

Dr. Yehor Brailian

**Germany in Russian propaganda in the occupied
territories of Ukraine**

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Introduction

The Russian aggression against Ukraine started from the occupation of Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in 2014. It transformed into a full-scale war in February 2022. During these 10 years, the information component was vital in the hybrid aggression of Moscow not only toward Ukraine but also toward NATO countries. Russian propaganda continues the traditions of Soviet ones by labeling the West as hostile against Moscow and Ukrainians as neo-Nazis. In this case, there is a dire need to understand the current situation with Russian propaganda in the occupied territories of Ukraine (Crimea, parts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts) in the context of one country – Germany, which has a specific role in Russia's memory policies, public opinion, and strategic culture.

Therefore, the main aim of this policy paper is to overview and outline Moscow's key narratives, actors, and information manipulations in the occupied territories of Ukraine in the context of Germany, German politicians, media, and people. This research might be used for establishing/revisiting Germany's strategic communications towards Ukraine regarding the cognitive reintegration of the territories occupied by Russia since 2014/2022.

The liberation of Ukrainian territories, which are currently under Russian occupation is one of the key elements of Ukraine's victory in the war. Despite of very tough situation on the frontline, the liberation of Ukraine's sovereign territories from the Russian occupation remains the main goal of this war.

In this regard, information (narrowly) along with cognitive (widely) aspects would be decisive because actually, the Russian-Ukrainian war is mainly about the perception of Russia (positive) and Ukraine (negative) abroad. That's why it's too important to analyze the German aspect of Russian propaganda in the occupied territories within a broader geopolitical and media context and the develop-

ments of the hybrid war that Moscow is waging against Ukraine and NATO. Hybrid warfare¹ consists of historical manipulations, economic and energy pressure, propaganda, and active intelligence measures under the umbrella of diplomatic missions.

Methodology

Russian propaganda in the occupied territories of Ukraine was the subject of various studies by Ukrainian and foreign journalists, analysts, and human rights activists. We've seen more interest in this topic after the Russian full-scale invasion. It was caused by the influx of Ukrainians from the East and South of Ukraine to other regions and abroad.

Detector Media and the Center for Information Resilience have conducted a complex analysis of the information space of Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories.² I participated in this collective effort as well. Key media resources, interconnections among propaganda actors, and the development of Ukrainian local media of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, Kherson oblasts, and Crimea since 2014 were outlined there. It's a perfect companion if you start your research/media coverage about the occupied territories of Ukraine.

In November 2024, NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence, located in Riga published a research on key information policy actors of Russian propaganda in the occupied territories of Ukraine.³ The authors of this

1 Bilal, A. (2024). *Russia's hybrid war against the West*. NATO REVIEW. Retrieved from <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2024/04/26/russias-hybrid-war-against-the-west/index.html>

2 Centre for Information Resilience (2024). *Mapping the media landscape in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories*. Retrieved from <https://www.info-res.org/post/mapping-the-media-landscape-in-ukraine-s-temporarily-occupied-territories>

3 Vorotyntseva, M./ Husakov, V./Kaplunov, D./Pakhomenko, S./Vorotyntseva, M./ Yurchenko, O. (2024). *The Use of Russian Proxy Actors in the Media Environment in Ukraine: A Comparison between Occupied and Non-Occupied Areas, 2017–2023*. Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. Retrieved from <https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/the-use-of-russian-proxy-actors-in-the-media-environ->

research are Andrii Dikhtiarenko, Ukrainian journalist, TV host at Suspilne, editor-in-chief of Realna Gazeta, relocated from Luhansk in 2014 and Maryna Vorotyntseva, Ukrainian journalist, strategic communications analyst, co-author of a book «How Ukraine was losing Donbas».

Narratives

There are three main social media/messengers in the occupied territories of Ukraine – Telegram, VKontakte, and Odnoklassniki. Other messengers and social media, such as Viber, X (former Twitter), and WhatsApp were blocked in 2022 by Russian occupation administrations.

There are several key narratives of Russian propaganda on Germany in the occupied territories of Ukraine: «The sanctions towards Russia do not work and only harm the German economy», «German Nazi support Ukrainian NeoNazi», «German military assistance to Ukraine only prolong the war», «Germans want to colonize the Ukrainian territory».⁴

Pro-Russian Telegram channels of the occupied part of Donetsk oblast are constantly monitoring the security assistance for Ukraine⁵ from NATO countries, including Germany. On 9 November 2024, «Donetsk News Agency»⁶ posted about the history of NATO arms support of Ukraine and changing the warfare.⁷ Germany was mentioned as a country that provided Ukraine with security assistance⁸ after the USA⁹, Canada¹⁰, France¹¹, and Poland¹².

