

[Scientific Articles]

Imamgayazova D.

*Between propaganda and public diplomacy:
The framing of the syrian conflict (2016) in russian and
american state-sponsored news outlets*

BETWEEN PROPAGANDA AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: THE FRAMING OF THE SYRIAN CONFLICT (2016) IN RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN STATE-SPONSORED NEWS OUTLETS

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Abstract:

The current study examines the construction of media frames about the Russian intervention in Syria in the international news outlets sponsored by the US and Russian governments. A twofold comparison was drawn on the materials from the Russian and English-language versions of *RT* and *Radio Liberty*. The matching of the American and Russian news stories was carried out along with the matching of the 'domestic' and 'externalised' versions of these news outlets.

The fact that the Russian and American media framed the intervention in completely different ways was expected, but there were also noticeable dissimilarities in the various editions of each news outlet. The strongest distinction between the Russian and English-language news reports emerged in the framing of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the attribution of responsibility.

The results were discussed in the light of public diplomacy and propaganda theories, which had partly predicted the findings (Taylor, 2012; Jowett & O'Donnell, 2014). The previous theoretical developments suggested that the political ideology and foreign policy orientation of a sender strongly influenced the principles of state-sponsored international broadcasting. The current findings point at other potential influences in the field, such as a local news discourse and the journalistic principles, which were developed in a specific media system (Roeh & Cohen, 1992; Jang, 2013).

Keywords: Public diplomacy, Propaganda, Russia Today, Radio Liberty, The Syrian conflict, Conflict framing, International news



[Научные статьи]

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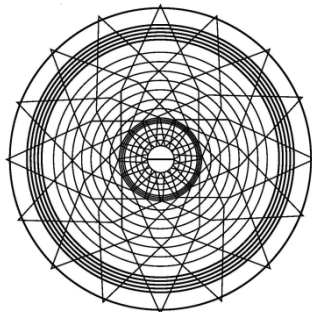
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Context

Established in 2005, the Russian government-funded media network *RT* (former *Russia Today*) is often perceived as the successor of the Soviet external propaganda, which was associated with information warfare and public deception (Weiss & Pomerantsev, 2014; Saari, 2014). Since 1950, *Radio Liberty* (RL) has positioned itself as an alternative news source that stood in opposition to the state propaganda in the USSR and its successor states. RL's current editorial policy is said to follow the principles of the “new public diplomacy” such as editorial independence, transparency and the rejection of a one-way communication (Pamment, 2011). However, the American and Russian information programmes do not uniquely fit into the categories of 'old propaganda' and 'new diplomacy'. Brown (2013, p. 9) noticed that the American external broadcasting had drawn on the “military concepts of information warfare, public diplomacy, and the media management approaches borrowed from domestic politics”. The Russian government also developed a militant “Information Confrontation” strategy together with the “soft power” programmes (Simons, 2015).

The recent Ukrainian conflict and the Russian intervention in Syria resulted in the estrangement between Russia and the West, which the Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev described as a “new Cold War” (Sanchez et al., 2016). During this period, international broadcasters (IB) became an important tool of the Russian diplomacy, and the RT network increased its presence in foreign TV and online news segments (Vitopoulos, 2015). Conversely, the US extended the radio broadcasting and online services in Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. RL re-declared its mission to provide uncensored news in the countries, which lacked media pluralism and press freedom (Radio Liberty, 2017). However, several researchers revealed the use of questionable propaganda techniques in the broadcasting of the US state-sponsored media in hostile countries (Hiebert, 2003; Powers & Samuel-Azran, 2014). Thus, Powers and Samuel-Azran (2014) described the cases of censorship and selectiveness in the Arabic-language news channel *Al-Hurra*, which was sponsored by the US government. It is worth noting that modern Russian IBs were also often accused of a biased reporting and deception (Pomerantsev, 2015; Vitopoulos, 2015).

The propaganda theorists believed that the ideology of a sending country influenced the IB policy and assumed that a deceitful propaganda was spread only by authoritarian countries (Ellul, 1973; Taylor, 2011). However, the line between 'democratic' and 'authoritarian' propaganda often became blurred during the hostilities. Taylor (2012) himself allowed for using 'half-truths' and selectiveness in the 'democratic' wartime propaganda. Another theoretical prediction is that the IB strategies may differ depending on the target audience and a foreign policy orientation (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2014). The controversial coverage of the Russian military intervention in Syria (2016) by American and Russian IBs provided an example of a modern 'media war' (Wintour & Harding, 2016). In the current study, the



framing analysis of English and Russian-language reports in RT and RL is employed in order to test the predictions about the determinants of the IB policies.

