

МАСОВІ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ ЗА КОРДОНОМ

Visn. Lviv. Univ., Ser. Zhurn. 2024: 54-55; 116–129 • DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.30970/vjo.2024.54-55.12153>

УДК [070:316.658.47(470+571)]:355.4.01(569.4)"2023"

RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA ABOUT THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN WAR IN 2023: EXAMPLE OF VLADIMIR SOLOVIEV

Iurii Melnyk

*Ivan Franko National University of Lviv,
Generala Chuprynky Str., 49, 79044, Lviv, Ukraine
e-mail: melnykiurii@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2825-9925>*

The purpose of this article is to reconstruct the position of Russian propaganda in the Israeli-Palestinian 2023 war using the example of the media activity of the leading Russian propagandist Vladimir Soloviev. The foreign political circumstances prompted Soloviev to choose a neutral optics of the war. The objects of Soloviev's accusations turned out to be the Western countries, Ukraine, and Russian political émigrés. Soloviev's sympathies for Israel came into conflict with the interests of Russian propaganda, for which he works. This contradiction naturally ended with the defeat of his personal sympathies (Israel) before the demands of his employer (Russia).

Keywords: Russian propaganda, Vladimir Soloviev, Israel, Palestine, Israeli-Palestinian war, impartiality.

Introduction. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been an important media phenomenon for decades, generating a number of media challenges related to controversy, ambiguity, and related media challenges. Russian propaganda during the Russian-Ukrainian war (since 2014) became accustomed to an unambiguous, black-and-white picture of reality, without halftones or nuances. However, in 2023, Russian propaganda is faced with the need to cover the Israeli-Palestinian war under difficult diplomatic circumstances, in which any unequivocal position in favor of any side contradicts Russia's foreign policy interests. This new, atypical situation for the Russian propaganda machine requires a separate detailed study. It is especially interesting to reveal the behavior in the situation of the key Russian propagandist Vladimir Soloviev, who repeatedly expressed¹ his sympathy with Israel – importantly, outside the framework of the general information policy of Russia.

¹ Паскевич, А. (2023), “«Если в Израиле начнется война, сразу туда поеду»: в сети вспомнили громкое обещание Соловьева, тот оправдался”, *Obozrevatel*, 16 октября. URL: <https://bit.ly/3SiMg5p>

The purpose of this article is to reconstruct the position of Russian propaganda in the Israeli-Palestinian war in 2023 using the example of the media activity of the leading Russian propagandist Vladimir Soloviev. The tasks facing this research are:

- Examine the peculiarities of Soloviev's media activity comparing it to the BBC coverage (on the example of the Israeli-Palestinian war coverage in 2023);
- Examine the Soloviev's broadcasts on the *Russia 1* TV channel regarding the Israeli-Palestinian war;
- Consider the content of the Telegram channel @SolovievLive regarding the same topic;
- Consider key narratives that characterize the Soloviev's media coverage of the events on the Middle East and to distinguish it from unengaged coverage;
- Go beyond Soloviev's media activity, extrapolating the conclusions to the Russian state media as a whole.

Literature review

Media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian war is a very popular topic for media scholars. Among the huge number of studies, one can mention the ones that focus on media bias (e.g. the research by M. Neureiter², H. Arikat³ or A. Deprez & K. Raeymaeckers⁴), narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian war (e.g. the research by G. Shupak⁵ or L. Peterson⁶), tones and frames (e.g. the research by Y. Ozohu-Suleiman & S. A. Ishak⁷), the comparison of domestic and global coverage of this war (e.g. the research by C. Baden & K. Tenenboim-Weinblatt⁸), instrumentalization of the news avalanche about the conflict in order to distract from internal affairs (e.g. the research by R. Durante & E. Zhuravskaya⁹).

There were also studies related to the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Russian media. A good example is the article by D. Strovsky & R. Schleifer, in which, based on the study of the Russian paper press, it was concluded that it is “much more positive toward Palestine than toward Israel”.¹⁰ E. Cohen & E. Boyd showed the historical depth of

² Neureiter, M. (2017), “Sources of media bias in coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict: the 2010 Gaza flotilla raid in German, British, and US newspapers”, *Israel Affairs*, 23:1, pp. 66–86.

³ Arikat, H. (2011), “Eye on the Media: the Israel – Palestine Conflict”, Master's Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, United States.

⁴ Deprez, A., Raeymaeckers, K. (2010), “Bias in the News? The Representation of Palestinians and Israelis in the Coverage of the First and Second Intifada”, *International Communication Gazette*, 72 (1), pp. 91–109.

⁵ Shupak, G. (2018), *The Wrong Story: Palestine, Israel, and the Media*, OR Books, New York, 195 p.

⁶ Peterson, L. (2014), *Palestine-Israel in the Print News Media: Contending Discourses*. Routledge, London, 264 p.

