

Title: **“Battle for minds and hearts – Kurukshetra of our days”**

The current physical plane war is just a small portion of a much larger informational war raging in humanity. This is the war in and for people's minds and hearts. For the first time information is a more important weapon than conventional arms. Humanity can survive this war only if a vision from a higher plane be presented to humanity, inspiring and leading it from miasms and traps of emotional and lower mental battles.

Aleksandr Ilchuk is a co-founder and a coordinator of the 2025 Initiative, an online platform that bridges groups and concepts, a space for groups and individuals to meditate together in support of the vision of the new civilization, learning from each other skills in developing group consciousness. Aleksandr holds a Master degree in International Affairs from Columbia University. He was born and lived in Kharkiv, Ukraine. Currently Aleksandr lives in New York City, USA.

1. Information sphere is defining humanity's progress

The unification of Europe and the world was impulsed by the decisions of the centennial conclave of the Spiritual Hierarchy in 1425. It started manifesting with the Renaissance, great geographical explorations and the invention of the printing press in 1440 by Johannes Gutenberg from Mainz in Germany.

This marked the start of the first informational revolution, which caused the Church to lose its monopoly on knowledge with the spread of printed books and newspapers. This led to an informational tsunami that transformed the world through the development of science, Reformation, and eventually the industrial revolution.

Today, we are living in the aftermath of the 2nd informational revolution caused by the explosion of information communication technologies that followed the invention of the Internet. The scale of the transformation that has occurred is still not fully comprehended. With the dawn of the Aquarian age, the floodgates of information have been opened again, and the world of data has flooded our cities and countries, exposing problems that have accumulated over millennia and demanding recognition and transformation.

Early idealists recognized the immense transformational potential of new informational technologies and used it to unite people around the world for good causes. However, others on the darker path quickly adapted to the new reality, using the same tools to separate people. This has opened a new page in the history of wars, with informational wars for people's hearts and minds.

The current physical plane war is just a small portion of a much larger informational war raging in humanity. This is the war in and for people's minds and hearts. For the first time information is a more important weapon than conventional arms.

In this world flooded with information, humanity has lost its orientation. It is the duty of the most advanced sons and daughters of the human race to orient themselves and help others to find the saving direction. At this conference, most of us affiliate ourselves with the New Group of World Servers, a supranational subjective network of people united by their recognition of the reality of soul and their responsibility to serve their fellowmen. It is our role to recognize and

hold the vision for humanity using our intuition and understanding of the fundamental spiritual values, principles, and laws.

2. My world view

It is crucial to acknowledge and confront the issues that plague humanity, shining the light of our collective consciousness into the depths of our villainy and suffering. As most of us come from the Western world, our conversations naturally focus on vices of our own society. It is an important phase to recognize and name those. Though I strongly believe it is important to acknowledge that all nations and cultures share in the same collective karma of humanity. We are all facing our collective Dweller at the same time. So please let us grow from such cherished Sixth ray idealism.

I have been fortunate enough to experience life in both Western and Eastern societies, and I can attest that the reality of the latter can be much more harsh. The "heavy overshadowing cloud" that has lingered over certain parts of the world since World War II has not dissipated; on the contrary, it has only grown denser.

We know the "door to where evil dwells" was not completely closed by the united efforts of the Forces of Light. Through active and organized efforts of the Forces of Evil this door was ajar again, allowing evil to spread around the world finding its own ways of expression in every part of the world. In the West it manifested through various institutions, such as finance, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture. One of their greatest successes has been the transformation of the ideal of freedom into a "freedom of consumption," which has now spread around the world.

My strong impression is that the political dynamic in Russia in the last 30 years allowed evil to express itself directly through the state system. While there was a short period of attempted liberalization after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this was quickly suppressed by the sustained traditions of the Soviet State machine. As a result, one person has increasingly focused all political power for the last 24 years, making him an easy target for the forces of evil. I recognize and state that in front of our eyes the history repeated itself: Putin became a vehicle for the forces of evil manifesting their will on the physical plane, the same as Hitler did in the last century.

