



USING SCIENCE IN PROPAGANDA AND STOLEN UKRAINIAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE RUSSIAN WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

Speaker:

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[Link to the meeting](#)



Overall, more than 22 000 different sanctions are currently active against Russia. This is the highest number ever in human history. Russia is 3+ times more sanctioned than Iran, 5+ times more than Syria or North Korea. But some areas remain untouched. For example, it is unacceptable to offend the “great Russian culture” or to restrict Russian science because academic freedom is considered a sacred foundation of the scientific community.

Russia actively takes advantage of this attitude, spreading propaganda through scientific publications, fabricating editorial boards of the journals, actively supporting the war, stealing Ukrainian universities and providing military technologies for the occupant army, assimilating Ukrainian population on the occupied territories.

For example, in 2022, the Russian Union of Rectors, representing over 700 university rectors and presidents, issued a statement (the so-called “Rectors’ Letter”) in support of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) Presidium also endorsed the invasion, and the Lebedev Physical Institute of RAS issued a letter backing the war, signed by about 300 academics. Similar statements and letters were published by the Academic Council of Lomonosov Moscow State University, 1,100 scientists from Saint Petersburg State University, employees of the National Research Center “Kurchatov Institute,” many Russian professors, etc.

Moreover, Russian academic organizations provide material support to the aggressor’s army, directly assist in the annexation of Ukrainian territories, spread propaganda, conduct military-oriented research, fund scientific projects, and educate Russian soldiers and youth in the annexed territories. For instance, RAS academics raised 32 million rubles (\$3.5 million) for Russians fighting in Ukraine. Russian scientific community, in line with the Russian government, labels occupied territories as Russian in authors’ affiliations and in the biographies of editorial board members of journals. In the occupied territories, Russia has established fake institutions using the facilities and property of universities that were evacuated to government-controlled areas of Ukraine.

There are hundreds of “scientific” articles published in peer-reviewed(!) journals which contain direct propaganda — for instance, justifying Russia’s “historical” claims to Ukrainian lands or referring to the “DPR/LPR” as independent states. International journals, publishers, and research databases continue to collaborate with Russian journals and institutions, even with those who openly support the war and annexation of Ukrainian territories or are stolen from Ukraine.

For example, Springer publishes up to 200 Russian journals, around 80 of which are founded or owned by the RAS, and thus spread propaganda. The Scopus database (owned by Elsevier) indexes over 800 Russian journals, 77 of which were added to the index during 2022–2023. Of these, 19 are founded by universities whose rectors signed a letter in support of the war, and at least 20 are published by or indirectly associated with the Russian Academy of Sciences. Existing shameful consensus should be revised.

The aim of this lecture is to provide documented evidence for the mentioned above issues in order to raise the problem, prove its existence and to propose potential solutions to these issues.

It includes the following points:

1. Exploration and documentation of cases when Russia is using science and academic sphere as a tool of propaganda and fakes
2. Research on cooperation of international organizations with active supporters of war from the Russian academic environment
3. Research on stolen by Russia Ukrainian institutions

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