⁷ Ozohu-Suleiman, Y., & Ishak, S. A. (2014), “Local media in global conflict: Southeast Asian newspapers and the politics of peace in Israel/Palestine”, *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)*, 8 (2), pp. 284-295.

⁸ Baden, C; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K. (2017), “Convergent News? A Longitudinal Study of Similarity and Dissimilarity in the Domestic and Global Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”. *Journal of Communication*, 67 (1), pp. 1–25.

⁹ Durante, R., Zhuravskaya, E. (2015), “Attack When the World is Not Watching? International Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, *Journal of Political Economy*, 126 (3), pp. 1085–1133.

¹⁰ Strovsky, D., & Schleifer, R. (2021), “Playing with Information: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the Russian Press”, *Middle East Policy*, 28 (1), pp. 105–122.

the informational work of the Kremlin on the side of Palestine in the informational field¹¹. In 2023, with the beginning of the new phase of the Israeli-Palestinian war, the position of the Russian propaganda machine is extremely ambiguous, so it needs a separate study.

Methodology

In addition to the general scientific methods (induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis), the research process used a descriptive method, as well as rhetorical, cognitive and discursive analysis of Soloviev's speeches, qualitative and quantitative content analysis of his telegram channel.

The BBC's approach

In the early days of the Israeli-Palestinian war, John Simpson's response to a popular question about why the *BBC* does not call Hamas terrorists caused an uproar in media circles: "Terrorism is a loaded word, which people use about an outfit they disapprove of morally. It's simply not the *BBC*'s job to tell people who to support and who to condemn – who are the good guys and who are the bad guys. The key point is that we don't say it in our voice. Our business is to present our audiences with the facts, and let them make up their own minds"¹².

The *BBC*'s coverage in general, particularly in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian war in 2023, is marked by a number of characteristics, including:

- A genuine attempt to understand the situation, rather than promulgate predetermined narratives;
- Drawing information from both opposing sides, as well as from independent sources;
- Separation of facts from comments;
- Balance of frames: attention to both the war on a general scale and the fate of common people¹³.

One don't expect this kind of coverage from media players who have established their reputation as propagandists.

Like *BBC*, the Russian propaganda tried to cover the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian war with maximum restraint. Among the more or less noticeable Russian voices were those who deviated from the neutral line: the leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, expressed unequivocal support for Palestine, and a Duma deputy Alexander Khinshtein expressed unequivocal support for Israel. The mainstream media allowed itself to stray from this neutral line to one side or the other, but not too far, and often tried to balance criticism of the Palestinians with criticism of Israel and vice versa.

Vladimir Soloviev on Russia 1 TV Channel

The information policy of Russia regarding the situation in the Middle East should be illustrated in more detail using the example of prominent Russian propagandist Vladimir Soloviev. This time, the foreign policy interests of Russia came into play, so the Israeli-Palestinian war had to be interpreted accordingly. Vladimir Soloviev hosts his talk show every night on the *Russia 1* TV channel. Here are the headlines of this talk show in the

¹¹ Cohen, E. & Boyd, E. (2019), "The KGB and anti-Israel propaganda operations", *Informing Science: The International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline*, 22, pp. 157–182.

¹² Simpson, J. (2023), "Why *BBC* doesn't call Hamas militants 'terrorists'", *BBC*. 11 October. URL: <https://bit.ly/3QBwIly>

¹³ *BBC* (2023), "Israel & the Palestinians". URL: <https://bit.ly/3MpVed9>

first days of the war, from which one can draw preliminary conclusions about the line that Soloviev advocates:

October 8: “Great failure of the Israeli security services and army”;

October 9: “The Middle East is always very subtle”;

October 10: “The West saw what it wanted in the tragic events in Israel”;

October 11: “Israel is accustomed to responding symmetrically”;

October 12: “Israel’s ruthlessness cannot be justified”;

October 15: “The world has gone so far as to get a terrible war.”¹⁴

Invited speakers come to Soloviev’s talk show to comment on current events. However, Soloviev does not limit himself to the classical function of a presenter-moderator, but takes on the role of the main speaker, the dominant interpreter of events, who needs guests rather to complement and develop his messages. He always reserves the first three to five minutes of the show for his monologue (the right of first interpretation), allows himself to interrupt guests and aggressively argue with them if they express unsuitable thoughts. It is important to note that participants receive money for coming to the program, including those who play the role of defenders of Ukraine, the USA, Poland, etc.¹⁵

Since the beginning of the war in the Middle East, Soloviev has been clearly emphasizing his priorities. If Israel has his support, it will be only situational: “Terrible morning in Israel. I want to be clear: I am a Jew, but I am not an Israeli. I have no favorites except my homeland. My homeland is Russia. Therefore, when I am asked whose side I am on, I do not understand this question at all. I am always on the side of my homeland, which is Russia. But as any normal person, how can I relate to pictures of inhumane, horrible atrocities and abuse of civilians, women, and children. I don’t understand why the other side films footage of its abuse of women and children. It immediately reminded me of the footage taken by the Ukrainian Nazis, when they mocked the peaceful inhabitants of Mariupol, when it became clear that they were on our side. What they [the Ukrainian Nazis] were doing with our prisoners. That is, (...) essentially the same thing. But what led to this? We must look deeper into the conflict...” Next, Soloviev makes accusations against Germany and the USA.¹⁶

