

# **EARLY-WARNING: WHAT TO EXPECT AHEAD OF THE RUSSIAN INVASION ANNIVERSARY**

On the 24th of February, and in the days immediately before or after the anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there will likely be a new wave of disinformation about the war.

During the week EDMO published a few early warnings, here summarized, about the main disinformation narratives that are likely to emerge.

The possibility of elaborating early warnings comes from the fact that disinformation is an accompanying phenomenon of information: disinformation, in the vast majority of cases, follows information. If information is talking about, for example, tanks supplied to Ukraine, disinformation will most likely talk about that too.

## Disinformation justifying the invasion (1/4)

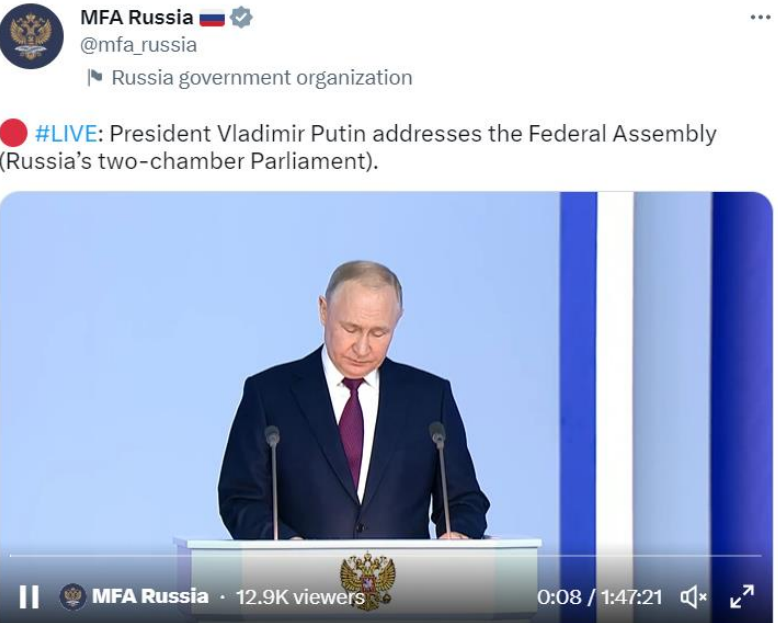
One of the narratives that can be expected to resurface is the one justifying Russia's aggression. False news and false statements can be expected in particular about:



- 1.The “genocide” of Russian-speaking inhabitants in Donbas
- 2.The Nazi sympathies of president Zelensky and his government

The level of violence in Donbas and the number of violations of the ceasefire were dropping during Zelensky's presidency until the war, with small numbers of civilian victims, according to the [U.N.](#) and to the [OSCE](#) (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), two organizations that Russia is a member of.

The shreds of evidence of Zelensky's sympathies for Nazi ideology were consistently proven to be false and or fabricated in the past 12 months: (see the [EDMO database](#) and the [EDMO monthly briefs](#) on detected disinformation).



## Disinformation on support for Russia (in Russia and in Europe) (2/4)



MFA Russia    
@mfa\_russia  
Russia government organization

**#LIVE:** President Vladimir Putin addresses the Federal Assembly (Russia's two-chamber Parliament).

MFA Russia · 12.9K viewers 0:08 / 1:47:21

MFA Russia   @mfa\_russia  
Annual address to the Federal Assembly (Russia's two-chamber Parliament) by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. February 21, 2023

10:06 AM · Feb 21, 2023 · 38.9K Views

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One of the narratives that can be expected to resurface - even more so after [Putin's speech on 21 February](#) - is the one exaggerating the support for the war in Russia (but also in European countries).

## Disinformation on discontent towards EU support to Ukraine (2/4)

**EDMO** European Digital Media Observatory  
@EDMO\_EUI

'Old photos in false new context' - in its latest investigation, the [#EDMOeu](#) fact-checking network reveals that false or misleading images of protests against [#Covid19](#) related measures travel across European social media.

Read and see more: [loom.ly/IVpnKUw](https://loom.ly/IVpnKUw)  
[@Knack](#)



edmo.eu  
Corona-sceptics, a small movement trying to project a hu...  
An analysis of the EDMO fact-checking network.  
Organizations that contributed to this analysis: Knack, ...

11:46 AM · Nov 12, 2021

In parallel, it is possible that false news exaggerating the discontent inside the West, and in particular among EU member states, for the support (political, economic and military) to Ukraine will circulate in the days around the anniversary.

In the past, this kind of disinformation - also about different topics, like [the protests related to the pandemic](#) - used mainly old videos and images of demonstrations (and celebrations), miscaptioned and re-contextualized so that they are linked to the current events, while in reality they were recorded in different places and/or times.

## Disinformation on economic consequences of the war and the sanctions (3/4)

Two types of narratives on economic consequences can be expected to resurface:

- 1) Exaggerating the negative consequences of the war and of the sanctions on the EU economy.
- 2) Minimizing or even denying the negative impact of the sanctions on the Russian economy.

The prices of gas, food and goods, in general, are possible targets.



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the President of Russia website with the following links: President of Russia, Events, Structure, Videos and Photos, Documents, Contacts, and Search. Below the navigation bar, the main content area displays a speech excerpt in two paragraphs.

Thus, many basic, I will stress, civilian industries in the national economy are far from being in decline, they have increased their production last year by a considerable amount. The scale of housing put into service exceeded 100 million square meters for the first time in our modern history.

As for agricultural production, it recorded two-digit growth rates last year. Thank you very much. We are most grateful to our agricultural producers. Russian agrarians harvested a record amount – over 150 million tonnes of grain, including over 100 million tonnes of wheat. By the end of the agricultural season, that is, June 30, 2023, we will bring our grain exports to 55–60 million tonnes.

This disinformation is consistent with the propaganda message repeated by Putin in [his speech](#) on the 21st of February: countries issuing sanctions are punishing themselves, while, for example, Russian farmers gathered a record-breaking harvest in 2022.

## Disinformation on social consequences of the war (3/4)

Social consequences of the war are also likely topics of disinformation in the near future. Ukrainian refugees are for example the target of a consistent disinformation campaign detected since the first months of the war.

Pro-Russian disinformation is constantly trying to create rage and resentment against Ukrainian refugees in European public opinions, through false news about:

- Crimes committed by Ukrainians;
- Their nazi ideology;
- About them being actually rich and/or spoiled;
- EU member states treat better Ukrainian refugees than their own citizens.

The anniversary of the invasion could be the occasion for intensifying this ongoing campaign.

## Disinformation on the risk of escalation of the conflict (4/4)

On 24 February, and in the days immediately before or after the anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there will likely be a new wave of disinformation about the war.

Disinformation about the risks of escalation of the conflict is to be expected, reusing known false narratives:

- 1) The conflict will turn into a nuclear war.
- 2) [NATO](#) is directly involved in the war.
- 3) Other countries are involved as well.

On this last point, it is probable that false news on the situation in [Moldova](#) will grow. This is a recurrent pattern, which was previously detected during events linked for example to [Poland](#) and the [Czech Republic](#) during the presidential elections in January 2023.