

## THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S "FAKE NEWS" INTENTIONS IN THE WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

Bohdan Yuskiv<sup>1</sup>, Nataliia Karpchuk<sup>2</sup>, Serhii Fedoniuk<sup>3</sup>, Serhii Shturkhetskyy<sup>4</sup>,  
Maksym Krechetov<sup>5</sup>

### Abstract

*The RF's conventional military operations against Ukraine are accompanied by a "fake news" powerful information influence on three objects, specifically "We" – Russia, "They" – Ukraine, and "The third party" – the West and other countries. In the RF's war in Ukraine, "fake news" reflects the strategic orientation of the Kremlin to manipulate the information space. The study aims to find out the dynamics and prevailing topics of the RF's "fake news" and to decode its intentions in the war time. The findings help conclude that 1) the dynamics of the number and topics of "fake news" in the Russian information campaign during military operations in Ukraine shows changes in Russia's priorities and tactics during the war; 2) topics of "fake news" that prevailed during the various stages of the war in Ukraine reflect the constant and changing aspects of the RF's information campaign; 3) the intentions coded in the "fake news" reveal the strategic and tactical objectives of the Russian information campaign and military operations in the context of the war in Ukraine. Analysis of the RF's "fake news" intentions discloses a general strategy aimed at delegitimising the Ukrainian government, justifying Russia's aggressive actions and splitting the anti-Russian coalition.*

**Keywords:** *Disinformation, "Fake news", Intention, Russian-Ukrainian war, Information campaign, Manipulation of public opinion*

<sup>1</sup> Rivne State University of Humanities in Rivne, Plastova St. 31, 33000, Rivne, Ukraine. E-mail: [yuskivb@ukr.net](mailto:yuskivb@ukr.net), ORCID-ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7621-5954>.

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of International Relations, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University. Voli Ave. 13, 43025 Lutsk, Ukraine. E-mail: [Natalia.karpchuk@vnu.edu.ua](mailto:Natalia.karpchuk@vnu.edu.ua), ORCID-ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9998-9538>.

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of International Relations, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University. Voli Ave., 13, 43025 Lutsk, Ukraine. E-mail: [Sergii.fedoniuk@vnu.edu.ua](mailto:Sergii.fedoniuk@vnu.edu.ua), ORCID-ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2853-8905>.

<sup>4</sup> National University of Ostroh Academy. Seminarska St. 2, 35800, Ostroh, Ukraine. E-mail: [shturkhetskyy@oa.edu.ua](mailto:shturkhetskyy@oa.edu.ua), ORCID-ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4430-2628>.

<sup>5</sup> Ivan Cherniakhovskiy National Defence University of Ukraine. Povitroflotskyi Ave. 28, 03049, Kyiv, Ukraine. E-mail: [maksym@krechetov.in.ua](mailto:maksym@krechetov.in.ua), ORCID-ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9620-1279>.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's world of information warfare and disinformation campaigns, the use of "fake news" as a strategic tool of military operations has become increasingly relevant. Russia's aggression against Ukraine reflects the destructive potential of fraudulent information. Consequently, it is important to understand how "fake news" is used to shape narratives, influence public opinion, and manipulate perceptions during military operations. The study of key topics and motivations behind the spread of "fake news" during military operations opens up opportunities to identify strategic goals and tactical flexibility of information campaigns in conflict situations. Understanding these aspects is critical to developing effective strategies to counter disinformation, ensure national security, and make informed decisions in conflict settings.

Studying "fake news" refers to understanding two distinctive phenomena: 1) an increase in disinformation in media in the period of war, and 2) malign intentions. In the article, we consider cases when disinformation is based on "fake news" and assume that intentions are the basis of any targeted communication, and "fake news", regardless of the target audience, always has some intention. Consequently, the purpose of the article is to determine the intentions of the RF's "fake news" directed against Ukraine and the West and in favour of the RF. Having defined five periods of the analysed time frame, the second aim is to research the intensity and topics of "fake news" prevailing in each period.

In this study, we set the following research questions:

RQ1: How did the "fake news" number and topics change depending on the development of military operations?

RQ2: What "fake news" topics dominated in each period we identified?

RQ3: How did the reconstituted "fake news" intentions reflect the tactical objectives of military operations, and how did those intentions influence Russia's information campaign?

This study concerns "fake news" of the first year of the Russian-Ukrainian war, and covers the period from February 17, 2022 to February 28, 2023. That is, a week before the beginning of the RF's full-scale invasion on the territory of Ukraine and a week after the end of the war first year. Ukrainian and Western experts (Pecherskyi, Buket, 2023; Walker, 2023; Westfall, 2023), taking into account the phases of military operations, divide the studied timeframe into five periods: 1) 17 – 23 February 2022 – the prelude of the RF to the invasion; 2) 24 February – 31 May 2022 – Russia's invasion of

Ukraine and international condemnation of its actions; 3) 01 June – 31 August 2022 – accumulation of forces by Ukraine to liberate territories occupied by Russia; 4) 01 September – 30 November 2022 – offensive operations of Ukraine and liberation of part of the territories; 5) 01 December 2022 – 28 February 2023 – defensive actions of Ukraine and exhaustion of the Russian armed forces. Selected periods are an important characteristic in the study of data, which allows systematisation and analysis of information according to the phases of war events.

The empirical data are taken from the relevant database of the Information Space Security Department at the Ivan Chernyakhovsky National Defense University of Ukraine. The database is published in two information and analytical collections (Mykus, Matsko, Voitko, 2022; Mykus, Matsko, Voitko, 2023). These primary data collection was composed based on official government sources, particularly, the official site of the Office of Strategic Communications (AFU StratCom, 2023), the official site of the Countering Disinformation Centre (2023), the fact-checking site Stopfake.org (2023) and the portal of the public organisation Detektor Media (2023).

The selection for the analysis consists of 1275 information units (texts only), which include “fake news” produced by the RF from February 17, 2022, to February 28, 2023. Each piece of “fake news” has undergone verification and includes a detailed description, primary message, and refutation. Cross-validation was applied to mitigate biases. Additionally, the aforementioned fact-checking resources have a clear methodology that is explained and publicly available on their websites.

The research data has certain limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results:

the analysis covers only one year of the war (2022-2023), which limits the possibility of studying long-term trends;

- the selection of “fake news” is limited to the Ukrainian information space;
- this study focuses exclusively on text-based “fake news”, excluding visual content such as photos, videos, or memes, which also play an important role in disinformation campaigns;
- only the war in Ukraine was considered, although the analysis of “fake news” spread by the RF in other conflicts (e.g., in Syria or Libya) could provide more knowledge about Russia’s general strategies in hybrid warfare.

Modern studies of the RF's disinformation destructive impact are conducted in several areas (Erlich, Garner, 2023; Bacio Terracino, Matasick, 2022; Propaganda Diary, 2023), namely: 1) impact of disinformation on national security: strategies to decrease disinformation, e.g., limiting access to specific channels and educating the public to distinguish facts from disinformation; 2) classification and detection of "fake news": characteristics of "fake news" and various techniques to identify and categorise them; 3) role of social media in spreading disinformation: the strategies used by social media companies to reduce the spread of "fake news" and the challenges posed by disinformation on these platforms; 4) combating disinformation: fact-checking, warning tags, and other methods to mitigate the impact of disinformation.

The first direction is the most studied, as it is the basis for comprehension of the phenomenon of Russian disinformation and "fake news". The least studied is the fourth direction since it requires a multidisciplinary approach and cooperation between various stakeholders, including governments, media organisations, and civil society. We focus on the last direction. Successful counteraction to disinformation influences is possible based on understanding the content of information flows. By analysing the messages and narratives shared in disinformation campaigns, researchers can identify the goals and tactics of the campaigns. This knowledge helps us figure out the best way to fight back with truthful information.

Our study refers to a relevant topic and potentially complements existing research, especially due to its longitudinal analysis. The results are not surprising, as there is a lot of literature on Russian information warfare (Pomerantsev, 2015; Horbulin, 2017; Elswah, Howard, 2020; Yuskiv, Karpchuk, Khomych, 2021; Bacio Terrano, Matasick, 2022; Erlich, Garner, 2023; Aleksejeva, 2023) that points to the same themes and applications. The potential of this study lies in the research design that allows for the development of strategic topics and intentions regarding military actions.

The article is structured as follows. The first section provides an extended literature review. The second section is dedicated to the description of research methods and procedures. The third section presents the empirical results of the analysis. The final section outlines the conclusion, discussion and further research directions.