I would argue that the institute of electoral cycles practiced in democratic systems does not allow evil to find a sustainable vehicle of expression through individuals in positions of political

leadership. Regularly elected country leaders change too quickly to allow enough time for dark forces to establish a sustained control over individual vehicles.

Despite the different expressions of evil in various cultures, I believe that the core of evil is the same. Evil disguises itself as different forces, creating an illusion of a battle between good and evil on the physical plane. But there is no pure goodness in any existing system. Systems everywhere are corrupt and crumbling. DK wrote 70 years ago that no country is free from the influence of evil.

As we move through the phase of recognition and acknowledgement, please let us leave behind our idealism, and recognize our togetherness in facing the collective Dweller – the karma that we together accumulated through millennia. Let us look forward and ask ourselves: where is the actual battle happening? Where are the actual forces of Light, and how can we contribute?

In my view, the battle is happening for human hearts and minds. This is the Kurukshetra of our days. Humanity can only survive this war if a vision from a higher plane is presented to humanity, inspiring and leading us out of the miasms and traps of emotional and lower mental battles.

In its final instruction communicated via Alice Bailey the Tibetan Master outlined the main work goals for the coming generations of disciples: to defeat totalitarianism as a material goal and to establish the Kingdom of God as a spiritual goal.

According to DK, “ (...) the defeat of that evil process which involves the imposition of ideas, and which can be the method of the democratic nations and of the churches everywhere, just as much as it is the method of the U.S.S.R. This we call totalitarianism. I would ask you to have this distinction clearly in your minds. Your material goal is the defeat of all that infringes human free will and which keeps humanity in ignorance (...). Totalitarianism is the basis of evil today; it is found in all systems of government, of education; it is found in the home and in the community. (...) I refer to the imposition of the will of the few upon the total mass of the people. The defeat of this undesirable tendency everywhere is your definite material goal.”

Propaganda has become one of the main tools of the imposition of the will of the few on the masses of humanity, and in the currently raging battle for minds and hearts, its dominance has exponentially exploded in the informational space. (10:42)

3. Propaganda

Though propaganda is not a new phenomena. Interestingly enough we could trace it back to the origins of Christianity and especially to the Catholic church. It originates from priests' sermons who sought to convert infidels and to distill right beliefs into the minds of their followers. Thus the purpose of propaganda is to change people's opinion and sometimes to stimulate them to action.

Propaganda is not inherently good or bad; it is merely a tool that can be used for either purpose. The motivation behind propaganda determines its effects. DK used this term often when he wrote about the need to disseminate information related to the work of the Hierarchy and the New Age.

In a way primary education is a type of propaganda, as knowledge is imposed on children without much argumentation. However, higher education requires the presentation of opposing views to encourage the development of critical thinking. The more education a person has, the less susceptible they are to propaganda. The more you know the more you realize that there are an infinite number of facts that could be combined in a variety of ways.

Propaganda does not provide alternative views. It has to be simple and digestible. It provides simplification of the world view. Most of the time propaganda appeals to emotions. Therefore propaganda is attractive for the masses of humanity: people seek a clear explanation of the complexity of the world around them. Often propaganda aims to explain issues outside of direct knowledge and experience of the targeted audience. That is why international affairs is one of the most common focuses of propaganda.

Propaganda styles vary depending on the political systems. Authoritarian governments aim to disorient the population and prevent political activism, while democratic and totalitarian systems use propaganda to stimulate action.

Marketing is a form of propaganda that uses human psychology to stimulate desire for things that people do not need.

Propaganda is used everywhere in the world, and there is nothing inherently wrong with it. The key is to ensure that alternative views are available, and people have the freedom to choose what to believe and express.

However, propaganda becomes evil when there is a state monopoly on it, and alternative views are suppressed. This is the case in modern-day Russia, where propaganda is used to promote the totalitarian regime.

4. Russia

At this conference the primary focus is what is wrong with the so-called “collective West” and very little information about the real situation in Russia. As someone with a deep appreciation of Russian culture and personal experience with the country, I feel it is my responsibility to share my perspective and help to form a more complete view of modern Russian history.

