

The issue of the genocide of the Ukrainian people in modern conditions (Historical aspect)



Olena Oleksiyivna Stadnyk ^{1,*}, Nataliia Petrivna Kuzminets ¹, Galyna Andriivna Shpytalenko ², Kostiantyn Ivanovych Bryl ³, Liudmyla Viktorivna Hutsalo ⁴

¹Department of History of Ukraine, Faculty of Historical, Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University, Vinnytsia, Ukraine

²Department of Theory and History of the State and Law, Faculty of National Security, Law and International Relations, Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Zhytomyr, Ukraine

³Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, Kyiv, Ukraine

⁴Department of World History, Faculty of History, Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Zhytomyr, Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to analyze past and present harm done to Ukrainians. It looks at the Russian Federation's current military actions in Ukraine as a continuation of past genocides. The article reviews literature about genocide, defining it and describing its features. It focuses on the time Ukraine was under Soviet control, highlighting genocidal acts like the Red Terror, punishment of the intelligentsia, and the Holodomor. It challenges the idea that the Holodomor only affected peasants, showing it was a broader attack on Ukrainian culture and identity, including educated leaders. The article compares the Holodomor, past punishments, and recent war crimes in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, indicating they all show signs of genocide. It presents strong evidence that the Russian army's actions in this conflict are genocidal against Ukrainians. This conclusion is supported by statistical data and comparisons with other genocides. The article stresses the importance of recognizing the fight against Ukrainian self-identity as genocide. By exploring these historical and current events, the article helps us understand the ongoing struggles of Ukrainians and calls for justice and reconciliation.

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1. Introduction

The full-scale military invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine has become one of the biggest challenges for the European continent. Since 2014, after the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the start of hostilities in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, many experts predicted the transition of the conflict into an active phase and an increase in the scale of the aggression of the Russian Federation (Shaw, 2023). Such forecasts were based on Ukrainian and international intelligence data, as well as on the analysis of the historical experience of relations between Ukraine and Russia in different historical periods, the experience of resolving military conflicts by

aggressor countries (Fox, 2021). The shortcomings in the global security system and the absence of strong methods to prevent aggression internationally have led to the start of military aggression that couldn't be halted by non-military means. The onset of this extensive military invasion has not only escalated security issues but also placed a heavy strain on the social systems, especially in European countries (Azarov et al., 2023). Since February 24, the movement of more than 8 million people who have become refugees has been recorded. A large number of forcibly displaced persons are registered in Ukraine. The hostilities have become the cause of major humanitarian challenges, the scale of which has already been compared to the scale of the Second World War. Overcoming social and humanitarian challenges became possible thanks to international cooperation and volunteer projects. However, the scale of the destruction of the material and technical base, infrastructure, residential facilities, and real estate objects determine the challenges of post-war reconstruction. The volume of Ukraine's GDP

* Corresponding Author.

Email Address: elenast.mail@gmail.com (O. O. Stadnyk)

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Corresponding author's ORCID profile:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9554-6975>

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decreased by 30%, which is reflected in the socioeconomic situation. However, in addition to the humanitarian, social, and economic consequences of full-scale military aggression, it is appropriate to consider psychological aspects. Violation of the laws of war, mistreatment of the civilian population, violence, including sexual, against women, children, the elderly, torture and execution of the civilian population created the prerequisites for defining the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine as genocide of the Ukrainian people, because war crimes aimed at intimidation, bullying, killing people for using the Ukrainian language, using national and state symbols, speaking in defense of their country, honor and dignity of Ukrainians. Therefore, it is appropriate to determine that the socio-economic, humanitarian, and psychological aggression of the Russian Federation, directed both against the military and against the civilian population, are elements of genocide and should be considered in the historical aspect of the development of our country.

