

Viktor Savka, Uliana Yatsyshyn
Lviv National Polytechnic University

Media as actors of propaganda influence. Portrayal of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict in Ukrainian religious media

ABSTRAKT

W artykule rozpatrzono problem wykorzystywania cerkiewnych mediów w wojnie informacyjnej podczas rosyjsko - ukraińskiego zbrojnego konfliktu w 2014 roku, na podstawie analizy oficjalnych stron internetowych najważniejszych cerkwi ukraińskich.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: cerkiewne mass-media, wojna informacyjna, propaganda, kontrpropaganda

1. Introduction

Attempts to change the borders of the European state by military force, as a consequence of reluctance to release Ukraine from the orbit of the Russian Federation political influence, became a challenge not only for Ukraine but for the entire civilized world. The statements of Western politicians about the destruction of the principles of the world order established after the Second World War, the ineffectiveness of international agreements and organizations that can no longer guarantee peace and stability on the European continent, are now heard more often. Open use of force by aggressor in Crimea and the eastern regions of Ukraine is accompanied by an increased activity of Russian propaganda. This necessarily raises the need for the country - the victim of aggression, to use adequate countermeasures. It is clear that they must be comprehensive and include not only power and advocacy influences on the citizens of their own country, but they must also be aimed at bringing Ukraine's position to the Ukrainian-Russian opposition to the international community and the population of the country - the aggressor. In the circumstances when the media have become a means of warfare, the researches (including sociological methods) of the features of the application of propaganda to inform the public, manipulate public opinion, provide informational support for implementation of the selected state policy, are relevant.

2. "The sole information space" as a means of Russian influence on Ukraine's citizens

Unfortunately, now we have to admit that the Ukrainian state and society were not ready for a wave of anti-Ukrainian propaganda of the Russian Federation, not less than to the armed aggression. This situation has led to a number of objective reasons, which were observed over the considerable time, and the subjective reasons, that particularly intensified during the regime of Yanukovich. Among them, it is worth to highlight the "attachment" of the part of the Ukrainian society and its political elite to the north-eastern neighbour. It has been actively formed by Russian imperial ideologues and politicians for many centuries and is continued in our time. The baton was taken by their Soviet followers. This includes not only people from the neighboring regions of Russia, but even partially the regions of Western Ukraine. Russian propagandists, using the power of modern media, in the early twenty-first century began to make active efforts to revive the ideological legacy of Galician and Carpathian "Rusynism"¹ of late 19th - early 20th century, which seemed to be completely compromised by the policy of the USSR on the local population 1939-1941 and at the time of the post-war terror. It was especially actively carried out within the framework of the concept of "Russia's World", underlying Russian propaganda over a decade. This "attachment" to the neighboring country found its expression in many ways: from the domination of the Russian media product (TV, movies, etc.) in the Ukrainian information space and even primitive inability to provide technically a broadcast of the Ukrainian TV channels in some border areas; to direct formal depending of Ukrainian high-ranking officials from government agencies in Russia. A clear manifestation of the latter is that in the days of Viktor Yanukovich, the Ukrainian defense minister was a Russian citizen. And this fact is not the only one that suggests the possible direct dependence of the Ukrainian officials from the neighboring state.

According to the director of the Ukrainian Institute of Policy Analysis and Management R. Bortnik at the beginning of 2015 "...Russian television product has variously estimated from 7 to 12 hours of broadcast of central television" of Ukraine². Even than in February 2015 the Ukrainian Parliament accepted legal restrictions on the distribution of Russian media products on Ukrainian television (in particular those that directly promote Russian security forces), they have not been enacted because of formal proceedings initiated by the opposition, which is based on former

¹ Ethnonym "Ruthenians" and the corresponding definitions country "Rus" was used as a self-designation of ancient Kievan Rus and only in the 18th century in a slightly modified form of "Russian", "Russia" was given the imperial circles Muscovy. To name the population of modern Ukraine, which came under the occupation of the Russian Empire began to be widely used modern name "Ukraine", "Ukrainian." In the western regions of Ukraine to the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century and then used the term "Rus", "Ruthenians", which is also used for the names of political currents whose adherents belonged to the Russian Empire and supported it.

