

The background of the cover features a stylized, abstract representation of the Ukrainian national flag. It consists of a blue upper half and a yellow lower half, separated by a thick, black, irregular diagonal line that suggests a torn or draped fabric. The colors are rendered with some texture and blending, giving it a painterly or digital-art feel.

CHRISTINA DIETL, KHRYSTYNA FOSTYAK,
THOMAS SCHULTE-UMBERG, OLHA UHRYN,
NOREEN VAN ELK (EDS.)

WAR IN UKRAINE

THEOLOGICAL, ETHICAL
AND HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS

Christina Dietl – Khrystyna Fostyak – Thomas Schulte-Umberg –
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War in Ukraine.
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 **Aschendorff**
Verlag

Münster
2025



universität
wien

Department of Historical Theology

Cover:

Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co. KG

Text:

© Christina Dietl, Khrystyna Fostyak, Thomas Schulte-Umberg, Olha Uhryn, Noreen van Elk

Publiziert von

Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co. KG

Soester Straße 13

D-48155 Münster

E-Mail: buchverlag@aschendorff-buchverlag.de

www.aschendorff-buchverlag.de

ISBN 978-3-402-25096-9 (Print)

ISBN 978-3-402-25097-6 (E-Book PDF)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.17438/978-3-402-25097-6>



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Europeans Lost in Translation

Roman Sigov

This paper examines the prevalent misunderstandings in Europe regarding the developments in Ukraine, emphasizing the substantial influence of Russian narratives. It explores the linguistic manipulation by Russian propaganda, the enduring colonial legacies shaping European attitudes, the challenges in reconciling Russia's authoritarian regime with European democratic ideals through memory politics, and the instrumental role of migration as a geopolitical tool and its role in the current situation. The paper highlights the significance of these factors in shaping European perceptions and responses to the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Additionally, it underscores the necessity of understanding the historical and socio-cultural contexts underpinning these narratives. This analysis aims to enhance awareness and inform more effective policy making to address the ongoing war.

1. Introduction

The present paper highlights the issue of misconstrued comprehension among Europeans regarding the developments in Ukraine across multiple dimensions. The resulting repercussions are conspicuously evident and regrettably transparent, though they may not be readily recognised as direct outcomes of the factors described herein. This text does not pretend to quantify the problem, but rather to assume the existence of the problem and attempt to outline different components of it.

The leitmotiv and primary research inquiry of this study revolves around the factors influencing the presence and impact of Russian narratives in Europe. Accordingly, this chapter proposes a non-exclusive list of aspects that warrant consideration in exploring this subject. This primarily includes the linguistic dimension and the role of Russian propaganda therein. While this factor can be characterised as external, the second one is, rather, internal and addresses

the colonial component of European politics and other social spheres. This encompasses Europe's colonial history – in particular, its continental form – which informs contemporary dynamics and perceptions of colonialism itself. Additionally, the politics of memory in Europe and beyond must be mentioned as a third factor. The phenomenon of migration is the fourth consideration.

As a person who has migrated several times during the last few years under several different circumstances, I feel the need to look closer at migration on the global scale as an instrument that shapes European discourse about the Russian war against Ukraine. Indeed, the hypotheses expressed in this chapter are strongly influenced by studying and working in such countries as Germany, Belgium, France, Switzerland, and Ireland, and by collaborating with international media to cover the Russian war against Ukraine and other kinds of formal and informal interaction with Europeans and Russians.

Regarding the terminology, one of the key concepts of this chapter – the Europeans – is also one of the most challenging to define¹. It will deliberately not be restricted to one precise definition and yet it will be understood less from a geographical and more from a socio-cultural point of view.

2. Discursive Dimension

In order to comprehensively analyse the perception of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, it is valuable to attempt to illuminate its semiological dimension and, in doing so, to emphasise the historical and socio-cultural context that underlies it. It is evident that language plays a pivotal role in the depiction of reality, a notion that gained prominence with the advent of the linguistic turn² in the 20th century. This paradigm shift underscores the significance of perceiving and comprehending the words and the text they collectively construct. In this regard, the Russian disinformation campaigns accompanying the military aggression cannot remain without scholarly attention³. There has

1 Cf. Anna Triandafyllidou/Ruby Gropas, *What is Europe?*, New York 2022, 3. [DOI: 10.4324/9781003278375]. All internet links in this article were last accessed on 19 April 2024.

