. OF ARTICLES FOR EACH TOPIC OF  
DISINFORMATION APRIL - JUNE 2023



The ongoing war in Ukraine and the latest developments from the Ukrainian frontlines have been a constant subject for manipulation and infiltration of disinformation narratives in the media. Moscow drone attack and collapse of Nova Kakhovka Dam were used to create narrative that “Ukraine is to blame for both attacks” and “Russia is only defending itself”. Variation of the same narrative that came directly from Kremlin claims that “the United States was



undoubtedly behind the incident”. While disinformation narratives around Wagner group rebellion revolved around claims that “Wagner group is not supported by Russia anymore and is now working for the West”.

Another strong anti- Ukraine narrative was connected to the Ukraine’s counter-offensive and the state of ammunition of the army. The narrative claimed “the army is dependent on Soviet-era ammunition” and it is too weak to continue to defend their territory.

#### **PERCENTAGE OF MOST COMMON NARRATIVES ON TOPIC THE WAR IN UKRAINE APRIL - JUNE**



Second most frequent theme of disinformation was the comparison between the West and Russia. The habit of dividing countries into two groups, “West vs. Rest”, may lead to an illusion that the members of the two groups are of two different kinds. Promoting narratives that present “West as immoral and against the traditional values”, while, on the other hand picturing “Russia as a defender of traditional values”, Russian propaganda tries to manipulate the way people from Western Balkans culture see themselves - closer to Russian traditional values and very different from the immoral Western civilization. Therefore, Russia tends to promote a widespread perception of “cultural supremacy” over the West among the public in these countries.



### PERCENTAGE OF MOST COMMON ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES APRIL - JUNE



Kosovo-Serbia relations are followed with heightened attention in all WB countries, especially after the incidents in the north of Kosovo over mayoral elections boycotted by the Serbian voters. Both country leaders started with accusations and finger pointing between themselves reducing the space for constructive dialogue and creating a vacuum of objective information in the public discourse.

Analyzing the narratives in Serbia and in majority Serbian held North Kosovo, we can clearly see the similarity between them. Claims like “Kosovo wants to expel Serbs from the North” were taken from Serbian media and transferred to Serbian language media in North Western Kosovo. This leads to conclusion that disinformation narratives in both countries targeted the Serbian population portraying Serbian minority as a victim to Kosovo official politics. Narratives like this oppose reconciliation of Albanian and Serbian society in Kosovo creating even greater polarization.



### DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES RELATED TO THE EVENTS IN THE NORTH OF KOSOVO



Elections in Albania, Montenegro and four municipalities in the north of Kosovo were also frequent source of disinformation. In the monitoring period there were various disinformation about the outcome of elections in Albania, Montenegro and four municipalities in the north of Kosovo depending on the political situation of the country, but one same narrative was repeated in all the three countries: Political parties accuse each other that Russia finances their election campaign.

Anti LGBT narratives were also present in the monitoring period. Every year they start to increase before the Pride Parade targeting the LGBTQ community across social media including hate speech and incitements to violence. In addition, these anti-LGBT narratives are also used for attacks at EU and The West. Disinformation spreaders primarily presented the parade as an attack on the family and as a “dictate from the West” and secondary as European values that traditional countries in the WB should oppose.



# COUNTRY CONTEXT UPDATE

## ALBANIA



Over the April-May period Albania was preparing for the upcoming elections. Faktoje team noted that disinformation narratives increased due to their potential to impact the election outcome. All major parties used the threat of foreign malign influence as a tool against their opponents accusing each other of taking money from Russia often without evidence.

Another topic of disinformation getting major coverage in the Albanian media over the past three months were the special elections in northern Kosovo and their aftermath. From claims that Serbia had pushed Kosovo Serbs to not participate in the elections, to mutual condemnations between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians for the violence that erupted in the north when the new mayors were sworn in, Albanian media published clickbait articles and unfounded claims that made the situation appear even worse than it was on the ground.

Speculation about the future of the Albania-Kosovo relationship were also present in the media due to the response of the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and his interference in the matter of the Association of Serb-Majorities, sending the draft proposal of the Statute of the Community of Serb-majority Municipalities to Paris and Berlin as form of pressure to encourage Albin Kurti to accept the CSM. Rama earlier cancelled a long-planned joint government meeting between Albania and Kosovo, which had been scheduled for June 14 in Gjakova in western Kosovo, the dismissal of a meeting caused disinformation narrative that the relationship between two countries will worsen.

