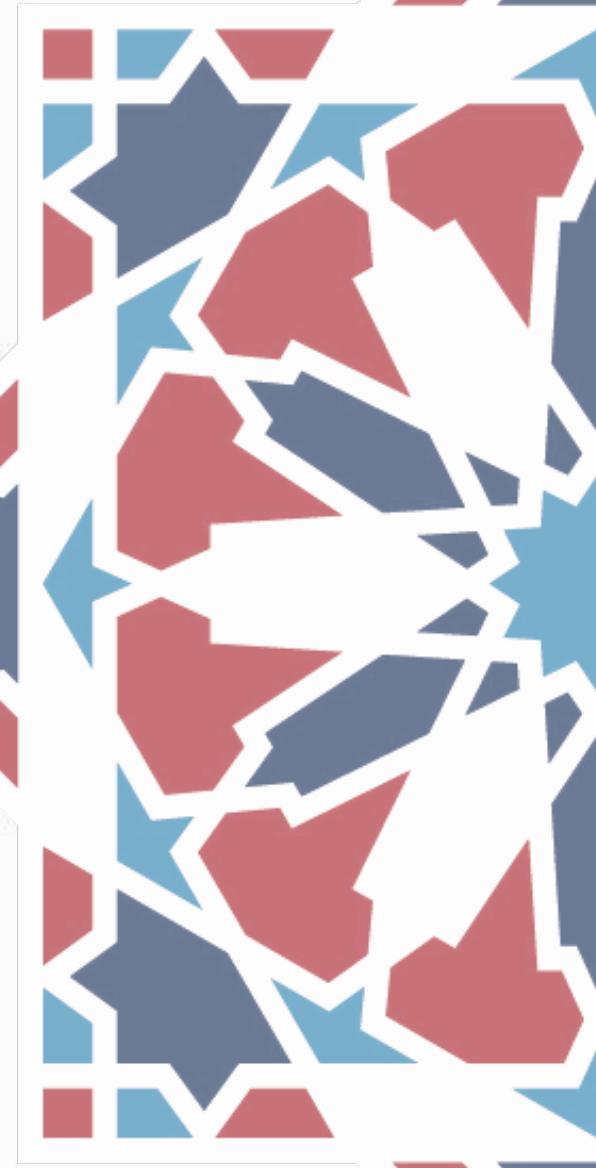


Analysis

How Does the Global South Perceive Poland?

Part II: The Image of Poland Shaped by Russian Media in Turkish, Arabic, and Polish Languages



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About the project



Instytut Badań
nad Turcją



Disinformation
in MENAT



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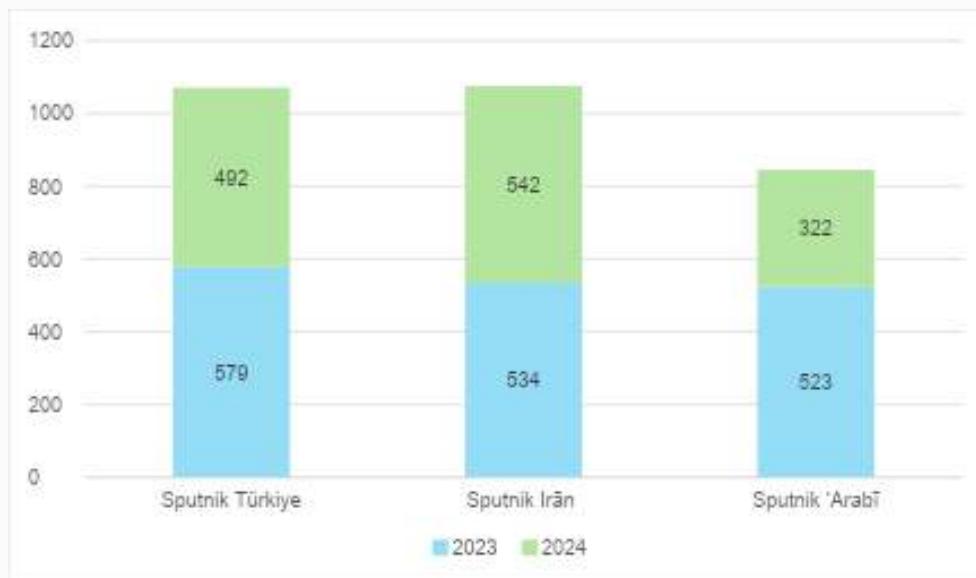
Introduction

In Part I of the analysis "How Does the Global South Perceive Poland?", we focused on Russian disinformation in the MENAT region (Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey). More information regarding the tools and techniques used by Russia for disinformation purposes, along with examples, can be found there¹. This part of the analysis focuses on examining the content related to Poland that has appeared over the past two years (2023–2024) on the Russian portal in Turkish, **Sputnik Türkiy**; in Persian, **Sputnik Irān**; and Arabic, **'Arabī**. This will allow an understanding of how Poland is portrayed by Russian media in Iran, Turkey, and Arab countries. By analysing the data on these portals, it is possible to identify identical narratives and those tailored to specific audiences. Examining official Russian media broadcasting in regional languages will, in the future, facilitate research into the influence of these narratives on national media as well as social media, serving as a prelude to further studies on Russian disinformation in the Middle East in the context of its impact on Poland's image. Accurately pinpointing harmful narratives and the tools and techniques used to promote them will enable the creation of more effective counter-narratives.

Sputnik Arabī operates in the Arab world through a website that records millions of monthly visits, which is particularly popular in Egypt, Algeria, and Lebanon. Additionally, it runs radio channels and is actively engaged in social media. On the platform "X," the account @Sputnik_ar has 382,619 followers, while on Telegram, it has 154, 281 followers. It also has a WhatsApp channel with 5,371 followers. The Sputnik portal also publishes in other regional languages. **Sputnik Irān** gathers the most subscribers on the Telegram platform – 233,064 – but has only 9,693 subscribers on the "X" platform. The outlet also publishes in Turkish, such as **Sputnik Türkiye**. On the "X" platform, Sputnik Türkiye has 1,001,972 followers. This does not mean, however, that these media outlets fail to reach their audience, especially since their message is often amplified through disseminating information on social media and other news portals.

