Debunk EU

PORTRAYING NATO: DEFENDER 2020

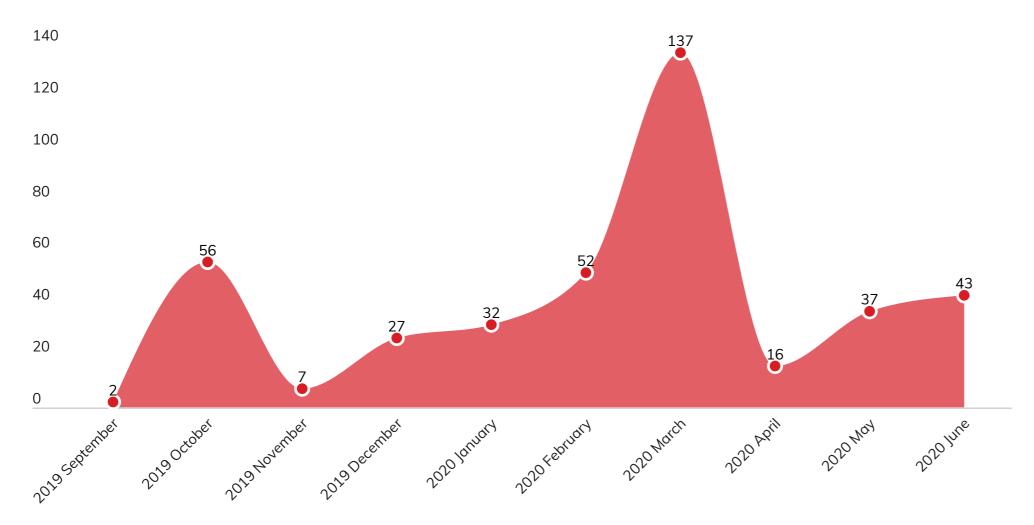


INTRODUCTION

Scope

On September 2019 - June 2020, Debunk.eu spotted and analysed **409 mentions** of **Defender 2020** military drills.

Dynamics of articles on Defender 2020



Insights

- **Eadaily.com** and **rubaltic.ru** published the largest number or articles mentioning Defender Europe 2020 exercises (64 and 33 articles respectively), both having the biggest impact on the image of the exercises in terms of negative publicity.
- In terms of total reach, the first three websites that wrote about the exercises **rambler.ru**, **ria.ru** and **rt.com** need to be mentioned.
- **the peak** of Defender Europe 2020 mentions was spotted on March 7th in relation to the comments of the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Maria Zacharova about the "NATO's fist on Russian border".
- The most articles written on Defender Europe 2020 exercises were noticed in **March 2020** (137), October 2019 (56), February 2020 (52). In October the main message was the increase of US troops in Europe and in February and March the impact of the pandemic for the exercises.
- The widest number of **social interactions** (1077) was achieved by the article on **rubaltic.ru** (NATO exercises in the Baltic have become a laughing stock), which portrayed Defender Europe 2020 negatively. Among the neutral articles, the largest attention was attracted by **obzor.lt** (American tanks leave Lithuania) 976 social interactions.



Overview

DEFENDER 2020 IMAGE September 2019 - June 2020





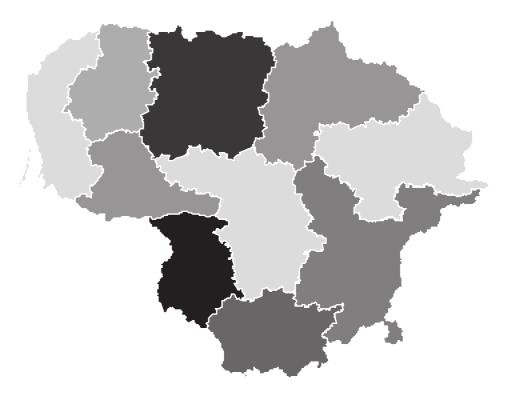
DEFENDER 2020 - OVERVIEW (I)

There were a number of significant disinformation attacks on NATO leaders and partners in 2020. In April, a spoofed email letter was sent to the Minister of National Defense of the Republic of Lithuania Raimundas Karoblis on behalf of NATO President Jens Stoltenberg about the decision to withdraw NATO troops from Lithuania, as it allegedly failed to deal with the coronavirus outbreak at that time.

A month before when the pandemic broke out, a spoofed email letter about Minister Karoblis' alleged request not to cancel the Defender Europe 2020 exercise and the permission for the US military to move freely on Lithuanian territory without noticing the society in order to avoid public outrage, was sent to the media on behalf of the Lithuanian Armed Forces' Strategic Communications Officer.

As experts unanimously agree, the main goal of the increase of these and other similar attacks is Russia's desire to undermine public image of NATO troops and the organisation itself.

This trend is confirmed by a study conducted by Demaskuok on how the NATO exercise Defender Europe 2020 is portrayed in the analysed Russian media outlets. 70 percent of all the mentions of these exercises the information was misleading, nearly 30 percent - neutral and only two articles can be classified as positive content.





DEFENDER 2020 - OVERVIEW (II)

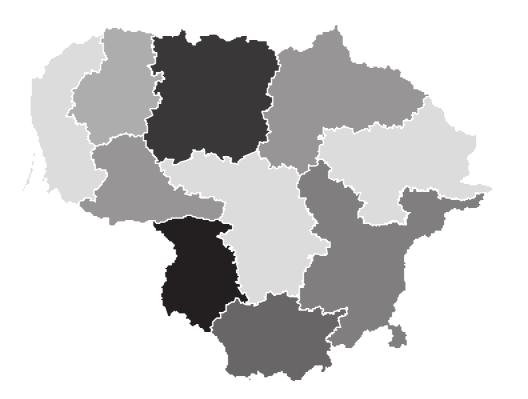
Defender Europe 2020 was to become the largest NATO exercise in Europe since the Cold War. The fact that the United States intended to deploy over 20K troops in the eastern wing of NATO, severely stormed the analysed Russian media.

