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Humanitarian components of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine from 2014-2022****

Humanitarne elementy wojny hybrydowej Rosji z Ukrainą w latach 2014-2022

Abstract: The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the humanitarian components of the latest Russian-Ukrainian war, which is qualified by its authors as a hybrid war. In principle, it is about the ideological basis, historical and religious mythology, and the information support of Russia's revanchist policy in Ukraine, which the current Russian regime uses in its armed aggression against Ukraine. The authors convincingly and argumentatively prove that non-military instruments in Russia's war against Ukraine are subordinated to a single goal – the restoration of the Russian empire and its international political influence. In order to achieve this goal, the Putin regime uses all the means available to it, including the spread of pseudo-historical myths and fakes that justify the expansionist policy of the Kremlin in Ukraine and in the countries of the post-Soviet space. Using a widely sourced base, the authors of the article refute the most common Russian pseudo-historical narratives.

Keywords: hybrid war, Ukraine, Russian aggression, Putin's regime, historical politics, ideology, language, culture, religion

Streszczenie: W artykule przeprowadzono kompleksową analizę humanitarnych aspektów najnowszej wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej, którą autorzy klasyfikują jako wojnę hybrydową. Decydują o tym przede wszystkim czynniki ideologiczne, mity historyczne i religijne, a także informacyjny wymiar polityki imperialnej Rosji w Ukrainie, które rosyjski reżim polityczny wykorzystuje podczas zbrojnej agresji przeciwko Ukrainie. Autorzy przekonująco argumentują, że niemilitarne środki w wojnie Rosji przeciwko Ukrainie są podporządkowane jednemu celowi – odbudowie imperium rosyjskiego i wpływów międzynarodowych. W tym

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celu reżim Putina wykorzystuje wszystkie możliwe sposoby i środki, włącznie z szerzeniem pseudohistorycznych mitów i fake newsów, próbując uzasadnić ekspansjonistyczną politykę Kremla w Ukrainie i w państwach obszaru poradzieckiego. Na podstawie obszernej bazy źródłowej autorzy prostują najbardziej rozpowszechnione mity rosyjskiej narracji historycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: wojna hybrydowa, Ukraina, rosyjska agresja, reżim Putina, polityka historyczna, ideologia, język, kultura, religia

Introduction

Russia's aggression against Ukraine began in 2014 with the illegal annexation of Crimea and the de facto occupation of parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. At that time, Russia disguised its aggressive actions under the guise of "little green men" or military formations without distinguishing marks (regular and irregular units). According to the so-called Gerasimov doctrine, Russia unofficially launched a hybrid war against Ukraine, the military component of which was only one of its elements.

According to classical concepts, war is a continuation of politics¹, which finds its confirmation in the actions of Russia in the post-Soviet space, when the Kremlin lacks political, economic, and cultural leverage. In the 1990s, it used a strategy of low-intensity conflicts in Transnistria (Moldova), Abkhazia, and South Ossetia (Georgia). At that time, Russia failed to implement a similar scenario in the Ukrainian Crimea, but it did not abandon its plans to subjugate Ukraine and annex the Crimean Peninsula. Having openly returned to the imperial traditions of the tsarist and Soviet era, Vladimir Putin's team prepared plans for political, economic, cultural, and military expansion in Ukraine. In particular, in addition to the concept of "near abroad", the concepts of "Eurasian space", "liberal empire", or "Russian world" appeared or were adopted. The asymmetry of the potential between the post-Soviet space countries and the imperial traditions of Russia caused the policy of imposing Russian "integration" projects on the former republics. Moscow used Ukraine's distancing from in-depth cooperation with Russia within the framework of the customs union and its desire to integrate with the EU and sign an association agreement as a pretext for unleashing a hybrid war against the Ukrainian state.

1 See C. von Clausewitz, *O wojnie*, Wydawnictwo Bellona, 2022.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine contributed to the popularization of the concept of hybrid warfare. According to the definition of F.G. Hofman, a hybrid war is a conflict in which at least one of the parties uses, in addition to regular troops, irregular troops and tactics, terrorism, and the actions of criminal structures. In addition to states, the participants in such a conflict may be non-state structures, and the confrontation takes place not only in the military but also in the economic and humanitarian spheres².

Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine combined military and non-military instruments consisting of several components. Firstly, Moscow supported and financed pro-Russian political parties, activists, and public organizations in Ukraine. Secondly, Russia influenced the information space of Ukraine with the help of pro-Russian media and free access for Ukrainians to Russian mass media. Thirdly, with the help of Russian mass culture and representatives of Russian show business in Ukraine. Fourthly, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate helped spread the cultural and civilizational influence of Russia³. As one of the main tools of the hybrid war, Russia chose propaganda and disinformation, with the help of which it spread its ideological, historical, political, and cultural narratives and myths.

For several reasons, Ukraine occupies a leading position in the politics of the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet space, and in the Central-Eastern Europe region. First of all, it is one of the most developed republics of the former USSR, with which the Russian military industry was largely connected. Secondly, in the ideology of the Russian and Soviet empires, the Ukrainian (Ruthenian) component was considered the basis of Russian statehood and spirituality. Thirdly, in the imperial policy of the Kremlin, for geopolitical reasons, Ukraine was important in the context of the reintegration of the post-Soviet space and the promotion of influence in Central-Eastern Europe. With the coming to power of Vladimir Putin, Russian policy was formed under the influence of geopolitical and historical determinism.

2 F.G. Hofman, *Conflict in the 21st century: The rise of hybrid wars*, Arlington 2007, p. 29.

3 M. Marek, *Operacja Ukraina. Kampanie dezinformacyjne, narracje, sposoby działania rosyjskich ośrodków propagandowych przeciwko państwu ukraińskiemu w okresie 2013-2019*, Warsaw 2020, p. 17.