Therefore, the purpose of the study is a retrospective analysis of oppression and aggression against the Ukrainian people with the aim of projecting the results of the historical revision on the full-scale military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine as a continuation of the historical genocide of the Ukrainian people by the Russians. To achieve the goal of the study, the following tasks were performed:

- A retrospective analysis of the historical development of relations between Ukraine and Russia was carried out from the point of view of sociocultural, socio-economic, humanitarian, psychological, and political influences.
- The elements of legislative support for the definition of the genocide of the Ukrainian people are defined.
- Developed directions and confirmed them with statistical data regarding the genocide of the Ukrainian people during the Russian-Ukrainian war since 2014.
- It was confirmed for the first time that the actions of the Russian army on the territory of Ukraine after the start of a full-scale military invasion can be considered an act of genocide, which is confirmed by the results of a comparative analysis with generally known acts of genocide.

2. Literature review

Analyzing the concept of genocide, a number of authors determine that genocide is the deliberate destruction of the population based on national, ethnic, and religious affiliation (Szpak, 2012; O'Brien and Hoffstaedter, 2020; Basnet Silwal, 2021; Isakhan and Shahab, 2022; Weisz, 2022; Harff, 2017). That is, genocide is directed actions against a certain social group (Stewart et al., 2002). Manifestations of genocide can be completely different: mass murders, deportations, policies of oppression and

prohibitions, terrorism, and other forms aimed at forming hostility in a certain group towards representatives of another social group (Samaddar, 2022). Generally, genocide is often the result of government policies and information campaigns. These are aimed at spreading propaganda against a specific social group to create an image of them as the enemy.

Analyzing the manifestations of genocide, it should be noted that it is mostly aimed at destroying the national self-identity of the people (Bigabo and Jansen, 2020; Rieder and Elbert, 2013). Therefore, in order to determine the acts of genocide against the Ukrainian people, it is advisable to analyze the retrospective of the formation of statehood and national self-awareness of Ukrainians (Kappeler, 2014).

To determine the presence of elements of national self-identity of the Ukrainian people, it is advisable to refer to the retrospective analysis of historical events in the history of the state presented in the works of various authors.

The history of Ukrainian statehood has ancient and deep roots that go back to the history of one of the most powerful state formations on the European continent – Kyivan Rus. Ukraine, as the legal successor of the history, legal norms, state formation, culture, traditions, social and everyday aspects of the Kyiv movement, has a unique and distinctive cultural heritage. The Ukrainian language is recognized as the most melodious in the world, and the role of the Kyiv movement in the historical processes of modern Europe is difficult to overestimate, not only in socio-political and socio-economic processes but also in culture, education, and the construction of social principles of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. It was the Ukrainian state that had the first Constitution (Constitution of Pylyp Orlyk), and the Cossack state was the personification of democratic norms and rules long before the first democratic norms appeared in the countries of the modern European Union. However, due to princely misunderstandings and dynastic circumstances after the death of Yaroslav the Wise, who brought Kyivan Rus to the level of leading European countries, but due to the distribution of all lands among his relatives and the significant development of administrative units, the process of its disintegration began. The reasons for the disintegration were the fall of princely estates, which sought greater independence and power from fraternal co-ownership. The process of disintegration was stopped for a certain time by Volodymyr Monomakh, who decided to unite the fragmented lands, but in the middle of the 12th century, the process of disintegration gained new momentum, as a result of which 13 new state entities were formed. As the military threat from nomadic tribes decreased at the time, the threat from western neighbors increased. Lithuanian tribes and German Orders took advantage of the fragmentation, Galicia fell into the geopolitical

interests of Hungary, and modern Muscovy came under the rule of the Golden Horde (Swenson, 2006).

The outcome of these events was the creation of state protectorates, which later evolved into an empire in the area now known as Ukraine. This situation led to several negative effects, such as the loss of unity, defense strength, and statehood. However, it is important to acknowledge that the introduction of foreign systems and ways of life, along with socio-economic factors, spurred the growth of agriculture and hastened the development of cities and urbanization.

