“The instrumentalization of science by Russian propaganda: Methods, forms, and mechanisms of dissemination”

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THE INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF SCIENCE BY RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA: METHODS, FORMS, AND MECHANISMS OF DISSEMINATION

Abstract

The propagandistic instrumentalization of science occurs not only through academic text content but also through institutional authority, territorial affiliations, bibliographic metadata, and publishing infrastructure. These practices may confer signals of academic legitimacy on politically oriented claims and increase their potential international visibility; infrastructural presence alone is not treated as evidence of legitimation. However, this infrastructural dimension of propaganda has received considerably less scholarly attention than message content. This study identifies and systematizes the methods through which scholarly communication is instrumentalized for propaganda, using contemporary Russian practice as an empirical case. Designed as a qualitative documentary multiple-case study, its empirical basis comprises a purposively constructed corpus of 2024–2026 monitoring materials, primary documents, prior studies, institutional web resources, and bibliographic records. Inductive-abductive analysis, thematic document coding, and cross-case comparison yielded a preliminary analytical typology of three methods: content-based construction of politically useful knowledge; authority- and institution-based legitimation; and affiliation-based territorial normalization of annexation. These methods are implemented through material, organizational, and digital forms, including scholarly texts, editorial boards, institutional statuses, affiliations, metadata, DOIs, scientometric databases, and publishing partnerships. At the theoretical level, the three methods are interpreted through four proposed analytical mechanisms: producing politically useful knowledge or ignorance; leveraging the cultural authority of science; politicizing classifications and standards; and organizing visibility and international circulation. The resulting configurational model demonstrates that these methods, forms, and proposed analytical mechanisms combine dynamically rather than forming a rigid sequence. The findings provide evidence-based reference points for auditing academic journals, university affiliations, metadata, indexing databases, and publishing partnerships.

Keywords propaganda, science, academic integrity, scholarly communication, institutional legitimacy, metadata, scientometric databases, information operations, Russo-Ukrainian war

JEL Classification D83, I23, M15, Z18

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INTRODUCTION

Science is a social institution endowed with a high degree of authority. Scientific claims are commonly perceived as products of specialized expertise, verifiable procedures, and professional scrutiny. This trust creates not only the social value of science but also the possibility of its political instrumentalization. Unlike an ordinary propaganda message, a claim published in a scholarly article and supported by a university affiliation, an editorial board, a DOI, and indexing in an international database acquires additional signals of credibility. Under such conditions, analysis must address not only the content of the message but the entire chain through which it is produced, authorized, normalized, and disseminated.

Following the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and especially after the full-scale invasion in 2022, the Russian scientific system became part of a broader process of state mobilization. Russian universities and academic institutions supported state policy through public statements (Russian Union of Rectors, 2022), research and educational practices (Plastun et al., 2025), and participation in integrating seized Ukrainian institutions (Plastun & Kozmenko, 2025). At the same time, Russian journals and institutions retained a substantial presence within international publishing and scientometric infrastructures (Plastun et al., 2025). This combination of domestic political mobilization and external academic visibility creates conditions under which scholarly forms may serve as channels for the international legitimation of Russian state narratives.

Research on propaganda has largely focused on the deliberate production of ignorance (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008), disinformation (Benkler et al., 2018), pseudoscience (Pigliucci & Boudry, 2013), the politicization of expertise (Pielke, 2007), or restrictions on and measurement of academic freedom (Spannagel & Kinzelbach, 2023). By contrast, the interaction among academic texts, institutional statuses, digital identifiers, databases, and publishing partnerships has received considerably less attention (Plastun et al., 2025; Plastun & Kozmenko, 2025). Accordingly, this article examines contemporary Russian practice not as a collection of isolated violations but as a configuration of propaganda-driven knowledge governance.

The research question is formulated as follows: Which recurring practices within the contemporary Russian academic system confer markers of academic authority and infrastructural visibility on politically predetermined claims? The article argues that the defining feature of such practices is not political subject matter per se, but the systematic orientation of evidence selection, institutional authorization, and infrastructural circulation toward supporting a predetermined political outcome.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Classical definitions of propaganda emphasize the deliberate and systematic shaping of audience perceptions, attitudes, and subsequent behavior (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). In academic settings, its specificity lies in the deployment of science's unique epistemic authority to support politically oriented claims. However, political subject matter, an isolated methodological error, authorial bias, or a routine conflict of interest is not in itself sufficient to classify a scholarly practice as propaganda (Godber & Origgi, 2023; Oreskes & Conway, 2010; Stanley, 2015). Building on these foundational approaches, this article proposes an operationalization according to which a practice is considered propagandistic when there is documented evidence of a combination of political orientation, recurrence, and the active utilization of scientific content, academic status, administrative classifications, or digital infrastructure to authorize, normalize, or circulate a politically significant claim. A defining feature of the content-based construction of politically useful knowledge is systematic selectivity in the use of evidence: purposefully selecting primary sources that support a predetermined conclusion, omitting relevant alternative interpretations, and applying unequal evidentiary standards to competing claims. This crucial distinction prevents propaganda from being conflated with any politically charged statement or any routine violation of academic integrity norms.

Propaganda is increasingly understood as a dynamic social process in which content production, dissemination, audience exposure, reception, and belief change constitute distinct analytical stages (Baden et al., 2026). A similar distinction directly applies to scholarly communication: signals of academic authority, message accessibility, and direct societal impact are related but not identical. Audience reception depends heavily on baseline characteristics, prior ideological attitudes, and the broader information ecosystem (Scheufele & Krause, 2019; West & Bergstrom, 2021). Accordingly, indexing in major bibliometric databases, publishing availability, or search engine visibility indicates the possibility and structural reach of material circulating within the academic environment, rather than guaranteed cognitive acceptance by readers.

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The strategic manipulation of knowledge content can be interpreted, among other theoretical perspectives, through the lens of agnotology, the cultural production and study of ignorance. Ignorance may arise not only from the natural incompleteness of empirical data but also from selective source deployment, systematic omission of viable alternatives, unequal evidentiary requirements, and the deliberate manufacture of artificial doubt (Oreskes & Conway, 2010; Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008).

Complementary research on the socio-epistemic boundaries of scientific knowledge shows that the scientific status of a claim is determined not merely by its intrinsic content. Procedures, professional roles, peer-review apparatuses, and institutional gatekeepers play an essential role in conferring scientific status on a given claim (Gieryn, 1983). From this boundary-work perspective, politically oriented knowledge construction is identified not by the raw political conclusion itself, but by the structural relationship between claims and evidence, the rigorous consideration of alternative explanations, and the precise way epistemic uncertainty is represented or suppressed.

Institutional authorization constitutes another distinct, crucial level of this process. Universities, national academies, peer-reviewed journals, editorial boards, and professional academic statuses provide powerful signals of competence and reliability that are frequently perceived by audiences independently of the intrinsic logical quality of the underlying argument. Individual scholar decisions are not the sole relevant factor; organizational norms surrounding openness, transparent verification, and systematic error correction are equally critical. Baird and Calvard (2019) describe systemic practices of structural closedness, negligence, and indifference to truth as organizational epistemic vices. Under such institutional conditions, systemic environments can sustain the reproduction and escalation of unreliable or politically useful claims without requiring direct, coordinated intention among all participating individuals. This perspective is particularly vital for analyzing authority- and institution-based legitimation: the systemic reproduction of a claim across academic channels does not necessarily imply a shared political or ideological intention among every participating scholar, journal editor, or technical intermediary involved.