Theoretical background and hypothesis

Propaganda and political ideology

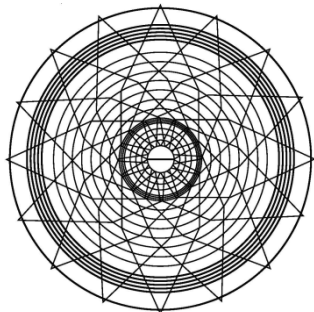
There are two main directions in the propaganda studies: 1) the 'neutralist' school, which viewed propaganda itself a neutral and legit communication tool (Taylor, 2011; Cull, 2013); 2) the critical school, which condemned the use of propaganda (Ellul, 1973, Cunnigham, 2001). The neutralists linked the IB policy with a political ideology and argued that democracies employ propaganda with a concern for public benefits, while authoritarian regimes use it for coercion and control. Nevertheless, propaganda critic Ellul (1973) warned democratic governments against the use of a myth-based propaganda abroad because it could undermine the cornerstone principles of a democracy. "Once democracy becomes the object of propaganda, it also becomes as totalitarian, authoritarian, and exclusive as dictatorship", concluded Ellul (1973: 249).

Although the IB policy is closely connected to the propaganda theory, the term itself is not popular among practitioners and policymakers. Since the 1960es, the US State Department was developing its conceptualisation of "public diplomacy" (PD), which was meant to serve as an alternative to propaganda methods. In fact, the terms 'PD' and 'propaganda' were often used interchangeably until the late 2000s when American policymakers tried to restart their IB strategies (Waller, 2007). Pamment (2011) noticed that the American IBs sought to abandon the one-way broadcasting model and to engage in an online conversation with foreign audiences. The principles of two-way communication, credibility, and editorial independence formed the basis of the "new public diplomacy" that emerged in the 2000s (Cull, 2013; Pamment, 2011). Table 1 presents the distinctions between propaganda and PD.

Table 1. The Distinctions between Propaganda and Public Diplomacy

Criterion	Propaganda	Public diplomacy
Transparency	Discreet	Open / Transparent
Communication flow	One-way communication	Two-way communication
Goals and values	Coercion and control	Trust and credibility
Reasoning techniques	Manipulation	Persuasion
Key media	Radio and TV	Web and social media
Editorial policies	Editors are subordinated to policymakers	Editorial independence

Sources: Pamment (2011), Cull (2013).



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In contradiction to the previous arguments, Jowett and O'Donnell (2014) claimed that modern IBs were still subordinated to the propaganda purposes. The scholars noticed that dialog-oriented PD programmes (e.g, cultural and exchange programmes) were entailed by a “classic” propaganda in order to maximise their effects in the modern media culture where it was more important “to say what a nation is doing, than to do it” (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2014: 312). Several researchers also found that American IBs returned to propaganda methods since the “War on Terror” had been declared in the aftermath of the 11/9 attack (Hiebert, 2003; Powers & Samuel-Azran, 2014). Powers and Samuel-Azran (2014) found that *Al-Hurra*, a US-sponsored TV channel in the Arabic language, was subjected to the policymakers' censorship. In particular, the researchers described the case when Bin Laden's records were taken off air despite the protests of Al-Hurra's journalists.

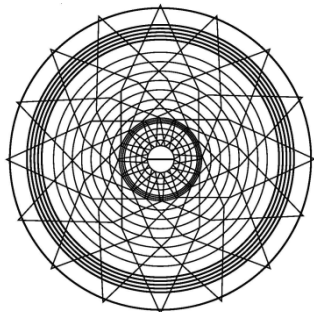
Propaganda and a foreign policy orientation

A foreign policy orientation (PFO) is characterised by “attitudes to participation in the international system, national interest and general foreign policy goals” (Riegert, 1998: 14). The researcher argued that a national FPO is profoundly reflected in the media coverage of foreign news, especially in the case of international conflicts (Riegert, 1998). Describing the bias in foreign news reporting, Nossek (2004) also found that journalists covered international events impartially mainly when the events were not related to the political interests in their homeland. In opposite cases, the loyalty to a national interest often superseded the journalistic neutrality even if the policymakers did not exert a direct pressure on the domestic media (Nossek, 2004). Instead of enforcement, the democratic governments strived to promote the certain interpretations and narratives among domestic and foreign journalists in order to achieve a desired coverage for their policies (Jang, 2013).

