WORDS AND WARS
UKRAINE FACING KREMLIN PROPAGANDA
KYIV. 2017
UKRAINE FACING KREMLIN PROPAGANDA

This analytical publication was compiled by NGO Internews Ukraine with the support of the European Union and the International Renaissance Foundation within the framework of the Civic Synergy Project and under the auspices of the Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Its content is the exclusive responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and the International Renaissance Foundation.
The book is an overview of the Ukrainian experience of dealing with Russian propaganda and information warfare. It is the work of a group of Ukrainian authors based on their own research and on the interviews they conducted with key Ukrainian civil society and media experts in information analysis, studying Russian propaganda, debunking fake news and information security. It contains analysis of Russian propaganda/disinformation actions perpetrated in Ukraine, including their key messages, approaches, communication channels, etc. It also contains policy recommendations for the international community and the Ukrainian authorities.

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Executive Summary

Over the past years and even decades Ukraine has been at the forefront of countering Russian information warfare. The country experienced the impact of Russian propaganda, disinformation and hybrid war earlier than many other European or American societies. This makes the Ukrainian experience so unique and so informative for those who have been facing the challenge of Russian propaganda only recently.

This book is a study of the Ukrainian experience of dealing with Russian information warfare. It is written by a group of Ukrainian authors based on their own research and on interviews with key Ukrainian civil society and media experts in information analysis, researching Russian propaganda, debunking fake news and information security.

The book contains the following key messages:

- Russian propaganda is not an invention of the recent past. It has deep roots, which can be traced back to at least Soviet times. «Post-truth» strategies are not the invention of the Putin era.
- However, today’s Russian propaganda not only resembles Soviet models but is also different from them. Its goal is not to provide its own narrative but also to weaken existing democratic narratives of Western societies. Being unable to suggest its own new grand narrative (post-democratic or post-capitalist), it tries to show that Western narratives are unsustainable.
- The problem of Russian propaganda is wider than that of «fake news». Studying fakes is an important part of this book too; however, its argument is that Russian propaganda goes further than fake news, and that it uses a specific discourse which has a clear semi-militarist tonality and is aimed at winning a war.

The book has the following chapters:

Chapter One, «Made in Russia: Narratives and Methods of Russian Propaganda’s War on Ukraine» by Artem Babak, studies key narratives and methods of Russian propaganda in Ukraine. The major narratives include: the idea that Ukraine is a failed state; that Ukrainians need regime change and that there will be a «third Maidan» soon; that Ukraine is reviving fascist or Nazi practices and is essentially russophobic; that the Ukrainian Army is a bunch of criminals; that NATO soldiers are fighting on the Ukrainian side; that Russia is not involved in the «Ukrainian conflict», that the West is trying to destroy Ukraine, and many others. The chapter also studies methods of Russian propaganda like focus on emotions, enemy construction, biased approach to information, invention of theories that «explain» a given event (like the downing of MH17) without genuine empirical basis, «whataboutism» (turning the West’s approaches and arguments against itself), etc.

Chapter Two, «Octopus Tentacles: The Structure of the Kremlin’s Propaganda Influence on Ukrainian Information Space» by Tetyana Matychak, studies the structure of propaganda’s impact in Ukraine. The chapter analyses the role of Russian public and private TV channels (from Channel One and Russia-24 to LifeNews and Zvezda), Russian websites (such as ria.ru or tass.ru, search engine Yandex, etc.), but also of Ukrainian media outlets (often with oligarchic and/or non-transparent ownership such as Inter, 112, NewsOne, Vesti, strana.ua, etc.) which imitate truly Ukrainian or independent media but, in fact, bridge Russian messages to the Ukrainian audience. The chapter also studies the information platforms of Donbas separatists; Russian influence through social networks; propaganda through comedy infotainment or fake civil society initiatives. The chapter also analyses the brightest fakes of Russian propaganda (from the « crucified boy» to «concentration camps for Russian speakers») and numerous other information techniques, including those that are partially based on reality. In the last subsection the chapter looks at the most hidden and sophisticated tactics of Russian propaganda.

Chapter Three, «David against Goliath: How Ukraine Resists the Kremlin’s Information Attacks» by Tetyana Matychak, focuses on Ukrainian responses to Russian propaganda. It gives an overview of such initiatives as StopFake, Ukraine Crisis Media Center, Information Resistance, UkraineWorld, Euromaidan Press, Detector Media, Verify and others. It also analyses Ukrainian state initiatives, as well as state sanctions against Russian information channels, from TV to social networks.

Chapter Four, «Networks of Illusion: how Russia acts through the Internet and social networks, and how to fight this» by Vitaliy Moroz, focuses on the major tactics used by Russian propaganda in the online world. It analyses how Russia controls the Internet at home, how major Russian services like LiveJournal, Vkontakte or others are watched by the Russian authorities, and how Moscow bans opposition websites or VPN services, which enable these bans to be circumvented. It also analyses the work of the Russian «troll army», including in Ukraine, and shows how the work of these online commentators has been automatized. Besides, the article focuses on how the Russians are using international web platforms like Wikipedia to promote their narratives. Moreover, the author analyses steps taken by Ukraine to tackle Russian actions in these fields.

Chapter Five, «Architecture of Lies: How the Kremlin’s Propagandist Mechanism Works» by Martha Puhach, gives an overview of existing information about the architecture and mechanism of Russian propaganda: it will help you to understand how the whole system is built up.

Chapter Six, «Mapping the Territory: What Other Researchers of Russian Propaganda Say» by Ruslan Minich and Vitaliy Rybak, provides a (non-extensive) overview of existing research into the topic of Russian propaganda, both in Western research and in Ukraine, and the key messages and narratives put forward by this research. The chapter can be a good summary of further reading on the topic.

Chapter Seven, «More than Fake News: Lessons Learnt by Ukraine» by Volodymyr Yermolenko, analyses the discourse of Russian propaganda in Ukraine. It suggests looking at it as a wider phenomenon, which not only produces fake news but also invents fake democracy, fake civil society and fake criticism, trying to use democratic values against themselves. The chapter points at two major elements of Russian propagandist discourse: «cyничal thinking» and «apocalyptic thinking». Cyничal thinking means that Russia tries to use the practices of democratic critical thinking for destructive purposes. «Apocalyptic thinking» means that Russian propaganda tries to show that its opponents are on the brink of collapse, and argues that it will be able to destroy Western democracies if it gets offended.

Finally, the book includes recommendations to both Ukraine and the international community. The full list of recommendations is available in the last section of the book. In particular, it recommends to:

- Acknowledge that the problem of propaganda and disinformation is a threat to security, both national and civilian.
- Open a debate among stakeholders on ways to respond to security threats without restricting genuine freedom of speech.
- Develop maps of dissemination of propaganda messages in each particular state.
- Develop anti-ratings of «media» that disseminate fakes most actively.
- Develop thorough fact-based and fact-checking journalism projects with international networks.
• Develop alternative forms of response to propaganda, which include irony and spreading fakes.
• Develop civic initiatives on counteracting propaganda.
• Introduce training sessions on media literacy in schools and universities.
• Develop due diligence practices and financial/fiscal monitoring of information resources which were caught spreading propaganda.
• Better integrate Ukrainian and international reporting communities, through forums, meetings, informal networks. Create an international expert network.
• Monitor social networks and sanction accounts propagating hate speech or spreading fakes.
• Defend the values of democracy by showing where democracy works, and how society would look like if democracy fails (or looks like where democracy does fail).
• Study Russian «soft power» initiatives, including NGOs, think tanks, communities, religious organizations, which can prepare the ground for «active measures».
• Study experiences in Donbas and Crimea in 2000-2013, prior to annexation and war.
• Compare the messages of Russian propaganda with the reality on the ground, including in the annexed/occupied territories of Crimea, Donbas, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, etc.
• Have more flexible tools for counteracting the flexibility of Russian propaganda.
• Remember that Russia often uses opportunities provided by democratic states in its fight against democracy; develop stricter legislative provisions which would make it harder, for example, to register propaganda channels in Europe or as media outlets.
• Recognize that workers of Russian propaganda outlets are not journalists, therefore avoid applying principles and practices to them that are applied to journalists (accreditation, etc.).
• Monitor support from Russia for specific political forces, especially during election campaigns (Front National, AfD, etc.).
• Introduce legal responsibility for sharing fake information.
• Introduce personal sanctions against key authors of Russian propaganda (many of them have assets in the West).
• Create a network of international experts dealing with propaganda.

Intro
The idea for the book that you have in front of you was born several years ago in a hotel in Brussels, where media colleagues and friends from Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan had gathered. They met there to discuss what was happening in the media affairs of their respective countries. These people were brought together by the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, the European Union’s initiative to engage public figures from different countries to develop EU policies at the international level. After just a few minutes of their conversation, these people suddenly realized that everyone was talking about the same thing — systematic and intentional information attacks on the part of the Kremlin. It became evident that information operations are conducted not only in the hottest points of confrontation, such as Ukraine, but also in the media spaces of other post-Soviet countries. The similarities between the methods and messages, and the simultaneous nature of certain events, made it clear that we are dealing not with some individual reactions, but with a systematic and well-thought-out strategy. To understand how to act when we come across the implementation of this plan we must, first of all, explore it and come to understand that it is no less systematic than the plan itself.

This is how we came up with the idea to study and describe the system of actions of the Kremlin’s propaganda machine in each of the Eastern Partnership countries. Certainly, this study would not be starting from scratch. There are large volumes of monitoring data, analysis of such data, analytical reports and journalistic descriptions of the work of Russian information resources mobilized to achieve the Kremlin’s geopolitical goals in various regions. Therefore, it was necessary to summarize such materials in each particular aspect and try to display an overall picture of how information influence is performed and what constrains it.

«The Devil is in the details,» you say. We agree, just as we agree with the fact that any generalization is a simplification; it sacrifices many features. However, it is impossible to interact with the world without generalizations. Without relying on them, we would not take a single step. Therefore, this work aims to present the main points without which we could not talk about such a subject as «Kremlin propaganda.» Each idea is implemented gradually, and now we are able to present a publication devoted primarily to Ukraine. This work will show the main features of the Russian propaganda system, as well as the way Ukraine responds to it and counteracts it. We believe that this publication will become part of a future wide-ranging study of the Kremlin’s information influence over the post-Soviet area.

In this book, we have endeavoured to describe the elements of the Kremlin’s propaganda mechanism and the way it works. We tried to distinguish the main messages and the way they are provided by Russian information resources and some media outlets in Ukraine. We have also tried to find out how Russia uses information to influence Ukraine in the media aspect, and what steps Ukraine takes as a state and as a society to protect itself from this influence. We have followed major international initiatives and projects that aim to build an «anti-propaganda defense system.» Based on the analysis, we tried to describe the lessons learned by Ukraine, and formulated recommendations that would help stakeholders to take the punch of information warfare.

By getting the full picture, we have attempted to not only summarize the maximum number of previous studies and descriptions, but also to take into account the opinions and assessments of leading experts in this field. We have conducted a special survey to identify the main approaches and the vision of the problem of the influence exerted by Russian propaganda. We are sincerely grateful to colleagues who responded to our request. Roman Shutov, Diana Dutsyk, Dmytro Zolotukhin, Serhiy Konstynskyi, Olena Holub, Oksana Voloshenyuk, Margo Hontar, Alya Shandra, Denys Kazanskyi, Oleksiy Matsuka, Oleksandr Nikonorov, Pavlo Kazarin, Oleksandra Matviychuk, Tetyana Popova, Volodymyr Yermolenco and Vitaliy Moroz are among the experts who contributed to our publication. The respondents are representatives of organizations involved in the development of media space and propaganda issues in Ukraine, namely Detector Media, StopFake, the Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine, the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting, the Institute of Mass Information, Euromaidan Press, NGO Information Security, NGO Internews Ukraine, the Ukrainian mass media, etc.

We are also grateful for the support of the European Union, the Public Synergy project and the International Renaissance Foundation, without whose help this and many other ideas would have never become reality.

We have been completing work on this book with great sadness in our hearts. During the project’s implementation, our friend and expert of this publication, Oleksandr Nikonorov, passed away. He, along with four young colleagues, died tragically in a car accident on their way back from an international conference in Poland, which concerned the problems of the hybrid war fought by Russia. We want to dedicate this book to the bright memory of our friend.
MADE IN RUSSIA:
NARRATIVES AND METHODS OF RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA’S WAR ON UKRAINE
A

t the end of 2013, the Russian Federation launched a massive campaign to discredit Ukraine and the West. The Russian media’s continuous information attack is of a propagandistic nature, since it they disseminated the messages monotonously and simultaneously through all possible channels.

Kremlin-controlled Russian media outlets provide extensive support for the ruling elite and its goals. To exacerbate the split in Ukrainian society, among EU countries, between the EU and the US. To justify the annexation of the Crimean peninsula. To deny involvement in the war in Ukraine’s East. To weaken anti-Russian sanctions. To change the Ukrainian Government. To stop NATO’s enlargement. To prevent mass protests inside the Russian Federation. To save the popularity ratings of Vladimir Putin among Russians.

Depending on the course of events in Ukraine and the world, Russian propaganda during the period of 2014-2017 has created many anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western narratives, using a variety of methods.

We will give further consideration to the most important of them below.

NARRATIVES OF RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA

«Ukraine – a failed state»
The themes of the social and territorial breakup of Ukraine, the impossibility of its existence within certain boundaries, dependence on other countries, appeared long before Euromaidan. However, when the information and, subsequently, military aggression began, Russian propaganda was intensified, reaching a previously unprecedented level.

The narrative about Ukraine as a failed state, unable to maintain its existence as an independent and viable political and economic unit, remains a trend. For example, philosopher and permanent Russia Today contributor Timofey Sergeytsev stated that «The idea of creating an independent Ukrainian political culture is absolutely utopian ... other political cultures will simply not allow this – neither the Russian nor the American (US) nor traditionally European.» They underlined several aspects. Ukraine will not survive without Russian resources. It is governed from outside («it is wholly dependent on Western donors and the US»). It reforms are a failure. The level of corruption is the highest over the course of independence («while under Yanukovych kickbacks were 25%, then with Poroshenko the kickbacks to receive a state contract were up to 50%, and sometimes 75%.»

After the annexation of Crimea and the start of riots in the East, the Russian mass media did not leave the narrative that Ukraine is falling apart due to «civilizational» differences. «The construction of a new and multipolar world establishes clear boundaries between the new geopolitical subjectness (civilizations), and one of them passes along the Dnipro or even to the West of it,» another Russian columnist, philosopher-anthropologist Vladimir Lepekhin, wrote in 2017.

With the help of manipulations and fake organizations, Kremlin media spread the disinformation about the alleged desire of the Ukrainian regions to become independent from Kyiv. For example, about the creation of the «Bessarabian Republic Budjak» in Odesa Region, or that the Transcarpathian and Chernivtsi Regions will receive autonomous status or become part of neighboring states. Such messages were spread due to the activities of separatist organizations in Ukraine, such as the so-called People’s Council of Bessarabia, so-called Assembly of the Romanians of Bukovina or the so-called People’s Council of Mykolaiv, which according to the Security Service of Ukraine, are coordinated by the Russian Federation.

«Ukrainians need a new Government»
The Ukrainian post-revolutionary Government remains one of the primary targets of the Russian media today. In 2014, Russian TV channels widely used the term «junta,» reinforced by the message of a violent coup by Euromaidan followers with US financial support (one term that is often used is «Ukrainian scenario»). Eventually, the Russian media began to speak less about the «junta,» and have given preference to «Kyiv regime» or «Kyiv authorities.» Binding the capital should emphasize the illegitimacy and insufficiency of power.

Accordingly, the Ukrainian Government, which is hostile towards the Russian Federation, needs to be delegitimized and changed in any manner whatsoever.

Each year, Russian mass media outlets use hard issues in Ukraine (currency instability, raising of utility tariffs, actions of radical organizations on the occasion of the anniversary of Euromaidan, the ban on Russian social media, etc.) to intimidate people and predict the «third Maidan» or «nationalist revolution.» They are talking about a change of power through force, hyperbolizing radical thinking in society: «the words “third Maidan” are hanging in the air, shouting out from newspaper pages, TV screens, from the Internet. People are whispering this to one another in their kitchens, the Security Service warns about this», was stated in a RIA-News article from 2016.

2 Ukraine will fail not to a winner but to a loser. 2017. https://ria.ru/analytics/20170824/151010422.html
3 Ukrainian counterintelligence effectively resists subterfuges and agents of Russian intelligence services. 2016. https://sas.gov.ua/news/1/category/166/view/1221/#.BOEvzON0.dpbs
6 Aleksey Pushkov: There is no independent Ukraine. - http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=1794557
10 Shutov Roman, Destabilization according to the plan. 2015 - http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua/monitoring/advocacy_and_influence/raskachka_po_planu/
11 Russian media buzz about the fall of Poroshenko under pressure from the Right Sector - http://www.osvita.mediasapiens.ua_monitoring/ru_zmi/rosysiska_smi_trubyat_o_paderin_poroshenko_god_natsikom_pravogo_sektora/
12 Maidan is a habit. There is no chance of non-violent change of power https://ria.ru/analytics/20161121/1481794938.html
13 Ukraine – a failed state»

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To warm up the image of the Ukrainian authorities as ineffective and criminal, Kremlin media have been spreading “horror stories”, that Ukrainians will freeze in the winter, they will run short of gas, nuclear and thermal power stations will stop for lack of coal, Ukrainians will not be able to pay utility bills at higher tariffs, and so on. Against this background, prophecies of early elections and the arrival of pro-Russian forces have since 2014 remained popular.  

The Russian mass media and politicians have repeatedly called the Ukrainian Government a “nationalistic dictatorship” or “fascists”, who conduct a “military operation against residents of the South-East.” Similarly, the successfully populated in the occupied areas of Donetsk suffers not from the ineffectiveness of the new government of the separatists, lawlessness or anarchy, but at the hands of the “Kyiv regime.” They depict the so-called “DNR/LNR” leaders as those who have come to the rescue and are not responsible for the low standard of living. The Ukrainian authorities allegedly abandoned the idea and no longer want to return Donetsk. For this purpose, the “punishers” are destroying the occupied settlements, killing civilians, carrying out an economic and trade blockade, are not paying pensions.

«Ukraine is a country of beggars, chaos, and radicals»

According to the Kremlin’s propagandists, since the end of 2013, radicalism has been blossoming in Ukraine. Therefore, we should accept without any surprise the statement of the Russian Foreign Ministry Commissioner for Human Rights Konstantin Dolgov in 2015 that Ukraine has become a “firing ground of neo-Nazism.”  

The great narrative that Euromaidan generated «the Ukrainian crisis» – chaos, radicalism, anarchy, the economic crisis, and the return to the “evil 90s” – has achieved several tasks. First of all, it provoked a section of Ukrainians in the East and Crimea to take active action against the new Government and support Russian sentiment. Secondly, the narrative discredited in the eyes of Russians the Ukrainian protest against corrupt power. Thirdly, it created a convenient explanation as to why Russians should not go out onto the streets against Putin's regime.

Russian media outlets talked about Ukraine’s economy defaulting in 2014, and are still predicting this in 2017. At the same time, they often repeat the narrative about Ukraine on the verge of collapse and «civil war.» In 2017 alone, there were several apparent fake quotes about the situation of people in Ukraine: how hungry people take bread from pigeons and about the introduction of ration cards. Before this, there were stories about young people in Kherson who swear allegiance to Hitler and in Zaporizhzhya veterans are not allowed to celebrate May 9 and their greeting program included performances showing the rape of Ukrainian women by the Red Army.

In recent years, Russian propaganda has notably exaggerated the role of the Voluntary Battalions such as Right Sector, Azov, Aidar, the Svoboda party and other radical organizations in Ukraine. Convicted Ukrainian film director Oleh Sentsov turns out to be a member of Right Sector. Dmytro Yarosh «almost» became the country's president (using made up statistics). In a fake Russian video on YouTube, produced by the Russian Federation, Azov threatened the residents of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. And mainly Aidar and Azov fighters were demanding the release of Nadiya Savchenko from a Russian prison.

Almost any incident between the authorities and members of radical organizations – which, as is known from the Russian media, can fuel a new revolution – hits the main news of TV channels and is actively promoted. For example, Russian channels spoke more about the armed incident in Mukachevo between Right Sector and Ukrainian MP Mykhaylo Lanyo in July 2015 than about so-called «DNR/LNR.» At the same time, there were publications about the separatism of the Rusyns and Hungarians, and that Ukraine will not receive the EU visa-free regime after such events.

«Ukrainian servicemen are criminals»

Russian propaganda has transformed Ukraine into one of the main enemies for the Russians (of course, after the US). In addition to endless stories about the crimes of the Ukrainian authorities during the last three years, the Ukrainian Army remains the main anti-hero in the eyes of the Russian media. The propagandists revived the Soviet term «Kyiv punishers» to denote members of the National Guard, regular military units, and volunteer battalions.

The favorite reports of Russian TV channels remain stories about the shelling of «civilians in Donbas», images of destroyed houses, difficult living conditions in the occupied territories. The biggest number of stories about the «atrocities» of the Ukrainian Army could be seen in the Russian media in 2014–2015. After establishing a relative truce, Russian TV channels continue to film TV reports from the occupied areas of Eastern Ukraine, but less frequently than before.

There are some incredible stories that Russians could watch on their TV screens. For the murder of a resident in the occupied territories, the authorities allegedly guarantee Ukrainian soldiers two slaves and a plot of land. Ukrainian soldiers raped all the women and killed all the men in two villages of Donetsk Region. They have drugged a boy and made a missile target out of him. It is also worth remembering the stories about mass alcoholism, desertion, huge losses, demoralization of the Ukrainian Army, open drug trafficking by Ukrainian officers, the adoption of «prisoners» in the ranks of the army, etc.

From time to time, Russian mass media outlets try to find connections between the terrorist organization ISIS and the Ukrainian authorities. After the flare-up between Turkey and the Russian Federation in the Autumn of 2015,
The latter are not only above the law but also (the Investigative Committee of the
of Paralympic athletes and other actions that harm the
Russian Federation are explained by the Kremlin as the West’s effort to split the country
due to Moscow’s attempt to pursue an independent policy.

Contrasting the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine with the radicals (nationalists) is still very popular. The latter are not only above the law but also freely pursue Russians and Russian speakers. «Nationalists understand that they will not be able to resist the Russian language in this so-called Independent country.» [Translator’s note: by describing Ukraine this way Russia shows its disparaging attitude] Product names or communication between people in the Ukrainian language is nowhere to be found. Therefore, radicals carry out a frontal attack against the Ukrainian language, which is Russian,» states an article from 2016 posted on the Komsomolskaya Pravda site.53
Since 2014, Russian politicians have been speaking at the official level of the «genocide of Russian-speaking civilians» (the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation), «linguistic genocide», «violent Ukrainianization» (Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova),54 violation of the rights of the Russian-speaking population55 in Ukraine to explain the support of unrecognized «republics» and the image of Russian power as their protector.
The narrative of mass Russophobia in Ukrainian society was probably the most successful during the special operation carried out with the annexation of Crimea. People perceived information about the «train of friendship with the Right Sector,» coming from Kyiv to Simferopol, as a real threat.56 Russian media observers still explain the «voluntary» entry of the peninsula into the Russian Federation due to the Russophobia of the Ukrainian authorities, and not as a planned military operation: «Apparently, Crimea escaped from Kyiv because Ukraine ceased to be friendly to Russia and Russians.»57
When suspicions fell on the Russian Federation in events like the shootings on Euromaidan, the tragedy in Odessa on May 2, the Boeing crash – the Kremlin’s press interpreted them as an anti-Russian conspiracy.58

Russofobie Ukrainy
Along with the narrative about the flourishing of «fascism» in Ukraine, Russian media outlets are continuously promoting the idea of Russophobia among Ukrainians and Western politicians. Renaming the streets or getting rid of Soviet symbols within the framework of decommunization, supporting the Ukrainian language on radio or television – is interpreted as Russophobia.51 The European and American sanctions, disqualification of Paralympic athletes and other actions that harm the
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Along with the narrative on NATO involvement in the military conflict, data occasionally appears on losses among foreigners. For example, in 2016, a so-called «DNR» representative said that 15 foreign contractors were allegedly killed during an attempt to launch an attack59, and in early 2015, some Russian sites wrote that more than a thousand foreigners had been killed.60

NATO fights in Ukraine
In early 2015, Putin talked about the NATO Legion62 in Ukraine, implying the Ukrainian Army, which seeks to restrain the Russian Federation. Since then, Russian media outlets have begun to support the thesis of the mass presence of foreigners from NATO countries involved in clashes on the side of the Ukrainian Army. For example, that bodies in NATO uniforms were found under the rubble of the destroyed airport in Donetsk, as well as American weapons.63 Someone guided the bombardments of Slovyansk in accordance with «American tactics.»64 Americans train the Ukrainian military on how to use Javelin anti-tank weapons.65 American Abrams tanks fired on the outskirts of Mariupol.66 The American Stinger portable anti-aircraft-missile system was found at Luhansk Airport.67 All these stories are usually based on the testimonies of one person or fake evidence, videos or photos.

The desire to see the presence of NATO sometimes leads to amusing stories. For example, in 2016, separatists «detected» the flag of the Kingdom of Denmark next to the Right Sector flag in the ATO zone, which was confused with the flag of Volyn Region.68

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Russian propaganda wrote about three battles of jihadists who are subject to the Right Sector.69 It is interesting that unconfirmed reports on ISIS and Ukraine appeared several times from foreign sources. In January 2016, the British newspaper The Independent, which is owned by Russian oligarch Aleksandr Lebedev, reported that Ukraine allegedly plans to invade Syria to confront ISIS and there is a probability of clashes with the Russian Army.70 This information has proven to be false. Moreover, in March, French Senator Nathalie Goulet said on French radio that there is a jihadist training camp in Ukraine. She later said that her words had been misinterpreted.71 They have often equated the terrorists of ISIS with members of the Crimean Tatar organization Mejlis. For example, that ISIS allegedly helped to undermine the electricity grid in Crimea.72

© NATO fights in Ukraine
In early 2015, Putin talked about the NATO Legion62 in Ukraine, implying the Ukrainian Army, which seeks to restrain the Russian Federation. Since then, Russian media outlets have begun to support the thesis of the mass presence of foreigners from NATO countries involved in clashes on the side of the Ukrainian Army. For example, that bodies in NATO uniforms were found under the rubble of the destroyed airport in Donetsk, as well as American weapons. Someone guided the bombardments of Slovyansk in accordance with «American tactics.» Americans train the Ukrainian military on how to use Javelin anti-tank weapons. American Abrams tanks fired on the outskirts of Mariupol. The American Stinger portable anti-aircraft-missile system was found at Luhansk Airport. All these stories are usually based on the testimonies of one person or fake evidence, videos or photos.

The desire to see the presence of NATO sometimes leads to amusing stories. For example, in 2016, separatists «detected» the flag of the Kingdom of Denmark next to the Right Sector flag in the ATO zone, which was confused with the flag of Volyn Region.68

Along with the narrative about the military conflict, data occasionally appears on losses among foreigners. For example, in 2016, a so-called «DNR» representative said that 15 foreign contractors were allegedly killed during an attempt to launch an attack, and in early 2015, some Russian sites wrote that more than a thousand foreigners had been killed.

© Russofobie Ukrainy
Along with the narrative about the flourishing of «fascism» in Ukraine, Russian media outlets are continuously promoting the idea of Russophobia among Ukrainians and Western politicians. Renaming the streets or getting rid of Soviet symbols within the framework of decommunization, supporting the Ukrainian language on radio or television – is interpreted as Russophobia.61

The European and American sanctions, disqualification of Paralympic athletes and other actions that harm the
«Crackdown on dissent and lack of freedom of speech in Ukraine»

Another popular Russian narrative about Ukraine (and the West) is lack of freedom of speech and the persecution of dissent. The ban on propagandist Russian TV channels is presented as a violation of the Constitution and the right to an alternative view. The banning of social networks in May 2017 was called the transformation of Ukraine into North Korea. Searches carried out in the Kyiv office of the Vesti publication is an «undeclared war with an overly independent media outlet in an unceremonious struggle against dissent.» Moreover, any protest actions in Ukraine, like against the raising of utility tariffs, are dangerous for one's health due to the actions of radicals.

The classic example of the destruction of dissent in Ukraine for the Russian press was the murder of journalist Oles Buzyna in 2015 (according to Dmitry Kiselyov, head of the Russia Today news agency – «the greatest Ukrainian of his generation»). The popular Russian publication Lenta.ru called this day «the beginning of the season of political assassinations.»

Creating the narrative of mass persecution of dissent in Ukraine, Ukrainian political actors play into Russia’s hands. Since 2014, members of the former Party of Regions have talked actively about political repressions in Ukraine and have counted more than 50,000 cases. It is no coincidence that representatives of the pro-Russia Opposition Bloc remain the most frequent commenters of Ukrainian events on Russian TV channels.

«Ukraine violates the Minsk Agreements»

Settlement of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine is a separate area for Russian propaganda. The central thesis of the narrative is that the Ukrainian authorities are sabotaging, disrupting and not going to comply with the Minsk Agreements. This is supported by reports from the ATO zone about the crimes of the Ukrainian Army, quotes from the leaders of the so-called «DNR/LNR» on the use of banned weapons, etc. In the summer of 2016, the message that Ukraine was responsible for violating the Minsk Agreements was the fifth most popular.