Classifications and scholarly communication infrastructures fundamentally shape how the origin, official status, and territorial attribution of knowledge are represented globally. Classification systems do not merely describe objective reality; they actively embed normative categories into standardized digital records and routine administrative procedures (Bowker & Star, 1999; Jasanoff, 2004). In the material examined here, territorial and institutional classifications may directly reproduce politically significant jurisdictional claims within author affiliations, library catalogues, and bibliographic metadata.

Publishing and scientometric platforms establish the foundational conditions of technical accessibility, algorithmic search visibility, and international circulation for such standardized records (Plantin et al., 2018b). Their overarching infrastructural role directly conditions the representation and subsequent digital reproduction of a bibliographic object, though this mechanical facilitation does not automatically imply explicit endorsement of the object's underlying narrative content.

The concept of information laundering helps interpret shifts in the perceived legitimacy and status of a claim as it moves between different institutions, platforms, and media contexts. A strategic change of distribution channel, publication format, or institutional setting can obscure the original political source of a message and endow it with borrowed reputational signals (Klein, 2012). In scholarly communication, such legitimizing signals include a prestigious university name, national academy affiliation, peer-reviewed publication status, a registered DOI, presence in an international indexing database, or formal co-publishing partnerships with prominent commercial global publishers.

In this article, information laundering is deployed as an explanatory analogy rather than as a separately established empirical mechanism. Passage through such technical and institutional channels does not definitively prove a shared political intention among all actors involved; technical oversight,

administrative inertia, commercial profit motivation, or inadequate peer-review due diligence must always be considered as competing, alternative explanations.

At the same time, not every politically charged statement or isolated claim constitutes a full-fledged narrative. In strategic communication, a narrative is understood as a coherent, structured account integrating specific actors, systemic causes, core conflicts, historical interpretations, and a desired future trajectory (Szostek, 2017). Individual academic utterances or isolated argumentative assertions are more accurately classified as claims, analytical frames, or ideological clichés when they fail to form a fully articulated, coherent narrative structure (Sadler, 2026). This distinction is vital for analyzing specific political content that may be authorized or normalized through standard academic forms.

Knowledge content, its formal institutional authorization, and its embedding within administrative classifications and digital infrastructure represent related but non-equivalent levels of analysis. A false institutional affiliation, fictitious editorial-board membership, duplicate DOI assignment, or incorrect bibliographic record primarily concerns core issues of research integrity, publication ethics, or metadata governance. The normative framework documents of ALLEA (2023), COPE Council (2021), and Crossref (2021) serve as essential baselines to distinguish among these technical and ethical categories. Classifying such practices as constitutive elements of propagandistic instrumentalization represents a distinct analytical step that strictly requires a documented, empirical connection to a politically oriented claim or frame, alongside a recurring practice of authorization, normalization, or infrastructural reproduction.

The historical Soviet experience provides essential context for these dynamics, illustrating how authoritarian governance structures establish long-standing precedents for the strategic interaction between scientific research, state control, and political propaganda. Historical investigations into the Soviet scientific public sphere, the ideologization of academic expertise, and institutional gatekeeping demonstrate how scientific production can be systematically subordinated to state policy across different historical eras (Andrews, 2013; Lovett, 2024).

Andrews (2013) analyzes the transformation of the scientific public sphere from late Imperial Russia through the Khrushchev era. Andrews demonstrates that while the state sought to popularize and deploy science as an instrument of enlightenment and ideological modernization, scientific discourse remained a dynamic, communicative arena where state control, academic authority, and public engagement constantly intersected. This shows that even under centralized control, state-sponsored scientific enlightenment functioned as a key mechanism to legitimize political ideology through popular and institutional channels.

David-Fox (2011) investigates the complex relationships between religion, science, and the concept of "political religion" within the Soviet system. Marxism-Leninism positioned Soviet science not merely as a secular technical enterprise, but as a totalizing, quasi-religious framework designed to replace traditional belief systems. By analyzing how academic expertise and scientific discourse were infused with state doctrine, his work illustrates how political regimes transform science into an ideological instrument to enforce socio-political orthodoxy and claim exclusive epistemic authority.

Lovett (2024) explores how the Soviet state controlled and suppressed demographic and population research between 1964 and 1982. Lovett demonstrates that when empirical findings threatened state narratives regarding socio-economic progress and public welfare, institutional gatekeepers deployed strict censorship mechanisms, effectively forcing researchers to distort data or frame population studies through ideologically acceptable filters. This case illustrates how authoritarian systems actively produce "useful knowledge" or deliberate ignorance by restricting permissible research interpretations and aligning scientific publishing with state propaganda goals.

Together, these historical precedents reveal how the deployment of scientific authority, the politicization of expertise, and administrative control over research output have deep institutional roots that continue to inform contemporary practices of academic instrumentalization.

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Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has intensified the urgent need to examine how politically oriented claims become deeply embedded in academic texts, institutional statuses, territorial affiliations, bibliographic metadata, and international publishing infrastructure. Systematizing these multi-layered practices in contemporary Russian science is necessary to identify recurring structural features, rigorously distinguish propaganda from adjacent forms of academic misconduct, and establish robust, evidence-based frameworks for auditing global scholarly communication.

2. AIMS

The study aims to identify and preliminarily systematize the methods and forms of propagandistic instrumentalization of scholarly communication by analyzing contemporary Russian practices involving scientific knowledge, academic institutions, scholarly publications, and the international infrastructure for knowledge dissemination.

3. METHODS

The study is designed as a qualitative documentary multiple-case study aimed at comparing recurring practices across different institutional and infrastructural contexts (Yin, 2018). The analysis employs inductive-abductive reasoning and thematic document coding. The inductive component means that categories of propagandistic instrumentalization were not predefined but emerged from recurring empirical practices. The abductive component involved iteratively comparing the resulting categories with theories of propaganda, agnotology, the cultural authority of science, the politics of classification, and infrastructure studies. The analytical process moved from individual empirical cases and initial codes to grouping similar practices, interpreting their possible communicative functions, aligning the resulting categories with the proposed analytical mechanisms, and formulating the labels used for the methods of propagandistic instrumentalization.

For example, identifying Simferopol as part of Russia in scholarly publications was initially coded as a "change in geographic affiliation," then as the recurring reproduction of a Russian territorial classification, in terms of its possible communicative function as normalization of annexation, and at the theoretical level as politicization of standards and classifications. The recurrence of such operations led to the analytical category "affiliation-based territorial normalization of annexation," defined in the typology as one method of propagandistic instrumentalization of scholarly communication.

The empirical basis of the study was a purposively assembled corpus of analytical reports and monitoring materials produced by the Sumy State University Think Tank "Research of Fakes and Propaganda in Russian Science" in 2024–2026 (https://thinktank.sumdu.edu.ua/) (see Appendix A). These reports contain initially verified cases, including analyses of publications by Russian scholars, metadata in Scopus/WoS, Crossref records, institutional affiliations, the activities of seized Ukrainian universities, institutional support by Russian higher education institutions for aggression against Ukraine, and official correspondence with members of Russian journal editorial boards. The sources aggregate empirical information on Scopus/Elsevier cooperation with Russian publications, the role of European publishers and organizations, the effectiveness of sanctions against Russian science, the reliability of the international composition of editorial boards, the Springer Nature–Pleiades partnership, territorial-affiliation manipulation, and multiple-DOI schemes.

