

**Jakub Jakubowski\*, Vladyslav Zinichenko\*\***

## **FROM CLASSIC TO TIKTOK PROPAGANDA. RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN UKRAINE AND NEW MEDIA PERSPECTIVE**

### **Abstract**

The ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine has become a highly relevant example of war in the age of social media, demonstrating how the tools and mechanisms of propaganda have transformed alongside recent developments in media. Using qualitative methods, we analyzed 600 videos and 63 screenshots from TikTok and identified changes in the practice of creating propaganda. We considered the most important of them: social media architecture (1), propaganda techniques (2) and content producers (3). The conclusions from the analysis confront the assumptions of the most important theories on propaganda, including war propaganda (Lasswell, Chakhotin, Herman, Chomsky). According to our findings, changes in the media require a revision of theoretical assumptions, which in the future will allow the creation of a new theory of propaganda.

**Keywords:** war propaganda, social media, TikTok, Ukraine, Russia

### **Introduction**

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine, a so-called “special military operation”<sup>1</sup>. Even the name of this act, which is constantly covered by Russian media, emphasizes the importance of information for the regime. Moreover, at such crucial moments, people lack important information and traditional media is often limited by their lack of access to occupied territories, lower flexibility in terms of speed, and lowered public trust. Political figures also do not have time to prepare official appeals due to the level of emergency.

---

\* Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, e-mail: jakub.jakubowski@amu.edu.pl, ORCID: 0000-0001-9557-1815.

\*\* Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, e-mail: vladyslav.zinichenko@amu.edu.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-8546-0553.

<sup>1</sup> R.N. McDermott, C.K. Bartles, *Defining the “Special Military Operation”*, „Russian Studies Series”, 2022, nr 5.

Therefore, social media have become the natural choice out of a wide range of sources<sup>2</sup>.

There were few reasons for choosing TikTok as the research object. First, around 12M people already use it in Ukraine. This social media application is the leader in the 18-24 age group, or the so-called “Generation Z, not only in Ukraine but all over the world”<sup>3</sup>. In contrast, the Russian audience is approximately 33M users. TikTok is significantly ahead of Odnoklassniki (21M), Facebook (5,5M), X (1M) or Snapchat (1M)<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, it ranked first among the most popular apps in the entertainment category of the App Store, and second in the social category of the Google Play Store in both countries<sup>5</sup>.

Another reason is the amount of user-generated content. For instance, videos with the hashtag #Ukraine received 50.3B views, and with the hashtag #Russia – 69.7B views as of July 14, 2022. There are special TikTok houses that gather unique influencers to create new videos, increase their popularity, and work with advertisers. Volodymyr Zelenskyy listed TikTokers among the groups that could resist the war, in an appeal to Russians a day before the start of military invasion<sup>6</sup>. After all, TikTok is one of the most developing and least researched social media platforms not only in social science but also in medical<sup>7</sup>, economic<sup>8</sup>, information<sup>9</sup> and many other fields.

During the first weeks of the Russian invasion in Ukraine we noticed that TikTok has been playing a unique role in the informative architecture of

---

<sup>2</sup> D. Geissler, D. Bär, N. Pröllochs, *Russian propaganda on social media during the 2022 invasion of Ukraine*, „EPJ Data Sci”, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> *U 2021 rotsi Youtube stav naypopulyarnishoyu sotsmerezheyu sered ukrayintsiv, ale molod' viddaye perevahu Tiktok — doslidzhennya*, Detector Media, <https://ms.detector.media>, 20.01.2022 (14.01.2024).

<sup>4</sup> E. Stogova, *Kak izmenyalas' auditoriya sotssetey posle blokirovok*, RBC, <https://www.rbc.ru>, 20.03.2022 (14.07.2022).

<sup>5</sup> *Top Ranked Google Play Apps*, Appfigures, <https://appfigures.com>, 23.07.2022, (14.07.2022).

<sup>6</sup> *Nastupajuchi, vi budete bachiti nashi oblichchja»: Zelens'kij zvernuvsja do gromadjan Rosii*, Radio Svoboda, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org>, 24.02.2022 (24.07.2022).

<sup>7</sup> C.H. Basch, G.C. Hillyer, C. Jaime, *COVID-19 on TikTok: harnessing an emerging social media platform to convey important public health messages*, „International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health”, 2020, No. 34(5).