The Galicia-Volyn principality became the heir of the state. The Holy Catholic throne considered the leaders of the Galicia-Volyn state to be the legal successors of Kyivan Rus, and the state took a worthy place in the socio-economic system of leading European countries. One of the princes was even crowned by the Pope and received the title of King Daniel, which made him equal to the monarchs of Europe (Shevchenko et al., 2024).

The next stage of development was the victory of the Ukrainians in the National Liberation War of 1648-1654 pp. And the revival of the Ukrainian Cossack state - Hetmanship. The Cossack state had all the signs of statehood:

- Territory;
- Public authorities;
- The population that lived there;
- Tax system;
- The legal system: Hetman articles - the constitution of the Hetman state.

However, the conclusion of the Ukrainian-Moscow treaty of 1654 doomed Ukraine to the gradual limitation and liquidation of its statehood.

The next time Ukraine will have the opportunity to fight for its own independence will be in 1917-1921 pp. The revolutionary events led to the proclamation of the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Western Ukrainian People's Republic, which was important for Ukraine's restoration of independence in 1991. The new state included all the Dnieper lands, and with the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the lands of western Ukraine became part of the state. On January 22, 1919, the connection of Western and Eastern Ukrainian lands took place. The results of the division of Ukraine became international documents signed as a peace treaty after the First World War at the Paris Peace Conference, where the territory of Ukraine was divided between the SFSR, Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. These events marked the beginning of one of the bloodiest periods in the history of the Ukrainian people. The rule of a totalitarian communist regime on the territory of Ukraine and the struggle against manifestations of national self-identity led to repression and genocide of the Ukrainian people in several Holodomors, which replaced the Ukrainization of the 1920s and 1930s (Bezo and Maggi, 2015). As a result of the geopolitical struggle before the beginning of the

Second World War, part of the western Ukrainian lands became part of the USSR in 1939. Opposition to the totalitarian system and the national movement were brutally suppressed by mass repressions, deportations of Ukrainians, mass shootings, torture of the local population, and punitive actions by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR.

Study of international experience in the field of national security (Akimov et al., 2020), improvement of information technologies for countering crime and improving its mechanisms in countering in border regions (Hubanova et al., 2021), and ensuring legal mechanisms of information security in the modern world (Bondarenko et al., 2022) taking into account the migratory activity of the population in the Eastern European region based on the simulation of various conditions that have an impact (Levytska et al., 2020), which directly affects the management of sustainable development with a spatial approach, using the example of machine-building enterprises (Latysheva et al., 2020). Development and application of open specialized geoinformation systems for students and postgraduates, taking into account emergency distance education in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bakhov et al., 2021) and features of creative burnout of educational workers public administration (Kryshchanovych et al., 2022) and not only, on the example of universities.

Therefore, the retrospective analysis shows the presence of deep historical traditions, national consciousness and self-identity, state system in Ukraine, and the influence of totalitarian regimes on the suppression of the national liberation movement is a violation of the norms of international law and should be recognized as an act of genocide of the Ukrainian people, which will be proven in articles by analyzing statistical data and historical events. Also, it will be proven that the war crimes of the Russian army in Ukraine should also be considered as an act of genocide (Lopatovska et al., 2022), which will also be proven by carrying out a comparative analysis according to the signs of genocide according to international norms.

3. Methodology

This article examines various literary sources to explore different perspectives on the definition of genocide, its key elements, and how these concepts apply to Ukrainians through historical analysis. It retrospectively studies the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations, identifying major events and confirming instances of genocide against Ukrainians by the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and Russian Federation. The article provides an analysis of statistical data regarding the number of Ukrainian genocide victims.

Additionally, a map highlighting the regions in Ukraine most affected by genocide across different historical periods was created by combining this retrospective analysis with statistical data. From this cartographic representation, the areas most

impacted by genocide are identified. The reasons for genocide, influenced by geopolitical, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and ethnographic factors, are also examined in this context.

