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Ukrainian Journalism in Transition: From Post-Soviet Challenges to Wartime Realities

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SUMMARY

This thesis examines the transformation of Ukrainian journalism from its post-Soviet challenges to its adaptation during the Russian-Ukrainian war. The scientific problem addressed is how Ukrainian media has developed through historical and socio-political transformations and adjusted to the difficulties of censorship, disinformation, and shifting public trust in wartime realities. The study also delves into whether changes that are occurring in the Ukrainian media during the conflict will have an ongoing influence on journalistic independence within the next period after the end of the war. This problem is vital to the future of Ukrainian journalism as well as for international discussions about the role and importance of the media in conflict zones.

The research aims to analyze the progressive role of Ukrainian journalism during the war, focusing on its impact on media practices, public perception, and independent journalism. The objectives are: (1) to examine how historical and socio-political transformations since independence have shaped the development of Ukraine's media landscape; (2) to explore the new functions and responsibilities assumed by journalists in response to the full-scale invasion; (3) to analyze the impact of censorship and freedom of speech restrictions during the conflict; and (4) to assess potential scenarios for the future of Ukrainian journalism after the war.

The research adopts a mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative analysis of interviews with Ukrainian journalists and media experts, content analysis of media outputs, and a review of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources, such as news articles and government documents, provide insights into censorship and official communication strategies. Secondary sources, including academic publications and international reports, offer a broader historical and comparative perspective.

The outcomes illustrate that Ukrainian journalism has played a critical role in informing both domestic and international audiences, maintaining national resilience, and addressing ethical dilemmas related to censorship. The conclusions highlight Ukrainian journalism's compliance, which has managed to balance neutrality and patriotism. The study draws attention to the importance of these transformations for the future of Ukrainian journalism, particularly in maintaining independence and maintaining democratic values in the post-war period.

Keywords: Ukrainian journalism, censorship, freedom of speech, wartime communication

SANTRAUKA

UKRAINOS ŽURNALISTIKA PEREINAMUOJU LAIKOTARPIU: NUO POSOVIETINIŲ IŠŠŪKIŲ IKI KARO REALYBĖS

Šiame darbe nagrinėjama Ukrainos žurnalistikos transformacija nuo post-sovietinių iššūkių iki jos prisitaikymo Rusijos ir Ukrainos karo metu. Mokslinė problema, kurią sprendžia šis tyrimas, yra tai, kaip Ukrainos žiniasklaida vystėsi per istorinius ir sociopolitinius pokyčius bei adaptavosi prie karo sąlygų, tokių kaip cenzūra, dezinformacija ir kintantis visuomenės pasitikėjimas. Taip pat analizuojama, ar pokyčiai, vykstantys Ukrainos žiniasklaidos kraštovaizdyje konflikto metu, turės ilgalaikį poveikį žurnalistų nepriklausomybei po karo. Ši problema yra esminė ir Ukrainos žurnalistikos ateities raidai, ir platesnėms tarptautinėms diskusijoms apie žiniasklaidos vaidmenį konfliktų zonose.

Tyrimo tikslas – išanalizuoti progresyvų Ukrainos žurnalistikos vaidmenį karo metu, ypatingą dėmesį skiriant jos poveikiui žurnalistinei praktikai, visuomenės suvokimui ir nepriklausomai žurnalistikai. Tyrimo uždaviniai: (1) nustatyti, kaip istoriniai ir sociopolitiniai pokyčiai nuo nepriklausomybės laikotarpio formavo Ukrainos žiniasklaidos kraštovaizdį; (2) ištirti naujas funkcijas ir atsakomybes, kurias žurnalistai prisiėmė reaguodami į plataus masto invaziją; (3) analizuoti cenzūros ir žodžio laisvės apribojimų poveikį konflikto metu; ir (4) įvertinti galimus Ukrainos žurnalistikos ateities scenarijus po karo.

Tyrime taikomas mišrus metodologinis požiūris, apimantis kokybinę interviu analizę su Ukrainos žurnalistais ir žiniasklaidos ekspertais, žiniasklaidos turinio analizę bei pirminių ir antrinių šaltinių peržiūrą. Pirminiai šaltiniai, tokie kaip naujienų straipsniai ir oficialūs dokumentai, leidžia gilintis į cenzūros praktiką ir oficialias komunikacijos strategijas. Antriniai šaltiniai, įskaitant akademines publikacijas ir tarptautines ataskaitas, pateikia platesnį istorinį ir lyginamąjį kontekstą.

Rezultatai atskleidžia, kad Ukrainos žurnalistika atliko esminį vaidmenį informuojant tiek vietos, tiek tarptautinę auditoriją, palaikant nacionalinį atsparumą ir sprendžiant cenzūros etines dilemas. Išvados pabrėžia Ukrainos žurnalistikos gebėjimą suderinti neutralumą ir patriotizmą. Tyrimas akcentuoja šių transformacijų reikšmę Ukrainos žurnalistikos ateičiai, ypač siekiant išlaikyti nepriklausomybę ir stiprinti demokratines vertybes pokario laikotarpiu.

Raktažodžiai: Ukrainos žurnalistika, cenzūra, žodžio laisvė, karo komunikacija

INTRODUCTION

Moscow's ongoing full-scale invasion of Ukraine has completely transformed the media landscape in Ukraine and created conditions to which Ukrainian journalism needs to adapt. These changes arise from historical and socio-political factors that have shaped Ukrainian media since independence. The Russian-Ukrainian war brought new challenges for journalists: navigating censorship, combating disinformation, and maintaining public trust, all while addressing the broader implications of freedom of speech.

The **thesis examines** the transformation of Ukrainian journalism from the post-Soviet period to adaptation during wartime realities. **It focuses** on the media's changing role in response to the full-scale invasion, analyzing how historical and socio-political transformations have shaped the media landscape and exploring the impact of the conflict on censorship and freedom of speech.

This study addresses the **scientific problem** of understanding how Ukrainian media has developed through the post-soviet period and adapted to the challenges posed by it and war realities, including pressures of censorship and shifting public trust. It also examines whether the transformations within Ukraine's wartime media landscape will have enduring effects on journalistic independence in the post-conflict period. This issue is of high significance as it has implications not only for Ukraine's media future but also for global discussions on the role of journalism in conflict zones.

The **thesis aims to** examine the transformation of Ukrainian journalism from its post-Soviet challenges to its adaptation during wartime realities. It seeks to explore the new roles and responsibilities assumed by media outlets during the whole-scale invasion, as well as to evaluate the impact of these changes on the future of journalistic independence in Ukraine. **The objectives of the research are:**

1. To examine how historical and socio-political transformations in Ukraine since its independence have shaped the development of its media landscape.
2. To explore the evolving role and concept of journalism in Ukraine in response to the full-scale invasion, focusing on new functions and responsibilities adopted by media outlets.
3. To analyze the impact of the ongoing conflict on censorship and freedom of speech within the Ukrainian media landscape.
4. To assess potential scenarios for the future of Ukrainian journalism in the post-war period, considering challenges to independence and freedom of speech.

