

# National Security



## Social Media Intelligence Report

Public online discourse  
assessment on National Security  
in V4

Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary

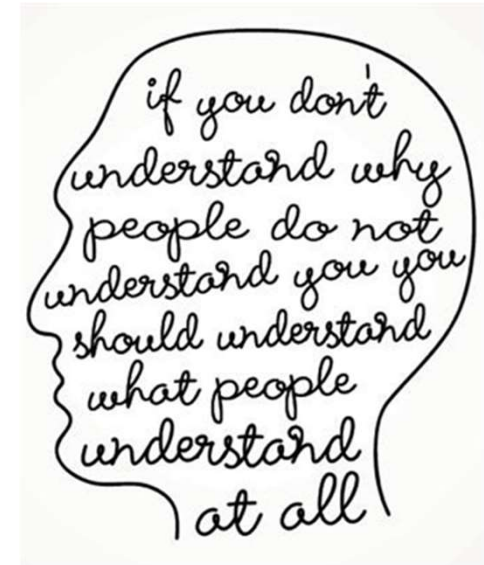
This report is sponsored by NATO's  
Public Diplomacy Division

# Trigger Warning\* - How to read this report!

Introduction



- **Thank you for your interest in this social media intelligence study.** Please note that qualitative social media research is a new and radically different methodology that focuses on people's truths and helps you to communicate in a language people can resonate with.
- It is **NOT like opinion polls**. Surveys frame people's responses into predefined boxes, which may or may not ask relevant questions. The latter lead to widely publicized failures of polling. Social listening by Bakamo in contrast values all opinions - be they correct or false, left or right, civil or hateful in tone - **equally** as it distills narrative patterns and implicit meanings behind them **without asking**.
- Our social listening methodology **combines technology and human insight** to collect millions of communications across social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, conversation forums and other outlets. We **analyze public perceptions** of an issue at scale, from local to global, employing an anthropological approach at scale.
- Our data collected from social media should not be taken as "public opinion" however, it represents a large and important part of the public discourse and therefore it:
  - provides insight into **narratives, attitudes and needs** of engaged constituencies
  - Holds a major **influence on the formation of the public opinion** at large,
  - Offers a chance to detect and **counter malignant outside influence**
  - Provides **relevance** to strategic communication **messaging**



\*This report contains quotes and summaries social media conversations that national security professionals have flagged as factually incorrect or disinformation. Other comments contain racist and sexist statements.

They are important parts of this report as the objective is not not decided between right but wrong, but help NATO learn about the narratives ecosystem people have around national security.

Bakamo holds no ideological views, but is driven by the mission to mend the social disconnect with social listening.

1

## Executive Summary

## Key Facts: Research, Findings and Recommendations

- The social media intelligence methodology analyzed close to 150,000 data points from across the countries, and used qualitative **content analysis of 13,600 randomly selected posts** from all public social media channels published between Nov 2018 to Nov 2020 to provide a grounded analysis into people's perspective on national security.
- Discussions on National Security are fairly uniform across the region. The issues people perceive as threats to national security are risks arising from **Foreign Powers, Corruption, Internal Enemies, Disinformation & Cybersecurity, National Health and Multilateral Constraints**. The latter refers to a set of sub-narratives unique to each countries, but all casting loss of national sovereignty to organizations such as NATO and the EU as a national security risk.
- The analysis identified three cognitive layers people view national security. Potential threats are contextualized and understood through these lay lenses:
  - **National** - associated threats: Russia, US, China strive for influence over the region
  - **Community** - associated threats: migration, liberal values
  - **Personal** - associated threats: COVID-19
    - Interestingly, risks associated with disinformation emerges on all three levels.
- Bakamo's analysis framework revealed **unmet (psychological) needs** audiences have regarding national security. The study provides strategic communication recommendations for NATO to address unmet needs **to increase resilience**. Three creative concepts aim to provide concrete examples to inspire NATO's public facing communication.

# National Security Threats in the Online Discourse

Topics present in all countries are coded as blue while country specific ones are color green.



## Foreign Powers

Geopolitics of big players (US, Russia, China) put countries at risk. NATO might not be willing to protect smaller countries.



