

SABER GUARDIAN 2017

How NATO's display of force was reflected in Romanian online media

August 30, 2017



FOTO: U.S. Army photo by Capt. Jeku Arce, 221st Public Affairs Detachment 2



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Firstly, we have noted an increase in the intensity of communication on these issues** in the public debate in Romania, which has made the activity of the Romanian Army, as well as NATO, more exposed to criticism. The Saber Guardian military exercise took place in the context of increased visibility of subjects associated with NATO and the Romanian Army (and Eastern Europe in general). Other visible issues during the same period have been the increase in military spending in Romania, a more active NATO presence in the region, and an intensification in hybrid operations in the region. Fortunately, Romania is a country where trust in the Army, NATO, and the US is at high and very high values. For this reason, the anti-Western propaganda against these institutions has not generated profound effects yet.
- **Both military exercises conducted this summer had a relatively positive and discrete coverage in the media - but they could have been better used to help strengthen trust in NATO** and the transatlantic project where Romania is a part. There was great improvement in the situation for the second exercise, through the involvement of the Romanian President, but the real potential was not fully fulfilled.
- **The anti-NATO negative narratives exist, they are noteworthy and diverse, even though their impact is still limited in Romania**, a country with one of the most pro-Western attitudes in the region. In the case of the Saber Guardian exercise, the negative narratives regarding its development or opportunity didn't gain significant visibility in media and social media, although there have been incidents which could have legitimized the launch of targeted negative campaigns. The negative mediatization was focused and isolated around a few subjects.
- **The negative narratives focused on the "occupation" risk, the Romanian Army's "lack of efficiency"** (as a result of several negatively-reflected accidents,), **the costs generated by the cooperation with the US** (buying expensive equipment - "The sinking of the Romanian TAB vehicle will be used as a pretext to buy military technique from the US at high prices") **and the risk generated by upsetting the Eastern Neighbor** (Russia - a country perceived negatively, but not seen as a direct threat). We have spotted the isolated use, in online media, of the term "occupation" with reference to the presence of NATO troops. Additionally, there have been references to the uncertainty that NATO would act: "These same troops will not defend us in case of an armed conflict." There were two accidents (the sinking of a TAB - armored personnel carrier - in the Danube and the fall of a fragment of ammunition in the back garden of a civilian

property) that generated negative news reports. Those situations generated critical observations regarding the capacity of the Romanian Army, but they have not significantly damaged the positive impression created by the exercise.

- **We've noticed an increase in the number of negative narratives, as well as a diversification and adaptation to the Romanian context.** The Russian reaction to the events was reflected in the media (particularly after Noble Jump, the first important exercise; media also covered the announcement of a Russian military exercise, Zapad 17, as a response etc.) and certain narratives were designed to undermine the credibility of the Romanian Army as well as the legitimacy of NATO presence in our country. Since social media networks, particularly Facebook, have registered a significant increase in media consumption in Romania, these types of narratives deserve a constant monitoring. This has been documented by sociological studies by CPD/SNSPA (2016-2017) that show **a category of public (particularly the youth) becoming more vulnerable to the narratives that underline the credibility of Western institutions in Romania.**
- **Social media networks, and particularly Facebook, were the channels most used for promotion of messages regarding these events.** The dynamic area of social networks is becoming more and more active in these domains - geopolitics, armed forces, foreign relations - and that could impact the distribution channels of propaganda in the future. It is on Facebook that the mentions of these issues reach the highest visibility (out of all types of online media sources), and Facebook is also the channel where it is easiest to create content.
- **The public who is active on social media networks is willing to promote pro-Army and pro-NATO messages, as long as that type of content originates from credible and impactful sources** (in the current case - US military leaders and the Romanian President).
Romania's President can play an important role in the public promotion of these actions - as witnessed, to some extent, during the Saber Guardian exercise, as he benefits from greater visibility than any other public actor involved (and he also has an increased credibility on Facebook in Romania). This is also true about the American leadership of the troops stationed in Romania.
- **The greatest amount of positive news came as a result of the factual promotion of the exercise, as a result of the involvement of Romania's President** (through events

organized in the context of the exercise) **and as an outcome of the American officials' praises for the Romanian Army in the frame of the exercise** - which increased the visibility of the theme. There have been moments when the troops participating in the exercise came in direct contact with the people - the military equipment exhibitions for example. Another interesting positive moment: the gun salutes occasioned by the celebration of 100 years since the Battle of Mărăști (one of the most important moments for Romania in the First World War).

- **The Romania media** (although generally pro-Western and anti-Russian) **does not distinguish between themes which are useful in the regional context and themes that generate an "easy" tabloid-style impact - therefore, the official proactive communication from the institutions responsible within the field** (the Army, in particular, but also the Government and the Presidency) is decisive in this perspective.
- As opposed to the first exercise (the Noble Jump), with Saber Guardian we **noticed 3 important positive differences in the official communication, which improved the public perception** regarding the NATO exercises, in spite of the fact that the number of negative stories increased: (1) Romania's President assuming an active role in communication (through visits and public messages, which increased the visibility and the positive impact for the military exercises); (2) the military authorities avoiding to communicate about the potential traffic disturbances – which meant no negative mediatization associated with this element this time; (3) the official (internal) communication being accompanied by official external messages - American military leaders present in our country - which also helped increase visibility and a positive impact.
- **The intensity of Russian reactions to this type of exercises has started to increase - a situation that can be noticed in the official messages**, where the tone towards Romania becomes harsher. We will continue to monitor these elements to see to what extent the anti-Western narratives increase their impact.



METHODOLOGICAL CLARIFICATION

The objective of the CPD study was to evaluate the way in which negative anti-NATO narratives were used in a visible way on this occasion to influence the Romanian public. We included in our monitoring the majority of online Romanian sources, analyzed with the help of a specialized software.

Monitoring Period - 1-31 July 2017.

We extracted a number of over 5600 mentions from all online media sources regarding the Saber Guardian exercise, mentions which reached over 7.5 million people.

To clarify certain elements of context, necessary for the correct perception of this event's impact, we also used classic monitoring instruments, as well as comparative analysis of sociological data.

The period of monitoring Saber Guardian, as well as Noble Jump for comparison purposes, was not limited to the period of their actual development.

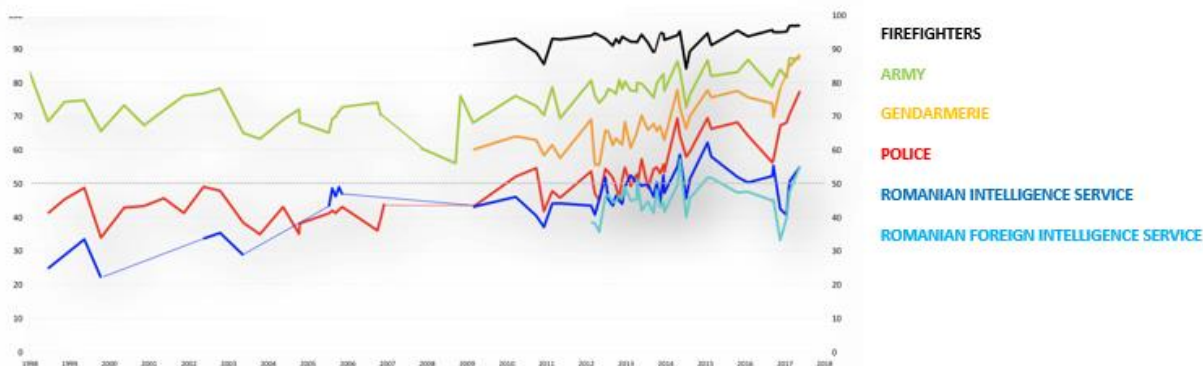
The monitoring period included several days in advance - approximately one week (to notice the way the participants' arrival in Romania was reflected) but also a few days after the exercise - approximately one week (to check the follow-up and the way the departure of the allied troops from Romania was reflected).

THE SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF NATO EXERCISES IN ROMANIA

Romania is a country in which the level of trust in the Army is very high. In our country, the highest level of trust in institutions is directed towards traditional and force institutions: the Army, the church, the police, the intelligence services, as well as the main international institutions where Romania is affiliated: NATO and the European Union. In the case of the Army, we are talking about the highest level of public trust in the last 20 years, a return to the top, above other institutions which have traditionally dominated this hierarchy (the church, for example).

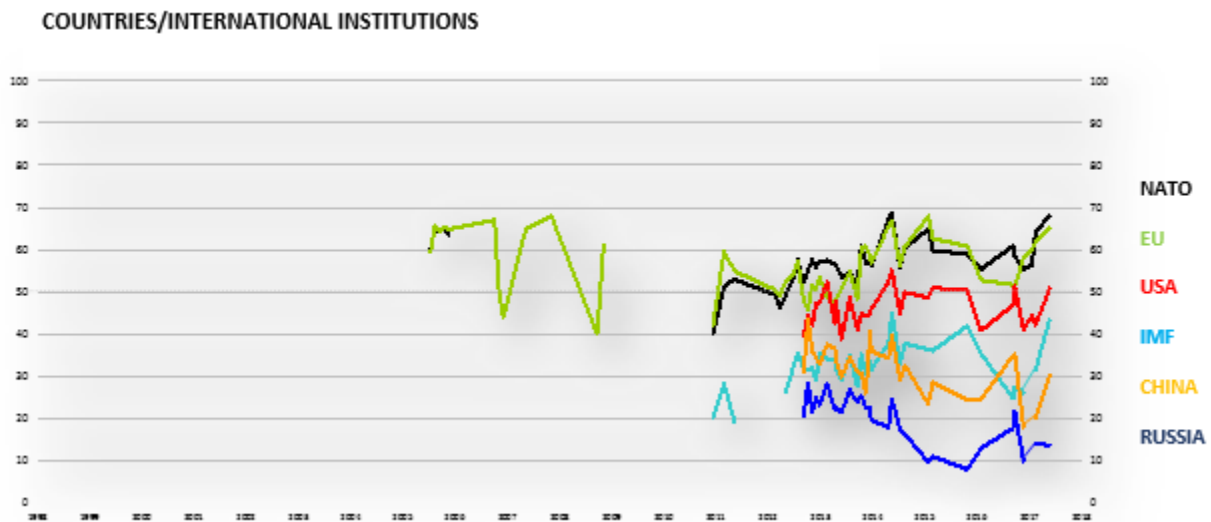
Trust in the Army has been constantly high after 1990. We can distinguish between a long, constant period of trust at around 70% from the '90s until 2010. Since 2010, the level has consolidated towards 85%, even 90% in the context of increasing tensions in the region and beyond (conflicts in Georgia, the Ukraine, Syria).

MILITARY/PUBLIC ORDER/LAW ENFORCEMENT INSTITUTIONS



Trust in NATO has been constantly high. After 2000, during the period when Romania became part of NATO, the trust level was over 60%. A slight erosion at the beginning of the next decade followed, with a decline towards 50%. The return to a higher level of trust in NATO (over 60%) has happened since 2011, in the same context of an increase in tensions in neighboring regions. There is a tight correlation with the trust in EU.

The US and Russia are at opposing ends of the spectrum, when it comes to Romanians' trust levels. Romanians' trust in the US varies around 50% with a slight decrease recently towards 40%. There is a strong correlation with the trust in NATO and the EU, but the levels are approximately 10% lower. As a comparison, the Romanians' trust in the Russian Federation declined from 20% in 2012 to 10% as a result of the events in the region. **Russia is, by far, the country Romanians trust the least.** But CPD data also show that in Romania the public willing to pay attention to the anti-Western message is more numerous than the pro-Russian public, and by and large, this is the main public targeted by anti-Western propaganda.

