

HISTORICAL POLICY OF PUTIN'S RUSSIA AS A COMPONENT OF THE INFORMATION WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

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INTRODUCTION

A distinctive feature of the hybrid war that Russia has been continuously waging against Ukraine is its comprehensive nature. As early as the presidency of B. Yeltsin, the use of political, economic, ideological, diplomatic, socio-psychological, and informational instruments of influence, as well as other forms of pressure, could be observed in relations with Ukraine and other post-Soviet republics. In the new millennium, V. Putin supplemented this arsenal with direct military intervention. In all cases, the goal of Russia's hybrid warfare is not so much the conquest of new territories as a geopolitical revanche through the creation of a new form of empire, which would include quasi-states with puppet regimes and a loyal population.

A decisive role in achieving this goal of the aggressor state is played by the informational component (information warfare), whose forms include the active dissemination and propaganda of historical myths, ideological postulates, and the use of information-psychological subversion, among others. In the era of globalization and informatization, the formula «whoever controls information controls the world» is more relevant than ever. There is even a term, «brainwashing», which refers to the manipulation of consciousness through information and psychological influence aimed at indoctrinating individuals, shaping passive and obedient behavior, and transforming social groups or entire nations into easily controllable masses. Competition for access to information resources and control over information flows, along with their use for neurolinguistic programming, has led to a situation in which the global community is becoming a society of disinformation, manipulated by certain groups, corporations, and state structures.

As a totalitarian neo-imperial formation, Russia has primarily employed the methods of information warfare against Ukraine, which represents the greatest obstacle to its revanchist ambitions. The «war of memories», as a product of historical policy and a

component of the information war unleashed by Russian aggressors, is aimed at the de-subjectification of Ukraine through the manipulation of historical myths claiming that the Ukrainian people never had their own state and were always objects of influence by other states. Accordingly, the pseudo-historian V. Putin, followed by politicians, ideologues, scholars, publicists, and educators of the Russian Federation, attempts to interpret Ukrainian history exclusively within the context of Russian statehood, recognizing the emergence of the Ukrainian state only after the collapse of the USSR. Another aspect of these historical manipulations is the claim that Ukrainians are an artificially separated (by Poles or Austrians) part of the Russian people and therefore should reunite with it on the basis of the values of the «Russian world»: the Russian language, Orthodoxy, and a shared historical past.

Such ideological clichés are intensively promoted within Russian society, reinforced through commemorative practices and historical education, and persistently disseminated in Russian media, including abroad, shaping the perception of Russia as a superpower – a civilizational core with a «natural» right to annex post-Soviet territories. Therefore, since the war of memory is an integral component of the Russian Federation’s information warfare, it remains relevant to clarify its characteristic features and methods of influence, which constitutes the purpose of this study. For a comprehensive analysis of the historical component of Russia’s information war against Ukraine, interdisciplinary, system-structural, problem-historical, and other methods have been employed. Their combined application makes it possible to examine the memory policy of the hostile state as an interconnected system within a specific historical context and to identify the forms and methods of manipulating history for information-psychological influence on both its own population and Ukrainian society.

1. Russia’s Information War Against Ukraine in the 21st Century

The theoretical foundations for the study of information warfare were laid by the Canadian scholar M. McLuhan, who viewed information warfare as a total struggle conducted through information and analyzed the means of influencing mass consciousness across various forms of mass communication, including advertis-

ing, television, cinema, and others¹. The concept of «information warfare» was largely developed in the United States in the early 1990s in the works of D. Denning and M. S. Libicki. The subject of information warfare as a distinct socio-political phenomenon has been studied relatively recently, while the term «information warfare» was introduced into academic circulation in 1967 by A. Dulles (USA).

Information wars, including the Russian-Ukrainian one, have been studied quite extensively, including at the level of collective monographs edited by V. Horbulin² and V. Krotiuk³, as well as in individual works by V. Zelenin⁴, H. Liubovets and V. Korol⁵, H. Pocheptsov⁶, I. Rushchenko⁷, and others.

The concept of «information warfare» is interpreted in various ways, highlighting its goals, objects, forms, methods of influence, information weapons, and so on. American scholars K. White, T. Thrall, and B. M. Mazanets define information warfare as «the deliberate manipulation or use of information by one side against an adversary to influence the choices and decisions it makes in order to achieve military or strategic advantage»⁸. British authors understand information warfare as «the use of information and communication technologies for offensive or defensive purposes to achieve immediate intrusion, disruption, or control over an oppo-

¹ McLuhan M. *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*. N.Y.: The Vanguard Press, 1951. 157 p.

² Світова гібридна війна: український фронт: монографія / за заг. ред. В. П. Горбуліна. К.: НІСД, 2017. 496 с.

³ Війни інформаційної епохи: міждисциплінарний дискурс: монографія/за ред. В.А. Кротюка. Харків: ФОП Федорко М. Ю., 2021. 558 с.

⁴ Зеленін В. В. По той бік правди: нейролінгвістичне програмування як зброя інформаційно-пропагандистської війни. Вінниця: Віндрук, 2014. 384 с.

⁵ Любовець Г., Король В. Контент негативу. Як захистити себе та країну в умовах тотального інформаційного протистояння: монографія. К: Києво-Могилянська академія, 2021. 266 с.

⁶ Почешцов Г. Сенси і війни: Україна і Росія в інформаційній і смисловій війнах. Київ: Києво-Могилянська академія, 2016. 312 с.

⁷ Рущенко І. П. Російсько-українська гібридна війна: погляд соціолога: монографія. Харків: ФОП Павленко О. Г., 2015. 268 с.