Geopolitical determinism in the politics of Russia is manifested to a greater extent in the political, military, and economic plane, whereas historical determinism can be observed in the politics of memory and in the ideology of the “Russian world” which has a linguistic, cultural, and religious component. With the help of information and cognitive operations against Ukraine, the Russian political and military leadership is trying to pursue a policy of subordination and de-sovereignization of the Ukrainian state and turn Ukrainians into an ethnographic mass.

Culture, history, and religion play an important role in international relations, especially in the context of the soft power of states⁴. Russia has been and remains a supporter of hard power, and Russian concepts of soft power sooner or later always boil down to the forceful imposition of its political or value model. Polish researcher Agata Wlodkowska believes that in the Russian concept of soft power, the leading place is occupied by the cultural and ideological component. With the establishment of the Department for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Abroad in the Putin administration in 2005, the process of countering colour revolutions in the post-Soviet space with the help of Russian culture and spirituality began. Gradually, Russia began to impose on Ukraine the model of “sovereign democracy” and the ideology of the “Russian world” in order to maintain influence and revive the empire. The main efforts were aimed at preventing the formation of stable and democratic nation-states in the post-Soviet space.

Russian researcher Olga Voronova believes that under the conditions of struggle in the international arena, the identity of nations and states is of great importance, especially on the basis of a separate historical and cultural code. Russian “soft power” policy cannot exist without combining the potential of cultural and historical (memory) politics. As part of such a policy, the Kremlin must counter the narrative of “Russia as an evil empire” and “Russia as an aggressive state”⁵. In this perspective, O. Voronova presents Russia as a victim

4 M. Znojek, *Kultura jako źródło soft power państwa*, “Studia i Prace WNEIZ US” 2018, no. 53/2, p. 101.

5 O. Воронцова, *Культура и историческая память как ресурс «мягкой силы» России на международной арене* [O. Voronova, *Kul'tura i istoricheskaya pamyat' kak resurs «tyagkoi sily» Rossii na mezhdunarodnoj arene*], <https://histrf.ru/read/articles/kultura-i-istorichieskaia-pamiat-kak-riesurs-miaghkoi-sily-rossii-na-miezhdunarodnoi-arienie> [10.02.2023].

that is forced to defend itself. However, this statement is an elementary change of concepts, in fact, the Russian Federation, especially in the post-Soviet space, continues the policy of historical, cultural, and religious imperialism.

This article will analyse the humanitarian components of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine in ideological, historical, cultural, and civilizational dimensions. The case study of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014-2022 clearly showed that, in addition to classical methods of warfare, Russia widely uses non-military components of struggle, including the humanitarian component. The purpose of the article is to prove the statement that in Russia's aggressive policy against Ukraine, the non-military component, in particular the humanitarian component, is no less important than the military component. During our analysis, both classical and modern theories of international relations, in particular constructivism, will be used⁶.

1. Ideological front

The ideological narrative in the formation of Russia's policy towards Ukraine can be reduced to several conceptual approaches. The first was related to the concept of the Eurasian empire, in which Ukraine, deprived of the Black Sea coast, was assigned to the Russian zone of influence. According to A. Dugin, Russia should not allow the formation of nation-states in the post-Soviet space⁷. The second approach is the concept of the "Russian world", a political and cultural-civilizational unity of the East Slavic peoples, in which the Russians occupy a dominant position. It is difficult to say which of these two concepts Putin preferred. Probably, his views on the "Ukrainian question" were formed to a large extent under the influence of General Anton Denikin, philosopher Ivan Ilyin, and writer Ivan Shmelev⁸ and were in the matrix of the imperial paradigm of the tsarist and Sovi-

6 Ю.Я. Тишкун, Д.А. Троцько, *Російсько-українська війна в призмі сучасних критичних теорій міжнародних відносин*, "Політичне життя" [Yu. Ya. Tyshkun, D. A. Trotsko, *Rosiisko-ukrainska viina v pryzhmi suchasnykh krytychnykh teoriy mizhnarodnykh vidnosyn*, "Politychne Zhyttia"] 2022, no. 2, pp. 48-53.

7 А. Дугин, *Основы геополитики* [A. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki*], Moscow 2000.

8 М. Міщенко, *Улюблений філософ Путіна* [M. Mishchenko, *Uliublennyi filosof Putina*], <https://uain.press/articles/ulyublenij-filosof-putina-1409067> [11.02.2023].

et times. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (2022), articles with the opinions of I. Ilyin appeared in the Russian mass media, in particular in "Rossiyskaya Gazeta":

Ukraine is recognized as the most threatened part of Russia in the sense of secession and conquest. (...) Little Russia and Great Russia are united by faith, tribe, historical fate, geographical location, economy, culture and politics. Foreigners who are preparing the disintegration must remember that they are declaring by this the whole of Russia a centuries-old struggle. There will be no peace and economic prosperity in the East with such disintegration. Russia will turn into a source of civil and international wars for centuries. The disintegrating state will become the most hated of the enemies of national Russia.

All alliances and all means will be used in the fight against it. Russia will shift its centre to the Urals, gather all its huge forces, develop its technology, find powerful allies and fight until it completely and forever undermines the power of the disintegrating state⁹.

On the ideological level in Russia, Ukrainians are considered separatists of the "Russian world", and Ukraine is considered a "disintegrating state". In particular, the Kremlin ideologue Vladislav Surkov wrote in 2020 that "coercion by force to fraternal relations as the only method that has historically proven effective in the Ukrainian direction" should be applied to Ukraine¹⁰.

