

*Toxic Pacifism in*  
**Extremist Discourse**  
**about the Russia-**  
**Ukraine War**

# About the project

**Russia's war against Ukraine has opened a brand-new front for disinformation and influence operations. A major influx of refugees in neighbouring countries is creating avenues for exploitation of local nationalism, xenophobia and anti-Western narratives, already on the rise.**

This research is part of the project UKRAINE MONITOR (Monitoring of Networks of Influence Tactics and Operations in the Region), which tries to document these phenomena and disseminate the information to relevant parties.

The project aims to check out how Ukraine-related disinformation is reflected and used within the far-right, ultra-nationalist and extremist communities to advance goals consistent with Russian interests. Particular attention paid to instances of cross-country cooperation between the assessed communities, what are the narratives they are sharing, are there any efforts put together for advancing similar agendas.

Within this project, we monitor online and social media activity among extreme groups in each of the countries mentioned above and analyse indications of convergence, communication, or coordination. The results will be communicated to relevant audiences with a role in stemming the spread of Russian malign influence and propaganda.

## Who we are

GlobalFocus Center (Romania) has partnered with Political Capital (Hungary) European Western Balkans (Serbia) and Reporters' Foundation (Poland). All partners have already documented extensively Russian-aligned propaganda and malign influence in Central-Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and the Black Sea area/ Eastern Partnership countries.

This project is supported by the Open Information Partnership. The analysis contained in this report is the work of each participant; it is not authored by and does not represent the view of OIP.

# Summary

In our analysis we have been able to identify three regional, cross-country narratives that refer to peace:

The **defeatist narrative** claims that the defeat of Ukraine is inevitable, so peace should be promoted, negotiated or pushed for as soon as possible. It is often draped in humanitarian discourse: peace is claimed to be in the best interests of Ukraine or the Ukrainian people.

The **egoistic<sup>1</sup> or "national interest" narrative** claims that peace ought to be achieved as soon as possible in order to ensure security for the target country and that until this is achieved, the national interest is perhaps best achieved by neutrality.

The **Russia-legitimising narrative**, which is the least commonly explicitly articulated, argues that the Kremlin's claims are legitimate and therefore they should be taken into account.

These narratives interact with other pro-Kremlin narratives, such as those that claim that peace talks should exclude Ukraine or that the fault for starting the war does not belong to Russia.

In Romania and Poland, the pro-Kremlin peace discourse is dominated by the *defeatist* and *egoistic/national interest* narratives, while the *Kremlin-legitimising* discourse is softer and sometimes just implicit. This is likely due to the public opinion in these countries which is defined by comparatively stronger anti-Russian and pro-Ukraine feelings.

In Hungary, where the authorities have a much more pronounced pro-Kremlin leaning, the *legitimising* and *national interest* discourses are stronger, but the *defeatist* discourse is also present in a "humanitarian" form. Viktor Orban uses the opportunity of speaking about peace to also touch upon the idea of *Hungarian exceptionalism*: only Hungary, he claims, supports peace.

In Serbia the defeatist narrative seems to dominate across the board.

The propaganda channels used seem to correlate with the degree of pro-Russian support from the government and population. In Hungary, the authorities lead the pro-Kremlin

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<sup>1</sup> The term of egoistic is preferred for Romania because in the local cultural context "national interest" carries more solemn connotations that would not describe the actual discourse,

peace discourse. In Serbia, media outlets seem to lead but politicians also dabble in this discourse, particularly Aleksandar Vučić. In Poland and Romania, major politicians generally steer away from it, so it remains the purview of marginal politicians and influencers.

# Romania

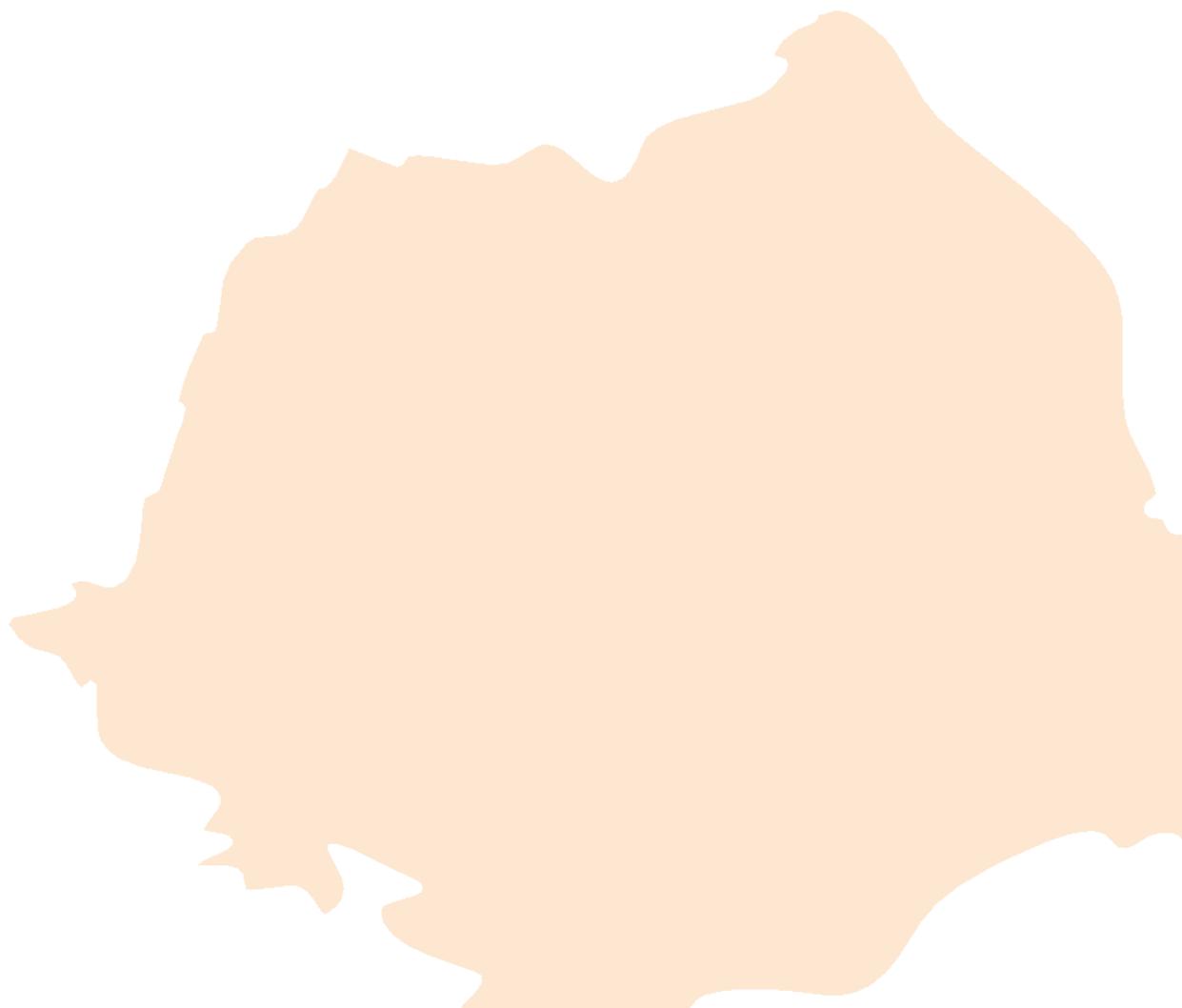
## Meanings and variations

When analysing the discourse about peace in Ukraine, it is difficult to distinguish between legitimate, well-intended discourse vs. malign, pro-Kremlin narratives, particularly in the absence of a good knowledge of the Romanian-language online and social media environment. This distinction is even more challenging to pin down in the current situation in which pro-Kremlin discourse is currently prevailing over traditional pacifist discourse.