At the beginning of September 2024, pro-Russian Telegram channels on the occupied part of Donetsk oblast shared the narratives on Chancellor Scholz and the German people. The latter allegedly does not want the further support of Ukraine and that sanctions towards

Russia only harm the German economy.¹³

Russian propaganda is using a narrative on biological labs and chemical weapons in Ukraine and in the West as well. For instance, injured Ukrainian military, who were curing at hospitals in Germany, Norway and the Netherlands become infected with superbugs that can resist antibiotics.¹⁴ Retrospectively, the narrative dates back in the 1980s (Operation Denver by KGB of the Soviet Union), when it was formed the information manipulation that the virus of AIDS was created in the biological labs of Pentagon in Fort Detrick.

This time according to the Telegram channels it's not American but German fault. The Armed Forces of Ukraine allegedly are using technology, used by Germany during World War I and World War II.¹⁵

Zaporizhia News Agency, a propaganda media of the Russian occupation administration, wrote on the Telegram channel about an expert who came from Germany to be an observer during the so-called presidential elections in Russia in March 2024. The expert said about «fantastic progress with transport». The observer emphasized the road from Melitopol to Crimea and more buildings in Mariupol.

The legitimization of Russian occupation of parts of Zaporizhia, Kherson oblasts, and Crimea was done through the so-called «elections» in September 2023.¹⁶ A head of Russian occupation administration in part of Zaporizhia oblast Evgeniy Balitskiy mentioned international experts from Spain, the USA, Argentina, Germany, Mexico, Slovakia, and Serbia, who helped to make the process legal for international law.¹⁷ They were present at the electoral commissions in Berdyansk. It's a big challenge because Russia is using the citizens of foreign countries in its propaganda. Germany is not an exception. In January 2024, the head of the Moscow bureau of the ZDF channel Armin Coerper¹⁸ visited occupied Mariupol.¹⁹ He told in his report from Maripuol that there were some destroyed buildings but in general a life in the city was ok.

Pavel Sudoplatov, a Soviet intelligence (NKVD) officer, who assassinated Yevhen Konovalts, a head of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists in Rotterdam in 1938 is

ment-in-ukraine-a-comparison-between-occupied-and-non-occupied-areas-20172023/312

4 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/mariupolz/18550>

5 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/itsdonetsk/218756>

6 Donetsk News Agency (2025). <https://dan-news.ru>

7 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/dan_dnr/35221?single

8 Press and Information Office of the Federal Government (2025). War in Ukraine. The arms and military equipment Germany is sending to Ukraine. Retrieved from <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/military-support-ukraine-2054992>

9 Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (2025). U.S. Security Cooperation with Ukraine. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-ukraine/>

10 Government of Canada (2025). Canada's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Retrieved from https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/response_conflict-reponse_conflits/crisis-crisis/ukraine.aspx?lang=eng

11 Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (2025). War in Ukraine: France's diplomatic action. Retrieved from <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/ukraine/situation-in-ukraine-what-is/>

12 President of the Republic of Poland (2025). Poland's aid to Ukraine. Retrieved from <https://www.president.pl/news/polish-aid-for-ukraine,93908>

13 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/dan_dnr/31479

14 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/mariupolz/50189>

15 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/dan_dnr/31380

16 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/zonewsru/1408>

17 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/zonewsru/1445>

Armin Coerper. Auslandskorrespondent bei ZDF (2025). LinkedIn. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/in/armin-coerper-4aba45294/?originalSubdomain=de>

19 Coerper, A. (Regie) (2024). Unterwegs in Mariupol: Sinnbild russischer Brutalität im Krieg [Film]. ZDFheute Nachrichten. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/live/hkQ4-JsdSHA?feature=shared>

a hero in contemporary Russia. In July 2022, in Melitopol (Zaporizhia oblast, Ukraine) the monument to Sudoplatov was erected by the Russian occupation administration.²⁰ The main narrative of Russian propaganda here is about the fighting «Nazi» – then and now.²¹ The West – mainly Germany and Anglo-Saxons equipped Nazi Ukrainians to fight against Russians. This is the logic of Russian propaganda in their portrayal of partners of Ukraine, namely the USA, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Neo Nazi in Ukraine narrative was shared by Russian/Soviet propaganda way before 2014 but it galvanized after the Russian occupation of Crimea. The main object of this narrative became a regiment (later battalion) of Azov.²² For Russians, Ukrainian nationalism means being a supporter of Nazi ideology.

In an interview for the Russian propaganda media outlet Luhansk Information Center²³ in March 2024, a deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Viktor Vodolatskyi, called on the Bundestag of Germany to investigate the German military's participation in the war on the Ukrainian side.

Trophy German tank Leopard 2A6 was presented during the Victory parade in Moscow in May 2024.²⁴

Russian propaganda in the occupied territories of Ukraine viewed Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock as a Nazi²⁵ and a warmonger. Retrospectively, just before the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in January 2022, the so-called Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the occupied part of Luhansk Oblast invited²⁶ Minister Baerbock to visit the frontline, but from the Russian side.