⁸ Whyte C., Thrall A. T., & Mazanec B. M. (Eds.). *Information Warfare in the Age of Cyber Conflict*. London: Routledge and CRC, 2020. 270 p.

ment's resource»¹. In the Ukrainian encyclopedia, the term «information warfare» is interpreted as a form of confrontation between various actors (governmental and non-governmental), which includes a set of measures aimed at damaging the opponent's information sphere while protecting one's own information security².

According to O. Danylyan and O. Dzoban, information warfare means a targeted influence on the public consciousness of the adversary in order to achieve informational superiority and political or military objectives (in the case of interstate war) by damaging the opponent's information capabilities³. These definitions appear reliable and mutually complementary, but they do not fully exhaust the meaning of the concept, as they are primarily focused on the goals of information warfare.

The peculiarities of Russian propaganda as a means of information warfare and preparation for armed invasion of Ukraine have also been thoroughly studied by A. Bobrov⁴, V. Ilnytskyi, V. Starka, M. Haliv⁵, M. Pavliukh⁶, and other scholars. Researchers agree that Russia's information war, with its historical component and aggressive propaganda, is at the forefront of Ukraine's War of Independence just as much as the military component.

In the context of this study, which focuses on the historical component, the definition proposed by Ye. Mahda is more appro-

¹ Taddeo, M. (2020). Information warfare: A philosophical perspective. *In The Ethics of Information Technologies*. 2020. P. 461.

² Велика Українська енциклопедія. Режим доступу: https://vue.gov.ua/%D0%86%D0%BD%D1%84%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%86%D1%96%D0%B9%D0%BD%D0%B0_%D0%B2%D1%96%D0%B9%D0%BD%D0%B0.

³ Данильян, О., Дзьобань, О. Інформаційна війна у медіапросторі сучасного суспільства. *Вісник НІОУ імені Ярослава Мудрого*. Серія: Філософія, філософія права, політологія, соціологія. 2022. 3(54). DOI:<https://doi.org/10.21564/2663-5704.54.265589>

⁴ Бобров А. Є. Пропаганда 2023. Інформаційні війни під час російської агресії. Харків: Фоліо, 2024. 157 с.

⁵ Ільницький В., Старка В., Галів М. Російська пропаганда як елемент підготовки до збройної агресії проти України. *Український історичний журнал*. 2022. Вип. 5. С. 43–55. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.15407/uhj2022.05.043>

⁶ Павлюх М. Методи та засоби російсько-української інформаційної війни (2014–2022): міфи і риторика пропаганди. *The Russian-Ukrainian war (2014–2022): historical, political, cultural-educational, religious, economic, and legal aspects*. Riga, Latvia: “Baltija Publishing”, 2022. С. 1017–1026.

appropriate. In addition to its goal-exerting influence – it also emphasizes its means and complex nature: the concept of «information warfare» has a synthetic character, as it incorporates a number of phenomena that manifest themselves in the interaction of different social groups and includes various forms of influence on society – propaganda, counter-propaganda, disinformation, psychological warfare, and so on¹. Information warfare is most intensively conducted by totalitarian, aggressive regimes, such as the Russian one, which combines the monopolization of internet resources (MAX in the Russian Federation), print media, radio, and television (mass media) with the prohibition and/or restriction of freedom of speech, the blocking of «undesirable» social networks, and the publication of materials aimed at discrediting a particular state, political or public figure («foreign agents»), political or civic organization, or public event within or beyond the country. Russia's information war against Ukraine, which constitutes its external dimension, combines information-psychological operations, cyberattacks, and large-scale disinformation.

Since mass media play a decisive role in the war of memories, V. Putin – a president with a background in the KGB-FSB – was well aware of this and, already in the first year of his rule (2000), ensured the adoption of the «Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation», which has been repeatedly supplemented, laying the theoretical and organizational foundation for information expansion and the war of memories. This foundation was developed conceptually, within the education system, in the public sphere, and in military planning. At the First World Congress of Compatriots on October 11, 2001, V. Putin promised Russia's protection to compatriots – that is, Russian-speaking populations in post-Soviet republics – and the creation of a «common cultural and information space». As emphasized by V. Ilnytskyi, V. Starka, and M. Haliv, this speech marked the launch of a mechanism for propagating a neo-imperial chauvinistic ideology and proclaimed a course toward the «gathering of lands»².

¹ Магда С. Гібридна агресія Росії: уроки для Європи. Київ: КАЛАМАР, 2017. С. 103.

² Ільницький В., Старка В., Галів М. Російська пропаганда. С. 47.

In February 2004, without concealing intentions to return post-Soviet republics «under Russia’s control», Putin publicly described the collapse of the USSR for the first time as a major national tragedy, and in his Address to the Federal Assembly of Russia (April 2005) as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century¹.

Thus, according to the assessment of A. Besançon, Putin’s policy not only fits into the Russian imperial tradition but also develops it: «It is a path of chauvinism, but with certain features it has often acquired in this country: a mixture of lies, violence, and arrogance»².

In the same year, Putin delivered his anti-Western revanchist speech in Munich, asserting claims to dominance in the post-Soviet space. In his Valdai speech in 2013, he presented the concept of forming a Eurasian civilizational identity for Russia in opposition to the West across the territory of the former USSR. Accordingly, following Putin’s directives, the Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation was once again adjusted to intensify information warfare. It is no coincidence that the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, General V. Gerasimov, speaking at a conference at the Academy of Military Sciences in January 2013, emphasized: «...The focus has shifted to the use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military measures, combined with the exploitation of the protest potential of the local population. All this should be accompanied by covert military operations – for example, using methods of information warfare...»³.