In this context, a significant part of the modern Russian political elite has formed a worldview of the final solution to the Ukrainian issue within the framework of big-state chauvinist concepts. Putin's political regime partly meets the criteria of a national dictatorship (as defined by Ilyin). From the point of view of the American historian Timothy Snyder, Russia is a fascist state in which the cult of the

9 В 1938 году философ, идеолог Белого движения Иван Ильин дал точный прогноз событий на Украине [V 1938 godu filosof, ideolog Belogo dvizheniya Ivan Il'in dal tochnyj prognoz sobytij na Ukraine], <https://rg.ru/2022/05/25/prorochestva-ilina.html> [12.02.2023].

10 Сурков: Украина для имперской и советской бюрократии всегда была делом хлопотным [Surkov: Ukraina dlya imperskoj i sovetskoj byurokratii vsegda byla delom hlopotnym], <https://tass.ru/politika/7838239> [12.02.2023].

leader, the cult of fallen heroes and the myth of the greatness of the imperial past are developed¹¹. A similar definition of Putin's political regime as fascist was given by the famous American political scientist Alexander J. Motyl¹², and the Dutch scientist Marcel H. Van Herpen calls Putinism crypto-fascism¹³. Putinism is not only the definition of the political regime in Russia but also the de facto state ideology. Sociologist and publicist Ihor Eidman believes that it is close to fascist and permeated with Great Russian chauvinism, clericalism (geopolitical orthodoxy), xenophobia, revisionism of the imperial idea, and the cult of a strong and aggressive state¹⁴. In this ideology, the Ukrainian issue is strictly subordinated to the doctrine of "Russian peace" and the policy of territorial expansion under the pretext of protecting Russian-speaking people and "collecting Russian lands".

Within the framework of the ideological narrative, Ukraine is presented as an integral part of the Russian geopolitical space in the image of the "Russian world" or the Eurasian empire. Given the fact that in Ukraine at one time the concepts of the union of East Slavic peoples were more popular, Russia imposed the ideology of the Russian, and de facto, the Russian world. In modern geopolitical conditions, this was accompanied by the imposition of an authoritarian form of government and the transformation of independent states of the post-Soviet space into an object of Russian geopolitics. The Russian model of "sovereign democracy" provided for the sovereignty of authoritarian Russia in relations with the democratic West, but for the countries of the post-Soviet space, sovereignty had to end where Russian geopolitical interests began. During the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity, Ukraine twice rejected the Russian political and ideological model and chose the European model of democratic development.

11 *Росія – це фашистська держава. Якщо Україна не переможе, нас очікують десятиліття темряви – Тимоті Снайдер* [Rosija – tse fashystska derzhava. Yakshcho Ukraina ne peremozhe, nas ochikuiut desiatylittia temriavy – Timoti Snajder], <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/106742/rosiya-ce-fashystska-derzhava-yaksho-ukrayina-ne-peremozhe-nas-ochikuye-desyatylittya-temryavy-timoti-snajder/> [8.02.2023].

12 A.J. Motyl, *Putin's Russia as a fascist political system*, "Communist and Post-Communist Studies" 2016, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 25-36.

13 M.H. van Herpen, *Putinizm: Powolny rozwój radykalnego reżimu prawicowego w Rosji*, Gdańsk 2014.

14 I. Eidman, *System Putina*, Warsaw 2022, p. 155.

2. Historical front

Historical narrative is one of the important factors that shape national interests and approaches in the foreign and security policy of states¹⁵. In Russia, most scientists and representatives of the political class remain in the paradigm of imperial traditions in historiography and politics of memory, continuing the civilizational paradigm of the dominant nation. Ukraine, especially after the Russian aggression of 2014, is trying to get rid of the influence of Russian historiography and form its own historiography and politics of memory in the European context. Analysing the non-military level of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014-2022, we see that historical memory is one of the important elements of the conflict. Russia is trying to impose its nation-empire model on Ukraine, where Ukrainians are considered part of the all-Russian people and an integral part of the empire. On the other hand, in Ukraine, the historical paradigm has recently shifted towards the formation of a nation-state¹⁶.

Historical determinism in Russian politics is demonstrated in particular in the denial of the existence of the Ukrainian nation, which, according to Hegel's definition, Russian intellectuals and politicians continue to consider ahistorical, that is, incapable of state formation. In the Russian-Ukrainian conflict of national memory, several main themes of the confrontation can be singled out, the Russian interpretation of which can be defined as historical fakes or myths of Russian propaganda¹⁷.

The first major topic is an attempt to justify Russian primacy in the creation of the Ruthenian state and to present Russia as the sole successor of Kyivan Rus'. In order to justify Russian primacy in the creation of the Rus' state, Putin's Kremlin regime first resorted to emphasizing the leading role of Novgorod and Ladoga (as opposed to Kyiv) in the founding of Rus' and the ethnogenesis of Russians from the middle of the 9th century. However, it was not possible to prove

15 U. Krotz, *History and foreign policy in France and Germany*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2015, pp. 24-40.

16 See O. Рафальський, *Цивілізаційна ідентичність українства: історія і сучасність* [O. Rafalskyi, *Tsyvilizatsiina identychnist ukrainstva: istoriia i suchasnist'*], Kyiv 2022.

17 *Альтернативна історія: як Росія прагне анексувати Київську Русь* [*Alternatyvna istoriia: yak Rosiia prahne aneksuvaty Kyivsku Rus'*], <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-antifake/3279397-alternativna-istoria-ak-rosia-prahne-aneksuvati-kiivsku-rus.html> [6.02.2023].

that the Rus' state was founded in Ladoga by the Varangian invader, King Rurik since the historians of the Soviet period substantiated the thesis about the deep roots of Kyivan Rus'¹⁸. On this basis, the Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Brychevsky came to the conclusion that "the history of Kyivan Rus' begins at the turn of the VI-VII centuries"¹⁹.

