

[Impact factor 9](#)

## **The Russian-Ukrainian War and the Mass Media in the Post-Soviet Space** (Georgian and Russian Public Broadcasters)

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the current events within the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in the context of mass communication media of Russia and Georgia, analyzing current military actions, trends and methods of presenting them to the public. Over the past decades, the development of digital media has greatly changed print and audiovisual media, but still remains a popular means of mass communication. For most of the world's population, television is the most accessible medium. The main task of media that can have a meaningful impact on society is to protect objectivity and maintain a neutral position. They should create conditions for a speedy end to the conflict, moreover, they should be entrusted with the role of a mediator in the settlement of relations between the warring parties.

**Keywords:** Trends and methods of media coverage of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in Georgia and Russia.

The flow of information in the modern world is so diverse and contradictory that it is almost impossible for an individual to grasp the essence of the situation. Therefore, the choice of information media is directly proportional to the subsequent manipulation of the individuals themselves.

In the information society, the possession of information is of crucial importance in the management of this society, in which the influence of money and any other state coercion recedes into the background. Accordingly, the mass media are the main carrier and disseminator of all information.

the Russian Federation and Ukraine date back to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the declaration of Ukraine as an independent state. However, for a certain period, Russia managed to maintain the status of "big brother" to Ukraine and integrate pro-Russian forces into the Ukrainian government.

Soviet Union Disintegration Then , in 1994 Ukraine has rejected the idea of a nuclear complex on its territory, which Budapest confirmed by signing the memorandum. In turn, Ukraine demanded security guarantees from the parties to this memorandum. Russia , Great Britain And United Despite independent Ukraine's aspirations for NATO , Russia still sought to bring it into the North Atlantic Alliance.

The situation was slowly escalating, and relations between Russia and the US-NATO member states became extremely tense. One of the main sources of military conflict was considered to be the policy of NATO expansion, to which America clearly expressed its support.

It is also worth noting that Russia continues to pursue a "self-justifying" policy not only towards Ukraine, but also towards Georgia and other neighboring states, and therefore, correct coverage of the situation is of great importance. People often perceive reality as it is provided to them in the form of primary information.

Impact factor 9

Television, which has existed for many decades, has had a positive impact on the development of public opinion, the formation and enhancement of mentality, consciousness, and cultural values. However, modern media often cause a certain distrust in society, because the dissemination of information is carried out in violation of ethical and legal norms.

The recent events in Crimea, Donbass, and Donetsk have further strained Ukrainian-Russian relations, raising questions about the extent to which we are dealing with a purely ethnic conflict and what role the media plays in fueling and politicizing it.

It should also be noted that the conflict in the above-mentioned regions is highly complex, with frequent destabilization, escalation, and breakdown of negotiations. Accordingly, the media should be more careful in covering related issues and take into account the factors that Russia uses to maintain tension between the parties.

The purpose of a news journalist is to accurately describe an event, to be understandable and emotional. The function of an analytical journalist is to reconcile the described events. In such a way that the public can see the events in a new way and draw appropriate conclusions.

In modern media, simply describing and analyzing information is not enough; existing information needs to be questioned, verified, and what is hidden needs to be discovered.

The attitude of the Georgian media towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict can be said to be identical to the divided public opinion. Whatever the attitude of the opposition media, the opposition-minded population also holds the same opinion, and, conversely, the government-run television stations also share the views of the government's supporters.

The Georgian Public Broadcaster more or less maintains a balance and tries to present current events objectively. Of course, in times of conflict, the media has one of the most responsible functions, and the Public Broadcaster even more so.

Based on initial observations, we could not say the same about the Russian public broadcaster, and it is natural, since Russia is a party to the conflict. Moreover, in a war inspired by Russia, of course, the methodology of public (i.e. government) television will be clearly biased and subjective.

British researcher **David Lloyd George** says, "Today, the purveyors of information are so powerful and skilled at shaping their preferred reality that it's easy to be deceived. They'll wrap a small amount of truth in such a way that if you take it unverified, you'll be left with a denial of the truth ."<sup>1</sup>

Who, where, when - these are the questions that a news journalist must answer. Modern media demands more. Answers to the question of why what is being described is happening and because of whom, or what is hidden behind the event it

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1. <https://tltaudit.ru/ka/immunity>

Impact factor 9

describes, what is the result for society? - Modern media answers precisely these pressing issues.

