Media Capture in Southeast Europe: Addressing Authoritarian Sharp Power & State Capture

Goran Georgiev
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Kremlin Narratives:
The Battle for Hearts and Minds

- **Disinformation Narrative 1:** Russia is conducting a special military operation for the denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine.

- **Disinformation Narrative 2:** The USA/NATO/Other Western entity have secretly been developing biological weapons in laboratories throughout Ukraine.

- **Disinformation Narrative 3:** The USA, through NATO, seeks world domination through aggressive and duplicitous means.

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Previous Findings Confirmed

- Russia's information influence remains strongly concentrated along geographic, linguistic and ethnic lines.

- Serbia and the Serbian language continue to serve as *the* gateway for the Kremlin's (information) influence in most former Yugoslavian states.

- Bulgaria and Serbia serve as key hubs for the Kremlin's (information) influence and base of operations for its geopolitical ambitions in the region.

- Pro-Kremlin disinformation reflects the Kremlin's ideal view of the region which can largely be summarized as a regression back to the Soviet era.

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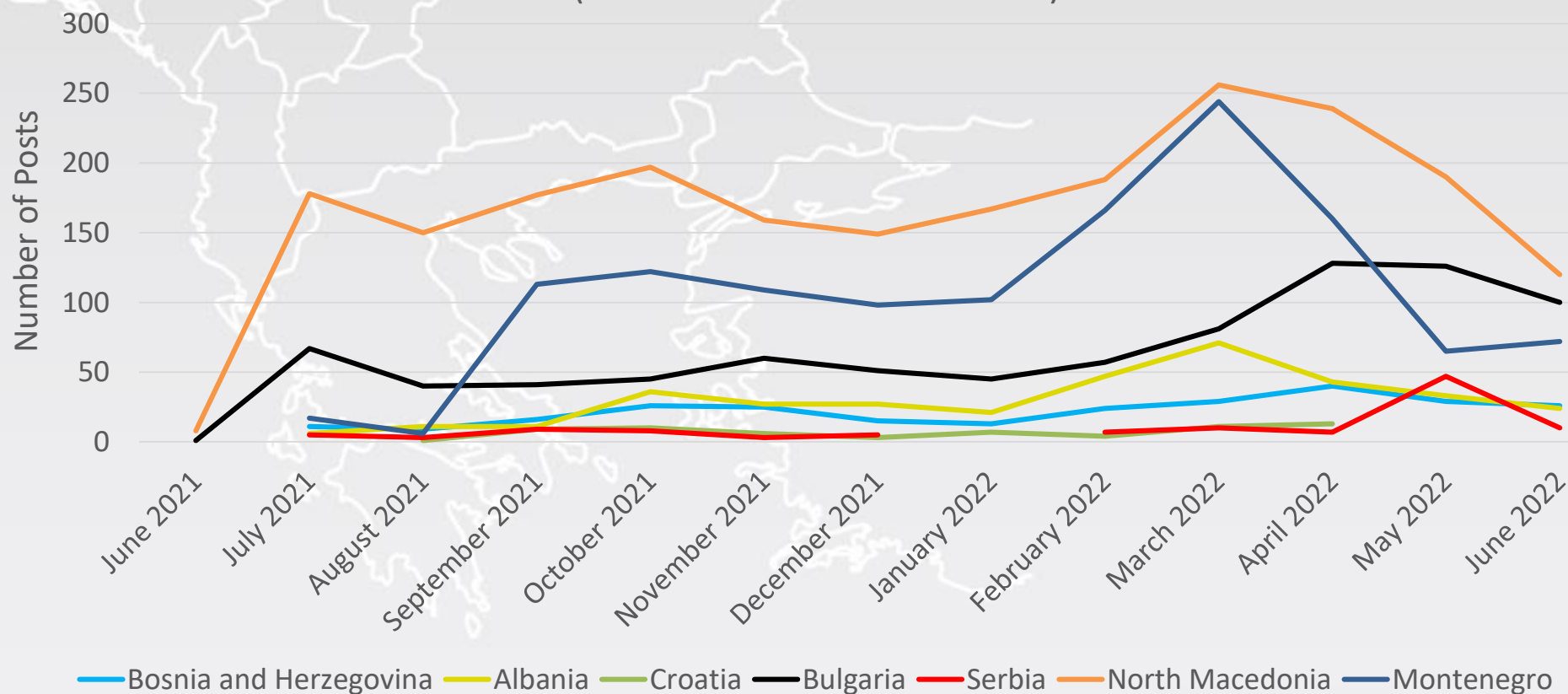Development and Integrity