If we are to group the divisive narratives identified in Romania, the most relevant categories are:

*Defeatist pacifism* is based on the claim that a victory against Russia is impossible no matter how much Ukraine resists and, thus, almost any peace is preferable to further bloodshed and destruction. It gained purchase in the days of the siege of Kyiv and was promoted mainly by leftist intellectuals not aligned with the Kremlin. It is now promoted largely by pro-Kremlin voices.

*Egoistic pacifism* claims that peace is in “our” (i.e., Romania’s) interest. Sometimes it merges into a broader narrative that “we [i.e., no one] should not help Ukraine.” At other times it refers to a greater European interest.



## Examples and history

Speculations and questions about peace in Ukraine peaked right after the beginning of the war, when the generic discussion about the war was also at its height. However, the narratives were not clearly defined at this point, and the discourse was more reminiscent of American “thoughts and prayers” speeches. The most popular [post](#) in this period (among all posts) is from [Father Calistrat](#), an Orthodox priest with anti-Western opinions and a followership of more than 1 mil. on Facebook. While he blames the West for sowing discord among Orthodox Christians (thus, inciting Russia to start the war against Ukraine), he sees peace in God rather than in politicians.

### *Early pacifism*

During the siege of Kyiv and even for a while after, several left-wing intellectuals adopted a pacifist-defeatist discourse.

*Despite the formidable resistance, and as much as we would like it, the chances of Ukraine defeating Russia outright tend towards zero (...) Ukraine can weaken Russia, increase its losses, inflict huge damage, but it cannot defeat it, because we are talking about an asymmetry of power that even Western weaponry cannot eliminate. Last but not least, and because Putin simply cannot afford to lose this war, domestically that would mean the end of him (...). So, as the likelihood of Ukraine winning this war outright is low, negotiation seems to be the only realistic solution to ending the war.*

*But to talk about a compromise - even if the goal is peace - makes you a pariah these days. More precisely, a Putinist, a useful idiot, and so on. I know. But the only label I'll assume is that of a pacifist ([Victoria Stoiciu](#), head of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Romania).*

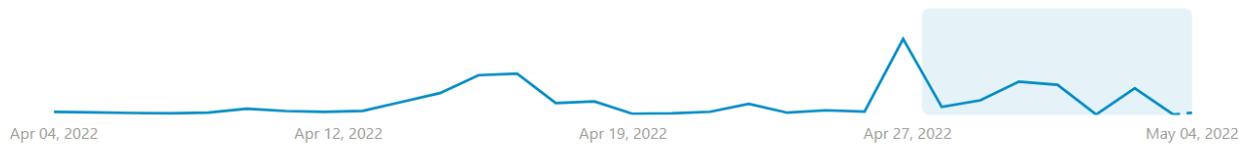
While these left-leaning voices are not pro-Kremlin in their actions or intentions, and typically describe contemporary Russia as an ultra-capitalist state run by a far-right conservative government, their public discourse was used as support for the “second wave” of “peace-at-all-cost” narratives, the one promoted by real pro-Kremlin actors/channels.

After a series of declarations by Sergei [Lavrov](#) and Chinese officials, accompanied by pro-peace interventions from intellectuals like [Jurgen Habermas](#) or [Stephen Walt](#), there was a marked increase in discussions claiming that peace talks are necessary at all cost and we need to avoid a third world war.

INTERACTIONS  
171,256

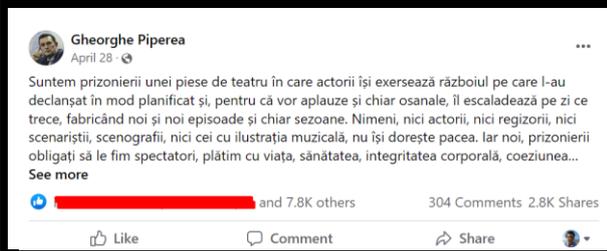
POSTS  
1,159

EXTENDED 1-MONTH TIME PERIOD ⓘ



Disruptive messages about peace in Ukraine. Data and graph: Crowdtangle. We have started from a generic search of terms like “peace” and “Ukraine” and then heavily narrowed it by manually eliminating legitimate channels and messages.

These discussions came partly from channels that had previously conveyed disruptive messages (e.g., former politician Gheorghe Piperea) but they were accompanied by mainstream channels legitimately reporting Russian and Chinese positions.



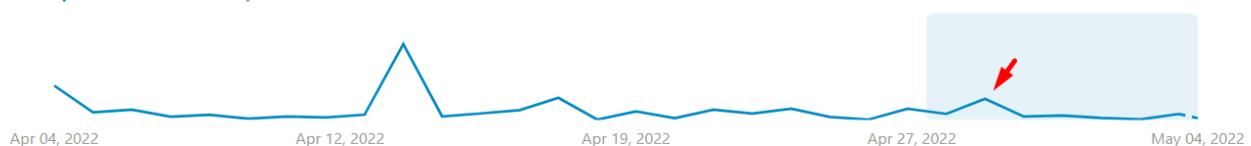
**Translation: We are prisoners of a play in which the actors practice the war they have planned (...) fabricating new episodes and even seasons. No one, not the actors, not the directors, not the writers, not the set designers, not the musical illustrators, wants peace. And we, the prisoners....**

In parallel, there have been a number of discussions on social media suggesting that in one form or another NATO should ask Russia for peace, or that NATO does not want peace.

INTERACTIONS  
173,422

POSTS  
1,110

EXTENDED 1-MONTH TIME PERIOD ⓘ



Disruptive messages claiming that NATO should proactively sue for peace or that NATO does not want peace.

### *Adding egoistic pacifism to the mix*

After this peak, interest in the issue continued to decrease. As the initial emotional reaction to the invasion decreased, defeatist-pacifist messages that appeared to side with Ukraine were partially and gradually blended with egoistic-pacifist messages saying, among other

things, that we should fear Russia rather than worry for Ukraine. A message attributed to retired general and far right-politician Mircia Chelaru says<sup>2</sup>:

*You who dream of Ukraine winning the war and the Russians retreating with their tails between their legs and apologising!*

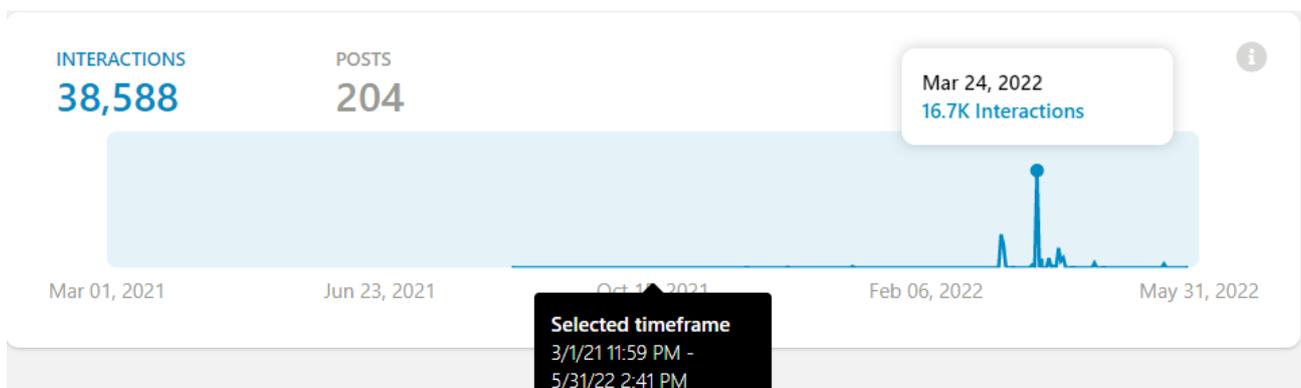
*Did you guys finish any real school?! Did you learn history?! The Russians never really retreated from anywhere!*