With the addition of a military component to Russia’s hybrid war against Ukraine in 2014, the arsenal of information weapons was also expanded: information-psychological operations (IPSO), the use of bots, and the dissemination of outright lies, hatred, and fake narratives aimed at the dehumanization of Ukrainians – from

¹ Гудзь В., Полякова Л., Ситник О. Спадщина Русі як сегмент російської історичної політики та інформаційної війни з Україною. *Сучасна російсько-українська війна: історіографічні, суспільно-політичні, соціально-економічні та культурно-духовні виміри. Наукова монографія*. Riga, Latvia: “Baltija Publishing”, 2024. С. 35.

² Марусик Т. Ален Безансон: людина, що не захотіла бути часткою імперії брехні. *Дзеркало тижня*. (Київ). 2012. 18–25 травня. Вип. 18.

³ Цит за: Рущенко І.П. Російсько-українська гібридна війна. С. 112.

«they are bombing Donbas», «killing civilians», to «the atrocities of the Banderites», including the story of the «crucified boy». The goals of Russia's information warfare on both external and internal fronts are achieved through various methods of manipulating public consciousness, in particular:

- direct lies – open falsification of facts and dissemination of false information;

- half-truths – processing information in such a way that insignificant details are presented objectively while important facts are concealed or distorted;

- concealment – blocking truthful information about the activities of a particular political actor, public figure, phenomenon, event, etc.;

- the introduction of reputational images and clichés – implanting in public consciousness desired stereotypes regarding certain political actors, ideological doctrines, individual events, and facts;

- labeling – imposing negative evaluative categories on society in order to discredit particular political actors (a state, party, movement, or individual), such as «imperialist», «nationalist», «fascist», «chauvinist», «anti-Semite», etc¹.

Among the most popular and effective tools of information technologies used against Ukraine are films that shape images of heroes, create value orientations, and form perceptions of particular historical events; television series – also filled with emotional content – intended to establish more stable worldview narratives than films; and, perhaps most effective of all, viral messages in internet messengers, in particular, as means of spreading panic and anxiety, etc.².

The well-known organization Freedom House stated in December 2014: «Ukrainian media have faced DDoS attacks and massive information warfare, including through the use of bots in comment sections, as well as propaganda and disinformation from the Rus-

¹ Дмитренко М.А. Політична система України: розвиток в умовах глобалізації та інформаційної революції. Київ: Знання, 2008. С. 38.

² Кресіна І.О., Тарасюк ВМ. Особливості застосування крайною-агресором інформаційних технологій у гібридній війні. *Держава і право. Серія: Політичні науки*. 2018. Вип. 81. С. 29.

sian state and Russian media»¹. At the same time, as analysts noted, Ukraine lost that information war even in territories under its control, not only in the occupied ones. At that time, the West also lost it, as it cultivated illusions of appeasing the aggressor imposed by Russian propaganda.

The reasons for this situation also lay in the financial and managerial priorities of the parties. While controlling the media within the country and broadcasting abroad, the Russian authorities also spent around 20 billion annually on implementing a program of national-patriotic education², and in 2016 Putin proclaimed patriotism the national idea of Russia³. Meanwhile, Ukraine at that time still had an «information security gap», and an «unprotected history of Ukraine – playing into Russia’s hands». Only in 2017 did the decision of the National Security and Defense Council «On the Doctrine of Information Security of Ukraine» appear, and only in 2021 – the Decree of the President of Ukraine «On the Information Security Strategy», which outlined tasks for countering disinformation in the media, particularly Russian mythologemes.

One such mythologeme was the idea of a new «reunification» of Ukraine with Russia, set out, in particular, in the article «On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians», published on behalf of Putin on July 12, 2021, on the Kremlin website and disseminated through other media outlets⁴.

The destructive impact of information warfare and such ideologemes on the self-identification of Ukrainians was revealed by a survey conducted by the Sociological Group «Rating» in July 2021: 41% of respondents supported the thesis from Putin’s «fresh» opus that «Russians and Ukrainians are one people, with a single histori-

¹ Freedom house визнає, що Росія веде проти України масовану інформаційну війну. УНІАН. 06.12.14. URL: <https://www.unian.ua/politics/1018401-freedomhouse-viznae-scho-rosiya-vede-proti-ukrajini-masovanu-informatsiynu-viynu.html>

² Якубова Л. Україна та українці в світоглядній матриці “русского мира”. Аналітична записка / відп. ред. В. А. Смолій. Київ Ін-тут історії України НАНУ, 2023. С. 46.

³ Гібридні загрози Україні і суспільна безпека. Досвід ЄС і Східного партнерства / за заг. ред. В. Мартинюка. Київ: Центр глобалістики “Стратегія XXI”, 2018. С. 43, 48.

⁴ Путин В. Об историческом единстве русских и украинцев. 12 июля 2021 года. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>

cal and spiritual space», including more than 60% of respondents in Eastern Ukraine and among parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate¹. The prolonged dominance of Russian media, social networks, and pro-Russian television channels made many Ukrainians «people without memory», receptive to «one-people» values and ideologemes and indifferent to the history of their country, language, and culture. This situation demonstrated both the effectiveness of Russia's information weaponry and the weakness of Ukraine's information security system, as well as critical gaps in state historical policy and national-patriotic education. The situation was observed by O. Udod: «It is precisely traditional mass media and the newest phenomenon—social networks – that serve as a fertile ground for historical myth-making and pseudoscience. It has not been possible to bridge the gap between academic historical scholarship and mass public consciousness through a well-thought-out system of popularizing historical knowledge»².

