Ukraine's Counter-Strategic Responses Toward Russian Disinformation and Propaganda During the War

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Abstract

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine was followed by a series of propaganda and disinformation aimed at degrading the government's political power and military capabilities in dealing with the war situation. There has been a significant increase in the spread of Russian propaganda messages and disinformation narratives among domestic Ukrainian society. The spread of propaganda and fake news about Ukraine has also targeted the global public. The enormous political impact requires Ukraine to take strategic countermeasures against the domination of Russian disinformation narratives. This study aims to give an analytical description of the strategic actions taken by the Ukrainian government and community organizations to overcome the spread of Russian propaganda messages and disinformation. This research uses a qualitative approach to analyze several of Ukraine's actions toward Russian propaganda and disinformation attacks. A literature study technique has been used in this research. In general, this research found that in collaboration with civil society communities, the Ukrainian government has increased anti-propaganda and disinformation campaigns to deal with the problems domestically. Meanwhile, various diplomatic initiatives are conducted in collaboration with governments and community organizations to counter the spread of Russian disinformation in the international sphere.

Keywords: *Propaganda; Disinformation; Russia; Ukraine; War.*

Abstrak

Invasi Rusia ke Ukraina diikuti oleh serangkaian kampanye propaganda dan disinformasi yang bertujuan untuk melemahkan kekuatan politik dan kemampuan militer pemerintah dalam menghadapi situasi perang. Sejak konflik berlangsung, telah terjadi peningkatan yang signifikan dalam penyebaran pesan propaganda Rusia dan narasi disinformasi di antara masyarakat domestik Ukraina. Penyebaran propaganda dan berita palsu tentang Ukraina juga telah menargetkan pemerintah dan masyarakat global. Dampak politik yang sangat besar mengharuskan Ukraina untuk mengambil tindakan penanggulangan strategis terhadap dominasi narasi disinformasi Rusia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan secara analitis mengenai serangkaian tindakan strategis yang diambil oleh pemerintah Ukraina dan organisasi masyarakat sipil setemnpat untuk mengatasi penyebaran pesan propaganda Rusia dan disinformasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik studi literatur untuk menganalisis beberapa tindakan Ukraina terhadap serangan propaganda dan disinformasi Rusia. Secara umum, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa pemerintah Ukraina, bekerja sama dengan komunitas masyarakat sipil, telah meningkatkan kampanye antipropaganda dan disinformasi untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut. Sementara itu, berbagai inisiatif diplomatik sedang dilakukan bersama dengan pemerintah dan organisasi masyarakat di berbagai negara untuk melawan penyebaran disinformasi Rusia di ranah internasional.

Kata Kunci: *Propaganda; Disinformasi; Rusia; Ukraina; Perang.*

Introduction

The full-scale invasion launched by Russia into Ukraine has been going on for more than two years. Until now, fierce fighting between the two sides is still ongoing, especially in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Armed with military assistance from the coalition of European Union countries and the United States, the Ukrainian military continues its resilience and tries to regain control of the areas annexed by Russia. Occasionally, the Ukrainian army also launches infiltration attacks into mainland Russia as a manifestation of a strategic step to defend itself.

The conflictual situation has had a significant impact on the civilian population, especially on the Ukrainian side as the invaded party. Some data show that Russia's brutal attack on Ukraine has caused economic losses of more than 150 billion USD. Ukraine's national economic growth rate has also fallen drastically, causing an increase in poverty rates and other socioeconomic problems (Kilfoyle 2023). The most massive attack in 2025 occurred throughout April, when hundreds of Russian drone and missile attacks destroyed energy infrastructure and public facilities and killed hundreds of Ukrainian civilians, especially in Kyiv, Kryvyi Rih, Sumy, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv (OHCHR 2025). If the Russian massive attacks continue to be launched by Russia, shortly, a prolonged food, energy, and environmental crisis might happen and will harm the lives of millions of Ukrainians (European Commission 2023).

Realizing the importance of information and communication technology in contemporary warfare, Russia has optimized its propaganda and disinformation campaigns even before a large-scale invasion was launched. Taking advantage of various social media platforms today, the Russian government encourages the dissemination of content that is specifically aimed at shaping domestic and international public opinion regarding the ongoing war. Obscuring the truth through social media instruments and various other forms of cyberattacks is indeed not a new way for Russia to disrupt the international socio-political order (Karalis 2024).