This body of data was used for contextual triangulation and to trace cases back to primary sources. The article applies secondary qualitative document analysis and thematic coding, with empirical cases serving as the basis for constructing a generalized conceptual model. The list of analytical reports and publications is provided in Supplementary Materials 1 (see Appendix A).

The unit of analysis was an individual documented practice involving the use of a scholarly text, academic status, classification, or infrastructure that could contribute to the legitimation, normalization, or circulation of a politically oriented claim. Such units included, for example, an article reproducing an official political claim or frame;

Table 1. Selected quantitative characteristics of the data used

Data category	Quantitative characteristic
Materials of the Sumy State University Think Tank "Research of Fakes and Propaganda in Russian Science," 2024–2026	7 analytical reports and 20 media publications
Metadata in the Scopus database	80,000+ publications affiliated with Russia, 2022–2025
Publications by Russian scholars	700+
Editorial boards of Russian journals	800+ journals, 3,700+ letters to editorial-board members, 1,000+ responses
Irregular ISSNs	60+ cases
Seized Ukrainian universities, research and educational institutions	1,500+ entities, including 400+ higher education institutions and 30+ research institutions and organizations
Fictitious DOIs	140+ Russian journals, of which 70+ were involved in generating fictitious DOIs
Springer Nature–Pleiades partnership	200+ Russian journals
Institutional affiliations	2,000+ identified cases

identifying occupied Ukrainian territory as part of Russia in an affiliation; listing a scholar on an editorial board without consent; assigning multiple DOIs to the same material; or distributing a journal of a sanctioned institution through an international publisher. Cases involving editorial-board anomalies, multiple DOIs, indexing, or international publishing were retained for boundary analysis but were counted as evidence of propagandistic instrumentalization only when a documented connection to a specific politically oriented claim or frame was established. Units were grouped not by document type but by the nature of the operation and its documented position in the communication chain. A document, bibliographic record, institution, and recurring practice were treated as distinct nested levels of analysis rather than equivalent observations.

Coding proceeded in five stages. First, each case received a descriptive code without assignment to a predefined classification, for example "reproduction of a state narrative," "Russian designation of Ukrainian territory," "editorial-board membership without consent," "multiple DOIs for one text," or "international circulation of a Russian journal." Second, similar codes were grouped by type of operation and context. Third, the possible communicative function was interpreted, including the production of politically useful knowledge, legitimation, normalization, the appearance of international recognition, or increased infrastructural visibility. Fourth, the resulting categories were compared with theoretical approaches to propaganda, agnotology, the cultural authority of science, classification politics, and knowledge infrastructure. Finally, recurring categories were integrated into an analytical typology of methods of propagandistic instrumentalization of scholarly communication.

The categories were also related to the integrative concept of "propaganda-driven knowledge governance," understood here as the systematic use of the content, authority, classifications, and infrastructure of science to produce, legitimate, normalize, and circulate politically desirable representations.

To avoid conflating propaganda with error or misconduct, three mandatory criteria were assessed at the level of each practice: political orientation, academic instrumentalization, and a documented connection to the communication chain. Political orientation meant support for a specific state or geopolitical claim, frame, or narrative. Academic instrumentalization involved the use of scientific content, the authority of a scholar, institution, or journal, or classifications, metadata, or a platform. A documented connection to the communication chain was established through actual publication, indexing, reproduction, or transmission of the relevant material or record. Recurrence was assessed at the level of the analytical category rather than the individual case and was established when a series of similar practices occurred within one or more institutional or infrastructural contexts. Legitimation, normalization, or dissemination was coded separately as an analytical inference and was not used as a self-sufficient inclusion criterion. Institutional embeddedness was treated as an additional reinforcing criterion.

Methodologically, intention, function, and effect were distinguished. Propagandistic intent was

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not attributed to international databases, publishers, or other infrastructural actors without direct documentary evidence. Where technical dissemination, commercial intermediation, or failure to respond appropriately after documented notification of a problem was established, such actors were classified as infrastructural intermediaries. Their actions or inaction could increase visibility and the potential for circulation, but were not treated as independent evidence of propagandistic intent or actual audience effects.

To establish the origin of an error or politically significant record, four metadata layers were distinguished: data supplied by the author or institution in a manuscript or profile (source metadata); a record created or edited by the publisher (publisher metadata); metadata deposited by a Crossref member in the DOI registry (Crossref deposit); and the import, matching, and normalization of the record in Scopus, Web of Science, or another database (database normalization). Responsibility was attributed to a specific actor only where evidence showed that the disputed value originated, was modified, or was retained at a level under that actor's control. The presence of the same error in a final database record and in publisher or Crossref data was not in itself treated as sufficient evidence of origin.

The number of methods was not predetermined. Given purposive case selection and the absence of independent double coding of the entire corpus, the result is defined as an analytical typology developed from Russian material rather than a definitive universal classification. The research design does not permit measurement of actual audience exposure, reception, belief change, or behavior.

Within the source–claim audit, all references were classified by evidentiary role: primary objects of analysis – scholarly articles, institutional statements, affiliation and bibliographic records; primary infrastructural sources – Scopus and Crossref records and publisher and institutional pages; secondary analytical materials – reports and prior studies by the authors; and theoretical and normative sources. Factual claims concerning a specific text, affiliation, or bibliographic record were checked against an available primary source. Analytical reports were used to identify cases, establish context, and triangulate evidence, but did not substitute for primary evidence.

Russian publications containing politically charged claims were treated as objects of analysis rather than as independent evidence that those claims were true. Theoretical sources were used to define concepts, and normative documents to formulate criteria of appropriate practice. Where a primary record was unavailable, this was stated explicitly, and the corresponding finding was not used for strong attribution of intent or responsibility.

4. RESULTS

Comparative analysis of the selected cases, encompassing scholarly publications, institutional documents, and bibliographic metadata, identified three recurring methods of propagandistic instrumentalization of scholarly communication: the content-based construction of politically useful knowledge; authority- and institution-based legitimation of politically oriented claims; and affiliation-based territorial normalization of annexation. The methods differ in the immediate object of the operation: in the first case, the content of knowledge; in the second, its academic authority and status; and in the third, the classificatory and affiliation attributes of knowledge. In individual cases, these methods may overlap and may be implemented through scholarly texts, journals, editorial boards, universities, institutional profiles, digital identifiers, databases, and publishing platforms.

At a higher level of analytical abstraction, the three methods are related to four proposed analytical mechanisms: the production of politically useful knowledge or ignorance; the use of the cultural authority of science; the politicization of classifications and standards; and the organization of visibility and international circulation. Methods and mechanisms are not interchangeable: a method denotes a recurring operation, whereas a mechanism describes a theoretically grounded logic through which that operation may contribute to the legitimation, normalization, or circulation of a politically oriented claim. One method may be

associated with several mechanisms, and the same mechanism may support different methods. The proposed mechanisms are not treated as fully verified causal chains.

Four analytical dimensions are distinguished in presenting the results: method, form, mechanism, and political content. A method denotes a recurring operation on the content, status, classification, or visibility of knowledge. A form is the material, organizational, or digital carrier of that operation. A mechanism describes the proposed explanatory logic through which the operation may contribute to legitimation, normalization, or circulation. Political content comprises the claim, frame, or strategic narrative that may thereby be authorized, normalized, or disseminated. Table 2 summarizes these dimensions. Depending on the case, the practices may occur separately, combine, or emerge at different points in the communication chain.