Furthermore, the article discusses reports from international organizations on the military aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine since 2014 and the onset of a full-scale invasion. These reports support the conclusion that the Russian-Ukrainian war constitutes genocide against the Ukrainian people, aimed at their destruction.

4. Results

After Ukraine declared its independence in 1991, Ukrainians started to reestablish their national identity and statehood. This period marked the beginning of their efforts to have the Holodomor, and the repressions of the totalitarian regime in Ukraine recognized as genocide against the Ukrainian people.

The Soviet occupation of Ukraine, which lasted from 1921 to 1991, involved the integration of territories into puppet states (Zhurzhenko, 2022).

This process was marked by the Red Terror, a campaign of violent actions against wide social groups labeled as "class enemies." This campaign was aimed at eliminating opposition to Bolshevik rule in the territories annexed to the Soviet Union. Targeted groups included those with a bourgeois background, peasants, and workers accused of "counter-revolutionary activities." On September 5, 1918, the Red Terror was formally announced with the adoption of the "Decree on Red Terror," effectively legalizing state repression.

According to the USSR's Ministry of Internal Affairs, the implementation of this decree in 1918 led to 8,389 people being imprisoned, 9,496 sent to concentration camps as "political prisoners," 34,334 detained in prisons, 13,111 taken as hostages, and 86,893 arrested over a period of seven months. Independent organizations have provided different statistics, estimating about 1,766,118 deaths from the Red Terror. It is important to consider the statistics of the social groups most affected by the Red Terror (Table 1).

Table 1: Statistics of social groups most affected by the Red Terror

Social group	The number of victims	Percentage in the overall structure
Civilian		
Priests	1243	0.09
Professors and teachers	6775	0.49
Doctors	8800	0.63
Landlords	12950	0.93
Representatives of the intelligentsia	355250	25.50
Workers	193350	13.88
Villagers	815000	58.49
Total	1393368	
Military		
Officers	54650	16.81
Soldiers	260000	79.96
Police	10500	3.23
Total	325150	

The analysis of statistical data on the impact of the Red Terror on different social groups led to insights about its underlying reasons and objectives, which are discussed in the research findings.

The Soviet regime's suppression of the Ukrainian intelligentsia continued in subsequent years. Hundreds of Ukrainian cultural figures, including poets, writers, actors, and artists active in the 1920s and 1930s, were eliminated by the Soviet authorities in what came to be known as the "shot revival." As of October 1, 1925, there were about 5,000 writers in Ukraine. Many from this generation of artists ended up in camps, were executed, or committed suicide due to intense psychological pressure, such as Mykola Khvylovy in the "House of the Word," a residence for cultural figures, most of whom were either shot or sent to camps.

Deportation, the forced resettlement of citizens based on their nationality to remote areas of the USSR, was another tactic used by the Soviet authorities against the national liberation movement. People were transported against their will in freight cars to special settlements for hard labor. Statistics indicate that these forced relocations

affected about 6 million people, with nearly 1.5 million dying.

Despite numerous repressions by the Soviet authorities against Ukrainians, recognized as a form of genocide in Ukraine and some other countries, the Holodomor stands out. This artificial famine in 1932-1933 occurred in ethnically Ukrainian territories, resulting in the deaths of 3.941 million Ukrainians and the prevention of 6.122 million births. The Holodomor was deliberately orchestrated by the Soviet government and its punitive bodies to crush the widespread Ukrainian national liberation movement, especially among peasants. It involved the total confiscation of grain and food under threats of violence, while the Soviet authorities had food reserves and exported Ukrainian grain. They also banned people from leaving famine-affected areas and prohibited the import of food as humanitarian aid. The Holodomor recognized as an act of genocide, was suppressed during the Soviet era, with no government officials held accountable for the organized famine and the resulting millions of deaths. In analyzing the spread and scale of the

famine in Ukraine, it is useful to refer to a map with statistical data.

