

FLOOD OF LIES

The battle for perception

2023/06/06



Unraveling Russian Propaganda Techniques and their Influence on Public Opinion in the Kakhovska HPP Destruction case

BACKGROUND INFORMATION¹

In the early morning of June 6, in parallel with another massive missile strike on Ukrainian cities, Russian occupiers blew up the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant they had seized.

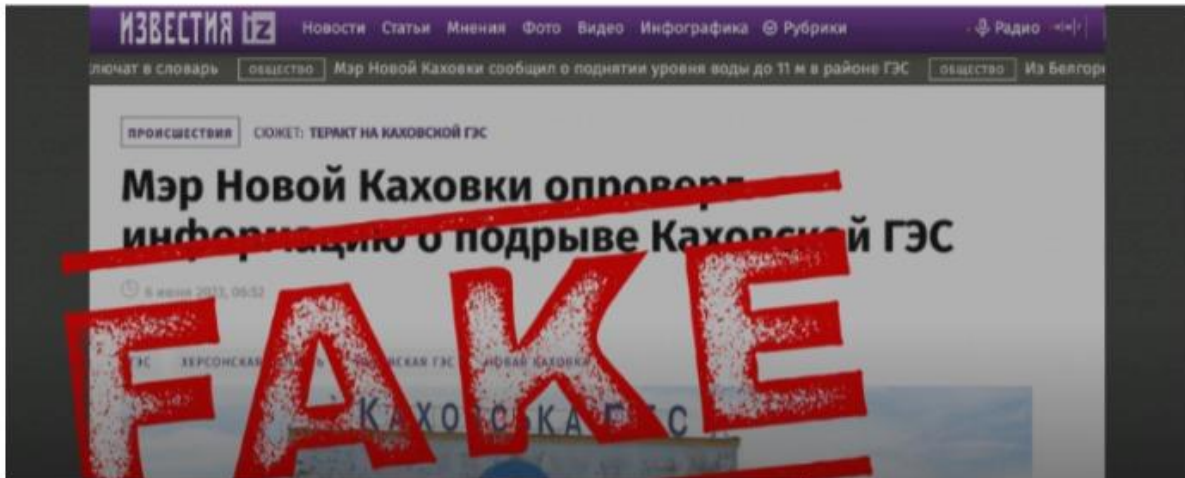
According to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, occupation troops carried out an internal explosion of the plant's structures at 02:50 a.m. About 80 settlements were in the flood zone, and tens of thousands were in the risk zone.

Despite the vast amount of photo and video materials confirming the data of the Ukrainian authorities about the occupants blowing up the Kakhovska HPP, at first, the Russian media tried to ensure that "everything in Novaya Kakhovka is "calm and quiet" and the information about blowing up the plant is "nonsense".

Subsequently, when it became impossible to hide the fact of the disaster, the pro-Kremlin media spread a considerable number of theories about the destruction of the Kakhovska HPP, from the narrative "the dam collapsed by itself" to the theses about "Ukrainian missiles bombing the Kakhovska HPP.

[Read also STOPFAKE ARTICLE: "It collapsed on its own" – Five Russian media fakes about the destruction Kakhovka dam | StopFake](#)

¹ ["It collapsed on its own" – Five Russian media fakes about the destruction Kakhovka dam | StopFake](#)



Factscheck for Facebook, EN News

“It collapsed on its own” – Five Russian media fakes about the destruction Kakhovka dam

2023-06-06, 15:01



I NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Overview of the manipulative techniques employed in the Russian propaganda campaign, based on the mentioned sample, used for news titles in the context of the HPP destruction includes the following instruments:

1. EMOTIONAL APPEAL AND REPETITION

The Russian-controlled information sources utilize strong emotional language and narratives to stimulate specific emotions such as outrage, sympathy, and fear. The propaganda repeatedly presents messages, claims, or narratives through various channels. These techniques aim to influence the audience's perception and generate a strong emotional response that can override critical thinking.

Possible Effect

Using solid emotional language and narratives can evoke strong emotional responses from the audience, potentially leading to increased anger, fear, or sympathy in society. This emotional manipulation can reinforce pre-existing biases and make individuals more receptive to the propaganda's messaging. Repetition aims to create an echo chamber effect, where the audience is continuously exposed to the same information, reinforcing the propaganda's claims, and suppressing alternative viewpoints.