The current memory policy of the Russian Federation about the Second World War II resembles Soviet ones. The official name of the war in academia and media is the Great Patriotic War, and traditions of commemoration and celebration remain the same. 9 May and 22 June as well as days of liberation from the German-fascist occupiers (Soviet propaganda term) are key dates of official events. The narrative that «Anglo-Saxon countries» (USA and UK) helped Germany to invade the USSR in June 1941²⁷ tries

to hide the fact of Soviet-Nazi cooperation during the previous 2 years.

This and similar historical manipulations are the basis of historical education and memory policy in the occupied territories of Ukraine.

The memory policy of Russia on the occupied territories of Ukraine duplicates late Soviet terms to the official ceremonies. For example, students from Berdiansk attended a lecture «War. Victory. Memory» from the Russian Military Historical Society on 7 May 2024.²⁸ Russians are pretty clear in their aim of historical brainwashing of youth by presenting Ukraine and the West as bad actors not only in the past but present.

A commentator at Crimea 24 Gennadiy Podleshiy on 8 May 2024 said that the Western countries want to make Victory Day (День Победы) unrecognizable, removing all symbols of this holiday.²⁹ In his point of view, «the current fascism is in form Ukrofascism. There is an open revisionism and fascism in Germany». The reason why Germany could be named fascist is that German generals were discussing how many rockets were needed to blow up the Crimea bridge.

The German-Soviet War/Eastern Front of World War II name in Russia on the official level is a Great Patriotic War. That's why the Russian administration people on the occupied territories of Ukraine are taking part in Soviet-style ceremonies gathering «veterans» and the Russian military.³⁰

The Telegram channel «New media in Zaporozhye»³¹ cited the head of Russian occupation administration in the part of Zaporizhia oblast Evgeniy Balitskiy on 22 June 2024: «Today, the worthy heirs of the great winners continue the feat of their grandfathers - they fight against Nazism, in the name of our common future, in the name of peace on earth, in the name of the memory of our heroes. And again the enemy will be defeated, and victory will be ours!»

Even Soviet wording style remains the same – we don't care about the casualties because we need victory for any price. This continuity of Soviet traditions of celebration of Victory Day on 9 May, which Moscow imposed on the occupied territories of Ukraine.

A head of the State Council of Russian occupation administration in Crimea Vladimir Konstantinov named the Munich Security Conference as an anti-Russian event in February 2024.³² The topic of Ukrainian children is also widely manipulated by Russian propaganda in the occu-

20 Информационное агентство ТАСС [TASS News Agency] (2022). В Мелитополе открыли памятник советскому разведчику Судоплатову, боровшемуся с нацизмом [A monument to Soviet spy Sudoplatov, who fought against Nazism, was unveiled in Melitopol]. Retrieved from <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/15149657>

21 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/NowMelitopol/23819>

22 Sklyarevskaya, G. (2022). Why Azov is not a "neo-nazi battalion". media sapiens. Retrieved from <https://ms.detector.media/manipulyatsii/post/29642/2022-06-10-why-azov-is-not-a-neo-nazi-battalion/>

23 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/LIC_LPR/64013

24 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/NowMelitopol/21455>

25 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/mariupolz/43973>

26 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2022). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/LIC_LPR/16020

27 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/GTRKLNRLugansk24/78512>

28 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/NowMelitopol/21807>

29 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/tvcrimea24/65803>

30 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/tvcrimea24/64733>

31 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/nmedia_zo/670

32 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/tvcrimea24/61667>

pied territories of Ukraine. For example, the Telegram channel New Melitopol in August 2024 shared the information manipulation that Ukrainian children were taken from refugee families in Europe, and 122 kids in Germany.³³ A head of the movement «We are with Russia together» Vladimir Rogov³⁴ a member of the main council of military-civil Russian occupation administration of a part of Zaporizhia oblast.

Local Luhansk propagandist Sergei Prasolov in September 2024 that the German economy is almost near catastrophe. «Germany had cheap gas, low loans, and a developed industry that relied on cheap raw materials, primarily from Russia. But they took the path of breaking off relations and destruction» - he said that in an interview for Luhansk 24 channel.³⁵ At the same time, the topic of green energy agenda might have changed the energy property in the world. In the end, in Prasolov's view people in Eastern Germany knew such bad tendencies in the German economy and that's why voted for the «conservative» «Alternative for Germany» party.

In general, actors of Russian propaganda (officials, journalists, bloggers) advocated against the policy of Chancellor Scholz, which was only bad for the German economy and the German people. Russians are openly against Germany as a part of the European Union and NATO and further support of Ukraine.³⁶ Russians were hoping for the change of foreign policy of Germany (lifting of sanctions towards the Russian Federation, restoration of economic ties between Berlin and Moscow, continuation of good old Ostpolitik of 1970-s).