I was born and grew up in a bilingual Ukrainian family in Kharkiv on the North East border of Ukraine. I was raised with a deep appreciation of Russian culture. I went to a Russian school and got my first engineering degree in Russian. I have also spent time living in Moscow and frequently visited. My wife is Russian. Thus, my perspective is based on personal experience: I can not unsee what I have seen – and so I will share.

Many voices within Russia acknowledge that Russia itself is the biggest victim of Putin’s political regime. Grigoriy Yudin, one of Russia's leading social scientists, called it "sabotage against the country" after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Unfortunately, the richness and vibrancy of Russia’s modern intellectual and cultural life are still isolated from the rest of the world by the language barrier, with only few voices of the Russian intelligentsia penetrating the West.

The modern history of the Russian Federation could be described as the Phantom Pain for the partially collapsed empire. The end of the Cold War ignited collective excitement with the vision of possible freedom and material prosperity. However the reality of the systemic economic crisis of the 90s along with exponential growth of organized criminal activities pushed the nation into deep shock. The collapse of the soviet ideological belief system caused a substantial erosion of the social fabric and made the situation even more bitter. All this caused a deep national trauma. This is reminiscent of the situation in Germany in the 1920s after World War I and the collapse of the German Empire.

In search of a new unifying national idea, Russian society deeply resonated with the idea of restoring greatness of the old days. Paraphrasing, we could say that “Make Russia Great Again”

was a definite winner for the Sixth Ray personality of Russia. The innate national archetype of a Father-Tsar, a strong leader figure, made Putin's emergence from the KGB and connection with criminal mobs and oligarchs logical. He recognized and used national yearnings for his own benefit, solidifying his authoritarian power, and the new national idea quickly took shape.

The same time the corrupt tradition coming from the mid ages and flourished during late Soviet times of state interference into religious matters got the new impetus during Putin's regime. The Russian Orthodox Church became one of the main ideological tools to fire up Russian patriotism in return receiving unheard economical privileges and presence in the front line of Russian establishment.

Then, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine happened. Hundreds of thousands of people across the country demanded fair elections in response to the attempt to falsify presidential election results. This massive social uprising in a culturally close nation demonstrated the reality of people's power that could influence the political landscape. It became an existential threat to Putin's power, and it defined the political dynamic in the Russian Federation in the following decade.

In the following years, Russia saw a dramatic shift towards solidifying the authoritarian system. All major opposition media outlets were shut down or taken under government control, installing state monopoly for propaganda. At present, all media in Russia are under the government's control.

A series of campaigns against opposition leaders and journalists took a heavy toll on the freedom of speech in Russia. Alexey Navalny, Ilya Yashin, Alexey Gorinov, and Vladimir Kara-Murza are in jail for their opposition to the regime, while Boris Nemtsov was brutally killed, and many others had to flee abroad. (19:50)

I must acknowledge that several other international events have had a serious effect on Russia's domestic and foreign policy trajectory in modern history. Among those events are the NATO war in Yugoslavia, NATO expansion, US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, invasion by the allied forces in Libya, and the subsequent killing of Colonel Gaddafi. While I acknowledge these as important factors, I will not discuss them in this presentation, as we have heard and will hear more from other speakers. It's important to recognize that our perceptions of these events can be highly politicized and influenced by our personal beliefs. To truly understand the situation in the realm of international affairs, we need to consider multiple layers of context, including domestic and international interests, historic tendencies, and global trends. It's the interplay of all these factors that shapes the reality of the world we live in.

Propaganda in Russia

After 2005, I witnessed the Russian government investing heavily in propaganda, using traditional and new communication technologies to create a powerful tool for both domestic and international audiences. This propaganda was used to disseminate various narratives, based on lies and semi-truths, to justify policies that limited people's freedoms and dramatically increased the power of the president.

Of all of Putin's propaganda narratives, Ukraine always held a central place. Many in Russia and abroad recognized Ukraine as a missing piece to restore the Russian Empire as a superpower.

As most people in Ukraine are bilingual, propaganda quickly became an increasingly aggressive weapon in the fight for influence within the country.

