

Andrey Demartino

## **False Mirrors**

The Weaponization of Social Media in Russia's Operation to Annex Crimea

With a foreword by Oleksiy Danilov

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Andrey Demartino

## FALSE MIRRORS

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# Contents

Foreword by Oleksiy Danilov.....	7
Abstract.....	9
Introduction.....	11
1. Background.....	21
1.1. Articles, News Items, Blogs.....	21
1.2. Western Studies .....	23
1.3. Ukrainian Studies .....	27
1.4. The “Ideological Problem” of Russian Historiography....	32
2. The Crimean Internet in Figures: 2011-2014.....	41
3. The Russian “Information Warfare Machine:” The Main Actors.....	51
4. Russia’s Activity: The Channels of Information Influence (October–December 2013) .....	71
4.1. Internet Forums.....	75
4.2. The GRU and Facebook .....	83
4.3. The Twitter of “Crimean Events” .....	85
4.4. The Blocking of Facebook .....	90
4.5. The Nationwide Anti-Ukrainian Campaign in Russia: The Crimean Dimension.....	91
5. The Ukrainian Response: Countermeasures Against Foreign Information Influence.....	99
Conclusions .....	107
References.....	119
Appendix .....	139



## Foreword

The attempt to annex Crimea and Russia's military invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014 have become an unprecedented challenge to the global security system, an act of open aggression against a sovereign state. Being the result of the implementation of aggressive foreign policy strategies by the leadership of the Russian Federation, these events were certain to attract the close attention of scientists and researchers in various fields. For the first time since the end of World War II, the leadership of one of the countries in Europe has planned and conducted a full-scale military operation based on modern principles of warfare.

As the use of nuclear weapons is becoming increasingly problematic, the confrontation will gradually but steadily focus on information and cyberspace, space and biotechnology. The techniques for information and psychological influence as part of a new type of hybrid warfare pose a particular danger, which has been clearly demonstrated in Crimea and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Modern challenges require an adequate response. The research of the author of "*The False Mirror*" on the role of social media in the Russian operation to attempt the annexation of Crimea will help to devise such countermeasures. The value of this study lies in the author's

focus on analysing real facts and reconstructing the sequence of events, which are looked at in the context of information warfare, one of the important elements of which is the use of social media.

The book examines the specific techniques and methods of using popular social media by Russian intelligence agencies before, during, and after the temporary occupation of Crimea. Using modern channels of communication, Russian special services distorted the events, falsified information, and created a favourable information environment for the military operation.

The study highlights the danger of the information component of warfare and emphasises the obligation of the state to be prepared, both technologically and organisationally, to resist hostile information influence. The materials collected and analysed by the author have not only historical value: the book contains practical recommendations for countering information and influence operations, which can be used in government decision-making.

*Oleksiy Danilov*  
Secretary of the National Security  
and Defence Council of Ukraine  
Kyiv, April 2021