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## State Terrorism Based on the Example of Putin's Regime: Present and History

STRESZCZENIE

### Terroryzm państwowy na przykładzie reżimu Putina: teraźniejszość i historia

Artykuł analizuje aktualne dokumenty międzynarodowe określające kryteria terroryzmu państwowego. Wykazano, że decyzje polityczne podejmowane przez prezydenta Rosji W. Putina w stosunku do Ukrainy mieszczą się w kryteriach Deklaracji genewskiej w sprawie terroryzmu. Odrębnie rozpatrywana jest naukowa interpretacja terroryzmu państwowego. Wyjaśniono podstawową przyczynę terroru państwowego we współczesnej Rosji. Podkreślono, że rządy Putina w dzisiejszej Rosji nie różnią się od rządów Piotra I w państwie moskiewskim, które opierały się na terrorze i przemocy. To nie przypadek, że W. Putin po zwiedzeniu wystawy poświęconej Piotrowi I w czerwcu 2022 r. porównał się do cara.

Autorzy ustalili, że w wieku XVI odejście od tradycji rozwoju cywilizacyjnego typu zachodniego i schyłek dorobku własnej kultury w dziwny sposób połączyły się na ziemiach Rusi Moskiewskiej z odrzuceniem przez społeczeństwo podstawowych zasad ładu azjatyckiego i kultury. Elementy demokracji ludowej (wolności) nie zostały całkowicie zastąpione przez despotyzm azjatycki. Zamiast tego ukształtowało się specyficzne zjawisko czysto rosyjskiej niemożności rządzenia – powszechny bunt i despotyczna samowola. Podkreśla się, że świadomość narodowa była



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zniewolona zarówno przez leninowski, jak i stalinowski system administracyjno-polityczny, w którym dominowała antyukraińska retoryka. Ustalono, że wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska jest historyczną okazją dla Ukrainy do wykorzenia prorosyjskich sił politycznych i jednoczesnego pociągnięcia Rosji do odpowiedzialności za międzynarodowe zbrodnie popełnione przez jej wojska na terytorium niepodległego państwa na bezpośrednie polecenie W. Putina.

**Słowa kluczowe:** prawo międzynarodowe, pokój, Organizacja Narodów Zjednoczonych (ONZ), rosyjski świat, wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska, terroryzm państwowy, terroryzm, działalność terrorystyczna, wojna

#### ABSTRACT

The article analyses current international documents that define the criteria of state terrorism. It has been demonstrated that the political decisions taken by the President of Russia Vladimir Putin in relation to Ukraine fall under the criteria of the Geneva Declaration on Terrorism. The scientific interpretation of state terrorism is explored here separately. Furthermore, the root cause of state terror in modern Russia is explained. The authors emphasise that Putin's rule of modern Russia is no different from the way Peter I ruled the Moscow state, which was based on terror and violence. It is no coincidence that Vladimir Putin, after having visiting in June 2022 an exhibition dedicated to Peter I, compared himself to the tsar.

It has been established by the authors that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the departure from the tradition of Western-type civilizational development and the decline of the achievements of own culture were oddly combined in the territory of Muscovite Rus with society's rejection of the basic principles of Asian order and culture. Elements of people's democracy (freedom) were not entirely replaced by Asian despotism. Instead, a specific phenomenon of purely Russian ungovernability – popular rebellion and despotic arbitrariness – was formed. It is emphasized that the national consciousness was enslaved by both the Leninist and Stalinist administrative and political systems, where anti-Ukrainian rhetoric prevailed. It has been established that the Russian-Ukrainian war provides a historic opportunity for Ukraine to root out pro-Russian political forces and at the same time to hold Russia accountable for international crimes committed by its troops on the territory of an independent state on the direct instructions of Vladimir Putin.