The Russian-Ukrainian war remains a big puzzle for the parties involved in the conflict. None of the old or new governments have been able to resolve the existing conflict and resolve it peacefully. Of course, the main task for journalists from the countries involved in the conflict should have been to engage in these processes and achieve positive results, however, research and the current situation have shown completely the opposite result.

For example, two-month monitoring studies conducted in Georgia in previous years showed that local media outlets did not consider it necessary to attach special importance to the coverage of the ongoing conflict in their country's neighborhood and were busy bringing secondary issues to the forefront. The study was conducted on the media outlets of the five main Georgian television companies, where this topic was covered only 43 times in the news programs and chronicles running throughout the day. The print media ("Kviris Palitra", "Kronika" and "Asaval-Dasavali") published a total of 11 articles, which, I believe, is insufficient for the coverage of such an important and large-scale conflict. The above-mentioned 11 articles, with the exception of some, also provided superficial information and did not contain a substantive discussion-analysis of the situation.

I cannot say that the media of other neighboring countries are covering the events with greater intensity, however, the media participating in the conflict itself, especially Ukraine, on whose territory hostilities are taking place, continue to operate under force majeure conditions and provide us with information from hot spots.

Therefore, in order to avoid becoming someone else's problem, a thorn in the side of the fence, and then turning into a major headache for everyone, it is necessary for the events in Ukraine to be the center of attention of the entire world, especially Georgia, which is still in a dormant state of war with Russia.

Since journalists have to work in dangerous zones, they must be especially vigilant when covering the conflict. They must protect the truth, refrain from showing close-ups of mutilated bodies. The focus of the report should not be on the victims. Showing the tragedy should not be the goal, the main thing should be to present both sides of the conflict in their true colors, and atrocities should not be reflected on TV screens.

If we recall the events of Bucha and the live broadcast of those horrific images, it is clear that neither journalists nor local media shy away from showing mutilated people and horrifying images. This is, of course, a way for the party involved in the conflict to show the world the treachery of the opponent and to act more harshly against him, although it is also necessary to consider the psychological impact that showing these images can have on the viewer.

The government and the military use television well for propaganda, they use it to demonstrate new weapons, power, to show that they are the best and that someone else is the worst. They create impressions in people about everything and everyone, and for this you use television.

Impact factor 9

The majority of the Russian population is still convinced of the justice of the Russian state involved in the war. Russian propaganda is so powerful that you will rarely find a Russian citizen who accuses his government of instigating this conflict.

The boundary between state interests and propaganda is truth. For the former, truth is of crucial importance, while for the latter, the main thing is to impose one's opinion on others, regardless of whether this opinion is wrong or not.

Information is still controlled in the media, but it's all beautifully packaged. Despite everyone knowing full well that they are being fed information that has been processed a thousand times, the situation is slowly changing for the better, although one step forward is the existence of recommendations that theorists have developed for journalists working on conflicts.

These are the recommendations:

- Frequent delivery of information by overlapping other topics;
- Raising the professional level of journalists so that the information they convey is balanced and based on real facts, multiple sources should be used;
- A journalist should know that he should not contribute to the escalation of the conflict, but rather prevent it;
- It should not engage in propaganda of these conflict situations and be freed from hate speech as much as possible.

It should also be noted that the main task of the mass media is to expose injustice and create a critical public opinion. A critical public should put pressure on government structures to correct the facts of injustice, restore justice, and discuss the conflict at the level of international law.

We need to determine what kind of approaches they have, how objective they are, under what circumstances the transformation of the situation takes place, whether they contribute to the incitement of conflicts, and whether television broadcasters are doing everything to prevent them?!

An accurate statement of the facts, a realistic description of current events, can show the parties to the conflict and the world community the damage caused by the war, the tendencies that hinder the progress of humanity...

Mass outrage and demonstrations can force parties to a conflict to cease hostilities.

