

Melnykova-Kurhanova O. S.
National Aviation University

TRANSFORMATION OF PROPAGANDA COMMUNICATIONS IN UKRAINE: A COMPARATIVE ASPECT

The article analyzes the transformation of propaganda communications during two historical periods: the Soviet (1960-1980) and the modern military (2014-2022) periods. The dissident movement under the Soviet totalitarian regime and the popular resistance during the Russian-Ukrainian war of aggression intensified aggressive propaganda. Propaganda communications were compared according to the following criteria: signal blocking, “blocking” of communicators, propaganda guidelines, propaganda documentaries, education, science, struggle against symbols, repressive methods, political prisoner status, author status. Through the Telegram channels monitoring, the main semantic words and their transformation in the context of modern warfare were identified. The main narratives of propaganda communications are also considered. In addition, alternative channels of information in the Soviet period are presented based on self-publishing, broadcasting dissident works on foreign radio stations, etc.

The comparative method of research helped us establish that modern propaganda communications have common features with Soviet propaganda, but they have been transformed into social media. In addition to propaganda narratives, Russian propagandists use certain words as “labels”. The simplest modern method of propaganda communications is the method of “reflection,” which means that the meaning of a word, narrative, or message is changed to the opposite by reframing. Shaping or influencing human thinking is one of the functions of propaganda communications. In the Soviet period, they were aimed at blocking alternative channels of information and shaping a “Soviet” person. In the current Russian-Ukrainian information war, propaganda communications are aimed at “protecting” a Russian-speaking person who must “return” to the aggressor country. Information aggression, hate speech, reframing, and narratives are the features of modern propaganda communications. However, the traditions of the dominant Soviet propaganda are used in a transformed form.

Key words: *propaganda, propaganda communication, information aggression, Russian-Ukrainian war, narrative, reframing, ideology.*

Problem statement. Propaganda communications are used in times of change, conflicts, crises, and any type of war. Information, semantic, cognitive, and hybrid wars demonstrate the transformation of propaganda in social media, including social networks and messengers, online space in general, public spoken space, etc. The subject-subject approach of propagandists is aimed at target audiences, which are massively reached with the help of various specialized structures such as troll factories, bot farms, and other information agencies that spread propaganda narratives.

The goal of propaganda is to influence public opinion, attitudes and behavior. Propagandists seek to capture the audience’s attention and thoughts in order to control their behavior, actions, and value system. All that openly takes place under a totalitarian political regime, particularly during the Soviet period of 1960–1980. While in the Soviet period propaganda communications functioned in the official dominant

space, during the invasion of Ukraine’s information space, one can observe the functioning of Russian and pro-Russian communication channels in social media to spread information aggression. However, in the occupied territories of Ukraine, the occupiers use transformed propaganda methods of working with the audience.

Analysis of recent research. The topic of propaganda communications is actively studied in countries with totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. However, during crises and wars, new propaganda studies research achievements can be observed.

In particular, R. Hobbs outlines the peculiarities of propaganda education, and I. Carter examines the features of modern propaganda. The researchers also focus on the spread of propaganda communications in social media. The ideological aspect of the information space also plays an important role:

“Globalization and integration of society is also a factor for the combination of various aspects of

informatization and the formation of the society that perceives information as a factor in the formation of an ideology regarding the unified values of the public information society” [1, p. 48].

Propaganda communications are represented in various spheres of human life, in particular, R. Hobbs identifies journalism and public relations, advertising and marketing, government and politics, entertainment, education, civic engagement and advocacy [2, p. 16].

I. B. Carter evaluates both the historical retrospective and the current content of the transformation of propaganda in political communications at the international level. She believes that changing public opinion can cause the destruction of a dictatorial regime. The researcher cites the example of the collapse of the Soviet Union as a case in point. In her opinion, the government relies on the beliefs of citizens, so that forces autocrats to invest in propaganda communications [3].

