
UDC: 004.65:001.51]:355.01:327.019.5

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‘Whose is Crimea?’ or What Content Are International Databases of Scientific Publications Filled with

Objective. The article aims to examine reputable international databases of scientific publications to identify the promotion of anti-Ukrainian content and determine the most typical directions of such promotion. **Methods.** Using the method of content analysis, the authors identified journals in certain international databases of scientific publications whose publishers are registered in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, as well as Russian journals that publish works by authors from these territories, recognizing them as "new regions of Russia" and positively perceiving the ideas of the legitimacy of including new subjects in the Russian Federation. There are also publications: a) on the regulation of life in the occupied territories according to Russian standards and legislation, b) on new social technologies used in the occupied Ukrainian territories in educational institutions, c) on the formation of Russian national and state identity of residents of illegally annexed regions, etc. **Results.** The primary scientific outcome of the study is the identification of three significant issues in Russian scientific content that global scientific platforms tend to overlook: the recognition of educational institutions in occupied territories as Russian (since 2016, this has appeared in articles indexed in DOAJ, Scopus, and WoS); the indexing of journals registered in the temporarily occupied territories by DOAJ and Index Copernicus; the instrumental role of international scientific publication databases in disseminating anti-democratic ideas and false narratives through such articles. **Conclusions.** The authors conclude that without a clear stance from Ukraine's scientific and educational community on this issue and ongoing advocacy for Ukrainian national interests within the international scientific community, there is a risk of harmful ideas detrimental to Ukraine being amplified on an even greater number of international scientific publication aggregators.

Key words: international databases of scientific publications; scientific content; national security; scientific journals; DOAJ; Scopus; Web of Science; Index Copernicus

Introduction

The thesis about science as a component of national security was officially introduced into the national and legal discourse of Ukraine a long time ago, with the adoption of the relevant Laws "On National Security of Ukraine" (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2018) and "On Scientific and Science-Technical Activities" (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2015).

Among other things, there are written basic principles, on the basis of which the integration of Ukrainian science into the world one is ensured in combination with the protection of the national security interests (for example, Article 28 of the LU "On scientific and science-technical activity").

In particular, the central executive body responsible for this must develop an appropriate state policy that envisages not only requirements for this sphere of the state life, the fulfilment of which will increase its competitiveness and global influence, but also measures to prevent threats to its fundamental principles and basic narratives, such as territorial integrity and inviolability of borders, legal status, historical memory, cultural and worldview priorities, etc.

A particular danger lies in the saturation of the public sphere with information harmful to national interests by hostile actors. In this context, J. Szostek and D. Orlova (2023) emphasize three main threats to national security: firstly, the use of false information by external agents; secondly, the imposition of narratives that contradict established values and national identity; and thirdly, the risk of negative behavioral and psychological reactions among the audience.

Thus, in the conditions of hybrid Russian aggression, which includes not only military actions but also disinformation campaigns aimed at shaping international public opinion about Ukraine on false grounds, E. Olzacka (2023) stresses the need to recognize historical memory, cultural heritage, language, and national identity as being under existential threat. Active resistance to hostile Russian influence in the public consciousness has strengthened national security and significantly contributed to international recognition of Ukrainian culture as independent of Russian influence, which has been crucial in gaining international support.

This assertion is echoed by Y. Sychikova (2023), who believes that the support of the international academic community and its demonstration of solidarity with Ukraine can also influence the formation of international opinion and policy regarding the war and further support for Ukraine.

Within the framework of the state policy to strengthen Ukraine's influence on the world stage, representatives of domestic science (both individual scientists and scientific publishers) have been given the opportunity to join international resources where it is possible to disseminate their scientific results, determine and track their impact, in particular to international databases of scientific results. Ukrainian scientific journals, encouraged by their own ambitious goals and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, also strive to add their content to these international bases, introducing into the editorial process global publishing practices regarding openness, accessibility, ethical standards and academic virtue. And on this path certain positive results have been achieved, as, for example, 459 Ukrainian journals (DOAJ, database) are currently indexed in the international multidisciplinary catalog of open access journals (DOAJ), 184 scientific publications from Ukraine are indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (Open Science in Ukraine, n.d.)