Only the total genocide unleashed by Russian occupiers since 2022 led to a radical shift in the consciousness of the Ukrainian people. Three months after the large-scale invasion by the aggressor, the Verkhovna Rada, in order to counter the ideology of «rashism», adopted the law «On the prohibition of propaganda of the Russian Nazi totalitarian regime, the armed aggression of the Russian Federation as a terrorist state against Ukraine, and the symbols of the military invasion of the Russian Nazi totalitarian regime in Ukraine», and blocked Russian information channels, which became a safeguard against the zombification of Ukrainians.

2. Modulation and Transmission of Historical Rhetoric by Putin in the Context of Information Warfare

Dozens of studies by domestic and foreign scholars are directly related to the contemporary Russian-Ukrainian historical debate and the war of memory in the context of information warfare. The history of the two countries has become not only a means of informational confrontation but also one of the causes of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. As S. Plokyh noted: «To a large extent,

¹ Общественно-политические настроения населения (23 – 25 июля 2021): URL: https://ratinggroup.ua/ru/research/ukraine/obschestvenno-politicheskie_nastroeniya_naseleniya_23-25_iyulya_2021.html

² Удод О. Исторична наука як фактор. С. 16.

the current conflict is an old-fashioned imperial war waged by Russian elites who consider themselves heirs to the great-power expansionist traditions of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union»¹.

The content, goals, and tools of Russian manipulations of Ukraine's history, including after the full-scale invasion by the aggressor, have attracted the attention of many researchers. In particular, various aspects of this topic have been explored in the works of S. Baturina², V. Gudz, L. Poliakova, A. Krylova³, V. Gudz, L. Poliakova and O. Sytnyk⁴, M. Doroshko⁵, H. Kasianov, V. Smolii and O. Tolochko⁶, O. Liubovets and I. Tsymbal⁷, V. Masnenko and V. Telvak⁸, O. Sytnyk, O. Zubkovyc⁹, O. Udod¹⁰, V. Yaremchuk, V. Telvak¹, V. Masnenko and V. Telvak, V. Yaremchuk and A. Smirnov², and others.

¹ Плохий С. Російсько-українська війна: повернення історії / пер. з англ. М. Ларченка. Харків: Книжковий Клуб «Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля», 2023. С. 7.

² Батурина С. Українська історія в сучасних російських підручниках з історії (2009 – 2015 рр.). *Історіографічні дослідження в Україні*. 2016. Вип. 26. С. 468–482.

³ Гудзь В., Полякова Л., Крилова А. Шкільні підручники з історії в путінській Росії як засіб інформаційної війни з Україною. *Проблеми гуманітарних наук*. Серія Історія. 2023. Вип. 14/56. С. 173–184.

⁴ Гудзь В., Полякова Л., Ситник О. Спадщина Русі. С. 35–75.

⁵ Дорошко М. Росія проти України: історичний фронт. *Wschód Europy. Studia Humanistyczno-Społeczne*. 2022. Vol. 8. № 2. С. 142 – 153.

⁶ Касьянов Г., Смолій В., Толочко О. Україна в російському історичному дискурсі: проблеми дослідження та інтерпретації. Київ: Ін-тут історії України, 2013. 128 с.

⁷ Любовець О., Цимбал І. Історична політика РФ як складова інформаційної війни проти України. *Актуальні питання у сучасній науці*. 2023. № 12(18). С. 1187–1198. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-6300-2023-12\(18\)-1187-1198](https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-6300-2023-12(18)-1187-1198).

⁸ Yaremchuk V., Telvak Vitalii, Masnenko V., Telvak Viktoria. Representation of Ukraine in russian history textbooks (until 2021). *Danubius*. 2024. Vol. XLII. P. 179–203.

⁹ Sytnyk O.M, Zubkovych O.I. Hybrid information ideological practice of the kremlin regime as one of the prerequisites for the modern russian ukrainian war. *The current Russian-Ukrainian war: historiographical, socio-political, socio-economic and cultural-spiritual dimensions. Scientific monograph*. Riga, Latvia: “Baltija Publishing”, 2025. P. 126–141.

¹⁰ Удод О. Історична наука як фактор деміфологізації історичної культури: простір мас-медіа і соціальних мереж. *Деміфологізація історії та творення міфів в українській науці та публічному просторі: колективна монографія / наук. ред. О. О. Салата, Ю. І. Ковбасенко*. Львів – Торунь: Liha-Pres, 2021. С. 16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36059/978-966-397-233-6-1>

One of the varieties of modern information warfare is the «war of memories», which has three main dimensions – historical, political, and socio-mental – and encompasses virtually all levels of social life. Wars of memory, unlike conventional historical policy, are generated by its aggressive content and claims to historical revisionism, which are used to justify the right to territorial expansion. As T. G. Schmidt established, the term «historical policy», in the context of manipulating the past in the interests of the present, was already used in journalism in the 1930s³. In a broader sense, without a negative connotation, the term was first used in 1970 in the monograph of the American historian H. Zinn⁴. However, the final introduction of the concept of «historical policy» (Geschichtspolitik) into academic circulation is associated with the scholarly debate in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1986–1987 regarding the interpretation of the country's past, particularly the Nazi period.