Fig. 1 displays a map of the Ukrainian SSR, with its historical borders outlined in white and the modern borders of Ukraine in black. The map uses color to show the number of deaths per 1,000 people. It reveals that the central region of Ukraine experienced the most severe impact of the famine. If we consider the hypothesis that propaganda downplayed or partially attributed the famine to peasants' resistance to working in collective farms,

then logically, significant effects of the famine would be expected not only in central but also in southern Ukraine and the northeastern areas. However, it is more accurate to explain the geographic spread of the famine by considering areas with stronger peasant resistance to collectivization and higher nationalist sentiments were more severely affected.

It is also important to mention that several countries have recognized the Holodomor as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. This recognition is illustrated in another map.

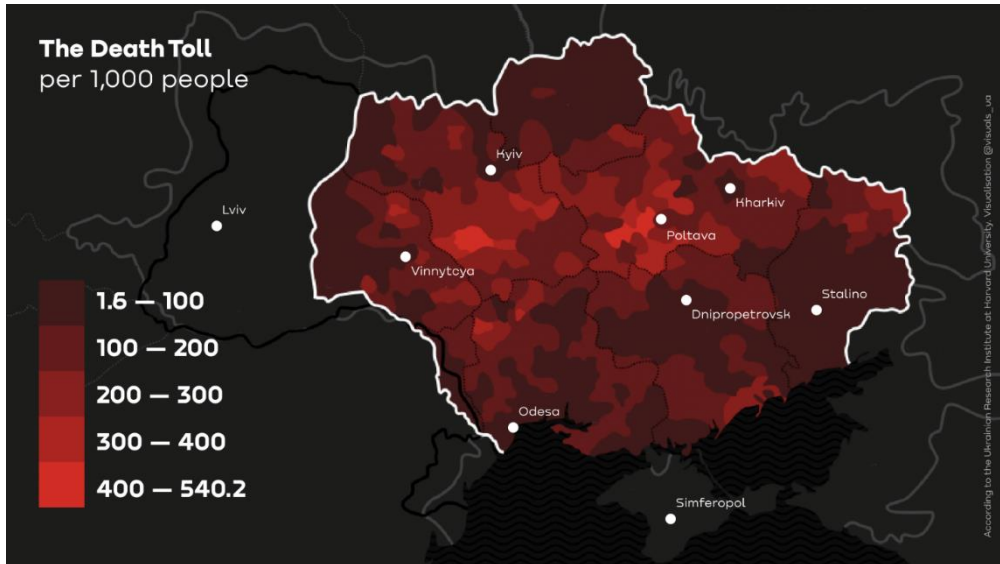


Fig. 1: Map of the scale of the famine in Ukraine

Fig. 2 shows that North America, nearly all of Latin America, Australia, and many European countries have recognized the Holodomor as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. However, the recognition of the Holodomor as genocide is more complex in African and Asian countries, many of which face food shortages and often lack democratic governments capable of making decisions in alignment with the global community.

With the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, experts studying the war crimes of the Russian army and violations of warfare rules have suggested that the actions of the Russian forces in Ukraine could be considered as genocide against the Ukrainian people. A retrospective analysis of the development of Ukrainian statehood underscores the distinct national identity of Ukrainians, their lengthy history of state-building, international relations, education, culture, language, and socio-economic ties. Therefore, the oppression witnessed in the context of Ukrainian national consciousness should be characterized not merely as military aggression but as an act of genocide. This can be substantiated by documenting the Russian army's crimes, which are recognized as elements of genocide under international law. A comparative table illustrating this is presented below (Table 2).

Therefore, when analyzing the facts of the recognition of crimes as genocide, it is appropriate to note that both the Holodomor in 1932-1933 and the

actions of the Russian occupying forces in Ukraine during the Russian-Ukrainian war are acts of genocide of the Ukrainian people, as proven by the analysis.

5. Discussion

The retrospective analysis of state formation in Ukraine shows evidence of statehood, national self-identity, and self-awareness in various historical periods. Therefore, actions to forbid, destroy, or oppress Ukrainians for showing their national self-awareness directly constitute genocide (Antonovych, 2015).