Analysing the government's relations with foreign journalists and publics, Entman (2004) noticed that policymakers tend to use priming and frame building techniques in order to shape the narratives in the international news. According to Jowett and O'Donnell (2014), the government's attempt to influence media framing during international conflicts may result in the following propaganda effects: 1) a foreign news reporting aligns with the perspective of the government and advances its interest; and 2) the middle ground is not presented in order to polarise the coverage and force audiences to take sides. Thus, Nohrstedt et al. (2000) found that an FPO influenced the reporting of the conflicts in Kosovo and Iraq in such a way that the actions of 'friendly' governments were framed mainly as legitimate and reconciling.

Hypothesis

The previous research showed that the policies of international broadcasters were affected by the sender's ideology and foreign policy orientation. However, the regional strategies of



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state-sponsored IBs and their connection with a FPO were rarely examined. Abdul-Magded and Herring (2010) and Al-Najjar (2009) discussed the reporting strategies of Al-Jazeera in the Middle East and in the West revealing significant distinctions in the news agenda and reporting techniques. However, these studies did not compare the framing of the same events in the various editions of Al-Jazeera. The current study seeks to fill this research gap by comparing the framing of the Russian intervention in Syria in the American and Russian state-sponsored IBs.

The proponents of the new public diplomacy argued that democratic countries, including the US, were committed to credible and trust-based communication (Taylor, 2011; Cull, 2013). At the same time, the Russian IBs were accused of using deceitful propaganda techniques (Saari, 2014; Weiss & Pomerantsev, 2014). Thus, the initial assumption was that the biased news reporting prevailed in the Russian IBs, whereas the American IBs provided a more balanced and neutral coverage. However, it would be impossible to identify which reports were more biased without a clear measurement indicator. Here this challenge was solved by adopting the concept of one-sided framing that “emphasises some elements and suppresses others in ways that encourage recipients to give attention and weight to the evaluative attributes that privilege the favoured side’s interpretation” (Entman, 2010: 392). This concept allowed for developing three testable hypotheses.

H1. Radio Liberty avoided the one-sided framing and provided mostly balanced coverage.

H2. RT employed the one-sided framing more often than providing balanced coverage.

H3. The tendency to one-sided or balanced framing persists in the different language editions of RT and Radio Liberty.

Methodology

Research design and sample

The research design is drawn on the combination of the content analysis and framing analysis. An article was a unit in the content analysis, and frames with their evaluative attributes were examined during the framing analysis (Krippendorff, 2012; Entman, 2010). The primary data was retrieved from the multilingual online news platforms run by RT and Radio Liberty. Hester and Dougal (2007) suggested to apply the constructed week sampling to online news studies as this method had proved to be more reliable than a random or consecutive sampling. The current study followed this method and reconstructed three weeks from each news outlet with publications from February, March and April 2016. Altogether, 178 news articles and editorials in Russian and English languages were collected from RT's and RL's websites. Editorials constituted some 15% of the sample, and the publications of other genres (e.g., blogs, podcasts, etc.) were not included.



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Table 2. The Characteristics of the Sample

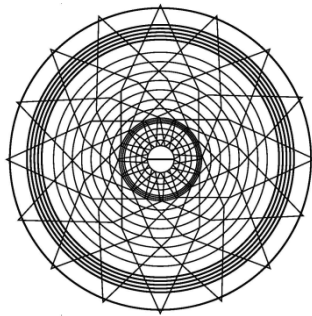
News Outlets	Articles	Share (by number)
RT English	49	28%
RT Russian	36	20%
Liberty	54	30%
Svoboda	39	22%
Total	178	100,00%

The comparability of materials was controlled by counting the number of articles collected from each source. As it is shown in Table 2, the English-language news outlets issued more articles than their Russian-language counterparts in both media networks. This difference can be explained by the organisational structure of the editorial offices. Most probably, more journalists and editors were employed by the English-language international offices and, therefore, they were able to prepare and publish more news items during the same period of time. Additional articles in the Russian language were not added to the sample in order to identify the authentic ratio of discussed topics and related frames.