Given that Russia has been carrying out military maneuvers by hundreds of thousands of troops, both at NATO borders and in the depth of the country for decades, Defender Europe 2020 has become one of the most serious responses to all this.

Unfortunately, for the first time in NATO history, the plans of this magnitude were halted. Although it was initially considered that if the pandemic did not subside, the military exercises will be cancelled altogether. Subsequently, as coronavirus contagion decreased in Europe, it was decided to extend some training activities to all required safety standards and with a significantly reduced contingent of troops.

As the stages of Defender Europe 2020 exercise plans were carrying out, each of the step received a great deal of attention from the Kremlin's disinformation channels. As might be expected, the main misleading messages were adapted to the socio-political situation at the time.

Initially, Kremlin disinformers highlighted the largest increase in the number of U.S. troops in Europe since the Cold War. Later, the criticism to the "aggressive" NATO, which broke its alleged promise "not to expand to the East" by the openly pro-Russian German parliamentarians' were widely publicised. Then came the message by the rulers of Russia and Belarus how they are going to respond to these exercises of the Alliance.





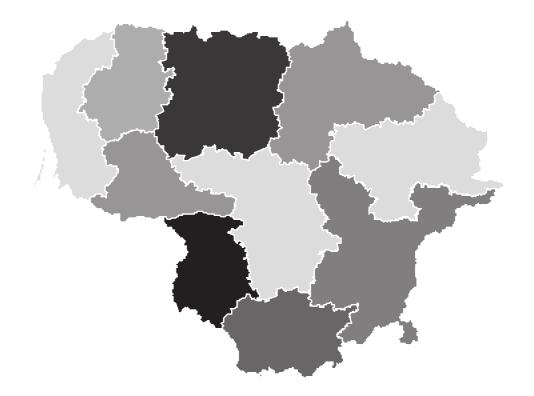
DEFENDER 2020 - OVERVIEW (III)

September 2019 - June 2020

In the wake of the serious threat of a pandemic in February, the Russian media began to iterate the lack of responsibility of the Americans and other NATO allies, because they do not suspend the maneuvers. And as the Alliance reduced the size of the military drills, firstly the ridiculed the failure of the plans, then started to criticise NATO's allegedly relentless militarism and heartlessness in maneuvering during the pandemic.

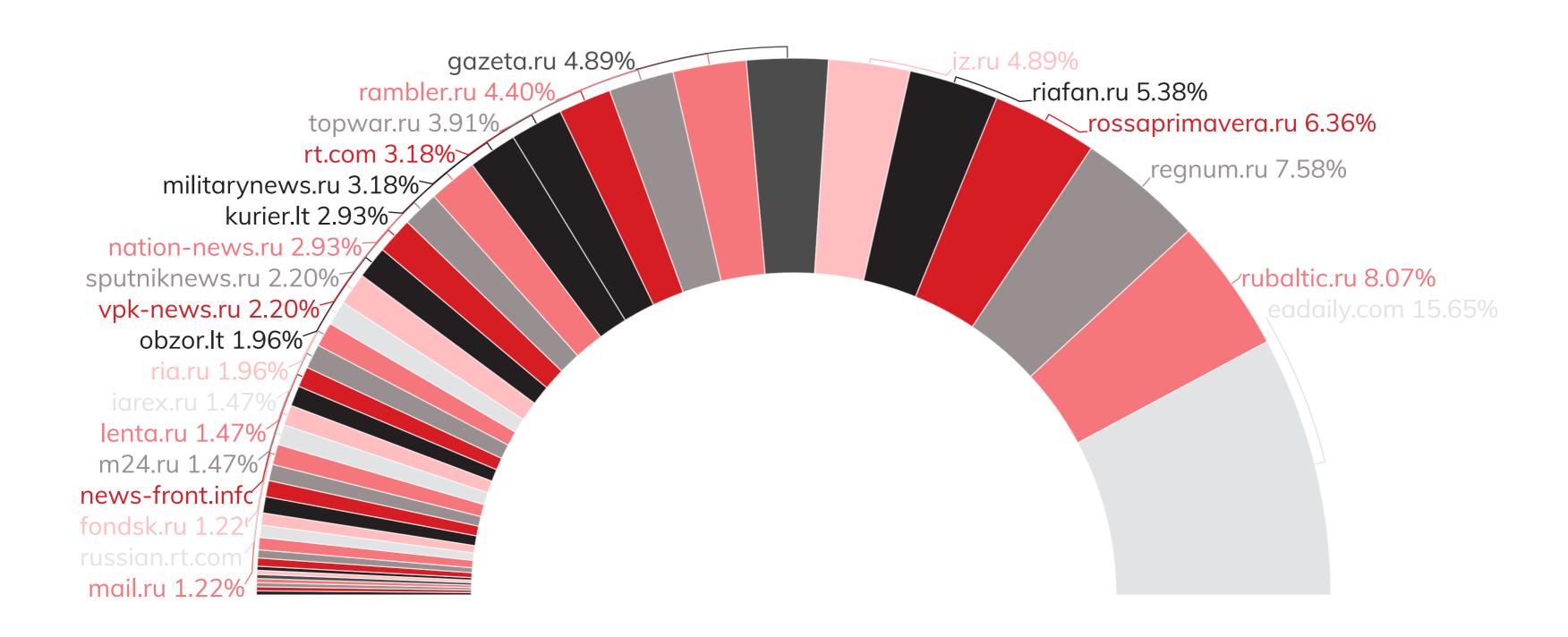
In addition, around the date of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, the narrative that NATO exercises are intended to obscure the celebration of Victory Day, a major memorable historical date for the Kremlin regime living in nostalgia for the Soviet empire, was activated.

Looking at the overall scale of the negative messages, their diversity and widespread discussion in the Kremlin's disinformation channels, it can be concluded that the Defender Europe 2020 exercise was one of the most painful of the recent NATO actions, despite the consequences of the COVID19 pandemic interruption.