EXAMPLES

The Kyiv regime has staged a real ecocide²

Киевский режим устроил настоящий экоцид

² [Киевский режим, уничтожив Каховскую ГЭС, устроил настоящий экоцид на территории Херсонской области - Лента новостей Крыма \(crimea-news.com\)](https://crimea-news.com/kyiv-regime-ecocide/)

By blowing up the hydroelectric power plant, the Kyiv regime has staged a real ecocide³

Подрывом ГЭС киевский режим устроил настоящий экоцид

Destruction of the Kakhovska HPP: Kyiv spits on innocent citizens⁴

Разрушение Каховской ГЭС: Киев наплевал на невинных граждан

Ukraine is trading Russian blood, but the West is preparing it for slaughter⁵

Украина торгует российской кровью, но Запад готовит ее на заклятие

"The Kyiv regime has committed an unthinkable crime": Nebenzia⁶ commented on the destruction of the Kakhovska HPP⁷

«Киевский режим пошел на немыслимое преступление»: Небензя прокомментировал разрушение Каховской ГЭС

"Russian Atlantis" and Ukrainian hysteria. Why is Russia accused of undermining the Kakhovska HPP?⁸

«Русская Атлантида» и украинская истерика. Для чего Россию обвиняют в подрыве Каховской ГЭС?

³ [Абрамченко: подрывом ГЭС киевский режим устроил настоящий экоцид | Общество | Аргументы и Факты \(aif.ru\)](#)

⁴ [Разрушение Каховской ГЭС: Киев наплевал на невинных граждан | Baltnews | Дзен \(dzen.ru\)](#)

⁵ [Михаил Смолин о подрыве ГЭС: Украина торгует российской кровью, но Запад готовит ее на заклятие - Лента новостей Херсона \(kherson-news.ru\)](#)

⁶ Vasily Nebenzya (Василий Небензя) is a Russian diplomat and the current Permanent Representative of Russia to the United Nations.[1] His official title is Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

⁷ [«Киевский режим пошел на немыслимое преступление»: Небензя прокомментировал разрушение Каховской ГЭС \(riafan.ru\)](#)

⁸ [«Русская Атлантида» и украинская истерика. Для чего Россию... \(politnavigator.net\)](#)

One careless missile and this catastrophe will go down in history for millennia:
Kyiv could become a second Atlantis in the event of a strike on the Kyiv
hydropower plant⁹

Одна неосторожная ракета – и эта катастрофа войдёт в историю на тысячелетия”: Киев может стать второй
Атлантидой в случае удара по Киевской ГЭС

If anything, Ukraine can simply be washed into the Black Sea¹⁰

В случае чего, Украину можно просто смыть в Черное море

2. DEMONIZATION AND DEHUMANIZATION

The Russian propaganda intends to portray Ukraine as the “aggressor” and uses derogative terms, underlining ethnical components, such as “Ukranazis” (“украонацисты”) and their “terrorist actions” to dehumanize and vilify the Ukrainian government and Armed forces. This technique aims to create a negative image of the perceived enemy and justify Russia's actions¹¹.

Possible effect. Portraying Ukraine as the aggressor and using derogatory terms can fuel animosity and hatred towards Ukraine among the audience. It can dehumanize the audience, making it easier for them to accept and support Russia's actions against Ukraine.

⁹ <https://ku.life/spetsoperatsiya-na-ukraine/odna-neostorozhnaya-raketa-i-eta-katastrofa-voydyot-v-istoriyu-na-tysyacheletiya-kyiv-mozhet-stat-vtoroy-atlantidoy-v-sluhae-udara-po-kyevskoy-kes.html>

¹⁰ [В случае чего, Украину можно просто смыть в Черное море | Время и Деньги \(e-vid.ru\)](#)

¹¹ The list of techniques is not limited in this case, by those provided.

EXAMPLES

"They blocked the possibility of a counterattack." The deputy explained the undermining of the Kakhovska hydroelectric power plant by the "crookedness of the Ukronazis"¹²

("Перекрыли возможность контрнаступления": Депутат объяснил подрыв Каховской ГЭС "криворукостью укронацистов")

3. CONSPIRACY THEORIES TECHNIQUES

The propaganda presents conspiracy theories, such as the involvement of NATO military advisors and Western countries in planning the dam's destruction.

Possible effect. Presenting conspiracy theories can increase the audience's suspicion and paranoia. It can create a belief that there is a hidden agenda against Russia and reinforce a sense of victimhood, further solidifying support for the Russian government.