Measures and procedures

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) insisted that the framing analysis should follow the inductive logic. Following their recommendations, researchers should 'extract' the specific frames from a media text by looking at reasoning and framing devices (e.g. rhetorical figures, metaphors, catchphrases, etc.). However, there were also attempts to unify the procedures of the framing analysis in order to achieve higher external validity. Thus, the group of researchers developed the recommendations for the framing analysis of war reporting, distinguishing the frames of human interest, responsibility and the effects of war as well as the diagnostic and prognostic frames (Carpenter, 2007; Dmitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007). Both approaches were employed in the current study as more 'typical' frames of an armed conflict (e.g. Responsibility, Prognostic and Diagnostic frames) were examined together with the case-specific frames (e.g. the Counter-Terror Operation frame).

Entman (2010) noticed that the one-sided framing can be detected whenever one interpretation constantly dominated over the rest of the possible readings. The study utilised this method for re-constructing and weighting key interpretations within a frame. First, the content analysis was conducted in order to identify the key events and issues discussed in the articles. The codebook included the speakers and persons mentioned, conflict parties, groups of interest, main issues and possible frames. The list of codes was open in this step, so that all coders had an opportunity to suggest new items and frames in the code book. The quantitative distribution of key frames and framing objects was built as the outcome of the content analysis. The unit of analysis was an article, so that each main frame was given the "weight" of its source article when the shares were calculated. These



shares demonstrate an absolute value for each frame, e.g. the intersections of two or more frames in one article were not considered.

The following qualitative analysis was focused on examining the attribution of responsibility, causal inferences and solutions within the key frames. For this purpose, the most common and developed frames were selected and supplemented with the possible interpretations derived from the previous analysis. Coders were instructed to leave an interpretation field blank if the factual evidence or discussion in a particular article did not support any given interpretation. Therefore, the outcome of the qualitative analysis showed how often each frame had been interpreted in a particular way. The double coding was employed at both steps of the analysis. Two Russian-speaking and two English-speaking contributors examined 40 articles in total, or more than 20% of the sample. The conformity between the outcomes achieved by the author and the second coders ranged from 90% to 94%, which confirms the robustness of the findings (Krippendorff, 2012).

Results

Framing objects

In the analysed materials, RT and RL together mentioned or quoted more than 400 actors in regard to the Russian intervention in Syria in 2016. This included individuals, the conflicting groups (e.g., the sides taking part in the armed conflict in Syria) and the groups of interest (e.g., non-militant groups involved in the conflict). On the one hand, such detalisation proved the high informative value of the news content in the American and Russian IBs. On the other hand, it allows for fact juggling and manipulation as it is difficult to follow the movement and actions of multiple groups. In this case, RT mentioned more conflicting groups than the RL: 29 against 17. Conversely, Liberty and Svoboda mentioned and quoted more international observers (34) and activists (16), while RT Russian and RT English mostly quoted politicians (27) and military leaders (11). Both news outlets covered similar social groups (e.g. civilians, refugees, doctors, women and children, etc.).

Table 3. The Coverage of Civil War in Syria

	Svoboda	Liberty
The Coalition intervenes in the civil war in Syria	15,55%	26,64%
Russia intervenes in the civil war in Syria	76,29%	52,75%
	RT Russian	RT English
The Coalition interferes in the civil war	7,59%	18,86%
Russia interferes in the civil war	7,60%	17,66%



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The two main events, or framing objects, that were described in the RT and RL's reports were the Civil War Intervention and the Counter-Terror Operation (CTO). The reporting of the Syrian civil war demonstrated the great incompliance between the Russian and American news platforms. RT Russian rarely mentioned the civil war and, when it did so, it showed that the US and Russia had been equally involved in the conflict. At the same time, Svoboda featured the Russian intervention in more than three-fourths of materials and infrequently referred to the American role (see in Table 3). Instead of speaking of the civil conflict, RT reporters focused their attention on the CTO in Syria. Notably, the Russian and American participation in the CTO was equally covered by RT Russian, but not by RT English (see Table 4).

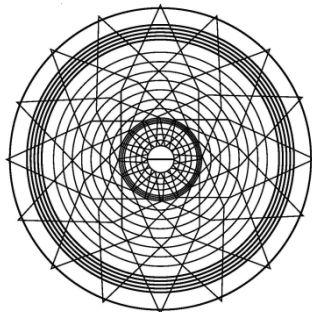
The Counter-Terror Frame

Both RT and Radio Liberty negatively portrayed the actions of their sender's rivals in the course of the CTO. Svoboda's reporters lashed out with criticism of the Russian military forces in nearly all articles covering the CTO, while Liberty left little space for the neutral coverage of the Russian airstrikes (about 8%). RT English portrayed the actions of the Coalition as harmful for the mission of the CTO in about 20% of their articles, whereas RT Russian criticised the Coalition in about 12% of cases (see in Table 4). The last trend can be related to the fact that the Russian edition constructed a narrative about the strategic partnership with the US in the framework of the CTO in Syria.