Here are other most notorious and recognizable narratives of Russian propaganda.

- “The US is a sponsor and an organizer of both Ukrainian revolutions.”

In the early 2000's I worked for several USAID and other US government assistance programs in support of civil society development in Ukraine – I always perceived that as a way to stimulate growth of the New Group of World Servers. The US definitely invested a lot into development of social activism in Ukraine in the 90s and 2000s, and that, in a way, contributed to the activation of the post-authoritarian society, which sequentially led to the civic uprising known as Maydan, but that is just one layer of the story. The Ukrainian government's corruption and attempted falsification of the presidential election was a direct cause of the popular uprising, where people exercised their right to protest. I was actively involved as a private citizen in Maydan protests in both Kharkiv and Kyiv in the winter of 2004-2005. I assert it was a genuine reaction of people to unjust manipulation of the government without any external influence. It was a moment of the collective recognition of Freedom and people's power. That was the time when the Soul of the Ukrainian Nation was awakened.

Following the Orange Revolution, the Russian propaganda machine was flooding people's minds and hearts with anti-ukrainian myths in both Russia and Ukraine. It was a meticulously crafted inflow of hate and fear, based on twisted partial truth and pseudo-historical myths. Its

intention was to provoke people's emotions of hate. It was an unfolding crime against humanity. It directly contributed to antagonization within predominantly Russian speaking regions in the East and South of Ukraine thus preparing the occupation of Donbas and Crimea. Though in a way the same propaganda made Ukrainians even more aware of their identity and contributed to the protests in winter of 2013-14.

The 2nd Maydan Revolution became a much more powerful wave. Ironically, Putin contributed the most to this revolution. Seeing what was happening in Russia in the 2000s made it clear to Ukrainians that they did not want to follow the same path.

Despite the lengthy process of preparing a highly anticipated by Ukrainians agreement of economic cooperation with the EU and therefore orienting towards the west, then Ukrainian president Yanukovitch did a 180-degree turn, declaring closer affiliation with Russia and accepting a \$2bn fund transfer from Moscow.

"Ukraine is controlled and run by nazi."

Ukraine has a wide range of political parties and movements, including those with nationalist ideologies. However, they have always been on the fringes of the political process. The only far right nationalist party "Svoboda" present on the national political scene had a continuously declining support in parliamentary elections: 10,4% in 2012, 6% in 2014 and only 2.15% in 2019.

The invasion of Ukraine in 2014 caused the formation of far-right volunteer paramilitary groups. The impact of these and similar organizations on both Ukrainian politics and society has since been greatly exaggerated and was cherry picked for propaganda purposes. For sure, the presence of such groups is a serious issue not only in Ukraine, but across Europe, the US and even more so in Russia. The claim that Ukraine is controlled by nazi is absurd. It is even more so, if we consider that the Ukrainian President Zelenskiy is a Jew himself.

The real reason for using "nazi" narrative was a strong resonance with the Russian people that has a strong historical memory formed around World War II and the victory over Nazis. It is a central part of the Russian national identity." Since the early 2000s, being increasingly promoted by state, the Victory Day in Russia has been continuously growing in its importance, and now it is the biggest occasion to celebrate national pride.

In reality Putin's claim of "de-nazification" means de-ukrainization by annihilation of most active ukrainian citizens who protested the occupation. The report of the UN High Commissioner on Human Right situation in Ukraine released on March 24th of this year documents multiple atrocities against Ukrainians based on their national identity.

The inhumane experience of the war has unfortunately fueled hatred towards Russians among many Ukrainians, but this was not the case before the conflict began. The dehumanization of Ukraine through propaganda aimed to prepare public opinion in Russia for war with Ukraine, much like the dehumanization of Jews before the Holocaust in Germany. As someone who has lived and traveled extensively in both Ukraine and Russia, I can attest that there was no hate between the two nations before the Russian government started heavily investing in it. The use of propaganda to spread hate towards a particular group is a tactic that has been seen before, as in the case of Rwanda leading up to the genocide in 1994-95.