The research questions driving this investigation are:

1. How have the historical and socio-political transformations in Ukraine since its independence shaped the media landscape?
2. How has the role and concept of journalism in Ukraine evolved in response to the full-scale invasion? What new functions and responsibilities has it adopted?
3. How has the ongoing conflict in Ukraine influenced censorship and the state of freedom of speech within the media landscape?

To answer these questions, the study will employ a **mixed-method approach**, combining **qualitative research methods** and **content analysis** to provide a comprehensive examination of the transformation of Ukrainian journalism during the full-scale invasion. **Primary data** is collected through interviews with Ukrainian journalists, media experts, and stakeholders, offering firsthand insights into the shifts within the journalistic community, the challenges media professionals face, and the adaptive strategies they have implemented in response to the war. Additionally, the research analyzes **primary sources** such as news articles, official documents, and communication strategies used by the government and media outlets.

Additionally, the research will draw on **secondary sources**, including scholarly articles, books, and historical publications, which explore Ukraine's media history and the development of journalistic practices during the post-Soviet era. Analyzing works focused on Ukrainian media, censorship, and wartime journalism will provide a context for the current situation within a broader historical framework. The secondary sources will also encompass reports, reviews, and analyses from international media watchdog organizations that monitor press freedom, offering a comparative perspective on how Ukraine's media landscape measures up against other nations facing similar challenges.

The **research methodology** will thus adopt a mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative data analysis from interviews, content analysis of media outputs, and the application of theoretical frameworks on censorship, freedom of speech, and media in conflict settings. This mixed-method approach will enable a comprehensive examination of the dynamic changes occurring in Ukraine's media landscape during the full-scale invasion.

1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND EVOLUTION OF UKRAINIAN MEDIA

1.1. Before the Independence: Soviet Governance and Media from Brezhnev to Gorbachev

The processes currently taking place in Ukraine carry with them a series of historical and social changes that occurred during its development both in the modern period and in the period before gaining independence. Ukraine was a member of the USSR for more than half a century (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), and this couldn't but affect its political, economic, and cultural development. The Soviet legacy has left a deep imprint on the consciousness of society, management practices, as well as on the relationships between the state and citizens. This period influenced the formation of social institutions, the structure of the economy, and the identity of the Ukrainian people, which is still reflected in the contemporary processes of the country's transformation.

In this part, we will examine the period from the 1980s, when the Soviet authorities attempted democratization by implementing reforms and new orders that caused significant political and social changes. These transformations directly impacted Ukraine after gaining independence, as "Sovietness" remained noticeable for a long time in the political, social, and media spheres, maintaining control over society and shaping the information space.

During the 1980s, the USSR experienced significant changes in its leadership, accompanied by widespread political restructuring. This era was also characterized by an intense inner crisis that affected all aspects of social life. After Stalin died in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev came to power. During his rule, he stunned the communist world with his denunciation of his predecessor and embarked on a policy of de-Stalinization. Nevertheless, Khrushchev's leadership failed in the end due to his inconsistent policies, serious economic mistakes, and political repression that separated the elite and the wider society. Despite ambitions, his reforms frequently lacked strategic planning and did not address systemic problems, which led to the difficulties and stagnation that his successors Brezhnev, Andropov, and Gorbachev faced.

Through the rule of Leonid Brezhnev, a symbol of neo-Stalinism, aside from mass executions and shootings, nearly everything remained unchanged for 15 years. Over the past 20 years, the nation has brought back and strengthened the authoritative administrative system that controls all aspects of public life. Cultural, economic, and media activities that were not coordinated

with the leadership were not planned. The initiative was allowed only to improve the implementation of the party's directives. Thus, the press was a tool for implementing party decisions, fully subordinate to the party committees. This caused a reduction in productivity growth. The lack of freedom and initiatives increased economic and political crisis conditions (Vladimirov, 2007, p. 150).

The new General Secretary Yurii Andropov aimed to strengthen discipline within the weakened mechanism of the party's leadership of the country. He didn't seek to democratize society but rather to control the violence which, he believed, would end the socialist state. Among the measures implemented by the country's leadership was stopping people on the streets and in cinemas for not being at work during working hours. Journalists, reacting sharply to the increasing disorganization and irresponsibility, supported Andropov's reforms both out of their own volition and under directives. They started actively highlighting negative cases in everyday life, identifying them as deviations from the Leninist style of work and the ideas of socialism. Later, during the years of "perebudova" ("restructuring"), this journalistic drive to expose shortcomings took on an extraordinary scale and forms, spreading throughout the entire press from central outlets to local publications (Vladimirov, 2007, p. 150).

The next General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Konstantin Chernenko, brought the country back to Brezhnev's times. Both the party and the press were again drowned in apathy, while the economy and social sphere continued to sink into a full-scale crisis (Vladimirov, 2007, p. 150). Perhaps the submissiveness of the media and its lack of an independent voice can be traced back to the directives of the "great leader" Vladimir Lenin: "The literary endeavor must become part of the common proletarian cause, a "cog, and wheel" of a single, grand social-democratic mechanism, driven by the conscious vanguard of the entire working class. The literary endeavor must become an integral part of the organized, systematic, and unified social-democratic party work" (Lenin, 1905). Thus, he accidentally built a self-destruction mechanism into the party apparatus, making the press one of the essential parts of its own downfall.

In April 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev was assigned as the new General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Democracy, energy, determination, desire, and readiness for radical social change were characteristic features of the image of the new party leader, which contrasted advantageously with the inaction and conservatism of most of those who were before him (Boiko, 2004, p. 18). This April plenum represented a significant turning point in the history of the Communist Party, the Soviet Union, Ukraine, and the Ukrainian press.

Indeed, in this way, the period of “perebudova” began, which led to changes and was deeply unavoidable. Many factors came together and made this large-scale transformation of society necessary and possible. The symptoms of a systemic crisis are those factors that pushed for radical changes in society, while the second group of factors makes these changes possible, creating the foundation and environment for social transformations (Boiko, 2004, p. 18).

Throughout the “perebudova”, Soviet television experienced significant transformations that mirrored social and political changes. Live broadcasts, political debates, citizen participation in discussions, the appearance of journalists with individual views, the reduction of taboo topics, more rapid news delivery, and news program formats were among the main innovations that television used to shape public opinion in the second half of the 1980s. It was the first time television was allowed to report negatively about the country’s leadership and criticize the government. But until 1989, it was only permitted to criticize party officials and local authorities; it was forbidden to criticize higher-ranking officials, such as M. Gorbachev, and Lenin was only brought up in a good light (Kaganov, 2019, p. 231).

The previously mentioned transformations in society and the function of the media were accordingly somewhat reflected in this period. There has been a real change: as the party’s power has decreased and the function of traditional state institutions has weakened, the media - especially television - has become more crucial as a tool for shaping public opinion, influencing others, and serving as a source of information. Viewers began getting access to earlier unavailable information about events taking place both domestically and overseas. Through this “discovery”, the public’s fear of discussion ended, and they became more comfortable expressing their opinions (Kaganov, 2019, p. 232).

To engage with the broader international community, Gorbachev made efforts to communicate more clearly and openly, showing a desire to acknowledge the concerns and perspectives of others. This standpoint reflected the foreign policy aspect of Gorbachev’s domestic approach of “glasnost” and openness. The leader of the Soviet Union referred to it as “the glasnost or openness in the interest of socialism” (Why Did The Soviet Union Collapse, n.d, p. 6).