At the same time, Russian TV channels position the Kremlin’s leadership as the main peacekeeper, who halted bloodshed and made the greatest efforts towards the conclusion of the Minsk Agreements. Following the bloody clashes near the Verkhovna Rada in the summer of 2015 caused by the approval of the decentralization bill (not yet adopted), the Russian media is still repeating the Russian president’s thesis about Ukraine’s inability to comply with the Minsk Agreements.

«Legitimation of «DNR»/«LNR»»

During 2014-2015 the Russian mass media actively promoted the idea of legitimizing the unrecognized republics, in parallel with questioning the legitimacy of the Ukrainian authorities. Russians who came to Eastern Ukraine to conduct hostilities, such as Igor Strelok, Igor Bezler, Nikolai Kozitsyn, turned into the leaders of so-called «Novorossiya» (Vladimir Putin outlined its boundaries from the Kharkiv to Odesa Regions). From the summer of 2014, Russian security officials received less attention, to the benefit of local Ukrainian leaders like Alexander Zakharchenko, Alexey Mozgovoy or Igor Plotnytsky. The latter distributed messages almost every day, which were then disseminated by central Russian TV channels: about the capture of Ukrainian military equipment, successful military operations, the demoralization of troops, and the importance of «humanitarian convoys» from Russia.

Legitimization was partly carried out through the emphasis on the fact that the creation of new «states» comes from below: «people’s referendum,» «people’s governor,» «self-defense,» «people’s militia,» etc. The use of the term «people’s militia," in fact, legitimized the fighting of the «republics» against the «fascists» (by analogy with the Soviet narrative of the exceptional heroism of the people’s militia during the Second World War). Volunteers from Russia who came to fight against the Ukrainian Army are regarded as restoring historical justice and continuing the work of Soviet soldiers.

Since 2015, there has been a trend to impose the idea that so-called «DNR>/«LNR» will not return to Ukraine under pressure from Western countries. The «republics» will become similar to other countries with frozen conflicts protected by the Kremlin, such as Transdniester, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

In the spring of 2016, Russian propaganda began to talk much more about the internal situation in Ukraine, paying very little attention to the so-called «DNR/»LNR». However, on the eve of the recent elections to the Russian State Duma and the lack of preconditions for re-election in Ukraine, Russian propaganda has actively returned to stories about Zakharchenko and Plotnytsky, the shelling and suffering of the civilian population.

«Russia is not involved in the events in Ukraine»

Right from the start of aggression, the Russian authorities have stubbornly denied their involvement in any military actions on the territory of Ukraine. The capture of Russian military personnel is attributable to the fact that they no longer serve in the army and are volunteers (the case of Aleksandrov and Yerofeyev), or that they got lost (the case of 10 troopers in Donetsk Region).

The Kremlin’s media present Russia as a peacekeeping country. It was not for nothing that in 2015 propagandists promoted the idea that the Russian Federation should be present in this part of Ukraine on a permanent basis. The successful conclusion of the so-called Minsk Agreements, which supposedly stopped the shelling of Donbas, was presented as the merit of Vladimir Putin.

The responsibility for violation of the truce falls on the Ukrainian military, volunteer battalions (which Kyiv is not able to control) or politicians who need a war to seize power. A Russian missile or separatists could not have in any way brought down the Boeing-777 which crashed in Donetsk Region in July 2014. Similarly, Russian mass media outlets have since the summer of 2016 constantly denied the alleged involvement of Russian special services in the murder of journalist Pavel Sheremet.
The Crimean narrative was the most noticeable.
In the absence of improvements in living conditions on the peninsula and constant problems with electricity, water or tourism, the Russian media interest in Crimean life is gradually fading. The Crimean narrative was the most noticeable on Russian television channels in 2014 when it was filling up approximately the same amount of airtime as events in Ukraine. Since 2015, the number of news stories about the life of the peninsula has decreased; however, the TOP-5 Russian TV channels still included the Crimean narrative. In 2016, the Russian media talked even less about Crimea, paying more attention to other international events such as the US elections, Brexit, the war in Syria, etc.

The Russian press repeatedly used the Crimean issue to support other narratives. For example, they used a civilian blockade and a power outage in 2015 to accuse Ukraine of aggression; the alleged assault of Ukrainian saboteurs on Russian border guards in Crimea in the summer of 2016 was interpreted as an attempt by Kyiv to worsen US-Russia relations.

The West does not need Ukraine

Russian media always retracts Ukraine’s European integration. They claimed that a visa-free regime would be of no benefit to Ukrainians – “political simulacrum and fake.” Here, for example, is how Dmitry Kiselyov interpreted the approval of visa-free travel: “visa waiver, which caused Poroshenko to giggle, turns his citizens into slaves of the European Union. After all, out there they are aliens who have no social guarantees, no legal contracts, and even no legal housing. It is humiliating and pathetic.”

Treaties between Ukraine and the EU are positioned as still not able to work legally. Moreover, they will have to accept Syrian refugees.

The Ukraine-EU Association Agreement is advantageous only to Europeans, as for Ukraine it is nothing but a loss, since it will have to return Western Ukrainian lands to the Poles.

In 2016, there were many news items on Russian TV channels about a potential thaw in Washington-Moscow relations in the event of a Donald Trump victory. There were frequent messages that Ukraine would be “bartered” for Russia’s consent to cooperate with the US in the Middle East. After the Republican victory, the Russian press started writing that Ukraine is a “burden,” and nobody needs it any more: neither Russia nor the United States. The Ukrainian pro-Russian publication Vestn even wrote that Washington is already seeking an alternative to Poroshenko and no longer has direct interests in Ukraine. “A representative of a gas production company, Burisma Holdings (the son of current US Vice President Joe Biden is a member of the company’s board), hinted that Washington no longer needs Ukrainian shale gas, and recalled that Trump aims to develop domestic oil production and shale deposits.”

The West is an enemy who wants to destroy Russia

After the annexation of Crimea and the war in the East of Ukraine, the Kremlin had to legitimize its actions in the eyes of Russians and the world. With the help of the mass media, over the past three years Russian propagandists have managed to construct vividly negative images of Ukraine, the EU, and the United States. The monitoring of Russian federal TV channels in 2016 showed that five out of the six most common messages were characterizing the West negatively. The first: the EU and the US are in collusion and are trying to expand their presence in Eurasia by weakening the Russian Federation. The second: the European Union (Schengen Agreement, EU Neighborhood Policy) is coming to an end. The third: Russia is getting up from its knees and making progress in spite of the sanctions and provocations of the West. The fourth: Russia, China, India, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, Eurasian Economic Union are new vectors of geopolitical processes and an alternative to the EU-US. The fifth: modern Western values are decadent, and only Russia has retained healthy civilizational landmarks. In fact, the Russian media mentioned the West twice as much as Russia’s own internal situation.

One of the cornerstones of Russia’s information war is to propagote the thesis that the United States selfishly and ruthlessly competes for world domination, so Russia’s efforts to confront the US are commendable. EU countries, especially those in Central and Eastern Europe, are depicted as Russophobic puppets of the United States. Accordingly, any NATO enlargement or training near the borders with the Russian Federation is seen as an outrage, threatening, and encroachment on Russia’s “sphere of interest.”

Explaining the internal problems of the Russian Federation by external factors is an inherent tactic of Kremlin media. For example, on the talk shows of national TV channels, one could repeatedly hear that the United States deliberately provoked the fall in global oil prices to weaken the Russian economy; mention of Vladimir Putin in the so-called Panama Papers is an attempt to destabilize Russia.

Media outlets have since 2015 been preparing the Russian population for a long-standing confrontation with the West. Therefore, the number of news items about pro-Russian European politicians who favor the lifting of sanctions against the Russian Federation has increased, as have reports on the exaggerated effect of Russian sanctions on the EU economy.
Furthermore, depending on the mission, propagandists can quickly change the characters and create new enemies (or friends). A good demonstration was the Turkish case with a plane that had been shot down, when for some time Ankara turned, in the eyes of Russians, into one of the main enemies.\textsuperscript{31}

\textbf{METHODS OF INFORMATION PRESENTATION BY RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA}

The monitoring and analysis of the Russian media in recent years indicate the use of various methods of disinformation. In particular, manipulative use of photo/video/sound, seeming diversity of thought, mixing of comments, opinions, and facts, appealing to fear and to the enemy, quoting questionable or unverified sources, manipulative search for heroes, stereotyping, repetition and exaggeration, inaccurate information, etc.

\textbf{Understatement and exaggeration}

Russian media outlets are obstinately hushing up the facts of capture of Russian service members, security officials, and the use of the latest Russian weapons in Eastern Ukraine. They also ignore the successes of the Ukrainian Army.

Since 2015, the Kremlin has almost completely concealed the facts of trade and economic ties between the so-called «DNR»/«LNR» and Kyiv. When the transport blockade began in 2017, Russian media explained events with the desire of «radicals» to force Petro Poroshenko to intensify the offensive against the «Republic» and with Kyiv’s dependence on Donbas coal.\textsuperscript{92}

The incident in Mukachevo in the summer of 2015 showed the Russian media’s ability to exaggerate the significance of events that are beneficial for maintaining the image of Ukraine as a country of radicals, lawlessness, and anarchy. The information bubble about the armed conflict in Mukachevo was presented as a trigger for fresh disorder in Ukraine.\textsuperscript{93} For almost two weeks, RTR, NTV, Zvezda, and LifeNews talked much more about the events in Mukachevo than about the so-called «DNR»/«LNR» (media attention was due in no small part to the large number of mutual accusations between representatives of Right Sector and the Government).

\textbf{Emotionality and identification of the next enemy}

A notable feature of Russian propaganda is the emotional presentation of information. For example, continuously displaying destroyed homes and suffering of civilians, they reach out to human feelings (like pain, fear, and compassion) and diminish the ability of viewers to perceive and analyze information in a critical fashion.

Propagandists always put the blame for the suffering of the «peaceful population of Donbas» on the Ukrainian Army and the authorities, Americans or Europeans. In Crimea, Russian propaganda added the Crimean Tatars from the Majlis, an officially forbidden organization, to the list of enemies.\textsuperscript{94}

Labelling the West an «enemy» consolidates the Russians in front of an imaginary threat and becomes a convenient justification for the Kremlin’s persecution of the opposition. In one of Dmitry Kiselyov’s programs, Russian oppositionist Alexey Navalny was called an agent of the British and American intelligence services. This scheme fits perfectly with the narrative that only Vladimir Putin can effectively counter «external threats,»\textsuperscript{95} the likes of NATO’s preparation for a war with Russia.\textsuperscript{96}

\textbf{Prejudice}

Disinformation works more efficiently in the absence of alternative sources of information. The monitoring carried out in 2015 showed that Russian TV channels invite a small circle of political actors.\textsuperscript{97} It is not for nothing that the Russian authorities blocked access to the Krym.Realii website (a Radio Svoboda project), the ATV TV channel and other media outlets over which the occupying authorities had no influence.

Talk shows and news programs on the main television channels unanimously criticize the Ukrainian Government and armed forces, supporting the actions of the Russian authorities. It is normal for Russian talk show hosts to mix their thoughts with facts, act like experts, use irony and sarcasm while speaking about Ukraine and to ignore official sources.

Instead of acting as a go-between to discuss public policy issues, Russia’s central television channels, Russia-1, NTV, and Channel One, openly demonstrated violations of ethical standards, biased attitude, showing support for one side and disrespect for another. During talk shows, they often used strong language when mentioning the official representatives of Ukraine, the USA, the EU and the West as a whole.\textsuperscript{98}

When covering these events, Russian media outlets usually maintain lines favorable to the Kremlin. For example, after the destruction of a bus at the Ukrainian roadblock near Volnovakha, there were various explanations, which came down to the only responsible party – Ukrainian. It is revenge by the Ukrainian Army for the loss of Donetsk Airport. The OSCE’s investigation has not confirmed the guilt of the «DNR», therefore responsibility falls on Ukraine. The Security Services of Ukraine organized the operation to discredit the «people’s militia» and Russia.\textsuperscript{99}

\textbf{Theories-theories}

One of the favorite techniques used by the Kremlin’s propaganda in complex cases, when the suspicion clearly falls on the Russian Federation, is to propose various theories, apart from those that are true. When separatists shot down the Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 Boeing-777 with the use of a Russian Buk missile, Kremlin propaganda tried to cover it up with quasi-realistic theories of who is to blame. Eventually, Russia’s mass media began to claim that due to the political component it is impossible to identify who is responsible for shooting down the passenger plane, and it will be unreasonable to bring accusations against the Russian Federation.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{96} http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/05/05/a-guide-to-russian-propaganda-part-1-propaganda-prepares-russia-for-war/ \textsuperscript{97} http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/05/05/a-guide-to-russian-propaganda-part-1-propaganda-prepares-russia-for-war/ \textsuperscript{98} http://3mv.ru/83579-boevye-gruppy-nato-otbatyvayut-udary-reality/ \textsuperscript{99} http://proqwerty.tilda.ws/russianpropaganda \textsuperscript{100} http://proqwerty.tilda.ws/russianpropaganda
Similarly, the Kremlin commented on the destruction of a humanitarian convoy in Syria in 2016. At first, they said that it was a terrorist act, then that there was no airstrike at all, but they later shifted the blame to an American drone.\textsuperscript{101}

\textbf{Whataboutism}

The Kremlin manipulates the selection of topics in news stories, distracting attention from domestic issues by highlighting the «Ukrainian crisis.» For example, during 2015, Channel One was in the main speaking about the situation in Ukraine (chaos, «DNR/LNR», Crimea, Minsk Agreements). The second most popular topic is the Second World War. And the Russian economy is only in third place. The Russia-1 TV channel talked less about Ukraine (though it is still the main topic), focusing more on international issues.

When it comes to Europe, the media are constantly looking for events to interpret them in favor of the Russian Federation. The use of whataboutism («and what about ...») makes it possible to assert: «Russia is not ideal, but neither is the West.» Instead of providing reasoned explanations of important things, the media focus on minor issues that are not related to the subject matter. For example, if you ask the Kremlin whether Russia had violated international law by military action in Crimea, the answer will be in the form of a question: why is the US is permitted to do so in Iraq or Afghanistan. Russian intelligence services contributed to the organization of the so-called «DNR/LNR» self-defense – but who organized the Maidan protests? Putin’s friend has billions in offshore accounts, but what about Western and Ukrainian politicians?\textsuperscript{102}

Kremlin propaganda also denies and rejects any criticism of the Russian Government. All negative comments on Russia are presented either as fictitious or as unfair: the result of double standards, prejudice, and selfishness.\textsuperscript{103}

\textbf{Eyewitness accounts}

The use of eyewitness accounts, not confirmed by other sources, has become a tool used widely by spread tool of Russian propaganda. The epic story about a boy, who was «crucified» by Ukrainian soldiers in Slovyansk, was shown on Channel One three times. Another lesser known story shown on LifeNews and NTV was about a boy whom Ukrainian military turned into a spy-drug addict and forced to be a gun spotter, was based on the words of leaders of pro-Russian militants. Both stories, from 2014, were quickly exposed, but none of the TV channels acknowledged their mistake.\textsuperscript{104}

The Russia TV channel showed a news item about a journalist who allegedly saw a bullet flying between him and a representative of the so-called «DNR» and the shot was fired from the side of the location of the Azov battalion. The Zvezda TV channel’s website published a news story about Ukrainian soldiers who were stealing domestic animals. The story was based solely on the comment made by a “witness” in the social media (using a fake photo that was subsequently deleted).\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{101} news on RIA Novosti - https://ria.ru/analytics/20151013/1301151121.html
\textsuperscript{102} http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/12/10/a-guide-to-russian-propaganda-part-3-rapid-fire-conspiracy-theories/
\textsuperscript{103} https://cepa.ecms.pl/files/?id_104
\textsuperscript{104} https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane_i_mire/content/201506201312-gno.htm
CHAPTER 2

OCTOPUS TENTACLES:
THE STRUCTURE
OF THE KREMLIN’S
PROPAGANDA
INFLUENCE ON THE
UKRAINIAN
INFORMATION
SPACE
While watching a favorite TV program, listening to the radio in the car, gossiping with a neighbor, visiting a concert of your favorite music band and even liking photos of kittens in social networks, you should never forget about critical thinking. After all, in any of these situations, the parties of the information-psychological warfare can bring you on their side. To steer clear of such influence and, for some people to retain common sense, it is worth knowing all the channels of propaganda's dissemination.

THE LABYRINTH OF THE MINOTAUR

With the beginning of Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014, Ukrainian experts began to investigate the influence of the Kremlin’s disinformation and propaganda on the internal information space. As of September 2017, they can say that with the beginning of Euromaidan in Kyiv on November 22, 2013, messages advantageous for the Kremlin were distributed through the following channels: Russian state and commercial television; Russian websites of various forms of ownership; Pro-Russian media in Ukraine, which include those who broadcast the viewpoint of leaders of the so-called «LNR» and «DNR» as well Ukrainian mass media, which are suspected of being financed by the Russian Federation; social networks: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, including Russian services like VKonakte and Odnoklassniki; Blogs, including LiveJournal; Experts from NGOs and think tanks; Pro-Russian Ukrainian politicians, and not only them; private initiatives and public movements not registered as separate organizations; personal communication; the cultural sphere that covers film production, book publishing and popular modern music.

NGO Internews Ukraine has interviewed 15 media experts, representing the most influential Ukrainian public and non-governmental organizations. Based on their research, conclusions, and their own experience in this field, we have managed to analyze the structure of the influence of the Kremlin’s information messages and to find examples of the most resonant fakes and disinformation circulating in the Ukrainian space over the last five years.

An attractive picture

Russian public and private TV channels were an important source in the propagation of pro-Kremlin messages in Ukraine in 2013-2014. For example, Channel One, Russia-1, Russia-24, NTV, Channel 5, LifeNews, TNT, Zveza and others. According to an annual study undertaken by Internews, in 2014, 27% of Ukrainians watched Russian TV channels. According to experts, Russian broadcasting is attractive, with its beautiful and quality picture, through a wide choice of entertainment programs and the emotionality of narrative, particular in talk shows. “Ukraine as a state did not set up its discourse. Therefore, people watched the Russian media – there was lots of entertainment, everything is fine there, there is a funny picture, entertainment shows,” Diana Dutsyk, executive director of the NGO Detector Media, explained to Internews Ukraine. Russian media outlets are capable of doing this thanks to large budgets, including Government grants. In 2015, 72 billion rubles (1.2 billion dollars at the average exchange rate in that year) were allocated to support media – primarily TV channels; in 2016 – 76 billion rubles (1 billion dollars at the average exchange rate); in 2017 – approximately 70 billion rubles (1.2 billion dollars at the average exchange rate). Ukrainian TV channels are losing in an unfair competition. In 2015, Volodymyr Borodyansky, head of StarLightMedia, a Ukrainian group of TV channels, said – “our economy allows the production of a TV show priced at 20,000-30,000 dollars per hour, and the neighboring economy 300,000 dollars per hour. Under such conditions, it is impossible to compete.”

The influence of Russian channels on the Ukrainian information space during 2014-2017 was significantly reduced thanks to the restricted broadcasting of 77 out of 82 channels in Ukrainian cable networks. Now Ukrainians can watch these channels only on the Internet or via satellite. As a result of such actions, and due to the loss of confidence in the Russian media product as a whole (according to research by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology111), in 2017, only 1% of Ukrainians admitted that they watch/read Russian media to get information (according to a study by Internews112).

Protégé of Roskomnadzor

Another channel for distributing the Kremlin’s information in Ukraine is a variety of Russian websites, including news agencies and print media: tass.ru, ria.ru, kommensart.ru and others. In 2014, 44% of Ukrainians read them.113 However, already in 2015, this part fell to 27% despite the fact that providers did not block any of these sites in Ukraine. Now, Ukrainians almost do not turn to this source of information.114 Experts recall that some Ukrainian journalists still use such sites as the primary sources of information, undermining the credibility of their own media. In pursuit of speed, employees of Ukrainian news agencies can write news based on reports from the Kremlin’s press service, without waiting for an official press release from Ukrainian state authorities. As a result, they sacrifice the standards of balance between opinions and facts in favor of being financed by the Russian Federation; social networks: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, including Russian services like VKonakte and Odnoklassniki; Blogs, including LiveJournal; Experts from NGOs and think tanks; Pro-Russian Ukrainian politicians, and not only them; private initiatives and public movements not registered as separate organizations; personal communication; the cultural sphere that covers film production, book publishing and popular modern music.

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108 Russia’s expenditure on mass media in 2017 is planned to be reduced by 6 billion rubles. «http://russian.rt.com/article/324885-rahidy-na-smi-v-rossii-v-2017
110 Liliya Rabatska. «Russia is losing the information war; we know clearly how to handle Crimea and Donbas,» https://apostrophe.ua/ua/article/politics/government/2017-08-22/rossia-proigrivaya-vet-informovnya-myi-chetko-znam-kak-byit-s-krymom-i-donbasom/13945
Some Ukrainian media, which on specific grounds are considered pro-Russian, play on the Kremlin’s “half of the field”. Currently, there is no direct proof that certain leading Ukrainian media outlets receive funding from Russia. However, according to experts, messages and discourses broadcast through some TV channels, print media, and websites suggest that: either journalists receive direct payment from the Russian Federation for spreading such opinions, or media owners have a common standpoint with the Kremlin and provide free help to Russia on information warfare. Among such media, experts include the TV channels Inter (the main beneficiary are the business partners Firtash and Serhiy Lyovochkin115), Ukraine (belongs to businessman Rinat Akhmetov, SCM Holdings116), Channel 112 (owned by Andriy Podschypkov117), NewsOne (owned by businessman Yevhen Murayev118). The Vestі119 newspaper and the radio station bearing the same name (belongs to the Cyprus company Media Holding Vestі Ukraine120). The website strana.ua (owned by Ihor Huzhva121, former editor-in-chief of the Vestі newspaper, law-enforcement agencies now accuse him of extortion122).

The NewsOne channel broadcasts Russian messages.123 Channel 112 maintains all journalistic standards and is pro-Ukrainian. However, it provides a public speaking platform for pro-Russian experts and politicians124 and contributes to the dissemination of their messages,125 Roman Shutov, Program Director of Detective Media said, providing an example to Internews Ukraine.

“In my opinion, Russia’s strategy in Ukraine in recent years has been to create media platforms, mimicking Ukrainian media platforms and Ukrainian opposition media platforms. But along with this, they carry out an agenda, resulting in the torpedoing of the Ukrainian state,” Pavlo Kazarin, popular blogger and TV presenter, columnist for Krym. Realni (Crimea. Realia), explains to Internews Ukraine.

Now that the war with Russia is still under way, the influence of such media is not decisive. “Ukrainian media owned by pro-Russian business people have their own audience. However, now this audience is not influencing the political agenda of Russian business people have their own audience. Print media: Novorossiya, Donetskoe vremya and others. Television channels: First Republican, Novorossiya, Oplot and others. Print media: Novorossiya, Donetskoe vremya, which on specific grounds are considered pro-Russian, play on the Kremlin’s “half of the field”. Currently, there is no direct proof that certain leading Ukrainian media outlets receive funding from Russia. However, according to experts, messages and discourses broadcast through some TV channels, print media, and websites suggest that: either journalists receive direct payment from the Russian Federation for spreading such opinions, or media owners have a common standpoint with the Kremlin and provide free help to Russia on information warfare. Among such media, experts include the TV channels Inter (the main beneficiary are the business partners Firtash and Serhiy Lyovochkin115), Ukraine (belongs to businessman Rinat Akhmetov, SCM Holdings116), Channel 112 (owned by Andriy Podschypkov117), NewsOne (owned by businessman Yevhen Murayev118). The Vestі119 newspaper and the radio station bearing the same name (belongs to the Cyprus company Media Holding Vestі Ukraine120). The website strana.ua (owned by Ihor Huzhva121, former editor-in-chief of the Vestі newspaper, law-enforcement agencies now accuse him of extortion122).

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“In my opinion, Russia’s strategy in Ukraine in recent years has been to create media platforms, mimicking Ukrainian media platforms and Ukrainian opposition media platforms. But along with this, they carry out an agenda, resulting in the torpedoing of the Ukrainian state,” Pavlo Kazarin, popular blogger and TV presenter, columnist for Krym. Realni (Crimea. Realia), explains to Internews Ukraine.

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unproven charges. In particular, clips from the «Evening with Vladimir Solovyov» program are disseminated in this way.\(^{123}\) Anatoly Sharuy\(^{125}\), a former Ukrainian journalist who may be deprived of political asylum in Lithuania\(^{144}\) for anti-Ukrainian propaganda, has also chosen this channel for the dissemination of manipulative messages. Sharuy is a frequent guest of Russian newscasts.\(^{15, 138}\) The Kremlin’s media repeatedly quoted his messages.

**Double-dealing**

Information warfare uses the **statements of Ukrainian politicians, whose position is advantageous to the Kremlin.** Thus, providing a media platform to its politicians, Ukrainian media create a «right image» for the Russian Federation. Russian media prefer to quote Yuriy Boyko,\(^{137}\) Yulia Tymoshenko,\(^{138}\) Vadym Rabinovych and others. All these politicians belong to the so-called populists wing. They aim to attract electorate by criticizing the current Government. At the same time, Russian media do not criticize them. The Kremlin information campaign also uses the statements of odious local politicians like Oleh Lyashko,\(^{139}\) Mikhail Saakashvili,\(^{140}\) Oleh Tyahnybok, and others to criticize the Ukrainian authorities. At the same time, they do not forget to conduct their own information campaign against them, damaging their reputation. The consumer of information cannot understand whether it is possible to trust such persons, and if it is so, then which aspects of them.

**«Useful idiots»?**

The statements of Ukrainian politicians are supplemented by **reports of Ukrainian experts and the activities of pro-Russian NGOs.** They help to distribute the Kremlin’s messages, receiving direct or indirect funding from the Russian Federation. These public organizations include various centers of Russian culture,\(^{141}\) particularly the Russian Research and Culture Centre in Kyiv,\(^{142}\) Ukrainian Choice,\(^{143}\) Virne Kozatstvo (Faithful Cossacks),\(^{144}\) 145 Public Council of Dnipropetrovsk, Social Zaporizhzhya, Odesa for Porto-Franco, Kharkiv Slobzhanshchnya\(^{146}\) and others. In addition, all statements by Ukrainian analysts and political experts, which criticize the situation in the country without providing sufficient arguments, contribute to the Kremlin’s propaganda.

**The initiative is welcomed**

Another source used to disseminate the necessary information during the war are so-called **«bottom-up initiatives.»** For example, in 2017, the Ukrainian media actively disseminated «letters of trade unions» that demanded resumption of economic relations with Russia at the previous level in order to increase employment opportunities: from the workers of the Trade union of chemical and petrochemical industries of Ukraine\(^{147}\) and others. This idea would not have been surprising if it had been advanced just by one group and published in one media. «But the mass nature of these letters and the speed of dissemination caused suspicion. Some editors and journalists admitted that they were offered money to publish these letters, Alya Shandra, editor-in-chief of Euromaidan Press, told Internews Ukraine. «Nadiya Kuramshyna and Viktoriya Shylueva are not the “Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers”. It is a Russian project, a pseudo-organization, which spreads discrediting information about the Ukrainian command. They imitated a Ukrainian patriotic organization, thanks to which they were invited to appear on television and people listened to them,» says Denis Kazansky.

**Stand Up and show**

Mass culture has become an important weapon in the Russian information and psychological war.\(^{148}\) According to experts, the most influential were **variety art, TV series, entertainment TV shows, stand-up comedy shows, movies, and books.**

«In general, the degree of cultural penetration is identical to the degree of ideological penetration,» explains Oksana Voloshenyuk, executive director of the Academy of Ukrainian Press. «Ukraine wants to pull out of Minsk formats. Russian media prefer to quote Yuriy Boyko,\(^{137}\) editor-in-chief of Euromaidan Press, told Internews Ukraine. «Nadiya Kuramshyna and Viktoriya Shylueva are not the “Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers”. It is a Russian project, a pseudo-organization, which spreads discrediting information about the Ukrainian command. They imitated a Ukrainian patriotic organization, thanks to which they were invited to appear on television and people listened to them,» says Denis Kazansky.

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123. Kotvin «gets bumped» during Solovyov’s September 25, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7coU25QKiel
126. Lithuania may deprive Shary of political asylum for anti-Ukrainian propaganda. https://www.radiovoboda.org.ua/20160311.html
127. Anatoly Sharuy’s exclusive interview to Russian TV Channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIbQikz3w
128. Sharuy - Interview to German RT, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWmDhOwE
131. After Saakashvili had decided to return to Ukraine, Lyashko urged that violators of the border be shot. http://www.vesti.ru/doc.id/922536/
133. «Useful idiots»? The statements of Ukrainian politicians are supplemented by reports of Ukrainian experts and the activities of pro-Russian NGOs. They help to distribute the Kremlin’s messages, receiving direct or indirect funding from the Russian Federation. These public organizations include various centers of Russian culture, particularly the Russian Research and Culture Centre in Kyiv, Ukrainian Choice, Virne Kozatstvo (Faithful Cossacks), Public Council of Dnipropetrovsk, Social Zaporizhzhya, Odesa for Porto-Franco, Kharkiv Slobzhanshchnya and others. In addition, all statements by Ukrainian analysts and political experts, which criticize the situation in the country without providing sufficient arguments, contribute to the Kremlin’s propaganda.
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Russian TV series produced by Pervyi Kanal (Channel One) which glorifies the Russian FSB, is a vivid example of the Kremlin’s propaganda policy in culture. The main idea of the series is that there are no corrupted officials in Russian Government. Meanwhile, all the anti-corruption organizations are being financed by the United States in order to undermine Russian officials and create chaos in the country – like they did in Ukraine with the Revolution of Dignity.