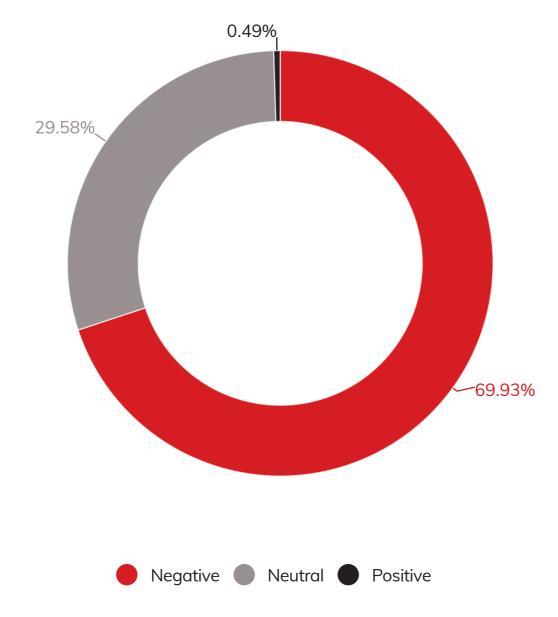


Mentions by sources





Share by sentiments



September 2019 - June 2020

Коропкая соылка

«Пандемия не остановила маховик манёвров»: как

В Латвии 13 апреля, несмотря на пандемию COVID-19, стартуют военные учения НАТО Steel Brawler. Об этом сообщила пресс-служба Национальных вооружённых сил страны. Цель манёвров — увеличить возможности размещённой в Латвии боевой группы расширенного присутствия блока. Ранее сообщалось, что у нескольких военнослужащих альянса в Латвии был обнаружен коронавирус. По мнению аналитиков, проведение учений

в условиях распространения болезни говорит о том, что НАТО готово продвигать свои геополитические нтересы при любых условиях. Эксперты отклечают, что истинные цели блока остаются прежники — создать

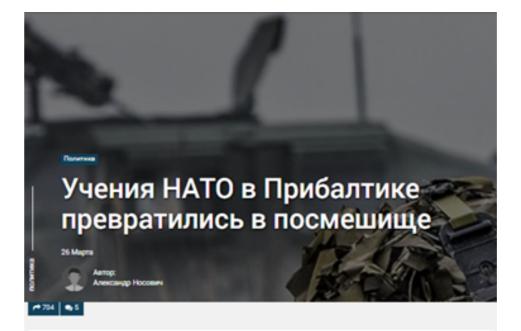
напряжённость у российских границ, а также продемонстрировать внутреннее «единство».

НАТО проводит учения в Латвии в условиях

распространения коронавируса

13 апреля 2020, 07:01 Ирина Таран, Елизавета Комарова

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В интернациональном батальоне НАТО в Литве обнаружен очаг коронавируса COVID-19. По данным капитана Эверт-Яна Даниэлса, выявлено 20 случаев заражения. Эта новость в очередной раз поставила вопрос о целесообразности проведения в условиях пандемии по сути уже сорванных учений Defender Europe 2020. Каждая новая информация о «крупнейших учениях НАТО в Европе» оказывается анекдотической, однако секретариат Альянса и «прифронтовые» страны Восточной Европы все равно собираются их провести, чтобы показать России свою решимость. Последствия Defender Europe 2020 для России в итоге могут превзойти все ожидания: наблюдая за попытками ее устрашить, Россия... лопнет от смеха.

Коронавирус выявлен у четырех военнослужащих Нидерландов, которые служат в

интернациональном ротационном батальоне HATC о Duran В Duran военными. Проводится тотальная дезинфекция по «ударный кулак» НАТО

Ротационный батальон передового базирования Н военнослужащих. С другими такими же батальона 👩 57 🚾 13 🙎 107 💟 💜 🔲 добавить в «Мою Ленту»

Между тем власти этих стран так официально и не Балтийский регион 40 тысяч военнослужащих из (российских границ крупнейших учений Североатл.

 Какую бы панику ни вызывала пандеми Прибалтики, они не в силах признать, чт могут быть более важные задачи, чем «

тря на распространение коронавируса, в Латвии с 13 по 18 апреля пройдут военные учения НАТО Steel Brawler. Об этом сообщила пресс-служба Национальных вооружённых сил страны

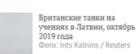
были расквартированы заболевшие нидерландцы Россия заметила у своих границ











 улучшение боевых возможностей размещённой в ксутствия НАТО, а также отработка слаженности действий

которых примут участие около 600 солдат и 100 единиц кники, будут проходить в Двугавлилсском крае на полигоне Меžа

в, что во воемя учений возможно ограничение движения на автомобильных дорогах в связи с перемещением военной

многонациональная боевая группа НАТО, размещённая возглавляемая Канадой, насчитывает более тысячи военных из замериканской страны, а также из Албании. Чекии, Италии, и, Польши, Словакии, Словении и Испании, Этот батальон наствует в учениях вместе с Национальными вооружённым