“Perebudova”, which included the principle of “glasnost”, encompassed extensive aspects of both the internal and external politics of the Soviet Union and one of the key ones was, that the concept of “glasnost” developed into a fundamental expression of freedom of speech and expression. This shift has facilitated the publication of works that critically examine the regime and the principles underpinning communist ideology (Why Did The Soviet Union Collapse, n.d, p. 6).

A case in point illustrating these media transformations is in the radio broadcast “Russia Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow” from May 24, 1989, on Radio Liberty’s Russian Broadcast. In this program, journalist Vladimir Tolts discusses the results of the May Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee and its outcomes. The famous Moscow writer and publicist Anatoly Strelyany speaks about Gorbachev. The meeting addressed Mikhail Gorbachev’s role in the country’s history, emphasizing his legal background and its impact on legislation.

The speaker notes that Gorbachev, despite being a lawyer, essentially delegated the task of passing laws to an uneducated staff member in his administration, signing off on whatever was placed in front of him. Over his four years in power, he provided the state with only one more or less significant law, which related to cooperatives, but even this law was not successfully implemented in practice. The speaker also highlights that Gorbachev’s predecessors tried to promote the idea that socialist construction was something new and that they were forging an untrodden path, though in reality, this was not the case (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1989).

Anatoly Strelyany highlights the complexity and uniqueness of leaving the Soviet system, which is deep-rooted and designed to prevent any attempts at escape or genuine reform. He emphasizes that, unlike other countries where dictatorships and authoritarian regimes can be overthrown or transformed, the foundational socialist order of the USSR is marked by an extraordinary level of inflexibility and calcification. This makes reforming an exceptionally challenging task. By comparing the situation in the Soviet Union with Hungary and Poland, the speaker notes that, despite some changes in these countries, the Soviet system has a fundamentally different nature that requires much deeper efforts to bring about change (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1989).

Additionally, the speaker draws attention to the paradoxical traits of the collective consciousness among the Soviet people, which further complicate the way out of the crisis. On the one hand, citizens strive for improved living conditions, success, and freedom, but they are not ready to take risks or assume the responsibilities necessary to achieve these goals. They want to live well, but at the same time, they don’t want anyone to live better than others; they strive for freedom, but at the same time, they feel a dislike for true independence.

The speaker notes that such controversial psychology contributes to maintaining the status quo, as society often criticizes and attacks those who call for loyalty to laws and fair treatment of all, regardless of social status: “From the podium, people stand ready to tear apart anyone daring to say that even an underground millionaire deserves to be treated lawfully, with humanity. They are prepared to tear apart anyone who speaks of burying the remains of the godless, now-declared

saints. Perhaps it is no coincidence that for thirty years we dreamed of this as if it were a miracle" (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1989).

During the Cold War, the poverty trap issues were prevalent in all 15 USSR republics, with proper clothing and shoes considered luxury items. The Soviet leadership spent at least 2 billion dollars annually on the war in Afghanistan, causing significant financial and military losses. The United States estimated the loss of Russian lives between 33, 000 to 38, 000. However, as part of Gorbachev's glasnost, the Soviet Union published the exact number of casualties, which was around 50,000, including dead, wounded, and missing. When the USSR ended its invasion in 1989, the returning soldiers - demoralized from the conflict - brought back sentiments that would soon contribute to the unraveling of the Soviet Union itself (Why Did The Soviet Union Collapse, n.d, p. 9-10).

The fall of the USSR is often linked to the policies of "perebudova" and "glasnost", which empowered East Europeans to select their preferred political and economic systems. The Baltic states, having been the last to join the USSR, were the first to challenge the authority of the central government in Moscow and advocate for their pro-sovereignty. Moscow's decision to send troops to Vilnius in January 1991, resulting in the deaths of 14 civilians and the injuries of hundreds more, damaged both the image of the USSR and of Gorbachev as a reformist leader.

Criticism of Boris Yeltsin, a former Moscow mayor, threatened Gorbachev's plans to achieve economic reforms and manage perestroika. Representatives of the Conservative Politburo expressed concerns regarding Gorbachev's reconstruction initiatives, frightened about the potential interruption to the status quo and the implications for their positions within the Politburo.

A solid number of conservative hardliners within the ruling party leadership joined the "State of Emergency Committee" (SEC), which pursued the objective of unseating Gorbachev. The SEC attempted to gain control of the USSR by detaining Gorbachev during his government holiday in 1991; however, their efforts were met with resistance, notably from Yeltsin and the population of Moscow, who were reluctant to surrender their recently gained freedoms. These pivotal developments across the Soviet Union underscored the lasting impact of perestroika and glasnost during this transformative period in history. As Thompson J.M, a historian specializing in Soviet history, notes in his work "Glasnost", "Gorbachev finally resigned as Soviet president on December 25, 1991, and shortly afterward, the Soviet Union has formally dissolved. A dramatic era in modern history came to an end" (Why Did The Soviet Union Collapse, n.d, p. 10-11).

1.2. Post-Soviet Ukraine: Evolving Media and Transformations

Since the declaration of Ukraine's independence, there has been a period of so-called "pink democracy" under the first President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, and the media landscape in Ukraine witnessed significant changes. Following the Soviet Union's collapse, Ukraine experienced a rise in private media and an initial loosening of state control over shared information. Thus, the media at that time struggled to adapt in a state that was neither communist nor yet fully democratic.

The media were liberated from any political party influences, but the economic crisis highlighted the benefits of having a "political patron" in the media services sector (Choronżuk, 2016, p 191). The lack of successful legislative initiatives, the power of oligarchs over the media, and instances of censorship - especially on television - remained significant challenges following these changes.

Along with adapting to the new political realities during the 1990s, Ukrainian media also developed into an essential tool of public influence, defining their place in public life. The media landscape has transformed due to the growing number of private media outlets and the continued degree of control over state channels. Considering these conditions, analyzing the main stages of media development and issues in Ukraine since its independence is important.

Roman Kupchynskyi, a journalist and public figure, led the Ukrainian Service of Radio Free Europe in 1991. This was a significant milestone in the development of independent journalism in Ukraine. During this time, he established the first Radio Liberty Bureau in Kyiv, which became a hub for independent information broadcasting throughout the country (Shchur, M., 2020). Owing to his efforts, the bureau not only expanded its activities rapidly but also became a platform for building a correspondent network both within Ukraine and outside its borders (Haidamakha, 2024).

R. Kupchynskyi played an active role in documenting the key events surrounding the formation of Ukrainian statehood. Under his leadership, Radio Free Europe turned up as one of the first independent media outlets dedicated to objectively covering events in post-Soviet Ukraine. This included addressing crucial issues such as political reforms, electoral processes, and the development of civil society (Tarasov et al., n.d.). During that time, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty offered Ukrainians access to alternative information not available in state-controlled media.

R. Kupchynskyi contributed a lot by establishing a professional journalistic network that covered various regions of Ukraine and adhered to Western journalism standards. His efforts not only promoted freedom of speech but also helped build trust in Radio Free Europe as a reliable source of information (Haidamakha, 2024).

