



Instytut Badań
nad Turcją



Disinformation
in MENAT

Report

History as a Tool of Influence: Russian Narratives about World War II in Sputnik Türkiye, Sputnik Arabic, and Sputnik Iran

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About the project



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Introduction

World War II was a global conflict fought from 1939 to 1945. It began with Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 (it took on a global dimension on 3 September 1939, when France and the United Kingdom declared war on the Axis powers). A few days later, on 17 September 1939, the USSR attacked Poland from the east, citing the pretext of "protecting the populations of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania." The war concluded in 1945 with the surrender of the Third Reich and Japan. It was fought between the Axis powers and the Allied nations (graphics 1 and 2).

Notably, in English-language historiography, the years 1939–1941 are characterised as a period of German-Soviet cooperation, during which both states jointly occupied, among other territories, the Polish lands and established a regime of terror. Additionally, the subsequent Soviet offensive into parts of Central and Eastern Europe is not seen as "liberation" — as depicted by Soviet propaganda — but rather as a "re-occupation," which persisted until the collapse of communism in the respective countries.

The Russian understanding of World War II differs from the widely accepted one. In Russia and several post-Soviet states, the term "Great Patriotic War" (Великая Отечественная война) has become firmly established. It does not encompass the entire scope of the Second World War; instead, it specifically refers to the fighting between the USSR and the Third Reich from 22 June 1941 to 9 May 1945, the date when Germany's surrender was signed. In 1945, the Soviet Union designated 9 May as Victory Day.

Axis powers

State	Date of accession / alliance	Notes
Germany	1 September 1939 (attack on Poland – the actual beginning of the war)	main initiator of the Axis
Italy	22 May 1939 – Pact of Steel with Germany (formal military alliance from 10 June 1940)	co-founder of the Axis
Japan	27 September 1940 – Tripartite Pact (Berlin–Rome–Tokyo)	co-founder of the Axis
Hungary	20 November 1940	
Romania	23 November 1940	
Slovakia	24 November 1940 (puppet state created after the partition of Czechoslovakia in 1939)	
Bulgaria	1 March 1941	
Yugoslavia	25 March 1941 (accession annulled after the coup on 27 March and the German invasion)	formally in the Axis only briefly
Finland	25 June 1941 (the so-called Continuation War – cooperation with Germany without a formal pact)	co-belligerent with the Axis
Croatia (NDH)	15 June 1941 (puppet state after the partition of Yugoslavia)	
Thailand	21 December 1941 (alliance with Japan)	
Manchukuo, Wang Jingwei Regime, Burma, the Philippines (puppet governments)	1940-1943	Japanese puppet states

Allied Powers

State	Date of accession / alliance	Notes
Poland	1939	attacked on 1 September by Germany and 17 September by the USSR
United Kingdom	1939	declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939
France	1939	declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939
Australia	1939	as a British dominion from 3 September 1939
New Zealand	1939	from 3 September 1939
Canada	1939	from 10 September 1939
Soviet Union (USSR)	1941	after German attack on 22 June 1941
China (Republic of China)	1937 / 1941	at war with Japan since 1937, formally among Allies from December 1941
United States (USA)	1941	after Japanese attack on 7 December 1941
Belgium	1940	after German invasion
Holandia	1940	after German invasion
Netherlands	1940	after German invasion
Greece	1940	after Italian attack on 28 October 1940
Yugoslavia	1941	after anti-German coup and German invasion
Czechoslovakia (government-in-exile)	1940	recognized by the Allies
British India	1939	automatically with the United Kingdom
Mexico	1942	after ships were sunk by Germany
Brazil	1942	sent an expedition to the Italian front
Iran	1942	after occupation by the USSR and the United Kingdom
Ethiopia	1941	after liberation from Italian occupation
Turkey	1945	declared war on Germany and Japan in February 1945 (symbolically)
Egypt	1945	formally joined in February 1945
Other British and French colonies (e.g., Sudan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Algeria, Tunisia)	1939-1942	gradually joined the Free Allies

Own elaboration

Historical narratives—similar to other topics studied in the Institute for Turkish Studies' reports—differ in subject matter and dissemination methods depending on the target audience. This study analyses content related to World War II published on the Russian portal Sputnik in its Turkish-language version (Sputnik Türkiye), Arabic-language version (Sputnik Arabic), and Persian-language version (Sputnik Iran). The purpose of the report is to understand how Russia presents World War II–related content in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, and whether the messages aimed at these audiences differ from those distributed in Polish or English. The analysis also considers which content has been manipulated and which constitutes outright disinformation.

Chapter 1

General narrative. Disinformation

The sacralisation of the Soviet victory over Nazism is a key aspect of Russian historical policy and part of a wider ideological campaign aimed at justifying Russia's current great-power ambitions[1]. In this narrative, the Soviet Union is shown as the nation that defeated the Nazis—portrayed as the personification of evil—and without the sacrifice of Soviet citizens, a free Europe would not have emerged. Simultaneously, this narrative downplays the role of the other Allied powers: the importance of Lend-Lease aid is often minimized and considered insignificant, while the value of the Western Front is deliberately reduced.

Furthermore, Russia aims to silence or discredit any criticism of Soviet policies before 1941, including the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the USSR's shared responsibility for starting the war, the invasion of Poland and Finland, the annexation of the Baltic states, the killing of Polish prisoners of war, and the repression of Soviet citizens and the populations of occupied territories.

These narratives, with varying intensity and contextual framing, also appear in the Middle Eastern language editions of Sputnik. Notably, most of the examples discussed below recur across all three versions (Turkish, Arabic, and Persian). However, there is one significant exception: the reference to the murder of Polish officers in Katyn appears only in the Turkish-language version; it is absent from both the Arabic and Persian editions.

• The USSR was the main force fighting in World War II, and without its victory, the world would have been dominated by Nazism.

– Dr. Mehmet Perinçek argued that the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany altered the course of history worldwide. He emphasised that “if the USSR had not won, the world would have been dominated by Nazism.” He added that a common narrative claims the United States saved the world from the Nazi threat, but in reality, the Soviet Union is portrayed as the main hero and decisive force behind the victory. As “evidence,” he pointed to the fact that German troops advanced to within 30–40 kilometres of Moscow, yet between late 1941 and early 1942, they were successfully pushed back[1].

– Sputnik also developed a special project imagining how the world might have looked if the Red Army had not defeated Nazi Germany. Using archival material, the project used AI-generated images to illustrate potential global outcomes if Nazism had not been stopped.

[1] Mehmet Perinçek: SSCB'nin kazanması dünyanın kaderini değiştirdi, Sputnik Türkiye 8.05.2025 <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20250508/1096061900.html>

[2] M. Domańska, *Mocarstwowy mit wojny we współczesnej polityce zagranicznej Kremla*, „Komentarze OSW” 31.12.2019, https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2019-12-31/mocarstwowy-mit-wojny-we-wspolczesnej-polityce-zagranicznej?utm_source=chatgpt.com



A frame from the film in Turkish

Comment: The USSR suffered significant losses, and its role in defeating Germany was indeed substantial. However, this account overlooks the fact that the broader Allied effort was also vital, including the financial and material aid given to the Red Army. In the examples above, these aspects were manipulated by heroising the USSR and depicting it as the sole decisive force in the fight against Nazism. A common method of emotionalising and simplifying involved an AI-generated alternative history scenario suggesting that “if the USSR had not won, the world would have been Nazi.” This is a counterfactual hypothesis, and from a scholarly viewpoint, it cannot be proven that such an outcome was the only possible scenario.