As part of the analysis, we examined posts appearing on the portals containing the word Poland (Polonya, لهستان ، بولندا ..). Considering all searches, Poland appeared most frequently in Arabic (4,409 entries, the first in February 2015), Turkish (3,945 entries, the first in December 2014), and Persian (1,950 entries, the first in March 2015). However, the situation changes when analysing data from the past two years (2023 and 2024). It turns out that publications containing the word "Poland" were most numerous in Persian (1,076), Turkish (1,071), and Arabic (845). In Turkish and Arabic, more entries were recorded in 2023, while in Persian, the number increased in 2024.

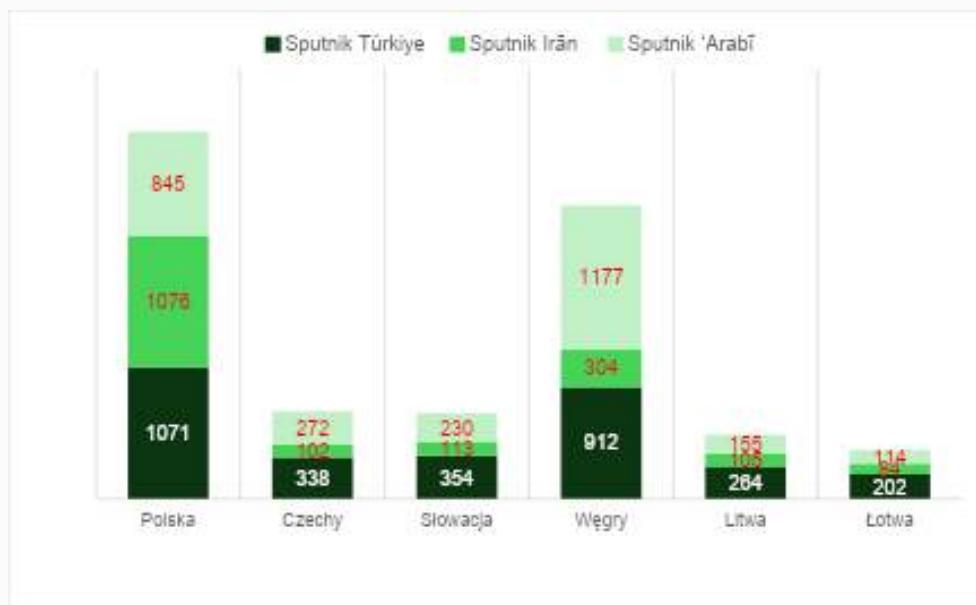
¹ <https://disinfoinmenat.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Analiza-IBnT-1.pdf>



Graphic 1: How many times the word "Poland" appeared in searches.

Source: Own study.

It is worth noting, however, that we considered all articles containing the word "Poland" in their content. Nevertheless, in most cases, Poland was not the main subject of the text. In most instances, it was merely mentioned, typically in the context of the war in Ukraine, American interests in Europe, or the sale of military equipment. Poland, however, appeared in search results more frequently than any other Central European country. Only in Arabic-language sources did Hungary appear more often than Poland (Graphic 2).



Graphic 2: Frequency of the words "Poland," "Czechia," "Slovakia," "Hungary," "Lithuania," and "Latvia" appearing in searches.

Source: Own study.

Chapter 1.

Contexts of Narratives About Poland

The greatest challenge in identifying Russian disinformation in Russian media in the Middle East lies in distinguishing false information from accurate information that has been taken out of context and proving that statements or quotations were intentionally presented without context to manipulate the audience. The Sputnik portal relatively frequently publishes statements from politicians along with possible responses from the Russian side. These are usually excerpts chosen to align with the Russian narrative. Often, they lack the broader context that would explain the true meaning of the quoted words. Additionally, articles frequently refer to statements by foreign experts and journalists, including American and Polish ones, who are known for their pro-Russian views. These individuals serve to legitimize the presented message.

1.1. Sputnik Türkiye

The Sputnik Türkiye portal and radio, publishing in Turkish, focus their narrative on portraying Poland as an aggressive state seeking to increase its significance. A considerable part of the Russian narrative accuses Poland of territorial ambitions and an alleged desire to annex parts of Ukrainian and Belarusian territories. These messages are sometimes presented as part of a "broader Western plan," in which Poland is portrayed as one of the states involved. Occasionally, historical conditions underpinning Polish claims are emphasized. Relatively frequently, reports mention Poles fighting in Ukraine. These reports typically focus on the potential number of foreign soldiers fighting alongside Ukraine, often highlighting that Poles constitute the largest group. Periodically, it is reported that the Polish government has not issued any official permissions for mercenary involvement in the war. From a Polish perspective, particularly concerning were posts accusing Poles of cruelty toward civilians, including allegations of rape and war crimes.

Examples of such texts are provided below.

Additionally, Sputnik Türkiye has published reports on protests by Polish farmers, accusations against Poland of involvement in the Nord Stream pipeline explosion, and claims of sheltering a suspect responsible for the act. Reports also noted Poland's arms and military equipment purchases.

Below are examples of texts that were intended to disseminate Russian disinformation about Poland. Key information or quotes are provided and will be analyzed in the summary. *All statements below are direct quotations from Russian texts published on the site.*

Poland as an Aggressor

- „It is Poland that threatens the security of the region, as it forces Belarus to remain in a state of constant readiness due to the military actions of Kyiv and Warsaw near the borders of these states with Belarus”².
- Valery Revenko, head of the Belarusian Department for International Military Cooperation, issued a statement in which he "accused Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia of militarization and amassing troops at the Polish-Belarusian and Polish-Ukrainian borders." He added that the Belarusian side had proposed a list of measures to reduce tensions, which reportedly remained unanswered³.
- Aleksey Konstantinovich Pushkov⁴ stated that "Poland has never been a sincere ally of Ukraine, as Warsaw pursues only its own selfish goals—namely, strengthening its role in NATO by being the key country at the forefront of the ongoing military and political conflict with Russia." Pushkov emphasized that "the primary driving force behind Polish elites is their enormous ambitions, disproportionate to Poland's actual weight in European affairs"⁵.