BBC: A little bird told me

Personal communication150 was and remains a very important channel for the dissemination of any information: relatives, neighbors, colleagues, taxi drivers, shop assistants, etc. It is worth remembering that people usually have a greater degree of trust in the words of family and friends than in the words of journalists. According to Research & Branding Group,151 12% of Ukrainians consider relatives and friends as the most trustworthy information sources on political events, and 3% talk and rumors. That is why the most successful election campaigns were those where the element of personal communication of both the politician and campaigners was involved as much as possible.

MAKING A MOUNTAIN OF A MOLEHILL: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Outright lying and propagandizing of ideas, bearing no relationship to reality, will not be viable. Instead, messages based on real examples may enjoy success. Therefore, for creating disinformation, the Kremlin’s communication experts in the main use real-life Ukrainian stories. Then they only need to generalize one or several examples for the whole country or enormously overestimate the meaning of a fact – and the «horror story» is ready. Ukraine has been in a rather difficult economic situation for the last four years. At the same time, it has to protect its borders from military aggression. This is why Ukraine is a fruitful field for the growth of various fake news and misrepresentations (for more details see Chapter 1 «Made in Russia: Narratives and Methods of Russian Propaganda’s Communication of both the politician and campaigners was involved as much as possible.

The war in Donbas

Ukraine’s biggest unresolved issue remains the war in the Donbas region, also known as the anti-terrorist operation (ATO). It takes lives every day, destroys destinies and undermines the state’s economy. Petro Poroshenko made a promise during his election campaign in 2014 to end the war as soon as possible: «an anti-terrorist operation will last a few hours.»152 The bringing in of Russian troops into the Donbas region made it impossible to fulfill the promise.153 However, Kremlin media outlets ignore this fact, focusing on the mistakes and shortcomings of the Ukrainian command. They hyperbolize and summarize the possible consequences, accusing Poroshenko of not ending the war.154 In addition, the investigations of Ukrainian journalists about corruption in the Ukrainian Army are fertile ground for speculation.155 The Russian information space is full of news, which presents the Ukrainian military in a grotesque style to ridicule the enemy. For example, after the Ukrainian news that the Russian military gave shelter to two boars, the Russian media provided this information as a very serious part of the strategy of strengthening the defense potential of Ukrainian troops.156

Inability to overcome corruption

All the presidents promised to overcome corruption in Ukraine. Petro Poroshenko was no exception. He has made the fight against corruption and the use of administrative resources a priority of his domestic policy.157 However, it has not produced fast and noticeable results: corruption has not been eradicated, and none of the high-profile criminal cases has been completed yet. In the World Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2016, Ukraine gained 29 points out of a possible 100 and ranked 131st out of 176 countries.158 This is just two points more than in 2015. Despite the fact that this position with 29 points was also shared by Kazakhstan, Russia, Nepal, and Iran, the Ukrainian media has over the past four years represented Ukraine as a highly corrupt state.159

The stagnation of reforms

In January 2015, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko signed the Decree «On the ‘Ukraine-2020’ Strategy for Sustainable Development,» which identified 62 necessary reforms for achieving European standards of living in the country.161 According to the analysis carried out by the analytical department of VoxUkraine,162 as of September 2017, the progress in reforms was very slow, and in early 2017, it was at zero level. This situation disappoints many Ukrainians and plays into the hands of anti-Ukrainian propaganda. Exaggeration and distortion of facts allowed discussion about the complete absence of reforms in Ukraine.163 At the same time, Kremlin media push the opposite idea – that reforms in Ukraine do take place (read Chapter 6. «Mapping the Territory: What Other Researchers of Russian Propaganda Say» for more details on such propaganda techniques). For instance, the media report on the process of medical reform in Ukraine and call it a «disaster.»164

151 Ukrainians trust TV twice as much as Internet media, https://duma.ua/UKRAINE/ukrainskij-doviruyat-televizionu-v-4va-razi-blishe-nizh-internet-
tv-2016
152 Poroshenko: ATO cannot last 2-3 months, it will last a few hours, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-CWIIIjOmo
153 Poroshenko advisor explained what has prevented Ukraine from completing the ATO in two weeks, http://zik.ua/news/2017/03/10/zadnyk_porozenko-
pvyanyv_shchota_zavadiylo_ukrani
154 In Kyiv people talk about a new, hidden mobilization campaign - it seems peace in Ukraine is not on the agenda of the current authorities, https://www.tvtr
155 Kyiv news/2017-02-12/319693-v_kiev
156 Vysoke
157 VoxUkraine.org/research/indeks-koruptsiyi-
158 In three years after Maidan - Ukraine is corrupted and poor, there is no promised prosperity, https://www.tvtr
162 European experts have analyzed the course of reforms in Ukraine, https://www.tvtr
163 tri_goda_poste_maydanu_na_ukraine_-
koruptsiya_i_nischeta_a_obeschannogo-
protivovazhya.net
165 https://www.1tv.ru/news/2015/12/705479/
166 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-CWIIIjOmo
167 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-CWIIIjOmo
The war in the East of Ukraine began when the Armed Forces were the least prepared for it since 1991. Volunteer battalions came to their aid. Some of them have chosen the nationalist movement as their ideology, which was part of patriotism for them. The most famous of them are the Right Sector and Azov. Chaotic and poorly controlled in 2014-2015, they later became part of the National Guard of Ukraine, and Right Sector has signed a cooperation agreement with the Armed Forces of Ukraine. However, they were demonized by anti-Ukrainian propaganda and were the embodiment of «fascists, » «Nazis» and «punishers.» Moreover, the actions of members of these battalions are imposed on the entire Ukrainian Army as a whole, and the actions of their supporters are extended to the entire population of Ukraine.

Social questions. The general standard of living in Ukraine remains very low. Despite the increase in the minimum wage from 1,147 UAH in 2013 to 3,200 UAH in 2017, the population does not feel an increase in social standards. After all, the inflation figure in 2014 was UAH in 2017, the population does not feel an increase in the so-called “LNR” and “DNR” groups.

Armed Forces of Ukraine, ignoring all reports of violations by them quote out of context and report only on violations by the Kremlin’s media use UN human rights after the Maidan. Nevertheless, this did not stop Russian state channels from providing news on voting as if this was the enactment of the provisions contained in the law.

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One of the reasons for this situation is the reform of the energy sector. It reduces dependence on Russian gas and makes the parasitizing of Ukrainian oligarchs on gas subsidies impossible. The reform has led to a fourfold increase in the price of natural gas for the population over a three-year period. Before that, its value remained unchanged for almost four years. All this has drawn disinflation from Ukrainians and strengthened their protest sentiment, which became suitable material for exaggeration in the news of the Russian media. They were quick to say that Ukraine is in for a “new Maidan.” However, protests against increases in tariffs were small and gathered much fewer people than protests on the Maidan against arbitrary rule in 2004-2005 and 2013-2014, when about a million people took to the streets simultaneously.

The violation of human rights

The situation in the field of human rights in Ukraine is still not at the highest level. Due to the war in the Donbas region and the occupation of Crimea, the level of violence and hatred has increased, and freedom of expression restricted, according to research by the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group for 2016. According to Iryna Bekeshkina, the head of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Ukrainians have not yet learned to protect their rights: «Most people who suffered from the violation of their rights have done nothing, and those who did something have not succeeded.» This gives a broad field for Russian propaganda manipulations.

“Quotes from the participants of our press conference on human rights after the Maidan were taken out of context and turned by the Russian media to their advantage.”

Oleksandra Matvivychuk, chairperson of the board of the Center for Civil Liberties, coordinator of EuroMaidan SOS, told Internews Ukraine. Similarly, the Kremlin’s media use UN reports on human rights in Ukraine in a selective manner; they quote out of context and report only on violations by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, ignoring all reports of violations by the so-called “LNR” and “DNR” groups.

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The Russian occupation of part of Donbas made it impossible for Ukraine to provide this region with all the necessary means of living. In addition, it has created conditions for smuggling and other forms of illicit enrichment in these territories. As a result, the Ukrainian authorities were forced to refuse to supply goods to the occupied region.
This situation was actively used by the Russian media to whip up tension and to indict the Ukrainian authorities for leaving the citizens to fend for themselves. At the same time, the Russian authorities were described as the liberators of the region.

**PARDON IMPOSSIBLE TO CRUCIFY – THE MOST FAMOUS FAKE ABOUT UKRAINE OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS**

Fakes and distorted information about Ukraine created in 2013-2017 are striking due to their absurdity and emotional appeal. According to experts, this is why they succeeded in acquiring such spread – first and foremost in Russia.

**«The crucified boy»**

On July 12, 2014, a week after Ukrainian troops had liberated the city of Slovyansk in Donbas, Russia’s Channel One TV ran a story about a Ukrainian serviceman who was allegedly killed in front of his grief-stricken mother. Then they took his mother, tied her to a tank and dragged her along the street. Since the release of this report, not a single person has been found to confirm the words of Halyna Pyshnyak. Attempts by Russian journalists from other media outlets, like Novaya Gazeta, to find witnesses to the case were in vain. The manipulative capability of the report aired on Channel One consists of the complete absence of clarifying questions from the interviewer. Besides, the lack of photo and video evidence at a time when many people have smartphones on their person is extraordinary. Moreover, the story about the crucifixion repeats the plot in one of the episodes of the fourth season of the popular Game of Thrones series.

Channel One tried to clear themselves of this story later on. However, far fewer people saw this explanation than the report, which was widely disseminated.

**«Two slaves and a piece of land»**

On November 2, 2014, Russia’s Channel One aired a news report about Ukraine, in which the self-proclaimed head of the village of Stepanivka in Donetsk Region quotes the statement of a Ukrainian servicemen who were allegedly promised «a piece of land and two slaves» for participating in the military operation. There was no evidence that these words were said. In Ukraine, there is no and there has never been a law or bill that could explain words about slaves or any kind of service staff for the military. Presumably, this was a deliberately dreamt up propaganda message, which was designed to draw a parallel between the Ukrainian Army and the Nazi German Army during the Second World War. After all, the fake report was devoted to the 70th anniversary of Ukraine’s liberation from the Nazis.

The report contained many signs of both visual and verbal manipulations. For example, soldiers of the National Guard of Ukraine are called «militants,» although according to standards, this term commonly refers only to members of illegal military formations.

**«Rape of epileptic pensioner»**

On November 21, 2014, Konstantin Dolgov, who was forced to flee Ukraine after he made calls to violate territorial integrity, participated in the live program “Special Correspondent” on Russia’s Channel One. In order to persuade the audience of the Ukrainian Army’s inhumanity, Dolgov told the story about a Ukrainian serviceman who «raped a 47-year-old pensioner in front of bus passengers» in Kramatorsk, after which «she had an epileptic fit.»

There is no evidence regarding this story: there were no lawsuits or media publications or social network posts. Konstantin Dolgov often takes part in Russian talk shows, where he regularly broadcasts anti-Ukrainian disinformation messages about the «junta» and «Ukrainian occupation of the territory of Ukraine for 23 years» and uses force in communicating with opponents. One day he calls himself «co-chairman of the People’s Front of Novorossiya,» another day «the official representative of the “DNR” Ministry of Foreign Affairs.»

**«Concentration camps for Russian speakers»**

On October 3, 2014, the Russia-24 TV channel, on November 7, 2014, Channel One, and on April 24, 2015, Zvezda TV channel aired stories about the construction of «separatist concentration camps», or «American secret prisons», or «refugee screening and filtration camps» in Ukraine.

Actually, in all cases, the issue was facilities constructed with money allocated by the European Union in 2011 for the temporary retention of illegal migrants in accordance with the humanitarian standards of the Council of Europe.

**«Carlos the air traffic controller»**

On July 17, 2014, the RT TV channel reported on the alleged involvement of Ukrainian troops in the Downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 (this report was later refuted). The channel referred to the Twitter post «of the Spanish air controller Carlos, who works at Boryspil Airport in Kyiv.» There was no Carlos air controller at Kyiv Airport or at any other airport in Ukraine. «Carlos’» Twitter account was deleted as soon as the topic became public. Despite that, many Russian media outlets still mention this «air controller» when they try to prove Ukraine’s involvement in the plane's
crash. At the same time, investigative journalists have proven Russia’s guilt in the downing of the Boeing.\(^{202}\) This information was also confirmed by the findings of the official investigation.

**Organs for sale**

On July 6, 2014, the Russia-24\(^{204}\) TV channel reported about organ trafficking involving wounded and dead soldiers in Ukraine and their delivery to Germany. Several other Russian media outlets, including the Russia-1 TV channel, reported the same news.

The fictional story does not withstand any criticism. There was no evidence of verbal confirmation from Ukraine or Germany. If there was such a train, wounded soldier should be brought immediately to a high-tech clinic for organ removal. Given the very short storage period of removed organs (up to eight hours), a doctor should be on constant standby for their receipt. A patient in Germany should be already prepared for surgery and lying on the operating table, although the organs may not match. Besides, the German transplant clinic in question should have all the necessary documents about the organ’s origin; otherwise, the insurance company would never pay for the surgery. The list of arguments against the claims made in this Kremlin fake can be continued for a long time.

**“Train of friendship” to Crimea**

On February 24, 2014, the Crimian media, including Sevastopol News,\(^{206}\) as well as leading Russian media – Lenta.ru\(^{206}\) and others, published the biggest «horror story» for Crimean residents at that time. It was the massive dissemination of information about the so-called Right Sector’s «train of friendship» from Kyiv to Simferopol. The arrival of this train was originally scheduled for the end of February 2014. Then the date was changed several times, including March 28, 2014, but this is what people were dreaming the most. The fear of «fascists from Kyiv» made many residents of Crimea come over to Russia’s side in the course of this information and psychological warfare.\(^{207}\) The reason for this information attack was the statement made by Ihor Mosiychuk, an active member of the Right Sector, during a talk show on Channel 112: «Any attempt to violate Ukraine’s territorial integrity will be severely punished. If the Government is not able to do this, then the Right Sector will form a ‘train of friendship’. We, as UNSO did in the 1990s, will go to Crimea, at that time a public like us, and feel safe under the current authorities. Jews have repeatedly stated that they do not receive threats and feel secure, https://russian.rt.com/article/24320. Everything is changing very quickly, and I do not think that anyone will defend the Jews if something happens.»

«But in fact, Misha Kapustin is the rabbi of the Simferopol synagogue. And his words were about the new occupation authorities in Crimea. Overstating his words on Kyiv footage created the impression of danger for Jews in the capital of Ukraine. Since then, Russian media have continually exploited the topic of anti-Semitism. However, Ukrainian Jews have repeatedly stated that they do not receive threats and feel safe under the current authorities.\(^{216}\)"
There was no evidence to confirm this statement. A reminder that bullfinches rarely migrate to Ukraine for winter, because in the northern regions of Russia the winters have become milder, so they do not need to migrate to warmer regions.

ZORYAN AND SHKIRYAK: THE LATEST AND THE MOST FAMOUS EXAMPLES OF DISINFORMATION ABOUT UKRAINE

Eventually, the fake news and manipulations of the Kremlin's information machine have become more sophisticated and invisible, experts say. That is why during the last year in Ukraine there were no such blatant fakes and barefaced lies observed during 2014-2015. Russia's reorientation in foreign policy also played its role, with most of Russia's news coverage dedicated to Syria and the elections in the US.

«In 2014, we recorded a very high flurry of Ukrainian themes in Russian mass media. Here is information as of March 2014: in Russian news 45 minutes out of 50 minutes, 10 reports were devoted to Ukraine and Crimea. And at the end of 2014, only 10-15 minutes in the news. In the daily Russian newspaper Komsomol'skaya Pravda in March 2014, the number of front pages with Ukrainian topics was 19 out of 30 issues, in April it was 11, in July 13, when the war in Donbas began. At the end of 2014, there was a decline,» says Diana Dutsyk. Nevertheless, the flow of misrepresentation and disinformation continues to gush towards Ukraine. The same messages are used in the main as before, but in another «wrapper.»

-Rocket engines for North Korea-

On August 14, American newspaper The New York Times published an article about North Korean missiles.219 Referring to expert Michael Ellemann, journalists assumed that the engines for these rockets could be supplied by Ukraine. Ukraine denied this information.220 Later, in an interview with Voice of America, Ellemann said that he was not entirely sure whether these engines came from Ukraine or Russia – it is just a probability. Therefore, the expert asked Ukraine to conduct its own investigation.221

Russian media did not cover Ellemann's interview with the Voice of America. The New York Times' article was covered by Russian media in a distorted way.222 «The main change in Russia's special information operations now is that the fake news Ukraine have switched to the West. Ukraine has stopped importing Russian cases directly. Therefore, Russian intelligence services use Western media to deliver these messages to us. As we hold the Western media in high regard, these operations are especially painful for us,» Dmytro Zolotukhin, Deputy Minister of Information Policy of Ukraine, explained to Internews Ukraine.

-Dangerous visa-free regime-

On June 11, 2017, when the visa-free regime with the European Union came into operation in Ukraine, the Russia-24 TV channel reported that this regime could be «taken away at any moment.»223 «The Soros Foundation has already warned Kyiv that the European Union will immediately cancel the visa-free regime if it finds out that too many Ukrainians have entered an EU country, but did not leave it within 90 days,» stated the makers of the piece. The headline used for this news piece is manipulative and misleading. Besides, it remains unclear what the phrase «too many» means and why the Soros Foundation, and not representatives of the EU, warns about the dangers of breaking the treaty with the European Union.

»Cancer Treatment in «LNR»»

On June 7, 2017, the Kharkiv News Agency website published a news story225 that Ukrainians are travelling en masse to the so-called «LNR» for cancer treatment. According to the author of the article, this can be done for free within the framework of the «Humanitarian program for the reunification of the people of Donbas.» Several more sites disseminated the same information.226

There is no evidence to prove these statements. Instead, there is a lot of evidence that residents of uncontrolled areas of Donbas leave their homes for treatment227 because there are no meds in the occupied territories or they are too expensive.228

-Bandershtadt-

On August 7, 2017, Kremlin media got back again to the demonization of the image of Ukrainians. The Russia-1 television channel showed a propaganda news story about the Bandershtadt rock festival coverage.229 «This year, the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities, Nazi groups and Western curators [have assembled] more than 12,000[people],» said the author of the report.

Throughout this entire report, the author talks about the outburst of neo-Nazism at the festival in particular and in Ukraine in general, without providing any evidence to support her words. However, the name of Stepan Bandera is repeated in the report dozens of times without any need, including, in conjunction with Adolf Hitler, to escalate the situation.

Bandershtadt230 is a non-alcoholic Ukrainian art festival, which has been held annually since 2007 and brings together well-known Ukrainian creators: artists, musicians, opinion leaders.

-Investigation into Givi’s assassination-

Investigation into Givi’s assassination. How the investigation is proceeding, http://vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2918439

-DaNK-and »LNR« ready to provide free treatment for residents of territories occupied by Ukraine, https://ria.ru/20170610/1400885961.html
A report on the Zoryan and Shkiryak investigation of the Zoryan and Shkiryak assassination. The investigation has not yet established who ordered it and who carried out the killing. Besides, Zoryan Shkiryak is one person, a well-known Ukrainian politician and public figure.

The headline used for this news piece is manipulative and misleading. Besides, it remains unclear what the phrase «too many» means and why the Soros Foundation, and not representatives of the EU, warns about the dangers of breaking the treaty with the European Union.

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Other media have also spread negative news regarding Ukrainian visa-free travel. In particular, on June 13, 2017, Channel One reported on a scuffle on the Ukraine-Poland border, caused by the simultaneous crossing of the border by a large number of people. «This is exactly what neighboring EU countries were afraid of after adoption of the visa-free regime — mass migration», said the makers of the report. It is totally incomprehensible as to what the basis is of conclusions that all Ukrainians who cross the border into Schengen countries are going to resettle there.

RABBIT IN A HAT: WHEN RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA ACTS COVERTLY

However, primitive, crude fakes and distortion of the data of primary sources are not the most dangerous elements of this information and psychological warfare. If desired, even an average person who is not familiar with OSINT-technologies can analyze and disprove a fake. The most challenging thing is when information attacks are constructed so that their consumers do not even have a clue about the primary source and, accordingly, the real purpose of the messages. "The most high-quality propaganda talks about the things people want to hear. Real propaganda is the one we do not notice, which speculates on our problems and experiences," — explains Alya Shandra. Experts were able to name a few newsbreaks, advantageous to the Kremlin's propaganda machine, those that are spread in Ukraine invisibly, interwoven into the local context.

Shale gas

Even before the Revolution of Dignity, one of the leading topics in Ukrainian media discourse was the extraction of shale gas in the East of Ukraine. In December 2013, the British-Dutch company Shell and America’s Chevron acquired the right to develop deposits on the Yuzovsk and Olesk gas-bearing shale rock. These two companies, jointly with local Nadra Ukrayiny, had to influence Ukraine’s gas dependence on Russia. It was expected to produce from 3.6 to 22 trillion cubic meters of shale gas in the Kharkiv, Donetsk, Liviv and Ivano-Frankivsk Regions. Later both companies withdrew from the Ukrainian market. Among the reason, they named were unprofitability of gas production and impossibility to reach a deal with local authorities. The intransigence of local authorities, some experts explain, was due to an active information campaign against shale gas production. «One of these journalists recently wrote an article on shale gas in Slovyansk, stating that Russia had led this information campaign before the war. They chose a theme that could scare people and formed a network of experts, who then spread this topic afterwards», says Roman Kulchynskyi.

«Dangerous» refugees

The war in Syria has caused the massive resettlement of these people’s citizens on the territories of other states. Ukraine was ready to accept these people. While social services were preparing shelters for such people, some Ukrainian journalists published reports about the alleged dangers of the refugees to local people. It stirred up hostility, created tension in society, and even prompted protests.298

This situation was advantageous for the Kremlin in its information and psychological warfare. Channel 112235 was the first to report about such «dangers» in its news story. On the basis of this story, the Strana.ua236 website published an article worsening the situation further and forcing people to be wary of the refugees’ arrival. «It could have been a journalistic mistake, but the trained eye sees manipulation,» says Roman Shutov. After that, other Ukrainian media began to sort out the situation and prepared reports that were more balanced. Nevertheless, the fear of refugees was hard to overcome.

#Betrayed or #the_game_is_over

Finally, the most important, most popular and most fruitful topic for both Ukrainian and Russian media is criticism of the Ukrainian authorities. The criticism appears in important journalistic investigations, as well as in the form of baseless statements and accusations made by both politicians and various experts. That is why it is so difficult to distinguish between the work of journalists and propagandists.

«It’s difficult to tell from the content, where the criticism of the authorities is, and where the dissemination of Russian messages is. One should have insider information. It is necessary to know how much ‘cash’ is provided, by whom and where. This does not fall within our remit, this is a case for the special services,» emphasized Serhiy Kostynskyi.

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Any channel you could possibly imagine can be used to spread propaganda during information and psychological warfare. It can imitate the most authoritative sources of information: journalistic investigations, analytical programs, public initiatives, and others. Advantageous ideas can be "implanted" during leisure time – while reading an entertaining detective book or listening to your favorite radio station on the beach.

That is exactly what Russian propaganda has been doing in Ukraine since 1991. They have managed to penetrate into all spheres of life in Ukraine. Propaganda made Russian aggression towards Ukraine in 2014 possible. The rapid spread of the Kremlin’s propaganda in Ukraine during the current phase of the information and psychological warfare that began in 2013-2014 has once again demonstrated the vulnerability of the Ukrainian media environment and society as a whole.

The Kremlin’s propaganda took advantage of all, even the smallest, Ukrainian problems. So, do not forget that anything you say will be used against you. That is why do not talk without your lawyers – fact-checking and critical thinking. Try not to create problems for yourselves and your state but solve them – it will enable the manipulators to be disarmed, at least for a while.

Does the situation seem hopeless? Maybe. However, Ukrainians have been able to manage the situation even in such a trap. In the next chapter, we will talk about successful state and public initiatives that are countering the aggressor during the current information warfare.

298 On the Ukrainian-Polish border, there was a crunch of Ukrainian citizens rushing to enter the European Union without visas. https://www.tvt.ru/news/2017-06-13/326927_na_ukrainsko-polskoy_granitse_proizoshla_tolpa_vtolpe_grazhdan_ukrayini_speshashih_v_tolpu_grazhdan_ukrayini_speashishhe_bez_viz_popast_v_evrosoyuz


210 The Kremlin’s propaganda during the Revolution of Dignity, the event that caused the massive resettlement of people’s citizens on the territories of other states. Ukraine was ready to accept these people. While social services were preparing shelters for such people, some Ukrainian journalists published reports about the alleged dangers of the refugees to local people. It stirred up hostility, created tension in society, and even prompted protests.298

235 More than 200 Syrian migrants planned to be settled in Yahotyn, Kyiv Region, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x68385694R8

236 Syrian refugees will be settled near Kyiv, https://strana.ua/news/2016-03/160328_yahotyn_migrants_vc

DAVID against GOLIATH:
HOW UKRAINE RESISTS THE KREMLIN’S INFORMATION ATTACKS
The Volunteer Movement, one of the most striking phenomena in modern Ukrainian history, asserted itself during Euromaidan and evolved after its completion. Since March 2014 and the beginning of annexation of Crimea, thanks to the public’s activity, several dozen voluntary associations have been established to resist Russian information warfare. In less than a year, the state has taken steps too. Moreover, a section of volunteers received funding from donors and raised their activities to a new, higher level. Currently, there are more than a dozen public organizations in Ukraine and dozens of legislative acts counteracting the Kremlin’s propaganda.

CITIZENS’ INITIATIVES

StopFake: facts against manipulations
The Stopfake.org website was the first of the most famous Ukrainian projects to counter the Kremlin’s information attacks. Students, graduates, and teachers of the Mohyla School of Journalism at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy created it on March 2, 2014. Their principal goal is to disprove fake news and manipulations relating to Ukraine. The refutation of lies about some European countries was also added to their activities later.

The StopFake.org journalists’ basic idea is a standard one: they monitor Russian, Ukrainian, and European media, searching for potentially false information. This is the usual process of fact-checking, which includes searching and analyzing data from open sources, checking the authenticity of photos and videos, including with the help of geolocation tools, and other methods. If the news turns out to be false, there will be a refutation on the site with a statement about all the pieces of evidence. Using this method they have already refuted about a thousand different messages.

Now the project brings together several dozen activists, who write news in Russian to reach a broad audience and translate information into 10 European languages. Every month, professional journalists refute about 20 fake news items and manipulations. Every week they create video digests and radio podcasts with a review of the latest refutations and pursue studies and training on fact-checking. In 2016, The Financial Times included one of the co-founders of Stopfake.org in the ranking of CEE reformers New Europe 100.

During the first year of operation, Stopfake worked thanks to the efforts of volunteers and crowdfunding. Later, the US Foundation National Endowment for Democracy, International Renaissance Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, the British Embassy in Ukraine, and the UK-based organization The Sigrid Rausing Trust provided financial support for the activities of the project.

UCMC: anti-crisis communications
Similarly, in March 2014, when Stopfake united Ukrainian journalists, the Ukrainian Crisis Media Center (UCMC) brought together professional PR and international relations experts. By that time, it had not been established as a public organization, but immediately became and remains the only non-profit platform in the country for speeches and discussions involving experts, activists and civil servants. The primary goal of its work is the objective coverage of events in Ukraine on the domestic and international arenas.

The newsletter published by UCMC enables the receipt of up-to-date and unbiased information about events in Ukraine in seven languages. However, apart from informational support, foreign journalists can count on UCMC’s assistance with accreditation in public authorities and in the ATO zone. This was especially useful in July 2014, when about 2,000 foreign journalists visited Ukraine to cover the topic of the downing of the flight MH17 Boeing. At that time, the UCMC actually took on the responsibilities of the state’s press services.

From the time of its foundation to the present time, several dozen UCMC employees have staged more than 3,000 events, attended by more than 7,500 speakers, and have written over 200 original articles and more than 6,700 press releases for Ukrainian and international media. At present, some 11,000 journalists and experts get press releases and supporting materials from them.

This communication project is funded by grants from charity organizations and the Governments of the following countries: the United States, Canada, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Poland, and Germany.

Information Resistance: report from the battlefield
On March 2, 2014, military experts joined the resistance to the influence of foreign propaganda. On that day, the Center of Military-Political Studies, a non-governmental organization (CMPS), which has actually existed since September 2008, launched the Information Resistance Group project. Its content is a military report from Donbas and analytical materials on the Ukraine-Russia conflict, written by experts on the basis of monitoring and further analysis of threats. Up until June 2014, Information Resistance was the only type of CMPS activity. It then continued its existence as one of the organization’s projects.

Now this analytical center, under the supervision of about a dozen people, disseminates consolidated data on a daily basis, as well as expert columns in Russian and English in three main areas: Kharkiv, the South, and Donbas.

Dmytro Tymchuk, coordinator of the Information Resistance group, as a result of the publication of CMPS’s consolidated data on Facebook during Crimea’s annexation and the beginning of the war in the Donbas region, became a top Ukrainian blogger. By September 2017, the number of his followers had reached 246,000 people.

Such mass popularity enabled Tymchuk to enter the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine during snap elections in 2014 on the electoral list of the People’s Front party founded by Arseniy Yatsenyuk.