## Corruption

Politicians' hidden agenda and corrupt motifs expose the country to risk



## Disinformation & Cybersecurity

Disinformation and people's exposure to Chinese tech is a growing threat that puts the nation at peril.



## National Health

Vulnerabilities exposed by COVID-19 pandemic made health a major national security threat.



## Internal Enemies

Domestic political forces such as NGO, political parties, activists, etc, betrays the national interest - typically by collaborating with a foreign entity.



## Liberal Values & Migration

Opposition to Gender equality, Migration and 'liberal values' at large, provide the backdrop to Internal Enemies and Multilateral Constraints

## Multilateral Constraints

### Sovereignty

### Limited Foreign Politics

### Burden of NATO membership

### Treated Unfairly

Membership in the EU and NATO limit the country's defense options. Voices putting NATO into a negative context are prevailing.



Indicates the presence of NATO in identified narratives of the national security, This means people see NATO playing a role concerning the threat.

# Foreign Powers

- **US and Russia are the most powerful foreign countries** whose aim is to gain control over the region. As they are regarded as **both allies and enemies**, their ambiguous position generates concerns.
- **US, Russia and China spy in V4 countries.** Intelligence operations often **mask themselves as companies**.
- Deploying of **foreign military forces in the region causes concern** among V4 citizens as it **increases the risk of war**.



Many Slovaks are concerned about **US military bases in Slovakia**. **Russia's occupation of Ukraine** and its supposed **disinformation campaign** worries many Slovaks. However **some consider Russia an ally**, a fellow Slavic nation that saved Slovakia in WW. II. Many fear that in case of a **US-Russia military conflict**, Slovakia **will be a frontline** because of its geography.



Polish people see both the **US and Russia as a threat**. While Russia is encroaching on Poland's borders with the **occupation of Ukraine**, the **US is expanding its military presence** in the country. The **EU** is also a frequently mentioned **threat** as it allegedly **promotes migration**, which in turn opens doors to **foreign intelligence agencies**.



Many Czechs believe that **China infiltrated the government** through **officials** and **contracts** with **tech companies**. **Huawei** is an especially hotly discussed company in the context of its **state ownership by the non-democratic China**. The **EU's Schengen zone** is also criticised in connection with the need to close borders because of **COVID19**.



Some **Hungarians believe that their politicians are being blackmailed by Russia based on their collaboration with the communist regime before 1990**. Others feel threatened by foreign powers such as **Soros** which they believe **spread anti-Hungarian ideology** and aim to **destroy the Hungarian bloodline** by financing **liberal media outlets** and **"fake NGOs"**. Others fear that **China is stealing their personal data** via TikTok and Huawei devices.

# Corruption

- **Corruption undermines resilience**, as it provides an alternative, distrust-driven narrative to matters of national security.
- **Self-interest of politicians** - be they monetary, or about remaining in power - **take precedence over the true national security threats**.



**Former president Kiska** is often viewed as a threat to national security as many **associate him with the Slovakian mafia, corruption and foreign powers**. People believe that he is willing to cooperate with anyone to gain power.



Polish people fear that the **state abuses its powers** and uses the **disguise of national security to hide scandals and try to limit people from practicing their basic rights**, e.g., freedom of speech or steal their personal data in order to gain more power and control.



Many Czechs believe that their **politicians abuse their power**, make secret deals with foreign powers and put their own interests over the interests of the nation. **President Zeman's way of protecting Huawei, ZTE, China, and Russia** are frequently perceived this way.



Many Hungarians accuse their government that it uses **legislation to embezzle funds, and incapacitate the opposition by** tailoring election laws to stay in power. Others say that **government officials only use the secrecy of national security to use military aircrafts** as private jets.

## Internal Enemies

- **Media publications, liberal voices, NGOs and academics are regarded as hostile actors.** They undermine national security with spreading and imposing corruptive ideologies that cause domestic disturbance and downfall.
- The presence of internal enemies in the public discourse adversely affects the countries resilience to respond to crisis, as it indicates a high level of polarization and social-political disunity.