<sup>8</sup> Y. Ma, Y. Hu, *Business model innovation and experimentation in transforming economies: ByteDance and TikTok*, „Management and Organization Review”, 2021, No. 17(2).

<sup>9</sup> W. Kong [et al.], *TikTok as a health information source: assessment of the quality of information in diabetes-related videos*, „Journal of Medical Internet Research”, 2021, No. 23(9).

propaganda in both conflicted countries. Therefore, we decided to look closer at the problem of war propaganda using the new tools of information, persuasion and other forms of describing and creating the social reality of the war. We consider this problem as scientifically significant, especially because of the new forms of propaganda – in both the technical and in content-related meaning. These new factors defining how this process develops seems to be a sufficient “starting point” for the attempt to create new classifications and compare new forms with “classic” tools of propaganda.

As long as people fight wars, they need the support of mechanisms used to generate narratives about the conflict. Media create a parallel reality that shows the audience the expected view of the situation up front. This is usually (but not always) a “crooked picture” of the reality of war: depressing losses of troops, overstating victories, creating the image of the leader, dehumanizing enemies etc. War propaganda is a relatively accepted weapon in the communication arsenal of authoritarian regimes but, interestingly, also of democratic countries<sup>10</sup>. Both employ elements of manipulation<sup>11</sup>, selection of facts, fake news<sup>12</sup> and other ethically questionable activities.

Propaganda itself has been defined in many different ways, including dimensions like mistreatment of truth, communication activities against human beings or systematic persuasion. But the crucial element of all definitions and the basis of various theories is to direct public sympathies and attitudes<sup>13</sup>.

There is no doubt that one of the first and most influential concepts of propaganda was Lasswell’s theory. In his opinion, the effectiveness of propaganda in media messages did not result from their content or visual attractiveness. The medium may be diverse: from rhetoric, images, music, film, children’s books, posters, airdropped pamphlets, radio broadcasts to national holidays, and other significant cultural symbols<sup>14</sup>. The efficacy of propaganda depends on the condition of the society, decreasing with the intensification of economic crises and political turmoil<sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> S. Dillon, *The Propaganda Conundrum: How to Control This Scourge on Democracy*, „Oregon Review of International Law”, 2022, No. 23.

<sup>11</sup> V.L. Rubin, *Manipulation in Marketing, Advertising, Propaganda, and Public Relations*, [in:] *Misinformation and Disinformation*, ed. V.L. Rubin, Cham 2022.

<sup>12</sup> S. Lewandowsky, *20 Fake news and participatory propaganda*, [in:] *Cognitive Illusions: Intriguing Phenomena in Thinking, Judgment, and Memory*, ed. R.F. Pohl, New York 2022.

<sup>13</sup> S. Scriver, *War Propaganda*, [in:] *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. J.D. Wright, Oxford 2015.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> H.D. Lasswell, *Propaganda technique in the World War*, Iowa City 1927.

Many factors of classic propaganda theory may be useful even after 100 years after WWI. The most crucial of them are: manipulation of significant symbols, adjusting techniques of propaganda by different attitudes of people<sup>16</sup> or considering propaganda as deliberate<sup>17</sup>. Other factors that may be established by the famous six significant factors evident in successful war propaganda: fasten guilt to the enemy, unity of the people, inevitability of victory, clearly stated war aims, disseminating examples of the enemy's depravity, unfavorable news cast as enemy lies, dehumanizing the enemy, justifying violent action, potential of ridicule<sup>18</sup>.

Other established theories based on the experiences of 20th century totalitarian regimes are theories of propaganda by Chakhotin or other scientific concepts considering media messages as "magic bullets". According to Chakhotin, Nazi propaganda worked on the same principle as inducing conditioned reflexes in Pavlov's experiments. The senders, using slogans, continuously and systematically stimulate the internal motives of behavior (drives, instincts) of the recipients on the basis of the stimulus-response action. This model assumes the passivity and irrational behavior of the individual and their high susceptibility to propaganda content. The technique of influence consists in associating (through persistent repetition) specific ideological contents with internal human drives. Simultaneously, magic bullet theory assumes that the media message is like a bullet that, if it hits a specific audience, always has the intended effect in the form of a specific reaction identical for all recipients. Based on more advanced research, today we know exactly that such thinking is too simplistic<sup>19</sup>. On the other hand, some elements of magic bullet theory are worth reinterpreting, taking into account the changing features of media. If posts on TikTok take the form of short, stimulus videos, looped and repeated many times, it seems that this way of thinking about propaganda in the age of social media may prove useful again.

