

# German anti-Russia propaganda is reaching Nazi-era levels

By Tarik Cyril Amar

*Moscow is now being accused of orchestrating Islamist terrorism, among a litany of other ridiculous claims*

Like people almost everywhere in NATO-EU Europe, Germans are currently being subjected to a relentless barrage of shameless, often astonishingly crude propaganda. That's because their political elites and mainstream media are desperately trying to prepare them for war against Russia. And this time, not by proxy, that is, by way of a devastated Ukraine and dead Ukrainians, but directly.

As a former, very evil but in his prime all-too-popular German master of mass manipulation – who also happened to love war with Russia more than was good for him (or Germany) – explained a century ago, effective propaganda keeps the world very, very simple. Or, to add a little detail, propaganda's sometimes literally stunning success is built on two primitive yet powerful – and very old – tricks: the broken-record principle and the litany effect.

Their meaning, too, is elementary: In essence, if your image of reality is delusional, you don't have sound arguments, and your case is absurd, do not despair. Instead, ceaselessly drum in a few very basic and bogus ideas until the audience is dizzy with repetition (the broken-record principle), while also eliciting frequent consent from it (the litany effect). In short: Keep shouting the same nonsense at them and make them bleat back “yes” regularly. You know, like a ritual, really.

In the case of the manufacturing of the current iteration of traditional German the-Russians-are-coming hysteria as well, it is easy to identify its handful of specious, daft, and childish simplistic key motifs: Russia and Russia alone is to blame for the war in Ukraine; Russia intends to attack Europe (if not the world) – and soon; and Russia is incredibly devious and scheming, so you cannot find a reasonable compromise with it.

Yet what about the nuts and bolts of this propaganda campaign? Even a simple story needs detail, and, if told and retold almost without letup, that detail at least needs to vary: Same old story but different flavor. That's where things get tricky.

For one thing, if you pick the wrong flavor, your propaganda may start looking as silly as it actually is. A current example in Germany – as well as the EU parliament – would be the recent hysteria over the global hit Sigma Boy from Russia. Its brilliantly catchy tune is a piece of art, like it or not. But its lyrics are about as profound as a margarine commercial.

Yet that won't stop Germany's radical-Centrist elite from exploring the song's ominous depths as a weapon of nefarious Russian cultural warfare. Because Sigma Boy, one EU parliamentarian from Hamburg has noticed – with a little

help from Ukraine – is really “a viral Russian trope used on social media that communicates patriarchal and pro-Russian worldviews” as well as “only one example of Russian infiltration of popular discourse through social media.” Also, you see, Sigma Boy is really just code for – scary sound effect – PUTIN!

Silly? So ridiculous it gives you that cringey feeling you get when someone else is making a total fool of themselves and all you want to do is tell them to shut up already and save whatever maybe left of their credibility? Yes, obviously.

Indeed, in the case of the Great Sigma Boy Panic Attack, even Spiegel – a usually reliably Russophobic and NATO-militarist publication now – has mildly demurred. Dedicating a whole podcast to the phenomenon, it had an editor and journalist deliberate on the Sigma Boy case in all earnestness and with proverbial German thoroughness and faces serious enough for Kant and Hegel hashing out the nature of TikTok. The result: Maybe, just maybe, it’s really simply a pop song.

Now you could say “*Great. At least someone is not completely falling for the mass hysteria.*” But that would be too optimistic. In reality, the real question is how could things get so absurd in the first place? What is the *Zeitgeist* environment in which an EU parliamentarian is not ashamed to display so much provincial paranoia and Germany’s major news magazine needs intensive research and a long discussion to find out that, perhaps, she does *not* have a point?

In that regard, another recent propaganda fiasco is instructive. Its essence is simple: Some may know the ZDF, one of Germany’s most popular and influential public – that is, de facto state – TV channels most of all as a rock-solid mouthpiece of Israeli propaganda, especially during the ongoing Gaza genocide.