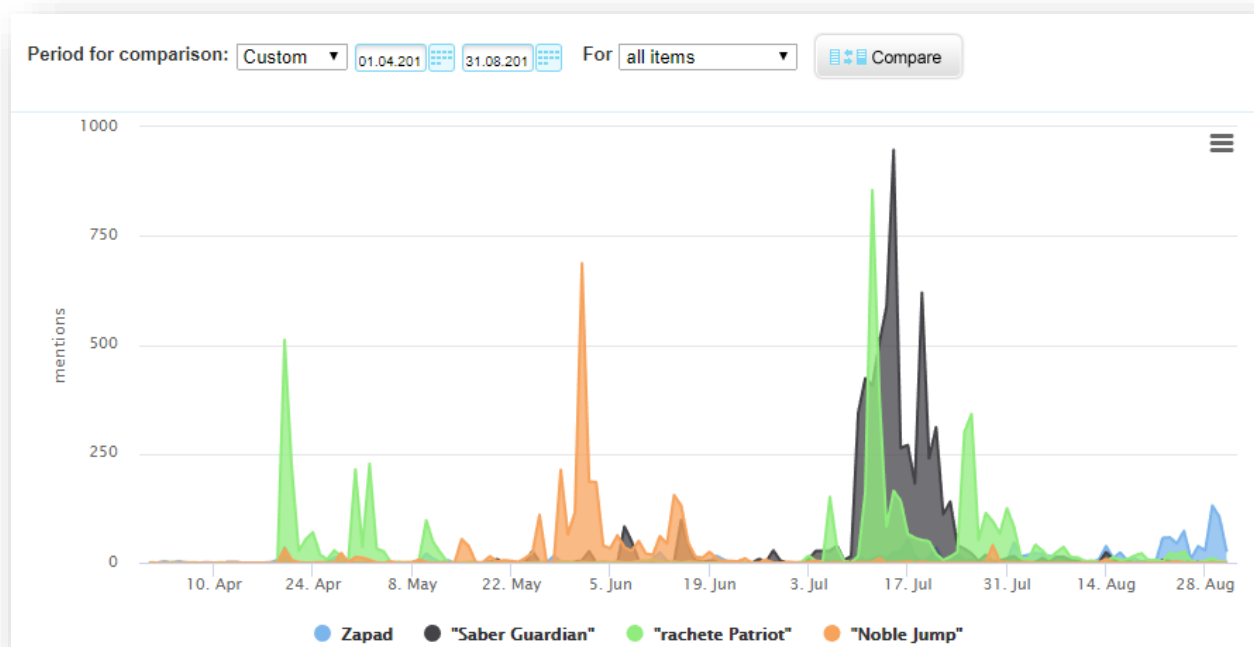


BACKGROUND EVENTS. THE CONTEXT IN WHICH NATO EXERCISES TOOK PLACE IN ROMANIA

This year included several important and visible moments, which increased the interest for the Army and NATO in Romania.

The military exercises conducted by NATO (Noble Jump and Saber Guardian) organized this summer on Romania's territory have come in a context when the media's interest regarding NATO, the Army, national security and the regional situation amplified. This interest was influenced by events on the greater international scene, by events in the region and also by internal evolutions.

During this year only, there have been several events that increased the visibility and the interest regarding these issues, which created a context that we must not ignore.



A BRIEF TIME LINE:

- **JANUARY 31, 2017** - The national defense budget (2% of GDP, for the first time) proposed by the government, receives the approval of CSAT (the Supreme Council for Defense, presided by Romania's President, Klaus Iohannis).
- **March 18, 2017** - After German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Washington, the US president Donald Trump states that "Germany owes vast sums of money to NATO & the United States must be paid more for the powerful, and very expensive, defense it provides to Germany." Germany rejects the statements, but the debate about increasing the defense expenses in Europe is stimulated.
- **April 20, 2017** - The Defense Ministry (MApN) sends a request to the government of the United States of America expressing willingness to buy Patriot missiles.
- **May 25, 2017** - The first NATO Summit with the participation of the new US President, Donald Trump, takes place in Brussels. On this occasion, the US president criticizes the Russian Federation, calls for the observance of the financial commitments made by the members of the Alliance and an increase of the sums allocated by the US to protect the Eastern flank of NATO is announced.
- **May 26 - June 16, 2017** - Noble Jump 2017 NATO military exercise takes place in Romania, in a relatively discrete manner without too much public promotion.
- **June 4-9, 2017** Romania's President Klaus Iohannis is in Washington, for the first meeting of an Eastern European head of state with the new US president. On this occasion the US president explicitly reaffirms the intention of the US to act in the spirit of Article 5 of the NATO Treaty.
- **June 29, 2017** - In the Arges County a grave road accident takes place involving a military truck, an event which resulted in the death of three Romanian members of the armed forces. The event is thoroughly reflected in the media, with the technical capacity of the Romanian Army under scrutiny.
- **July 6, 2017** – The Summit of the Three Seas Initiative takes place in Warsaw, where Romania is represented by the President, and the US leader Donald Trump asks Russia "to cease its destabilizing activities in Ukraine and elsewhere".
- **June-July 2017** - more information appears regarding the Zapad 17 military exercise, prepared by Russia, as a response to military mobilization in Eastern Europe. Also, specific reactions from Russia emerge towards the exercises in Romania.
- **July 11-22, 2017** – Romania is one of the countries which host Saber Guardian 2017 NATO military exercise.
- **July 11, 2017** The US State Department approves a possible sale of Patriot missile defense systems to Romania - generating an ample discussion regarding the opportunity of this expenditure in Romania.

- **July 28, 2017** - Romania refuses to allow entry in its airspace to a plane transporting Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Rogozin, generating his aggressive reaction containing threats of direct responses.
- **End of July/ beginning of August** - The government announces changes regarding special pensions, which impact the Army, and the public debate around the issue includes examples of high pensions, discussed in a critical manner. The image of the Army is affected.

Since the beginning of the year **President Iohannis has started sending signals regarding the importance of Defense**, by asking its budget to be increased to 2% of GDP. This request came in the context **of the broader discussions regarding defense spending in NATO states**.

At political level, **in Romania there was a public message of consensus regarding defense spending and the first elements pointing to our country's intention to increase the funds for military acquisitions were evident since May**. Romania tends to be presented in the media as a country which supports a strong NATO with solid relations between the partners, especially between the US and European countries.

At the end of May **the first NATO summit with the participation of the new US President** took place in Brussels. For the Romanian media, this moment helped clarify **President Trump's vision regarding the mission of NATO**, as well as the new US administration's relation with **countries in Eastern Europe in the context of increasing pressure from the Russian Federation**. Romanian media noted the messages of the US President in this respect, as well as the decision to increase the funds allocated for strengthening the Eastern NATO flank.

Trump întărește apărarea flancului estic al NATO. Planurile pentru România

Într-o propunere trimisă Congresului SUA pe 23 mai, Administrația Trump solicită creșterea cu 40% a bugetului dedicat European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), programul lansat după anexarea ilegală a Crimeei de către Rusia, dedicat apărării țărilor din flancul estic al NATO.



4,77

MILIARDE
DOLARI
BUGET

Cu **1,357 MILIARDE** mai mult decât a fost solicitat pentru 2017 și de **CIRCA ȘASE ORI** mai mult decât a fost alocat în 2016.

217,7
MILIOANE
DOLARI

Pentru **EXERCITII ȘI ANTRENAMENTE** alături de aliați și partenerii NATO ar urma să fie alocate.

337.8
MILIOANE
DOLARI

Pentru **ÎMBUNĂȚĂȚIREA INFRASTRUCTURII.**

știrileprotv.ro

UPDATE Donald Trump la summit-ul NATO. Alianța trebuie să se concentreze asupra „terrorismului, imigrației” și „amenințărilor Rusiei” FOTO VIDEO

25 mai 2017, 12:07 de **Viorica Marin** Devino fan

Salvează în arhivă

cuvinte cheie: nato, summit, bruxelles, proteste, donald trump, recep erdogan

-1 (1 voturi)

18 comentarii

imi place 2 de persoane apreciază asta. Fii primul dintre prietenii tăi.

2

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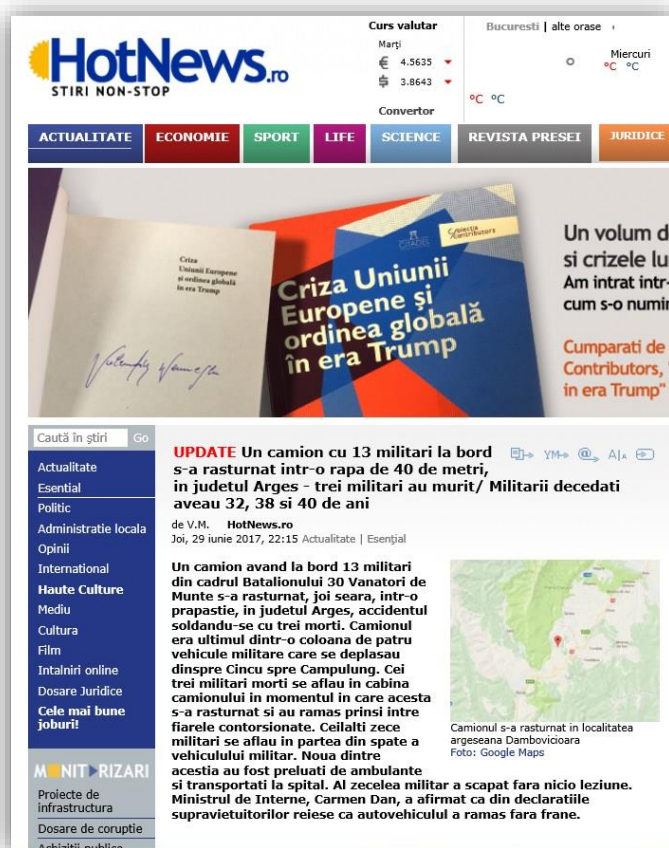
Soon after the NATO summit and during the early stages of the military exercise **NOBLE JUMP**, **President Iohannis's visit to the US took place**. In public messages the main focus was the partnership between the two countries in the security area.

In this context, we noted the tendency of voices in the Romanian media to present the visit of Romania's President to the US also as a form of mediation of the relation between the US and Europe.

During this period, more details started to appear about the Army's intentions concerning acquisitions.

Furthermore, President Iohannis warned at the beginning of July that there might be problems with the government's observance of its commitments regarding the Army budget, **again underlining the target of 2% of GDP**.

Between the two military exercises **the truck accident in the Arges County took place, where several Army personnel lost their lives**.



hotnews.ro

It is a moment which brought back into public focus, in a critical manner, the **issue of the endowment of the Romanian Army.**

The Summit of the Three Seas Initiative took place in Poland, with the participation of President Iohannis. **President Trump stepped up the rhetoric against Russia which was the key moment for the Romanian media** (along with the announcement about the organization of the next Summit in Bucharest).

In the first part of July **THE SABER GUARDIAN EXERCISE BEGAN** (details below). During the exercise **the subject of the acquisition of Patriot missiles** from the US appeared. This was one of the moments when several visible voices of the Romanian media suggested that the acquisition represented the “bill” of President Iohannis’s visit to the US. Furthermore, mainstream media sources criticized the acquisition – either accusing its price or promoting elements meant to question the efficiency of Patriot missile systems.

At institutional level, there was an integrated message supporting the possible acquisition - the cabinet and the President conveyed similar messages.

Iohannis, despre rachetele Patriot: Le luăm pentru a avea o armată dotată mai bine și pentru a garanta securitatea

15 iulie 2017, 13:44 de News.ro Devino fan

Salvează în arhivă

cuvinte cheie: klaus iohannis, rachete, patriot, armata, securitate, cincu

-2 (8 voturi)

20 comentarii

imi place 419 de persoane apreciază asta. Fii primul dintre prietenii tăi.

419

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Abonare



Președintele Klaus Iohannis participă la exercițiul militar multinational Saber Guardian 2017 la Cincu Brașov
FOTO Presidency.ro

adevărul.ro

The end of July and the beginning of August (right after the end of Saber Guardian) are marked by a debate which puts the area of National Security and Defense in a rather negative light in the public eye - **the government's decision to modify the system of special pensions** was accompanied in the media by repeated examples of high pensions of former members of the Army, police or intelligence services, as well as by high-profile news about people leaving these sectors (which were presented as justified by the fear of smaller pensions). **Regardless of the motivations behind the cabinet's decision, the way this debate evolved generated the impression that there are "privileged employees" of the state.**

Sistemul militar, în pragul colapsului. Mii de pensionări în armată, poliție și servicii secrete de frica schimbării legii pensiilor militare

21 Iul 2017, 14:18 Un articol de: [B1.ro](#) |  Like 315



Foto:Gandul **Eveniment**

Mii de militari, polițiști și angajați din serviciile secrete și-au depus în acest an dosarele de pensionare de teamă că viitoarele pensii le vor fi diminuate printr-o modificare a legii pensiilor militare. În cadrul ședinței de Guvern de joi, chiar premierul Mihai Tudose a vorbit despre "hemoragii extraordinare în sistemele militare", informează [HotNews](#).

Totul a început de la Lia [Olguța Vasilescu](#), Ministrul Muncii, care a susținut de mai multe ori că legislația privind pensiile militare trebuie modificată, date fiind cuantumul mult mai mari decât cele ale pensiilor obișnuite. În ultimele luni, și președintele PSD, Liviu [Dragnea](#), a vorbit despre pensiile speciale.

b1.ro

During the same period the diplomatic incident between the Russian Federation and Romania took place, when **Dmitri Rogozin's plane was not allowed to enter Romanian airspace**. The Russian reaction included clear elements of propaganda, meant not only to explain the event in the international context, but also to send signals towards Romanians - that the Romanian state satisfies the interests of other countries (i.e. the United States).

The incident allowed the dissemination of such messages about Romania, since other European countries did not take similar decisions regarding the aircraft.