The research identified several factors as elements of genocide against the Ukrainian people, including:

- Deliberate actions aimed at destroying population groups based on nationality.
- Killings, torture, and mental abuse based on nationality.
- Policies preventing childbirth within certain national groups.
- Efforts to erase national self-identity.
- Creating conditions leading to humanitarian crises in areas inhabited by specific national groups.
- Violations of war customs due to national intolerance.
- Denial of the existence of language, culture, or religion of a particular nationality.

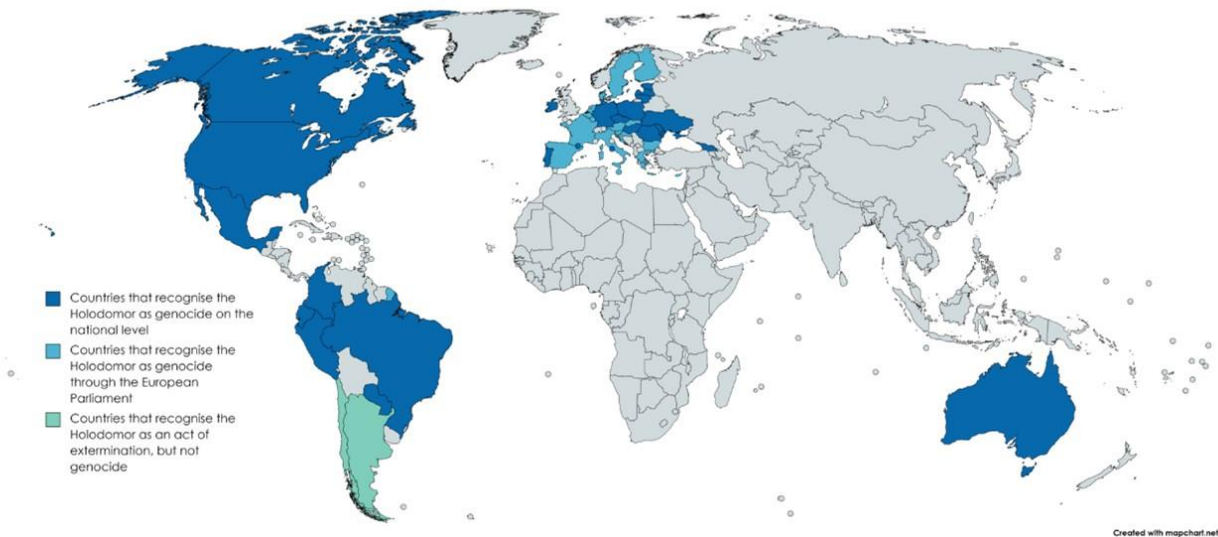


Fig. 2: Countries that recognized and/or condemned the Holodomor as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian

Table 2: Comparison of the actions of the Russian army in Ukraine with signs of genocide according to the norms of international law

