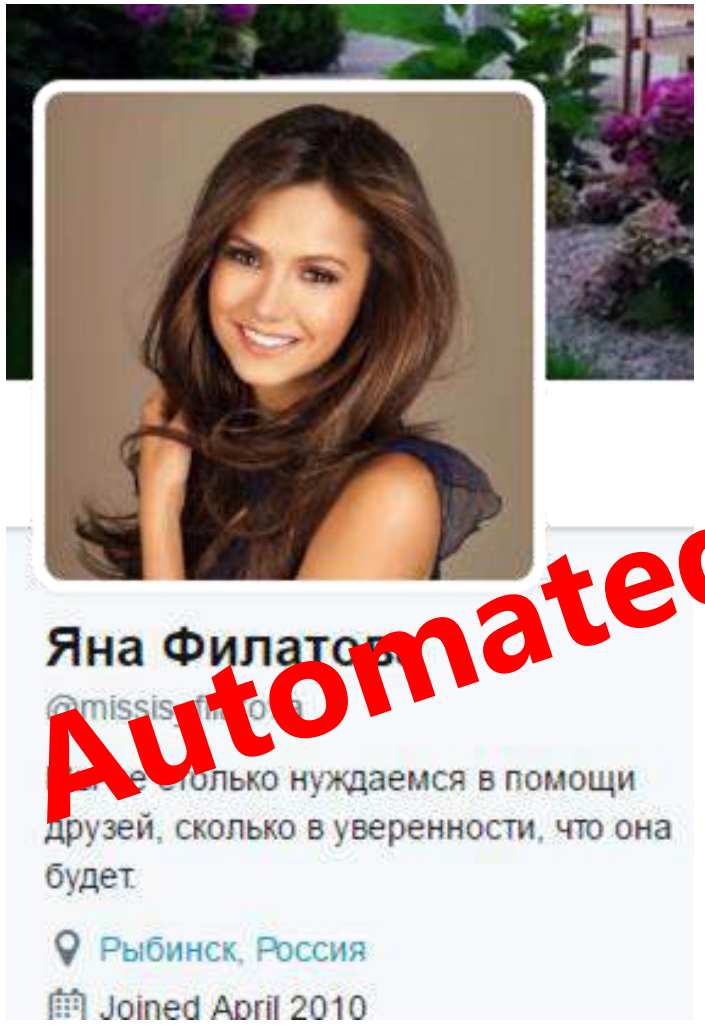
From Automation to Anonymity: ROBOTROLLING Tactics in 2018

Research by Dr .Rolf Fredheim, NATO Stratcom COE

Robotrolling

- Published quarterly
- Considers messages about NATO and the four countries Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, or Poland
- Currently Twitter data for March 2017 - present
- VKontakte from Summer 2017 - present

