Ad Funded Disinformation on Conflict in Ukraine:
Ad tech companies, Brands and Policy
How we define disinformation

Disinformation is more than overly simple false dichotomies like true vs. false or left vs. right.

GDI views disinformation through the lens of adversarial narrative conflict. Adversarial narratives:
- Can be implicit or explicit;
- Are intentionally misleading;
- Are adversarial against:
  - at-risk individual or group
  - current scientific consensus
  - democracy and key institutions

Most importantly, creates a risk of harm

This definition transcends false binaries and identifies disinformation explicitly by adversarial narrative topic, such as anti-immigrant, misogyny, anti-vax, etc.
GDI has studied a selection of popular brand ads appearing next to anti-Ukrainian and anti-democratic disinformation

This deck focuses on harmful adversarial narratives that falsely claim:

- Ukrainians are Nazis / fascists
- The Russian Federation has launched a special military “peacekeeping” operation, not a war, to “de-Nazify” Ukraine
- Ukranians are committing genocide in Donbas
- Ukrainians are killing civilians / using them as human shields and blaming it on Russians
- Ukraine is a communist fabrication / should not be conferred the rights of a sovereign state
- Action taken by NATO members is invalid

The adversarial narratives have been found across multiple countries and languages (English, Russian, Serbian and Spanish)
Ad tech companies servicing these ads & funding these stories:

Google

Yandex

Criteo

Revcontent
Ad tech companies’ publisher policy announcement on Russia/Ukraine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Announcement</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>“In light of the crisis in Ukraine, we are pausing Google’s monetization of Russian Federation state-funded media. We will continue to actively monitor the situation and make adjustments as necessary.” <strong>February 26, 2022</strong></td>
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<td>“In light of the extraordinary circumstances, we’re pausing Google ads in Russia. The situation is evolving quickly, and we will continue to share updates when appropriate.” <strong>March 3, 2022</strong></td>
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<td>revcontent</td>
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Ad tech continues to monetise anti-Ukrainian and anti-democratic disinformation

- This deck highlights ad tech’s continued monetisation of harmful disinformation between 2-10 March, 2022.

- In response to recently announced EU and U.S. sanctions some ad tech companies announced that they have suspended business in Russia and with certain Russian domains.

- Whilst welcome, these moves have not defunded the harmful anti-Ukrainian and anti-democratic disinformation GDI continues to track in a range of languages on the open web outside of Russia.

- Advertisers have little control over where their adverts end up

A long-term and industry-wide solution is needed to end the monetisation of harmful disinformation
Popular brands unwittingly funding these stories:
English
And that is Ukraine’s lingering “Nazi” problem. Over the years, neo-Nazi ideology has not only taken root in the Ukrainian conscience but has also gained the Ukrainian government’s imprimatur. This has naturally raised concerns in Moscow that was evident in the speech made by Putin days before Russia’s military offence in Ukraine.

After failing to stop Russia from invading Ukraine, the western countries and their media outlets have unleashed a propaganda war that involves sharing old pictures from past conflicts to demonise Russia and lavishing praises on Ukrainian leadership for standing its ground against the invasion, seemingly to paper over

https://www.googleadservices.com/pagead/ads?client=ca-fra-1&subtype=webpage&h=promo&dclid=cw-yGUXj_lF4K92xvKHG3ljlCLp7nq0qD2yOSjXMBM-fyHygg92yklh=0CgaAmSp5hOyAC4AAGuNyBAY7tgGpAAb_DKRX3dPQn6CPCg2sMB7mSgchYRL_auScG5F...
‘Criminals armed by Zelenskyy govt are indulging in rapes, murders, and looting in Ukraine’, claims man in Kyiv

A writer named Gonzalo Lira in Kyiv has claimed that criminals armed by Ukraine govt to take on the Russian forces were indulged in rapes, murders, and looting.
Russian State-Controlled Media: Moscow’s decision to conduct a special military operation on the territory of Ukraine, the goals of which are declared to be the demilitarization and denazification of the country, puts the Western world before new realities. Russia has crossed the Rubicon despite constant threats of “body bags” and “sanctions from hell.” Such a turn could have been avoided if the US and NATO had responded adequately to Russia’s security concerns.
Russian
“RESIDENTS OF BELOGORSK SUPPORTED THE SPECIAL OPERATION IN UKRAINE
Car enthusiasts held a car rally and a flash mob

On March 6, motorists from Belogorsk organized a rally in support of the actions of the Russian authorities to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine. They held a flash mob, lining up their cars in the form of letters V and Z. On March 7, a motor rally took place from the entrance to the city to the 30th anniversary of the Victory Square.

The column of cars stretched for 3 kilometers. The cars were decorated with the flags of Russia, Belogorsk, automobile clubs, as well as the applied inscriptions "Power to Truth" and "For Victory". The column of participants started from the stele at the entrance to the city and moved along the central street of Kirov. The column, in which there were 380 cars, stretched for 6.5 kilometers.”
"Russian in Germany: today the Germans are taking revenge on us for the victory over Nazism"

Now everyone here likes to repeat Scholz’s phrase that Russia removed guilt from Germany. His words were understood as follows: what Germany did during World War II was not a mistake, what Putin is doing now is worse. As a result, the Germans feel rehabilitated.

Since 1945, this unprocessed anger at the Russians has been sitting in them. Now there is nothing holding them back. The front command is given and this anger pours out on us.

Everything that is being done here now is not about Ukraine at all. They only recently learned that there is such a country. For them, Ukraine is something like Mongolia. This is hatred and revenge on the Russians. The historical hatred that they have choked in themselves for so long.
"There is a mess created in the city, because Mariupol is certainly the city with the greatest saturation of not Ukrainian Armed Forces, but Nazis. There are many of them there. Accordingly, they understand their fate perfectly and will defend themselves to the last. For this reason, the situation is complicated. - summarized the Tsargrad interlocutor."
Serbian
RUSSIAN JOURNALIST DIRECTLY FROM MARIUPOL: In the city we have the last stronghold of neo-Nazis - "civilians exit blocked, snipers shoot at people" According to the latest information from the field, Ukrainian nationalists blocked the exit of civilians from Mariupol, reports Izvestja.
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Spanish
USA, NATO and the neo-Nazi regime in Kyiv blamed for the crisis in Ukraine
Russia proposes the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine, where the regime established in 2014 vindicates collaborationist politicians from Adolf Hitler’s armies during World War II. The submission to the gringo empire and its global media machinery leads many to repeat, without any criticism, the narrative of the Western powers about what is happening in Ukraine.

In reality, what Russia is doing is protecting its territory from the nuclear threat spread throughout the European countries that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, and neutralizing, with focused special operations, the Ukrainian military infrastructure established in hundreds of military bases packed with tons of weaponry supplied by the Pentagon and the UK.

In short, say “enough” to the expansion of the aggressive NATO bloc, whose leader, the US, is thirsty for dollars for the US military industry and affected by an economic crisis of unsuspected magnitude. In addition, and not least, Russia comes to the aid of the democratic people’s republics of Donetsk and Lugansk, independent from Kiev and located in the eastern region of Donbass, whose population has been massacred for eight years by the neo-Nazi regime installed in power in Ukraine. after the 2014 coup d’état, which overthrew Victor Yanukovych, a coup largely sponsored by the CIA and Western powers, with the participation of Ukrainian fascist paramilitary squads.
For More Information:

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