## **1 STATE-OF-THE-ART RESEARCH AND LITERATURE OVERVIEW**

Systematic information manipulation and disinformation have been applied by the Russian government as an operational tool in its assault on

Ukraine (EU imposes sanctions, 2022). In the weeks and months leading up to Russia invading Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the Kremlin and pro-Kremlin media employed false and misleading narratives to justify military action against Ukraine, mask the Kremlin's operational planning, and deny any responsibility for the coming war (Yuskiv, Karpchuk, 2024). Collectively, these narratives served as V. Putin's *casus belli* to engage in a war of aggression against Ukraine (Aleksejeva, 2023).

Ukrainian fact-checkers emphasise that during the war, the RF's disinformation became repetitive, systematic and stable. It focuses on everyday problems as a result of massive attacks ("Life has become unbearable"), and also promotes the message "The West has given up on Ukraine and there will be no more help". Instead, before the war, the top topics included "Ukraine is a failed state", "Ukrainians are Nazis" and "Zelenskiy is a traitor and a thief of Western money." In the conditions of the war, the tactic of "massiveness" is even more used, i.e., much different disinformation, "fake news", manipulations under different guises and in different forms of content are thrown into the information space on all platforms. In addition, the war "fuels" the RF's disinformation like, for example, the topic of Ukrainian refugees (Kotubey-Herutska, 2023).

Russia's full-scale armed aggression significantly affected the volume of disinformation and "fake news" flows. Thus, in the first days of the full-scale invasion, the analysts of the Ukrainian public organisation Detector Media daily recorded more than 30 unique information leaks of Russia in the Ukrainian information space (DisinfoCronicle, 2022). The RF hoped to erode public trust, fuel discriminatory behaviours causing civil unrest, and undermine the quality of information making it difficult for the public to determine fact from fiction. It is the speed, scale and immediacy of its spread that makes misleading content dangerous (McNair, 2018; Farhall, et al., 2019). "Russia's disinformation campaigns purposefully confuse and undermine information environments. Their efforts seek to cause confusion, complicate efforts to reach consensus, and build support for Russia's goals, while undermining the legitimacy of Ukraine's response" (Disinformation and Russia's war, 2022). In addition, disinformation and "fake news" proper become the means of information warfare, which is directly or indirectly financed by the state or corporations, and involves the strategic use of information for political, economic or military purposes (Thornton, 2015). However, internet allows other players to challenge the Kremlin's narrative by providing counter-narratives and debunking distorted information and fake images (Khaldarova - Pantti, 2016).

The EU defines disinformation as “verifiably false or misleading information [...] created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to internationally deceive the public”, it “may cause public harm [...] [and] threats to democratic political and policymaking processes, as well as public goods” (European Commission, 2018). This means that: a) disinformation is a conscious attempt to encourage people to believe something that the producers and/or disseminators of the content know to be untrue; b) the producers and/or disseminators of disinformation act out of malicious intent (European Parliament, 2019, p. 19).

Disinformation has different ways of presentation, namely, fabricated content, misleading content, accurate content shared with false contextual information, satire and parody (House of Commons Select Committee, 2018) and in media, it is “fake news” (Egelhofer, Lecheler, 2019, p. 103). This term has been widely used since 2016 by American experts to explain the shocking results of the US elections (Wendling, 2018). The concept included both outright lies and ill-considered information traditionally used during election campaigns (bragging, bullying opponents, etc.). Since 2016, “fake news” has denoted a unique connection between algorithms of social networks, advertising systems, “creators” of false content and high-profile events (Fakes as a tool to influence, 2020).

Disinformation and “fake news” remain somewhat different, however, as the former generally refers to large-scale, orchestrated political and military actions to deceive people, while “fake news” might be sporadic and applied as part of a more general mosaic, often aimed at confusing population or arguing that there is no truth in the media, or elsewhere in the world (Kirby, 2016). “Fake news” has a centuries-long history around the world but the difference now is that the internet and social media distribute “fake news”, which is often hard to tell from real news, farther and faster than was possible only a few decades ago (Fargo, 2019, p. 59). Over the past years “fake news” concept evolved from journalists debating the notion (2017-2018), the concept being accepted as a term in public discourse (2020-2021) to turning into a newsworthy event, a particular expression of the more general phenomenon of disinformation (Boudana, Segev, 2024). Nevertheless, disinformation and “fake news” are interrelated and “fake news” becomes the basis/component of the disinformation campaign (Del Vicario, et al., 2016; Adjin-Tettey, 2022; Gibbons, Carson, 2022; Ferreira, 2022).

The threat of “fake news” is that “in a post-truth world in which ‘alternative facts’ have replaced the real in the collective imagination of

millions of people around the planet” a large segment of the population is unable to distinguish between reality and its ubiquitous misrepresentation and it may destabilise “democratic models of governance around the globe coinciding with the rise of autocratic forms of populism” (Moser, 2024, p. ix). “Fake news” may create “cultural chaos”, i.e., a new discursive order, where information flow is porous, hegemonic control over agendas is almost impossible, and traditional propaganda is not quite effective (Pantti, 2016).

Elections are not the only “breeding” ground for “fake news”. The RF’s war against Ukraine demonstrates the destructive potential of fraudulent information. During the period of preparation and implementation of aggression, the task of “fake news” may be to shock and intimidate the enemy (Clements, 2014; Yuskiv, Karpchuk, 2024). Such a strategy comprises several elements, the combined aim of which is to achieve “rapid dominance” over an enemy (Ullman, Wade 2003). The overall goal is to make the war quick and winnable.

News is often seen as an output of journalism, a field expected to provide “independent, reliable, accurate, and comprehensive information” (Kovach, Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 11). “Fake news” refers to a range of discredited low-risk or high-risk news (A Multi-Dimensional Approach, 2018). The World Economic Forum has even listed “fake news” as one of the main threats to society (Del Vicario, et al., 2016). Like disinformation, “fake news” can take a variety of forms, including satirical news sites, fabricated news items, manipulated photography, propaganda, false press releases (Tandoc, Voc, 2016) and sensationalist tabloid content (Marwick, 2018).

The modern “flourishing” of “fake news” is associated with the development of virtual space technological and communication capabilities and numerous crises characterised, on the one hand, by a lack of information, and on the other, by its excessive volume. Troubled times provide fertile ground for the growth of “fake news”. “Social tumult and divisions facilitate our willingness to believe news that confirms our enmity toward another group” (Tandoc – Lim – Ling 2016: 13).

Oxford Dictionary defines “fake” as “not genuine; imitation or counterfeit”. “Fake news” mimics the form of mainstream news and is purposely crafted to mislead audiences (Bhatia, et al., 2023). It contains “false connection, false context, manipulated content, misleading content” (Wardle, 2017). Bakir and McStay describe “fake news” as “either wholly false or containing deliberately misleading elements incorporated within its content or context” (Bakir, McStay, 2018, p. 157). This means that the presence of facts does not disqualify a message as “fake news” and that its content can be

completely fabricated, but also only be partly untrue and paired with correct information (Egelhofer, Lecheler, 2019).

Since “fake news” imitates objective news, it consists of similar structural components: a headline, a text body, and (however, not necessarily) a picture (Horne, Adali, 2017). The information is presented under the false pretense that it resulted from journalistic research (Egelhofer, Lecheler, 2019). As a result, recipients might misattribute “fake news” articles as genuine and credible news articles (Vargo, Guo, Amazeen, 2018).

The creation and use of “fake news” are determined by the following factors: 1) intention, 2) dissemination environment: “fake news” is primarily related to news that must come from legitimate sources, but a wider information ecosystem can also be used; 3) amplification: “fake news” exists “on its own”, but its consistent, coordinated amplification contributes to its use in information operations (Davlikanova, Kompantseva, 2022, p. 268).

In the conditions of war, “fake news” becomes weaponised aimed to bring about a change in beliefs and attitudes and, as a result, promote behaviour that serves the attacker’s purpose, in other words, “subdue the enemy without fighting” (Weaponization of Information, 2022). “Words also shoot”, so noted the Russian Minister of Defence Shoigu when opening the first military media festival in Russia in 2015 (Hansen, 2017).