² http://ua.golos.ua/social_problem/ekspert_zakon_ob_ogranichenii_pokaza_rossijskih_filmov - 5.03.2015.

supporters of the Yanukovich's regime. For example, one of the most popular channels NTN from 7 until 13 March 2015 announced a broadcast of television series "Secrets of the investigation" and "Streets of broken lamps", and a film "Thunder Fury", dedicated to the Russian criminal investigation and special military forces of the Russian Federation³.

Almost uncontrollable by Ukrainian government, the Russian media and dependent on them domestic media resources de facto become a subject of manipulation of public opinion in Ukraine. Especially, considering that for influence on Ukrainian consumers they remain a fully open wide spectrum of modern information channels: TV, Internet and so on.

In other words, as pointed out in 1998 by the experts of the National Institute of Ukrainian-Russian relations, O. Lanovenko and O. Shevchenko: "... thanks to community Ukrainian-Russian information space, Russia has a significant influence on any, including political and ideological, scope of Ukrainian-Russian relations, including attempts to implement, in particular, goals that are contrary to the task of maintaining the status of an independent Ukrainian state"⁴. The current situation is, unfortunately, a complete confirmation of their forecasts.

3. The information component of the " hybrid "war

Aggression at south-eastern borders of Ukraine created new challenges to Ukraine and the civilized world to which not only Ukraine, but European countries were not ready. A new form of power expansion used by Russia was one of them. It was the so-called "hybrid war". It was called so because of a combination of military power, aggressive propaganda and denial of own participation in the war by the aggressor. Herewith, the latter fact within relatively short time has undergone a significant metamorphosis: from denying the participation of the Russian troops in the Crimea's annexation to the official recognition of this fact by President Putin and even the introduction in the anniversary of the annexation of Crimea, February 27, 2015 "Day of Special Operation Forces Russia", which actually made this annexation⁵. The situation has repeated in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Now it is in its first phase: the complete denial of the presence of the Russian armed forces on the territory of Ukraine, despite the existence of clear evidence recognized by the international bodies, including the UN.

Among the "explanations" of the aggression, broadcast by the media of the Russian Federation, the first place takes "protection" of the so-called Russian-speaking people and Orthodox citizens of Ukraine, the fight against "fascist junta that

³ Телеекспрес від 7.03.2015 р. до 13.03.2015 р., С. 2-23.

⁴ Лановенко О., Шевченко О. Спільний українсько-російський інформаційний простір як зона можливого соціокультурного впливу на Україну. Режим доступу: <http://old.niss.gov.ua/book/panorama/lanov.htm> - 5.03.2015.

⁵ <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201502260061> - 6.03.2015.

seized power in Kiev" and so on. Each argument finds its supporters both in Russia and in our country, considering, as already mentioned above, the significant fact of "attachment" of the Ukrainian population, especially in border areas, to the Russian socio-cultural environment, as well as weak protection of Ukrainian information space from massive Russian propaganda.

4. Information war and religious media

In this regard, the problem of scientific analysis of Russian propaganda actions and reactions of actors of the Ukrainian information field on it has a special significance. Among the latter, the religious media, in view of high level of confidence to the Church among Ukrainians, played a special role. According to the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, in 2013 it had 3.2 points on a 5-point scale and took fourth place after the family and relatives, fellow citizens, neighbors and colleagues⁶.

In other words, church structures, in terms of trust, anticipate all formal social institutions. In addition, controlled by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) is the most massive by the number of laymen church structures in Ukraine and its influence is felt to be the strongest in the eastern and southern regions.