Presence in Mainstream Media Space

One or more of the monitored mainstream online outlets overlapped with pro-Kremlin outlets in **5 out of 8 countries**:

- Albania: *Top Channel*

- Bosnia and Herzegovina: *Nezavisne Novine*

- Bulgaria: *Blitz*

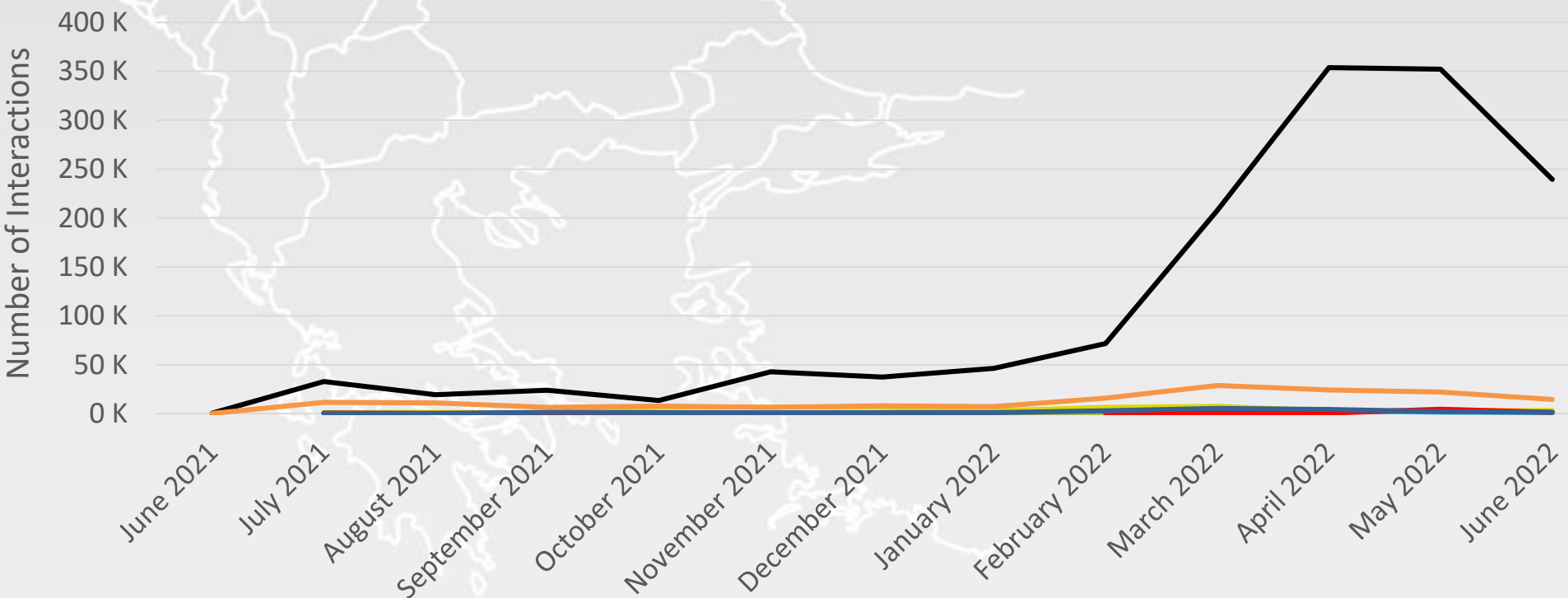- Montenegro: *IN4S* and *Mondo.me*

- Serbia: *Srbija Danas*

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Facebook – Russian Embassy Pages Compared

Facebook Russian Embassy Pages Posts per Month
(30 June 2021 - 30 June 2022)

Number of Posts

300
250
200
150
100
50
0

June 2021, July 2021, August 2021, September 2021, October 2021, November 2021, December 2021, January 2022, February 2022, March 2022, April 2022, May 2022, June 2022

Bosnia and Herzegovina — Albania — Croatia — Bulgaria — Serbia — North Macedonia — Montenegro

