

## Political Invasions into Collective Memories: Russia

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This article analyzes the political manipulations of Vladimir Putin's regime using the collective memory of World War II to undermine protest potential within Russian society in 2013–2015. In light of the unfolding Ukrainian protests against former president Viktor Yanukovich's rule, Putin's government has launched a massive propaganda campaign presenting the Ukrainian political resistance as a neofascist initiative. Given the close relationship between Russia and Ukraine and Putin's low rating at the beginning of 2013, the political changes in Ukraine could provoke a similar public response and inspire anti-Putin insurgencies. The Russian media has established a strong correlation between fascist war crimes committed during World War II and the activities of protesters, thus trying to manipulate the Russian collective memory. Emphasizing the negative experience while repressing positive memories, media outlets have selectively presented historical events and facts in order to establish a negative image of the situation in modern Ukraine. Whereas propaganda associates Putin with war winners and the Soviet legacy, Ukrainian protesters are depicted as the ancestors of the defeated Nazi regime.

*Keywords: collective memory of World War II, propaganda, Russia, Ukraine, Russian media*

The Ukrainian antigovernment revolt in 2014 and the ensuing crisis have initiated many unintended sociopolitical alterations not only within Ukraine but in its nearest neighbor, the Russian Federation. In the economic sector, authority begins an isolationist course by the implementation of sanctions on European and American exports; in the political field, crucial changes are associated with the consolidation of the oligarch power because the Ukrainian events have revealed regime insecurities. The first wave of the Russian people's enthusiasm, provoked by the anticorruption nature of the Ukrainian unrest, was immediately detected by Vladimir Putin's oligarch government.

The position of the Russian government became uncertain when protests broke out in November 2013. One possibility was that, given Putin's waning popularity since 2008, Ukraine's political changes might instigate simultaneous protest actions in Russia, which could lead to a showdown with the current regime (Gudkov, 2014). When the Putin-Medvedev tandem won the presidential election of 2008, Putin's rating remained steady at around 60% between 2008 and 2009 (Zydin, 2015). However, the Russo-Georgian War (August 2008) temporarily increased his approval rating to 88% (Gudkov, 2014). From that point on, surveys detected a steady decline in Putin's popularity: In 2010, it was 57%; in 2011, 48%; in

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2012, 49%; and in 2013, 44% (Zydin, 2015). The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula (February–March 2014), which brought an upsurge of patriotism, had a significant impact on the president's approval rating; it jumped to 80%.

A second possibility was that, opposition, with its demands for evolutionary democratic reforms, might gain momentum, directing and inspiring antigovernment attitudes. Trying to preserve the power balance, the regime hectically began to build "lines of defense" within the country, embracing various methods, the most important of which were anti-immigrant laws, Internet censorship, serious limitations of freedom of speech, imprisonment of civil activists, and the law about "foreign agents."

In addition, the Russian government has launched a pro-regime propaganda machine, which started with biased or openly false news on state TV channels. The massive propaganda campaign presented the Ukrainian political resistance as the initiative of neofascist groups and organizations. Progovernment media has created a bridge between Nazi history and the modern Ukrainian situation, which ostensibly made attempts to reestablish fascist ideology and annihilate the entire Russian-speaking population. Whereas the propaganda has connected President Putin with war winners and the victorious Soviet legacy, Ukrainian protesters are portrayed as the ancestors of the defeated Nazi regime.

Starting with the fundamental research of Halbwachs, many scholars have focused on the study of collective memory, its definition, connection with cultural history, evolution in different circumstances, rituals of remembrance, the interconnectedness of media and collective memory, and other related issues (Boym, 2002; Butler, 1989; Confino, 1997; Cubitt, 2007; Erll, 2011; Halbwachs, 1992; Olick, 2007; Ricoeur, 2004; Rigney, 2005). The European experience on the politics of memory, justice, the process of forgetting after the end of World War II, and the ethics of collective memory are all issues that have been widely scrutinized by scholars of collective memories (Beker, 2010; Berger, 2002; Gildea, 2002; Snyder, 2002; Warburg, 2010). Finney (2011) makes fruitful contributions to the analysis of how states remember World War II in terms of international relations, national identity, and collective memories, connecting remembering to a political context. The swift progress of media technologies inspires researchers to evaluate collective memories with regard to the quickly changing sociopolitical realm (Edgerton, 2000; Huyssen, 2000; Reading, 2011; Silverstone, 1999; Volkmer, 2006; Zandberg, 2010).

Many studies are devoted to analyzing collective memory in Communist society and modern Russia. For instance, referring to the Soviet and post-Soviet reality, Boym (2002) applies an interdisciplinary approach to collective memories, adopting the term *nostalgia*. The author's widening of the concept of nostalgia from the dimension of space to the dimension of time clarifies the importance and manipulability of collective memories in contemporary Russia as well as the inner mechanism of memory manipulations (Boym, 2002). Aron (2012) examines moral and ethical Soviet experiences through memories of Stalin's repressions and the emergence of Soviet myths. Considering the main mechanism of remembering World War II in the Soviet Union and, further, in its successor, Markwick (2012) argues that, in modern Russia, Putin's regime continues to emphasize Stalin's role in the war, ignoring collective memories about the Stalinist terror of the 1930s.