Characteristic	USSR	Russian Federation after the start of the Russian-Ukrainian War
Purposeful actions aimed at the complete or partial destruction of population groups based on national characteristics	Holodomor, deportations, red terror, shot revival	Mass murders, torture, rape, intimidation
Murders based on nationality	Mass executions of political prisoners and peasants for national liberation ideas	Mass murders of the civilian population of Buchi, Irpen, Izyum, and other occupied territories for the pro-Ukrainian position
Torture based on nationality	Mass torture of political prisoners and peasants for national liberation ideas in concentration camps	Mass torture of the civilian population and prisoners of war for a national-patriotic position in filtering sites and colonies
Applying mental influence	Psychological pressure and violence	Psychological pressure and violence, mass rape as an element of intimidation of the civilian population
The impossibility of having children due to a certain national characteristic	Shots of young girls with relevant wording	Castration of Ukrainian prisoners of war, gang rape of young girls because of impaired reproductive function
Forcible transfer of children of this national group to another	Deportation	Forced transfer of children to Russian orphanages and families, alienation of children from temporarily occupied territories under the pretext of rest in sanatoriums and subsequent transfer to Russian families
Creation of conditions for the destruction of national self-identity	Prohibition of language, cultural values, traditions, shooting and torture of intelligentsia	Destruction of cultural objects, libraries, a ban on language, cultural values, torture and mass murder
Murders, tortures, rapes based on nationality	The work of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR bodies	Mass burials of civilians, recorded facts of war crimes
Blocking territories where civilians of a certain nationality live to create a humanitarian crisis	Prohibition of the population leaving the territories of mass famine and prohibition of the importation of humanitarian aid	Blockade of territories, prohibition of humanitarian corridors, shelling of humanitarian corridors, shooting of civilian vehicles when trying to leave the occupied territories
Non-observance of customs of warfare due to national intolerance	-	Recorded war crimes of the army of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine
Denial of the existence of the language, culture, religion, etc. of another nationality	Oppression and concealment	Expressing a direct position regarding the absence of language, culture, and other elements of national self-identity both in propaganda media and in official reports and publications of government representatives (Volodymyr Putin's article and a series of speeches on the absence of Ukrainian statehood and the creation of Ukraine by Volodymyr Lenin).

In studying the social groups most affected by the Red Terror, repressions, deportations, and the Holodomor, we concluded that:

1. The Red Terror disproportionately affected civilians, suggesting its aim was not to combat threats from military institutions but to suppress popular resistance. This contradicts propaganda claims of widespread support for the Bolshevik government.
2. Despite the communist regime's anti-church stance, clergy victims comprised only 0.09% of total Red Terror casualties, whereas 25.5% were intelligentsia, such as professors, teachers, and doctors. This indicates a targeted campaign against

cultural and educational figures aimed at establishing totalitarian control over education, literature, and art and suppressing any information or opinions contrary to the regime's propaganda.

3. The Red Terror's significant impact on peasants (58.5%) and nearly all landowners reflects a deliberate policy of collectivization and forced labor, while only 13% of workers were affected. This underscores the USSR's coercive approach to transforming its agricultural economy instead of adopting economically viable industrialization strategies.
4. Russian propaganda often frames the Red Terror and Holodomor as actions aimed at forced

collectivization unrelated to nationality. However, our study counters this narrative by showing that famine predominantly affected Ukrainian territories, ethnically or administratively, like the Kuban region. Additionally, the structure of Red Terror victims reveals efforts to combat national identity through the persecution of the intelligentsia.

Finally, for the first time, it is confirmed that the Russian army's actions in Ukraine since the full-scale invasion can be considered an act of genocide. This conclusion is based on a comparative analysis with other well-known acts of genocide. By identifying signs of genocide and comparing the Soviet government's crimes during the Holodomor with those of the Russian government and army in the Russian-Ukrainian war, it is determined that the Russian army's war crimes in Ukraine constitute genocide against the Ukrainian people.

6. Conclusion

The research concluded that the main characteristics of genocide are illegal and criminal acts targeting specific social groups, usually defined by a national characteristic. When retrospectively analyzing the development of statehood and national self-awareness, certain issues become evident. For Ukraine, a prolonged period under the protectorate and occupation of other states notably hindered its national development. However, following the restoration of Ukrainian independence in 1991, there was a resurgence in the self-identification of Ukrainians as a distinct nation.

Historical analysis revealed that the Soviet government decimated many Ukrainians through measures such as the Red Terror, repression, deportations, and famine. The study refutes the hypothesis that the artificial famine primarily targeted the peasant class due to Ukraine's agricultural economy. Instead, the analysis of Red Terror statistics shows that the intelligentsia, as key figures in national self-identity, were also targeted. A comparative analysis of the characteristics of the Ukrainian genocide during the Holodomor and the war crimes in the Russian-Ukrainian war revealed similarities in the methods used, leading to the conclusion that these acts constitute genocide against the Ukrainian people.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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