"Ukraine is an artificial formation that Russia has created within its borders."

Ukraine and Russia have a complex and intertwined history, as do any other neighboring nations. History has been a contentious topic in propaganda narratives in recent years and has been used to justify the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The ongoing debate around the common history in essence is the fight between Ukraine and Russia for identity and birthright. On a certain level it is a re-enactment of the Biblical story of Esau losing his birthright to his twin brother Jacob and the conflict that ensued between their descendant nations because of Jacob's deception.

However, while I acknowledge the importance of history in understanding the reasons behind the conflict, I also recognize that history is often written by the winners and can be used as an ideological tool of influence. Regardless of the historical context, it is unacceptable for one nation to deny another nation their right to exist and to call them an artificial creation. Those are the actual words used by Putin's propaganda. The quote: Ukrainians were fooled by Americans into believing that they are not Russians. This narrative denies the entire nation of Ukraine the right to exist and reveals the nature of this conflict. It is the same force that was not completely expelled from the Earth 70 years ago and is now manifesting through Putin and his regime in world affairs. (33:22)

Before moving to the next topic of my sharing, I have to acknowledge that the *Western propaganda has the same long history as Russian/Soviet propaganda. The difference is the*

absence of the monopoly for information in the west. Freedom of speech is one of the fundamental principles that allows functioning of the universe of media resources. However this makes the task of domination of certain narratives in the Western propaganda more sophisticated and complex. I recommend reading "Manufacturing Consent. The Political Economy of the Mass Media." by Edward Herman and Naom Chomsky with extensive research of case studies of propaganda used in the US. There are a number of other peer reviewed publications on this topic. Phillip Lindsay will talk more about it on the last day of the conference.

Informational warfare

Russian propaganda targeting Western democracies is a much more complex and layered subject.

The occupation of Crimea is an indicative example of the Russian information warfare tactics. I saw how within the first days and weeks following the invasion, Russian officials denied the presence of their militaries in Crimea. These officials generated ink clouds of lies in response to international inquiries about the unfolding events. It was interesting to observe some "alternative independent media sources" in the West repeating the same nonsense just to switch days later to new narratives sent from the Kremlin, explaining the presence of Russian troops in Crimea with the need "to support the freely expressed will of the people."

As I delved deeper into this topic, I realized how deep is the rabbit hole of Russian infiltration targeting Western democracies. It is more appropriate to use the term "informational warfare," which is a part of new official military doctrines on both sides of the combat forces. According to several sources, including the US Department of Defense and the Russian Ministry of Defence, information warfare involves the confrontation between states in the information space with the purpose of inflicting damage to information systems, processes and resources, critical and other structures, undermining the political, economic and social systems, a massive psychological manipulation of the population to destabilize the state and society, as well as coercion of the state to take decisions for the benefit of the opposing force. *Information operations target the information environment that includes the physical, informational, and cognitive dimensions.*

According to General Valery V. Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, the ratio of nonmilitary to military measures in the modern security environment is 4:1.

Aleksander Dvornikov, commander of Russia's Southern Military District, points out "Now states achieve their geopolitical goals through the application of complex non-military measures, which often are more effective than the military ones. The main goal of these measures is not the physical destruction of the enemy but the complete submission of his will."

Even without war, states engage in an information struggle trying to influence each other's perceptions and decision making while targeting populations, both domestic and foreign, trying to influence their consciousness. Note: according to the US Marine Corps University publication, the US does not conduct informational operations in in absence of actual war.

Here is a quote from a political-military dictionary, edited by Russia's former ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, *"information warfare (...) aims to influence the consciousness of groups in society but also to change their knowledge about basic social and natural phenomena, weakening their will to counter aggression."*

It is important to recognize that the information we consume is not just information, but a weapon covertly developed and delivered in a tailored form to weaken our will to counter aggression.

"Russia is targeting the West through a divide and rule approach, using multiple tools of influence. The population is mainly reached through media and social media, exploiting divisive issues. Minorities, refugees, and extremists are used to further this divide and rule approach. Human intelligence and cyber operations are important covert tools of influence. Russia also uses the energy sector, business, and corruption as venues for influence. It has an extensive network of allies and front organizations, and reconstructs reality and rewrites history to legitimize itself and undermine others."

