

Roman OFITSYNSKY¹

Ukraine

Yuriy OFITSYNSKY²

Ukraine

"BATTLES FOR HISTORY" IN THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR FROM FEBRUARY 24, 2022 TO THE PRESENT

Abstract: *The proposed study focuses on the principled intellectual contests - "battles for history" - from the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 to the present day. It is natural that the authors emphasize on such important research concepts as interpretation, source, ideologue, totalitarianism, stereotype, civilization, paradigm. It is emphasized that a sacrificial struggle is being waged not only for Ukrainian independence, but also for the future of Europe and the world in general. This is, in fact, an intercivilizational war - between democracies and anti-democracies. For the most part, it is considered in established comparative, stylistic and figurative dimensions, which are very recognizable in the narratives of turning points in world history.*

Keywords: *war, aggression, civilization, rascism, decolonization, Ukraine, Russia*

Introduction

Being scientists – historians who specialize in modern history, as well as public historians, the authors of these lines often speak mostly to Ukrainian-speaking audience on current topics related to the title of this article and the

¹ Roman Ofitsynsky, PhD, Professor, Augustyn Voloshyn Carpathian University, Transcarpathian Institute of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education (Ukraine). Email: ofitsynsky@gmail.com

² Yuriy Ofitsynskyy, MA. Email: yuriy.ofitsynskyy@gmail.com

course of the Russian-Ukrainian war in general³. Occasionally, it is necessary to explain what is important at a popular level to foreigners for their better awareness, for example, at the request of Slovak neighbors⁴. The personal YouTube channel of one of the authors, which serves as a kind of video archive, contains thematic interviews for radio and television, public speeches, in particular, about the Balakliya offensive operation of the Defense Forces of Ukraine on September 6–11, 2022⁵.

The authors of this scientific work have been studying the noted issues for a long, since the very beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war on February 20, 2014, when the military occupation and illegal annexation of Ukrainian Crimea by Putin's Russia began. Thus, a monographic study on the modern Russian-Ukrainian war, with prominent emphasis on the theater of war in Donbas and publications of the world-influential daily newspaper *The New York Times* as of 2018, written by one of the authors of this article, was properly presented in media space to professional and general communities⁶. This monograph expresses a realistic hypothesis, which was subsequently confirmed by historical realities and which can be extended to the events of 2022–2023. Firstly, Russian aggression in Ukraine is designed to prolong Putinism as an autocracy. Secondly, the duration of the Russian-Ukrainian war depends on the pro-Western modernization of Ukraine and Russia's overcoming of totalitarianism. Thirdly, its completion is possible in a short time, and the consequences will be overcome by more than one generation.

For now, we will consider not “trench truth” or military art, previous achievements and current circumstances. Instead, we will focus on “battles for history” during the latest war of civilizations, emphasizing important concepts such as interpretation, source, ideologeme, totalitarianism, stereotype, civilization, and paradigm. Of course, this list is not exhaustive, as thousands of studies from various scientific fields have already emerged worldwide. However, the concepts we have highlighted serve as optimal guidelines for achieving the goal set forth in this work.

³ R. Ofitsynskyy, *Putinizm natysnuv «yadernu knopku» samoznyshchennia*, <<https://glavcom.ua/columns/romanoficynskyy/putinizm-natysnuv-yadernu-knopku-samoznishchennya-828820.html>> (11.03.2022).

⁴ *Historik z Užhorodu pre HN: Ruská armáda je len vyblednutou kópiou sovietskej*, <https://hnonline.sk/focus/publicistika/23342394-historik-z-uzhorodu-pre-hn-ruska-armada-je-len-vyblednutou-kopiou-sovietskej-s-takymto-nepriatelom-sa-este-nestretla> (08.03.2022).

⁵ R. Ofitsynskyy, *Balakliiska nastupalna operatsiia*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRUU65T5hxg&ab_channel=РоманОфіцінський> (11.09.2022).

⁶ Y. Ofitsynskyy, *Suchasna rosiisko-ukrainska viina (za materialamy hazety «The New York Times» 2013–2017 rokiv)*, Uzhhorod 2018, p. 312.

Source arrays

There are countless thematic sources. Their list and volume is growing uncontrollably and everywhere, particularly in visual formats. For instance, “Maps of Russia's invasion of Ukraine” is constantly updated by the influential American daily *The Washington Post*, which employs over a thousand journalists. The newspaper provides a comprehensive news column titled “War in Ukraine” featuring verified videos. On August 16, 2022, it published an extensive article titled “The Road to War: The US Tried to Convince Allies and Zelensky of the Risk of an Invasion”⁷, which generated significant attention. In 14 chapters, the actions and decisions of statesmen are reconstructed using the oral-historical method – based on an interview, in particular, with the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky on August 8, 2022.

The journalistic investigation reverberated around the world and was also translated into Ukrainian. Confessions that President Zelensky had concealed important information about Russia's attack from Ukrainian society resounded loudly. He indicated an economic reason, so that due to a possible panic, Ukraine would not lose 7 billion dollars every month from October 2021. This was conveyed in direct speech with the caveat: “Then I would lose 7 billion dollars”. It is like the apocryphal quote “The state is me,” which was attributed to Louis XIV a century after his death.