NEGATIVE NARRATIVES - SABER GUARDIAN

We must mention from the beginning that the negative narratives regarding Saber Guardian had an isolated impact - even though we have noticed their diversification. Their existence implies a high level of interest and attention and, in certain situations, we can speak not only of specific critical mentions, but about the promotion of anti-Western stereotypes.

There were two major moments which were reflected in all meaningful areas, information which put an unfavorable focus either on the military exercise or on the Romanian Army: the metallic ammunition fragment which landed in a garden near Sibiu and the sinking of a Romanian TAB (amphibious armored personnel carrier) in the Danube. These two moments were reflected in all media sources and on Facebook.

In standard online media, we have noticed attacks on the following themes:

- News outlets in the Valcea County ([Viata Vâlclii](#); [Vocea Vâlclii](#)) referred to the **“traffic jams” created** in the county by the NATO convoys.
- [NTV Constanța](#) accused the fact that citizens were **“frightened”** by the helicopters which overflowed the capital of the county one night.
- [Info Brașov](#) used the term **“occupation”** when referring to the presence of NATO troops.
- On the website of the newspaper [Deșteptarea](#) from Bacău, an op-ed underlined that such military exercises are **“provoking Russia”** and defended the Russian Federation regarding the annexation of Crimea.
- As an element of context, [Știrile Pro Tv](#) offered increased visibility to the Russian Federation’s Zapad 17 exercise (presented as a reaction to NATO maneuvers).

On Facebook, additional attacks were launched, and distributed in groups with large numbers of members, on the following two themes:

- “The sinking of the Romanian TAB vehicle will be used as a pretext for the country to buy military technology from the US”
- “The presence of NATO and particularly US troops is affecting infrastructure and the lives of Romanians. The same troops are not going to defend us in the event of an armed conflict”.

It is notable that, **as a marked difference from Noble Jump, when the potential traffic problems generated by military convoys were a prominent issue, in the case of Saber Guardian the issue was much less discussed both in media and on Facebook.**

COMPARISON WITH THE BALTIC COUNTRIES - WHAT WAS NOT DISCUSSED IN ROMANIA

The Baltic countries are amongst the most targeted by Russian propaganda. According to the study by the DFRLab of the Atlantic Council (“Russian Narratives on NATO’s Deployment” - published on medium.com on April 1st, 2017), the preferred themes used in these countries are focused on the following ideas:

- The Baltic states are paranoid and / or Russophobic
- NATO is unwelcome / NATO troops are occupants
- NATO cannot protect the Baltic States
- NATO’s actions are provocative / aggressive
- Russia is not a threat
- NATO supports Nazism
- NATO is obsolete
- NATO supports terrorism.

From these narratives, only a few can gain acceptance in Romania. The two studies regarding the two NATO military exercises show that, in Romania, **only some of these narratives are promoted:**

- **The fact that the official policy is “Russophobic” and that the current actions are provoking Russia**
- **“Russia is not a threat” or “NATO cannot protect Romania”.**
- **There are certain references to the fact that the respective (NATO) troops would be occupation troops – thus the implicit suggestion is they are not welcomed by the population.**

There are also common points with the situation in the Baltic countries (adapted to the local context).

The positioning towards Russia as a country which should not be provoked and with which a constructive relation should rather be built is relatively common in the Romanian public space. CPD/SNSPA studies show that the majority of Romanians not only do not wish for conflict, but would also prefer a better relation with Russia, in this context (therefore, we cannot speak about an explicit, direct Russophobia of the population).

In Romania the narratives suggesting NATO support for “extremist movements” or “terrorism” are inexistent.

EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE NARRATIVES IN THE MEDIA & ON FACEBOOK

Gândul.info – fragment of ammunition landed in a garden, as an example of military inefficiency: <http://www.gandul.info/stiri/un-proiectil-ricosat-din-poligonul-cincu-a-cazut-in-gradina-unui-localnic-16586383>



gandul.info

Știrile Pro Tv: The response of the Russian Federation to the Saber Guardian exercise - through the Zapad exercise: <http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/25-000-de-soldati-la-exercitiul-saber-guardian-din-romania-rusia-urmeaza-sa-raspunda-cu-zapad-si-100-000-de-militari.html>

25.000 de soldati, la exercitiul "Saber Guardian" din Romania. Rusia urmeaza sa raspunda cu "ZAPAD" si 100.000 de militari



Cel mai mare exercitiu militar condus de Statele Unite in Europa de Est atinge in aceste zile punctul culminant pe teritoriul Romaniei.

stirileprotv.ro

Viața Vâlcii and Info Brașov: Romania - "occupied" by NATO troops, the locals could not sleep because of the "encirclement" of the area:

<http://www.viatavalcii.ro/stiri/dus-intors/item/53586-cum-ati-dormit-in-noaptea-de-16-17-ramnicul-a-fost-incercuit-o-noapte-de-armata-nato>

CUM AȚI DORMIT ÎN NOAPTEA DE 16/17? RÂMNICUL A FOST ÎNCERCUIT O NOAPTE DE ARMATA NATO

Scris de Laura Bondoc
Luni, 17 Iulie 2017 (21)

Notează articolul ★★★★★ (0 voturi)

În noaptea de duminică spre luni, 16-17 Iulie 2017, în Râmnicu Vâlcea, peste 2.000 de militari și peste 740 mijloace tehnice militare au desfășurat acțiuni complexe în cadrul unui amplu exercițiu militar. Aceste acțiuni fac parte din cadrul exercițiului multinațional Saber Guardian 2017. În ziua exercițiului, o parte a trupelor NATO, care au luat cu „asalt” Râmnicul, au staționat pe bulevardul Dem Rădulescu cu tehnica și dotarea cu care au executat exercițiul. De altfel, în perioada respectivă, bulevardul Dem Rădulescu, dar și DN 64 au fost blocate pentru deplasarea mijloacelor militare în locația unde s-a desfășurat exercițiul nocturn. La acest exercițiu militar au participat aproximativ 500 de militari români din Brigada Multinațională Sud-Est și din Brigada 10 Geniu „Dunărea de Jos”, 1.000 de americani din Regimentul 2 Cavalerie și circa 130 de polonezi, 150 germani, 45 olandezi, 40 macedoneni, 30 sloveni, 35 lituanieni și 10 britanici, care au simulat acțiuni de luptă complexă și trecerea peste un curs de apă pe timpul nopții. În condiții de intinerie, s-au construit trei poduri plătitoare: unul românesc (Batalionul 136 Geniu Alba Iulia, 52 Geniu Sata Mare, Brigada 10 Geniu Brăila, sprijinite de genii ai Centrului de Instruire pentru Geniu EOD și Apărare CBRN Rm Vâlcea), unul americano-olandez și unul german. Despre acest amplu exercițiu militar, maiorul Florentin Duman din cadrul Forțelor Terestre Române ne-a declarat: „Acest exercițiu a fost planificat în scopul promovării securității și stabilității în zona Mării Negre, precum și întărirea parteneriatului între forțele terestre ale SUA în Europa, România și Bulgaria”. Acest amplu exercițiu militar al trupelor NATO la Rm. Vâlcea va fi reluat și în noaptea de 19 spre 20 Iulie, încheind în județul nostru activitățile din cadrul Saber Guardian 2017. În altă ordine de idei, Inspectoratul de Jandarmi Județean Vâlcea și Inspectoratul de Poliție Județean Vâlcea au executat o acțiune de asigurare a ordinii și siguranței publice la localitățile de câmpare și cazare pentru prevenirea și combaterea tulburării ordinii publice, a faptelor antisociale, protecția participanților și a infrastructurii. Pe timpul tranzitării convoaielor cu tehnica militară, acestea au fost monitorizate de echipele de intervenție ale Inspectoratului de Jandarmi Județean Vâlcea și Inspectoratul Județean de Poliție Vâlcea. Saber Guardian 2017 este cel mai mare exercițiu militar desfășurat în țara noastră până acum. La el participă 25.000 de militari, din 22 de țări aliate și parteneri. Antrenamentele au loc în peste 20 de țări, inclusiv Marea Neagră.

Viața Vâlcii

<http://infobrasov.net/romania-o-tara-ocupata-25-000-de-militari-din-22-de-tari-si-3-000-de-blindate-se-antreneaza-in-tara/>

**România o țară ocupată!
25.000 de militari din 22 de țări și 3.000 de blindate se antrenează în țară!!**

Politica | Iul 18, 2017

Dupa tragerile cu munitie de razboi, de sambata de la Cincu, duminica, romanii si americanii au trecut cot la cot Dunarea si au simulat respingerea unui atac inamic.

Cel mai mare exercitiu militar condus de Statele Unite in Europa de Est atinge in aceste zile punctul culminant pe teritoriul Romaniei.

Desfasurat si in Ungaria si Bulgaria, **Saber Guardian** aduna la un loc 25.000 de militari din 22 de tari, precum si 3.000 de blindate.

Info Brasov

Facebook Post in the group *Justiție-Dreptate și Adevăr (Justice-Fairness and Truth): The sinking of the Romanian TAB vehicle - pretext to buy military technique from American "bastards"*

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ASOCIATIAPROEUROPALEX/permalink/1128809713886951/>



Facebook Post - Raw: Saber Guardian - damages caused. NATO troops "will not defend us" in case of conflict.

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1940998262806917&id=1424556087784473



POSITIVE NARRATIVES - SABER GUARDIAN

At several times during Saber Guardian, the exercise was promoted directly through positive approaches, either by the media or by representatives of the authorities or of the participating armies.

The most visible positive moments have been the following:

- The **gun salute** meant to commemorate the Romanian soldiers who fought in the battle of Mărăști in the First World War.
- **The Romanian Army engineers participating in the construction of a bridge over the Danube**, in the frame of the exercises.
- **Appreciative messages that came from the Romanian President and the Defense Minister, as well as praises from American military leaders.**
 - Most importantly, the President's participation over numerous days at events in the frame of Saber Guardian guaranteed supplementary visibility. It is notable that even tabloids covered the President's visit to the exercise, and particularly his presence at the Kogalniceanu base (when his outfit generated a vast news coverage)

The Commander of U.S. Army Europe praises the Romanian Army

(hotnews.ro)



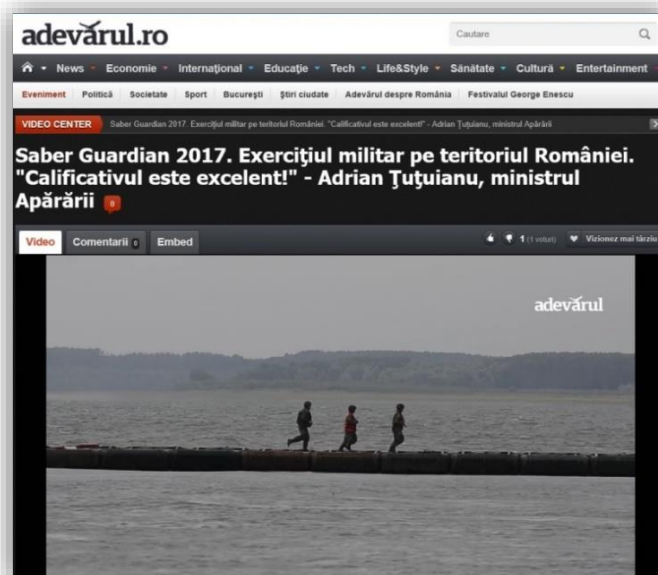
Gun salute in honor of the Romanian soldiers who fought at Mărăști

(adevarul.ro)



