

History

UDC 327.8:94[323+327.2](470)“2006/2014”

DOI <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15479708>

**The Formation of the Russkiy Mir Propaganda Content: Evolution from
“Soft” to “Hard” Power (2006-2014)**

Yevheniia Shyshkina,

Candidate of Historical Science (PhD in History), Associate Professor, the
Department of Ukrainian Studies, Cultural Studies and History of Science National
Technical University “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute”, Kharkiv, Ukraine,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8599-5518>

Accepted: 06.05.2025 | Published: 21.05.2025

***Abstract:** The purpose of the article is to analyze the process of implementation into public practice of the concept of the Russkiy Mir as one of the main propaganda projects of the Russian Federation. The main attention is paid to the initial stage of the project, when Russia mainly used “soft power” in its foreign policy. The study is based on the methodology of criticizing public, primarily digital sources, which is based on the peculiarities of presenting information in these types of publications (their focus on a wide audience, simplified presentation of material, sensationalism, strong emotional coloration, the possibility of violating the laws of logic in the presentation of material, work to order, etc.). The results of the study showed that the Russkiy Mir was conceived as a political technology aimed at attracting the Russian diaspora to the strengthening of the Russian state through the return and comprehensive assistance of its most successful figures. On the other*

hand, it was planned to attract the attention of the leading countries of the Global South and receive their assistance (or neutrality). Over time, the main components of the *Ruskiy Mir* were adapted to different population groups: residents of Russia, Russian-speaking inhabitants of the former Soviet republics, Russian-speaking migrants of various waves (with Russian imperial or Soviet identities), non-Russian-speaking populations of NATO-opponent countries, states of the former socialist camp, conservative-minded masses and individual leading representatives in developed countries. For each target group, the ideological content of the *Ruskiy Mir* was diversified. At the same time, a “course” for the resumption of Russian “greatness” was launched inside the country, and quite quickly turned the broad masses of the Russian population to the idea of neo-imperial revanchism.

Keywords: *propaganda, information technology, computer science, information war, computing technology, “soft power”, “hard power”, history of science and technology, source, multidisciplinary, methodology*

**Формування пропагандистського контенту “руського миру”:
від “м’якої” до “жорсткої” сили (2006-2014)**

Шишкіна Євгенія Костянтинівна,

кандидат історичних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри українознавства,
культурології та історії науки Національного технічного університету

“Харківський політехнічний інститут”, м. Харків, Україна,

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8599-5518>

Анотація: *Метою статті є аналіз процесу впровадження в суспільну практику концепції «руського миру» як одного з головних пропагандистських проектів Російської Федерації. Основна увага приділяється початковій стадії*

проекту, коли Росія переважно використовувала «м'яку силу» у своїй зовнішній політиці. Дослідження базується на методології критики публічних, насамперед цифрових джерел, яка ґрунтується на врахуванні особливостей подачі інформації в таких видах публікації (їхня орієнтація на широку аудиторію, спрощена подача матеріалу, сенсаційність, сильне емоційне забарвлення, можливість порушення законів логіки в подачі матеріалу, робота на замовлення, тощо). Результати дослідження показали, що «руський мир» задумувався як політична технологія, спрямована на залучення російської діаспори до зміцнення Російської держави через повернення та всебічну допомогу її найуспішніших діячів. З іншого боку, планувалося привернути увагу провідних країн Глобального Півдня та отримати від них підтримку (або нейтралітет). Згодом основні компоненти «руського миру» були адаптовані до різних груп населення: жителів Росії, російськомовних мешканців колишніх радянських республік, російськомовних мігрантів різних хвиль (з російською імперською або радянською ідентичністю), неросійськомовного населення країн-супротивників НАТО, держав колишнього соціалістичного табору, консервативно налаштованих мас та окремих провідних представників розвинених країн. Для кожної цільової групи ідейне наповнення «руського миру» було урізноманітнено. Одночасно всередині країни був розпочатий «курс» на відновлення російської «величі», який досить швидко повернув широкі маси російського населення до ідеї неоімперського реваншизму.