It was the researcher of German historical policy, E. Wolfrum, who proposed one of the most relevant definitions of such policy: «a type of activity and a field of politics in which various actors use history for their specific political purposes. It is addressed to the public and performs the functions of legitimization, mobilization, politicization, scandalization, defamation, etc.»⁵ At the same time, the author emphasized that the key issue lies in the methods, intentions, and results of the actions of the political actor who actualizes the experience of the past.

Specialists of the National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS) understand historical policy as a set of practices through which

¹ Masnenko V., Telvak V. Reinterpreting the theoretical model and methodological tools of 'memory studies' in the context of the russian-ukrainian war. *Наукові записки Вінницького державного педагогічного університету імені Михайла Коцюбинського. Серія: Історія*. Вип. 53. 2025. С. 180–190.

² Яремчук В., Смирнов А. Аналітичний огляд "Історія України в російських шкільних підручниках з історії". Київ: Алменда, 2023. 31 с.

³ Schmid H. Vom publizistischen Kampfbegriff zum Forschungskonzept: Zur Historisierung der Kategorie «Geschichtspolitik». *Geschichtspolitik und kollektives Gedächtnis: Erinnerungskulturen in Theorie und Praxis*. Göttingen, 2009. S. 53–75.

⁴ Zinn H. *The Politics of History*. Chicago; Urbana, 1990 (2-nd ed.). 392 p.

⁵ Wolfrum E. *Geschichtspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Der Weg zur bundesrepublikanischen Erinnerung 1948–1990: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft*. Darmstadt, 1999. S. 25.

political forces or states instrumentalize the historical past for their own purposes. Historical policy performs three functions: 1) symbolic (assigning significance to a particular event); 2) interpretative (interpreting a historical event or phenomenon for the needs of current policy); 3) identificational (influencing the formation of national identity and social mobilization)¹. The same scholars emphasize: «Russia's historical policy toward Ukraine should be considered in the context of the implementation of such important geopolitical projects as the 'Russian world' and the 'Eurasian Union,' which aim at the integration of the post-Soviet space and, in the future, using the mythology of 'civilizational choice,' the complete incorporation into the Russian state»².

The origins of Moscow's religious messianism, historical revanchism, and territorial expansionism date back to the end of the 15th century, when the principality intensified its aggressive policy of «gathering the heritage of Rus'», justifying it with the mythological concept of the monk Philotheus – «Moscow as the Third Rome». Since then, Russian tsars and emperors, who emerged «from the bloody swamp of Mongol slavery», expanded their territories by fire and sword and destroyed surrounding peoples, seizing one-sixth of the landmass. This policy was continued by the general secretaries of the Soviet empire, who managed to preserve most of what had been seized by the tsars. With the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of opportunities to build a democratic, civilized state in the Russian Federation, the imperial appetites of its presidents only intensified, fueled by a desire for historical revanchism. If in the 19th century Moscow's mythology of the Third Rome was supplemented by S. Uvarov's formula «Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Nationality», adapted from the triad of the German historian H. Luden «Fatherland, People, State», then the autocracy of V. Putin found its foundation in the concept of the «Russian world», based on the unity of faith, language, and historical memory, supplemented by the expansionism and messianism of the ideology of «rashism».

¹ Політика історичної пам'яті в контексті національної безпеки України: аналіг. доповідь / за заг. ред. В. М. Яблонського. Київ: НІСД, 2019. С. 26.

² Ibid. С. 36.

Of course, the implementation of the imperial goals of post-Soviet Russia began as early as the early 1990s, which manifested itself in the Russian Federation's Supreme Council raising the issue before Ukraine of the legality and «historical justice» of the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR, as well as in a resolution that defined the federal status of the city of Sevastopol as of December 1991. During the following years, the Russian Federation attempted to detach Crimea through special services and the proclamation of V. Meshkov as its president, as well as through «soft power»: granting a «Russian-language status» and Russian citizenship to residents of the peninsula, establishing its own educational institutions, and, most importantly, controlling the information space of Crimea with the dissemination of historical myths about «primordially Russian lands» and Sevastopol as a «city of Russian glory».

However, the observation by J. Le Goff is most clearly illustrated by the actions and messages of the Russian political elite of the 21st century, above all the pseudo-historian V. Putin: «For classes, groups, or individuals who have ruled and continue to rule in the history of societies, their control over memory and forgetting remains one of their principal concerns»¹.

The war of memory reached its greatest scale with the rise to power of V. Putin, obsessed with geopolitical revanchism and historical revisionism. As L. Yakubova noted: «since the beginning of the millennium, the Ukrainian question has remained one of the top issues on the all-Russian political agenda», as politicians and intellectuals directed their efforts toward undermining the identity, historical memory, and political culture of Ukrainians instead of addressing their own domestic problems². Armed with historical literature and the ideological constructs of V. Ilyin, A. Dugin, S. Pereslegin, and other precursors of rashism as a Russian form of fascism, V. Putin realized that without Ukraine it would be difficult to legitimize both Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian state, whose history he traces back to Kyivan Rus. Emphasis is placed on the identity of the terms «Rus'» and «Russia», and «Rus'» and «Russian» population in the Russian language, which serves to justify

¹ Le Goff J. *History and Memory* / transl. by S. Rendall, E. Claman. Columbia University Press. 1992. XXIII. P. 54.

² Якубова Л. Україна та українці. С. 19.

Russia's claims to Ukrainian lands as «primordially Russian». Without Ukraine and the baptism of Volodymyr in the 10th century, the foundational myth of a «thousand-year-old Russia» collapses, leaving only Muscovy of mixed origin, traceable at the earliest to Andrei Bogolyubsky of the 12th century. Moreover, without the territory, population, and resources of Ukraine, the realization of the neo-imperial project of «gathering Russian lands» under the guise of the «Russian world» is impossible. Therefore, Ukraine is perceived in Putin's Russia as an enemy that, through its aspiration for Euro-Atlantic integration, has betrayed and undermines Russian civilization and statehood.