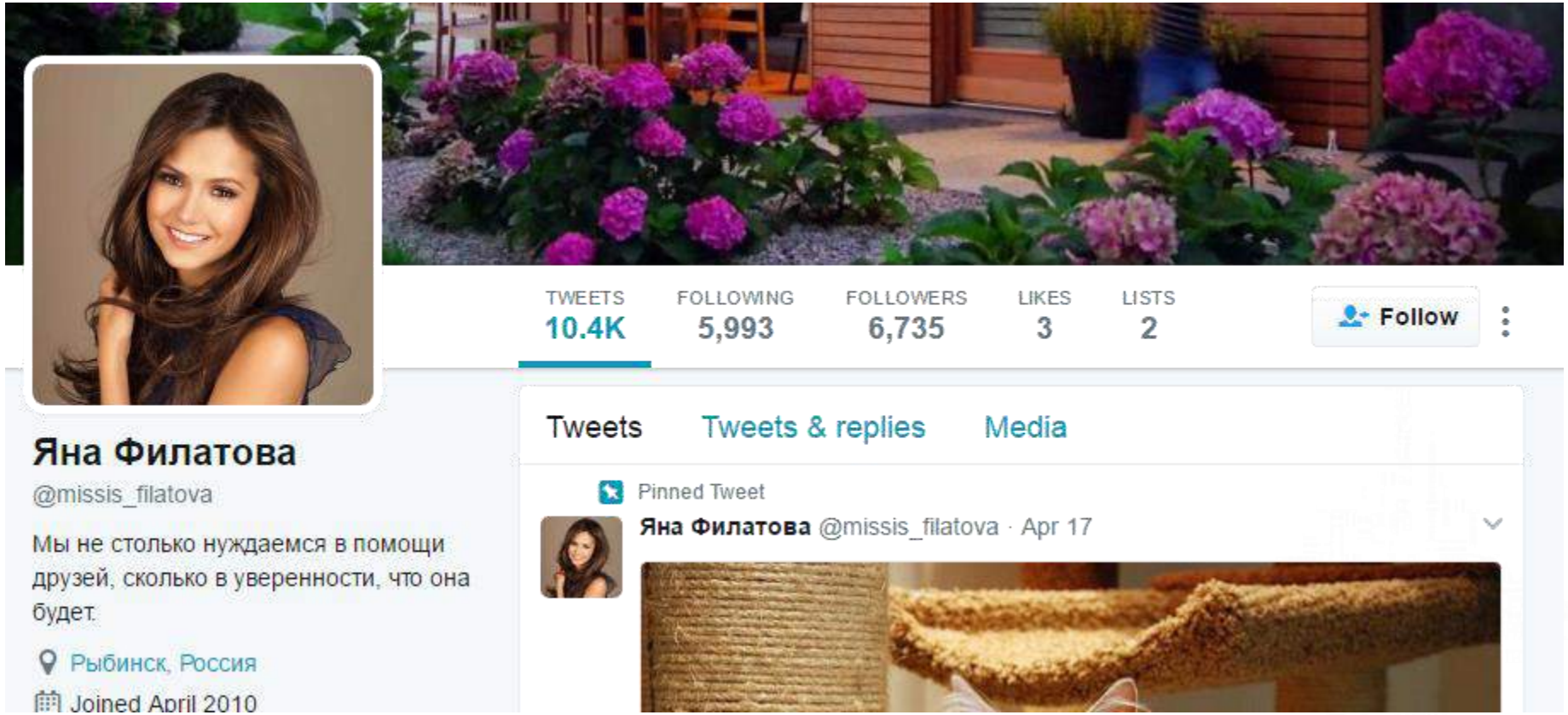
Bots & Sockpuppets



Automated

Human-controlled

Meet: Robotic Jana



Google

jana.PNG ×

nina dobrev

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About 25,270,000,000 results (1.03 seconds)

Image size:
178 × 185

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Best guess for this image: ***nina dobrev***

Nina Dobrev (@nina) • Instagram photos and videos

https://www.instagram.com/nina/?hl=en

14.5m Followers, 260 Following, 2924 Posts - See Instagram photos and videos from **Nina Dobrev** (@nina)

Nina Dobrev - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nina_Dobrev

Nikolina Konstantinova Dobreva (born January 9, 1989), better known as **Nina Dobrev** is a Canadian actress. Her first acting role was of Mia Jones in the drama ...

Visually similar images

Nina Dobrev

Actress

Nikolina Konstantinova Dobreva, better known as Nina Dobrev, is a Canadian actress. Her first acting role was of Mia Jones in the drama series Degrassi: The Next Generation. Wikipedia