EXAMPLES

The U.S. and Ukraine blew up the dam of the Kakhovska HPP. They created an environmental disaster for decades to come¹³

(США и Украина взорвали плотину Каховской ГЭС и устроили экологическую катастрофу на десятилетия вперед)

¹² [Депутат Журавлёв: Подорвав Каховскую ГЭС, ВСУ сорвали своё контрнаступление \(life.ru\)](https://life.ru)

¹³ [Политолог Марков: США и Украина взорвали плотину Каховской ГЭС и устроили экологическую катастрофу на десятилетия вперед - Аргументы Недели \(argumenti.ru\)](https://argumenti.ru)

The head of the British Foreign Office accidentally disclosed Western involvement in the destruction of the Kakhovska HPP¹⁴

(Глава МИД Британии случайно раскрыл причастность Запада к разрушению Каховской ГЭС)

There is no doubt that the terrorist actions to destroy the dam are part of a plan by NATO military advisors to organize a notorious "counterattack"¹⁵

Нет сомнения в том, что террористические действия по уничтожению дамбы – часть плана НАТОвских военных советников по организации пресловутого «контрнаступа»

Kakhovska HPP: How the West Prepares Society for Kyiv to Use Weapons of Mass Destruction¹⁶

Каховская ГЭС: как Запад готовит общество к применению Киевом оружия массового поражения

4. FALSE ATTRIBUTION TECHNIQUES (inadequate appeals to support an argument)

The propaganda attributes the destruction of the hydroelectric power station to Ukraine without providing verifiable evidence. It attempts to create a perception of guilt by presenting claims without substantial proof and shifting the blame onto Ukraine (and Western countries).

Possible effect. By attributing the destruction of the power station to Ukraine without verifiable evidence, the propaganda can manipulate the audience's perception of the event. It can create a perception of guilt and shift blame onto Ukraine, further justifying Russia's actions in the eyes of the audience.

¹⁴ [Глава МИД Британии случайно раскрыл причастность Запада к произошедшему на Каховской ГЭС \(pravda.ru\)](https://pravda.ru)

¹⁵ [Киев уничтожает плотину и бросает России обвинение в «экоциде» \(sobcor.news\)](https://sobcor.news)

¹⁶ [Каховская ГЭС: как Запад готовит общество к применению Киевом оружия массового поражения | Октагон.Медиа \(octagon.media\)](https://octagon.media)

EXAMPLES

Kyiv decided to destroy the Kakhovska HPP because it feared the possibility of an attack by the Russian Armed Forces¹⁷

Киев пошёл на разрушение Каховской ГЭС, поскольку опасался возможности наступления Вооружённых сил России

The AFU blew up the Kakhovska HPP to get F-16 fighter jets as soon as possible¹⁸

ВСУ подорвали Каховскую ГЭС, чтобы поскорее получить истребители F-16

The Ukrainian armed blew up the Kakhovska hydroelectric power station to flush Russian army minefields¹⁹

ВСУ подорвали Каховскую ГЭС, чтобы смыть минные поля России

Blowing up the Kakhovska HPP is a Kyiv`s attempt to paralyze the water supply in Crimea²⁰

Подрыв Каховской ГЭС – это попытка Киева парализовать водоснабжение Крыма

The Kyiv regime blew up the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station to redirect troops to the area of their offensive actions²¹

Киевский режим подорвал Каховскую ГЭС, чтобы перебросить войска в район своих наступательных действий

¹⁷ [«Киев пошёл на разрушение Каховской ГЭС, опасаясь российского наступления», — Денис Пушилин - Лента новостей Киева \(news-kyiv.ru\)](#)

¹⁸ [Военный политолог назвал цель подрыва Каховской ГЭС | Ямал-Медиа \(yamal-media.ru\)](#)

¹⁹ [ВСУ подорвали Каховскую ГЭС, чтобы смыть минные поля ВС России: Самая скандальная версия \(howto-news.info\)](#)

²⁰ [Подрыв Каховской ГЭС – это попытка Киева парализовать водоснабжение Крыма, заявил Песков \(vmeste-rf.tv\)](#)

²¹ [Шойгу объяснил, почему киевский режим подорвал Каховскую ГЭС - 06.06.2023, Sputnik Кыргызстан](#)

Zelenskyy disrupts "counterattack" by attacking Kakhovska HPP²²

Атакой на Каховскую ГЭС Зеленский сорвал «контрнаступ»

5. MISDIRECTION AND DESTRUCTION

The Russian propaganda accuses Ukraine of using the destruction of the power station as a diversion tactic to shift attention from their military maneuvers or to harm the civilian population which have been committed by the occupation troops. This technique aims to divert attention from Russia's actions and intentions to the artificial aspect of the context.

