

Information Security Policy

Conditions, Threats and Implementation
in the International Environment



EDITED BY
PIOTR BAJOR

INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY

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Kraków 2022

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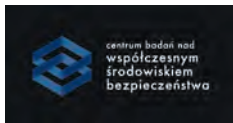
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The Russian Narrative Construct towards Ukraine

ABSTRACT: The article focuses on revealing various civilisational-cultural ('Russian order', triune Ruthenian nation, Moscow – third Rome), geopolitical (Ukraine as an axis of European stability, a fragment of the so-called "convergence zone", with features of a zone disorganised by conflict and internal fragmentation – crush zone, the concept of Russia – island) and intrasystemic (totalitarian tendencies) elements of the Russian narrative message towards Ukraine of the time of the second, great aggression (2022). The article refers to the notion of totalitarian political gnosis as a product of totalitarian reality that justifies social mobilisation against an acknowledged hostile target – in this case, an independent, struggling Ukraine with the possibility of sovereign choice of development path. The analysis refers to the historical approach and the paradigm of critical geopolitics, deconstructing the narrative that contributes to geopolitical perceptions and the geopolitical image of reality. To substantiate the claim of a totalitarian political gnosis conditioning the official narrative, reference was made to Vladimir Putin's speech on February 21, 2022, constituting the decision to aggress against Ukraine.

KEYWORDS: Ukraine, The Russian Federation, geopolitics, the "Russian order", totalitarian political gnosis

Introduction

On February 24, 2022, the second invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation (RF), with its onset truly devastating for regional and global stability, modified the hierarchy of global concerns and, once again – in a symbolic sense – made Moscow the capital of the aggressor state and the essential reference point for attempts to understand the determinants of the tragic events. Natural in this context, the need to rationalise the actual state of the war had to include a search for the causes of an act which, in the face of the problems of global climate catastrophe, increased migration. The fight against terrorism appeared to be a distant reality, arousing a real, long absent and overwhelming fear for the future. The so-called “special military operation” in Ukraine announced by Russian President Vladimir Putin on the day of the invasion was the breath of a broader narrative, the relatively clear message of which, involving the demand to protect the Russian-speaking population from the humiliation and extermination that was supposed to be the work of alleged Banderites and neo-Nazis (for example),¹ results in a search for justification for the efforts to explain the motives behind the Russian Federation’s initiation of the military action. This allows a conclusion in the form of an important premise for the study, stating that the fact of a large-scale, second Russian invasion of Ukraine was probably associated not only with the geopolitical interests of the aggressor here (e.g., the likely desire to gain territorial access to the quasi-state of Transnistria)², but also stemmed from a sense of violation of certain values or visions of international relations and/or the model of national or social existence.

This analysis aims to reflect on the axiological and subject-oriented architecture of Russian news coverage of fundamental importance to the war against Ukraine. For this reason, elements of the information stream rooted in the Russian tradition of political, geopolitical and foreign policy thought will be examined, forming an integral narrative of the Russian order (“*russkij mir*”) – a historically, culturally, ethically and politically grounded vision, the objectivity of which is understood in terms of the threat of Western civilisational action. Specifically, the following hypothesis is adopted

¹ R. Treisman, “Putin’s Claim of Fighting against Ukraine ‘Neo-Nazis’ Distorts History, Scholars Say”, *NPR*, 1.03.2022, [on-line:] <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/01/1083677765/putin-denazify-ukraine-russia-history> (23.09.2022).

² See more: M. Kosienkowski, *Naddniestrzańska Republika Mołdawska. Determinanty przetrwania*, Wyd. Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2010; P. Oleksy, *Naddniestrze. Terror tożsamości*, Wyd. Czarne, Wołowiec 2018.

for the study: *The main threads of the Russian narrative in the context of the current aggression against Ukraine are based on a totalitarian mindset (totalitarian political gnosis).*

The consequence of the assumption formulated above is the identification of an auxiliary issue, according to which the Russian civilisation-state project in the context of the Gnostic perception of reality is unique, consisting of recognising this project as clearly positive and, thus, classifying this phenomenon on the side of good. A parallel conclusion that meets the condition for the existence of ontological dualism resulting from political gnosis is the statement that Ukraine and Ukrainians are representatives of a negative, evil – but necessary – world for the binary structure of reality.

