

Russian-American information conflict as a determining factor of Russian media discourse development

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Abstract - Modern international relations are undergoing tectonic changes, which are indirected by the influence of the development of information technologies. Modern relations between large countries largely depend on the information coverage of actions of these countries. Moreover, the mass media have a direct impact on the formation of public opinion and media discourse, which in Russian media is crowded with Russian-American cluster of information confrontation. This article highlights the problems of the impact of the information confrontation between Russia and the United States on the media discourse situation in the Russian public. The article attempts to theoretically comprehend the methods of presenting the issues of information confrontation by the Russian media, the techniques and methods used in this case. During the study, great importance was attached to the content analysis of the Russian media, the analysis of word-indicators and the detection of techniques used by the Russian press. The results of the study consist in the statement of the paramount importance of information confrontation between the States and the fact that the problem of information counteraction with the United States occupies an important place in the Russian media discourse.

Keywords — component, mass media, media discourse, Russian media, information war, content analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

The modern confrontation of states is increasingly expressed in several different dimensions: if earlier the lines of divergence were presented in the military, political and economic spheres, now an information factor has been added to this spectrum. In this connection, not only the structure of international relations is changing, but also their very essence, in which states are fighting for attempts to create a "post-actual world", which, as a rule, means the oversaturation of the information field with all sorts of facts far from reality, facts from which it becomes almost impossible to identify reliable ones [1]. In such circumstances, the confrontation between the states is increasing in every possible way. The information space is becoming another platform where the interests of great states converge. This confrontation has an impact both on the internal policy of the state, changing the direction of its priorities, and on the external, stimulating the creation of a regulatory framework for the regulation of information security, as well as forcing to act ahead of the curve, using both already tested and completely new methods of struggle.

In this regard, the problems of information confrontation, the level of influence of this factor on the state of international politics and security policy in General, is an actual topic of scientific research and theoretical consideration.

At the same time, it should be noted that with the increasing role of information in the modern political context of public relations, the study of discourse is also relevant and fully attracting interest scientific topics. However, the term "mass media discourse" established in the result of research works of T. G. Dobroklonsky, which brought her own definition of the studied concepts. According to her point of view, the concept of "discourse of mass media" is revealed in the following definition: "This is a message together with all other components of communication (sender, recipient, channel, feedback, communication situation or context)" [2]. In addition to T. G. Dobroklonsky perspective of discourse mass media studied by such researchers as I. M. Dzyaloshinsky, who insists that the mass media in relation to all aspects of social life develop and disseminate "ideal plans for new types of human activity, human behavior, communication, all forms of human existence" [3]; in addition, a significant contribution to the domestic formation and development of the theory of media text made scientists such as D. N. Shmelev [4], S. I. Bernstein [5], V. G. Kostomarov [6], [7], A.N. Vasilyeva [8], Yu.V. Rozhdestvensky [9], G.Ya. Solganik [10], S.I. Treskova [11], I.P. Lysakova [12], B.V. Krivenko [13]. These researchers agree that the level of mass communication gives the concept of "text" new shades of meaning, due to the media properties of a media. Thus, the given topic has been studied by scientists quite extensively, but the problems of the Russian media discourse in relation to the information confrontation between Russia and the United States have been studied rather sparsely. Consideration of this topic is the main task of the presented research and is the scientific novelty of the work.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS (MODEL)

Given the specificity of the given research problems, it is worth noting that from the arsenal of scientific methods, this article is based mainly on the use of the method of content analysis, as well as the study of primary sources. Thanks to the use of these methods, it was possible to fully consider and analyze the problems of the Russian media discourse in

relation to the coverage of the information confrontation with the United States.

First of all, it should be noted that the modern specifics of the media discourse differs in its features. On the one hand, modern mass media, which perform the functions of ensuring the interaction of all social actors with the processes of social self-knowledge, "are constantly in the present, at the point where the action takes place at a particular moment of time", where the reality is relayed to the real fact, and, on the other hand, the need for projectivity increases, the essence of which is that the mass media create and popularize "ideal plans for new types of human activity, human behavior, communication, all forms of human existence" [14].

In addition to this, it should be noted that the mass media are aimed at ensuring the process of mass communication and realize their ideological resource aimed at "cognitive processing of society and the individual in order to form a special picture of the world" [15]. At the same time, the discourse of mass media reflects the actual social being and is applicable to the context of the actual ideology. Thus, media discourse plays an extremely important role in the construction of public consciousness and the creation of relevant public opinion.