However, since the war began, Russian campaign messages and propaganda in the social media space have increased drastically. To increase its legitimacy among the domestic public, the Russian government also uses print media and television as propaganda tools. All information regarding the war in Ukraine is strictly monitored and must first receive approval from the Russian government elites. It makes the Russian population and the international community unable to gain access to credible and reliable information regarding the dynamics of the war situation (Federal Ministry of Interior of Germany 2025).

The massive Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks require a strategic counter-response from the Ukrainian side to ensure full political legitimacy from the domestic public and optimize support from the international community (Roccatello and Knight 2025). In this regard, this study was conducted to provide an understanding of a series of strategic actions that have been taken by Ukraine in dealing with massive disinformation and propaganda attacks by Russia, both targeting the domestic Ukrainian population and the international community. The Ukrainian government is aware of the dangers of massive Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks to its credibility amid a war situation.

As conveyed by President Zelensky, most of the world community, including world leaders, are surrounded and trapped in the narrative of Russian disinformation and propaganda. As a result, instead of condemning the open invasion carried out by Russia, the dominant narrative about the war is that the Ukrainian government and society as the guilty parties for the war that occurred. Therefore, it is necessary to fight against disinformation to provide the entire audience with the truth of the history and dynamics of the Ukraine-Russia war (Giordano and Melkozerova 2025).

The initial observation in this research shows that a series of strategic steps to counter Russian disinformation and propaganda have been conducted by the Ukrainian government and civil society organizations. In general, Ukraine's counter-narrative actions were focused on the Ukrainian community, especially in Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, and the eastern regions, which were the main area of the battle. A series of anti-propaganda and anti-Russian disinformation messages were disseminated to the public directly through various social media and broadcasting. The government and civil society organizations also promoted digital literacy programs to prevent and balance all the Russia's lies, especially in frontline areas (Helmus and Holynska 2024). The various counter-narrative initiatives launched have proven to be effective in degrading the dominance of Russian disinformation and propaganda messages. There has been a periodic increase in the Ukrainian public's approval rating for its government's capability to face a war situation with Russia (Fornusek 2025).

Reflecting on the reality that Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks also target the international publics, Ukraine's resistance actions also include increasing the intensity of diplomacy and cooperation carried out with the governments of the state partners. As is the case in the Latin American region, the Ukrainian government has increased political

and economic cooperation between governments in recent years while strengthening and expanding public diplomacy to increase its national branding and reputation among the public of Latin American countries (Runde 2024). Similar diplomatic patterns are also carried out towards other countries in various regions, with the main purpose of degrading the narrative of Russian disinformation and war propaganda that dominates their government elites and societies.

Methods

This is a descriptive analytical study that examines the strategic steps taken by the Ukrainian government and community organizations in facing massive disinformation and propaganda attacks by Russia in the ongoing war. To produce a comprehensive understanding of how Ukraine's counter-narrative steps are taken, along with a series of successes achieved, this research uses a qualitative method with literature study techniques. Observations were made on several data points regarding Ukraine's anti-disinformation and anti-propaganda steps listed in primary sources, mainly including official documents of the Ukrainian government, international organizations, and community organizations in Ukraine, as well as statements from the President of Ukraine and several other government elites. In addition, searches were also carried out on data contained in secondary sources, including previous research reports and journals, as well as credible online news portals. All obtained data were then processed and analyzed to describe the strategic resistance steps that Ukraine has taken in facing massive disinformation and propaganda attacks by Russia in the ongoing war.

Countering Disinformation and Propaganda Strategy in The War Situation

Several previous studies provide a theoretical basis for this research. The first is the research of Nicholas J. Cull (2015), which explains that counter-propaganda strategies are divided into various methods. One of the most common is negative censorship, in which the government inhibits the spread of information from the opposing party by restricting the press and imposing strict supervision on social media and the internet. As a continuation, this effort includes penetration of the opposing party's government and society systems to suppress their center of propaganda and disinformation activities.

An extreme form of this action is to carry out military operations against the opposing party, which is considered responsible for the propaganda and disinformation. Nowadays, a series of those negative actions is considered no longer efficient and ethically and morally unacceptable. Therefore, the implementation of counter-propaganda tends to be directed at positive actions by indirectly influencing the circulation of messages and information on various media platforms. In this case, the government can distract information among the public by competing with the spread of opposing propaganda messages through entertainment to attract public attention (Cull 2015).