• **In World War II, the nations of the Soviet Union bore the primary burden of fighting, yet the world is attempting to distort this history:**

– All the nations of the Soviet Union endured enormous losses between 1941 and 1945—likely among the highest ever borne by any population during a single war, one of the bloodiest and most devastating conflicts in history. The scale of human, material, and psychological losses was immense. Nevertheless, the Soviet legacy—including the legacy of the Red Army and the Great Patriotic War—is, according to this narrative, being gradually erased today. This is said to occur most frequently in the Baltic states, followed by Poland and the Czech Republic. As an example, it is noted that only a few years ago monuments in central Prague were removed[1].

– Leaders of the CIS described attempts to assign equal responsibility to the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany for the outbreak of the war as immoral and disrespectful to the efforts made to commemorate those who “saved the world from the brown plague. [1]”

– It is argued that future generations must be reminded that the Nazis were defeated mainly by the Soviet people and that representatives of all Soviet republics fought alongside each other in this heroic struggle—both on the front lines and in supporting roles[2].

[3] Sputnik Arabic بقلم بوتين... "75 عاما من النصر العظيم" مسؤولية مشتركة تجاه التاريخ والمستقبل 19.06.2020: <https://sarabic.ae/20200619/1045768700-المسئولية-مشتركة-تجاه-التاريخ-والمستقبل>, متن كامل مقاله ولاديمير بوتين, <https://spnfa.ir/20200619/6593008-نشرية-نشانال-اينترست>, Sputnik Iran 16.06.2020, <https://anlatilananotesi.com.tr/20250509/1096105087.html>

[4] 'Rusya, Batı'nın 9 Mayıs Zafer Günü'nü unutturma çabalarına izin vermedi. Güçlü bir mesaj verildi' Sputnik Türkiye 9.05.2025, <https://anlatilananotesi.com.tr/20250509/1096105087.html>

[5] BDT liderleri, Büyük Vatanseverlik Savaşı Zaferi'nin 80. yıldönümüyle ilgili halka yönelik 'hitabı' kabul etti, Sputnik Türkiye 8.10.2024 <https://anlatilananotesi.com.tr/20241008/bdt-liderleri-buyuk-vatanseverlik-savasi-zaferinin-80-yildonumuyle-ilgili-halka-yonelik-hitabi-1088986090.html>

Comment: In these articles, Russia employs a “victim narrative,” portraying the USSR as a state whose legacy—its role in the victory over Nazi Germany—is under threat from Western countries. While some Soviet-era monuments, such as the statue of Marshal Konev or other memorials in parts of Central Europe (Poland, the Czech Republic, the Baltic states), are being dismantled, this does not extend to the graves of Red Army soldiers. These actions are rooted in how these countries interpret the entry of the Red Army: not as liberation, but as a renewed occupation accompanied by looting, repression, and sexual violence committed by some of the individuals commemorated in communist-era monuments. The Russian narrative omits this context entirely, reducing it to accusations of “erasing history.”

Additionally, it simplifies the historical reality by depicting all Soviet republics as a united community of heroism, disregarding internal divisions or instances of collaboration with Germany at the start of the war (e.g., in Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states, and the Southern and Northern Caucasus—Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, and Karachays—as well as in Moldova). This omission is significant because it hinders any discussion of why some local populations supported or collaborated with Germany—often as a result of their traumatic experiences under earlier Soviet occupation.

- **The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was forced:**

- W 1939 roku Związek Radziecki i nazistowskie Niemcy podpisały pakt o nieagresji. Jednak tekst od razu zaznacza, że to z powodu polityki Ligi Narodów i państw zachodnich, które „zamiast sprzeciwiać się agresywnym działaniom Niemiec, chciały je uspokoić np. pozwalając na fragmentację i okupację Czechosłowacji w wyniku układu monachijskiego z 1938 roku. Związek Radziecki próbował zapobiec tragedii w oparciu o swoje międzynarodowe zobowiązania. Jednak sojusznicy Czechosłowacji na Zachodzie woleli zrezygnować ze swoich gwarancji i pozostawić ten kraj na łasce Niemiec. Ich celem było skierowanie nazistów do Związku Radzieckiego, aby zderzyli się i osłabili Moskwę i Berlin. Pomimo dwulicowego podejścia krajów zachodnich, administracja radziecka dołożyła wszelkich starań, aby utworzyć koalicję przeciwko Hitlerowi. Związek Radziecki podpisał pakt o nieagresji z Niemcami pod presją obecnych warunków, stając się ostatnim krajem wśród krajów europejskich, który to zrobił. Głównym celem tego kroku było opóźnienie nieuniknionego początku wojny”[6].

- In 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed a non-aggression pact. According to the narrative presented in these articles, this decision resulted from the policies of the League of Nations and Western states, which “instead of opposing Germany’s aggressive actions, chose to appease it — for example, by allowing the fragmentation and occupation of Czechoslovakia through the 1938 Munich Agreement. The Soviet Union attempted to prevent this tragedy in line with its international obligations. However, Czechoslovakia’s Western allies preferred to abandon their guarantees and leave the country at Germany’s mercy. Their intention, it is claimed, was to direct Nazi aggression towards the Soviet Union, triggering a clash that would weaken both Moscow and Berlin. Despite the duplicity of Western countries, the Soviet leadership made every effort to form a coalition against Hitler. The USSR signed a non-aggression pact with Germany under the pressure of existing circumstances, becoming the last European country to do so. The primary goal of this step was to delay the inevitable outbreak of war[6].

- Minister Lavrov stated: “As clouds gathered over Europe, Western capitals made a highly selfish and short-sighted decision to appease Hitler’s regime. The result of this policy was the 1938 ‘Munich conspiracy.’ In the spring and summer of 1939, when war had already become unavoidable, these countries tried to direct Hitler’s aggression eastward. In 1938, immediately after signing the Munich conspiracy, Germany–UK and Germany–France declarations of mutual non-aggression were issued.

[6] *Rusya'nın İstanbul Başkonsolosluğu: Tarih çarpıtılıyor*, Sputnik Türkiye, 22.06.2021, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20210622/rusyanin-istanbul-baskonsoloslugu-tarih-carptiliyor-1044791281.html>

A similar declaration had been signed between Germany and Poland in 1934. Under these circumstances, the Soviet Union had to ensure its own security by signing a non-aggression pact with Germany. This necessary step allowed it to better prepare for war against an aggressive state[7].

- In the case of the so-called “Munich betrayal,” alongside Hitler and Mussolini, the leaders of the United Kingdom and France also participated, agreeing to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia with the approval of the League of Nations. Poland was also involved in dividing its southern neighbour by occupying Zaolzie. According to this account, the Soviet Union—bound by alliance agreements with France and Czechoslovakia—tried to prevent the country's partition and halt German aggression. However, the Western powers failed to recognise the growing threat posed by Hitler. Moscow aimed to form an anti-Hitler coalition, but Poland consistently refused to cooperate with the Red Army, even under pressure from France and Britain. Facing the prospect of war on two fronts—against Germany in the west and Japan in the east, where fighting at Khalkhin Gol continued—the USSR signed a non-aggression pact with Germany on 23 August 1939. This was, according to this narrative, the last major European country to sign such an agreement with the Third Reich. After Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, the Wehrmacht swiftly advanced into the country, reaching the outskirts of Warsaw by 8 September. By 17 September, Poland's military and civilian authorities had fled to Romania, leaving the fighting units without central command. Under the secret protocol of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, in the event of a territorial reorganisation of Poland, the border between German and Soviet spheres of influence was to run “approximately along the Narew, Vistula, and San rivers.” This meant that the Soviet zone included not only territories inhabited by Ukrainians and Belarusians but also parts of historic Polish lands. In early September 1939, Berlin repeatedly urged Moscow to join military operations, but the Soviet authorities consistently delayed, seeking to avoid direct involvement. It was only when it became clear that France and Britain would not effectively support Poland, and that the Wehrmacht would soon occupy the entire country, that the USSR decided on 17 September 1939 to send the Red Army into the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic—areas now belonging to Belarus, Ukraine, and Lithuania[8].