In Slovakia liberal parties are considered a serious internal threat by many, as they supposedly destroy democracy with their “liberal-fascism” and their tendency to attack those with views different from liberalism. “Progressive-liberals” are frequently compared to Russian Bolsheviks and are at times associated with George Soros. Many believe that some Slovakian politicians serve foreign, especially US interests, thereby betraying their country.



Polish people criticize the ruling party, PIS for its supposed poor decisions in foreign policy, highlighting the country’s growing dependency on the US. Politicians in favor of dismantling the army and helping migrants are often viewed as enemies of Poland.



Czechs express distrust towards PM Babis because of his former association with the communist secret service. Also, President Zeman’s conflict with the current secret service on requesting the names of Russian secret agents in Czechia is seen as a proof of him being a pro-Russian actor.



NGOs, liberal media, academics, universities, and even the Supreme Court are regarded as institutions that are undermining Hungarian values. Hungarian social media users often link these organizations to George Soros. Politicians from all parties are being accused of betraying their countries by serving Western or Eastern interests.



## Disinformation & Cybersecurity

- **Chinese tech companies, prominently Huawei and TikTok are not trusted** to have a stake in the nation's communication infrastructure. They are seen as risk to the protection of **national secrets and privacy of personal data**.
- **Disinformation threats come from Russia and liberal media outlets** that propagate false or manipulated information.



A possible information leakage from Slovakia's government network; arrest of a person, who made bomb-threats unless mobile operators stop monitoring citizens and a referendum on Slovakia leaving NATO is announced. Collaboration with the US on cybersecurity raised privacy concerns.



Polish social media users are concerned about Huawei and the growing influence of China. The announcement of the ministry of National Defense to create **Cyberspace Defense Forces** in order to "ensure stability of national networks" is an **interesting topic for Polish people**.



Czechs fear that providing the **autocratic PRC with their personal data via TikTok and Huawei** poses a threat to national security. Others believe that action taken against Huawei only shows that the government is trying to please the US.



Hungarians are concerned that **Chinese companies like TikTok and Huawei** are monitoring them through algorithms. **Pro-government** social media users are **concerned about** how **Facebook** can be used by the opposition to overturn the government.

## National Health

- In light of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the **nation's health is a significant national security issue**.
- Covid-19 represents a national security challenge in two ways:
  - **Enforcement of rules and regulations** to reduce infections
  - **Diverting attention away from migration** causing fears of **terrorist attacks**.



Slovakians **perceive national health issues and migration equally dangerous**. Countries should not push migration crisis into the background while dealing with restrictions for the pandemic as it would weaken defense system of the country.



Polish people **criticize governmental actions** on the pandemic. Citizens who **travel irresponsibly are regarded as a threat**.



Producing **medical equipment and masks domestically** is key to gain control over the nationwide pandemic. **Tracking apps and any other digital tools** should be used to reduce the number of cases.



**Right wing media and users** tend to **not talk about the pandemic**. Others talk about their silence as **an illogical act**.

# Multilateral Constraint

Executive Summary



- **EU and NATO membership** reduce the **sovereignty of member countries** and **prevent them from taking decisions in their interests** (border protection, migration quota, and coronavirus restrictions).
- While users are not seeing any entity replacing the EU or NATO, they experience their membership as second class, where big countries prioritize their interests, and **V4 countries await for orders from EU or NATO**.
- Frictions and tensions around a nation's NATO membership are adverse to the organisations and the member nations' resilience, because they ideologize public support for the military alliance.



NATO **does not treat each members equally**. They argue that the **referendum to join NATO was not valid**. NATO is a burden **rather than a support**. They fear the US will drag the country into a military conflict as Slovakia is compelled to help the US in a war due to its NATO membership.



The **interests of the citizens** should be top priority as in the **US, China and Russia**. These countries' decisive actions come from their autonomy.



EU's intervention in **Czech state's decision making process** makes citizens question **their country's sovereignty**.



**Brussel's orders** can not be accepted without asking some questions first. The European Parliament should take care of democracy but also pay regard to the interests of Hungarian citizens.