Subsequently, post-WWII theories were steeped in the climate of critical concepts of mass media. One of the most influential was Herman

---

<sup>16</sup> From intensifying the attitudes favorable to the propagandist's purpose, to reversing the attitudes hostile to it, and to attract the indifferent, or to prevent them from assuming a hostile bent. In other words: "the morale-unity of your own country, weaken the morale of your enemy and win over the morale of the neutrals". See E.L. Bernays, *The Marketing of National Policies: A Study of War Propaganda*, "Journal of Marketing", 1942, No. 6(3).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> S. Sriver, *op.cit*.

<sup>19</sup> J.M. Sproule, *Progressive propaganda critics and the magic bullet myth*, "Critical Studies in Mass Communication", 1989, No. 6(3).

and Chomsky's propaganda model, which is constantly tested, also in social media times<sup>20</sup>. The theory was based on five general classes of "filters" that determine the type of news broadcasted in media: ownership of the medium, the medium's funding sources, sourcing, flak, and anti-communism or "fear ideology". The first three, which are economic factors, are considered the most important. Therefore, Herman and Chomsky<sup>21</sup> detected and proved the symbiotic relation between the state and media which are more disposed to construct a narrative close to the government's interest if they are more economically, socially, and politically related to the state. A different view was presented by Sproule<sup>22</sup>, who espied seven common propaganda devices: Name-calling, Glittering generalities, Transfer, Testimonial, Plain folk, Card stacking and Bandwagon. It is especially interesting from 'the public' point of view because the concept includes the role of the people as the clue subject in the process. If social media platforms are indeed social, it is necessary to reconsider the role of the media as the agent in propaganda and also the role of their users.

Contemporary propaganda studies focus on issues related to new types of media. Important strands are the unreliability of sources and the role of tech corporations in creating propaganda messages<sup>23</sup>. The role of bots and the specificity of propaganda activities in various regions and grounds are increasingly emphasized<sup>24</sup>, carried out by state entities<sup>25</sup> and various organizations, including terrorist<sup>26</sup> or religious ones<sup>27</sup>. Thus, we see that the dominant scientific narratives are research focused on different political actors and online tools that support propaganda. There are few studies on the impact of the changing form of media messages on

<sup>20</sup> C. Fuchs, *Propaganda 2.0: Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model in the age of the internet, big data and social media*, [in:] *The propaganda model today: Filtering perception and awareness*, eds. J. Pedro-Carañana, D. Broudy, J. Klaehn, London 2018.

<sup>21</sup> E.S. Herman, N. Chomsky N, *Manufacturing Consent*, New York 1988.

<sup>22</sup> J.M. Sproule, *Authorship and origins of the seven propaganda devices: a research note*, "Rhetoric & Public Affairs", 2001, No. 4(1).

<sup>23</sup> J. Farkas, C. Neumayer, *Disguised Propaganda from Digital to Social Media*, [in:] *Second International Handbook of Internet Research*, des. J. Hunsinger, M. Allen, L. Klastrop, Dordrecht 2020.

<sup>24</sup> *Computational propaganda: Political parties, politicians, and political manipulation on social media*, eds S.C. Woolley, P.N. Howard, Oxford 2018.

<sup>25</sup> D.A. Broniatowski [et al.], *The COVID-19 Social media Infodemic Reflects Uncertainty and State-Sponsored Propaganda*, „arXiv", 2020.

<sup>26</sup> A. Tsesis, *Social media accountability for terrorist propaganda*, "Fordham Law Review", 2017, No. 86(2).

<sup>27</sup> J. Farkas, J. Schou, C. Neumayer, *Cloaked Facebook pages: Exploring fake Islamist propaganda in social media*, „New Media & Society", 2017, No. 20(5).

the mechanisms of propaganda. Hence our proposal to complement this knowledge with the theoretical concept of propaganda in which TikTok plays the dominant role as a social network and a source of knowledge for young people.