*When has Russia ever been judged, when has Russia ever paid reparations to anyone?! When has Russia ever been brought to its knees?! When?! (...)*

*You don't insult the Russians, you don't trample on them, and then you drink together, kiss each other, dance, (...) and stay friends forever! You have to be careful with Russians. Keep good neighbourly relations.*

### *Populist politicians weighing in on the “peace-by-all-cost” narrative*

In March 2022, the populist politician [Diana Sosoaca](#), known for her [pro-Russian attitude and convictions](#), initiated a process of convincing the public (and fellow MPs) that peace with Russia is the only solution we should seek, and that the peace should be mediated by Romania. The initiative, dubbed “[Pacea de la București](#)” (the Bucharest Peace), trended on radical social media channels (with tens of thousands of views on the politician’s official Facebook and Telegram channels).



Media posts for “Pacea de la București”. Data and graph: Crowdtangle.

<sup>2</sup> The truthfulness of the attribution and the initial point of origin are unclear. One of the more important distribution channels is [this](#).

She even tried to capitalise on this attention<sup>3</sup> and on March 12 she organised a public demonstration, demanding neutrality for Romania. The meeting was a quasi-failure, with only a couple of hundred gathering for the event.

Moreover, Mrs Sosoaca managed to convince another three members of the parliament (a social democrat; and two independent politicians, both of them former members of the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians<sup>4</sup>) to accompany her on [a visit to the Russian embassy in Romania](#), to present the initiative to the ambassador. The visit ended up with few positive outcomes for the four politicians (the ambassador was reluctant to open another negotiations process paralleling the one taking place at that time in Turkey), but was regarded by Sosoaca's constituency as an important political gesture.

At a later stage Sosoaca [saluted](#) Viktor Orban's declarations regarding Hungary's neutrality, declarations that were regarded by Sosoaca followership as being inspired by her initial initiative.

### *Viktor Orban's visit in Romania*

The private visit of PM Viktor Orban in Romania, at the 31st edition of the Bálványos Summer University and Student Camp organised at the end of July, was mainly analysed in Romanian mainstream media and on social networks from the perspective of his declarations about Hungarians being a pure race. However, in his discourse at a summer school he had also [insisted](#) on the subject of *peace*, with a combination of defeatist and egoist pacifism:

*This is why, as a neighbouring country, Hungary has the right to say that peace is the only solution that will save human lives, and the only antidote to wartime inflation and a wartime economic crisis.*

...as well as with an insinuation that the peace must be decided above the heads of Ukrainians, by the US and Russia.

*Since Russia wants security guarantees, the war can only be brought to an end with Russo-American negotiations. There will be no peace until there are Russo-American talks.*

This seems a variation of the *NATO should sue for peace* (sub)narrative where NATO is simply replaced by the US. Even though these declarations were only marginally debated

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<sup>3</sup> As seen in the above graph, on March 24 - the day Sosoaca organised a [public debate over zoom](#) - there were more than 15k interactions with Facebook posts referring to the initiative.

<sup>4</sup> The aforementioned MPs are: [Dumitru Coarna](#), a social-democrat with strong anti-Western opinion; [Mihai Lasca](#), a far-right politician with a criminal track-record; and [Francisc Toba](#), a former military officer who participated in the repression of the anti-communist demonstrations back in 1989.

in Romania initially, they are mirrored in positions of pro-Russian influencer Gheorghe Piperea who provided a [selective summary](#) of Orbán's discourse leaving aside the race issues and focusing on the malignant role of the West in preventing peace. Including shares, the post received more than 11,000 engagements.

Likewise, [Oana Lovin](#) - one of the most prominent pro-Russian influencers on Romanian language social media - saluted the courage demonstrated by Viktor Orbán in opposing NATO and Western powers in one of her [posts](#), and labelled his discourse in Bálványos as the one of a leader struggling to find allies.



**Oana-Elena Lovin**

August 5 at 4:47 PM · 🌐

Discursul lui Viktor Orbán în America.

Discursul unui lider care încă mai luptă pentru oameni și nu pentru hegemonia corporațiilor pentru care oamenii sunt simpli șoareci de laborator.

Același gen de discurs l-a avut și în România, în încercarea de a găsi aliați în această luptă nedreaptă cu un inamic cu puteri nelimitate.

Translation: Viktor Orbán's discourse in America. The discourse of a leader who still fights for his people, and not for hegemonic corporations who are considering mankind as lab rats.

He had the same type of discourse in Romania, trying to find allies in this unfair fight with an enemy with limitless powers.

# Poland

## Meaning, variations and history

Among the countries being investigated for this project, Poland is the only one to enjoy solid and univocal support for Ukraine both in government circles and in society. A [survey conducted in mid-June by European Council on Foreign Relations<sup>5</sup>](#) indicates Poland has the largest support for what they called the "justice camp" - that believes the more pressing goal is to punish Russia - as opposed to the "peace camp," which leans towards peace negotiations with Russia, even at the price of Ukraine's territorial concessions. 41% of Polish respondents demand continued support for Ukrainian efforts to repel Russian forces from all contested territories and re-establish its territorial integrity.

In those circumstances (despite being 4 months into the war), campaigning or communicating for concessions to Russia, whether on the ground of defeatism or of "national interest", would pose a big challenge in Poland.

Historically, slogans and campaigns "against the war with Russia" were spread on social media in 2014-2016, e.g. "NOT for the war with Russia" linked by Facebook with other profiles of the pro-Russian "Zmiana" party (this profile has not gained an audience and remains inactive); or another inactive profile "Initiative 'Not at war with Russia,'" associated with the pro-Russian nationalists of the Great Camp of Poland.

Another fan page that remains sporadically active is "Pact Against the War with Russia," led by Piotr Jastrzębski, the left-wing journalist and publicist, who we [uncovered to cooperate with Russian influence agencies ECAG and CIS-EMO](#) as an election observer.

After February 2022, in most of the public debate "for peace" equals "against war" and should be understood as "against Russian invasion." In most cases, the message is followed with a clear demand for Russian accountability, if not retaliation. This is despite some initial reactions from left-wing circles and a few right-wing organisations that interpreted the conflict in terms of "a clash of Atlantic and Russian imperialism" and distanced themselves from supporting Ukraine. The debate on a possible truce is associated with fears that Ukraine will be forced to make concessions, rather than with active advocacy for such solutions.

Since the beginning of the invasion, some agencies typically aligned with Russian propaganda have tried to break through with messaging intended to mix the pacifist

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<sup>5</sup> The poll has been conducted online, with n=1002 for Poland. Prudence is necessary in using online surveys as citizens who do not have a computer and who are less versed in using the mobile phone do nevertheless vote and can be local, offline influencers. However, much of our research is also focused on online audiences so the data remains relevant.

narrative with narratives aiming to transfer responsibility for hostilities away from Russia to Ukraine and NATO, and pushing a narrative of a "proxy war" between Russia and the West. In the first weeks after the war began, such messaging was aimed at promoting the preservation of Poland's neutrality towards the conflict and the demobilization of support, especially military support, for Ukraine. As the situation on the front began to become more complex and difficult for Russia, and it became in the Russian interest to secure territorial progress in the east and south of Ukraine from any counter-offensives, and such "peace talk" turned into direct calls for an immediate ceasefire between Ukraine and Russia.