Among Ukrainian scholars, the impact of propaganda communications is studied by H. Pocheptsov, B. Ivannytska, S. Husieva, and others.

In his article “Propaganda Answers Unanswered Questions”, H. Pocheptsov focuses on narratives as a way of “organizing meanings” and highlights the grand narrative of Russian propaganda “The West is Russia’s eternal enemy” [4]. It is up to ten narratives and their further transformation that Russian propagandists use.

Propaganda communications include the dissemination of propaganda narratives, reframing, polarization of public opinion in society, manipulation, changing the context of messages, promoting a propaganda myth, etc. According to B. Ivanitska and S. Husieva, the main goal of the Russian-Ukrainian propaganda war is to undermine the trust of the Ukrainian population in the governmental state structures, i.e. deliberate dissemination of distorted information with harmful, destructive intentions aimed at destabilizing the situation in Ukraine and discrediting its international authority [5].

Thus, propaganda communication studies examine the influence of the Soviet Union on the formation of a “Soviet” person, as well as methods and tools for influencing users of social and mass media.

The aim is to compare propaganda communications of the Soviet period of 1960-1980 (when propagandists fought against the dissident movement) and the modern period of the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2014–2022 (when propagandists fight against the resistance movement of the Ukrainian people during the occupying war).

To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set:

1) to study modern Ukrainian and foreign research literature covering the topic of the study;

2) to analyze the conditions of propaganda communications functioning during the specified period;

3) identify the features of propaganda communications using the comparative research method (see Table 1);

4) to identify transformed propaganda communications during the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Presentation of the main research material. In the Soviet Union, samizdat acted as an alternative information flow that was distributed not only in the republic, but also in the Western countries and the United States. During the Khrushchev Thaw, information about human rights and freedoms outside the Soviet Union appeared. To block alternative sources of information, the Soviet Union used various methods to combat dissent both in the physical and information space. The repressive methods are similar to the current period of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The USSR paid much attention to propaganda communication, which was based on mass persuasion. Soviet propagandists aimed to correct or change public opinion and mass consciousness, especially when it came to ideology. They created myths and used lies [7, p. 38]. For example, in order to emotionally influence the population in the USSR, the so-called fears of the West, the Cold War, and terrorism were artificially created, and “soft” myths about the Soviet police, the economy, the environment, and technological risks during perestroika were used.

In their turn, samizdat authors (I. Dziuba, V. Chornovil, Y. Sverstiuk, V. Moroz) used Marxist-Leninist positions in their discussions to oppose the KGB, which corresponded to their worldview and the worldview of the mass audience of readers. That is why in samizdat journalism, there are often references to the USSR Constitution, the works of Lenin, Karl Marx, and F. Engels. Changing the context and meanings helped convince the audience of their views.

In the mid-1960s, the dissidents stopped using pseudonyms or anonymity and began to sign their own works.

Samvydav as a way of distributing original works in a totalitarian state is divided into “primary”, which is created on the territory of a particular state by various official (printed in a printing house) and unofficial (typewriter, manuscript, photocopies) methods, as well as “secondary” or “tamvydav”, when the works were published abroad and distributed in the Soviet Ukraine.