The first part of the analysis will present a set of various civilisational, historical, geopolitical and systemic conditions that contributed to the perception of the “Russian order” as threatened by the Western forces of the ideal world. The second part presents selected strands of the Russian narrative, which – fulfilling the condition of totalitarian, Gnostic newspeak – situate Ukraine on the side of hostile forces that threaten Russia as the depository of the proper truth.

The study was based on the model of critical geopolitics, the main idea of which is the deconstruction of geopolitical perceptions and the resulting geopolitical world picture. The historical approach in political science and the categories of analysis of non-democratic systems, especially the empirical phenomenon of political gnosis, will be applied for this purpose. The elements of formal geopolitics, based on primary (speeches and opinions) and secondary (scientific studies) sources, and the threads of practical geopolitics – based on political opinions and actions – will be critically analysed.

Architecture of aggression – geopolitics, geocivilisation, axiology and practice

In one of his final analyses, which was an attempt at a model interpretation of changes in the so-called “Eurasian Convergence Zone”, the eminent American geographer and geopolitician Saul B. Cohen noted that, for historical reasons connected with the formation of Kievan Rus, at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries as an area encompassing today’s European part of Russia – as well as Belarus and Ukraine – the latter (i.e., Ukraine), often a zone of later conflicts, plays a very important role when it comes to ‘Russian national feelings’.³ According to Cohen, Ukraine was and is con-

³ Cf.: S.B. Cohen, “The Eurasian Convergence Zone: Gateway or Shatterbelt?”, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2005), pp. 6–7.

sidered an integral part of the embryonic area of the modern Russian state. This gives rise, after all, to a categorical statement based on historical reasoning and, therefore, inherently containing civilisational themes. Cohen points out that the so-called “Kievan Rus” was a country held together by an element of Slavic ethnicity and an orthodox Christian religion – Eastern Orthodox Christianity (Slavic and Orthodox Christian state).⁴ This view of Cohen is accompanied by another, geostrategic nature, ascribing to Russia the traditional perception of Ukraine as an area naturally susceptible to clash with Western forces due to its location at the country’s southern edge. This has the consequence of attributing the character of a borderland to Ukrainian land, a natural consequence of which is constant pressure from other centres of power giving the area of Ukraine the characteristics of a so-called “crush zone”.⁵ A crush zone is an area that is internally disorganised and subject to objective conflict between rival actors representing the major powers – in this case, the Western states institutionalised by the EU, NATO and the Russian Federation.

The geopolitical positioning of Ukraine applied by Cohen coincides with the conclusions of a more predictive and practical geostrategic nature formulated by Zbigniew Brzezinski. In his seminal study of the formula of the post-Cold War international order, Brzezinski not only recognised Ukraine as a key element of the European equilibrium, but also as a decisive factor in the possibility of restoring Russia’s imperial influence – which, after the collapse of the USSR, created a geopolitical vacuum in the middle of the Eurasian continent.⁶ This role stems from the qualification of the Ukrainian state as a geopolitical pivot whose fundamental position is based not on strength or ambition, in this case Kiev, but on a key geographic location and an internal situation that directly affects the actions of the world’s great powers.⁷

The above definition of Ukraine’s key role turned out to be the most important premise for Brzezinski’s later opinion, dating from 2012 (i.e., just before the first Russian invasion of Ukraine), in which he not only classifies the aforementioned state as part of the set of international actors most threatened geopolitically, but also draws what turned out to be the correct scenario of events (i.e., the eventuality of Russian armed aggression and resistance, amplified by a growing Ukrainian national consciousness, distinct from the Russian one)⁸.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁵ *Ibidem*; *idem*, *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations*, Rowman & Littlefield, Maryland 2015, p. 48.