The current study scrutinizes the political manipulations of new Russian elites of the collective memory of World War II for undermining the protest potential in 2014–2015. To underline the reasons that Putin's administration uses the collective memories about World War II, the first section examines the cult of World War II in Russian society and its metamorphosis over time. The second section provides an analysis of the anti-Ukrainian media campaign on main state TV channels, referring to created documentaries, statements of public figures, interviews, and testimonies of veterans. The third part examines the effectiveness and consequences of political invasions for the collective memories and the self-identity of Russians.

### **The Cult of World War II in Russian Society and Its Metamorphosis**

The process of remembering previous wars plays a salient role in the shaping of a nation and building national identities and historical narratives. Academic research on and teaching about wars embraces heroism of warriors and glorious moments as well as ugly images of war crimes and war atrocities. Combinations of emotionally important narratives differ from culture to culture. Narratives can refer to past events in response to modern sociopolitical needs. Smith (1999) notes that, throughout a construction of "the present in the context of the past and of the community, the myth of descent interprets present social changes and collective endeavors in a manner that satisfies the drive for meaning" (p. 62). Narratives with vivid images of heroes and enemies provide guidance on how society and individuals should exist and develop. In addition, these stories revive previous national threats, clashes, and enemies through the articulation of the heroic survival of a state. The direction of narratives' construction may serve a wide range of objectives from cultural to political. In contemporary Russia, the development of war narratives presents a conscious attempt to give legitimacy to the current regime and thus prolong its political existence for as long as possible.

The manipulative potential of World War II is high for a number of reasons. Almost every family in the Soviet Union lost members in the war, and the total national human cost of the victory was about 27 million lives. This Great Patriotic War has never been tarnished in the minds of Russians (Kirillov, 2011; Shevzov, 2010). It explains why the most meaningful moments in Russian history, both glorious and tragic, are connected to this war in the 2000s. In 2009, 91% of respondents considered army failures at the beginning of the war as tragic historical moments. At the same time, in public perception, the most honorable event was the victory in World War II (89%) (Kamenchuk & Fedorov, 2009). On an individual level, people maintain vivid interest in the war through the involvement of their family members in it. In a 2010 Levada survey, the overwhelming majority of respondents (93%) knew the fates of their relatives who participated in this war (Levada Center, 2010).

During the short postwar Stalin period, the Communist Party tried to make the public forget the war, because otherwise collective memories, which were still vibrant, could reveal the unpleasant truth about the role of Stalin, the causes of the war, the unprecedented mistakes of the Soviet military leadership, and human losses. Only after 1965 has the state approach changed to officially commemorating and glorifying the nation's heroic past in accordance with the Communist Party's ideological frame. The creation of a solid foundation for the cult of the Patriotic War, which embraced every member of Soviet society, went through a stimulation of academic research, publications of

memorials, the establishment of monuments, the writing of songs, and the construction of museums and exhibitions devoted to various battles and war events. While the Soviet Union dictated a particular way of interpreting history after its dissolution, the state's approach to history became more liberal. In the 1990s, many new documents, memoirs, articles, and books that previously did not fit the monumental propaganda frame became available for public regard. Nonetheless, the Soviet ideological censorship over collective memory allowed the shaping of the image of this war, creating a fertile ground for extreme mythologization, forgetting pivotal national experience through the establishment of a primacy of officially approved narratives over individual stories and memories. Further, under Putin's rule, this censorship facilitates the resurrection of a polished version of collective memories about World War II and, as a result, makes possible the reconstruction in 2014–2015 of the heroic narrative about Stalin's role in the victory over Nazism.

Before the Ukrainian crisis of 2014, the regime had frequently referred back to World War II, looking for an association with the glorious facets of Soviet heritage in the eyes of society, who began to express its disappointment with the persistent inability of the government to normalize economic stability and conduct structural reforms for a corrupt political system. The history of the Victory Day Parade sequence is very persuasive in this regard. During the Communist rule, the parades were conducted four times at substantial time intervals: 1945, 1965, 1985, and 1990. Since 1995, the authorities have made the parade an annual event, providing special financial resources from the state budget for this important ceremony. Other prominent political players, such as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Russian Democratic Party, have also repeatedly referred to the Great Patriotic War in order to legitimize themselves, widen public recognition, or underline their unity with the government. As a result, every year party leaders have their messages broadcast to the Russian audience and organized public meetings, marches, and demonstrations.

Putin's regime not only exacerbates the highly politicized context of this event but militarized it by adding a demonstration of so-called new military weapons in 2008. For instance, in the Victory Day Parade on the Red Square in 2015, a group of TY-95MS strategic bombers, Buk-M2 air defense missile complexes, and intercontinental ballistic missile systems (Yars RS24) were on display by the Russian government (Harress, 2015; RT: TV Network, 2015).