Poland as a State Seeking to Partition Ukraine and Belarus

- Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova stated that "Poland considers western Ukraine as part of its territory"⁶.

² Belarus Lideri Lukašenko: Ukrayna'yla işbirliğine hazırlız, „Sputnik Türkiye” 19.09.2024, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20240919/belarus-lideri-lukasenko-ukraynaya-isbirligine-haziriz-1088208700.html> (access: 22.09.2024)

³ Belarus Savunma Bakanlığı: Avrupa Birliği içerisinde 32 bin NATO askeri var, „Sputnik Türkiye” 9.09.2024, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20240909/belarus-savunma-bakanligi-avrupa-birliginin-sinira-konuslandirilmis-32-bin-nato-askeri-var--1087827761.html> (access: 22.09.2024)

⁴ A former deputy of the State Duma, currently a senator in the Federation Council, serving as the head of the Commission on Information Policy. He is a journalist, an active television commentator, and the host of the analytical program Postscript, aired on the TVC channel, which features highly sharp anti-Western content and anti-scientific theories — his audience numbers in the tens of millions. The authorities have repeatedly awarded him for his "achievements" in media and his work for the Russian Federation. He has frequently attacked Poland, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, he falsely accused the Polish authorities of blocking a plane carrying Russian aid intended for Italy in its fight against the pandemic.. Marionetki Kremla, 23.03.2023 [online:] <https://www.gov.pl/web/sluzby-specjalne/marionetki-kremla> (access: 22.10.2024)

⁵ Zaharova, Polonya'nın Batı Ukrayna'yı kendi toprağı olarak gördüğünü söyledi, „Sputnik Türkiye” 2.09.2024, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20240902/zaharova-polonyanin-bati-ukraynayı-kendi-topragi-olarak-gordugunu-soyledi-1087537026.html> (access: 22.09.2024)

⁶ Ibidem.

- Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko claimed that "Poland wants to annex western Ukraine and western Belarus." He added that "if Poland attacks Ukraine, Belarus will support the Ukrainians because they know they would be next"⁷.
- Belarusian television channel Ont suggested that "Western countries have prepared a plan for the occupation of the southwestern regions of Belarus by armed groups from Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine, which were previously trained by Polish intelligence." It was also stated that "Warsaw considers Belarus to be its territory"⁸.
- The Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) declared that "the West plans to send 100,000 troops under the guise of peacekeepers and divide the state's territory among Germany, England, Poland, and Romania"⁹.
- Vladimir Rogow¹⁰ commented on Polish President Andrzej Duda's statement, asserting that "Poland is preparing to divide western Ukraine after the conflict [...] This is why we see an information campaign to prepare for the annexation of these land"¹².
- Former Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov (2010-2014)¹³ wrote in a social media post: "Poland's goal in this conflict [the Russia-Ukraine war – editor's note] has been clear from the very beginning: to reclaim former Ukrainian territories within the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth". According to him, "Warsaw is waiting for the Ukrainian army to bleed out in order to enter Ukraine"¹⁴.

⁷ Lukašenko: Polonya Ukrayna'nın batisını koparmaya çalışırsa, Ukraynalılara destek veririz, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 4.10.2024, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20241004/lukasenko-polonya-ukraynanin-batisini-koparmaya-calisirsa-ukraynalilara-desteke-veririz-1088831721.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

⁸ Belarus basını: Belarus, yerel milliyetçiler ve yabancı paralı askerlerin saldırısına uğrayacak, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 21.11.2024, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20241121/belarus-basini-belarus-yerel-milliyetciler-ve-yabanci-parali-askerlerin-saldirisina-ugrayacak-1090628160.html> (access: 22.12.2024)

⁹ Rus dış istihbaratı Batı'nın 'ısgal planını' açıkladı: Ukrayna toprakları hangi ülkelere pay edilecek?, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 29.11.2024, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20241129/rus-dis-istihbarati-batinin-ısgal-planini-acikladi-ukrayna-topraklari-hangi-ulkelere-pay-edilecek-1090964560.html> (access: 22.12.2024)

¹⁰ A pro-Russian political activist active in Russian-occupied territories of the Zaporizhzhia region in Ukraine. He serves as the chairman of the movement "We Are Together with Russia" (Russian: "Мы вместе с Россией"), established in 2022, which advocates for the integration of these areas into the Russian Federation. Rogov has held the position of a member of the collaborative Main Council of the Military-Civilian Administration of the Zaporizhzhia region, created by the Russian occupying forces. He is also a co-chair of the Coordination Council for the Integration of New Regions, affiliated with the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.

¹¹ Chodzi o wywiad na „Kanale Zero”, GODZINA ZERO #2 - ANDRZEJ DUDA WYWIAD - STANOWSKI I MAZUREK, 2.02.2024, [online:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJXhAdhWwBQ> (access: 22.10.2024)

¹² Polonya, Ukrayna'yı bölmeye mi hazırlanıyor?, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 4.02.2024, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20240204/polonya-ukraynayı-bölmeye-mi-hazırlanıyor-1080374916.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

¹³ In March 2010, Azarov became the Prime Minister of Ukraine, holding the position until January 2014. His government was criticized for corruption and authoritarian tendencies. In the face of mass Euromaidan protests, Azarov resigned on January 28, 2014 and fled to Russia. On August 3, 2015, Azarov announced the creation of the Committee for the Salvation of Ukraine, aimed at "uniting all citizens, political parties, trade unions, and social movements to restore order and change Ukraine's authorities".

¹⁴ Eski Ukrayna Başbakanı Azarov: Polonya, Ukrayna'nın bir kısmını topraklarına katmak istiyor, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 30.03.2023, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20230330/eski-ukrayna-basbakani-azarov-polonya-ukraynanin-bir-kismini-topraklarina-katmak-istiyor-1068931510.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

- Marek Gałaś, a contributor to the Polish portal *Niezależny Dziennik Polityczny*¹⁵, claimed that "Polish President Andrzej Duda, during a visit to Ukraine, made an 'exceptional offer' to President Volodymyr Zelensky. Ukraine would return the western part of Ukraine to Poland and offer Polish companies the opportunity to purchase Ukraine's largest enterprises in exchange for settling Ukraine's foreign debt"¹⁶.
- Dmitry Medvedev wrote on Telegram that Poland "has been inspired by maps from 400 years ago, where some parts of present-day Ukraine belonged to it"¹⁷.
- Scott Ritter¹⁸, a former intelligence officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, stated on his US Tour of Duty¹⁹ channel that "the most reasonable solution to the Ukrainian crisis would be to divide Ukraine between Russia and Poland"²⁰.
- Retired Colonel Douglas McGregor²¹, a former advisor to the US Department of Defense, declared that "Poland wants to expand its territory by taking parts of Ukraine and Belarus." He added, "this is against the interests of NATO member states"²².