**Keywords:** international law, peace, United Nations (UN), Russian-Ukrainian war, Russian world, state terrorism, terrorism, terrorist activity, war

Terror as a means of achieving certain political goals has entered history in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More recently, there has been a threatening tendency to strengthen state terrorism based on the example of Putin's regime. After the collapse of the USSR and under the leadership of V. Putin

the concept of “Russian world” appeared, promoting the identity of “Russian civilization” above the rest of the world, as well as the rise of “Russian civilization” over all others<sup>1</sup>. In the statement of the Russian president, one can hear such propaganda phrases as “the borders of Russia do not end anywhere”<sup>2</sup>. The following phrases are often heard from the mouths of Russian propagandists: “there are no Ukrainians and Belarusians, these are naming conventions created by foreigners”, “Russia is surrounded by enemies, therefore the country needs a strong hand to ensure order and counteract their treacherous actions”. This list of propaganda phrases is not exhaustive. Moreover, the formation of the “cult leader” created an atmosphere of its exclusivity and “unity” of decisions. Putin has become the embodiment of the whole country: “Putin is the essential of Russia, no Putin means no Russia”; reliance on the security forces and its use for the sake of persecution of opposition and “dissenters”, creation of an atmosphere of suspicion and fear in society, introduction of a system of state propaganda and censorship in order to form a situation in the country and “pictures of the world” in the population, are all required by the dominant regime.

Putin's foreign policy dimension is characterized by total violation, abuse and manipulation of the international law; commitment of acts of armed aggression, terrorism, genocide and other crimes against humanity; direct interference with internal affairs of other countries, including Ukraine, through organisation of campaigns of misinformation, conducting active propaganda activity through state media, bribery of politicians, public figures, journalists, as well as the formation of pro-Russian opposition within these states; introduction of new methods of war, including cyber-attacks; protection of authoritarian regimes in the world; nuclear terrorism and more. Obviously, today there is reason to consider state terrorism based on the example of Putin's regime as one of the significant factors of destabilization of social and political life in Europe and as a grave threat to security of international relations in the world<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> M. Volkhonskiy, V. Mukhanov, *The concept of Russian world. The variability of understanding in the context of international processes*, “Mezdunarodnaia analitika” 2019, no. 4(30), pp. 58–65.

<sup>2</sup> BBC News Ukraine, Putin zaiavyv, shcho “kordony Rosii nide ne zakinchuiusia”, November 11, 2016

<sup>3</sup> V. Ohryzko, *Deshcho pro rashyzm*, “Ukraina Dyplomatychna” 2022, no. 23, pp. 338–345.

There are many interpretations of the concept of “state terrorism” in scientific circles. But in order to substantiate the research hypothesis of state terrorism based on the example of the Putin regime, it is worth familiarizing oneself with the legislative interpretation of the term “state terrorism”. The term “state terrorism” entered scientific circulation after the 102<sup>nd</sup> plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly on 17 December 1984, where the Resolution “Inadmissibility of the policy of State terrorism and any actions by States aimed at undermining the socio-political system in other sovereign States” was adopted. This Resolution resolutely condemned policies and practices of terrorism in relations between states as a method of dealing with other states and peoples. Moreover, it demanded that all states take no actions aimed at military intervention and occupation, forcible change in or undermining of the socio-political system of states, destabilisation and overthrow of their government and, in particular, not to initiate military action to that end under any pretext whatsoever and to cease forth with any such action already in progress<sup>4</sup>.

The Geneva declaration on terrorism indicates that state terrorism manifests itself in: police state practices against its own people to dominate through fear by surveillance, disruption of group meetings, control of the news media, beatings, torture, false and mass arrests, false charges and rumours, show trials, killings, summary executions and capital punishment (e.g. in the case of Russia – kidnapping and killing of Crimean Tatar activists in Russian-occupied Crimea, the arrest of opposition politician Alexei Navalny, the assassination of Boris Nemtsov as one of the main leaders of the Russian opposition to the Putin regime, which was committed on February 27, 2015 on the Great Moskvoret-sky Bridge in Moscow, the murder of Alexander Litvinenko by the Russian special services, repression by the Russian authorities against their own citizens who publicly spoke out against the war in Ukraine); the introduction or transportation of nuclear weapons by a state into or through the territory or territorial waters of other states or into international waters (e.g., Russia has deployed

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<sup>4</sup> Inadmissibility of the policy of State terrorism and any actions by States aimed at undermining the socio-political system in other sovereign States. Adopted at the 102<sup>nd</sup> plenary meeting, 17 Dec. 1984, [in:] Resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly during its 39<sup>th</sup> session, 18 September – 18 December 1984 and 9–12 April 1985. – A/39/51. – 1985. – p. 99. – (GAOR, 39<sup>th</sup> sess., Suppl. no. 51), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/75242> (accessed: 17 V 2023).