Paradoxically, society, underlining the importance of knowing national history and being especially proud of their victory over fascism, shows few real efforts to acquire historical knowledge. Surveys conducted in the 2000s reveal that people of all ages consider movies, documentaries, and other TV products as valuable and reliable sources of information (Kamenchuk & Fedorov, 2008; Levada Center, 2010, 2015c; WCIOM, 2014). According to surveys, most people did not connect concrete historical facts or events to the war: Few Russians know basic facts about the war, such as its causes, the number of human losses, dates of main battles, and state participants (Kamenchuk & Fedorov, 2008; Levada Center, 2010; 2015c; WCIOM, 2014). Therefore, the modern public perception of World War II is a product of state propaganda, media, the film industry, and widely practiced rituals; this means that experience, value systems, and knowledge for the entire post-Soviet generation was shaped and interpreted by a number of professionals, such as scholars, movie directors, editors, and media anchors. Indeed, in this situation, where appreciation of the victory of the Red Army is coupled with a reliance on TV research

expertise and the absence of a desire to fill knowledge gaps, the government has an opportunity to influence society according to current political needs. Being an effective means of nationalist mobilization, in 2014, the myth of the victorious war is used for constructing an official national narrative that presents Russians as a leading group in terms of a domestic and international perspective.

By the beginning of the Putin era, Russian nationalism had not become a coherent ideological framework with straightforward sociopolitical preferences and ethical underpinnings. This helped Putin exploit nationalism. Eventually, nationalism took on a new meaning, in which the state and its government, rather than the nation of Russians, became crucial elements (Laine, 2015). This approach allowed Putin to bring and reinforce the need of a strong centralized governmental system in protecting Russians from internal as well as external threats. The Kremlin has utilized this nationalistic rhetoric for its own convenience. In light of this, World War II, which is associated with heroism and achievements by the Russian people, began to be a favorite theme in the political games. The fact that post-Soviet Russia failed to reevaluate the historical experience of this war makes the Great Patriotic War's myth a powerful symbolic tool with a high manipulative potential. This appeal to the imperial past has justified the Communist regime's crimes, facilitating the reconstruction of the Soviet authoritarian system and rebuilding an imperialistic national identity. Putin has presented Russia as a successor of the Soviet Union and has emphasized Russian ownership of World War II as historical legacy. As a result, any critic of World War II results or actions is considered a nonpatriot or even a fascist; political opponents to the current regime automatically become nonpatriots according to this rhetoric. Also, this national narrative has dictated a particular geopolitical strategy that hopes to return Russia's superpower status and reinforce its influence over the post-Soviet region.

Russia's actions in the Crimean Peninsula were dictated by this geopolitical stratagem as well as long-held historical connections. The Russian government rationalized its annexation of Crimea as a legitimate attempt (at least for Russian society) to protect the ethnic Russian populace in Ukraine. The idea of the "Russian world" was around well before this event, but it did not attract close attention from the Putin administration. During the Ukrainian crisis, however, Putin brought this concept to light as justification for the taking over of Crimea and the Russian aggression in Donbass. This promulgated extremely negative connotations of the "Russian world." Underlining the destiny of the Russian Federation, this concept refers to an imagined collective formed on three pillars: common history, the Russian language, and Russian culture. While previously the Russian mission was associated with spreading Christianity or Communism, in modern Russia, from the Kremlin's perspective, state destiny is dictated by the "Russian world" concept and conservative values (Laruelle, 2016). Thus, by 2014, the Russian Federation had not finalized the process of statehood transformation from an empire to a national state. The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and unlawful military invasion hampered this process, highlighting the imperial narrative within Russian society. As a consequence, Russians observe the taking over of Crimea as a reunion of the Peninsula with its motherland, while critics of Russian actions (in Crimea or Donbass) are taken to be state enemies who do not want Russia to be a prosperous country and a major geopolitical power on the global stage again. The follow-up sanctions have reinforced the unity between the people and their government against foreign pressure. The almost-forgotten anti-American Soviet attitude has been revived and is producing a new wave of hatred and isolationism.

Overall, Russians are not ready to accept that their legacy in all its diversity (language, culture, political patterns) has to retreat from the Ukrainian state.

The nationwide approval of Putin persistently declined from 2008 to March 2014. The protests against the fraudulent elections of 2011–2012 arose from public disappointment from the sociopolitical discourse of the Russian government and the corruption associated with it. Before the Ukrainian Maidan at the end of 2013, the approval of the government's work, governors, and Putin were constantly low (Levada Center, 2015a). The regime began to perceive its own shaky ground and looked for effective tools that would restore its previous stability and power balance.

The development of the antigovernment protests in Ukraine, which were unexpected and feared among Russian ruling elites, made the regime's insecurity more visible, especially for the elites as opposed to the rest of society. At the end of 2013, the idea about adding the Crimean Peninsula to Russia agitated society, exposing a demand for appropriate government decisions in this regard. Therefore, in part, the sudden actions to annex Crimea can be explained by domestic problems; it was an attempt by the Russian authority to buy popularity and thus political stability for the regime.