Table 4. The Framing of the Counter-Terror Operation in Syria

	<i>Svoboda</i>	<i>Liberty</i>
The Coalition is mentioned, including	15,00%	37,00%
the Coalition is effective	14,00%	12,00%
the Coalition is harmful	0,00%	0,00%
Russia is mentioned, including	25,00%	36,00%*
Russian action is harmful	25,00%	27,00%
Russian action is effective	0,00%	1,00%*
The CTO is not mentioned	60,00%	27,00%
	<i>RT Russian</i>	<i>RT English</i>
The coalition is mentioned, including	24,00%	25,00%
the Coalition is effective	0,00%	3,00%
the Coalition is harmful	12,00%	20,00%
Russia is mentioned, including	30,00%	6,00%*
Russian action is effective	28,00%	0,00%*
Russian action is harmful	0,00%	0,00%
The CTO is not mentioned	46,00%	69,00%

*Note: In the cases marked with * the coders disagreed on the frame interpretation.*



The Diagnostic Frame

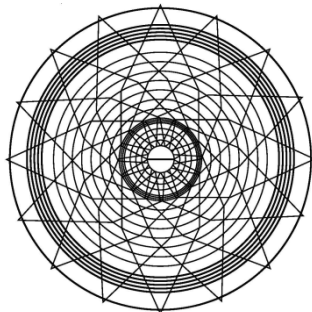
Svoboda and Liberty named the reasons for the Russian intervention in Syria in the majority of cases. The most frequent interpretation was that “Russia had backed al-Assad”, although it was not a fully developed diagnosis. In some 13% of articles, Liberty provided a deeper analysis, explaining why Russia would prefer to keep al-Assad in power. Svoboda more often than Liberty connected the events in Syria with the Ukrainian conflict and offered original explanations in its editorials, which are presented as “Other reasons” in Table 5. Those explanations included the versions that “Putin wanted to get back on Erdogan” and “The offensive is used as a distraction from the external problems”. On the contrary, the RT rarely mentioned any reasons for the Russian mission in Syria, and RT English highlighted the counter-terror objectives of the Russian military.

Table 5. The Framing of The Reasons for the Intervention

Reasons for Intervention	Svoboda	Liberty
Russia is backing al-Assad, not clear why	32,00%	38,00%
Russia is backing al-Assad to retain political influence in the Middle East	13,00%	9,00%
Russia is fighting the terrorists because of national / global security interests	1,00%	3,00%
Russia is fighting the terrorists to improve the relations with the West	2,00%	8,00%
Russia is “playing muscles”	5,00%	4,00%
Russia wants to overcome isolation after the Ukrainian conflict	20,00%	10,00%
Other reasons	8,00%	0,00%
Reasons were not explained	19,00%	28,00%
Reasons for Intervention	RT Russian	RT English
Russia is backing al-Assad, because he is a legitimate president	5,00%	8,00%
Russia is fighting the terrorists because of national / global security interests	11,00%	26,00%
Russia is fighting the terrorists to improve the relations with the West	4,00%	1,00%
Reasons are not explained	80,00%	65,00%

The Humanitarian Frame

The notable dissimilarities occurred in the reportages about the humanitarian aid, which had been provided to the Syrian non-combatants by different sides. In the analysed materials, RT English never mentioned the Russian humanitarian mission in Syria. It could hardly be an accidental trend as the narrative of the Russian help in the rebuilding of Syria



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was widespread in the Russian domestic state-funded media. This positive portrayal of the Russian mission was also mentioned in about one-fourth of the articles in RT Russian. At the same time, Svoboda mainly referred to the Western aid, and Liberty paid equal attention to the Western aid and the contribution of NGOs.