- World War II started when Nazi Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. On 3 September, the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany. The Soviet Union did not declare war on any country; instead, it argued that it was necessary to send its troops to “liberate” the territories of western Ukraine and Belarus from Polish control and to prevent their occupation by Germany. According to this account, the USSR was drawn into the war only on 22 June 1941, when Germany turned against it[9].

- According to Sputnik, on the 80th anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the Russian Ministry of Defence published the related documents for the first time. These notes identified Germany, Italy, Japan, and Poland as potential adversaries and suggested that Germany and Poland might concentrate their main forces in the north, while also analysing other possible scenarios. The documents outlined strategies for the deployment of Red Army forces in the event of an attack. The states committed themselves to mutual non-aggression and to maintaining neutrality if one party was attacked. Only a week after signing the pact, Germany invaded Poland, marking the start of World War II[10].

[7] Lavrov: Sovyetler Birliği'nin 2. Dünya Savaşı'na katkıları Rusya'yı karalamak için yok edilmeye çalışılıyor, 22.08.2019, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20190822/lavrov-sovyetler-birliginin-2-dunya-savasina-katkilari-rusyayi-karalamak-icin-yok-edilmeye-1039979040.html>

[8] بقلم بوتين... "75 عاما من النصر العظيم" مسؤولية مشتركة تجاه التاريخ والمستقبل 19.06.2020 Sputnik Arabic, <https://sarabic.ae/20200619/1045768700-المستقبل-وتاريخ-مسئولية-مشتركة-تجاه-التاريخ-والصراع-75-عاما-من-النصر-العظيم-مسئولية-مشتركة-تجاه-التاريخ-والصراع> متن كامل مقاله, <https://spnfa.ir/20200619/6593008-البنطاغون-يخرف-تاريخ-الحرب-7-05-2020>

ولاديمير بوتين: بنشر به-نشر-البنطاغون-يخرف-تاريخ-الحرب-7-05-2020, Sputnik Iran, <https://spnfa.ir/20200619/6593008-البنطاغون-يخرف-تاريخ-الحرب-7-05-2020>

[9] الغزو السوفييتي-البنطاغون-يخرف-تاريخ-الحرب-7-05-2020, Sputnik Arabic, <https://sarabic.ae/20200507/1045371658-الغزو-السوفييتي-البنطاغون-يخرف-تاريخ-الحرب-7-05-2020>

[10] اسناد پیمان مولوتوف-ريبنتروپ از سریت خارج شد + عكس 9.09.2019, Sputnik Iran, <https://spnfa.ir/20190909/5195584-اسناد-پيمان-مولوتوف-ريبنتروپ-از-سریت-خارج-شد-9-09-2019>

Comment: References to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact appear extensively across all language versions of the portal. However, the pact is presented—repeating the Kremlin’s long-standing narrative—along with a reinterpretation of causality: the USSR allegedly signed the agreement under pressure because Western states supposedly sought to provoke a German attack on the Soviet Union. This frames the USSR as a victim of geopolitical circumstances rather than a co-architect of the pact, thereby legitimising its actions. At the same time, uncomfortable elements are manipulated or omitted. The secret protocol dividing the territories of Central and Eastern Europe between the USSR and the Third Reich is downplayed or reframed as an act of “liberation”. Repeated references to the Munich Conference and Poland’s annexation of Zaolzie serve to divert attention from the pact itself and shift blame for the outbreak of the war onto Western countries and Poland. This rhetorical strategy deflects substantive debate away from the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and its consequences.

• Polish officers in Katyn were murdered by the Germans

According to this account, Nazi leaders attempted to shift responsibility for crimes they had committed by conducting a false propaganda campaign aimed at misleading international opinion and concealing their actions. They claimed that “special commissions composed of representatives from various German and foreign organisations,” including British and American prisoners of war, had been sent to the Katyn Forest to spread information about alleged “crimes committed by the Russians.” On 13 April 1943, Joseph Goebbels’s Ministry of Propaganda announced the discovery of a mass grave of Polish officers in the Smolensk region and stated that they had been executed by the NKVD. After the Red Army retook Smolensk, a Soviet investigative commission declared that the Polish prisoners had been killed by German occupation forces in the autumn of 1941. Today, Poland recognises that the officers were murdered by the NKVD and classifies the massacre as genocide. Some Russian historians argue that the Soviet authorities had no reason to execute the Polish officers, maintaining that they posed no threat to Moscow[11].

Comment: Information about the murder of Polish officers appeared only in one article in the Turkish-language edition of Sputnik. The version attributing the massacre to Germany was propagated from the discovery of the graves in 1943 until 1990, when the USSR officially acknowledged NKVD responsibility. In 2010, the Russian parliament (the State Duma) adopted a resolution stating that Joseph Stalin and members of his Politburo were among those responsible. The image of the Soviet Union as the state that saved the world from Nazism and rebuilt it from wartime destruction also appeared in contexts beyond the most frequently circulated narratives. Sputnik included topics related to World War II that were relevant to the Middle East as well.

•The USSR’s contribution to defeating Japan and emphasising China’s role in combating militarism and fascism during World War II.

- Russian historian Vasily Khristoforov highlighted the significant role of Soviet intelligence agencies in the victory over Japanese militarism[12].

[11] Rusya’da, Nazilerin Katın’da katlettikleri Polonyalılarla ilgili ifadeleri ifşa edildi, 22.06.2023, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20230622/rusyada-nazilerin-katinda-katlettikleri-polonyalilarla-ilgili-ifadeleri-ifsa-edildi-1072758653.html>

[12] Rus tarihçi, Sovyetler Birliği’nin Japonya’nın yolladığı mesajları nasıl ele geçirdiğini anlattı, 3.09.2025, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20250903/rus-tarihci-sovyetler-birliginin-japonyanın-yolladigi-mesajlari-nasil-ele-gecirdigini-anlatti-1099114987.html>

Another article published by Sputnik Türkiye states: “China and the Soviet Union, the main theatres of World War II in Asia and Europe, were the primary forces supporting the fight against militarism and fascism and suffered enormous losses. [13]” This text discusses China’s struggle against Japan and Soviet aid to Beijing, but it does not mention the United States—appearing only in the context of the use of atomic weapons.

Comment: The USSR indeed provided substantial assistance to China between 1937 and 1941, including sending hundreds of volunteer pilots, supplying military equipment, and granting loans. Soviet intelligence also played a role in the Far Eastern theatre—the most notable example being Richard Sorge’s network in Tokyo, which reported, among other things, that Japan would not attack the USSR in 1941, enabling Stalin to redeploy divisions to Moscow. The Soviet offensive in Manchuria in August 1945 likewise contributed to ending the war with Japan—alongside the atomic bombings and the broader US military campaign. Russian propaganda, however, exaggerates the USSR’s role, presenting events selectively and downplaying the United States’ contribution in the Pacific theatre. In reality, from December 1941 to 1945, the United States bore the primary burden of operations in the Pacific (Midway, Guadalcanal, the 1944–45 campaigns). American bombing raids, the naval blockade, and the destruction of Japanese naval forces were decisive in breaking Japan’s military capability. The Russian narrative also overstates the importance of Soviet intelligence, assigning it more strategic significance than it historically had—an example of rhetorical amplification and personalised credit.

