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**RUSSIAN WORLD’S FUNDAMENTALISM
AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE
AS A CHALLENGE FOR MODERN
JOURNALISM STANDARDS**

**FUNDAMENTALIZM AGRESJI ROSYJSKIEGO ŚWIATA
WOBEC UKRAINY JAKO WYZWANIE DLA WSPÓŁCZESNYCH
STANDARDÓW DZIENNIKARSTWA**

Streszczenie

W artykule poddano analizie koncepcję „Rosyjskiego Świata” oraz standardy współczesnego dziennikarstwa w odniesieniu do konfliktu zbrojnego w Donbasie, stanowiącego starcie doktryny Moskwy i zachodniej cywilizacji. Przypadek strony internetowej Myrotvorets i opublikowanej tam listy dziennikarzy akredytowanych na terytoriach okupowanych został użyty jako dowód głębokiego zrozumienia skomplikowanej sytuacji, w której światowym i lokalnym mediom przychodzi informować o konfliktach. W artykule dokonano krytycznej analizy koncepcji „Rosyjskiego Świata”, ze wskazaniem na jego ekspansjonistyczną i fundamentalistyczną naturę. Przeprowadzono porównanie redakcyjnych poradników dla dziennikarzy oraz wyzwań wojny hybrydowej. Lista zaleceń dla dziennikarzy oraz odbiorców ich publikacji stanowi podsumowanie artykułu.

Słowa klucze: „Rosyjski Świat”, standardy dziennikarskie, Myrotvorets, fundamentalizm, media, wojna hybrydowa

Introduction

Ukraine has been under attack since late February 2014: first it was the annexation of Crimea by Russian Federation and then the invasion to Donbas region. This ongoing conflict is on focus of global public because of constant presence in mass media. Not only are Ukrainian and Russian media covering it but international correspondents and stringers are also involved. At the same time in the case of the Ukraini-

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an media actors the conflict has revealed the latent collision between journalism standards and their patriotic or citizen attitude. Some respected voices advise Ukrainian journalists to stick to the core principles of conflict reporting, paying no attention to the public activists' choice – helping Ukrainian army to defend the country from the actual foe. One of the journalism principles implies the impartiality, and Ukrainian journalists are facing the new challenge if they want to remain devoted to professional principles and not to become “traitors” for Ukrainian people. This conflict of interests made local media actors divided into two parties.

Our hypothesis is that the specifics of the armed conflict in Crimea and Donbas region make the clash between journalism standards and patriotic inspirations complicated and unique. In modern history there is no other similar example of armed conflict. Not all reporters can easily define the sides of the conflict (trying to give the equal time for both of them – due to the impartiality principle) if we are dealing with its hybrid form. This issue leads us to the need of profound understanding of main conflict actors' motivation in order to conduct a qualitative analysis for our self before reporting to the public. Otherwise the surface coverage may distort the real meaning of facts and tendencies from the conflict zone.

To prove the declared hypothesis we are using the method of critical analysis of philosophical ground of modern Russian aggression against Ukraine and comparative analysis of actual journalism standards against the background of objective realism of the current conflict. Our sources are number of editorial guidelines and media ethical codes, Ukrainian and international experts' opinions, Russian philosophical approaches in favor of “Russian World” concept as one of the key engines of the aggression.

The Russian World – the Eurasia is not enough for Russian soul

Under “Russian World” we understand the concept that is based on the perception of Russian people and their state as exclusive power with unique mission in the mankind's history. Since 2007 there has been a Foundation established by Russian president Vladimir Putin: using the same name – “Russian World” <http://www.ruskiymir.ru/fund/>. The announced objectives of the Foundation are Russian language promotion and the support of Russian language study programs in the Russian Federation and abroad. But there are some indicators to assume that its original ambition goes far beyond that philological declaration of aims.

A number of philosophers, historians and Russian Orthodox Church leaders explained the meanings and values of “Russian World” calling it a global project uniting the Russian-speaking people all around the globe in order to find a new identity for Russia, new opportunities for effective cooperation with the rest of the world and the additional impetus of its development. The core rhetoric here lies on several ideas: Russian people obligation is to serve the motherland on the same level as to serve each other (a kind of parallel with the famous thesis of John F. Kennedy); unity of Russians through overcoming the former differences and arguments of the 20th century; mobilization to build a better future for a grandiose nation living in peace with itself and other nations (Nikonov 2010).