39 nuclear weapons carriers on the territory of occupied Crimea); military exercise manoeuvres or war games conducted by one state in the vicinity of another state for the purpose of threatening the political independence or territorial integrity of that other state (e.g., large military exercises in early February 2022 in the southern military district of the Russian Federation and in Belarus near the borders of Ukraine); the armed attack by the military forces of a state on targets that put at risk the civilian population residing in another state (e.g., the bombings of Mariupol, Irpin, Bucha and other cities of Ukraine), the creation and support of armed mercenary forces by a state for the purpose of subverting the sovereignty of another state (e.g., Private Military Company Wagner funding by Russia); assassinations, assassination attempts and plots directed by a state towards officials of other states or national liberation movements, whether carried out by a military strike, special forces units either through covert operations by “intelligence forces” or their third party agents (e.g., since the beginning of the large-scale war, Russian special services have attempted 12 times to assassinate the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy); covert operations by the “intelligence” or other forces of a state which intend to destabilize or subvert another state, national liberation movements or the international peace movement (e.g., the Russian dictator announced the start of a “special military operation” against the “Kyiv regime” rather than a war against Ukraine); disinformation campaigns by a state, whether intended to destabilize another state or to build public support for economic, political or military force or intimidation directed against another state (e.g., propaganda of Russian propagandists such as Olga Skabeyeva, Yevgeny Popov, Vladimir Solovyov, Margarita Simonyan, *etc.*); arms sales which support the continuation of regional wars and delay the search for political solutions to international disputes (e.g., since 2014, Russia has openly supported the armed formations of the terrorist organizations “DPR” (Donetsk People’s Republic) and “LPR” (Lugansk People’s Republic). However, the weapons were most likely not sold, but supplied free of charge to their own security forces and mercenaries who fought under the guise of separatists against Ukraine); the abrogation of civil rights, civil liberties, constitutional protections and the rule of law under the pretext of alleged counter-terrorism (e.g., in Russia, all opposition media have already been closed down, Facebook has been

blocked); and the development, testing and deployment of nuclear and space-weapons systems that in all circumstances increase the probability of genocide and ecocide, while condemning the poor to continued misery and all humanity to a state of perennial fear (e.g., Kh-95 long-range hypersonic aviation missile is being developed for the aerospace forces)<sup>5</sup>.

The listed facts of state terrorism based on the text of the Geneva Declaration on Terrorism from 1987 gave the European Parliament in November 2022 a reason to recognize Russia as a “state sponsor of terrorism”. The resolution was adopted by 494 votes in favour, 58 against with 44 abstentions. The European Parliament stressed that the deliberate attacks and atrocities committed by Russian forces and their proxies against civilians in Ukraine, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and other serious violations of international and humanitarian law amount to acts of terror and constitute war crimes. In light of this, the European Parliament recognises Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism and as a state that uses the means of terrorism<sup>6</sup>.

Ukrainian legislation establishes the notion of “terrorist state”. This notion is understood as a state that is openly, using its own armed forces, other armed formations, or clandestinely, using armed formations acting on behalf of and (or) in the interests of such a state, performs terrorist acts, acts of international terrorism. Unprovoked cruel aggression of Russia against Ukraine in 2022 has demonstrated Putin’s policies to the entire democratic world and secured the label “Russia – the terrorist state”<sup>7</sup>.

Ukrainian researcher, professor Serhii Serhiivych Kudinov noted that state terrorism should be understood as the commission of actions (including complicity, organization, assistance, financing) by representatives of state bodies or on behalf of a certain state and with its official support (justification) of actions provided for by conventions on combating terrorism, as well as the very crimes themselves (military, against peace, genocide) with the purpose of intimidation, coercion of another state, inter-

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<sup>5</sup> The Geneva declaration on terrorism. UN General Assembly Doc. A/42/307, 29 May 1987, Annex, 1 sheet, <https://i-p-o.org/GDT.HTM> (accessed: 17 V 2023).

<sup>6</sup> European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2022 on recognising the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism, 1 sheet, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0405\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0405_EN.html) (accessed: 17 V 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Zakon Ukrainy pro borotbu z teroryzmozom, 20 March 2003, no. 638-IV, article 1.

national organization, group of persons, person to make political, economic, religious decisions, *etc.*<sup>8</sup> An important confirmation of this scientific definition is the fact that in 2014, Putin's regime financed and supported terrorist groups in Crimea, which were represented by Russian servicemen without identification marks, disguised as "little green men" and "local self-defence"<sup>9</sup>.