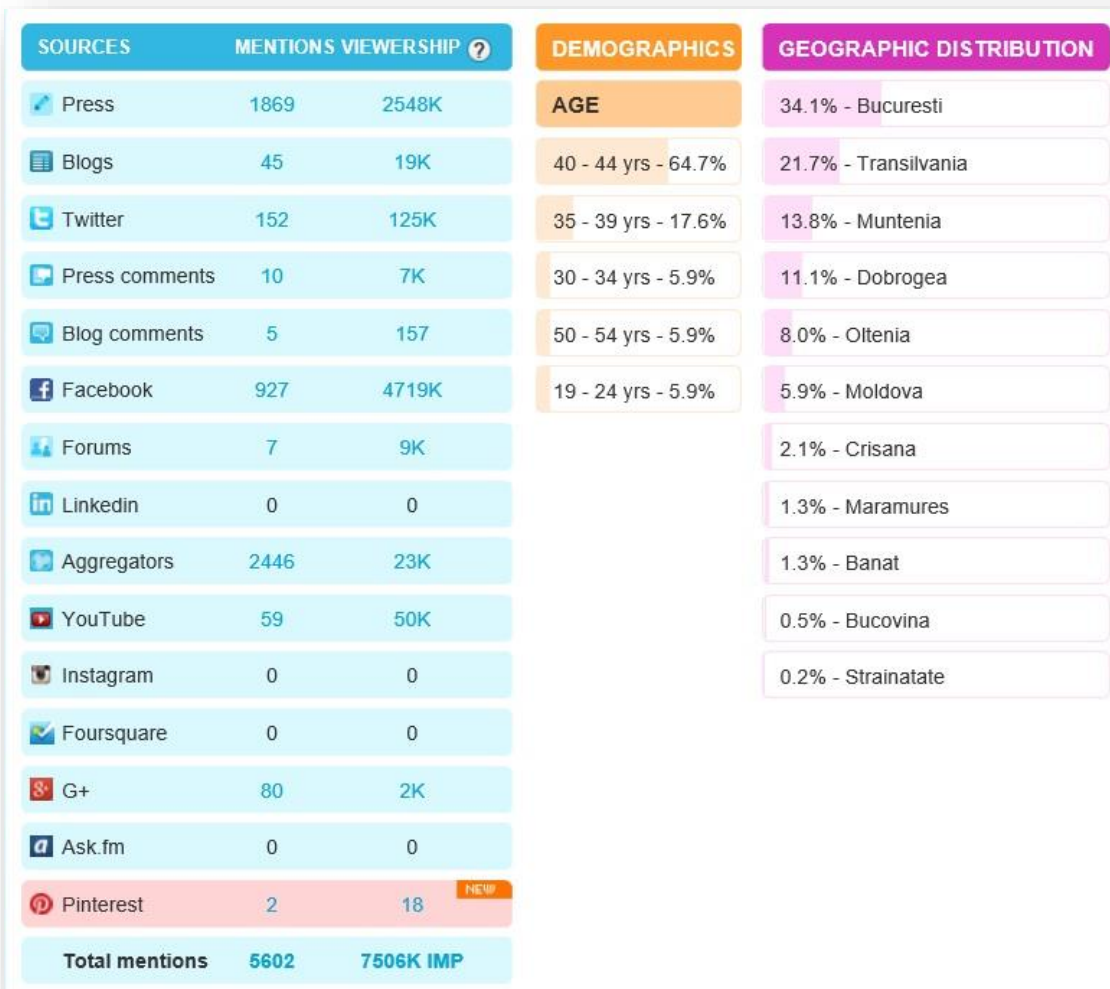
Romanian political leaders promote Saber Guardian: The President and The Minister of Defense

(adevarul.ro, agerpres.ro, stirileprotv.ro)



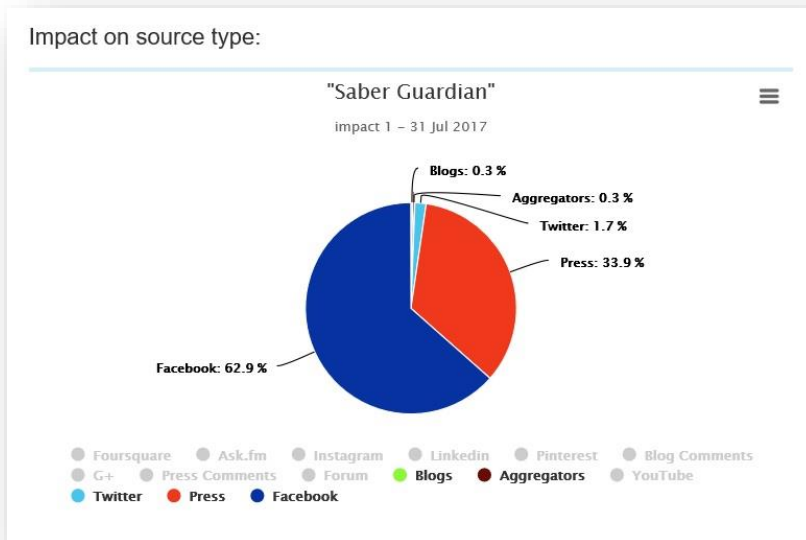
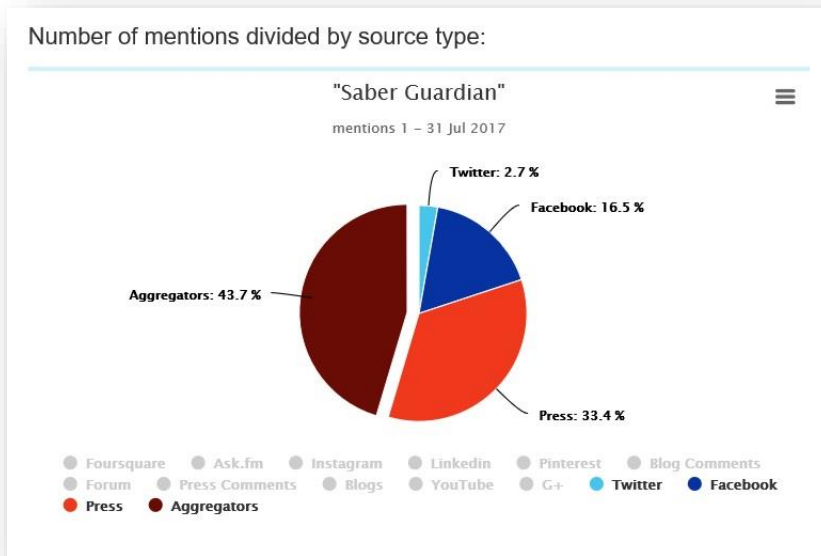
APPEARANCES GROUPED BY SOURCES. WHO PROMOTED THE EXERCISE THE MOST?

The Saber Guardian military exercise recorded in July over 5600 mentions in all media sources, mentions which had an impact on over **7.5 million people**. **The impact is double as intensity (and visibility) compared to the Noble Jump exercise (which had around 2350 mentions and 3.7 million views)**. Compared to the Noble Jump exercise, the number of mentions on Facebook was 3 times bigger, the main explanation being the involvement of President Klaus Iohannis, known for his intense use of this social network to promote his own activities. Those who promoted varied elements about Saber Guardian are mostly people aged 35 - 44, from Bucharest, Transylvania and Southern Romania.



NUMBER OF MENTIONS AND IMPACT BY SOURCE TYPE

As we showed previously, although the largest number of mentions regarding Saber Guardian comes from news aggregator websites, followed by classic online media and **Facebook**, the **impact of the latter is over 60%** of the total, whilst the impact of aggregators is under 1%. The media websites account for 33.4% of the mentions and their impact is 33.9% of the total impact gained by Saber Guardian mentions.



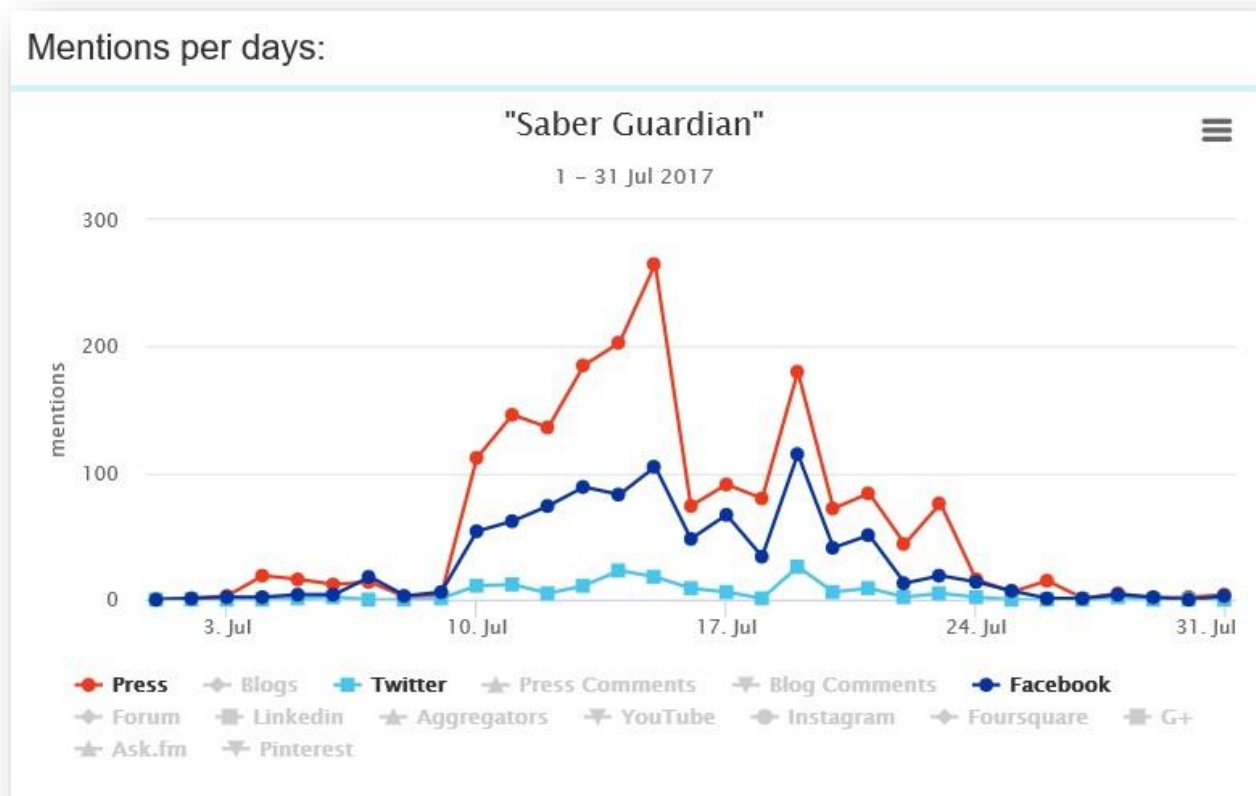
THE EVOLUTION OF THE THEME MENTIONS

The visibility of the Saber Guardian exercise was concentrated mainly over a period of two weeks, mostly during its actual running.

The main moments of visibility were:

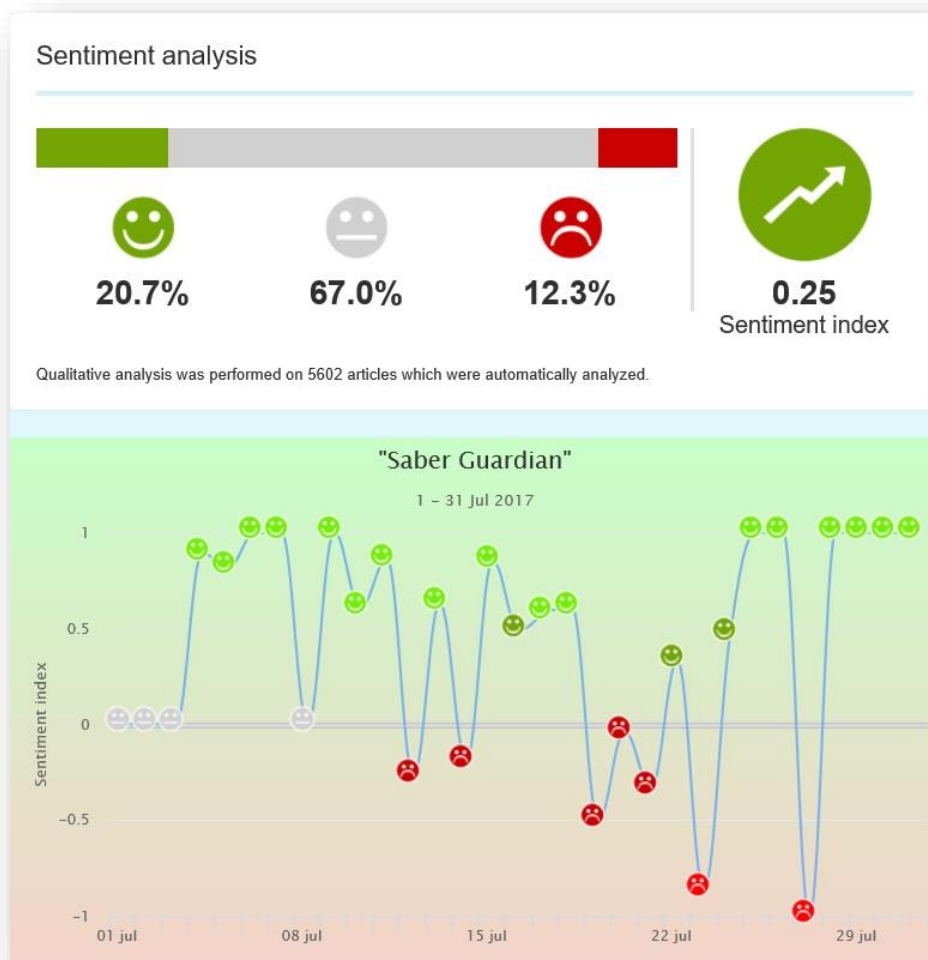
- **The landing of a fragment of ammunition in the garden of a local from the Sibiu County.**
- **The TAB vehicle sinking in the Danube.**
- **President Klaus Iohannis taking part in** events organized within the frame of the Saber Guardian exercise.