But the most prominent publication databases in the academic world include a huge number of journals and publications from countries representing antagonistic worldviews, justify violent methods of organizing social life, as well as countries that are at war with each other. And for us, the most painful example in this sense is the Russia-Ukraine war, which has been going on since 2014 and, along with other problems of international relations and changes in public consciousness, is reflected in the subject-matter of scientific content, which is presented in the periodicals of Russia and Ukraine, and then promoted by scientific publications bases. Analyzing publications on the Ukrainian war in the international scientometric database Scopus, Y. Sychikova (2023) identified 4,657 indexed articles authored by researchers from various countries within just two years (2022–2023). This indicates a broad scientific dialogue dedicated to the war in Ukraine and its global impact. On the other hand, the researcher emphasizes that Scopus includes many articles from Russian-affiliated sources that continue to be published despite international restrictions and sanctions and may disseminate false narratives about Ukraine and Ukrainian people.

The purpose of the article is to study authoritative international databases of scientific publications on the subject of their promoting anti-Ukrainian content and to determine the most typical directions of such promotion.

Methods

For the quantitative study of documents in international databases of scientific publications, the method of content analysis was used, which allowed singling out about 300 articles among the articles with the keywords "Crimea, Russia", "Donetsk People's Republic, Russia", "Luhansk People's Republic, Russia" (in all search fields of the database DOAJ). A more detailed review of these articles and the application of the qualitative method of content analysis made it possible to group the articles a) by main topics; b) by publishers. The thematic analysis gave grounds for conclusions about the manipulation techniques that the authors of the articles resort to in order to achieve a positive impression of their content. The analysis by publishers allowed us to identify publishers from various European and American countries who publish texts by authors from the occupied territories self-affiliated with Russia. And checking these publishers for indexing in the Scopus and Web of Science databases allowed expanding the list of scientific citation databases, whose experts and founders do not pay attention to the affiliation of the author or the content, which he submits, do not work with editors who resort to such manipulations and continue to index these journals.

In the Index Copernicus database, under the "country of publication" option, 732 journals published in Russia are found, of which 5 journals are registered in the temporarily occupied territories. This allowed formulating a separate problem of the inappropriate scientific content's aggression, which undermines the very idea of journal scientific communication.

Chronological framework of the research: September 2024.

Results and Discussion

In the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, it is possible to single out three important problems of scientific content from Russia, which global platforms of scientific content prefer not to notice.

1) **Since 2016, Russian scientific journals have been publishing articles by authors affiliated with Crimea under Russian control, as well as with the "pseudo-republics" formed in the Russian-occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.** For example, in the DOAJ database, authors from Crimea call themselves Russian starting from publications in 2016. At first, it is supported by the publishers of Russia itself. For example, a search using the keywords "Crimea Russia" and viewing the indexed content revealed that the first Russian journals to start indexing articles by authors with "Crimea, Russia" affiliation were Russian journals "Materials on the Archeology and History of the Ancient and Medieval Crimea" (indexed in DOAJ since 2008), "Scientific and Practical Rheumatology" (since 2000), "Current Problems of Economy and Law" (since 2008), "The Volga Regions Archeology" (since 2012) and many other Russian scientific publications. And in the same 2016, the Swiss astrophysical journal Galaxies, which is indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, Astrophysics Data System, INSPIRE, Inspec and other databases, publishes an article (<https://doi.org/10.3390/galaxies4040069>) in which one of the authors affiliates himself with the Crimean Astrophysical Observatory from Crimea, Russia.

A further cursory search for these keywords gave us at least two websites of international conferences – E3S (France) and BIO Web of Conferences (France) – which recognize the affiliation of scientific and educational institutions of Crimea as Russian one.

Among the publications of 2023-2024, we found articles published in authoritative European and American journals in their scientific fields, including those indexed in Scopus (Astrophysical Journal (USA) – article <https://doi.org/10.3847/1538-4357/ad543d>, Cogent

Education (Taylor & Francis Group, United Kingdom) – article <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2371178>, Journal of Marine Science and Engineering – article <https://doi.org/10.3390/jmse12071211>) – which also recognize the Russian affiliation of Crimea through the affiliation of the authors of the publications.

Articles by authors from the "Donetsk People's Republic" are also indexed quite a lot in DOAJ. This process began, as our search showed, in 2016 – when Russian journals began to submit content for indexing, the authors of which directly affiliate themselves with this pseudo-formation. For example, the continuously operating Russian site InterCarto. InterGIS (Moscow state university) in 2016 published a text on the sustainable development of the coal-mining region on the example of the Donetsk People's Republic (<https://doi.org/10.24057/2414-9179-2016-2-22-255-268>), and in 2018 the same Moscow university, but already the Department of Psychology in the journal "Clinical and Special Psychology" published a text by a specialist from DPR on adaptation and personal transformations of the population of this territory (<https://doi.org/10.17759/cpse.2017060408>).