As for the original territory of Rus', at the turn of the VI and VII centuries, it was a small association covering part of the right-bank forest-steppe (the basins of the Ros and Tyasmyn rivers)²⁰. The core of the Rus' state became the Polyansk land – the territory of the former Anta union. Actually, Rus' also arose on the ruins of that union as its successor. Instead, the power of the last representative of the ruling dynasty of the Kyivan Kahan (king) Askold [ca. 860-882], spread, according to the "Tale of Bygone Years", to all Polyans, namely, to all six "tribes" of the southwestern group that made up Polyans (Ante) federation: Dulibs, Volhynians, Buzhans, White Croats, Ulyches, and Tivers²¹.

Therefore, under Kahan Askold and his predecessors, Kyivan Rus' included the lands of Polyans, Derevlyans, Drehovychi, and the southwestern part of the northern regions (with Chernihiv), that is, only those territories where the ancestors of the present Ukrainians lived from ancient time.

The second topic, which fuels not only Russian imperial sentiments but also acts as a basis for the spread of fake information about "Russia as the cradle of Orthodoxy" is the falsified history of the introduction of Christianity in Kyivan Rus'. It is known from historical sources that the most important consequence of the Kyiv Kahan Askold's campaign against Byzantium in 860 was the introduction of Christianity. This fact, as noted by M. Brychevsky, "is not very popular in modern historiography (which is used to attribute the Christianization of our

18 Б.А. Рыбаков, *Предпосылки образования древнерусского государства*, [in:] *Очерки истории СССР, III-IX вв.* [B.A. Rybakov, *Predposylki obrazovaniya drevnerusskogo gosudarstva*, [in:] *Ocherki istorii SSSR, III-IX vv.*], Moscow 1958; Б.А. Рыбаков, *Древняя Русь. Сказания. Былины. Летописи* [B.A. Rybakov, *Drevnyaya Rus'. Skazaniya. Byliny. Letopisi*], Moscow 1963.

19 М. Браичевський, *Аскольд – цар київський*, [in:] М. Браичевський, *Вибране* [M. Braichevskiy, *Askold – tsar kyivskiy*, [in:] M. Braichevskiy, *Vybrane*], vol. 2, Kyiv 2009, p. 341.

20 М. Браичевський, *Аскольд – цар київський* [M. Braichevskiy, *Askold – tsar kyivskiy*], p. 421.

21 *Повість врем'яних літ*, переклад В.В. Яременка [Povist vremianykh lit, translated by V.V. Iaremenko], Kyiv 1990, pp. 30-31.

country to 988), it is quite reliably recorded in both Byzantine and domestic sources”²².

Sources testify that Askold’s baptism of Rus’ had a national character and was by no means a private affair of the Kahan. Patriarch Photius of Constantinople was the author of an encyclical (circular message) written no later than 867. It was in this message that he spoke about the conversion of Rus’ to Orthodoxy: “And in them (that is, in Rus’ – Author) such a thirst for faith was ignited that they accepted [the] shepherd and perform Christian rituals with great care”²³. Another Byzantine source, the so-called Continuator of Porphyrogenet, writes: “Soon after that (the siege of Constantinople in 860 – Author) an embassy came from them (from Rus’ – Author) asking to make them spokesmen for divine baptism, which was done”²⁴.

Arab chronicler Ibn Khordadbeh, author of the Nikon Chronicle, Russian historian V. Tatishchev, Hustyn Chronicle, Synopsis, and others write about the total adoption of Orthodoxy by Askold’s Rus’. Even in the Church Statute of Volodymyr, there is a statement that Rus’ was baptized during the time of Patriarch Photius, i.e., in the 9th century²⁵. Thus, it was the official act of introducing Christianity in Rus’ as a state religion.

Despite the fact that none of the available sources mentions the date of the first Christianization of Rus’, M. Braichevsky believes that it happened in 860²⁶, arguing that it was the introduction of a special Ruthenian era in the Kyiv state in 860 by Kahan Askold (the honour of opening that era belongs to the Russian historian B. Rybakov²⁷) connected with the introduction of a new system of chronology, in which the counting of years began from 860, the year not only of the successful military campaign of Rus’ to Constantinople but also, and this is the most important thing, the year of the introduction of Christian-

22 Ibid., p. 73.

23 Ibid., p. 74.

24 Ibid.

25 *Памятники русского права*, Вып. 1 [*Pamyatniki russkogo prava*, Выр. 1], Moscow 1952, pp. 237, 244.

26 М. Браичевський, *Суспільно-політичні рухи в Київській Русі*, [in:] М. Браичевський, *Вибране* [M. Braichevskyi, *Suspilno-politychni rukhy v Kyivskii Rusi*, [in:] M. Braichevskyi, *Vybrane*], vol. 1, Kyiv 2009, p. 77.

27 Б.А. Рыбаков, *Древняя Русь. Сказания. Былины. Летопис* [B.A. Rybakov, *Drevnyaya Rus': Skazaniya. Byliny. Letopis*], pp. 163-165.

ity, which “the state ideology considered to be an accession to grace, a spiritual rebirth, for the beginning of a renewed, true existence”²⁸.