⁶ Z. Brzeziński, *Wielka szachownica*, Bertelsmann Media, Warszawa 1999, pp. 86, 88–119.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

⁸ Cf.: *idem*, *Strategiczna wizja. Ameryka a kryzys globalnej potęgi*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2013, pp. 130–132.

Both Cohen's and Brzezinski's approaches clearly bear the hallmarks of a realist approach in the study of international relations, recognising the causal role of the main players (i.e., the states) which, in a system characterised by conditions of anarchy, are essentially aiming for survival. In this context, economic theories of organisational development are all too noticeable.⁹

In the above view, Ukraine becomes a function of the essence of the current force relationship of the major world powers – mainly the US, the EU and the Russian Federation aiming at: the continuous, subjective strengthening of the Euro-Atlantic system through the formal and procedural incorporation of new members into existing civilian and military structures, and the restoration of the former Soviet Union's sphere of influence and their expansion through the adoption of a formula of a universal, Russian-centric order (*rususkij mir*).

The attempt to justify and promote another world centre of power with autotelic features after the USA, China and the EU does not only result from the Russian tradition of geopolitical thought – which, in the eyes of its contemporary representatives (e.g., Igor Panarin¹⁰ or Alexander Dugin)¹¹ – but it also becomes a contribution to the resistance against the expansion of the influence of the USA and its allies deeper into Eurasia and an element of building a new, multipolar international order with a significant role of Eurasian entities (i.e., Russia and China). The main thing is the recognition of the civilisational principals that fundamentally differentiate Russia from the countries of the West, which are considered a fundamental threat because of values such as pernicious liberal individualism.¹² Therefore, the construction and use of certain myths of a geocivilisation nature¹³ are based on the assumption of the proper legitimisation of state power based on true tradition – which is, therefore, entitled to create a universal system. Such conditions are met by the doctrine of Moscow – the

⁹ Cf.: K.N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, Massachusetts 1979, pp. 88–92.

¹⁰ Cf.: J. Potulski, *Współczesne kierunki rosyjskiej myśli geopolitycznej. Między nauką, ideologicznym dyskursem a praktyką*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 2010, pp. 286–289.

¹¹ Cf.: P. Eberhardt, "Koncepcje geopolityczne Aleksandra Dugina", in P. Eberhardt, *Słowińska geopolityka. Twórcy rosyjskiej, ukraińskiej i czeskosłowackiej geopolityki oraz ich koncepcje ideologiczno-terytorialne*, Wyd. Arcana, Kraków 2017, pp. 342–347.

¹² J. Diec, "Doktryna rosyjskiej polityki zagranicznej. Partnerzy najbliżsi i najdalsi", in *Geostrategiczny wybór Rosji u zarania trzeciego tysiąclecia*, vol. 1, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2015, p. 149.

¹³ When I use the term 'geo-civilisational myth', I am referring to a concept that evaluates a particular geographical space, in this case Russia, because of the ascribed existence of certain cultural characteristics deemed appropriate and desirable.

third Rome, referring to the claims of the monk of the Orthodox Church Philotheus that, due to heresy attributing to Christ the acquisition of human nature, the proper (first) Rome fell and then, as a result of the alliance with him, also the second (i.e., Constantinople). The third Rome is Moscow, portrayed as the centre and mainstay of the universalist Christian tradition.¹⁴ Joachim Diec provides excellent characteristics of the contemporary context in which the doctrine in question operates: “What is striking about the idea of Moscow – the third Rome, one of the most fundamental to the subsequent centuries of the existence of the Moscow state on the international stage, is its similarity to the perception of the capital as a kind of centre of the world, *axis mundi*, through the conviction of its own one-ness, uniqueness. At the same time, however, this belief is devoid of inner certainty, no lasting peace (...). The outside world is seen as a threat, but also as an environment that needs to be convinced of its own superiority. Hence, the strictly monocentric doctrine constantly struggles with the awareness of the lack of recognition from the international environment.”¹⁵