The development of modern technologies has presented journalists and the media with new challenges, as confirmed by Anna Colin-Lebedeva, an employee of the University of Paris and a researcher of the countries of the former Soviet Union. She says regarding the events in Ukraine that although she has written a lot about Ukrainian-Russian relations, our knowledge is no longer useful for describing the processes taking place there today, because we are far from the object of study and the approaches that have existed to date can no longer be consistent with the current situation.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Archives: Georgia's Chaotic Memory . <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/482211.29.03.2019>

Impact factor 9

Anna Colin-Lebedeva emphasizes the fact that the public's demand for journalists and researchers involved in war situations has increased, and they expect them to provide accurate assessments and conclusions, but neither researchers nor the media have the knowledge or ability to answer all questions.

Lebedeva notes that before the war, society expected general information, but the war changed the situation and now there is a need for a deep and thorough study of facts, factors, and the overall situation in general.

"The thunder of cannons is a thing of the past, the time will come when there will be no unity between Russia and Ukraine, they will no longer have a common history, and perhaps the topic of Russian occupation will no longer be remembered. No one knows the results of this war, how it will end, what damage it will cause, what the post-war situation will be, what will happen in Ukraine after the war and what kind of country it will become?" - says Anna Colin Lebedeva.

When we are talking about such a large-scale conflict situation as the Russia-Ukraine war and the involvement of the media in this war, it is necessary to use methods and approaches that will allow the public to see and analyze current events in a realistic light.

Therefore, a journalist, or any mass media representative, should consider it necessary to communicate with people who have had or are directly involved in conflicts. These can be people living in the conflict region or those who accidentally find themselves there. As a result of communicating with them, it will be possible to determine from what sources they receive information about existing conflicts, what they think about the role of the media in this process, and what their attitude is towards conflicts.

It is also interesting to see how often journalists working in conflict regions communicate with the conflict-affected population, in what cases and in what way they cover their problems, and in general, how they see their own role in the conflict resolution process. It is also interesting to determine to what extent journalists who cover conflict-related topics are professional and have the necessary skills, as the main problem may be low competence.

When we talk about the main broadcasters of the two countries involved in the conflict and the methods of their involvement in this conflict, of course, the public channels of both countries need to be monitored first. However, it would not be amiss to also review the other broadcaster in general and make it possible to record interviews with several people living in the conflict region through direct communication.

Of course, here too, the journalist must rely on basic methods proven in social sciences, such as: the comparative method, document study, content analysis, empirical research, and so on.

All this will give us the opportunity to study social reality and generalize from different angles, which will have a great impact on a certain layer of society. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect current events with maximum accuracy and objectivity.

Impact factor 9

One of the main goals of our research is to understand how and How much Often Covers Georgian and Russian Telemedia Conflict-related issues - are these topics becoming a daily occurrence? In major news outlets And How much They maintain Journalists Objectivity, whether journalists themselves are aware of their own weaknesses and strengths, and how they envision increasing their role in the conflict resolution process.

Representatives of both public broadcasters should be well aware of these issues and set the following as their main tasks:

- What By methods and how tendentiously They are covering Telemedia The existing conflict?
- Are the parties involved in the conflict equally represented in the coverage?
- What a historical Are they discussing the current conflict in a neutral context and are they not biased towards any side ?
- What impact does media involvement have on the civilian population and does it help them make the right decisions?
- What positive and negative role does the information they convey play in all these events?
- How balanced is the information provided on political and ethnic factors?

As soon as the Russian-Ukrainian war began, the Georgian Public Broadcaster began to cover the events with more or less completeness. Based on the review of almost all programs and talk shows dedicated to these events, we can conclude that Georgian Television tried to show different opinions and convey information in a balanced way. It also covered the opinions of invited guests, people known to the public.

Of course, as a neighboring state, the main focus was still on what impact the ongoing war could have on the security of our country, how it could also spill over to other neighboring states.

The Public Broadcaster did not turn a blind eye and covered domestic processes in parallel, whether it was protest rallies or other ongoing political activities.

It should be considered a success for the Public Broadcaster that it had journalists directly sent to the conflict zone. In parallel with Ukraine, Channel One informed the Georgian population about the Russian invasion of Ukraine in a nine o'clock news broadcast on February 24 and included a correspondent from Donbass, Levan Akhalaia, on the air, who introduced us to the events taking place there from the spot. Working in parallel with Levan Akhalaia was Rati Khvistani, the second correspondent of "Moambe", who provided us with information from the country's capital, Kiev. Unfortunately, in order to protect their safety, both correspondents were summoned and had to leave Kiev by evacuation train.