On the occasion of the first anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance has published thematic information materials titled “We Survived – We Will Win!” on its official website⁸. Publishers drew attention primarily to their own media projects – an interactive map of Russia's full-scale invasion (wartoday.info) and the Virtual Museum of Russian Aggression (rusaggression.gov.ua) – an online portal documenting events and crimes committed during the occupation of Ukrainian territories. These projects provide updated information in three languages: Ukrainian, English, and Russian.

Let's reiterate: there is a wide range of mass visual sources in free access on almost all social platforms, especially videos of combat actions, computer infographics or works of fine art. For example, the artist Nataliya Li from Kyiv portrayed recognizable female figures representing the heroic cities of

⁷ *Road to war: U.S. struggled to convince allies, and Zelensky, of risk of invasion*, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/ukraine-road-to-war/>> (16.08.2022).

⁸ *Vystoialy – peremozhemo!*, <https://uinp.gov.ua/informaciyni-materialy/vchytelyam/metodychni-rekomendaciyi/vystoialy-peremozhemo-informaciyni-materialy-do-richnyci-povnomasshtabnogo-vtorgnennya-rf-v-ukrayinu?fbclid=IwAR31KJ8heeRN7-sicqn5nQHgZNX4W1m6m2_044Byv4HfPGqBbJlh6Kf_Hfc> (21.02.2023).

Ukraine⁹. The popular artist Yuriy Zhuravel from the city of Rivne accompanies the war events with expressive graphics on his social media page and personal website¹⁰.

The “War Map in Ukraine” project combined cartographic visualization with interactive texts. This system of online maps, created by Ukrainian programmers, allows you to live monitor the course of Russian aggression since 2014¹¹. For its part, the Kyiv company of professional content creators “TopLead” makes daily infographics and maps about the war in Ukraine¹².

The most important is immediately reflected in the world's largest electronic encyclopedia “Wikipedia”, such as: “rascism” in 38 languages. It is worth noting that Kremlin censorship (“Roskomnadzor” – the federal service for supervision in the field of communications, information technologies and mass communications) demanded in April 2022 that “Wikipedia” remove six articles: “Russian Invasion of Ukraine” (currently in 139 languages), “Bucha Massacre” (64 languages), “Battle of Kyiv (2022)” (36 languages), “War Crimes in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine” (24 languages), “Mariupol Theater Airstrike” (in 18 languages), “Mariupol Hospital Airstrike” (in 17 languages)¹³.

Overall, the modern Russian-Ukrainian war is largely regarded as one of the most extensively documented act of armed aggression in history. To this end, the non-commercial electronic Ukraine War Archive (ukrainewararchive.org) reliably preserves all forms of digital materials that have been collected since the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022¹⁴. Its primary objective is to ensure the proper use of these materials in criminal trials, journalistic investigations, scientific and artistic endeavors. Currently, the archive houses nearly 8 million unique media files (audio, video, photos, and texts), including more than three hundred documented interviews. At least 36,000 registered events and potential war crimes are covered. Notably, the archive is not open to the public, access is granted following through verification procedures. The maintenance and expansion of the archive involve fifty permanent specialists, as well as volunteers.

⁹ *Zhinochi obrazy rosiisko-ukrainskoi viiny*, <facebook.com/photo/?fbid=5103977546349888&set=pcb.5103978546349788> (23.04.2022).

¹⁰ *Y. Zhuravel*, <zhurawell.com.ua/?fbclid=IwAR0HTZeHdlvvSjUBoNTYzqJmoJRi55M1QZRZKBDrG8YQFUSMinSTd202_dU> (08.08.2023).

¹¹ *Mapa viiny v Ukraini*, <liveuamap.com/uk> (08.08.2023).

¹² *Get the latest infographics and maps about the war in Ukraine*, <uawarininfographic.toplead.com.ua/> (08.08.2023).

¹³ *Roskomnadzor potreboval ot «Vikipedii» udalit pyat statej pro voennye prestupleniya v Ukraine*, <<https://zona.media/news/2022/04/04/viki>> (04.04.2022).

¹⁴ *Ukraine War Archive*, <ukrainewararchive.org> (08.08.2023).

Of course, these are just a few of the available sources. Nevertheless, the acquired meanings – the “battles for history” – hold greater significance than anything else. It is worth mentioning that *Battles for History* is the title of the well-known 1952 collection by French historian Lucien Febvre, the founder of the “Annals” school, which focuses on eras, civilizations, and mentality. From this point of view, we will make the appropriate emphasis further.

Interpretive approaches

Usually, the modern Russian-Ukrainian war, which remains ongoing and has entered its tenth year, is divided into three distinct periods. It began with the unprovoked hybrid aggression of the Russian Federation to the south of Ukraine, specifically, the occupation and annexation of Crimea from February 20 to March 18, 2014. Subsequently, this war continued in a similar hybrid manner in the Ukrainian Donbas, comprising two stages: anti-terrorist operation (April 14, 2014 - April 30, 2018) and Joint Forces Operation (April 30, 2018 - February 24, 2022). Official Kyiv conducted them against Russian and pro-Russian forces.

In the third period, which began after Russia’s large-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, April emerged as the turning point. Despite Russian attempts, their plans to capture Kyiv have thus far been unsuccessful. Since then, hostilities have entered the prolonged phase of defending and liberating of Ukrainian territories within internationally recognized borders, encompassing several stages.