But the ZDF also has a substantial line in Russophobia. And for once, it went a little too far in its never-slackening eagerness to stick it to the big bad Russians: In its main news show and a long, sensationalist pseudo-documentary in its Terra X History program – under the title “*Spying, Sabotage, Fake News. Putin’s war against us*” – the broadcaster claimed, in effect if with some cheap pro forma hedging, that Russia was behind, among other nefarious schemes, an Islamist terror attack in the city of Mannheim in May 2024.

This was, obviously, an extremely serious allegation, in principle as well as in detail: the attack, carried out by a man from Afghanistan who had lived in Germany for ten years, left five victims injured and one, a policeman, dead. Moreover, in the consciousness of the German public, this particular terror attack is only part of a whole series of unrelated yet similar violent assaults that have taken place over the last year, including another one in Magdeburg as well as in the cities of Solingen and Aschaffenburg.

Hence, pointing a finger at Russia over one of these traumatizing onslaughts inevitably implied that Moscow may have had a hand in the others as well. Et voila! A new and particularly horrifying accusation against Russia had been

manufactured: Moscow, so the essence of this wildest of many wild tales, was using migrants to instigate bloody Islamist terror in Germany.

And this big fat lie started working quickly: Various major mainstream media in Germany and abroad began to uncritically repeat the story, such as Britain's Telegraph and The Sun, the German Merkur, and the French Sud-Ouest.

Yet the “*research*” on which ZDF had based this specific propaganda strike against Moscow was so breathtakingly sloppy that, this time, even Germany's BND foreign intelligence service had to object.

Shortly after the ZDF had made its splash, the BND publicly contradicted it, pointing out that the method – basically a childish misreading of Google Trend data – used to produce these allegations against Russia is, in essence, ridiculously unreliable. Indeed, it turned out that several German intelligence agencies had warned the ZDF already before the Terra X pseudo-documentary was broadcast. Even Germany's highly conservative Welt newspaper called the ZDF's handiwork – with massive understatement – “*negligent*.”

So far, so bad. Just another case of propaganda becoming self-defeating by going too far. Let's move on. And that is, of course, what is happening now. While the very worst lie about Russia has been discredited, there are virtually no consequences.

Yet, in reality, this is where the whole daft affair is only beginning to get interesting. For one thing, the Terra X feature, almost 45 minutes long, was packed with other, equally unfounded accusations against Russia. Indeed, it consisted of a long sequence of one hearsay after another speculation, all based on profound evidence of the “*Western-intelligence-services-believe*” type.

At Terra X, have they ever heard of those Iraqi weapons of mass destruction? The babies torn from incubators in Kuwait? Or Gaddafi handing out Viagra to his troops to promote rape? All of them, of course, lies; all, in their time, spread by those famously reliable Western intelligence agencies and mass media functioning as their servile propaganda arms. And all of these lies, these actual cases of “*hybrid warfare*” – by Western elites on their own populations – have always had the same purpose: prepare and justify Western military aggression.

Yet, in the Terra X case as well, the fact that the single most egregious anti-Russian allegation of many has been, for once, exposed quickly as at best reckless nonsense if not a deliberate lie, makes no dent in the story as a whole.

On the contrary, all that happens is that one scapegoat is singled out and sacrificed: Steven Broschart, the discredited “*data profiler*” and self-appointed “*digital behavioral analytic*.” It was all him, is the message now. But that is clearly untrue. Long stretches of the Terra X tale consisted of various, often much more prominent talking-heads lending their authority to a long list of equally unsubstantiated allegations of Russian crimes and, in general, helping beat the war drums against Moscow.

There was, for instance, an official of Germany's domestic intelligence service – the Verfassungsschutz – who first conveniently confirmed that the internet is a “*treasure chest*” of information revealing sabotage and attack plans and then informed viewers that they are already at war with Russia, even if they haven't noticed yet. No biggie in Germany now: at war, not yet at war with Russia... Who cares once we all know where we are supposed to be going anyhow, and so soon, too.