The media, giving information, are able to form emotional response to the consumers. In this respect the religious media occupy a special position, since the effect of religion itself is largely designed to actually influence the emotional sphere of their supporters.

Skilful combination of emotions and rationale in the information flow should equip people with the position required to justify certain activities, such as warfare. The massive data messages are directed primarily at the emotional sphere of a person and therefore to reduce its capacity, critically analyze the received information. As a result, they not only weaken the will to resist the enemy, but are even able to convert people to its side. Information becomes a weapon of the parties. This practice has been used since the First World War and was named "information war". Propaganda and counterpropaganda are means of information war. A number of researchers of propaganda consider communicative aspect as a crucial one. In particular, John. Ellul noticed: "Propaganda is a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in Us actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated in an organization"⁷. G. Jovett and V. O'Donnell argue that propaganda should be seen as a process of communication

⁶ Українське суспільство 1992-2013. Стан та динаміка змін. Соціологічний моніторинг / За ред. д.ек.н. В. Ворони, д.соц.н. М. Шульги. - К.: Інститут соціології НАН України, 2013. - с.486.

⁷ Ellul J. Propaganda: The formation of men's attitudes. – New York, 1968. - С. 61.

effects within complex social systems. The propaganda campaign is a management of strategically projected communication acts to manage the emotions of the group⁸.

Today Russian propaganda is not only secular but also religious, it directs its efforts not only to compromise the Ukrainian government, but also to kindle hatred to the Ukrainians as such. The new Ukrainian government is now called "fascist", citing the supposedly high popularity of nationalist political forces in the country. Herewith, such objective facts as low rating of right-wing nationalist-oriented parties, none of which hit the Ukrainian parliament in the last election, were not taken into account. By the way, one of them - "Freedom", despite the active Maidan participation in 2013 and the availability at the time of their own fraction in Parliament, lost the parliamentary elections 2014. The enemy number one is now the elected political party "Right sector" and its leader D. Yarosh, who showed themselves during the events on the Maidan. Ukraine and the National Guard were also demonized. The patriotic feelings of the citizens of Ukraine, priority to protect the Ukrainian language, and the Ukrainian festivals were all put in a single associative array with Nazi ideology. The victory of the Russians (the other nations of the former Soviet Union are not taken into account) over Nazi Germany are constantly highlighted. Thus, there is the creation of an enemy through association. Perhaps the most striking (and most absurd) example of this association array were posts at a talk-show on channel "Russia 24" about the calls on Ukrainian school teachers to their students: "... kill bullfinches, because their colors symbolizing Russian and defend titmouse, because their yellow and blue colours symbolize the Ukrainian flag".

Also, reports about "punitive operations" of the Ukrainian National Guard against the residents of Donbas with provided "eyewitness" about "crucified boys" (an obvious allusion to Christianity), shooting peasants and sale of their internal organs to illegal transplant, etc. appear every day. This media do not provide any real evidence. All these "revelations" of Ukrainian authorities' crimes are aimed at dehumanization of the Ukrainians, so that those who fight on the side of the Separatists would have no pity for the enemy.

It is also worth mentioning that the Russian political elite, President V. Putin, obstinately deny their participation in conflict in the eastern regions of Ukraine. At the same time, the media always say that separatists in Ukraine are fighting with the US and NATO forces, particularly Catholic Poland - the old enemy of Russia. Ever since the Cold War, the Russian media have formed a public opinion that the US and NATO are enemies of Russia, trying to conquer or destroy it. The desire of Ukraine to integrate into the EU and join the NATO regarded as the machinations of the West against Russia, direct aggression, including aggression of Catholics against Orthodoxies. Thus, there is a creation of an image of an external enemy to mobilize chauvinist-minded Russian inhabitants and their followers among the citizens of Ukraine - Donbass residents.

⁸ Jowett GS, O'Donnell V. Propaganda and persuasion. – Newbury Park, 1992. - C. 260-265.