The visibility of these moments is normal.



WHAT WERE THE FEELINGS GENERATED ONLINE BY SABER GUARDIAN

Saber Guardian was mostly promoted through neutral or positive attitudes. The index of **negative attitudes** is around **12%**. The moments when negative attitudes were expressed coincide with the incidents which took place. In the case of the TAB vehicle sinking in the Danube, the criticism targeted the endowment of the Romanian Army, not the Saber Guardian exercise. Nevertheless, the Army's negative visibility cannot be ignored - because in the end, these narratives affect the credibility of these institutions (whether we are talking about the Romanian Army or NATO).



TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MENTIONS

Generally, Saber Guardian was associated with specific elements, but, significantly, it is **also quite strongly associated with Romania's President Klaus Iohannis**. This confirms the fact that the President's participation in these events mattered greatly from the point of view of media coverage, as it contributed to a greater visibility and media impact of the exercise.

It should also be noted that association with Romania or elements related to our country is also very high. This shows that the media was quite interested in the events conducted by the Romanian Army in the frame of the exercise, in other aspects which involved its presence, but also in the communication of Romanian officials on the subject.

Tagcloud

americani Apararii Brasov Centru **Cincu** Dunare Europa exercitiu Exercițiul exercitiul
exercitiului Fortele Fortelor FOTO Getica **Guardian** GUARDIAN Infanterie
Iohannis Klaus Kogalniceanu lupta MApN Mihail militar militara militare militari
Militarii multinational Nationale **NATO** participa Presedintele Romane romani
Romania Romaniei SABER **Saber** scufundat Sibiu SUA TAB Terestre timpul
Tutuianu Unite Valcea VIDEO

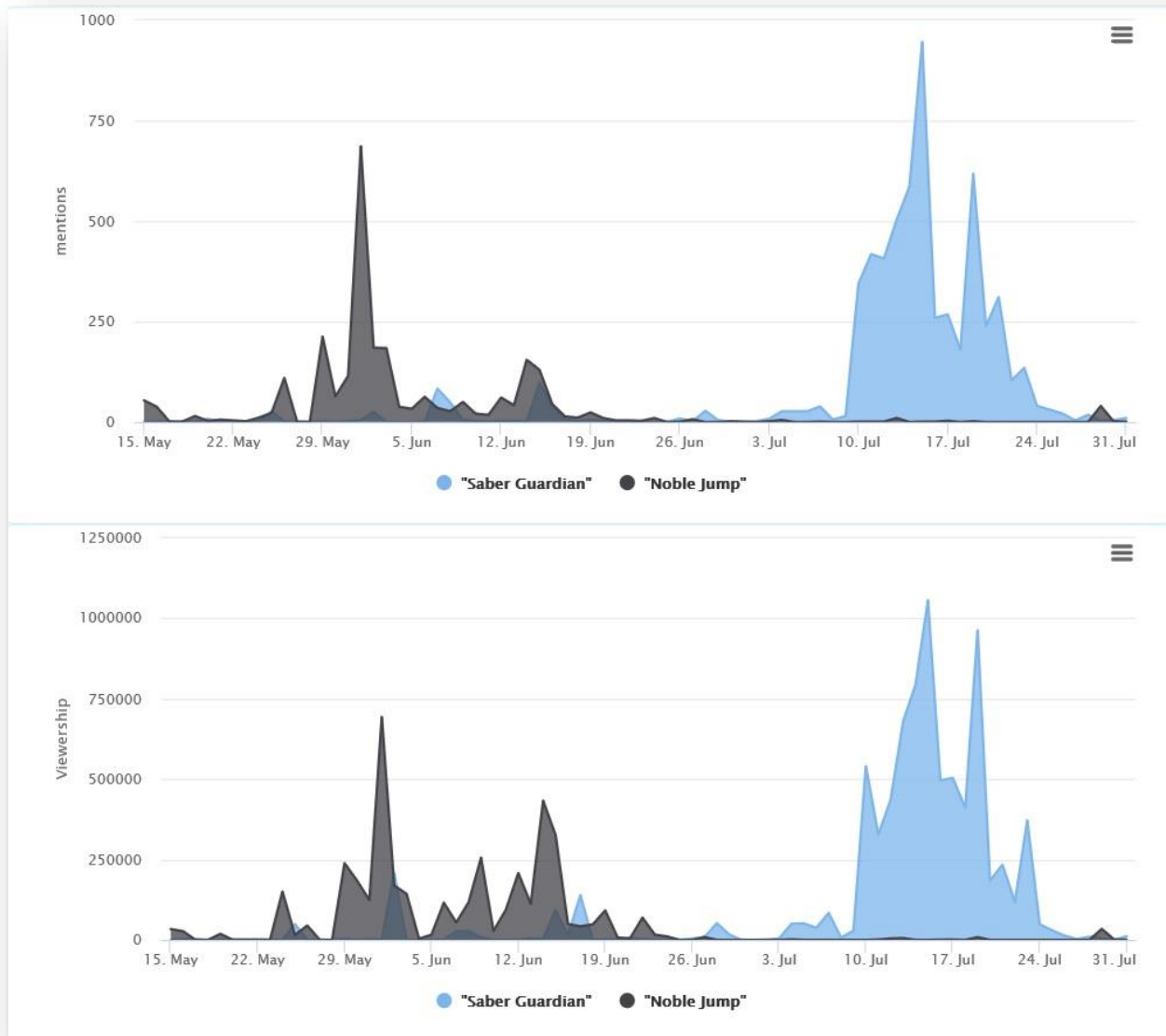
THE MOST INFLUENTIAL FACEBOOK SOURCES

Facebook	Posturi	Fans
+ Adevărul	1	623937
+ Antena 3 Romania	1	538513
+ Ministerul Aparării Naționale, Romania - www.mapn.ro	1	325459
+ TVR2	1	125235
+ Forțele Aeriene Române	2	55465
+ Centrul de Televiziune și Film al MAPN	2	30332
+ OBSERVATORUL MILITAR	3	28660
+ Nicolae Ionel Ciucă	2	22301
+ Divizia 4 Infanterie "Gemina"	1	13287
+ Liga Militarilor Profesioniști	1	12983
+ Revista Forțelor Terestre	4	12575
+ EurActiv.ro	1	8394
+ Divizia 2 Infanterie Getica	1	8065
+ Ora Armatei	1	4932
+ Brigada 8 LAROM	1	3989
+ Plutonier-adjutant principal Florea SAS	1	3827
+ Brigada 10 Geniu "Dunărea de Jos"	1	1024
+ Zamobxis	1	919
+ Liga Maiștrilor Militari de Marină	1	887
+ Romani inca demni	2	503

NOTE. On the official Facebook page of President Klaus Iohannis - which has over 1.800.000 fans – one post was published, containing several photos, about the visit to the Mihail Kogalniceanu base. It was not included in the ranking above due to the fact that the official name of the exercise or its explicit mentioning were absent, but it contained a reference to a meeting with “military personnel from Romania and allied forces stationed in our country”, as well as images which were intensely debated by the media.

SABER GUARDIAN vs. NOBLE JUMP vs. POLITICAL ISSUES

The most important conclusion is that the Saber Guardian exercise was more visible and had a greater media impact compared to the Noble Jump exercise. The peak number of mentions about Saber Guardian but also their impact is higher than in the case of Noble Jump, the other NATO military exercise organized in Romania at the beginning of the summer. It is of note that during the period of the Noble Jump exercise, information about Saber Guardian had already started to appear (a fact which is noticeable in the graphs below):

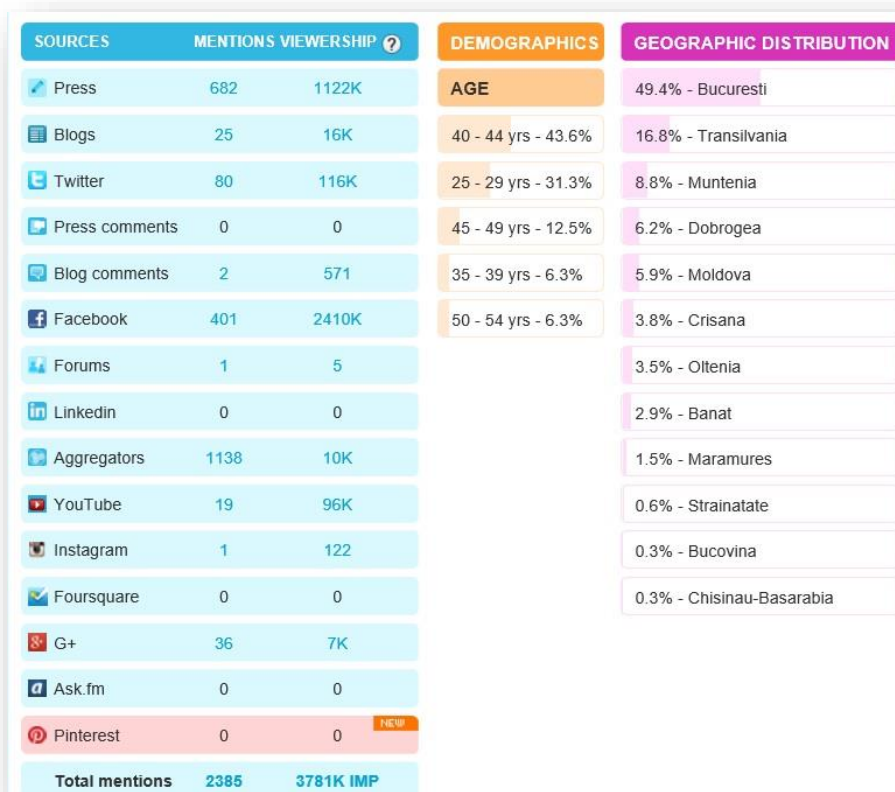


Although people in the 40-44 age category disseminated the most materials regarding the Noble Jump, similar to the case of Saber Guardian, in the case of the first exercise we can also mention **a large number of youth from the 25-29 age category**. This age category was not as active in the case of Saber Guardian.

For both exercises **the highest interest was registered in the Bucharest and Transylvania regions**.

Furthermore, **the highest impact of the mentions** of Noble Jump, as well as Saber Guardian, is **on Facebook**. In the case of both military exercises, **Facebook impact is around 62%**.

Graph below: *NOBLE JUMP - Number of mentions by source and impact of sources.*



We can note important differences in the mediatization of the two military exercises.

In the graph below, we find terms associated with the Noble Jump exercise, in its mediatization. **There are no associations of Noble Jump with the Romanian President, as he did not take part in events related to the first NATO military exercise organized in our country. Things changed significantly during Saber Guardian.**

Tagcloud

Apararii Aproximativ Brasov Bulgaria Bulgariiei Centrul Cincu convoaie Convoaiele drumuri Exerciitiu exercitiu exercitiul Exerciitiul Fortei Fortelor Getica Giurgiu Giurgiu-Bucuresti Grecia Greciei ingreunat Instruire Intrunite joi Jump JUMP militar militare militari multinational National NATO Nivel NOBLE Noble Oltului participa Reactie Ridicat Romania Romaniei ruta Sibiu Trafic Traficul Valcea Valea VIDEO VJTF

It is also noteworthy that **the most important moment when information containing negative attitudes was disseminated, in the case of Noble Jump, was the arrival of the troops in our country (end of May - beginning of June) – when potential traffic jams became a focus of the debate, following official communication on the issue.** **This was the peak in visibility for the Noble Jump exercise.** As a **comparison**, the most visible moments of **Saber Guardian** occurred during the actual exercise – **the arrival or withdrawal moments being less visible in the media** (this was partly influenced by the fact that institutional communication insisted less on these aspects).