Ключові слова: пропаганда, інформаційні технології, інформатика, інформаційна війна, обчислювальні технології, «м'яка сила», «жорстка сила», історія науки і техніки, джерело, мультидисциплінарність, методологія

Statement of the problem. The aggravation of the situation in the international arena and the transition of the world's largest countries to “hard” forms of political communication on the one hand, and the strengthening of the role of information technology in promoting political ideas on the other, increase the interest of society and scholars to the question of changes in the structure of conflicts in the modern information society. The experience of the formation of the Russkiy Mir as a military-political project that passed through stages from the formation and activity in the format of “soft power” (2006) to “hard power” and military confrontation in Ukraine (2014) confirms the importance of studying the peculiarities of each of these stages on the example of concrete historical practice. It is especially valuable to establish the conditions under which the introduction of philosophical concepts (primarily Dugin's neo-Eurasianism) into political practice and the gradual simplification and adaptation of ideological formulations to the “consumers” of propaganda takes place.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Today in the world historiography in issues related the Russkiy Mir, Russian studies obviously dominate in terms of quantity. Most of them are aimed at “justifying” its main positions by “scientific” methods. The visible propagandistic character of such works suggests that this segment of research cannot be considered. Therefore, we will focus mainly on non-Russian publications and employ a problem-solving approach. In these works, the Russkiy Mir is described in various ways: from a philosophical or religious concept to a political instrument. It is primarily associated with the Russian-Ukrainian war (Zdioruk S.I., Yablonsky V.M., Tokman V.V. [1]) and the use of information technologies in propaganda (Semen N.F. [2]). Many researches are devoted to the study of the history of formation and change of meanings of the concept, search for the origins of the ideologeme of “the Russkiy Mir” (Artimishin P.I., Kostyuk O.A. [3]). This historical exploration often leads researchers to the

drawing of analogies between the Russkiy Mir and fascism (Verkhovtseva I.G. [4]). In addition, this concept is often directly associated with a variety of the latest types of wars: “hybrid” (Gorbulina V.P. [5]), “informational” (Khudolii A.O. [6]), “mnemonic” (Motenko Y.V.[7]). Analyzing the geopolitical role of the Russkiy Mir, most scholars also agree with its “neo-imperialist” (Goltsov A.G. [8]) and “revanchist” (Denishchenko D.V. [9]) character. Authors also focus on the global consequences of the spread of the ideas of the Russkiy Mir and the conflict with Ukraine (Cordesman A.H. [10]) and pay attention to social, gender, and other consequences for the Ukrainian population (Assisi S. E., Kipo-Sunyhzi D. D. [11]).

Identification of previously unresolved parts of the general problem. As for the study of the process of unfolding new ideological views, especially the reconstruction of the mechanism of their introduction into political practice and implementation through “soft power”, as well as the processes of digitalization, have not been considered by scholars. The study of this issue will help to better understand the features of new types of wars (hybrid, informational, mnemonic, etc.), and at one of their most important stages - at the moment of deployment.

Formulation of the objectives of the article (task statement). The article aims to study the process of designing propaganda content (primarily in the form of the Russkiy Mir project), as well as to analyze the results of its implementation through “soft power” at the initial stage (from Putin's first mentions of the Russkiy Mir in 2006 to the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014).

To achieve this goal, public sources will be used: speeches of political and civil society figures, materials from official websites of propaganda organizations, publications in mass media, etc.

The study will be based on the methodology of criticizing public sources, which is based on the peculiarities of presenting information in these types of publications (their focus on a wide audience, simplified presentation of material,

sensationalism, strong emotional coloration, the possibility of violating the laws of logic in the presentation of material, work to order, etc.).

Summary of the main research material. In the late 1990s – early 2000s, the preparation of the semantic content of the *Ruskiy Mir* had largely been completed, and in 2006–2007, it for the first time showed itself in the public sphere. In fact, at that time, the *Ruskiy Mir* had become an integral part of Russian politics with the objective of establishing on the basis of the Russian language, an artificial multinational Russian-speaking community. This is most clearly evidenced by Putin's speeches of that time, which were picked up by Russian public figures [12]. As well as the activities of the *Ruskiy Mir* Foundation, established by the decree of the Russian president in 2007 [13]. Due to the official website of the *Ruskiy Mir* Foundation, this community was intended to encourage the return of the most successful figures of the Russian diaspora (especially scientists) to Russia, or to stimulate their activities for the benefit of Russia [14].

Simultaneously, another political task was being promoted: let's call it conventionally “The fight against a unipolar world.” The representation of this idea in the public sphere is usually linked to Putin's Munich speech in 2007. This speech is often also associated with starting point for mass use of Russian Newspeak – the practice of the large-scale using of euphemisms in politics. In fact, Russia in 2007 in the public sphere represented itself as the initiator and main fighter against the West, which was accused of creating a unipolar world. It was expected that the common interests of all opponents of the West should have become a reason to strengthen Russia's role in the world and ensure support or neutrality from the leading countries of the Global South. A special place in the speech was occupied by the euphemism about Russia as a peaceful state, in contrast to the “aggressive” West [15].

The mission of the foundation was consonant with the chosen foreign policy course and was most fully presented in the publications of its head, Doctor of Historical Sciences V. Nikonov. It was, in his words, “to ride globalization”. The key statement, which he also used in the public sphere was the Russkiy Mir “apolitical” nature, which was explained by the possibility of attracting representatives of both right-wing and left-wing views into its ranks [16].

