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Entry into the War

Foreword to the English Edition

Ukraine has been working closely with partners since February 2022 to obtain the weapons required to defeat the Russian army on the battlefield. The English-language edition of this book is my personal thank you to Ukraine's friends around the world. This book, I dare say, is a weapon I deliver to help you win uphill communications battles. It contains secrets and solutions. Use them responsibly.

If you have ever wondered how Ukrainians managed to get their message across so well during Russia's full-fledged invasion, you will find plenty of answers on the following pages.

The truth is that by February 2022, we had three key elements for effective communication in place: valuable experience gained since 2014 and exposed in this book; a blockbuster true story to tell about the vicious aggressor and brave defenders; and a top-notch character representing heroic defenders on the world stage, President Zelenskyy.

I wrote *The War for Reality* in 2018 to share my experience in communications with Ukrainian audience. The book summarized my years of work with various people and institutions in politics, business, art, and government. Each of them felt that their realm was special. But the deeper I got into the field throughout my career in diplomacy and communications, the more I realized they were all facing similar challenges and fighting similar battles. They all fought on the same modern communications battlefield.

The spread of social media, fakes, disinformation, propaganda, clickbait, sensationalism, false equivalence, confirmation bias, opinion bubbles, radicalization, artificial intelligence, the fragmen-

tation of truth, and the devaluation of facts and expert opinion are just some of the dreadful symptoms of the world we all find ourselves in, characterized by a dramatically increased data consumption. The one I called “the world of fakes, truths, and communities.”

My biggest dream as an author is for you to find this book useful. Based on real-life cases, solid research produced by respectable institutions and scholars, and my personal work, it offers practical solutions that arm readers with self-defense and counter-offensive tools, increasing their chances of survival on the battlefield of the war for reality.

My own survival in this cruel world has taught me the rule of four “don’ts”: don’t be surprised by anything; don’t trust information at first glance; don’t take anything personally; and don’t jump to conclusions.

Whether you are a politician, public servant, businessperson, artist, or ordinary netizen surfing your feeds, this book provides five simple rules of engagement that are equally applicable to any communications battle.

1. **Keep a firm grip on reality.**
2. **Use critical thinking.**
3. **Control your emotions.**
4. **Sense the community.**
5. **Engage with the government.**

Many Ukrainians have found *The War for Reality* useful since its initial publication in 2019. It quickly became a best-seller in Ukraine, feeding both the author’s ego and the publisher’s pride.

In 2022, when Ukraine stunned the world with its communication muscles, my publisher received a request to translate the book.

Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has certainly raised the stakes of the war for reality. To many people’s surprise, Ukraine has

been winning both the ground war and information battles against a much more powerful adversary.

However, this came as no surprise to the Ukrainians themselves. We know how much blood, sweat, and tears went into these successes. We never relied on a lucky ticket. We got our kicks and gained skills. We employed them to win battles.

I only regret that it took a devastating total war to make people outside of Ukraine realize how cool Ukrainians are. In fact, we have always been cool. And in terms of communications, it's particularly true since 2014, when we first faced Russia's arsenal of hybrid warfare. Sadly, few across our borders were interested in our experience until 2016, when Russia heavily interfered in the US elections. And even after that, our know-how remained largely in the shadow of the great US battle for reality.

The bottom line is to avoid your own problems, put arrogance aside, and listen to those who already have experience. It is never too late to start listening to Ukraine. Learn from what we have to say. Trust our experience.

Many are agitated with the rise of the new superpower these days. Artificial intelligence is another emerging challenge in the war for reality. AI was not a hot topic in 2018, so it was only mentioned sporadically in this book. Given how often it is mentioned in speeches and presentations today, AI is on the verge of becoming a swear word.

I do not think AI has brought any big changes to the battlefield of the war for reality. It merely introduced new problems and solutions within existing frameworks.

An attentive observer may have noticed that AI creators act and speak like messiahs. This detached messianism is the greatest threat to humanity, rather than the technology itself, which has

already become part of reality. To address the effects of AI on the war for reality, I added a new sub-chapter to this English-language edition of the book.

By the way, this is my first ever addition to the originally published text. I made it specifically for my English-speaking readers because my publisher insisted that AI is a hot thing, and the calculation was that the book would sell better with an additional sub-chapter than without it. I reluctantly agreed.

You see, I've been asked many times by my Ukrainian readers whether I was planning to write *The War for Reality-2*, and I always routinely replied "no." Yes, I could have added more entertaining, terrifying, or fascinating cases or research data; they would add pages and make the book even more fun to read than it already is. But they would not add any value to our understanding of how the war machine works, as I tried to keep this book simple.

The fundamental principles of the war for reality I outlined in 2018 have not changed. Over the course of these five years, I have only grown more confident in my initial conclusions (I will be happy to be challenged on this, though). What reality has provided over the years are only new cases demonstrating that the lessons of this book remain effective. It has also introduced new quandaries and challenges. Life is very diverse, but, like the basic laws of physics, the rules of the war for reality remain the same.

Perhaps naively, I dare to argue I have said enough in the book's initial edition for attentive readers to understand and apply this knowledge to defend themselves, their beloved ones, their communities, and their nations.

One more point on freedom of speech. We are winning the war for reality thanks to free speech and Ukrainian communication talents. However, there are serious flaws in how this fundamen-

tal principle is being applied in practice. The fierce competition between traditional and social media produces a rush for being the first to publish and for sensationalism. The media's blind faith in quoting two sides of any story – regardless of whether one of them is overtly lying or spreading propaganda – causes friendly fire on the battlefield of the war for reality. Both freedom of speech and democracy suffer as a result.

These are delicate topics to address. They probably grant anyone who wishes to challenge the established principles and practices the prospect of crucifixion. However, I have no doubt that we need to find a way out.

Take just the example that occurred as I write this preface: Russia's destruction of the Kakhovka dam on June 6, 2023. Despite the obvious fact that only Russia had the means and the motives to blow up the dam, the media resorted to bothsidesing. "Kyiv and Moscow are trading blame on who destroyed the dam," they reported.

Russian propaganda could not have a better present. They used the doubt to the fullest extent to cover up their crime, as they usually do. Some thorough reporting followed, laying the blame squarely on Russia. It never gained the same traction as the initial false balance. The damage to the truth has been done.

There is no other world than the world of truths, fakes, and communities. After fighting many battles myself and observing others fight from a hill, I admit one important correction has to be made to my initial thinking: learning to survive and thrive in this world relies more on emotional control than critical thinking. Initially, I believed in the primary importance of the latter and placed it one rank higher on the list of rules proposed in this book. Not that both contradict each other, but if you ask me which learning