Official historiography mainly ignores the date of Askold's baptism of Rus', primarily because it will be necessary to throw out almost all works in which the Varangian invaders and usurpers from the dynasty of the Scandinavian King Rurik are the first statesmen in Rus', who allegedly laid the foundation of the current Russian state. After all, if we rely on the work of the Polish chronicler of the 15th century; according to Jan Długosz, who used now-lost Old Ruthenian sources, Askold and his brother (or co-ruler?) Dir were not only Ruthenian princes (i.e., Slavs) by origin but also direct descendants of Kyi, the legendary founder of the first ruling dynasty of the Kyivites in the Rus' state. Therefore, Askold and Dir are the legitimate successors of power in Kyiv, and not the “boyars of Rurik”, as stated in the third version of the “Tale of Bygone Years”, deliberately falsified in 1118-1119.

By accepting the option of the violent termination of the Kyiv dynasty and the establishment of a new, Norman Rurik dynasty, the foundation of the prevailing (and not only in Russia) version of Russian affiliation (or primacy) of the Ruthenian state, which is based on a false idea of the beginning of the history of Rus', from 862 in Novgorod and its continuation in 882 in Kyiv, is lost. Therefore, without a deliberately falsified (during the reign of Yaroslav the Wise in Kyiv – Author) in the middle of the 11th century period of the reign of the Kyiv dynasty in Russia, the Russian imperial myth about Kyiv as the first capital of the “Russian” state loses all meaning.

Having erased Askold from the history of Rus', despite his enormous historical achievements, his figure was overshadowed by the much less significant figures of the Rurik dynasty princes – Oleg, Igor, and Svyatoslav. Moreover, all the achievements of Askold, such as the baptism of Rus', foreign policy actions towards Byzantium, etc., were attributed to his distant successor – Volodymyr the Great, who only returned Christianity to the status of the official religion of Kyivan Rus' after 988.

In the end, all these Russian propaganda fakes about Russia's pretended succession from Kyivan Rus' are aimed at returning Ukraine to

28 М. Браичевський, *Суспільно-політичні рухи в Київській Русі* [M. Braichevskiy, *Suspilno-politychni rukhy v Kyivskii Rusi*], p. 78.

the “Russian world”. The Kremlin believes that Kyiv, which leaves the sphere of influence of Russian statehood, undermines the image of Russia as a country with a thousand-year history and the cradle of Orthodoxy.

The third thematic block touches on the version of Kyivan Rus’ as the “cradle of three brotherly nations” – Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian – that was widespread during the time of the totalitarian communist regime in the USSR. This is how the official Soviet ideology explained the appearance of East Slavic peoples and their languages. In defence of this concept, first of all, the affinity of the words “Rus” and “Russian” was cited, emphasizing the priority right of Russians to be called the successors of Kyivan Rus’. This outright manipulation is demystified by historical primary sources, which testify that the ethnic definition of the word “Ruthenian” or “Rusian” in the sense of “Ukrainian” has been continuously preserved for many centuries²⁹.

Also, in Putin’s Russia, the myth of the Stalin era about the “Ancient Russian state” and the “Ancient Russian nation” has been reanimated. According to the works of Soviet scientists, as a result of the rapprochement and union of many East Slavic tribes during the time of Kyivan Rus’, an ethnic and linguistic unity was formed – the ancient Russian nation, which had a common territory, language, and common cultural and psychological characteristics. In his speeches, Vladimir Putin very often appeals to the fact that Kyivan Rus’ or the Ancient Russian State and Russia are the same concept.

The famous Ukrainian historian Leonid Zalizniak claims that “Moscow’s rights to the historical and cultural heritage of Kyiv state are no greater and no less than the rights of Madrid, Lisbon, Paris, and Bucharest to the history and culture of Latin Rome. Just as the Romanic peoples inherited certain assets of Roman culture, so Belarusians and Russians absorbed certain elements of the culture of Kyiv state into their ethno-identifying complex. However, just as the previous were not direct creators of the Latin culture of Rome, so the last have an indirect relation to the creation of the culture of Kyivan Rus’³⁰.”

29 Г.П. Півторак, *Походження українців, росіян, білорусів та їхніх мов* [H.P. Pivtorak, *Pokhodzhennia ukrainsiv, rosiian, bilorusiv ta yikhnikh mov*], <http://litopys.org.ua/pivtorak/pivto9.htm> [15.02.2023].

30 Л. Залізник, *Від склавинів до української нації* [L. Zalizniak, *Vid sklavyiniv do ukrainskoi natsii*], https://chtyvo.org.ua/authors/Zalizniak/Vid_sklavyiniv_do_ukrainskoi_natsii/ [13.02.2023].

The current Russian dictator also claims that “Ukrainians are Russians”. This thesis of Putin’s cannot withstand any criticism, because historians, including Russian ones, have proven that the Russian and Ukrainian nations were formed completely separately, with different indigenous populations and on different territories³¹.

In 2013, a study by Russian scientists showed that Russians from the northern part of Russia are “Finno-Ugric-Tatars” by origin and not “Eastern Slavs”; which are Ukrainians and Belarusians. Only representatives of several populations of the central part of European Russia have a certain similarity with populations from Central-Eastern Europe. Therefore, even genetically, Ukrainians and Russians are different ethnic groups³².

The fact that the historical policy of modern Russia is a continuation of the tradition of tsarist Russia is evidenced by Putin’s statements that Kyivan Rus’ is the core of the Russian Empire, emphasizing the allegedly identical cultural, historical and ethnic concepts of Russians and Ukrainians, referring to the fact that “they are single people”³³.

The above Russian pseudo-historical narratives show that the “Russian peace” rests on falsified history, manipulation, and disinformation attacks. The Kremlin’s desire to privatize the common historical past, writing, Slavs, Orthodoxy, and culture is only an attempt to maintain the illusion of non-existent greatness, which is completely destroyed by the exit of Ukraine from Russian influence. Therefore, Ukraine became a victim of Russian armed aggression in 2014 and a full-scale invasion in 2022, because without the history of Kyivan Rus appropriated by the Kremlin, and without the Russian claim to Ukrainian history, heroes, symbols, and senses, the success of the policy of restoring the status of a superpower is impossible, and Russia is simply the late successors of the Golden Horde.