Political syncretism was reflected in further political decisions of the Russian authorities. Attention was focused on finding mechanisms to attract representatives of different waves of Russian migration, as well as non-Russian and non-Russian-speaking populations, into the Russkiy Mir. This was facilitated by means of the instrumentalization of history. It allowed exerting influence through the history of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The common in both cases was the essentially imperial character of the Russkiy Mir.

A number of measures have been taken to bring historical research under state control at that time. In 2009–2012, acted Commission under the president of the Russian Federation “to counter attempts to falsify history to the detriment of Russia's interests”. In 2012, the activity of several societies that operated in imperial Russia in 1907–1917 was re-established, among them were the Russian Historical Society and the Russian Military Historical Society. These organizations presented materials on the history of the Russian Empire, taking into account the preferences of the early waves of Russian migration. As a basis was used the conservative Russian traditions built on the Orthodox religion. The propaganda managed, thanks to the “demonization” of the liberalism of Western countries in the public sphere, also to go beyond the boundaries of Orthodoxy [17].

For soviet migrants, as well as the Russian-speaking population living in the former republics of the USSR, the main role played the instrumentalization of the history of the USSR, primarily the Soviet Union as the “liberator of the world” from

Nazi Germany. Russia was proclaimed the successor of the USSR and the continuer of its values. Nazi Germany as an “outgrowth of Western civilization” was equated with the modern democratic states of the West. Remarkably, such euphemisms are actively used by Russian scientists [18].

Such use was possible because the USSR's participation in the unfolding of World War II and the crimes of the communist regime were not properly condemned in the world information field, and the guilt was not recognized by Russian politicians and society. This allowed the deployment of actions around the world, ostensibly oriented towards preserving the memory of World War II, but in reality propagandizing the Russkiy Mir. The Immortal Regiment project is a vivid example. The “noise” around the action has reached a huge scale: from the marches held in various countries around the world to the creation of app for the online marches and interactive maps of the participants [20].

In the Russian Federation, the promotion of the exclusive role of Russia in the fight against Nazism led to increased militaristic propaganda. On October 30, 2014, the minister of defense of the Russian Federation, General of the Army S. Shoigu, signed an order to create the “Patriot” – Military-Patriotic Park of Culture and Recreation of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation [21], and in 2016, on his initiative, “UNARMIA” – the All-Russian Children's and Youth Military Patriotic Public Movement was established [21].

The political use of history was further strengthened by the introduction of criminal prosecution of those historians who could stand in the way of the propaganda of the Russkiy Mir. In 2014, Article 354.1 was added to the Russian Criminal Code, threatening punishment for “spreading deliberately false information about the activities of the USSR during World War II”. The same year, the Interdepartmental Commission for the Protection of State Secrets of the Russian Federation decided to extend the secrecy of the archives of the All-Russian

Extraordinary Commission – People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs – State Security Committee (VChK-NKVD-KGB) of 1917–1991 until 2044. In 2021, the State Duma of the Russian Federation adopted a law that prohibited “identifying the role of the USSR with Germany” in World War II, as well as “denying the decisive role of the Soviet people in the victory over fascism”.

Russia planned to “ride globalization” not only with the help of the Russian diaspora, but also with everyone ready to take Russia’s side in the globalization process. Support could be provided by countries of the former socialist camp, which, with the end of the Cold War, lost support of the USSR, as well as undemocratic regimes opposing the West, especially those that experienced economic sanctions, peacekeeping operations, etc. [22, 23].

Russian traditionalism was used as a tool. (Table 1).

Table 1.

The West, according to the supporters of the Russkiy Mir

WEST	RUSSKIY MIR
liberal is presented as “low-spiritual”	traditional, conservative is presented as “high-spiritual”
Democracy brings:	Authoritarianism brings:
1) chaos – right to demonstrate is presented as “riots, instability”	1) “order”, “stability”
2) immorality – tolerance towards LGBT is presented as “destruction of the traditional family”	2) “traditionalism”, “orthodoxy”
3) violation of customary values - race, national, and religious tolerance is presented as “a threat to national traditions, disrespect for national histories and pride in ancestral heroes” - free market is presented as hedonism	3) “civility”, “spiritual rise”

Source: developed by the author

The Russkiy Mir was presented in the public sphere as a “highly spiritual” concept, which can and should defeat the “lowly spiritual” Western world. At the same time, in practice, “highly spiritual” was equated with the notion “traditionalist”.

Democracy was presented as uncontrollable “chaos”, while authoritarianism and orthodoxy were extolled and presented as a civilized approach and a guarantee of stability in society. Among the main themes used for the information influence was criticism of democratic freedoms: tolerance towards LGBT was presented as a violation of the traditional family; race, national and religious tolerance – as a disrespect for national histories and pride in ancestor heroes; right to demonstrate – as a riots and instability; free market – as hedonism, etc.