The claim of Russia as the sole, traditionally legitimised and representative of the true principles of Christian civilisation and, therefore, universal centre of state power justifies the tendency to octroi [dictate] desirable solutions – especially to those entities considered native or in the orbit of direct influence. Therefore, the adoption of the concept of the triune Ruthenian nation, composed of ethnic Russians (Great Russians) and Belarusians and Ukrainians (Lesser Russians), was a natural consequence of not only the sacred principle of transferring power from Rome to Moscow, but also the recognition of the supreme role of Orthodoxy and the Russian state in building a political community.¹⁶ In this obvious, eclectic vision of the nation, the Russians were given priority, while the remaining groups – as partially Latinised and thus detached from the true Orthodox homeland – were placed lower, also by recognising their peasant origin, suggesting a lower social level.¹⁷

The formula of national unity, with an evident element of supremacy and subordination of other communities and considered to be the chief of the Orthodox Russian nationality, omitted the element of both national aspirations and the state-building process in relation to Belarusians and Ukrainians in particular. This does not change the fact that the principle of unity survived and was strengthened even despite several decades of the communist system, which saw the creation of a communist-Soviet

¹⁴ Cf.: J. Diec, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 37–38.

¹⁶ Cf.: R. Radzik, “Rosyjska wizja narodu ogólnoruskiego”, *Studia Białorutenistyczne*, vol. 10 (2016), pp. 56, 60–61.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

nation based on the existing ethnos – the main initiator and executor of which, as in the periods preceding communism, was the centralised state apparatus. Paradoxically, as Ryszard Redzik points out, the demarcation of the borders of the Soviet republics, the development of national languages (in spite of parallel Soviet Russification, or the separate state-like status of Belarus and Ukraine at the UN) contributed to the strengthening of the emancipation aspirations of these societies, regarded by Russians as members of the same all-Russian and Orthodox community, but not as equal representatives of a *de facto* provincial, inferior culture.¹⁸

The imposed sense of national unity interacted with the undemocratic features of the Russian/Soviet state. The system of imperial, tsarist one-man rule and then Soviet totalitarianism – which reached its climax under Joseph Stalin¹⁹ – found its continuation in the retreat from the reformist, West-cooperative model of hard authoritarianism presented by Vladimir Putin. Initially, the conditions for this were created by the Constitution of the Russian Federation adopted in 1993, introducing a super-presidential system of power in which the head of state, who represented an extremely strong executive power at the expense of legislation, gained supremacy over all other state structures. Moreover, although the source of power was assigned to the multi-ethnic nation of the Russian Federation, only the President of the Federation represented this power, guaranteeing its unity and being based on the constitutional act. The practice of Putin's long-standing rule as head of state, which lasted with a four-year break in the 2008-2012 period from 1999 until the present time, turned out to have a decidedly anti-democratic and neo-despotic face. This can be evidenced not only by the fight against the opposition – here, in addition to individual repressions against its representatives (e.g., Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Alexei Navalny), collective repressions that turned many NGOs into alleged agent centres linked to Western forces,²⁰ or the falsifications and numerous cases of abuse in the elections of the Russian State Duma (e.g., in 2011 and 2021)²¹ – but also the fundamental legal and institutional changes

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 61–62.

¹⁹ According to Russian political scientist Yuli Zolotovskiy, the system of totalitarian Stalinism was based on two features: omnipresence and a repressive-punitive orientation as indispensable determinants of the actions of the essential element of the undemocratic order - the totalitarian bureaucracy. The latter was the basis of a state of total tyranny imposing universal terror – com: *Rosja. XX wiek. Od utopii komunistycznej do rzeczywistości globalistycznej*, transl. P. Burek, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2004, pp. 78–85.

²⁰ M. Łojkowska, “Agenci społeczeństwa. Ustawy o zagranicznym finansowaniu w Rosji”, *NGO.pl*, 23.10.2020, [on-line:] <https://publicystyka.ngo.pl/agenci-spoleczenstwa-ustawy-o-zagranicznym-finansowaniu-w-rosji> (7.10.2022).