In 2014, public excitement about the annexation of Crimea allowed the reestablishment of some unity between the regime and the people. However, it did not last for long, and it undermined the sympathy of Russians toward the Ukrainian anticorruption revolt. Putin and his team clearly understood this. To some degree, the danger of toppling was overestimated by the elites, because even opposition leaders were divided on the Crimean issue under the pressure of public enthusiasm. Without unity among the opposition, the social protest potential could not be effective. Due to the fear of losing control over society, the ruling elite has launched a massive propaganda machine that uses various methods, including political games with collective memories about World War II.

Given the political and economic climate in Russia in the 2000s, combined with a growing regret about the former glory of the Soviet Union, the Russian people were ripe for this propaganda. As a result, the anti-Ukrainian propaganda aimed to achieve the following objectives and concentrated on hyperboles of such favorite topics:

1. Identify the enemy and the subverters of peace in the state.
2. Construct a strong association between Nazism and the revolt against the corrupted regime in Ukraine.
3. Weaken the protest potential within society and undermine public sympathy for the Russian opposition.
4. Increase Putin's rating and prolong the regime's life.
5. Rally the Russian population over the regime.

### **Politics and Collective Memory**

This section provides an analysis of the anti-Ukrainian media campaign on main state TV channels, referring to created documentaries, statements of public figures, interviews, and other sources.

It examines the content devoted to various aspects of the Ukrainian situation on three of the most popular TV outlets—NTV, Russia-1, and First Channel. The period from November 2013 to the end of April 2015 is covered. In total, the contents of 298 television programs, including 251 talk shows, 36 news programs, and 11 documentaries were scrutinized. Table 1 presents a breakdown of these TV programs by year of production.

**Table 1. Russian TV Programs Devoted to the Ukrainian Situation, November 2013 to April 2015.**

Type of program	Total number of programs	November–December 2013	2014	January–April 2015
Talk show	251	6	152	93
News	36	7	24	5
Documentary	11	2	5	4

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian TV industry has grown very quickly, as has media influence over society. Many TV channels that function in the Russian Federation today and cover the largest area of the country were established in the 1990s: NTV in 1993, Russia-1 in 1991, and First Channel in 1995. With the expansion of social influence, the media began to attract more attention from politicians. While former president Boris Yeltsin did not rely entirely on TV influence, the Putin administration has widely used it to control society in order to support the regime. As a result, the authorities increased their control over large TV segments of the media market during the 2000s (Federal Agency of Mass Communication, 2013; Gehlbach & Sonin, 2008). Today, the vast majority of the Russian TV market falls under government control. The state has increased its presence in Russia-1 and First Channel (“Who Owns Media,” 2014). Another outlet, TB-Center, is a property of the Moscow administration. Gazprom-Media Holding, which embraces radio stations, movie production, newspapers, and television, owns NTV. By the beginning of the Ukrainian Maidan, the state had exerted almost full political control over media sources. This allows Putin’s administration to employ effective informational propaganda.

Paradoxically, the increasing state control does not undermine the reputation of TV outlets in the eyes of society, and TV remains the primary source of news. People receive more than 90% of their news from television, and 51% of TV viewers get information from only one TV channel on a regular basis (Levada Center, 2014b). According to the Levada survey of 2014, most Russians prefer to receive information from three TV channels controlled by the government: NTV, Russia-1, and First Channel. TV customers have not sought alternative information sources, which occupy an extremely small segment in Russian media space and cover only 2% to 3% of the population (Levada Center, 2014a). These tendencies have made television a main propaganda tool, allowing the government to seize control over society—and, in particular, over the opposition.

The situation of alternative media outlets demands additional attention. Media that presents unbiased news coverage still exists in the Russian media market. Since the rise of the Internet, authoritarian governments have to be very inventive in controlling informational flows. In Russia, even

poor people may find cheap Internet access in public Internet cafés. Nonetheless, with the accessibility of the Internet, most Russians still prefer to receive news from progovernment sources, ignoring alternative media and creating artificial informational isolation. Oriented to shape a specific way of thinking within the population, the Russian propaganda campaign has an extremely small factual base, operating by opinion rather than news.

This seemingly blind trust among the public largely predetermined success for the unfolding anti-Ukrainian campaign. Despite the overall decline of public trust in TV media from 79% in August 2009 to 50% in March 2014 and 41% in November 2015, 59% of Russians have no doubts about the quality of information and objectivity of domestic media outlets covering events in Ukraine (Levada Center, 2014c, 2015b). Moreover, more than 80% of respondents believe that the Ukrainian government, supported by powerful Western states, launched an informational war against Russia and concocted false information about the difficult situation in Donbass and the Russian engagement in the conflict (Levada Center, 2014c). Therefore, society has maintained a high level of trust in TV channels, and even with the presence of alternative media sources (Ukrainian TV channels or the Russian TV channel TVrain), the population does not seem to make much of an effort to find the truth. This tendency suggests that people do not want to gather, compare, and analyze informational flows on their own; rather, they are willing to take analyses provided by state-controlled media for granted.