EVOLUTIONS: Therefore, we can conclude that institutionally there have been three important differences in the official communication, which improved the public perception of NATO exercises, in the context of an increase in the number of negative narratives:

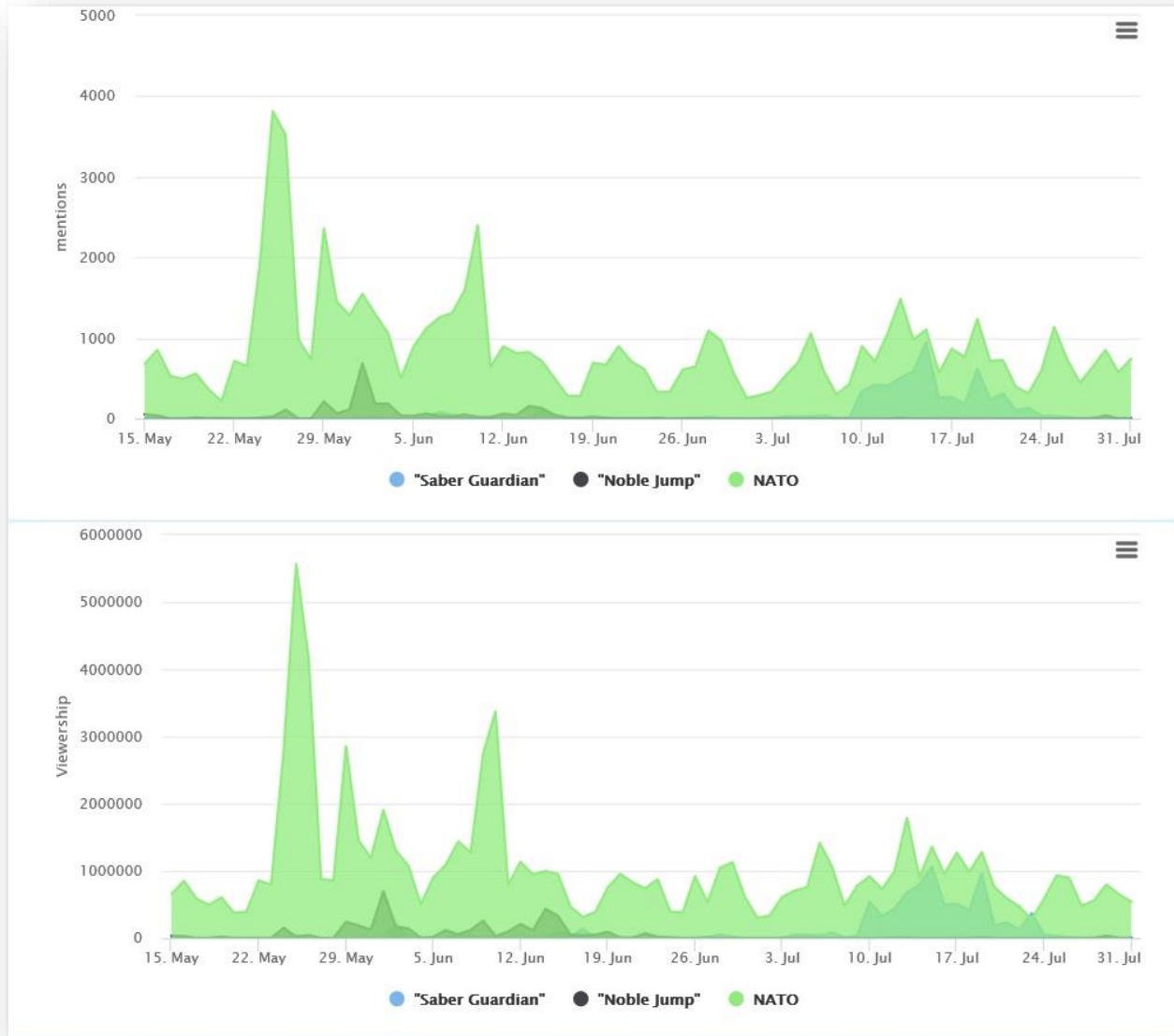
1. We noted the Romanian President taking on a role in the communication regarding the exercise (through visits and public messages which raised the profile and positive media impact of the military exercise)
2. We remarked that the military authorities avoided to communicate about the risk of traffic jams, which resulted in a lack of negative coverage associated with this element
3. We noted the existence (in addition to the official internal communication) of several external official messages – of American military leaders present in our country, which also helped raise the visibility and positive media impact.

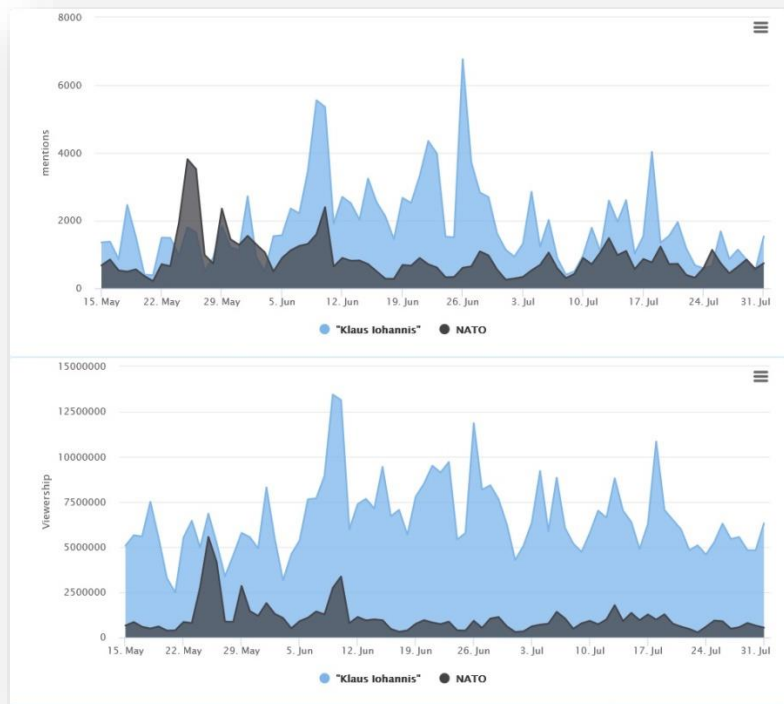
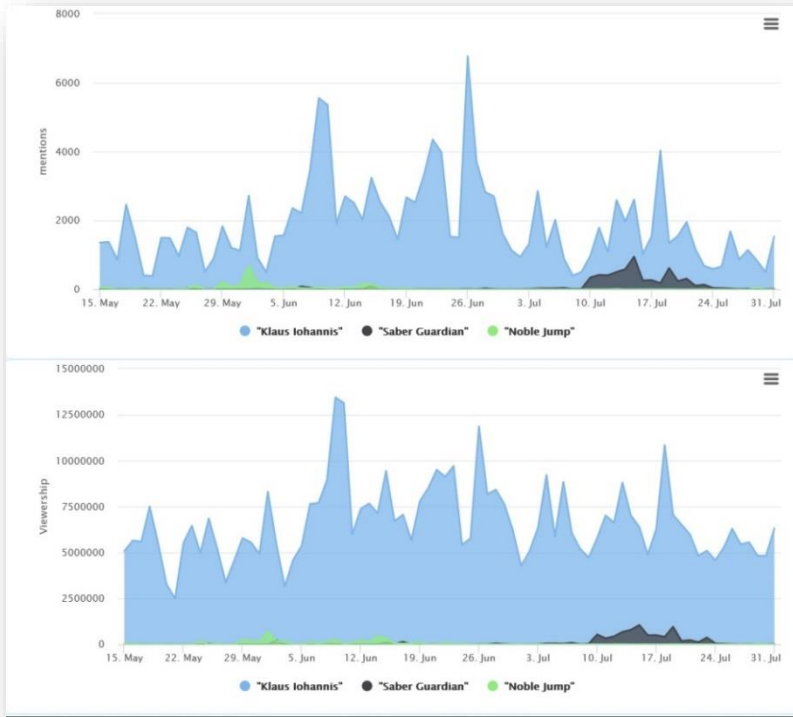
If the visibility of the two exercises is compared to that of NATO in general, we notice the number of mentions of NATO and their impact is vastly superior. The term “NATO” was obviously associated with the two military exercises, but not in an exclusive manner, not even during the exercises.

During the last months there have been many elements tied to the NATO-Russia relation, or US-Russia. At the same time, there was an **intense period** when NATO-related content was heavily circulated, especially after the latest NATO summit, with a focus on the actions and messages of the US President, but also on analyses regarding the future of the Alliance in this context (as exemplified at the beginning of our study).

The two military exercises took place against the background of important internal political events - firstly the change of the cabinet (with evolutions both before and after that moment).

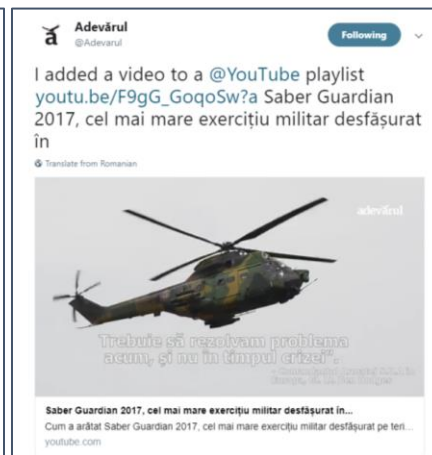
As an example (as seen in the following graph) the Romanian President, whose name was directly or indirectly associated with these national events, obtained a much higher visibility compared to the two military exercises or NATO as such:





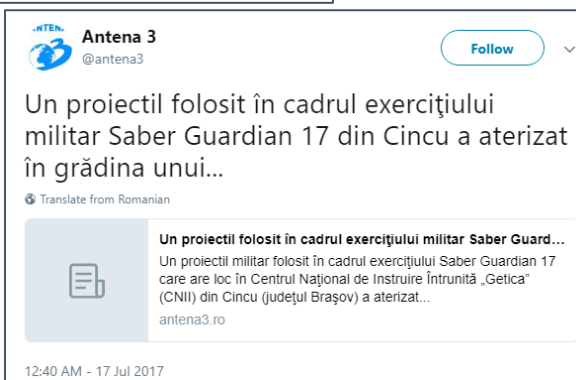
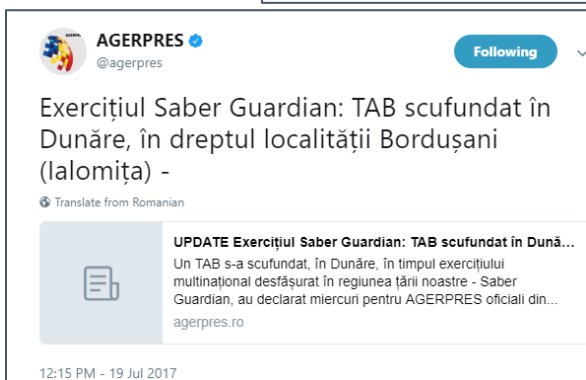
SABER GUARDIAN ON TWITTER - CASE STUDY

A special note regarding Twitter: because of the low interest for this network in Romania, there was no substantial communication (either as frequency or impact) in Romanian, by Romanian Twitter accounts on the subject of Saber Guardian and we have not identified impactful negative narratives disseminated on this network - with the exception of the press coverage of the incidents recorded during the exercise. From the point of view of visibility (through the number of people potentially reached), among the most important messages posted on Twitter from domestic accounts are the tweets posted by press sources such as @HotNews_ro (a leading news website), @Adevarul (a tweet which is actually an automated forward of a video posted on YouTube by this leading daily newspaper) and @romanioliberal (a daily newspaper), as well as @MAERomania (the account of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).



Among a provisional selection of the top 20 tweets with most potential visibility, we can also find three with unfavorable content from the point of view of the aspects they choose to reflect - two are focused

on the incident of the TAB sinking – posted by the DIGI24 news TV station account (@Digi24_HD) and by the account of the national press agency Agerpres (@agerpres), respectively, and the third, dedicated to the incident of the ammunition fragment landed in a garden, is posted on the account @antena3 (leading TV news channel).



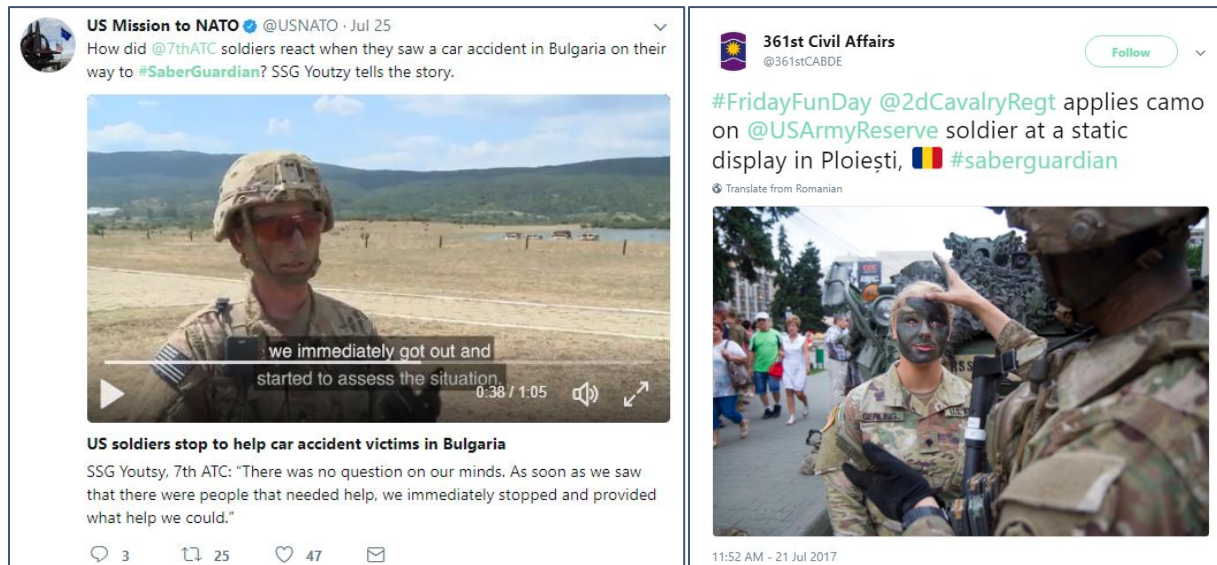
Following detailed monitoring, we also identified accounts of certain political or media institutions or influential journalists, which without commanding large audiences on Twitter, have also posted messages regarding this exercise. Among these accounts which reflected the event we found @RRInternational (the account of the national radio channel dedicated to broadcasting outside the country), @AmbasadaSUA (the account of the Embassy of the United States in Romania) and @catalinRtanase (the account of reporter Cătălin Radu Tănase, ProTV news correspondent). Their communication is quantitatively reduced, remarking only certain moments. Moreover, part of the tweets from these accounts were in English:



Among the tweets by Romanian sources which did not use the name Saber Guardian as a hashtag or as such in the tweet text, but simply referred to the NATO military exercise in Romania, we find messages about the participation of President Iohannis and the sinking of the TAB vehicle, but their number is small and their impact (determined by the number of followers) - presumably slight.