Countermeasures against propaganda and disinformation began to be popularly used by the United States to deal with the German and Japanese propaganda that disrupted public opinion and political choices during World War II. Facing massive disinformation, propaganda, and conspiracies from opposing parties, several actions were taken by the United States, including building positive relations with media companies, disseminating information and news as much as possible, expanding access to information, and implementing intensive anti-propaganda and rumor campaign activities (Walton 2022). Likewise, throughout the Cold War, the United States and Western countries were faced with massive disinformation and propaganda attacks from the Soviet Union.

To deal with this situation, according to Calder Walton (2022), there are three principles of counter-propaganda carried out by the United States, including strategy, intelligence data collection, and synergy between government institutions, civil society organizations, and international partners. In the realm of strategy, the United States government has created a special agency, the Active Measures Working Group, which functions to connect US defense and security institutions and domestic and international media to create sufficient fact-based counter-narratives against the opposition's propaganda. After the end of the Cold War, the existence of social media and the internet has provided space and opportunity for the increasingly massive and intense spread of Russian disinformation and propaganda, presenting a new dimension of challenges for the United States and the global order. However, the three principles of US strategic resistance are still considered relevant to be applied in degrading Russian disinformation and propaganda narratives on various contemporary media platforms (Walton 2022).

Regarding Russia's disinformation and propaganda, Kalensky and Osadchuk's (2024) research proposes that there are approximately ten elements in Ukraine's counter-disinformation and anti-propaganda

strategy. First, strengthening the monitoring system against all forms of Russian false information and propaganda in society. Secondly, maximizing the quantity of counter-narratives and the dissemination of fact-based counter-information. Furthermore, the Ukrainian government promotes inclusivity by opening the opportunity for all parties to engage. Fourth, optimizing the participation of non-governmental elements, including non-state organizations, civil society, and influential individuals. These efforts are expected to fulfill domestic and international media with organic news about the magnitude of the social and economic destruction caused by the Russian aggression.

Fifth, preparations are made to ensure that all elements of government and society are ready to face Russia's military attacks and disinformation. Sixth, not only focusing on self-defense from Russian disinformation, penetration of information, and counter propaganda attacks are conducted by Ukrainians toward the Russian public. Seventh, inserting elements of entertainment and creativity in the dissemination of counter-narratives to gain wider domestic and international attention. Eighth, showing the photos and videos regarding the reality of the atrocities committed by the Russian military against Ukrainian civilians to the international public through social media and other broadcasting platforms. Finally, the last element of Ukraine's countering disinformation strategy is strengthening diplomatic action and building cooperation with various governments and the international community, especially Western countries, to stem the spread of Russian disinformation and propaganda while improving Ukraine's reputation in the international arena (Kalensky and Osadchuk 2024).

Russia's Propaganda and Disinformation in the Ukraine-Russia War

Since the early days of the conflict escalation, the Russian government has attempted to spread propaganda messages and false information targeting both the domestic Russian and Ukrainian public and the international audience. According to Dutsyk (2024), information disruption is carried out by the Russian government and media for several purposes, including, first, the Russian government is trying to garner full approval and legitimacy from its people for the decision to go to war with Ukraine. Likewise, the spread of propaganda and disinformation is also aimed at delegitimizing the political position of the Ukrainian government among its people, especially among residents of the border areas that are the focal point of the war. The Ukrainian government does not have sufficient ability and competence to guarantee security for its people. Propaganda and

disinformation can be seen as an attempt by the Russian government to shape and control international public opinion. Thus, a misunderstanding arose among the international community, where Ukraine was considered the guilty party for the invasion and occupation carried out by Russia (Dutsyk 2024).

Propaganda, disinformation, and data manipulation are nothing new to the Russian government. Propaganda and information manipulation have become a crucial instrument in realizing its domestic and international political interests. The Russian government exercises tight control over all print and broadcast media in the country. Several independent media outlets that spread negative news and criticize government policies will be intimidated and threatened. As experienced by Novaya Gazeta, the largest independent media in Russia, it was forced to temporarily close its operations due to threats and intimidation from the government after criticizing Russia's invasion and occupation of Ukraine (Vinokour 2022). The Russian government also restricts its people's activities in the digital space. It closes every person and activist's social media accounts criticizing the Russian government's policies. The government also uses buzzers and hackers to manipulate data and cause information disruption to the public in the digital space (Bond and Allyn 2022).