²¹ J. Rogoża, “Rosja po wyborach: oddolna presja zmusza władze do zmiany taktyki”, *OSW*, 14.12.2011, [on-line:] <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2011-12-14/rosja-po-wyborach->

undertaken at the turn of 2019/2020. The constitutional reform that was then carried out was a fundamental step towards the legally unlimited (in term) extension of Putin's holding of office as Head of State and towards an even stronger supremacy of the President over the government and the judicial system.²²

Inherited and developed along with social, legal and institutional traditions and the usually undemocratic practice of exercising power, the Russian model of governing and arranging international relations is saturated with constant tendencies towards the autocratic promotion of civilisational values considered specific – Orthodoxy, Russian national-territorial unity and a particularly cohesive policy of building the so-called “Russian order”, alternative to Western liberal openness (*ruskij mir*, Russian world).

The term itself had already existed in Russian politics since the early 1990s, when Boris Yeltsin and Andrei Primakov introduced into the discourse the formal-legal category of ‘compatriots abroad’, which at the time meant individual persons who, as a result of the break-up of the USSR, remained outside the borders of the Russian Federation, felt a historical, cultural and linguistic connection to Russia regardless of their current citizenship.²³ The situation has changed with the geostrategic evolution of the situation in Russia's so-called “near abroad”, which can be definitely linked to the process of expanding US and NATO influence in the former Soviet republics (e.g., the Baltic states) that were admitted to the Alliance in 2004. Of particular importance were the years 2007–2008, when the actions of pro-Western-minded Georgia and Ukraine were aimed at gaining membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), while Russia implemented what was most likely a previously prepared plan to regain influence in the former Soviet area. The result was a Russian-Georgian war lasting several days, taking advantage of the existence of pro-Russian separatists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The events of 2008 and the Russian decision on aggression in Ukraine – resulting in the incorporation of Crimea, including the actual detachment, destabilisation and subsequent recognition of the so-called “People's Republic of Donetsk and Luhansk” – transformed the idea of cultural and historical connection into an element of

oddolna-presja-zmusza-wladze-do-zmiany-taktyki (7.10.2022); H.A. Conley, A. Lohsen, “Where Does Russian Discontent Go from Here? Russia's 2021 Election Considered”, *CSIS*, 23.09.2021, [on-line:] <https://www.csis.org/analysis/where-does-russian-discontent-go-here-russias-2021-election-considered> (7.10.2022).

²² Cf.: M. Domańska, “Wieczny Putin' i reforma rosyjskiej konstytucji”, *OSW*, 13.03.2020, [on-line:] <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2020-03-13/wieczny-putin-i-reforma-rosyjskiej-konstytucji> (7.10.2022).

²³ I.A. Zevelev, “The Russian World Boundaries”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 7.06.2014, [on-line:] <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/the-russian-world-boundaries/> (8.10.2022).

the politics of a force trying to revive powers. These powers are defined henceforth as action based on various means, civil and military, aimed at reintegrating the territories of the former Soviet Union and connecting with areas inhabited by people who feel communal with Russian culture and civilisation.²⁴

The evolution of Russian policy after the unsuccessful experiment with pro-Western reforms in the 1990s, therefore, returned to the tracks of isolationism and autarky under Putin,²⁵ which had to be combined with the strengthening of internal security policy – understood as the regaining and centralisation of influence in the area of the so-called “near abroad”.²⁶ The application of the principle of “Russian order”, which, apart from military measures, also assumed wider activities (e.g., related to the promotion of language and culture)²⁷ can be safely considered the dominant doctrine in Russian foreign policy, combining both hard and soft forms of state power and the native principle of organising areas recognised as gravitating towards Russian culture.