31 *Путін назвав росіян і українців одним народом. Історики пояснюють, чи це так* [Putin nazvav rosiiian i ukraintsiiv odnym narodom. Istoryky poiasniuiut, chy tse tak], <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-51596469> [11.02.2023].

32 *A Genome-Wide Analysis of Populations from European Russia reveals a new pole of genetic diversity in Northern Europe*, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0058552> [29.01.2023].

33 *Путін назвав росіян і українців одним народом...* [Putin nazvav rosiiian i ukraintsiiv odnym narodom...], <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-51596469> [11.02.2023].

The fourth major historical theme is related to Cossack traditions and relations between Hetman Ukraine and Tsarist Russia. In this context, Russia is trying to preserve the centuries-old narrative of the liberation of Ukrainians from Polish (Western) enslavement and the historical reunification of “fraternal nations”. The litmus test in this discourse is the figures of Ivan Mazepa, Peter I, and Catherine II. The figure of Ivan Mazepa found an appropriate place in Ukrainian history. However, many events in national history still need to be rethought and returned to the national memory of Ukrainians. In particular, the traditions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Rus’ and the Commonwealth of Three Nations (Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian Commonwealth). For example, before the start of the full-scale invasion of Russia in Ochakiv, the main base of the Ukrainian Navy, there was a military-historical museum named after Suvorov, but no appropriate institution was created to shape the traditions of Ukrainian military sailors based on the Cossack heritage. Firstly, it was not Suvorov, but rather Prince Bohdan Glynskyi with the Cossacks who was the first to capture Ochakiv in 1493. Secondly, by returning the stolen history, Ukraine will struggle with the myth of Novorossia – a new land that was supposedly mastered by the Russian Empire.

The fifth topic is related to the period of the liberation struggle in 1917-1921 when the myth of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists was formed in Russian historiography, which was imposed on the historical consciousness of Ukrainians during the Soviet period, presenting the socialists Mykhailo Hrushevskyy, Symon Petliura, and the statesman Wacław Lipiński, among others, in a negative light. A significant part of the formerly Russian political elite, regardless of political views, did not recognize the independence of the Ukrainian nation and considered the so-called Ukrainian question to be purely internal – Russian. In this regard, Anton Denikin’s approach is followed by Vladimir Putin³⁴ and the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Kirill, when he talks about the internal conflict in Ukraine.

The sixth thematic block is related to the Second World War, which continues to be called the Great Patriotic War in Russia. The memory

34 Путін і Денікін – одна дорога з України [Putin i Denikin – jedna doroha z Ukrainy], <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/1739408.html> [20.02.2023].

policy of the Russian Federation was focused on this direction in domestic and foreign policy. The internal component consisted in the formation of the modern historical memory of Russians based on the “cult of victory” of Moscow over the West due to the mobilization of society under the guidance of a leader (chief). Propaganda spread the image of Russia as a peace-loving state fighting global fascism and terrorism. Actions such as the “immortal regiment” and “pobedobesie” (victory mania) were generally intended to consolidate society around the president as the leader of the victorious nation and prepare the population for the policy of a militaristic state. The external component consisted, in particular, of imposing its model of historical memory on neighbouring nations³⁵. Ukraine, which since 2005 began to form its historical policy, including in the context of the Second World War (Ukrainian Insurgent Army, Stepan Bandera), different from the narratives of the Kremlin, was considered a traitor to the common East Slavic/Russian memory invented by Russian propaganda. The Russian Federation used this as an excuse to wage a hybrid war (2014) and a full-scale invasion (2022) of Ukraine. The official propaganda of the Russian Federation invented the problem of Ukrainian fascism/Nazism in power in order to justify military aggression against its citizens³⁶.

The seventh thematic block – crimes of the communist regime, related to the terror of the Soviet past. In this circle, the most important issue is the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine. The topic of the Holodomor occupies a special place in Ukrainian-Russian relations. The modern leadership of Russia, which has declared itself not only the legal successor but also the beneficiary of the USSR, motivated to recreate the status of a great power on the international arena, including appealing to the positive part of the legacy of the USSR, fails to notice the actions of Stalin that led to the genocide of the Ukrainian people as a result of famine in 1932-1933; the signs of a deliberately

35 Я. Потапенко, *Концепт «великої перемоги» як антиукраїнська ідеологема кремлівської пропаганди: спроба комплексного міждисциплінарного аналізу*, “Наукові записки з української історії” [Ya. Potapenko, *Kontsept «velykoi peremohy» yak antyukrainska ideolohema kremlivskoi propahandy: sproba kompleksnoho mizhdystyplinarnoho analizu*, “Naukovi Zapysky z Ukrainiskoi Istorii”] 2015, vol. 36, pp. 112-120.

36 G. Kasianov, „Ukrainian Nazis” as an invented enemy, https://russiapost.net/politics/ukrainian_nazis [14.02.2023].

planned crime. The adoption of the Law of Ukraine “On the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine” on 28 November 2006, and the recognition by the parliaments of almost 30 countries of the world of the Holodomor as an act of genocide of the Ukrainian people, marked the beginning of the policy of spreading the truth about one of the greatest tragedies in human history.