2 Cf. Richard Rorty (ed.), *The Linguistic Turn. Recent Essays in Philosophical Method*, Chicago – London 1967.

3 Cf. Eveline Mărășoiu, *Considerations on the Role of Information (-Psychological) Operations in Russian Military Thinking*, in: *Bulletin of "Carol I" National Defence University* 12/1 (2023) 7–18; Christopher Paul/Miriam Matthews, *The Russian "Fire-hose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model: Why It Might Work and Options to Counter It* (11 July 2016). [DOI: 10.7249/PE198]; Volodymyr Yermolenko (ed.), *Re-Vision of*

been academic research on the methods of propaganda and, more broadly, on the postmodern, post-truth society that provides the framework for the psychological and information operations⁴.

The latter have also been an object of studies by the government structures in the US⁵ and in the EU⁶. They have been deceived by a perverted Russian vocabulary since the Russian invasion in 2014, which is used in the hybrid warfare of the Russian war machine. Notable examples of this language strategy include the usage of terms such as “special military operation” instead of “war”, as well as the misleading usage of the terms “peace”, “freedom”, “escalation risks”, “necessity of a ceasefire”, “negotiations”, “compromise” and so forth. The list could be continued much longer and also contains constructions such as the “Ukraine crisis”, “Ukraine conflict” or “Ukraine war” instead of the “Russian war of aggression against Ukraine”. The linguistic features are shaping the discourse away from the unjust nature of this war and create the illusion that Russia is either not involved in the war crimes or participates in the war on equal terms with Ukraine. The resulting narratives can be framed as a part of the confrontation between the different forces, which in terms of dichotomies can be formulated as East and West, North and South, democracy and autocracy, EU, USA and Russia or USSR. Overlooking these cleavages can allow the falacious messages produced in Russia to be perceived as if they were coming from inside the European milieu.

At the same time, there is a risk of overestimating the “clash of civilisations”⁷ and of putting debatable borders between them. This is why it is problematic to perceive the Russian Orthodox Church as the main representative of the Ortho-

History. Russian Historical Propaganda and Ukraine, Kyiv 2019; Dominique Geissler et al., Russian Propaganda on Social Media during the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine, in: EPJ Data Science 12 (2023). [DOI: 10.1140/epjds/s13688-023-00414-5]; Todd C. Helmus et al., Russian Social Media Influence. Understanding Russian Propaganda in Eastern Europe, Santa Monica 2018. [DOI: 10.7249/RR2237].

- 4 Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible. The Surreal Heart of the New Russia*, New York 2014.
- 5 U.S. Department of State, GEC Special report: Pillars of Russia’s Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem (August 2020). URL: <https://www.state.gov/russias-pilars-of-disinformation-and-propaganda-report>.
- 6 EUvsDisinfo, *The Kremlin’s travelling roadshow*, 2023. URL: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/the-kremlins-travelling-roadshow>; Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (European Commission), Digital Services Act. Application of the Risk Management Framework to Russian Disinformation Campaigns, Luxembourg 2023. URL: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2759/764631>.
- 7 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, in: *Foreign Affairs* 72/3 (1993) 22–49, 22. [DOI: 10.2307/20045621].

dox world, while in reality its phyletist actions⁸ put in doubt its very belonging to the Orthodox Church. This should be considered along with its patriarch being an agent of the secret services of his country for decades. According to the archives at the disposal of the Swiss federal police, Russian Patriarch Kirill worked as a KGB agent in Geneva when he was a representative at the World Council of Churches⁹. This leads to the conclusion that the WCC is possibly used by the Russian Orthodox Church as a platform to promote the interests of the Russian State.

3. Colonial Component

Although the Russian war against Ukraine entered a new phase on the 24th of February 2022 and is characterised by an unprecedented scale of military confrontation and terrorism against civil society, it remains an escalation of the war that started in 2014. The prevailing understanding posits that the present war necessitates analysis through the lens of continental colonialism¹⁰. An exhaustive historical examination would surpass the scope of this article, yet it is salient to acknowledge that the origins of Russian military aggression against Ukraine go back to the 17th century. It is characterized by a persistent evolution of various forms of subjugation, for example, the genocidal famine (Holodomor) in the 1930s¹¹. So, it is vitally important to see the path dependency of the contemporary Russian attitude towards Ukraine. It consistently follows the idea of Russian superiority, centrality and claim to a domineering role in the region with the status-quo expressed by the idea of “russky mir” (Russian world)¹². This situation has been often tolerated by the global community, including Europe. Partially, it might be explained by the need for further efforts to rethink continental colonialism in Europe.