Table 6. The Framing of the Humanitarian Aid

Roles in the Humanitarian Crisis	Svoboda	Liberty
Western aid	32,00%	7,00%
UNs aid	7,00%	1,00%
NGOs aid	12,00%	8,00%
Turkey's aid	1,00%	1,00%
The humanitarian crisis is mentioned without connection to any aid	20,00%	23,00%
Humanitarian crisis is not mentioned	28,00%	60,00%
Roles in the Humanitarian Crisis	RT Russian	RT English
UNs aid	27,00%	33,00%
Western aid	0,00%	6,00%
Russian aid	11,00%	0,00%
NGOs aid	10,00%	11,00%
SARs aid	6,00%	0,00%
Humanitarian crisis is mentioned without connection to any aid (absolute)	21,00%	25, 00%
Humanitarian crisis is not mentioned	25,00%	25,00%

The Responsibility Frame

The attribution of responsibility in Liberty's reports was made cautiously and mostly through the quotes of renowned speakers (e.g. political leaders or respectable NGOs). In contrast, Svoboda blamed the Russian military for civilian deaths and the refugee crisis in nearly a half of all cases and the referencing was less accurate. The “blaming” language in Svoboda's editorials and even in news articles was by far more expressive than in other news outlets. For instance, Svoboda titled the articles with metaphors such as “*To Aleppo over the corpses of women and children*” (Svoboda, 2016). The metaphors were not always borrowed from the politicians' speeches as it happened in the English edition.

Both Svoboda and Liberty rarely mentioned the responsibility of the UN-recognised terrorist groups in Syria. On the contrary, the brutality of the terrorist attacks of ISIL and other recognised groups was an important component in RT's reasoning. RT English and RT Russian also attributed the responsibility for civilian casualties and the refugee crisis to the Islamists opposition along with the Turkish and the US forces. There were some disagreements among the coders in regard of the Responsibility frame; these were marked with asterisks in Table 7.

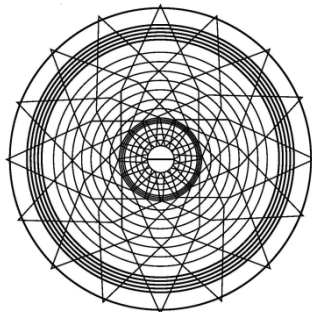


Table 7. The Framing of Responsibility for the Effects of War

Responsible Actors	Svoboda	Liberty
Russia	48,00%	21,00%
Assad's government	26,00%	19,00%
Terrorists	3,00%	2,00%
The effects are mentioned, but the responsibility is not attributed	6,00%	20,00%
The effects of war are not mentioned (absolute)	17,00%	38,00%
Responsible Actors	RT Russian	RT English
UN recognised terrorists (ISIL, Al-Nusra Front)	35,00%	25,00%
Moderate opposition (Free Syrian Army)	0,00%*	0,00%
Islamists opposition (Jayash al-Islam)	10,00%	7,00%
The Coalition, including	18,00%	20,00%*
Turkey	13,00%	13,00%*
the US	5,00%	7,00%
The effects are mentioned, but the responsibility is not attributed	4,00%	11,00%
The effects of war are not mentioned (absolute)	33,00%	37,00%

*Note: In the cases marked with * the coders disagreed on the frame interpretation.*

The Prognostic Frame

The fewest discrepancies were found in the framing of possible remedies for the Syrian conflict in RT and Radio Liberty. The American and Russian news outlets mentioned several common solutions, including the advancement of the CTO, the ceasefire, peace talks and the resignation of al-Assad. There were almost no differences in the interpretation of this frame in different language editions. Both American and Russian media also promoted the additional solutions, which seemed to be aligned with the foreign policy objectives of the respective senders.

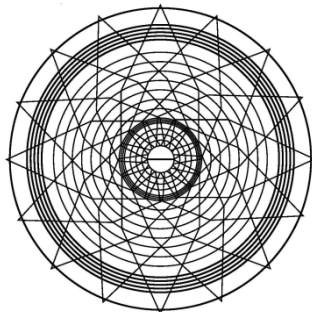


Table 8. The Framing of Solutions for the Syrian Conflict

Prognostic frame	Svoboda	Liberty
al-Assad should resign	14,00%	27,00%
Russia should withdraw	24,00%	13,00%
Ceasefire & Peace talks	14,00%	6,00%
The CTO should continue	10,00%	2,00%
Iran should agree on the ousting of Assad	0,00%	6,00%
Other solutions	4,00%	1,00%
No solution mentioned	34,00%	45,00%
Prognostic frame	RT Russian	RT English
al-Assad should resign	0,00%	7,00%
al-Assad should stay	3,00%	5,00%
The CTO should continue	14,00%	20,00%
Turkey should withdraw	8,00%	16,00%
Ceasefire & Peace talks	8,00%	0,00%
Invite Kurds to the peace talks	9,00%	5,00%
Exclude Jaysh al-Islam from the peace talks	2,00%	8,00%
Other solutions	3,00%	9,00%
No solutions mentioned	53,00%	30,00%