The focus of propaganda on the formation of stereotypical thinking in the auditory is an important aspect of its effectiveness. It reduces the ability for analytical thinking about political processes and phenomena, and leads to an instantaneous reaction to a stimulus. The information which does not match the stereotype, or is contrary to certain perceptions of people and groups, is discarded. The stereotype is stable and it is difficult to change. During the war, or preparation for one, messages, based on stereotypes, combined with emotional appeals to honor, justice and protective fellow, ensure action of propaganda.

Propaganda, aimed at creating stable negative stereotypes for all Ukrainian, reinforced by fears about "fascists" and Catholics and Protestants hostile to Orthodox and higher idea of "Russia's World" led to a situation in which the views spread by Russian and separatist propaganda, fit in outlook of significant part of the local population of the eastern regions of Ukraine.

Religious media can be used same as active actors of propaganda measures and as its repeaters. Such practices took place, for example, during the Orange Revolution in 2004, when the political leadership activated their information resources to discredit the political opponents and raise the image of a pro-government candidate Viktor Yanukovich. In particular, his pro-conservative views were shared by a major part of clergy of UOC-MP. This divided the religious circles into two conditional camps in which the UOC-MP represented the pro-Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP), the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), the Roman Catholic Church, Union free of Christians of Evangelical Faith of Ukraine, Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and others - pro-Ukrainian wings. Over time, rhetoric has become less radical, but some accents make it possible to distinguish the political mood that prevails in religious circles.

The problem of the politicization of religion with a renewed force faced with manifestation by political (V. Putin) and religious (Patriarch Cyril) tops of RF the ideas of the creation of the "Russia's World". Russian patriotism began to pick up signs of radical nationalism with religious backgrounds. M. E Marty and S. Eplbi suggest the following signs of religious fundamentalism: the truth is understood as "divine" which in this sense can unite; scandal, provocative language; apocalyptic moods; demonization of opponents; hatred of modernist cultural hegemony⁹. As we can see, emotions and irrationality dominate in fundamentalism as well as in propaganda.

According to fundamentalists religion loses its dominant position in society, so they show deep concern of the decline of morality (the spread of premarital relationships, pornography, homosexuality, abortions and more). Their evaluation criteria are reduced to "black - white", "Paradise - Hell". Their attitude to history and

⁹ Богданова Т., Маковецько В. Православний фундаменталізм у сучасній світовій політиці. - <http://lib.chdu.edu.ua/pdf/ukrpolituk/3/42.pdf> - 5.03.2015.

traditions are selective and deeply conservative¹⁰. There is a powerful appeal to the past as a "good and right time". Fundamentalists believe and perceive the worth for existence of only those facts and evidences that fit into their value system. On the margins for fundamentalists are human rights, as they provide equal rights for undesirable social elements (eg, homosexuals). For this reason, a powerful incentive for Solidarity of modern Orthodox fundamentalists is the opposition between "Russia's World" and "decaying West".

Modern Orthodox fundamentalism spreading Orthodox newspapers (such as "Orthodox Russia"), TV shows, has its own organizational structure: Brotherhoods and organizations (eg, "The Union of Orthodox Citizens"). In Ukraine, organizations like this receive support from the most radical clergy of UOC-MP, which operates over to the Russian Orthodox Church.

Fundamentalists' sentiments are supported by the political regime of Russia. As P. Datsyuk aptly noted: "The state itself makes order to this Orthodox fundamentalism - without government support religious obscurantism and Orthodox repression would be impossible"¹¹. The activities of such organizations in Ukraine threaten the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country, particularly through anti-Ukrainian propaganda within the country.