Sputnik also published texts combining historical disinformation with anti-American narratives, which otherwise appear relatively rarely in the context of World War II. Regarding the use of nuclear weapons, noticeable differences exist between the Turkish and Persian versions: the Persian version places stronger emphasis on US nuclear hegemony and Washington’s alleged hypocrisy.

• Use of atomic weapons by the United States

- An article in Sputnik Türkiye notes that some scholars interpret the atomic bombings as retaliation for Pearl Harbour, while others see them as a demonstration of force. It also claims that Japan refused to accept calls to end the war, and that this stance allegedly led to the bombings[1]. Additionally, reports on UN Secretary-General António Guterres’s speech commemorating the victims of Hiroshima emphasise that he did not mention the country responsible for these deaths—the United States[15].

- The atomic bombing of Hiroshima is depicted as the worst crime against humanity and, in a way, as an act of genocide, because an entire population was wiped out instantly by a weapon that was previously unknown. Although the United States is the only country to have used an atomic bomb in war, it now claims to be a leading opponent of nuclear proliferation. According to this view, one reason for this seeming hypocrisy is Washington’s desire to keep a monopoly on nuclear deterrence and protect its geopolitical interests.

[13] ‘Putin’in Pekin ziyareti, İkinci Dünya Savaşı’nın sonuçlarını savunma konusundaki kararlılığını yansıtıyor’, 28.08.2025, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20250828/putinin-pekin-ziyareti-ikinci-dunya-savasinin-sonuclarini-savunma-konusundaki-kararlilikini-1098887060.html>

[14] Dünyanın ilk atom bombası saldırısının üzerinden geçen 79 yıl, 15.08.2024, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20240805/dunyanin-ilk-atom-bombasi-saldirisinin-uzerinden-gecen-79-yil-1086520906.html>

[15] Hiroşima felaketinin 78. yılı: BM Genel Sekreteri atom bombasını atan ABD’nin adını anmadı, 6.08.2023, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20230806/hirosima-felaketinin-78-yili-bm-genel-sekreteri-atom-bombasini-atan-abdnin-adini-anmadi-1074428175.html>

It is also argued that the United States aims to prevent instability in regions where its strategic interests are at risk and uses non-proliferation as a political tool to limit rivals and pressure governments opposing the US-led order. In this perspective, US opposition to other countries' nuclear programmes arises less from moral or global security concerns than from calculated power motives[16].

- Another article states: "Today marks the anniversary of the greatest criminal act against humanity—the use of nuclear weapons by the United States against the civilian population of Japan. Regardless of the aggressor's stated rationale, targeting unarmed civilians—women, children, and the elderly—constitutes a crime against humanity. The only factor that can deter the United States from using weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, is an adversary's possession of such weapons, which creates a form of nuclear deterrence. It is clear that the United States and its allies, who have used or continue to use weapons of mass destruction, should not be the last to claim moral authority over other states' nuclear programmes. [17]"

Comment: It is true that the United States was the only country to use atomic weapons, bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, the context presented in these texts is considerably simplified: other atrocities committed by Japan—such as the Nanjing and Manila massacres, forced labour, or Unit 731's experiments—are left out. The materials are mainly used to promote an anti-American narrative: the Iranian and Arabic editions link the Hiroshima bombing to US "hypocrisy" and "nuclear monopoly," undermining modern non-proliferation policies (e.g., regarding Iran). By depicting the United States as the sole aggressor, the narrative suggests that nuclear possession by other countries (including Russia and Iran) might be morally justified as "deterrence." A more blatant example of blending historical manipulation with an anti-American stance is the claim that the United States created a prototype of Nazism.

• Nazism was based on the United States

During the Nuremberg Trials, high-ranking Nazi criminals asserted that they had drawn inspiration for their racist practices from the system of racial segregation in the United States. In a special film series prepared for Sputnik, Yegor Yakovlev, a historian and author of the book War of Destruction, presents what he describes as interesting details about American influences on German Nazism, based on the diary of psychologist Gustave Gilbert[18].



A scene from a film in Russian with Turkish subtitles.

[16] چرا آمریکا هنوز داور هسته‌ای جهان است؟
6.08.2025, Sputnik Iran, <https://spnfa.ir/20250806/24413574.html>

[17] سالگرد بزرگترین جنایت تاریخ بر علیه بشریت
6.08.2023, Sputnik Iran, <https://spnfa.ir/20230806/17180703.html>

[18] Nazi liderleri yabancı düşmanı fikirlerini ABD'nin ırkçı politikalarına dayandırarak nasıl savundu?, 2.05.2025, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20250502/nazi-liderleri-yabanci-dusmani-fikirlerini-abdnin-irkci-politikalarina-dayandirarak-nasil-savundu-1095810270.html>

Comment: During the Nuremberg Trials, some defendants (such as Hans Frank and Julius Streicher) did indeed point to the existence of racial segregation in the United States, but this was a classic tactic of shifting blame—clearly visible in this text as well. The narrative suggests that the origins of Nazism lie in the United States, making Washington partly responsible for the crimes of the Third Reich. At the same time, it employs an exaggerated analogy: racial segregation, although oppressive and racist, was not an extermination plan. Furthermore, the text references the authority of Gustave Gilbert, the prison psychologist at Nuremberg, without clarifying that the diary passages cited are statements made by the defendants themselves, not the author's scholarly conclusions.

• Americans betrayed their allies

- According to this story, the Americans cleverly persuaded Europeans to send all valuable items looted from other countries to the United States to “save” them from the war. Europeans allegedly transferred all their gold and jewels to America, hoping to recover them once the war ended. However, after the war, they were supposedly too weak and humiliated for the United States to consider returning these assets—meaning that Europeans “never saw the gold or jewels they had sent to America again”[19].

Comment: This narrative, which appears only in the Persian-language edition, is a clear example of disinformation. No coordinated action of “transferring treasures to the United States” ever occurred. Some European gold reserves were indeed moved to the US or Canada in 1939–40, but solely at the explicit request of European governments aiming to safeguard their assets from German occupation. These holdings were returned or compensated after 1945 by the Tripartite Gold Commission (TGC), established in 1946 by the United States, Great Britain, and France.

• The USSR liberated and reconstructed Europe

The anti-American narrative is contrasted with an exaggerated depiction of the sacrifice and aid supplied by the Soviet Union.

- On 17 January 1945, Warsaw, the capital of Poland, was “completely liberated” from Nazi German occupation by the Polish People's Army together with the Soviet Red Army. An infographic published by Sputnik shows the course of the operation to free the Polish capital, which had been under Nazi occupation for 5 years and 111 days and suffered extensive destruction[20].