The research procedure was divided into two stages. The first one was based on the principles of digital ethnography (netnography). The observations that we used (including participant ones) should be treated in the research procedure as a starting point for more advanced methods. It is worth remembering that "so far, the vast majority of researchers (...) treat the Internet as another subject of observation. Therefore, the same tools and methodology are used to study it as in the case of the physical environment - that is still, above all, the methodology of qualitative research (...). Thus, netnography, as any ethnographic research in principle, will naturally move from participant observation towards other methods"<sup>28</sup>. In our case, it was a content analysis in the qualitative variant. Its effect was not to be an enumerative picture of the material published on the TikTok platform, but an analysis of cases allowing to relate social, political and media reality to the accumulated theoretical base. This may result in a proposal of changes within selected theories of propaganda. In this context, 'the extended case' method will be used in the variant of the analysis of a wide category of randomly selected cases. This will allow, firstly, to compare the phenomena with the collected theoretical knowledge and specific, existing classifications. It will also be an attempt to find certain regularities in the characteristics of the selected material<sup>29</sup>.

Thus, the methodology that we used can be called a multi-stage triangulation including elements of netnography, content analysis and case study method. Procedure designed in this way was supplemented with research questions:

RQ1: What opportunities for spreading propaganda does the TikTok platform have?

RQ2: How do Ukrainians and Russians present and propagate propagandist content on TikTok?

RQ3. How may the new aspects of media content influence the theory of propaganda? The questions formulated in this way are intended to

---

<sup>28</sup> A. Radomski, *Badanie kultury w Informacjonalizmie – czyli w stronę antropologii cyfrowej*, CEON, <https://depot.ceon.pl>, 20.01.2022 (14.01.2024).

<sup>29</sup> As part of the method, the techniques that we used were primarily: the selection and analysis of sources, with particular emphasis on those that were examples of activities of the surveyed communities, i.e. based on coexistence in the network. See: K., Lisiecka A. Kostka-Bohenek, *Case study research jako metoda badań naukowych*, „Przegląd Organizacji”, 2009, No. 10.

verify the research hypothesis (RH), which is: Modern communication tools such as Tik-Tok may be a source of new communication processes requiring changes in the field of propaganda theory.

### Database characteristics

The data collection covered the period from February 24 to July 30, 2022. 600 materials (90.5%) were obtained in the form of dynamic tik-toks, while 63 (9.5%) were obtained in printscreen form. In the database, 462 materials (69.7%) were in support of Ukraine, while 201 (30.3%) were in support of Russia. The average length of the footage was 0:27 seconds, while the median was 0:14. 27.6% of the films contained original sound, less than 2% contained a soundtrack borrowed from other sources (e.g. movies). As many as 53.6% of films were accompanied by music, which is a key feature of the TikTok platform and a classic tool of various types of propaganda. 16.9% of films were recorded without sound effects. 39.1% of the films were recorded in Ukrainian, 8.7% in English, 40.7% in Russian, 6.2% of the films contained more than one language, 1% another language, and 4.2% of the films contained no dialogue in any language. The relative diversity in this respect may reflect a desire to internationalize propaganda messages. The protagonists of 42.8% of the films were ordinary people, 5.1% were soldiers, only 6.9% of the protagonists were officers, journalists and other characters, while as many as 45% of the protagonists were hard to identify due to the lack of supporting informational signs about them. Such a setting demonstrates a shift in narrative power in favor of making the message credible by giving voice to ordinary people, but also propaganda through disinformation - lack of knowledge about the subjects can be a reason for confusion and thus greater susceptibility to propaganda messages.

### Results

We categorized 3 main elements that encourage the spread of propaganda through TikTok. They are: 1) platform architecture, 2) special techniques, and 3) content producers. This subsection describes each of them in detail.

*TikTok's architecture and its impact on propaganda.* A short video is a new type of "Internet content transmission" or "content carrier" lasting from a few seconds to five minutes. It can be created with

a smartphone and quickly distributed using new communication channels<sup>30, 31</sup>. TikTok is one of the social media platforms and/or the mobile apps that host these videos. Users are allowed to download content with the logo and distribute it on the Internet without any restrictions.

One of the reasons for choosing this platform is non-complex editing tools. A user can record video in three modes: normal camera, make a story, or select among special templates for a series of images. It can be slowed down or sped up. TikTok offers various effects divided by categories (trending, new, by theme, visual, motion, etc.), stickers, GIFs or emojis, filters, image enhancement tools and others. Text and voiceover can be added. Creators can work with their voice and sound. The platform has a big library of soundtracks to choose (e.g. original songs, sounds from TV shows and social media videos). Users add them in order to highlight the main idea of the video and to increase its attractiveness. For example, Ukrainians accompanied “short stories” about the heroism of the soldiers of the Azov regiment in Mariupol with a song called “Azov-Stal” (Azov-Steel). At the same time, Russian users “gave their hearts” to “Vovochka” (President Vladimir Putin).