It’s worth noting that a comprehensive examination of the modern Russian-Ukrainian war, particularly the period starting from February 24, 2022, is included in the updated curricula of general secondary education. This coverage encompasses lessons in the history of Ukraine and world history, jurisprudence and civic education, as well as the subject “Defense of Ukraine”. It is indeed important to highlight Russia’s genocidal actions, the national resistance, and the international support extended to Ukraine. Additionally, key concepts such as “Russian peace”, “rascism”, “politics of Russification”, “collaborationism”, and more are appropriately emphasized¹⁵.

It’s also worth noting that on January 17, 2023, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine sent informational materials for use in the educational process. Specifically, it included an extended commentary developed by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine on the historical periodization of the large-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, spanning nearly thirty pages. As of December 2022, this commentary delineated three

¹⁵ *Vsesvitnia istoriia. Istoriiia Ukrainy. 6–11 klasy. Navchalni prohramy dlia zakladiv zahalnoi serednoi osvity*. Kyiv 2022, p. 260.

stages or strategic operations: the first defensive (February 24 – April, a disruption of the enemy’s initial concept – “blitzkrieg” – and transition to “war of attrition”), the second defensive (May–August, Ukrainian defense forces seizing military-political and military-strategic initiative), and the offensive (September–December - Balakliia (also referred to as Kharkiv) and Kherson operations)¹⁶.

Slightly earlier, on September 29, 2022, the mentioned ministry prepared methodological materials for teaching international humanitarian law within the courses of history, civic education, and legal studies, in accordance with the updated curricula of general secondary education. This collective work spanned nearly one hundred and forty pages, focusing on key aspects: the deployment of military actions, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russian forces and their documentation, national resistance, the Armed Forces and civil society in the defense of the state, the volunteer movement, international support for Ukraine, lend-lease¹⁷.

Primarily, the observed phenomenon of world history is examined within a three-dimensional context: from the perspectives of Ukraine, Russia, and the global community (highlighting specific countries and regions such as the West and the Global South). To Ukrainians, this war represents a struggle for liberation; for the broader international audience, it constitutes an interstate conflict; and in Russian official terminology, it is referred to as a “special military operation”.

Very often, popular media publications refer to Russian aggression as a war for Ukraine’s independence. A familiar analogy from school desks to the average community is the American Revolutionary War, which lasted 8 years, 4 months, and 15 days, from April 19, 1775, to September 3, 1783.

At the same time, Ukraine is engaged in a modern war against Russia not only for its own independence but also for the future of Europe. In other words, it is an intercivilizational war. Notably, during the Munich Security Conference held on February 17–19, 2023, participants interpreted this war in various ways - European, neo-imperialist, and neo-colonial. However, there was a clear usage of the term “war” rather than surrogate substitutes such as “conflict” or “crisis”, as had been the case in the past within Western expert circles and among statesmen from leading countries around the world.

¹⁶ *Rozshyrenyi komentar do istorychnoi periodyzatsii rosiisko-ukrainskoi viiny*, <<https://mon.gov.ua/storage/app/media/zagalna%20serednya/metodichni%20recomendazii/2023/01/18/Inform.materialy.HSH-ZSU.18.01.2023.pdf>> (18.01.2023).

¹⁷ *Metodychni rekomendatsii shchodo vykladannia mizhnarodnoho humanitarnoho prava*, <<https://mon.gov.ua/storage/app/media/zagalna%20serednya/metodichni%20recomendazii/2022/09/27/Pro.metod.rekom.shchodo.vykl.mizhn.hum.prava-4.2698-22.vid.27.09.2022.pdf>> (27.09.2022).

However, the complex terminological question of “How to label the modern Russian-Ukrainian war”¹⁸ remains open for professional discussions. Specifically, should it be categorized as existential (in defense of the vital essence of Ukrainian identity), a full-scale or wide-scale, a total conventional, a deferred (postponed) major European war, genocidal (in terms of the Ukrainian people’s genocide), liberating for Ukraine, or a hybrid Third World War¹⁸? The last definition has found favor among Russian propagandists, who interpret the confrontation between the West and China, rather than a conventional global conflict, which is currently disadvantageous for competitors.

Most often, the modern Russian-Ukrainian war is examined within established comparative, stylistic, or figurative contexts. It is therefore no coincidence that after the “Miracle on the Vistula” of August 13-25, 1920, where Polish and Ukrainian soldiers repelled the Russian Bolshevik offensive to the West, there is now discussion of the “Miracle on the Dnipro” from February 24 to April 2, 2022. During this period, Russian troops retreated from Kyiv using the sole surviving bridge in the village of Ivankiv, following their defeat between the cities of Bucha and Irpin. These events have become the most recent symbols of the indomitable spirit of the Ukrainian nation.

It is quite telling that many of the comparisons drawn regarding modern Russian aggression against Ukraine are rooted in narratives from the Second World War, including the quest for a contemporary Winston Churchill. The anti-Putin coalition, launched by defense ministers from nearly fifty countries on April 26, 2022, at the American Ramstein Air Base in Germany, is seen as reminiscent of the anti-Hitler coalition. Furthermore, on May 9, the US law on lend-lease for the defense of democracy in Ukraine was enacted, effectively opening a “second front” against the Russian aggressor. For instance, the “Ramstein format”, known as the Contact Group on the Defense of Ukraine, currently comprises 54 countries. They have already conducted 14 collective meetings as of July 2023, focusing on pertinent matters concerning military assistance to Ukraine in countering the Russian attack.