The last idea tends to be a false statement as we can see in the case of Crimean peninsular annexation and Russian aggression in Donbas. 10 thousand dead, over 20 thousand wounded and over 2 million refugees in two years time (Koval 2016) do not seem to be the appropriate result of the declared peaceful stand for Russian language. To understand the concealed intentions of “Russian Word” concept one has to read its real apologist – Alexandr Dugin.

He is the one who promotes thesis about “potential Russia” that, as he argues, is bigger than Russian Federation even with the former USSR republic’s territory and is connected with some kind of civilization mission of Russian people’s essence of existence. Dugin defends the idea of Russian “Drang nach Osten und Norden”, as if Russians were the nation responsible for the control on North-East Eurasia. In his book “Project “Eurasia” (Dugin 2004) he also writes about the contrast between a special type of Russian religiosity, culture and catholic-protestant Western, post Christian civilization as a whole – without choosing any particular country of the West. This thesis brings him to the conclusion of inescapable competition and mutual exclusivity of both models that causes the obligatory opposition between Russia and the West – for their own survival through expansion. At the same time Dugin defines the expansion as a Russian universal mission of Empire building with borders that are constantly expanding. This deliberate integration of Russian Empire into different cultural realities for him is an approval of a special type of Russian philosophy that claims the last word in the earth's history. Dugin calls it the highest and the most important task of the Russian nation as a God-bearing people – regardless other ethnos and races. In this case any people, any culture or any territory in the whole world with their destiny and their historic path are not indifferent for Russian consciousness. Dugin linked this “right of ecumenical interference” with Russian’s unwavering faith in the final triumph of Truth, Spirit and Justice, not only within the Russian state but everywhere. However, other nations

may have the right of autonomy in the new Russian empire – due to Dugin’s theory. These aspects he calls the core of future geopolitical strategy as he claims that the battle for Russian’s world domination has not ended and there is a need of the world redistribution. The fundamental principle of new geopolitical structure of the future Russian Empire for Dugin is the principle of common enemy and its manifestations are the denial of Atlanticism, the rejection of the US strategic control and the rejection of the rule of economic, market-liberal values. Russian philosopher argues that US dominance stands on artificial conflicts and contradictions in Eurasia and all regional powers serve the interests of Atlanticism – not being able to provide a large-scale resistance which is only possible in the imperial strategic context under Russian dominance.

Western analysts noticed the tendencies of “Russian World” idea implementation in modern Moscow domestic and foreign policy – especially after 2014, when Russian President Vladimir Putin used some its principles to justify Russia’s annexation of Crimea and military intervention in Eastern Ukraine. Profound criticism of this idea reveals its imaginary, fuzzy and blurred nature. Despite the fact that the Russian World theory is a variable myths depository it allows number of actors around the Kremlin to interact with different audiences using specific shades depending on the context and the actual task (Laruelle 2015). Other researcher calls Eurasian concept a Neo-Messianic Russian Fundamentalism (Yasmann 1993) and, in our opinion, this fact puts “Russian World” idea into one rank with ISIS ideology and other radical views that allow armed expansionism under flags of religious or philosophic justification. Of course, contrary to Islamic Fundamentalism, “Russian World” does not look like a rigid doctrine: it is elastic and opened to all kinds of re-branding and re-articulation, it could develop other maps of meaning (Laruelle 2015). But so far we can not agree that “Russian World” apologists tend to smooth-down their military rhetoric. It looks as if despite the western sanctions Kremlin will also continue to use all possible means to attract the countries of the region into the Russian World, to promote a Eurasian Orthodox identity and events in Ukraine are only the preview of Putin’s ambition for the “Russian World” (Lutsevych 2016).

These Russian ambitions gave birth to what is called hybrid war in Ukraine and Ukrainians are resisting this Russian desire to subordinate them through political, economic and information tools (Mahda, 2015). From the NATO perspective hybrid warfare is a type of warfare widely understood to blend conventional/unconventional, regular/irregular, and information and cyber warfare (Van Puyvelde 2015). It is hard to find the country ready for Russian information intervention: especially due to American and European understanding of a peacetime – for Moscow it

seems to be not a period without war but a period to prepare for war. Despite the possibility that Russian officials' and common people's (if they trust their ruling elites) consciousness has changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, their former ambitions remained (Joyal 2016). The hybrid nature of the actual Russian war against the western civilization appears in possibility that Hacker attacks on behalf of the "Islamic state" were carried out by Russia (Romashenko, Prokopchuk 2016) and Russian football hooligans on EURO 2016 in France were connected with Kremlin uniformed services (Boffey 2016).