As aforementioned, “fake news” is always intentional. Cambridge Dictionary treats “intention” as “something that you want and plan to do”. Particularly, intentions refer to the goals, objectives, or reasons behind someone’s actions. Intentions are combinations of ideas and desires rather than independent mental instructions, and they are distinguished from other instructions by “a special practical character” (Mele, 1997). Unlike desires, for instance, an intention has a decisive character, i.e., it sets the agent to a certain course of action (McCann, 1997, p. 206). Intentions are not always “visible” and clear, they can be implicit and need to be “reconstructed” to understand the agent’s aspirations, and this especially applies to the intentions embedded in “fake news”.

In times of war, “fake news”, having malicious intent, i.e., specific motives or reasons behind deceptive actions, could be disseminated to confuse and misdirect the rival, to demoralise enemy troops, to create fear, and erode trust in leadership, to camouflage military equipment and future actions, to disrupt enemy communications and intelligence-gathering efforts, to mislead enemy spies and intelligence agencies, to get a strategic advantage by making the enemy react to false information etc.



Russia has “acquired” the experience of using “fake news” since the time of the USSR. They were generally aimed at discrediting the West in the eyes of its citizens and the USSR’s satellite states and forming an exclusively positive attitude towards the Soviet state. During Putin’s time, the variety of forms of destructive information influence only expanded. While the methods used may differ across countries, the goals are the same: to sow distrust and confusion, to promote radical voices on divisive political issues, and to gain economic leverage, all while eroding support for the democratic process and rules-based institutions created in the aftermath of the WWII (Putin’s Asymmetric Assault, 2018).

“Fake news” enables the RF to construct a distorted pseudo-reality, in which military and other aggressive operations look forced, aimed at protecting the offended, overcoming “world evil”; fabricated “fake news” justifies the need for further tough action (Horbulin, et al., 2017, p. 58). In the war against Ukraine, the RF uses “fake news” that create a negative image of Ukraine and manipulate public opinion, which affects the course of a full-scale war, as well as the image of Ukraine in the eyes of citizens and the international community. Since agents of influence are well-versed in Ukrainian political, economic and social realities, they have the tools to manipulate public opinion.

The overall aim of this “fake news” activity is not necessarily to make one believe in lies but to persuade that everyone lies and there is no truth, or perhaps, there are “alternative truths” or “alternative facts.” Taken together, “fake news” establishes a fake cloud of vivid “pluralist truth,” which does not need proofs, knowledge, experts or even logic. Such “pluralist truth” is hard to counteract in a legal sense as it finds protection in the international and national standards on free speech (Fargo, 2019, p. 41)

## **2 RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

This study involves three main stages: 1) analysis of the dynamics of “fake news” emergence in the context of military operations; 2) analysis of “fake news” topics within the defined periods; and 3) definition and analysis of objects and intentions of “fake news” according to their dynamics.

Analysis of “fake news” dynamics is the first step in the research aimed at understanding the general logic of information support of conventional operations. The main goal is to find the connection of “fake news” with the development of military events, including their distribution and response to changes. Such an analysis will enable, on the one hand, to specify the

key points of military operations, and on the other hand, how fraudulent information is used to influence the course of military operations, the population and public opinion, and international reaction.

At this stage, we use the method of forming a time series reflecting the number of “fake news” by weeks, months and military stages; then time series are analysed. This analysis includes trend detection, shift analysis, variance change analysis to identify extremes or special events in a time series and search for regularities (patterns). Data visualisation plays an important role in this process as it is a key research tool for visualising complex information patterns and trends, in particular for displaying the dynamics of the spread of “fake news”. This not only makes it easier to perceive the data, but also reveals hidden patterns that could be imperceptible in a purely textual analysis.

For a deeper understanding of the connection between military actions and “fake news”, we apply qualitative analysis, i.e., we compare the features of each period with the content of the publications. The most typical/characteristic and the most non-standard/notable publications are selected.

Identification and analysis of “fake news” topics for the periods was performed using the GPT-4 language model. Owing to advanced natural language processing capabilities, GPT-4 can understand and interpret complex narrative structures, providing deep analysis of “fake” discourses. A number of studies are devoted to the use of ChatGPT thematic analysis and analysis of intentions in the text. In particular, Fang et al. confirmed the effectiveness of using ChatGPT for thematic analysis and detection of intent in text (Fang, et al., 2023). Levkovich and Elyoseph apply ChatGPT to professional intent assessment and demonstrate the improved capabilities of the GPT-4 version in determining intentions compared to GPT-3.5 (Levkovich, Elyoseph, 2023). A study by Elyoseph et al. shows that ChatGPT can successfully identify and describe emotions (Elyoseph, et al., 2023). He and Garner conclude that large language models, in particular ChatGPT, can achieve intentions classification accuracy close to that of controlled models. Therefore, ChatGPT can be used to reliably identify intentions and emotions, at least compared to the capabilities of human experts (He, Garner, 2023). Similarly, Jeong confirms the superiority of ChatGPT in determining intentions compared to traditional chatbot systems (Jeong, 2023). The research by Zhang et al delves into the effectiveness of ChatGPT in refining the thematic analysis process (Zhang, et al., 2023). Hariri offers a comprehensive overview of ChatGPT, detailing its applications, advantages, and limitations (Hariri, 2023).

At this stage of the research, GPT-4 was applied to identify key topics for subsets of “fake news” for the corresponding period.

Analysis of the intentions embedded in “fake news” is a key stage of the research that provides an opportunity to consider the motivations of the enemy during a military conflict. Determining the intentions accompanying each “fake news” and further analysis of the general scheme of motivations to prepare and distribute “fake news” help not only reveal the tactical goals of the enemy’s information campaigns but also determine the tactical goals of the military operation as a whole. When we understand what objects “fake news” focuses on, we can reveal the real consequences of fraudulent information for these objects. Analysis of dynamics helps identify trends associated with changes in the political and social environment, as well as find key moments in “fake news” dissemination. On this basis, effective counter-disinformation strategies can be developed, aimed at the objects and motivations that gain importance in the analysis, but this may be a task for further research.

The intent analysis technique of political discourse is used to analyse intentions (Ushakova, et al., 2000; Zasiékina, Zasiékin, 2008). In the case of conflict discourse, this technique was applied by B. Yuskiv and colleagues (Yuskiv, Karpchuk, Khomych, 2021; Yuskiv, Karpchuk, 2024).

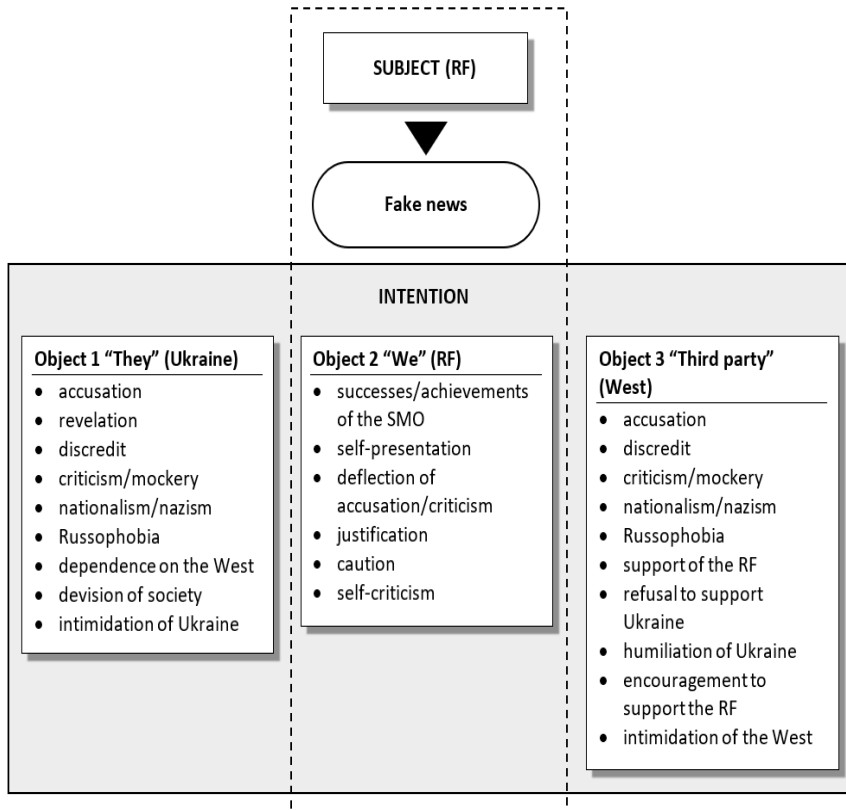
The methodology is based on the fact that intention is a property of the subject’s consciousness and is defined as the subject’s purposeful focus on some object. In the context of communication between the subject and the object, the message of the subject, being a product of his/her thought processes, contains one or more intentions of different courses. The structure of such a communication intention includes two aspects: indicating the object and expressing the subject’s attitude towards it. The individuality of intentions is revealed in the choice of objects to be designated and the expression of attitudes towards them. The same intention can be expressed in different forms: by one word or a whole sentence. And, conversely, one fragment of text can contain several intentions. The main goal of the technique is to try to reconstruct communication intentions based on the text of the message (See *Intentions in Communication*, 1990; Livet, Ridel, 1994).