Possible effect. Accusing Ukraine of using the destruction of the power station as a diversion tactic can divert attention away from Russia's actions and intentions. It can create confusion and shift the focus onto Ukraine's alleged motives, potentially diminishing scrutiny of Russia's involvement in the conflict.

EXAMPLES

Kyiv deliberately aggravates the situation in the Kherson region²³

(Киев осознанно усугубляет ситуацию в Херсонской области)

²² [Атакой на Каховскую ГЭС Зеленский сорвал «контрнаступ» - Свободная Пресса - Каховская ГЭС. Новости сегодня. Каховская ГЭС новости. Новости. Каховская ГЭС сегодня. Каховская ГЭС новости 7 июня 2023. Новости часа. Новости дня. \(svpressa.ru\)](#)

²³ [Вести в 20:00 последний полный выпуск смотреть онлайн \(smotrim.ru\)](#)

8. "SCAPEGOATING"

The propaganda blames Ukraine for destroying the power station, portraying it as an intentional act of aggression or ecocide. This technique aims to shift responsibility and divert attention from Russia's military intervention.

Possible effect: Blaming Ukraine for destroying the power station can fuel hatred and resentment towards Ukraine. It can create a false perception of Ukraine and justify Russia's actions, garnering support for Russia's military intervention.

EXAMPLES

Kyiv has staged an ecocide in the Kherson region by destroying the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant²⁴

(Киев устроил экоцид в Херсонской области, разрушив Каховскую ГЭС)

Russian Foreign Ministry calls Ukraine's destruction of Kakhovska HPP a planned act of terrorism²⁵

(В МИД РФ назвали разрушение Украиной Каховской ГЭС спланированным террористическим актом)

The hitting of the hydroelectric power plant is a genocide of the people of Ukraine by Kyiv²⁶

(Удар по ГЭС – это геноцид народа Украины Киевом)

²⁴ [Разрушив Каховскую ГЭС, Киев устроил экоцид | 07.06.2023 | Продолжение проекта «Русская Весна» \(rusnext.ru\)](https://rusnext.ru)

²⁵ [В МИД РФ назвали разрушение Украиной Каховской ГЭС спланированным террористическим актом \(tass.ru\)](https://tass.ru)

²⁶ [Удар по ГЭС – это геноцид народа Украины Киевом ::Первый Севастопольский \(sev.tv\)](https://sev.tv)

II CONTEXT ANALYSIS

PASTEL environment

Russian propaganda surrounding the destruction of the Kakhovska hydroelectric power station, several important points can potentially influence political, economic, and social environments etc. The political aspect of the propaganda is evident in the portrayal of Ukraine as the aggressor and Russia as the victim, despite the documented war crimes committed in the occupied territories, a full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation and 9-year Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Analyzed in this overview, titles used by the Russian propaganda articles aim to shape public opinion and convince different groups (internally and internationally) to support Russia's military intervention in Ukraine. The Russian propaganda highlights political tensions and rivalries toward Ukraine, emphasizing the perceived illegitimacy of the Ukrainian government and justifying Russia's actions.

The economic aspect of Russian propaganda is addressed indirectly. By framing Ukraine as an aggressor or one who committed the crime, it implies potential economic disruption and negative consequences for regional stability, cooperation, and further reconstruction.

The social aspect of the propaganda is evident in the use of emotive language and framing of the incident as a crime or ecocide and blaming Kyiv for it. These tactics evoke strong emotional responses, generate outrage, and rally support for the Russian government's actions inside the country. It could also be produced internationally with the help of another aspect of Russian propaganda and its joint effects. At the same time propaganda campaign seeks to foster a sense of national unity and patriotism among the Russian population by portraying Ukraine as a hostile and reckless actor.

Dissemination and amplification of propaganda through social media are crucial from a technological point of view. Social media platforms, online news outlets, and digital communication channels such (Telegram analyzed in this summary) enable the rapid spread of narratives and targeted messaging to specific audiences. The researched titles demonstrate the utilization of these technological tools to shape public opinion, control the information flow (narrative control), and maintain a dominant narrative in the Russian information space.