Thus, the typology has two levels of abstraction: the empirical level comprises the three identified methods, while the theoretical-analytical level comprises the four proposed mechanisms. Visibility, accessibility, and potential legitimating function are not equated with actual reception, belief change, or audience behavior, because these effects were not measured in this study.

Each of the three empirically identified methods is considered below, from its defining features to specific forms and cases of implementation.

Method 1: Content-based construction of politically useful knowledge (an operation on the content of an academic claim). This method involves incorporating politically oriented claims, frames, or narratives into academic argumentation so that they take the form of scholarly explanations, interpretations, or conclusions. In the corpus examined, empirical indicators included the recurrent reproduction of politically predetermined causal explanations, the presentation of normative-political assessments as academically substantiated conclusions, and alignment with official state narratives. Selective citation, omission of relevant alternatives, asymmetric evidentiary standards, and concealment of uncertainty may serve as additional indicators, but require separate verification at the level of the argument structure and source base of a specific text. A characteristic form is the integration of a politically oriented narrative into

Table 2. Distinguishing analytical mechanisms, methods, forms, and political content

Level of analysis	Main question	Conceptual content	Example
Analytical mechanism	What explanatory logic links the practice to possible legitimation, normalization, or circulation?	A theoretically grounded logic: production of politically useful knowledge or ignorance; use of the cultural authority of science; politicization of classifications and standards; organization of visibility and circulation. A mechanism is not treated as a fully verified causal chain	Academic status may lend a political claim the appearance of expert-validated knowledge
Method	What recurring operation is performed on the content, status, classification, or visibility of knowledge?	A recurring operation on the content, status, classification, or visibility of knowledge. Three methods were identified empirically	Content-based construction of politically useful knowledge; authority- and institution-based legitimation of politically oriented claims; affiliation-based territorial normalization of annexation
Form	Through what is the method implemented?	The material, organizational, or digital carrier of the method	Scholarly article, editorial board, author affiliation, institutional profile, DOI, translated journal, publishing or scientometric platform
Political content	Which politically oriented claim, frame, or narrative is authorized, normalized, or disseminated?	A claim, frame, or strategic narrative with which the relevant practice has a documented connection	"Occupied territories are Russian"; "Ukraine is responsible for starting the war"; "the collective West or NATO is at war with Russia, while Russia is the victim of aggression"

Note: Authors' synthesis based on theories of propaganda (Ellul, 1973; Stanley, 2015; Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019), agnotology (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008), classification politics (Bowker & Star, 1999), and infrastructure studies (Plantin et al., 2018a; 2018b). The same narrative may be disseminated through several methods and forms, while one form may serve different narratives; these concepts are therefore not interchangeable.

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an academic text equipped with specialized terminology, references, and formal attributes of scholarly publication. This is not synonymous with pseudoscience, because individual facts, sources, or methods may be valid; the object of analysis is the process through which a politically oriented explanation acquires academic form and authority.

Examples from contemporary Russian practice illustrate this logic. The article "Zigzags of the Post-Imperial Syndrome," published in Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences and internationally distributed by Springer/Pleiades, portrays Russia as a victim of the "West" and "NATO," which allegedly cultivated a nationalist, Russophobic, and neo-Nazi Ukraine, accompanied by the glorification of Bandera, discrimination against the Russian language, calls for repression against hated Muscovites, and simultaneous saturation with weapons. As a result, Russia is said to have "exhausted all diplomatic resources" and to have been "forced to launch a special military operation" to "protect the people of Donbas" (Garbuzov, 2022).

Merkuryev and Rubtsov (2024), in "Genocide of the Russian-speaking population of Donbass. Criminological and criminal law justification," describe an alleged genocide of the Russian-speaking population of Donbas by the "Kyiv regime" and link it to the criminal ideology and practice of Nazism.

Alexandrova (2025), in "Crimes of the Kiev Regime Against the Civilian Population of Ukraine After the 2014 Coup," purportedly "analyzes" crimes of the "Kyiv regime" against civilians in Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk "People's Republics," reproducing familiar Russian propaganda frames concerning the "Kyiv regime," the "2014 coup d'état," "neo-Nazi armed formations," and the "bloody crimes of the Kyiv regime," among others.

Kiknadze (2022) "examines" the "demilitarization" and "denazification" of Ukraine during the "special military operation," the characteristics of "Ukrainian Nazism" and the "crimes of Banderites," and presents Ukraine as an anti-Russian bridgehead of the United States and NATO that posed a military threat to the Russian Federation and was preparing aggression against it. This, in the article's framing, led to Russia's "adequate actions" to "protect its national security, save the people of Donbas from genocide, and liberate the fraternal people of Ukraine from neo-Nazism."

The cases analyzed directly demonstrate the recurring transfer of official political claims and frames into an academic format. They show academicized representations that shift responsibility for the war onto Ukraine and Western states, portray Ukrainian identity as an "anti-Russian course," and deploy the frames of "neo-Nazism," "genocide," and external threat.

Method 2: Authority- and institution-based legitimation of politically oriented claims (the object of the operation is the academic authority and status of the source of the claim). This method involves using the academic status of scholars, university leaders, research institutions, professional associations, or scholarly publications as a source of authority for a politically oriented claim, frame, or narrative. Unlike content-based knowledge construction, where the primary operation concerns the formation of the academic argument itself, the key issue here is who authorizes the claim and which academic or institutional status is used to reinforce it.

A direct example is the 2022 statement of the Russian Union of Rectors, in which leaders of Russian universities publicly supported the actions of the state authorities in the war against Ukraine (Russian Union of Rectors, 2022). This case therefore satisfies the evidentiary threshold for Method 2: the political claim is identifiable in the statement, and collective academic status is documentably used to authorize it. Here, a political position receives an additional signal of authority through the collective status of the rectors and the universities they represent. Academic legitimation does not mean that institutional affiliation makes the political claim true; rather, the claim is presented on behalf of actors endowed with socially recognized status as experts and academic authorities.

A separate form of this method is the use of the status of a research institution or publication to sustain the academic authority of politically oriented content. Such a classification requires a documented connection between a specific claim or narrative and the relevant academic actor; an

institution's membership in a politically engaged organization or its presence in an international database is not sufficient by itself.

International indexing and publishing presence must therefore be analytically distinguished from legitimation itself. A contrasting boundary case clarifies this evidentiary threshold. According to the Faculty of Psychology at Lomonosov Moscow State University, Lomonosov Psychology Journal was accepted for indexing in Scopus on December 19, 2025. MSU was also among the signatories of the Russian Union of Rectors statement, and its rector, Viktor Sadovnichy, headed the union (Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, 2025; Russian Union of Rectors, 2022). However, the coexistence of these facts establishes institutional association and international bibliographic visibility only; it does not demonstrate a connection between the Scopus indexing decision and a specific politically oriented claim. This case was therefore excluded from the evidentiary basis for Method 2 and retained solely as a boundary case illustrating infrastructural visibility.

Similarly, the distribution of Russian journals through international publishing channels creates conditions for academic visibility and potential circulation. Such cases can primarily be treated as infrastructural forms that may support legitimation or circulation, but they do not substitute for evidence of a legitimating operation itself. Unless a documented connection to an identifiable politically oriented claim is established, such cases are classified as infrastructural visibility only and do not constitute evidence for Method 2.