конце марта сообщалось, что у нескольких военнослужащих

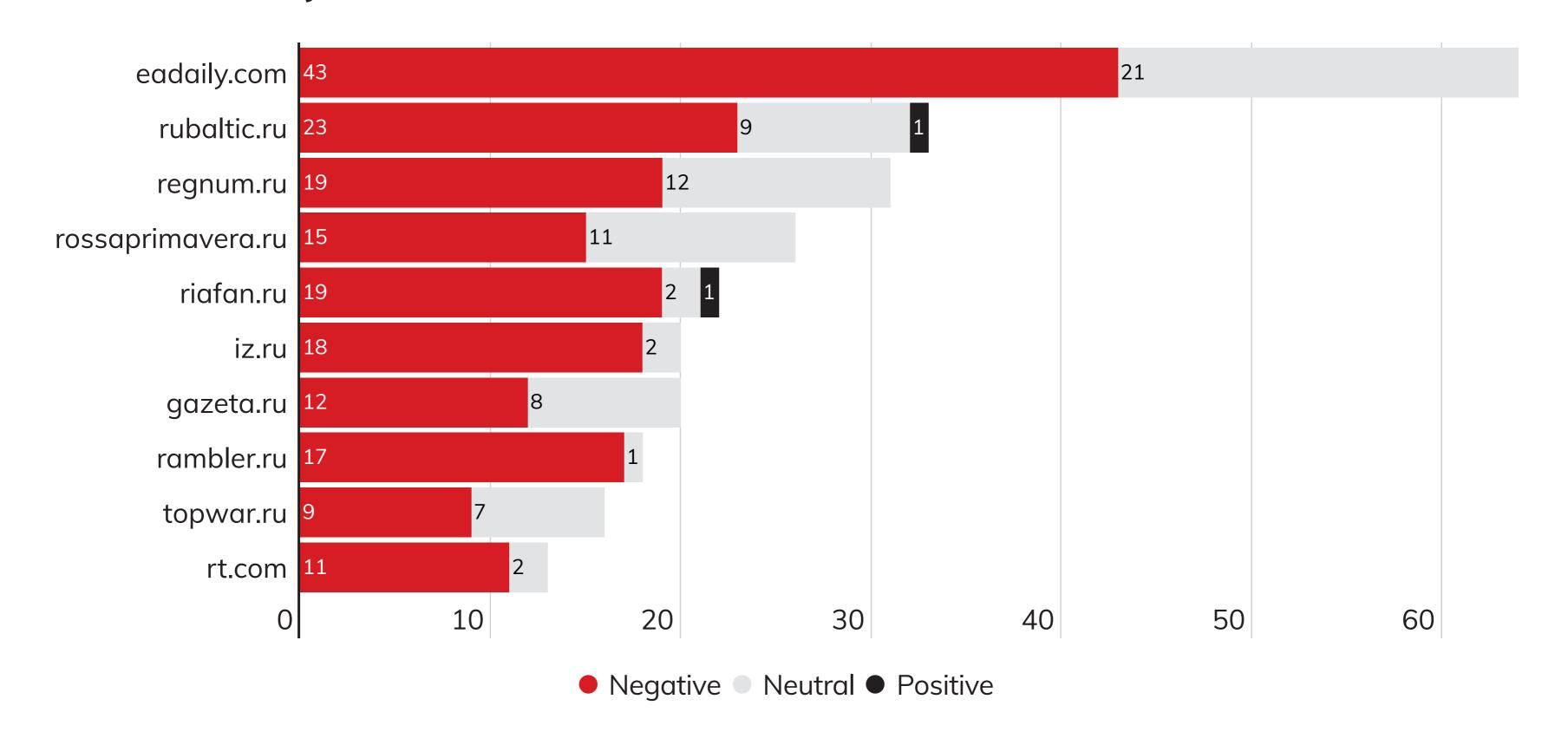
НАТО собирает ударный кулак у границ России, заявила официальный представитель МИД РФ Мария Захарова. Так она прокомментировала информацию о планах альянса провести весной этого года учения Defender Europe-2020, <u>сообщается</u> на сайте внешнеполитического ведомства.

«Разумеется, агрессивные намерения США и НАТО учтем в собственном военном строительстве. Рекомендуем натовцам задуматься о последствиях их агрессивных действий, лишь усиливающих международную напряженность», — подчеркнула Захарова.