The propaganda aims to portray Ukraine as an environmentally irresponsible actor, causing harm to the environment and potentially jeopardizing the population's well-being. By highlighting the environmental impact, the propaganda attempts to create a negative image of Ukraine and further justify Russia's actions.

The legal aspect is not explicitly addressed in the given context. However, it is essential to note that international laws and norms regarding infrastructure protection, environmental preservation, and human rights are relevant. Russian propaganda may seek to downplay or dismiss any legal implications or responsibilities on the part of Russia while potentially emphasizing perceived violations by Ukraine.

The propaganda analysis reveals a comprehensive effort to manipulate public perception, justify Russia's military intervention, and rally support for the government's actions. The propaganda utilizes various aspects of the PESTEL framework to shape narratives, evoke emotions, and create a favourable image of Russia while portraying Ukraine in a negative light.

The strongest side of Russian propaganda in the case of Kakhovska HPP remains to utilize emotive language and narratives to evoke strong emotional responses from the audience, fostering a sense of outrage and sympathy towards Russia. Another asset is the large-scale usage of various communication channels, including social media platforms and online news outlets, allowing for the widespread dissemination of fake messages, reaching a large audience and influencing public opinion.

At the same time, the weakest side is biased messaging, accompanied by a lack of credibility. Propaganda faces the most challenges in terms of credibility, particularly among international audiences or individuals seeking diverse information sources. Skepticism towards Russian propaganda's authenticity and accuracy may undermine its effectiveness.

However, Russian propaganda presents an opportunity to shape public opinion and garner support for Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, particularly among the domestic audience relying on state-controlled media sources. By controlling the narrative through propaganda, Russia can frame the conflict to align with its political interests and objectives, potentially influencing international perceptions and actions.

Overall, Russian propaganda contributes to the further polarization of opinions domestically and internationally, creating divisions and reinforcing existing biases that align with Russia's narrative.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Stakeholders' analysis of Russian propaganda about the situation involving the destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station portrays the Russian regime and military as major stakeholders in this situation. They have initiated a military intervention in Ukraine and are using propaganda to shape public opinion domestically and internationally. Their objectives may include maintaining control over the occupied territories, projecting power, and justifying military actions.

The Ukrainian government and military are directly affected by the Russian invasion and the destruction of the power station. They are stakeholders in the conflict and are in necessity to work to counter Russian propaganda and garner international support for their cause. Their goals may include regaining control over the occupied territories and protecting their sovereignty but also is to combat disinformation and propaganda.

The international community, including governments, organizations, and individuals, is a crucial stakeholder. They shape public opinion internationally, provide aid, and determine the response to the conflict. Their stance on the situation, influenced by Russian propaganda and information, can impact diplomatic relations, sanctions, and humanitarian efforts.

Media organizations are responsible for reporting accurate and unbiased information to the public.

The energy sector, particularly in the affected region, is directly impacted by the destruction of the power station. The disruption of power supply and infrastructure damage can have significant economic and logistical consequences. Energy companies, employees, and consumers are stakeholders interested in restoring energy infrastructure and stability.

Humanitarian organizations, such as NGOs and aid agencies, have a stake in assisting and supporting affected populations. They are concerned with the well-being and safety of civilians, providing humanitarian aid, and protecting human rights. The conflict and Russian propaganda narratives can influence their access to affected areas and the scale of their operations.

Neighboring countries, particularly those bordering Ukraine and Russia, are stakeholders. They may be concerned about the spillover effects of the conflict, such as refugee flows, security risks, and geopolitical implications. Russian propaganda and the perceived threat to their national interests can influence their responses and policies.

Environmental organizations are interested in the ecological impact of the destruction of the power station and the uncontrolled water flow. They may advocate for environmental protection, mitigation measures, and raising awareness of the ecological consequences. The propaganda narratives can influence public perception of the environmental impact and potential international response or create a biased perception of the context.

CONCLUSIONS

The review of Russian propaganda techniques in the context of destroying the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Plant (HPP) reveals a deliberate and systematic effort to manipulate public opinion and shape narratives to support Russia's military intervention in Ukraine. Russian propaganda employs manipulative techniques to influence the audience's perception and generate strong emotional responses.

One of the primary techniques employed is emotional appeal and repetition, where the propaganda uses strong language and narratives to evoke anger, fear, and sympathy among the audience. This emotional manipulation aims to override critical thinking and reinforce pre-existing biases, making individuals more receptive to the propaganda's messaging.