The main feature of any social media is the algorithm. TikTok combines mobile products and machine learning technologies. It differs from other competitors with a “For You” recommendation system. Since the experience with this platform is based on continuous scrolling of videos, special artificial intelligence (AI) determines the type of content a user will see. Learning your preferences starts from the moment you log into the app. The “For You” feed offers users various videos and analyzes their behavior. Further recommendations will depend on several factors like user interactions, video information, device and account settings, view duration and content that users are not interested in.

TikTok does not make recommendations based on the number of followers or on the previous content with high figures of views and interactions. It means that any video can get into the viewing trends. Moreover, the more the platform is used, the more efficient the algorithm works. Each user has a unique For You feed. It matches their viewpoints, rather than contradicting them. “Of the major social media platforms on

---

<sup>30</sup> L. Ma [et al.], *Research on User Loyalty of Short Video App Based on Perceived Value—Take Tik Tok as an Example*, “16th International Conference on Service Systems and Service Management (ICSSSM)”, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> L. Xu, X. Yan, Z. Zhang, *Research on the Causes of the ‘Tik Tok’ App Becoming Popular and the Existing Problems*, “Journal of Advanced Management Science”, 2019, No. 7(2), p. 59.



the market, TikTok is the only one to position its algorithm at the center of social experience it engenders”<sup>32,33</sup>.

After all, TikTok’s architecture creates a favorable environment for propaganda to influence users. The algorithm can recognize their interest in war after watching only a few videos with Ukraine/Ukrainians, Russia/Russians, etc. Over time, it fills the “For You” feed with unending relevant content. The possibility of replaying the same video is low. However, a large amount of unique war-themed videos can be compared to a new form of “magic bullets” that shape the perception of users. Hence, we state the “renaissance of the Chakhotin model” in the digital sphere thanks to this platform.

*Propaganda techniques in the age of TikTok.* Video authors can be divided into two categories. Those who produce original content and those who duplicate it (repeat or copy an idea). These users try to offer creative ideas in order to be competitive during the information war. The range of opportunities is so wide that they can even record videos in random locations (e.g. bus station, bedroom). A well-chosen propaganda technique is a core element of any message. We present their updated list in Table 1.<sup>34</sup> People use them intentionally or accidentally (depends on the level of media literacy).

**Table 1. Propaganda devices from TikTok**

Main Topics	Pro-Ukrainian content	Pro-Russian content
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Use of children	14 (≈3%)	2 (≈1%)
Cult of the leader(s)	8 (≈2%)	30 (≈15%)
Demonization/dehumanization of the enemy	11 (≈2%)	11 (≈5%)
Destabilization of the enemy	3 (≈1%)	4 (≈2%)
Diversity	13 (≈3%)	0 (0%)
Exceptionalism	1 (≈0%)	11 (≈5%)
Justification of actions	0 (0%)	14 (≈7%)
Heroization	81 (≈17%)	36 (≈18%)
Historical narratives	7 (≈1%)	18 (≈9%)
Compilation of legends	2 (≈0%)	0 (0%)
Mockery/critics	95 (≈20%)	14 (≈7%)
Patriotic animals	15 (≈3%)	0 (0%)

<sup>32</sup> A. Bhandari, S. Bimo, *Why’s Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media*, „Social Media and Society”, 2022, No. 8(1), p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> J. Grandinetti, *Examining embedded apparatuses of AI in Facebook and TikTok*, „AI & Society”, 2021, No. 38, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Definitions of different categories are included in codebook.

1	2	3
Patriotism in computer games	7 ( $\approx 1\%$ )	0 (0%)
Personal stories	42 ( $\approx 9\%$ )	3 ( $\approx 1\%$ )
Popularization of the culture	50 ( $\approx 11\%$ )	21 ( $\approx 10\%$ )
Propaganda of despair among the enemy	41 ( $\approx 9\%$ )	21 ( $\approx 10\%$ )
Propaganda of enlightenment	65 ( $\approx 14\%$ )	16 ( $\approx 8\%$ )
Staging of the future celebration	7 ( $\approx 1\%$ )	0 (0%)
<b>All posts</b>	<b>462 (100%)</b>	<b>201 (100%)</b>

Source: own elaboration.