In light of the significant changes in the media landscape of independent Ukraine, it is essential to compare it to the Soviet era. For example, in 1972, at the peak of the Soviet system's functioning, 3,852 mass-circulation newspapers were published in the USSR with a total annual circulation of over 424 million copies. During this period, 784 production publications were issued in Ukraine, with a circulation of over 65 million copies per year. However, in the early 1990s, after the declaration of independence, most Soviet mass-circulation newspapers ceased to exist. Instead of them, new forms of media began to develop in Ukraine actively. Foreign investments started to flow into Ukraine, which laid the groundwork for the emergence of corporate media similar to Western counterparts, such as corporate publications. These changes became one of the main features of media transformation after 1991 (Oltarzhevskyi, 2021, p.136).

The development of new print media that served the public's need for transparency, as well as accessible information, was one of the biggest changes to the media landscape of independent Ukraine. A prime example of such a publication is "Holos Ukrainy". The inaugural issue of the newspaper "Holos Ukrainy" was released on January 1, 1991, and it became the official printed publication of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. This newspaper was created to report on the activities of the parliament, keep the public informed about legislative initiatives and decisions, and promote transparency in the operations of the legislative branch of government (Sukhova, 2006).

"Holos Ukrainy" was a newspaper published five times a week in Ukrainian. It featured official publications of laws, resolutions, and other regulatory acts that must be published. In addition to these legal documents, the newspaper covered events in Ukraine and abroad, analyzed socio-political processes, and paid attention to cultural life and social issues. Since its establishment, "Holos Ukrainy" has grown to be a key information source for citizens, government, and organizations. The newspaper played a significant role in raising public awareness about the activities of the Verkhovna Rada and the legislative processes (Shevchuchenko, n.d.).

In just two years, by 1993, the number of journals and magazines doubled. According to the information from the Ministry of Information and Press of Ukraine, from September 1990 to May 1992, 2,869 printed media outlets were registered in Ukraine, of which 2,451 were magazines and 418 were journals. For the residents of the western part of the country, the truth was their own, and in the east - their own.

Another factor hindering the establishment of freedom of speech in Ukraine was the influence of Soviet publications, which sought to maintain their previous position in the media market. It should be emphasized that until 1997, regardless of the adopted Constitution and the most important laws regulating the media sphere, no division was made between Soviet and regional

magazines (Choronżuk, 2016, p. 191). Since gaining independence, Ukraine has struggled to develop a distinctly independent media landscape due to the lingering influence of the Soviet legacy.

Despite the challenges posed by the remains of Soviet publications and the struggle to redefine the identity, carrying out the role of providing information fairly and neutrally, timely, and relevantly, journalistic attempts during this new era of Ukrainian statehood (1991–2001) years presented a distinctive challenge. They marked a new validation phase within the mass media landscape. Statements by the country's leaders regarding "reforms" and "freedoms" were primarily targeted toward Western democratic systems, resulting in a heightened demand for information. During this era, the information and communication landscape witnessed the development of mechanisms to suppress subjective or biased viewpoints (Michuk & Gorbenko, 2024, p. 152).

Despite what appears, freedom of speech decreased significantly as the number of new programs and magazines stood up For instance, CNN materials and other Western European newscasts were available for watching on television in the early 1990s. However, when Kuchma took office in the second half of the decade, those channels were prohibited from broadcasting. The president made decisions on his own regarding what could and couldn't be broadcast (Choronżuk, 2016, p. 192).

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, most of the public media sector continued to function without significant attempts at reform, and any efforts made were largely unsuccessful. It was expected to result from a lack of political will and weak reform implementation mechanisms. During this period, communal mass media rose, particularly in the 1990s, alongside the growth of the private media sector. It contributed to the appearance of new media initiatives and gradually expanded the information landscape in Ukraine (Ukraine Media Ownership Monitor, n.d.).

The primary media legislation was enacted in the 1990s, establishing the foundation for independent and private media functioning. Specifically, several key laws were accepted:

1. Law of Ukraine "About Information" (1992)
2. Law of Ukraine "On Printed Mass Media (the Press) in Ukraine" (1992)
3. Law of Ukraine "On Television and Radio Broadcasting" (1993)
4. Law of Ukraine "On the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting" (1994)

They aimed to ensure freedom of speech, regulate information relations, support independent media, and create transparent conditions for print publications, television, and radio. By creating a specialized unity, the National Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting, these

laws guaranteed access to information, codified journalist rights, set the fundamentals of information policy, and established mechanisms for media regulation.

The National Council was composed of eight members, with four appointed by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and four appointed by the President of Ukraine. This arrangement was intended to maintain a balance between the legislative and executive branches of government. The National Council had the authority to impose sanctions on broadcasting organizations that violated the law, which could include issuing warnings, imposing fines, or revoking licenses (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1994).

Afterward, between 1999 and 2003, the structure of state bodies responsible for regulating information policy subsequently faced several changes. The Ministry of Information dissolved in 1999, and the recently established State Committee for Information Policy adopted over its roles. In 2000, the Committee was merged with the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting, forming the State Committee for Information Policy, Television, and Radio Broadcasting, which assumed most of the functions of its predecessors, except for implementing the decisions of the National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting. In 2001, the State Information Agency of Ukraine (DINAU) was transformed into the Ukrainian National Information Agency "Ukrinform". In 2003, following a ruling by the Constitutional Court, President Kuchma reorganized the committee into the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting (Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, 2006).

All of this indicates, that while the Law aimed to promote a diversity of opinions and to form an independent media landscape expanding the freedom of speech and minimum guarantee for journalists, the practical implementation of these norms was often complicated by political interference, especially in appointing members of the National Council and making decisions. Additionally, there were challenges in ensuring proper monitoring and enforcement of the legislative norms. Nevertheless, the laws have established a foundation for the continued development of media and the gradual implementation of democratic standards in Ukraine's information sphere.

1.3. Forming Ukraine's Media in the 1990s

The 1990s were significant for the Ukrainian media landscape as many publications and television channels were established during this time. They began to create a new informational sphere, opening up opportunities for independent journalism and generating fresh content. These media outlets became important sources of information, influencing social discourse and fostering

cultural and social changes. Examples of these projects illustrate how Ukrainian media started to evolve in the early years of independence.

ICTV first went on air on June 15, 1992. The co-founders of the channel were the Ukrainian conglomerate PRT, which ensured the creation of a powerful and high-quality coverage network, and the company Story First, part of whose shares belonged to the famous film producer Universal. From the very beginning, the TV channel focused on entertainment programs and became the first in Ukraine to master the technique of dubbing and voice-over for foreign films.

The peak of ICTV's popularity came in 1996 when the channel ranked third in the list of Ukrainian television channels. However, over time, its positions somewhat declined due to increased competition. In September 2000, ICTV was sold to the foreign investment company Royal Capital, LLC, "Central Moscow Depository" (Russia), and its subsidiaries "Promidia", "Agency of Information Technologies", and Interpipe (Liga.net, n.d.).

In September 1995, the television channel 1+1 was established. For the first two years, it broadcast on the UT-1 frequency. Starting in 1997, it began operating on a separate frequency, UT-2. The founders of 1+1 in 1995 were Oleksandr Rodnyansky, Vadym Rabinovych, and Borys Fuksman (Liga.net, n.d.).