Beside the communication from Romanian sources, a constant flow of communication regarding the Saber Guardian exercise on Twitter was supported by a series of accounts which are connected mostly to the American Army or the American administration. Among them we have noted @USNATO (the official account of the US Mission to NATO) @USArmyEurope (which represents the American troops in Europe), @10thCAB (10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division), @361CABDE (361st Civil Affairs Brigade) as well as @USArmy, @7thATC (7th Army Training Command), @173rdAbnBde (US Army 173rd Airborne Brigade), @GermanyNATO (German Delegation to NATO) or specialized journalists such as @JenJudson.



The messages disseminated by these channels were focused on informative elements regarding the exercise, but the intention to associate the event with a series of principles and attributes such as cooperation (among the allied states), peaceful character, openness and even support for the civil population was also clear. As in the case of Noble Jump, the effort to visually present the event by using

high-quality photos, containing attractive compositions (through colors, landscapes, snapshots), meant to convey powerful messages, was obvious.



To conclude, due to the extremely limited number and potential visibility of tweets in Romanian, we have not identified on this network negative narratives regarding the Saber Guardian exercise capable to have a great impact among Romanian users, but several unfavorable elements reflected by the media regarding the event were also reflected on the Twitter channels of several press institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

The Saber Guardian military exercise was conducted in the context of an obvious rise in communication activities associated with the themes of national and regional security. Firstly, we note a rise in the intensity of communication on these aspects, in the public debate in Romania, a reason for which the Romanian Army and NATO are more exposed to critical evaluation.

Both exercises conducted this summer obtained a relatively discrete and positive mediatization - whilst they might have been better used to strengthen trust in NATO and the transatlantic project which Romania is part of. During the second exercise there was an improvement achieved through the involvement of the President of Romania, but the real potential was not fulfilled.

The anti-NATO negative narratives exist, they are noteworthy, even though their impact is still limited in Romania, a country with one of the most pro-Western attitudes in the region. The negative narratives concentrated on the “occupation” risk, the Romanian Army’s “lack of efficiency”, the costs generated by the cooperation with the US and the risk generated by upsetting the Eastern Neighbor (Russia - a country perceived negatively, but not so acutely as to be seen as a direct threat).

Romania’s President can play an important role in the public promotion of these actions - as witnessed, to some extent, during the Saber Guardian exercise, as he benefits from greater visibility than any other public actor involved.

The public who is active on social networks is willing to promote pro-Army and pro-NATO messages, as long as such content is available from credible and impactful voices (in this case – US military leaders and the Romanian President).

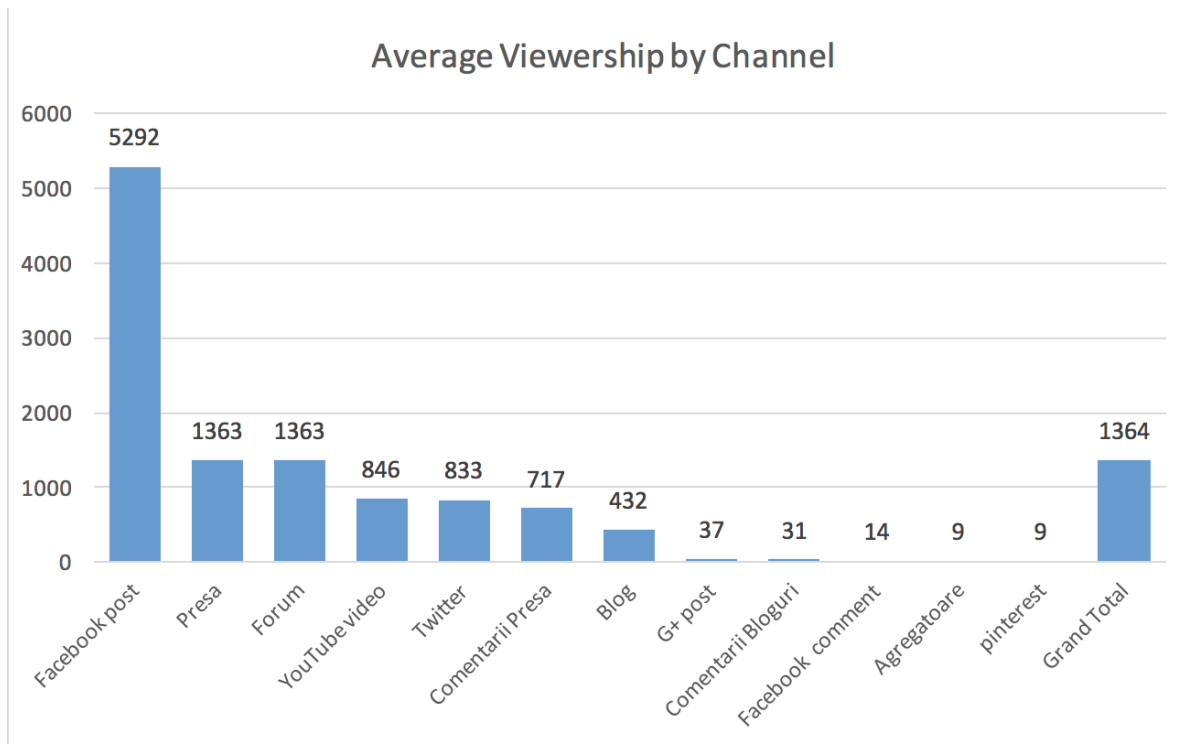
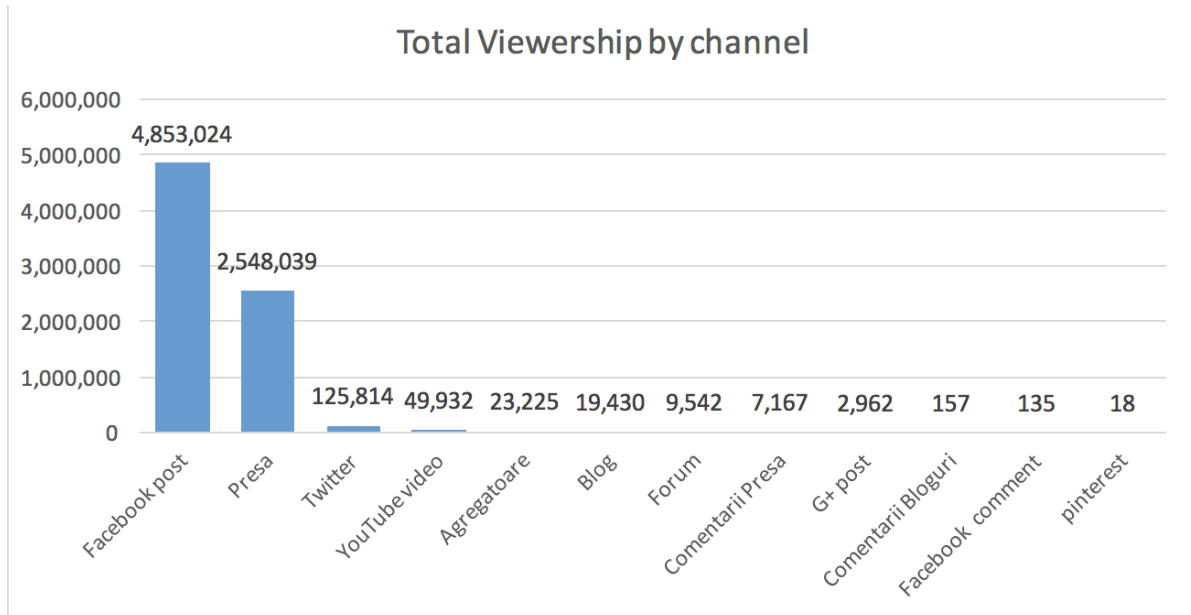
The Romanian media does not distinguish between themes which are useful in the regional context and themes that generate an “easy” tabloid-style impact - therefore, the official proactive communication from the institutions responsible within the field (the Army, in particular, but also the Government and the Presidency) is decisive in this perspective.

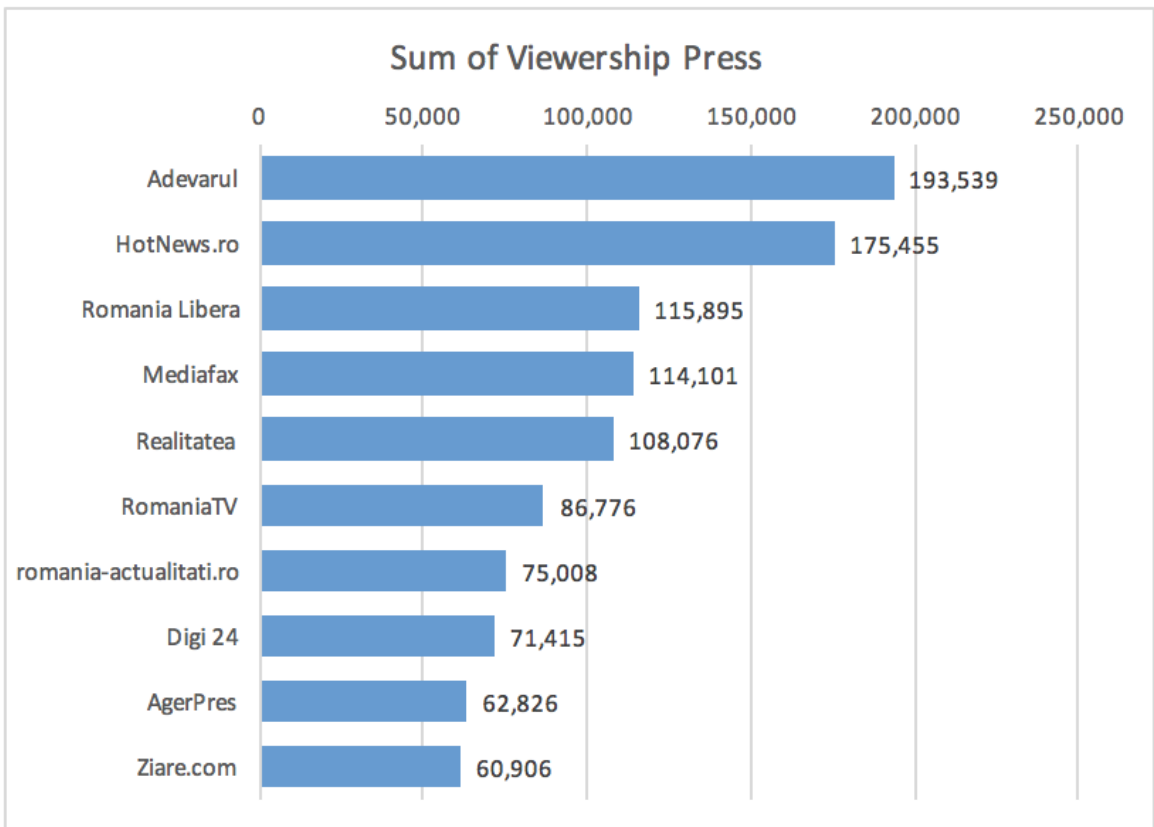
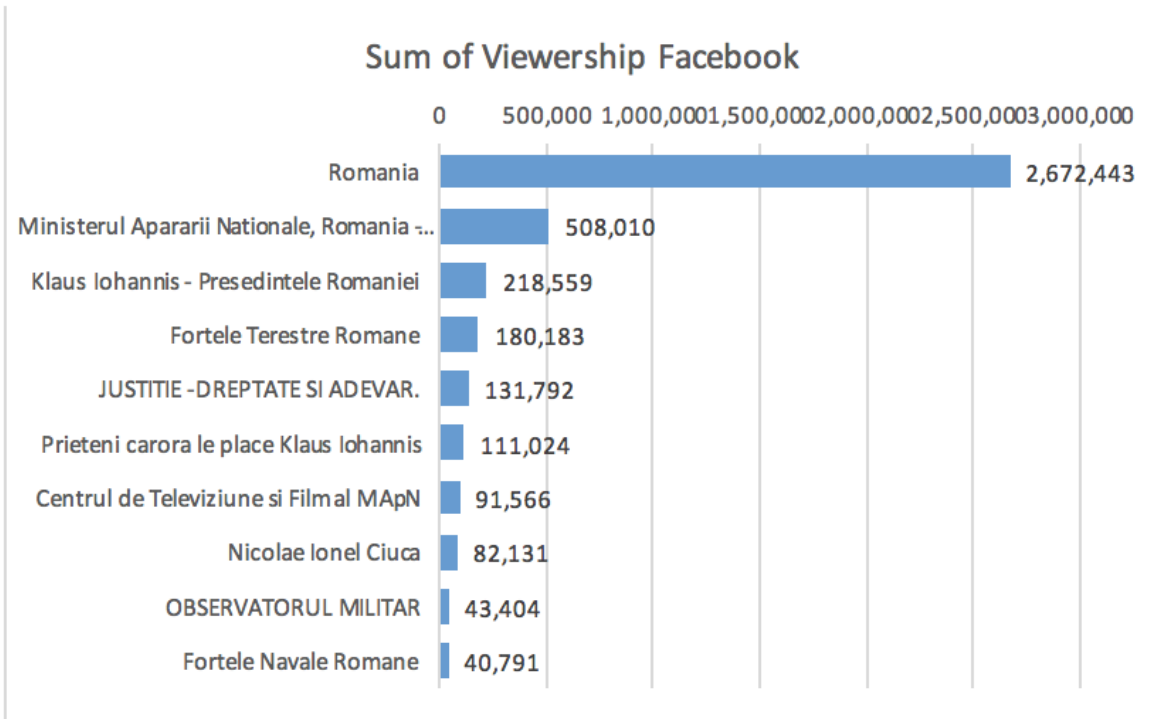
The intensity of Russian reactions to these exercises has started to increase - a fact which can be noticed in the official messages. We will continue to monitor these elements to see to what extent the anti-western narratives increase their impact.