Comparison of features of propaganda communications

Criterion	The Soviet period (1960–1980)	War period (2014–present)
signal blocking	"Jamming" alternative channels of foreign radiostations	"Jamming of national TV channels and radio stations in the occupied territory of Ukraine. Not only Ukrainian media, but also the so-called "DPR" banned the use of Viber messenger.
"blocking" of communicators	Persecution and arrests of dissidents in the 'Blok' case (imprisonment in high-security colonies or detention in psychiatric hospitals, exile in camps)	Imprisonment of Ukrainian military, civil society activists, and ordinary citizens (e.g., Izoliatsiia prison in Donetsk, Olenivka colony)
Guidelines as an advocacy tool	Dissemination of so-called methodological guidelines: M. Vartsev's work "Bourgeois-Nationalist Propaganda in the Service of Anti-Communism" (1974), "Methodological Materials on the Problems of Atheist Counter-Propaganda" (1988), etc.	Guidelines for working with the population in the occupied territories (in tables)
Advocacy documentaries	For example, the films against Radio Liberty – Kankan in English Park and Radio Saboteurs.	A lot of documentaries with manipulative and propaganda techniques about the "liberation" of the territories of Ukraine
Education	Harassment and arrests for possession and distribution of the "banned" literature. Russification of the educational process and other areas of life. The "ideological" aspect of educational activities, for example, teachers must have a CPSU party card.	Destruction of Ukrainian-language literature or books published by Ukrainian publishers. Russification of the educational process. "Re-certification" of teachers, lecturers, educators who cooperated with the occupiers for one reason or another
Science	Creation of a number of propaganda scientific events, writing research papers within the framework of the CPSU ideology. Scientists appearing in the media with reviews and critical articles against dissidents as dissidents.	Dissemination of anti-Ukrainian propaganda ideas in foreign scientific journals, speeches at international conferences, official work at foreign universities. Ukrainian topics at scientific conferences in Russia; "cooperation" of Russian universities with destroyed educational institutions of the occupied territories of Ukraine
Repressive methods	Repression (dismissal from work, expulsion from university, postgraduate studies, threats to relatives), harassment, arrests, censorship, information campaigns in the official media against dissidents, wiretapping.	Wiretapping, phone checks, repression (captivity, executions), anti-Ukrainian propaganda campaigns in the occupied territories of Ukraine.
Struggle with symbols	Harassment, arrests for hanging a blue and yellow flag, using Ukrainian symbols such as a trident, etc.	Captivity or execution for keeping the Ukrainian flag, tattoos with Ukrainian symbols; demolition of cultural and historical Ukrainian monuments, closure of a symbolic mural (for example, the mural of Milan in Mariupol to mark the shelling of Skhidnyi in 2015); distribution of their symbols (tricolour or Soviet flags, St George's ribbons, the Z sign, graffiti and plastic figures of Baba Anya with the Soviet flag).
Political prisoner status	Political prisoners and human rights issues in dissident self-publishing.	Political prisoners (citizens of Ukraine and oppositionists of the Russian Federation) and the development of human rights journalism.
Author status	Anonymity; collective signature of open letters, statements and other documents; public status in the tam publication.	Open authorship. Publication of testimony under one's own name. Anonymity of administrators of social media as alternative media

It should be noted that both authors and distributors were persecuted, as well as the custodians of the leading self-published Ukrainian Bulletin and the Russian Chronicles of Current Events magazine. Some texts were aired on the programs of Radio Liberty and Voice

of America [8, p. 20]. It is also important that modern citizens of Ukraine anonymously create their own channels and groups in social networks, anonymously give interviews to journalists, collect content from Internet users and share it with their audience.

Dissidents resisting the flow of information from the official authorities used samizdat, the magazines of which did not have a clear periodicity or circulation. Therefore, most often, they chose artistic and journalistic genres for writing media texts, which effectively influence public opinion, because "... emotionally colored elements are used by journalists to covertly and explicitly influence the audience. Tonally colored materials are perceived by readers, viewers, listeners better than official information" [9, p. 16]. Alternative communication always attracts attention, particularly in social media.

Dissidents paid special attention to democratic values and rights, freedom of speech, and pluralism of opinions. During the Russian-Ukrainian war, human rights, including political prisoners, the search for missing people, murder and rape by the invaders, have become an important content again.