This short speech made on the first day of the war reflects the entire information policy of Russia on the Israeli-Palestinian war:

- Israel and Palestine as sides of the conflict may be right and wrong in some ways, but in general one should maintain a neutral perspective in assessments;
- Russia is always right. In particular, in the war, which is taking place in the Middle East;
- Crimes and especially brutal footage of the war between Palestinians and Israelis should as often as possible be compared to the “atrocities of the Ukrainian Nazis”;
- Responsibility for the war in the Middle East lies with the United States and other Western countries.

If in the above quote Soloviev criticized Hamas for crimes against Israeli civilians, then a few days later a counter-thesis was required condemning Israeli forces. Again, the propagandist resorts to parallels with the Russian-Ukrainian war, thus presenting Russia

¹⁴ Вечер с Владимиром Соловьёвым (2023). URL: <https://bit.ly/3QAQFPC>

¹⁵ Rus.LSM (2023), “На пропагандистских шоу в РФ люди прилично зарабатывают – журналист”. URL: <https://bit.ly/3QACcST>

¹⁶ Вечер с Владимиром Соловьёвым (2023), “Грандиозный провал спецслужб и армии Израиля. Эфир от 08.10.2023”. URL: <https://bit.ly/466oe0N>

in the most favorable light: “The Middle East is in turmoil. Syrian airports are already being attacked. The explanation is that planes from Iran were going to land there. So what? Based on this logic, we just need to destroy to hell all the airfields in Poland, Romania, and Germany. International law is either there or it is not. If the country of Israel for some reason decided that it has the right to attack Syria... So what? Has someone imposed sanctions? Has someone said anything?” Soloviev about the attacks on the Gaza Strip: “Phenomenal cruelty, unacceptable, impermissible, cannot be justified in any way.”¹⁷

Soloviev – copying the style of independent journalists – consistently maintains a line of moderate, restrained condemnation of both sides for obvious excesses, fundamentally maintaining a balance: “The attack on Saturday against Israel is not something that will be accepted in Russian society. The same applies to the decision to declare a blockade on ordinary residents in the Gaza Strip, leaving them without food and electricity. Both approaches are unacceptable.”

On one of the broadcasts, Russian Duma deputy Gurulev made a clear statement on Soloviev’s show, taking sides in the conflict: “Iran is our ally, Israel is an ally of the United States.” Then Soloviev was forced to intervene and to correct him: “But at the same time, we have uniquely good relations with Israel, which have never existed, only under Putin.”

In addition to his evening talk show on the Soloviev television station, he also streams on social networks. On one of the streams he expressed the same position in other words: “Whose side are our sympathies on? Our sympathies are with peace. This conflict was smoldering, it was inevitable, it was quite obvious that sooner or later the situation would escalate to the point where it would flare up.”

Soloviev then proceeds to state that events in the Middle East are useful for Russia: “What happened today in Israel completely destroys America’s hopes of creating an anti-Russian coalition... Because now there is a very clear split: the entire Arab world is virtually unanimously on the side of the Palestinians, NATO, of course, is on the other side... There can be no question of any coalition. Moreover, the distraction from Ukraine is enormous; there is a possibility for Europe and America to lose the Arab world forever if they now behave in a careless manner.”¹⁸

Sometimes Soloviev allows himself to express his own position, mainly in a situation where it is necessary to balance the skew towards the Palestinian side: “I am a Jew, I never hid it. In 2004, when there was also tension, I said that if a war broke out in Israel, then, as a Jew, I would go there to defend my people. I’ll tell you more, I’m 60 years old, but if Russia didn’t participate in the Special military operation now, I would go to Israel, because Jews from all over the world are going there to defend their people after this horrific tragedy.”

Telegram channel @SolovievLive

This Telegram channel has 1,310 thousand subscribers, which makes it quite influential (the 21st place in Russia, including non-political ones). The first week of the 2023 Israeli-Palestinian war featured both the Hamas attack on Israel and the Israeli counterattack,

¹⁷ Вечер с Владимиром Соловьёвым (2023), “Безжалостность Израиля не может быть оправдана. Эфир от 12.10.2023”. URL: <https://bit.ly/3skzit0>

¹⁸ Davis Julia (2023), “‘Only Good News Today’ – Russia’s Propagandists Delight as Israelis Die”, Сера, October 8. URL: <https://bit.ly/40naq0r>

with civilian casualties on both sides. In view of this, the specified period of time can be considered representative for the quantitative study.