²⁴ *Ibidem.*

²⁵ A certain convergence with the principle of the ‘Russian order’ understood in terms of the so-called ‘near abroad’ can be seen in Vadim Tsymbursky’s concept of Russia – the island, which assumed, like the concept of Moscow – the Third Rome, the existence of an independent and autonomous civilisation, immune to threats through the appropriate organisation of buffer zones, the so-called ‘land straits’, separating Russia from the main civilisational centres of Europe and Asia. Tsymbursky attributed special importance to the so-called Great Limitrophe stretching from Finland in the north, through Eastern Europe and Central Asia to Korea, which was supposed to safeguard Orthodox civilisation from internal turbulence and external attack – Cf.: J. O’Loughlin, P.F. Talbot, “Where in the World is Russia? Geopolitical Perceptions and Preferences of Ordinary Russians”, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2005), p. 24.

²⁶ An interesting interpretation of the ‘Russian world’ is formulated by Marek Budzisz, who argues that territorially, the known principle can be interpreted as an archipelago of links, incorporating e.g. Armenia or Syria into Russian civilisation and not necessarily Slavic or Russian-speaking national entities, as a ‘cultural and political gravitation towards Russia’ is sufficient – M. Budzisz, *Wszystko jest wojną. Rosyjska kultura strategiczna*, Wyd. ZonaZero, Warszawa 2021, p. 235.

²⁷ A significant instrument of institutional and cultural influence is the Russkiy Mir Foundation, deriving its origins from the words of V. Putin addressed to the Russian Federal Assembly in 2007, which defined the ‘Russian world’ as a ‘living space’ that goes beyond the borders of Russia itself, in principle encompassing those who use Russian as their own language, but also those who expressed a desire to learn about Russian culture (in this context, one can see a similarity with the official mission and activities of the British Council, the French Institute, the Goethe Institute or the Confucius Institute). The composition of the Foundation’s Board of Trustees is also not without significance, including the head of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, deputy head of the administration of the Russian president, Dmitry Kozak, and the minister of education of the Russian Federation, Sergei Kravtsov – Cf.: “About Russkij Mir Foundation”, *Russkiymir*, [online:] <https://russkiymir.ru/en/fund/index.php> (10.10.2022).

‘Russkij mir’ in action: Elements of the narrative legitimising the Russian Federation’s second aggression against Ukraine

In 2007, during a session of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, President Vladimir Putin initiated state actions of the Foundation of the Russian Order (*Russkij Mir Foundation*). In addition to emphasising the concept of ‘Russian order’ as a zone of presence and active use of the Russian language (already mentioned in this work), he said that language is a “common heritage of many people”²⁸ and, as such, would never become a code for “hatred, hostility, xenophobia or isolationism”.²⁹ It would be peculiar to combine the considerations on the spatial role of the cultural code with pejorative phenomena characteristic of societies or the international system, but when applying the assumption of the existence of a totalitarian narrative based on political gnosis, this relationship acquires its proper meaning.

The use of a Gnostic-type political narrative stems from the process of creation of a new human being, *homo sovieticus*,³⁰ developed over time, revolutionary in its nature, accompanying the construction and functioning of a totalitarian system – in this case, the USSR. It is not the time to decide here about the fact and scope of a possible transfer of the model and attitude to contemporary Russia. Nevertheless, the presence of significant features of the political system, already indicated in this work – and especially the category of political thinking and communication – is a sufficiently serious contribution to assume that the continuation of at least part of the totalitarian reality is objective in nature.

Totalitarian political gnosis, referring to the traditional categories of Manichaeism, organises ideas based on ontological dualism – the contradiction between the world of good and evil. In this perspective, the whole reality is classified into its positive and negative manifestations, which unambiguously not so much makes it understandable and explainable, but reduces thinking to basic categories, truth and falsehood.³¹

Gnosis of the totalitarian type is characterised by distinctive categories that, in effect, create a specific structure. These include the over-interpretation of history, the

²⁸ “RMFound: Creation”, *Russkiimir*, [on-line:] <https://russkiimir.ru/en/fund/> (10.10.2022).