As the tension of the conflict escalated, Russia increased the intensity of its propaganda and cyberattacks targeting the Ukrainian government and society. When it attempted to annex Crimea in 2014, Russia not only launched a military operation to occupy the Crimean region. Media control was carried out strictly, propaganda was spread, and information was manipulated to justify actions. The Russian government built a narrative among the Crimean people that the attacks and occupation carried out were Russia's steps in restoring justice and freeing the Crimean people from the Ukrainian occupation. Through the mass media and the internet, manipulation of historical facts was also carried out by spreading the myth that Crimea is an inseparable part of Russia, which must eventually return to Russia (Voytuk 2023).

On several occasions, President Putin directly conveyed misleading information that the attack and occupation carried out on Crimea were legitimate actions because they were aimed at liberating the Crimean people (Voytuk 2023). Russia's disinformation also includes the spread of xenophobic messages that discriminate against the existence and role of non-Russian ethnic minority communities in Crimea, such as the Crimean Tartar group. Putting aside the historical facts of the multiculturalism of the Crimean population, the discriminatory actions and neglect carried out

against minority groups are part of Russia's efforts to quell the opposition and smooth the process of annexation of Crimea (Bidochko 2024).

The full-scale invasion of Ukrainian territory in 2022 was followed by the implementation of a similar propaganda and information manipulation strategy. Following the attacks on Donbas, Luhansk, and Kyiv, Russian media affiliated with the government built a narrative that Russia's actions were limited to military operations carried out in self-defense. Utilizing the internet and artificial intelligence, the Russian government manipulated information on social media by stating that the attacks were inevitable due to NATO's aggressiveness and the Ukrainian government's abuse of power against the dominant ethnic Russian population in eastern Ukraine. In official diplomatic forums, the Russian government also made false accusations, stating that there was a collaboration between the United States and Ukraine in creating biological weapons of mass destruction intended to carry out genocide against the ethnic Russian population and pro-Russian groups in Donbas and Luhansk (Polegkyi 2023).

As stated by Krainkova and Propenko (2023), there are more than 24 disinformation narratives spread by Russia through both conventional and digital media. All these false narratives can be categorized into four groups of issues, namely, first, military-strategic, such as the statement that Ukraine will attack first if Russia does not attack. Second, the political issue in which Russia builds a false narrative that the Ukrainian government has been controlled by the NAZI and the statement that Ukraine is not a sovereign country but part of Russian rule. Third, in the socio-economic field, the false narrative built by Russia, such as the Ukrainian government, has completely ignored and ignored the needs of the people of Donbas and Luhansk. Meanwhile, disinformation in the cultural realm includes the statement that the government and residents of Kyiv are Russophobic and plan to carry out genocide against ethnic Russians in Ukraine.

Table 1. Category of Russia's Disinformation

No	Narrative Category	Disinformation Statement
1.	Strategic military	• "The armed forces of Ukraine and those who backed them are criminals" • "Ukraine will eventually lose the war" • "NATO is fighting for Ukraine" • "The armed force of Ukraine is only a proxy army used for war" • "The Ukrainian forces is not capable of fighting" • If Russia had not started special military operation, Ukraine would have attacked first"
2.	Politic	• "Ukrainian government is Nazi" • "Ukrainian needs new government" • "Ukraine is country full of chaos and extremists" • "Nazis are in power in the government of Ukraine" • "People support Russia, but the government against it" • "Russia wants peace, Putin will liberate everyone"
3.	Socio-economy	• "Ukrainian government didn't care about the citizens who remained in the temporary occupied territory" • "Ukrainian government didn't care about the life condition of its people who speaks Russian" • "There are reasons to fear the Ukrainian government for your children" • "International sanction does not function to Russia"

4.	Culture	• "Ukrainians are Russophobic" • "Ukrainians government discriminates Russian ethnic group" • "Ukrainian government forbit its people speaking Russian"

In general, Russia's disinformation and propaganda strategies include constructing false narratives and manipulating images and videos related to the war by using dismissing, distorting, distracting, and dismaying techniques. In the first aspect, disinformation agents recruited and employed by Russia deny the reality and spread false news that the Ukrainian government has committed crimes and tortured its people. Furthermore, in the distorting technique, the Russian propaganda machine tries to build a new understanding among the international public that Russia is not waging war but only carrying out special and limited military operations to protect the Russian ethnic community in Ukraine (Polegkyi 2023). Russia's disinformation strategy also includes the diversion of problems or distractions, where false information is spread to divert public attention. For example, Russia built a narrative that the Ukrainian government had been controlled by Neo-Nazi groups to distract public understanding of the reality that Russia was the aggressor in the war. Finally, Russia also implemented the dismaying technique by spreading threats of missile and nuclear attacks to the entire population of Ukraine (Polegkyi 2023).