Information as a weapon

Mass media plays an important role in Russian World hybrid war. After the Revolution of Dignity Ukraine became a target for Russian propaganda and began to defend itself. As the Russian TV channels have completely replaced Ukrainian ones in Crimea after its annexation, Ukraine's media regulator has ordered all cable providers to stop transmitting Russian state-controlled TV channels (Ennis 2016). Officials explained that they were acting in the interests of "information security", as there is almost no language barrier for Ukrainians to percept the messages of Russian propaganda. Public activists started some initiatives to inform the multilingual audience about Russian aggression against Ukraine. One of them is a Stopfake project (stopfake.org) – students and graduates of Mohyla School of Journalism initiative founded in March 2014 to search for false news about Ukraine and publish their refutations. Other examples are Ukrainian Crisis Media Center (uacrisis.org), Euromaidan Press (euromaidanpress.com), StopTerror (stopterror.in.ua), InformNapalm (Informnapalm.org) and many others.

But "Russian World" concept is not limited with former USSR territory only. Therefore a frequent target for Moscow propaganda is the European Union, which enforced sanctions after Russia had annexed Crimea and supported separatists in eastern Ukraine. As an example one of the French television show has exposed a Russian news report about Euro skeptics in France as a cocktail of misquotes and falsifications (The Moscow Times 2016). That is why the information front became one of the key aspects of EU's defense strategy and tactics, as the intelligence agencies' reports about Russian constant endeavors to compel countries by propagandistic destabilization of the particular information space and divide the EU (Lohse, 2016). European Parliament and European Commission brought to life East StratCom Force with its disinformation review and disinformation digest weekly. European External Action Ser-

vice in Russian (EEAS 2015) also seems very similar to mentioned Ukrainian online resources. Against this background there are fierce debates in Ukraine on media standards during the Donbas conflict coverage.

Patriotism vs journalism standards: Myrotvorets list

In May 2016 the website Myrotvorets (“Peacemaker”) published a part of the separatists’ accreditation records. There were names, email address and phone numbers of more than 4,000 journalists, including not only Russian media (actual enemy propagandists) representatives but freelancers and correspondents of world known newspapers, Reuters, the BBC and other outlets. These journalists were collectively labeled “terrorist collaborators” for gaining accreditation from the separatists. NY Times correspondent Ian Bateson is one of them, covering the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17. Now he is baffled to read that Ukraine has labeled him as terrorists’ collaborator (Bateson 2016). Before he went to the crash site, he obtained accreditation from the separatists. And this fact seems to be the core problem of the Myrotvorets list conflict.

On January 27 2015 Ukrainian Parliament recognized Russia as the aggressor country, and so called “Donetsk people republic” (DPR) and “Luhansk people republic” (LPR) as terrorist organizations. The resolution called on other countries and international organizations to the same recognition (Verkhovna Rada 2015). On this fact perspective the accreditation from the terrorists looks more then controversial and became a matter of further in-depth analysis in Ukrainian media (Matviychuk 2016). In this case Ministry of information policy of Ukraine reminded the Law is one for all, and no one, journalists, in particular, has no right illegally to enter the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine from the Russian side, without permission of the Ukrainian authorities (Ministry of information policy of Ukraine 2016). The Deputy Minister Tetiana Popova even expressed suspicion that the database of journalists could be drained by Russian special services, because they are interested in possible closure of the Myrotvorets and charges against Ukraine for freedom of speech suppression (Sinitsina 2016).

In our opinion the Myrotvorets authors had the right to publish the list – taking into consideration two circumstances. One of them is the same argument that the opposite side is using to blame Myrotvorets – the freedom of speech and freedom of expression is applicable to the work activists are doing since the Crimea annexation and Russian aggression

in Donbas region. As media staff correspondents and stringers justified the accreditation and even illegal crossing of the country's border in places not controlled by Ukraine due to Russian invasion by the need to reveal "pure facts" about the conflict from its heart, the Myrotvorets activists had also the ground to name the published record a "pure fact" – a part from the actual reality. So far no one who has been mentioned in the list denied the fact of accreditation and this means that Myrotvorets did not distort facts – unlike Russian media tend to be doing.

The second matter is the analysis of the list's accompanying commentary in which all the journalists were labeled "terrorist collaborators". Taking into consideration the fact of hybrid war conducted by Russia against Ukraine and other countries, due to Ukrainian Parliament's definition of "DPR" and "LPR" as terrorist's organizations supported by official Moscow, any accreditation may be defined as a legitimization of terrorist's reign on the illegally occupied territory of Ukraine. It is almost impossible to imagine that NY Times, BBC, FAZ, FP, Reuters or other western media outlets correspondent could be accredited by Saddam's administration during both Gulf wars, Taliban officials in Afghanistan or ISIS leaders.