[19] جنگهای جهانی عبرتی برای استعمارگران [19]

8.05.2025, Sputnik Iran, <https://spnfa.ir/20250508/22224187-جنگهای-جهانی-عبرتی-برای-استعمارگران.html>

[20] 80 yıl önce bugün Varşova, Nazi işgalinden kurtuldu, 17.01.2025, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20250117/80-yil-once-bugun-varsova-nazi-isgalinden-kurtuldu-1092798679.html> ; 80 عاما على تحرير وارسو من الاحتلال النازي

17.01.2025, Sputnik Arabic, <https://sarabic.ae/20250117/80-1096882780-الاحتلال-النازي-تحرير-وارسو-من-الاحتلال-nazi.html>



Liberation of Warsaw from Nazi occupation, 14–17 January 1945. Sources: mil.ru, bigenc.ru



Five years and 111 days. That was the duration of Nazi occupation of Warsaw. Around 200,000 Soviet soldiers died on the Warsaw front. "The Nazis, with their sadistic brutality, levelled the city to the ground, district by district. The largest industrial plants were reduced to rubble. Houses were blown up or burned... The city turned into a ghost town." — Marshal of the Soviet Union Georgiy Zhukov

- Warsaw was in ruins in January 1945 due to German bombings in 1939, the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943, and the fighting during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. Ninety per cent of the city's industrial plants and historic monuments had been destroyed, and only 28 per cent of residential buildings remained habitable. When units of the Soviet Red Army and the Polish Army entered the city on 17 January 1945, Warsaw was practically a depopulated wasteland. On 29 January 1945, the State Defence Committee of the USSR issued a decree to assist Poland in rebuilding the capital. The Soviet Union supplied 500 trucks, 500 railway wagons, 8,000 shovels and pickaxes, five cranes, and five excavators. It also provided 500 tons of paper, large quantities of medicines and medical equipment, as well as 500 wooden houses from Finland for homeless residents of Warsaw. Urban transport and public communications were likewise reorganised. On 11 February 1945, the leaders of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland, Bolesław Bierut and Edward Osóbka-Morawski, requested further technical and financial support from the Soviet authorities. After a meeting with Stalin on 18 February 1945, it was decided that the USSR would cover half of the costs of rebuilding the main districts of Warsaw. A special economic mission was established, whose experts worked with city authorities on planning and implementing reconstruction efforts. The Soviet Union also supported the restoration of Warsaw's power and water systems. At the time, Warsaw's mayor, Marian Spychalski, described Soviet assistance as a sign of "sincere sensitivity" and a "symbol of friendship between Slavic nations." The final sentence in the source text—claiming that present-day deterioration in Polish-Russian relations is "in no way Russia's fault"—is an explicit propagandistic statement and does not reflect historical analysis[21].

[21] Sovyetler Birliği Polonya'nın başkentini nasıl küllerinden yeniden doğurdu?, 29.01.2025, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20250129/sovyetler-birligi-polonyanin-baskentini-nasil-kullerinden-yeniden-dogurdu-1093175529.html>

Comment: The term “liberation of Warsaw” overlooks the fact that the Red Army ceased its offensive on the Vistula in August 1944 during the Warsaw Uprising, allowing the Germans to brutally suppress it. The terror inflicted by the USSR—Poland’s subjugation to Moscow, the dismantling of Home Army structures, Sovietization, and widespread repression—is completely ignored. Once again, the USSR is credited as the sole liberator of Europe, while the contributions of the Allies, Polish forces in the West, and the Polish Underground State are dismissed. Regarding reconstruction, the truth is presented selectively: material aid (such as trucks, equipment, and supplies) was provided, but it was minor compared to the scale of destruction and was primarily used to establish total political control. The final sentence employs a form of “blame reversal,” turning historical interpretation into a political statement by suggesting that current tensions arise from Polish “ingratitude.”

- The Russian Ministry of Defence launched a multimedia project titled “Reconstruction, not Enslavement,” which showcased archival materials illustrating the Red Army’s alleged role in rebuilding Europe after World War II. Separate sections highlighted the USSR’s contribution to restoring “peaceful life” in Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. The ministry published official documents alongside letters and testimonies from ordinary citizens, emphasising the actions of Soviet soldiers. The project also featured profiles of Soviet officers—described as “heroes of Europe”—who were said to have demonstrated bravery in battle, cleared mines, opened hospitals, and saved civilians[22].

- Another account states that the Red Army embarked on its “mission of liberation” in Europe, rescuing entire nations from destruction, slavery, and the horrors of the Holocaust, while enduring heavy casualties—hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers lost their lives. According to this narrative, the USSR also supplied considerable financial and humanitarian aid to liberated nations to prevent famine and restore their economies and infrastructure, despite the USSR itself having been devastated by the war, with destruction spanning from Brest to Moscow and the Volga. As an example of this aid, the article references a case from May 1945, when the Austrian government allegedly requested food supplies from Moscow, claiming it “did not know how to feed its population for the next seven weeks until the new harvest season”[23].

Comment: These texts depend on portraying the occupier as a hero, depicting the Red Army not as an enforcer of a new occupation regime, but as a benevolent “liberator.” Countries subjected to Sovietisation are shown as grateful beneficiaries rather than victims. Humanitarian assistance is described using emotive phrases like “saving civilians,” “humanitarian aid,” and “heroes of Europe,” while selective omissions hide the full historical context—such as forced contributions, factory dismantling, and the removal of industrial equipment to the USSR as “reparations.” The narrative often links wartime history with current Russia–Europe relations, contrasting supposed “USSR aid” with what is called the “ungrateful West.”

World War II–related content appears only sparingly across the three portals (Sputnik Türkiye, Sputnik Arabic, Sputnik Iran). Aside from manipulated texts, some descriptions of wartime events are factually accurate, but even these mainly serve to emphasise the USSR’s decisive role in the war’s outcome. Sputnik Türkiye highlights campaigns framed as having “liberated” cities—particularly those now in Ukraine following the dissolution of the USSR:

[22] Rusya Savunma Bakanlığı, SSCB'nin Avrupa'ya yaptığı yardımlara ilişkin proje başlattı, 24.07.2025, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20250724/rusya-savunma-bakanligi-sscbnin-avrupaya-yaptigi-yardimlara-iliskin-proje-baslatti-1098119391.html>

[23] بقلم بوتين... "75 عاما من النصر العظيم" مسؤولية مشتركة تجاه التاريخ والمستقبل 19.06.2020, Sputnik Arabic, <https://sarabic.ae/20200619/1045768700-والنصر-العظيم-مسؤولية-مشتركة-تجاه-التاريخ-والمستقبل.html>

- The Battle of Kyiv is depicted as a significant milestone in liberating the Soviet homeland from Nazi occupation during the Great Patriotic War[24].
- On 8 September 1943, the Red Army “liberated” the city of Stalino (now Donetsk), the capital of the Donbas region, from Nazi forces[25].
- Eighty years ago, the Odessa offensive occurred—one of the largest operations of World War II[26].

Comment: Russia consistently stresses that the USSR defeated Nazism during World War II (or, more commonly in Russian discourse, during the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945). Experts observe that Russian disinformation often draws a false equivalence between past struggles and the current invasion of Ukraine, depicting Russia as once again “fighting Nazis[27]” This narrative mixes historical facts with manipulated, selective, or decontextualised information to craft a particular impression—that the USSR was the main architect of victory in World War II.

Some texts may be factually neutral, yet they still add to the wider narrative framework. For example:

- They highlight that Germany was responsible for initiating World War II—hostilities commenced when German air forces attacked Poland. At 04:37 local time, German warplanes bombed the town of Wieluń, which lacked significant military targets. The attack on 1 September 1939 destroyed 70 percent of the town and resulted in around 1,200 deaths. Minutes later, the German naval vessel SMS Schleswig-Holstein fired upon the Polish garrison at Westerplatte. These two assaults are widely regarded as the start of World War II[28].

- They emphasise the contributions of Soviet society to the war effort—covering topics such as “Nurses and medics who contributed to victory in the Great Patriotic War,” “Death Ladies... Snipers of the Great Patriotic War,” “The Battle of Kursk,” and “The role of Soviet women in defeating Nazism.” Sputnik also publishes photographs of female snipers from World War II[29].