Method 3: Affiliation-based territorial normalization of annexation (an operation on the classificatory and affiliation attributes of knowledge). This method involves changing the geographic and institutional attributes attached to knowledge. For coding and interpretation, territorial status was assessed against Ukraine's internationally recognized borders rather than against de facto control or unilateral national designations. This benchmark was grounded in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262 for Crimea and Sevastopol and Resolution ES-11/4 for the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions (United Nations General Assembly, 2014, 2022).

Within this framework, identifying an occupied Ukrainian city or institution as Russian is not a neutral technical detail: the affiliation becomes a recurring jurisdictional claim (for example, "Sevastopol, Russia" or "Donetsk, Russia"). The operation occurs simultaneously at two levels: substantively, through the representation of Russian jurisdiction as an established fact; and technically, through corresponding affiliations in bibliographic records (Plastun et al., 2025).

Forms of this method include author affiliations, institutional profiles, maps, bibliographic records, publishing templates, and library catalogues. Repetition of the same designation across systems creates a cumulative infrastructural trace: the political claim becomes part of a machine-readable reality and is reproduced through search, analytics, and subsequent publications. The legitimation of seized universities is a broader version of the same operation: not only territory but also institutional history, personnel, and academic capital are appropriated (Plastun & Kozmenko, 2025).

According to the bibliometric analysis by Plastun et al. (2025), hundreds of Scopus-indexed publications in 2022–2024 contained affiliations identifying occupied Ukrainian cities as part of the Russian Federation. For Crimean cities, the share of such designations remained very high, while for Donetsk and Luhansk it increased markedly after 2022. Detailed data by international publisher for 2023–2024 are presented in Table 3.

According to Plastun et al. (2025), bibliographic records also contain Russian affiliations for Kherson, a city located in one of the Ukrainian regions whose attempted annexation by the Russian Federation was rejected in United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/4 (United Nations General Assembly, 2022). This suggests that bibliographic infrastructure may reproduce neither actual administrative control nor internationally recognized territorial status, but a unilateral Russian territorial claim.

If this example shows the reproduction of a territorial claim at the level of an individual affiliation record, a related practice at the institutional level is the incorporation of seized Ukrainian in-

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Table 3. Number of Scopus-indexed publications with affiliations identifying Ukrainian cities as part of the Russian Federation, 2023–2024

Source: Plastun et al. (2025).

Publishers	Sevastopol	Simferopol	Donetsk	Yalta	Kerch	Luhansk
Total	625 (435)	413 (381)	115 (124)	75 (54)	29 (12)	23 (18)
Springer Nature/ Pleiades	194 (115)	64 (56)	40 (47)	15 (3)	7 (3)	10 (14)
MDPI	65 (21)	25 (12)	5 (0)	12 (5)	2 (1)	1 (1)
EDP Science	43 (32)	32 (23)	4 (4)	11 (12)	8 (1)	1 (0)
IEEE	37 (19)	8 (2)	3 (1)	6 (2)	7 (2)	1 (0)
Elsevier	24 (36)	9 (17)	3 (5)	0 (1)	1 (2)	0 (0)

Note: The table reports the number of publications for 2023; figures in parentheses refer to 2024. The unit of counting is the unique Scopus EID of a document. Separate searches were conducted for each city using the AFFILCITY field and publication year; attribution to the Russian Federation was determined from the country specified in the affiliation record. Records were deduplicated by EID and, where unavailable, by DOI or a combination of title, year, and first author. Language versions with different EIDs were counted separately. Publisher information was taken from Scopus metadata and checked against the journal website.

stitutions into the Russian academic system and the subsequent reproduction of their Russian attribution. Affiliation-based territorial normalization therefore encompasses not only city or country labels but also the representation of the institutional identity of seized organizations as Russian.

Plastun and Kozmenko (2025) report that during 2014–2024, 1,536 educational and research institutions were located in or displaced from occupied territories. Within this set, the authors identified 289 Ukrainian higher education institutions appropriated by Russia. The use of the names, physical assets, and institutional legacies of such organizations may contribute to normalization of

One channel through which such institutional attribution is reproduced internationally is the presentation of staff from seized institutions in programs of international academic events. For example, the program of the International Geographical Union (IGU) Regional Conference scheduled for August 17-21, 2026 lists participants and speakers from the A. O. Kovalevsky Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Supplementary Materials 2). This Ukrainian research institution was seized and incorporated into the Russian institutional system after the annexation of Crimea. Presenting it under a Russian institutional name reproduces Russian jurisdictional attribution in an international academic context.

5. FORMS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND THE CONFIGURATIONAL MODEL

The analysis shows that methods of propagandistic instrumentalization and the forms through which they are implemented constitute different analytical levels. Methods differ by the immediate object of the operation – the content of knowledge, the academic authority and status of its source, or its classificatory and affiliation attributes – whereas forms denote the material, organizational, or digital environments through which such operations may be carried out. Thus, one form may be relevant to several methods, and the same method may be implemented through different forms. A scholarly article, for example, may contain a politically oriented academic explanation, while its institutional presentation may additionally generate signals of academic status. An affiliation record performs a classificatory function, while its reproduction in publishing and scientometric systems gives that classification broader visibility.

Organizational practices capable of generating signals of academic authority include the presentation of editorial-board membership. The material examined contained cases in which scholars were listed without consent and their names were