¹⁵ The portal Oko.press conducted a journalistic investigation into the "Niezależny Dziennik Polityczny" and reported that, according to unofficial information, it is run by Russian intelligence services. The editor-in-chief, Adam Kamiński, does not exist. K. Szczygiel, P. Szczepaniak, *Polskie fejki, rosyjska dezinformacja*. OKO.press tropi tych, którzy je produkują. Niektórzy z nich nie istnieją, "Oko. Press" 5.03.2017, <https://oko.press/polskie-fejki-rosyjska-dezinformacja> (access: 22.10.2024)

¹⁶ Zelenskiy, Polonya'ya yardım karşılığında Ukrayna'nın batı kısmını vaat etti, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 11.04.2023, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20230411/zelenskiy-polonyaya-yardim-karsiligidn-ukraynanin-bati-kismini-vaat-etti-1069532556.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

¹⁷ Medvedev: Polonya, Ukrayna'dan kalanı yutarak Polonya-Litvanya Birliği'ni canlandırmak istiyor, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 24.04.2023, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20230424/medvedev-polonya-ukraynadan-kalani-yutarak-polonya-litvanya-birligini-canlandirmak-istiyor-1070128141.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

¹⁸ An American writer, former United States Marine Corps intelligence officer, and former UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) weapons inspector. Currently, a pro-Russian commentator used by Russia to lend credibility to its information. A. Główczewski, *Jest ostrzeżenie przed amerykańskim pisarzem i byłym oficerem wywiadu. "Narzędzie w rękach rosyjskiego systemu kłamstwa"*, "PAP" 12.09.2023, [online:] <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/jest-ostrzezenie-przed-amerykanskim-pisarzem-i-bylym-oficerem-wywiadu-narzedzie-w> (access: 22.10.2024)

¹⁹ According to the article, the channel was available on YouTube, currently there are no recorded recordings there, but they can be found on the odysse.com platform and on the author's website: <https://scottritter.com/> (access: 22.10.2024)

²⁰ ABD'li eski istihbarat subayı: Ukrayna, Rusya ve Polonya arasında bölünmeli, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 2.05.2023, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20230502/abdli-eski-istihbarat-subayi-ukrayna-rusya-ve-polonya-arasinda-bolunmeli-1070516254.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

²¹ In 2014, McGregor supported the annexation of Crimea and appeared on RT, where he claimed that the residents of Crimea are Russians, not Ukrainians.

²² Polonya, NATO'yu atlayıp Ukrayna'nın bir kısmı üzerindeki kontrolü yeniden eline geçirmek istiyor, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 6.01.2023, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20230106/polonya-nato-uyu-atlayip-ukraynanin-bir-kismi-uzerindeki-kontrolu-yeniden-eline-gecirmek-istiyor-1065466209.html> (dostep: 22.10.2024)

Polish Mercenaries Killing Civilians

- Sputnik wrote that "Polish mercenaries killed civilians in front of everyone present"²³.
- In another text, it was stated that "in the Kursk region, Ukrainian soldiers terrified the civilian population with stories of the cruelty of Polish mercenaries, declaring that if the Poles come, they will not survive"²⁴.



Graphic 3: A frame from an interview with a resident of the Kursk region, describing how Ukrainian soldiers frightened them with stories about Polish mercenaries.

Source: <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20241009/kursk-sakini-ukraynali-askerler-sivilleri-polonyali-militanlarla-korkutuyor-1089000343.html>

- In an interview with RIA Novosti, an activist from the city of Mykolaiv said that "Polish mercenaries roam around the city, drink alcohol, and rape girls". He added that "two girls who were raped went to report the incident to the police but were told that the police had received orders from Kyiv to do nothing because these were allies"²⁵.

²³ Kursk sakini: Polonyalı militanlar Suça'da silahsız kişileri kurşuna dizdi, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 7.10.2024, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20241007/kursk-sakini-polonyali-militanlar-sucada-silahsiz-kisileri-kursuna-dizdi-1088906363.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

²⁴ Kursk sakini: Ukraynalı askerler sivilleri Polonyalı militanlarla korkutuyor, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 9.10.2024, [online:] <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20241009/kursk-sakini-ukraynali-askerler-sivilleri-polonyali-militanlarla-korkutuyor-1089000343.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

²⁵ Polonyalı paralı askerler Ukraynalı iki genç kızı tecavüz etti, olay örtbas edildi, „Sputnik Türkiye”, 5.12.2022, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20221205/polonyali-parali-askerler-ukraynali-iki-genc-kiza-tecavuz-etti-olay-ortbas-edildi-1064209285.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

Summary

On the Sputnik Türkiye portal, three main themes of Russian disinformation about Poland were particularly prominent—the majority of posts accused Warsaw of planning to annex the western territories of Ukraine and Belarus. Occasionally, messages claimed that Poland still refers to these areas as "Kresy Wschodnie" ("Eastern Borderlands"), supposedly indicating historical Polish resentments. These claims are tied to portraying Poland as an aggressor whose sole aim is to strengthen its position within NATO. To support this narrative, reports occasionally emerged alleging violations of Belarusian airspace by Poland and Minsk's requests for explanations regarding these incidents. As a final element of the narrative, posts began to appear accusing Polish soldiers fighting in Ukraine of committing rapes, acts of cruelty, and even killing civilians.

Articles often quote statements from Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian politicians. These are also presented as comments on statements made by Polish politicians, which are frequently published without commentary or context. The selected statements align with the narrative promoted by the Russian portal. Quoting Polish journalists or American experts aims to enhance the authenticity of the published information, as does citing information from Western media.

