

What is stopfake.org?

- Launched in March 2014, stopfake.org is a dedicated fact-checking website run by a group of Ukrainian journalists determined to fight the rising tide of propaganda originating from Russian news outlets. The purpose of the stopfake.org community is to check facts, verify information, and refute distorted information and propaganda about events in Ukraine.
- This briefing gives UK readers three examples of fake stories exposed by stopfake.org used to shape a narrative about Ukraine that says: the Ukrainian Government is full of anti-Semites and fascists; it came to power following a fascist coup d'état; the rights of Russian speakers are under threat; and the security operation in Luhansk and Donetsk is punitive action taken by Kyiv against peaceful citizens in the east of Ukraine.
- This narrative, though wholly untrue, is contributing to the instability and bloodshed in Ukraine.

Monitoring and highlighting the spread of disinformation through news and social media

- In February 2014, stopfake.org founders began to notice increasing examples of questionable journalism, propaganda and fake stories appearing in the media. When the former Ukrainian President and Putin ally, Victor Yanukovich, fled to Russia, the Kremlin propaganda machine began to ramp up its operations. By the time of Putin's illegal annexation of Crimea in March, it was in full swing and remains so today.
- Stopfake.org monitors traditional news sources and social media in Russia and Ukraine, seeking out inaccuracies and distortions which, when found, they publish online.

Who is responsible for spreading misleading and false 'news' about Ukraine?

- Editorial independence and journalistic integrity has all but disappeared from much of Russia's mainstream media. Russian TV is dominated by channels that are either run directly by the state or owned by companies with close links to the Kremlin. The government controls Channel One and Russia One - two of the three main federal channels, while state-controlled energy giant Gazprom owns NTV.
- The Kremlin owns two news agencies, Itar-Tass and RIA Novosti, and also owns the newspaper 'Rossiskaya Gazeta'. This Russian state publication pays to distribute its English-language supplement '[Russia Beyond the Headlines](#)' in reputable western publications. Also in the UK, the Kremlin-owned news channel Russia Today, which aims to 'present 'global news from a Russian perspective' is available on Freeview, and has a weekly reach of 497,000¹ (this, however, is significantly less than channels such as the Community Channel and both the Food Network and Food Network 1). In March 2014, two Russia Today presenters resigned live on air saying they were unwilling to participate in what they described as the channel's "whitewashing" of Russia's actions in Ukraine.
- There have also been reports (see Max Seddon's BuzzFeed [article](#)) that the Kremlin is paying Russian citizens to troll the comments sections of major news websites (including UK websites) and social media on an unprecedented scale.

Why is this a problem?

- Vladimir Putin is constructing a narrative around events in Ukraine that (a) ensures his popularity in Russia remains high, and (b) communicates that his illegal acts of aggressions in Ukraine are justified, and somehow Russia is the victim.
- In this global digital age, disinformation spreads at an ever increasing speed, reaching and shaping the views of UK audiences through a wide range of media. It is these methods of manipulating news which stopfake.org was set up to expose and show the world.

¹ <http://www.barb.co.uk/viewing/weekly-total-viewing-summary>

Propaganda methods exposed by stopfake.org

Method 1: Inflicting reputational damage through use of misrepresented photo/video



- This screenshot was taken from a graphic video widely spread on YouTube with the description "Punitive Ukrainian National Guard mission throwing dead bodies near Kramatorsk (Donetsk region) on 3 May 2014".
- Stopfake.org traced the original video on YouTube and found the footage was actually taken in Dagestan in 2012 and the soldiers are Russian soldiers throwing bodies of Dagestanis they had killed.

Method 2: Distorting a story to fit Putin's narrative



- In March 2014 a Russia Today report (shown in the UK) claimed that Jews were leaving Kyiv in fear of an anti-Semitic Ukrainian government. The report featured Rabbi Misha Kapustin (pictured in screenshot) who told them, that he, his family and other Jews are afraid and are leaving for their own personal safety.
- The truth is that Kapustin was not fleeing Kyiv – he was fleeing Simferopol after the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, and had previously created a petition calling for Crimea and Ukraine to be protected from Russian aggression.

Method 3: Creating an alternative reality for Russian audiences



- On Russia One news channel on 25 May, this screenshot was broadcast, claiming to have been taken from the Ukrainian Electoral Commission website. The graph shows that the Right Sector candidate, Dmitro Yarosh (Ярош), demonised by the Russian media as an extremist anti-Semite, was leading in the exit polls with over 37%.
- However, no graph even remotely similar to this was ever published on the Commission's website and the truth is that Yarosh polled less than 1% of votes. The other candidate labelled in the Russian media as a fascist was Oleh Tyanibok of Svoboda/Freedom Party and he also polled less than 1%. The Kremlin lie that Ukraine is overrun with fascists simply does not hold up in the face of these elections results.

Helping other journalists and citizens to uncover fakes

- Stopfake.org are working to help other journalists and citizens uncover fakes and have created a set of simple instructions (in English and Russian) and a set of tools which anyone can use to do this. See the '[How to identify a fake](#)' section on their website.
- **If you see any media on Ukraine and you question its authenticity, please contact the stopfake.org team on their [website](#).**

About the Ukrainian Institute in London:

The Ukrainian Institute in London develops and promotes a greater awareness, understanding and knowledge of Ukrainian history, language, current affairs, business, economy, literature, religion and culture through educational, professional and networking activities. Based in Holland Park (London), it is maintained and supported by the Society of St Sophia, a UK registered charity founded in 1979.

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