



# DISINFORMATION AND THE NARRATIVES THAT CONDITION THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

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# AIM AND PLAN OF MY REPORT

## Aims

- Understand how disinformation campaigns use grand narratives of Eastern Europe to participate in the Russian-Ukrainian war
- Show how the informational warfare changes nation- and state-building in Europe

## Plan

- Clarify terms
- Disinformation super-success
- History of grand narratives that politically shaped Eastern Europe
- Current clash of grand narratives around Ukraine
- Conclusions

# SPECIFICITY OF THE SITUATION: THE FOG OF WAR ENLARGED

- Fog of War (Clausewitz: uncertainty in situational awareness experienced by participants in military operations) goes far beyond military
- mass media, social networks, and illusion of being informed
- super-efficiency of information producers on all sides of the conflict: neither peace nor de-escalation are legitimate, huge demand for military solution
- conflict of disinformation campaigns ruining recognition of each other: ultimate dehumanization — “Russian Orcs” VS “Western Satanists” and “Ukrainian Nazis”
- Tilly: war-making = state-building
- 2022: war-making (with its influential info warfare) = nation-building

# GRAND NARRATIVES AND POLITICAL ORDERS

- World is a chaos of events, in which human individuals and collectives can exist only if at least some part of it is ordered or perceived to be ordered
- Ricoeur, “On Interpretation”:
  - even though there is a diversity of modes of narrative (realistic, fictional, else), all narratives perform a common function — “they mark, organize, and clarify temporal experience”
  - narrative makes “emplotment,” gives the meaning of persons, relations, and events that comprise human affairs
- Human imagination uses narratives to order groups’ thinking and acting through ascription of shared and contested meanings



# THE POWER OF SOCIAL IMAGINATION

- Imagination is the core human capacity to bring together reason and sentiments, logic and experience, creativity and acceptance of the created by previous generation — its aspects:
  - The real aspect: imagination is embodied in the social reality, and it participates in its reproduction
  - The intersubjective aspect: imagination refers to the experience of individuals and groups simultaneously
  - The ideal aspect of imagination: it focuses on alternative to the state of affairs, offers a utopia or nostalgia as possible solutions
- Social imagination makes possible existence of big lasting groups — nations as imagined communities — now defined by militarist legitimacy and re-use of grand narratives of Eastern Europe



# A SHORT HISTORY OF THE GRAND NARRATIVES IN EASTERN EUROPE

- the Imperial Order
- the Nationalist Order
- the Socialist Order
- the Western Liberal Order
- the post-Soviet Republican Order

# NARRATIVE OF THE IMPERIAL ORDER (XVI-EARLY XX CENTURIES)

- Imperial creativity from early Modernity projects: the struggle of Polish-Lithuanian Catholic, of Turkish Islamic, and of Russian Orthodox projects
- Russian Imperial Order: unity of Orthodox Christians as the path to stable peace in Eastern Europe
- XVIII-XX centuries test: absolute monarchy of the Romanovs, Caesarepapism, republic of Russian Orthodox Church
- World War I, the Imperial narrative disfunction, and the Nationalist narrative explosion in the Eastern Europe