*Content producers and their impact on propaganda.* Three specific actors regulate the framework of propaganda in the age of social media. These are, in order of influence, private corporations (e.g. TikTok, Facebook owners), users, and the state. Previously, state authorities always controlled the picture from the battlefield and could manage the emotions of their citizens, working in cooperation with traditional mass media. Military spokespeople, as the only official source, provided them with approved news for dissemination. Press accreditation was the main tool for limiting access to information. If the media did not want to cooperate, it was left out of conferences, briefings and trips to war zones. However, the influence of the state has declined recently. It cannot defeat social media. The only options remaining to maintain a profitable reality are to slow down the Internet or to regulate inappropriate visual content.

Private corporations that own social media platforms have taken greater part in the “propaganda game”. They are independent in the decision-making process and set their own terms and conditions of using the platform. People either accept them or lose modern communication capabilities. The developers have the authority to identify and remove inappropriate content, as well as ban users that violate their rules.

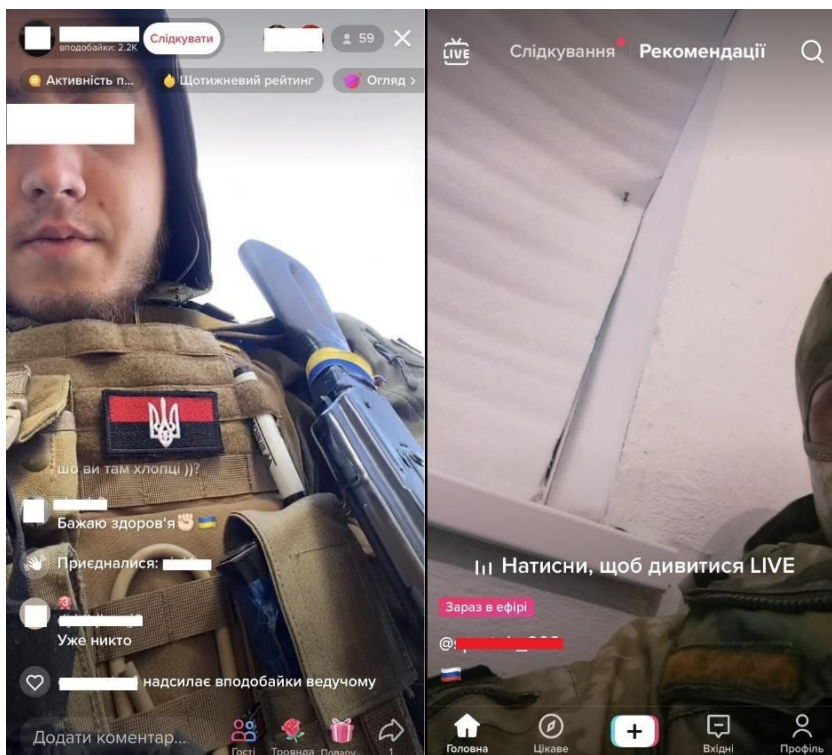
Propaganda narratives can still be created by the state, and the TikTok algorithm makes them trendy. Nonetheless, we agree with Sproule that users are the most important actor in the current chain. Ordinary citizens become co-producers of propaganda. They consume the ideas, creatively develop them, and further share with the audience. It is important to note that Russia has been trying to blur the cultural boundaries of Ukraine for a long time. At the beginning of the full-scale war, some Ukrainians were uncertain of their own history but felt a sense of national belonging. In such a situation, they repeated the plots of popular tik-toks from their knowledgeable compatriots. This is in line with Cialdini's<sup>35</sup> theory of social proof<sup>36</sup>. In addition, soldiers no longer need

<sup>35</sup> R.B. Cialdini, *Influence: science and practice*, London 2009, p. 99.

<sup>36</sup> Perception of a certain action as appropriate if it is done by other people.

the state and traditional media to communicate with allies or enemies. They are equal users who can make tiktoks from the frontline without any mediation or censorship. Some of them even arrange LIVE broadcastings (Figure 1). As a result, followers receive news from the first source and can send information in the opposite direction.

**Figure 1. LIVE of: Ukrainian soldier (left); Russian soldier (right)**



Source: Own elaboration.

## Conclusions

It is obvious that mechanisms and forms of propaganda evolve as the architecture of the media has rapidly changed in the first two decades of 21st century. The thing is that these new media genres modify the process of propaganda itself. Theories we quoted which were based on the era of mass media did not include the complexity of so-called new media.