The well-known researcher of the Putin regime, L. Shevtsova, in 2014, explaining Russia's aggression in Ukraine, noted: «First, Ukraine for Russia is the protection of its own history, and thus of the state. Second, it is the Kremlin's defense of its own legitimacy. Third, it is the prevention of a Maidan in Russia. Fourth, it is a challenge to Europe and the Western world»¹.

Thus, in the thinking and actions of the Russian authorities, history serves as an instrument of war for national memory, identity, and the self-preservation of the «besieged fortress» regime. It is therefore not surprising that while Ukraine until 2014 did not develop a system of measures to protect and promote its own history, and during the Yanukovich–Tabachnyk period even promoted the idea of a joint textbook, experts of the NISS stated that even after the Revolution of Dignity Ukraine's historical policy remained unsystematic and situational, contained elements of Soviet interpretation, and the authorities failed to offer society a coherent concept of the past².

Meanwhile, V. Putin, immediately after coming to power, began developing a historical policy and mobilizing scholars. Already in 2001–2002, he gathered humanities scholars, giving instructions on how to write history, which meant a return to «managed history» and the substitution of scholarship with historical policy. At Putin's request, in 2003, the monograph *Russia Between West and East: Bridges to the Future* was published, whose authors argued for the

¹ Лилия Шевцова: Путин ищет новые способы удушения Украины. URL: <https://minval.az/news/62621>

² Політика історичної пам'яті. С. 5.

need to form a special «Eurasian civilization» and a superpower by incorporating other peoples into the «Eurasian space» – primarily Ukraine and Belarus.

In 2007, Putin personally turned to historical education, promoting textbooks that justified Stalinist «management» and endorsed his own «managed democracy», while banning alternative publications.

At the NATO summit in Bucharest on April 4, 2008, Putin warned that Russia had important interests in Ukraine, where allegedly one-third of the population consisted of ethnic «Russians», and in certain regions only Russian population resided. In doing so, the President of the Russian Federation deliberately referred to Russian-speaking populations as Russians, in line with the thesis that «Russia ends where the sphere of use of the Russian language ends». In this speech, Ukraine was characterized as a complex artificial entity, allegedly formed as a state only in Soviet times at the expense of lands from other states – Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania¹.

In 2009, the «Commission under the President of the Russian Federation to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests» was established, which engaged in promoting Russian «spiritual bonds» and the war of memories. Commenting on the commission's tasks, President D. Medvedev repeated Putin's thesis about the harmful «confusion» in the minds of teachers and students due to the absence of a unified historical narrative in textbooks².

In 2012, proclaimed the «Year of Russian History», Putin signed a decree establishing a body under the presidential administration tasked with «strengthening the spiritual and moral foundations of Russian society» and intensifying patriotic education. At the same time, Putin personally initiated the creation of a canon of historical education and a unified history textbook aimed at instilling in students «respect for their heroic past». This directive was implemented already in 2014, when the Kremlin-controlled Russian Historical Society developed the «Unified Historical and Cul-

¹ Див: Любовець О., Цимбал І. Історична політика РФ. С. 1193.

² Турченко, Ф.Г. «Общая история»: наука чи політика? *Наукові праці історичного факультету Запорізького національного університету*. Вип. XXVIII. С. 346–359.

tural Standard» for teaching the school course «History of Russia». Notably, the history of Ukraine is studied within this course rather than as a separate state within world history. Since 2014, memes such as «Crimea is ours!», «people of Donbass», «Novorossiya», «Russian Odesa», etc. have been consistently implanted in the minds of the young Russian population.

The course toward the de-subjectification of Ukraine became a central direction in Russian historical policy, mass media, and the education system after the Revolution of Dignity and became directive in the 2020s, when the education sector was headed by V. Medinsky, known for his writings portraying Russians as a «nation of titans» with an «extra chromosome». Speaking at a conference in 2020, Medinsky argued that to become a «good citizen», every Russian must be «at least a little» of a historian and should not justify themselves but rather «...impose their view by all possible means», declaring that the main thing is for a theory – even a false one – to capture the masses, as was the case in the USSR¹.

With the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia launched a rapid «revision» of existing textbooks to incorporate Putin's narratives about a «Nazi» Ukraine. In December 2022, the Russian Ministry of Education approved a new school history curriculum revised in accordance with Putin's messages about the «Special Military Operation» (SMO) in Ukraine. V. Medinsky was tasked with introducing corresponding changes into the modern history textbook, and already in 2023 such a unified textbook of falsehood and hatred for graduating classes was published. In August of that year, Medinsky presented the first in a series of works co-authored with A. Torkunov and O. Chubaryan as a unified state textbook on modern history for the 11th grade².

In the «Medinsky textbook», sections on Soviet history beginning from the 1970s were rewritten, and a separate section on Russia's war in Ukraine (SMO) was added, filled with anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian rhetoric. Paragraph 14 of the book is titled: «Ukraine—an ultranationalist state». The roots of nationalism and

¹ Мединский В.Р. Образы будущего и историческое мировоззрение. *Преподавание военной истории в России и за рубежом*. Вып.3 / под ред. К.Пахалюка. Москва; Санкт-Петербург, 2020. С. 5, 6, 9.