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238 New Europe 100 — changemakers in central and eastern Europe, https://www.fl.com/content/cece6b66-90a7-7b4b-916-e6-a72e-b42b60d578
240 UCMC: anti-crisis communications, http://ucmc.us/a/about
After that, many Ukrainians began to doubt the trustworthiness of the news and the reports released by Information Resistance, considering it a politically committed project that disseminates the position of the Ukrainian authorities. Nevertheless, this website remains the only non-state project that publishes the most up-to-date information and military analysis from the ATO zone.

In 2014, the CMPS was funded through grants from the Ukrainian Media Development Fund and the US Embassy’s Grants Program, charitable donations, and individual donations. However, over the course of 2015-2017, the group failed to publish data on its website about sources of funding.

**UkraineWorld: coordination of initiatives**
The vigorous activities undertaken by civil society in 2014 required coherence and coordination. That is why Ukrainian journalists, activists, and experts who worked with foreign audiences, providing unbiased information about their country, decided to team up.

The UkraineWorld project, 242 founded in 2014 at the initiative of the NGO Internews Ukraine, is still functioning and currently **unites more than 100 disinformation experts from Ukraine and abroad**. Internews Ukraine, Hromadske, StopFake, Ukraine Crisis Media Center, Euromaidan Press, Chatham House, Atlantic Council, European Council on Foreign Relations, the German Council on Foreign Relations and many other organizations have joined the project.

The daily internal online communication between journalists and experts with the purpose of information exchange and implementation of initiatives is complemented with the writing of analytical materials on critical Ukrainian issues and their publication in such influential publications as Atlantic Council, Newsweek Europe, Global Ukraine, and others.

Launched as a volunteer initiative UkraineWorld has, in the space of a couple of years, received donor funding from the NGO Internews and the International Renaissance Foundation to create a website and continue its analytical work.

**Euromaidan Press: English-language hard news**
Another volunteer initiative has focused its activity on the international audience. In spring 2014, Euromaidan Press, 243 created back in 2014 to disseminate news about the Revolution of Dignity, extended its activities with an emphasis on events in Crimea and Donbas in order to combat Kremlin disinformation about Ukraine. They write **news and analytics in English** with the focus on the international audience so as to provide the international community with prompt and objective information. The BBC, The Guardian, Euronews, CNN and other leading media use them in their work.

Euromaidan Press’s important project is the letmypeoplego.org.ua website about Ukrainian political prisoners, which was created jointly with the Euromaidan SOS initiative.

With only four full-time employees, but involving volunteers, Euromaidan Press manages to translate important Ukrainian news in English, carry out research, and create video and graphic content. The organization conducted several dozen social media campaigns: about the referendum in the Netherlands, Ukrainian culture, political prisoners, etc. For a year and a half, Euromaidan Press existed as a volunteer initiative financed by the donations of readers. During this time, its contribution to informing the international audience was not less than that of a professional and well-funded media outlet. Since August 2015, the International Renaissance Foundation has been financing the project.

**Government Moves**
At the beginning of Russian military aggression, the Ukrainian authorities were at a loss, but gradually they have joined the fight against Kremlin propaganda. The press services of ministries, especially law-enforcement agencies and the military establishment, began to hold briefings and press conferences. One of the main venues for holding these events was the UCMC.

Later, the Government created a separate ministry to combat propaganda, and Parliament has intensified its legislative activities. As a result, Ukrainian laws banned cable operators from broadcasting 77 out of 82 Russian channels, and Internet providers – from giving access to the Yandex search engine, social networks Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki, and mail service Mail.ru. In addition, state policy in the field of culture was radically changed.

**Ministry of Information Policy: legislative activity**
On December 2, 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a decision establishing the Ministry of Information Policy to «repulse information attacks against Ukraine.» This Ministry has 29 employees. They elaborate **laws in the field of information policy, work with journalists**, including in the ATO zone, carry out **social campaigns**, and increase the **level of the population’s media literacy**.

Thanks to the efforts of the Ministry, the US Embassy has funded the construction of three TV towers to promote Ukrainian content to the East: in Kramatorsk, Donetsk Region, on December 5, 2016, in Chonhar, Kherson Region, on March 17, 2017, and in Bakhmutivka, Luhansk Region, on August 22, 2017. It is planned to construct another tower in Pokrovsk, Donetsk Region.

At the same time, the policies of the Ukrainian Ministry of Information Policy are being subjected to criticism. For instance, Ukrainian journalists and Internet users do not support the Ministry’s initiative to make Ukrainian Internet providers block access to 20 websites with anti-Ukrainian content. Namely, these are so-called “separatist” websites which share the propaganda of “LNR” and “DNR”. Journalists see such bans as attempts to attack freedom of speech in the country.

**Information Troops: Trolls on Service**
On February 23, 2015, the Ministry of Information Policy formed a new initiative called «Information Troops.» As the Ministry’s budget was negligible at that time, they were looking for cooperation on a voluntary basis. The task was simple: to **distribute through social networks**

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242 UkraineWorld: About us, http://ukraineworld.org/about/
244 The Ministry of Information Policy http://mip.gov.ua
246 State TV tower in Pokrovsk will cover the last “white spots” in Donbas, https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/2298551-nevozua-ukrainska-zakrnie-ostanni-biti-plani-na-donbas-telec.html
247 Ukraine’s Information Troops, http://1-army.org
reliable information about Ukraine in order to combat Russian propaganda. Anyone could register to become a «state troll,» nobody was checking the passport of a citizen of Ukraine. Evaluating the results of the work of Information Troops is difficult. It is known that the majority of volunteer activists who started working there (about 35,000 people registered the first day250), subsequently abandoned this idea. Some of them accused the Ministry of Information Policy of their own propaganda; others just did not want to work for free. A reminder that according to the international company Zecurion Analytics, the number of Russian cyber troops in 2017 was about a thousand people, and their annual funding may reach about 300 million dollars.249

On August 1, 2017, Information Troops moved out of the control of the Ministry of Information Policy and became an individual project.250 Currently, members of the organization continue to track information provocations against Ukraine, the lies of Russian media outlets and continue spreading counterpropaganda. The size of their financial support is not disclosed.

OSINT: media literacy

In 2015, the Institute of Post-Information Society, jointly with the Ministry of Information Policy, created an all-Ukrainian educational project called OSINT Academy. Within the framework of the project, the director of the Institute, Dmytro Zolotukhin, who works as Deputy Minister of Information Policy, has held 25 free training sessions for journalists and bloggers; has created and posted on YouTube an online course on information search and fact-checking.251

The importance of this project is that it provides tools for debunking fake propaganda during information warfare, and teaches everyone interested in creating socially relevant content, and how to search for information about corrupt officials, politicians, candidates for elective office, etc. The European Endowment for Democracy funded the project.

Prohibitions: forced necessity

The delay in reacting to the information-psychological warfare unleashed by the Kremlin against Ukraine, cost it Crimea and part of Donbas, territories which are now occupied by Russian troops. In order not to lose more, the Ukrainian Government began to take drastic measures. Without sufficient budget funds for counter-propaganda and no support from its own media outlets or cultural projects, Ukraine has been forced to impose restrictions on the broadcasting of Russian propaganda and disinformation on its territory from August 2014 onwards.

77 agents of the Kremlin

In early 2014, 82 Russian state and private TV channels were being broadcast on cable television networks in Ukraine. Since August 2014, in accordance with court rulings or decisions adopted by the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council, the operators of these networks were banned from such broadcasting. In view of the propaganda of war and stirring up of inter-ethnic hatred, bans were imposed on 14 channels252: Channel One. World Network, RTR-Planet, NTV, NTN World, Russia-24, Russia-1, NTN, Zvezda, Ren TV and others. Gradually, more and more stations were added to this list. Even the broadcasting of the Rain (Dozhd) TV channel, which is considered to be an opposition channel in Russia, was also banned. The reason was the violation of Ukrainian legislation and the mention of Crimea as Russian territory. In fact, the Rain (Dozhd) TV channel is also cut off from all cable networks in Russia. However, just when Ukraine imposed the same prohibition, an official representative of Russia’s Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, promised to address the OSCE on the actions taken by the Ukrainian authorities.253

As of September 2014, cable operators in Ukraine are prohibited from broadcasting 77 Russian TV channels due to violations of Ukrainian legislation.254 Meanwhile, even in Lithuania, which is not conducting a real war with the Russian Federation, two Russian television channels may be banned because of incitement to war and inter-ethnic hatred.255

Odnoklassniki-undercover

According to a study by Kantar TNS CMeter,266 until recently the top 10 most visited websites in Ukraine included Russian search engine Yandex and all its services (62% of coverage in April 2017), email service Mail.ru (62%), as well as social networks VKontakte (78%) and Odnoklassniki (47%). However, in May 2017, Ukrainian Internet providers were obliged to disable access to these sites for three years under penalty of a fine of 1,700-3,400 UAH (100-200 non-taxable minimum incomes)257. The reason for this was the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine «On the application of personal special economic and other restrictive measures (sanctions).»258 In total, the Sanctions List consists of 468 legal entities and 1,228 private individuals. The reason for the banning of Russian sites was their contribution to stepping up Russian propaganda and stirring up inter-ethnic hostility, as well as the desire to protect the personal data of Ukrainian users from falling into the sphere of influence of Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB). A reminder that from August 1, 2014, Russia’s FSB has had access to all the data of users registered in the Russian Federation’s resources.259 As of September 2017, most Ukrainian Internet-providers had already fulfilled the Government’s demands.

«They burst into song again»

Experts name modern variety art as one of the most powerful channels of Russian propaganda in Ukraine (for more details see Chapter 2: “Octopus Tentacles: The Structure of Kremlin’s Propaganda Influence on Ukrainian Information Space”). By 2014, on some Ukrainian radio stations, just 8%-12% of songs were in the state

250 Svetlana Dorosh, «Information Troops» or propaganda.- who will win? http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-5914111
252 OSINT Academy. Training course, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWwq6JGvmxQ&list=PL-9OTQQwXf2XuDGO_-features-39114111
253 Ukraine has blocked TV channel Rain (Dozhd) because of Crimea, http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-36597895
254 Lila Rahutskaya. -Russia is losing the information war: we clearly know what to do with Crimea and Donbas-, https://apostrophe.ua/ua/article/politics/government/2017-08-22/rossiya-proigrivayet-informvoyna-myv-sechej-kak-byit-s-krymom-i-donbasom/13945
258 Decree of the President of Ukraine «On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine: «On the application of personal special economic and other restrictive measures (sanctions),», https://ukrketor.gov.ua/media/documents/2017/05/17_2017_05_17_13dupa.pdf
259 Kateryna Medovynka. FSB wants to know more, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/ua/25474658.html
language. While from Russia, there was not just the language but also the performers. The leadership of the Ukrainian state focused on the problem on November 8, 2016. At that time, a law came into force introducing a 50% quota on local telecasts and 25% (30% in a year, 35% in two years) – on Ukrainian-language songs on TV and radio broadcasts. The overwhelming majority of radio stations have fulfilled the requirement, which gave impetus to the development of Ukrainian-language music. Radio stations have appeared that broadcast only Ukrainian-language music compositions. The idea of language quotas has also been extended to television. On October 13, 2017, a law introducing weekly quotes for programs and films in the Ukrainian language came into force in Ukraine; 75% of the state language for national and regional TV channels, 60% for local, and 75% for TV news programs. However, it will be easier for TV workers, because even now the product meets most of the requirements set out in the new law.

**«The Chief» changes subordinates**

Cinema is also an important sphere for spreading propaganda, both films for theatrical distribution and television series. Until recently, airtime on «occupied» by Russian films and TV series that glorify the law-enforcement agencies of the Russian Federation: «Ulitsy razbityh fonarej» (Streets of Broken Lamps), «Ubonya sila» (Destructive Force), «Glukhar» (Cold Case), «Agent nationalnoy bezopasnosti» « (National security agent), «Grazhdanin nachalnik» (The chief) and others. In 2014, according to research done by media consulting company Media Resources Management (MRM), the top 10 Ukrainian TV channels showed more than 27,000 hours of series – 66% are Russian-made, 5% are Ukrainian, and 6% are Russian-Ukrainian joint productions. The Ukrainian authorities had to overcome such dominance on the part of Russian propaganda film production through bans and restrictions. The first «forbidden list» of 162 films and TV series with annulled rental licenses for distribution and demonstration was presented on June 4, 2015. In April 2016, another law on the prohibition of Russian films adopted after September 1, 2014, came into force, as did a ban on movies popularizing the authorities of the aggressor state. Since then, the State Film Agency (Derzhkino), as the regulatory body in this area, continues to monitor Russian cinema products and from time to time updates the list of banned propaganda films.

At the same time, the Ukrainian state began to support the production of its own cinema product. This year over 600 million hryvnias have been allocated to film production and distributed among 78 film projects that won the tenth pitching competition.

**The ABC book of Propaganda**

Until 2016, not only Russian songs but also Russian books prevailed in Ukraine. Up to 60% of the shelves in bookshops were full of literature produced in the Russian Federation, including not only classics, but also separatist literature, and books by such authors as Sergey Lukyanenko and Zakhar Prilepin, who support the annexation of Crimea and the war on Donbas.

However, a law came into force on January 1, 2017 prohibiting the import into Ukraine of any printed products containing anti-Ukrainian content. That is, printed products, which refer to the liquidation of Ukraine's independence, violation of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, promotion of the communist or national-socialist totalitarian regimes and the aggressor state (Russia), particularly its authorities. These criteria were developed in May 2017 and, in accordance with them, the Expert Board on the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting «admits» books from the Russian Federation onto Ukrainian shelves.

**«SHOW YAROSH'S BUSINESS CARD»:**

**HUMOR AS A WAY TO CONFRONT AN AGGRESSOR**

«Junta and shootings,» «the Banderites' train,» «fascists killing Russian-speakers» ... Propaganda and disinformation achieve their purpose via intimidation and the switching off of logic through emotions. In a state of fear, a person becomes inflexible and easily pliable. People quickly fall under their influence and become disoriented. Humor always helps to overcome this condition and relieves stress. It became one of the ways to conquer the fear that emerges during information-psychological warfare. You can read more about it in Maksym Kyiak's study, «Use of humor for solidarity, denigration, and stress-relief in the Ukrainian media during the Russian aggression in 2014-2016», included in the book «StratCom laughs: in search of an analytical framework.»

Several Ukrainian TV and YouTube channels have created comedy shows that mocked Kremlin propaganda and debunked fake news (see the table for more details). At the same time, everybody could join them in ridiculing the Russian news. The trolling of the Kremlin’s messages in social networks, primarily Facebook, has covered a lot of topics which then turned into memes.

**Yarosh’s Business card**

On April 20, 2014, the Russian TV channel LifeNews aired a story about a nighttime gunfight near one of the checkpoints in Slovyansk. As a result, three locals and two attackers died. The separatist leader in Slovyansk, Vyacheslav Ponomariov, blamed the Right Sector for the attack. As evidence of their involvement, among other things, he showed a business card of Dmytro Yarosh, the head of this organization. Being an insignificant figure in Ukrainian politics, by that one moment Dmytro Yarosh was turned into the personification of evil by Russian propaganda, the worst thing that could happen to the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine. Social network

**Violodymyr Ivakhnenko. Ban on Russian anti-Ukrainian books: will the shelves become empty in the bookstores? https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28269967.html**

**The Law on Amendments to certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding Promotion of Information, Television and Radio Broadcasting «admits» books from the Russian Federation onto Ukrainian shelves.**

**Show Yarosh’s Business card**: in search of an analytical framework, http://stratcom.ua/

**Right Sector militant who attacked one of the roadblocks is in custody, https://life.ru/т/новости/131665**
users immediately picked up this information and carried the demonization of Dmytro Yarosh to absurdity with jokes and trolling. #Yarosh'sbusinesscard entered the lofty heights of Ukrainian and Russian Twitter.

«Russian scientists have found a secret German bunker in Antarctica. The doors were blocked, but the old terminal accepted #Yarosh'sBusinessCard.»

«#Yarosh'sBusinessCard was found near the Tunguska meteorite impact location.»

«#Yarosh'sBusinessCard has been found at the site of the crucifixion of Jesus.»

«It wasn’t the falling asteroid that destroyed the dinosaurs but #Yarosh'sBusinessCard.»

«During the liquidation of Osama bin Laden by US intelligence services, #Yarosh'sBusinessCard was discovered there.»

On April 22, 2016, in a published article Dmytro Yarosh confirmed both the fact of the attack and that one of the attackers on the checkpoint in Slovyansk really did have Yarosh’s business card.

On July 24, 2014, Alyona Kochkina, an employee of the TV channel Russia-24, put a warning post on her Facebook page: «Folks who travel by train and bus, be careful, guys are being taken off trains and sent to the National Guard.» This message fits well in the context of one of the key messages of the Kremlin’s propaganda at that point in time, namely the failure of Ukraine’s mobilization and the inability of the Ukrainian Army to defeat the aggressor.

Alyona’s statement had also been reduced to an absurdity. Over 1,000 comments to the post and thousands of individual posts on the social network have ridiculed the message.

«One girl went out for bread, and returned as a National Guard colonel.»

«Guys who are at the Mir Space Station, be careful when flying over Ukraine, people are being taken off the spacecraft and sent to the National Guard.»

«Folks who love to take pictures – guys are being taken off trains and sent to the National Guard.»

Alyona Kochkina was forced to delete her post and comments to it, but a lot of screenshots remained in the web.

«Russia. A lane. The dark hours of the day. «What is your nationality?» – «Chechen.» – «Thank God, I was afraid that you’re Ukrainian.»

Cartoon: https://twitter.com/nightseparator/status/905842535368679424

Journalists and public figures, experts and civil servants, comedians, and everyone interested – this is the main backbone of anti-propaganda groups in Ukraine. Our experience of 2014-2017 has shown that during an information-psychological war there is no time for contemplation, hesitation, multiple approvals of budgets and bureaucratic procedures. Communication professionals, amateurs and denizens of the social networks had to act quickly, clearly and coherently. That is why the most successful projects were those created out of sheer enthusiasm – both websites and Twitter memes.

At the same time, the state cannot distance itself from information warfare. At a time when the conflict has already escalated or threatens to escalate into a full-scale war, with military actions and human losses, it is necessary to change the law to a new one, to meet the requirements of wartime. It is already necessary to employ interdictions, direct or indirect constraints, and introduce new rules of the game. Human life must occupy first place for legislators.

The unique Ukrainian experience of confrontation within the conditions of information and psychological warfare has helped us to create new ideas and formulate recommendations for countries, which could be involved in a conflict or which have only been marginally impacted so far. The tips are provided in the next chapter.

275 Dmytro Yarosh: «The first offensive of the war took place on April 20, 2014 - volunteers attacked the checkpoint outside the town of Slovyansk.» https://censor.net.ua/resonance/386673/yarosh_pershij_nastupniy_biy_v_yaroshovyi_vydubvysya_20_kvtnya_2014go_dobrovolts_atakuvali_blokpost

276 «With a representative of which nationality would you be afraid to meet in the dark hours of the day?» http://echo.msk.ru/polls/2050658-echo/results.html

277 Grey cardinal @slevo4kin, https://twitter.com/slevo4kin/status/905555070190673970

Chapter 4

Networks of Illusion: How Russia Acts Through the Internet and Social Networks, and How to Fight This.
High-tech Western democracy countries created the Internet and then social networks later. However, non-democratic regimes learned to use the weaknesses of technologies to achieve their political goals. At first, non-democratic regimes learned to restrict access to the Internet for their own citizens – as exemplified by Iran, China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, these regimes began to use technologies to «hack» the accounts of protesters in social networks, as was the case during the «Arab Spring» protests in Tunisia in 2011. Now social networks have become information channels, through which authoritarian regimes, such as Russia, are exporting the «hybrid war» to democratic countries.

In an era of cluttered information space, the user is subjected to a flood of thousands of messages, and his or her ability to perceive information critically is deteriorating sharply. Under these circumstances, undemocratic regimes use a whole range of means to mislead the user even more. Such tools include special information operations, dissemination of propaganda, the creation of fake news and manipulative messages.

Russia is widely using the Internet and social media under conditions of the «hybrid war,» and Ukraine has received the utmost «attention.» The Kremlin has taken control of its Internet and media sphere. How the Kremlin has encaged the Russian Internet: Russia's ability to use the Internet for propaganda purposes reflects the chronology of how the Kremlin has taken complete control of Russia's Internet segment.

Popular Russian Internet services like Mail.ru, Rambler.ru, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, were launched as independent projects, but subsequently became controlled by the Russian authorities due to loyal oligarchs and the approval of repressive legislation on Internet regulation.

The case of VKontakte, the most popular social network in Russia is quite indicative. Three students from St. Petersburg: Pavel Durov, Lev Liviyev, and Vyacheslav Miralashvili, created it as an analog of American Facebook in autumn 2006. The public figure of VKontakte was Durov, who at the end of 2013 sold his shares in the company and left Russia. Durov explained his emigration by the fact that the FSB demanded the transfer of the data of Ukrainian VKontakte users, moderators of the groups supporting the Euromaidan protests. Durov refused, went abroad and stated: «There is no turning back for me, especially after I publicly refused to cooperate with the authorities.» Soon, VKontakte came under the full control of Mail.ru Group, owned by loyal Kremlin oligarch Alisher Usmanov. In 2014, Pavel Durov created a messenger service called Telegram in the United States, whose audience in 2017 reached more than 100 million users, including some from Russia. The Russian authorities are demanding disclosure of users' information, and are currently imposing sanctions on the service. Telegram will most likely be blocked in Russia soon.

LiveJournal, a blog platform popular in the mid-2000s, known in the post-Soviet space as «Zhyvoy zhurnal» (LiveJournal) can also be a good example of Russia's Internet control. Founded in 1999 in the United States, LiveJournal was sold to Russian company SUP in 2006, and, according to American law, it remained under US control until 2016. However, in December 2016, LiveJournal servers were relocated to Russia and Russian intelligence services acquired access to user information.

Over the past ten years, the Russian authorities have systematically and purposefully restricted the digital rights of Russian users, increasing the pressure on Internet freedom in Russia. Starting from 2015, the international organization Freedom House states in its report Freedom on the Net, Russia was among countries with a non-free Internet. Legislation on Internet regulation in Russia is repressive both for companies and for users. In January 2015, Russian lawmakers obliged all technology companies to store user data exclusively in Russia.

Approval of the so-called Yarovaya «antiterrorist package» of laws in the summer of 2016 enabled Russian intelligence services to establish full control over users' correspondence on the Russian Internet. According to the amendments to certain laws, Russia's law-enforcement agencies received access to all the telephone conversations and electronic mail of users on the territory of Russia. Communication and Internet service providers have been obliged to keep the content of users' messages for six months. Besides, with the help of providers, Government agencies can decrypt encrypted messages.

In July 2017, Russia passed a law abolishing the right of users to anonymity on the Internet, and the law came into force on November 1, 2017. According to the law, anonymizers, VPN-services should be blocked, and search engines (Google, Yandex) should be prohibited from showing links to these services in search hits. A separate institution called Roskomnadzor, which is subordinated to the Ministry of Communications and Mass Media, carries out Internet control in Russia. Since becoming operational in 2008, this federal body has blocked hundreds of thousands of sites, and defenders of the free Internet refer to Roskomnadzor as the censorship body,
involved in the curtailment of user rights. Officially, the agency performs the functions of supervision and control in the field of mass media, processing of personal data and organizing the activities of the radio frequency service. However, Roskomnadzor is entirely Kremlin-controlled. In April 2017, in the event of the long-distance drivers protests in Russia, the Zello application, which drivers were using to coordinate their demonstrations, was blocked.

Since 2014, a number of opposition sites have been blocked in Russia – Grani.ru, Kasparov.ru, Ej.ru – because of alleged “calls for illegal activities and participation in mass events.” Articles in Wikipedia and some Western messengers were also blocked. The American business network LinkedIn has been blocked since November 2016 in Russia for refusing to transfer the personal data of users to the territory of Russia. The same fate may await Facebook, at least the head of Roskomnadzor, Aleksander Zharov has already publicly threatened the company with blocking in case of refusal to transfer data to Russia.287

The bots were tested in Ukraine. Afterwards, they took on the USA

In February 2015 in Ukraine, amid the deterioration of the military situation in Donbas, there were sharp swings in the national currency’s exchange rate – reaching 30 hryvnias per US dollar. Russian propaganda did not miss this opportunity, and the hashtag #гривнавкотле (hryvnia encircled) was launched on Twitter, imitating the Kremlin’s narrative about the “Debalteve trap”, the so-called encirclement of the Ukrainian military near Debaltsevo in the Donbas region.288

The number of publications on Twitter with the hashtag #гривнавкотле reached 40,000 a day289; bots reinforced the panic, while most of these messages had nothing to do with fluctuations in the hryvnia exchange rate.

Bots are accounts in social networks, created automatically in large quantities and programmed to perform a specific algorithm of actions, first and foremost to disseminate information messages. Most often, bots are created on Twitter, because on this social network it is easy to bypass the barriers for automatic registration of a large number of accounts.

While in the West, bots were created primarily for the promotion of commercial products, in Russia this was done mainly for the dissemination of propaganda messaging and information manipulation. According to many experts, Russia’s goals with regard to the USA are to deepen the split in the most sensitive issues for American society, such as race, social status, gender, and religion.290

In 2009-2012, the Twitter bots that overwhelmed the Ukrainian Internet were easy to identify by the absence of avatars, biographies and false names. However, algorithms for creating bots are becoming more and more advanced and modern bots have all the signs of real users.

In summer 2017, NATO analysts from the Stratcom Center in Riga conducted a study,291 which revealed that 70% of Russian language tweets about NATO during the three-month period were created automatically, that is, by bots. The ratio of bots for English-language tweets about NATO was lower – 28% of bot-created tweets.

Western Governments have started an active investigation into Russia’s influence after the 2016 presidential election in the United States. The American Secret Service has stated292 that bots spread fake news and misinformation during the 2016 election campaign. Later, a network of bots also participated in the distribution of memes, videos, and misinformation during the French presidential elections in spring 2017.

In Britain, parliamentarians began to raise critical questions about the role of bots just before the Brexit referendum in summer 2016. Researchers from the City University of London identified a network of 13,000 bots and discovered that the number of tweets in favor of Brexit on the eve of voting was eight times the number of tweets from opponents of the UK’s exit from the EU293.

How the West is fighting against Russian bots

In September 2017, the American Fund GMF launched the Alliance for Securing Democracy project. It has started a tracking mechanism for 600 Twitter accounts, which promote Russian narratives or which are directly related to the Russian294 Government. In real-time mode, the program monitors and analyzes what topics are brought up in accounts, and summarizes key trends every week. Another resource is the Botometer295 from Indiana University. It allows determining the percentage of bots among the subscribers of any Twitter account.

Under pressure of investigation into Russian influences on the US elections in June 2017, Twitter acknowledged Russian intervention and announced the extension of anti-abuse mechanisms.296

In September 2017, Twitter makes a new statement, disclosing the data of 201 Twitter accounts that violated the terms and conditions of the service’s policy during the 2016 elections and which were eventually removed. Moreover, Twitter has released data that in 2016 Russia spent 274,100 dollars on advertising through Russia Today’s Twitter accounts. This related to @RT_com, @RT_America and @ActualidadRT accounts. The company also spoke about hundreds of thousands of attempts to misuse the service and announced countermeasures at the level of account registration.

Facebook also has similar problems with Russian influences. On the eve of the 2016 presidential election in the United States, Russia created dozens of large English-speaking groups on Facebook, whose mission was to speculate on America’s sensitive issues of migration, race, religion, etc. One of these groups, called “Being Patriotic,” has reached 4.3 million interactions with users, and the rhetoric of publications in the group can be judged by the use of words like «laws of Sharia» or «illegal aliens.»298

290 Botometer: https://botometer.iuni.iu.edu/
Now Western researchers are analyzing the activities of six large groups that have been removed from Facebook, whose posts had reached millions of US users. As a result of an internal investigation, Facebook has detected at least 470 “unauthentic” profiles and pages on its network, which tried to influence public opinion on the eve of the US elections. All of them were deleted. Moreover, the company acknowledged that Russia spent 100,000 dollars on the purchase of Facebook ads to promote these accounts and pages.

**Onslaught of pro-Russian trolls stir up trouble on the Internet**

When well-known American actor Morgan Freeman recorded a video announcing that Russia had attacked and been waging a war against America since the 2016 elections, a campaign was launched on the Internet to discredit the actor. Hundreds of Russian trolls on Twitter began to write with the hashtag #StopMorganLie’s, posting «creative» photos and posters. Unlike automated bots, trolls are real users who start their own online campaign or at the demand of customers. The trolling against Freeman was fueled by the reaction of Putin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov, who began to troll over the «emotional tension» of the actor.

Russian trolls, which attacked ideas, politicians, and the media, are well known in the West. The British publication The Guardian states that attacks that already back in 2012 Pro-Kremlin trolls were being noticed as a real and insidious threat to online communities and discussions.

Planning the annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014, the Kremlin also took care of the Internet. Massive registration of Russian trolls was recorded at the end of February 2014, and a flurry in activity by trolls in Western media was seen during the initiation of the armed conflict in the Donbas region. The Guardian’s editors provide examples of three editorial articles, which described events in Ukraine and discussions.