In February 2024 it was a coordinated information operation, shared by Russian media³⁷ in the occupied territories of Ukraine³⁸ that Putin is more well known than other world leaders. Such a conclusion was made after polling people in Germany.³⁹ Political analyst, member of Coordination Council at the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation Vladimir Karasev outlined in an interview for Zaporozhye News

The transcontinental ballistic missile «Orieschnik», used by Russia to attack Dnipro city in November 2024,⁴⁰ helped

Chancellor Scholz not to give ultimatums to Russia. According to the VK page on life in Alchevsk,⁴¹ the missile is the best cure for not taking a firm stand against Russia.

Actors

The vertical of Russian control of information policy on the occupied territories of Ukraine has been transformed since 2014. The modern curator of Moscow's (including informational) policy is Sergey Kirienko,⁴² former Prime Minister of the Russian Federation (1998-1999), head of Rosatom (2005-2016), and deputy head of the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation since 2016.

So-called «Ministries» of Information/Digital Policy/Mass Communications became institutions for implementing the narratives of Russian propaganda through local occupation administrations.

The actual coordinator of Russian propaganda in the occupied territories is Alexander Malkevich, media manager and co-chairman of the Coordination Council for the Integration of New Subjects of the Russian Federation.⁴³ He was directly involved in creating new media on the occupied territories of Ukraine: Mariupol-24, Tavriia, Za!TV.⁴⁴ Malkevich considers the current situation in Germany as a decline of Western Christianity, when churches are being sold.⁴⁵ He is one of promoters of Russian traditional values, meant by Russian Orthodox church, controlled by the Federal security service of the Russian Federation.

Malkevich is a vital element of Russian propaganda machine by helping with so-called humanitarian aid to the occupied territories, where some foreigners were also mentioned, including Germans.⁴⁶ In August 2024 propagandist emphasized the role of German director Wilhelm Domke-Schultz in documenting the life in the occupied part of Kherson oblast.⁴⁷ It's about propaganda film about an international observers from France, Chile, South Africa, the USA during the so-called presidential elections in Russia in March 2024.⁴⁸

33 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/NowMelitopol/24518>

34 ЧЕХО [Chesno] (2025). Retrieved from <https://www.chesno.org/traitor/66/>

35 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/GTRKLNRLugansk24/78250>

36 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/mariupolz/55422>

37 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/readovkanews/73713>

38 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/zpvestnik/16413>

39 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/NowMelitopol/18334>

40 Shvarts, D. (2024). Удар «Орешником» по Дніпру був «жахливою ескалацією» - Шольц [Scholz: Oreshnik's strike on Dnipro was a „terrible escalation“]. Deutsche Welle. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/uk/udar-rf-po-dnpru-eksperimentalnou-raketou-buv-zahlivou-eskala-cieu-solc/a-70859649>

41 vk.com (2024). Информационный Центр Переваляск-Алчевск [ЛНР|LPR [Perevalsk-Alchevsk Information Center|LNR|LPR]. Retrieved from https://vk.com/inform.cent?w=wall-76474527_1468363

42 Khmlevskaya, V. (2022). Новым «куратором» отношений с „Л/ДНР“ стал Кириенко — россМИ [Kiriyenko became the new „curator“ of relations with „L/DNR“ - rossmedia]. Zerkalo Nedeli. Ukraine. Retrieved from <https://zn.ua/POLITICS/novym-kuratora-otnosit-s-l-dnr-stal-kirienko-rossmi.html>

43 AKMP (Association of Directors of Communications and Corporate Media of Russia) (2025). Alexander Malkevich. Retrieved from <https://corpmedia.ru/akmr/network/?id=8635>

44 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2022). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/alexandr_malkevich/9480

45 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/alexandr_malkevich/24087

46 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/alexandr_malkevich/17444

47 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/alexandr_malkevich/22880

48 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/alexandr_malkevich/19765

Rodion Miroshnyk, former head of Luhansk State TV company and a senior member of the Party of Regions of Ukraine, who became a Russian collaborator in 2014 currently has a position as a special envoy for Kiev regime crimes of MFA of the Russian Federation.⁴⁹

The EU, Switzerland, and Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council sanctioned him.

His main role in the Russian political establishment is to collect pieces of evidence of war crimes, convicted allegedly by the Armed Forces of Ukraine and Ukrainian people on the frontline and towards the occupied territories of Ukraine, controlled by Moscow now. Miroshnyk uses his Telegram channel, apart from interviews for Russian media to make a negative public opinion on NATO countries, including Germany. In his view, Germany is a vassal state of the USA⁵⁰ and is supplying Ukraine with weapons, with which the civilian population of Donbass was killed and injured.⁵¹ It's a manipulation to change the perspective from the role of the Russian Federation as an aggressor to «bad Ukraine and West, supporting it».

Miroshnik is pretty clear and open in Russian intentions: «If you support the Nazis (Ukrainians), get ready for our (Russian) parade in Berlin!». ⁵² An open hostile tone towards Germany and German people from Russians is not breaking news.