On April 26, 1996, the newly established company "Ukrainian Independent TV Corporation" received a license for state UT-3 frequencies, allowing for half-day broadcasts and creating the channel "Inter" (Liga.net, n.d.). One of the co-founders of the corporation was the "Russian channel ORT (Общественное Российское Телевидение, Public Russian Television)", holding a 29% stake in the Ukrainian company. In addition to ORT, the founding members included the Association of Business Cooperation and Development "Business World", the State Property Fund, and the A.S. Pushkin Bicentennial Fund. The core concept of the Inter TV channel was based on broadcasting programs and shows produced by the Russian ORT channel in Ukraine (Liga.net, n.d.).

In the context of the growing Ukrainian media sector, alongside television channels, analytical print publications began to play a significant role. Their emergence was not only a response to society's demand for deep and objective analysis but also an important stage in the formation of independent journalism. One such publication was "Dzerkalo Tyzhnia" (Mirror Weekly), the first issue of which was released on October 8, 1994. The editor-in-chief Yulia Mostova, during an open lecture, recounted that the newspaper immediately positioned itself as an analytical publication for thinking people. In the beginning, only five pages of materials were

created in Ukraine, the rest were filled with reprints due to a lack of funding. Later, the publication began to release its first investigations, particularly on corruption and shadow politics.

At “Dzerkalo Tyzhnia”, there were only five staff journalists, but influential authors who aimed to cover important national issues were involved in writing the materials. During the period of general media censorship, the publication became an “island of freedom” where journalists could express their views without restrictions. According to Mostova, there were never any thematic guidelines at “Dzerkalo Tyzhnia”, which allowed for the maintenance of editorial independence (Bilodid, 2021).

In 1995, the Ukrainian media scene launched two important publications: the tabloid “Bulvar” and the English-language newspaper “Kyiv Post”. The tabloid “Boulevard” started its journey in 1995 and quickly became a hit with readers. During the 1990s, it reached an impressive circulation of 570 thousand copies for a single issue, showcasing just how popular it was among the public (Liga.net, n.d.).

On October 18, 1995, Jed Sunden took a big step and founded the “Kyiv Post”, a weekly newspaper that has since earned the title of the oldest English-language publication in Ukraine. This paper served not only Ukrainians but also foreign readers who are keen on staying informed about political developments, business happenings, and entertainment (Sharapova, 2021).

The STB (СТБ) television channel began broadcasting on June 2, 1997, founded by the visionary International Media Center and the Internews Network (USA). From the very beginning, STB embraced its role as an independent channel, offering viewers a brave alternative to state news. The first program, “Vikna Novyny” (Windows-News), debuted on September 4, 1995, even before the channel’s official launch. This program marked the debut of independent news broadcasting in Ukraine, offering a different perspective on events occurring within the country (STB, n.d.).

On February 27, 1998, “Novy Kanal” (New Channel) began broadcasting. At that time, it shared a network with STB and broadcasted during non-prime daytime hours (Liga.net, n.d.). And by June 14, 1999, the news program “Reporter” was aired for the first time. The establishment of the news service and the launch of the news program were key changes that impacted the New Channel’s reputation and its perception by viewers. For many viewers, “Reporter” has become the primary source of up-to-date information since it provides the fairness and neutrality of news coverage as well as the ability to see the event beneath the scenes. Timeliness, objectivity, and neutrality have been the three primary principles that define the channel’s information policy. According to assessments by BBC British service reviewers and independent experts, the New

Channel emerged as the most neutral and objective in its coverage of the 2000 presidential election campaign and the 2002 parliamentary elections (Novyi Kanal, n.d.).

Thus, it was the time when the first independent media were forming, initiating new approaches to informational broadcasting and entertainment content. Foreign investments and partnerships played an important role in expanding the capabilities of Ukrainian media, creating a competitive environment, and introducing modern technologies. The establishment of key television channels and publications not only marked an important stage in the development of the media sector but also significantly contributed to shaping the socio-political discourse, which is interconnected in the "politics-society-media" relationship. The aforementioned indicates that the events and participants of this period laid the foundation, particularly in the process of media oligarchization and a long-term foundation that carried its influence and defined the Ukrainian media space up to the extreme point of awareness and the responsive changes after the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014.

1.4. The Oligarch's Influence on Ukrainian Media

Media in Ukraine in the second half of the 1990s became a key link in the oligarchic-political system. The ownership of major media resources by oligarchs in Ukraine has created a system where the media operate not as a source of independent information, but as part of their business empires. This phenomenon has significantly influenced socio-political processes and the development of journalism.

Investments in media were not just a financial decision, but part of a strategic game where loyalty to the president and the government was exchanged for economic privileges. Yet, in 1996–1997, when censorship began to penetrate the Ukrainian media space, several private media outlets, mainly television channels, were created not for profit or self-sufficiency, but to appease the authorities, particularly the president, who was sensitive to criticism. Investments in media were used as a way to gain access to privatization or resource flows. The loyalty of media owners was traded for profitable projects in industry, energy, and other sectors (Bilodid, 2021). In 1995, the government exempted 6,300 state-owned enterprises from privatization. Less than one-third of industrial enterprises had shifted to private ownership by then. The initial privatization phase, which involved distributing vouchers, mostly aided the "red directors" with assets but lacked investment resources. By 1999, while 85 percent of enterprises were privately owned, they produced less than 65 percent of industrial output, with half operating at a loss. Many were still managed by Soviet-era officials or government-connected individuals, maintaining monopolies and deepening the crisis.

Ukraine's ownership shifted to ambitious oligarchs who thrived amid chaos, acquiring government assets cheaply during the second privatization stage. They built wealth through various means focusing on the metallurgical industry as the military-industrial complex declined (Plokhy, 2015, p. 330).

In the context of the development of journalism and the establishment of its role, such a concentration of economic resources and power in the hands of a limited circle of individuals created conditions for media control. Journalism could have become a tool for exposing corruption, monopolies, and the inefficiency of reforms, but the media's dependence on power structures limited critical discourse. Despite the difficulties, society began to demand transparency and pluralism. This contributed to the development of new independent initiatives in the media space, which later became important during the Orange Revolution.

Oligarchs like Rinat Akhmetov, Viktor Pinchuk, and Igor Kolomoiskiy became the new economic elite of Ukraine as a result of corrupt privatization. Their influence extended beyond the economy into the political sphere. This class of businessmen sought to maintain political stability on their own terms, often offering support to the government or specific political parties in exchange for economic advantages. Between 1994 and 2004, President Leonid Kuchma oversaw the privatization of Ukrainian industry, which ultimately benefited oligarchs and garnered their support. Especially after his win of the second term in 1999, he became the supreme authority in managing relationships among the emerging oligarchic clans in both economics and politics, consolidating his personal power while marginalizing the parliament. However, this strategy failed, as Ukraine was different from Russia, and the privatization process didn't go as planned (Plokhy, 2015, p. 331).