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Using fake heroes

Russian propaganda creates not only fake characters for television but also fake users of social media, who claim to be experts and serve the purposes of propaganda. On 2 May 2014, there were clashes in Odesa, during which pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian activists perished. The following day, a user profile under the name of Igor Rozovsky appeared on Facebook. He positioned himself a doctor from Odesa, who allegedly talks about the tragic events near the Trade Union Building as an eyewitness. In his post, the pseudo-doctor blamed the pro-Ukrainian activists for the tragedy. Russian TV channels began to circulate the post written in Russian and English, and the story of the «doctor from Facebook» filled the information space. However, Ukrainian users discovered that the «doctor» account was fake. It had been created the day before the post was published, and the photograph for the avatar of the «doctor» was stolen from the account of a dentist from Karachay-Cherkessia, Russia, and not from Odesa.

Ukraine’s reaction to Russian influences

Traditionally, Russia has a powerful informational impact on the Ukrainian segment of the Internet since it was formed in common with Russia information space in the 2000s. At that time, Ukrainian users started to register email accounts, use search engines, and later create accounts on social networks. However, at that time, US services such as Google, Gmail, Facebook did not have localized Cyrillic interfaces of their services yet, so millions of users in Ukraine began to use services with Ukrainian or Russian language.
interfaces. Taking into account the higher technological development of the Russian Internet segment, many Ukrainians used the services of Yandex, Mail.ru, Rambler.ru, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, MoyMir, etc.

Even in the fourth year of the war, in April 2017, three out of the five most popular sites in Ukraine were Russian – VKontakte, Yandex, Odnoklassniki. The Russian services, controlled by the FSB since 2016, were widely used by Ukrainian officials, military, teachers, and business. The popularity of Russian services has not dropped since the beginning of Crimea’s occupation and the war in Donbas. Russia, first and foremost, through Russian social networks, conducts special information operations. Pages of the so-called «ministries of the ‘DNR’ and ‘LNR’» on VKontakte were registered and there are also large groups that disseminate propaganda and manipulation.

While searching for answers to Russian challenges, the Ukrainian Government has chosen the tactics of Internet regulation. There is currently great concern in Ukrainian society about the following: Is the interference of the state in Internet freedom justified by national security interests?

On 15 May, 2017, the President of Ukraine, by his decree No. 133/2017, implemented the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of April 28, 2017, on the application of personal special economic and other restrictive measures (sanctions). In total, 468 Russian companies and 1,228 individuals were subject to sanctions, imposed for a period of one to three years. The sanctions were primarily directed against the Russian media, as well as a number of companies that own key Russian Internet resources, namely VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Mail.ru, Yandex.

The majority of Internet providers and mobile operators have blocked the access of Ukrainian users to Russian sites, although legally the decree did not oblige them to do so. Some international human rights organizations have criticized this decision, whereas NATO has indicated Ukraine’s right to defend itself. At the same time, users can visit sanctioned websites through anonymizers and VPNs, and law-enforcement agencies have not prescribed any punishment for this.

In June 2017, the Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine sent the Security Service of Ukraine a list of 20 «separatist» news sites with a recommendation on blocking them. These included Russkaya Vesna, News-Front, Novorossiya. This proposal has also aroused criticism since its implementation could be a precedent for the blocking of any other websites.

After the signing of the sanction decree and blocking of a section of Russian sites in May 2017, the popularity of Russian resources has been hit a little. Traffic to the blocked resources is, due to the use of anonymizers and VPNs, still quite high, though Russian websites have lost their positions. According to Gemius studies, in August 2017 only VKontakte was in the top ten most popular sites.

At the same time, the research results of different companies may vary. Factum Group provides its list of 25 top sites in Ukraine in August 2017, where Russia's VKontakte is ranked fourth in the ranking, while Yandex 5th. Other studies show that Russian sites dropped out of the top ten popular sites.

In general, the results of the study indicate the gradual displacement of Russian sites from the daily life of Ukrainian users. In 2-3 years, it will be clear as to whether or not Russia will ultimately lose its influence on Ukrainian users through social networks.

With the blocking of Russian social networks, the position of American services has strengthened. While as of May 2017 (the month when the Ukrainian presidential decree on sanctions, No. 133/2017, was signed) the audience of the Ukrainian Facebook segment was up to 6 million users, as of August 2017 it had grown to 8.9 million users, reports the Watcher publication, referring to internal Facebook statistics for advertisers.

Millions of Ukrainians experienced the results of cyberattacks for the first time during the Euromaidan events in the winter of 2013-2014. For some months, Ukrainian users were, from time to time, unable to download the pages of key news sites that were covering the protests in an impartial manner, namely Ukrayinska Pravda, Radio Svoboda, Liga.net, Censor.net. This was the result of DDoS attacks, the external «bombardment» of site addresses by millions of artificial requests, which lead to a temporary slowdown or blocking of sites.

The cyberattacks against Ukraine unfolded fully with the outbreak of war in the Donbas region. On the eve of the presidential election in May 2014, the pro-Russian group of hackers CyberBerkut, which is associated with the Kremlin, «hacked» the site of the Central Election Commission and announced the victory of an ultra-right presidential candidate, Dmytro Yarosh. Administrators restored the site’s work in less than an hour before the announcement of official election results.

In October 2015, the first massive cyberattack with the spread of the BlackEnergy virus, which is attributed to a hacker group called Sandworm with a «Kremlin trail», shook Ukraine. For a few hours, the operations of three large energy companies in Ukraine were knocked out and 250,000 residents were left without electricity. Previously, hackers from Sandworm had attacked American energy facilities; however, Ukraine has now experienced a series of their attacks. In December 2016, new attacks were carried out against the Ministry of Finance, Ukrenerho, Ukrzaliznytsia, and a dozen other critical infrastructural facilities.

One of the most powerful cyberattacks took place in June 2017 with the spread of the malware Petya.A, which required a ransom to unlock computers and restore data. Both state and privately-owned companies throughout Ukraine were affected. However, the cyberattack was aimed not at getting money, but rather at inactivating the critical infrastructure of the country.

Ukraine is stepping up measures to protect itself against cyberattacks, but these are just the first steps. In October 2017, in the fourth year of the «hybrid war», the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (Parliament) finally adopted the Law on the Foundations of Cybersecurity, which provides an official definition of threats in cyberspace and describes the policy of counteracting these threats.
ARCHITECTURE of LIES: HOW THE KREMLIN’S PROPAGANDIST MECHANISM WORKS
A n attempt to understand how Russia is waging war where the main battleground is human consciousness

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union and Vladimir Putin’s coming to power, Russia has been waging a war in which the main combat theater is human consciousness. By introducing the discourse of information and psychological warfare, the Kremlin has built up a system of propaganda that has become the embodiment of manipulativity and falsehoods.

Since the beginning of Vladimir Putin’s premiership in 1999, it is possible to define two main directions of Russia’s information and psychological efforts: 1) influence on the internal audience – inside the country; 2) influence on the external audience – the post-Soviet space, Europe, America and the rest of the world.

This chapter aims to clarify the answers to the following questions: 1) what is the status of propaganda in Russia’s domestic and foreign policy? 2) What sequence of actions can be seen in Russia’s efforts to control the information space inside the country? 3) How can we describe the system of Russia’s influence on the external audience, primarily the post-Soviet space and Ukraine?

Answers to these questions will help us to gain a greater understanding of the functioning of Russia’s propaganda machine in modern conditions.

INFLUENCE ON THE INTERNAL AUDIENCE

The system of information isolation in Russia – a combination of the population’s fear and state control over information flow

Since 1999, Russia has begun the revival and development of the propaganda machine from Soviet times. At that time, the newly-appointed prime minister (and a year later – president) Vladimir Putin launched the second Russian–Chechen war, and various restrictions were imposed on the information environment in Russia, from unofficial to legally established ones.

In order to provide as much control as possible over information flows within Russia, the restrictions had to fulfill two primary functions:

1) To reduce access to information disadvantageous to the Kremlin;
2) To form the fear of dissent in the media community and society as a whole.

The «great purpose» has always served as the justification for passing the necessary laws. For example, to prevent the «information aggression» of the West, which was urged by the Doctrine of Information Security, adopted in 2000.

In December 2016, a new Doctrine was adopted to replace the Information Security Doctrine of 2000. «The increased capabilities of informational and technical influence on the information infrastructure (of Russia) by a number of foreign countries for military purposes» was acknowledged as one of the threats. The Internet was recognized as a hostile environment. The Doctrine states that Russia will «maintain a balance between the need for free flow of information and necessary restrictions to ensure national security.»

It means that the new doctrine may justify the restrictions on the freedom of the information sphere of Russians by threats to national security.

Restricted access to alternative information gained momentum in 2001. At that time, the media holding Media-Most was closed. It had been «spoil[ing] the image of the Russian authorities since the coming to power of the new president – Vladimir Putin (in 2000). The media outlets that were part of the media holding strongly criticized the war in Chechnya, through which Putin became popular among the Russian population, and accused him of dictatorship.»

It was not limited just to this, «in the following years, a number of media were closed, and their assets were seized by the state energy giant Gazprom.»

In June 2009, the then-president of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, approved the list of mandatory TV and radio channels, which had to be broadcast throughout the Russian Federation. After the active period of the growing purging, Russians became consumers of mainly mandatory state-controlled media, which was a part of the propaganda system aimed at internal audiences.

The top five include – Channel One (watched by 52% of Russians), Russia-1 (43%), NTV (36%), TNT (21%), and Russia-24, which belong to the list of mandatory TV channels in Russia; and which media experts have repeatedly marked down as manipulative media.

This has ensured the achievement of the first goal – the restriction of access to information disadvantageous to the Kremlin.

The law «On Counteracting Extremist Activity,» passed in 2002 and last amended in 2015, was introduced to attain the second goal, to create a fear of alternative opinion.

Based on this law, in 2008, the Tyumen-based journalist Vladimir Efremov was called an extremist for criticizing the local police. And after the annexation of Crimea in 2016, by the same law, the Crimean activist Suleyman Kadyrov was convicted as an extremist for the comment he made on Facebook that «Crimea – is Ukraine.»

The SOVA Center for Information and Analysis occasionally publishes lists of individuals deprived of their liberty for «extremist crimes». In February 2017, in Russia, 94 persons were in jail under the article of on «extremism.» This is double the figure in 2015.
Increasing emphasis is placed on the Internet environment. In 2012, a resolution was adopted on the register of Internet resources containing information prohibited in Russia. Since then, Roskomnadzor (Russia’s federal executive body) has started to block websites. As of August 31, 2017, the Register of Prohibited Web Sites contained 83,361 entries.

In May 2017, Putin signed the Decree «On the Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in the Russian Federation»,\(^{230}\) emphasizing the need to «form an information space in Russia that takes into account the right of citizens and society to receive only high-quality and truthful information.»

However, the term «truthfulness» for Russia may have quite the opposite meaning. First, due to abolition of anonymity, the criticism of power on the Internet will decrease sharply. After all, many users were hiding their identity online for safety reasons. Secondly, according to the official Russian version, Orthodoxy and spirituality should become the main focus for users, because according to the published text, the strategy defines «the priority of Russian spiritual and moral values and compliance with the norms of behavior based on these values while using information and communication technologies», say Internet-freedom experts.\(^{239}\)

The latest legislative innovations have ultimately deprived Russians of anonymity on the Internet. Among them are the following:

1) Laws on the regulation of Internet messaging – messengers (which, from the beginning of 2018, may restrict the transmission of messages according to a procedure determined by the Government);

2) The prohibition of means of bypassing Internet blocking – anonymizers (from November 1, 2017, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia and the FSB will monitor their use);

3) Restriction of search engine activity (search engine operators are obliged to block links to websites prohibited by Roskomnadzor).\(^{310}\)

In July 2017, the international human rights organization Human Rights Watch issued a statement that Russia has recently developed a system of tough restrictions on freedom of expression on the Internet. In particular, during 2014-2016, about 85% of sentences for «extremist rhetoric» were related to online activity, a Human Rights Watch report states.\(^{331}\)

Control over information is increasing with each passing day. Currently, the «wrong flows» of information can also be technically blocked. There were reports recently that Russia is «cleaning up» information on the Internet. This was noticed during anti-corruption protests that took place in 82 cities of Russia on March 26, 2017. Reports of protests remained «unnoticed» by the media – and almost did not notice (almost) mass protests. And the target audience, according to the third reading.» Meduza, 26.03.2017.

According to Peter Pomerantsev's terminology, in the modern world of the «post-truth», the mixture described above can accurately describe the notion of «narrative» – the «additional message» that Russia adds to the fact, distorting it where it is needed, or completely replacing it, thus creating and spreading a completely new perception of reality.

**INFLUENCE ON THE EXTERNAL AUDIENCE**

Influenced by the discourse of war, the information-psychological impact is directed at the internationalization of the ideas of the «Russian world».

Researchers often describe Russia's desire to influence other countries in the 21st century as a new imperialism. They use definitions like neo-imperialism, post-imperialism, trans-imperialism,\(^{332}\) and others. All of them point to Russia's efforts to adapt to the challenges of the modern globalized world and to use them for their own benefit to achieve their goal.

The Russian ideologists, the Kremlin's official speakers, businesspersons, politicians, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church are trying to give a clear or covert answer to the question «What is the purpose of Russia’s influence?»

Using various sources, Russia disseminates narratives and messages that «cover» the entire political and social spectrum of the target audience – from the most radical to the most liberal, from politicians and civic activists to cultural figures and business people. Regardless of whether they are spread under the Kremlin’s supervision or independently, these messages strengthen the Russian propaganda machine.

In particular, Aleksandr Dugin insists on the most radical ideas (for more details see below). Russian businessman Konstantin Malofeyev propagates the concept of monarchism and traditional values and morals, where Russia is their only source.\(^{334}\) A representative of the Rodina party, Dmitry Rogozin, special representative of Vladimir Putin in Transdniaster, defends Russia's right to intervene in Transdniaster.\(^{335}\) On the pages of Western media, Russian journalist Leonid Bershidsky defends the thesis that Russia...
had no influence on the elections in the USA and that it is necessary for the USA to abandon attempts at “promoting democracy.” A local official, head of the municipal district of Novo-Peredelkino in Moscow, and popular Twitter blogger (60,000 followers), Ernest Makarenko, comments on various political events, honoring Russia’s greatness and power, and ridiculing Western values, etc.

Aleksandr Dugin is the most radical of the Kremlin’s speakers. He is known for his calls to “to kill the Kyiv junta” in 2014. The “Kyiv Junta” is a message that has been actively disseminated by Russian propagandists since Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity in 2013–2014; and is part of the Russian narrative that the revolution in Ukraine was a “fascist coup,” which brought a “junta” to power.

At the Sorokin Readings international conference in 2011, Dugin described the Eurasian project, which, according to him, Russia has been embodying since Putin’s election as president in 2012.

In a report, Aleksandr Dugin claims that Russia aims to create a multipolar world, where the subjects of international law would be civilization, but not countries. On this civilization basis, Russia seeks to integrate the post-Soviet space into a Eurasian Union.

According to Dugin’s ideology, the political structure of Russia and Eurasia must be traditional, ideological, based on the values of religion, tradition, family, morality, integrity, unity and courage; material incentives should not be dominant. Instead of nationalism, the plurality of ethnic groups within a single imperial strategic space should be validated, and modernization should not affect culture, society, spirituality, but only defense, technology, and industry. That is, Dugin promotes a theory according to which the Eurasian Union should not include nations, but ethnic groups (i.e., peoples that do not have a state). Thus, Dugin’s ideas do not envisage the existence of individual nations (Ukrainian, Belarusian or others), but only ethnic groups that must enter the amorphous association of the “Russian world” under the Kremlin’s political and economic control.

A reminder that in 1995, the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, determined the primary goal of Russian policy towards the CIS as “to create an integrated economic and political union of states which is capable of claiming a worthy place in the world community.”

“Vladimir Putin has left this goal unchanged. The political and economic stability of CIS states depends on their having a friendly policy towards the Russian Federation,” said Volodymyr Horbulin, director of the National Institute for Strategic Studies, advisor to the President of Ukraine, in theses to the second anniversary of Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Dugin’s theory, “despite its theoretical nature and mysticism, claims to be the main theory of Russia,” state the Western researchers Hanna Toubarn and Anton

The “Imaginary affiliation with the mythical Orthodox-Eastern Slavic community is destructive for the nations which have internationalized this ideological construct, mastered it and made it part of their identity. It is harmful because it preserves medieval, paternalistic, authoritarian, anti-modern, anti-Western, anti-liberal values on which they were built and which today revitalize Putin’s propaganda in the concept of the Russian world,” said Ukrainian journalist Mykola Ryabchuk, who studies identities and nations, and Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak.

Barbashin. It should also be noted that Dugin’s theory might be the most radical variant of the coverage of the Kremlin’s ideas, formed in the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation.

The Kremlin created the term “sovereign democracy” in order to convey two main messages: 1) Russia’s political regime is democratic; 2) the first statement should be beyond all doubt. Any attempt to check the statement will be regarded as hostile interference in Russia’s internal affairs, which is how the content of the concept can be described.

Through the example of Dugin’s theory and Sukov’s concept, we can see that, on the one hand, by establishing clear boundaries and cultivates the idea of the closed political system of Russia for the “enemies” of the country, the Kremlin strives, on the other hand, to internationalize the idea of the Eurasian Union and traditional spiritual values.

One more ideological platform is the Russian world. This is a global project of Orthodox civilization, a concept formed back in the 1970s among Moscow’s liberal intelligentsia, and which was picked up in 2010 by the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Kiril (V. Gundyaev). The basis of the concept, which serves as the ideological basis for Russian propaganda, is 1) the Orthodox faith, 2) Russian language and culture, 3) shared historical memory and common views on social development.

The Russian world project of Orthodox civilization seeks to unite Russian-speaking residents of the post-Soviet space, as well as all those who speak Russian, profess an Orthodox faith and share the values of Russia. “Being Russian” does not mean belonging to the nation, but rather to the spiritual-civilizational space: one can become “Russian” as a result of a conscious civilizational choice, accepting Orthodoxy and learning the Russian language and culture.
The concept of the «Russian world» does not contradict Dugin’s Eurasian project, who emphasized that ethnic groups, rather than nations should become members of the Eurasian Union. The feature, which assimilates both concepts – is an attempt to internationalize the values of Russia.

Thus, we can identify two primary goals that Russia aims to realize, using the discourse of Eurasianism and the «Russian world.» 1) To legitimize the revenge-seeking appetites in the post-Soviet space and the corresponding foreign policy generated by the collapse of the USSR. In 2005, Vladimir Putin called this dissolution «the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.»2) To create a space of «alternative values» opposing the liberal West, and to form a new world order.

During the Munich Security Conference in 2017, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called the new world order «post-West» (similar to Peter Pomerantsev’s term «post-fact»3), and described it as one «in which each country, based on its sovereignty, will look for a balance between its national interests and the national interests of its partners.»

In domestic policy, the phrase «finding a balance» in official documents, such as the «Doctrine of National Security,»4 is often used to justify arbitrary actions by the regime. In the case of foreign policy – «the search for balance» may mean Russia’s right to uncontrollable actions. First and foremost, –on the territory of post-Soviet countries, which Russia designates as a «gray zone», where the sovereignty of other nations is limited, and where Russian politicians and Russian companies have a privileged economic and political status.5

Russia’s information-psychological influence is one of the elements of the external influence system, formed after the collapse of the USSR.

Russia’s external influence on the countries of the post-Soviet space can be explained through the prism of the «autocracy promotion» approach (as opposed to «promotion of democracy» by Western countries). Researchers Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way were among the first who mentioned it in the book «Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After The Cold War (2010),» explaining the methods of influence on other countries.6 The central thesis of the approach is that Russia supports non-democratic countries and tries to destabilize democratic ones.

For example, Russia actively supported authoritarian Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine until 2004 and in 2010-2013 and tried to destabilize democratic Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine in 2004-2010 and after the Revolution of Dignity of 2013-2014. Based on the scheme outlined by the researcher Jakob Tolstrup, it is possible to identify a list of factors that serve to «stabilize» or «destabilize» countries in the post-Soviet space:

1. Political influence through political parties;
2. Legitimate influence on elections (recognition or non-recognition of election results);
3. Debt, subsidies paid to state budget, trade sanctions;
4. Presence of Russian military base on the territory of the country;
5. Existence of territory not controlled by a central authority;
6. Dependence on Russian energy resources;
7. Affiliation with «Russia-friendly» international organizations (e.g., the Customs Union, etc.).

Here is one example from the list. How does the process of legitimate influence on the elections occur? For example, the Elections Monitoring Committee of the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly recognized the fair and just parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in 2005, Belarus in 2012, presidential elections in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, Belarus in 2006 and 2010, and Azerbaijan in 2013, while official observers from the OSCE have openly stated that these elections were unfair and uncompetitive. At the same time, the Committee has noted massive violations and falsifications of elections that OSCE observers recognized as fair and transparent.

In particular, in the case of Ukraine, when assessing the parliamentary elections in 2012, the OSCE pointed to a significant step back in the development of democratic institutions in the country, while the CIS Committee declared free expression of the will of Ukrainians.

Russia’s information and psychological influence should be added to the above list since it serves not only as one of the factors, but rather it binds all other influences, «legitimizing» them. Mostly during politically or economically sensitive periods.

The informational and psychological influence on the external audience is located in the system of coordinates, where one axis is the desire to create an alternative to the Western system of values that would undermine the democratic and liberal idea of the West, as well as integrate the «gray zone» into the «Russian world» and the Eurasian project. The second one is the challenges of the modern globalized world, which dictate new «rules of the game» and which have changed the tactics and the whole system of informational and psychological influences.

How did the Kremlin’s propaganda machine develop, and how was the discourse of the «information-psychological war» formed?

After World War II, comprehension of Soviet propaganda emerged, tied to the perception of the «threat to the USSR» in the West; and the propaganda itself was considered inherent only in totalitarian regimes. In 1942, a professor at Cambridge University, F. S. Bartlett, formulated the definition of propaganda: «It is an attempt to influence thoughts and behavior – first of all, social ones – in such a way that a person would perceive evoked thoughts and behavior without looking for reasons and explanations.»

The concept of «informational and psychological influence» is collective. It is used in this section to explain its place in Russia’s foreign and domestic policy, as well as to demonstrate the dynamism and versatility of the methods used by Russia in the information field. The debate about Russia’s informational and psychological influence is not static; the search continues all the time for new approaches to explain Russia’s actions and for attempts to understand their logic and consistency.
In the 1960s, Soviet propaganda began to be perceived as part of a general scheme that «may include military actions, rebellions, espionage, sabotage and deliberately provoked disorders in non-communist countries.» In the 1980s, the «general scheme» was called «active measures.»

«Active measures» are methods of information-psychological warfare under the KGB’s aegis to influence public opinion. According to estimates, about 15,000 special agents were involved in «active measures.»

To describe the scheme, Michael Weiss and Peter Pomerantsev, writing in the article «The Masters of Lie: Information, Culture, and Money on the Kremlin’s Service», cite a passage from the International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence:

«The Soviet Union was waging this battle not only through simple (or tricky) advocacy of its positions or positive propaganda, but also resorted to the spectacular […] variety of open and secret psychological measures […] [ranging from] independent international congresses of peace and youth festivals […] to the introduction of agents of influence and, of course, a number of diverse information events with a global reach.»

Along with the concept of «active measures», according to researchers, Russian propaganda also includes «reflexive control» (meaning that by submitting false or slightly distorted information you manipulate the enemy’s consciousness and force him to make certain decisions); and «organizational weapons» (this is now most often used as a synonym for «color revolutions» or as an equivalent of «network warfare»).

It is notable that in 1983 a book was published in Russia by Lieutenant-General D. A. Volkonogov titled «Psychological War. The subversive action of imperialism regarding mass consciousness», which described how Western countries had been waging a psychological war against the USSR. The author noted that «The mechanism of psychological warfare is based on mind control and bringing targeted disinformation into the consciousness of the masses.»

Describing the Soviet Union as a victim of the information aggression of Western countries, the Kremlin has built a discourse of information-psychological warfare, in which to legitimize its actions not only is influence over the enemy country important, but also the precise delineation of the external enemy within the country.

Today, the existence of an external enemy is also an important element of Russia’s informational and psychological efforts. That is why official Kremlin doctrines and documents create in the public’s imagination an image of an enemy, who, according to the authorities, is waging war against Russia. Thus, according to opinion polls, as of May 2016, 72% of Russians consider the United States to be their enemies, 48% – Ukraine, and 29% – Turkey.

The concept of «information-psychological warfare» is used in Russian military journalism and scientific literature: 1) as part of the «hybrid war»

The current official Russian understanding of the term «hybrid war» is set out in a report by the Army General Valery Gerasimov, current Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, at the general meeting of the Academy of Military Sciences of the Russian Federation in January 2013.

The general noted that in the 21st century there is a tendency to blur the boundaries between the state of war and peace. Wars are no longer declared, and once they have begun, they do not follow the usual pattern. Comparing revolutions, such as the «Arab Spring,» with the war, Gerasimov emphasizes that the focus of military methods is nowadays shifting to non-military ones – political, economic, information, humanitarian and others, with the use of the population’s protest potential.


The central message of both books is that «wars of the future will take place not on the battlefield, but in people’s minds.» Russia’s new approach is to use the people’s consciousness as the main theater of warfare, and not an additional one, as was believed to be so for many years.

The above examples point to the fact that the discourse of information-psychological warfare as an independent phenomenon, or as part of a hybrid war, is now inherent to the Kremlin’s propaganda machine.

Who are Russia’s modern agents of influence?

In an effort to describe the operating principles of the Kremlin’s propaganda machine, researchers are asking the following questions:

Is there a machine such as the Politburo in the USSR, which controls the content and coordinates its distribution through various channels of information? Or perhaps there is no single control center, and the actions that seem to be coordinated are, in fact, the result of spontaneous and decentralized impulses, reactions, and conformist behavior.

Weiss, Pomerantsev, 2015.
Allies and enemies of Russia, European integration. Levada-Center, 06/02/2016. http://www.levada.ru/2016/06/02/1346/
It seems that the Kremlin’s information-psychological influence is a combination of these two options. In Soviet times, the propaganda machine was headed by Agitprop, a department of the Central Committee, established in 1920. The International Department controlled the propaganda directed at the Eastern bloc audience. Local party organizations, revolutionary movements, and front-line organizations carried out specific activities. Controlled media and non-party information networks (visible and invisible) transmitted the messages to the public. Currently, the system has changed a lot in its content and size. Local agents of influence (visible and invisible) – a whole network of individuals and organizations operating in other countries under the Kremlin’s influence (from the representatives of marginal far-right and far-left parties and any forms of protest between them – to obviously pro-Russian parties, present in parliamentary countries); the media and Internet resources (from openly Kremlin-sponsored ones to those which became propaganda triggers unconsciously – due to lack of education, experience, or other factors); Internet trolls (paid Internet propagandists, whose purpose is to disorganize and sow chaos) and others.

Russia has changed its tactics regarding the content too. «Unlike Soviet propaganda, modern Russian methods of information warfare do not roughly advertise the Kremlin’s agenda. Instead, they are committed to creating confusion, hesitation, and distraction,» explained Edward Lucas and Peter Pomerantsev.

Thus, instead of calling for certain actions, Russia’s modern information efforts distract the audience with trifling information or false news opportunities, causing chaos of thoughts, passivity, and paranoia.

Using the terminology of Peter Pomerantsev, Russia actively exploits narratives and neutralizes the significance of the facts to the maximum. «Every version of events is a new narrative, where lies can be justified as an alternative point of view and personal opinion,» because ‘everything is relative and everyone has his own truth.’

The concept of «narrative» as an «additional message,» which Russia adds to the facts, or completely replaces it, very aptly describes what can be now called the key manipulative element that Russia uses in the information-psychological warfare.

The «additional message» can fulfill all of the above-mentioned roles – from disorganization and manipulation to false representation and distortion of reality. We do not consider propaganda and disinformation in narratives as separate elements – they are complementary and both are aimed at the internal and external audience.

In the search for a list of present-day Kremlin agents, one should refer to the Resolution on countering anti-European propaganda. The document states:

- think tanks and special funds (for example, “Russian world”);
- special bodies (such as “Rossotrudnichestvo”);
- certain politicians, journalists, and individuals;
- Kremlin-sponsored political parties and other organizations;
- social media and trolls (paid propagandists);
- multilingual television stations (such as RT);
- trans-border social and religious groups;
- pseudo-news agencies (such as Sputnik);
- Kremlin-controlled companies and organizations.

Source: EU Resolution on countering anti-European propaganda

1. Means and tools of the Kremlin’s propaganda machine
2. think tanks and special funds (for example, “Russian world”)
3. special bodies (such as “Rossotrudnichestvo”)
4. certain politicians, journalists, and individuals
5. Kremlin-sponsored political parties and other organizations
6. social media and trolls (paid propagandists)
7. multilingual television stations (such as RT)
8. trans-border social and religious groups
9. pseudo-news agencies (such as Sputnik)
10. Kremlin-controlled companies and organizations

The Russkiy Mir Foundation

The Russkiy Mir Foundation was created by a decree issued by President Vladimir Putin in 2007. In the 10 years of its existence, as of January 2017, the fund had opened 110 Russian centers in 46 countries, and 140 Russkiy Mir offices operate in 55 countries. The Foundation holds a variety of events, from conferences to exhibitions and fairs, and supports organizations within other countries.

The diagram below shows how many organizations are presented in The Russkiy Mir Foundation catalog in post-Soviet countries, particularly in six countries of the Eastern Partnership and three Baltic countries.