Russian propaganda also relies on demonization and dehumanization tactics, portraying Ukraine as the aggressor and using derogatory terms to vilify the Ukrainian government and armed forces. By dehumanizing the perceived enemy, the propaganda aims to fuel hatred and justify Russia's actions in the eyes of the audience.

Conspiracy theories are another prominent technique used, suggesting the involvement of NATO military advisors and Western countries in planning the dam's destruction. These conspiracy theories aim to increase suspicion and reinforce a sense of victimhood among the audience, solidifying support for the Russian government.

False attribution techniques are employed to attribute the destruction of the power station to Ukraine without providing verifiable evidence. By manipulating the audience's perception and creating a perception of guilt, the propaganda justifies Russia's actions and shifts the blame onto Ukraine.

Russian propaganda also utilizes misdirection and destruction tactics, accusing Ukraine of using the destruction of the power station as a diversion tactic or to

harm the civilian population. This technique aims to divert attention from Russia's actions and intentions and create confusion regarding Ukraine's motives.

Furthermore, the Russian propaganda engages in scapegoating, blaming Ukraine for intentionally destroying the power station and portraying it as an act of aggression or ecocide. This technique fuels hatred and resentment towards Ukraine, justifying Russia's military intervention.

Analyzing the context surrounding the propaganda reveals its influence on political, economic, and social environments. The propaganda portrays Ukraine as the "aggressor" against Russia and the civil population, emphasizing political tensions and rivalries while indirectly addressing potential economic disruption and negative consequences for regional stability and cooperation. Emotive language and framing of the incident as a crime or ecocide generate outrage and rally support for the Russian government's actions.

Overall, the analysis highlights the comprehensive effort by Russian propaganda to manipulate public perception, justify Russia's military intervention, and create a favourable image of Russia while portraying Ukraine negatively. The propaganda exploits emotions, utilizes derogatory language, promotes conspiracy theories, and shifts blame to shape narratives that support Russia's actions in Ukraine. Understanding these techniques is crucial for critical media consumption and promoting informed public discourse.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study consists of two levels: narrative analysis and context analysis. The study aimed to analyze a sample of almost two hundred news and articles related to the Hydro Power Plant (HPP) from Nova Kakhovka, a city under Russian occupation. These news articles were published on June 6. They were selected based on keyword research conducted on Telegram and searching engine Yandex, using the Russian language. The selected articles were then grouped and categorized based on their main messages, allowing for identifying dominant narratives.

To draw credible conclusions, insights were derived from integrating various analytical frameworks, including PESTO, SWOT, and Stakeholder analysis. The PESTO analysis provided a comprehensive examination of the political, economic, social, technological, and environmental factors influencing the propaganda campaign surrounding the destruction of the HPP. The SWOT analysis identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the different actors involved in the narrative. Additionally, the Stakeholder analysis sheds light on various stakeholders' interests, perspectives, and influence in shaping the narrative.

Furthermore, a theoretical framework was employed to explain the manipulation techniques employed in the information campaign. By examining the methods (techniques) used and their potential effects on public perception, the study aimed to understand the media effects that could arise from disseminating disinformation regarding the issue.

By combining the findings from the narrative analysis, context analysis, PESTO, SWOT, and Stakeholder analysis, this study provides credible insights into the manipulation techniques employed in the information campaign surrounding the destruction of the HPP and the potential effects on public perception.

TERMS USED IN THE REVIEW

Russian propaganda - in this research, is the malign informational intervention and informational framing of the context, manipulation techniques, and psychological warfare, with the extensive engagement of digital instruments and often vocalized by the official persons.

Russian aggression - The term used here to frame the aggressive actions of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, starting in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea, condemned in the same year on the level of the UN General Assembly²⁷, Russian intervention in the East of Ukraine and launching the full-scale invasion in Ukraine 24.02.2024, recognized on the level of the UN General Assembly²⁸.

Propaganda analysis - includes here research of the articles' samples, published on the day of discussed context in terms of techniques, media effects and the way of how it incorporated in the information environment, as well the main stakeholders and potential influence on political, economic, and social perspective, from the standpoint of main stakeholders.

²⁷ [General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region | UN Press](#)

²⁸ [General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts Resolution Demanding Russian Federation Immediately End Illegal Use of Force in Ukraine, Withdraw All Troops | UN Press](#)