8 Cf. Cyril Hovorun, *Ethnophyletism, Phyletism, and the Pan-orthodox Council*, in: *The Wheel* 12 (2018) 62–67, 65.

9 Cf. Sylvain Besson/Bernhard Odehnal, *Putins Patriarch war Spion in der Schweiz*, in: *SonntagsZeitung* (5 February 2023). URL: <https://epaper.sonntagszeitung.ch/article/10000/10000/2023-02-05/1/130050758>.

10 Cf. Dittmar Schorkowitz, *The Shifting Forms of Continental Colonialism. An Introduction*, in: Dittmar Schorkowitz/John R. Chávez/Ingo W. Schröder (eds.), *Shifting Forms of Continental Colonialism. Unfinished Struggles and Tensions*, Singapore 2019, 23–68.

11 Cf. Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, New York 2022.

12 Cyril Hovorun, *Interpreting the “Russian World”*, in: Andrii Krawchuk/Thomas Bremer (eds.), *Churches in the Ukrainian Crisis*, New York 2016, 163–171, 163. [DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-34144-6_8].

By adopting a view of path dependency, these tendencies are the result of a historical path undergone by Europe, including the development of European thought. The issue of colonialism has not been entirely resolved, neither at the global level of Europe's international relations, nor at the intra-European level. Colonialism can be expressed not only by a dominance over certain territories but also by accepting such attitudes from other colonial forces. In terms of paradigmatic limits, this attitude is also expressed in overestimating the role of great powers and underestimating the agency of smaller ones in foreign relations. In other words, in certain situations, the gap between the stronger and weaker international players is perceived as bigger than it is. This is one of the main reasons for the international surprise of the defensive success of the Ukrainian army in early 2022 and also for the slow readiness to deliver heavy weapons. This is a result of the logic of *realpolitik* which places Ukraine in a "a geographic corridor (...) between Russia and the EU/NATO"¹³ and denies its agency as an independent actor.

Ukraine is one of the largest countries in Europe. After the fall of the Soviet Union, it owned more than 1,000 nuclear warheads and it arguably has one of the strongest armies on the continent¹⁴ (at least in terms of ground forces). It could be argued that the EU's limited interest in Ukraine is due to the level of economic development of the former. Indeed, it is hard to overestimate the importance of the economic element in European politics since the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. However, it is also worth mentioning that the characteristics of Russian economic development are not equivalent to its political significance in Europe. Russian natural resources played an increasingly important role for the Europeans since 1991, however 1) they are not irreplaceable, as the current developments show, and 2) there is still a tendency to keep the Russian status quo (similarly to how it was with the USSR just before its collapse).

Hard power is not the only important factor, although it significantly contributes to the status of a country and, therefore, to its relations with other actors. Unlike hard power (e. g. traditional military force), soft power¹⁵ (e. g. cultural diplomacy) is more fragile to how it is perceived. Although the Russian military aggression cannot be stopped other than by equal or superior military power and

13 Nicholas R. Smith/Grant Dawson, Mearsheimer, Realism, and the Ukraine War, in: *Analyse & Kritik* 44/2, (2022) 175–200, 180. [DOI: 10.1515/auk-2022-2023].

14 Global Firepower, 2024 Military Strength Ranking. URL: <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php>.

15 Joseph S. Nye, Soft Power, in: *Foreign Policy* 80 (1990) 153–171, 153. [DOI: 10.2307/1148580].

inaction causes damage, Russian soft power can be countered by eliminating the colonial constituent from foreign policy.

4. Politics of the Past

Hopes for a transformation of Russia into a democratic state through a sudden and remarkable shift are characterizable by a degree of naivety¹⁶. Instead of improving national memory of the crimes of its predecessors, the current Russian regime is actively blaming the Ukrainians of being fascist and Nazis. Russian propaganda depicting Ukrainians as collaborators with the Nazis has been spread ever since the end of the Second World War and reached its culmination in 2022 when “denazification” was declared an official justification for Russian aggression. This justification does not correlate with reality, which is why it disappeared from Russian propagandistic media almost as quickly as the presumption of capturing Kyiv in three days.