At the times of the Soviet period, more authors signed their names among dissidents. By comparison, during the Russian-Ukrainian war, the bloggers, civic activists, public opinion leaders, and military journalists are signing their names. As G. Pocheptsov notes: "People are carriers of ideas, so people act as media. Only information technology allows us to expand the circle of recipients of this information, and the source in any case consists of one person: both when we are dealing with spoken communication (kitchen, as an example), and when communication becomes massive" [9, p. 392]. Dissidents, anonymous special correspondents of self-published magazines, distributors of leaflets, inscriptions on the walls of state institutions, post offices, etc. fought against totalitarian propaganda narratives. Reports from the samizdat about the repression of intellectuals and political prisoners were broadcast on Radio Liberty and Voice of America, sent to the Reuters news agency, and to the press in the Western Europe and the United States.

During Russian-Ukrainian war, there is also active communication between foreign journalists and fixers, Ukrainian journalists and volunteers.

J. Habermas found that in a closed society, the resistance movement leads to repression by the authorities in the public space [10]. Samizdat, as a reflection of dissent in a totalitarian society, influenced the mass audience during the transition from the private to the public sphere. The resistance of the Ukrainian people in the Russian-Ukrainian war is "drowned out" by propaganda narratives, staged footage, surveys or interviews.

A. Gramsci wrote about the loss of state hegemony as a process of changing public opinion

and consciousness of every citizen, transforming their world of symbols, the cultural basis of society, on which the collective will to maintain order is based. Therefore, the counter-propaganda communication of civic activists is a major factor in defining and undermining hegemony, as its representatives create and disseminate ideologies in society [11].

During the thirty years of the dissident movement's existence in the USSR, the information network was enriched, and ties with international news agencies, the press, various foundations, international organizations for human rights and freedoms were strengthened. Despite obstacles, repressions against dissidents, and clashes with the dominant model of information, samizdat as an alternative media in the Ukrainian SSR had a significant impact on the Soviet information space.

Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, social media publics have been increasing in number. There are many different new channels with a small number of users and little monotonous content (sometimes bots or administrators take screenshots from other social networks or messengers and distribute them in other channels). They work strictly according to the guidelines, like each other, write comments, but do not engage the target audience [6]. The number of propaganda YouTube channels is growing rapidly, but bots do not have time to comment each of them. The activity seems low. One of the peculiarities of modern Russian propaganda communication is that, in addition to bots, Russian citizens also contribute to the comments, in particular under materials about the destroyed occupied Ukrainian cities.

There is an interesting experience of Ukrainian local channels in various social networks run by the residents of a particular city. Therefore, as an alternative source of information, people under occupation often send video and photo content to share anonymously with an audience of thousands. Such alternative channels are monitored from the uncontrolled territories. The owners and administrators of the public channels receive threats. For example, the 'Mariupol Seychas' channel publishes such communication with its subscribers, and the administrator notes in anonymous interviews with journalists the specifics of her work and systematic threats.

The main propaganda narratives can be heard in the traditional media of the Russian Federation. However, different methods of using propaganda can be observed in social media.

We analyzed 12 telegram channels in the occupied Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The pro-Russian telegram channels use several propaganda methods in

their messages. There is an active use of hate speech to provoke aggressive attitudes toward Ukraine. For example, in the fall of 2022, bots started using the words “neo-Nazis” and “Ukroccupants”. On the official telegram channels of the leaders of the occupied Ukrainian territories, you can find the words “invaders” and “occupiers”. This is how they refer to the Ukrainian government and the army, which is defending the territories of Ukraine and partially returning the occupied cities and towns back.

The technique of interpreting words from the enemy’s messages (e.g., occupiers) to their own context of messages is a common trend. Taking into account the monitoring of public opinion polls on the Russian-Ukrainian war, we can identify the most emotional and inhumane comments of the elderly, who are the basis of the audience of traditional media. In addition to hate speech, such as “we need to shoot the Khokhlovs, the Germans,” they also say “non-humans” and “cannibals” about the Ukrainians. Those Ukrainians from the affected regions called the Russian army as “non-humans” in their interviews and testimonies. For example, during the air bombardment of Mariupol in the first half of March, the word “non-humans” came to mind naturally and residents often said it out loud. Parents of young children restrained themselves from using profanity and said “non-humans” to the enemy. Therefore, the word “non-humans” was taken out from the Ukrainian context and then the context was changed to the opposite. The “mirroring” method works even at the verbal level. Previously, pro-Russian propagandists used only Ukrainian news to change the context to the opposite. Now they are actively using individual words and changing their meanings. Reframing is used at the level of words and narratives in this war of meaning [12].