Among the selected countries, the most substantial number of organizations engaged in activities aimed at popularizing Russian language and culture are located in Ukraine – 180. A large number of such organizations is also centered in the Baltic States, especially given the small size of these countries and the relatively low population density: 122 organizations in Estonia (1.3 million people), 113 in Latvia (almost 2 million), and 120 in Lithuania (2.8 million). The presence of a large number of Kremlin-supported organizations can play into Russia’s hands in its attempts to have information influence on other countries.


Rossotrudnichestvo

“Rossotrudnichestvo” (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation) was established by a decree issued by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in 2008. Currently, the organization has 95 offices in 79 countries, 72 Russian centers of science and culture in 62 countries. However, the agency’s primary activity is aimed at CIS countries.
Propaganda costs

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<th>million dollars, 2014</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>721</td>
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<tr>
<td>all-Russian state TV and radio companies (channels Russia-1, Russia-24, RTR Planeta, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>395.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>broadcasting in English, Arabic, and Spanish languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subsidies for Channel One, NTV, Petersburg, Karusel, and TV Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>56.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports broadcasting</td>
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<td>40.8</td>
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<td>ITAR-TASS</td>
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<td>86.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Television of Russia</td>
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<tr>
<td>345.2</td>
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<td>Students and Professors</td>
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Source: Ukrayinska Pravda
Infographics by Yaryna Mykhaylyshyn

Social media and trolls

In 2017, NATO presented a study according to which 84% of Russian-language Twitter messages mentioning the presence of NATO in the Baltic countries or Poland, were created by bots (that is, not people, but special programs, involving persons to promote some messages).

In 2016, the Ukrainian media revealed a network of Facebook trolls that consisted of about 2,000 accounts and was closely intertwined with militant Stefan Mazura from the separatist formation in eastern Ukraine – the so-called «Donetsk People's Republic.»

He claimed to be a patriot of Ukraine and conducted undermining activities with the help of pseudo pro-Ukrainian public groups and users who, under the guise of patriotic slogans, were disseminating calls for protests and a coup. Mazura’s account had a Russian trail, as Sergei Zhuk, a former militant of the Russian hybrid army in Donbas, was sat on the other side of the monitor.

«Such privileged media are obliged to distribute the ‘right’ information about events in Russia and the world, to increase the information about a healthy lifestyle, socially responsible behavior, to spread the traditions, cultural, moral and family values of the ‘Russian world,» notes Gleb Kanevskyi, an expert of the Center for Political Studies and Analytics.

According to the state program, in 2014, Russia-1, Russia-24, RTR Planeta and others received 721 million dollars in subsidies. The target sum for subsidies for Channel One, TV companies NTV, Petersburg, Karusel and TV Center was 202 million dollars. Reformed RIA Novosti should have received 86.7 million dollars, ITAR-TASS 40.8 million dollars. Sports broadcasting 56.1 million dollars, Public Television of Russia 47.5 million dollars. In 2017, the total budget for program support was increased by 0.5%, and it was announced that as of 2016 the program was fulfilled by 80.4%.

State programs

State programs running into billions of dollars are targeted at Russian-speaking people around the world. In October 2010, the then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin approved the unprecedented state program «Information Society (2011-2020)» with a total value of 40 billion dollars (at exchange rate of 30 rubles = 1 dollar).

The program is aimed at hundred percent coverage of the Russian-speaking world’s population by media outlets (both state and private), which adhere to Russia’s state strategic policy. Among its results is that the majority of international students come to study in Russia from the CIS (in the 2015-2016 academic year, 237,538 international students studied in Russia, of whom 79.2% were from CIS countries).

Sputnik and RT

Particularly noteworthy is the pseudo-news agency Sputnik, established in November 2014, and the RT channel (Russia Today), created in April 2005. The English version of the latter was launched in 2005; Arabic language in 2007, Spanish language in 2009. In February 2010, RT America, based in Washington DC, was launched; and in October 2014 RT UK based in London.

The RT channel is generously funded. In 2005, the channel’s budget reached 23 million dollars, 120 million dollars in 2008, and since 2010 the total budget has started to exceed 300 million dollars (according to the channel itself, or Russian media reports that we have managed to find). In 2015, Russia spent the largest amount of money on the channel, 400 million dollars. This coincided with the need to justify the attack on Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea; the first attempt to change the European borders by military means since the collapse of Yugoslavia; the downsizing of the Malaysian Boeing 777 plane near Donetsk, as well as the run-up to the presidential election in November 2016 and with Russia’s military intervention in Syria in September 2015.

Organisations from Eastern Partnership and Baltic countries listed in a catalogue of «Russian World» («Ruskiy Mir») organization.
The information portal of the Ruskiy Mir Foundation: http://russkiymir.ru/catalogue/
Religious groups

Let us provide an example from Russia-occupied Crimea. In 2017, a member of the Crimean Human Rights Group, Iryna Sedova, said that in annexed Crimea priests of the Russian Orthodox Church are taking part in military propaganda.

«The Russian Orthodox Church is distributing grants for Orthodox children’s camps, where children are taught to be scouts. Religion is combined with the aggressive propaganda of militarization, and children think that to be a militarist is sacred.»[^386]

According to the defender of human rights, there are facts of cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church, Russian cossacks, and political parties; participation in events to honor the Russian Army, with the involvement of children.

The list provided is just a part of the examples that could be distinguished from information chaos to show the limits of Russia’s informational and psychological impact on the external audience. Specific cases in the example of Ukraine will be considered in the following sections.

To sum up, it is worth noting that the dissemination of propaganda is not forthright and 100% Kremlin-controlled. As soon as a narrative or disinformation starts, the subsequent process is hard to control, especially on the Internet.

A section of controllable media outlets work «to order», though a large number of traditional media outlets and Internet resources broadcast the Kremlin’s narratives, falling under its information-psychological influence. This can be due to the low level of education and underpayment of media workers in most post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine; the well-honed skills of propaganda creators; and the chaos created around a news-making event with the help of trolls (paid propagandists), strict advocates of Russia, and other agents who act simultaneously.

«Occasionally, the pro-Kremlin media coordinate their actions with activists who work ‘on the ground,’ either paying them directly or by providing financial assistance through formal associations. Some local activists provide narratives favorable to the Kremlin on independent platforms in their countries,» explains Yevhen Fedchenko, director of the Mohyla School of Journalism and one of the founders of the StopFake Initiative for countering Russian propaganda in Ukraine[^388].

Thus, on the one hand, the system of information-psychological influence on the external audience is generously funded, carefully thought-out and justified by the decision-making center in Russia – the Presidential Administration; on the other hand, it is full of narratives, whose flow is difficult to control in the 21st century. Accordingly, the consequences of «information-psychological warfare» may also be unpredictable.

Mapping the Territory: What Other Researchers of Russian Propaganda Say
Today we are facing a paradox. On the one hand, Russian propaganda has ceased to be a secret for many journalists, analysts, and politicians from different countries of the world. It is analyzed as a method of «hybrid warfare,» as an example of transforming information into weapons, as a tactic of informational and psychological impact, and as a mode of warfare in hostile territory.

However, on the other hand, there are a lot of people who continue to deny its reality and consider the theses of an information war an exaggeration, dreaming that it is possible to live with Russia in conditions of perfect symmetry.

In our opinion, it is important for both parties to see a «map of the territory.» To understand what has already been done in terms of the analysis of Russian propaganda. To see a variety of undertaken research and analysis, many of which have common intuitions and reach similar conclusions. To know how to use this information or how to react to it.

In this chapter, we decided to look through many existing pieces of research on Russian propaganda. This part of the book is a kind of a window that will allow you to learn about research from various authors and think tanks.

We will try to review the fundamental principles and messages, encouraging our readers to go further and get better acquainted with the original texts. You can find many interesting things there.

How «a looking-glass world» is created

Russian and pro-Kremlin media often fill the media space with fabrications, conspiracy theories, alternative versions of events. Many Russian propaganda experts agree that a distinguishing feature of the Kremlin’s information operations is lack of reality. No one is thinking about proving something.

That’s what accounts for its advantage, state researchers of the American analytical center RAND, Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, argue in their 2016 article "The Russian ‘Firehose of Falsehood’ Propaganda Model: Why It Might Work and Options to Counter It." Creating a fake takes less time and effort than fact checking. However, when the fake is finally exposed, the distorted version of events is stuck in the consciousness, so it is hard to forget it. The more often that information is repeated, the easier it is to accept it. The information comes from many sources in large volumes. It does not matter that one message is contrary to another message.

The Russian TV channel Russia Today, which is aimed at foreign audiences, at first sight resembles Western news, such as for instance, the BBC, except that the graphics are not red, but green. Such a news format and high-quality television product cause a sense of trust. The more details, the better – it is easier to believe even if it is pure fiction, continue Paul and Matthews.  

Russian fakes are also distributed by twins of authoritative media, including British The Guardian, Belgian Le Soir, Arab Al-Jazeera, American The Atlantic – the senior business reporter of authoritative British daily newspaper The Guardian, Graham Ruddick revealed. Their domains are similar to the originals. Other pro-Kremlin media refer to them to increase trust in their own messages. There were reports that Saudi Arabia allegedly financed the election campaign of French President Emmanuel Macron or that American and British intelligence allegedly incited citizens of Georgia to the “Rose Revolution” in 2003.

However, it is not to say that Russian propaganda is entirely based on falsehood, note Paul and Matthews. Often it is a half-truth. Propaganda often twists and distorts facts or cover only negative aspects of events. In particular, the authors of an article in 2017 for the Polish Center for International Relations entitled «Information Warfare in the Internet: Countering Pro-Kremlin Disinformation in the Central and Eastern European Countries» showed that in CEE Countries pro-Russian media outlets strive to induce the viewer’s or reader’s negative reaction towards the EU and the West. They do not talk about success but, on the contrary, they actively cover protests and political scandals. This is a sort of «two minutes of hate.»

The emphasis on the negative has a psychological aspect: it is perceived better than the positive, writes Yuriy Kuleshov, Baymehamed Zhudtidey, Denis Fedorov in the article of 2014 for the Bulletin of the Academy of Military Sciences of Russia entitled «Information and Psychological Confrontation in Modern Conditions: Theory and Practice.» Sure enough, it is easier to believe that your home is burning than that you have won the lottery.

Russian propaganda can act more discreetly. For example, the Russian First Baltic Channel, which broadcasts to the Baltic States is quite objective, writes American publicist David Satter in the article from 2014 called «The Last Gasp of the Empire: Russia’s Attempts to Control the Media in the Former Soviet Republics» for the American Center for International Media Assistance. There is only a slight emphasis on economic problems and the Russian minority in Europe.

Another aspect is the «return» of an argument to an opponent. Something like you talk about our problems, but what about your own problems. Russia invaded Ukraine, but what about the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan; Russian troops took part in the annexation of Crimea, but what about the bombing of Kosovo by NATO; Putin’s regime is corrupt, but what about corrupt Western politicians? Russia often diverts attention from derogatory information. Instead, they begin to talk about the actions that compromise opponents, writes the Ukrainian independent online newspaper Euromaidan Press in an article from 2016 called «A Guide to Russian propaganda. Part 2: Whataboutism.»
The authors of this study also drew a clear line between external and internal directions of propaganda. They showed how different they are: while outside propaganda tries to prove that Russia is no worse than Western countries, the internal disinformation is hinged on the enemy's image, both the United States and the «Ukrainian Nazis», who are supposedly «supported» by the United States.

The victims of the MH17 passenger flight shot down over Ukraine «died a second time» from the lack of proper investigation by the West; «violence in America is normalized at Government level»; in Rome, police used water cannons against migrants.

All these stories aired by Russia today are linked by emotion. When you feel compassion for victims of the plane crash or migrants, hostility to the West and America, fear of the American Government or have other strong emotions, the facts become less important, said Paul and Matthews.

Russian propaganda often uses human interest stories to elicit emotions. Stories are more effective in convincing a person compared to facts or analysis. The story of the allegedly crucified boy causes more emotions, as contrasted with a «dry» message of a human rights violation by the Ukrainian Army in the Donbas region. Edward Lucas and Peter Pomerantsev in the article from 2016 entitled «Winning the Information War: Techniques and Counterstrategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe» for the independent Center for European Policy Analysis took Ukraine as an example. The spokesman for the Donbas separatists stated that Ukrainian soldiers had been infected with the California influenza virus due to a virus leak from an American laboratory in Ukraine. Russian media actively disseminated this fake.

Another way to convince the viewer is through humor. The US president makes a telephone call to Russia – allegedly, he is bored at the G-7 summit, since everyone supports America's position in the absence of the Kremlin; the US defines who and what instrument is playing in the international arena – such sketches of this post-Soviet stand-up comedy show go on TV screens in Russia and outside the country. Russian humor aims to expose so-called American dictate. They exploit emotions and compare «us - Russian-speakers» the (Russian-speaking population abroad which, according to the Kremlin, belongs to the so-called «Russian world») to «them – Americans.» The stand-up comedy show also influences the perception of true news. Latvian experts Zaneta Ozolina and Solvita Demina-Liepniece described it in their 2016 article «Anatomy of the use of humor in political propaganda campaigns.»

To achieve the goal, the Kremlin often combines false information with other so-called active measures. For example, David Satter has demonstrated how Russian propaganda helps to oust the president of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev. After Bakiyev extended the lease of the Manas air base for the United States, Russian channels issued reports about the president's corrupt practices almost on a daily basis. In Kyrgyzstan, Russian channels are even more authoritative than the local media. Moreover, Russia imposed a tax on fuel exports to Kyrgyzstan. Goods became more expensive, and the population poorer. This led to a rebellion and Bakiyev's overthrow.

Actions can also be misleading. An American analyst, Timothy Thomas, writes about the «friendly embrace» of Moscow in his 2015 article «Psycho Virus and Reflexive Control: Russian Theories of Information-Psychological War» for the Legatum Institute, an international analytical center. At first, Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists in Donbas signed a truce in Minsk, thus bringing hope for peace. Then the separatists launched a sudden attack. The established fragile truce made the attack more unexpected.

Social networks further amplify Russia's messages. TV channels and the press provide posts from Facebook or Twitter as confirmation of their stories. And vice versa, social networks spread media messages increasing their coverage, state the authors of the 2016 research for NATO «Social Media as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare.» To disseminate the messages, they actively engage Internet trolls and bots. An Internet troll is a person who creates many accounts in social media and then makes comments and posts using these accounts. The bot's task is the same, though it is not a real person, but an automatic system. The purpose of these mythical Internet beings and robots is to oversaturate the media space with fakes, disinformation, and aggression, as noted by the NATO study. The truth vanishes among this «smoke.» A person is confused. It is hard to understand where the truth is. People even doubt the existence of unbiased information. They do not want to participate in aggressive discussions with Internet trolls and bots. All this gives more space to Russian alternative explanations.

However, the NATO study also notes that in Latvia Internet trolls comment on just 4% of articles. Another NATO study from 2015 called "Russian Information Campaign against the Ukrainian State and Defence Forces" revealed that more than half of the posts by trolls on the Facebook page of the National Liberation Movement are without ‘likes’ and comments. At the same time, social networks continue to be a useful tool for spreading the word.

**What is the Kremlin's goal?**

The aim of Russian propaganda is to cause confusion among Europeans. According to Lucas and Pomerantz's aforementioned article, pro-Russian media do not praise Russia very often. They have no intention of making Russia attractive to Europeans. They want to undermine the order and political regime in European and Western countries. Create instability. Storytelling and manipulations are good tools for this.

It is highly unlikely that a Russian-speaking Estonian would like to live in Russia, where living standards and political freedoms are at a very low level. A message that Estonia is a Nazi country seems incredible to him or her. However, a constant flow of misinformation can make a

697 A guide to Russian propaganda. Part 1: propaganda prepares Russia for war. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSRkGigVbQw&t=15s
698 Paul and Matthews, 'The Russian «Firehose of Falseness» Propaganda Model'.
701 Satter, 'The Last Gasp of Empire'.
702 Thomas, Timothy, 'Psycho Viruses and Reflexive Control: Russian Theories of Information-Psychological War', in Information at War: From China’s Three Wars to NATO’s Narratives, The Beyond Propaganda Series (The Legatum Institute, September 2015), https://lif.blob.core.windows.net/lif/docs/default-source/publications/information-at-war-from-china-s-three-wars-to-nato-s-narratives-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=2
703 Reynolds, Anna, ed., ‘Social Media as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare’ (NATO Strategic Communications, Centre of Excellence, May 2016)
704 Ibid.
706 Lucas and Pomerantsev, ‘Winning the Information War’. 
person cast doubt on all information in the country. After all, everyone is lying, so it does not make any sense to believe the real media either.

In addition, disinformation is a tool to achieve concrete results. A positive image of pro-Russian politicians in Europe should contribute to their election to senior positions in the country, writes Lucas and Pomerantsev.

Media campaigns can be directed to protect business interests. For example, Lithuanians voted against the construction of a new nuclear power plant. Regnum.ru and Litovsky Kurier contributed to that decision, David Satter notes. They were talking about the environmental threat of such power plants. All of this was done to make Lithuanians consume the energy of Russia’s two Rosatom power plants in Kaliningrad and Belarus.

Residents of the «looking-glass world»

The central narrative of the Kremlin is aimed at challenging the present-day order in Europe. Russia wants to be acknowledged as a power to be reckoned with. It wants to have bigger status than it has today. This is what Mark Laitly writes in the 2015 article «NATO and the Power of Narrative» for the international analytical center Legatum Institute. In the author’s opinion, other narratives contribute to this overall idea.

In various European countries, Russian information operations work differently. This can be seen from the fact that Russian media Russia Today and Sputnik – they are the most popular abroad – have multilingual broadcasting: RT has 5 languages, while Sputnik has 32 languages. This allows them to be heard and read not only by Europeans but also by national minorities who live in Europe, since these media broadcast in Russian and Arabic, writes Keir Giles in the article from 2016 called "Russia’s ‘New’ Tools for Confronting the West: Continuity and Innovations in Moscow’s Exercise of Power."

The peculiarities of each country influence the choice of messages, channels of influence and manipulation techniques. For example, Russian interpretations of Polish-Ukrainian relations will be of little interest in the Czech Republic. The Kremlin’s sub-goals are different for each country.

In the aforementioned article Lucas and Pomerantsev note the strong presence of a Russian-speaking population in Estonia and Latvia. Three out of four Russian-speaking Estonians are watching Russian channels (First Baltic Channel, RTR Planeta Baltic, NTV Mir, and Ren TV Estonia). In Latvia, Russian media outlets have even greater influence. One in three Latvians watches Russian TV channels.

The main messages are often centered around the xenophobia and Nazism of Estonians and Latvians. The purpose is to divide society into the Russian-speaking population and Estonian/Latvian, respectively.

The results of such actions are even more extensive. The Russian-speaking television of the Baltic countries is also popular in Russia. Therefore, the negative image of Estonians and Latvians has to strengthen Putin’s regime. Seeing that Estonia and Latvia are infected with a «brown plague,» the Russians should support the ruling regime: it is better than living with the Nazis. Moreover, the Western allies must be disappointed with the allegedly fascist Estonia and Latvia, wrote Lucas and Pomerantsev. They say, why should such «bad» NATO and EU allies be helped and supported.

Russian channels highlight pro-Russian forces in a positive way. Viewers should vote for them at regular elections. For example, Satter writes that the Kremlin supported the former mayor of Tallinn, Edgar Savisaar (2001-2004, 2007-2015), not only financially, but also through a positive film about him on the eve of the 2011 parliamentary elections.

In general, Russia acts in a similar way in all post-Soviet countries. The logic of the Kremlin’s actions is fully described in the book «Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire» by Dr. Agnia Grigas, who is a non-resident senior fellow scientist at the Atlantic Council’s analytical center. Dr. Grigas described how the Russian Federation was developing a policy on «protecting Russian compatriots» in Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. She has illustrated that for more than two decades, since the early nineties, Moscow has consistently used Russian minorities in neighboring states to meet its territorial ambitions. In the book, Crimea is taken as an example.

The scheme is as follows: at first, Russia uses so-called «soft power» – it spreads its cultural and humanitarian influence over the area to attract the attention of the population. When Moscow finally gets minimal support, the «brotherhood policy» begins. It was most noticeable in Crimea. Then, the Russian media sphere, which distributes pro-Russian messages in the region, joins the process. After that, the situation develops very quickly: Russia begins to issue its own passports; announces that in the region there are a lot of Russians who need to be «protected» and, as it happened in Crimea, it carries out the annexation of the territory.

Dr. Grigas notices that in such cases, Russian propaganda can act very inconspicuously, but a timely response is very important. But Ukraine did not respond. «Until the mid-2000s Russia handed out its passports and citizenship to the inhabitants of the peninsula without impediment. Russian service members stayed in Crimea even after their term of service in the Black Sea Fleet was over. And when Crimea began to organize festivals to celebrate the reunion with Russia, it became clear that Moscow has successfully realized its territorial claims in Crimea. Their methods of achieving the goals proved to be effective,» the researcher notes.

In Moldova, Russia acts both through the Kremlin media (Komsomolskaya Pravda, Sputnik, NTV Moldova), and through local pro-Kremlin media (Panorama, Gagauzinfo, the Socialist Party’s website), state the authors of the “Information warfare in the Internet” study mentioned above. These channels mostly report about problems in the EU, the USA, and NATO, about EU disintegration, and that the only salvation for Moldova is Russia.

In Lithuania the Russian-minority is small and, therefore, so is the role of Kremlin media. Local media are more important here, according to Lucas and Pomerantsev. The goal is to make the Polish minority hostile to Lithuanians and
and to depict the Lithuanian authorities as incompetent and unable to rule the country. Problems related to the economic and financial crisis are good material for this. Moreover, the flaws of Western countries are in the spotlight.

Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are approached in a different way. The target here is extreme right and left-wing forces. According to Lucas and Pomerantsev, they are already hostile to the EU, the West, and towards migrants. Similarly to Russia, these forces aim to undermine the ruling liberal establishment. Pro-Russian media outlets only amplify messages that are already present and promote further disappointment with the ruling elites. In the majority of cases, these are not Kremlin media, but local ones. However, they often have direct or indirect ties to Moscow: Russian embassies, culture centres, NGOs.

In the study «Kremlin Influence Index 2017», the authors note that the so-called «alternative media» became an important source of information for extreme forces of the ideological spectrum, particularly in the Czech Republic. They indicate that these forces remain in the minority. However, this is not to say that there is no threat. In Europe, the popularity of radical forces has grown in recent years due to various reasons, including the economic downturn and the inflow of immigrants from the Middle East.

People feel threatened. They tend to feel cautious and suspicious about immigrants, Islam, the elite, who, in their opinion, cannot provide economic prosperity.

The authors of the aforementioned article on information warfare in the Internet emphasize that in Poland the Kremlin is actively exploiting Polish-Ukrainian history to its advantage. For example, pro-Russian media talk about the «Volhynia massacre,» the mass slaughter of Poles by Ukrainians, which is a rather one-sided and biased coverage of events, taken completely out of context. This should sow hatred towards Ukrainians and drive a wedge between Poland and Ukraine.

Hungary is a particular case. The Kremlin Influence Index found that Russian media or other actors do not influence the information space here. However, Budapest is governed by pro-Russian forces, which frequently criticize the EU and the West. This coincides with the Kremlin’s messaging in many other European countries. Besides, they have business contacts with Russia. It should come as no surprise that Russian companies will upgrade Budapest’s subway cars, and Russia’s Rosatom will start construction of the Paks II nuclear reactor in 2018, the authors of the Index explain. This is perhaps the only country in Europe where the Kremlin’s messages are widely present in the central media, aside from pro-Russian alternatives. This is another feature that distinguishes Hungary from other European countries.

Vulnerable spot
In most European countries, you will rarely hear Russian messages in the central media. Except for countries like Hungary and partly Ukraine, where Kremlin media are present. Such stories can get here mainly by accident, due to inadvertence, unprofessional journalism or poor awareness of the situation. Polish TVP Info reported that Egypt allegedly sold two French Mistral ships to Russia for one dollar – cited an example the authors of the article about the information warfare in the Internet.

The Russian message can get into Central European channels more inconspicuously. For example, calling the so-called Crimean referendum a «referendum» may be considered as its legitimation, even if the general delivery of the information is objective, Katri Pynnöniemi and András Rácz wrote in their report of 2016 for the Finnish Institute of International Affairs entitled «Fog of Falsehood: Russian Strategy of Deception and the Conflict in Ukraine.»

Provision of different perspectives is the basis of objective journalism. This is the standard for all authoritative Western media outlets. Providing objective information and a balance of views. When it comes to Russia, the Kremlin’s point of view should also be added, not to look biased. However, Russia’s propagandists take advantage of this. This is one of the ways of «pushing through» the propaganda message into the central TV channels of the West, writes Keir Giles in the article mentioned above.

The openness of a democratic society is another vulnerable spot of the West, used by pro-Russian propaganda for its own purposes. The diversity of media contributes to the variety of opinions. However, this diversity is an excellent basis to establish pro-Russian media, writes Stefan Meister in the article from 2016 entitled «Isolation and Propaganda: The Roots and Instruments of Russia’s Disinformation Campaign» for the Transatlantic Academy.

One of the studies that explains the intentions of Russian propaganda was published in November 2014. The article entitled «The menace of unreality: how the Kremlin weaponizes information, culture and money» was written by the British journalist and writer Peter Pomerantsev and the American journalist Michael Weiss. This research was conducted for the Institute of Modern Russia, a non-governmental organization based in New York.

Pomerantsev and Weiss have provided a detailed description of the Kremlin’s instruments in the information war against the West. The authors have determined that Moscow actively exploits the commitment of democratic societies to the freedom of speech in order to conceal propaganda and fake «alternative opinion.» According to the authors, the openness of liberal societies also works in the Kremlin’s favor, since it enables the enlisting of the Orthodox Church and the creation of «puppet» non-governmental organizations to destabilize public opinion.

The experts are also under pressure, note Pomerantsev and Weiss. They cited the Valdai Discussion Club as an example. Western experts who participate in its meetings become rebroadcasters of the Russian narrative. The authors put more focus on the promotion of the message that business and politics should be separated. They state that the Russian Government would try to take full advantage of economic and business ties with European countries.
That is exactly what happened. The phrase «business as usual» became very common in the following years with reference to European businesspersons calling for the lifting of sanctions against Russia and the resumption of economic partnership. These appeals were especially frequent in Germany and the Czech Republic. These countries have strong economic ties with Russia.

Attempts to resist propaganda

It is worth distinguishing two attempts to systematically combat disinformation from the side of Moscow.

The European Union has established an institutional unit to fight Russian propaganda. On March 19-20, 2015 at the summit of the European Council, the leaders of EU member states agreed on the need to resist Russian disinformation campaigns. On the basis of this decision, the **EU StratCom East Task Force** was established. According to the plan, this strategic group should not only reveal fakes, deal with the effective communication of the EU’s messages in Eastern Europe and enhance the effectiveness of the media environment in the region, but also strengthen the EU’s ability to foresee future disinformation campaigns. It also coordinates the efforts of journalists and expert centers in EU member states. However, at the start of the project, this strategic group only consisted of eight persons, who were not able to cope with this volume of work.

The team has organized the release of weekly reviews on Russian propaganda and investigated its influence. However, not all EU institutions had taken the group’s activity seriously. The EU’s StratCom East Task Force was constantly under-resourced. In its turn, on March 20, 2017, the expert group published an open letter to Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, calling for the threat of Russian propaganda to be recognized and tripling of the budget of the EU Stratcom East Task Force. «We see questioning and marginalizing of the issue on multiple levels, on claims such as that there is actually no disinformation campaign: that it is not happening in our countries; that it is not corrosive. We see blindness and refusal to admit that someone is actively working to undermine our societies and to destroy the world order that has been established after World War II and has provided the Euroatlantic world with an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity.»

At the beginning of 2016, EU countries, which have a key role for Moscow, launched initiatives against the Kremlin’s propaganda. A good example can be **Kremlin Watch—a strategic program of the Czech think-tank «European Values.»**

The project team carries out weekly monitoring and analysis of disinformation, takes an active part in the EU’s Stratcom East network, regularly publishes studies on Russian propaganda and recommendations for EU Governments on how to counter Moscow. In particular, the Kremlin Watch project presented a multi-pronged strategy entitled **<50 Measures to Oust Kremlin Hostile Disinformation Influence out of Europe.>** A number of experts from many countries have worked on this document, including Yevhen Fedchenko, founder of the Ukrainian initiative StopFake.

The publication states that EU and NATO institutions, national governments and EU civil society should learn to work together to overcome the Kremlin’s propaganda machine. Fifty measures of counteraction are divided into four clusters. According to experts it is, first and foremost, imperative to **include enemy propaganda in the agenda of the foreign and security policy of EU countries and NATO.** After that, it is necessary to publicly disprove the Kremlin’s messages and shed light on European politicians who support Moscow. The next step is to **make the Russian disinformation campaign understandable to the public,** explain its purpose and means. Finally, it is crucial to develop the ability of democratic societies to stand against information attacks.

It is important that Kremlin Watch’s recommendations do not remain only among experts, as is often the case with research on Russian propaganda. Leading global media like The Guardian, The New York Times, Reuters, Politico, and others, have often quoted the expert opinions of the think tank, retransmitting them to a wider audience. Nevertheless, national governments sometimes do give credence to Kremlin Watch’s recommendations. In particular, in May 2016, the Czech Government announced the creation of a specialized Centre against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats within the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic. This was one of the European Values recommendations in the wake of the Czech national security audit.