Russian propaganda is citing representatives of the Alternative for Germany party a lot. For example, the co-chair of it Tino Chrupalla, and his statements about the need to stop the military support to Ukraine⁵³ (meeting in Nuremberg, April, 2023⁵⁴), to cut the support of Ukraine in showing solidarity with the Republican party of the USA in December 2023⁵⁵ or the alleged victory of Russia over Ukraine in December 2024.⁵⁶

Russian propaganda is constantly monitoring⁵⁷ the military assistance to Ukraine and publishing the new armaments, which were sent to the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Miroshnyk is echoing the narratives of Russian propaganda on the attacks on NordStream 1-2 pipelines in Sep-

tember 2022.⁵⁸ According to him, it was initiated by then Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, General Valerii Zaluzhnyi, and Germany was just a «loyal mechanism» in the game of the USA/CIA.⁵⁹

Back in December 2022, Rodion Miroshnyk harassed online the German Minister of Culture and Media Claudia Roth, comparing her with Nazi, who looted cultural heritage in Ukraine during the Second World War.⁶⁰

Roth mentioned then about the support of preserving the cultural heritage of Ukraine (archives, libraries, museums), struggled of the consequences of the Russian full-scale invasion.

One of the Russian propagandists, who was living and working in Germany (as an assistant of deputy of Bundestag from the Alternative for Germany Evgenii Schmidt⁶¹) was Vladimir Sergienko shared negative views on the Foreign Minister of Germany Baerbock. Sergienko named Baerbock and Melanie Jolie «cuties, who are warmongers by giving weapons to Ukraine». ⁶² In August 2024, Rodion Miroshnyk participated in the Arria Formula meeting at the UN in New York⁶³, where the acting head of representation of the Russian Federation in the UN Dmitriy Polyanskiy said the following on German military support of Ukraine and the operation in Kursk region: «The last time we saw German tanks on our territory was exactly 80 years ago. Now they are run by Ukrainians. You all remember how it ended for Germany. The end for the Ukrainian Nazis will be just as inglorious». ⁶⁴

Apart from Russian officials, propagandists, and media collaborators, the international journalists, and activists, who became the observers at referendums in the occupied territories of Ukraine are actors of information warfare as well. Russia needs people from foreign countries to show approval from the international community of «inclusion» (in fact occupation) of Ukrainian territories into the Russian Federation.

On 9 March 2024, there was a manifestation of youth, invited by the Russian occupation administration to visit Luhansk. There were 20 people from 15 countries, inclu-

49 Brailian, Y. (2024). *A Stranger in Luhansk, at Home in Moscow. Who is Rodion Miroshnyk?*. Detector Media. Retrieved from <https://en.detector.media/post/a-stranger-in-luhansk-at-home-in-moscow-who-is-rodion-miroshnyk>

50 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/miroshnik_r/17109

51 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/miroshnik_r/13891

52 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/miroshnik_r/11153

53 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/chp_crimea/38111

54 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/dnrpravda_news/62272

55 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/dnrpravda_news/79607

56 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/GP_Donbass/290745

57 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/mariupolz/49045>

58 Lorenz, W./ Zaręba, S. (2022). *Consequences of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 Gas Pipeline Explosions*. The Polish Institute of International Affairs. Retrieved from <https://pism.pl/publications/consequences-of-the-nord-stream-1-and-2-gas-pipeline-explosions>

59 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/miroshnik_r/16409

60 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2022). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/miroshnik_r/9908

61 Myrotvorets Research Center (ed.) (2025). *Sergienko Vladimir Vladimirovich*. Retrieved from <https://myrotvorets.center/criminal/sergienko-vladimir-vladimirovich-2/>

62 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2022). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/vvsergienko/2761>

63 Department of Global Communications - DGC (2024). *UN Security Council Arria-formula meeting „Crimes of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the nationalist battalions“ [Film]*. Retrieved from <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1c78db8iz>

64 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/russiaun/5353>

ding Germany.⁶⁵ Young people were coordinated by local «United Russia» party activists. That visit was a part of the broader program of the international youth festival «We returned to Russia». Foreigners visited local museums in Luhansk.⁶⁶ There's no coincidence that Russia is using culture and history as a weapon in order to impose their manipulative vision of the past and present events (war) as well.

On 10 March 2024, a head of Russian occupation administration in the part of Luhansk oblast Leonid Pasechnik told to the foreigners⁶⁷ at youth festival that he hopes for more foreign students in the region in the future.

Chairman of the local national-cultural autonomy of the Germans of the urban district of Melitopol «Widergeburt» Sergei Prikhodchenko⁶⁸ was among mouthpieces of Russian propaganda⁶⁹ about ethnic minorities policies of the Russian occupiers in the part of Zaporizhia oblast. There was a meeting with the representatives of ethnic minorities on 12 August 2023 in Melitopol.⁷⁰ Prikhodchenko, being self-proclaimed as the head of the Germans of Melitopol said that he got an official registration (legitimization by the Russian occupation administration).