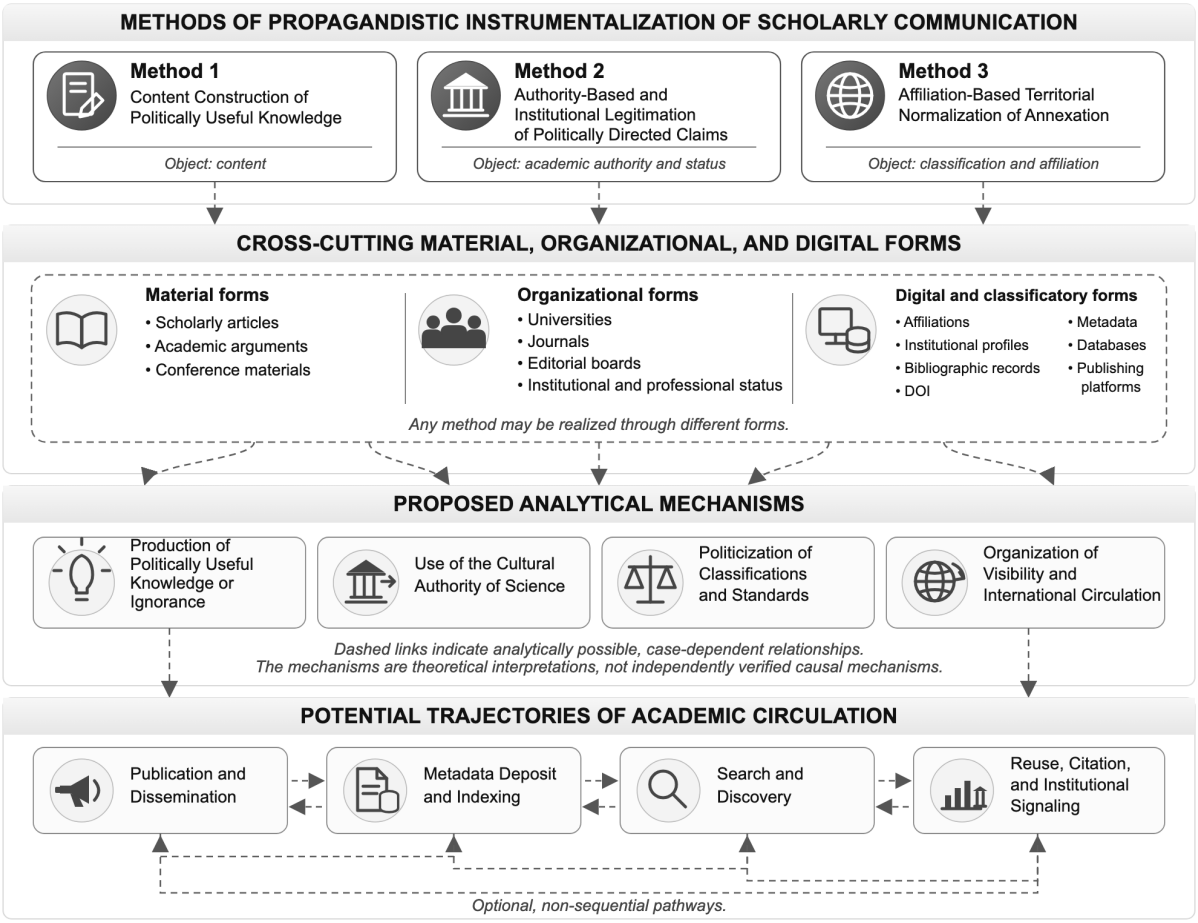

Figure 1. Configurational model of the propagandistic instrumentalization of scholarly communication

not removed after direct requests. The presence of deceased or inactive individuals on such lists was treated as an indicator requiring further verification rather than as self-sufficient evidence of deliberate fabrication (Plastun et al., 2026).

At the digital level, relevant practices include the creation and linking of bibliographic records, including multiple-DOI cases that may complicate the establishment of provenance and relationships among versions of the same object (Plastun & Kotelnykova, 2026). Multiple DOIs are not in themselves evidence of manipulation, because separate identifiers may correspond to different versions or formats. Cases were considered problematic where version relationships were not transparently indicated, the same object was duplicated without an established editorial basis, or records created a misleading impression of provenance (Crossref, 2025). Such bibliographic practices

Accordingly, neither editorial-board anomalies nor multiple-DOI cases were treated as evidence of propagandistic instrumentalization in the absence of a documented connection to an identifiable politically oriented claim or frame; otherwise, they remained publication-ethics or metadata-governance issues.

Synthesizing the findings made it possible to propose a configurational model of the propagandistic instrumentalization of scholarly communication that relates the three empirically identified methods to four theoretically proposed analytical mechanisms and their forms of implementation. The model shows how content-based construction of politically useful knowledge, authority- and institution-based legitimation of politically oriented claims, and affiliation-based territorial normalization of annexation may be associated with the production of politically useful knowledge or ignorance, the use of the cultural authority of sci-

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ence, the politicization of classifications and standards, and the organization of visibility and international circulation.

The model also represents potential trajectories of academic circulation: publication and dissemination, metadata creation and transmission, indexing, search and discovery, and subsequent citation, reuse, or institutional signaling. These stages do not constitute a universal cycle and do not imply that every object passes through the entire sequence. Figure 1 summarizes possible configurations of methods, forms, analytical mechanisms, and circulation trajectories.

The four mechanisms shown in Figure 1 are theoretically grounded analytical interpretations. The links among elements of the model do not form a mandatory sequence or universal causal chain. A scholarly text may acquire international visibility without affiliation-based territorial normalization; a politically significant territorial classification may be embedded in a publication that is otherwise politically neutral in content; and a platform may provide visibility to a record without authority- and institution-based legitimation of a specific political claim. Reverse links are also possible: for example, international indexing or publishing presence may be used by an institution as a signal of external academic recognition.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings specify the processual and infrastructural dimensions of propaganda: propagandistic instrumentalization may occur not only through the content of an individual message but also through the interaction of academic institutions, classifications, and technical standards (Baden et al., 2026; Plantin et al., 2018b). The recurrence of these practices and their documented

These methods do not form a mandatory sequence and may operate separately or combine in different configurations. The organization of international visibility may support the circulation of outputs produced by any of these methods, but such links must be established separately. At the same time, documented accessibility or visibility does not in itself demonstrate reception, persuasive effects, or behavioral influence on audiences (Scheufele & Krause, 2019; West & Bergstrom, 2021). Accordingly, the four proposed mechanisms are used here as theoretically grounded analytical interpretations of how the observed practices may contribute to legitimation, normalization, or circulation.

The Russian case adds an important element: legitimating functions and dissemination potential may arise through interactions among actors with different intentions. A Russian institution may deliberately construct a political narrative; a scholarly journal may provide it with academic form; a scientometric database may mechanically import metadata; and an international publisher may manage a commercial portfolio. The system as a whole, however, may create cumulative conditions for legitimation and normalization that no single element would create independently. This change in the status of a claim can be interpreted by analogy with information laundering: movement across channels and institutional contexts may obscure its original provenance and endow it with borrowed reputational signals (Klein, 2012). Here the concept is explanatory rather than a separately established empirical mechanism. Alternative explanations – technical error, administrative inertia, commercial motivation, or inadequate verification – must therefore be assessed for each actor. A systemic function should not automatically be attributed to the intentions of all participants.

From a knowledge-governance perspective, this problem lies at the intersection of knowledge quality and provenance, research integrity, publication ethics, metadata governance, and research security. Traditional control mechanisms focus on manuscript content, plagiarism, and peer review, whereas affiliations, editorial-board composition, sanctions compliance, DOI registration, and territorial metadata are generally governed by different institutions and procedures. The problem is not only a lack of rules but also fragmented responsibility. The present study does not test a specific governance intervention. It nevertheless identifies a policy-relevant vulnerability arising from the fragmentation of responsibility across the scholarly communication system. One resulting policy implication is that publishers, databases, and other infrastructure providers could consider

provenance-chain audits covering the origin of a claim, its institutional authorization, its encoding in metadata, the platforms through which it circulates, and the correction of reported errors. Such an audit would need to distinguish research-integrity violations, publication-ethics issues, and metadata-quality problems under ALLEA, COPE, and the rules of the relevant infrastructure, while treating political function as a separate analytical question.

The findings also call for caution regarding automated propaganda detection. Emotional language, political subject matter, or alignment with an official position cannot serve as self-sufficient indicators. Existing automated systems primarily identify rhetorical techniques or textual fragments, whereas the proposed typology also encompasses actors, affiliations, metadata, and institutional behavior (Da San Martino et al., 2020). Directly applying text classifiers to scholarly infrastructure therefore raises a construct-validity problem: a system may measure political vocabulary but incorrectly interpret it as a propagandistic function (Jacobs & Wallach, 2021). A methodological implication is that any future detection system would need to combine textual indicators with evidence concerning claims and supporting evidence, representation of alternatives, transparency about uncertainty, source reliability, affiliation anomalies, actor roles, and infrastructural context. Its output would be more appropriately treated as a risk signal for expert review than as an automated determination of propaganda. The validity and practical performance of such an approach remain to be tested.