All the posts on the Telegram channel on the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian war and the Middle East crisis in October 2023 within one week were taken into account. There were 639 such posts on the channel. All of them were divided into three categories: “pro-Israel / anti-Hamas”, “pro-Palestine / anti-Israel” and “neutral / informative”. Only messages with a clear attitude of the author of a post (including authors of posts that have been reposted) are counted as pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian. News reports, even the ones like “Israeli missile hits ambulance in Gaza”; “In Dublin, Ireland, pro-Palestinian demonstrators dispersed the rally of supporters of Israel and organized their own in its place” do not contain the author’s attitude to this event, so they are still classified as neutral.

In turn, the news “Terrible footage: the Israeli Air Force is demolishing the Gaza Strip with massive bombings” includes an assessment of the event, and is therefore classified as pro-Palestinian.

Statements by Turkish President Erdogan (pro-Palestinian) and New York City Council member Inna Vernikov (pro-Israeli) published on the channel – without any comment from the authors of the Telegram channel – have clear characteristics of siding with one of the participants in the war, so they were included in the appropriate column. Instead, the news report that Biden declared his support for Israel is just an informational report (those were sorted into the neutral column).

| | pro-Israel / anti-Hamas | neutral / informative | pro-Palestine / anti-Israel | Total |
|--------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--------------|
| 7.10 | 6 | 143 | 1 | 150 |
| 8.10 | 4 | 75 | 1 | 80 |
| 9.10 | 5 | 85 | 3 | 93 |
| 10.10 | 5 | 97 | 9 | 111 |
| 11.10 | 4 | 64 | 7 | 75 |
| 12.10 | 3 | 60 | 1 | 64 |
| 13.10 | 2 | 63 | 1 | 66 |
| Total | 29 | 587 | 23 | 639 |

One of Putin’s statements quoted in the Telegram channel (“One should refrain from making harsh statements and do not offend the feelings of people involved in the conflict in the Middle East”) sounds like a recommendation. It is not clear whether Putin addressed it to the official speakers of Russia or the Russian media, but both the former (almost without exception) and the latter (in the overwhelming majority of cases) spoke out regarding the Israeli-Palestinian war in accordance with these recommendations.

Other statements by Putin in the same vein:

- “Russia is ready to be a mediator in the Palestinian-Israeli arrangement”;
- “Many of our compatriots live in Israel, we cannot forget that, but we also have good relations with the Arab world”;

As can be seen from the table, the results of quantitative analysis show the extremely cautious interpretation of hostilities in the Middle East: 92% of posts on the telegram channel are news posts or some neutral interpretation of the news without taking sides. Posts with a pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian position are 4.5% and 3.5%, respectively.

Soloviev's telegram channel disseminates neutral statements and factual news stories from both official Russian sources and news streams:

- “Russia calls on Israel and Palestine to stop violence...”;
- “The situation must be brought back to a peaceful course as soon as possible...”;
- “Russia has long-standing ties with the Palestinians, but there are also relations with Israel, where there are many compatriots”;
- “Supporters of Israel and Palestine came face to face in the center of San Francisco”;
- “Pro-Israeli and pro-American demonstrators fought in American Kirkland”;
- “Violence on both sides.”
- “It is necessary to stop this conflict immediately, comply with international humanitarian law, prevent terrorist acts and indiscriminate use of force”.

The explanation given by Alexander Kou, a *Komsomolskaya Pravda* military correspondent in one of the streams on the channel, is quite typical: “We are being asked to take a side. Honestly, I can't do this. On one side of the scale is Israel, which has pursued a nationalist policy all the time. From the beginning of the Special military operation they secretly helped our enemy. An entire unit of Israelis fought on the side of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. On the other side of the scale are outright terrorists.”

The Telegram channel refers to various media, both favorable to Israel, favorable to Palestine, and neutral, maintaining the balance: *Press TV, The Sun, Guardian, Middle East Eye, Times of Israel, Al-Arabya, RIA Novosti, Moskovsy Komsomolets*. The source of the assessments are the Palestinian journalist Mohammed Najlib, the Turkish historian Mehmet Perincek, the Palestinian politician Dimitra Dilyana, and the Israeli journalist Nick Kolekhin. The Telegram channel shows footage of killings and destruction as both sides of the frontline.

The terminology is kept in neutral tones: if the realities of the Ukrainian topic on the same day are reflected in the style of “Kiev regime”, “terrorist attacks on targets on the territory of the Russian Federation”, then the wording during the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation is as careful as possible:

- “militants from the Gaza Strip”;
- “armed people crossed the border”;
- “Palestinian forces”;
- “Palestinian groups”;
- “Palestinian militants”;
- “fighters of the Hamas movement”;
- “assault groups”.

However, on some occasions some content is reposted where the wording is different: “Islamists”, “terrorist objects of Hamas” etc.