Sergei Prikhodchenko was also part of a propaganda campaign about multiculturalism in Russia during the official celebrations of Unity Day on 4 November 2023.⁷¹

Germans, who came to the South of Ukraine (contemporary Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts of Ukraine) as colonists at the end of the XVIII century were Mennonites.⁷² Germans were invited by the Russian empire and got economic privileges in an exchange. During the German-Soviet war they were massively deported by NKVD. Stefan Bruno Shaller from Germany was an «international observer» at the «referendum» in Melitopol in September 2022.⁷³ According to him the voting was «organized very well».

65 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/LIC_LPR/63863

66 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/LIC_LPR/63884?single

67 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/LIC_LPR/63889

68 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/za_tv_ru/13617

69 РІА Мелітополь правова інформація [RIA Pivden](2023). Кто из предателей Мелитопольских национальных общин прославлял Россию в пропагандистском ролике (2 часть, фото) [Who among the traitors of Melitopol national communities glorified Russia in the propaganda video (2 part, photo)]. Retrieved from [https://ria-m.tv/news/334675/kto_iz_predateley_melitopolskiy_natsionalnyih_obschin_proslavlyal_rossiyu_v_propagandistskom_rolike_\(2_chast_foto\).html](https://ria-m.tv/news/334675/kto_iz_predateley_melitopolskiy_natsionalnyih_obschin_proslavlyal_rossiyu_v_propagandistskom_rolike_(2_chast_foto).html)

70 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/NowMelitopol/11568>

71 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/za_tv_ru/16780

72 Barkar, S. (2025). Деїчі вигнанці – українські меноніти [Twice Exiled - Ukrainian Mennonites]. Український інтерес [Ukrainian Interest]. Retrieved from <https://uain.press/articles/dvichi-vygnantsi-ukrayinski-menonity-1171133>

73 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2022). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/srochnow/17730>

Russia actively used foreign observers during the «presidential elections» in March 2024. One of the «civil activists» from Spain Fernando Moragon shared the manipulation of Russian propaganda outlets in the occupied territories of Ukraine that after visiting Donbas he was included in black lists in Germany and Ukraine.⁷⁴

According to the information of the Myrotvorets database, Moragon⁷⁵ is the head of the Spanish-Russian Eurasia research center.

Apart from that different youth forums, and summits with foreigners have only one goal – to show the normal life under the Russian occupation and remind that there is no isolation at all.

Russia was blackmailing Germany about the denunciation of the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (2+4), which finalized the unification of Germany in 1990.⁷⁶ It was connected with the possible and long debatable⁷⁷ provision of Ukraine with the medium-range missile «Taurus» by Germany. So, Russian politicians said that in the case of giving «Taurus» to Ukraine, Russia would leave the treaty. It was stated by the head of the German community of Crimea Yuri Hempel and senator from Crimea Sergei Tsekov on 1 March 2024.

Moreover, the provision of «Taurus» would lead to an allegedly higher civilian death toll.⁷⁸

According to Myrotvorets database⁷⁹ Hempel was a member of the electoral commission at the so-called referendum in Crimea on 16 March 2014, being held to legitimize the Russian occupation of the peninsula. Later on, Yuri Hempel started to work for the Russian occupation administration as a deputy of parliament and a head of the Committee of State Council of the Republic of Crimea on public diplomacy and interethnic relations. He was one of those people, directly involved in inviting German officials and German citizens, who illegally visited Crimea after the Russian occupation in 2014. Such visits were frequent – like at least twice a year international visits were organized. The German delegation to the occupied Crimea compared the peninsula with Spain and Italy.⁸⁰ Pretending a «high quality of life» is one of the aspects of propaganda efforts and foreign visits have to empower the feeling of international recognition of the Russian occupation of Crimea.

74 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/dan_dnr/21761

75 Myrotvorets Research Center (ed.) (2025). Moragon Fernando.

Retrieved from <https://myrotvorets.center/criminal/moragon-fernando/>

76 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/rus_demiurge/68853

77 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/itsdonetsk/139064>

78 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/zo_telegraf/6584

79 Myrotvorets Research Center (ed.) (2025). Yuriy Konstantinovich. Retrieved from <https://myrotvorets.center/criminal/gempel-yuriy-konstantinovich/>

80 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2021). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/tvcrimea24/12302>

In July 2023, Hempel met with a German citizen Heinrich Ginz,⁸¹ who illegally came to Crimea and brought humanitarian aid to the Russians in the Kherson oblast.⁸²

In an interview for state Russian information agency TASS in April 2024, Hempel said that German citizens, who permanently live in Crimea are successfully integrating into the local society.⁸³ Previously, in April 2023, Yuri Hempel stated that 200 German families returned to Crimea since the beginning of 2022.⁸⁴