The TV channels NTV, Russia-1, and First Channel have many similarities: their range of coverage, the character of their media evaluation, and government involvement. Since the end of 2013, these channels have provided steady and extensive coverage of the Ukrainian events at the expense of domestic news, whose coverage has been reduced dramatically. These media sources cover an identical range of issues and opinions and provide expertise from the same public figures almost to the exclusion of opposing or controversial views. These alterations have not gone unnoticed. Nikolai Svanidze—a professor at the Russian State University (Moscow) and a former TV anchor of Russia-1—and Vladimir Pozner—a famous Russian anchor who began his career in the Soviet Union, was the first president of the Russian TV Academy (1994–2008), and currently has a TV show called *Pozner* on First Channel—emphasize that the three TV channels, focusing only on the Ukrainian situation, do not provide news about Russian regions, and the quality of TV coverage is poor (“Pozner About,” 2015; “Svanidze: Prohibited Topics,” 2015).

The character of media evaluation on the three TV channels has become adversarial, suspicious, and emotionally aggressive, assuming that the United States and Europe have sinister motivations in undermining Russia’s reputation on the global stage. Reporters observe the Ukrainian events as ventures of neo-Nazi activists and neofascists. Such a highly selective approach becomes common practice, focusing predominantly on the Russian government’s view of the situation. [First name] Igor Ykovenko, a former chief of the journalists’ union of the Russian Federation (2014), notes that “the Russian government created these insane anti-Ukrainian media, which have a detrimental influence on both society and authority” (“Russian Media,” 2014, para. 7). The crisis in Ukraine has modified the role of media. For now, reporters have to keep the collective memory of World War II vivid in the public’s imagination. Moreover, they must bridge this memory to the modern events in Ukraine in a politically designed way. Therefore, the media have helped to create new myths and spread them within the population, thus undermining opposing memories.



The third similarity among NTV, Russia-1, and First Channel is government involvement. Ownership of media matters. Channel administrators display a great deal of deference to Putin's regime. Undoubtedly, the government directs and rules their media coverage, controlling information that media presents to the public. By doing this, the elites seek to frame situations and images in certain ways to further their goals. Hence, their coverage patterns, serving the same goal of preventing Russians from supporting Ukrainian activists, are similar and biased in a like manner.

In August 2014, the Internet was full of information about Russian soldiers who were killed and detained by the Ukrainian forces who participated in the military operation in Donbass. Lev Shlosberg, an oppositional politician from Pskov, began to spread information about clandestine funerals of killed Russian officers in the Pskov region ("Russian Politician Beaten," 2014). Because this explosive news could seriously undermine public support and lead to mass antigovernment manifestations, the structure of the TV coverage was modified in order to overshadow controversial news. In response to the political needs of the Russian government, old TV programs such as *Segodnya* (Today) (NTV), *Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym* (Evening With Vladimir Solovyov) (Russia-1), and *Politika* (Politics) (First Channel) shifted their attention to different aspects of the Ukrainian crisis. TV channels surprised viewers with new shows, which were initially designed to be sociopolitical: *Vremya pokazhet* (Time Will Show) (First Channel, launched in fall 2014), *Structure of Moment* (First Channel, launched in fall 2014), and *Spisok Norkina* (The List of Norkin) (NTV, launched in 2014). This process has unfolded hand in hand with a new approach to human resource management on television, which is embodied in the exchange of less loyal reporters for more flexible people who share the government's stance. Some reporters were fired, such as Svanidze; others, such as Lesnoy Evgeniy<sup>1</sup>, voluntarily quit (Ringis, 2015). In addition, channels hired some loyal reporters. For instance, from September 2014, NTV began to air a new talk show, *The List of Norkin* ("Does NTV Channel," 2015). A new reporter, Andrey Norkin, who became its host and was previously unknown by the Russian audience, proves his readiness to defend and support any government action and initiative. In light of new political circumstances and objectives, the structural adjustment of TV content should help television to be productive in the propaganda field. It has led to the institutionalization of a propaganda mechanism in Russia, making personal loyalty to the regime more important than professionalism. As a result, the content of these channels has become highly politicized. On one hand, this allowed the raising and shaping of the political consciousness of common people in the direction needed for the regime. On the other hand, it undermined the public's sympathy for the opposition and stopped the rise of protest potential within society.

Referring to collective memories about World War II, the media has adopted classic methods of propaganda: name-calling, testimonials, transfer, and repetition (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2005). Name-calling proves to be one of the most effective tools for a number of reasons. The array of names used by TV reporters is relatively small, but the names are catchy. They include *Ukro-fascists* (Ukrainian fascists), *neofascists*, *Banderovzi* (followers of Stepan Bandera<sup>2</sup>), *neo-Nazis*, and *Nazis*. Given the significant

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<sup>1</sup> Evgeniy decided to leave NTV for ethical reasons. According to him, he could not continue to work for a channel that provided the biased approach to the coverage of the Ukrainian crisis.

<sup>2</sup> Bandera (1909–1959) was a Ukrainian ultranationalist and a Nazi collaborator, who, during World War II, was involved in the killings of Jewish and Polish people. In 2010, the president of Ukraine, Viktor

emotional power of Russians' memories of World War II, these recollections immediately conjure up analogies with the current political situation and players such as the rebels in Ukraine and regime opponents.