Intercivilizational war

The modern Russian-Ukrainian war represents a confrontation not only between two nations (states) but also between totalitarian and democratic civilizations. It lacks comparable sides in its narrower dimension. On one hand, there is an entrenched wrongdoer – Russia; on the other, an unyielding victim – Ukraine. This is why the attempts by various disinformers, particularly among scholars and educators in Western countries, to justify Putin’s Russia and

¹⁸ *Perelom. Viina Rosii proty Ukrainy u chasovykh plastakh i prostorakh mynuvshyny*, Kyiv 2022, t. 1, pp. 182, 188, 204, 215.

apportion blame to both sides are noteworthy¹⁹. Such efforts are periodically exposed and are equated in public opinion to complicity in the crimes of the Russian aggressor state.

It is worth noting separately that in June 2022, a letter by 36 prominent American experts discussing the Western strategy in the Russian-Ukrainian war gained significant attention. Based on their strong conviction, they believed that a Russian victory would lead to the collapse of the global world order, and Ukraine's defeat would result in a reevaluation of the geostrategic legacy of the Second World War. As a result, the West must actively work to thwart Russian aggression, ensuring that Ukraine successfully repels the invaders from its territory²⁰. Since then, this outlined position has remained unchanged.

Putin's senseless war has tectonically yielded the opposite effect of what the Kremlin had hoped for, leading to the rejuvenation of the West (specifically NATO, which has been joined by neutral Finland and Sweden subsequently), the empowerment of Ukraine, and the debilitation of Russia. Furthermore, the aggressor nation will remain isolated globally until its leaders face international tribunals and Russia provides proper compensation to Ukraine. Simultaneously, a comprehensive international program for post-war reconstruction in Ukraine, featuring infrastructure aligned with Western models, is in the works. It was also emphasized that the revitalized transatlantic community is prepared to confront future threats even after prevailing over the current ones²¹.

As aptly noted, it is the Ukrainian people's resilience against Russian aggression that acts as a shield and barrier against the global expansion of non-democratic nations²². None of the major international players had anticipated an existential confrontation with Russia prior to its large-scale invasion of Ukraine. The leading democracies are still working to avert a rupture in the current framework of international relations. Despite Russia's numerous aggressive actions following the dissolution of the USSR, there was no resolute response from the West until February 24, 2022, except for sanctions that did not significantly impact the regime under the personal authority of Vladimir Putin.

¹⁹ *Yak studenty u Brytanii vykryvaiut vykladacha u poshyrenni brekhni pro viinu v Ukraini*, <<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-61662864>> (01.06.2022).

²⁰ *36 experts agree: Stay the course in Ukraine*, <<https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/3508456-36-experts-agree-stay-the-course-in-ukraine/>> (01.06.2022).

²¹ K. Volker, *After Russia's War*, <<https://cepa.org/after-russias-war-a-stronger-ukraine-and-west-will-emerge/?fbclid=IwAR0dC0yDoZUS4o39j9TkfeM7VAp6pbRAuODnstYk9ciQ45h93QQY WTXLsMQ>> (02.05.2022).

²² R. Ofitsynskyy, Y. Isak, O. Slipetsky, *Rosiisko-ukrainska viina vid 24 liutoho 2022 roku donyni: istorychni realii ta potochni uroky*, "Aktualni pytannia humanitarnykh nauk" 2023, Vol. 62 (2), pp. 4-9.

Putin's ideologeme

In September 2003, the impactful book *Ukraine is not Russia* by Leonid Kuchma, the former president of Ukraine, was published in Moscow. To the Russian public, it felt like a blunt blow to the head. In response, the “Russian world” (“russkiy mir”) – the doctrine of Putinism, which was crystallizing at the time, divided Ukrainians (portrayed as a “brotherly nation” deceived by the West) into categories of “good” and “bad” (so called “neo-Nazis-banderivets”). The “special military operation” launched by the Russian Federation in 2022 for the so-called “denazification” of Ukraine was preceded by a barrage of fabrications and manipulations aimed at creating a new division of the world.

The Russian elite is still obsessed with rewriting history. Firstly, it persistently portrays Ukrainians and Russians as a single people, a notion rejected by 91% of Ukrainian citizens in April 2022²³. Secondly, it depicts neighboring countries such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine as reactionary, nationalist, and anti-Semitic states, which is utterly absurd. Thirdly, it propagates Soviet revisionism, such as the notion of the “Great Victory”. As a result, renewed falsehoods have emerged, suggesting that France and Great Britain, who were involved in betraying Poland, share blame for the outbreak of the Second World War, alongside Germany, while absolving the USSR. These efforts should be characterized as an attempt to appear as “fighters for national independence or liberation from communism”. This includes the grandiose and misleading narrative that the Soviet Union profoundly and decisively defeated Nazism, thus saving the world.

By the way, a group of three dozen fact-checkers and analysts participated in the enlightening volunteer initiative known as “On the Other Side of Putin's Lies” (putinlies.com.ua). They meticulously analyzed Vladimir Putin's article titled “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians”, which was published on the official website of the President of the Russian Federation on July 12, 2021, in both Russian and Ukrainian. Their efforts resulted in the direct refutation of 58 false claims and the detailed explanation of over a hundred manipulative techniques, including the omission of facts, concept substitution, labeling, and false analogies.