Intentions are usually implicit and the determination of intentions is a complex and ambiguous procedure. However, in texts that express extreme conditions of conflict discourse, the hidden means tend to acquire a clear character and reveal the pragmatic or strategic orientation of the text. A conflict discourse creates a model of the enemy/adversary and a negative

assessment of everything related to it. Simultaneously, everything related to “us” is given a positive assessment. In the conflict discourse, “intrigue” unfolds in the so-called triangle: “We” – “They” (alien) – “Third party”. Each component of the triangle is assigned its characteristic. “We” block is usually attributed positively. Reproaches, condemnations, threats, etc. are addressed to the “They” block, as “They” represent the enemy/opponent. The “Third party” includes the people and decision-makers who are either encouraged to take the necessary actions or are reproached. Though, the triangle “We – They – Third party” is a characteristic feature of conflict discourse, it can be found in other types of discourse. However, it is in conflict situations that it gains the greatest potential.

In our case, we deal with texts that express the specified extreme conditions, i.e., a military conflict and the obvious confrontations. The subject of influence is the RF which uses “fake news” for purposeful, justified and organised influence on various target audiences to promote the ideas of the current Russian regime. The triangle of influence includes: 1) “We” – the RF’s decision-makers, its population and Russian supporters in the captured territories, as well as pro-Russian forces in other countries; 2) “They” – Ukraine’s decision-makers and its population; 3) “Third party” – the Western world. Taking into account the above considerations, appropriate profiles of intentions are defined for each object. The complete intentional model of “fake news” is presented in Fig. 1. The characteristics and interpretation of intentions are given directly in Annex. When counting the number of intentions in “fake news”, we consider that each news item may contain several intentions. In relation to one object, only one dominant intention is indicated.

**Figure 1:** *Intentional model of the Russian Federation’s “fake news”*



*Source: Authors*

The intention analysis procedure involves two stages: 1) selection and expert assessment of the range of intentions contained in the text, 2) their ranking and description of individual characteristics of the subject of influence based on intentions. The intentions of each message were evaluated regarding each object. The process of intentions assessment was initially conducted using the GPT-4 based on the identified intentions, and then each of the five experts expressed their version of the intentions. In the final version, an agreed assessment of the intentions of “fake news” was composed.

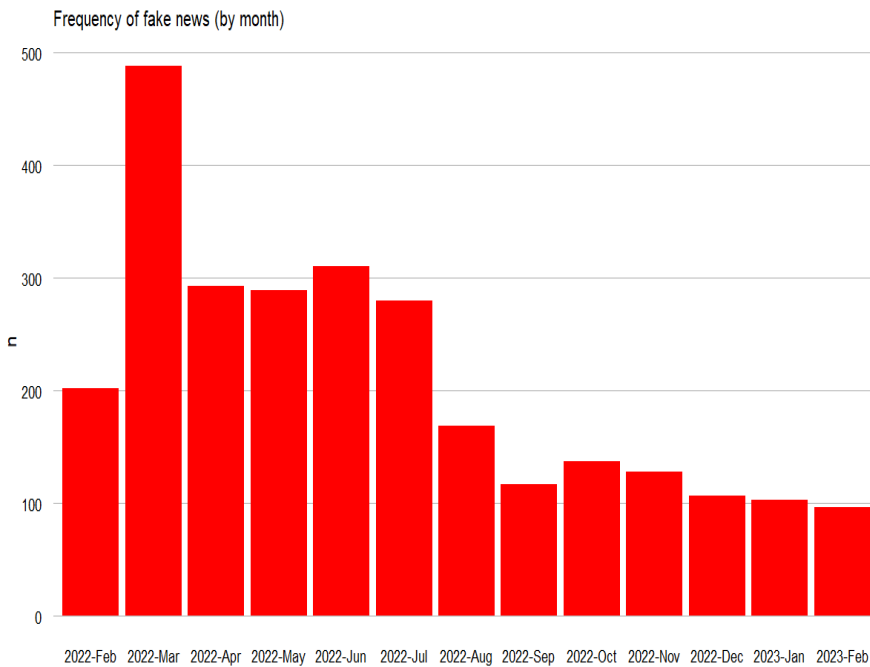
The described research stages are implemented in the R environment using: 1) data manipulation – functions of the dplyr and tidyr quanteda packages; 2) data visualisation – ggplot function from the ggplot2 package.

### 3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 3.1. Research Question 1

The data in Fig. 2 and 3 show that “fake news” is an important component of the RF’s war:

**Figure 2:** *The number of the RF’s “fake news” by month from 17.02.2022 to 28.02.2023*

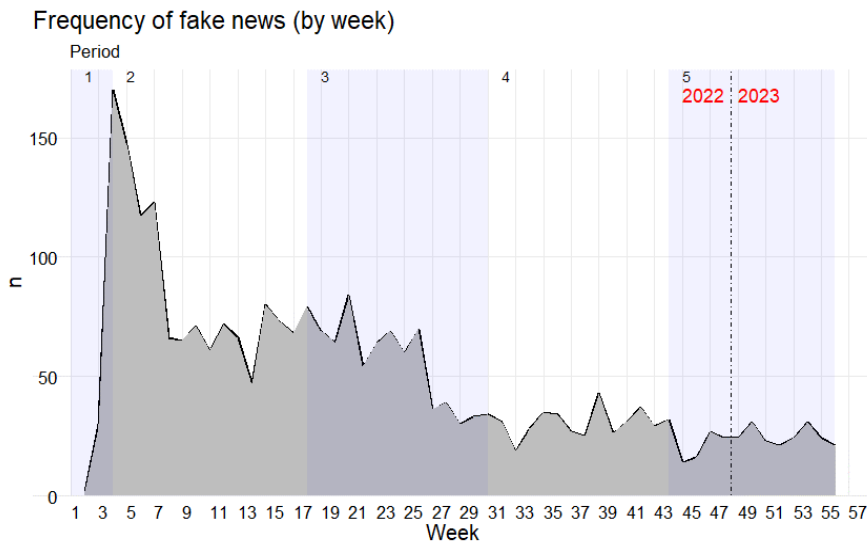


*Source: Authors*

Fig. 2 shows that the months can be divided into three groups according to the number of “fake news”. In March, the first period, the number of messages reached a maximum – 488 messages (more than 15 daily). The following months, from April to July, formed the second group, where the number of messages ranged from 280 to 310 (9-10 messages per day). The rest of the months belong to the third group. After August (169 messages – 6 messages per day), their number gradually stabilised within 100-140 monthly (3-5 messages per day).

We can explain it as follows: at the beginning of Russian aggression, the RF needed to justify its aggressive actions and at the same time intimidate Ukraine. Later, Russia tried to justify the consequences of its actions. The third period is a reaction to Russia's failures on the fronts. "Fake news" was seen as an attempt to save RF's face in the eyes of their supporters and at the same time to discredit the Ukrainian Armed Forces, accusing them of various crimes. So, the dynamics of "fake news" reflect a change in the priorities of the Russian information campaign during hostilities.

**Figure 3:** *The number of the RF's weekly "fake news" by stages of the war from 17.02.2022 to 28.02.2023*



Source: Authors

Fig. 3 shows changes in the number of "fake news" depending on the characteristics of each period of the war. The graph indicates the increase in the number of "fake news" during the first period of the war (17.02.2022 – 23.02.2022). The peak is reached at the very beginning of the second period – the invasion. During the next five weeks (until the beginning of April), there is a sharp decrease in the number of "fake news", but at the end of this period (the end of May), this trend changes to a slight increase in the number of fraudulent information. The third period is also characterised by an oscillating

decline in the number of “fake news” for nine weeks (until the end of August). Then, in the following periods, there are sinusoidal fluctuations in the amount of “fake news”; they are at approximately the same level.