Born: January 9, 1989 (age 29 years), Sofia, Bulgaria

Height: 1.69 m

Full name: Nikolina Konstantinova Dobreva

Upcoming movies: Run This Town, Dog Days

Nationality: Bulgarian, Canadian

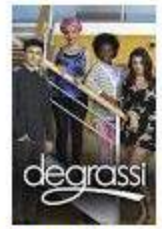
Movies and TV shows

View 20+ more

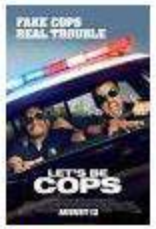
The Vampire Diaries

xXx: Return of Xander Cage

Flatliners
2017

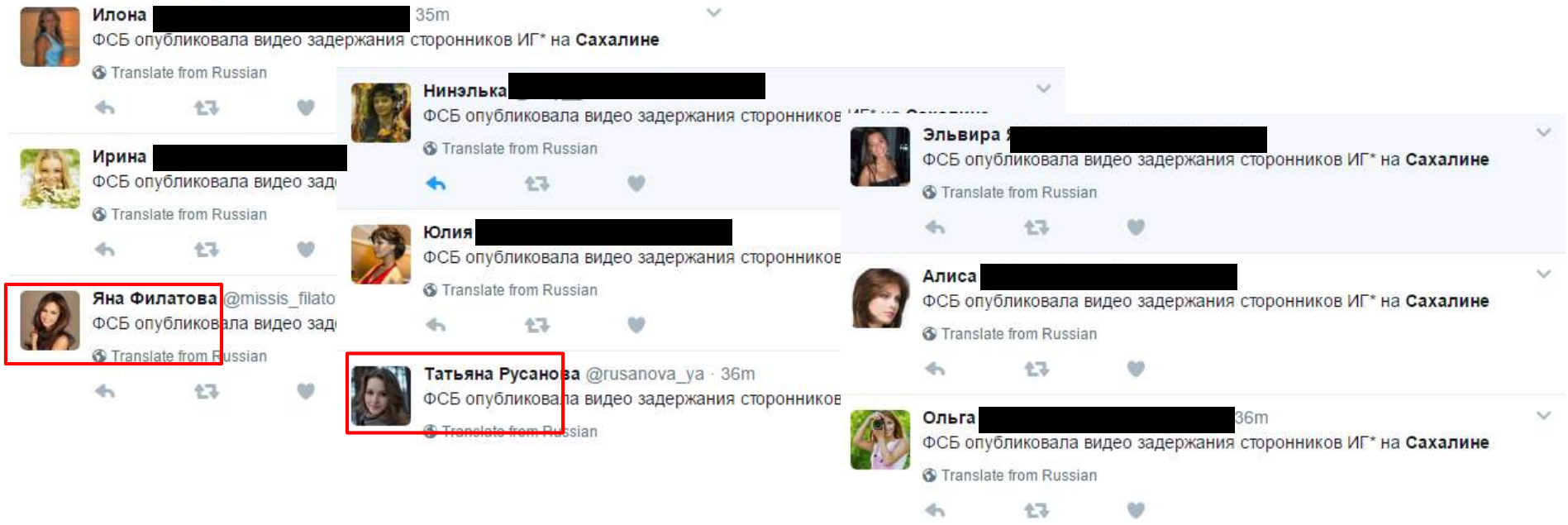


Degrassi: The Next Generation