German political commentator Aleksandr Rar is frequently cited by Russian media^{85,86} and different pro-Russian Telegram channels⁸⁷ in the occupied territories of Ukraine.⁸⁸ Rar is a former scientific director of the German-Russian Forum in Berlin and a senior advisor of the President of the German-Russian Chamber of Commerce.⁸⁹ He is a member of the Valdai Club⁹⁰ (an annual forum and network of public figures, intellectuals, analysts, and scholars, organized by the Kremlin for having more geopolitical power abroad) and a participant in the «Petersburg dialogue». Since 2015, Rar has been a senior consultant at Gazprom Brussels.⁹¹ Gazprom is a key state Russian gas company with ambitions of getting control over the energy markets in Europe and globally.⁹²

Rar is commenting on the topics of occupied territories of Ukraine the following way: Ukraine won't return them, the division of Ukraine is inevitable, and the West could compensate for the loss of territories for Kyiv with EU membership.⁹³

His propaganda views on the Russian-Ukrainian war has also a German aspect. Aleksandr Rar greeted (it

was during an interview for Arguments and Facts on 28 October, 2024) the possible phone call of Chancellor Scholz with Vladimir Putin.⁹⁴

The current situation with StratCom regarding the occupied territories in Ukraine

Since 2014, it has been difficult to form and implement Ukraine's information policy towards the occupied/front-line territories due to different reasons.

On the one side, there was an absence of Kyiv' systematic humanitarian policy in the South and East of Ukraine before the Revolution of Dignity, 2013-2014 – the regions, where Russia was actively sharing anti-Ukrainian propaganda with post-Soviet nostalgia and targeting West/NATO as the main evil.

The occupied territories of Ukraine lived for more than 10 (2) years in an information vacuum, where Russia was trying to get total cognitive control over local people. Russian Internet providers started their work in Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea after 2014 and the Internet was centralized in the Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine in 2023. Local media from the regions of South and East Ukraine cover the hostilities of the Russian-Ukrainian war, internally displaced people, media collaborators on the Russian side, and the history and culture of those territories. Some media were displaced due to the war twice – in 2014 and 2022.

The topic of occupied territories is not covered much by national Ukrainian media due to the lack of verified data, security reasons, and the absence of Ukrainian politicians on the future of these territories. Russian occupiers have dramatically changed there regions in demography, economy, and identity.

On the Ukrainian government level, we have different perspectives and levels of work with the frontline/occupied territories of Ukraine. The main Ukrainian government institution, which works with issues of the occupied territories is the Ministry of Reintegration of temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine⁹⁵ was established back in 2016. Its mission is wide and covers the topics of evacuation, demining, social policy for internally displaced persons, etc. In December 2024, the Ministry of Reintegration was transformed into the Ministry of Unity of Ukraine.⁹⁶ The latter mission would include the policy of returning Ukrainian refugees from Europe and beyond.

At the same time, there is a Center of Strategic Communications and Information Security as a part of the Ministry of

81 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/NowMelitopol/10302>

82 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/chp_crimea/24218?single

83 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/tass_agency/241205

84 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2023). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/chp_crimea/19579

85 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2022). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/tass_agency/106190

86 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2021). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/ukr_2025_ru/37471

87 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from <https://t.me/zonewsru/14788>

88 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/dan_dnr/34429

89 СПИСОК ПУТИНА [PUTIN'S LIST] (ed.) (2025). Рар Александр Глебович [Alexander Rahr]. Retrieved from <https://www.spisok-putina.org/personas/rar/>

90 Beav, P. (2023). Putin Uses Valdai Club to Repeat Nuclear Bluff. The Jamestown Foundation 2025. Retrieved from <https://jamestown.org/program/putin-uses-valdai-club-to-repeat-nuclear-bluff/>

91 Фонд Росконгресс [Roscongress Foundation] (2025). Александр Рар [Alexander Rahr]. Retrieved from <https://roscongress.org/speakers/rar-aleksandr/>

92 Ukrainian Research Institute. Harvard University (ed.) (2021). Europe's Gas Crisis and Russian Energy Politics: Experts Respond. Retrieved from <https://www.huri.harvard.edu/tcup-commentary/europes-gas-crisis-russian-energy-politics>

93 Telegram FZ LLC and Telegram Messenger Inc. (2024). Telegram. Retrieved from https://t.me/dan_dnr/34429

94 Tseplyaev, V (2024). «Раздел Украины неизбежен». Немецкий политолог Рар раскрыл планы Запада [„The division of Ukraine is inevitable.“ German political scientist Rahr revealed the West's plans.] In: Weekly „Arguments and Facts“ No. 44. The Gift of Intervention 10/30/2024. Retrieved from <https://aif.ru/politics/world/razdel-ukrainy-neizbezhnen-nemeckiy-politolog-rar-raskryl-plany-zapada>

95 <https://minre.gov.ua>

96 Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine (2025). <https://unity.gov.ua/>

Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine, which started its work in 2021.⁹⁷ The Center's work lies within different aspects of media literacy training for Ukraine's officials in the regions, the analysis of Russian information operations, and forming the strategic narratives of Ukraine on war, foreign policy, internal affairs, and emergencies at the war.

The Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea⁹⁸ is a key government body in forming and implementing policies on Crimean reintegration. Crimea Platform⁹⁹, a new coordination format of the deoccupation of the Crimean peninsula started in 2021.

The Center for Countering Disinformation at the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine coordinates the research on Russian information operations in the occupied territories, Ukraine, the West, and the Global South. There is no one central stratcom institution at the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine but there are stratcoms in different Ministries.

It's the people's choice to stay in the occupied territory or to leave it and go to Ukraine or further abroad as we've seen since 2022.

The Centre for National Resistance¹⁰⁰ is an integral part of the Special Operations Forces, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, and is responsible for the coordination of partisan movements and analysis of public opinion and the military-political situation on the occupied territories of Ukraine. There are research papers¹⁰¹ about the situation in the parts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, Kherson oblasts, and Crimea. The latest one is devoted to the situation on TOT during the first half of 2024.

Local media from the East and South of Ukraine are covering the Russian aggression since its beginning in February 2014. For journalists from those areas, the war is their personal pain, drama, and tragedy.

English-language outlet «Occupied Media»¹⁰² started in 2024 by uniting the efforts of several relocated media from the occupied territories of Ukraine: Realna Gazeta¹⁰³, Trybun¹⁰⁴, 0629¹⁰⁵, Most¹⁰⁶, RIA Pivden¹⁰⁷, Novyny Donbasu¹⁰⁸, Berdiansk 24¹⁰⁹, Skhidnyy Farvater,¹¹⁰ OstroV.¹¹¹ News coverage, investigations, analytics and

more can be found on the website of Occupied Media.

Unfortunately, due to different reasons (security measures, Russian hybrid influence in the West, financial issues), there are not so many stories about the life of Ukrainians under the Russian occupation: tortures, kidnappings, kids deportations, forced mobilization. The occupied territories are covered more by local media but not on the national level in Ukraine. Therefore, it has to be more joint projects and collaboration of local and national media in Ukraine as well as stories about the occupation for the global audience.

We need to understand that the public opinion in the occupied territories of Ukraine is not black and white. People can get a Russian passport for their survival or wear an embroidered shirt (or other traditional Ukrainian clothes) and start to work for the Russian occupation administration. There must be more nuanced and personalized approach regarding the collaborationism in the occupied territories of Ukraine. Moreover, there won't be any recovery of these territories after the liberation from the Russian occupation without the investments of foreign countries, including Germany.

Recommendations

- Establish joint projects for Ukrainian and German (European) media that will cover topics related only to the occupied territories of Ukraine and related issues of internally displaced people, as well as the phenomenon of collaborationism in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. These projects will help combine the joint expertise and efforts of Ukrainian and German media professionals, bloggers, scholars, activists, and officials.
- More coordination of work among the Ukrainian government institutions, Defence Forces of Ukraine, volunteers, media, and academia in their work regarding the occupied territories of Ukraine and their reintegration. It's about the study (online) courses about the hybrid warfare of Russia in the occupied territories of Ukraine, international communication of Ukraine in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, strategic communications in the regions of East and South of Ukraine, etc.
- Support of local relocated media from Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, Kherson oblasts, and Crimea in their coverage of the occupied territories, Russian ideological indoctrination there, internally displaced people across Ukraine, war crimes of the Russian army in the occupied territories, forced mobilization of Ukrainians to the Russian army. These topics are very under-covered by European and international media.
- synchronisation of sanctions of Germany along with G7, EU, USA, UK, Canada, and Australia towards

97 Centre for Strategic Communications (2025). <https://spravdi.gov.ua>

98 Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (2025). <https://ppu.gov.ua/en/>

99 Crimea Platform (2025). <https://crimea-platform.org/en/>

100 The National Resistance Center (2025). <https://sprotiv.mod.gov.ua>

101 The National Resistance Center (2025). Publications. Retrieved from <https://sprotiv.mod.gov.ua/publikatsiyi/>

102 Occupied Media (2025). <https://occupied.media/en/>

103 Realna Gazeta (2025). <https://realgazeta.com.ua>

104 Trybun (2025). <https://tribun.com.ua>

105 0629 (2025). <https://www.0629.com.ua>

106 Most (2025). <https://most.ks.ua>

107 RIA Pivden (2025). <https://ria-m.tv/ua>

108 Novyny Donbasu (2024) <https://novosti.dn.ua/>

109 Berdiansk 24 (2025). <https://www.brd24.com/>

110 Skhidnyy Farvater (2025). <https://farvatermedia.com/>

111 OstroV (2025). <https://www.ostro.org/>

actors of Russian propaganda in the occupied territories of Ukraine. People, who are directly involved and implement cognitive occupation of Ukrainian territories with a Russian propaganda playbook must be held accountable for their role in waging the war against Ukraine.