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## **The Propaganda Machine in the Age of Social Media**

„(...) FORCE is always on the side of the governed,  
the governors have nothing to support them but opinion” .  
DAVID HUME, *Of the First Principles of Government*

**Abstract:** It is an obvious fact about the history of propaganda that the development of every new public communication medium was accompanied by a new propaganda wave. Therefore, the propagandists proved to be the main agents that were capable of understanding and exploiting the potential of every new communication technology. However, the development of social media in the last two decades offered them the opportunity to exercise their ability to an unprecedented scale. The terms that are used in order to refer to this phenomenon are „computational propaganda” and „digital propaganda”. Computational propaganda includes the use of bots and automated content delivery, fake social media accounts, trolls, fake and junk news and other instruments of „computational enhancement” with the aim of creating the illusion of a large scale consensus. In this paper I will refer to the way in which some of these instruments were exploited in large scale propaganda campaigns. In order to explain how the digital propaganda machine works and how it can be countered, I will use the theory of Reflexive Control.

**Keywords:** computational propaganda, social media, political bots, fake accounts, troll farms, Reflexive Control, digital diplomacy.