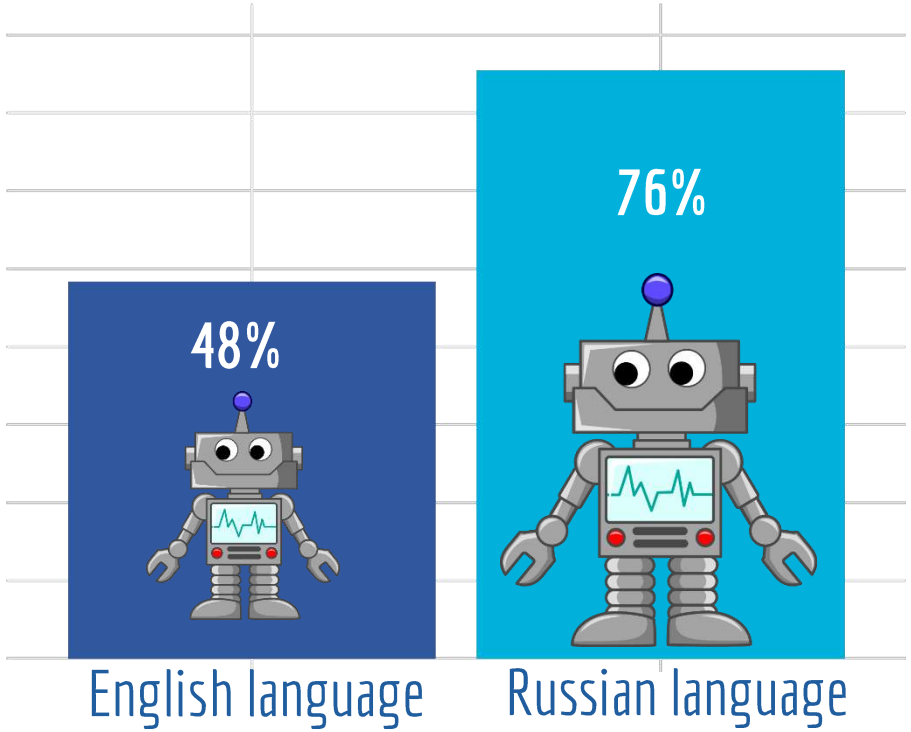


Let's Be Cops
2014

Jana and her sisters



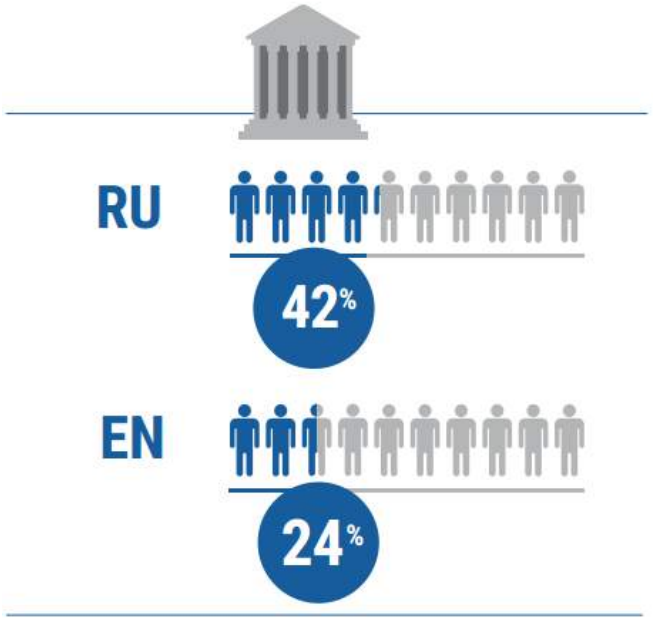
Bot armies manipulating popular sentiment



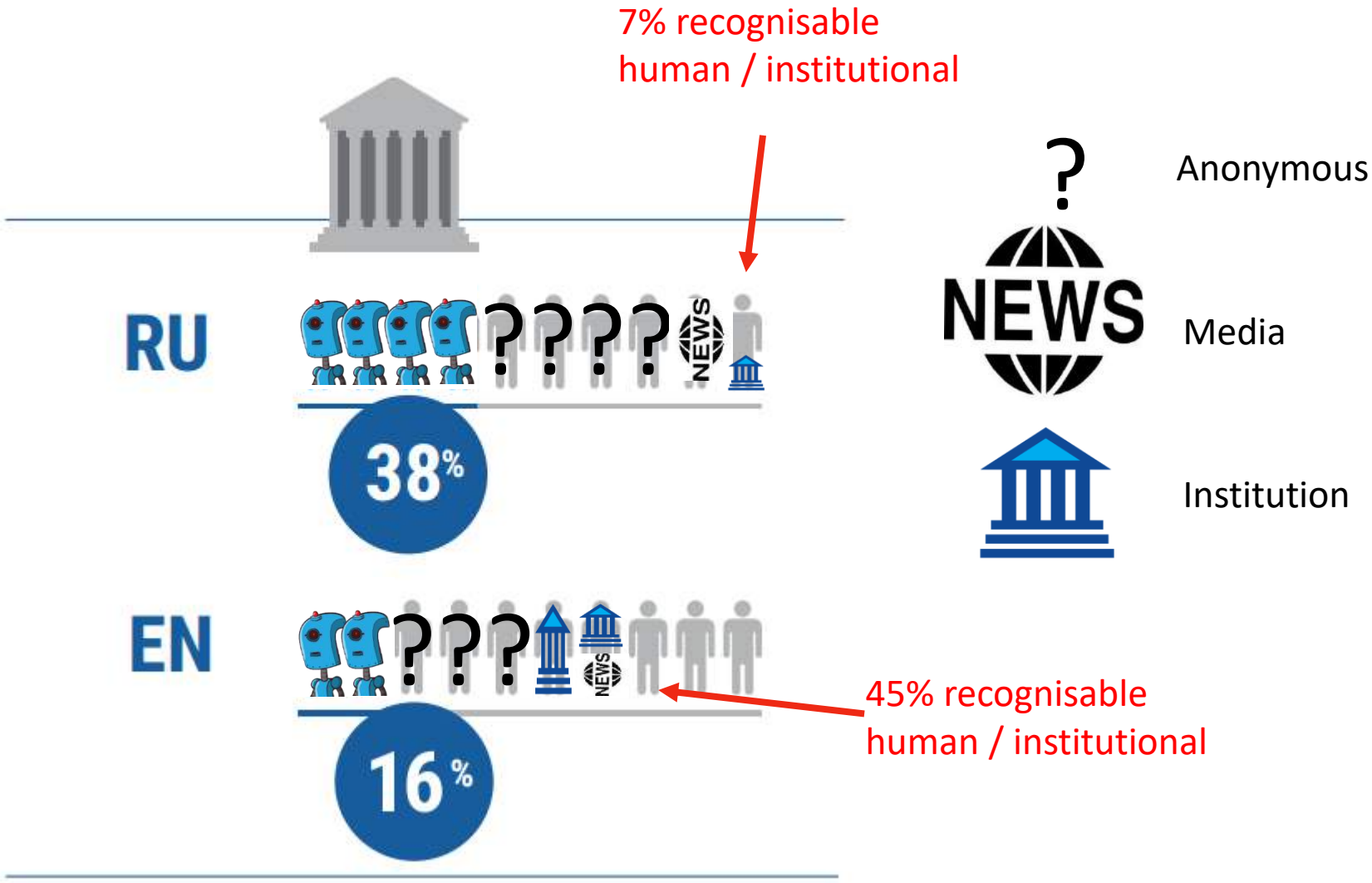
- Case: NATO and Baltics, Poland
- Counting -› junk statistics
  - In Estonia bots generated ~85% of tweets spring 2017
- Russian-language Twitter is dominated by bots
- Trolls echo Kremlin media
- Undermines discussions online