### **3.2. Research Question 2**

Let us consider how the features of each period of the war affected the topics of “fake news”.

The first period (17 – 23 February 2022) can be considered a kind of week-long “prelude” to the invasion though sufficient to understand Russia’s logic before the imminent invasion. Full preparation for the war lasted about a year (Banko, et al., 2023). Key events of this period include the gradual increase in tensions due to the build-up of Russia’s military presence along the borders of Ukraine and in the territory of Belarus, as well as demands to limit NATO; the growing threat of a full-scale invasion due to Russia’s provocative actions, such as the recognition of “people’s republics” in Donbas; increased support of Ukraine from the West in the form of intelligence, military assistance and preparation of sanctions; failed attempts at diplomatic settlement due to Russia’s position.

During this week, 38 RF’s “fake news” appeared in the information space. Key topics were the following:

- atrocities and war crimes of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (shelling of civilian objects, victims among the civilian population, violations of humanitarian law);
- panic and evacuation of the population of Donbas due to the actions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (creating the impression of a mass departure of people to Russia);
- “staging” and provocations by Ukraine (fake chemical attacks, bombings, shelling of the territory of the RF);
- demoralisation and breakdown of the Ukrainian army (allegations of military desertion, dissatisfaction with the leadership);
- accusing Ukraine of escalating the conflict and aggression;
- creating the impression of the inevitability of a full-scale invasion by Russia.

This “fake news” content was aimed at the following goals:

- to portray Ukraine as an aggressor that prepares provocations;
- to discredit the Armed Forces of Ukraine, accusing them of crimes against civilians;



- to sow panic among the population of Donbas regarding the actions of Ukraine;
- to create the impression of the inevitability of Russia's invasion as a forced measure. In this way, Russia tried to justify its aggressive intentions, portraying Ukraine as the culprit of the escalation and a threat to the population of Donbas. Its purpose was to form an information background for the invasion under the pretext of "protecting" the population from the "aggression" of Ukraine.

The second period of the war (24 February – 31 May 2022) is associated with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and international condemnation. The period's main events are the following: the RF's large-scale and simultaneous invasion in many directions and fronts; formation of several operational zones and directions of hostilities; the strategic defeat of the Russians in the battles for Kyiv, Hostomel, Irpin and the RF's retreat from the northwestern regions; disruption of plans for a naval landing in Odesa due to the destruction of the fleet and the Moskva missile cruiser; the long defense of Mariupol and the distraction of Russian forces. The period is characterised by the scale and multi-vector nature of Russia's offensive actions which ended in a turning point in favour of Ukraine.

During this period, 1284 RF's "fake news" was found. The key topics included:

- discrediting the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Ukrainian authorities (accusations of crimes against civilians, unprofessionalism, Nazism, looting, corruption, etc.);
- humanitarian disaster and difficult situation in Ukraine (lack of food, medicine, communal services, mass flight of people);
- provocations and "staging" by Ukraine (shelling of residential areas, bombings, killings of civilians);
- successes of the Russian army and liberation of cities ((alleged) capture of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Mariupol);
- support for Russia and pro-Russian sentiments in Ukraine (referendums, switching to the side of the RF);
- fatigue and disappointment of the West, termination of aid to Ukraine;
- internal conflicts and crises in Western countries;
- aggressive intentions of NATO and some other states towards Russia.

To sum up, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> period there was a large-scale RF's invasion, but it was defeated near Kyiv, Chernihiv and in the south. However, Russian

“fake news” focused attention on the topics of the alleged successes of the Russian army, the capture of cities, and Russia’s support in Ukraine. In this way, Russia was trying to hide its failures and the real situation, to create the image of the invasion success contrary to the facts, to demoralise Ukrainian society with “fake news” about a humanitarian catastrophe, to discredit the Armed Forces of Ukraine with accusations of crimes, and to present Ukraine as a country without the support of the West. In other words, “fake news” was designed to create an alternative to the reality picture of the war, in which Russia “dominates and wins”.

The third period of the war (01 June – 31 August 2022) can be characterised as the accumulation of forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to liberate the occupied territories. Main events include Russia’s focus on seizing the Luhansk region and massive shelling of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk; the retreat of Ukrainian troops from these cities caused significant losses to the Russians; failure of Russia’s attempts to force Siverskyi Donets and to surround Ukrainian troops; maintaining positions on the Avdiyivka and Novopavlivka directions; restoration of control over Zmiinyi (Snake) Island, which made landing in Odesa impossible; the depletion of Russian troops and Ukraine’s accumulation of potential for a counteroffensive. As a result, this is the period of deterring Russia’s offensive, Ukraine’s successes in the south, and its preparation for a counteroffensive.

The analysis of the RF’s “fake news” during this period (759 messages) made it possible to identify the following key topics:

- Ukraine’s military failures, heavy losses, low morale (alleged defeats of the Ukrainian army, its demoralisation and lack of fighting spirit);
- atrocities and crimes of Ukrainian troops (allegations of shelling civilians, killing civilians and prisoners);
- Ukraine’s inability to resist Russia (Ukraine is doomed, has no strength to resist and no chance of victory);
- betrayal and inaction of the West (the countries of the West do not really support Ukraine, want quick peace with Russia, etc.);
- provocations and “staging” by Ukraine (accusing Ukraine of forgeries and staging to escalate the conflict);
- threats to the civilian population (spread of panic regarding humanitarian disasters, evacuations, lack of food, etc.);
- the successes and humanity of the Russian troops (alleged successful advance of the Russian troops and their concern for civilians).

Hence, the RF's "fake news" focused on the topics of Ukraine's defeats, Ukrainian atrocities, Western inaction and Russia's successes. Obviously, Russia was trying to hide its failures and the real state of affairs, to demoralise Ukrainian society with reports about the defeats and brutality of Ukrainians, to discredit the support of the West and to create the impression of Russia's inevitable victory. That is, the "fake news" was designed to sow panic, disappointment and hopelessness among Ukrainians.

The fourth period (01 September – 30 November 2022) is a series of Ukraine's offensive operations and the liberation of part of the territories. The main events are the following: Ukraine's transition to a strategic offensive after the accumulation of forces and means; the successful Kharkiv offensive operation and liberation of the Kharkiv region significant territory; a diversionary offensive in the Kherson region and the liberation of the right bank of the Dnieper; the liberation of Kherson as an important strategic victory of Ukraine; forcing Russia to mobilise, attract mercenaries and increase pressure on the Eastern Front; the transition of Ukraine to strategic defense after successful offensive operations. This period's key features involve Ukraine's transition to the offensive, successful operations and the liberation of territories, opposition to Russia and a new stage of defense.

We distinguish the following key topics in this period RF's "fake news" (382 messages):

- discrediting the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Ukrainian authorities (accusations of crimes, unprofessionalism, Nazism, the escape of President Zelenskyi, etc.);
- pro-Russian sentiments in Ukraine (referendums, refugees to Russia, pro-Russian schools);
- successes of the Russian army (capture of territories, destruction of Ukrainian troops);
- the West's fatigue from supporting Ukraine (ceasing aid, criticism of allies);
- humanitarian disaster in Ukraine (lack of food and light, cold);
- nuclear threats from Ukraine and NATO;
- provocations by Ukraine (shelling on the RF's territory, sabotage);
- crimes of Ukrainians in Europe (thefts, Nazism);
- internal conflicts in Western countries;
- discrediting the West and international organisations.

In this "fake news", Russia again offered the same information "menu": to hide its failures and loss of territories, to create a false impression of the

successes of the Russian army, to discredit the Armed Forces of Ukraine and to portray them as incapable of offensive actions, to sow panic and demoralisation in Ukraine with the help of false information about the humanitarian catastrophe, as well as to undermine the West's support for Ukraine, accusing Ukrainians of crimes.

The fifth period (01 December 2022 – 28 February 2023) can be called the defensive actions of Ukraine and the exhaustion of the Russian armed forces. Determining events are the following: Ukraine's transition to strategic defense after successful offensive operations; maintaining positions and restraining the Russian offensive in the main directions; exhaustion of Russian troops in defensive battles, particularly for Bakhmut; Russia's failure of initial plans to capture Kyiv, Odesa and exit to Transnistria; focusing Russia's efforts on Donbas and keeping part of the occupied territories; undermining the Russian offensive potential and breaking the backbone of aggression due to Ukraine's resistance.

