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## DIGITAL VISUAL PROPAGANDA IN THE GENRE OF ALTERNATIVE HISTORY IN THE 21st CENTURY

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At the beginning of the 21st century due to the formation of a global digital space emerged a promising means of propaganda and agitation – a visual message which is a digitized image that contains the hidden idea. During 2014–2023, a notable segment of the digital environment was the mass representation of visual images advertising the armed expansion of the Russian Federation (RF) with the goal of establishing itself within the borders of the USSR and seizing the territories of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO). Among such digital images, illustrations in the genre of alternative history are remarkable for their pretentiousness. The authors of these works, by identifying Russia and the Soviet Union, invite users of social networks to dream about «how the course of world history would change if the USSR existed in the 21st century». An analysis of the ideological content of these images allows us to characterize them as a means of informational and psychological influence. The subconscious of the viewer experiences a complex and aggressive influence of the visual row of Soviet political symbols in the plot, using motifs of well-known works of mass culture and scenes of violence. As a consequence, the viewer develops a psychological attitude towards a positive assessment of the historical experience of the USSR and a tolerant attitude towards the glorification of the Soviet totalitarian past. One of the most popular topics of propaganda content is the revival of the Soviet Union as a neo-imperial communist project using advanced military and space technologies and the war between Russia and NATO. Communities «USSR-2061» and «Russian Space Society» are the crystallization points for the proponents of such ideas on the Internet. These communities disseminate their visual messages in social networks Telegram, Facebook, Twitter, VKontakte, LiveJournal and video hosting Youtube. Digital painting is used as a medium for ideological allusions, using the techniques of concept art and promo art. Both types of visual art have been widely used in the process of gamification of digital space, so they correspond with the aesthetic tastes of modern youth, which turns them into the main object of visual information attack. The semantic load is provided by the use of historical visual symbols: coat of arms and flag of the USSR, details of the landscape, interior, clothing, weapons, vehicles, etc. The viewer sees in the paintings depicting the megapolises of the second half of the 21st century architectural monuments in the Stalin's Empire style. Colorful battle scenes «promise» the viewer the total destruction of the future world of the «collective West» by Soviet soldiers. Thus, we conclude that the visual political message has become a way of political communication in social networks and a means of information-psychological impact capable of performing manipulative and agitation functions.