We have identified a change - firstly

In the beginning of 2018 the number of bot-tweets dropped by 15 percentage points for Russian and 20 percentage points for English.



We have identified a change - secondly



We have identified a change - thirdly

Automated Russian-language bot accounts are dying

...but...

The actors are chaging tactics

...and...

Increasingly they now rely on human-operated troll accounts

Pulse of the nation?

Labour dominating Twitter discussions, researchers say

Labour makes up 62% of specific party references on platform, while proportion of links to professional news sites rises - but so do those to fake news

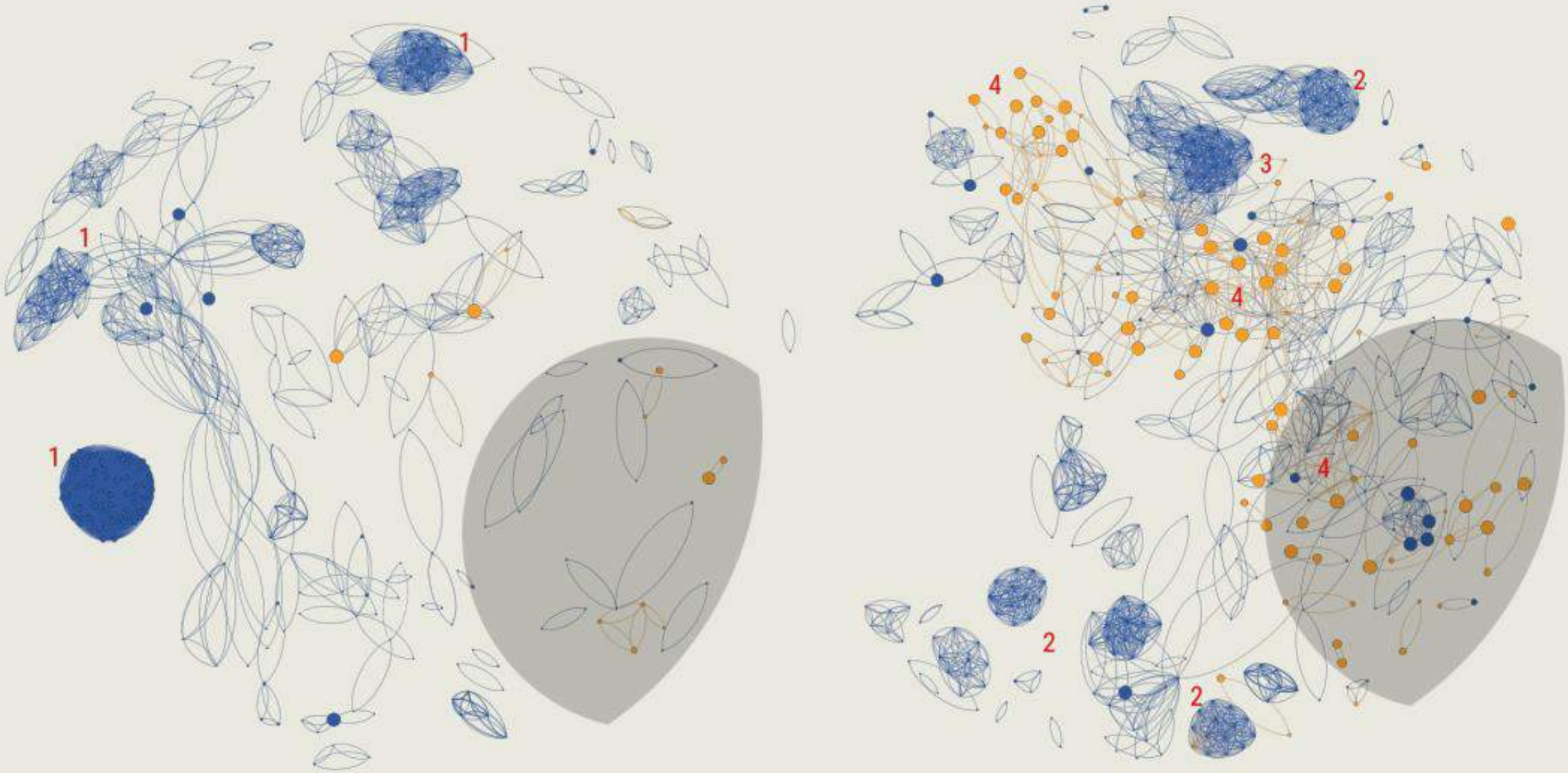
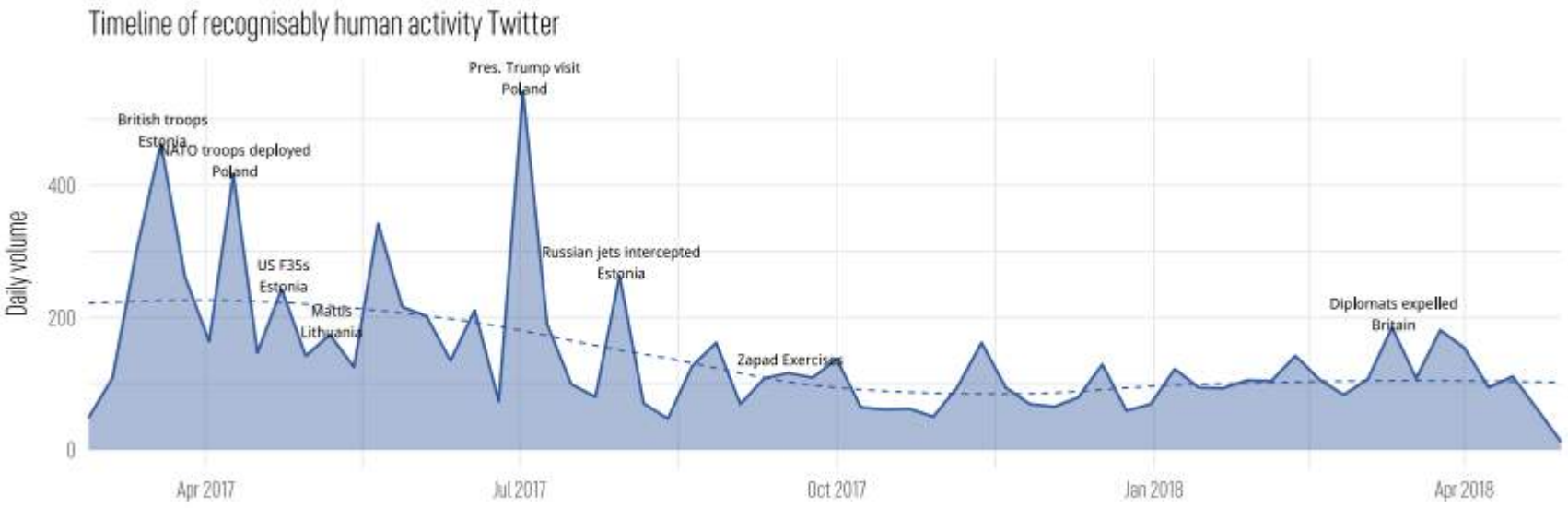


Figure 5: The evolution of bot activity. March 2017 (left) vs. November-January (right)

Declining interest in NATO presence among humans



Cause and Effect

Bot activity is in decline in absolute terms, but Twitter in Russian remains more polluted than Twitter in English.

As social media companies intervene to clean up automation, they should take care that changes they introduce may enable new forms of manipulation.

As we prepare for the future we need to be aware of the rapid changes taking place in the information environment.

Robotrolling

Violent Extremism and Communications

FAKE NEWS
DISINFORMATION
Fake News. A Roadmap.

Russia's Footprint in the Nordic-Baltic Information Environment

Academic journal
'Defence Strategic Communications'