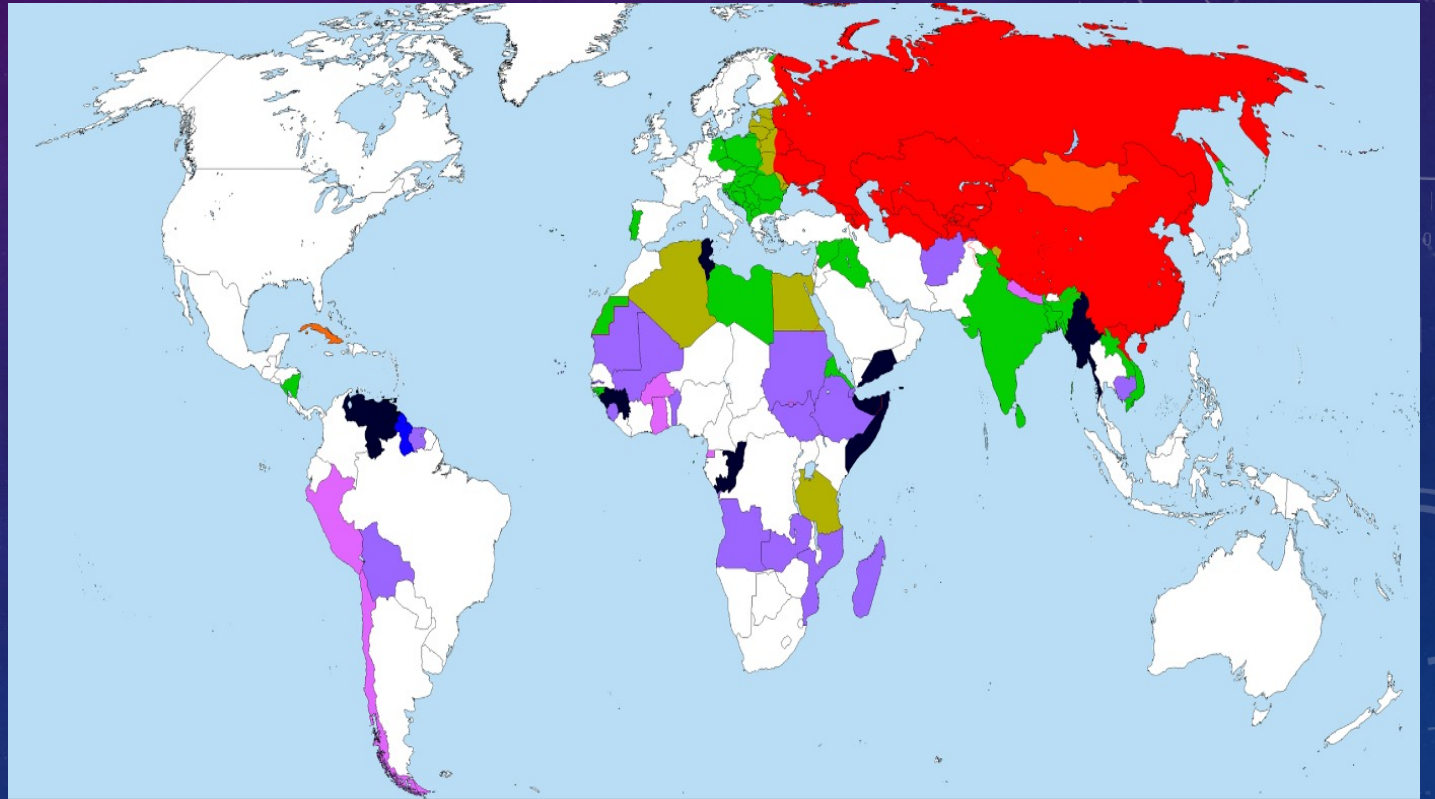
# NARRATIVE OF THE NATIONALIST ORDER (1917-1945, ?)



- 1917-22: Revolutionary period in Eastern and Central Europe
- Nationalist narrative wins in Central Europe, fails in the East
  - Finland, Baltic countries, Poland, little Austria, Hungary
  - Soviet Union, Yugoslavia
- World War II and the failure of nationalism in Eastern Europe
- National liberation movements between nationalism, conservatism, and socialism

# NARRATIVE OF THE SOCIALIST ORDER (1917-1991,?)

- Marxist Universalist Narrative
- The class divide over the ethnic groups divide
- From proletarian dictatorship to class-less state
- Socialist nations as a compromise with the nationalist narrative
- Socialist global alternative



# NARRATIVE OF THE WESTERN LIBERAL ORDER (1945-2022)

- UN and the universal order based on human rights, republican sovereignty, and international obligations
- Peace as the Global Project (Kant: peace as constructed unnatural order that reveals human reasons forces through institutions)
- International (regional) organizations as promoters of the liberal balance
- Council of Europe as the common case for all European nations
- Contradiction of the Narrative: West as the core of the world-system

# NARRATIVE OF THE POST-SOVIET REPUBLICAN ORDER (1991-2022)

- Post-Soviet decommunization and liberation narrative
- Contradictions of democratization (with blooming autocracies), marketization (with flourishing oligarchies) and nationalization (with civic – ethnic divide)
- Europeanization as a framework to diminish contradictions
- Anti-European reactionary narratives: ethnonationalist conservatism, neo-Sovietism, Ostalgie, Eurasianism, sovereigntism



## EMERGING NARRATIVE (2022-?)

- West: now — strong solidarity against the common enemy; past — return to 1990s; future — vague; limited war agenda
- Russia: now — global war with the West; past — Soviet and Imperial experiences; future — Eurasia as region of closed states; increasing totalizing global war agenda
- Ukraine: now — total war with Russia; past — nationalist resistance to Soviet order; future — military victory; total regional war agenda
- Global South: now — waiting and distancing from the West; past — distrust to the West as the colonizing power; future — multipolar globality; limited pacifist agenda

# UKRAINE IN THE CENTER OF ULTIMATE NON-RECOGNITION

- Universalism of West vs Putin's sovereigntist imperialism
- New wave of state- and nation-building — now in wartime, and with new long-term influence of disinformation
  - Annexation of 4 Ukrainian oblasts and an attempt of application of the Chechnya and Crimea "success"
- Democracy vs autocracy
- Europeanization vs Eurasianism
- Battlefield of two solidarities and many narratives
  - Strategic de-escalation through tactical escalation
- New nations- and states-building in Europe

# DE-ESCALATION AS MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

- Creating new order in the Fog: successful dis- and mis-representation of each other and each others aims
- International relations in the framework of the ultimate non-recognition of each other
- All sides are ready for the long war of attrition

THANK YOU!  
ANY QUESTIONS?