Pro-Israeli posts:

- “I am more than sure that today it is necessary not to negotiate, but to completely destroy all structures of the terrorist organization Hamas. Their leadership is like rats hiding in Beirut and leading from there. I promise that Israel will reach them there too, and none of them will survive” (David Ben Abraham, Ashkelon City Council member).
- “A husband and a wife killed 7 terrorists, saved their children, but died themselves. Adar and Itay were officers in the Israeli army, and the couple kept weapons in their house. When Hamas terrorists approached their home, they hid their ten-month-old

twins in a fortified room and decided to divert attention to themselves. They managed to eliminate 7 militants. The couple died.”

- “Did German money in Palestine pay pensions to Hamas terrorists? So who sponsors terror?”

Pro-Palestinian posts:

- “The Israeli Zionist regime must liberate the occupied lands because the time has come” (Khayal Muazzin, Iranian journalist);
- “The Palestinian people are resisting not only for their own interests. It has the right to defend its territory, to oppose the occupation and aggressive policies of Israel”;
- “Why is there so little sympathy for Israel in Russia?” The answer is the report of a Ukrainian TV channel about the meeting of the fighters of the Ukrainian “Azov” regiment with the Israeli public.

Important narratives

Refusal to take sides in the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation does not mean refusal to promote clear, unambiguous messages on this war that are beneficial to Russia. Without them, Russian coverage of events in the Middle East in October 2023 could even be called close to objective.

1. The US and Europe have failed in the Middle East, or deliberately provoked hostilities there:

Putin personally pointed out this several times, characterizing the Palestinian-Israeli war of 2023 as “a striking example of the failure of US policy in the Middle East” and proclaiming that “the United States has neglected mechanisms in the zone of the Arab-Israeli conflict.”

Other quotes from the Telegram channel @SolovievLive:

- “The US could not be unaware of the clashes that are being prepared in the Middle East”;
- “Miscalculations of the US special services, which failed to predict the escalation in the Middle East”;
- “The Americans made a lot of mistakes, but they understand that they need conflict in the region”;
- “When I look at the way the USA behaves towards Israel, I have a strong feeling that Israel is alone in this situation”;
- “The Americans, when it comes to destabilizing involvement in the Middle East, have been doing it for decades”;
- Failure of Western policy.

From time to time, mockery of Biden and other Western officials is published. For example, making fun of John Kirby for crying on air.

2. Mentioning Ukraine in the context of events in the Middle East in a negative light.

It is not important if there is a reason to criticize Ukraine, it is important not to avoid any opportunity for this. This narrative of the Telegram channel is divided into several components.

Firstly, the attempt to declare that Hamas is using Ukrainian weapons. Marjarie Taylor's and Douglas McGregor's guesses about Ukrainian weapons in the hands of Hamas should be included here. Other quotes on this topic:

- “Weapons transferred to the Nazi regime in Ukraine are actively used in Israel”;
- Putin “supposed the leakage of weapons in connection with the high level of corruption in Ukraine”;
- “Hamas has weapons from Ukraine.”

Secondly, attempts to compare the war crimes and acts of cruelty of the Israeli-Palestinian war (on both sides) with the actions of the Ukrainian army:

- “Gaza, hell on earth. The question is, if the Russian Aerospace Forces had leveled Kyiv in the same way, would the world community also remain silent? And we know the answer”;
- Soloviev: “Children of Donbas are torn apart, women are raped, underground gas storages and wells are filled with corpses. Bastard Zelenskyi is Hamas”;
- “Hamas militants treat the dead and captured soldiers of the Israeli Defense Forces like the militants of the Kyiv regime treat our guys”;
- “Hamas behave towards prisoners and civilians is exactly the same as the Banderaites do, by the way.”

Thirdly, the thesis that from now on weapons intended for Ukraine will be sent to Israel:

- “If the USA intervenes in the Israeli conflict, it will be a defeat for Ukraine”;
- “Zelensky is reportedly worried that America's attention will shift to Israel.”

Soloviev himself, in one of his streams on October 19, noted that Hamas “must be destroyed as a terrorist organization,” and immediately condemned Israel, because what it “is now doing in relation to the Palestinians is... exorbitant. This is cruelty, an accusation against the nation.”

Then Soloviev resorted to a favorable parallel with the Russian-Ukrainian war: “If in Russia... the president of our country would say that the entire Ukrainian nation is guilty and bears collective responsibility, no one remained silent... In Israel, the president of Israel says this.” Thus, in 40 seconds of the broadcast, equidistance was maintained between both sides of the conflict due to accusations on both sides, and the Russian-Ukrainian war was mentioned in the needed light.

3. Mention in a negative way of the known figures from Russia who moved to Israel as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war

After October 8, the Telegram channel regularly mentions the so-called “relocants”, mainly to make fun of them. One of the @SolovievLive speakers, Serhiy Mikheev, notes that “Galkin's cloying speech about Israel does not look sincere”. Soloviev says that residents of the Russian Federation, who have taken the Israeli passport, should go to defend their new homeland. On another occasion, Soloviev calls them “a pitiful circle of migrants who fight for 20 shekels” – “you are nobody, and you cannot accept this.”