As a result, the most influential and largest media groups in Ukraine were owned by the same individuals who were on the list of the wealthiest Ukrainians: above-mentioned Rinat Akhmetov, Victor Pinchuk, Ihor Kolomoiskiy, and Dmytro Firtash, Serhiy Kurchenko. An interesting detail is that the 5th President of Ukraine (2014-2019) and owner of Channel 5 Petro Poroshenko is one of such oligarchs. Through corrupt privatization, those oligarchs gained substantial economic and political influence and arose as major figures in Ukrainian sociopolitical life. They actively influenced the political agenda in addition to controlling key economic sectors. One of the key instruments for guaranteeing their power was media ownership. The business empires of large media groups like "1+1 Media", "Media Group Ukraine", and "Starlight Media" have been included. Media began to play a dual role: they protect the business interests of their

owners and influence public opinion, especially during political campaigns (Institute of Mass Information. (n.d.).

Oligarchs used television in the interest of influencing citizens, as it went on to be the main source of information for the majority of Ukrainians. National television channels provided news to more than 80% of the population in 2016, highlighting the importance of media control. Oligarchs supported certain political parties or candidates, promoting their popularity or discrediting opponents. For example, Akhmetov supported the Party of Regions, Kolomoisky financed several controversial initiatives simultaneously, and Pinchuk targeted those political forces that aligned with his interests. Such a system creates a monopoly on public discourse and restricts access to objective information (Institute of Mass Information, n.d.).

Kurchenko and Akhmetov have significant control over print media, appealing primarily to older voters influenced by traditional press. Kolomoiskiy has shifted focus from print to online media, targeting a younger audience, who mainly receive information from online sources. His platform, tsn.ua, has grown into a prominent independent news outlet. Pinchuk, on the other hand, holds sway in the radio with popular stations like Hit-FM. Overall, the media strategies differ based on their target demographics (Institute of Mass Information, n.d.).

Consequently, the dependence of journalists on the interests of owners has led to censorship and the limitation of editorial independence. Journalists are often forced to adapt to the demands of owners, which harms the trust in media as an independent institution. Moreover, viewers begin to associate journalists with certain political groups, which undermines their reputation and objectivity.

Such a system has serious consequences for the democratic development of Ukraine. The concentration of media in the hands of oligarchs limits the pluralism of opinions and fosters corruption in the political system. However, at the same time, there is a growing demand for alternative sources of information, which stimulates the development of independent online media and journalistic investigations. This process shows that, despite the significant influence of oligarchs, Ukrainian society has sought greater transparency, accountability, and democracy in the media space.

1.5. The Journalistic Revolution of 2004

Since autumn 2002, a wave of journalistic protests against political control of the media has been taking place in the Ukrainian media landscape. It was primarily caused by the following factors (Kvit, 2008, p. 83) :

- Direct shutdown of TV channels;
- Direct cutting of material from an episode or program, leading to numerous lawsuits and the murder of journalists;
- Direct dominance of pro-government candidates on TV channels;
- Manipulations in TV channels and the press;
- The absence of a complete state monopolization of broadcasting, which preserved the polyphony of the media space;
- Real political competition, which led to the establishment of new information channels (TRC "Ukraine", NTN, Channel 5);
- Decreased role of the state media due to low ratings and the shift of influence to business projects with a larger audience.

Private regional media (including print media) are constantly developing in Ukraine, and are less subject to government pressure and professional control. Thus, they were more independent than the "central" media, and one of the main achievements of "Our Ukraine" in the 2002 parliamentary election campaign was the victory in the struggle for the support of local media. According to Serhiy Kvit, regional media had more influence than the national print media. This period also saw the gradual strengthening of professional solidarity in the media environment (Kvit, 2008, p. 84).

Already in October 2004, several channels began to remove censorship one by one. Twenty-five journalists from "Channel 5" decided to protest against the pressure on the channel and went on a hunger strike. A few days later, journalists of "Inter", "ISTV", "Novy", "Tonis" and "NTN" TV channels also reported on political pressure on the media. They were followed by seven journalists from the "1+1" TV channel who quit to protest against censorship (24 Kanal, 2024).

As Serhii Kvit notes, a factor that contributed to the journalistic revolution was the presence of a powerful media union and several other independent NGOs established in the wave of the "journalistic protests" of the years 2001-2002. In particular, opposition structures managed to stir up appropriate reactions in the media corporation, support the idea that journalistic standards are a priority, and conduct explanatory work on journalistic rights and ways to protect them. Non-governmental organizations also provoked public rejection of the censored media outlets (through monitoring, critical articles, etc.), which couldn't help but affect their rating. Another factor was the general changes in public consciousness as a result of attempts at falsification of the 2004 presidential election and therefore the threat of possible public judgment or rejection from the professional community (Kvit, S. 2008, p.86).

1.6. The Role of Media in the Orange Revolution

Journalism develops and changes in response to challenges and changes in the society. When a revolution begins in a country - of any scale - it finds reaction as well in the media. This is particularly important when the country's political leadership has built its own rules and a wall between reality and censorship.

Yuriy Matsiyevsky has studied the transformation of the political regime in Ukraine before and after the Orange Revolution, applying an institutional interpretation. As he states, the Ukrainian political system in the last years of Leonid Kuchma's presidency can be described as a pyramid of institutionalized informal rules that shaped the governance mechanisms. He characterizes this regime as "oligarchic authoritarianism" or "patrimonial oligopoly". The president is at the top of this pyramid and holds the most power. The second level of influence comprises his allies, including the presidential administration and certain family members, who follow the established rules and provide their support. The third and final circle included several rival financial and industrial groups. Those who supported and followed the established rules showed loyalty to the center, and in reward received privileges in their regions. In contrast, those who attempted to defy, violate, or change the rules were discredited by the authorities, as in the case of Pavel Lazarenko, or faced direct harassment (Yulia Tymoshenko) or indirect repression (Viktor Yushchenko) (Matsiyevskyi, 2010, p. 555).

Up until the Orange Revolution, it was common to conduct information blockades and mislead the audience through the systematic dissemination of disinformation. It was the easiest way to manipulate mass consciousness. All regions of Ukraine were artificially excluded from national communication. Most central and local media outlets were owned either by oligarchic groups that supported the Kuchma regime or by the state, therefore the possibility of choosing news and receiving up-to-date information on a national scale was narrowed to a minimum (Kvit, S. 2005).

It ought to look at particular historical events that have demonstrated the power of media in shaping public opinion to understand the importance and impact of journalism during the crisis. The Orange Revolution, which took place between November 22 and December 26, 2004, was one such period in Ukrainian history. According to the "Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine", the Orange Revolution was a peaceful movement of civil disobedience that took place in Ukraine after the second round of the 2004 presidential election. The protests were caused by falsified voting results and were aimed at protecting the democratic will. The protests took the form of mass demonstrations, rallies, strikes, and blockades of government offices, and the color orange, the

campaign symbol of opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko, became a visual marker of the movement. The Orange Revolution was a landmark event for Ukraine, as it attracted the attention of the international community, including the EU, the US, and Russia, and demonstrated the strength of civil society (Kulchytskyi, 2024).