The main obstacle to the international recognition of the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as a genocide of the Ukrainian people is the position of Russia, which fundamentally refuses to recognize the Holodomor as genocide, citing the fact that not only the residents of Ukraine suffered as a result, but also other places (in particular, Russia (specifically the territories of the Kuban, Volga, and Urals) and Kazakhstan). Russia also fears that, as the legal successor of the USSR, claims may be made against it, and perhaps a demand for compensation. These fears are justified only if Russia actually considers itself not just a successor, but a beneficiary of the USSR: then it will not only have to use the achievements of the Soviet Union but also take responsibility for the crimes of the communist Kremlin, which Putin’s government does not want to do. Therefore, the topic of the crimes of the Stalinist regime in Russia is once again among the forbidden, and the historical policy of the Kremlin is aimed at erasing the historical memory of the population of the Russian Federation.

As for Ukraine, its political leaders began relatively late to pay attention to the formation of the statist narrative in the historical memory of Ukrainians (Kyiv State, Galicia-Volyn State, Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Rus’, Hetman State, Ukrainian People’s Republic, and West Ukrainian People’s Republic). The decree of President Volodymyr Zelenskyi (2021) on the celebration of the day of Ukrainian statehood, together with the baptism of Kyivan Rus’, certifies that Ukraine will fight for its statehood traditions on the basis of historical memory.

3. Cultural and civilizational front

The cultural and civilizational narrative is connected with religious, cultural, and linguistic factors, which the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church use in the hybrid war against Ukraine. The civilizational paradigm of the “Russian world”, which is based not only on great power but also on religious and cultural chauvinism, is de-

signed to preserve the dominance (supremacy) of Russia in the “near abroad” and its influence in the “far abroad”. The civilizational paradigm, the basis of which is the struggle of Western and Orthodox civilizations, gives the Russian Federation and the Russian Orthodox Church, within the framework of the concept of “Moscow – the Third Rome” and imperial policy, the opportunity to claim the role of a single leader and defender of Orthodox values and the Orthodox world. In order to interfere in the internal affairs of Orthodox states with the help of the Russian Orthodox Church, especially in Ukraine, which Russia considers an integral part of the spiritual and cultural space of the “Russian world”, a new direction has been formed – Russian geopolitical (political) Orthodoxy³⁷.

In the context of not only statistics but also geopolitics, it should be taken into account that according to Rosstat data for 2018, the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) had 18,550 religious organizations in Russia and taking into account parishes abroad – 38,649 churches in total. In particular, in Ukraine, the Moscow Patriarchate counts more than 11,000 parishes (Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) – (UOC-MP)). Statistics show that by losing the revenues from the UOC-MP, the Russian Orthodox Church will lose its status as the largest Orthodox Church in the world. After all, taking into account about 8,000 parishes of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), the Kyiv church is quantitatively the largest Orthodox church in the world³⁸.

A significant part of the clergy and members of the UOC-MP do not feel a connection with the Ukrainian state, but instead identify themselves with the ideology of the “Russian world”, which denies the existence of Ukraine as a nation-state, and considers it as Little Russia within the “Russian Orthodox civilization”, where Moscow and Russia are of key importance.

Religious expert Dmytro Horevoy notes that during the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict, it is the UOC-MP, that: 1) called to betray

37 *Політичне православ'я* [Politychne pravoslav'ia], <https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/resources/directory/48781/> [11.02.2023].

38 В. Балук, М. Дорошко, *Релігійний чинник у гібридній війні Росії проти України, “Актуальні проблеми міжнародних відносин”* [W. Baluk, M. Doroshko, *Relihiinyi chynnyk u hibrydnyy viini Rosii proty Ukrainy, “Aktualni Problemy Mizhnarodnykh Vidnosyn”*] 2020, no. 51, p. 6.

Ukraine and take the side of Russia, 2) sanctified Russian weapons aimed at Ukraine, 3) cooperated with the Russian Armed Forces, 4) sanctified monuments to invaders, 5) blessed the leaders of terrorist organizations (“DPR”, “LPR”), 6) engaged in espionage for the benefit of Russia, 7) curses the Ukrainian government and disrupts mobilization into the army, 8) still refuses to honour the fallen heroes of Ukraine, 9) denies the existence of the Ukrainian people and 10) does not notice Russian aggression against Ukraine, presenting the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict as a civil war in Ukraine (fratricidal war)³⁹.

Russian strategic doctrine provides for the protection of the Russian and Russian-speaking populations of neighbouring countries. In practice, this means political and military interference in the internal affairs of other countries and the use of these categories of the population as a “fifth column”. With the help of mobilization and discrediting narratives, Russia not only destabilizes the political situation but also continues to influence the formation of the cultural space of the post-Soviet states⁴⁰. From the very beginning of relations between the two independent states, Russia tried to force Ukraine to give the Russian language the status of a second state language. In general, the conformity of Ukrainian legislation and political practice with international norms for the protection of national minorities did not prevent Russia from constantly challenging Ukraine in the opposite way. The protection of the Russian minority and the Russian-speaking population became a contrived pretext for Russia’s aggression in 2014⁴¹ and a full-scale invasion in 2022. The above-mentioned pretext for the so-called military operation appears in the speeches of Putin, Glazev, Surkov, and other politicians. In particular, in June 2014, the

39 *Релігієзнавець пояснив, чому УПЦ (МП) не можна залучати до примирення [Relihiieznavets poiasnyv, chomu UPTS (MP) ne mozhna zaluchaty do prymyrennia]*, <https://cerkvarium.org/publikatsii/monitorynh-zmi/religieznavets-poyasniv-chomu-upts-mp-ne-mozhna-zaluchati-do-primirennia> [12.02.2023].