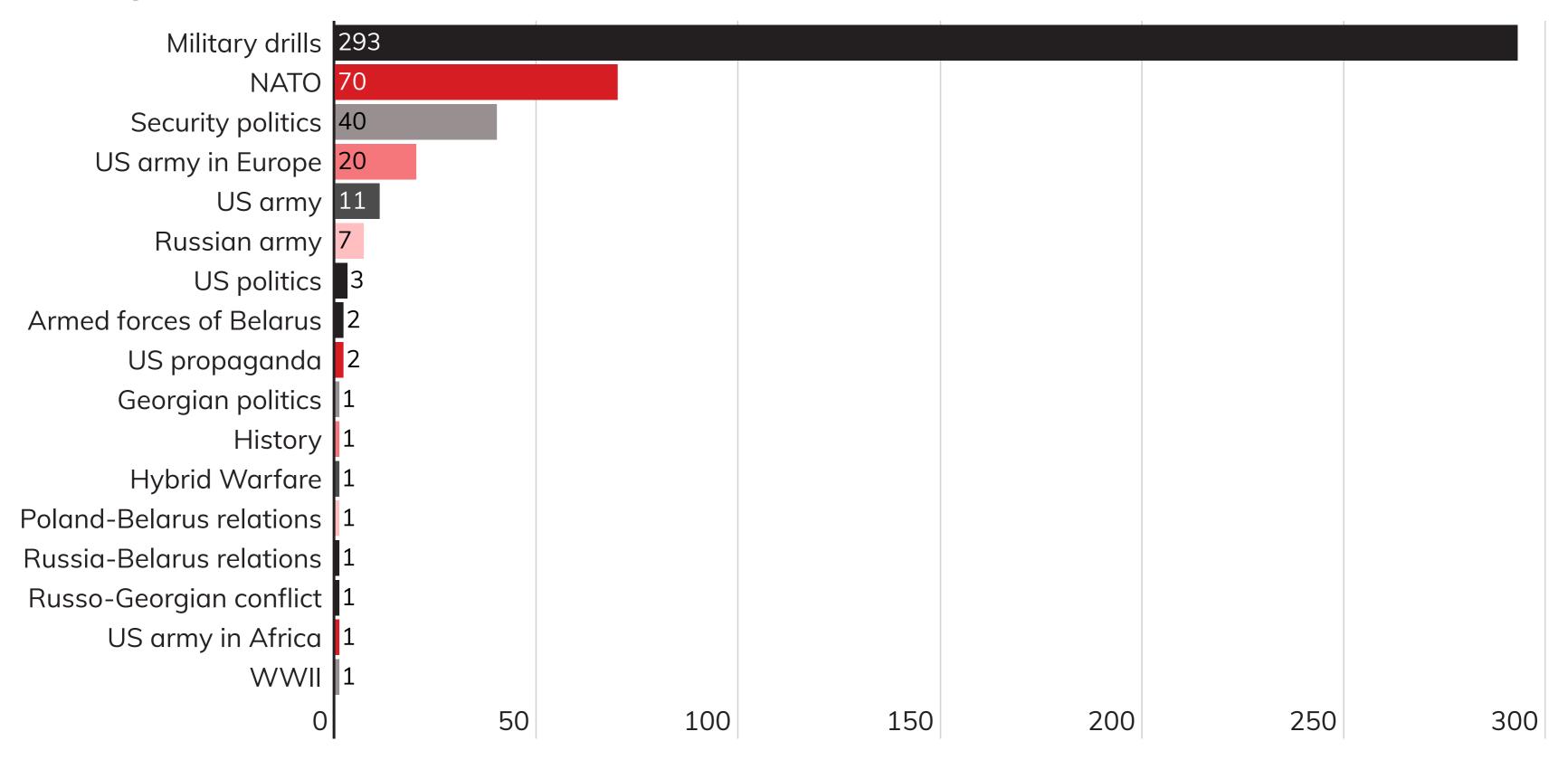


TOP10 sources by sentiment

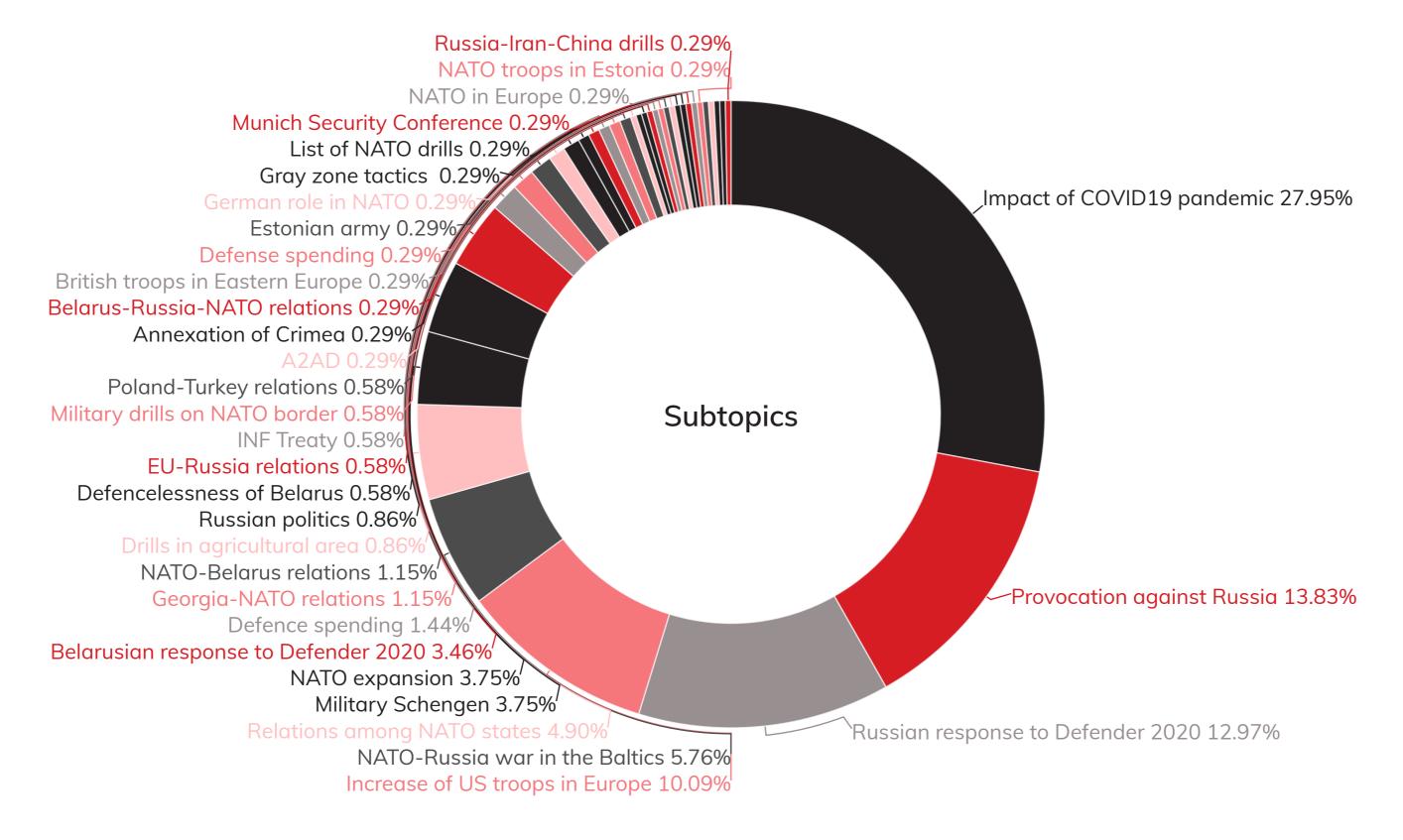
Total number of articles: 409



Main topics

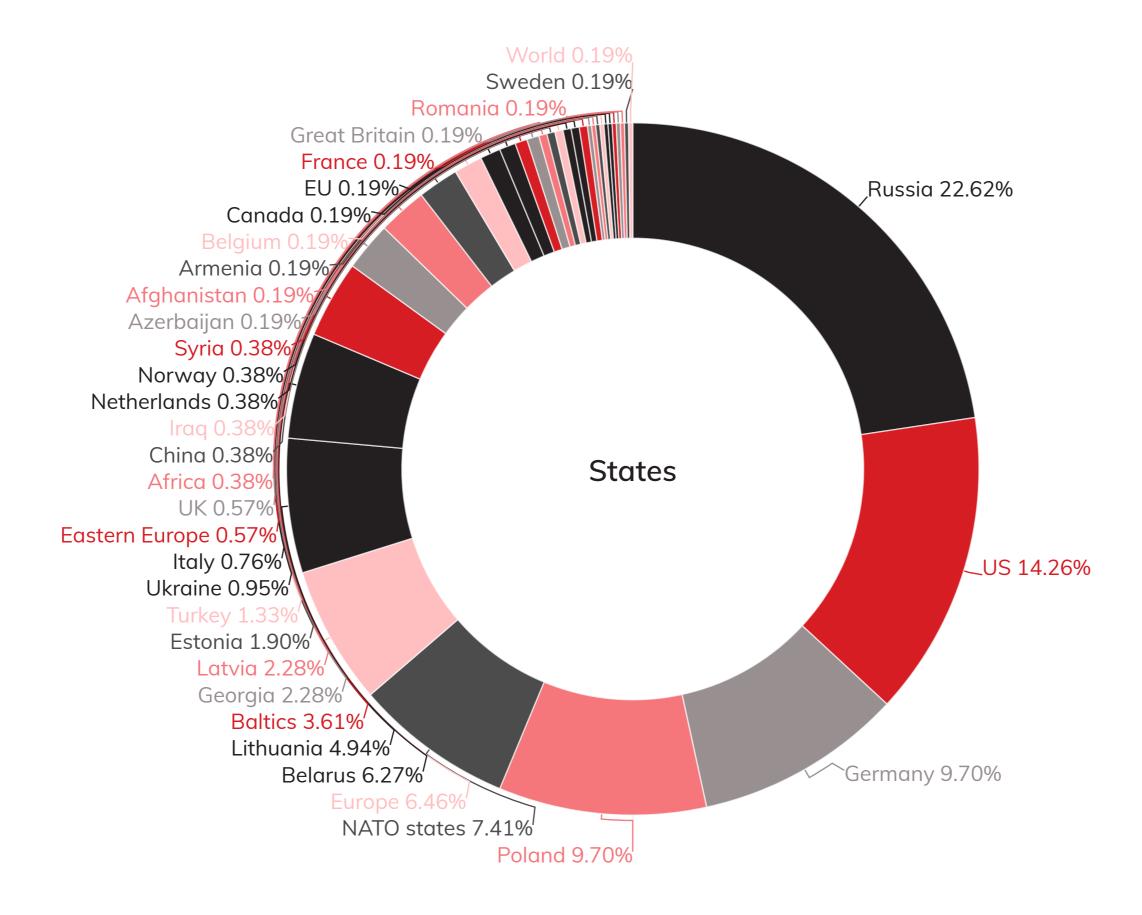


Subtopics



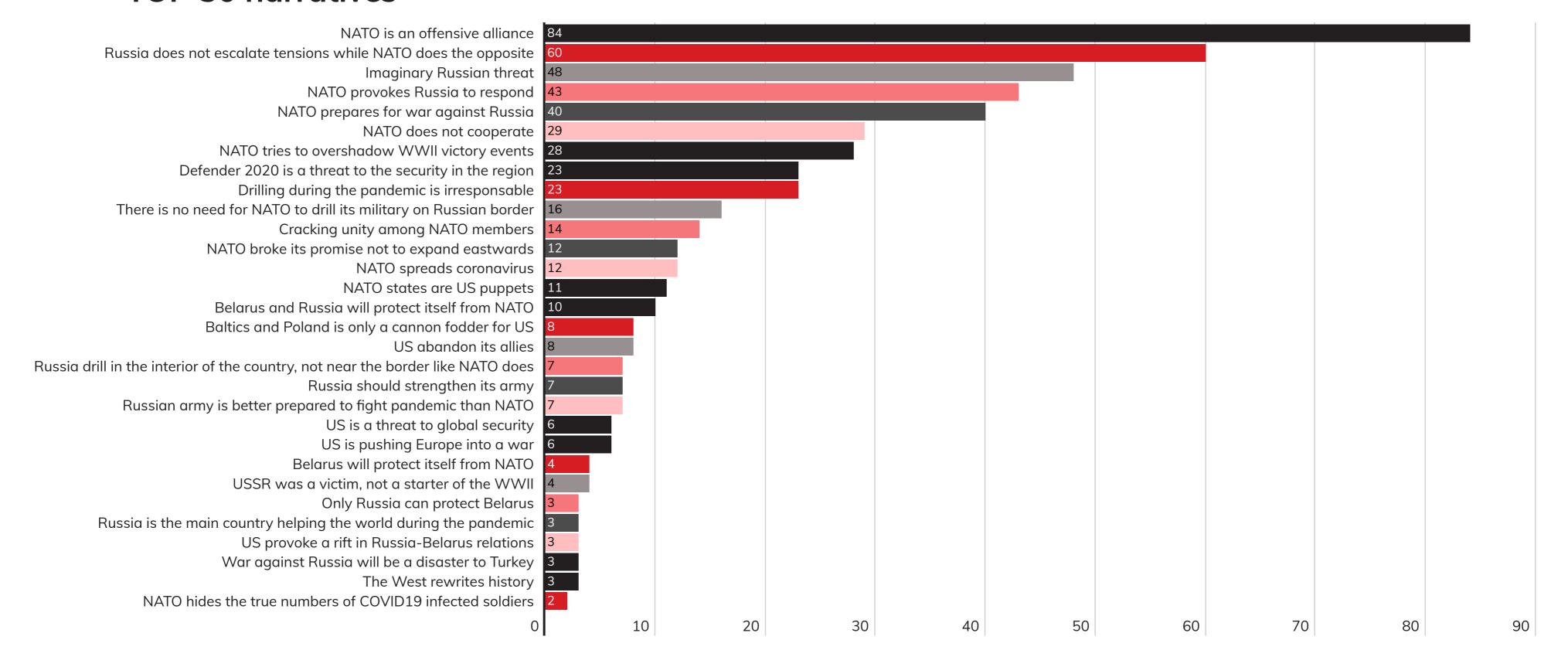


States

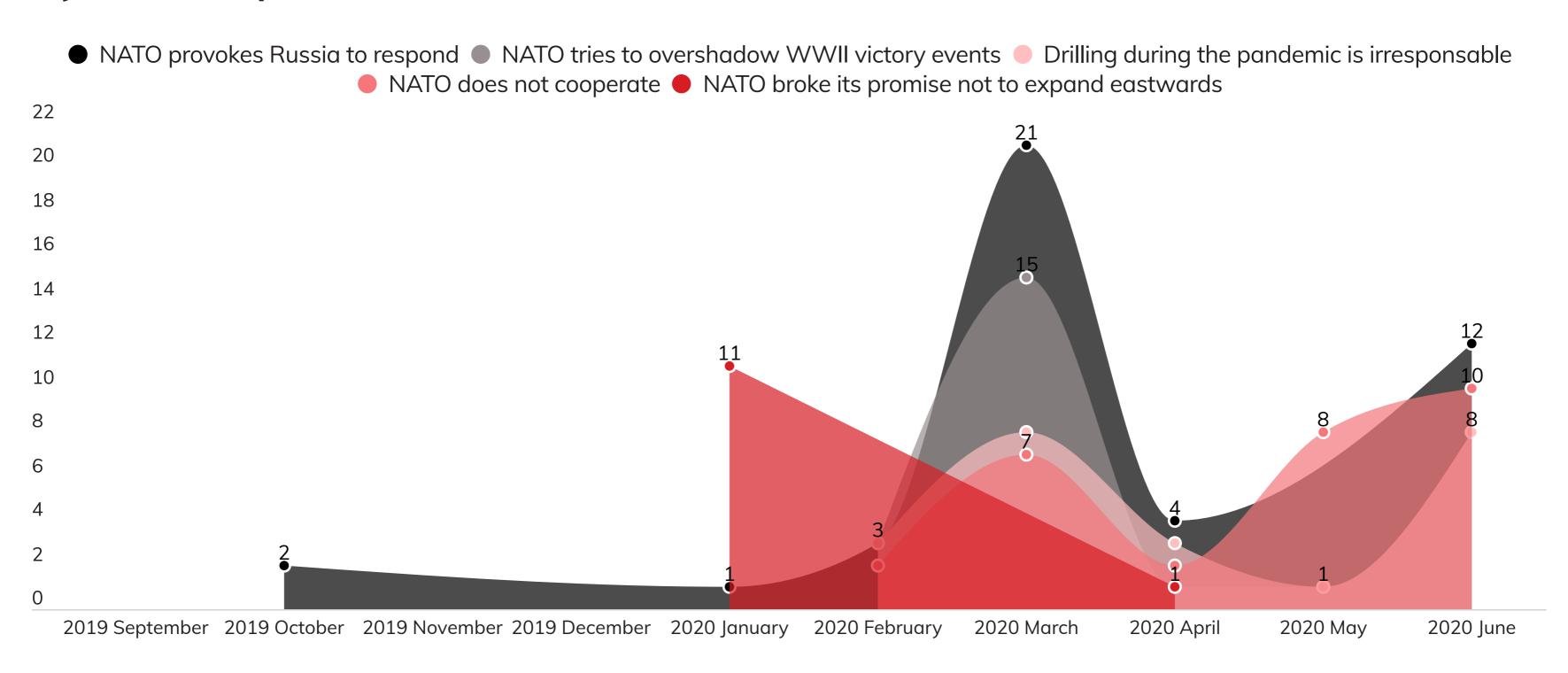




TOP 30 narratives



Dynamics of particular narratives

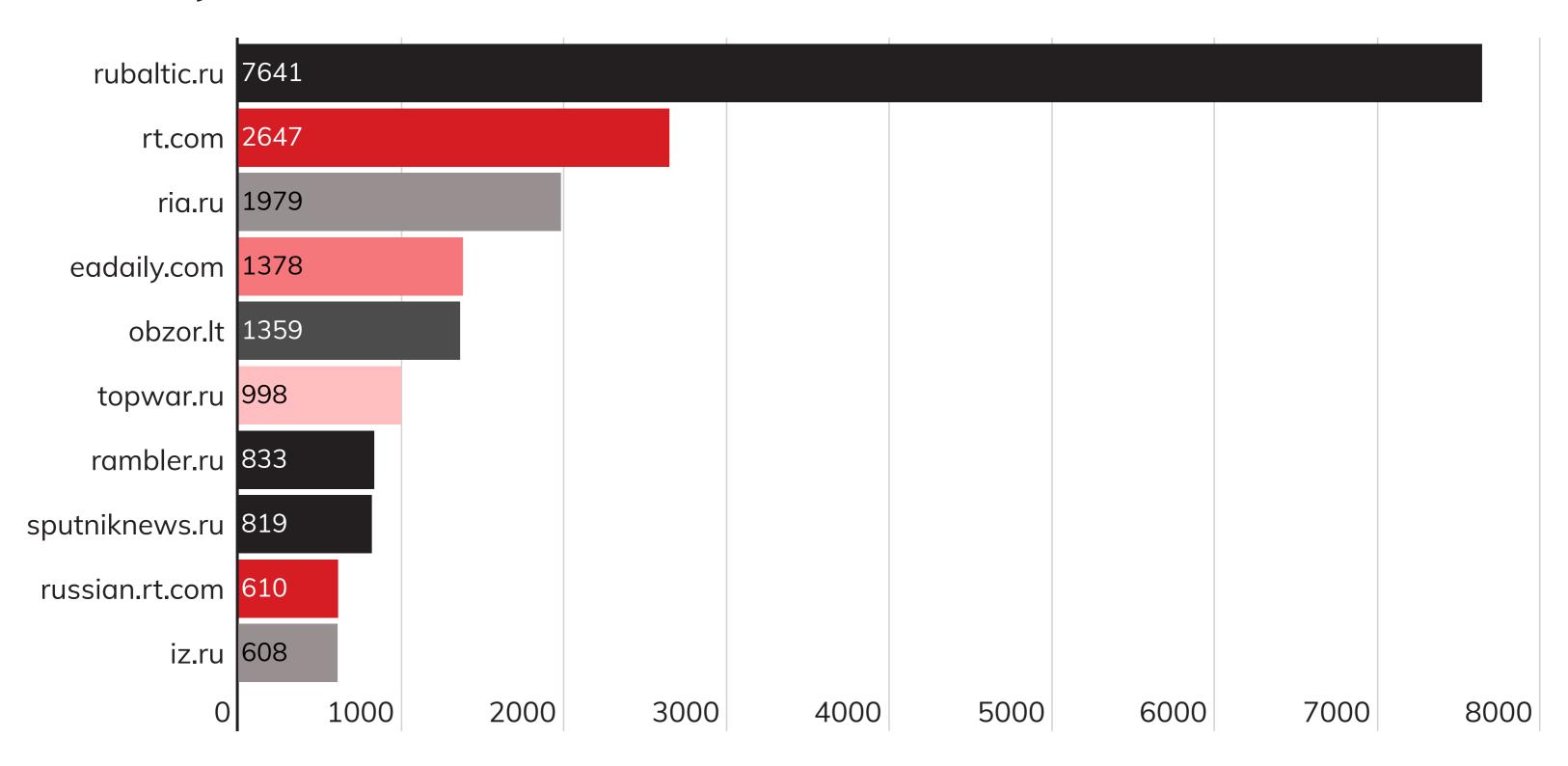




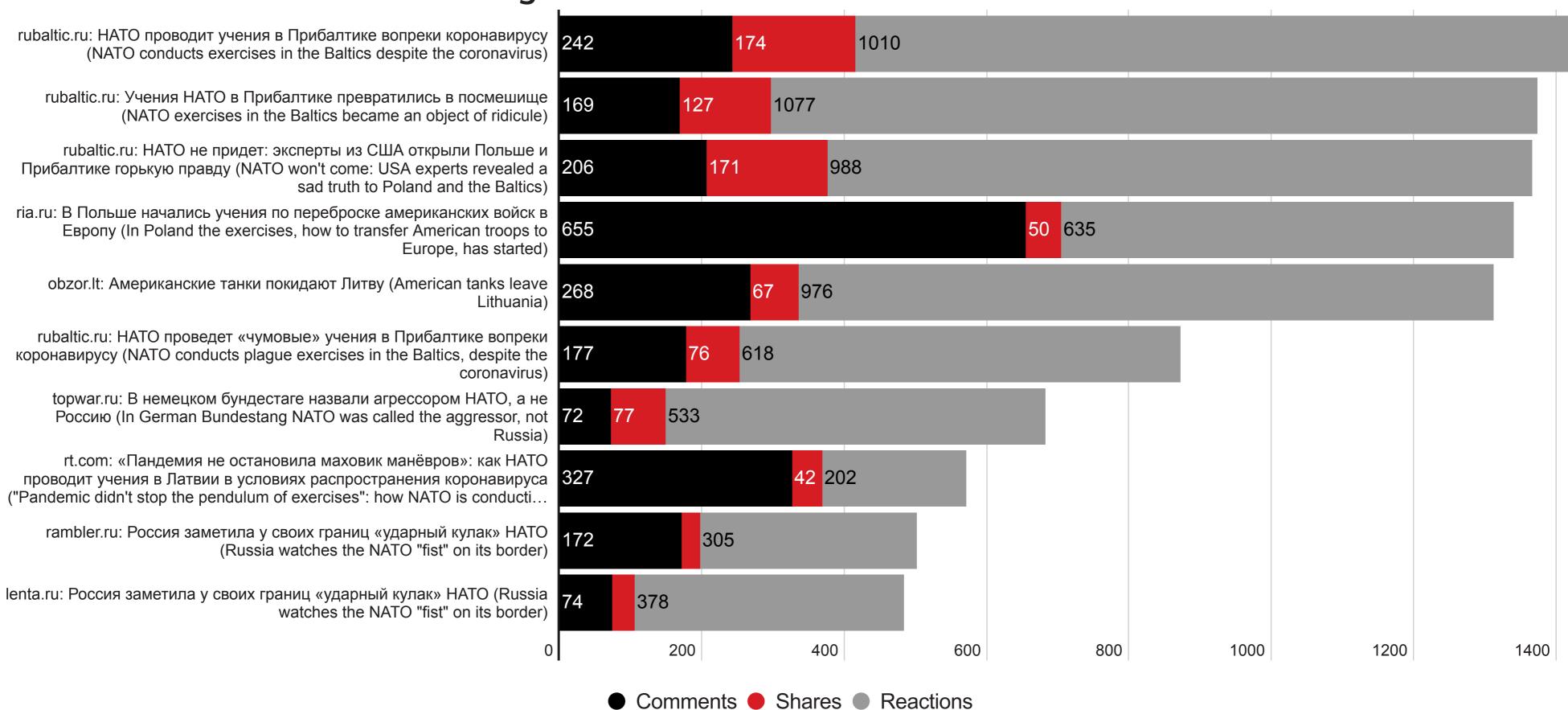
Total: 20 987

DEFENDER 2020

Sources by social interactions to articles with Defender 2020



TOP 10 articles with the highest number of social interactions