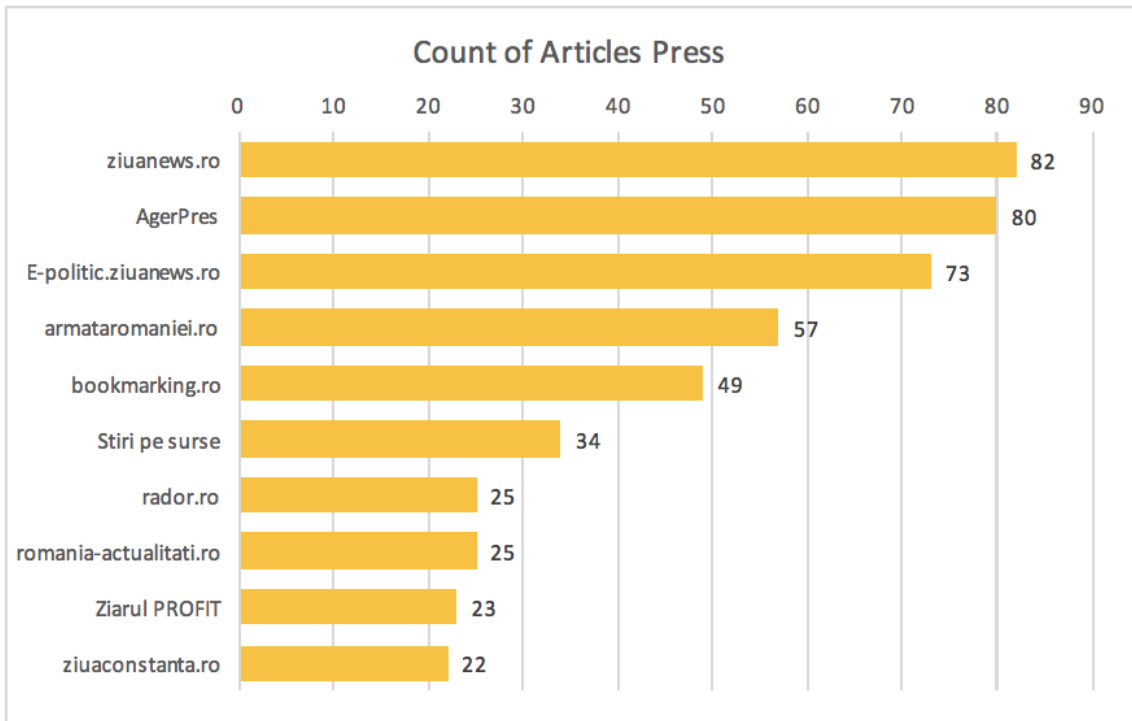
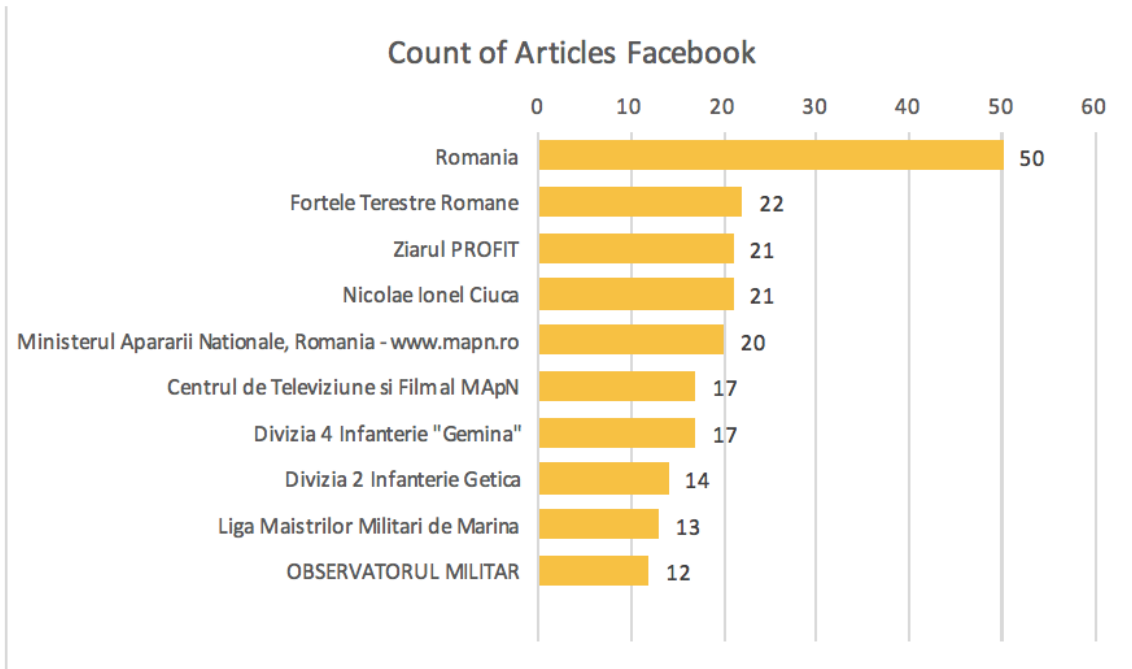
Dan Sultănescu is Executive Director of the Center for Civic Participation and Democracy (CPD@SNSPA). Daniel Buti, Dana Sultănescu, Radu Cucuta, Adi Constantin and Patricia Besciu are members of CPD.

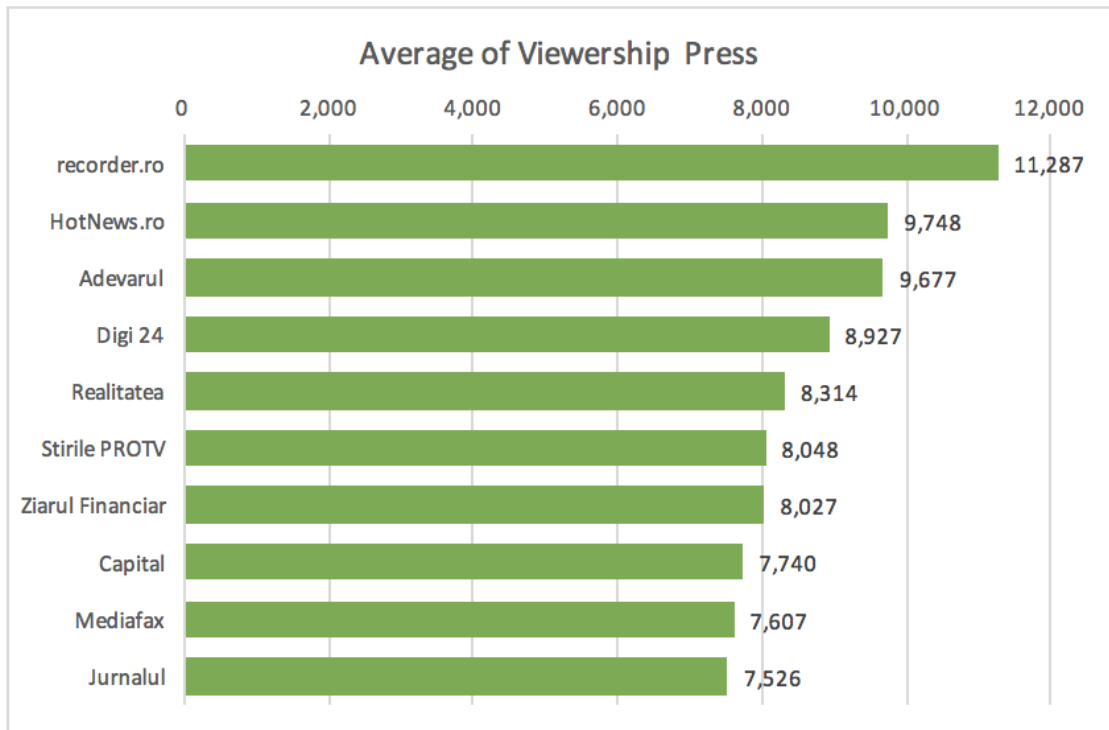
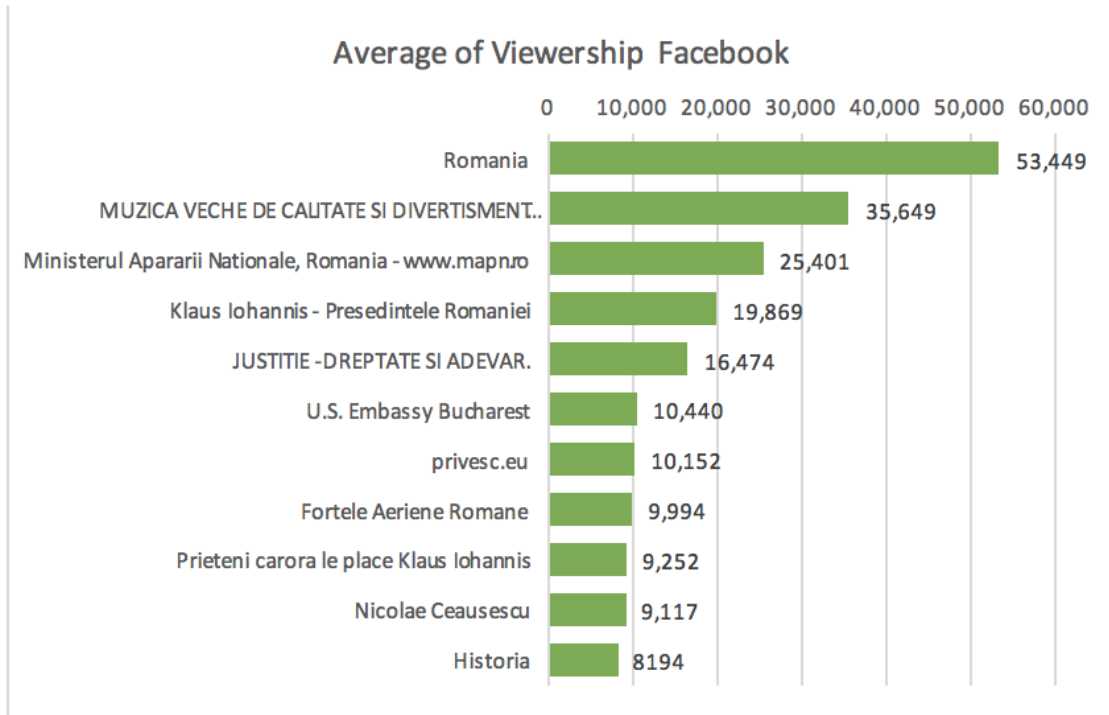
More about our work on www.civicparticipation.ro

ANNEXES









Sum of Viewership - Facebook