Based on this, it should be noticed that the mass media discourse, which in our time is formed in relation to the Russian Federation (hereinafter – the RF) and the United States of America (hereinafter – the USA) has a direct impact on the public mood and forms both personal and semantic and social-semantic attitude of each individual to reality.

Based on this, we can assume that the information proxy-war observed in our time between the USA and the RF forms the overall picture of the political world, the national picture of the world within a particular state and an individual picture of the world of each person. At the same time, it should be mentioned that the information confrontation between the two countries is increasingly attracting the attention of the Russian reader, taking priority coverage in the Russian media discourse. In particular, such trends began to manifest with the changing of the geopolitical era of undisputed the USA dominance in the world political dimension and the strengthening of Russia's place in the world. Such a turning point happens after the well-known events in Ukraine and Syria. It is the events in these regions that are the reason for the growing information confrontation between Russia and the United States and receive the most attention from both Russian and American media. At the same time, it should be noticed that during this period, the approach of the Russian Federation to the formation of foreign policy, as well as traditional methods of policy significantly transformed. Global changes are also taking place with regard to informational policy. Information counteraction to the great power represented by the United States is becoming an emerging trend of modern Russian policy. Based on this statement, the purpose of this article is to consider the methods and forms of coverage of the information confrontation with the United States, which are used in the Russian media discourse.

Content analysis of the most popular Russian information sources (such as Arguments and Facts, Moskovsky Komsomolets, Kommersant, RIA Novosti, Lenta.ru), makes it possible to trace a certain set of characteristic words-

indicators and "techniques" that are used by the Russian media in order to emphasize the tendentious growth of the information confrontation between Russia and the United States. For example, most of these resources publish information about the high-profile statements of famous foreign figures that Russia is the aggressor and participates in the Ukrainian conflict by deploying its troops to the South-East of the country. Russia responds to such statements with a complete refutation. A similar trend can be traced by studying the stories and publications of various Russian media. There is a clause at the end of most reports: "international observers have never recorded the presence of the Russian military in the territory of Donbass. In addition, Moscow has repeatedly officially denied all accusations and stressed that Russia is not a party to the internal Ukrainian conflict" [16].

In addition to the abovementioned facts, the Russian media actively use such a method as "gluing or labeling", which is known under the term "namecalling". Such media as "Moskovsky Komsomolets", RIA Novosti and some other publish information denouncing the guilt of the United States at the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine. According to correspondents, it is the United States that is waging an information war against Russia, acting through a third party – Ukraine. The US deliberately provides NATO partners with false intelligence information on the basis of which they declare the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine. So, for example, the Moscow Komsomolets published an article under the following heading: "The United States deliberately transferred to NATO false intelligence on Ukraine" [17]. In addition to Ukraine, Venezuela has recently become the focus of media attention. In particular, "Gazeta.ru" declares the U.S. Congress adopted a "Law on combating the threat of Russia in Venezuela." The document States that Russia maintains close contacts with the Venezuelan authorities, in particular with President Nicolas Maduro. Thus, such publications strengthen the idea of the ongoing information confrontation between Russia and the United States and the leading role of Russian media resources in the public consciousness.

In addition, the Russian media are actively using such a technique as "transfer". In Russian news media, the authority of the President of Russia is increasingly spread professionally and skillfully, by quoting his expressions and comments on the events in international politics, in particular, the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria. For example, one of Mr. Putin's statements is quoted by the majority of Russian publications: "There are no Russian troops in Ukraine. We do not participate in the civil war in Donbass" [18]. Thus, the media influence the formation of associative ties between the President of the Russian Federation and citizens of Russia, which have value and significance among others, and makes them believe in the truthfulness of the words of the head of state.

Also as part of this method of information warfare it can be mentioned "references to authority", "testimony", used in conjunction with the "direct refutation" or "affirmative statements". So, for example, in addition to Mr. Putin's statements that there are no Russian troops in Ukraine, one of the media resources publishes a quote from the well-known analyst Harry Bentham, who argued that: "...instead of non-existent evidence of the presence of Russian troops in

Ukraine, the Western media offer an argument based on sophistry that some Russians and Russian equipment found in this country. No information coming from Ukraine does not indicate the Russian "invasion", which from time to time write the Western media. If Russia really invaded the territory of Ukraine, then why did Kiev not break off diplomatic relations with it and is not afraid of Russian nuclear weapons or cruise missiles, which can destroy the entire army in a matter of minutes, as well as the population of the country" [19] Thus, referring to the authority, the Russian media once again confirm the idea of the absence of Russian troops on the territory beyond Ukraine's control and the deliberate aggravation of relations with Russia, initiated by the Ukrainian government.