Fighters of the propaganda front get rid of their personal characteristics

An important trend concerning Russian propaganda in general: by engaging the medi figures, the information machine deprives them of their personal views and beliefs that they cherished before they joined the entered the service of propaganda. The propagandist

Soloviev, who under normal conditions was a sympathizer of Israel (and did not take a neutral position between Israel and Palestine), at the time when the interests of Russian propaganda collided with his own sympathies, gave preference to the former and got rid of the latter.

The second example is the RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan. She has long been working in the system of Russian media controlled by the Kremlin, so she did not allow herself unambiguous pro-Armenian statements regarding the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in conditions when Russian propaganda tried to balance the contradictions between both sides. At the same time, Simonyan did not hide her self-identification with the Armenian people (in particular, drawing attention to the memory of the Armenian genocide of 1915¹⁹). When, in September 2023, the interests of Russian propaganda shifted towards criticizing Armenia for breaking political and military cooperation with the Russian Federation, Margarita Simonyan, in unison with other Russian propagandists, exposed President Pashinyan and blamed him for the surrender of Karabakh²⁰.

The third example is Anton Krasovsky, who before working for the Russian propaganda spoke out against the persecution of Russian homosexuals, and after becoming a cog in the state information machine, he supported the law banning the propaganda of homosexuality.²¹

Conclusions

Faced with the need to cover the Israeli-Palestinian war of 2023, the Russian propaganda machine found itself in a difficult and atypical situation, when the foreign policy interests of the Russian Federation did not allow it to describe what was happening in black and white tones, unequivocally supporting one of the sides in the war. In this situation, the only possible strategy was to maintain a balance in criticism and support of each side.

Having examined the nature of coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian war of 2023 using the example of the media activity of the key Russian propagandist Vladimir Soloviev and his telegram channel @SolovievLive, it was possible to find out that the circumstances outlined above prompted Soloviev to choose for himself a neutral, atypical optics of war, based on equidistance, balance of thoughts, giving the floor to both sides, etc.

If we take into account exclusively the quantitative indicators of the Israeli-Palestinian war coverage in the Telegram channel @SolovievLive (the proportion between informative/neutral publications and the engaged ones, the proportion between the pro-Israeli and the pro-Palestinian ones), they are commensurate with the corresponding indicators of the world's leading media, which dictate standards of impartiality, such as *BBC*. However, the qualitative analysis shows that even under these conditions, the propagandistic discourse of the Russian media (and Soloviev as their prominent representative) differs significantly from the standards of non-engaged journalism. First of all, Soloviev consistently develops narratives that would be little popular or completely absent in independent media (be it *BBC* or *Novaya Gazeta*, which also has its focus on the Russian agenda). Namely:

¹⁹ АМИ. Новости Армения (2013), “Мargarita Симоньян: Моя семья пережила геноцид и других доказательств мне не нужно”, 24 апреля. URL: <https://bit.ly/3tLxE6>

²⁰ Медуза (2023), “Что это за иуда и что это за гнида?”, 23 сентября. URL: <https://bit.ly/3Mm7zim>

²¹ BBC (2022), “Антон Красовский: сравниваем слова журналиста сейчас и девять лет назад”, 27 октября. URL: <https://bit.ly/3Qz3rhI>

- The responsibility of the West (primarily the United States) for events in the Middle East;
- The presence of a Ukrainian component: Hamas is allegedly fighting with Ukrainian weapons; the war crimes and brutality of both sides cannot be described without resorting to comparison with the actions of the Ukrainian army; The military support previously flowing to Ukraine will now be redirected to Israel;
- Relocants, that is, residents of Russia who moved to Israel as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war, made a mistake (and in general, they are worthless).

This example shows that even if ideal conditions are created for the propagandist to be unbiased, moderate and avoid ambiguity, even if he has all the technical capabilities to cover events correctly, propaganda will still find its way and win. Soloviev's sympathies for Israel came into conflict with the interests of Russian propaganda, for which he works. This conflict naturally ended with the defeat of his personal sympathies (Israel) before the demands of his employer (Russia). Any beliefs that a propagandist had and postulated before he entered the service of propaganda, or in parallel with his work for propaganda, are nullified the moment those beliefs come into conflict with the official line of propaganda.