40 Ю. Макарець, *Довколомовні гібридні наративи в російсько-українському протистоянні, “Літературознавство. Мовознавство. Фольклористика”* [Yu. Makarets, *Dovkolomovni hibraydni naratyvy v rosiisko-ukrainskomu protystoianni*, “Literaturoznavstvo. Movoznavstvo. Folklorystyka”] 2022, no. 1(31), pp. 21-25.

41 *Вопросы идентичности русскоязычных граждан Украины в контексте вооруженного конфликта на востоке страны [Voprosy identichnosti russkoyazychnyh grazhdan Ukrainy v kontekste vooruzhennogo konflikta na vostoke strany]*, <https://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Ukraine-Russophone-Identity-RU-2017.pdf> [15.02.2023].

President of Russia stated that “we will always defend ethnic Russians in Ukraine and that part of the Ukrainian people who feel their inextricable not only ethnic but also cultural, linguistic connection with Russia, feel themselves part of the broad Russian world. Of course, we will not only closely monitor, but and respond accordingly. I hope that the armed forces will not be required for this”⁴². The above once again confirms that Russia uses the issue of language and culture not only as a soft but also as a hard power in its policy against Ukraine. The events of 2014 related to the so-called “Russian Spring” proved that it was a well-planned special operation by Moscow, in which the Russian minority in Ukraine was used to organize a coup d'état and seize power in Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, and other regions of the country⁴³.

To spread its influence, Russia uses not only popular but also high culture. The authorities control the popularization of Russian culture abroad, especially in the post-Soviet space in the context of soft power policy, which uses several stereotypes: 1) Russia is a state of high culture, science, and art, 2) Russia and the Russian people are characterized by high cultural and religious tolerance⁴⁴. It is for the Russian church and culture that they were and to a large extent remain markers of Russia's imperial policy. Russia's war against Ukraine in 2014-2022 proved that the Kremlin is incapable of using culture as soft power⁴⁵. A number of figures of Russian culture (M. Mikhalkov, M. Piotrovsky, A. Netrebko, etc.) openly support Putin's fascist regime and the war against Ukraine, and culture is viewed as a weapon. In view of this, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine called to abandon Russian culture⁴⁶. The world reacted differently to the call of the Ukrainian minister.

42 Путин обещает «защищать русских» на Украине всегда [Putin obeshchaet «zashchishchat' russkikh» na Ukraine vsegda], https://www.bbc.com/russian/russia/2014/06/140624_putin_deauthorisation_ukraine_reax [25.12.2022].

43 Р. Малко, Чому замерзла «русская весна» [R. Malko, Chomu zamerzla «russkaia vesna»], <https://tyzhden.ua/chomu-zamerzla-russkaia-vesna/> [20.02.2023].

44 А. Казанцев, В. Меркушев, Россия и постсоветское пространство: перспективы использования «мягкой силы», “Полис” [A. Kazancev, V. Merkushev, Rossiya i postsovetskoe prostranstvo: perspektivy ispol'zovaniya «tyagkoj sily», “Polis”] 2008, no. 2.

45 N. Gergało-Dąbek, Soft power rosyjskiej kultury w kontekście wojny Federacji Rosyjskiej przeciwko Ukrainie, “Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej” 2022, no. 4, <https://ies.lublin.pl/rocznik/riesw/2022/4/7/> [13.02.2023].

46 Відкрите повторне звернення Міністра культури та інформаційної політики України Олександра Ткаченка щодо заклику відмови від російської культури та її виконавців [Vidkryte povtorne zvernennia Ministra kultury ta informatsiinoi polityky Ukrainy Oleksandra Tkachenka shcho-

On this occasion, the famous director Agnieszka Holland wrote that she supports the boycott of Russian culture but speaks out against the removal of works of Russian culture from the world heritage because it can lead to the growth of blind nationalism⁴⁷. The civilized world made the right decision – to boycott odious figures of Russian culture who support the criminal Putin regime, and also not to help Russian cultural diplomacy during the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Conclusions

Ideological and religious values, history and culture play a significant role in the formation and stability of a nation-state, which directly affects its security. The above-mentioned components are also used as soft power in international relations. Russia's aggressive and imperial policy toward Ukraine in 2014-2022 proved that Moscow uses them as a non-military component in a hybrid war. It has been proven that the humanitarian component in this war was no less important than the military component. The conducted analysis showed that countering the challenges and threats from Russia should have a comprehensive nature, both in the military and non-military spheres.

Studies have shown that the ideological component is connected with the formation of Putinism in Russia, as a political regime of rigid authoritarianism and state ideology, built on Great Russian chauvinism and imperial doctrine, playing a leading role in the Russian-Ukrainian war. The ideological factor, in particular the concept of the “Russian world”, was widely used by Russia to influence Ukrainian society and the political, business, and cultural elite. Ukraine began to actively counter these challenges and threats from Russia relatively late. Only after the full-scale invasion did the authorities in Ukraine implement a number of security measures related to the anti-state activities of political and religious figures.

Historical memory and cultural identity are of great importance in the process of building nation-states. Russia has tried in every pos-

do zaklyku vidmovy vid rosiiskoi kultury ta yii vykonavstv], <https://mkip.gov.ua/news/7877.html> [17.02.2023].

47 *Agnieszka Holland: jestem za bojkotem kultury rosyjskiej*, <https://www.wirtualnemedial.pl/artykul/agnieszka-holland-bojkot-kultury-rosyjskiej> [9.02.2023].

sible way to prevent the formation of a modern democratic state and political nation in Ukraine, depreciating the importance of Ukrainian history and culture. However, the war started by Russia led to different results than planned. The struggle of Ukrainians against the Russian aggressor showed the existence of a Ukrainian political nation that is trying to integrate the state of Ukraine into the European historical, civilizational, geopolitical, and security space.

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