The "fake news" of this period (307 messages) contains the following key topics:

- losses and failures of the Ukrainian army (attention to the heavy losses of Ukrainian troops, especially near Bakhmut, their exhaustion and unpreparedness for offensive operations);
- the incompetence of the Ukrainian command (claims about the chaotic actions and mistakes of the Ukrainian command leading to losses);
- the successes of the Russian army (the RF's advance in the Donetsk region and the offensive in the Bakhmut direction);
- the West's fatigue from supporting Ukraine (Western countries will soon stop helping Ukraine);
- Zelensky's escape and surrender;
- atrocities of Ukrainian troops (shootings of civilians and other crimes by Ukrainian troops);
- the threat of a nuclear attack from Ukraine.

### **3.3. Research Question 3**

Table 1 summarises the results of the analysis of intentions in "fake news"

**Table 1:** Share of intentions in the RF's "fake news"

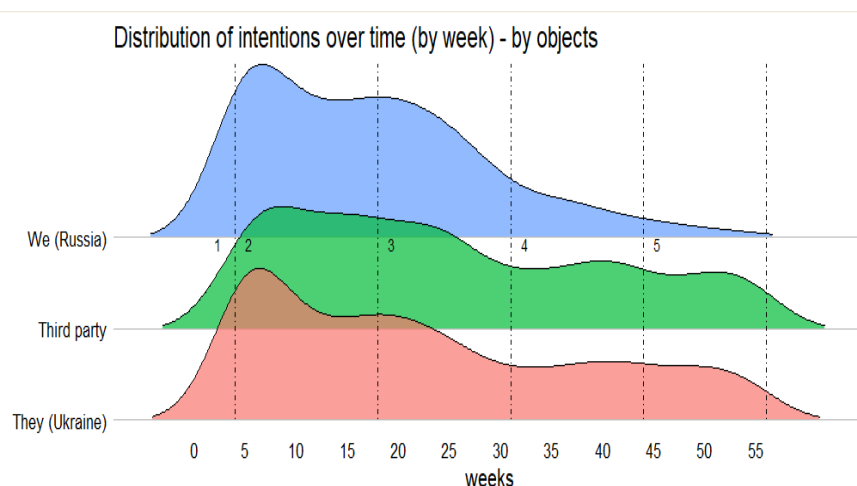
Object / Intention	Total		Period 1		Period 2		Period 3		Period 4		Period 5	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>We (Russia)</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>31,4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>44,7</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>36,5</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>37,8</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>19,4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8,5</b>
deflection of accusation/criticism	244	9,0	5	13,2	133	10,8	73	9,6	25	6,5	8	2,6
justification	238	8,8	8	21,1	116	9,4	101	13,3	11	2,9	2	0,7
successes/achievements of the SMO	176	6,5		0,0	101	8,2	48	6,3	16	4,2	11	3,6
caution	131	4,8	3	7,9	66	5,3	54	7,1	8	2,1		0,0
self-presentation	66	2,4	1	2,6	35	2,8	11	1,4	14	3,7	5	1,6
<b>They (Ukraine)</b>	<b>1168</b>	<b>42,9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>42,1</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>41,4</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>38,1</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>47,6</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>55,4</b>
discredit	360	13,2	3	7,9	195	15,8	67	8,8	45	11,8	50	16,3
intimidation of Ukraine	178	6,5		0,0	38	3,1	52	6,9	48	12,6	40	13,0
accusation	152	5,6	10	26,3	74	6,0	35	4,6	18	4,7	15	4,9
revelation	148	5,4	2	5,3	76	6,2	43	5,7	13	3,4	14	4,6
dependence on the West	90	3,3		0,0	28	2,3	33	4,3	9	2,4	20	6,5
criticism/mockery	89	3,3	1	2,6	41	3,3	22	2,9	16	4,2	9	2,9
nationalism/nazism	76	2,8		0,0	30	2,4	22	2,9	15	3,9	9	2,9
division of society	48	1,8		0,0	23	1,9	9	1,2	13	3,4	3	1,0
Russophobia	27	1,0		0,0	6	0,5	6	0,8	5	1,3	10	3,3
<b>Third party</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>25,6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13,2</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>22,0</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>24,1</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>33,0</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>36,2</b>
humiliation of Ukraine	196	7,2	3	7,9	116	9,4	40	5,3	16	4,2	21	6,8
refusal to support Ukraine	113	4,2		0,0	48	3,9	45	5,9	9	2,4	11	3,6
accusation	89	3,3		0,0	34	2,8	21	2,8	12	3,1	22	7,2
intimidation of the West	79	2,9		0,0	25	2,0	21	2,8	17	4,5	16	5,2
discredit	78	2,9		0,0	8	0,6	19	2,5	28	7,3	23	7,5
criticism/mockery	54	2,0		0,0	11	0,9	11	1,4	21	5,5	11	3,6
encouragement to support the RF	36	1,3	2	5,3	15	1,2	13	1,7	6	1,6		0,0
support of the RF	23	0,8		0,0	2	0,2	7	0,9	8	2,1	6	2,0
nationalism/nazism	15	0,6		0,0	7	0,6	3	0,4	4	1,0	1	0,3
Russophobia	14	0,5		0,0	6	0,5	3	0,4	5	1,3		0,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2720</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1234</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Authors

At the level of objects of intentional influence, the largest share of intentions for the entire studied period is directed against Ukraine (42.9%), followed by Russia (31.4%) and the West (25.6%). If we consider the periods of the war, the share of intentions towards Ukraine and the West gradually increases to 55.4% and 36.2%, respectively, while the share of Russia drops to an extremely low value of 8.5%.

If we look at the distribution of intentions over time, the peak intentional influences on all three objects fall at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> period of the war (24 February – 31 May 2022) and then the activity of the influences gradually decreases. It is interesting that in relation to Russia (“We”) already in the 5<sup>th</sup> period (01 December 2022 – 24 February 2023) the intentions are reduced to practically 0.

**Figure 4:** *Distribution of intentions during all periods of the war by objects – Russia, the West and Ukraine*



*Source: Authors*

A detailed analysis at the level of intentions regarding objects reveals the following results.

Ukraine (“They”). The largest percentage of “fake news” intentions falls on discrediting Ukraine (14.5%), i.e., unreliable information is disseminated to undermine the trust and authority of Ukraine. Considerable attention is paid to intimidation of Ukraine and the spread of panic (7.2%), accusing Ukraine of invasion, provocations and crimes (6.1%), as well as an attempt to

“uncover” allegedly secret intentions or actions of Ukraine (6%). The topics of Ukraine’s dependence on the West (3.6%) and humiliating criticism and mockery of Ukraine (3.6%) are present as well.