In June a police raid of a camp hosting members of the People's Mujahidin Organization of Iran (commonly known as MEK - Mujahidin-e-Khalq) took the media by storm. Disinformation narratives claiming the raid was a consequence of the cyber-attacks against Albania in late 2022 followed with claims that this was an attempt to weed out terrorists within the organization plotting against Iran.



Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful instances of disinformation
Russian influence in Albanian politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Albanian opposition is pro Russian</li> <li>▶ Russia is influencing Albanian politics through the socialist party</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Former opposition leader Monika Kryemadhi had <a href="#">received money from Russian companies</a></li> <li>▶ Socialist leaders have received money from Russian through Charles McGonigal.</li> </ul>
Kosovo-Serbia relation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ KFOR intervention in the north of Kosovo will start a war in the Balkans</li> <li>▶ Serbia and Kosovo want a new war in the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The inauguration of the new mayors and the <a href="#">ensuing violence in north of Kosovo</a>.</li> <li>▶ Kosovo and Serbia were using Kosovo Serbs to raise tensions and spark a <a href="#">new conflict in the region</a>.</li> </ul>
Kosovo-Albania relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Edi Rama and Albin Kurti are on bed terms</li> <li>▶ Relationship between Albania and Kosovo will worsen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Rama criticized Kurti over how he handled the situation in the north of Kosovo.</li> <li>▶ <a href="#">Rama undermining the historic relationship between Albania and Kosovo</a>.</li> </ul>

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



During the reporting period the B&H media space was dominated with disinformation related to the ongoing domestic political disputes and the role of the institutions of the international community in B&H. “Why Not” team found out large part of the domestic disinformation and political narratives revolved around the B&H Constitutional Court. Media was also spreading disinformation reporting that B&H Constitutional Court judges are elected according to ethnic criteria.



Another large segment of disinformation in B&H concerned the High Representative, Mr. Christian Schmidt and legality of his appointment and decisions. Since his appointment in 2022, the High Representative’s legitimacy is denied under a false narrative also supported by The Russian Ambassador in Bosnia, Igor Kalabuhov, calling for the “immediate” closure of the Office of the High Representative stating that the Office is impeding the democratic development of the entities comprising Bosnia.

During the month of May mass shooting in the elementary school in Serbia, where a teenage boy opened fire and killed eight children and a security guard produced large amount of disinformation, conspiracy theories, manipulative news and clickbaits. During the month of June, the LGBTQ Pride 2023 event held in Sarajevo attracted a considerable amount of disinformation and hate speech. Ukraine also remained a steady source of disinformation, manipulation and the foreign malign influence in B&H media during the entire reporting period, in particular, it was observed that the RS public broadcaster invented the claims about “Western support for Prigozhin”.

Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful instances of disinformation
High representative legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The Constitutional Court is illegitimate</li> <li>▶ Constitutional Court judges are elected according to ethnic criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <u>German citizen Kristijan Schmidt is impersonating the High Representative</u> and this is a known fact both to himself and to the institution in which he sits illegally .</li> <li>▶ When it comes to the election of judges of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, <u>advantage is given to judges of Croatian nationality.</u></li> </ul>



### Russian aggression on Ukraine

- ▶ Wagner went from being war profiteers and terrorists to a group fighting for justice
- ▶ Ukrainians want to attack Russia with radioactive bomb
- ▶ Russia is winning the war in Ukraine.
- ▶ Western leaders have changed the rhetoric regarding Wagner group and are now supporting Prigozhin
- ▶ Ukraine's military intelligence service planned to carry out a terrorist attack on Russia using a "dirty bomb" containing radioactive substances and making the area unusable for people.
- ▶ Despite Western media reports that Ukraine is on the verge of defeating Russia, it's actually the opposite, U.S. Army General Christopher Cavoli told Congress last week.