The discrepancies in the framing of the Russian intervention by Liberty and Svoboda allowed for denying Hypothesis 1. Liberty's edition in the Russian language seemed to be more inclined towards the one-sided framing technique, so that only the English-language edition provided a balanced coverage. The second hypothesis was accepted as the RT indeed used the one-sided framing of the events in Syria in both language versions. Still, the coverage in RT English was more neutral in contrast to the propagandistic stance of RT Russian. The third hypothesis should also be rejected, as much dissimilarity was detected in the different language versions. It seemed that RT English adopted a more restrained rhetoric than its Russian counterpart, while Svoboda did not keep up to the standard set by Liberty. Still, the overall impression summarised in Table 9, shows that the American IBs used the one-sided framing less often.

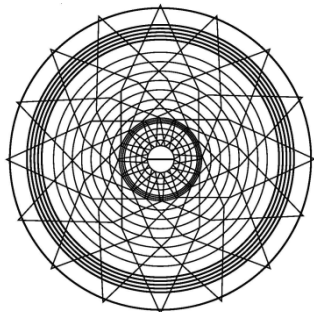


Table 9. The Tendency to the One-Sided or Balanced Framing

News outlet / frame	Responsibility frame	CTO frame	Humanitarian frame	Diagnostic frame	Prognostic frame
RT Eng	One-sided framing	More balanced framing	More balanced	Nearly absent	More balanced
RT Rus	One-sided	One-sided	One-sided	Nearly absent	One-sided
Liberty	More balanced	More balanced	More balanced	One-sided	More balanced
Svoboda	One-sided	One-sided	One-sided	One-sided	One-sided

Discussion

There are many similarities between the concepts of the democratic propaganda and the new public diplomacy. Thus, the democratic propaganda was said to be tolerant to alternative opinions (Taylor, 2011), while the new PD called for the editorial independence of the IBs and a balanced coverage (Cull, 2013). The proponents of these approaches believed that the international broadcasters, which offered impartial and balanced coverage, were more efficient as their audiences would not register the reporters' bias. However, the strategic communication was still aimed to 'programme' preferred readings through, or in Jang's (2013) terms, the "hegemonic framing". The models of democratic propaganda, proposed by Taylor (2011) and Jang (2013), can partly explain the tendency towards the one-sided news framing in Radio Liberty and RL. The dominating role of foreign policy orientation and the lack of middle ground in conflict reporting by state-sponsored IBs was predicted by Jowett and O'Donnell (2014).

In addition to this, the findings of the current study suggested that two other factors might affect the policies of modern state-sponsored IBs.

- 1) The impact of the local news discourses may explain the discrepancies in news framing between the different language editions in the same media network. Thus, it was found that Svoboda used far more expressive language than Liberty did. Furthermore, the framing of the events in Syria by RT English was more balanced than the one of RT Russian. It is possible that Russian-speaking journalists in Svoboda deliberately or unconsciously reproduced the typical discursive practices of the Russian media such as the use of catchphrases in headlines, emotive and evaluative lexicon, etc. At the same time, the editorial team of RT English had to look up at the reporting standards in international news media and stick to the rhetoric tenets of facticity, neutrality and balance (Roeh & Cohen, 1992).



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- 2) The journalists of the liberal and authoritarian media systems developed their own professional codes and ethics (Taylor, 2012; Jang, 2013). This fact can partly explain why RT's news coverage in English was evidently more balanced. On the one hand, the Western readers would not be attracted by the whitewashed coverage of Russia. On the other hand, the journalist, who adheres to the codes of the liberal media system, would hardly agree to become the mouthpiece of a foreign government. Therefore, RT English had to respect the principles of editorial independence in order to hire competent international professionals. RT's Chief Editor Margarita Simonyan, educated in Columbia University, confirmed that the Russian leadership wanted to exercise a tighter control over RT's programming, but such policy would prevent the network from attracting audiences and qualified staff (Surganova & Glinkin, 2016).

Limitations and Perspectives

The third hypothesis was rejected as the Russian and American IBs employed different framing strategies in their local editions. However, there is no clear line between slanted news coverage and balanced coverage. For instance, it is possible to argue that any mentions of the adversary's opinions by a state-sponsored media already add some balance. In this study, it was accepted that the minimum coverage of the opponents' arguments is usual for the one-sided framing strategy (Entman, 2010). The imprecise measurements of the slant in news coverage should be associated with the limitations of the method. Entman (2010: 404) noticed that his methodology pointed at "the substantial lacunae that remain in the study of media framing, bias, and political power." Therefore, the implemented method of comparative framing analysis is still relatively new and required further refinement.