The sorting algorithms that individualize the media diet of users increase the opportunities for spreading propaganda via TikTok

(RQ1.). The new architecture of social media makes arguments and emotions better adapted to the needs of the user. Persuasive techniques are customized, for example, to the user's tolerance for the brutality presented in the content. The algorithm tests and practices the best methods of influence until it reaches the optimal result for the individual recipient. We argue that the quoted "magic bullet" theory contained a logical mistake – a bullet cannot be aimed equally at millions of spectators in mass communication. Simultaneously, massive weapons are too general for arguments against each individual to be effective. The AI on which the content distribution is based makes each bullet different and adapted to the user, and thus – more effective. This is a fundamental change in the propaganda distribution process. The effectiveness of this mechanism is also influenced by the large variety of content present on TikTok (RQ2.). Also, the word "magic" seems to be definitely more relevant than in the times of Chakhotin's research. Influence on addictive behavior, "deep immersion" of users and behavioral targeting are `magic` processes that often take place outside of human consciousness. This is not about any subliminal actions, but about the lack of knowledge of users about how these mechanisms work. Influencing in this way by the controlling entities seems to be simpler and more effective.

Propagandist content has gained a more social character thanks to the new types of media. In democratic regimes, the role of the state and media institutions in this respect has definitely weakened. Users have gained much greater opportunities to produce content, which can be associated with their credibility (users trust primarily their online friends). Hence, the explanatory strength of Chomsky's model decreases significantly in relation to propaganda using social media. Due to the change in the structure of the electronic services market since the 1980s, Internet media in the globalized world are less related to state institutions, less state-based, and thus – less dependent on the government. TikTok propaganda is therefore more user-based. This is a major paradigm shift from earlier propaganda theories (RQ3.). It also allows for a better understanding of its mechanisms, distinguishing between democratic (Ukraine) and authoritarian (Russia) countries. Based on the cases we have analyzed, we propose to make significant modifications to the theory of propaganda, which is the clear effect of positively verified research hypothesis. Researchers should take into account and include in further research some algorithmic issues as well as those concerning the change in the function of the media.

## Bibliography

- Bernays E. L., *The Marketing of National Policies: A Study of War Propaganda*, "Journal of Marketing", 1942, No. 6(3).
- Basch C.H., Hillyer G.C., Jaime C., *COVID-19 on TikTok: harnessing an emerging social media platform to convey important public health messages*, „International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health”, 2020, No. 34(5). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2020-0111>.
- Bhandari A., Bimo S., *Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media*, „Social Media and Society”, 2022, No. 8(1), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221086241>.
- Broniatowski D.A. [et al.], *The COVID-19 Social media Infodemic Reflects Uncertainty and State-Sponsored Propaganda*, „arXiv:2007.09682”, 2020, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2007.09682>.
- Chakhotin S., *The rape of the masses. The psychology of totalitarian political propaganda*, London 1940.
- Cialdini R.B., *Influence: science and practice (5th ed.)*, London 2009.
- Dillon S., *The Propaganda Conundrum: How to Control This Scourge on Democracy*, „Oregon Review of International Law”, 2022, No. 23.
- Farkas J., Schou J., Neumayer C., *Cloaked Facebook pages: Exploring fake Islamist propaganda in social media*, „New Media & Society”, 2017, No. 20(5). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817707759>.
- Farkas J., Neumayer C., *Disguised Propaganda from Digital to Social Media*, [w:] *Second International Handbook of Internet Research*, eds. J. Hunsinger, M. Allen, L. Klasttrup, Dordrecht 2020.
- Fuchs C., *Propaganda 2.0: Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model in the age of the internet, big data and social media*, [w:] *The propaganda model today: Filtering perception and awareness*, eds. J. Pedro-Carañana, D. Broudy, J. Klahn, London 2018.
- Geissler D. [et al.], *Russian propaganda on social media during the 2022 invasion of Ukraine*, „EPJ Data Sci”, 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2211.04154>.
- Grandinetti J., *Examining embedded apparatuses of AI in Facebook and TikTok*, „AI & Society”, 2021, No. 38. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-021-01270-5>.
- Herman E.S., Chomsky N., *Manufacturing Consent*, New York 1988.
- Kong W. [et al.], *TikTok as a health information source: assessment of the quality of information in diabetes-related videos*, „Journal of Medical Internet Research”, 2021, No. 23(9), DOI: <https://www.jmir.org/2021/9/e30409>.
- Lasswell H.D., *Propaganda technique in the World War*, Iowa City 1927.
- Lewandowsky S., *20 Fake news and participatory propaganda*, [w:] *Cognitive Illusions: Intriguing Phenomena in Thinking, Judgment, and Memory*, ed. R.F. Pohl, New York 2022.
- Lisiecka K., Kostka-Bohenek A., *Case study research jako metoda badań naukowych*, „Przegląd Organizacji”, 2009, No. 10.
- Ma L. [et al.], *Research on User Loyalty of Short Video App Based on Perceived Value—Take Tik Tok as an Example*, „16th International Conference on Service Systems and Service Management (ICSSSM)”, 2019.
- Ma Y., Hu Y., *Business model innovation and experimentation in transforming economies: ByteDance and TikTok*, „Management and Organization Review”, 2021, No. 17(2), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/mor.2020.69>.