The idea to use this fascist trend in the propaganda campaign was not a result of pragmatic calculations or research by progovernment thinkers. It was an accidental finding, inspired by the active involvement in the Ukrainian protests of the ultranationalistic organization Right Sector. To distinguish itself, this group used symbols that resemble Nazi signs, and it commemorates Stepan Bandera as a national hero (Hughes, 2014). The leader of Right Sector, Dmytro Yarosh, repeatedly called himself an adherent of Stepan Bandera ("Profile: Ukraine's," 2014).

In 2010, Oleh Tyahnybok, a Ukrainian politician and the leader of the nationalist Svoboda political party, was awarded a golden cross by former members of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS ("Ukraine: The Galician," 2009). To instill a negative attitude within Russian society, this symbolic resemblance was widely advertised by the media. Focusing on the public actions of this organization and presenting it as a major driving force of the protests, the Russian media has conveyed the idea of the Nazi revolution in Ukraine. Their extravagant actions produced plenty of material for TV propaganda, which pushed Russian audiences to make false generalizations about the situation in Ukraine.

In various combinations, TV reporters have persistently repeated these names, trying to entrench them in the public mind and establish a strong association with the Ukrainian events. The labels also immediately provoke very negative emotions within the population, which keeps alive the memory of World War II. Given the fact that every TV channel uses the same names when presenting news about Ukraine, the majority of Russians received the wrong impression about the legitimacy of this labeling; they accepted it at face value without demanding any concrete evidence.

Being a part of the fight for the regime's survival, many prominent political figures and officials have used these names. In speeches, President Putin has frequently described the annexation of Crimea and the situation in Ukraine using such negative terms as *neo-Nazis*, *nationalists*, *Russophobes*, and *anti-Semites* (Putin, 2014; Videoscope, 2014). The leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Gennady Zyuganov, presents the Ukrainian protests as a coup orchestrated by Nazis, fascists, and Banderovzi gangs in his multiple public appearances on television. It is interesting that in 2015, TV became more cautious in its use of these negative names. Nowadays, talk show guests and government officials rarely use these labels. The TV propaganda has changed its preferences and operates now by names such as *nationalists* or *extremists*. One of the main reasons for this change is the failure of Putin's ambitions in Donbass; he does not want to continue with military involvement (Kolesnikov, 2015). Therefore, the acute need for public support fades away, and media outlets change their rhetoric accordingly.

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Yushchenko, made him a national hero, but due to a negative international reaction, Yushchenko rescinded the honor.

In general, to galvanize propaganda and make it more credible, these TV channels widely use testimonials from such people as Zyuganov, Joseph Kobzon, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Nikita Mikhalkov, Oleg Tsarev, Igor Girkin, Alexander Zakharchenko, and Nikolay Starikov.<sup>3</sup> The testimonials convey the opinions of public figures not only in the news but through the format of talk shows. In fact, for expertise and guidance, common people often search for authority from public figures. Information received from these individuals looks persuasive in the eyes of ordinary folks, especially if the propagandist message is constant and repetitive. Girkin and Zakharchenko, who are active participants in the battles against the Ukrainian army in Eastern Ukraine, became widely known to Russian viewers through their multiple interviews in news programs on NTV, Russia-1, and First Channel TV outlets. In contrast to these field commanders, many prominent Russian individuals, whose opinions and ideas serve as a model to common Russians, have an opportunity to convey their stances through not only news programs but various talk shows, such as *Evening With Vladimir Solovyov* (Russia-1), *Politics* (First Channel), *Time Will Show* (First Channel), *Structure of Moment* (First Channel), and *The List of Norkin* (NTV). In light of the upsurge of Putin's rating, the president has become the main face on TV. The appearance of Sergey Lavrov, the minister of foreign affairs, Vitaly Churkin, permanent Russian representative to the United Nations, and other officials is dictated by the development of the political situation.

With the threat of U.S. sanctions against Russia and the expansion of NATO's presence in the Baltic States, in March and at the beginning of April 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense published several archival documents about the activities of Stepan Bandera and his militants in the territories of Ukraine and Poland during the war ("Russian Ministry of Defense," 2014). For a long time, these historical documents were highly classified and only a few researchers had access to them. Reports of Soviet guerrillas, officers, and soldiers of the Red Army then became open to the public ("Russian Ministry of Defense," 2014). There is a lot of evidence about war atrocities committed by Ukrainian nationalists as well as evidence about their cooperation with the Nazi regime. This propaganda event was widely advertised by these TV channels and helped to establish (1) the legitimacy of the media's focus on fascism and (2) the credibility of the propaganda campaign. Even for people who did not read or at least skim over these documents, this action of the Russian government made them sure that the Ukrainian Maidan was a creation of neofascists and followers of the Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera. Also, this action increased the trust of the Russian population in the media and the regime.