## People have different National Security perspectives

We found that when people speak about issues concerning National Security they talk about three types of risks:



Personal	Community	National
Threats put the personal health and safety of the individual at risk.	Local customs, traditions and cultural values of the community are at risk.	Integrity of countries borders, political & economic operation are at risk.
Issues: National Health, Disinformation & Cybersecurity	Issues: Migration, Disinformation & Cybersecurity	Issues: Foreign Powers, Multilateral Constraints, Corruption, Disinformation & Cybersecurity

NATO should aim to communicate on each three understandings of National Security to allow broad audience to resonate with NATO's mission to foster resilience.

# Resilience is the key unmet need of National Security concerned audiences

	Foreign Powers	Multilateral Constraints	Disinformation & Cybersecurity	National Health	Internal Enemies	Corruption
	Pride - Resilience		Trust - Resilience		Trust	
What are people's unmet needs?	People perceive their own country to be NOT powerful enough to stand up to its interests. They would like to enjoy taking pride in the strengths and resilience of their nation.		Protected from personal data theft and being manipulated by information.	Being able to rely on (1) institutions and information, and on (2) society to adhere to rules and restrictions, and (3) oneself's own body & mind.	Overcome polarizing ideological or economic division, and the 'other side' to understand and respect 'our concerns.	People are frustrated by their leaders' dysfunctionality, who seemingly place personal gain above national interest.
Recommendations for NATO	Audiences should have the ability to perceive, experience and contextualize the <b>power their nation</b> gets from being a NATO member.		<b>NATO is strong because it's members are strong.</b> It is no different with nations and individuals. A society can be resilient, if its members are resilient. NATO should connect the top and bottom of the security pyramid (NATO <=> Citizens of Member States) to <b>enlist &amp; empower individuals</b> .		<b>Do not engage</b> in this conversation. This debate is part of the domestic democratic political process.	

2

Creative Ideas

# Give Pride through Gaming

Creative Ideas



## Games are serious business

- **Online gaming is outgrowing and supplanting social media in importance.**
- E-sports increasingly accepted as a sport with competitions and champions.
- Games, Teams, and missions can provide involvement and pride in a rich, contextual narrative.
- Look beyond, but do not exclude FPS (first-person-shooter) games, to complex simulations and strategy games.
- NATO can convene competitions, virtual meet-ups with professional soldiers, challenge gamers to virtual peacekeeping missions, etc.
- Build on previous successful game tie-in with Honfoglalo, in Hungary.
- Use the Atlantic Treaty Association to host competitions.
- Broadcast or simulate war game scenarios and military exercises to in-game audiences.

## Online games and simulations to connect with audiences



### Benefits:

- **Reach** new, mostly **young audiences**, thereby bypassing the current stale and negative discourse.
- **Engaging communities**, empowering them to collaborate, compete, and learn about NATO in way that makes sense - and address unmet needs of pride.
- **Cost-effective, Innovative, non-ideological and scalable**

# Enabling Self-Resilience in Cyberspace

Creative Ideas



## Resilient people make a resilient society

- Nato should develop and distribute a **Cyber Self Defense toolkit** that allows regular people to defend their information from hostile actors and detect manipulation of information received.
- **Raise awareness on how disinformation weakens our collective defense capabilities - with a focus on what individual citizens can do about it.**
- Consider ways of involving citizens with public trainings, cyber self-defense militias, etc.
- Build on historic example of civilian-military partnership to keep secrets from the enemy.



## NATO to enable people to defend themselves online





# Enabling People's Health Resilience

Creative Ideas



## COVID-19 opened an opportunity for resilience

- **COVID-19 made health a national security issue.** NATO should use this interest to approach the general public with a resilience message.
- NATO can use its broad expertise from military medicine, counter-biological warfare, boot camp, etc to help people safeguard their health and keep going under danger - and help people address their anxiety with meaningful action.
- NATO's communication should frame the general public as the key stakeholder for resilience: **healthy individuals, make a resilient society and member state.**
- Topics could include: Military endurance training, history of military and infectious diseases, Martial art, biological and chemical threat readiness/drills, information on NATO's efforts in the current pandemic, i.e. how drones, satellites, help get the vaccine to places safely, etc.
  - How to differentiate Covid-19 from a hostile biological attack? What would be different?
  - How would the public be informed?

## NATO helps people to stay healthy

