

DIS!NFO

BRIEF



March 2022

SHADOWS OF UKRAINE OVER MONTENEGRO

DFC STUDY

The [study](#) of Digital Forensic Center (DFC) *Shadows of Ukraine over Montenegro* offers an insight into a dynamic of Russian aggression against Ukraine, as well as implications on the Western Balkans, with a focus on Montenegro. The analysis shows not only the negative implications of the Russian invasion of Ukraine but also all implications of the extensive campaign that Russia and its key partner from the region, Serbia, run towards Montenegro in

the previous years. Precisely due to such a campaign, ambivalent attitudes, positioning of certain political actors opposed to Euro-Atlantic principles, and presence of Russian exponents, the possibility of additional progression of political, security, economic and social events in Montenegro cannot be excluded. Thus, an urgent reaction of all democratic structures of the society, that base their political activism on European and Euro-Atlantic values is needed.

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NAZI SYMBOLS WERE NOT DISPLAYED DURING THE PROTEST IN SUPPORT OF UKRAINE

DISINFORMATION

A photomontage of a photo from the protest in support of Ukraine in Cetinje appeared on social media Twitter and Facebook. In a photo from the protest, a Ukrainian flag was edited and a Nazi symbol was added. In that manner, certain individuals aimed to additionally polarize the society in an already tense socio-political situation, and discredit the protests in support of Ukraine, taking place daily in Cetinje. In this way, it was tried to spread the narrative of the Russian media on social networks, which represents Ukraine as a Nazi state, and Putin's claim that he is carrying out the denazification of Ukraine. So, some users of social networks used the photo in which they see the people of Cetinje who support Ukraine in order to substantiate the allegations about Nazism in Ukraine. The Embassy of Ukraine in Montenegro also came forward and [confirmed](#) that the people of Cetinje did not wear Nazi symbols, and that it was a photomontage.

VIDEOS FROM BUCHA ARE NOT STAGED

DISINFORMATION

In an absurd attempt to besmirch the massacre in Bucha, Ukraine, portal *IN4S* [published](#) disinformation on April 4, which was subsequently shared on Twitter by the Russian embassy in Montenegro. The *IN4S* portal claims in the article that on viral video showing victims of the massacre are actors and not bodies, pointing out that one of them is moving hand. It is crystal clear that

it is the reflection/drop of water from the windshield. Publishing such an article *IN4S* continues to be an echo of the Russian media in Montenegro, praising the Russian aggression and undermining Ukrainian victims. The content continuously promoted by this portal abounds with sensationalism and disinformation in a direct correlation with narratives propagated from Moscow.

KREMLIN'S ACCOUNTS MANIPULATE THE INFORMATION

DFC INFO

BBC [spotted](#) an extensive network of official Twitter accounts of the Russian government which manipulate the information on events on the battlefield in Ukraine. Those accounts are missions abroad and embassies with several thousand or millions of followers. One example when those accounts reacted promptly was the case with a photo of hurt Olena Kurilo taken during the Russian bombing of Ukraine, the case DFC already [wrote](#) about. Numerous media and social media users spread the information that the viral photo was actually taken in 2018, as well as that Olena was not hurt, which turned out untrue. Such theories and manipulative information were published on the official Twitter account of the Russian government – Russian mission to Geneva. This tweet was retweeted by more than 20 separate accounts of the Russian government and in that manner greater reach of fake news was ensured. All that is enabled by the Twitter policy which does not treat the accounts of the Russian government as the accounts of the Russian state media qualified not to be recommended in the timeline and notifications of Twitter. Tim Graham, a social media analyst in QUT Digital Media Research Centre in Australia analyzed 75 Twitter accounts of the Russian government, having more than 7 million followers, and found out that this network is working together to retweet and increase traffic, making disinformation and manipulations more visible in that manner.

DISINFORMATION

PATRIARCH KIRILL DID NOT MENTION UKRAINE IN HIS SPEECH

On April 3, certain Montenegrin and Serbian media published the information that Russian Patriarch Kirill in his speech delivered after the liturgy in the Cathedral of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation said at some point Ukraine must be destroyed as the Nazi Reich. This is disinformation since Russian Patriarch never mentioned Ukraine during his speech. In his [speech](#) after the liturgy Patriarch Kirill said We broke the spine of the fascism which would inevitably win if it wasn't for Russia and our people's deeds.

HATE SPEECH ON FACEBOOK

DFC INFO

The Meta company will temporarily allow Facebook and Instagram users in certain countries to call for violence against Russians and Russian soldiers in the context of the war in Ukraine. Experts for digital rights said that by allowing hate speech Facebook broke its own rules concerning instigation and showed it applies double standards which could harm users in other conflicts. This decision provoked numerous comments given the fact that Meta company records failures in suppressing hate speech and instigating content in other war zones. It is important to emphasize that in the parts of the world where no wars are being waged there are cases of hate speech not sanctioned on Facebook and

Instagram, for instance in Montenegro. A complex socio-political situation as a result of increased traffic in online space in Montenegro contributed to the increased hate speech on social networks –the DFC already [wrote about](#) earlier. A number of citizens, activists, and representatives of political parties, but also the most vulnerable groups, women and children, have been exposed to the most brutal insults, threats, and hate speech based on national, political, and religious beliefs. It is necessary for technological giants, such as Facebook, not only to ensure user's security and support freedom of speech but also to sanction all types of hate speech in all parts of the world and in that manner uphold human rights.



Disinfo Brief provides a monthly overview of the key disinformation, narratives, and propaganda developments that the DFC team researched and debunked to raise awareness of the issue and its extent.



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