Another Russian strategy of feigning blame on Ukraine is to play on the existing international acknowledgement of Nazi crimes while denying the crimes of Russian communism. As a result, even in Europe, the position that Germany’s crimes were far more terrible than the crimes of the USSR and Russia put together is popularised. Therefore, a potential conclusion in regard to the future relations of Russia with Ukraine is the following: if Germany has been forgiven by the Allies, it will not be difficult to forgive Russia in the same way. However, such a simplified understanding is misleading, reductionist and dangerous for a number of reasons: 1) the lack of democracy in Russia¹⁷, 2) the imperial nature of the war¹⁸ following centuries of unilateral oppression, 3) the absence of knowledge and solutions to the problem, as Russia’s defeat is not yet expected in the near future at the time of writing this text, 4) even if the defeat would be close, there are currently no mechanisms or tools to address this problem, and it would be a mistake to use the same tools for dealing with memory as the Germans, because it is a different context. The difference is, first of all, that the Russians do not have a clear ideology, and if they do have one, it operates in a different way than Nazism. At the moment, we are only at the beginning of understanding this phenomenon. Attempts to conceptualise

16 Cf. Miłosz Jeromin Cordes, *Why Russia Needs Decolonisation for its Future Democratisation*, in: *New Eastern Europe* 54/6 (2022) 41–47, 46.

17 Cf. Michael McFaul, *Russia’s Road to Autocracy*, in: *Journal of Democracy* 32/4 (2021) 11–26, 11.

18 Cf. Jeffrey Mankoff, *The War in Ukraine and Eurasia’s New Imperial Moment*, in: *The Washington Quarterly* 45/2 (2022) 127–147, 127. [DOI:10.1080/0163660X.2022.2090761].

this phenomenon in terms of nationalism are arduous, because nationalism requires a certain national identity. So far, it seems that the imperial Russian identity demands a need for domination over its neighbours¹⁹. Effective work on memory, which would enable Russians to reconcile with their victims, should involve awareness of colonial thinking, its rejection and acknowledging the responsibility for one's actions. However, if a principal aspect of Russian identity is abandoned (it is worth remembering the multi-ethnic nature of the Russian Federation-Empire), the very existence of a Russian nation will be contended. If it ceases to exist, this creates a major obstacle, because to reconcile two subjects, it is necessary to have at least two subjects. So, regardless of the approach used to pursue the prospect of reconciliation, it becomes clear that the path is fraught with pitfalls, some of them insurmountable.

5. The Factor of Migration

There is a need to describe and conceptualise the perception of Russian and Ukrainian societies by the people of Europe. One phenomenon which has an explanatory value for the current state of affairs is migration. Migration policy has long been a means for empires to establish control over their territory, including forceful deportations. This approach to migration policy within the empire promotes ethnic mixing and amalgamation of the population within a specific territory and, therefore, facilitates control over it²⁰.

Migration is also one of the most important instruments of foreign policy in modern times. This has been especially evident in Europe in the last decade, when Russia and other countries used migration to exert geopolitical influence, particularly on Europe, as was the case, for example, with the migration crisis in Europe²¹. Accordingly, Russian strategy seeks to incite conflict in a certain part of the world, which creates a flow of migrants that leads to logistical, infrastructural, political and other challenges. In addition, it contributes to radicalisation in the political sentiments of a population, thus creating social and political divisions.

It is possible to further explore Russia's strategic intent in utilising its belligerent actions against Ukraine as a means to generate a migration influx of

19 Cf. Taras Kuzio, *Imperial Nationalism as the Driver Behind Russia's Invasion of Ukraine*, in: *Nations and Nationalism* 29/1 (2023) 30–38, 30.

20 Cf. Terry Martin, *The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing*, in: *The Journal of Modern History* 70/4 (1998) 813–861, 813. [DOI: 10.1086/235168].

21 Cf. Jeanne Park, *Europe's Migration Crisis* (23 September 2015). URL: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/europes-migration-crisis>.