Russia's disinformation and propaganda strategy hasn't produced significant impacts on Western countries and societies. Since the beginning, governments in Europe and North America have strongly condemned the annexation of Crimea and the brutal attacks carried out by Russia on Ukrainian territory. In contrast, governments and communities in developing countries or the Global South have relatively diverse views and reactions (Nadkarni et al. 2024). As in the G-20 forum held in Indonesia in 2022, the governments of member countries classified as the G-7 carried out a boycott action and urged that Russia be immediately removed from the forum. Meanwhile, the developing countries, including India, China, and Indonesia, ignored the Russia-Ukraine war issue in the forum (Fadhila & Bimantara 2022).

The divergent views and reactions among the Global South also occurred in every session of the United Nations Security Council forum discussing the issue of the Ukraine-Russia war. Only a small number of countries, such as Indonesia and India, condemned the invasion, while most other

developing countries, including China, opted to abstain. However, despite their criticism, Indonesia and India have yet to implement a concrete foreign policy that strongly opposes Russia's aggressive behavior (Rabel 2025). To maintain its reputation and political legitimacy among developing countries, Russia has been intensively launching disinformation and propaganda attacks that frame its position as a guardian of the alternative world that dares to oppose injustice in the liberal world order dominated by Western countries. In this case, the invasion of Ukraine is described as a form of Russia's courage in defending the interests of developing countries (Rabel 2025).

The impact of Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks on the international community is explained in more detail by Moira Fagan's et al. research (2024) conducted on people in 35 developed and developing countries. The study showed that overall, 65% of the public expressed unfavorable views towards Russia and Putin, while around 28% expressed favorable views and supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Negative views of Russia and the invasion generally come from developed countries in Europe and North America such as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, Sweden, and Poland where the level of negative perception reaches more than 85% compared to only around 5-10% who have positive views of Russia and Putin. Meanwhile, among developing countries, positive perceptions of Russia, Putin, and the invasion of Ukraine are much higher. In Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, and Tunisia, the ratio of positive perceptions towards Russia and the invasion of Ukraine reaches around 50-58%, compared to only 15-40%, which views the opposite. Similarly, in Peru, Nigeria, the Philippines, India, Kenya, and Ghana, around 40-48% of the population perceives Russia positively, while 15-50% have a negative view on Russia (Fagan et al 2024).

Ukraine's Resistance toward Russian Disinformation and Propaganda

The massive propaganda, disinformation, and cyberattacks launched by Russia have direct implications for Ukraine's position in the dynamics of the ongoing war. From the outset, Russia has been committed to waging a modern war against Ukraine in which information campaigns are essential. Therefore, the military invasion was followed by the threat of massive information attacks targeting the Ukrainian population since the escalation of the conflict. Various information warfare strategies were developed and implemented, including controlling radio and television in Crimea and other Ukrainian regions that were successfully annexed and dominating negative narratives about the Ukrainian government and

society in contemporary social media platforms (Lange-Ionatamišvili 2015). The main objectives of the information warfare conducted by Russia are to undermine the legitimacy of the government and discredit the capability and the leadership of the Ukrainian military against the Russian invasion. A series of disinformation and propaganda attacks is also specifically aimed at weakening the psychological aspects of Ukrainian society amidst the ongoing military attacks. Thus, the Russians predicted that Ukraine's resistance and ability to defend itself in the ongoing war could be weakened (Digital Forensic Research Lab 2024).

Realizing the threat of Russian information war, as explained by Kalensky and Osadchuck (2024) that the Ukrainian government's strategy in countering Russian disinformation and propaganda rests on two aspects, namely, strengthening the function of monitoring the spread of Russian false information and propaganda while launching counter-narratives across available media platforms. As conveyed by the Ukrainian government, the long-term experience in dealing with Russian disinformation and propaganda has encouraged the Ukrainian government to be serious about strengthening protection of the information space, promoting media literacy, and developing critical thinking among the Ukrainian public (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine 2023).