The war of meaning is waged for people’s minds. The Russian population is accustomed to information aggression from their screens. The Ukrainians are familiar with the experience of blocking alternative opinions in authoritarian/totalitarian states, in particular, the Soviet Union, because they have a high level of education and social media skills.

In the Ukrainian information space, in particular in the occupied territories, “cautious” meanings are being spread by Russian commentators on bot farms. For example, they call the occupied territories as “Novorossiia” and focus its new citizens’ attention on “Great Russia” phrase. Also, in the fall of 2023, in order to remove the negative connotation of the word “liberation” of the Russian-speaking population, as the word is associated with the destroyed cities, they began to use “return” to Russia.

There is also a propaganda narrative that all Ukrainians should not be accepted into the “Russian family” because they often take to the streets, organize revolutions, etc. In other words, narratives about the risks of dissent in society are spread through communication in comments and forum threads.

Agents of influence in society are involved in propaganda communication. That is, the agents enter public space, including mass gatherings of people (shops, markets, public transport, and queues for water or food) and discuss the main propaganda message, emphasizing the right decision and behavioral model.

Thus, propaganda communications in the Russian-Ukrainian war are being transformed in social media, with all the main messages of propaganda communications being published in Telegram channels that are popular among Ukrainian and Russian audiences.

Conclusions. Therefore, modern propaganda communications have common features with Soviet propaganda, but they have been transformed into social media. In addition to propaganda narratives, Russian propagandists use certain words—“labels,” but sometimes they are replaced. The simplest modern method of propaganda communications is the method of “mirroring,” which means that the meaning of a word, narrative, or message is changed to the opposite by reframing.

Propaganda communications were used to counteract dissent and alternative communication, as shown in Table 1. The tradition of Soviet propaganda communications is used by Russian propagandists in the current Russian-Ukrainian war.

Shaping or influencing human thinking is one of the functions of propaganda communications. In the Soviet period, they were aimed at blocking alternative channels of information and forming a “Soviet” person. In the current Russian-Ukrainian information war, propaganda communications are aimed at “protecting” a Russian or Russian-speaking person who must “return” to the aggressor’s country.

Information aggression, hate speech, reframing, and narratives are the features of modern propaganda communications. However, the traditions of the dominant Soviet propaganda are used in a transformed form.

The prospect of the research is to study propaganda communications in social networks and messengers in the context of the current Russian-Ukrainian war. In addition, it is necessary to compare pro-Russian propaganda narratives aimed at Ukrainian, Russian, European, American and other states and societies.

Bibliography:

1. Melnykova-Kurhanova O., Bella M., Naumenko L., Ostrovska N., Liashchenko A., Murzina O. Media Education as an Effective Perspective on the Formation of Ideology in Society Through the Influence of Self-Consciousness. *Postmodern Openings*. 2022. 13(4), 42-55. <https://doi.org/10.18662/po/13.4/504>
2. Hobbs R. *Mind Over Media: Propaganda Education for a Digital Age*. New York. W. W. Norton & Company. 2020. 368 p.
3. Carter I. B. *Propaganda in autocracies: institutions, information, and the politics of belief*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 350 p.
4. Pocheptsov H. Propaganda answers the questions that have not yet been voiced. URL: <https://detector.media/infospace/article/204703/2022-11-09-propaganda-vidpovidaie-na-shche-ne-ozvucheni-zapytannya> (accessed January 15, 2023).
5. Ivanytska B., Guseva S. "MAIN PROCESSING METHODS IN THE RUSSIAN INTERNET-MEDIA "PRAVDA.RU"". *Visnyk "Lvivska Politechnyka"*. Lviv. Volume 2, Number 896, 2018. P. 59–64.
6. Melnykova-Kurhanova O. Propaganda, education, scientific communication: new challenges during the war. URL: <https://detector.media/blogs/article/204873/2022-11-13-propaganda-osvita-naukova-komunikatsiya-novi-vyklyky-pid-chas-viyny> (accessed January 15, 2023).
7. Melnykova-Kurhanova O. *Features of dissident communications in Ukraine in 1960 – early 1990: a monograph*. Mariupol: PPNS LLC, 2020. 228 c.
8. Obertas O. *Ukrainian samizdat: literary criticism and journalism (1960s – early 1970s): a monograph*. Kyiv : Smoloskyp, 2010. 300 c.
9. Pocheptsov H. *From Facebook and glamor to Wiki – Leaks: media communications*. Kyiv : Heritage, 2012. 464 c.
10. Habermas J. *Moral consciousness and communicative action*. URL: <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Moral+Consciousness+and+Communicative+Action-p-9780745694122> (accessed January 15, 2023).
11. Gramsci A. *Prison notebooks*. URL: https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/prison_notebooks/problems/intellectuals.htm (accessed January 15, 2023).
12. Pocheptsov H. *Toxic infospace. How to maintain clarity of thinking and freedom of action*. Kharkiv: Vivat, 2021. 384 c.

Мельникова-Курганова О. С. ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ ПРОПАГАНДИСТСЬКИХ КОМУНІКАЦІЙ В УКРАЇНІ: КОМПАРАТИВНИЙ АСПЕКТ

У статті проаналізовано трансформацію пропагандистських комунікацій під час двох історичних періодів: радянський (1960–1980 рр.) та сучасний воєнний (2014–2022 рр.) періоди. Дисидентський рух при радянському тоталітарному режимі та народний спротив під час загарбницької російсько-української війни активізували агресивну пропаганду. Було порівняно пропагандистські комунікації за критеріями: блокування сигналу, «блокування» комунікаторів, методичні вказівки з пропаганди, пропагандистські документальні фільми, освіта, наука, боротьба із символами, репресивні методи, статус політв'язня, статус автора. За допомогою моніторингу Телеграм-каналів було визначено основні смислові слова, їхню трансформацію в контексті сучасної війни. Також розглянуто основні наративи пропагандистських комунікацій. Крім того, представлено альтернативні канали інформації в радянський період на прикладі самвидаву, трансляції дисидентських творів на закордонних радіостанціях тощо.

Під час використання компаративного методу дослідження було виявлено, що сучасні пропагандистські комунікації мають спільні риси з радянською пропагандою, проте вони трансформувалися в соціальних мережах. Російські пропагандисти крім пропагандистських наративів використовують окремі слова-«ярлики». Найпростішим сучасним методом пропагандистських комунікацій є метод «віддзеркалення», тобто за допомогою рефреймінгу змінюється смисл слова, наративу, повідомлення на протилежний. Формування або вплив на мислення людини є однією з функцій пропагандистських комунікацій. У радянський період вони були спрямовані на блокування альтернативних каналів інформації та формування «радянської» людини. В сучасній російсько-українській інформаційній війні пропагандистські комунікації спрямовані на «захист» російськомовної людини, яка повинна «повернутися» до країни-агресора. Інформаційна агресія, хейт спіч, рефреймінг, наративи є особливостями сучасних пропагандистських комунікацій. Проте традиції домінантної радянської пропаганди використовуються у трансформованому вигляді.

Ключові слова: пропаганда, пропагандистська комунікація, інформаційна агресія, російсько-українська війна, наратив, рефреймінг, ідеологія.