Some texts can be considered entirely neutral, although they are also meant to fulfill a specific role in the narrative being constructed, for example:

- to emphasize that Germany was responsible for the outbreak of World War II – World War II began when German air forces attacked Poland. At 04:37 local time, German combat aircraft bombed the town of Wieluń, which was of no military significance whatsoever. As a result of the attack on 1 September 1939, 70 percent of the town was heavily damaged and 1,200 people lost their lives. A few minutes after the attack on Wieluń, the warship SMS Schleswig-Holstein, belonging to the German navy, struck the arsenal in Gdańsk. These two attacks are considered the beginning of the Second World War[28].
- to highlight the contribution made by the society of the USSR during the war – texts addressing topics such as: “Nurses and medics who contributed to victory in the Great Patriotic War”[29], “Ladies of death... Snipers of the Great Patriotic War”[30], “the Battle of Kursk”, “The role of Soviet women in defeating Nazism”[31]. Sputnik photographs depicting female snipers from the Second World War[32].

[24] 6 Kasım 1943'te Kızıl Ordu, Kiev'i Nazi işgalinden kurtardı, 6.11.2024, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20241106/6-kasim-1943te-kizil-ordu-kievi-nazi-isgalinden-kurtardi-1090112811.html>

[25] 80 yıl önce bugün Kızıl Ordu, Donbass'ın başkentini Nazi Almanyası'ndan kurtardı, 8.09.2023, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20230908/80-yil-once-bugun-kizil-ordu-donbassin-baskentini-nazi-almanyasindan-kurtardi-1075307005.html>

[26] 80 سال از آزادی اودسا می گذرد - داده نمای - <https://spnfa.ir/20240412/80-20328655-سال-از-آزادی-اودسا-می-گذرد-داده-نمای-12042021>, Sputnik Iran, <https://spnfa.ir/20240412/80-20328655-سال-از-آزادی-اودسا-می-گذرد-داده-نمای-12042021>

[27] K. Chwaryło, *Urwać łeb Hydrze. Jak walczyć z rosyjską dezinformacją*, Punkt Widzenia OSW, nr 91/2025, s. 25.

[28] *Almanya Cumhurbaşkanı, İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın 80. yıldönümünü ilk bombanın atıldığı yerde andı: Kurbanlardan af diliyorum*, 1.09.2019, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20190901/almanya-cumhurbaskani-ikinci-dunya-savasinin-80-yildonumunu-ilk-bombanin-atildigi-yerde-andi-1040059528.html>

[29] *المرمضات ومساعدات التمريض اللواتي ساهمن بالنصر في الحرب الوطنية العظمى*, 19.06.2020, Sputnik Arabic, <https://sarabic.ae/20230509/1076687589-المرمضات-ومساعدات-التمريض-اللواتي-ساهمن-بالنصر-في-الحرب-الوطنية-العظمى-19062020>

[30] *سيدات الموت... قناصات الحرب الوطنية العظمى*, 9.05.2024, Sputnik Arabic, <https://sarabic.ae/20240509/1088642588-سيدات-الموت-قناصات-الحرب-الوطنية-العظمى-9052024>

[31] *دور النساء السوفييتيات في دحر النازية*, 3.05.2017, Sputnik Arabic, <https://sarabic.ae/20170503/1023818598-دور-النساء-السوفييتيات-في-دحر-النازية-3052017>

[32] *بانوان مرگ: تک تیراندازان زن جنگ جهانی دوم*, 5.05.2024, Sputnik Iran, <https://spnfa.ir/20240505/20481107-بانوان-مرگ-تک-تیراندازان-زن-جنگ-جهانی-دوم-5052024>

Chapter 2.

Regionally tailored narratives

Sputnik Türkiye

- At Ankara's Hacı Bayram Veli University, a symposium and exhibition titled "Turkish–Russian Relations during World War II" took place. Russian Ambassador to Ankara Aleksey Yerkhov attended the opening. In his inaugural speech, Rector Naci Bostancı highlighted that understanding the realities of the period requires recognising Stalin's actions. He remarked that World War II was a significant historical event and that the Nazis committed unimaginable atrocities, killing millions. Roma, Jews, and many Russians were deported to camps such as Auschwitz and Birkenau, where they were subjected to medical experiments. Bostancı emphasised that global mobilisation against Nazism was vital. According to him, Stalin, as the leader of Russia, also undertook an ideological effort—creating a "Soviet spirit" through historical memory, appeals to solidarity, and the cultivation of collective identity. In Bostancı's view, these efforts proved effective, ultimately contributing to the defeat of Nazism[33].

Comment: Turkey remained neutral during World War II but consistently feared Soviet imperial ambitions. Throughout the conflict, Ankara was concerned that Moscow might seek to revise the 1936 Montreux Convention—an apprehension that materialised at the end of the war when the USSR demanded changes to the regime governing the Straits. Turkish policymakers were even willing to mediate between the Anglo-Saxon powers and the Axis in an effort to form a coalition that would counterbalance the Soviet Union. After the USSR joined the Allied coalition, Turkey adopted a cautious policy, avoiding steps that could provoke Moscow while still recognising the Soviet Union as its primary security threat.

- If the Soviets had not stopped Hitler, Turkey would have been the next target. According to this view, if Hitler's advance had not been halted, Turkey would have inevitably become his enemy. He would have tried to reach the Middle East via Turkish territory, moving towards Lebanon, Iran, and Egypt to defeat Britain. In this context, the Soviets "saved" Turkey[34]. The article cites Professor Gabriel Gorodetsky, who has studied, among other things, the diaries of the Soviet Ambassador to London, Ivan Maisky.

Comment: Hitler's plans did include potential troop movements through Turkey towards Palestine. Had the Wehrmacht entered Turkish territory, Ankara would indeed have been forced into the war—either on the side of the Axis or the Allies—and compelled to fight Nazi Germany. However, between 1939 and 1941, Turkey was more concerned about Soviet imperial ambitions. Sputnik selectively emphasises the threat posed by Nazi Germany while completely omitting the USSR's simultaneous demands regarding control over the Black Sea Straits.

[33] *Rus Büyükelçi Yerhov: 2. Dünya Savaşı'nın doğru anlaşılması için bilimsel bakış açısına ihtiyaç var*, 17.02.2025, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20250217/rus-buyukelci-yerhov-2-dunya-savasinin-dogru-anlasilmasi-icin-bilimsel-bakis-acisina-ihitiyac-var-1093732058.html>

[34] *Mayski Günlükleri'nin yazarı Prof. Dr. Gorodetsky: Sovyetler, Hitler'i durdurmasa, Türkiye sonraki hedef olacaktı*, 14.10.2019, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20191014/mayski-gunluklerinin-yazari-prof-dr-gorodetsky-sovyetler-hitleri-durdurmasa-turkiye-sonraki-hedef-1040392126.html>

Sputnik Arabic

- The Red Army paid a heavy price for victory but successfully halted the Blitzkrieg plan against the Soviet Union, showing the world that defeating the German army was achievable. According to the article, before the Battle of Moscow, both Turkey and Japan considered attacking the USSR, but following the failure of the German offensive, they adopted a wait-and-see stance. Historians view the collapse of the Blitzkrieg strategy as a crucial turning point of World War II [35].

Comment: During World War II, the Turkish government viewed the USSR—not Germany—as its main security threat and was more likely to mediate between a potential Anglo–Axis alignment if it could counter Soviet ambitions and protect Turkish interests in the Caucasus and the Black Sea. Turkey was militarily too weak to attack Moscow on its own, and there is no evidence that such a plan ever existed; Turkish mobilisation during the war was strictly defensive. Meanwhile, Russian narratives emphasise the effectiveness of Soviet intelligence in Japan, claiming it informed Stalin that Tokyo had no intention of attacking the USSR, thus allowing divisions to be transferred to Moscow. Here, factual manipulation is evident: in the Arabic version, Turkey is portrayed as intending to attack the USSR, whereas in the Turkish version the narrative suggests Moscow “saved” Ankara from Hitler.