The discussion at that time, aimed at countering Putin's theses, became so intense that it was labeled the “war of texts”. It became evident that Russia had been fabricating false narratives for an extended period, consistently disseminating them within the global information space for the purpose of disinformation and propaganda.

²³ *Ukrainci ta rosijani ne odyn narod*, <<https://zn.ua/ukr/UKRAINE/ukrajintsi-ta-rosijani-ne-odin-narod-tak-vvazhajut-ponad-90-hromadjan-ukrajini.html>> (08.04.2022).

Echoing the fabricated concept of the “historical unity of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples”, Putin labeled pro-Western Ukraine as nationalist and russophobic. For him, the obliteration of an independent Ukraine signifies the “final solution to the Ukrainian question”, achieved through genocidal practices and a coerced transformation into a “single nation”. Putin’s “special operation” aimed at dismantling Ukraine to construct a neo-imperial Russia bears resemblance to the Nazi project of the Third Reich. As a result, Ukraine is perceived by many as a hunter who hunted the devil.

As British Foreign Minister Liz Truss rightfully noted on April 27, 2022, the West faces a desperate rogue Putin who shows indifference to international norms²⁴. The economic and security structures established after the Second World War and the Cold War have not deterred Russian aggression. Nevertheless, as Liz Truss suggests, Ukraine’s victory will usher in a new era of peace, security, and prosperity for the world.

Turning totalitarianism

The extensive propagation of imperial-militaristic consciousness has given rise to a form of “turning totalitarianism” in modern Russia. Its profane version, encapsulated in the phrase “Russia did not attack Ukraine”, has gained traction. In the eyes of the West, present-day Russia resembles a fascist state, characterized by the veneration of a single leader (Putin) and a fixation on the past (World War II). It features symbols such as Z, the myth of a golden age of imperial greatness supposedly restored through the invasion of Ukraine. Putin draws inspiration from the works of Russian fascist Ivan Ilyin (1883-1954), branding the defenders of Ukraine as fascists and Nazis and attributing Ukraine’s existence to an international conspiracy²⁵.

An interesting fact: from April to June 2022, the “Ordinary Nazism” exhibition, showcasing the alleged “mass crimes” committed by neo-Nazis and the prevalence of pro-Nazi sentiments in Ukraine, was displayed at the Moscow “Museum of Victory”. Certain exhibits were sourced from the base of the “Azov” regiment in the village of Urzuf, near Mariupol, including symbols, documents, and books like the “History of the UPA” (2021), authored by one of the writers of this article²⁶.

²⁴ *The return of geopolitics*, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretarys-mansion-house-speech-at-the-lord-mayors-easter-banquet-the-return-of-geopolitics>> (27.04.2022).

²⁵ T. Snyder, *We Should Say It. Russia Is Fascist*, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/19/opinion/russia-fascism-ukraine-putin.html>> (09.05.2022).

²⁶ V. Nytko, *Knyzhku uzhhorodskoho profesora chytaly na peredovii*, <<http://www.golos.com.ua/article/361478>> (18.06.2022).

Therefore, in Russia, a series of regional museums dedicated to “the special military operation in Ukraine and the exploits of its participants” have been initiated. Four federal state budgetary institutions of culture are responsible for collecting exhibits related to “the history of Ukraine’s armed aggression against the people of Donbas and the conduct of a special military operation in Ukraine”. These institutions include the State Historical Museum, the Victory Museum, the “Battle of Stalingrad” museum-reserve, and the State Central Museum of Modern History of Russia. This project is coordinated by the Ministry of Culture and the Russian Historical Society, led by Sergei Naryshkin, the Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service. As of May 1, 2023, they have reported the collection of over 12 500 “items, reports, and interviews with local residents”²⁷.

Putin’s Russia has assumed a position reminiscent of Nazi Germany and requires a process of derascification, similar to the denazification that took place from 1945 to 1989. As a response, on May 22, 2022, Ukraine passed a law legalizing the ban on Russian propaganda, designating the Russian Federation as a terrorist state, and characterizing its political regime as “Nazi in nature and practice”²⁸. The authors of the law project clarified that the resolution of the UN General Assembly dated March 2, 2022, had affirmed the presence of state terrorism by the Russian Federation and the neo-Nazi character of its political totalitarian regime. However, it is worth noting that this resolution only acknowledged Russian aggression, adhering to the term established by the UN General Assembly resolution of 1974.

Earlier, in a resolution dated January 27, 2015, Ukrainian lawmakers classified Russia as an aggressor state, taking into account the aforementioned resolution. As a result, on May 2, 2023, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine issued a special statement condemning the rascism that forms the foundation of the state policy of the Russian Federation²⁹. Concurrently, rascism is defined as an inherent aspect of the totalitarian ideology and practices of the regime led by President V. Putin, which is rooted in the traditions of Russian chauvinism and imperialism, as well as the ideologies of the former communist USSR and National Socialism.

²⁷ *V regionah gotovyat muzei, posvyashennye vojne na Ukraine*, <<https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2023/05/02/vse-chto-nuzhno-znat-2-maya-2023-goda-a41777>> (02.05.2023).

²⁸ *Zakon Ukrainy. Pro zaboronu propahandy rosiiskoho natsyistskoho totalitarnoho rezhymu, zbroinoi ahresii Rosiiskoi Federatsii yak derzhavy-terorysta proty Ukrainy, symboliky voiennoho vtorhennia rosiiskoho natsyistskoho totalitarnoho rezhymu v Ukrainu*, <zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2265-IX#Text> (22.05.2022).