At the same time we can suppose that the primary goal of any correspondent and field stringer is a good story – sometimes it means exclusive reportage, preferably made from the territory, which is not for common excess. In this case interests of journalists and armed people who control the territory (café, theatre, bank with hostages or part of some countries) may sometimes collide. That does not mean they are always becoming collaborators, but it is possible that one is interested in news coverage and can provide at least limited excess for journalists to ensure a good story. No one denies the safety problem for freelance journalists and news organizations working in hostile environments. If the people who have actual control feel the danger of media presence they may suppress, arrest and even kill the journalists. And this fact of realized danger could have some influence on ways of collaboration between journalists and terrorist who may try to use each other chasing personal "professional" interests. All these arguments are applicable for international correspondents and the issue of local has to be analyzed in a separate way.

The experience of Balkan, Middle East, Zimbabwe and other armed conflicts' coverage by local and international media proved that sometimes journalists were not just witnesses and chroniclers but their participants. The uniqueness of every conflict demands from any general recommendations for journalists to take account of the specific circumstances of each conflict. The international media can complicate attempts

to resolve conflicts and local people often find it difficult to understand why they are the intense focus of media attention one day but then disappear of the media horizon the next (Puddephatt 2006).

The question of contradiction between patriotism and professional standards of journalism is more than actual for modern Ukraine, as the country has to respond fast to the hybrid war challenges. Under patriotism we understand “love that people feel for their country” (Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary). At the same time the International Federation of Journalists code of ethics embraces the core values of journalism – truth, independence and the need to minimize harm (The International Federation of Journalists). This gathering of values is similar to the principles used for sport referees: one can hardly imagine that the referee could be the same nationality as one of the team or players.

BBC Editorial Guidelines, American Society of Newspaper Editors Code of Ethics, Associated Press Managing Editors Ethics Codes, Ukrainian journalists' professional ethics code and Ukrainian journalist ethic code basically have the same ground and principles but the interpretation can be different. One of them is impartiality. The BBC's Editorial Guidelines state that “due impartiality is often more than a simple matter of 'balance' between opposing viewpoints. Equally, it does not require absolute neutrality on every issue or detachment from fundamental democratic principles” (BBC Editorial Guidelines). New York Times Ethical journalism Handbook mentions the principle of impartiality writing about Personal Relations with Sources. To their mind Relationships with sources require the utmost in sound judgment and self discipline to prevent the fact or appearance of partiality. ... Yet staff members, especially those assigned to beats, must be sensitive that personal relationships with news sources can erode into favoritism, in fact or appearance. And conversely staff members must be aware that sources are eager to win our good will for reasons of their own”. At the same time staff members are strongly recommended to obey the law in the pursuit of news (NY Times).

In case of Myrotvorets list scandal these two issues of impartiality and law obedience might be the key points for qualitative analysis of the problem. Critics, using the freedom of speech and journalism standards arguments, seem to forget the applicableness of these principles to the motivation of the list's authors. Saying that Myrotvorets was not objective in their commentary to the list we have to remember that the principle of journalistic objectivity is idealistic in its core (Hackett, Zhao 1998). Some researches argues that sometimes news said to be Objective fuels further violence (Lynch, McGoldrick 2005.). Annabel McGoldrick calls war Journalism biased in favor of war (McGoldrick 2006). She and Jake Lynch

are one of the defenders of peace journalism concept (Lynch) but their ideas are also criticized as too idealistic (Ottosen 2010).

Dov Shinar proposed “seven “golden questions” that should be asked by any enlightened media consumer about coverage of conflict before they begin to read or watch the news” analyzing the way journalists cover war and peace (Shinar 2011). But these questions require the appropriate level of media literacy and deep understanding of the news context that the consumers have to possess before evaluating each conflict dispatch.