In 2023 and 2024, quite a number of articles by specialists from the "pseudo-republics" (both Donetsk and Luhansk) have already been presented at the French conferences we have already mentioned above - E3S (France) and BIO Web of Conferences (France) (for example, <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202455502008>; <https://doi.org/10.1051/bioconf/202411302016>).

And already in 2024, the Elsevier chemical journal JCIS Open also acknowledges the fact that authors from Donetsk, when publishing their article, indicate "Donetsk, RF" in the metadata.

Therefore, we can see from these specific examples that the scientific organizations of the world, despite the declarative statements of their countries' politicians about the recognition of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, are indifferent to it, gradually integrating into the public consciousness the idea of a new division in the East of Europe and of the stolen Ukrainian regions as Russian ones.

2) **In the international databases of scientific publications, there are also separate journals that are published in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.** Thus, until 2019, the DOAJ database indexed the journal "Materials on Archeology and History of the Ancient and Medieval Crimea", among the founders of which there was the Sevastopol branch of Moscow State University, Crimea, Russia. Currently, its publication has been discontinued and the journal, which no longer has founders from the territories occupied by Russia, became the legal successor.

Despite this, in 2023, the journal "Cultural Heritage and Modern Technologies" (e-ISSN 2837-0759) was accepted into DOAJ, the publisher is, in particular, the V. I. Vernadskyi Crimean Federal University, Simferopol (the country of publication is the Russian Federation). M. Afanasyeva also wrote about this journal in an open letter to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine regarding the cooperation of the DOAJ with the aggressor country and the recognition of Crimea as Russian territory (Ostrolutska, 2024). After that, the journal remained on the DOAJ portal, but the geography of the publisher (Crimea) disappeared somewhere. Although all this can be traced on the journal's website.

In the Polish scientific database Index Copernicus, we found 5 journals registered in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine:

1. Bulletin of the Donetsk National University. Series G: Technical Sciences (ISSN: 2663-4228 (print), 2663-4236 (online)). Publisher: Federal state budget educational institution of higher education "Donetsk State University" (IC page: <https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/-search/details?id=63327>).

2. Modern Industrial and Civil Construction (ISSN: 1819-432X (print), 1993-3495 (online)). Publisher: Donbas National Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Makeevka (IC page: <https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/search/details?id=31765>).

3. Metal Structures (ISSN: 1814-5566 (print), 1993-3517 (online)). Publisher: Donbas National Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Makeevka. (page in IC: <https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/search/form>).

4. Economics of Civil Engineering and Municipal Economy (ISSN: 1819-5377 (print), 1993-3509 (online)). Publisher: Donbas National Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Makeevka. (page in IC: <https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/search/details?id=31946>).

The Crimean Scientific Bulletin (ISSN: 2412-1657 (online)). Publisher: Inter-Regional Institute for Spatial Development, Yalta. (page in IC: <https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/search/details?id=47899>).

The adoption by international databases to promote scientific journals from temporarily occupied territories is perceived by the entire scientific community as undermining the idea of a scientific journal as a model for the dissemination of scientific information based on the principles of objectivity, verification and open exchange of scientific information. After all, honest and impartial researchers from other countries will be wary of publishing in such journals. And the very scientific results of specialists who choose these journals for publication are mostly perceived as a propaganda narrative.

3) Propaganda and anti-democratic content coming from journals from Russia and the occupied territories is picked up and spread by readers from other countries, thus damaging the attitudes towards broad international support for Ukraine.

In this sense, such content is part of a broad information campaign, which is deployed and financed by Russia in the countries of Europe, America and Asia. The further away from the conflict zone, the less informed the readers are about the real state of affairs, the easier it is to perceive manipulative practices and it is easier to believe that Russia is carrying out a great historical mission of gathering the territories that used to belong to the USSR into one country, it is working exclusively on military facilities, or is establishing a new, beautiful life in the territories that it illegally seized. And in this sense, **multidisciplinary international databases of scientific publications act as an additional tool for the spread of anti-democratic ideas and false testimony**, even if the article contains the results of medical or socio-hygienic research or justifies the adaptation practices of the population living in the zone of military conflict. For example, the DOAJ-indexed article entitled "*Features of assessing the subjective well-being and safety of adolescents in war zones*", published in the journal "Psychology and Law" by specialists of the Moscow State University of Psychology and Pedagogy (<https://doi.org/10.17759/psylaw.2023130421>), in addition to presenting the results of a sociological survey on the territories of Russia and the occupied part of the Donetsk region of Ukraine (which is also called Russia by the authors), already in its title contains two positively connoted concepts, which completely nullify the third, negatively connoted one: "subjective well-being", "security" vs. "zone of military conflict". The first emotional conclusion of the reader who looks at such a headline: if security and well-being are investigated, it is obvious that we are talking about the "post-war stage" of the conflict, or "the conflict is no longer a conflict". In the abstract, the authors conclude that teenagers in the Donetsk region lack "developed children's infrastructure" and "social and psychological support by qualified specialists", after which the reader concludes that Russia has a very positive effect on the well-being of teenagers in the occupied territories, as it already takes care of such nuances of their safety and well-being.