Ukrainian nationals into Europe as a lever of influence. At the same time, less attention is paid to migration from the core of the empire (rather than the periphery) to the outside. In this case, we are talking about Russian migrants to Europe and to the general West. When discussing the framework of the strategic plan, a distinction should also be made between the extent to which this policy is consciously and purposefully implemented or unconsciously, inertially and reactively. Positing that the 2022 migration patterns of Ukrainians and Russians abroad represent the primary objectives of either the Russian or Ukrainian parties would be a dubious argument. In this context, Ukrainians are largely involuntary participants, serving as hostages of the situation, and their ability to shape migration policies is somewhat constrained. Conversely, Russia possesses significantly greater agency, including the capacity to bring an end to the conflict, thereby potentially altering or reversing the trajectory of migration flows.

It is important to consider the points of departure and arrival of migrants, as well as their social status. A hypothesis can be proposed that the wealthiest and most socially and culturally cultivated Russians from central Russia would be inclined to leave for wealthier countries. It is in this context that the issue of soft power is of paramount importance, because it is these people who are able to influence social and political consciousness most effectively. It is arguable that by fleeing from Putin's regime, these Russian migrants are expected to take a position in agreement with the principal stance of Ukraine and its allies. However, being members of the (former) elite of the contemporary Russian empire, they are also expected to return or maintain their status quo. This partially explains their lack of advocacy for military help to Ukraine and their advocacy for lifting the economic sanctions, as well as the other potential threats to Russia as a whole.

It is pertinent to discuss the presence of conditions that, if not actively promoting emigration, at least do not pose significant hindrances to the departure of the Russian cultural elite abroad. Such circumstances are not incidental but are the product of deliberate actions. It is not the first time this situation has occurred. For example, at least behind the façade, the state system of the USSR changed drastically and, in theory, the cultural and political foundations also changed, compelling the cultural elite ideologically opposed to those foundations to flee the country. The subject under consideration pertains to the migratory waves out of the USSR, including the renowned *philosophical steamers*²². Presently, we find ourselves in a position to observe not quite the same

22 Cf. Lesley Chamberlain, *Lenin's Private War. The Voyage of the Philosophy Steamer and the Exile of the Intelligentsia*, New York 2007, 1.

phenomenon, but one that has similar features. It should be noted that migration can play a role in soft power politics. It is about the apparent paradox that people who do not represent Russian society do represent it. This is because people who are not representative of the population of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation, first of all, claim (actively or passively) to be *de facto* representative of them, or at least give the impression of being representative of their home population to the host countries.

A crucial aspect to consider is that the concept of “soft power” is relatively new in academic and public discourse. This is because the understanding of not just the presence of soft power in foreign policy (this was true even before the 1990s) but the full significance, and even dominance (at least as it seemed), of soft power in international relations came only in the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Before that, the study of internal migration policy was more practiced while external migration policy was given less attention. The perspective adopted to approach the external migration policies can be called the *studies of migration policy squared* or *migration meta-policy*, so that a third country is included in the analysis. An example for the latter is found in several studies that examine how Russia uses a third country (e.g. Syria) to place migratory pressure on European countries²³. As a consequence, less attention is paid to Russia’s internal migration policy.

There is reason to believe that the Russian migration of the past still has a significant impact on the perception of Russia and Ukraine abroad (in addition to the massive work of the state propaganda machine). This is because the Russian migrants were fleeing a declaratively anti-imperial revolution, the Bolsheviks. Consequently, these migrants had reason to retain a conditional nostalgia for the empire. That is why the descendants of Russian migrants, who associated themselves with the Russian heritage and cultivated russophilia abroad, protested against the Soviet Union. Evidently, rather potent anti-Soviet sentiments existed. However, it might be assumed that some of these people perceived the collapse of the Soviet Union to a certain extent as the return of Russia. From a linguistic perspective, it is apparent that this progression can be chronologically situated in the sequence of Russia-USSR-Russia (although *de jure* today’s Russia is not called an empire, as it once was, but “democratic federal law-bound State with a republican form of government”²⁴). Accordingly, for some people both inside and outside of Russia, the return of the Russian

23 Cf. Angela Stent, *Putin’s Power Play in Syria. How to Respond to Russia’s Intervention*, in: *Foreign Affairs* 95/1 (2016) 106–113, 106.