- The story begins after the USSR “released” Polish soldiers following Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. The Anders Army was formed and moved to Iran, from where the soldiers continued through the Middle East to Europe. Along the way, additional units joined the fight against Nazism—including one unlike any other: a Syrian brown bear. The Polish troops found the bear (*Ursus arctos syriacus*) in northern Iran and named him Wojtek, an Old Slavic name meaning “happy warrior.” Wojtek first gained fame in Palestine when he attacked two spies attempting to steal weapons from the Polish camp. Known for his intelligence and cleverness, he was treated by soldiers as a true comrade and greeted like a real soldier[36].

Comment: This example illustrates soft disinformation—an ostensibly neutral, sympathetic historical anecdote that subtly alters the broader context. The text relies on a false premise: that “Russia released Polish soldiers after the German invasion,” omitting that the USSR had earlier deported, imprisoned, and forced these soldiers into labour camps following its aggression on 17 September 1939. It also ignores that their release was a result of the Sikorski–Maisy Agreement and occurred only because the USSR urgently needed manpower after Germany’s attack. By pairing this difficult history with an emotionally positive story about Wojtek, the narrative aims to soften emotions and neutralise historical grievances. Notably, the Arabic version contains the warmest and most heroic stories—such as those of Wojtek and Soviet women—precisely because this tone aligns with local expectations.

- The Arabic text about Auschwitz cites the testimony of a Polish former soldier who served in the Polish Army in 1939. He spent three years in the camp before being released. He was a functionary prisoner who, according to his account, lived relatively well: he admitted to beating other prisoners and “living comfortably, as a leader.”

[35] معركة تحييط خطة المعتدي بالاستيلاء على موسكو وتثني الآخرين عن العدوان 17.06.2020, Sputnik Arabic, <https://sarabic.ae/20200617/1045729753-معاركة-تحيط-خطة-المعتدي-بالاستيلاء-على-موسكو-وتثني-الآخرين-عن-العدوان.html>

[36] بالفيديو والصور... دب سوري يشرب الجعة مع الجنود حارب النازيين وهزمهم 20.09.2019, Sputnik Arabic, <https://sarabic.ae/20190920/-من-هو-الدب-السوري-الذي-حارب-النازية-وشارك-في-المعاركة-الأكثر-دموية-إلى-جانب-قوات-التحالف-1042932176-.html>

He testified that “genocide of innocent people was carried out in Auschwitz: Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, French, Czechs, Belgians, Norwegians, etc.” [37]. In contrast, the Turkish-language text about the liberation of Auschwitz presents the history of the camp in a fully neutral way: the Red Army liberated Auschwitz, where Nazi Germany committed war crimes. Auschwitz was established by Nazi Germany in 1940 in Oświęcim, Poland. Initially intended for Polish prisoners, it gradually became a centre of genocide where Jews, Roma, Sinti, Soviet POWs, and homosexuals were systematically murdered. Between 1940 and 1945, about 1.3 million people were sent to Auschwitz, of whom 1.1 million were murdered, including approximately 1 million Jews. The camp became a symbol of Nazi crimes against humanity. On 17 January 1945, as the Red Army approached, 60,000 weakened prisoners were forcibly marched westward—the event known as the “Death March.” Soviet doctors did everything they could to help the survivors, although thousands died in the following two weeks due to exhaustion and disease[38].

Comment: The Arabic version minimises Germany’s responsibility and omits Jewish victims, instead listing other nations and suggesting that “the West also committed crimes.” In many Arab countries, the Holocaust is downplayed or reinterpreted through a Palestinian perspective—e.g., “Israel uses the Holocaust to justify aggression.” Russia thus avoids highlighting Jewish suffering in Arabic-language content. The Arabic version is therefore more morally flexible, permitting narratives involving ambiguity or relativity without provoking public backlash. In Turkey, however, there is stricter control over historical accounts and what can be publicly stated about the Holocaust.

Sputnik Iran

- Russian Orientalist Vladimir Sazhin notes that 25 August marks the anniversary of the joint Soviet–British military-political operation in Iran in 1941. This period witnessed significant losses for the USSR, yet Stalin decided to send troops into Iran. The decision was justified by Article 6 of the 1921 Soviet–Iranian Treaty, which, according to Moscow, permitted intervention if Soviet security was threatened. The operation’s aim was to defend the USSR’s southern borders against German sabotage and to prevent Iran from being used by Germany for operations against the Soviet Union. Reza Shah refused to expel German representatives from Iran despite pressure from both Moscow and London. Consequently, on 15 September 1941, Soviet and British forces entered Tehran, and the Shah abdicated the following day. His son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, assumed power and declared cooperation with the Allies. Axis diplomats were soon expelled, and on 29 January 1942, the USSR, the United Kingdom, and Iran signed a tripartite agreement granting the Allies the right to station troops on Iranian territory and to utilise its transport routes for delivering Lend-Lease supplies to the USSR. Meanwhile, relations between the USSR and the West remained tense. After signing a trade memorandum with Germany in February 1940, the Soviet Union supplied raw materials to the Third Reich—something London and Paris interpreted as a sign of cooperation. The United Kingdom and France even considered attacking Soviet oil fields in Azerbaijan. Germany, for its part, spread rumours about alleged Soviet plans to invade Iran, fuelling anti-Soviet sentiment. According to Russian historians, Stalin’s decision to intervene in Iran in 1941 aimed to eliminate German influence on the USSR’s southern borders, safeguard the transport corridor for Allied aid, and prevent the British from gaining control of Iran in a manner that could threaten Soviet interests.

[37] "روسيا ترفع السرية عن وثائق جديدة تكشف فظائع النازية في أكبر معسكرات الموت "أوشفيتس"

27.01.2025, Sputnik Arabic, <https://sarabic.ae/20250127/1097197281-روسيا-ترفع-السرية-عن-وثائق-جديدة-تكشف-فظائع-النازية-في-أكبر-معسكرات-الموت-أوشفيتس.html>

[38] 80 yıl önce bugün 1 milyon kişinin öldüğü Nazi toplama kampı Auschwitz, Kızıl Ordu tarafından özgürleştirildi, 27.01.2025, Sputnik Türkiye, <https://anlatilaninotesi.com.tr/20250127/80-yil-once-bugun-1-milyon-kisinin-oldugu-nazi-toplama-kampi-auschwitz-kizil-ordu-tarafindan-1093101348.html>

Russian narratives stress that the intervention was carried out under the provisions of the 1921 treaty and that it “saved Iran” from becoming a Nazi satellite state. The presence of Allied forces allegedly facilitated large-scale infrastructure reconstruction—roads, railways, ports on the Persian Gulf, and airports were expanded; repair and assembly plants were built; and hundreds of thousands of Iranians found employment. According to this view, the 1941 intervention helped to preserve Iran’s sovereignty, and its participation in the anti-Hitler coalition secured its place in the postwar international system. In 1945, Iran became one of the founding members of the United Nations[39].

Comment: This narrative exemplifies Russian historical revisionism that downplays the 1941 Soviet intervention in Iran—presenting it as “protective” and “legal.” The mention of Article 6 of the 1921 treaty creates an illusion of legality, but the clause referred to a scenario where Iran might be used as a base for aggression against the USSR, which was not the case in 1941. The intervention is depicted as self-defence while neglecting crucial facts: prior Soviet cooperation with Germany (Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact; raw-material deliveries in 1939–1941), as well as the severe economic and social hardships inflicted on Iran, including famine, inflation, corruption, and exploitation of Iranian resources by the Allies.