Along with the significant increase in Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks on Ukraine after Euromaidan and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Ukrainian government began to ban the operations of every mass media, television, and radio company directly affiliated with the Russian government. Various Russian search engines and social media that were previously popular in Ukraine, such as Yandex and Vkontakte, were also banned from operating in Ukraine because they were proven to have contributed to infiltrating Ukrainian society with fake news and propaganda messages from Russia (Helmus and Holynska 2024). The closure and banning of Russian media operations may not necessarily stem the spread of Russian disinformation and propaganda, but it was an important step to reduce the intensity of the circulation of Russian disinformation and propaganda among Ukrainian society amidst the critical conditions of the ongoing war.

Based on the previous experience, following the escalation of the conflict in Donbass and Luhansk, the Ukrainian government has tried to strengthen its resilience to the increasingly Russian disinformation and propaganda. In 2021, just before the full-scale invasion was launched, the Ukrainian government established two strategic media and communication institutions, the Center for Strategic Communication and Information Security (CSC) and the Center of Countering Disinformation (CCD). Both

institutions have the same responsibility in eliminating the spread of Russian disinformation and propaganda among Ukrainian society, but with different functions and roles (Spravdi 2023).

The CSC under the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy is responsible for helping the Ukrainian government to design and implement anti-disinformation and anti-propaganda policies more effectively and efficiently. This institution also becomes a forum for the government and civil society organizations to collaborate and determine specific counter-disinformation programs. In addition, CSC also provides a special website and other media platforms that report and correct the false narratives constructed by Russia (Spravdi 2023). Meanwhile, the CCD is a special institution that focuses on identifying and countering Russian disinformation narratives in the context of defense and the military. The existence of this institution is considered crucial in preserving the Ukrainian public's trust in the capabilities of the government and military in dealing with the war. The CCD also acts as a hub for the formation of anti-disinformation and anti-Russian propaganda cooperation between the government and domestic communities and international entities (National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine 2022).

Since its formation in 2021, various realizations of programs and actions have been carried out by the CSC and CCD in dealing with Russian disinformation and propaganda. To provide adequate information protection for the Ukrainian people, the CCD has built a strategic information system that can detect the spread of Russian disinformation and disruptive propaganda effectively. During the three years of the war, the CCD has detected thousands of types of disruptive information spread by Russia. As a form of resistance, in collaboration with the media, community organizations, and influential individuals, Ukraine claims to have disseminated millions of confirmations and factual information through all social media platforms. This was not only to increase popularity and public attention, but also to provide a deep understanding to the wider public about the damage experienced by the Ukrainian people due to Russia's brutal attacks (National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine 2025).

Likewise, the CCD also runs a series of literacy and training programs to build Ukraine's awareness and capabilities in dealing with Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks (National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine 2025). Similarly, during the war, CSC has exposed various Russian disinformation, followed by efforts to enlighten the public. One of them is regarding the Russian narrative about the Ukrainian government's fascism, which is illogical and not based on a clear historical context. As a counteraction, CSC has tried to spread real historical facts

that refute Russia's accusations of Ukrainian fascism (Spravdi 2025a). During the war, Russia has also spread various fake documents, images, and videos throughout social media to discredit Ukraine's position. As a response, CSC has actively confirmed that those contents are fake (Spravdi 2025b).

Public participation and involvement are crucial aspects in Ukraine's strategic resistance to the information war with Russia. Responding to the increasing Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks after Euromaidan and the overthrow of the pro-Russian government, groups of Ukrainian civil society organizations initiated the Ukraine Crisis Media Center in 2014, specifically aimed at countering the growing threat of Russian information manipulation. Together with other independent Ukrainian media such as Stop Fake, Detector Media, Fox Ukraine, Texty, and the Institute of Mass Information, this community initiative played a fundamental role in stemming the Russian cyberattacks and information manipulation amidst the power vacuum at that time (Helmus and Holynska 2024). Now, when the war is ongoing, the active participation of Ukrainian civil society in fighting Russian disinformation and propaganda has grown more intense and independent.

Various networks of community organizations have been formed to oppose Russian authoritarian disinformation through various scopes of activities. One of them is the Together for Ukraine program initiated by The Educational Equality Institute that includes educational activities, increasing media literacy, and critical thinking training for young people, professionals, community leaders, and Ukrainian civil society (The Educational Equality Institute 2025). Faced with the wave of cyberattacks and information disruption, civil society is also actively utilizing social media as an instrument of resistance. As explained by Sirinyok-Dolgaryova et al. (2024) regarding the existence of special channels such as BRAMA and Internet Viyska Ukrainiy on the Telegram platform, which are providing space for people to actively exchange information and confirm the existence of misleading news content, images, and videos spread by Russia.