24 Constitution of the Russian Federation, First Section, Ch. 1, Art. 1.

Empire was seen as a positive development that had been awaited since the Bolshevik Revolution.

A paradox is revealed; following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, two diametrically opposed trends are discernible. On the one side, there is a marked and radical disassociation of the USSR from Russia, forming a stark contrast as the former vanishes and the latter reemerges. On the other side, there is a perception that Russia is the same entity as the USSR. For instance, this accounts for the seemingly purely legal field of succession in the UN, the UN Security Council in particular²⁵, the consequence of which is the critical paralysation of the Security Council²⁶. There is no resolution, neither by the General Assembly nor by the Security Council, that determines that Russia took over the seat of the USSR in the UN. In other words, from one day to the next, the representatives of the USSR in the UN became representatives of Russia without any normative document or act. This blatant transfer of power is a consequence of the consciousness in which Russia and the Soviet Union are one and the same, which, in turn, is a continuation of the European and American unwillingness to see the USSR disappear from the political map of the world²⁷.

This phenomenon can be attributed, in part, to the inherently colonial character of the Soviet Union itself, sharing its origins with the tendency to overlook Russian policies in what is referred to as its sphere of influence, often denoted as the “Russian world”, lacking well-defined borders. This is a manifestation of the acquiescence to Russian colonialism that was also at the heart of the Soviet Union. A better understanding of it can contribute to the explanation of the mythologised image of Russia which exists in Europe. Contrary to the Russian experience, Ukrainian culture has been mostly either not known, or considered to be a part of the USSR and Russian culture or seen as marginal.

6. Conclusions

It is crucial to understand the vast differences between the European languages and the Russian language and the distinction between European cultures and the Russian culture in order to ensure that any message is communicated

25 Cf. Yehuda Z. Blum, *Russia Takes Over the Soviet Union's Seat at the United Nations*, in: *European Journal of International Law* 3 (1992) 354–361, 354.

26 Cf. Alun Jones, ‘Waging Word Wars’: The ‘Emotionscape’ of the United Nations Security Council and the Russian War in Ukraine, in: *Political Geography* 108 (2024) 103032. [DOI: 10.1016/j.polgeo.2023.103032].

27 Cf. Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe. A History of Ukraine*, New York 2015, 318.

accurately and understood properly. The Ukrainian experience is pivotal in this decoding process as it presupposes an exposure to both European and Russian-Soviet *modi vivendi* and *operandi*. It is even more pertinent to take the Ukrainian perspective into consideration as it has suffered and has been artificially muted throughout the centuries, either via laws prohibiting the use of the Ukrainian language or by restricting the freedom of speech. When searching for the correct translation in any context where the interpretations are contested, it is indispensable to involve the victim of aggression to this process and provide them with the respective room for expression. Given the multicultural and multi-ethnic Ukrainian society, it is an optimal modality to create an environment of mutual understanding. In search of the most correct interpretation between the cultures, the decoding of the meanings of words and phrases, as well as learning the socio-cultural languages, is required. This dynamic operates bidirectionally; it necessitates the deciphering of the Russian language to comprehend Russian speech practices, while also necessitating a nuanced approach to formulate and transmit the messages effectively.

In conclusion, the present study has provided an exploration of the narratives surrounding the current war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine. Four factors have been examined to develop a greater understanding of the reasons facilitating the dominance of some of these narratives and the acceptance of others. Firstly, the study underscores the pervasive influence of linguistic manipulation, particularly by Russian propaganda efforts, which shapes European perceptions of the conflict. Secondly, this study highlights the enduring colonial legacies that inform European attitudes and policies towards Ukraine and Russia. Thirdly, this study examines the challenges of reconciling Russia's authoritarian regime with European democratic ideals through an examination of memory politics. Lastly, this study investigates the instrumental role of migration as a geopolitical tool in shaping European responses to the crisis is revealed.

It is hoped that the ideas outlined here will serve to stimulate further research on this topic of critical importance. By delving deeper into these dimensions and exploring their interplay, future studies can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of European engagement with the Ukrainian crisis and inform more effective policymaking responses. Such research endeavors are essential for navigating the complexities of the ongoing conflict and advancing efforts towards a peaceful resolution.