## Examples

An example of a typical priming message published prior to Russian invasion by the "Pact Against War With Russia" profile linked to person cooperating with ECAG and CIS-EMO. It should be noted that such channels have a barely perceptible reach.

### Photo



Porozumienie Przeciw Wojnie z Rosją  
12 February · 🌐

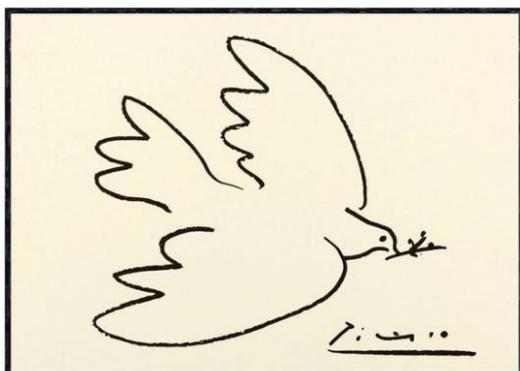
Stowarzyszenie Spadkobierców Polskich Kombatantów. Kol. Roland Dubowski.

"Wobec wciągania Polski w wojnę, zgubnej postawy decydujących ugrupowań politycznych, oraz wszechobecnej wojennej propagandy poprawno-politycznej. Stowarzyszenie Spadkobierców Polskich Kombatantów II Wojny, apeluje do władz wszystkich szczebli w Polsce oraz do Polaków o publiczny zdecydowany sprzeciw.

Milczenie będzie tragicznym w skutkach przyzwoleniem, o czym nieraz przekonaliśmy się w historii Polski.

Jednocześnie dziękujemy środowiskom odważnie stojącym w obronie polskiej racji stanu: Myśli Polska, Zjednoczenie Patriotyczno-Robotnicze "Grunwald", Stowarzyszenie Tradycji Ludowego Wojska Polskiego im. Gen. Zygmunta Berlinga w Bytomiu, Polski Ruch Lewicowy, Stowarzyszenie Pokolenia, i inne...

1. Stop wojennej polityce władz w Polsce!
2. Naród Polski "nie zasłużył", aby być mięsem armatnim dla imperializmu USA!
3. Stop wojnie z Rosją!
4. Stop wojnie z Białorusią!
5. Stop wspieraniu banderowskiej Ukrainy!
6. Dość "amerykańskiej demokracji"!
7. Wyprowadzić wojska USA z Polski!
8. Dziękujemy za "sojusz" z Anglią!
9. Wyjść z NATO!
10. Nawiązać dobrosąsiedzkie stosunki ze Wschodnimi Sąsiadami!"



### Translation:

Pact Against War With Russia, 12 February

"In the face of Poland being lured into the war, of the disastrous attitude of the political decision makers, and the omnipotent PC military propaganda, the Association of the Heirs of Polish Combatants of the Second World War, appeals to the authorities of all levels in Poland and to all Poles for public opposition. Silence will be a tragic consent, as we have seen many times in the history of Poland.

(...)

1. Stop the military policy of the authorities in Poland!
2. The Polish nation "did not deserve" to be cannon fodder for US imperialism!
3. Stop the war with Russia!
4. Stop the war with Belarus!
5. Stop supporting Bandera Ukraine!
6. Enough of "American Democracy"!
7. Get the US troops out of Poland!
8. Thank you for the "alliance" with England!
9. Leave NATO!
10. Establish good neighbourly relations with Eastern Neighbours! "

On 12 March, a "peace rally" was held in Warsaw under the slogan "yes to peace, no to war", preceded by an intense and well-prepared campaign in channels related to the so-called Kamrat (Comrade) movement - informal groups of anti-vaccine activists and pro-Russian nationalists formed during the pandemic. The choice of date was probably related to the Act on Assistance to Ukrainian Refugees voted in the Sejm (Parliament) on the same day. The rally (which attracted just a few attendees despite intensive promotion) hosted a group of speakers that framed refraining from supporting Ukraine and Ukrainians as "peace".

"This is not our war, this is why Poland and Poles should remain neutral", stated Rafał Mossakowski from "Powiśle Educational Center," while the attendees were chanting "Neutrality is our way", "This is not our war". "There is no regional conflict behind the war, this is not Russian-Ukrainian war; this is a global war where globalists from different sides are making Slavic nations bleed in their war. We, Poles, should not join such a war."

ES "We are not on this side (...) we should not take part in it at all. (...) [Russia] is striving to restore legal power in Ukraine, because in 2014 there was a coup d'état. (...) ", said [Nabil Al Malazi](#), known supporter of Putin and Assad. "Poles want peace, say yes to the neutrality of Poland, as Russia acts in accordance with its interests - how can NATO still [expand] to the Russian border? The purpose of this intervention is only to neutralise Ukraine, not any occupation."



### Translation:

"The worst day of peace is better than the most beautiful day of war. "Yes" to peace, "No" to war".

The most notorious instance of actors pushing forward the notion of peace at all costs was a collective statement issued by Grzegorz Braun, MP from the Konfederacja parliamentary club, together with six other signatories with professor titles who are associated with Konfederacja or general right-wing circles. On 25 June, a [statement named “An appeal for peace in Central Europe” was promoted at a press conference](#) during a meeting of the parliamentary team formed by MP Braun (working, for example, on the issue of "stopping Ukrainianization"), as well as at a public rally of the "comrade movement" .

The document included statements in line with the Kremlin's narrative:

- signatories expect a “compromise between Russia and Ukraine that will lead to lasting peace”,
- the document appeals to economic arguments and concerns about the spill-over of the conflict,
- most of all, the document attributes the entire blame for the conflict to “Russia's fear of NATO enlargement and the neighbouring countries' fear of Russia's power” and to Ukraine’s “inappropriate internal politics” that provoked Russia into a war.

The document released as a “statement” is a paraphrase of an article published on May 30 in [Rzeczpospolita newspaper](#). It was written as an opinion piece by one of their cooperating publicists, Włodzimierz Julian Korab-Karpowicz (later signatory of the statement), referring to the idea of "political realism" and quoting Henry Kissinger. Later it was reprinted by [“Myśl Polska” and the Kremlin medium of News Front](#) and finally circulated as a “statement from Polish intellectuals”.

## Photo

**„Nic nie jest stracone przez pokój. Wszystko może być stracone przez wojnę!”**  
(Pius XII, 1939)

Wojna jest największą **tragedią ludzką i kulturową**. Nawołujemy do natychmiastowego **zakończenia wojny** na Ukrainie i do **kompromisu** między Rosją a Ukrainą, który doprowadzi do trwałego **pokoju**. Dla rozwiązania konfliktu należy **usunąć wzajemny strach**, a doprowadzić do tego może jedynie **profesjonalna dyplomacja i gotowość do kompromisu**, a nie - działania wojenne.

WARSZAWA,  
25.06.2022

KONFEDERACJA  
KORONY  
POLSKIEJ

Z OŚWIADCZENIA  
PRZEDSTAWICIELI  
NAUKI POLSKIEJ  
WS. POKOJU  
NA UKRAINIE

Udostępnij

## Translation:

“Nothing is lost by peace. Everything can be lost by war ”(Pius XII, 1939).

War is the greatest human and cultural tragedy. We call for an immediate end to the war in Ukraine and for a compromise between Russia and Ukraine that will lead to lasting peace. To resolve the conflict, mutual fear must be removed, and this can only be achieved by professional diplomacy and a willingness to compromise, not by military action.

From the statement of representatives of Polish science.