The analysis of the theoretical concepts of civic participation presented in the article by Piotr W. Juchacz allows us to establish a deeper connection between the media as a catalyst for the involvement of citizens in socio-political life in times of crisis and the further development of democracy. According to the author, the traditional methods of informing by authorities are one-sided and do not involve a deep discussion: "Traditional models of citizen consulting, which are oriented either solely to inform citizens about the activities of the authorities (...), or to obtain their common (raw, uninformed, non-deliberative) opinion (...), or to consult about planned intentions" (Juchacz, 2007, p. 152). Up until the Orange Revolution, state media in Ukraine served as exactly that tool, and the 2004 election campaign demonstrated how this approach causes public distrust and creates a communication gap between the government and the public. In contrast, during the revolution, independent media took on the function of new deliberative models, one of the key characteristics of which is deliberativeness and openness, which distinguishes them from traditional methods of engaging citizens (Juchacz, 2007, p. 151).

Thus, in this period, the media became not only a tool for informing, but also a platform for expressing positions, discussing problems, and uniting citizens around common ideas. Andriy Shevchenko, head of the news service at the opposition-oriented "Channel 5", notes: "We can say that we have had a television revolution. Our television has changed. We got orange television, orange journalism with a significant shift towards Yushchenko at the moment" (DW, 2004). Shevchenko emphasizes that even those channels that didn't support Viktor Yushchenko changed their position into open support. This was manifested not only in the orange symbolism of the correspondents but also in the content of the news itself. According to the media expert, there was a "breakthrough", a revolution that journalists had not even thought about for years, "people who went out on the streets helped us do what we could not do before" (DW, 2004).

As the political conflict approached a critical point, despite pressure from the authorities and their control over most media outlets, the media began to return to the standards of objective journalism. For example, the Saturday evening edition of "TSN" on the "1+1" TV channel on November 6 was a "breaking point" for pro-government channels in terms of professional news that met all the necessary standards. The main content of the program consisted of news about the two frontrunners in the presidential race, Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovych. At that time, the

expressions of objective journalism were “alien” to the media environment, and the way they covered the events couldn’t remain unnoticed (Ligachova & Hanzha, 2005, p. 114).

For instance, the coverage of events of pro-government and opposition candidates was highly accurate. Besides, the coverage of the Prime Minister didn’t use traditional propaganda rhetoric, that was being used during the election campaign, and the coverage of opposition rallies didn’t understate the scale of protests, or distort their message or the intentions of the organizers. For the first time during the entire election campaign, a national channel showed the general plans of the opposition, giving the public a clear picture of the real scale of the events. In addition, none of the national channels (such as “Inter” and “First National”), except for “1+1”, provided balanced information about the initiative of the Kyiv authorities to ban the opposition assembly by notifying the public of a court permit for the demonstration (Ligachova & Hanzha, 2005, p. 114).

To summarize, the Orange Revolution marked the end of a political cycle that had lasted for 13 years in Ukraine. In the view of Yuriy Matsiyevsky, the events of November-December 2004 marked the beginning of the third stage of social transformation, characterized by the change of elites. In the general historical context of Ukraine, the first stage lasted from the late 1980s to 1991, and the second from 1991 to the end of 2004. In 2005, changes began to take place in Ukraine: a campaign against corruption, which is considered a system typical of authoritarian and transitional societies and is institutionalized in Ukraine; the implementation of political reform with changes in the powers of key government agencies; and the preparation of administrative and territorial reform (Matsievskyi, Y. 2005, p. 12).

In the context of journalism development, it becomes a key point for the development of independent media, building a pluralism of opinions, raising professional standards of journalists, as well as trust and a closer connection with Ukrainians. As the journalist Mykhailo Brynykh points out in an interview for “Telekrytyka”, at that time “the reputation of a journalist was so identified with the media outlet he or she worked for as if there was no individuality behind the television image” (Ligachova & Hanzha, 2005, p.163). The changes that have taken place among the media, in particular, the desire to “stop lying” and provide the information objectively, albeit late, but “it was worth to sacrifice “objectivity” for this” (Ligachova & Hanzha, 2005, p.163).

1.7. The Role of Journalism in the Euromaidan Movement

As of 2013, according to Alya Shandra, editor-in-chief of the English-language platform Euromaidan Press, the information space was dominated by oligarchic media, which made it difficult to get truthful information about the situation in the country (Kukhar, 2024, November 7).

Moreover, many channels were pro-Russian voices, which created huge opportunities for Russian information operations and Russian cultural influence.

The country was under total dominance and oriented toward Moscow. It was primarily ensured by such channels as “Inter”, “112”, and “NewsOne”, which belonged to the media holding of oligarch and pro-Russian politician Viktor Medvedchuk. The news published by Ukrainian journalists was taken from Russian news agencies, and the concept of “international journalism” didn’t exist. Only by June 2014, “European Pravda” was founded as a way of thinking independently and looking at the world and the processes occurring in it (Kukhar, 2024, November 7).

Ukraine was in the shadow of Russia and thought of itself as part of the Russian information space and it should have been changed. The catalyst for the redirection of the political course from Russian propagandistic influence to Europe and its values is marked by November 21, 2013 - a date known in Ukrainian history as the start of the Revolution of Dignity, or as it is also known, Euromaidan. It was a critical time when Ukrainians initiated protests following the government’s refusal to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. At first, the demonstrations had a smaller scale but quickly escalated into a nationwide movement (Thomson, 2019, p. 6). By November 24, 2013, the protests grew significantly. Organized by opposition political parties, student organizations, and long-time activists, approximately 250,000 people gathered in Kyiv. Tens of thousands of Ukrainians joined in Lviv and across western Ukraine, while smaller protests occurred in other parts of the country in cities, including Odesa, Simferopol, Kharkiv, and Sumy (Thomson, 2019, p. 1).

By December 1, 2013, the scale of the EuroMaidan protests reached unprecedented levels, with estimates suggesting up to 800,000 participants in Kyiv alone. Similar demonstrations were held in other regions, including Donetsk and Luhansk, areas traditionally seen as strongholds of then-President Viktor Yanukovych (Thomson, 2019, p. 1).

Euromaidan first appeared as an encore of the Orange Revolution of 2004. But Euromaidan turned out to be different. The events of 2013-2014 were out far more complex and violent, whereas the Orange Revolution ended peacefully and brought a certain relative stability. An important turning point in post-Soviet Ukrainian history was reached when what started as a peaceful protest swiftly descended into violence. The Euromaidan protests opened Pandora’s box, dividing the nation and opening new doors for radical voices on both sides to earn a place in the sun (Thomson, 2019, p. 6).

The transformations in the political system and society have also affected the development of journalism in Ukraine. Kateryna Sergatskova, a journalist, researcher, and co-founder of the 2402 Foundation, explains that the beginning of the Revolution of Dignity in 2013 brought significant changes in Ukrainian journalism, one of which was the growth of the number of journalists who began to cover conflict events. These events became the starting point for the formation of conflict journalism as a separate field in the Ukrainian media space. Previously, journalism that focused on covering civil unrest, protests, or armed conflicts remained a marginalized area of journalistic work (Kukhar, 2024, November 12). Even though protest actions had occurred in the country before, the large-scale events on Independence Square, which were accompanied by shootings and deaths, were the first experience for most Ukrainian journalists working in conditions of violent confrontation.