With regard to the US-Russian relations, Kommersant refers to the words of former Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Jerzy Pomianowski, now Executive Director of the European Foundation for Democracy (EED), who argued that: "We in Europe are shocked by how easily Russian media have moved to militant rhetoric, and it does not allow us to feel safe. Unfortunately, it is state TV that sets the tone in the Russian media, and high-quality independent publications, which represent an alternative view, are under pressure from the authorities and are simply not able to balance the "picture" [20]. RIA Novosti, describing the information confrontation between the two countries, refers to the comment of Professor of St. Petersburg State University Alexander Kubyshkin, who positively assesses the efforts of the Russian Federation in the media sphere: "another step has been taken in strengthening the information struggle, – says A. Kubyshkin. – This kind of action is aimed at to some extent to satisfy the claims of those people who claim that Russia allegedly intervened in the democratic process in the United States. It is nonsense, but, nevertheless, this nonsense is now perceived against the General anti-Russian hysteria. RT is a very successful project. I know how this channel is viewed in America, it has a very good audience, a professional team. I think that the Americans thus confirm the effectiveness of the channel. What they are doing, unfortunately, is another step towards the deterioration of mutual understanding and relations". Thus it is clear that the information confrontation with Russia has an impact on the American public and, therefore, causes concern among the American authorities, which generates all sorts of insinuations against the Russian media [21].

It is impossible not to pay attention to the widespread idea about Russia's interference in the US presidential elections in 2016. Actively spreading such misinformation, the Russian media with the same activity publish facts that refute such statements, each time using words-indicators "allegedly" or "possible" Russian interference in the US elections. In particular, Sputnik, referring to the authoritative opinion of the head of the Center for Foreign Policy of the Institute of Economics Boris Shmelev, cites the following quote: "...information about the alleged "intervention" of Russia comes primarily from the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, who exaggerates this topic in all his speeches, including the recently concluded Munich security conference. However, Russia is not going to interfere anywhere" [22].

At the same time, the number of published materials devoted to the fight against Russia's information influence not only in the United States but also in other countries of the

world is increasing in foreign media. In turn, the Russian media do not hesitate to answer and refute these statements. For example, "Izvestia.ru" publishing information that Democrat Jeff Merkley submitted to the US Congress a resolution on the need to counteract "Russian interference" in the presidential elections in Ukraine in order to "implement the principles and ideals of the Ukrainian revolution of 2014" [23], at the same time pointing to the inexpediency of such ideas, referring to the authoritative opinion of the first Deputy Chairman of the International Committee of the Federation Council Vladimir Dzhubarov. Mr Dzhubarov claims that: "These charges are ridiculous, unfounded. They do not even need to comment and justify, it's nonsense... even if we close all social networks, Russia will still be accused of interference, only through third countries, for example" [24].

Based on this, it is necessary to draw the following conclusion. Russian media discourse, covering the information confrontation with the United States, actively uses the method of referring to authoritative opinions and statements, thus refuting the meaningless accusations against Russia.

Another method actively used by Russian media is "shining generalization" or "brilliant certainty". So, for example, Tass.ru publishes the statement of Mr. Putin under the headline: "Putin is convinced that the accusations of Russian intervention in elections in the United States was invented by the opponents of the Trump," also noting the following words of the Russian leader: "It is as though without understanding that by doing this, people damage the internal political condition of the country is drained of the ability of elected head of state. This means that they simply do not respect the voters who voted for him (Trump)" [25]. So, once again, the absence of Russia's guilt in any information impact on the American public and on the domestic policy of the United States is claimed. In addition, the Russian media have repeatedly stated the opposite actions committed under the leadership of the US government against Russia. So, at the end of February 2019 Federal News Agency publishes the following statement by the official speaker of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Maria Zakharova, who spoke about the cyberattacks carried out by the United States against the Russian media. The diplomat said: "Recently, a massive DDoS attack on NTV World involving four million IP addresses registered in the United States was carried out for several days." In the same article, the publication cites the statement of a member of the Committee on Defence Yury Svitkina: "of course, these facts are a vivid example of how US intelligence agencies under the guise of conducting investigation "the Russian intervention", doing their dark deeds. In fact, there is interference in the work of the Russian media, which do not participate in political battles" [26].

In addition to these, we can also note the following method used by the Russian media. The method of "games in common", which is actively used by bloggers. They try to establish a trusting relationship with the contact audience through the use of phrases, quotes, ideas, opinions belonging to the "common people". It is important to note that blogs are a place in the Internet space where users express their own opinion about any fact or situation, as well as relate to social networks.