The findings do not empirically validate a system of countermeasures. Rather, they identify institutional and infrastructural vulnerabilities from which several policy implications and practice-oriented proposals can be derived. General normative reference points include transparency, accountability, risk assessment, and protection of fundamental rights (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2024); these documents do not constitute empirical validation of the proposed measures. Within this provisional framework, journals could consider periodically confirming the consent and activity of editorial-board members; publishers could strengthen the synchronization of editorial roles across language versions and review sanctions-compliance procedures; DOI registrars could develop methods for identifying semantically identical records; databases could introduce accessible procedures for contesting territorial affiliations and documenting corrections; and international associations could adopt risk-based procedures for assessing documented institutional involvement in support for war, propaganda, or the appropriation of seized organizations. Any such procedures would need to focus on verified institutional conduct rather than scholars' nationality. Potential indicators for future evaluation could include response times, the proportion of corrected metadata, recurrence of documented violations, false-positive decisions, appeal outcomes, and unintended restrictions on legitimate scholarly communication.

Sanctions constitute a separate element of countering propaganda in science. According to Kozmenko et al. (2025), sanctions were associated with reductions in some indicators of the international presence of sanctioned Russian institutions. This is not equivalent to a demonstrated reduction in propagandistic influence; such a conclusion would require separate evidence on audience reception and behavior. In strategic-communication evaluation terms, this is an indicator of structural visibility or reach rather than a demonstrated outcome at the level of perceptions, attitudes, or behavior (AMEC, 2020). The available evidence therefore supports only a limited policy inference: sanctions may alter patterns of institutional visibility and international participation, but it does not establish whether they reduce the production, legitimacy, circulation, or reception of politically oriented claims. Any evaluation of sanctions as a policy response would need to examine proportionality, differential effects across institutions and researchers, and possible substitution effects, including shifts of publications to other journals, alternative affiliations, intermediary institutions, or less transparent dissemination channels.

The findings raise five discussion questions that clarify the boundaries of the proposed typology, the responsibility of infrastructural actors, and the principles of proportionate countermeasures.

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6.1. Is propagandistic intent a necessary condition?

The proposed typology distinguishes intention, function, and effect. These three levels must be established using different types of evidence and cannot be treated as interchangeable. Classical definitions of propaganda emphasize intentional and systematic shaping of perceptions (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019), whereas an infrastructural approach shows that platforms may structure the circulation of knowledge independently of the stated motives of individual participants (Plantin et al., 2018b). For state actors or actors directly linked to the state, evidence of intent may derive from official programs, editorial policies, systematic practices, and consistency with state narratives. For international publishers, indexers, and technical platforms, this is insufficient: their participation may be commercial, procedural, or negligent. Prolonged inaction after documented notification of a violation may justify a separate assessment of foreseeability and due diligence, but does not by itself prove propagandistic intent. Thus, without demonstrated intent, it is appropriate to establish

6.2. Where is the boundary between academic misconduct and propaganda?

Fictitious editorial-board membership, outdated affiliations, and duplicate bibliographic records may fall into different categories: publication-ethics violations, research-integrity violations, or metadata-quality problems. Their classification as propaganda requires separate evidence of political orientation, recurrence, and connection to a specific claim or frame (ALLEA, 2023; COPE Council, 2021; Crossref, 2021). Empirical grounds for this distinction are provided by research on editorial boards (Plastun et al., 2026) and analysis of Springer/Pleiades cooperation, including multiple DOIs and other bibliographic anomalies (Plastun & Kotelnykova, 2026). Such practices become elements of propaganda-driven knowledge governance when they are politically oriented, recurrent, use academic authority, and perform a function of legitimation, normalization, provenance masking, or scaling of a specific narrative. No single feature – political significance, recurrence, a metadata anomaly, or the use of academic authority – should be considered sufficient without examining alternative explanations. This distinction protects the typology from overextension, whereby any academic error would be labeled propaganda.

6.3. What is the responsibility of publishers, databases, and indexers?

Platforms are not entirely neutral: indexing rules, affiliation standards, linking of language versions, and correction procedures shape the visibility and provenance of knowledge (Bowker & Star, 1999; Plantin et al., 2018b). Yet infrastructural participation alone does not prove complicity in propaganda. Responsibility depends on what a platform knew, what actions it could reasonably take, and how it responded to verifiable signals. The levels below should be treated as a normative-analytical heuristic rather than a validated responsibility scale. At least three levels of responsibility among infrastructure providers can be distinguished:

1. Technical intermediation without reliable knowledge of a problem. For example, automatic import of affiliations without awareness that they are incorrect. This indicates infrastructural vulnerability but not deliberate complicity in propaganda.

2. Negligence after receiving a verifiable signal. A platform is notified of a false affiliation, fictitious editorial board, or other documented violation but fails to ensure timely verification, explanation, or correction. This level concerns due diligence and foreseeability of consequences.

3. Intentional preservation or reproduction of a practice despite verified evidence and a realistic opportunity to correct it. Any inference of possible deliberate participation by an intermediary should be based on documented response times, the content of responses, and actual actions, not merely on the absence of a desired outcome.

As normative reference points – though not as direct regulation of scholarly databases – the principles of due diligence, transparency, accountability, and accessible appeal procedures articulated by UNESCO (2023) and OECD (2024) may be used. Empirical grounds for further testing of this dis-

tinction are provided by peer-reviewed analysis of territorial and publishing practices (Plastun et al., 2025) and the Springer/Pleiades report (Plastun & Kotelnykova, 2026).

6.4. How universal is the typology?

The three methods of propagandistic instrumentalization of scholarly communication were developed from Russian material, whereas the four proposed analytical mechanisms may have broader potential applicability: the production of politically useful knowledge, appropriation of scientific authority, politicization of classifications, and organization of knowledge circulation may operate in other authoritarian, wartime, and even democratic contexts (Stanley, 2015; Oreskes & Conway, 2010; Benkler et al., 2018). The Russian specificity lies in the combination of state centralization, historical repertoires of interaction between science and state policy (Andrews, 2013; Lovett, 2024), territorial aggression, and access to global academic infrastructure. Comparative testing should establish which elements of the model are general and which depend on a particular political regime and historical context.

6.5. How can countering propaganda be reconciled with academic freedom?

Stronger verification, sanctions compliance, and metadata controls may conflict with academic freedom, open science, and the principle of non-discrimination based on citizenship. Empirical analysis of the impact of sanctions on publication activity and international cooperation (Kozmenko et al., 2025) shows that such measures have systemic consequences. Those consequences alone, however, do not establish the effectiveness, necessity, or proportionality of any particular restriction. A policy implication of the present analysis is that any proposed restriction would need to be tied to documented institutional relationships, falsified statuses, false territorial classifications, concealed provenance, or systematic rule violations rather than to research topics, political disagreement, or a scholar's nationality as such. This approach would be consistent with EU research-security principles of risk orientation, proportionality, non-discrimination, protection of academic freedom, and periodic review (Council of the European Union, 2024). A proportionate policy model would therefore need to combine verifiable criteria, a right to explanation and correction, transparent decision-making, and priority for metadata correction over automatic removal of bona fide research outputs. It would also distinguish institutional from individual responsibility, provide for appeal, set time limits on restrictions, and regularly assess effectiveness and unintended consequences. Whether this model produces the intended effects without disproportionately restricting legitimate scholarly communication remains an empirical question for future research.

The contribution of the proposed typology therefore lies not in extending the label "propaganda" to every academic violation, but in specifying the evidentiary conditions under which content-related, institutional, and infrastructural practices can be analytically connected within a configuration of the propagandistic instrumentalization of scholarly communication. The resulting policy implications identify areas requiring institutional attention and empirical evaluation.