A special feature of the Putin's regime propaganda is the use of phoney language, which is commonly used by countries with totalitarian or authoritarian political regime. This signifies that words take on different meanings according to the demands of the regime, such as "special operation" instead of "war", "bang" instead of "explosion", "regroup" instead of "retreat", "gesture of good will" instead of "loss of control over Snake Island". Russia often uses this propaganda tool to control and regulate public sentiment<sup>10</sup>.

Since 24 February 2022, using the phoney language, Russian propagandists tried to justify the Putin's regime terrorist war under the name of "special military operation" with "NATO activity near Eastern Europe". Subsequently, Putin put forward other demands to Ukraine, including its neutral and non-nuclear status, demilitarization, denazification, recognition of occupied Crimea as part of Russia and the sovereignty of the so-called "DPR" and "LPR". Putin's regime deliberately made demands that Ukraine could not comply with, as these demands directly contradicted the international law. The terrorist state and its actions were guided by the principle: "If the enemy does not surrender, it will be destroyed". We find confirmation of this thesis in the massive missile and air strikes by Russian soldiers on populated areas, critical civil and economic infrastructure, administrative and political centres of Ukraine aimed at provoking panic among the civilian population, undermining the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government, the will of the people of Ukraine and national military formations to resist the aggressor. In this way Putin's regime artificially creates threats to the physical security of Ukrainian citizens and instils

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<sup>8</sup> S. Kudinov, *Derzhavnyi terorizm – vyznachennia ta kharakterystyka*, "Informatsiia i pravo" 2022, no. 2(41), pp. 78–84.

<sup>9</sup> A. Alimpiev, G. Pevtsov, *The features of the hybrid war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Experience received by the armed forces of the armed forces of Ukraine*, "Rozvytok ta zastosuvannia Povitrianykh Syl, inshykh vydiv ZS Ukrainy, udoskonalennia yikh system upravlinnia" 2017, pp. 19–25.

<sup>10</sup> O. Matkovska, *Orvelivska novomova ta suchasnyi dyskurs*, "Naukovi zapy-sky Nazionalnoho universytetu »Ostrozka akademiia«" 2012, no. 26, pp. 185–188.

fear in Ukrainian society. This, in turn, can lead to depression and panic, thereby pushing people to the expected appropriate actions in the direction of destabilizing the socio-political system, which is beneficial to Russia as a terrorist state. This is directly related to the reflective management of the decision-making process in the state structures of Ukraine. The essence of the reflective management is that first of all, it is aimed at the psyche of the representatives of the authorities, who decide on matters of ensuring national security, and in particular on socio-political stability, and has a negative character. The main task of reflective management is to put the leadership of the Ukrainian state in difficult conditions of continuing the war with the terrorist state or to force it to make decisions that will objectively lead to Ukraine's defeat and surrender<sup>11</sup>.

Another manifestation of state terrorism was the disinformation campaign during the speech of Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Federal Assembly on 21 February 2023. The speech was another piece of propaganda by Putin's regime aimed at further destabilizing the situation in Ukraine. Putin said Russia launched a "special military operation" in Ukraine the previous year in order to protect people on "historic Russian lands", to ensure Russia's internal security, and to eliminate the threat posed by Ukraine's "neo-Nazi" post 2014 "coup" regime and to protect the population of the Donbas region.

The Russian president sharply accused the collective West of arming Ukraine and placing bases and biolaboratories near the Russian borders, thereby unleashing a war against Russia. Separately, he emphasized that it was not Russia that started the war in Ukraine, but the collective West, which was implementing an "anti-Russia" project from within Ukraine. According to him, citizens of Ukraine were hostages of the "Kyiv regime" and its "Western masters", who actually occupied that country in a political, military, and economic sense, destroyed Ukrainian industry for decades, and looted natural resources. Therefore, the responsibility for inciting the Ukrainian "conflict" rests entirely on the Western elites and the current "Kyiv regime". Furthermore, the collective West was using Ukraine as a battering ram against Russia, and as

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<sup>11</sup> V. Abramov, O. Ziuzia, *Udoskonalena bazova model mazderzavnoho protyborstva z urakhuvanniam suchasnykh tendenzii rosiisko-ukrainskoi viinu*, "Derzavne upravlinnia: udoskonalennia ta rozvytok" 2022, no. 5.

a training ground to inflict a “strategic defeat on Russia”. Putin’s regime believes that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States began reviewing the results of the Second World War, with the aim of rebuilding the world in the American way, in which there would only be one master, and has therefore began to reshape the world order suitable only for the US, and exclusively in its own, selfish interests. Thus, Putin’s speech was not only an element of information warfare, but also it revived several long-standing Russian information operations to justify the war. And if we refer to the Geneva Declaration on Terrorism from 1987, then this speech can be directly considered a pattern of state terrorism on the example of Putin’s regime<sup>12</sup>.