# Serbia

## Meaning, variations and history

The narrative that Ukraine should make concessions to Russia to achieve peace has been present in Serbia since the start of the war, although it has not been as central as in some other countries (Hungary, for example). Narratives that Serbia must withstand the pressure to impose sanctions and cut ties with Russia have been more dominant thus far. Nevertheless, leading political figures (notably the President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić) and far-right media outlets have also pushed the message that peace must be reached as soon as possible, often stressing that the only way for this to happen is to accept some of the perceived aims of Russia, such as the partition of Ukraine.

This narrative has been promoted in Serbia by both pro-government media outlets, mostly tabloids, as well as anti-government right-wing media portals. Both groups can be classified as pro-Russian, though the pro-government media have mostly refrained from their earlier editorial policy of openly supporting a Russian victory, which was especially prevalent in the first months of the war.

It is notable that the “peace narrative” has been present almost exclusively in traditional media outlets. Right-wing and far-right political figures and organisations have not focused on the need for peace on their social media accounts. They have instead promoted other pro-Russian narratives, such as the responsibility of the West for the war.

There have been several variations of the “peace narrative”. One of the most frequent forms has been the quotes of political officials and analysts (such as [Henry Kissinger](#) and [Silvio Berlusconi](#)) directly urging Ukraine to give up parts of its territory or heavily implying that it should do so. A sub-variant of this narrative has been negative coverage of the statements of officials who had urged the Ukrainian government not to go consider ceding territory in exchange for peace.

Another form of this narrative has been the message that Ukraine and the West are not interested in peace at all. This conclusion has always been made in the context of the real or assumed rejection of Russian demands and military aims. Quotes by [Chinese officials](#), as well as Hungarian Prime Minister [Viktor Orban](#), were used to create this form of the narrative.

Finally, one of the less frequent forms of the “peace narrative” has been the reporting on divisions in the Euro-Atlantic community, with the United States and the United Kingdom portrayed as “hawks” and “warmongers”, while some of the European leaders portrayed as

sensible by not wanting to “completely defeat Russia”, implicitly recognizing the legitimacy of some of the Russian demands.

### Examples - Vučić's messages

On several occasions since the start of the war, President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić, the dominant political figure in the country's media landscape, has used the “peace narrative.” His role cannot be overstated due to his significant influence on public opinion in Serbia due to his extensive media presence. It can therefore be concluded that he has been the figure providing the most visibility to this message.

In mid-May, during an interview on *Prva* television, Vučić stated that he expected the conflict to get worse in the autumn and that, according to his assessment, a nuclear war “is very realistic”. Two days later, pro-government *Informer* [reported](#) on the statement of Mykhailo Podolyak, member of the Ukrainian negotiating team, who said that the talks with Russia had been suspended. The headline read “VUČIĆ WAS RIGHT ONCE AGAIN! There will be long-term war, nobody wants peace!”

Speaking at the GLOBSEC Forum in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 2 June, the President of Serbia said that he did not believe in total victory and a total defeat, and that peace was needed as soon as possible.

“Peace is urgently needed, and then (Russia and Ukraine) can solve their problems in the next 20, 50 years... One day means a lot, that's 1,000 people who will survive”, Vučić said, adding that he had said that to President of Russia Vladimir Putin over the phone. Putin, according to Vučić, told him that he had always been for peace, but that he would achieve his goals (in Ukraine). Vučić's statement was reported by the majority of the country's mainstream media (such as [RTS](#)) and widely-read tabloid portals (such as [Informer](#)).

Vučić's arguably biggest contribution to this narrative came on 13 July, during his interview on the national television channel *Pink*. He said that, once Putin “finishes the job” on the Slavyansk-Kramatorsk-Avdeyevka line, his “offer” to the West will follow.

“If the West does not accept the offer, we will all go to hell, and it will not accept it”, Vučić said. The website of the *Kurir* tabloid [reported](#) this statement in a news article, which has had 2.3k interactions on Facebook.<sup>[1]</sup> The next day, several pro-government media outlets reported in a positive tone that the speech of the President of Serbia had made an impact in Russia after it had been quoted by the state TASS agency.

<p><b>Photo</b></p> 	<p><b>Translation:</b></p> <p><b>IF THE WEST DOES NOT ACCEPT PUTIN'S OFFER, WE ARE GOING TO HELL! Vučić: I know what's coming!</b></p>
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#### Examples of the narrative in other media

[One of the media articles](#) with the highest number of interactions on Facebook (1.3k) was published by the right-wing *Standards.rs* on 6 June, with the headline “Washington Post: EU leaders want peace in Ukraine no matter what, Biden calmed them down”. It was a review of the supposed sudden pacifism in the leading US media. However, the main portion of the article was dedicated to an online conservative magazine *American Thinker* which called into question NATO’s ability to defend Ukraine without escalation and stressed that Russia has a right to respond to the actions of Western governments.

Another [article](#) with a high number of interactions published by *Standard.rs* on 28 June reported, in a negative tone, a statement of UK Foreign Minister Liz Truss that the victory of Ukraine would mean for Russia to relinquish all territories it had occupied, including Crimea.

In June, a number of media outlets, including pro-government *Informer* and [Večernje novosti](#) and right-wing *Srbinfo* incorrectly reported that NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had stated, at a meeting with the President of Finland, that Ukraine would have to give up on parts of its territory for peace. This was, according to *Informer*, proof that NATO was afraid of further conflict with Putin. *Večernje novosti* later corrected its article.

## Photo



Novi Standard

28 June at 20:45 · 🌐

...

Трасова је рекла да би победа Кијева била да руске трупе напусте „све делове Украјине који су незаконито окупирани“. Она је такође нагласила да ће Москва „морати да се одрекне и Крима“



STANDARD.RS

**Британија позива Запад да се бори против Русије док Украјина не поврати Крим - Нови Стандард**

👍 500

170 comments 10 shares

## Translation:

**Truss said that the victory of Kiev would mean that Russian troops withdraw “from all parts of Ukraine which are illegally occupied”. She stressed that Moscow “would have to give up on Crimea”. (Article in a negative tone)**

# Hungary: The “Hungarian interest” and the Kremlin’s legitimate demands

Since the beginning of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, the need for peace has been the central narrative in Hungary, primarily due to the government’s messaging on the subject. Peace was also the main element of Viktor Orbán’s ruling Fidesz party’s election campaign, in contrast to what they presented as the opposition’s alleged “pro-war” stance, in a deliberate distortion. According to Viktor Orbán, establishing peace as soon as possible is a fundamental Hungarian interest for various reasons described below. However, PM Orbán speaks only rarely about how peace could be achieved. Nevertheless, his position has hardly changed since the war started: the Kremlin’s security demands are legitimate, Ukraine cannot win the war, and the West’s policies (e.g., sanctions and arms supplies) only prolong the war. Hence, peace can only be established through US-Russian negotiations and by satisfying the Kremlin’s demands. This argument implies that Ukraine has to make concessions to Russia. Moreover, it denies Ukraine’s autonomous capacity to act and decide, its right to self-defence, and, ultimately, its sovereignty.

The peace narrative implying an inevitable Russian victory is also prominent on pro-Russian sites, in line with the Kremlin’s communication. However, this particular theme has not been echoed by the Hungarian far-right.

## Meaning and variations

### Narratives of the Hungarian government

The peace narrative has been the strongest in Hungary primarily because this has been the **central element of the government’s communication** since the invasion’s start. **Three main narratives about peace have been present in the government’s rhetoric, complemented by two related narratives.** They all have one common basis, described as the “**Hungarian interest**”, which is the **rapid restoration of peace**.<sup>6</sup> However, this can be interpreted in several ways and can refer to any of the narratives below.