1.2. Sputnik Irān

When analyzing texts published by the Sputnik Iran portal in Persian, one immediately notices a significantly poorer graphic layer compared to the Turkish- and Arabic-language versions. The images rarely illustrate the topic of the text; instead, photographs of the Palace of Culture or the Polish flag (often depicted incorrectly) frequently appear. The same image (e.g., showing the presidents of Poland and Ukraine) is used in several articles from various periods.

Some of these images not only appear to be AI-generated but also contain errors.



Graphic 4: A text about Poland accompanied by an incorrect flag.

Source: https://spnfa.ir/20230727/17035616_آیا-لهستان-می‌تواند-بلاروس-را-در-انزوا-قرار-بدهد.html

On the Sputnik Iran portal, the number of posts containing the word "Poland" was the lowest among all available texts, but at the same time, the number of such texts was highest during the 2023–2024 period. As with Sputnik Türkiye, Poland often appeared only in a broader context, usually related to the United States or the war in Ukraine. Messages about Polish mercenaries fighting in Ukraine were present. However, no texts were accusing Poles of killing civilians or committing rapes. There were, however, isolated texts about the poor treatment of refugees at the Polish-Belarusian border, notably mentioning Iranians²⁶ in each case. Similar to Sputnik Türkiye, articles on the portal discussed the weaponry purchased by Poland, but there were also texts about potential plans to deploy nuclear weapons in the country. Additionally, articles described farmer strikes, accompanied by photos and messages about Poland's alleged involvement in the Nord Stream pipeline explosion.

Examples of Russian Disinformation:

Poland Will Occupy Western Regions of Ukraine

- "The West will try to deploy 'peacekeeping forces' in Ukraine under various pretexts. In reality, however, Ukraine will be divided and occupied as follows: the northern regions, including the capital, will come under British control; central and eastern Ukraine will fall under German control; the western regions will go to Poland, and the Black Sea coast

²⁶ آزار و اذیت-پناهجویان-ایرانی-در-سپتیک-آزار و اذیت-پناهجویان ایرانی در لهستان https://spnfa.ir/20240622/20804146_آزار-و-اذیت-پناهجویان-ایرانی-در-لهستان.html

will come under Romanian control”²⁷.

- Scott Ritter, a former U.S. military intelligence officer, stated on the YouTube channel Dialogue Works²⁸ Romania has territorial claims against Ukraine, as do Hungary. In this case, I assume there might be a referendum leading to the transfer (of Ukrainian territories inhabited by ethnic minorities to other states)." He also added, "Russia will not allow western Ukraine to become part of Poland, as it could increase the threat from Warsaw"²⁹.
- Sputnik referenced the Serbian newspaper Politika, which claimed that "the former Warsaw Pact countries have once again found common ground. Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania, according to their historical interests, are ready to 'carve out a piece' of Ukrainian territory." The newspaper noted that "the primary aim of dividing Ukraine among its neighbors is to bring NATO closer to Russia's borders, as these countries are members of the North Atlantic Alliance"³⁰.
- „Poland wants to reclaim territories it considers historically its own, which were transferred to Ukraine”³¹.
- Vladimir Putin, in an interview with Dmitry Kiselyov, stated: "If Polish forces enter Ukrainian territory under the pretext of securing the Ukrainian-Belarusian border or assisting Ukrainian troops on the front lines, I believe Polish forces will never leave. They [the Poles – editor's note] want to reclaim the lands they historically consider theirs, which were taken away by the father of nations, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, and handed over to Ukraine"³².

²⁷ آبا-طح-تحزیه-اوکراین-کلید- خورده؟ <https://spnfa.ir/20241129/21069695.html> (access: 1.12.2024)

²⁸ The Dialogue Works channel has 253,000 subscribers on YouTube. It is hosted by Nima R. Alkhorshid, a doctor of philosophy of Iranian-Brazilian origin who worked at the Federal University of Itajubá (Brazil). However, it is difficult to confirm whether he is still employed there. He has frequently invited Scott Ritter to his program.

²⁹ افسر-اطلاعاتی--Sputnik Irān", 9.03.2024, [online:] <https://spnfa.ir/20240309/19966796.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

³⁰ رسانه-ها-از-برنامه-ای-که- اروپا-برای-اوکراین-چیده-خبر-دادند <https://spnfa.ir/20240207/19606937.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

³¹ نکات- مهم-/ گفتگوی-ولادیمیر-پوتین در مصاحبه با خبرگزاری روسی + ویدئو <https://spnfa.ir/20240313/20001343.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

³² هشدار-پوتین-در-مورد-/ گروهای-نیروهای-اوکراین-به- خاک-اوکراین- 5 <https://spnfa.ir/20240313/20000645.html> (access: 22.10.2024)

- Marek Gałaś, in an article published on the portal *Niezależny Dziennik Polityczny*, wrote: "Zelensky made the only right decision—to hand over the western part of Ukraine to Poland"³³.

Poland as an Aggressor and a Threat to Russia and Belarus

- Vladimir Rogov spread disinformation about Poland's preparations for potential involvement in the conflict in Ukraine. Rogov stated: "Under the guise of mercenaries, combat coordination activities are being carried out under real military operation conditions, as well as the training of military personnel. This is preparation for the possible deployment of a Polish military group in Ukraine and participation in the conflict against Russia"³⁴.
- Maria Zakharova, responding to Donald Tusk's statement acknowledging the presence of NATO soldiers in Ukraine, said: "This confirms that the West is waging a hybrid war against Russia, and Tusk's statement is evidence of the West's involvement in actions aimed at Russia"³⁵.