Professor of the Kuras Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine Yuriy Ivanovych Shapoval, explaining the phenomenon of Russian sophisticated lies today, , noted that such a tradition of state management has been handed down to descendants, citizens of modern Russia since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He referred to the work of Giles Fletcher, the ambassador of England to Muscovy in 1588–1589, who described the way of ruling the Russian tsar in his publication entitled *Of the Russe common wealth. Or, Maner of gouvernement of the Russe emperour, (commonly called the Emperour of Moskouia) with the manners, and fashions of the people of that countrey*<sup>13</sup>.

This is how Giles Fletcher describes the way of ruling the Muscovite state the chapter 7 (*The State or forme of their Gouvernement*): “The rule of the Muscovite tsars is purely tyrannical, all the steps of the tsar are calculated to be useful only for one tsar, and besides, everything is done in the most reckless and barbaric way... Any new law, or resolution relating to the State, shall always be determined before any general assembly or council is called on the occasion. Apart from his Duma, the tsar has no one to consult with about subjects on which a decision has already been made in advance, with the exception of a few bishops, archimandrites and monks, and then in order to take advantage of the superstitions of the people (always to his detriment), who consider holy and everything that is done with the consent of their bishops and clergy

<sup>12</sup> Poslanie Prezidenta Federalnomu Sobraniyu, 21 February 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Yu. Shapoval, *Dzhuls Fletcher pro moskovsku derzhavu*, “Kyiv Post. Ukraine’s global voice” 2023, <https://www.kyivpost.com/uk/opinion/12234> (accessed: 17 V 2023).

is just. In the tax system, Muscovites ‘do not observe the slightest fairness’<sup>14</sup>. In the chapter *Meanes used to draw the wealth of the land into the Emperours Treasurie*, Giles Fletcher points out the principles followed by the king: “Not to resist violence, extortion and all kinds of bribes used by princes, ‘cantor’ and other local officials, but to allow them everything it is until the end of their term of service, until they are completely devoured; then put them on ‘correction’ for their behaviour and snatch the booty from them in part or in whole and put it in the royal treasury [...]”<sup>15</sup>.

In his research, historian Nikolai Karamzin tried to explain the root cause of state terror in modern Russia. He wrote that the process of the formation of the Russian state was marked by two-fold consequences: the strengthening of the power of the autocrat and the weakening of the social system, morality and spiritual life of a large part of the population. In this process, the achievements of ancient Greek influence began to disappear from life. Instead, the presence of the Asian component increased. However, the departure from the tradition of Western-type civilizational development and the decline of the achievements of one’s own culture were strangely combined in the territory of Muscovite Rus with society’s rejection of the basic principles of the Asian system and culture. The elements of people’s democracy (freedom) were not completely replaced by Asian despotism. Instead, a strange phenomenon of purely Russian ungovernability – popular rebellion and despotic arbitrariness – was formed.

Muscovite Rus tried to build its existence on the principle of centralization and mandatory service of all subjects to the autocrat, starting with farmers, artisans, *etc.* and ending with “serfs” who bore military and administrative duties and were forced to give themselves completely to the tsar. All of them together were just cogs in the government machine. This principle of the organization of life was based on the denial of any civil liberties. It cultivated the rule of official duty, discipline and, ultimately, slavish obedience, leading to the depersonalization of the people. At the same time, a tendency to level social differences among Russian subjects

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<sup>14</sup> G. Fletcher, *Of the Russe common wealth. Or, Maner of gouvernement of the Russe emperour, (commonly called the Emperour of Moskouia) with the manners, and fashions of the people of that country*, London 1591, p. 20, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A00947.0001.001/1:10?rgn=div1;view=fulltext> (accessed: 11 IX 2023).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 42.

began to appear. In the Judicial Code of 1497, the legislator nullified the differences between the historically formed social estates, except of dividing the population into “serfs” and “non-serfs” people. The first category included boyars, princes, courtiers, people of lower origin (blacksmiths, gunners, ordinary soldiers). The category of “non-serfs” united merchants, farmers and other strata of the population<sup>16</sup>.