To be fair, the man from the Verfassungsschutz had his entertaining side: You don't need tanks to bring down a country, he enlightened us, because you can also strike at its vital infrastructure. Really? You don't say! You mean the way that Germany's “*allies*” in Washington and its spongers in Kiev struck at the Nord Stream pipelines? No, just kidding. Of course, he did *not* mean that. Because that would be reality, and his job clearly is the opposite, propaganda.

Quintessential German professor Martin Schulze Wessel added platitudes about Putin, who, we learn, thinks in categories of East and West and antagonism. Wow! Aren't we lucky that no one does so in Garden Value Europe and a Germany that has decided to quite literally define itself, again, via antagonism toward Russia.

In addition, the professor confirmed that Russia is a “*direct*” threat to Germany – clearly unlike, again, Ukraine and the US, obviously, even if they have actually committed the largest act of infrastructure sabotage in German peacetime history. And the German public must be made aware of that non-fact, the professor lectured. Thank you for summarizing the essence of propaganda so selflessly: making the people aware of what isn't there. And, if we may add, the opposite is also important: that that same public is made unaware of what does, actually, exist, for instance that Nord Stream attack that must go forever unmentioned.

My only caveat regarding Schulze Wessel's amusing contribution is that, as a matter of transparency, he could have let viewers know that he is heavily networked with Ukraine and in particular the rather nationalist city of Lviv. Again, no biggie: On the big crusade against bad Russia, minor sins are forgivable.

The cast of Terra X was rich and not everyone can be mentioned here. But we would be amiss to omit Anton Shekhovtsov. Ironically now based at some “*Center for Democratic Integrity*,” he is the commentator who publicly celebrated the Odessa Trade Union House fire, while comparing its victims to vermin, literally. Dehumanizing? A little on the fascist side psychologically, perhaps? Oh, come on! Once again, on the grand campaign against Moscow, a little excess of eagerness is more than welcome.

On Terra X his function was unspoken yet clumsily clear: He served as the “*expert*” explaining that everything alleged in the show is “*hard to prove*.” But, of course, not as in not likely to be true, but as in: absolutely true even without any evidence. Thank you, too, Anton, for demonstrating a basic yet always popular

trick of gutter propaganda: *“You can’t see them,”* as it were, *“but that’s only because they are so well hidden. Which proves again how dangerous they are.”*

The single worst irony about this piece of weaponized *“journalism”* from one of Germany’s biggest broadcasters is its flatfooted hypocrisy. For, in the context of the Ukraine War, provoked and fought via proxy by the West, there *are* real sabotage and terrorism, namely by Ukraine and the West: The attack on the Crocus City venue in Moscow, the assassination of General Igor Kirillov, the heinous murder of Darya Dugina, the Ukrainian attacks on the Kerch Bridge and on Nord Stream, of course – and this list could be prolonged – are all clear examples of Ukraine using terrorism. And we have known for years now, from Western mainstream media, that behind these activities, there has been hands-on and proud support from Western intelligence services.

Is it possible that, in a conflict where the West and Ukraine have liberally deployed *“hybrid war”* tactics, Russia is sometimes paying them back in the same coin? Yes, in principle. You could even make a plausible argument that it has to do so to remain credible.

Accusations of promoting Islamist terrorism, from which Russia has suffered greatly, in any case, should be off-limits to anyone with half a brain and some elementary decency. And the West would do very well to mind the beam in its own eye.

For Western media that would mean that, even apart from the straightforward lying, against this background, it is not just dishonest but ridiculous to produce *“journalism”* that focuses on Russia alone. The *very least* a serious investigation would have to do is look at all sides and treat information from all sides critically.

But then, that would be a piece of practical enlightenment, intellectually and politically empowering viewers and citizens, and it would not be effective war-in-sight propaganda anymore. It might even end up – oh horror! – promoting compromise and peace.

As it is now, in Germany and elsewhere in Western Europe, journalists, security service officers, experts, and academics – all are perfectly fine with lending their name to propaganda of the basest form. What a shame.

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