American Interests as a Threat to Poland

- Mateusz Piskorski³⁶, a journalist and prominent political scientist from Poland, wrote in an article for the portal *Myśl Polska*³⁷ :"One of the latest messages from billionaire Elon Musk on platform X reads: 'I always wondered why NATO still exists, given that its main opponent and reason for its creation, the Warsaw Pact, no longer exists.'" Piskorski states, "The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is not a solution to security problems but their source. There are various ways to get rid of this 'arsonist.' By staying outside NATO structures, Poland could feel a greater sense of security, if only because the

³³ رسانه: زلنسکی به لهستان درازی کمک علیه روسیه و عده اهدای خاک داده است <https://spnfa.ir/20230410/15432732> (access: 22.10.2024)

³⁴ „لهستان در حال آماده سازی پرسنل نظامی خود برای اعزام نیرو به اوکراین است <https://spnfa.ir/20240412/20326854> (access: 22.10.2024)

³⁵ واکنش وزارت خارجه روسیه به سخنان نخست وزیر لهستان درباره حضور فیزیکی نیروهای ناتو در اوکراین <https://spnfa.ir/20240509/20518045> (access: 22.10.2024)

³⁶ The founder and leader of the pro-Kremlin party Zmiana, arrested in 2016 on charges of espionage for Russia and China. He is also the creator of the European Centre for Geopolitical Analysis, established in 2007, which received €21,000 as part of a money laundering scheme known as the Laundromat. The funds were reportedly of Russian origin. <https://frontstory.pl/index/piskorski-mateusz/> (access: 22.10.2024)

³⁷ *Myśl Polska* is a publication, now primarily an online portal, presenting pro-Russian content. It brings together individuals sympathetic to Russia and critical of Western countries, particularly the United States and the European Union. After the outbreak of the war, the *Myśl Polska* portal was blocked by Polish authorities but was moved to a new domain. Currently, access to it is restricted but still possible.. A. Mierzyńska, *Kto promuje w Polsce rosyjskiego nacjonalistę Dugina? To środowisko znane z sympatią do Rosji, "Oko.press"* 26.20.2022, <https://oko.press/kto-promuje-w-polsce-rosyjskiego-nacjonaliste-dugina> (access: 22.10.2024)

cause of confrontation with states that perceive NATO as a constant and growing threat would disappear"³⁸.

- "A better solution for Poland would be to undertake diplomatic actions with Russia instead of escalating the conflict. However, it seems that Poland's American 'patrons' want to increase tensions rather than alleviate them. The question arises: do Poles really agree to become, like Ukrainians, victims of others' interests?"³⁹.
- Sergey Shoigu, Russia's Minister of Defense, stated, "Poland has become the main tool of the United States' anti-Russian policy and is striving to create the strongest army in Europe"⁴⁰.

Summary

articles suggest that Poland plans to occupy western parts of Ukraine under the pretext of border protection or military assistance. Such actions are allegedly aimed at permanently dividing Ukraine among neighbouring states with NATO's support. Poland is also accused of training mercenaries and preparing for military intervention in Belarus.

Narratives about NATO and U.S. interests emphasize that Poland acts as a tool of the United States' anti-Russian policy. Articles claim that Poland's actions, including strengthening its military and the potential deployment of nuclear weapons, are directed against Russia and Belarus, framing the country as a pawn in the hands of its American "patrons." Russian propaganda attempts to convince audiences that Poland could share Ukraine's fate and become a victim of foreign interests. Content published by Sputnik Iran constructs an image of Poland as an aggressive state acting against regional interests and fueling conflicts. This disinformation aims to undermine Poland's image, foster distrust toward it in the region, and create divisions within organizations like NATO. Additionally, it seeks to discourage support for the West by portraying it as an "imperial structure", ultimately working against the interests of its members.

³⁸ درگیری-اوکراین-و-آتش-نشان-/آتش-نشان-قهرمان-عمو-سام-، "درگیری اوکراین و آتش نشان قهرمان "عمو سام 19902595.html (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

³⁹ اصرار-بر-شعله-ورتر-، "اصرار بر شعله ورت کردن جنگ پیش از رسیدن تراامپ به کاخ سفید کردن-جنگ-پیش-از-رسیدن-تراامپ-به-کاخ-سفید-21054939.html (dostęp: 1.12.2024)

⁴⁰ ناتو-دو-خط-قرمز-برای-/، "ناتو دو "خط قرمز" برای مداخله در اوکراین مطرح کرده است" Sputnik Irān، 5.05.2024, [online:] https://spnfa.ir/20240505_20483548.html (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

1.3. Sputnik Arabī

Analyzing the information published by the Sputnik Arabī portal, many themes related to Poland resemble those previously noted in Turkish and Persian-language content. Here, too, Poland frequently appears as one of several states within a broader context, often related to the war in Ukraine or U.S. policies. A notable focus was given to the explosion of the Nord Stream pipeline. Alongside coverage of farmer strikes, reports on Polish arms purchases, and the potential deployment of nuclear missiles, there were narratives about refugees at the Polish-Belarusian border. According to Sputnik, Belarus reportedly negotiated with the Iraqi government, returning over 400 people to their homes, highlighting Minsk's alleged effectiveness in resolving the crisis. Additionally, Sputnik Arabī was the only version of the portal to report on the "release of a Russian-Spanish journalist as part of a U.S.-Russia prisoner exchange". It claimed that after spending 29 months in Polish custody, the journalist could reunite with his family. The report emphasized that no formal charges were filed, no evidence was presented, and no trial date was set. It also alleged that the journalist had been held in a prison in Radom, referred to as Poland's Guantánamo⁴¹.

Examples of Russian Disinformation:

Poland Will Occupy Western Regions of Ukraine

- According to Sputnik: "The territories are to be divided among the occupiers as follows: the Black Sea coast will go to Romania, the western regions of Ukraine to Poland, central and eastern Ukraine to Germany, and the northern provinces, including the capital, to the United Kingdom"⁴².
- Russian President Vladimir Putin stated in an interview: "If Poland sends its troops to Ukraine, it will not leave; it wants to reclaim territory it considers its own"⁴³.