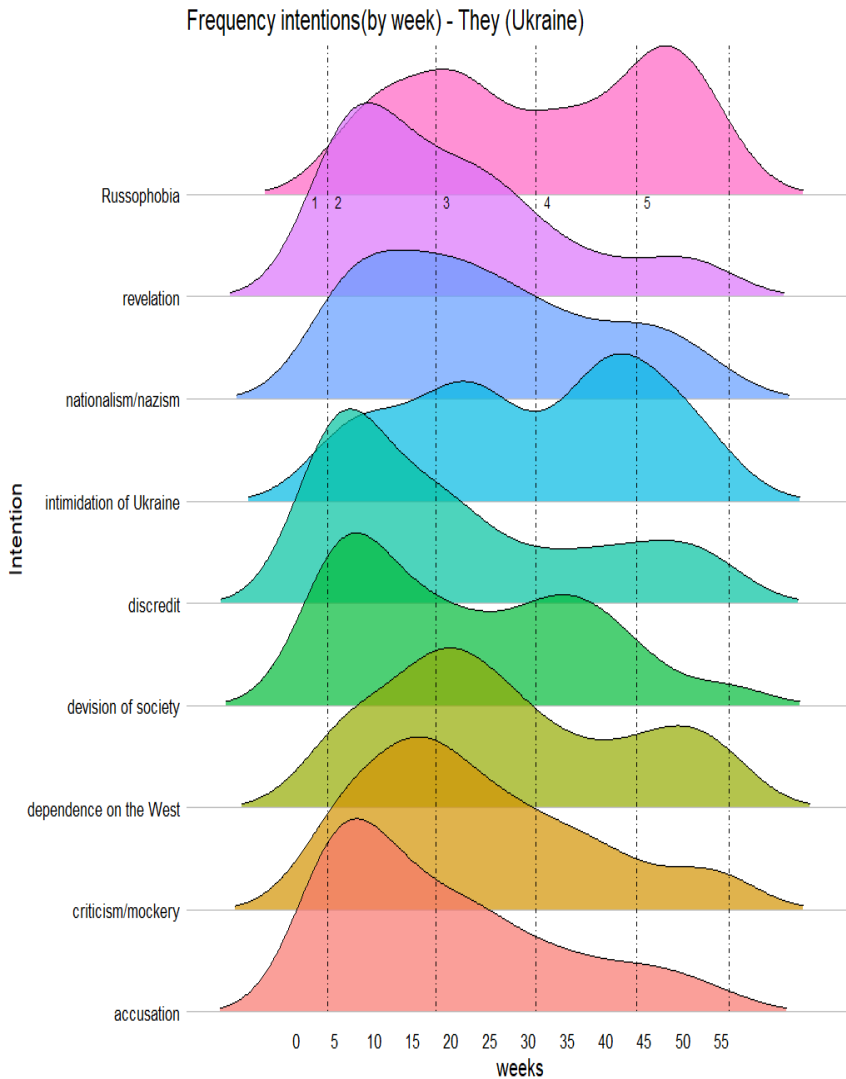
Features of the intentions dynamics can be seen by considering the density curves<sup>6</sup> in Fig. 5. Most of the intentions were actively used from the first period of the war. Intentions of accusations and discrediting were the most prominent in the first two periods. From the first to the fourth periods, the Russian side very actively used such intentions as division of society, exposure, nationalism/Nazism and criticism/ridicule. Intentions of dependence on the West were accentuated in the second period and intensified again in the fifth period. Intentions of intimidation and Russophobia occurred at the very beginning, but they were most often emphasised in the last researched period.

So, we can see the “fake news” intentions regarding Ukraine uniformly cover the entire period of the war. However, we cannot claim that judging by the graph, a decrease in some intentions is compensated by an increase in the number of other intentions. It is partly true but it should be taken into account that the share of intentions is different.

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<sup>6</sup> The density curve of the distribution shows how the variable is distributed over the set of definitions of X. Before preparing this graph, the variable is normalised and therefore the area under the curve is equal to 1. Hence, the value of any segment below the curve shows what fraction (from 1) falls on this segment. In our case, it is about how intentions are distributed throughout the entire period under study.

**Figure 5:** Dynamics (density curves) of intentions regarding Ukraine



Source: Authors

The consequences that Russia counts on can be formulated as follows. The predominance of discrediting intention over other intentions indicates that the RF's main task is to undermine the trust and legitimacy of the Ukrainian authorities. Intimidation is also aimed at spreading panic and



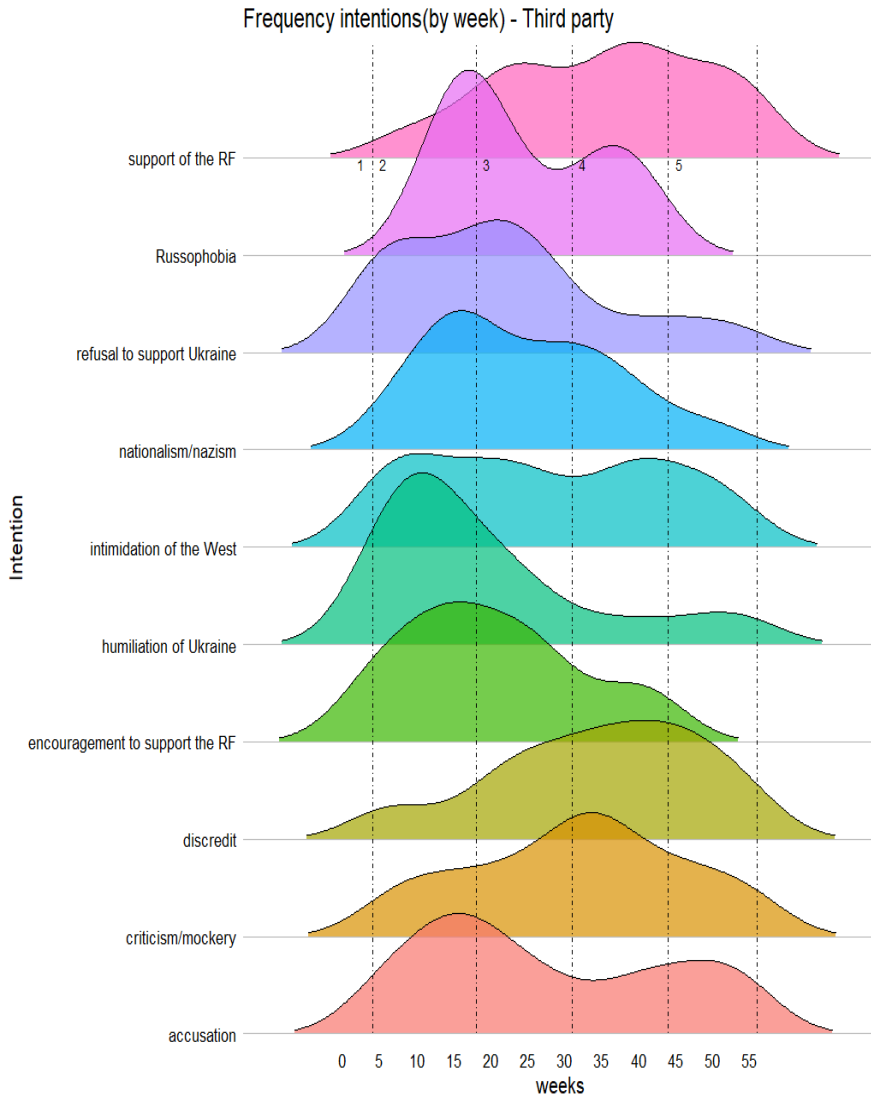
demoralising Ukrainian society. Almost equal shares of accusations and revelations intentions serve to justify Russia's aggression and create a negative stereotype about Ukraine. Small amounts of criticism and ridicule add emotions to discredit in the form of humiliation, and the focus on "dependence on the West" is intended to emphasise the weakness of Ukraine.

Therefore, this distribution of intentions reflects a strategy of deliberate undermining of trust (delegitimation) in Ukraine in the eyes of its citizens and the world.

West ("Third party"). The analysis of intentions towards the West gives the following results. The largest percentage (7.9%) is devoted to the humiliation of Ukraine by Western countries to discredit Western support for Ukraine. Considerable attention (4.6%) is given to calls to deny the support of Ukraine from the West to cast doubt on the trust in allies. Accusations of Western countries for aggression against Russia are present (3.6%). The intention of intimidation of the West and discrediting of Western countries equals 3.2% and criticism and ridicule of the West is 2.2%. A small share of other intentions completes the overall picture.

Fig. 6 shows the dynamics of intentions. Such intentions as humiliating Ukraine and encouraging the West to support the RF were most actively used in periods 1 – 3. Nationalism/Nazism and Russophobia were most actively used in periods 2 – 4. The peak of such intentions as criticism/ridicule and refusal to support Ukraine fell on period 3. Discredit intentions were actively used in the last two periods – 4 and 5. Intentions to support the RF and blame and intimidate the West were typical for almost all periods.

**Figure 6:** Dynamics (density curves) of intentions regarding the West



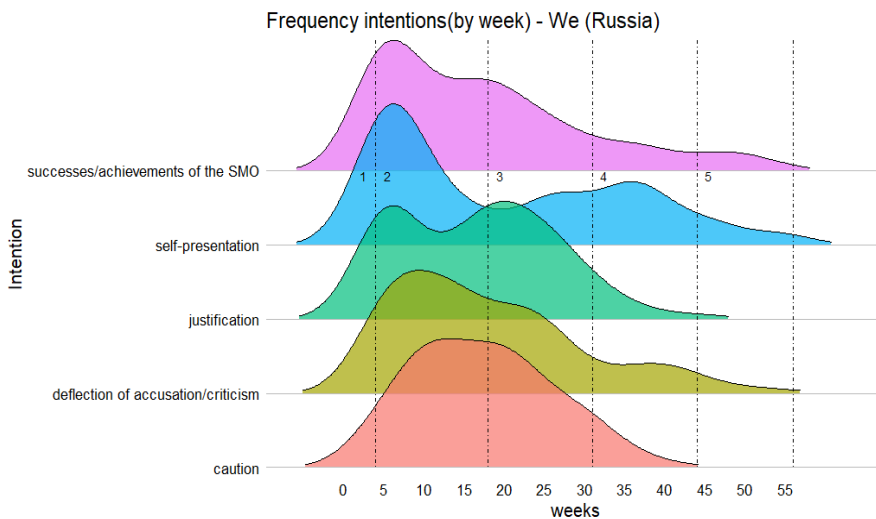
Source: Authors

Thus, the main goal was to discredit the West's support for Ukraine, sow doubts in the trust in allies and portray the West as an aggressor. In this way, Russia tried to undermine the unity of the West and its resistance to Russian aggression.