For emotional resonance, the media produced many reports with testimonies of ordinary people: Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish veterans of World War II; refugees from Eastern Ukraine; residents of the separatists' regions; militants; members of nongovernmental organizations; and volunteers. Such

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<sup>3</sup> Kobzon is a famous Soviet and Russian singer. Zhirinovskiy is a founder and leader of the Russian Liberal Democratic Party. He has been a serious candidate in several presidential elections and is famous for his populist far-right views. Mikhalkov is a famous actor and filmmaker who has won prizes at many prestigious film festivals (Cannes, France; Venice, Italy, etc.). Tsarev is a member of the Party of Regions (Ukraine) and a leader of separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Girkin is the former Minister of Defense of the Donetsk People's Republic. Zakharchenko is a pro-Russian separatist leader from Donetsk, Ukraine. Starikov is a Russian writer and journalist who argues for a return to calling modern Volgograd by its former name, Stalingrad.

emotional presentations are an effective propagandist strategy of persuasion. On one hand, this strategy does not demand digging for facts, details, professional integrity, or skills from reporters. On the other hand, TV viewers, petrified by war atrocities, do not ask for evidence or proof, taking reporters' ethical dignity for granted. The request for analytical appeal is missing from both sides: creators/reporters and consumers of propaganda. The illogical structure of these testimonies allows reporters to associate contemporary stories with the past by mixing sorrowful narratives and comments of people from Donetsk or Lygansk and of veterans of World War II with images of marches of the Right Sector in 2014–2015 and the Nazi Army in the 1940s. On October 19, 2014, Mirosław Hermaszewski, a Polish astronaut, reminisced about the murders of his relatives by Bandera militants and his difficult fatherless childhood (First Channel, 2014).

It is worth noting that the film industry has been an essential part of the Soviet propaganda machine, helping to shape and maintain a particular psychological attitude. For many decades, filmmakers, controlled by the Communist Party, deliberately ignored widely known and controversial topics such as sex, corruption, and structural violence, focusing on anticapitalist propaganda and the glorification of the Communist regime (Taylor, 1998). Referring to the Soviet experience, modern TV outlets take advantage of documentaries, and this genre becomes a powerful tool for propaganda by distributing sociopolitical information. In fact, documentaries carry powerful potential for emotional claims to TV viewers, initiating and directing the personal identification of viewers with characters, events, and acts on TV screens. A series of propagandist documentaries about the Ukrainian events began in December 2013 with the airing of *Technology of Maidan* on NTV (NTV, 2013). At that time, the focus on fascism in propaganda did not reach its culmination, and to undermine the inner opposition, filmmakers employed well-known strategies: a presentation of oppositional leaders as Western puppets and protest actions as a threat to peace. On one hand, the documentary vividly depicted the transformation of civil protests in Kiev into full-fledged violence, transferring this association to peaceful demonstrations at Bolotnaya Square in Moscow in 2011–2012. According to the logic of the documentary, this uprising of the Russian opposition was a preliminary stage of uncontrollable violent actions, which were fortunately prevented. On the other hand, it revealed the so-called conspiracy of the predatory West and the Ukrainian corrupt, unpatriotic opposition against the Ukrainians. Further, the West-domestic opposition conspiracy pattern was transferred to the Russian antigovernment resistance. The documentary presented Putin's regime as a strong government that saved society from plunging into a similar bloody disorder. The government used the media outlets for public condemnation of opponents' tenets, and negative publicity seriously undermined the domestic opposition spreading these media stories while simultaneously providing positive coverage for the government. In total, from December 2013 to March 2015, NTV alone bombarded Russian audiences, presenting 14 documentaries, 11 of which were devoted to various facets of the Ukrainian situation (see Table 2).

**Table 2. NTV Documentary Films About Ukraine, December 2013 to March 2015.**

Date aired	Title
December 3, 2013	<i>Maidan Technology</i>
December 12, 2013	<i>Shale Gas in Ukraine</i>
February 20, 2014	<i>Bandera's Heirs</i>
March 4, 2014	<i>Ukrainian Rulers (Part 1)</i>
March 14, 2014	<i>Ukrainian Rulers (Part 2)</i>
March 28, 2014	<i>Sasha Belyi</i>
April 30, 2014	<i>The Hunt for Viktor Yanukovych</i>
February 8, 2015	<i>War in Ukraine</i>
February 15, 2015	<i>Pro-U.S. Troops: Ukraine</i>
February 22, 2015	<i>The Maidan Revolution Kills Its Children</i>
March 15, 2015	<i>Strange Suicides in Ukraine</i>

The coverage ranged from shale gas deposits and the corruption of the new Ukrainian government to biographies of Stepan Bandera, President Petro Poroshenko, a former boxing star, and Kiev mayor Vitali Klitschko among others ("Terezvitainoe rassledovanie," 2015).