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ About *homo sovieticus* see: H. Arendt, *Korzenie totalitaryzmu*, Wyd. Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2008; J. Staniszkis, *Ontologia socjalizmu*, Wyd. Dante, Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu, Kraków–Nowy Sącz 2006; A. Walicki, *Marksizm i skok do królestwa wolności*, Wyd. PWN, Warszawa 1996.

³¹ Por.: R. Bäcker, *Nietradycyjna teoria polityki*, Wyd. Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2011, p. 191.

subordination of morality to the goal of action, the one-sided evaluation of man only in terms of the ability to participate in the world of good (either temporal or eternal salvation), the definition of the believer-fighter who, for the sake of participation in the attainment of right knowledge, renounces needs and acts only professionally.³² In particular, from the totalitarian gnosis as a feature of social consciousness stems the conviction that there is an objective enemy and an imaginary entity, which manifests itself in specific newspeak.³³

In our case, the imaginary being analysed in the first part was the triune Ruthenian nation's community that crossed the Russian Federation border drifting towards totalitarianism. However, for further consideration, it is assumed that the category of the objective enemy includes Ukraine and Ukrainians as part of a larger, hostile whole – the civilisation of the West. The assumption will be exemplified by reviewing the content of Russian President Vladimir Putin's speech on February 21, 2022, constitutive for the creation of the enemy,³⁴ preceding the second invasion of Ukraine.

In an evocative speech, saturated with many examples from history, economics, political systems, etc., Mr Putin clearly constructed a dichotomous division of reality using the Gnostic category of 'us' and 'them' while focusing more, understandably, on the characteristics of the enemy. As for the category created as one's own, positive, placed on the side of the good, we are dealing with reference to the connection with compatriots in Ukraine, but not treated as a formally and materially separate foreign country, but as a specific common historical, cultural and spiritual space, belonging from time immemorial and, therefore, always to the "Old Ruthenian" lands. Thus, the narrative shows some recognition of Ukraine's statehood – the speech included words about 'respecting the dignity and sovereignty of Ukraine', which, however, after 1991 – and at the request of its political elite – was to be given extensive and comprehensive economic assistance, with which Putin underlined the significant ties of cooperation. The inhabitants of Ukraine, and especially those from the south-eastern

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 191–192.

³³ Idem, "Kategorie teoretyczne totalitaryzmu a badania empiryczne", *Studia nad Autorytaryzmem i Totalitaryzmem*, vol. 38, no. 2 (2016), pp. 14–15. It should be noted that the phenomenon of political gnosis itself has awaited methodological operationalisation. By distinguishing a comprehensive, empirical set of detailed categories that condition the objectivity of political gnosis – See: J. Rak, "How to Measure Political Gnosis? Empirical Evidence from Putin's Russia", *Przegląd Polityczny*, no. 4 (2017), pp. 159–171. The aforementioned collection was used in another analysis devoted to Vladimir Putin – see: A. Maćkowiak, "Elementy gnozy politycznej w orędziach Władimira Putina do Zgromadzenia Federalnego w latach 2014–2016", *Refleksje*, no. 19–20 (2019), pp. 153–168.

³⁴ "Address by the President of the Russian Federation", *Official Internet Resources of the 'President of Russia'*, 21.02.2022, [on-line:] <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67828> (11.10.2022).

part of the country, were considered to be friendly to the idea of cooperation with Russia. Therefore, those “millions” accepted “good relations with Russia” and “cultural and linguistic diversity”. Thus, it can be clearly stated that the historical model of one nation gathering together culturally and regionally similar ethnos is considered ideal and constitutes a reference point for the enemy personifying the forces of evil.