7. LIMITATIONS

The study has several limitations. First, the corpus was assembled through purposive selection of analytically rich cases rather than a representative sample of Russian scholarly communication. Materials differed in type, time coverage, and level of nesting, partly overlapped, and were not consolidated into a single registry with persistent identifiers. The study therefore supports construction of an analytical typology but not estimation of the prevalence of the identified methods or extrapolation to Russian science as a whole.

Second, the study establishes academic authorization, infrastructural visibility, and circulation potential but does not measure actual audience exposure, reception, belief change, or behavior. The identified links among methods, forms, and proposed analytical mechanisms should not be interpreted as proven causal chains. Testing them requires longitudinal data, process tracing, and audience research.

Third, digital metadata, affiliations, editorial-board composition, and indexing records may change after data collection. Some identified cases may have been corrected, while new cases may

http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/kpm.10(4).2026.01

have emerged. The findings therefore reflect the state of available sources at the time of verification and require periodic updating.

Finally, the authors are affiliated with the analytical center whose materials constituted a substantial part of the initial corpus. This positionality provided in-depth subject knowledge but may have influenced case selection and interpretation. To mitigate this risk, the center's materials were used primarily to identify potential cases and establish context, while factual claims were checked against available primary documents and infrastructural records. Alternative explanations were considered throughout the analysis. Where primary confirmation was unavailable, the corresponding finding was not used for strong attribution of intent or responsibility. Nevertheless, such triangulation does not fully eliminate the risk of confirmatory selection.

CONCLUSION

The cases analyzed show that the propagandistic instrumentalization of scholarly communication is not limited to politically oriented content in academic texts. It may operate through different interventions in the content of knowledge, the academic authority and status of its source, and the classificatory and affiliation attributes of knowledge. Based on documented practices, the study develops a preliminary typology of three methods: content-based construction of politically useful knowledge; authority- and institution-based legitimation of politically oriented claims; and affiliation-based territorial normalization of annexation. The proposed configurational model relates these methods to four theoretically proposed analytical mechanisms: the production of politically useful knowledge or ignorance, the use of the cultural authority of science, the politicization of classifications and standards, and the organization of visibility and international circulation. The methods do not form a mandatory sequence: they may operate independently or combine in different configurations through material, organizational, and digital forms of scholarly communication.

The conceptual contribution of the study lies in distinguishing among different objects of propagandistic instrumentalization – the content of knowledge, academic authority, and the classificatory and affiliation attributes of knowledge – while integrating them into a common analytical framework of scholarly communication. This approach makes it possible to analyze how politically oriented claims may acquire academic form and authority, and how politically significant classifications may become embedded in institutional and bibliographic records and gain international visibility. At the same time, indexing, publishing availability, or infrastructural presence alone is not treated as sufficient evidence of legitimation of a specific political claim, just as documented visibility does not demonstrate reception or audience effects. The practical value of the proposed typology and configurational model lies in providing evidence-based reference points for auditing scholarly texts, journals, editorial boards, universities, affiliations, bibliographic metadata, databases, and publishing partnerships.

The findings also identify directions for future empirical testing. These include the possible formation of networks of strategic reciprocal citation, the use of academic uncertainty to manufacture doubt, territorial normalization through research that is non-political in content – provisionally termed "academic camouflage" – and the transformation of politically charged concepts into machine-readable descriptors in English-language abstracts, keywords, and metadata. Testing these hypotheses requires separate samples, clearly operationalized indicators, comparative or negative cases, network, corpus, or in-depth source-level analysis, and independent coding.

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During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT, Gemini to proofread the manuscript, improve readability and language. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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APPENDIX A

Supplementary Materials 1

List of publications and reports of the Sumy State University Think Tank "Research of Fakes and Propaganda in Russian Science"

ANALYTICAL REPORTS

1. Plastun, O. (2024). *On collaboration of Scopus/Elsevier with the Russian Federation* [Analytical report]. Think Tank "Research of Fakes and Propaganda in Russian Science" Sumy State University. Retrieved from https://thinktank.sumdu.edu.ua/images/analytics/tt01062024.pdf
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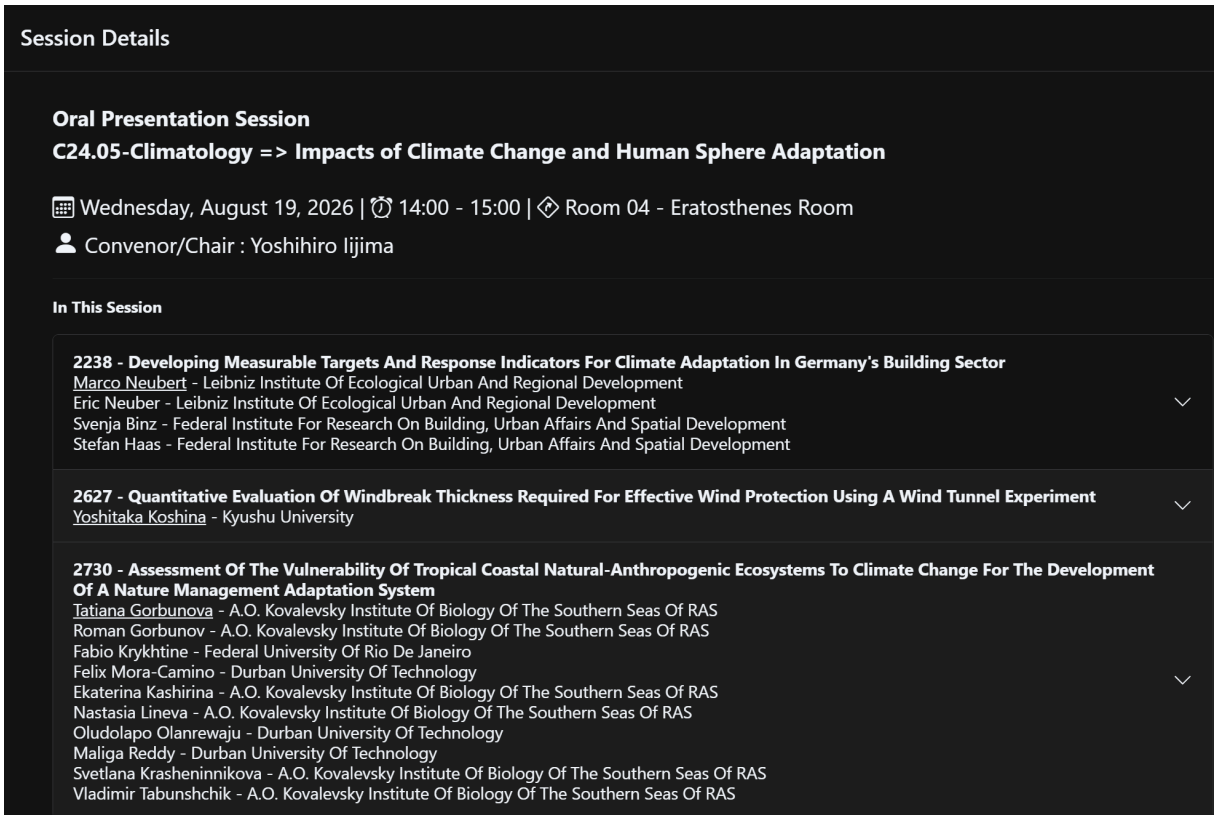
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS 2

Screenshot of the IGU Regional Conference IRC 2026 website, scheduled for August 17-21, 2026, at Istanbul University

Source: https://irc2026.org/program/#august19