The Georgian Public Broadcaster took on a great mission in the Russia-Ukraine war and actively participated in the process of covering the war situation. **8**

Impact factor 9

projects and talk shows were dedicated to the topic of the war, including historical and documentary films, which makes up a total of **62** television programs, and this is only the data for one year, 2022.

It is precisely because the Georgian Public Broadcaster was one of the main informants of the population about the ongoing events in the war, the attitude and involvement of various states in this war, the developing stories, and diplomatic negotiations.

In Russia, the media is divided into state and independent media. State media are considered to be those media outlets that follow the information line dictated by the political elite. By financing the media, the state has the right to directly or indirectly control the format and content of the media. The concept of “state media” in Russia refers to media that is directly or indirectly owned by the Russian government.

The position of independent media in Russia is difficult, because the media space there is not neutral and there are significant challenges in this space: Russia does not have a tradition of free media, and legislation related to the media is often in conflict with freedom of speech, which leads to the possibility of controlling the opposition.

In state-run media, journalists can work autonomously, but within certain limits. These limits specifically apply to key political issues. It is noteworthy that the diversity of media content in Russian media decreases in proportion to the sensitivity and political nature of the topic. Alyukov, M. (2021, 15).

As TV journalist Vladimir Solovyov noted, Russia is a country “that cannot live without ideology. Ideology is always a state position. And when we talk about ideology, it means that there is a certain cycle of programs that, in one way or another, should solve the tasks facing the state. This is where a coordinated position of TV channels and a clear understanding of what and how to do is needed. (Soloviev, V. “Russia cannot live without ideology”).<sup>3</sup>

As for the coverage of hostilities, the research found that state television shows stories and videos that make a certain assessment and express an attitude towards what is happening. News programs pay special attention to the government's position on a specific issue, while often completely ignoring the event itself.

As soon as hostilities began in Ukraine, strengthening the information flank became the order of the day, and Russia's main broadcaster directed all its efforts towards this.

Since February 24, 2022, due to military operations in Ukraine, all entertainment programs have been removed from the air of Channel One. Instead, regular news programs and socio-political talk shows have been broadcast (“Time Will Tell” and “The Big Game”), and since February 26, news programs and socio-political talk shows have been broadcast in the news block. The channel's press

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<sup>3</sup> Soloviev, v. (n.d.). <http://lgz.ru/article/-42-6435-23-10-2013/vladimir-solovyev-rossiya-ne-mozhet-zhit-bez-ideology/> 81.

### Impact factor 9

service stated that “in the current situation, Channel One considered it necessary to pay more attention to socio-political programs.”

Finally, in conclusion, I would like to note that Russia In Ukraine The military action created the largest influx of refugees since World War II. The country has a population of over six million. More Ukrainian left and Almost a third of the population Forcibly became refugees, which in turn led to product shortages and famine.

34 years have passed since the collapse of the once huge state, the Soviet Union, which also found a difficult reflection in the television space of these two now independent countries. Television in the post-Soviet space developed according to its own strict laws, withstood the blows of the government, private owners, the advertising market and competitors, but survived and, under great dangers and risks, reached the highest level of professionalism, with a very modest initial capital in a difficult and difficult era.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have attempted to convey, as far as possible, the attitude and nature of the coverage of the Georgian and Russian public broadcasters regarding the ongoing events in Ukraine. I have attempted to determine with what frequency, in what form, and for what purpose the Georgian and Russian public broadcasters cover the course of the war and issues related to the conflicts.

It is no secret that the mass media and information outlets have a great influence on the population, and therefore the provision of objective, balanced information is of great importance. There are often cases when the public is presented with distorted information, which prevents them from understanding the essence of the matter and self-determination. Therefore, it is necessary that the information provided, whether accurate or not, is close to reality. The purpose of our research is to determine the accuracy of this information.

As a result of the scientific study of the conflict, the technologies and characteristics of the broadcasters will be identified. They will be evaluated and based on this, both their merits and shortcomings will be determined, which, in turn, will allow researchers to draw appropriate conclusions.

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