The design of the hostile side is more complex. It involves admitting historical mistakes (the artificial division of nations by inadequate borders of the USSR republics, which created *de facto* nation-states), mistaken political concepts (the Leninist model of strong autonomy of the republics with the possibility of breaking away from the federation) and political mistakes made at different times (the lack of centralist constitutional reform under communism or the misguided leadership of reforms in the 1980s). Thus, one can see the seemingly dual nature of the forces of evil – made up of self-inflicted errors but justified as not having been committed deliberately. In Putin’s judgment, they were the result of a very difficult situation (world war, revolution, economic collapse). The search for an answer to the question about the source of the negated state of affairs is the reference to the category of nationalism (fascism, neo-Nazism) – the source of which Putin sees in the Leninist principle of self-determination of nations. The alleged Ukrainian nationalism is accused of numerous offences such as repression and genocide against the Russian or Russian-friendly population, corruption, the oligarchisation of politics and the economy, leading to *coups d’état* and collaboration with obviously hostile, ‘Western capitals’ and their agendas – advisors and third sector organisations. Part of the expansion of the enemy category is to point to Ukraine’s institutional, material cooperation in military and security terms with the US and NATO, consisting of a range of activities. These include the adoption of what is considered to be an aggressive new Ukrainian military strategy, the installation of various forms (centres, bases) of NATO presence in Ukraine and the possible presence of ‘weapons of mass destruction’ on Ukrainian territory.³⁵

In view of the above, the main enemy – Ukrainian nationalism, which is in the service of the self-interested, lying and aggressive USA and NATO, is a major threat to Russia. It shatters the unity of the historical, cultural and religious Ruthenian community, introduces an oppressive social system and threatens treaty-based and common-sense security principles. Worst of all, however, according to Putin, is the fact that Ukrainians are *de facto* going against their traditional, historical homeland,

³⁵ All quotes come from the English and Polish transcripts of Putin’s speech on February 21, 2022 – *ibidem*; “Współczesna Ukraina jest w całości dziełem Rosji”. Całe przemówienie Putina sprzed ataku”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25.02.2022, [on-line:] <https://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/7,124059,28157005,wspolczesna-ukraina-jest-w-calosci-dzielem-rosji-cale-przemowienie.html> (11.10.2022).

Ruthenia. This is clearly expressed in the words: “Contemporary Ukraine is entirely the work of Russia, or more precisely, of Bolshevik, communist Russia. In fact, this process began shortly after the revolution of 1917, with Lenin and his comrades treating Russia very brutally, tearing away some of its historical territories. Of course, no one asked the millions of people who lived there (...). In fact, Ukraine did not have any solid traditions of true statehood. Since 1991, it has followed the path of mechanical copying of other people’s models, detached from both history and Ukrainian realities”³⁶.

It is difficult to more clearly depreciate the feelings and community achievements of everyone who cultivates their individuality and the real tradition of striving for independence of a nation which, by failing to fit into the civilisation matrix of the world power, becomes the goal of its aggressive policy.

Summary

The Russian concept of ‘*ruskij mir*’ is a specific state-cultural and historical construct, justifying the Russian Federation’s claim to what it considers to be the exclusive sphere of influence of the so-called “near abroad”, which includes the former Soviet republics, including Ukraine. The multi-level cooperation vision does not recognise a sovereign choice other than a development model similar to the Russian one. Therefore, any activity considered to be a deviation from the pattern of reintegration of the former Soviet space under Russian leadership is considered at least suspicious, if not overtly hostile in its nature. This fear is accompanied by the evolution of a strongly authoritarian political system under Vladimir Putin towards totalitarianism, excluding political and worldview pluralism. The consequence of this process is the emergence of a totalitarian political gnosis, manifested in language and attitudes, which assesses the values recognised by the Russian authorities and openly depreciates all those that deviate from the pattern. Therefore, adopting a dichotomous vision of reality has its geopolitical consequences (struggle for the sphere of influence and a renewed, relatively permanent division of the world), social (incapacitation and then attempts to mobilise a totally subordinated society) and cultural consequences, consisting of a return to the model of totalitarian culture and consciousness (*homo sovieticus*). Evolving towards totalism, the system seeks its justification; hence the objective character takes on a process of the permanent creation of the enemy manifested both in the sphere of communica-

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

tion and information as well as in aggressive actions. Ukraine, with its pro-European and pro-NATO aspirations, is currently such an enemy of the Russian Federation.

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