Peter I continued the violent transformation of society started by Ivan IV. The introduction of the “Table of Ranks” (1722) witnessed the complete abolition of the traditions of the viceroyalty. Monetary and trade reforms, together with the reform of the public administration, finally allowed for unlimited autocracy. The oligarchic boyar Duma was replaced by a Senate appointed by the tsar. The army was reorganized, recruitment was introduced, and church property was secularized. The church itself came under the control of the synod appointed by the tsar. From that moment on, the bureaucratic-police nomenclature state strengthened in Russia, and in many of its features is still intact today.

While building the Russian empire, Peter I, just like Ivan IV, did not take into consideration either the law or human sacrifices. He did not reckon with folk psychology either, he tried to eradicate age-old customs. The secret office, which was engaged in political supervision, together with fiscal and prosecutorial institutions implemented 400 decrees, which helped Peter I to suppress public resistance to his actions and policies. Measures for the punishment of “political crimes” were defined in the “Conciliar Decree” and the “Military Article” dated 1725. For the first time in the history of Russia, “instigators”, “those who did not report information”, “helpers” and “concealers” were included in the circle of real and imaginary “political criminals”. The legislation introduced the death penalty<sup>17</sup>. It is no coincidence that Vladimir Putin, after having visited in June 2022 an exhibition dedicated to Peter I, compared himself to the tsar. This is because the way of governing modern Russia coincides with Peter I’s period, in which state terror was also present<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> N. Karamzin, *Predanie vekov*, [Moscow] 1988, p. 424.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 640.

<sup>18</sup> *Putin the Great? Russia's President Likens Himself to Famous Tsar*, “The New York Times” 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/09/world/europe/putin-peter-the-great.html> (accessed: 17 V 2023).

The next period that explains the origins of state terrorism in modern Russia is the reign of Alexander II. In order to achieve social and political changes in the country, the tsar implemented a peasant reform, which was carried out primarily in the interests of landowners. This caused the peasants to fall into a new economic dependence on the landlords, because they were forced to buy or rent land from the latter. Russia's defeat in the Crimean War of 1853–1856 vividly demonstrated the backwardness of the autocratic-serf system. The non-Russian part of the territories sought to escape from the national oppression of the empire. These were primarily the Poles, who in 1863 raised an armed uprising. More conscious Ukrainians expressed solidarity and support for the liberation movement of the Polish people and they themselves began the struggle for their own national revival. But the tsarist regime under the leadership of general Muravyov brutally dealt with the rebels and this national liberation struggle of both Poles and Ukrainians ended in defeat<sup>19</sup>.

The next example of terror and abuse of enslaved peoples was the February Revolution in 1917, which radically changed the state and social system of Russia, finally destabilizing the Russian society. The state of the society, which was already used to violence, enabled the Bolsheviks to carry out a coup in October 1917. This unjustified seizure of power by one political party provoked strong opposition from other political forces, resulting in a brutal and bloody civil war. On the territory of Ukraine, the war lasted for almost four years and also became the incarnation of terror. The first stage of the civil war in Ukraine was the Ukrainian-Russian war (December 1917 – March 1918), unleashed by the Bolsheviks. Ukrainian professor Valeriy Smoliiy notes in his historical essays that the confrontation of political forces in Kyiv in October 1917 ended in favour of the Ukrainian Central Rada. On November 7(20), the Autonomous Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed by the III Universal. The Ukrainian People's Republic refused to recognize the Petrograd Soviet People's Committee as the supreme authority on the entire territory of the former Russian Empire. It considered it a regional government of one of the subjects of the

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<sup>19</sup> Tsentral'nyy derzhavnyy isroruchnyi arkhiv Ukrayiny u Kyevi (Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kyiv) [CSHAU], fund 442, description 1, case 1836, sheet 7.