In the context of the use of social media, an article in the British edition of *The Guardian*, published in March 2016 under the title "The New Cold War in Europe is Becoming Digital as Putin Increases the Media", is interesting. There, journalist Daniel Boffi writes how Russia recently created so-called "factories", where many bloggers work around the clock, filling the Internet with comments in favor of Russian interests. They are otherwise called "hybrid trolls" and "trolling" (as an activity on the Internet and a specific form of social provocation in network communications) – the basis of Putin's strategy. The author adds that such "trolls" can be distinguished by grammatical errors in the comments, their repeatability and, of course, IP-addresses. Moreover, according to the journalist, there are five main types of "hybrid trolls": "all the fault of the American conspiracy", "troll in a bikini" (when the photos of network users shows a beautiful girl and a "troll" politely asks his interlocutors to change their opinion on any issue), "aggressive troll" (seeks to oust disagreeing with him interlocutor from the network), "troll Wikipedia" (busy editing articles in Wikipedia, as well as blogs in favor of Russia) and "troll-with-application" (publishes links to articles and videos of Russian news agencies, acting in defense of the interests of Russia). Further, Mr Boffi quotes the statement of NATO communications expert Sandu Svetok: "the Kremlin TV channels fill the air, Russian-language newspapers and magazines distribute content produced in Moscow, and Russian-funded non-governmental organizations provide "talking heads" with an opinion on any issue. And at the same time, "digital trolls" generate comments in social networks and blogs, to thereby effect on the results of search engines..." [27].

As for the electronic media in General, they combined and helped Mr Putin to win several victories in the current information war – so many Anglo-Saxon media believe. For example, in the American edition of the *New York Observer* at the end of last year came the material, talking about the extraordinary abilities of Russia in the field of PR. The article describes the scandal surrounding the USA attacks on the Russian-funded TV channel *Russia Today*, which broadcasts around the clock in English through cable and satellite networks around the world. The delegate of the Institute of International Leadership of Senator John McCain David Kramer published his article in the *Washington Post*, which was soaked through with anti-Russian sentiments. He proposed to freeze the assets of RT, not taking into account the important fact: the TV channel *Russia Today* is not a state property of Russia in contrast to the news Agency "Russia today", which is considered as a separate, unrelated to RT structure. This situation suggests, the journalist writes, that Mr Kramer did not check the facts before the publication of this kind of provocation. It turned out to be more important for him to incite hostility to Russian TV channels at any cost, even with the help of his own ignorance and prejudice. But in fact, it turns out that the facts in the information war (war of words) are crucial, especially, the author emphasizes if this war is waged against the Russian opponent, witty and successful in the implementation of PR wars. Then, in response to Mr Kramer editor-in-chief of *Russia Today* Margarita Simonyan wrote that it was funny to hear calls to restrict the activities of the Russian TV channel from those people who, in theory, have to glorify advantages of democracy and freedom of speech. "Now they want to drown out a rare voice that disagrees with their line of material."

They are Americans. Therefore, the use of blogger-sphere is also one of the most important methods of information warfare.

III. CONCLUSION

Based on the aforesaid, the following conclusions have been made. In the modern world, the role of mass media in political processes cannot be underestimated. We are witnessing a process of policy mediatization – a process in which media reflect events and influence outcomes by influencing public opinion and politics. In our time, the most prominent subjects of confrontation in the information space are the United States and Russia. The information confrontation between these states took place on an increasing line: at the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, after – the war in Syria, then – the US presidential elections. It was in these political planes that the most active information confrontation between the two States was observed. Based on the above, as well as the specific methods used by the Russian media, it should be noted that the confrontation in the information sphere of Russia with the United States is becoming the defining discourse of modern Russian media. Content analysis of specific Russian information sources makes it possible to verify this. It should be said that the information counteraction between the States is due to the modern global transformation of the system of international relations, in which information begins to play a paramount importance, as well as to the general convoy of world politics: the hot confrontation between the superpowers flows into the virtual sphere, which also becomes more intense every year. This aspect is becoming so global that the expert community is gradually calling for the need for information disarmament, the purpose of which should be the restoration of mutual understanding between states, but no less important is the strengthening of trust between the state and society. However, at the moment it is difficult to talk about any progress in improving relations between the United States and Russia in this area. It is reasonable to assume that the efforts of the US and Russia in information attacks will only increase, which will accordingly affect the Russian media discourse.

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