² Мединский В.Р., Торкунов А.А. История России. 1945 год – начало XXI века. 11 класс. Москва, 2023. 448 с.

the idea of an «anti-Moscow Rus'» are traced back to the 19th century as an ideological diversion by Austrian intelligence in Galicia, allegedly intended to convince the local population that they were «not Russians but a separate people»¹.

Using the myth of the «Great Patriotic War», the authors of the book draw parallels with modern Ukraine in simulacra-like paragraphs such as «The Revival of Nazism» and «Ukrainian Neo-Nazism». The latter is portrayed in Ukraine as «angry national, linguistic, and cultural violence of an aggressive minority against the majority». Another blatant falsehood is also propagated: «Several generations in Ukraine, since the 1990s, have been raised in hostility toward Russia on neo-Nazi ideas»².

Following the paragraph on the «ultranationalist» Ukraine comes a subsection about the aggressive and insidious West. Students are persuaded that after the collapse of the USSR, the West became obsessed with the «fixed idea» of destabilizing and dismembering Russia in order to gain control over its resources. Ukraine was allegedly prepared by the United States and NATO as the «main battering ram» against Russia.

The reasons for the attack on Ukraine are presented as propaganda clichés: the SMO is portrayed as a forced measure to protect the Russian Donbas, which was allegedly bombed and subjected to genocide by the «Kyiv junta», and to protect Russia from Ukraine, which was supposedly planning to develop nuclear weapons, deploy NATO bases, create biolaboratories, and pose other threats.

By contrast, alongside the subsection on the «neo-Nazi» and aggressive Ukraine, a paragraph titled «Russia – a country of heroes» is presented, referring to the valiant «heroes» of the SMO who, like their grandfathers and great-grandfathers in the 1940s, are said to be «fighting for good and truth». Meanwhile, ideologically «pumped» Ukrainian «militants» are portrayed as inheritors of Hitler's punitive forces and accused of using the barbaric tactic of employing «their own citizens as a 'human shield'»³. Thus, the authors brazenly attribute to Ukraine's defenders the war crimes committed by Russian forces, not to mention the concealment of

¹ Ibid. P. 397–398.

² Ibid. P. 397–398.

³ Ibid. P. 407–408.

the bombing of Ukrainian residential areas and acts of torture in the occupied territories.

The authors insidiously urge high school students to «draw their own conclusions» and determine «where Ukrainian Nazism resides», for which they recommend two «Black Books», newly published in Moscow in 2023: *The Atrocities of the Banderites (1941–1945)* and *The Atrocities of Modern Banderites – Ukrainian Neo-Nazis (2014–2023)*¹. In doing so, information-psychological operations are carried out to dehumanize Ukrainian soldiers and to semantically link their combat actions with the crimes of the Nazis.

Among the pathos-filled paragraphs about nationwide support for the «heroic» SMO soldiers and the bright prospects for Russia's development is also a subsection about the triumph of the occupiers in the «new regions», whose populations allegedly willingly voted for the invaders. In reality, as numerous facts attest, the terrorist Russian Federation is conducting its own Nazi-style «denazification» there, carrying out the physical and spiritual genocide of the Ukrainian people².

In a teaser for one of the interviews with V. Medinsky and his co-author A. Torkunov, Russian TV presenter M. Kim referred to textbooks for grades 10–11 as «our main weapon in the information war» and emphasized their urgency and strategic importance³. Therefore, Russian propagandists are accelerating information attacks against Ukraine and the indoctrination of Russian youth.

In August 2024, the Minister of Science and Higher Education, V. Falkov, announced that, on Putin's instructions, the ministry had begun work «on forming a unified concept for teaching social sciences, in which history and philosophy will play a key role». The course on Russian history is to be supplemented by a course titled

¹ Ibid. P. 418.

² Lipkan V., & Artymyshyn P. The Concept of «Denazification» in the Context of the Information Component of the Modern Russian-Ukrainian War. *East European Historical Bulletin*. 2022. 25. P. 227–236. URL:<https://doi.org/10.24919/2519-058X.25.269561>.

³ Останній розділ Путіна: як війна стала національною навчальною програмою Росії.

URL:<https://euvdisinfo.eu/ua/%d0%be%d1%81%d1%82%d0%b0-%d0%bd%d0%bd%d1%96%d0%b9-%d1%80%d0%be%d0%b7%d0%b4%d1%96%d0%bb-%d0%bf%d1%83%d1%82%d1%96%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d1%8f%d0%ba-%d0%b2%d1%96%d0%b9%d0%bd%d0%b0%d1%81%d1%82%d0%b0%d0%bb%d0%b0/>

«Foundations of Russian Statehood». At the same time, the «grey cardinal» S. Naryshkin, director of the Foreign Intelligence Service, appeared in the role of a «historian» and supervised the preparation of a new textbook for university students of non-history faculties.

Russian society is increasingly resembling the society depicted in George Orwell's novel *1984*. Putin himself, like Orwell's Winston Smith, is engaged in revising history textbooks through the hands of figures such as Medinsky and Naryshkin. A form of «hybrid fascism», or rashism, has taken hold, incorporating elements of a single language, faith, historical memory, messianism, and expansionism.

Thus, in the context of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, the aggressor combines the physical destruction of the Ukrainian people with their «denazification», that is, the stripping away of national identity in order to merge them into the «Russian world». This goal is achieved, among other means, through information warfare, which in the temporarily occupied territories is supplemented by the destruction of sites of historical memory, the suppression of the Ukrainian language in education, publishing, toponymy, and more. As noted by V. Hudz, L. Polyakova, and O. Sytnyk: «In addition to strengthening the internal 'bonds' of the odious 'Russian world' and appropriating the heritage of Rus', the authorities of the Russian Federation aim to deprive Ukrainians of their own ethno-historical roots and to de-subjectify the Ukrainian state. ... The second goal of Putin's political revanchism and historical revisionism, and that of his ideological 'army,' is to fabricate justifications for their 'SMO-style' war and territorial claims against Ukraine as an allegedly artificial entity on 'primordially Russian lands»¹.