In general, Ukraine's strategy is considered successful in dealing with Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks effectively. Referring to data from the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2024), before the annexation of Crimea, 78% of Ukrainians had a positive perception toward Russia, while only around 13% viewed Russia negatively. This figure completely changed following the full-scale invasion in 2022, where more than 50% of Ukrainians viewed Russia as a negative party, while 34% still

perceived the opposite. By 2024, as Russia's attacks became more massive, Ukrainians' negative perception of Russia had reached 93% compared to only 3% who still had a positive view of Russia. This series of data indirectly shows that the Russian disinformation and propaganda have not had a significant impact on the Ukrainian public's view of Russia as a war aggressor.

Likewise, a survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2025) showed that there is an increase in public trust toward the Ukrainian government's capability in dealing with Russian aggression. At the beginning of the Russian invasion, public trust toward the Ukrainian government was only 37% compared to 52% who expressed distrust in President Zelensky's government. Meanwhile, as the war progressed, public support for the Ukrainian government rose to around 50%-77% from 2023 to 2024. The figure implicitly shows that amidst the disinformation and propaganda, the Ukrainian government could maintain its political legitimacy. This has become important for the Ukrainian government in defending itself and trying to win the war against Russia.

Ukraine's Effort to Contain Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda among the International Community

As one of Ukraine's main supporters, the European Union has become a major target of Russian disinformation and propaganda. Based on data collected by the Center for Information, Democracy, and Citizenship at the American University of Bulgaria, there were thousands of disinformation publications affiliated with the Russian Pravda network spread across European Union countries between 2024 and 2025. Most of them targeted people in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the Baltic, especially Poland, Moldova, Serbia, Latvia, and Estonia (Thomas and Franca 2025). The massive spread of Russian disinformation and propaganda has become the focus of cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union since the beginning of Russia's aggression. The Ukrainian government and several civil society organizations are an important part of the Council of Europe and other European Union forums in formulating strategic steps to confront Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks among European society (Council of Europe 2025).

In 2024, after conducting various intensive dialogue processes with Ukraine, the European Parliament adopted Resolution 2988, which specifically condemned Russia's disinformation and falsification of history. In the resolution, the European Parliament urged member states to increase monitoring of the dissemination of fake news and content

affiliated with Russia (European Parliament 2025). The cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union also includes providing €37 million in funding to support the independence of Ukrainian media and establishing a special media center in Poland that allows Ukrainian media to report on Russian military aggression amidst the ongoing war. In 2025, the European Union added €10 million in funding for independent Ukrainian media to increase their resilience and resistance to Russian disinformation and propaganda (European Union 2025).

A series of cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union, followed by various realizations of bilateral collaborative actions, has been quite effective in protecting European society from the influence of Russian disinformation and propaganda. This achievement can be seen from the maintenance of positive perceptions of European public support for Ukraine in the ongoing war. The results of the Eurobarometer survey show that the level of European public support for the provision of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine reached 89%. Meanwhile, the level of European public acceptance of Ukrainian refugees reached 84%, and 72% of them supported the provision of greater financial assistance to Ukraine in facing the war (European Commission, 2023).

Likewise, a survey conducted by the DGCOMM Public Opinion Monitoring Unit in 2023 showed an average of 82% of the European population had a negative view of Russia and Putin. Only two countries, namely Greece and Hungary, whose people have a positive view of Russia and support the war it waged against Ukraine (European Parliament 2023). The high level of support for Ukraine and the low level of positive perception towards Russia indicate that the impact of the spread of Russian disinformation and propaganda among European society is still minimal.

Despite European Union countries, the United States and Canada are also Ukraine's most reliable partners, which are the main targets of Russian disinformation and propaganda. The spread of manipulative news and content is carried out intensively to influence public opinion in the United States regarding the involvement of the United States government in the Ukraine-Russia war. After Trump was elected president, there was an increase in the quantity of content and false news about relations between Ukraine and the United States on social media, to reduce the level of public approval of military and financial assistance provided by the United States government to Ukraine (Klepper 2024). In response to the threat of Russian disinformation and propaganda, the government, through the Department of State, Department of Justice, and other related institutions, has closed companies and expelled individuals proven to have spread manipulative

content about the Ukraine-Russia war (US Department of Justice 2024).