The inherited drawback of the framing analysis is that the diffuse nature of media frames provokes multiple interpretations. Although the degree of inter-coder reliability was sufficient, there were still cases of disagreements among coders, as mentioned above. Another limitation is associated with the cross-language comparisons of news articles. The comparative framing analysis of multilingual media is a relatively novel research design, and there is no widely accepted methodology for comparing the framing devices, which are present in one language and absent in the other. In order to avoid non-equivalent comparisons, the study refrained from an in-depth linguistic analysis. Therefore, the analysis was more inclined to the comparison of reasoning devices.

Global online media received little scholarly attention so far as they were often regarded as inferior to TV channels. Web and mobile platforms, the fastest news providers, now play an increasingly important role in the global media market. Open-access online platforms



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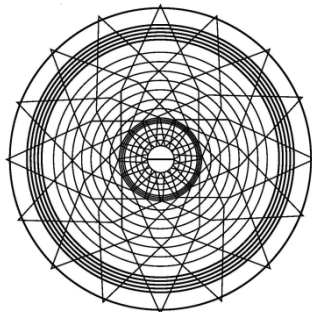
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allowed contraflow news outlets to bypass the “gates” of (inter)national media systems and counter the mainstream Western media (Figenschou, 2013). Weiss and Pomerantsev (2014) found that the presence in popular social media allowed the RT network to find its audiences in the US and Western European countries, despite the low viewership of its TV channels. The researchers explained that RT's entertaining content in social media normalised the image of the news channel among young audiences in the US and Europe. The analysis of the social media strategies of contraflow international media, such as RT and Al-Jazeera, can provide valuable results for both academics and practitioners.

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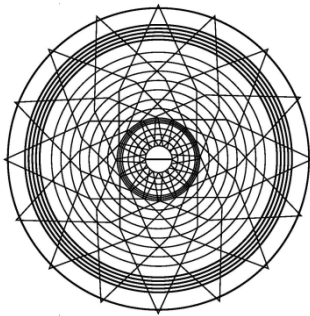
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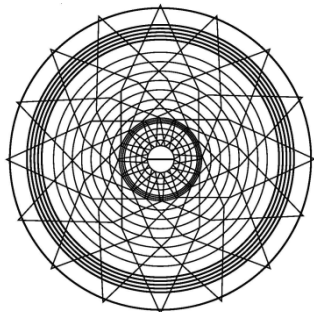
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МЕЖДУ ПРОПАГАНДОЙ И ПУБЛИЧНОЙ ДИПЛОМАТИЕЙ: ФРЕЙМИРОВАНИЕ КОНФЛИКТА В СИРИИ (2016) В РОССИЙСКИХ И АМЕРИКАНСКИХ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ СМИ

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Аннотация:

Данное исследование рассматривает фреймирование участия России в конфликте в Сирии на материале публикаций в международных государственных СМИ России и США. В работе сопоставлены новостные материалы из онлайн-версий RT и Radio Liberty (Радио Свобода), опубликованные на русском и английском языках. Были обнаружены несовпадения ключевых фреймов в новостных публикациях американских и российских СМИ, а также ряд несоответствий в разных языковых версиях обоих источников. Наиболее заметные различия выявлены во фреймировании гуманитарного кризиса в Сирии и атрибуции ответственности.

Стратегии фреймирования обсуждаются в рамках теории пропаганды и теории публичной дипломатии, основные положения которых частично предсказывают полученные результаты (Taylor 2012; Jowett & Donnell 2014). Ранее считалось, что стратегия и политика вещания государственных международных СМИ определяется в первую очередь государственной идеологией и внешнеполитической ориентацией страны. Результаты данного исследования также указывают на возможность наличия иных факторов влияния, таких как региональный медиа-дискурс и принципы работы журналистов, характерные для конкретной национальной медиа-системы (Roeh & Cohen 1992; Jang 2013).

Ключевые слова: Публичная дипломатия, пропаганда, Россия Сегодня, Радио Свобода, конфликт в Сирии, освещение конфликта, международные новости



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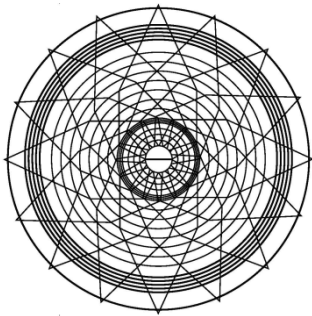
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