## KOSOVO



During this monitoring period, Sbunker team claims that the ongoing disputes between Kosovo and Serbia have remained the central topic in the media. One significant event greatly influencing the narrative in recent months is the violent clash occurring in the north of Kosovo. The clashes began on 26. May, when newly elected Albanian mayors went to municipal facilities in Leposaviq, Zvečan, and Zubin Potok, accompanied by special units of the Kosovo Police. These facilities were previously under the management of the Serbian List, which lost the power in the north for the first time since 2013 due to the boycott of the elections. The violent clash in the north resulted in the spread of various forms of disinformation.

Following the events in the north, Serbian media outlets spread disinformation claiming that the Government of Kosovo aimed to arrest and deport Serbs from Kosovo. These outlets, also being watched in Serbian-populated areas of Kosovo, attempted to instill fear among the citizens of this community by suggesting that the Kosovo Police planned to torture visitors during the Vidovdan celebration, historically celebrated by Serbs at Gazimestan near Pristina. Despite the biased headline, the content of the article did not support this claim.





Additionally, certain Serbian media outlets and politicians blamed the Kosovo government for an oxygen shortage in the northern Mitrovica hospital. However, this claim, which lacking reliable sources, was denied by the Kosovo authorities.

Moreover, a deep fake audio recording pretending to be a conversation between the United States Ambassador in Kosovo Jeff Hovenier and Prime Minister Albin Kurti was shared. This recording, posted on Twitter, falsely claimed that Kurti will arrest Serbs in the north of Kosovo whether they are criminally responsible or not. The news was proven to be false and was debunked by Sbunker. The attached audio recording, accompanied by a photograph of Hovenier and Kurti, was fabricated, and no such conversation ever took place.

Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful instances of disinformation
Kosovo-Serbia relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Kosovo Police is planning to arrest Serbs during the tensions in north Kosovo</li> <li>▶ Kosovo has an agenda to expel Serbs from the north</li> <li>▶ The officials in Kosovo do not allow critically ill Serbs in Mitrovica to get help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Elections in north of Kosovo are part of a larger <a href="#">agenda to ultimately expel Serbs</a>.</li> <li>▶ <a href="#">Pristina has the intention of arresting Serbs</a> during their visits to Gazimestan for the Vidovdan festival.</li> <li>▶ <a href="#">Oxygen is running out</a> for a hospital in Kosovska Mitrovica.</li> </ul>
Deepfake of a pretended conversation between Hovenier and Kurti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Albin Kurti will arrest Serbs in the north of Kosovo whether they are criminally responsible or not</li> <li>▶ Albin Kurti is a treat to Kosovo Serbs</li> <li>▶ The USA supports the behavior of Albin Kurti to the Serbian minority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ In a conversation with U.S. ambassador Jeff Hovenier, <a href="#">Albin Kurti says he will arrest Serbs in the North of Kosovo whether they are criminally responsible or not</a></li> </ul>



# MONTENEGRO



During this period, Montenegro has gone through the second round of presidential elections, which saw Milo Đukanović lose power after three decades and Jakov Milatović becoming the new president. CDT team noted that these elections were the prelude for the snap parliamentary elections, held in June. Throughout these few months, there was a lot of disinformation about the electoral processes. Disinformation mainly coming from abroad became active tool that participants of the elections used. Fake polls are becoming more popular, cheap and effective way to influence the voters, also as fake statements made up and attributed to certain politicians.

Ukraine remains high on the ladder of disinformation spreading in the region. Starting from president Zelensky, constantly accused of being Nazi, drug addict, etc, then claiming that the Ukrainians are bullies and not the Russians. Another disinformation narrative coming also from Russia targeted the West, trying to portrait it as evil and promotor of decadent values. All these things paint a fake picture of the war and about the roles: who is the aggressor and who is the attacked party. AI tools are used to put politicians into wrong perspective and their effect for now is big, because many believe the fake stories supported by AI generated images. Other than that, vaccines are still on the “menu”, so is anti-western propaganda.

Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful instances of disinformation
War in Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ US operated bio laboratories in Ukraine</li> <li>▶ Russia is winning the war in Ukraine</li> <li>▶ Misleading representation of Zelensky</li> <li>▶ The war in Ukraine is a war between USA and Russia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Russia seizes documents in Cherson: <a href="#">U.S. is developing biological weapons in Ukraine</a></li> <li>▶ The U.S. Armed Forces general stated that <a href="#">most of the Russian military has not been negatively affected</a> by the conflict with Ukraine</li> <li>▶ Zelensky said that <a href="#">he wouldn't be on the front line if he wasn't president.</a></li> <li>▶ U.S. Senator: <a href="#">Killing Russians is our best investment</a></li> </ul>



### “Evil west”

- ▶ The West is decadent
- ▶ The West is promoting pedophilia
- ▶ West vs Russia – the western values are distorted unlike the eastern orthodox values
- ▶ Schools have long been a dangerous place for our children. In America, they’re taught various deviations: to switch sexes, to sue their parents, to become gay.
- ▶ The distorted values that come from the West are leading children in the wrong direction.

## NORTH MACEDONIA



Most of the disinformation affecting the public in North Macedonia that associated with ongoing local political developments aimed at further disruption of the integration of the country in the European Union by decreasing support for pro-EU stakeholders and increasing mistrust in democratic institutions. The input by top state officials at the Conference “Building Social Resilience to the Harmful Effects of Disinformation in the Republic of North Macedonia” held on July 20 in Skopje confirmed the results of the media monitoring and analysis of the Western Balkans Anti-Disinformation Hub Project. At the conference, the President Stevo Pendarovski stressed the need for building systemic response through increased media freedoms, education and whole society approach. Director of the Intelligence Agency Eroid Musliu warned that the country will become a target to disinformation propaganda related to the Constitutional amendments, the Church-related issue and the Elections 2024.

The war in Ukraine was the dominant topic of disinformation during the 3-month monitoring period. Prigozhin’s Rebellion and the collapse of Kakhovka Dam where the main events around which disinformation revolved and Russian state-controlled media called out Ukraine responsible for the demolition. All these events were widely reported by the Macedonian online portals alongside the statements from the Russian officials becoming a root of foreign-sourced information and disinformation spread especially on pro-Russian Facebook groups and profiles. The main narrative here was that “Russia is the victim in the war against Ukraine because Russia is just defending itself”.



On 24. June the Pride Parade took place in Skopje, same as every year anti-LGBT narratives alongside with hate speech were very present in the media. Macedonian Orthodox Church used the sentiment of the people that are against the LGBT community and five days later organized a large protest against the draft laws on gender equality and civil registration. Disinformation was expressed by the Head of the Church and Bishop Stobiski Jacob claiming the laws entered the Parliament after a shortened procedure, and passing the laws is an attempt for violent change of the traditional way of life seeing this as an ideological dictatorship.

A clear message that the Church was spreading disinformation was the statement from the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, responsible for the two laws stressing out that the law was not even in the governmental, nor parliamentary procedure as the MOC claimed.

Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful instances of disinformation
War in Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Russia is the victim in the war against Ukraine</li> <li>▶ Ukraine is responsible of the explosion disaster of dam Nova Kakhovka</li> <li>▶ Sanctions against Russia imposed by the West did not gave the expected results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <u>In Ukraine children are subject to mobilization.</u></li> <li>▶ <u>Enormous dam on Dnipro River, close to Nova Kakhovka in South Ukraine, was demolished, thereby giving the war in Ukraine a new form - both sides, Russian and Ukrainian, claim that the other side was responsible.</u></li> <li>▶ <u>Based on last year's results, Russia is back in the top ten largest economies in the world</u></li> </ul>



<p><b>Culture wars West vs Russia</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ West is destroying families, cultural and national identity</li> <li>▶ Putin accuses USA of child trafficking</li> <li>▶ Missing children from Ukraine were used by the West for organ trafficking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <u>The missing children from Ukraine were used by the West for organ trafficking</u>, while those who were taken to Russia were taken cared for.</li> <li>▶ In Cleveland alone, 30 children disappeared in two weeks. <u>Imagine how many children disappear every day in the United States.</u></li> </ul>
<p><b>Anti-LGBT</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ EU supports the LGBT community and fights to deprive parents of parental rights</li> <li>▶ In North Macedonia, children in schools are forced to dress like the opposite sex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <u>EU vows to punish Hungary</u> and deprive mothers and fathers of their parental rights</li> <li>▶ Skopje’s Ljuben Lape School is conducting <u>LGBT indoctrination.</u></li> </ul>

## SERBIA



During the period of April to June of 2023 the major narratives in Serbian media according to ISAC team continues to be the war in Ukraine and increasing tensions in Belgrade-Priština relations with emphasis on strong and all present anti-western narratives embedded in almost any school subject (sports, culture, astrology, climate change etc.) in the media.