The problem of using media in the information war against Ukraine, including the religious ones, increasingly raised in a religious as well as in the social environment. Thus, in July 2014 Appeal of Ukrainian Council of Churches and religious organizations to the media¹², and February 5, 2015 - Address of the Synod of Bishops of the Kyiv - Galician Major Archbishopric of the UGCC to the priests of pastoral care in war¹³ were published. These documents stated the widespread use of media resources in the modern Ukrainian-Russian confrontation, and stressed the responsibility of not only the Church hierarchy, but the controlled religious media, for the formation of an adequate informational picture within Ukraine.

Taking into account the large number of churches and religious organizations operating in Ukraine, and the complexity of processing the vast array of information, we have a limited coverage of positions about modern Ukrainian-Russian armed confrontation by largest Ukrainian Christian Churches (UOC-MP, UOC-KP UAOC and UGCC). The objects of the analysis were the publications posted on the official Internet resource data of churches, because the Internet today is the rapid method of

¹⁰ Богданова Т., Маковецько В. Православний фундаменталізм у сучасній світовій політиці. - <http://lib.chdu.edu.ua/pdf/ukropolituk/3/42.pdf> - 5.03.2015.

¹¹ Дацюк С. Война за православие. За что воюет Россия. Часть 3. - <http://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/datsuk/537ee518897f7/> - 23.02.2015.

¹² Звернення Всеукраїнської ради Церков і релігійних організацій до засобів масової інформації. - http://news.ugcc.ua/documents/zvernennya_vseukrainskoi_radi_tserkov_%D1%96_rel%D1%96g%D1%96ynih_organ%D1%96zats%D1%96_do_zasob%D1%96v_masovoi_%D1%96nformats%D1%96i_71078.html - 20.02.2015.

¹³ Звернення Синоду єпископів Києво-Галицького Верховного Архієпископства до священників УГКЦ про душпастирство в умовах війни. - http://news.ugcc.ua/documents/zvernennya_do_svyashchenik%D1%96v_pro_dushpastirstvo_v_umovah_v%D1%96yni_72892.html - 20.02.2015.

obtaining information. Analyzing religious media, we noticed not only the direct application and calls of religious figures, but also words, accents and context of what was said. Words that reflect the extreme and "moderate" views on war and its members as presented by the media were selected as basic indicators for the analysis of the publications. An example is shown below.

1. Territory clashes: "Novo-Russia" --- Occupied Territories of Donetsk and Lugansk regions;
2. Those who fight against the Ukrainian army: rebels --- separatists, terrorists;
3. Ukrainian military: punitive --- defenders.

Among the array of messages on the sites we focused on many related to social issues. Our attention was drawn to the heading "Church and Society". We also limited our study by temporal boundaries to 2014. In total 2413 messages were examined. The most common concepts and definitions that are used in the publications relating to the armed conflict in Ukraine are in the table.

UOC-MP	fratricide / South-East / conflict / ATO zone / Donbass / war	ATO fighters / Ukrainian military / defenders	refugees / internally displaced persons / humanitarian assistance / volunteering	peace / territorial integrity of our country
UOC-KP	occupiers / occupied territories / terrorists / terrorist organization / Russian saboteurs	Ukrainian military / defenders / defense of the Ukrainian people	volunteering	territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine / peace
UAOC	The situation in the East		volunteering	U
UGCC	terrorists / external aggression / Putin's aggression / Russian soldiers / armed conflict / the occupied territories / propaganda	Ukrainian military / Ukrainian soldiers / defenders / Protection / our boys / Patriots of Ukraine	volunteering / spiritual support military / military chaplaincy	peace

Under the heading "Church and Society" at the official website of the UOC-MP 1630 posts were published during the year 2014. Of these - 184 more or less devoted to the conflict in eastern regions of Ukraine. Much attention is devoted to the issue of aid to refugees (IDPs) from the zone of Anti-terrorist operation (ATO) and collecting and sending humanitarian aid to the conflict zone. The use of the term "South-East" to describe the territory of armed confrontation is typical. The use of this term highlights the problem "in terms of Moscow" because "of Kyiv" the region would be called as Donetsk and Lugansk regions. The concept of "terrorists" was also once understood in connection with the beaten IL-76. Typical for the UOC-MP pro-Russian rhetoric was replaced with neutral messages with emphasis on charity. In our

opinion, it was called on one hand by reluctance to be affected by the dominant in ROC chauvinism fundamentalist wing, on the other hand, to openly stand on the side of his people and do not disappoint Moscow metropolis.