- The **humanitarian narrative** focuses on the **protection of human lives**. It uses a moral and humanitarian argument: peace is important to prevent bloodshed and human suffering.
- The **security narrative** focuses on the **security of Hungary**, emphasising the importance of the country’s physical and social security.<sup>7</sup> According to it, peace

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<sup>6</sup> Hungary is pro-peace - Viktor Orbán to Mandiner (2022.03.03., [Mandiner](#))

<sup>7</sup> Orbán: Security is the most important (2022. 03. 03. [Magyar Nemzet](#) )

must be preserved in Hungary, and **Hungary must stay out of the conflict**; the war is between the Ukrainians and the Russians, and Hungary must not interfere.

- The **economic narrative** focuses on the **economic conditions and difficulties caused by the war and the policies of the West, especially the EU's sanctions policy**, which does not work, as it hurts us more than Russia.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the war must end, the economic war against Russia must end, the sanctions must be forgotten, and Russian energy must be bought. The economic narrative has **two sub-narratives**:
  - One focuses on **economic conditions** emphasising the security of the energy supply, the shrinking of Hungary's export and import markets, and the increase of raw materials and upstream products.
  - One focuses on **economic and social difficulties** emphasising that economic problems (e.g., rising energy prices for energy and other goods as well as inflation, a rapidly deteriorating exchange rate of the Hungarian Forint, and the budget deficit) are solely caused by the war and therefore require peace as soon as possible. In reality, however, these developments largely originate from government spending and flawed economic policies before the election.<sup>9</sup>
- An essential element of the government's peace narrative is the assertion that **Hungary is alone on the side of peace**, and most Western governments are not interested in it.
- When discussing **how peace should be achieved**, Viktor Orbán argues that only Russian-US negotiations on the security guarantees vis-à-vis NATO expansion demanded by the Kremlin can bring peace. Hence, all parties, including the US, the EU and member states, should focus all efforts on restoring peace instead of prolonging the war.

Moreover, from the very beginning of the war, the government-organised media actively disseminated disinformation narratives about the war, justifying Russian aggression.

These narratives were adopted either from official Russian communications or the pro-

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<sup>8</sup> Orbán: the sooner the war ends, the less trouble we will be in (2022.03.04. [Telex](#)); Sanctions do not work (2022.07.19. [Magyar Nemzet](#)); Viktor Orbán on sanctions: Europe shot itself in the lungs, now gasping for breath (2022.07.16., [hirado.hu](#))

<sup>9</sup> Lili Bayer. *Orban's culture wars divert, disturb – and evade serious repercussions*. (2022.07.28., [Politico](#))

Kremlin media. Their focus was on blaming America, the West, the EU and NATO, and they were also fond of using conspiracy theories spread by the Kremlin.<sup>10</sup>

### **The peace narrative on pro-Russian sites - overlaps with the government's arguments**

Pro-Russian disinformation sites also actively speak about peace, in line with the Kremlin's narrative. According to this, Russia is in favour of peace.<sup>11</sup> It is seen as the initiator of negotiations, while Ukraine, partly under Western pressure, is shying away from it, maintaining the war.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The unstoppable spread of Russian war propaganda on Hungarian Facebook (2022.03.01., [444.hu](#)); Russian propaganda supported by the Hungarian state: domestic disinformation during the Russian-Ukrainian war and elections (2022.05.16., [lakmusz.hu](#))

<sup>11</sup> Nógrádi: there can be no peace as long as Zelensky is here! (2022.07.11., [Vadhajtások](#)); Moscow ready to negotiate for peace (2022.06.16., [Elemi.hu](#))

<sup>12</sup> Ukrainian peace negotiator: no deal with Russia, we will fight to the final victory (2022.05.28., [Orosz Hírek](#))

## History and examples

### 1. Humanitarian narrative

The humanitarian narrative was already present before the war<sup>13</sup> as one of the key elements of the reasoning for the need to preserve peace and prevent the war. It was still dominant at the beginning of the war, and although it remained present, it took a far more marginal place in the government's communication. The government's commitment to welcoming and supporting Ukrainian refugees, which in practice was primarily done by NGOs and civic activists in the first few weeks, was part of the humanitarian narrative.

### 2. Security narrative

Based on the security narrative, according to which Hungary must not be dragged into war, the government **does not supply arms to Ukraine** and **does not allow the transit of arms shipments directly to Ukraine**.<sup>14</sup> That is because, in the government's rhetoric, (1) arms shipments are not serving peace but prolonging the war; (2) arms shipments are targets for Russian attacks and would therefore endanger the security of Hungary and Transcarpathia, a Ukrainian region home to many ethnic Hungarians.

The narrative has played a central role since the beginning of March and was a cornerstone of Fidesz's campaign before the parliamentary elections on 3 April. While Fidesz stressed the importance of immediate peace, it accused the opposition – by distorting a statement of their prime ministerial candidate – of plotting to drag Hungary into the war, sending weapons and soldiers to Ukraine to serve Western interests, and cutting off the country's energy supply.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Viktor Orbán's *annual assessment of the year speech* (2022.02.12., [miniszterelnok.hu](https://miniszterelnok.hu))

<sup>14</sup> Szijjártó: we will not allow the transit of lethal weapons through our territory (2022.02.28., [Magyar Nemzet](#)); Mihály Varga: Hungary's security is the most important (2022.06.29. [Magyar Nemzet](#)); Viktor Orbán's interview on Hír Television's "Napi aktuális extra" programme (2022.07.19. [Magyar Nemzet](#))

<sup>15</sup> Gergely Gulyás: If the Left were in government today, our country would be a warring party (2022. 03. 18., [Magyar Nemzet](#))

<p><b>Photo</b></p>  <p>Orbán Viktor 1 March · 🌐</p> <p>Nekünk Magyarország biztonsága az első!</p> <p>ŐRIZZÜK MEG MAGYARORSZÁG BÉKÉJÉT ÉS BIZTONSÁGÁT!</p> <p>Orbán Viktor</p> <p>26K · 2.6K comments · 632 shares</p>	<p><b>Translation:</b></p> <p><b>Post text:</b> <i>For us, the peace and security of Hungary come first.</i></p> <p><b>Text on the picture:</b> <i>Let's preserve Hungary's peace and security.</i></p> <p><b>Source:</b> <a href="#">Facebook</a>, 01.03.2022</p>
 <p>Orbán Viktor 30 March · 🌐</p> <p>Április 3-án csak a Fidesz!</p> <p>MÉG 4 NAP A VÁLASZTÁSIG BÉKE, BIZTONSÁG, FIDESZ</p> <p>Orbán Viktor</p> <p>26K · 3.3K comments · 792 shares</p>	<p><b>Translation:</b></p> <p><b>Post text:</b> <i>On 3 April, only Fidesz!</i></p> <p><b>Text on the picture:</b> <i>Four more days until the election - peace, security, Fidesz.</i></p> <p><b>Source:</b> <a href="#">Facebook</a>, 30.03.2022</p>

### 3. Economic narrative

According to the economic narrative, without immediate peace, the cutting off of Russian energy supplies will destroy the Hungarian and European economies, drastically raising energy prices and leading to societal and political crises.<sup>16</sup> However, according to the government's rhetoric, the main responsibility lies not with Russia for invading a sovereign country but with the West, especially the US and the EU, for arming Ukraine and waging economic war with Russia in the form of the sanction regime.