The mechanism of influence consisted of emphasizing the commonality of traditional values of the Russian Federation and other countries and communities inclined to conservatism. On this basis, the objects of influence led to the idea of the necessity of cooperation or sharing the ideas of the Russkiy Mir.

Another tool was the emphasis on the “peacefulness” of the Russkiy Mir, which only “protects” and “liberates”, but doesn’t attack, unlike the West, which shows “aggression” against other countries. In this way, Russia positioned itself as a defender of the countries that “suffered” from NATO countries.

Influencing the Russian-speaking populations of the former Soviet republics, the Russian Federation faced a number of problems. Although those who spoke the Russian language were proclaimed a part of the Russkiy Mir, in practice, it did not automatically result in their being ready to share the interests of the Russian Federation. The emphasis on Russian traditionalism was made primarily due to the preferences of the Russian population itself (Table 2).

Table 2.

What kind of democracy does Russia need?

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2009	2010	2011	2011
	VI	XII	XII	VI	VI	XII	XII	VI	X
The same as in developed countries of Europe and America	24	18	22	20	20	23	23	23	19

The same as it was in the Soviet Union	16	13	10	13	18	14	17	16	14
Very special, corresponding to national traditions and specifics of Russia	45	48	47	45	39	43	44	45	49
Russia doesn't need democracy	6	10	7	8	10	7	7	7	7
Difficult to answer	9	11	14	15	14	13	10	10	11

(Source: Analytical Center of Yuri Levada) [24, p.26]

In Ukraine, due to historical preconditions, Russian speakers were mainly concentrated in large industrial and commercial centers, which means they were more adherents of liberalism, the free market, and democratic values. Due to the difficulties in using “soft power” on Ukrainians, the next stage was the direct aggression. To understand what was transformed, it could be suggested using the classification applied during this period by V. Inozemtsev, director of the Center for Research on Post-Industrial Society. He divided the Russkiy Mir into the Russkiy Mir I – Russian emigrants who left Russia long ago, mostly successful, who created the Russkiy Mir in other countries, exceeding not only in scale, but also in the level of economic, scientific and technological development Russia itself, and the Russkiy Mir II – Russian population that remained during the collapse of the USSR as part of other countries, which, in the conditions of perestroika and the post-Soviet economic and political crisis, had a hard time experiencing “fall” in comparison with the Soviet period of emotional pride of their state’s superpower in a bipolar world [25].

In 2014, Russia reoriented itself towards the priorities of the Russkiy Mir II, which was reflected in its territorial expansion in Ukraine. At the same time, the Russian Federation was still trying to maintain the image of a “soft power”, trying through the tools of information warfare to unleash (and in case of failure, to create

the appearance of) civil war in Ukraine, thus guaranteeing non-interference of other countries of the world to the conflict.

Conclusions. Thus, the study of the process of designing propaganda content in the format of the “Russian World” project showed that the Russkiy Mir was designed as a political technology oriented, on the one hand, to attract the Russian diaspora to strengthen the Russian state through the return of its most successful figures and/or their comprehensive assistance to the Russian Federation. On the other hand, to create in the public sphere the appearance of mass support for Russia to attract the attention of the leading countries of the Global South and gain their support (or neutrality). To this end, the idea of fighting the unipolar world, which Russia could take on if it were allowed to become one of the new poles, was voiced.

Initially, the Russkiy Mir used “soft power”, i.e., influence through the creation of centers of Russian culture and support for the Russian language. Simultaneously, the ideological content of the Russkiy Mir was diversified. This was intended to facilitate the attraction of individuals with diverse political convictions, historical memories, and religious preferences. However, the Munich Speech had the opposite effect and led to a strengthening of the unification of forces of Western democracies, while the countries of the Global South were in no hurry to support Russia. At the same time, a “course” for the resumption of Russian “greatness” had already been launched inside the country.

As a result, Russia had to shift its priority to the Russkiy Mir II (the Russian-speaking population of the former Soviet republics). This allowed the realization of territorial expansion (annexation of Crimea) – a small victory to prove the “greatness” of Russia to its citizens. However, further efforts to seize Ukrainian territories were not so successful and increasingly led Russia toward more violent forms of political communication and military confrontation.

The results obtained in the course of the research reveal a certain mechanism of unfolding of the newest types of wars, relying both on political tools long known to historical science and new ones, mainly related to the development of public digital technologies. This can contribute to the further development of the theoretical and methodological basis of public history. From a practical point of view, it may also be promising for further study of the experience of implementing such political-digital projects in other fields of science, also within the framework of other humanities and social sciences.

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