Buckle up, Dorothy, It is not Kansas anymore.

An example of reconstructing reality techniques is to blame any current situation on Western hostile actions and ignorance, and to create the impression that Russia is only reacting to Western aggression.

For the Baltic States, with their large Russian minorities and long history, Russia has developed a comprehensive narrative covering both the past and the present. It is focused on the Baltic States' support of Nazism, and the Soviet Union as the savior and winner of World War II, while at the same time omitting Soviet oppression, occupation and deportations. The key themes of

Russia's description of the current situation in the Baltic States are that the Baltic States and NATO are aggressive and a threat to Russia; that these are failed states that, politically and economically, and depend on good relations with Russia; that Russophobia, discrimination and human rights abuses are widespread; and that Nazism and fascism are returning.

Russian "big" idea

Some people might suggest that Russia is fighting for a good cause or a big idea, but in reality, there is no sign of any such idea emerging from the country. We observe only one "big" idea: chaos to the world. Russia is challenging the current international system of cooperation without offering any viable alternative. Russian state propaganda openly threatens the west through its talking TV heads to transform western capitals into radioactive ash and proclaiming that Great Russia should spread to Lisbon while Russian soldiers will wash their boots in the waters of the Atlantic.

I personally believe that the great idea Russia was supposed to bring to the world is the Brotherhood, a concept that resonates with the Aquarian age and the soul of the nation. However, in practice, Russia's idea of *Brotherhood* has been inverted and brought to its neighbors as "de-natzification," resulting in the deprivation of their high mission. And of all the things this is probably the saddest part of this story.

I recognize the Russian Soul being imprisoned the same as a Beautiful Princess captured and put into lethargic trans by an infernal Tsar Kashey in a prophetic Russian folk tale. I have faith that one day a Brave Hero will emerge to defeat Kashey and awaken the Princess with his kiss, just like in the fairy tale. The people of Russia will rise against the imprisoning evil and awaken the soul of their nation. Grigoriy Yudin, a Russian social scientist who studies and understands social dynamics, asserts that a popular uprising in Russia is inevitable, and it is only a matter of time. As we see what is happening these days in other countries like Israel, France, Germany, and what has happened twice in this century in Ukraine, we know the same will happen in Russia too. I believe the Great Russian Revolution is coming – Pluto on its way through Aquarius will help the hero to awaken the beautiful Princess.

5. World Arjuna

Kurukshetra, a powerful symbol for all students of ageless wisdom, was also known as Dharmakshetra – the "field of Dharma" – or field of righteousness. In that battle Arjuna – the world disciple – was prompted by Krishna to stand for what is right to fulfill his dharma. Five Thousand years later we stand together as a group Arjuna in the midst of the raging world Kurukshetra. The same we have to act fulfilling our group Dharma: defeating totalitarianism and manifesting the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

Let us use this conference to recognize together what we can do to succeed. Here is my contribution:

- We need to practice the skill of recognition and discrimination in order not to throw the baby with the water. The Tibetan directed us to recognize the nature of forces hiding behind the masks by techniques and methods they use. As Christ told us, "You will recognize them by their fruits."
- We have to turn our eyes to the source of light – our soul – holding that orientation we will help others to find their way to the light as they start seeking way out from the dense clouds of deceit.
- We remember and hold our ground with the foundational spiritual values, laws and principles which are not of this world and yet define all the processes of human evolution. Let them motivate all our thoughts and words and actions.

*"Freedom is an essentially spiritual attribute, underlying the entire evolutionary process; this should always be remembered as a strengthening and conditioning reality by all men everywhere. It has survived aeons of opposition from the principle of enslaving selfishness and is largely responsible, at this time, for the struggle in which we are all participating."*Rays and Initiations, pp.428

And finally, let us remember Christ's words "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." The crystalized systems of the world should undergo transformation. Our work is to support and cultivate forms that can adequately manifest the incoming energy of Life.