CONCLUSIONS

- Most of the articles that mentioned the Defender Europe 2020 exercise were about military maneuvers. The second most popular topic was NATO these articles focused not only on the Alliance's military plans, but also on internal political peripetias. The third key topic, security policy, is an even broader topic dominated by the relationship between the world's major political powerhouses.
- The vast majority of articles that mentioned the Defender Europe 2020 exercise expressed a negative view. It constituted for almost 70 percent of all the articles examined. Almost 30 percent of messages were neutral. And only two articles (0.49%) of the 409 examined could be classified as positive content.
- After analysing all the articles, it can be noticed that the main narratives were operatively adapted to the general flow of the information. The best example was a narrative that Defender Europe 2020 will serve to spread the coronavirus and must therefore be stopped which was started to escalate on the eve of the pandemic. After the announcement of the suspesion of the drilling plans, various types of articles that mocked NATO's failed plans appeared. Some of them even forecasted the crisis of the Alliance. However, with the announcement of a smaller-scale extension of the exercise, there was a return to a narrative of the NATO as an aggressive force, which ignores even a global pandemic.
- Looking at the overall scale of the negative messages, their diversity and the wide discussion in the Kremlin's disinformation channels, it can be concluded that the Defender Europe 2020 exercise was one of NATO's most painful actions recently, despite interruption of the COVID19 pandemic.