СПИСОК ЛІТЕРАТУРИ

1. Arikat, H. (2011), "Eye on the Media: the Israel – Palestine Conflict", Thesis, California State University, Sacramento.
2. Baden, C., Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K. (2017), "Convergent News? A Longitudinal Study of Similarity and Dissimilarity in the Domestic and Global Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict". *Journal of Communication*, 67(1), pp. 1–25.
3. BBC (2023), "Israel & the Palestinians", available from: <https://bit.ly/3MpVed9>
4. Cohen, E. & Boyd, E. (2019), "The KGB and anti-Israel propaganda operations", *Informing Science: The International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline*, 22, pp. 157–182.
5. Davis Julia (2023), " 'Only Good News Today' – Russia's Propagandists Delight as Israelis Die", *Сера*, October 8, available from: <https://bit.ly/40naq0r> (accessed 14 November 2023).
6. Deprez, A., Raeymaeckers, K. (2010), "Bias in the News? The Representation of Palestinians and Israelis in the Coverage of the First and Second Intifada", *International Communication Gazette*, 72 (1), pp. 91–109.
7. Durante, R., Zhuravskaya, E. (2015), "Attack When the World is Not Watching? International Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", *Journal of Political Economy*, 126 (3), pp. 1085–1133.
8. Neureiter, M. (2017), "Sources of media bias in coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict: the 2010 Gaza flotilla raid in German, British, and US newspapers", *Israel Affairs*, 23:1, pp. 66–86.
9. Ozohu-Suleiman, Y., & Ishak, S. A. (2014), "Local media in global conflict: Southeast Asian newspapers and the politics of peace in Israel/Palestine", *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)*, 8(2), 284–295.
10. Peterson, L. (2014), *Palestine-Israel in the Print News Media: Contending Discourses*. Routledge, London, 264 p.

11. Rus.LSM (2023), “*На пропагандистских шоу в РФ люди прилично зарабатывают – журналист*”, режим доступа: <https://bit.ly/3QACcST> (accessed 14 November 2023).
12. Shupak, G. (2018), *The Wrong Story: Palestine, Israel, and the Media*, OR Books, New York, 195 p.
13. Simpson, J. (2023), “*Why BBC doesn't call Hamas militants 'terrorists'*”, BBC. 11 October, available from: <https://bit.ly/3QBwIly> (accessed 14 November 2023).
14. Strovsky, D., & Schleifer, R. (2021), “Playing with Information: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the Russian Press”, *Middle East Policy*, 28(1), pp. 105–122.
15. АМИ. Новости Армении (2013), “*Маргарита Симоньян: Моя семья пережила геноцид и других доказательств мне не нужно*”, 24 апреля, режим доступа: <https://bit.ly/3tLlxE6> (accessed 14 November 2023).
16. BBC (2022), “*Антон Красовский: сравниваем слова журналиста сейчас и девять лет назад*”, 27 октября, режим доступа: <https://bit.ly/3Qz3rhI> (accessed 14 November 2023).
17. Вечер с Владимиром Соловьёвым (2023), “*Безжалостность Израиля не может быть оправдана. Эфир от 12.10.2023*”, режим доступа: <https://bit.ly/3skzito> (accessed 14 November 2023).
18. Вечер с Владимиром Соловьёвым (2023), “*Грандиозный провал спецслужб и армии Израиля. Эфир от 08.10.2023*”, режим доступа: <https://bit.ly/466oe0N> (accessed 14 November 2023).
19. Вечер с Владимиром Соловьёвым (2023), режим доступа: <https://bit.ly/3QAQFPC> (accessed 14 November 2023).
20. Медуза (2023), “*Что это за уда и что это за гнида?*”, 23 сентября, режим доступа: <https://bit.ly/3Mm7zim> (accessed 14 November 2023).
21. Паскевич, А. (2023). “*«Если в Израиле начнется война, сразу туда поеду»: в сети вспомнили громкое обещание Соловьёва, тот оправдался*”, *Obozrevatel*, 16 октября, режим доступа: <https://bit.ly/3SiMg5p> (accessed 14 November 2023).

REFERENCES

1. Arikat, H. (2011), “Eye on the Media: the Israel – Palestine Conflict”, Master’s Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, United States.
2. Baden, C., Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K. (2017), “Convergent News? A Longitudinal Study of Similarity and Dissimilarity in the Domestic and Global Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”. *Journal of Communication*, 67(1), pp. 1–25.
3. BBC (2022), “*Anton Krasovsky: comparing the journalist's words now and nine years ago*”, October 27, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Qz3rhI> (accessed 14 November 2023).
4. BBC (2023), “*Israel & the Palestinians*”, available from: <https://bit.ly/3MpVed9>
5. Cohen, E. & Boyd, E. (2019), “The KGB and anti-Israel propaganda operations”, *Informing Science: The International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline*, 22, pp. 157–182.
6. Davis Julia (2023), “*‘Only Good News Today’ – Russia’s Propagandists Delight as Israelis Die*”, *Сера*, October 8, available at: <https://bit.ly/40naq0r> (accessed 14 November 2023).