These arguments are applicable to the Ukrainian case. Ukrainian journalists are disoriented in the question of how to do their jobs during a war in which the media have played an outsized role, and in a historical context that fosters weak standards of journalism. In the context of war, media outlets that are not sufficiently “patriotic” are pressured by state structures, although in 2015 the Ukrainian parliament enacted and the president signed into law legislation to create a more professional media landscape. Faced with such a media environment, a new generation of journalists is trying to train itself and create media outside the current system with professional standards of journalism. The Ukrainian government denounces Russian propaganda as a key cause of the war, but responds in the same way, while media that respect professional standards could have helped Ukraine to avoid or limit the conflict and would be useful for post-war reconstruction (Vannay 2016). Some authors even write about “wrong form of patriotism”, mentioning that “critical or oppositional voices are impossible to find in the rebel-held media landscape” and at the same time blaming other parts of the country in negative trends of distortion, manipulation and hiding of facts for the benefit of the current government” (Kirschbach 2016). Ukrainian expert Olexandr Chekmyshev argues that journalism standards are not the icon on the wall – they are permanently changing, dynamic, connected with changes of the situation. He remembers both Gulf wars as ones that changed the journalism standards but insists that in the name of freedom of speech no one can sacrifice the lives of Ukrainian soldiers, it is forbidden to share the information which could harm the army opposing Russian invaders and Moscow led separatists (Holos stolytsi 2014). This variety of thoughts depicts the poor war coverage experience of Ukrainian journalists: there are no rules and standards for professional work in the battlefield zone. Sometimes particular journalists have to conduct their personal decision on particular conflict coverage issues and even teach some editors who are not ready for news from the frontlines management (National Union of journalists of Ukraine 2016). Therefore the attempts to establish some kind of actualized code of standards were made (Kulias 2014, Webster 2015).

The call for Worldwide Freelance Protection Standards asks governments, combatants and groups worldwide to respect the neutrality of journalists and immediately end the cycle of impunity surrounding attacks on journalists (Sawyer 2015). Basically it was targeted on the issue of journalists' protection in their professional duty – to insure safety during the work in “hot points” of the world. We can assume that the acceptance of this call by governments, combatants and groups means their agreement to cooperate with journalists. At the same time Ukrainian media community, opposing to Myrotvorets, states that accreditation does not mean and never meant cooperation of journalists with any side of the conflict, being only a form of protection and security for journalists (Musayeva-Borovyk 2016). In this statement there was no trace of understanding that the accreditation issued by DPR/LPR separatists' administration, backed-up by Russia, becomes the act of legitimization of their rule on the part of Ukrainian territory. Separate territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions were occupied by armed forces of combined nature: partly organized by Russians and partly by locals after Crimean peninsular annexation in early 2014. And we have a right for at least methodological doubt concerning existence of full correlation between interests of actual occupants and journalists, seeking for possibilities to cover the conflict from the occupied territories. First side will be always intended to hide some facts (presence of Russian regular army in Ukraine, MH-17 Malaysian Airlines flight case and other atrocities against peaceful population of the region, pro-Ukrainian combatants and activists) and another one will be always aimed at finding good and colorful stories.

No one denies that dirt, power, flesh, blood, guts and fascination of any war provide action for journalists and their audience. War reporting is a democratic requirement, and nothing is worse than a conflict covered far from the battlefield. But not all journalists fully understand the fact, that covering a war is always challenging because of the risk to be manipulated by the military or politicians and the risk of violating ethical rules (Gutierrez 2016). Especially if one is a Moscow-based correspondent of international media outlet with no profound understanding of origins of Russian World concept expansionism. Sometimes it is easier to ask for accreditation, to cross the border illegally – without Ukraine's permission, to visit particular places in Donbas and talk to people under occupants supervision (for safety reasons only of course), gather a number of fascinating photos and videos to affect the audience and maybe even to get a prize for that. Answering the question “Why happened so?”, “Who has to be blamed for actual casualties?”, “What kind of philosophy inspires the invaders and defenders of Ukraine?” is not obligato-

ry here. But we insist that answers for these and many more additional questions are vital for correct understanding of the conflict in Ukraine and its adequate coverage. This has to become the ultimate principle in any further conflict reporting.

Conclusions

- The “Russian World” concept as the engine of modern Moscow’s interior and foreign policy has some links to other forms of fundamentalism.
- Without profound analysis of “Russian World” ideas any coverage and interpretation of the Donbas conflict would be fragmentary and partial.
- From this perspective principle of impartiality in journalism is not always applicable – especially if its democratic nature is opposite to the core ideas of one part of the conflict.
- Journalism war reporting standards are not universal and have to be adapted to the uniqueness of each conflict – especially under the circumstances of actual hybrid war between Russia and Ukraine.
- The Myrotvorets case revealed the complicated links between patriotic positions of media and journalists chase for sensation and good story.
- International and local reporters may use distinct reporting guides to cover the conflict – due to relative impartiality on one hand and obvious conflict of interests on the other.
- Audience has to demand from the journalists not only a fragmentary good and fascinating stories but a deeper analysis of the infield situation with appropriate background of the conflict – to avoid possible mislead in understanding or distortion of tendencies and facts interpretation.

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