future Russian Democratic Federation. At the beginning of December 1917, the People's Commissar was convinced that without armed intervention from outside the Bolsheviks in Ukraine would not be able to come to power. On December 3(16), the "Manifesto to the Ukrainian People with Ultimate Demands to the Ukrainian Council" appeared, and almost simultaneously, units of Russian troops began advancing into Ukraine. In such a situation, the Bolsheviks, on instructions from Petrograd, held an All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets in Kharkiv, proclaimed Soviet power in Ukraine and created a puppet government – the People's Secretariat. This was necessary to cover the direct aggression of Soviet Russia against the Ukrainian People's Republic. Soviet power in Poltava was established by the method of terror. Then the Soviet troops led by General Mikhail Muravyov advanced to Kyiv, on the way there was a battle near Kruty on January 17(30), 1918, which became a high-profile event at the beginning of the civil war. According to Professor Valeriy Smoliiy Kruty became a symbol of heroism and sacrifice of the young generation in the struggle for independent Ukraine. But at the same time, Kruty was an example of a brutal violation of the norms of morality and law in relation to captives, arbitrariness and devaluation of human life by the Soviet regime. General Muravyov declared that his army had come to the territory of modern Ukraine with the sole purpose of restoring the "defamed" Soviet power. Similar rhetoric is now proclaimed from the mouths of Vladimir Putin and the supporters of his regime<sup>20</sup>.

Later, the Ukrainian people became hostages of the Bolshevik terror, which replaced the policy of "war communism" with the "New Economic Policy" (NEP). NEP was held in the Soviet republics starting in 1921 and increased dependence on Moscow. Political processes during this period were characterized by a tendency towards dictatorship and authoritarianism. Already in the first years after the establishment of Soviet power, Lenin, formally the first among equals, turned out to be an almost cult figure, and one can talk about creating a cult of the personality of the supreme ruler<sup>21</sup>. Lenin did not hide his intentions of building communism and complete political dependence on Moscow, when he defined

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<sup>20</sup> V. Smolii, *Politychnyi terror i teroryzm v Ukraini XIX–XX st. Istorychni narysy*, Kyjiv 2002, pp. 121–122.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 255.

the ultimate goal of the socio-economic transformations that began in the first months of 1918<sup>22</sup>.

A few years later, the Ukrainian people became victims of terrorist methods of grain procurement, which led to the Holodomor of 1932–1933 and the genocide of the Ukrainian people organized by the Soviet government<sup>23</sup>. The Stalinist regime repeated the genocide of the Ukrainian people in 1946–1947<sup>24</sup>. And in the post-war period, the Stalinist regime introduced terror against the intellectuals, party and government workers<sup>25</sup>. Cultivating fear in society, the Stalinist regime essentially placed only fear at the basis of human activity and creativity, simultaneously destroying everything else that would provide spiritual support, strengthen the will of a person and fill one's life with meaning: ideals, faith, honour, dignity, conscience, goodness, beauty, patriotism, *etc.* Taking all this away from the people, the Stalinist regime condemned them to a miserable existence, humiliation and slavery.

In any union republic, fear was used against people of any nationality as a kind of preventive measure to prejudice even the opinion of opposition to the Stalinist regime. “Enemies of the state”, “pests” and “bourgeois nationalists” were sought out among all nations and severely punished. The tragedy of the peoples of the USSR during the Stalinist period had as its analogue the historical practice of the despotism period of Peter I, and now the practice of Vladimir Putin: arrests of opponents, testimony of informers, inquisitorial form of justice, torture in dungeons, deportation to hard labour camps for construction of enterprises, ports, fortifications, mines, *etc.*<sup>26</sup>

Thus, after having primarily analysed the works of Ukrainian historians and political scientists, state terrorism can be defined as a deliberate threat of violence by state agents or their dependents, aimed at intimidating a broad audience. The main target of state terrorism is to impair a certain national or international community and not directly violate humans instead. State terrorism tries to achieve certain political or political-economic goals through violence. Moreover, it has both an internal domestic and an external

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 341.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 370.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 380.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 716.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 724.

foreign political aspects. In the domestic aspect, state terrorism manifests itself in the intimidation of the population inside the country, while the foreign policy aspect involves the deliberate intimidation of other states in international relations, such as, for example, of the neighbouring states.

Given this interpretation, Putin's regime can be recognized as criminal, and modern Russia as a terrorist state, since it commits violence, conducts a purposeful state policy of terror with the aim of intimidating not only the society inside Russia, but also the international community of states. Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine comprises criteria of terrorism, as Russia commits serious war crimes and crimes against humanity, tries to intimidate the civilian population in Ukraine, and also to intimidate other neighbouring states.

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