Ukraine’s response to Kremlin propaganda

Finding itself on the frontline of the battle, Ukraine has made a significant contribution to the research on Russian propaganda. The important thing is that all these attempts were initiated by the so-called «third sector», several NGOs have started to work in this area independently of each other.

The first step was the StopFake initiative, set up on March 2, 2014, shortly after the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and the first wave of Moscow’s propaganda. The initiative was created on the foundation of the Kyiv-Mohyla School of Journalism and relied primarily on the work of volunteers. At first, StopFake participants were working at the grass-roots level, disproving fake news. Later, the initiative began to monitor the research of other organizations and subsequently joined them.

Whereas StopFake was at first focused on Ukrainian audiences and covered cases related to Ukraine, the Euromaidan Press website immediately began to work for foreign audiences in 2014. Their first product, which was entirely dedicated to Russian propaganda, was the aforementioned series of videos titled «A Guide to Russian Propaganda,» published in September 2016.

Hromadske.ua became an important media project. In particular, its English-language service is called Hromadske International. The service is one of the few media resources related to Ukraine, the Euromaidan Press website immediately began to work for foreign audiences in 2014. Their first product, which was entirely dedicated to Russian propaganda, was the aforementioned series of videos titled «A Guide to Russian Propaganda,» published in September 2016.

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Volunteers did not lag behind either. In March 2014, Ukrainian journalist Roman Burko and Georgian military expert Irakli Komaxidze launched the InformNapalm research initiative. At first, the initiative was promoted by representatives of the countries most affected by the Kremlin’s propaganda, but now InformNapalm combines the forces of over thirty volunteers from more than ten countries. Their research is available to readers in more than twenty languages.

Ukraine Crisis Media Center is another organization at the forefront of Russian propaganda research. It was established with the support of leading Ukrainian experts in March 2014. The organization aimed to provide the world community with proven information on Russian aggression in Crimea and later in Donbas. Thus, the experts of the group were also involved in analyzing Russian fakes and explaining the causes to Western audiences. It was important at that time because the US and European countries were not ready for a flow of misinformation from Russia.

As time went on, other initiatives began to appear. In particular, the NGO Internews Ukraine has initiated the creation of the UkraineWorld group, an information network that joins together key Ukrainian and international experts and journalists to counter propaganda and disinformation. Since 2016, UkraineWorld has provided the international community with high-quality materials on events and challenges in Ukraine, including unbiased information on military actions and Russia’s interference in Eastern Ukraine. This method of fighting Russian propaganda proved to be quite effective: UkraineWorld’s analytical materials are published on authoritative information platforms in Ukraine and abroad, and participants use the materials and assistance of other members of the group in their activities.

Ukrainian NGO Internews Ukraine decided to give Internet users the tools necessary to effectively counteract Russian propaganda. The Verify.org.ua website was launched in February 2016. Its goal is to assist in checking information online. The initiative was supplemented by a dozen training sessions for journalists and civil activists. Strengthening the media hygiene and critical thinking of journalists from post-Soviet countries was continued in a free Russian-language online course called Verification in the Internet. A Course for journalists.

NGO Information Security has been in operation in Ukraine since 2015. This organisation counteracts Russian propaganda by developing independent and pluralistic media in Ukraine and improving the standards of journalistic activities, including in Eastern Ukraine.

NGO Detector Media has chosen a systematic approach to solve the problem. The organization regularly monitors the messages of Russian propaganda in the Ukrainian media, and some of them are still spreading the Kremlin’s messages. It is worth noting that Ukrainians are not watching Russian information programs but only entertainment shows, including movies, series, talk shows, write the authors of the Kremlin Influence Index 2017.420 Ukraine has banned Russian channels for stirring up hostility and hatred. However, even among the central media, there are those who promote the Kremlin’s messages, as stated in the mentioned investigation on information warfare in the Internet.421 These messages are not nearly as controversial as «a junta and the Nazis came to power In Ukraine». The trust in the channel that distributes such news will be eroded immediately. However, they talk about the failures of the Government, Ukrainians joining the ranks of the “Islamic state” terrorist organization, about the so-called violation of the ceasefire with separatists in the East, and even that everyone likes Russia. The owners of these channels do not have direct ties with the Kremlin. Such stories can be explained by business interests and ties with Russia. Another reason such messages get to central channels is the work of unprofessional journalists, the authors of the study add. However, there are such media outlets that are suspected of having direct links with the Kremlin.

In June 2017, the StopFake initiative analyzed the level of awareness and the attitude of Ukrainians towards disinformation and propaganda in media. The study consisted of two parts: a representative survey of public opinion in different regions of Ukraine and focus group discussions. A national opinion poll helped to get a sociological pattern of views and opinions related to the problem of disinformation and propaganda, while focus group discussions helped to explore the perception held by citizens of information, the peculiarities of their demand for information, and their trust in the media.431 It turned out that the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians (58.3%) think that the threat of Russian propaganda does exist. In addition, 59.7% believe that they can discern disinformation. 42.1% of respondents consider that disinformation is a key problem for the Russian media, and 33.8% of them believe that the Ukrainian media also have this shortcoming. Almost one third of those polled feel the need for additional knowledge and skills to detect misinformation and propaganda, but most respondents (58.4%) do not feel that need.432 Focus group discussions helped to reveal that in general respondents do not trust one source of information, and rely on their own experience or eyewitness testimony. Another important point is that respondents are not satisfied with the quality of the media environment they use.433

Manipulations with the perception of reality, distraction from merits, fake or half-truths, the “return” of arguments to the opponent, negative emotions, all of these make Russian propaganda remarkable and efficient. It is its unreality that makes it so real. At the end, it is our attitudes that determine our actions, not the actual real facts.

In this chapter, we have analyzed a number of pieces of research and initiatives that exist on the study of Russian propaganda. It is important to see the already created «map of the territory,» which explains a lot.

Next, we will analyze the force of Russian propaganda in Ukraine and its influence on the Ukrainian audience. We will try to understand what the peculiarities of Ukrainian realities are, and what lessons we can draw from this.

420 Ibid
421 Wierzejski, ‘Information Warfare in the Internet’
431 Ibid
432 Ibid
433 Ibid
MORE than FAKE NEWS:
LESSONS LEARNT
BY UKRAINE
f politics was an «experimental science» and history was its experimental protocol, Ukraine would be the most fruitful field of study of Russian propaganda. Today, Ukraine is learning a lot from Western countries, but when it comes to countering Russian expansion, it apparently has experience that other countries, most likely, lack. The events that took place after 2014 in Central Eastern Europe, Western Europe and even in the United States – disinformation, defamation of democratic institutions, cyberattacks, meddling in internal politics – gave Ukrainians a feeling of déjà-vu, something they had experienced much earlier.

It is not surprising that StopFake was established in Ukraine rather than anywhere else. It is one of the most famous Ukrainian information projects, a tool, and experience of «unmasking» fake news, fictitious stories, mythologized statements and manipulated photos and videos. The experience possessed by this project is actively considered by the world and is applied to new needs.

However, the understanding of Russian propaganda and countering it should not be limited only to the «fight against the fake.» The problem is much more profound: Russian propaganda is not just a lie and not always a lie. Sometimes it states half-truths, sometimes it points at real problems, and sometimes it plays semitones. Propaganda is a discourse – that is, a whole chain of messages, statements, arguments, images, metaphors, real or not, fictitious or not, which have a particular purpose.

The purpose of Russian propaganda could be considered the pursuit of power and dominance. That is how it is traditionally seen by those who analyze the authoritative backstage discourse after the Second World War, particularly after the German «critical theory» or the French philosophy of the 1960s-1970s.

The desire for power, no doubt, is present in Russian propaganda too. However, in my opinion, one crucial detail distinguishes it from other examples of propaganda, misinformation, or misleading strategies familiar to Western observers – for which they often lack proper optics. Russian propaganda discourse positions itself not so much in terms of relations of power, as in terms of relations of war. Ukraine is living through this – they do not want to hold sway over us, they want to destroy us. However, there is no guarantee that Ukraine is the final goal for modern Russia. Russia probably does not seek to destroy the Western world physically, but in any case, it strives to erase its concepts.

In this section, I will try to summarize the conclusions that Ukrainians have drawn from their permanent existence alongside Russian propaganda. The main lesson is that the logic of this propaganda is precisely in maintaining a strategy of destruction: either the destruction of a particular reality or the destruction of certain concepts. That is why it should be taken seriously.

Not only disinformation: how democracy itself becomes a fake

The theme of democracy is one of the crucial issues that Russian propaganda works with. However, Russian propaganda’s work with democracy is not straightforward. It would be naive to expect just a simple thesis from it – allegedly, Western democracy is evil, and that is it. Today, everything is much more complicated.

In fact, the Russian regime is actively using a democratic argument to legitimize itself. After all, today’s authoritarian Russia thinks in terms of democracy, sees itself as democracy, sees itself at least «decorated» with democracy – therefore, it is ready to criticize others from the point of view of democracy.

This hybrid of «authoritarian democracy» simultaneously brings nearer and distinguishes modern Russia from the left totalitarianism of the communist USSR or the right totalitarianism of Italian fascism or German Nazism of the 1920s-1930s. On the one hand, German Nazism, Italian fascism, and Russian communism used democratic rhetoric, presenting themselves as «true» democracies that are formed by the general «will of the people» (or class) embodied in the will of its leader – the «Duce», «leader» or «Führer». We often forget about this «democratic rhetoric» of totalitarianism of the twentieth century.

On the other hand, they put forward a program for the building of society and state that was radically different from the classical idea of democracy. The term «totalitarian,» which at first was used by Italian fascist ideology to denote its regime, envisaged monolithic unity, homogeneity, «totality» of society – it should be a mono-organism pierced by one idea, one chain of institutions and one conviction. Its main opponent was plurality.

Now everything has changed. Authoritarian regimes ceased to combat the idea of plurality. Instead, it has become a reality that cannot be avoided. Neo-authoritarian regimes, in Russia, Turkey, China, etc., live in an ocean of opportunities and, therefore, have to take it into account. However, they can reckon with plurality either by adaptation or by aligning this plurality with themselves. Typically, they choose the second option, therefore their primary tactic is to turn multiplicity into a fake.

This is customary for the Russian propaganda discourse in Ukraine and Europe. They do not fault them for the lack of «authority,» hierarchy, a strong hand, an effective repressive apparatus or a single ideology. No, the charges are quite different: democratic – Ukraine and EU countries allegedly lack freedom, respect for minorities, justice and liberalism. Ukraine is bad not because it is not sufficiently «authoritarian» or not sufficiently, say, Orthodox, but because it is not «democratic» enough.

The identification of post-Maidan Ukrainian powers as a «junta» became a classic and well-known one. After 2014, politics is interpreted as a realization of a certain «scenario» from outside. They say undemocratic and intolerant «Nazis» control power in Ukraine. Poroshenko’s rule is described as a «dictatorship», and this claim is sounded by people close to Yanukovych’s regime. (For example, Oleksandr Klymenko, one of the most famous representatives of the «Yanukovych Family» and the «wallet» of his regime, talks about the «dictatorship».

It is a paradox, but in those days, in the 1920s-1930s, a lot of people thought in terms of a combination of «democratic» and «totalitarian» styles: if a nation has «internal unity,» «totality,» then its enemy is diversity and plurality, and not a «totalitarian» idea.

For more details see Artem Bakali’s Chapter 1. Made in Russia: Narratives and Methods of Russian Propaganda’s War on Ukraine

Klymenko: Poroshenko’s regime dives into dictatorship: http://ukraina.ru/sn/20170817/1019050759.html

434 It is a paradox, but in those days, in the 1920s-1930s, a lot of people thought in terms of a combination of «democratic» and «totalitarian» styles: if a nation has «internal unity,» «totality,» then its enemy is diversity and plurality, and not a «totalitarian» idea. For more details see Artem Bakali’s Chapter 1. Made in Russia: Narratives and Methods of Russian Propaganda’s War on Ukraine

Now he is presenting himself on the part of (fake) «civil society». The purpose of all these images is to emphasize the «undemocratic» opponent (or enemy) in order to convince everybody that Russian authoritarianism is, in fact, not authoritarianism at all. Raising the issue of the democratic legitimacy of Western countries, the Kremlin’s ideology is attempting to distract the most common argument from itself and, at the same time, to hit right into the heart of the opponent’s identity. You criticize us for lack of democracy – but look at yourself, you are not better, you are even worse. The thesis of the democratic illegitimacy of power is a constant refrain regarding post-Maidan Ukraine, but it is also directed against the EU itself. The.tagName of «certain regions» of the Donbas would be impossible without proper «heating up» from outside. That is, without the Russian vector really genuine democratic uplift, and «organic» self-creation. Names created an illusion of «movement from below», a bodies of the so-called «DNR»). Their armed forces were «People's Governors» from the «republics» formed through «popular referendums». Their leaders call themselves «People's Governors» from the «DNR/LNR». For example, it is notable how Russian media operating in Ukraine pick up the concept of hybridity and apply it to Ukraine itself. Hybridism is a concept that Ukrainian and Western commentators have used to describe Russian aggression since 2014. The concept means that Russian aggression is not a classic war but a mixture of military, information, energy, diplomatic, and economic actions. However, to depreciate this concept, Russian propaganda «returns» it to the critics: look at yourself – you are the hybrid ones. The website ukraine.ru, funded by Russia and designed to bring Russian official information sources to the Ukrainian audience, frequently uses this concept in reference to «Ukrainian hybridization» and «hybrid junta».

Separatist entities identify themselves as «national republics» formed through «popular referendums.» Their leaders call themselves «People’s Governors» from the very start (Pavel Gubarev was «People’s Governor of Donetsk region» in 2014; today he remains within the bodies of the so-called «DNR»). Their armed forces were called «self-defense» and «people’s militia». All these names created an illusion of «movement from below», a genuine democratic uplift, and «organic» self-creation. However, despite the fact that the Russian vector really received support from the local population, the separatism of «certain regions» of the Donbas would be impossible without proper «heating up» from outside. That is, without the massive activity of Russian organizations in Donbas in the 1990s-2000s and «fierce» heating up in the spring and summer of 2014.

The reality on the ground, however, is completely contrary to the «democratic» discourse. Take freedom of speech: the media discourse in the so-called «DNR/LNR» is definitely authoritarian (according to studies, over 82% of media messages are complimentary towards the authorities of the separatist «republics», 18% are neutral, and there are almost no critical reports; the front pages of printed materials are often published with portraits of local leaders). The case of the so-called «DNR/LNR» is particularly crucial because it is the most «raw» and «expert» (for it was created at «local» level). However, it is an illustrative example of the game between «democratic» rhetoric and de facto authoritarian reality. These quasi-states are «people’s» – but actually, people have no voice there. «Democratic» – but the media only praise the authorities. The «militia» maintains defense, but the army of a neighboring state plays a critical role.

Russia criticizes the weaknesses of Ukrainian democracy through a similar approach. Russian propaganda blames Ukraine for the lack of freedom of speech – e.g. because of the ban on Russian social networks or the searches of the Vesti publishing house. However, Russia is primarily worried about manifestly pro-Russian media or media with Russian capital, represented as «independent» media – even «the only» independent media in Ukraine; since only those media outlets which are utterly dependent on Russia itself can be «independent».

When the pro-Russian columnist and journalist Oles Buzyna was killed in Kyiv in 2015, Dmitry Kiselyov, perhaps the main Russian propagandist, called him «the greatest Ukrainian of his generation.» However, Buzyna’s «greatness» for Russian propaganda was only in his denial of the legitimacy of Ukrainian identity. He was known for his self-stylization to the white officers of the Russian Empire – the same as Girkin, the main leader of acts of sabotage in spring 2014, which led to the war. The major volte-face of Russian propaganda is as follows: the «greatest» Ukrainian can only be a person who puts Ukraine in doubt, who wants to erase Ukraine as a failed state. The greatest «nation» are only those who want to sacrifice themselves for the empire.

In Russia, the values of «freedom of speech» apparently do not apply to Ukraine. So as to divert suspicions of «authoritarianism,» they imitate and theatricalize. There is no freedom of speech – instead, there is a bad theater, where freedom of speech is «played.» In addition, they play according to a well thought-out scenario, where one point of view is by necessity presented as a true one and the opposite one – as false – with the obligatory tagging.

Talk shows with «Ukrainian» speakers – or guided ones (they are not well known in Ukraine – though in Russia they are presented as famous bloggers) are top-rated on Russian television, or from the circle of Yanukovych’s former «elite:» politicians, «political scientists», experts, etc. The mission of the Ukrainian guest is to be an object of public condemnation and mockery.

For example, Dmytro Suvorov, «Ukrainian political scientist» (in Ukraine he is not very famous, although he is a frequent guest on Russian television) was a guest recently on the Pust’ govoryat («Let them talk») talk show on Russia’s central Channel One.

See Chapter 1. See Chapter 2 and 3 by Tetyana Matychak. Octopus Tentacles: The Structure of the Kremlin’s Propaganda Influence on Ukrainian Information Space and «David against Goliath: how Ukraine resists the Kremlin’s information attack»

See Chapter 1.
During the live program, he expressed an explicitly provocative remark (it is hard to imagine that the editors of the channel did not sanction it), after which he was thrown off the show with screams of «get out of here.» And he left the studio quite obediently. 445

Here are other examples: the presenter on an official Russian channel is never an impartial moderator. He actively helps one of the sides, and invited «Ukrainian» guests are ridiculed no matter what they are talking about. 446 This is like a media «rethinking» of the Soviet court system, in which the judge, and sometimes even the lawyer, were actively assisting the prosecutor.

In other words, Russia likes to play democracy for the purpose of its denial – or, using the words of French philosopher Marcel Gauchet, to use «democracy against itself.» For this purpose, they use not only fake talk shows, fake institutions or fake «people's republics» but also fake «civil society.»

In this book, we write in the main about one of the techniques of current Russian propaganda: the «shop floor initiative» and many letters in support of Russia and the Russian vector. (For example, «letters from trade unions demanding Ukraine return to Russian markets» – which were closed by Russia itself.) At some point, those Ukrainian media outlets that were under the influence of Moscow began to actively publicize these letters.

Similarly, the technique of fake «public organizations» was actively used. They were preparing the ground for the coming of Russian authorities in 1990-2000. Russian soft power has always been in preparation for hard power.

This is how the logic of new «floating» authoritarianism, or a flexible oligarchy, works: if we are doomed to live with elements of democratic institutions, it is necessary to use these institutions for their own benefit and give «democratic legitimacy» to something that by its nature is not democracy at all. Fake democracy serves, therefore, as an instrument of the enemies of democracy, a virus, and simulacrum, which is intended to discredit and destroy democracy within itself.

Cynical mind: how ideologies change their masks

The use of democracy against itself and the use of the value of freedom of speech against itself are interesting examples of Russian doublespeak. Because, on the one hand, Russian propaganda says that in Ukraine and Europe dissidence and freedom of speech are suppressed. On the other hand, Western democracy is doomed to collapse, freedom of speech «went too far» because it ignores the traditional and religious values that are the basis of identity. On the one hand, there is a crackdown on «dissent» in Ukraine and Europe but, on the other hand, dissidence is evil. Russian propaganda often uses values like cards in a poker game: when they need liberals, they use liberals; when they need traditionalists, they use them. For the Kremlin's propaganda, there is nothing dissonant in this contradiction between values: suspiscious of «formal» logic with its demand for the identity of concepts, Russian propaganda believes that one concept can be easily changed for another.

There are also similar accusations of corruption, which spreads, with regard to Ukraine. This accusation is fair (Ukraine has still not made serious progress in the fight against corruption), but it is important from where this criticism comes. Russian propaganda often draws attention to Ukraine's low position in world corruption rankings. However, the problem is that Russia's rating is by no means better, so the «point of criticism» is entirely inappropriate here. 448 Russia often criticizes Ukrainian reforms, their halts or delays, from a perspective of an «ideal point» that can coincide with the opinion of Western democracies. The problem is that in Russia itself, the situation with reforms is even worse; and the current Russian regime is ridiculing Ukrainian pro-Western reforms no less than their own failure.

In Ukraine, Russian or pro-Russian propaganda murmurs that there are no better or worse standards of the organization of social or political life – there are only pragmatic interests. And that the current reforms in Ukraine allegedly serve someone's practical interests. For example, anti-corruption activists and anti-corruption institutions, whose «financial sources are well known,» are implementing not so much the desire to clear society of corruption, but their trivial struggle for power. 449 That is how the idea of anti-corruption reform – and any reform at all – is depreciated. Born in the West (in the era of the neo-Marxist «critical theory» of the 1950s), the idea that somebody's «interests» and ideology may stand behind «universal» values is now actively disseminated in the post-Soviet area. Being in love with great ideas, it became fruitful ground for the «discourse of suspicion.» The Western art of suspicion is used against the West itself and raised to the extreme: there are no «universal» values at all, there is a cynical reasoning behind every ideal and, therefore, a model for transforming society into a more just and more humane one cannot exist.

Using the term of Peter Sloterdijk, if the Western intellectual thought long ago that he understood the problem of «cynical reason,» then modern Russian ideology takes a real enjoyment in it. Only the «cynical reason» allows the ridiculing of something that would have to limit human and national selfishness.

In general, it is not important for Russian propaganda what ideology lies at the root of the Russian project, but how an ideology can be used for its pragmatic goals. In modern Russia, as in the entire post-Soviet area in general, including Ukraine, ideologies are changeable, mutative and gaseous. They are quickly adapted to new realities; they can be rapidly «tooled for» what they need at this particular moment. The Kremlin uses the rotation of ideologies: postmodernism for youth, left-liberal ideas for the critical Western public, right and conservative ideas for a large number of Russian citizens. Ideologies are subject to rotation depending on the tactics, just as the football coach uses rotation of the team during matches. There is no single idea that is irreplaceable; and there is an entire set of «alternative ideas,» that can be «released on the field» when the original ideas do not work.

The set of this rotation often includes values that Russia interprets as the values of their enemy, namely «Western civilization.» However, they are directed against the enemy itself, proving that the opponent does not meet his own values. Thus, it achieves a simple goal: to discredit the idea on which the imaginary enemy builds its society, and the desire to win over its most avant-garde social groups.

445 See Chapter 1
446 See this show as an example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8bKcAvL_Ccs
447 See Chapter 2
448 Message by Vyacheslav Pikhovshek on Newsone – a TV channel with non-transparent funding, which often broadcasts messages beneficial to Russian propaganda. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_bC3T46kWo (8-9 min)
War is peace: how Russia attacks through reconciliation

Democracy is used to mask authoritarianism, and «freedom of speech» to mask the «general party line.» The peace is, accordingly, used to hide the war – everything is Orwellian, nothing more.

«War is peace» – Orwellian, and Russia is the most skillful in waging war when it shows itself as a peacemaker.

In this book, we have analyzed the «peacemaker’s» narrative, which seeks to solve the problem of the Ukrainian «civil war,» allocating responsibility to Kyiv that «does not comply with the Minsk Agreements» and continues to «endlessly fuel the war.»

The fault lies with the victim; its defense is interpreted as «war fueling,» and external aggression as a craving for peace.

This topic has moved today into the global context: Russia offers its «services» as a peacekeeper not only to Ukraine but also to Syria or North Korea.

However, the Ukrainian – and post-Soviet – experience has shown that these peacekeeping ambitions cannot be trusted. «Peacemaking» for Russia has everywhere been only a mask for military expansion.

The narrative of the Second World War can be recalled, when liberation from Nazism was accompanied by atrocities of a new occupation, which were justified by the rhetoric of «liberation.» We can recall the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR in December 1979, when official news channels reported that Soviet troops were brought in «at the request» of the Afghan Government. One may recall the destabilization in Georgia, where Russian «peacekeeping troops» were brought into South Ossetia in 1992, and since 1994, «peacekeepers» – mostly Russians – have implemented their actions to resolve the «Georgian-Abkhaz conflict.» Russia took advantage of South Ossetian forces in 2008: when one of the parties to the conflict is a «peacemaker,» the situation can be easily turned for its own benefit. A reminder of Moldova, where the 14th Russian Army, again, positioned itself as a «peacemaker.»

The tactic of «war through peacekeeping» is very successful in Donbas. Russia launches a war «by proxy,» and then brings in «humanitarian convoys,» which they do not permit to be inspected (perhaps they had something to hide). It then initiates the «Minsk Agreements,» which is another episode of «forced peace» under Russian conditions (the «return» of Donbas to Ukraine as a «Trojan horse,» which is completely controlled by Russia but votes in Ukrainian elections). Furthermore, it plays the game of «UN peacekeepers» only on the demarcation line (de facto legitimizing the separatists controlled by Russia but votes in Ukrainian elections). «Peacekeepers» again, positioned itself as a «peacemaker.»

The essence of this discourse is reduced to a simple message: the forms of society that oppose Russia are doomed to destruction and are experiencing their final hours. What exactly will lead them to these «final hours»? Will it be the internal «contradictions» of the Russian system or «active actions» by Russia itself? The options may vary.

Ukraine, for example, is depicted as a failed state: the country is about to collapse; the idea of creating a Ukrainian political culture is «absolutely utopian;» Ukraine is «absolutely dependent» on both the West and Russia. Ukraine is also portrayed as a country on the brink of economic collapse – with authorities who «strip off the last layer of skin,» 

RIA Novosti, an official Russian news agency, is convinced that Ukraine is in its «last autumn;» the authors assure that if you do not see the imminence of this «apocalypse,» you are either blind, or you live in «a parallel universe» or are under the influence of the «evaporation of toadstools.» As for Ukraine, the metaphor «Ruins» is used actively (in Russian and Ukrainian, from these two words, one can even create a rhyme that obviously inspires Russian political marketers).

Ukraine's desire to protect itself from Russian aggression and to seek external support is interpreted as an act of self-destruction. Russian propaganda sees the presence of US and NATO troops at the Independence Day Parade as an example of Ukraine's «full dependence.» Soldiers of partner countries are called «a parade of occupation troops»; and the US is allegedly preparing for the inevitable «partition of Ukraine.»

Ukraine – and Eastern Europe in general – is in for new chaos, emptiness, a desert («wasteland»). They will be «dead lands» between two centers of civilization: Western and Russian.

In this situation, so new Russian propagandists say, Russia does not strive to destroy Ukraine, but merely «rescues it from suicide.» However, while until now Russia was «kind» (during the annexation of Crimea, war on Donbas, war in Georgia, actions by the Russian Army in Moldova, Soviet repression, and during the Gulg – is what the creators of these messages probably mean), then from now on it will not be like that – and Russia's neighbors are in for a «glorious future.»

What is important here is the diametric difference between the narratives of Europeans and Russians about their neighbors: the EU is trying to convince neighbors that it would be better with them (perhaps it is the European Neighborhood Policy – but at least the positive aspirations are obvious). Meanwhile, Russia tries to convince neighbors that things will get worse without Russia – apparently even worse than with it.

Iskander Khisamov, editor-in-chief of ukraina.ru, which is sponsored by Russia, goes even further: he takes the premonition of Ukraine's collapse for granted and, at the same time, he warns against dealing with Ukraine too lightly. He says Ukraine is already a threat to Russia. This is how Protess of the propaganda discourse transforms – the victim quickly turns into an aggressor; the occupation is

See Chapter 1.
See Chapter 1.

Apocalyptics: how everything around is getting closer to its «final hours.»

We have talked about various tactics of masking, hybridization, «dialectization»: authoritarianism is masked as democracy, war as peace, one ideology as another, and so on.

However, there is an important invariant that supports and nourishes this rotation of ideologies. It is the Apocalyptic Discourse.

The tax on poverty: authorities are «stripping off the last» layer of skin from Ukrainians: http://ukraina.ru/exclusive/20170822/1019050759.html

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explained by the need for «self-defense.» The silent conclusion from Khismatov’s thesis is that Russia must treat present-day Ukraine with even greater aggression. Another «official» commentator urges recognition that Kyiv «declared war against Russia a long time ago» (sic!), therefore, «It should be punished – adequately, rigorously, and effectively.»

This policy of disaster and apocalyptics of Russian discourse towards Ukraine translates into the form of a «third Maidan.» Here we also see the duality of propaganda consciousness: the Kremlin’s official line interpreted Maidan of 2013-2014, as well as the Orange Revolution of 2003-2004, in a clearly negative way, often on the edge of hysteria and despair. Maidan was a symbol of the «junta,» and the term «junta» was «whispering about it in the kitchens.» Today, however, the Russian information machine uses the metaphor of Maidan for opposing purposes: Maidan is welcomed, it is actively «predicted,» and it is seen as inevitable – an example of the «last autumn.» The «taste» of the third Maidan is «in the air,» «they are shouting about it from newspaper pages, TV screens,» people are «whispering about it in the kitchens.»

Here we see a serious substitution of notions: pro-Western democracy is bad in itself, but when it serves the interests of Russia, it is good. The Maidan which brought the «junta» into power is bad and illegitimate but the alleged «third Maidan» that will overthrow the «junta,» would be positive and correct.

Characteristically, Maidan is used as a metaphor to denote any protest that takes place in Ukraine. This is an interesting hyperbole because a protest is the symptom of a healthy democracy. Those societies where no protests occur are sick. Instead, for Russia, any rally contains an apocalyptic threat. It will allegedly turn into a «new Maidan» that will destroy Ukraine.