²⁹ *Zaiava Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy «Pro vykorystannia politychnym rezhymom rosiiskoi federatsii ideolohii rashyzmu, zasudzhennia zasad i praktyk rashyzmu yak totalitarnykh i liudynonenavysnytskykh»*, <<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3078-20#Text>> (02.05.2023).

So, the state regime of the Russian Federation – Putinism – is categorized as a form of totalitarianism, alongside fascism, Nazism, and communism. At the core of Putinism lies a foundation of imperial chauvinistic ideology marked by rascism. Putinism is sometimes interpreted as an authoritarian regime or neo-Stalinism. Interestingly, the anti-Western pro-Russian regime of Viktor Orbán in Hungary, self-identified as “Christian-democratic national politics,” is classified as an authoritarian regime. Furthermore, the European Parliament, as of September 15, 2022, no longer views Hungary as a full-fledged democracy, but instead designates it as an “hybrid regime of electoral autocracy”³⁰.

Behavioral stereotypes

Modern social networks have a direct impact on the course of military operations and serve as invaluable sources for understanding public sentiments, along with their intellectual foundations. Unlike previous eras that required extensive censorship involving the examination of thousands of archival documents, such as private letters confiscated from the fronts of the Second World War or from politically unreliable ostarbeiters.

Military events, challenging situations, and projections for the upcoming elections are all simultaneously reflected in social networks. Notably, the parliamentary party “European Solidarity” preemptively reported that there are 2.4 thousand of its members serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, among whom a fifth are deputies of local councils. Additionally, more than 4 500 party members, approximately a quarter of whom are deputies, have become volunteers. Some parties, such as “Opposition Platform – For Life” (which was banned by the court in June 2022), have been reminded of the hundreds of their members who are serving as collaborators in the temporarily occupied regions of east and south of Ukraine.

According to a sociological study, in February 2023, 61% of European Union citizens believed that Ukraine would win this war started by the Russian Federation³¹. The share of those who agreed with that ranged from 51% in Italy to 81% in Poland. At the same time, 68% of Europeans regarded the attack on Ukraine as an attack on all of Europe, and 66% considered Russia guilty of the war. However, almost 20% of respondents separately blamed the USA, NATO or Ukraine for the war. This group is the largest in Italy (28%), and the smallest in Poland (6%).

³⁰ *MEPs: Hungary can no longer be considered a full democracy*, <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220909IPR40137/meps-hungary-can-no-longer-be-considered-a-full-democracy>> (15.09.2022).

³¹ *Anxious we stand?*, <<https://eupinions.eu/de/text/anxious-we-stand>> (16.02.2023).

At the same time, it should be noted that during the first year of the war, a number of misconceptions developed in Ukrainian society. The first thing is that Putin has already lost the war, although the Russians could still advance on the battlefield. The news of the provision of Western weapons was taken as a fait accompli, although long and deadly months had to pass before the actual deliveries. Reference information that was used by the enemy to inflict losses on the defense forces of Ukraine and civilians often appeared in social networks. More than once, various Ukrainian bloggers were officially called upon to refrain from public evaluations of combat operations, logistics, support, and commanders' decisions.

Instead, all Ukrainians were expected to be ready for deep social modernization and high self-organization on the basis of democracy and the rule of law. The mayor of Dnipro, Borys Filatov, on his official visit to the western Ukrainian regional center - the city of Chernivtsi, noted on his Facebook page on April 23, 2022, tellingly extensive thoughts on the matter:

“The city is teeming with refugees. Cafes, hotels, and streets are swarming with people. You'll find girls with highlighted hair carrying dogs under their arms, dressed in plush Juicy Couture suits. Boys in cutoff trousers are occupying all the public dining establishments with their laptops. Children are screaming and running on the tables, often with the tacit approval of their parents. Grandfathers and grandmothers are drinking in hotel rooms during the night. There's a complete disregard for traffic rules by cars.

And then there are local girls with tired faces and circles under their eyes, staying awake 24 hours a day at the volunteer center. Romanians and Spaniards distributing food and hygiene supplies. Local people, genuine and dedicated, doing everything – even the impossible – for our Victory. But if you've come to visit, seeking shelter and protection, don't assume that your fancy outfits, spoiled children, and drunk relatives are acceptable. Even if you're paying your hard-earned money for it. True acceptance comes when you approach the local authorities or volunteers and ask, “How can we contribute?” For the sake of our shared Victory”.

Unfortunately, the post, which we promptly copied and translated from the original language (Russian), is no longer available on Facebook for unexplained reasons. As a result, we are presenting the quoted content without a direct reference. Nevertheless, numerous similar testimonies have been made public, validating the depicted realities.

Paradigmatic changes

We are familiar with the maxim that wishful thinking is never accurate. It is professional historians who determine who, how, and what will be remembered. As a result, following the full-scale Russian invasion on February

24, 2022, Ukrainian history education is undergoing a rapid and systematic removal of Soviet and Russian narratives.