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Source: *CSD using data from CrowdTangle*

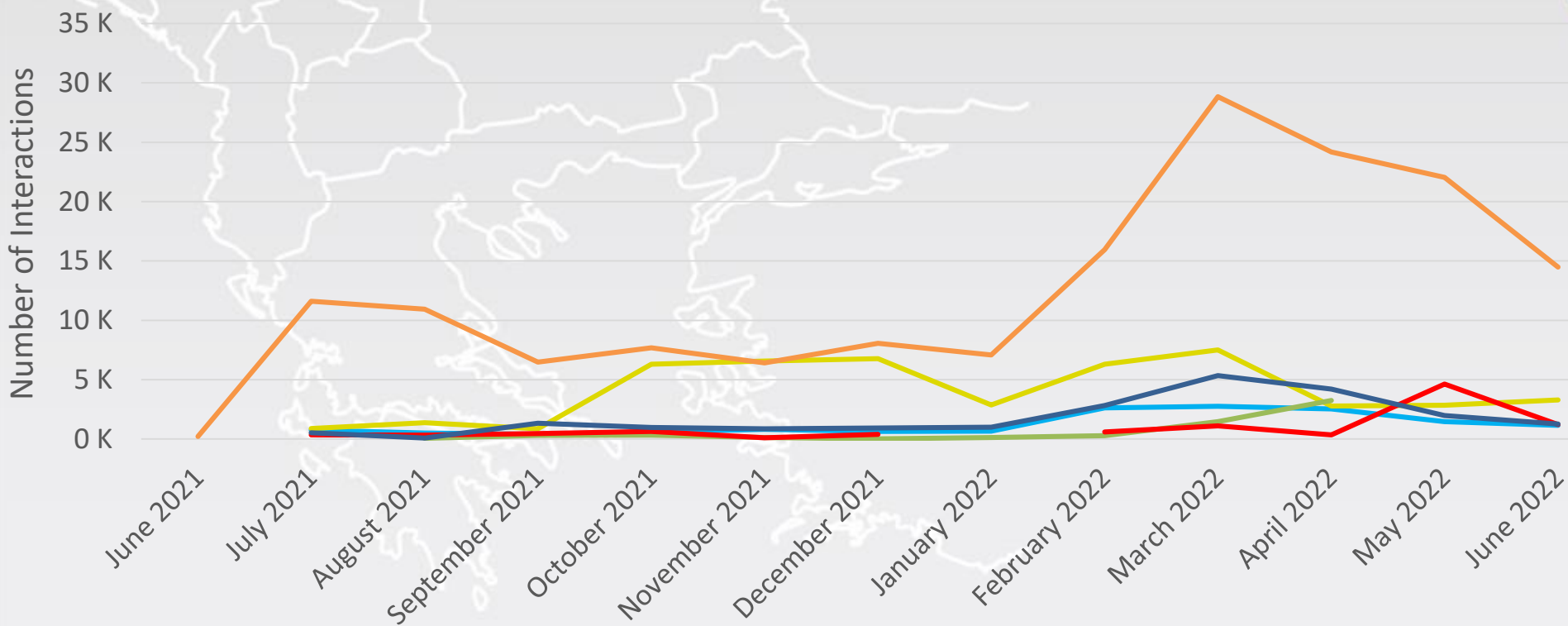# Facebook – Russian Embassy Pages Compared (1)

Facebook Russian Embassy Pages Interactions per Month
(30 June 2021 - 30 June 2022)

Legend: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro

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Facebook – Russian Embassy Pages Compared (2)

Facebook Russian Embassy Pages Interactions per Month w/o Bulgaria
(30 June 2021 - 30 June 2022)

Number of Interactions

35 K
30 K
25 K
20 K
15 K
10 K
5 K
0 K

June 2021 · July 2021 · August 2021 · September 2021 · October 2021 · November 2021 · December 2021 · January 2022 · February 2022 · March 2022 · April 2022 · May 2022 · June 2022

— Bosnia and Herzegovina — Albania — Croatia — Serbia — North Macedonia — Montenegro

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Source: *CSD using data
from CrowdTangle*

Thank you for your attention!
www.csd.bg

Goran Georgiev
Email: goran.georgiev@csd.bg