That is why Russian information tools use every opportunity to prevent the threat of rebellion – even when it is necessary to resort to distortions. A recent example: information banners on pro-Russian Ukrainian websites stating that «Kyiv is in for an autumn rebellion.» The message of this banner is simple – in autumn there will be a sociopolitical collapse in Ukraine. However, the banner leads to the text «Tuka: Kyiv is in for an autumn rebellion,» where Heorhiy Tuka, both a former volunteer and governor of Luhansk Region, warns about fake (not real) protests. Instead, for Russia, any rally contains an apocalyptic threat. It will allegedly turn into a «new Maidan» that will destroy Ukraine.

«Apocalyptic» thinking is characteristic for Russian intellectual culture – since the nineteenth century, from Chaadaev and Dostoyevsky to Solovyov and Berdyaev. Russian communism was largely a projection of Orthodox apocalypticism on Marxist concepts. When reading Lenin or Stalin, one can get this feeling: the class struggle is moving into its «final phase» and, therefore, it requires rapid, cruel and impatient actions. The impatient expectation of the «end of the story,» its imminence, and the desperate desire to get rid of those who «detain» this imminence. The process seems to be switching today from Stalin’s times to Putin’s times – in a more relaxed and glamorous form, but with no less fascination with the «last days.»

The Apocalyptic Discourse involves the striving of Russian propaganda to diminish the success of its opponents. The discourse «it is bad anyway» and «everyone is bad anyway» does not permit the selecting and seeing of what is negative, and what is positive. Let us take the visa-free regime with the EU, which Ukraine received recently. One of Russia’s TV channel, for example, informed that it «can be canceled at any moment.» Another one focused on problems with crossing the border or scuffles on it. The editor of ukraina.ru is trying to reduce everything to simple triggers: the topic of the «visa-free regime» comes along with homosexuality: «gays and visa waiver» is «a sexual blind corner of the Ukrainian revolution.» RIA Novosti, the official Russian «news agency,» revealed a secret: «after September 11, many citizens will be surprised to learn that they are denied entry to the EU.» September 11 has come and gone, but nothing has changed with Ukrainian «visa-free travel.» However, it did not stop Russian propaganda: it will be looking for other «dates of the end of the world.» In other words, if Russian propaganda actively exploits the problems of Ukraine or Europe, then it actively denies the successes of its opponents.

Deconstruction of successes here is not an instrument of critical re-evaluation or an attempt to inject doubt into mythologized reality; on the contrary, it is a new religion of cynicism. Its purpose is not as critical as it is destructive – not to stimulate the search for a solution to a problem but to persuade the viewer – even the successes out there, abroad, will not save opponents from the indisputable apocalypse.

How exactly does Russian propaganda see the possibility of «the end» of Ukraine? Very often through the prism of the idea of «the clash of civilizations.» In fact: current Russian propaganda often sees «Russianness» and the «Russian world» not as a nation, but as a separate civilization. An important narrative about the «clash of civilizations,» which must definitely pass through the territory of Ukraine, is related to this. According to one Russian resource, the construction of a «new and multipolar world» involves «defining clear borders» between the new geopolitical players – civilizations. One of such borders passes «across the Dnipro or even more to the West.»

The reflection on the plurality of civilizations is not a Russian invention. It is the invention of those whom Russia considers its enemies – «Western civilization.» The themes of the «plurality of civilization» were born in European romanticism (primarily German – Herder, and French – Ballanche) at the beginning of the nineteenth century and was revived closer to the end of the century and early twentieth century by the authors of the various «philosophies of history», from Toynbee to Spengler. Simultaneously, it penetrates Russia – Lev Gumilyov or Nikolay Danilevsky; and subsequently, it gets to the Russian Eurasians of the 1920s (Prince Trubetskoy, Suvchinsky, Savitsky, early Florovsky and others). After the collapse of the USSR, it becomes crucial for Russian neo-Eurasians, whose ideologist, Aleksandr Dugin, is a well-known theoretician of the «Russian Spring» and of the current Russian expansion into Ukraine.
In addition, there is another parallel influence (and it is Western as well) – the famous book «Clash of Civilizations» by Samuel Huntington. It also says that the «civilizational split» passes through the territory of Ukraine, more in Western Ukraine than in Central Ukraine. For many modern Russian theorists, Huntington’s text was not a description of reality but a call for action: if Ukraine is really «divided» between civilizations, we must definitely grab «our» piece of civilization. «Krymnash» (Crimea is ours), «Donbassnash» (Donbas is ours) cannot be understood without this ulterior motive: political boundaries between states are fictional; therefore, they can be violated; just borders between «civilizations» are «true».

However, Huntington’s forecasts for Ukraine proved to be wrong. He tirelessly denied the possibility of a war between Russia and Ukraine (they allegedly belong to one «civilization» and, therefore, war between them is impossible) – and he was wrong. Serious splits may indeed cause wars in the twenty-first century, though they are related not to static «civilizations,» but more to dynamic projects of modernization and de-modernization – the movement towards greater freedom and equality or reverse motion towards less freedom and equality. The current war in Donbas is not a war between ancient and immovable «civilizations.» It is rather a war between Western civilization and what the Ukrainian-Georgian philosopher Vakhtang Kebuladze calls «the shadow of civilization» – the simulation of Western civilization and simultaneous opposition to Western culture, which modern Russia often is.

**Subhumans are everywhere: how to dehumanize the enemy so it would be easier to hate him**

One of the most interesting and, at the same time, most shocking themes of Russian propaganda is not only the diverting of the narrative in the direction of fiction but also rigid dehumanization of the enemy.

In our study, we have shown the most famous and the most striking examples: the story of a «crucified boy» in Slovyansk; the Ukrainian authorities allegedly promise every soldier «a piece of land and two slaves;» about a «raped epileptic pensioner;» about «concentration camps for Russian speakers;» about «the extermination of bullfines» (because they have the same colors as the Russian flag), and so on.

All these examples impress with their absurdity and, at the same time, with the potential of dehumanization that they provide. However, dehumanization and fantasy, oddly enough, do not reduce but increase the «truthfulness» of a story for a person who is ready to perceive it. People believe in such propaganda because they want to believe in terrible, inhuman, and eerie things. After all, some people can continue to believe in themselves, just feeling that others are worse than they are. Only having a picture of absolute evil in front of their eyes, do people think that their lives – sometimes good, sometimes bad – can have justification.

Today, for example, the active use by Russian propaganda of a term like «genocide» is related with such dehumanization. The term, which has very serious weight and serious consequences is very «quick to make» for Russian propaganda. Russian propaganda accuses any action by the Ukrainian authorities of being «genocide», which one way or another is connected with the theme of identity – either the «genocide of Russian speakers,» or the «language genocide,» or any other. 472

The concept of «genocide» in Russian propaganda has lost its meaning – but not its effectiveness. Andrey Karaulov, a well-known journalist and laureate of prestigious Russian television awards, recently published a book called «The Genocide of Russians in Ukraine. What the West is silent about.» 473 Crimea’s annexation was justified precisely by the future «genocide» at the hands of mythical Ukrainian nationalists, and official Russia justified its military presence in Donbas precisely by the need to counteract the «genocide of the Russian-speaking population.» The Russkaya Vesna («Russian Spring») site (rusvesna.su) has a special tag, «Genocide of the Russian-speaking population»; its themes are the intentional destruction of Donbas by Ukraine. Russian media outlets call current European reforms «social genocide.» 475

The main thing in demonization is the mixture of fantasy and dehumanization: it is necessary to create the image of the most terrible enemy, who commits dishonest and terrible acts – so that he can be denied the last vestiges of humanity.

Just like Stalinist propaganda of the 1930s, Russian propaganda is now creating the image of an enemy who seeks evil for the sake of evil and, therefore, people believe in the most fantastic stories.

**Be afraid of us: how Russia threatens to exterminate**

The image of absolute evil causes the only reaction, the desire for ruthlessness in response. If your opponent is dehumanized, you can do with him whatever you want. We all remember the crimes of Nazism, but we often forget how Nazism developed an image of the Jewish enemy – as an image of a race that is ruthless to all living things (e.g. practicing «ritualistic killing») and, therefore, deserves ruthlessness in response. If, however, this enemy is already on the verge of «apocalypse,» then he only needs to be helped a little. That is why another argument actively reinforces the thesis of the apocalypse’s proximity – that Russia itself is capable of causing this apocalypse.

During Dmitry Kiselyov’s famous broadcast he talked about the «Perimeter» – or «Dead Hand» automated nuclear response system, which is capable of turning America into «radioactive ash.» 476

However, few people notice that this theme and this thesis were not singular: the instruments of Russian propaganda continue to push the idea. Sputnik wrote about this system recently, calling it «a doomsday machine.» 477 This material is an adaptation of a report by RIA Novosti, where the Russian nuclear system is referred to as the machine of «Guaranteed retaliatory Armageddon.» 478

Examples of intimidation in which Russia indirectly threatens Western countries and, at the same time, stimulates aggressive «patriotism» within its society, are not isolated instances. In February 2015, St. Petersburg’s Channel 5 broadcast a report that was a response to the Russian Federation, Nikolay Patrushev – http://russianwriters.org/news/1495114462

These «reforms» are in fact social genocide, and the impact will step up the decline of the hyrnia, connected with the drain of gold reserves, and growth of inflation. RIA Novosti Ukraine: http://rian.com.ua/country/201708211056654986-russia-source=smi2

472 See Chapter 1.
475 These «reforms» are in fact social genocide, and the impact will step up the decline of the hyrnia, connected with the drain of gold reserves, and growth of inflation. RIA Novosti Ukraine: http://rian.com.ua/country/201708211056654986-russia-source=smi2
476 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TA9mVLomYo8
refusal by Western leaders to attend a Victory Day Parade on May 9 in Moscow. The leitmotif of the report is as follows – if you are not coming to us, we will come to you with tanks and weapons. Warsaw is 300 kilometers away, so, they say, the T-90 tank will reach the Polish capital «in less than a day.» 1,800 kilometers to Berlin «for the modern army – is no distance at all,» Russian «journalists» continue, illustrating their theses by video graphics with arrows, to show how quickly the Russian Army will reach the German capital. Furthermore, against the background of residential buildings (apparently the territory of former East Germany, former «military towns» of the Red Army), we see the lowering of the German flag and hoisting of the Russian flag. As if Russia has seized power in Germany, calmly and without resistance. Russian soldiers can arrive by foot to the nearest capitals, cities like Prague, Vilnius, Riga or Tallinn, as it was 70 years ago. The story ends with the threat of a nuclear strike: Russia’s Western partners will not see «Iskander» and «Satan» because they can be «transported outside of Russia only by air.»

On the Internet there are aggressive and intimidating viral videos, whose message is simple: you should be afraid of Russia. «Be afraid of Russians,» says one of them; «They are Russians. Do not mess with them,» says another; «Russians. Why we won’t defeat them,» joins in the third one, and so on, ad infinitum. In social networks there are also widespread memes about Russian missiles destroying Western cities, particularly London, and the capital of the Russian oligarchy.

All this creates the lingering impression that Russian propaganda is aimed at preparing for a major war – both its own population and potential enemy states. According to the logic of «zoopolitics,» the main aspiration is not to win more than your competitor but to lose less than your enemy and, at the same time, be ready for losses, deaths, destruction, at the hands of the «apocalypse.»

**Instead of conclusions: a killer comedian**

Peter Pomerantsev has come up with a brilliant diagnosis for Russian propaganda: «nothing is true, and everything is possible.» It is possible to agree with Peter in many respects: messages, ideas, statements, tactics, extremes – everything in today’s Russian discourse is either consolidating, or dissolving into the air, becoming gaseous and elusive, baffling, denting the foundation, leaving in doubt, deceiving, and then it provides an opposite idea, etc., indefinitely.

In this sense, Russian propaganda is genuinely «postmodern» – in that sense when the concept of «postmodern» fell to Russian soil in the 1990s: an era where there was no longer any certainty, but where everything was possible.

However, the postmodernism – post-truth – of Russian propaganda is only an instrument, but not the essence. This is its aesthetic side, but not political side; this is its form, but not the content. This is the tactic of misleading, obscuring, and confusing – but there is a goal behind all of this, and it is much less playful. This goal is to win the war.

Today’s Russia reminds us of the Joker from the famous Batman movies: outwardly a comedian who plays and juggles, but inside he is a killer.

We can argue whether this new «fog» tactic is a testimony to the «post-truth» era, or rather whether it is a continuation of already known and repeatedly tested narratives. After all, the Russian «post-truth» has long roots. It did not come unexpectedly. The point of its creation is a game with the truth that was typical of the Soviet era. Andrey Vyshinsky, Attorney General of the USSR and Stalin’s «right hand» during the Great Terror, declared in his book on the theory of punishment in the Soviet system: the basis of trials is not the «Procrustean bed of formal logic, which is locked in the ‘yes – yes, no – no’ range of judgments, but ‘really scientific method’ – that is ‘Marxist dialectics.’» This meant one thing: that white could turn into black, black into white – because no formal logic operates, because nothing preserves its identity, because truth can be regarded as a lie and a lie as truth – after all, this is «dialectics.» It was the result of the «post-truth» that flourished in the USSR in the 1930s: its readiness to use fakes, fabricated stories, myths, fantasies not only for information propaganda but even for court decisions, particularly decisions on death sentences. According to Vyshinsky, all these decisions are based on the «dialectic combination of the principle of suppression and coercion with the principle of persuasion and re-education.»

Ukraine was the subject of «post-truth» work long before the present time. The court trials involving the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the late 1920s and early 1930s were mostly fictitious. The Holodomor that took the lives of about 5 million people was concealed, as if it had never happened. The West began to detect crimes of Stalinism together with its lies rather late on, and only with the «show trials» of 1936-1937. However, then it was already late: Western commentators were shocked by the whimsicality of the accusations, but this only indicated that Stalin’s regime was no longer afraid of being blamed for lies. It was modern German historian Karl Schlögel who noted that in show trials «the meaning of the trial was not to seek evidence, but to tell a fantastic story that would cause fear and confusion.»

One of the main Ukrainian lessons learned from the confrontation with Russian propaganda is the following: it is not something accidental; it has deep roots and broad traditions. These roots lie in the fact that Russia presents itself in the world as a country that is continually making war, and not building peace. A country that is primarily focused on destruction, not on creation. These roots reach at least the Soviet era, with its complete dissolution of respect for empirical truth in the ideas of «dialectics» and the «higher» truth of history. Perhaps these roots go even further, right into the depths of the Russian Empire.

When Ukrainians observed Russian aggression in Georgia in 2008, they knew that Ukraine would be next, so they perceived the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas as a repetition of what has already happened before. When Russian propaganda began to attack American Democrats, the German police, or Macron’s campaign in France, Ukrainians were among the few who were not surprised: we saw a repetition of previous events.

If the same techniques have been repeated through the decades, if they have not disappeared, if they have overcome the limits of major political projects like the Russian Empire or the USSR, then they are able to live longer than we believe. That is, they are much more consistent than meets the eye.

Therefore, protection from them should be much more systematic and resolute than is sometimes desirable.
What is the best way to fight propaganda?

Recommendations based on Ukrainian experience, General Recommendations
General recommendations (for the international community and Ukraine)

- To recognize that propaganda and disinformation are a threat to both national and civil security. To consider them not only through the prism of the value of freedom but also through the prism of the value of security.
- To hold a discussion in society, among stakeholders: how to respond to security threats without departing from the principles of freedom of speech? Can those who threaten this freedom enjoy it? Can the values of democracy be applied to those who threaten democracy? Can the principles of media freedom be applied to those who are not media but actually an instrument of another state in its information and psychological warfare?
- To contribute to the self-organization of journalists around the world (through networking meetings, joint initiatives, etc.) in order to discuss journalistic standards in the fight against disinformation and propaganda. Development of an informal «professional code» for journalists involving representatives of top publications in Europe and America.
- To create a propaganda dissemination map that would reflect the trajectory of the messages and themes, the influence of channels and speakers. To develop such maps for each country; identify the leading producers of propaganda in the country and their channels of influence. To publish information on key institutions and individuals who collaborate with Russian media outlets that disseminate Russian propaganda abroad (RT, Sputnik, etc.).
- To compile lists and anti-ratings of media outlets that were caught creating or spreading propaganda/ misinformation. To entrust it to international organizations with a strong reputation (Freedom House, or international journalists' associations) in cooperation with the best national media organizations.
- To revive the popularity of research focused on Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, especially in Western countries. To provide financial support to researchers studying the countries of Eastern Europe/Caucasus, conducting empirical research in this region. To facilitate the creation of a new generation of researchers focusing on Eastern European/ Caucasus countries, in order to have a different perspective on the countries of the region – and not from Russia's position.
- To create a database of experts who are already actively working on topics of disinformation, security research, Russia and Eastern Europe. To broadcast this database among the editors of key European media outlets (with the permission of experts). To base it on already existing informal networks (such as the Freedom Wins group on Facebook).
- To provide more support to investigative journalism aimed at researching the corrupt and anti-democratic (in particular Russian) lobby in Europe. To support investigative projects that reveal the links between propaganda and corruption.
- To support documentary films that focus on countries/topics regarding which Russian propaganda is particularly active (Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Western Europe and the USA – especially during pre-election/election periods). To support documentary films for leading TV channels in Western Europe and America about life in less known regions/ countries where Russian propaganda is concentrated (Eastern Europe, Caucasus, etc.).
- To develop comprehensive training courses for young people and vulnerable groups – on effective use of the Internet and social media, on digital security, privacy, counteracting bullying and understanding the role of technology in human life.
- To directly counteract the activity of bots, trolls, fake accounts through self-organization of users and digital diplomacy institutes (to direct national ambassadors to technology companies).
- To develop partnerships between civil society and large technology companies (Facebook, Twitter, Google) during crisis situations (how to ensure users' rights during conflicts, how to ensure user safety, and to avoid the blocking of users through third-party manipulative complaints).
- To build dialogue between civil society and Governments with large technology companies which have seized the technological power of the Internet as a public space. To promote the transparent functioning of these companies as a socially responsible business.
- To bear in mind that in social networks users, first and foremost, trust other people, not the organizations. To support independent journalists with a good reputation who are already thought leaders – or have powerful audiences and can become opinion leaders later on. To support them so they are able to work continuously, providing objective analysis and data examination.
- To search for new formats of fact-based journalism. These may be new explanatory genres («explainers») such as «10 things you need to know about ...» and other formats of objective but attractively presented information (it is important to respond to an audiences request that requires a quick explanation as well as a brief explanation).
- To search for alternative approaches to information, such as infotainment. To discredit fake news and disinformation through emotionally appealing forms, such as irony. To keep in mind that propaganda works through emotions and, therefore, fact-oriented objective journalism can seek ways to report objective information through emotions – laughter, intimate human stories, memes, etc. There is an interesting Ukrainian example: a popular show by Michael Shchur can be seen as a response to Russian propaganda methods (primarily comic infotainment), although at the same time he stays within the limits of critical thinking. There are similar examples of counteraction of Russian propaganda in France, Germany and other countries where propaganda was disproved in late night shows.
- To develop public initiatives in the fight against propaganda. In Ukraine, public initiatives are on the cutting edge of this fight and are often more effective than state-owned mechanisms. Initiatives like StopFake, InformNapalm, Hromadske TV, Euromaidan Press, Ukraine Crisis Media Center, UkraineWorld, Detector Media are often more professional, flexible and faster than state-run projects. Many of them were created as volunteer initiatives. An important role is also played by independent journalists, who may have as much influence as big ideological machines.

To strengthen media literacy at all levels of society through educational activities and the creation of additional tools for checking information online.

To promote the transparent functioning of these companies as a socially responsible business.
To remember the new risks present in the modern world, which we discuss in this book – the problems of «fake democracy» and «fake civil society.» To apply due diligence practices to information projects, public initiatives, political projects, checking them for attempts to mitigate the key values of democracy and open society – in particular, trying to use these values to weaken them.

To establish media literacy courses at schools and universities.

To develop financial supervision of organizations/projects which were caught in the creation and dissemination of fake information or the promotion of a Russian narrative. To raise the issue of the origin of their financial resources. Financial and fiscal control can be the key to a civilized fight against the agents of propaganda – they often have non-transparent funding schemes or may be associated with Russian business interests.

To intensify the integration of the Ukrainian and world journalistic community. To conduct events like the Lviv Media Forum and Donbas Media Forum (have existed for several years); to create an Eastern European Media Forum on the basis of this model (possibly on the basis of the Eastern Partnership Media Conference, with a more rational budget and modest costs – but with more regular work and a more flexible agenda), to create international coalitions against disinformation.

To monitor social networks, expose hate speech accounts, and apply sanctions against them – right up to closing them. To penalize those who do not adhere to the rules of counteracting the language of hostility.

To remember that Russian propaganda works not only through fakes and disinformation, but also through a specific discourse with its sceptical and apocalyptic rhetoric. In response, it is necessary not only to disprove Russian narratives/fakes but also to form our own narrative, which will explain in an entertaining and unhashed manner, the values on which modern democratic societies are built. To combine critical thinking with the understanding of the dangers of the «cynical mind» and, therefore, look for «success stories» and «stories of strength» of European values and practices of life.

To scale up fact-checking and support the websites that provide it – so that ideally it would be easy to find information on the Internet for every significant fake to expose it through the use of search tools. To support projects focusing on fact-checking and detecting false information and disinformation that work across Europe/USA.

To analyze the main themes developed by the Russian media (often these are really problematic issues of Ukrainian, European and American societies) – and work with them, showing not only problems but also the ways of dealing with them. To remember that the information vacuum will always be filled by someone else.

To support the projects that monitor, analyze and disclose hate speech towards Europe, America, and democracy in general (for example, in Russia’s official or alternative media, but not limited to). To analyze and disclose information actions directed against democracy and democratic societies, which, in particular, spread rhetoric of destruction (for example, romanticizing war, aggression, nuclear strikes, etc.).

To support existing English-language and Russian-language communication channels – both in Eastern Europe/Caucasus and in the EU and America.

To support alternative communication ideas aimed at audiences, which do not trust mainstream media. To develop alternative communication tools (video games, mobile applications for media, YouTube channels with unorthodox approaches, ironic infotainment, directed against propaganda, etc.).

To translate and distribute the best content from countries particularly affected by Russian propaganda (Eastern Europe, Caucasus, etc.) and publish them in the top publications of Europe and America. To create a resource that would provide the free circulation of this information (without copyright), like Project Syndicate, by inviting European media outlets to use it.

To create a fund to finance journalistic materials from freelancers and independent journalists who will distribute their reports in collaboration with existing popular media platforms.

Recommendations for Ukraine

To more effectively coordinate the actions of key state institutions dealing with information security, information policy, strategic communications, etc. (that is, institutions like the Ministry of Information Policy, the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council, the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection of Ukraine, the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting, Public Television station, Committee on Freedom of Speech and Information Policy of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the press services of key ministries). To create a single Center for Strategic Communications that would, if possible, develop a one-voice policy or provide information exchange between government agencies, representatives of civil society and the media.

To hold regular meetings of this Center of Strategic Communications with representatives of civil society, the media (Ukrainian and foreign) and international organizations for feedback.

To improve the level of work for international audiences. To increase the level of professionalism of state channels in the dissemination of information to international audiences (UATV, Ukrinform), as well as to cooperate with public initiatives and the media with English-speaking services (Hromadske TV, UkraineWorld, Ukraine Crisis Media Center, Euromaidan Press, Kyiv Post, The Ukrainian Week, etc.) To provide the opportunity for grant support of outward communication efforts for public initiatives (through the Ukrainian Institute or other mechanisms).

To remember that sooner or later any lie will be revealed. Not to copy Russian approaches to propaganda and disinformation. To speak the truth and communicate openly – paying attention to the positive and negative aspects of various processes taking place in Ukraine.

To develop cultural diplomacy. To ensure the effective operation of the Book Institute and launch the Ukrainian Institute as soon as possible. To remove existing restrictions on holding cultural diplomacy campaigns abroad. To carry out regular movie screenings, creative events, meetings with Ukrainian intellectuals, journalists, activists, volunteers, artists, etc. in the key cities important for Ukrainian foreign policy.
Recommendations for the international community

- To expand and clarify the discourse on propaganda/disinformation/information warfare. To draw attention to the fact that the phenomenon of fake/simulation now relates not only to the news but also to other phenomena: fake civil society, fake opposition, fake freedom of speech, etc. To return to the agenda the opposition between what is «true» and «simulacrum,» which has been questioned in recent decades.
- To apply financial transparency and due diligence practices to those organizations/individuals/projects that use democracy against itself. To require them to be financially transparent and reveal their source of income.
- To carry out a financial audit of organizations that cooperate with Russian actors of information activities (TV channels, media, PR agencies, etc.).
- To monitor the media practices that relate to Russian propaganda policies in each country. To remember the practice of «placing» a message or speakers on top media through financial incentives or political influence, which are popular among Russian «political technologies» and actors of information influence. To impose sanctions against media that spread Russian propaganda/fake information, or which provide agents of propaganda influence with a platform, presenting them as independent journalists.
- Subject to the proving of ties between the entities of information influence and the Russian authorities or groups of influence on politics (for example, with President Putin’s inner circle, his business partners, etc.) to recognize them as instruments of Russian information policy – down to their being declared agents of a foreign state.
- To create a coordination center for NATO countries and the G7 to counter Russian propaganda. To find the principles of a common policy for all participating countries.
- To investigate the networks of influence of Russian (and not only) propaganda, in particular, the influence of Russian «soft power» (public organizations, media, cultural initiatives, etc.) in Europe and America. Ukrainian experience has shown that Russia actively expanded the influence of its soft power in Donbas before the war (pro-Russian public organizations, media, associations, books), but little attention was paid to this: the influence was too «soft» and imperceptible. However, that is what prepared the ground for military aggression.
- To apply an ironic approach to Russian propaganda. The Ukrainian lesson is that a weapon becomes less dangerous when it is neutralized through irony (for example, when Ukrainians ironically apply concepts like «Zhydobanderivtsi,» «junta,» «punishers,» «Right Sector» to themselves). Laughter is often the best way of neutralizing propaganda.
- To compare the messages of Russian propaganda with Russian realities. If Russia criticizes Western democracy for lack of democracy and values, it is worth analyzing what the situation is with democracy and values in Russia itself. To compare Russia’s
promises to the citizens of the territories that it has occupied (Crimea, Donbas, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, etc.), with the reality on the ground. To provide objective information on the socio-economic situation in the regions of Russia.

- To pay attention to people who create so-called «representative offices» of the «DNR» and «LNR» in Europe. To analyze the networks of these people and institutions that become broadcasters of propaganda and anti-Western rhetoric in Europe.
- To remember that Russia is extremely flexible (for example, in response to the ban on a certain TV channel in a particular country, it often establishes a new one – with similar messages and management). Therefore, it is also necessary to be flexible when responding to these flexible challenges.
- To draw attention to the fact that democratic countries in Europe and America are often the place of registration of channels of Russian propaganda. Thanks to their place of registration, they exercise the rights that provide them with democratic rules of the game, particularly the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. To develop an algorithm according to which such channels will be sanctioned as tools of information-psychological warfare.
- To recognize that the staff of Russian propaganda information resources (such as RT, Sputnik, Channel One, Russia, etc.) are not journalists. To not allow them to attend events for journalists (press conferences, etc.) and not give them the rights of journalists (accreditation, access to information, etc.).
- To monitor the vectors of support for certain political parties by the Russian media, especially prior to an election. Recent stories about support from Russian media outlets (and not only) of certain candidates in American, French, German and other elections are an important symptom.
- To impose legal responsibility for the spreading of fake information. To deprive persons and institutions involved in this dissemination of the right to be called journalists and media. To compile transparent ratings of disseminators of fake news. To monitor suspicious media outlets with regard to their compliance with journalistic standards and revoke licenses in case of gross violations.
- To apply sanctions against those who are actively involved in disinformation (travel ban, freezing of assets, etc.). Many Russian propagandists have so far remained beyond the reach of sanctions.
- To analyze the «entrails» of Russian propaganda through the support of empirical research on the work of Russian propaganda media outlets (in particular, through interviews with people who once worked there). To make this information public – to show how the Russian authorities and Russian intelligence agencies control this or that «media».
- To create an international pool center of experts that will exchange information and demonstrate the international scope of the problem. To track the effect of transnational propaganda through this network, its main messages, and the tools, which are often similar.
- To invite Ukrainian, Baltic, Eastern European experts to Western Europe and the United States to share their experience.
- To remember that we are dealing with Apocalyptic Discourse and, therefore, be responsible for disseminating information. To raise the issue of the boundary between critical journalism and journalism of despair. Ukraine's experience and its work with «management of despair» and «disappointment management» (so-called #treason) may also be of interest.

K.I.S. Ltd.
P.O.Box 1 Kyiv-80, 04080 tel.: (+380 44) 462-5269, kis.kiev.ua
Registered at State Publishing Register by ДК №677 from 19.11.2001.

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The modern infosphere is filled with shapes, symbols, sounds and forms. The white noise is overwhelming. If we keep propaganda in mind, everything is important. Every message is significant. These child-style drawings are set here to show how the tiniest details can change the meaning and create an illusion to manipulate minds.

Nadiya Machkarina-Mykhailichenko, Artistic design and layout
The book is an overview of the Ukrainian experience of dealing with Russian propaganda and information warfare. It is the work of a group of Ukrainian authors based on their own research and on the interviews they conducted with key Ukrainian civil society and media experts in information analysis, studying Russian propaganda, debunking fake news and information security. It contains analysis of Russian propaganda/disinformation actions perpetrated in Ukraine, including their key messages, approaches, communication channels, etc. It also contains policy recommendations for the international community and the Ukrainian authorities.