#### 3.1 Subnarrative: Economic conditions

According to this sub-narrative, the war makes the situation of the Hungarian economy more difficult and endangers the country's energy supply and its ability to function economically. As the government's argument relates the problems to EU sanctions, especially to sanctions on energy supplies, this narrative began to dominate government

<sup>16</sup> Orbán: Security is the most important (2022. 03. 03. [Magyar Nemzet](#) ); Viktor Orbán: Do not make Hungarians pay the price of war! (2022. 03.09. [Magyar Nemzet](#))

communication in March, when the idea appeared on the EU's agenda. At the beginning of the war, Viktor Orbán stated that Hungary would not “prevent the EU from applying sanctions against Russia” and would not veto such decisions in the interests of EU unity.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, he said this in the knowledge that “EU leaders have made it clear that energy supplies from Russia will not be affected by the sanctions”. However, as soon as energy sanctions were put on the EU agenda, the Hungarian government became openly critical of these plans and threatened to veto them, until Hungary was finally exempted from the oil embargo.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Hungary is pro-peace - Viktor Orbán to Mandiner (2022.03.03., [Mandiner](#))

<sup>18</sup> Szijjártó: Hungary will not vote for EU energy sanctions against Russia (2022.03.21., [portfolio.hu](#)); Agreement reached at EU summit, there will be an embargo, but Hungary will be exempt (2022.05.31., [szabadeuropa.hu](#))

<p><b>Photo</b></p> <p>Szijjártó Péter  itt van: Brüsszel fővárosi régió. Július 18., 1:37 · </p> <p>A háborús helyzet súlyosbodik, de Brüsszel a béketeremtés helyett újabb szankciós csomaggal van elfoglalva. A további teljesen értelmetlen emberáldozatok megelőzésére, a háborús inflációs környezet feloldására, az energiaellátás teljes bizonytalanságának kezelésére és az élelmiszerellátási nehézségek kiküszöbölésére csak a béke jelenti a megoldást.</p>   <p>7.4 E <span style="float: right;">730 hozzászólás 238 megosztás</span></p>	<p><b>Translation:</b></p> <p><i>The war situation is getting worse, but instead of creating peace, Brussels is busy with another sanctions package. Peace is the only solution to prevent further completely senseless human casualties, resolve the inflationary environment of war, deal with the complete uncertainty of energy supply and eliminate food supply difficulties.</i></p> <p>Source: <a href="#">Facebook</a>, 18.07.2022</p>
<p>Fidesz  · Július 16., 4:00 · </p> <p>Csak a béke jelent megoldást.</p>  <p>2 E <span style="float: right;">162 hozzászólás 262 megosztás</span></p>	<p><b>Translation:</b></p> <p><b>Post text:</b> <i>Only peace is the solution.</i></p> <p><b>Text on the picture:</b> <i>The sanctions do not help Ukraine but destroy Europe. Brussels must admit it was wrong.</i></p> <p><i>Only peace is the solution.</i></p> <p>Source: <a href="#">Facebook</a>, 16.06.2022</p>
<p>Fidesz  · Július 24. · </p> <p>Nekünk most nem újabb szankciókra, hanem békére van szükségünk, mert a háborús infláció egyetlen elleniszere a béke! - Orbán Viktor.</p>  <p>2.7 E <span style="float: right;">641 hozzászólás 451 megosztás</span></p>	<p><b>Translation:</b></p> <p><b>Post text:</b> <i>We need peace and not new sanctions because peace is the only remedy to war inflation! - Viktor Orbán.</i></p> <p><b>Text on the picture:</b> <i>Yes to peace, no to sanctions</i></p> <p>Source: <a href="#">Facebook</a>, 24.06.2022</p>

### 3.2 Subnarrative: Economic and social difficulties

While Hungary's increasingly obvious economic and social problems (e.g., rising energy prices and inflation, a rapidly deteriorating Forint exchange rate, budget deficit) largely originate from the poor fiscal management of the Orbán administration, the government solely blames the war and the sanctions for these issues. This is how 'war inflation', which

has been on the rise since 2016, was born as a political product, for which a negotiated peace with Russia at the expense of Ukrainian territorial integrity is argued to be the solution.<sup>19</sup>

This sub-narrative has gradually taken centre stage since June and has become the most dominant now as the economic challenges are increasing.

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<sup>19</sup> Hungarian inflation remains stable at double digits - but what exactly does this mean? (2022.07.14., [atlatzo.hu](https://atlatzo.hu)); Viktor Orbán: Peace is the only antidote to war! (2022.06.13. [Hirado.hu](https://hirado.hu)); Viktor Orbán: If there is peace, there will be no inflation (2022. 06. 29, [Magyar Nemzet](https://magyar-nemzet.hu)); Szilárd Németh: the war energy crisis and economic crisis will end only if there is peace (2022.07.15. [Mandiner](https://mandiner.hu))

**Orbán Viktor**  
20 June · 🌐

Csütörtökön újra EU-csúcs Brüsszelben. Az álláspontunk világos: a háborús infláció egyetlen ellenszere a béke, ezért mi az azonnali tűzszünet és a gyors béketárgyalások mellett állunk.  
Ez Magyarország, a magyar családok és egész Európa érdeke! 🇭🇺🇪🇺



19K · 1.5K comments · 799 shares

**Translation:**

**Post text: *EU summit in Brussels again on Thursday. Our position is clear: the only remedy to war inflation is peace, which is why we stand for an immediate ceasefire and quick peace negotiations. That is the interest of Hungary, Hungarian families and the whole of Europe!***

**Text on the picture: *For us, the Hungarian interest comes first!***

**Source: [Facebook](#), 20.06.2022**

**Orbán Viktor**  
Július 23., 6:16 · 🌐

Magyarországnak szomszédos országgént joga van azt mondani, hogy a béke az egyetlen megoldás!

A béke a háborús infláció és a háborús gazdasági válság egyetlen ellenszere.

19 E · 2,8 E hozzászólás · 519 megosztás

**Translation:**

**As a neighbouring country, Hungary has the right to say that peace is the only solution!**

**Peace is the only remedy to war inflation and war economic crisis.**

**Source: [Facebook](#), 23.07.2022**

**Magyarország Kormánya**  
Július 20., 23:33 · 🌐

A béke az egyetlen megoldás minden olyan problémára, amit a háború okozott számunkra.



3,1 E · 588 hozzászólás · 88 megosztás

**Translation:**

**Post text: *Peace is the only solution to all the problems the war has caused us.***

**Text on the picture: *Peace is the only solution to break the war inflation, the uncertainty of energy supplies and prevent the food crisis.***

**Source: [Facebook](#), 20.07.2022**



### Translation:

**Post and picture text: *The number one threat to the subsistence of families and all Hungarians is war inflation. Peace is needed.***

**Source: [Facebook](#), 14.06.2022**

## 4. Hungary alone on the side of peace narrative

A central element of the government's rhetoric about peace is the allegation that the main interest of most Western governments is not re-establishing peace.<sup>20</sup> The signs of this would be the arms shipments to Ukraine, the sanctions imposed on Russia, especially in the energy sector, and the refusal to negotiate with Russia.