Thus, during the years of Putin's presidency, and at his initiative, history has been subordinated to the state propaganda machine and information warfare in order to influence the consciousness of the population of both Russia and Ukraine, with the aim of imposing anti-Ukrainian historical stereotypes, fueling separatist sentiments, denationalizing Ukrainians, and de-subjectifying their state.

To maintain the Ukrainian historical front in the war of memory imposed by Russia, the authorities and society must consolidate

¹ Гудзь В., Полякова Л., Ситник О. Спадщина Русі. С. 35.

themselves in the same way as in the military rebuff of the aggressor. The strategic task of the Ukrainian authorities, professional historians, and the mass media is to bring Ukraine out of the shadow of the narratives of Russian history and culture prevalent in the world and into the subjective mental space.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, one of the main vectors of Russia's total war against Ukraine is information warfare. Through the use of various forms, methods, and technologies of manipulating consciousness, the aggressor has acted quite successfully within the Ukrainian information space. With the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine has undertaken a number of measures to counter the enemy's information aggression, but the information war continues. An important component of it is the war of memories, conducted through the dissemination of Russian historical myths and ideologemes aimed at depriving Ukrainians of their own state tradition and national memory. Such warfare is masked by a historical narrative of a «single Russian people» since the times of Rus' and a supposedly «shared historical past», and is subordinated to a geopolitical strategy aimed at achieving imperial and revanchist goals – restoring Russia's status as a superpower at the expense of the destruction of the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian national identity.

For Russia, as an authoritarian ideocratic state, it is characteristic that the war of memories is directed personally by President Putin, whose directives are filled with patriotic rhetoric in line with the imperial tradition of a «thousand-year-old Russia», modified through the concept of the «Russian world». The ideological myths disseminated in the information space, education system, and culture are based on pan-Russianism, messianism, Eurasianism, and Ukrainophobia, and serve to legitimize territorial conquests and strengthen the rashist regime.

Putin's directive messages are implemented by court historians and ideologues, such as V. Medinsky, in the public sphere, commemorative practices, educational programs, and textbooks, and are intensively broadcast by Russian and foreign media. These are directives of historical revisionism, revanchism, and neo-imperialism, filled with falsehood and hatred. One of the key components of Russian historical policy and information warfare –

dominant in affirmative and didactic narratives – is the appropriation of the past of the Ukrainian people, their de-subjectification, and their discrediting, which is most clearly evident in the history textbooks of the aggressor state.

Ukraine has also taken decisive measures to strengthen information security and adjust its historical policy, particularly in the information space, commemorative practices, toponymy, and the fields of education and culture. However, victory in the information war can be achieved not so much through defensive reactions to Russian information-psychological attacks and the promotion of imperial historical narratives, as through proactive strategies, including the ability to model the adversary's actions in various situations and determine one's own algorithm of countermeasures. Therefore, a comprehensive study of the components of Russia's information warfare against Ukraine, including in the field of historical memory, requires further continuation and deepening. By understanding and studying the content and plans of Russia's historical and informational war against Ukraine, we will be able to more effectively counter the enemy's intentions, better protect our own information environment, historical memory, and historical education, and promote the truth about national history and the just struggle for independence in the global information space.

АНОТАЦІЯ

У роботі з'ясовано, що одним із головних векторів тотальної війни Росії з Україною є інформаційна війна і встановлено, що внаслідок застосування різних форм і технологій маніпулювання свідомістю, агресор доволі успішно діяв в українському інформаційному просторі. Обґрунтовано висновок про те, що важливою складовою є війна пам'яті, яка ведеться засобами поширення російських історичних міфів, ідеологем, спрямованих на позбавлення українців власної державної традиції та національної пам'яті. Така війна маскується історичною складовою на кшталт «єдиного російського народу» з часів Русі та подальшого «спільного історичного минулого» та підпорядкована геополітичній стратегії на реалізацію імперських та реваншистських цілей – повернення Росії статусу наддержави за рахунок нищення держави України та її національної ідентичності. Простежено на фактах, що для Росії, як

авторитарної ідеократичної держави, характерне спрямування війни пам'ятей особисто президентом Путіним, чії директиви наповнені патріотичною риторикою у річищі імперської традиції «тисячолітньої Росії» з модифікацією «русского міра». Поширювані в інформаційному просторі, в системі освіти і культури ідеологічні міфи режиму базуються на засадах панрусизму, месіанства, євразійства, українофобії та служать легітимізації територіальних завоювань і зміцненню рашистського режиму. Виявлено, що директивні послання Путіна імплементуються придворними істориками та ідеологами, як-от В. Мединський, в публічний простір, в комеморативній практиці, в освітніх програмах та підручниках, інтенсивно транслуються російських і зарубіжних ЗМІ. З'ясовано, що Україна також здійснила рішучі заходи на посилення інформаційної безпеки та з корекції історичної політики, проте потрібно не тільки протистояти імперським історичним нарративам Росії, а й моделювати дії супротивника в різних ситуаціях і визначити власний алгоритм контрзаходів та поширювати правду про вітчизняну історію і справедливу боротьбу за незалежність у світовому інформаційному просторі.

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