Russia (“We”). Table 1 above shows that the following intentions predominated in Russian “fake news” about the RF: denial/refutation of accusations and criticism of Russia (9.9%), justifying Russia’s actions (9.6%), demonstration of the successes and achievements of the Russian army (7.1%), caution, restraint in statements (5.3%) and self-presentation, creating a positive image (2.7%).

Fig. 7 shows that the dynamics curves of almost all intentions are identical. They reach a peak in period 2. The exceptions are two intentions – justification, which peaks in period 3, and self-presentation, which has a second (albeit smaller than the first) peak in period 5.

**Figure 7:** Dynamics (density curves) of intentions regarding Russia



Source: Authors

This dynamic of intentions indicates that the main goal of the RF’s “fake news” intentions towards Russia was to justify and legitimise its actions in the eyes of its citizens. The predominance of topics of denial of criticism and demonstration of successes indicates an attempt to compensate for real failures and international condemnation. A moderate share of cautious and positive statements contributes to the creation of the image of a strong but restrained state.

Thus, such dynamics of “fake news” enable Russia to control the information space inside the country and maintain loyalty and approval of its aggressive policies.

Comparing the intentions regarding Russia, Ukraine and the West, we can claim the following. Intentions towards Russia were aimed at justifying its actions and creating a positive image. Therefore, there was a predominance of denying criticism, demonstrations of the army's successes, and careful positive statements. Intentions regarding Ukraine were aimed at delegitimisation, so the discrediting of the authorities, intimidation of the population, accusations of aggression and crimes dominate here. Intentions towards the West were aimed at dividing Ukraine's allies. That was done by discrediting support to Ukraine, portraying the West as an aggressor, and spreading doubts about the reliability of partners.

By twisting the facts, lying and hiding the truth, the RF accused, criticised, and mocked the opponent. Regardless of the object of influence, the general strategy was to discredit and manipulate.

In general, behind the use of reconstructed intentions in Russian "fake news", the following real motives and goals may be hidden regarding:

- the RF's citizens – to hide the truth about the army's failures and justify aggression to maintain support for the war;
- Ukraine – to break the people's resistance, sow panic and distrust in the authorities, undermine the fighting spirit;
- West – to quarrel allies, split unity in support of Ukraine, weaken sanctions;
- the world – to present Russia as a victim of Western aggression, and Ukraine as an illegitimate state, to justify the invasion;
- in general – to cover the imperial ambitions of the Kremlin and the desire to restore control over Ukraine.

## **CONCLUSION**

Considering the stated research questions, the present study enables us to conclude the following:

- the dissemination of disinformation during the Russian-Ukrainian war was not uniform, but rather fluctuated in intensity. The most concentrated period of disinformation dissemination occurred at the onset of the invasion;
- while the specific content of disinformation varied in response to evolving battlefield developments, certain overarching themes remained consistent. These topics primarily centered on discrediting Ukraine, its Armed Forces, and Western support, while concurrently constructing a positive narrative of Russian actions. The underlying

purpose of this disinformation campaign was to obscure Russian failures, demoralise the Ukrainian population, undermine Western unity, and project an image of Russian success. Despite tactical adaptations, the strategic objective of the Russian information campaign remained unchanged: to legitimise its aggression and maintain domestic support for the war;

- beneath the surface of reconstructed intentions in Russian disinformation, several real motives and objectives can be discerned: concealing the Russian army's failures and justifying aggression to sustain domestic support for the war; weakening Ukrainian resistance through sowing panic and distrust; alienating Ukraine's allies and fracturing Western unity; portraying Russia as a victim of Western aggression and Ukraine as an illegitimate state; and advancing the Kremlin's imperial ambitions and desire to reassert control over Ukraine.

This research has made a significant contribution to the academic discourse by elucidating the strategic and tactical aspects of disinformation in military conflicts, particularly within the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The study underscores the enduring strategic objectives of the Russian information campaign and its tactical adaptability in response to frontline developments. This research enhances our understanding of contemporary challenges and threats to information security, contributing to the development of scientific approaches to countering disinformation and psychological operations in wartime, which is essential for safeguarding national and international security.

We posit that this study may serve as a foundation for further research exploring the impact of Russian disinformation at various geographical levels, e.g., in European countries. Additionally, future investigations could focus on the analysis of visual content within the realm of Russian disinformation.

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## ANNEX

**Table:** *Characteristics of intentions by groups of reference objects*

<b>Intentions (mode<sup>7</sup>)</b>	<b>Reconstruction of intentions</b>
<b>Object 1: "They" (Ukraine)</b>	
<b>accusation (-)</b>	attributing any guilt to Ukraine
<b>revelation (-)</b>	detection of improper actions, intentions, negative qualities of Ukraine
<b>discredit (-)</b>	presenting facts and arguments that undermine trust in Ukraine and diminish its authority
<b>criticism / mockery (-)</b>	a negative judgment or ridicule of Ukraine and its actions
<b>nationalism / nazism (-)</b>	the priority of national interests and cultural purity of Ukrainians accompanied by extremism/discrimination based on racial, ethnic or ideological characteristics
<b>Russophobia (-)</b>	a negative/hostile attitude to everything associated with Russia and the Russians
<b>dependence on the West (-)</b>	Ukraine relies heavily on the West's economic, political or cultural support, or has significant Western influence on its decisions and actions
<b>division of society (-)</b>	conflict or lack of unity of Ukrainian society, in particular concerning values, views, ideologies or interests
<b>intimidation of Ukraine (-)</b>	the RF's acts/verbal statements to create fear, a sense of danger or the promise of trouble in Ukraine to control, punish or achieve certain goals of the Russian Federation.
<b>Object 2: "We" (Russia)</b>	
<b>successes / achievements of the SMO (special military operation) (+)</b>	impressive results and efficiency of the SMO that demonstrate the high level of professionalism and military achievements of the Russian Federation
<b>self-presentation (+)</b>	presenting the Russian Federation in an attractive, favourable light;
<b>deflection of accusation / criticism (+)</b>	denial of guilt attributed to the Russian Federation, negative judgments about the RF or its actions

<sup>6</sup> Note: Mode of intentions is defined as: "-" – negative, "0" – neutral, "+" – positive/

<b>justification (+)</b>	providing arguments and/or facts to prove the rightness of the Russian Federation and to show the absurdity of its condemnation by the international community
<b>caution (+)</b>	refraining from situations or actions to prevent possible negative consequences or problems
<b>self-criticism (-)</b>	the Russian Federation criticises itself
<b>Object 3: "Third party" (West - other countries)</b>	
<b>accusation (-)</b>	attributing some guilt to the West
<b>discredit (-)</b>	presenting facts and arguments that undermine trust in the West, diminish its authority
<b>criticism/mockery (-)</b>	negative judgment or ridicule of the West and its actions
<b>nationalism / nazism (-)</b>	the priority of national interests and Western culture accompanied by extremism/discrimination based on racial, ethnic or ideological characteristics
<b>Russophobia (-)</b>	a negative/hostile attitude to everything associated with Russia and the Russians
<b>support of the RF (+)</b>	the West's support of the RF's certain actions or the RF as a whole
<b>refusal to support Ukraine (0)</b>	refusal/encouragement of refusal of the West to provide support to Ukraine
<b>humiliation of Ukraine (-)</b>	negative statements or actions of Western politicians or famous people aimed at accusing, insulting or humiliating Ukraine and the Ukrainians
<b>encouragement to support the RF (0)</b>	encouragement to take the side of the Russian Federation through the declaration of the RF's "great mission" to fight any evil associated with Ukraine
<b>intimidation of the West (-)</b>	the RF's acts/verbal statements to create fear, a sense of danger or the promise of trouble in Western states to control, punish or achieve certain goals of the Russian Federation