7. Deprez, A., Raeymaeckers, K. (2010), "Bias in the News? The Representation of Palestinians and Israelis in the Coverage of the First and Second Intifada", *International Communication Gazette*, 72 (1), pp. 91–109.
8. Durante, R., Zhuravskaya, E. (2015), "Attack When the World is Not Watching? International Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", *Journal of Political Economy*, 126 (3), pp. 1085–1133.
9. Neureiter, M. (2017), "Sources of media bias in coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict: the 2010 Gaza flotilla raid in German, British, and US newspapers", *Israel Affairs*, 23:1, pp. 66–86.
10. Ozohu-Suleiman, Y., & Ishak, S. A. (2014), "Local media in global conflict: Southeast Asian newspapers and the politics of peace in Israel/Palestine", *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)*, 8(2), 284-295.
11. Peterson, L. (2014), *Palestine-Israel in the Print News Media: Contending Discourses*. Routledge, London, 264 p.
12. Rus.LSM (2023), "People make decent money from propaganda shows in Russia – journalist", available at: <https://bit.ly/3QACcST> (accessed 14 November 2023).
13. Shupak, G. (2018), *The Wrong Story: Palestine, Israel, and the Media*, OR Books, New York, 195 p.
14. Simpson, J. (2023), "Why BBC doesn't call Hamas militants 'terrorists'", BBC. 11 October, available at: <https://bit.ly/3QBwIIy> (accessed 14 November 2023).
15. Strovsky, D., & Schleifer, R. (2021), "Playing with Information: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the Russian Press", *Middle East Policy*, 28(1), pp. 105–122.
16. AMI. News Armenia (2013), "Margarita Simonyan: My family survived the genocide and I don't need other evidence", April 24, available at: <https://bit.ly/3tLlxE6> (accessed 14 November 2023).
17. Evening with Vladimir Soloviev (2023), "Israel's ruthlessness cannot be justified. Broadcast from 10/12/2023", available at: <https://bit.ly/3skzjt0> (accessed 14 November 2023).
18. Evening with Vladimir Soloviev (2023), "A colossal failure of the Israeli intelligence services and army. Broadcast from 10/08/2023", available at: <https://bit.ly/466oe0N> (accessed 14 November 2023).
19. Evening with Vladimir Soloviev (2023), available at: <https://bit.ly/3QAQFPC>
20. Meduza (2023), "What kind of Judas is he and what kind of nit is he?", September 23, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Mm7zim> (accessed 14 November 2023).
21. Paskevych, A. (2023). "«If a war starts in Israel, I'll go there right away»: the network remembered Solovyov's loud promise, he justified himself", *Obozrevatel*, October 16, available at: <https://bit.ly/3SiMg5p> (accessed 14 November 2023).

РОСІЙСЬКА ПРОПАГАНДА ПРО ІЗРАЇЛЬСЬКО-ПАЛЕСТИНСЬКУ ВІЙНУ 2023 РОКУ: ПРИКЛАД ВЛАДІМІРА СОЛОВЙОВА

Юрій Мельник

Львівський національний університет імені Івана Франка,

вул. Генерала Чупринки, 49, 79044, Львів, Україна

e-mail: melnykiurii@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2825-9925>

Дослідивши характер висвітлення ізраїльсько-палестинської війни 2023 року на прикладі медіаактивності ключового російського пропагандиста Владіміра Соловйова та його телеграм-каналу @SolovievLive, вдалося з'ясувати, що зовнішньополітичні обставини спонукали Соловйова до вибору нейтральної, нетипової для себе оптики ізраїльсько-палестинської війни, заснованої на рівновіддаленості, балансі думок, наданні слова обом сторонам тощо.

Якщо брати до уваги виключно кількісні показники висвітлення ізраїльсько-палестинської війни у телеграм-каналі @SolovievLive (співвідношення між інформативними/нейтральними та ангажованими постами, співвідношення між проізраїльськими та пропалестинськими постами), вони співмірні із відповідними показниками провідних світових ЗМІ, які диктують стандарти неупередженості, наприклад *BBC*. Проте якісний аналіз показує, що навіть за цих особливих умов пропагандистський дискурс російських ЗМІ (і Соловйова як їхнього чільного представника) суттєво відрізняється від стандартів неангажованої журналістики. Зокрема, Соловйов послідовно пропрацьовує наративи, які були б малопопулярними або зовсім відсутніми в незалежних медіа. Ці наративи стосуються західних країн, України та російських політичних емігрантів. Усі три теми порушено у близькосхідному контексті у підкреслено негативному ключі.

Цей приклад показує, що навіть якщо створені ідеальні умови для того, щоб пропагандист був неупередженим, поміркованим і унікав спрощеного трактування дійсності, пропаганда все одно даватиметься взнаки (як одна з тих сутностей, які важко піддаються контейнеруванню). Симпатії Соловйова до Ізраїлю вступили у протиріччя з інтересами російської пропаганди, на яку він працює. Цей конфлікт закономірно завершився поразкою його особистих симпатій (Ізраїлю) перед вимогами його роботодавця (Росії). Той самий механізм спрацював і у випадку з іншими російськими пропагандистами, Маргарітою Сімоньян та Антоном Красовським.

Ключові слова: російська пропаганда, Владімір Соловйов, Ізраїль, Палестина, ізраїльсько-палестинська війна, неупередженість.