Nothing is overlooked. For example, nowadays in Ukraine, fundamental questions about the birth of nations have been advanced from the end of the 18th century to the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries³². It is patiently explained how the Rus (Ukrainian) people of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth clearly manifested themselves between the second half of the 16th and the first half of the 17th centuries. Or how Ukrainians resorted to self-organization on the hostile borderland without their own state, giving birth to the Cossacks or the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

At the same time, the Ukrainian state, under the pressure of civil society, is rapidly decolonizing in all areas, primarily historical politics or culture. For example, monuments that for decades reflected the “occupied consciousness” are removed from the state register: to the Russian imperial writer Alexander Pushkin in Chernihiv, to the Soviet militant Mykola Kuznetsov in Rivne, or to the commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the “reunification of Ukraine with Russia” in Pereyaslav.

In everyday life, folk toponymy is more important for orientation. That is why there are notable controversies regarding the immortalization of famous figures of past Ukrainian origin in street names, such as: geochemist Volodymyr Vernadskyi (1863–1945) and aircraft designer Ihor Sikorskyi (1889–1972). These are, as it were, symbolic names for the world in the clip thinking of patriotic contemporaries. In fact, Vernadsky considered Ukraine a springboard for the restoration of Russia within the imperial borders, while Sikorsky remained a Russian monarchist.

Such cases emphasize that Ukraine urgently needs a developed historical expertise, which is lacking due to a shortage of personnel despite a significant number of candidates and doctors of historical sciences, doctors of philosophy in the field of history. After all, not everyone is capable of qualitative judgments or expert conclusions.

It is no less revealing how Russia is culturally distancing itself, “de-Ukrainizing”. For example, a commemorative plaque to the outstanding Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Hrushevskyi (1866–1934) was removed in Kazan. After February 24, 2022, references to Ukraine and Kyiv in school textbooks were reduced to a minimum in Russia, and “exposing” courses were launched in higher education institutions. Lessons on “special operation”, “anti-Russian sanctions”, “hybrid war” of the West were introduced in Russian schools according to unified notes. The Kremlin stubbornly fences off Russians from the world not with a new “iron curtain”, but with obscurantism.

³² *Shcho ne tak z urokamy istorii u shkoli?*, <<https://localhistory.org.ua/texts/statti/shcho-ne-tak-z-urokami-istoriyi-u-shkoli-poiasnuiut-istoriki/>> (05.05.2022).

Conclusions

Let's say the obvious. History is the past of people who either became famous for great deeds, or entered the list of ethnic, political or social groups in small print, or serve as a nameless background. Therefore, everyone has a choice, especially in such a turning point in world history, when its major direction is determined by the modern Russian-Ukrainian war.

It is no accident that re-Sovietization and the return to common narratives with Russia were quite reasonably canceled in Ukraine, and attention was also focused on principled intellectual competitions – “battles for history”. It is natural that they include, in particular, such important research concepts as interpretation, source, ideologeme, totalitarianism, stereotype, civilization, paradigm. At the same time, in real hostilities, a sacrificial struggle is being waged not only for Ukrainian independence, but also for the future of Europe and the world in general, or an intercivilizational war – between democracies and anti-democracies. Moreover, it is mostly considered in the established comparative, stylistic and figurative dimensions, which are very recognizable in the narratives of the turning points in world history.

In an effort to change and rewrite history, the political elite of Russia persistently presented Ukrainians and Russians as one people, which, however, was categorically denied by the citizens of Ukraine. Putin's “special military operation”, which is aimed at destroying Ukraine and building a neo-imperial Russia, is very similar to the Nazi project of the Third Reich. Predictably, after the victory of Ukraine, a new era of peace and prosperity is expected in the world. Therefore, Putin's Russia, which switched places with Nazi Germany, needs to be derascified, similar to the denazification of 1945-1989.