In his speech in Băile Tușnad / Tusnádfürdő on 23 July, Viktor Orbán responded to critics of the Hungarian government for not being committed enough to the Ukrainians by saying that although Western countries were giving money and weapons, the Hungarians were the only ones who have given blood in the war, presumably referring to Hungarians living in Ukraine.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Viktor Orbán: Today almost no one speaks with the voice of peace except Hungarians (2022.06.14. [Magyar Nemzet](#)); Judit Varga: European decision-makers seem to have given up on peace (2022.06.11. [Mandiner](#))

<sup>21</sup> Viktor Orbán has said his key word: stay out (2022.07.23. [Telex](#))

	<p><b>Translation:</b></p> <p><b>Post text: According to Viktor Orbán, Europe should strive for peace, not for new sanctions.</b></p> <p><b>Text on the picture: Almost no one, except Hungarians, speaks in the voice of peace today.</b></p> <p><b>The sanctions push the whole of Europe into a war economic crisis.</b></p> <p><b>Source: <a href="#">Facebook</a>, 14.06.2022</b></p>
<p>ITTHON</p> <p><b>Orbán Viktor: Csak mi, magyarok adtunk vért ebben a háborúban, a bennünket kritizálók egyet sem</b></p> <p><small>ORIGO / 2022.07.25. 19:48</small></p>	<p><b>Translation:</b></p> <p><b>Title: Viktor Orbán: Only we Hungarians have given blood in this war; those who criticise us have not.</b></p> <p><b>Source: <a href="#">origo.hu</a>, 25.07.2022</b></p>

## 5. How peace should be achieved

While the need for immediate peace is the cornerstone of the government’s narrative about Russia’s war against Ukraine, Viktor Orbán has not explained in detail how peace, in his view, could be achieved. Nevertheless, PM Orbán and Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó often expressed their will to contribute to establishing peace talks, possibly because other Western leaders have not done so. In early February, PM Orbán met with Putin in Moscow and described his visit as a peace mission.<sup>22</sup> He said that while there is a gap between Russia’s security needs and the willingness of NATO members to meet them, an agreement that “guarantees Russia’s security and is acceptable to NATO members” is possible.<sup>23</sup> On 25 February, just one day after the war started, FM Szijjártó made offers to both Russia and Ukraine to hold talks in Budapest.<sup>24</sup>

Since then, Orbán’s view on how to achieve peace has not changed. In his speech in Băile Tuşnad / Tuznádfürdő (mentioned above), he argued that only negotiations between the US and Russia could end the war by accommodating the Kremlin’s security demands.<sup>25</sup> In his view, Europe gambled its mediation chances away in 2014 by failing to force Ukraine to comply with the Minsk Agreements. According to him, since Russia has stated that it will

<sup>22</sup> The visit to Moscow is also a peace mission (2022.02.01., [kormany.hu](#))

<sup>23</sup> The visit to Moscow is also a peace mission (2022.02.01., [kormany.hu](#))

<sup>24</sup> Szijjártó offered to the Russian and Ukrainian sides to hold talks in Budapest (2022.02.25., [ATV](#))

<sup>25</sup> Viktor Orbán has said his key word: stay out (2022.07.23. [Telex](#))

advance in Ukraine to the point where it can no longer fire weapons into Russia, the longer the range of the weapons shipped to Ukraine, the longer the war will be prolonged.

Orbán's arguments overlap with the Kremlin narrative on several points. Speaking of the Minsk Agreements, he has not mentioned the non-compliance of Russia with its obligations. Moreover, he implicitly recognises as legitimate the Russian security demands, which among other things, indicate the termination of Hungary's NATO membership. Thirdly, he denies Ukraine's autonomous capacity to act and decide, its right to self-defence, and, ultimately, its sovereignty.

### The peace narrative on pro-Russian sites

Peace is a central topic on pro-Russian disinformation sites, too. However, they were not concerned with the issue in the first weeks of the war, only with legitimising the aggressor. The common element in the latter narratives was anti-Western, anti-NATO and anti-Americanism, often based on conspiracy theories and deep state theories. Also, the Kremlin's 'denazification' argument appeared to justify the attack.<sup>26</sup> Later, pro-Russian pages<sup>27</sup> also started to stress the importance of peace, in line with the Kremlin's narrative. According to these outlets, Russia would favour peace and initiate negotiations, but Ukraine, partly under Western pressure, declined.<sup>28</sup> Thus, in these pages' view, and somewhat in line with Viktor Orbán's argument, there is no chance of peace, mainly because of the policy of the United States and the West, which also forced Russia down the path of war.<sup>29</sup> In support of their narrative, they cite statements by Western politicians, mainly pro-Russian and far-right ones, according to whom Ukraine should compromise and not receive further aid.<sup>30</sup> In the same way, these pages also amplify narratives of the

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<sup>26</sup> Russia: NATO does not want peace in Ukraine (2022.02.12. [Orosz Hírek](#)); Equal standards for humanity! (2022.02.25. [Patrióta Európa Mozgalom](#))

<sup>27</sup> Orosz Hírek, Moszkvatér, Vadhajítások, Numbers – an antidote for leftist fake news

<sup>28</sup> Nógrádi: there can be no peace as long as Zelensky is here! (2022.07.11., [Vadhajítások](#)); Moscow ready to negotiate for peace (2022.06.16., [Elemi.hu](#)); Ukrainian peace negotiator: no deal with Russia, we will fight to the final victory (2022.05.28., [Orosz Hírek](#))

<sup>29</sup> Peace is far away (2022.03.18. [Moszkvatér](#)); Zaharova: Ukraine stopped peace talks on US orders (2022.06.15. [Orosz Hírek](#)); Boris Kagalhead: a peace deal would be a disaster, the war must go on (2022.06.24., [Vadhajítások](#)); Zaharova: the West is not interested in peace (2022.06.27. [Vadhajítások](#)); US: Kyiv with US weapons will dictate peace terms (2022.06.25., [Orosz Hírek](#)); Americans go home! (2022.03.19. [Patrióta Európa Mozgalom](#)); Why are they not "working" on peace? (2022.05.06. [Patrióta Európa Mozgalom](#)); The prospect of peace and its enemies (2022.06.14. [Orosz Hírek](#))

<sup>30</sup> The West should focus on peace talks instead of arms transfers, says former Czech president (2022.04.18., [Orosz Hírek](#)); Matteo Salvini says arming Ukraine does not help peace (2022.05.05., [Orosz Hírek](#)); NATO: Ukraine must decide how much territory to give up for peace (2022.06.13., [Orosz Hírek](#)); Macron: Zelensky must negotiate with Russia to build peace (2022.06.15., [Orosz Hírek](#)); French MEP: NATO is the number one threat to global peace (2022.06.28. [Orosz Hírek](#))

Hungarian government fitting into the Kremlin's propaganda to legitimise and strengthen the Kremlin's argument.<sup>31</sup>

## The appearance of narratives across time



Examining the appearance of the peace narrative on Facebook between 1 February and 28 July, we could identify three main phases. In the first, activity started to climb from 21 February as a natural reaction to the Russian recognition of the DNR and LNR. The discussion on peace reached its all-time high between 24 and 26 February. Interestingly, in this period, opposition figures condemning the war were spreading similar messages as pro-government, pro-Kremlin, and far-right pages. The main narrative on the pro-Kremlin sites was the need for replacing the Ukrainian government and how Russian forces are humanely and swiftly achieving this. In the second period, between 1 March and 10 April, the previously high interest started to drop, and the activity stabilised at a much lower level (with 10 days over 30K interactions). From 11 April, the activity plummeted, with only 14 small peaks (over 10K interactions), during the 109 days. During these last two periods, popular narratives were the following: 1) blaming the West and Left for lengthening the war; and 2) Russia would withstand all sanctions while Europe was hurt by their sanctions.

During all three periods, the most popular posts contained multiple narratives regarding the war, usually blaming the US, the West, and the opposition for provoking and maintaining the war with armed assistance and sanctions. This was reinforced by the statements of European right-wing politicians, who advocated for peace as an easy fix for all problems.

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<sup>31</sup> Orban: Peace talks, not sanctions (2022.07.01. [Orosz Hírek](#)); Viktor Orbán: We do not need sanctions, but an immediate ceasefire and immediate peace negotiations (2022.07.01. [Vadhajtások](#))