In addition, the anti-disinformation collaboration between Ukraine and the United States includes technical and financial assistance programs. One of them is an intelligence sharing relationship between Ukraine and the United States regarding the spread of Russian disinformation and propaganda (Walton 2025). Previously, the United States Department of State, together with Ukraine and Poland, initiated the Ukraine Communication Group Initiative, which has a role in promoting accurate information about Russian attacks while also responding to Russian disinformation spread in various media (Le Monde 2024). Likewise, the Ukrainian government has collaborated with the government of Canada and the company IREX in conducting socialization and digital media literacy activities for Ukrainian journalists and civil society. Cooperation between the two countries also includes the commitment to limit the spread of misinformation about the Ukrainian and Russian wars among Canadians. As in late 2024, Canadian national media, such as Global Affairs Canada, were actively checking and disseminating the reality of Canada's position and NATO's role in the ongoing war in Ukraine (Government of Canada 2024).

In contrast to Western countries, where Russian disinformation and propaganda have minimal influence and implication on the public perception regarding the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks have a relatively diverse impact on the people of developing countries. The information disruption deliberately constructed by Russia through the spread of manipulative news and content causes many people in developing countries to have an inadequate understanding of the Ukraine-Russia war. As a result, despite having invaded aggressively and brutally, Russia is still popular and has received positive responses from people in developing countries such as Pakistan, India, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Likewise, data shows that people in South Asia, Africa, and Southeast Asia regions have a high level of trust and positive perception of Russia, with a ratio of up to 75% (Lewsey 2022). This condition urges the Ukrainian government to start increasing its diplomatic activities and take a series of strategic actions to boost its popularity and eliminate the dominance of Russian information and war narrative among the public in developing countries.

In response to the increasing manipulation of Russian information and narrative through the presence of the media such as Russia Today and Sputnik Mundo, as well as various social media platforms in the Latin America Countries, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has optimized the communication strategy in the region aimed at improving Ukraine's

reputation among the public of Latin America. As explained by Runde (2024), Ukraine's strategy involves the use of technology and increasing cooperation with local community organizations in identifying Russian disinformation content and spreading counter-narrative information. Ukraine also seeks to strengthen socio-political and cultural relations, one of which is by optimizing the intensity of diplomatic visits by the president and government leaders in the region and vice versa. Finally, the Ukrainian government, in collaboration with local governments and private entities in several Latin American countries, operates the media named Ukrinform to compete with the power of Russian media in the region. The existence of Ukrainian media is expected to provide space for people in Latin America to understand Ukraine more deeply, especially regarding the war situation (Runde 2024).

The Ukrainian government also implemented a similar strategy to counter the spread of disinformation and propaganda as well as increase Ukraine's popularity among people in Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Inclusively, the government also opened opportunities and provided sufficient support for community organizations' initiatives that focused on forming a positive narrative about Ukraine. One of them is Brand Ukraine, an independent Ukrainian organization operating in Morocco, Turkey, Kazakhstan, China, Indonesia, and other developing countries. In carrying out its mission, this organization becomes part of the Nations Against Disinformation Initiative conducted by the Ukrainian government, which uses a data-based approach as the basis for producing and promoting positive content and narratives about Ukraine. Operating since the Russian invasion was launched, Brand Ukraine claims to have attracted the attention of millions of social media users in developing countries with a dominant positive response (Brand Ukraine 2023).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the invasion launched by Russia into the territory of Ukraine was followed by aggressive propaganda and disinformation attacks. The spread of propaganda, along with a series of manipulative information, was carried out massively targeting the domestic Ukrainian community to weaken the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government and military capability to deal with the war. Along with the development of a global information and communication network, Russia's propaganda and disinformation were also aimed at the international community throughout the world. Various narratives of false accusations about Ukraine were spread to gain political support from the governments and publics of other countries. The dominance of Russian propaganda and information, both in conventional media and digital space, has drawn serious attention from Ukraine's side.

Several strategic responses have been made by the Ukrainian government together with the Ukrainian civil society community, both in the context of domestic and foreign policies. In the domestic realm, a special national institution has been formed that specifically addresses Russian disinformation, propaganda, and cyberattacks in Ukrainian society. The government also gives opportunities for the emergence of various digital literacy activity initiatives and anti-Russian propaganda and disinformation campaigns carried out by Ukrainian organizations and community groups. To overcome information disruption in the international realm, the Ukrainian government has tried to increase its presence and diplomatic relations with the governments and international communities. Thus, through the intensification of public diplomacy, the Ukrainian government and people can effectively contain Russian disinformation and minimize its political impact and consequences.

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