After all, the state regime of the Russian Federation – putinism is a type of totalitarianism along with fascism, Nazism, and communism. At the heart of Putinism is rascism, an imperial chauvinist ideology, and the Kremlin stubbornly fences off Russians from the world not only with a new “iron curtain,” but with obscurantism. In view of this, the Russian-Ukrainian war is, in fact, interpreted as a confrontation between not only two nations (states), but civilizations. It has no equal sides. On the one hand, there is the inveterate criminal and international pariah, the Russian Federation, on the other, the unconquered victim and strategic winner, Ukraine, whose citizens are firmly convinced of the need for the accelerated completion of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, even without waiting for the formal end of this war.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. *Anglichanka gadit*, <<https://zona.media/article/2022/04/08/anglosaksy>>
2. *Anxious we stand?*, <<https://eupinions.eu/de/text/anxious-we-stand>>.
3. *Get the latest infographics and maps about the war in Ukraine*, <uawarininfographic.toplead.com.ua/>.
4. *Historik z Užhorodu pre HN: Ruská armáda je len vyblednutou kópiou sovietskej*, <<https://hnonline.sk/focus/publicistika/23342394-historik-z-uzhorodu-pre-hn-ruska-armada-je-len-vyblednutou-kopiou-sovietskej-s-takymto-nepriatelom-sa-este-nestretla>>.
5. *Mapa viiny v Ukraini*, <liveuamap.com/uk>.
6. *MEPs: Hungary can no longer be considered a full democracy*, <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220909IPR40137/meps-hungary-can-no-longer-be-considered-a-full-democracy>>
7. *Metodychni rekomendatsii shchodo vykladannia mizhnarodnoho humanitarnoho prava*, <<https://mon.gov.ua/storage/app/media/zagalna%20serednya/metodichni%20recomendazii/2022/09/27/Pro.metod.reko.m.shchodo.vykl.mizhn.hum.prava-4.2698-22.vid.27.09.2022.pdf>>.
8. Nytko V., *Knyzhku uzhhorodskoho profesora chytaly na peredovii*, <<http://www.golos.com.ua/article/361478>>.
9. Ofitsynskyy R., *Putinizm natysnuv «yadernu knopku» samoznyshchennia*, <<https://glavcom.ua/columns/romanoficinskyy/putinizm-natysnuv-yadernu-knopku-samoznyshchennia-828820.html>>.
10. Ofitsynskyy R., *Balakiiska nastupalna operatsiia*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRUU65T5hXg&ab_channel=ПоманОфіційський>.
11. Ofitsynskyy R., Isak Y., Slipetskyi O., *Rosiisko-ukrainska viina vid 24 liutoho 2022 roku donyni: istorychni realii ta potochni uroky*, “Aktualni pytannia humanitarnykh nauk” 2023, Vol. 62 (2).
12. Ofitsynskyy Y., *Suchasna rosiisko-ukrainska viina (za materialamy hazety «The New York Times» 2013–2017 rokiv)*, Uzhhorod 2018.
13. *Perelom. Viina Rosii proty Ukrainy u chasovykh plastakh i prostorakh mynuvshyny*, Kyiv 2022.
14. *Road to war: U.S. struggled to convince allies, and Zelensky, of risk of invasion*, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/ukraine-road-to-war/>>
15. *Rozshyreni komentar do istorychnoi periodyzatsii rosiisko-ukrainskoi viiny*, <<https://mon.gov.ua/storage/app/media/zagalna%20serednya/metodichni%20recomendazii/2023/01/18/Inform.materialy.HSH-ZSU.18.01.2023.pdf>>.
16. *Roskomnadzor potreboval ot «Vikipedii» udalit pyat statej pro voennye prestupleniya v Ukraine*, <<https://zona.media/news/2022/04/04/viki>>

17. *Shcho ne tak z urokamy istorii u shkoli?*, <<https://localhistory.org.ua/exts/statti/shcho-ne-tak-z-urokami-istoriyi-u-shkoli-poisniuiut-istoriki/>>.
18. Snyder T., *We Should Say It. Russia Is Fascist*, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/19/opinion/russia-fascism-ukraine-putin.html>>.
19. *The return of geopolitics*, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretarys-mansion-house-speech-at-the-lord-mayors-easter-banquet-the-return-of-geopolitics>>.
20. *V regionah gotovyat muzei, posvyaschennyie voyne na Ukraine*, <<https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2023/05/02/vse-chto-nuzhno-znat-2-maya-2023-goda-a41777>>.
21. Volker K., *After Russia's War*, <<https://cepa.org/after-russias-war-a-stronger-ukraine-and-west-will-emerge/?fbclid=IwAR0dC0yDoZUS4o39j9TkfeM7VAp6pbRAuODnstYk9ciQ45h93QQYWTXLsMQ>>.
22. *Vsesvitnia istoriia. Istoriia Ukrainy. 6–11 klasy. Navchalni prohramy dlia zakladiv zahalnoi serednoi osvity*, Kyiv 2022.
23. *Vystoialy – peremozhemo!*, <https://uinp.gov.ua/informaciyini-materialy/vchytelyam/metodychni-rekomendaciyi/vystoialy-peremozhemo-informaciyini-materialy-do-richnyci-povnomasshtabnogo-vtorgne-nnya-rf-v-ukrayinu?fbclid=IwAR31KJ8heeRN7-sicqn5nQHgZNX4W1m6m2_044Byv4HfPGqBbJlh6Kf_Hfc>.
24. *Ukrainci ta rosiiany ne odyin narod*, <<https://zn.ua/ukr/UKRAINE/ukrajntsi-ta-rosijani-ne-odin-narod-tak-vvazhajut-ponad-90-hromadjan-ukrajini.html>>.
25. *Ukraine War Archive*, <ukrainewararchive.org>.
26. *Yak studenty u Brytanii vykryvaiut vykladacha u poshyrenni brekhni pro viinu v Ukraini*, <<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-61662864>>.
27. Zhuravel Y., <zhurawell.com.ua/?fbclid=IwAR0HTZeHdlvvsjUBoNTYzqJmoJRi55M1QZRZKBDrG8YQFUSMinSTd202_dU>.
28. *Zakon Ukrainy. Pro zaboronu propahandy rosiiskoho natsyystskoho totalitarnoho rezhymu, zbroinoi ahresii Rosiiskoi Federatsii yak derzhavy-terorysta proty Ukrainy, symboliky voiennoho vtorhnennia rosiiskoho natsyystskoho totalitarnoho rezhymu v Ukrainu*, <zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2265-IX#Text>.
29. *Zaiava Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy «Pro vykorystannia politychnym rezhymom rosiiskoi federatsii ideolohii rashyzmu, zasudzhennia zasad i praktyk rashyzmu yak totalitarnykh i liudynonenavysnytskykh»*, <<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3078-20#Text>>.
30. *Zhinochi obrazy rosiisko-ukrainskoi viiny*, <facebook.com/photo/?fbid=5103977546349888&set=pcb.5103978546349788>.
31. *36 experts agree: Stay the course in Ukraine*, <<https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/3508456-36-experts-agree-stay-the-course-in-ukraine/>>.