The tragic event that shook Serbia happened on 3rd May when a school shooting occurred at Vladislav Ribnikar Elementary School in Belgrade. The shooter, identified as a 13-year-old male student, opened fire on students and staff, resulting in the deaths of ten individuals, including nine students and a security guard. One day after the mass murder in the Belgrade elementary school, later in the evening on May 4th, another shooting took place in the villages of Dubona and Malo Orašje near Mladenovac, in which eight people were killed and fourteen were injured. Part of the media in Serbia, as expected,



led by the statement of the then Minister of Education Branko Ružić (who has since resigned from that position): blamed the influence of Western values and culture for what happened.

In April Pristina authorities announced local elections in four municipalities in the north of Kosovo: Severna Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zubin Potok and Zvečan, to fill the seats vacated after the Serbian representatives left all institutions as a protest against Pristina’s failing to deliver on its obligations stemming from Brussels Agreement. On April 21st, the leaders of the Serb List called for a general boycott of the elections. Due to the Serbian boycott of the elections, there were only candidates from Albanian parties on the ballots. This situation escalated quickly when newly elected mayors of Albanian nationality for the municipalities entered their offices on May 26th. Groups of residents in these municipalities objected to their entry into offices organizing protests of Serbs against the newly elected mayors that lasted almost a month and were followed by violence and arrests. These incidents were a fertile ground for disinformation about the current situation in these municipalities.

Most impactful themes	Most impactful narratives	Most impactful instances of disinformation
<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 hearted, threatening not just Serbia but also EU</li> <li>▶ Kosovo will never be independent</li> <li>▶ Kosovo ruling elites only wish ill to Serbs and are committing genocide against Serbian population on Kosovo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <a href="#"><u>Danilo Vucic the son of President Aleksandar Vucic, passed through Pristina on his way to the liturgy at the Gračanica monastery, and was stopped three times on the way while the car was searched several times.</u></a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#"><u>Three police officers from Kosovo, who were arrested by the Serbian armed forces for illegally crossing the border were actually kidnapped.</u></a></li> </ul>



<p><b>EU and NATO integrations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ They provoked the war in Ukraine</li> <li>▶ The West blackmails and lies Serbia</li> <li>▶ They violate international law and human rights all over the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <a href="#"><u>West will only use Serbia for its conflict with Russia</u></a></li> <li>▶ West is already forcing Serbia to impose sanctions</li> </ul>
<p><b>War in Ukraine</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Distorted representation of Ukraine</li> <li>▶ Ukraine is responsible for the war</li> <li>▶ Russia must defend itself</li> <li>▶ Ukraine has no way to win</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reports that the <a href="#"><u>hydroelectric plant no longer existed as a result of the Ukrainian attack</u></a></li> <li>▶ <a href="#"><u>NATO has been conducting military operations against Russia</u></a> through the hands of the Ukrainians</li> </ul>



# KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR

## All WB countries

- Disinformation around the war in Ukraine are in the books, especially since the Ukrainian counteroffensive isn't going the way it was expected.
- Speculations about NATO being party to the war and the narrative claiming "that the Americans are fighting Russia until the last Ukrainian soldier dies" designed to turn the public opinion against the Western support of Ukraine.
- Attacks at the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

## Albania

- Disinformation about the relationship between Rama and Kurti, and how the relation between the two countries will develop due to their significantly differing approaches in addressing escalating events in the mainly Serb-inhabited north of Kosovo.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Disinformation narratives regarding the B&H Constitutional Court and the "legality" of the High Representative in B&H will resume to be published in the B&H media space in the following period.

## Kosovo

- Disinformation following the appointment of new municipality mayors in the North of Kosovo, intentionally disseminated to create fear and anxiety among the Serbian community in Kosovo.

## Montenegro

- Disinformation about the difficult coalition talks ahead after Montenegro's Europe Now Movement (PES) has won a snap election.





### 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.

### Serbia

- Disinformation due to anniversary of Srebrenica massacre in July and major negation of crimes committed coming from Serbia politicians.
- Disinformation about the status of Serbian community in Kosovo and misrepresentations of the current developments on the ground and about the process of negotiations supported by the European Union.





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