⁴¹ زوجة-أحد-/Sputnik Arabī", 2.08.2024, [online:] <https://sarabic.ae/202408021091367520.html> (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

⁴² الشمال لبريطانيا والمركز لألمانيا... الاستخبارات الروسية تكشف عن خطط تقسيم الغرب "للكعكة الأوكرانية" "Sputnik Arabī", 29.11.2024, [online:] <https://sarabic.ae/20241129/1095309767.html> (dostęp: 1.12.2024)

⁴³ يوتيوب-إذا-أرسلت-/Sputnik Arabī", 13.03.2024, [online:] <https://sarabic.ae/202403131086925036.html> (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

- A Croatian newspaper reported: "Some of Ukraine's neighbors, especially Poland and Hungary, may begin dividing Ukrainian territory after the defeat of the Kyiv regime's forces"⁴⁴.
- Former CIA officer Larry Johnson claimed: "Ukraine will lose large areas that Poland, Hungary, and Romania will want to reclaim"⁴⁵.
- Oleg Suskin said: "So-called friends—Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Moldova—will tear off entire pieces of Ukraine"⁴⁶.
- Colonel Douglas McGregor announced that Poland aims to annex western Ukraine to resettle all refugees who arrived after the conflict began. McGregor added: "When Ukraine starts to collapse and its army weakens, there will be an attempt to invade the western part of the country to establish a security zone and send home three million Ukrainian refugees"⁴⁷.
- Ritter, on a YouTube channel, said: "The takeover of western Ukraine by Poland is inevitable, which will enable Romania and Hungary to annex certain territories"⁴⁸.
- Zakharova: "When the border [between the two countries] is removed and the remnants of Ukraine are absorbed by Warsaw, no one will speak with the local population at all"⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ صحيفة-،Sputnik Arabī، 31.01.2024, [online:] <https://sarabic.ae/20240131/صحيحة-عن-شجع-جيران-أوكرانيا-الغربيين-في-تقسيم-البلاد-1085620733.html> (22.11.2024)

⁴⁵ ضابط-،Sputnik Arabī، 24.12.2023, [online:] <https://sarabic.ae/20231224/ضابط-أمريكي-يتحدث-عن-ضم-أجزاء-من-أوكرانيا-إلى-بولندا-وال مجر-ورومانيا-1084418649.html> (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

⁴⁶ مستشار-الرئيس-الأوكراني-الأسبق-الغربي-سيتقاسم-البلاد-بعد-انهيار-الجيش-،Sputnik Arabī، 28.08.2023, [online:] <https://sarabic.ae/20230828/مستشار-الرئيس-الأوكراني-الأسبق-الغربي-سيتقاسم-البلاد-بعد-انهيار-الجيش-1080498526.html> (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

⁴⁷ مستشار-لدى-البنتاغون-يكشف-سبب-خطة-بولندا-بضم-جزء-من-أوكرانيا-،Sputnik Arabī، 2.08.2023, [online:] <https://sarabic.ae/20230802/مستشار-لدى-البنتاغون-يكشف-سبب-خطة-بولندا-بضم-جزء-من-أوكرانيا-1079715336.html> (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

⁴⁸ ضابط-أمريكي-تقسيم-أوكرانيا-يؤدي-لصراع-داخل-الاتحاد-الأوروبي-والناتو-،Sputnik Arabī، 22.07.2023, [online:] <https://sarabic.ae/20230722/ضابط-أمريكي-تقسيم-أوكرانيا-يؤدي-لصراع-داخل-الاتحاد-الأوروبي-والناتو-1079297160.html> (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

⁴⁹ موسكو-بولندا-تعامل-مع-أوكرانيا-طالما-هي-في-حاجة-لها-كأداة-مناهضة-لروسيا-،Sputnik Arabī، 17.04.2023, [online:] <https://sarabic.ae/20230417/موسكو-بولندا-تعامل-مع-أوكرانيا-طالما-هي-في-حاجة-لها-كأداة-مناهضة-لروسيا--1076006190.html> (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

”هذه هي الطريقة التي تتعامل بها بولندا مع أوكرانيا، طالما لا تزال بحاجة إليها، ككيان أو مجموعة أدوات مناهضة لروسيا. وعندما تزال الحدود [بين الدولتين]، واستيعاب بقایا أوكرانيا من قبل وارسو، فلن يتحدث أحد مع السكان المحليين على الإطلاق. ومثل هذا القرار هو دلالة، من وجهاً نظر فصح القلق الحالي للغربيين، على الحياة والمحاجن للطعام.”

ماريا زاخاروفا

المتحدثة الرسمية باسم وزارة الخارجية الروسية



American Interests as a Threat to Poland

- Sergey Shoigu, the Russian Minister of Defense, pointed out, "Poland has become a tool used by the United States in its confrontation with Russia and is planning to establish joint Polish-Ukrainian forces to ensure security in areas occupied by Warsaw in western Ukraine"⁵⁰.
- Myśl Polska noted, "NATO membership gives Polish leadership, which dreams of Russia's downfall, a false sense of total impunity"⁵¹.

Ukrainian-Polish Tensions That Could Lead to a New Conflict

- Oleg Suskin said unstable relations between Poland and Ukraine could lead to an armed clash⁵².
- A Ukrainian soldier said: "We clashed with mercenaries from Poland because they are armed, equipped, and receive humanitarian aid, while Ukrainian soldiers have nothing"⁵³.

⁵⁰ شويفو-يكشف-/،،شويغو يكشف تفاصيل مخطط بولندي لاحتلال غرب أوكرانيا،Sputnik Arabī، 9.08.2023, [online:] https://sarabic.ae/20230809_1079901571_تفاصيل_مخطط_بولندي_لاحتلا_غري_أوكرانيا_--_عاجل_.html (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

⁵¹ اعلام-توسيع-الصراع-في-/،،اعلام: توسيع الصراع في أوكرانيا يهدد بتصفيه بولندا،Sputnik Arabī، 27.06.2023, [online:] https://sarabic.ae/20240627_1090215082_أوكرانيا_يهدد_تصفيه_بولندا_.html (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

⁵² مسؤول سابق لدى كييف: صراع عسكري وشيك قد ينفجر بين بولندا وأوكرانيا،،Sputnik Arabī، 26.11.2023, [online:] https://sarabic.ae/20231126_1083500646_مسؤول_سابق_لدى_كييف-صراع_عسكري_وشيـك_قد_ينفجـر_بين_بولنـدا_وأوكرـانيا_.html (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

⁵³ جندي روسي يتحدث عن صراعات بين مسلحي القوات الأوكرانية والمرتزقة الأجانب،،Sputnik Arabī، 13.10.2024, [online:] https://sarabic.ae/20241013_1093698174_جندي_روسي_يتحدث_عن_صراعات_بين_مسلحي_القوات_الأوكرانية_والمرتزقة_الأجانب_.html (dostęp: 22.10.2024)

Summary

Russian disinformation published in Arabic on the Sputnik portal consistently portrays Poland as an aggressive country destabilizing the situation in Central and Eastern Europe. These narratives depict Poland as a state seeking to annex western territories of Ukraine, allegedly under the pretext of protecting refugees and ensuring security. The messages suggest that Poland, supported by the United States and NATO, is pursuing revisionist territorial goals in coordination with other countries, such as Hungary and Romania, which are also claimed to be demanding parts of Ukraine.