The article "The importance of principal component analysis for environmental biodiagnostics of Donbas" was published by the Donetsk University's authors (which works in the temporarily occupied territory) in the French conference E3S Web of Conferences

(<https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202455501007>). There are no controversial statements in the title of the article at all, and the word "Donbas" will not alarm any foreign reader. However, in the abstract, the authors name "a high level of industrialization (mining, metallurgical, mining and chemical industry), urbanization, agricultural technologies, landscape transformation and the conduct of hostilities since 2014 up to the present" among the reasons for the tense ecological situation in the region. Further, on the basis of marker plants, they check the ecological condition of the central Donbas and single out the most significant processes of general degradation in the region's ecosystem. What is missing in this article is the recognition and actualization that it was the prolonged hostilities that led to such a degradation of the ecosystem, since all other factors have been present in this territory for more than a hundred years).

Conclusions

Thus, the above-mentioned problems of the quantity and quality of scientific content indexed in international databases of scientific publications indicate the threat of Ukraine losing the information campaign on the world scientific platforms, since scientific texts by specialists from Russia and the temporarily occupied territories, despite the fact that they often contain leveling and silencing of the real causes, problems, course and consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, continue to expand. Due to the expansion of Russian periodicals, which is consciously or unconsciously supported by international databases of scientific publications, editors and teams of scientists in democratic countries of the world are beginning to perceive (or continue to perceive) these sources of scientific information as truly expert and authoritative. Through journals from the temporarily occupied territories, the world learns an "alternative" point of view about the state of affairs in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and in the occupied Crimea, and through the peculiarities of the formulation of scientific ideas and narratives in the articles by authors from Russia and temporarily occupied territories, readers form a false opinion about the real causes and consequences of the Russia-Ukraine war. Therefore the clear position of the scientific and educational community of Ukraine and the central body of the executive power – the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine – should be aimed at closing and reducing the distribution of such content and instead at the constant lobbying of Ukrainian national interests in the international scientific community. Without this, there is a threat of scaling ideas harmful to our country on an even greater number of international aggregators of scientific publications.

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«Чий Крим?» або яким контентом наповнюються міжнародні бази даних наукових публікацій

Мета. Авторами проведено дослідження авторитетних міжнародних баз даних наукових публікацій з метою виявлення фактів просування антиукраїнського контенту та визначення найбільш типових напрямів такого просування. **Методика.** За допомогою методу контент-аналізу автори виявили в окремих міжнародних базах наукових публікацій журнали, видавці яких зареєстровані на тимчасово окупованих територіях України, а також російські журнали, які публікують роботи авторів з цих територій, визнаючи їх «новими регіонами росії» та позитивно сприймаючи ідеї легітимності включення нових суб'єктів до складу російської федерації. Також є публікації: а) про регулювання життя на окупованих територіях за російськими стандартами та законодавством, б) про нові соціальні технології, що застосовуються на окупованих українських територіях в освітніх закладах, в) про формування російської національно-державної ідентичності мешканців незаконно анексованих регіонів тощо. **Результати.** Основним науковим результатом дослідження є виявлення трьох важливих питань у російському науковому контенті, котрі, як правило, залишаються поза увагою світових наукових платформ: визнання навчальних закладів на окупованих територіях російськими (з 2016 року це питання з'явилося у статтях, що індексуються в DOAJ, Scopus та Web of Science); індексація журналів, зареєстрованих на тимчасово окупованих територіях, базами DOAJ та Index Copernicus; інструментальна роль міжнародних баз даних наукових публікацій у поширенні антидемократичних ідей та неправдивих наративів через такі статті. **Висновки.** Автори доходять висновку, що без чіткої позиції української науково-освітньої спільноти з цього питання та постійної адвокації українських національних інтересів у міжнародній науковій спільноті існує ризик поширення шкідливих для України ідей на ще більшу кількість міжнародних агрегаторів наукових публікацій.

Ключові слова: міжнародні бази даних наукових публікацій; науковий контент; національна безпека; наукові журнали; DOAJ; Scopus; Web of Science; Index Copernicus

Received: 03.08.2024

Accepted: 25.11.2024