- On 28 November 1943, the Tehran Conference of Allied leaders commenced, leading to key decisions that influenced the outcome of World War II. The article contends that the event also yielded positive effects on Iran’s history and politics. The Allies issued a declaration ensuring Iran’s independence and territorial integrity and reaffirmed earlier commitments made by the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union to withdraw their forces within six months after the war’s conclusion.

It is noted that shortly before the conference—and under pressure from Western powers—Iran declared war on Germany on 9 September 1943 and formally joined the Allies. Despite the Allied commitment to withdraw, foreign troops remained in Iran long after the conflict ended, and only Iran’s complaints to international organisations forced their departure. Dr Ali Masgar told Sputnik: “From a pessimistic perspective, the exclusion of the Iranian government from the conference was an obvious insult to the host country. Regardless of ideological interpretation, it is important to note that none of the commitments made during the conference were fulfilled. The Allies pledged to leave Iran and to respect its sovereignty—but not only was this not realised, the USSR after the war supported the establishment of separatist governments in western Iran”[40].

Comment: This is a clear example of symmetrical blame-shifting. The text suggests that both the United Kingdom and the USSR failed to honour their commitments, although historically it was the Soviet Union that refused to withdraw and supported separatist movements in Iranian Azerbaijan and Mahabad, whereas the British withdrew their forces from their zones. The article shows selective empathy by emphasising the “insult to Iran” from the West, while neglecting that the main postwar violator of Iranian sovereignty was the USSR. The narrative appears balanced—implying “everyone is at fault”—but ultimately directs attention towards “Western pressure” and Western responsibility.

[39] Countenance سالگرد یک عملیات نظامی در ایران

27.08.2021, Sputnik Iran, <https://spnfa.ir/20210827/Countenance-8215661.html>

[40] 1.12.2023 کنفرانس--تهران-و-تاریخ-اکنون-نقطه-آغاز-نظم-نوین-، کنفرانس ۱۹۴۳ تهران و تاریخ اکنون؛ نقطه آغاز نظم نوین جهانی 18846208-جهانی.html

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- Across the three analysed language versions—Turkish, Arabic, and Persian—a consistent narrative thread emerges. The Soviet Union is depicted as the sole true victor of World War II, with the Red Army portrayed as the liberator of Europe and benefactor of nations. This narrative adopts a sacralising tone, employing heroisation and moral absolutisation of the “Soviet victory.” At the same time, the roles of other Allies—particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, and Poland—are minimised or omitted.

- A common tactic is role reversal, where the USSR is portrayed as a victim rather than an aggressor. The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact is depicted as a “forced decision” made in response to Western betrayal and the “Munich conspiracy.” These reinterpretations help absolve Moscow of shared responsibility for starting the war and shift blame onto other European nations, including Poland—thus rehabilitating Stalin’s imperial policies.

- All language versions of Sputnik use targeted selectivity. The Turkish edition highlights encyclopaedic and symbolic-historical narratives, emphasising the supposed “rescue of Turkey” by the Red Army. The Arabic version adopts a more morally flexible, anti-Western tone—relativising the Holocaust and blurring Nazi guilt. The Persian version concentrates on justifying the 1941 Soviet intervention in Iran, presenting it as lawful and protective.

- A consistent set of disinformation techniques appears across all versions: contextual manipulation, selective fact presentation, false analogies, emotionalisation, and disproportionate use of “expert authorities.” AI-generated counterfactual scenarios—such as imagining a world without Soviet victory—enhance emotional impact and suppress critical evaluation.

- The narrative consistently blurs the distinction between liberation and occupation. Central and Eastern European countries are depicted as recipients of benefit rather than victims of the Red Army. Postwar Soviet material aid is utilised to justify Soviet dominance. Current Russia–West tensions are reinterpreted as proof of the “ingratitude” of nations that supposedly owe their existence to the USSR.

- Alongside traditional propaganda, “soft disinformation” is employed: seemingly neutral, sympathetic stories (such as the tale of Wojtek the bear or narratives about Red Army nurses) that foster positive emotions towards the USSR and shift focus from facts to feelings. This approach is especially effective in societies sceptical of explicit political messaging.

- Historical disinformation is embedded in contemporary Russian information warfare. Russia does not present history as the past; each story serves to legitimise current geopolitical actions. World War II is invoked as a reference frame for the invasion of Ukraine, which Russia portrays as a continuation of the “fight against Nazism.”

- Regional versions of Sputnik serve as testing grounds for narrative calibration. The Turkish, Arabic, and Persian editions illustrate which stories resonate culturally and emotionally. A particularly hazardous phenomenon is the “re-import” of these narratives into Europe—as the supposed “voice of the Global South”—which could reinforce pro-Russian frames in Western debates.

Recommendations

- To combat this type of disinformation, early identification and response are crucial—before Russian narratives become deeply rooted. Concise, approachable formats of historical communication should be created to prevent myths and inaccuracies. Content made in local languages (Turkish, Arabic, Persian) should be published directly in the information spaces where disinformation spreads.

- Effective counter-narratives should be educational rather than confrontational. In response to soft narratives, equally gentle tools should be employed: testimonies of historical witnesses, documented facts, memoirs, photographs, and archival material. The aim is not to stigmatise audiences but to gradually restore proportionality and factual accuracy.

- A permanent collection of “narrative cards” should be created—summaries of key facts on disputed topics: the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet invasion of Poland on 17 September 1939, the Katyn massacre, the Lend-Lease programme, the 1941 intervention in Iran, and the actual role of Western Allies in defeating Nazi Germany. Each card should include a concise, accurate explanation, source references, and visual elements.

- In the Turkish context, focus on developing a shared historical vocabulary that highlights how “liberation” also involved subjugation and control. In the Arab context, it is vital to emphasise the importance of Nazi crimes and stress that the Holocaust was a worldwide, not solely European, atrocity. In the Iranian context, it is essential to reintroduce historical facts about the 1941 intervention and present its true economic and social repercussions.

- Media discourse should pay close attention to terminology. Phrases such as “liberation of Warsaw,” “Soviet aid,” or “territorial security” must always be accompanied by accurate historical context—occupation, repression, forced deportations, and Sovietisation—to prevent reinforcing semantic frames created by Russian propaganda.

- New formats for presenting historical facts are necessary—short videos, infographics, podcasts, and popular science series that communicate the realities of World War II in engaging ways. Since modern disinformation spreads through visuals and emotional cues, the response cannot be limited to academic texts; it must also include visual storytelling.

- Strengthen cooperation with local partners—universities, media outlets, NGOs, and regional historians. These actors hold the highest credibility in Turkish, Arab, and Iranian contexts and can effectively counter false narratives without being dismissed as external interference.

- Open historical data repositories should be established—digital archives of documents, photographs, and maps that enable audiences to verify information independently. In disputes over history, access to primary sources is the strongest safeguard against manipulation.

- Particular attention should be given to narratives that connect history to the present. Systematically dismantle analogies between World War II and the war in Ukraine, emphasising differences in legal, moral, and historical contexts. Expose the propagandistic aims of "Denazification" comparisons.

- An effective policy against historical disinformation requires long-term, institutional cooperation among state bodies, media, and academic institutions. When history is used as a tool of influence, it becomes a weapon — and the defence against it must also be systemic, sustained, and cross-sectoral.

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