In fact, talk shows aired in 2013–2015 imitate the unscripted character and spontaneous form of public participation. Several methods help to accomplish this: a selective approach to participants, preliminary monitoring of participants' positions on the main issues, and the host's engagement in a discussion panel. In a talk show format, participants include media professionals (politicians, journalists), experts (scholars, representatives of various organizations), and ordinary people. Although the first two categories are common guests on TV shows, appearances by ordinary folks depend on discussing certain topics and the appropriateness of the emotional potential of their contributions. The frequency of TV appearances for public figures depends on their loyalty to the regime. Therefore, the members of the political parties that made up the State Duma (United Russia, Communist Party, Liberal Democratic Party) are guests of talk shows on federal TV channels most often. The people who are known to be critical to government policy also may be invited, but the format of these programs forces some opponents to decline invitations. Still, there are some who accepted. Stanislav Belkovsky, a political expert on TVrain, noted that he repeatedly rejected invitations from the federal channels due to their unfair treatment and extremely biased approach (TVrain, 2015). Most of the time, opponents have less time than loyal guests to express their opinion; when their presentations contained valuable, persuasive arguments, they endure frequent and sudden interruptions from hosts or background noise. In addition, talk show discussions deliberately maintained the underrepresentation of opponents: The number of guests with antigovernment views is fewer than the number of supporters of the regime. The emotional format of the programs undermines the demand for valid arguments and facts, making a rational analysis look unpersuasive and often overshadowed by emotional blasts. One very effective method of manipulation used by TV outlets is the public demonstration of war atrocities during discussions—and in particular during opponents' talk time. This method proved to have a wide persuasive effect on talk shows such as *The List of Norkin*, *Time Will Show*, and *Politics*.

Given that the role of the host is defined by propagandistic goals, moderators allow the progovernment side to openly mock or loudly show negative emotions toward opponents. During programs, hosts do not try to mitigate conflicts or reach an agreement between speakers, or to underline the proper position to a viewing audience. On September 19, 2014, discussing critics of Russia's presence in Ukraine, the host of *The List of Norkin* interrupted speakers using aggressive exclamations such as: "Why do these people hate our homeland? These people allow themselves to criticize our government, but their irrelevant criticism looks like an attempt to cast aspersions on all of us!" (NTV, 2014). On October 4, 2014, the same host repeatedly laughed scornfully at the president of the Union of Right Forces, Leonid Gozman, who argued against the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Offering his opinion, the host used the following expressions: "traitors," "enemies of our state," "Bandera's militants," "fascists," "despicable," "unpatriotic," and "the Ukrainian mess." To support a speaker, another talk show host, Vladimir Solovyov, insulted Ukrainian politicians. He called Vitali Klitschko "a political appendix of misfortune" (Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym, 2014). Talking about the 15th prime minister of Ukraine, Arseniy P. Yatsenyuk, Solovyov made the following poignant comment: "If Yatsenyuk looks for bullets, he should go to the Babi Yar, where Ukrainian nationalists and German soldiers killed several thousands of Soviet people. He can find many bullets there" (Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym, 2014). Hosts always take a progovernment stance. Being the main voice of propaganda, TV shows do not look for the presentation of alternative perspectives and contrasting views on topical issues. Instead, their pivotal purpose is to deliver and entrench the government's agenda in the public mind.

Not all talk shows practice emotional appeal; some of them have a peaceful communication style with a slow, lecture-type discussion. On Russia-1, within the project *Spezial Korrespondent* (Special Correspondent), Arkady Mamontov has launched a TV program that is a hybrid between a talk show and a documentary ("Stars: Arkady Mamontov," 2015). Between January 2014 and March 2015, 43 programs were aired, and all of them covered the situation in Ukraine. This format allowed him to mix the entertaining character of TV shows with serious political issues. His show follows a particular format. The host presents a new documentary, and then guests discuss issues covered by the documentary. Experts who starred in the documentary are key figures of discussions that increase the legitimacy of the documentary's message. Interestingly, the slow-moving discussion between invited political figures and intellectuals is agitated by the aggressive appearance of the host, Mamontov, who is very generous in using derogatory labels and even cursing remarks toward opponents (Mamontov, 2014).

### Conclusion

Trying to buy some time to increase Putin's ratings, the oligarch regime has launched a massive anti-Ukrainian propaganda campaign. The progovernment TV outlets play a crucial role in delivering the regime's ideas, achieving a desired effect toward protesters and shaping public opinion. TV channels enjoy a large reach as well as the absence of media plurality, which makes them very influential. While the number of progovernment media in Russia is essential, the segment of divergent voices is presented by only one TV channel, TVrain.

Through historical narrative, the media has successfully employed many classic methods of propaganda and bridged the collective memory of World War II with the modern protests in Ukraine.

Given the political and economic climate in Russia in the 2000s, combined with growing nostalgia about the former glory of the Soviet Union, the Russian people were ripe for this sort of campaign.

For Russian society, the collective memory of World War II has great emotional power, and the government uses this to its full advantage. After several reports about the nationalistic organization the Right Sector and repeated demonstrations of its symbolism, these memories were immediately caught up with the current political moment in the public's imagination. During the second part of 2014, the media had just warmed up this connection of the past with the modern Ukrainian crisis, which directly defies rebels in Ukraine and indirectly defies the domestic opposition. Today, the rhetoric of the media has become more careful and less aggressive; the fascist trend has begun to lose its actuality and popularity due to political changes in the Russian Federation.

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