In the section "Church and Society" the official page UOC-KP published 45 articles and reports on social topics, including - 20 directly related to the crisis in Ukraine. The emphasized definitions used to present both sides of the conflicting parties - "Ukrainian soldiers", "defenders" against "terrorists", "occupants" - points on the emotional nature of articles. These definitions correspond to the official position of the Ukrainian authorities. Loyalty to the authorities and clear patriotism are typical for UOC-KP.

The official website of UAOC has no category "Church and Society", so we viewed this feed. Of the 97 messages in 2014 - 4 issues related to the armed conflict in Ukraine. Three of them are devoted to coverage of high-ranking officials of Ukraine, two mentioned that Church took part in the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (UCCRO), which examined the problem of Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict. Posts showed neutral attitude of the church hierarchy to the situation in the eastern regions of the country.

By 2014 in the category "Church and Society" on the website of the UGCC 641 posts were published, of which 92 - regarding the ongoing crisis in the eastern regions of Ukraine. In the articles and publications for the specified period, Russia and V. Putin were directly accused of armed aggression against Ukraine. With regard to the Ukrainian side, the terms "protection", "patriotism" were used. The Ukrainian soldiers emphasized the words "Ukrainian" and "our", indicating the emotional solidarity with them. Much attention is given to a reflection on the theme of "war" and "peace". The prayers of Pope Francis and the Bishops of the Catholic Church for peace and harmony in Ukraine were published. The emphasis is on the service in all its manifestations to Homeland, particularly in the military chaplaincy, as one of its topical forms.

It should be noted that the official reports in the Internet resources of churches cannot be interpreted as a complete reflection of the opinion within the church circles that may actually vary in their approach and views. This is confirmed in particular in the secular media reports on the cases of disloyalty to their clergy hierarchy, moving with their followers under a mantle of the patriotic church structures denominations, or similar steps taken by a congregation who express distrust of pro-Moscow minded priests¹⁴.

¹⁴ Ю. Чорноморець. Наростає хвиля переходу громад від УПЦ МП // День, 19 вересня 2014 р.; Фанстастический священник из Херсона. - // <http://naberejna.com.ua/n/1523-fantasticheskij-svyashchennik-iz-khersona.html> - 07.03.2015; Церковна община УПЦ МП перейшла в УПЦ КП... - // <http://vlasti.net/news/211461> - 07.03.2015.

5. Conclusions

The media, as the example of the "hybrid war" in Ukraine, played a greater role in the international conflicts, transforming into one of the most effective weapons. At the same time, media can use certain methods that can contribute to conflict resolution with minimal material and human losses. Religious media that operate in Ukraine are mostly balanced and persuade public opinion to the peaceful settlement of conflicts, which can be seen in their reflection of the current Ukrainian-Russian armed confrontation. However, reports of Internet resources are obviously a noticeable attraction prepared by the churches which they represent, to their centers located in Ukraine or abroad.

A careful study of the influence of the media on the audience in such extreme situations as hostile circumstances, provides opportunities to distinguish basic methods and techniques of media influence on the course of the conflict, and develop mechanisms for optimal response of the consumers of this information. This allows not only to optimize the use of media in the information confrontation, but also to put in place mechanisms to protect the public opinion of the unwanted media exposure.

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Summary

The problem of the use of religious media in the information war during the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict in 2014 was presented in the paper on the basis of analysis of official websites of the most important Ukrainian orthodox churches.

Key words: religious/orthodox church media, information war, propaganda, counterpropaganda