- McDermott R.N., Bartles C.K., *Defining the "Special Military Operation"*, „Russian Studies Series”, 2022, No. 5.
- Nastupajuchi, vi budete bachiti nashi oblichchja»: Zelens'kij zvernuvsja do gromadjan Rosii*, Radio Svoboda, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org>, 24.02.2022 (24.07.2022).
- Radomski A., *Badanie kultury w Informacjonalizmie – czyli w stronę antropologii cyfrowej*, CEON, <https://depot.ceon.pl>, 01.05.2023 (14.07.2022).
- Rubin V.L., *Manipulation in Marketing, Advertising, Propaganda, and Public Relations*, [w:] *Misinformation and Disinformation*, ed. V.L. Rubin, Cham 2022.
- Scriver S., *War Propaganda*, [w:] *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* ed. J.D. Wright, Oxford 2015.
- Sproule J.M., *Authorship and origins of the seven propaganda devices: a research note*, „Rhetoric & Public Affairs”, 2001, No. 4(1).
- Sproule J.M., *Progressive propaganda critics and the magic bullet myth*, „Critical Studies in Mass Communication”, 1989, No. 6(3), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295038909366750>.
- Stogova E., *Kak izmenyalas' auditoriya sotssetey posle blokirovok. Infografika*, RBC, <https://www.rbc.ru>, 20.03.2022 (14.07.2022).
- Top Ranked Google Play Apps*, Appfigures, <https://appfigures.com>, 20.12.2023, (14.07.2022).
- Tsesis A., *Social media accountability for terrorist propaganda*, „Fordham Law Review”, 2017, No. 86(2).
- U 2021 rotsi Youtube stav naypopulyarnishoyu sotsmerezheju sered ukrayintsiw, ale molod' viddaye perevahu Tiktok – doslidzhennya*, Detector Media, <https://ms.detector.media>, 20.01.2022 (14.07.2022).
- Xu L., Yan X., Zhang Z., *Research on the Causes of the 'Tik Tok' App Becoming Popular and the Existing Problems*, „Journal of Advanced Management Science”, 2019, No. 7(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18178/JoAMS.7.2.59-63>.

### **Od klasyki do propagandy TikToka. Rosyjska agresja na Ukrainę i perspektywa nowych mediów**

#### **Streszczenie**

Trwający konflikt zbrojny na Ukrainie stał się istotnym przykładem wojny w dobie mediów społecznościowych, pokazując, jak narzędzia i mechanizmy propagandy przekształciły się wraz z ostatnimi zmianami w masowej komunikacji. Przy użyciu metod jakościowych przeanalizowaliśmy 600 filmów i 63 zrzuty ekranu z TikToka oraz zidentyfikowaliśmy zmiany w praktyce tworzenia komunikatów propagandowych. Przeanalizowaliśmy najważniejsze z nich: architekturę mediów społecznościowych (1), techniki propagandowe (2) i twórców treści (3). Wnioski z analizy stawiają w opozycji założenia najważniejszych teorii dotyczących propagandy, w tym propagandy wojennej (Lasswell, Chakhotin, Herman, Chomsky). Według naszych ustaleń, zmiany w mediach wymagają rewizji założeń teoretycznych, co w przyszłości pozwoli na stworzenie nowej teorii propagandy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** propaganda wojenna, media społecznościowe, TikTok, Ukraina, Rosja