In these narratives, Poland appears as a tool of the United States, engaged in implementing anti-Russian policies. Poland's NATO membership is portrayed as a source of false security, which, in reality, exposes the country to conflict escalation and destabilization. At the same time, alleged tensions in Polish-Ukrainian relations are emphasized, suggesting weaknesses in the cooperation between the two countries. The articles imply that a lack of trust between Warsaw and Kyiv and conflicts between Polish mercenaries and Ukrainian soldiers could lead to an open confrontation.

These messages, targeted at Arabic-speaking audiences, aim to undermine Poland's image as a credible international partner and erode trust in NATO. By portraying Poland as an aggressor and destabilizer, Russian propaganda seeks to influence public opinion in the Arab world, highlighting the alleged hypocrisy of the West and manipulation by the United States. These narratives align with Russia's broader strategy to strengthen its position, discredit countries supporting Ukraine, and undermine transatlantic unity.

Chapter 2.

Analysis of Similarities and Differences in the Content of Sputnik Türkiye, Sputnik Irān, and Sputnik Arabī

Similarities in Narratives

Portraying Poland as an Aggressor

- Poland is depicted as an aggressive state pursuing revisionist territorial goals in all language versions.
- The narrative of Poland's annexation of western Ukrainian territories is present in every version.
- Each version includes information about plans to divide Ukraine between Poland, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Romania.

Emphasizing NATO and U.S. Roles

- Poland is portrayed as a tool of U.S. anti-Russian policy.
- Poland's NATO membership is depicted as a source of regional destabilization.
- The West is presented as unreliable and imperialistic, using its members to serve U.S. interests.

Similar Mechanisms

- Using statements from Russian politicians, such as Vladimir Putin and Maria Zakharova, as well as Western "experts" (e.g., Douglas McGregor, Scott Ritter) to legitimize the narrative by showing that these views are shared by "independently-minded" analysts from the West.
- Quoting Polish journalists and sources (e.g., Marek Gałaś, Niezależny Dziennik Polityczny, Myśl Polska).

Differences in Narratives

- Only on Sputnik Türkiye was there information about crimes and cruelty committed by Polish mercenaries.
- The Turkish version was the only one to report a plan for the occupation of western Belarus by armed groups from Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine.
- Sputnik Irān and Sputnik Arabī mentioned the potential division of Ukrainian territory by Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. The Arabic version also included Bulgaria and Moldova in this scenario.
- The Persian version contained the most references suggesting that NATO is practically engaged in a war with Russia. It also included a quoted text by Mateusz Piskorski claiming that NATO is no longer needed as a military alliance and that Poland would be safer if it left NATO.
- Sputnik Irān reported on the mistreatment of Iranian refugees at the Polish-Belarusian border, while Sputnik Arabī mentioned Iraqi refugees who, thanks to Minsk's efforts, decided to return to Iraq. The Arabic version uniquely added that Poland would seek to annex western Ukraine to create a buffer zone where it could send Ukrainian refugees currently residing in Poland.
- Sputnik Arabī was the only version to detail a prisoner exchange between Russia and the U.S., including a thorough description of a Polish prisoner and a comparison of the Radom prison to Guantanamo.
- All portals included numerous reports suggesting a significant deterioration in Polish-Ukrainian relations. However, only Sputnik Arabī quoted a statement implying that this could lead to an armed conflict.

The selection of specific narratives by the various language versions of the Sputnik portal is closely tied to local social, political, and cultural contexts. In the case of **Sputnik Türkiye**, Turkey's sensitivity to issues related to regional conflicts and migration plays a crucial role. The Turkish public, due to its geographical proximity to conflict zones, is particularly susceptible to narratives portraying Poland as an aggressor. Consequently, the portal emphasizes information about Polish mercenaries, alleged war crimes, and plans for the annexation of western Belarus. Additionally, Turkey's strained relations with NATO make claims about alleged threats stemming from Poland's actions within the Alliance resonate strongly with Turkish public opinion.

In the case of **Sputnik Irān**, the narratives focus on scepticism toward NATO, which Iran perceives as a hostile and imperialist organization. Messages about NATO's alleged involvement in the conflict with Russia resonate with audiences who view Western actions as imperialist. Quotes like Mateusz Piskorski's statement advocating for Poland's withdrawal from NATO align perfectly with Iran's anti-Western propaganda policy. References to the mistreatment of Iranian refugees at the Polish-Belarusian border aim to highlight the hypocrisy of the West, which promotes human rights but fails to uphold them for citizens of countries like Iran.

Meanwhile, **Sputnik Arabī** targets a region with strong anti-American sentiments. Narratives portraying Poland as a tool of the United States find greater resonance in the Arab world, where American actions are often seen as hegemonic. Information about the prisoner exchange between Russia and the U.S. and comparisons of a Polish prison in Radom to Guantanamo emphasize Western hypocrisy. Mentions of Iraqi refugees returning home thanks to Belarusian efforts create an image of Minsk as an effective mediator, contrasting with the negative portrayal of Poland as allegedly treating these refugees with disdain.

Each of these narratives is tailored to local sensitivities, allowing Russian propaganda to more effectively influence public opinion across different parts of the MENAT region. Many of the messages appear in all language versions, illustrating the broader image of the West and Poland that Russia seeks to promote. However, special attention should be paid to the information tailored to specific audiences, considering their social, cultural, or political sensitivities. These tailored narratives have the greatest potential to shape a negative perception of Poland, especially as they emphasize the country's independent choices rather than presenting it solely in the context of the West's alleged imperialist ambitions.