These events fundamentally changed the vector of development of Ukrainian journalism, as more journalists started discovering conflicts and analyzing the experiences of international colleagues. Particularly, Ukrainian media professionals have been actively researching examples of coverage of events during the Arab Spring in the Middle East, including the conflicts in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. In addition, their interest was directed to the experience of journalists who worked during the civil war in the Balkans, as well as during armed conflicts in the North Caucasus. An important consequence of this transformation was the increase in the number of publications and research papers on conflict journalism, leading to the further development of this area in the Ukrainian media discourse (Kukhar, 2024, November 12).

Consequently, the media landscape has changed: more independent media outlets were established and many journalists have moved away from oligarchic structures. For example, this is how “Hromadske TV” was formed in 2013, even before the Maidan. It was a harbinger: because of censorship, many journalists left the oligarchs’ channels and created “Hromadske”, an independent NGO that began to cover the events on the Maidan without any supervision from above. “Hromadske Radio” and several other media organizations also appeared, revealing themselves as independent entities working for citizens, without the influence of business elites (Kukhar, 2024, November 12).

The role of independent media and journalists during the EuroMaidan was essential for covering the events and informing the public. Unlike most state-owned channels, such as “Inter”, which didn't provide accurate information, journalists from “Hromadske”, “Espresso TV”, “Spilno TV” and “Radio Liberty” not only live-streamed on YouTube, but also covered the Revolution through articles, reports, and analytical materials, providing Ukraine and the world with reliable information (Kukhar, 2024, November 12).

2. UKRAINIAN JOURNALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 2022 FULL-SCALE INVASION

2.1. Changes in Media Rhetorics During Wartime Realities

The war in the country affects the work of media and journalists, changing its course. In parallel, wartime has brought transformations that can help overcome long-standing problems in the media environment. This part will examine the changes taken place in the Ukrainian media landscape since the start of the full-scale invasion, how these changes have affected journalism and its role, and what prospects this may open up in the future. Standing in the face of the threat from the terrorist state and the mobilization of all spheres of society, both weaknesses and strengths become apparent. Journalism has always been close to society, but in times of war, the authorities may interfere with this relationship, especially regarding censorship, freedom of speech, and access to information. Such actions sometimes have a well-intentioned purpose, but sometimes are aimed at limiting independent journalism.

Throughout its development, Ukrainian journalism has been nurturing the sprouts of independence, despite the strong influence of the aggressor country and its longstanding propaganda in politics and media. The Revolution of Dignity and the war in the East began to adjust the vector of development of both journalism and the country as a whole, and the full-scale invasion of 2022 became a catalyst for change, laying an even stronger foundation for further progress.

The war has posed new challenges for the government, media, and society, affecting the exchange of information and trust between the sides. The media are forced to work in an environment where the balance between freedom of speech and security requirements is becoming very important. The government is increasingly using the rhetoric of unification and control of information to mobilize society, which may limit the independence of journalism. In these conditions, a new format of relations is emerging that affects the content and presentation of information. Studying these changes will help to understand how the war is transforming media rhetoric, freedom of speech, and the role of censorship.

According to the monitoring data “News in Time of War: Analysis of the Content of Leading Online Media as of October 17, 2022” conducted by the Institute of Mass Information (IMI), in October 2022, most of the news publications of the analyzed media focused on Russia’s war against Ukraine. At the same time, it was unexpected that some of the materials on this topic contained quotes from Russian propaganda that were not accompanied by the necessary refutations

and publications with signs of being ordered. For example, in the news feed of “Ukrayinska Pravda”, 83% of the content was related to the war, covering international political events, the situation in the energy sector after massive attacks, and events in Russia itself (Institute of Mass Information, 2022).

Compared to IMI’s monitoring results in April 2024, the study revealed a decreasing trend in the number of such publications compared to previous periods. Ten of the most popular Ukrainian online media were analyzed to assess the share of news dedicated to Russia's war against Ukraine and the sources of information used by journalists. Thus, on average, 30.7% of news stories were directly devoted to the war. For comparison, in May 2023, this figure was 71% on the “Censor.NET” website, which remained the leader in the number of such publications in April 2024, although the share dropped to 51%. The decline in the share of news about the war may indicate that the media are adapting to the ongoing conflict and seeking diversity in the content (Institute of Mass Information, 2023).

According to Alya Shandra, Ukrainian society has returned to the state that prevailed in 2021. A state where beliefs about the impossibility of change, that the situation will always remain negative, and that corruption and inaction are permanent characteristics of the system dominate. She describes such a state of society with the concept of “anomie” when society experiences a crisis of faith - it ceases to trust ideals and its own capabilities. Ukrainian society, which historically had a post-Soviet mentality, for a long time was characterized by passivity. This is reflected in certain phrases: “What will change? It has always been like this, it will always be like this. This is Ukraine. Everyone steals here”. Such statements illustrate the disbelief of a significant number of Ukrainians in the possibility of improving their lives and achieving a better future by themselves (Kukhar, 2024, November 7).

While there was an “anomaly reversal” at the beginning of a full-scale invasion - when society began to believe in itself in the face of a threat - they also began to believe that they could lose what they had. So they suddenly begin to realize that “the society we are building is important. Our history is important. Our government is important”(Kukhar, 2024, November 7). Today, this return to a passive attitude is accompanied by a rise in critical attitudes that are increasingly affecting society. The level of criticism is growing, and processes are emerging that are destabilizing the social balance, which may indicate a lack of social cohesion.

Indeed, according to Kateryna Sergatskova, media rhetoric during the war is not shaped by journalists or editorial offices, but mainly by government agencies that respond to public inquiries.

Journalists are trying to find answers to important questions that worry society, and these questions determine the topics and content of media (Kukhar, 2024, November 12).

Simultaneously, the state, for its part, selects a certain concept of interaction with the media and society. In times of war, when there are many more problems that can be solved quickly, the communication strategy focuses on less problematic aspects. The goal is to create a positive impression and reduce anxiety. For example, instead of highlighting critical situations on the battlefield, the emphasis is placed on the successful aspects of the reorganization of the Ukrainian armed forces or other areas to “calm” the audience and create the image that the current situation is not as catastrophic as it seems (Kukhar, 2024, November 12).

This concept is evident, for example, in the Unified Telethon, which is dominated by materials that are not critical but focus on the positive. The criticism is mainly directed at external enemies, such as Russia, and Russia's cooperation with other countries (Iran, China, etc.). In such conditions, journalists do not always get answers to their questions if they are not aligned with the general concept of the state information policy. In particular, the Unified Telethon is dominated by materials that cover events more optimistically. For example, there is an emphasis on criticizing Russia’s actions (Kukhar, 2024, November 12).

Media editors are somewhat dependent on this rhetoric, as they find it difficult to overcome the barrier created by the state's communication strategy. Interaction between journalists, government agencies, and society is complicated by the war, which leads to many misunderstandings and additional difficulties in the work of the media.

2.2. War Realities Influence on Freedom of Speech and Self-Censorship

Freedom of speech often conflicts with the information concept introduced by state authorities in times of war. Journalists who seek to cover socially important topics often take risks, making this profession one of the most dangerous in the world. If the activities of journalists become unfavorable to the authorities, they may face harsh responses, restrictions on access to information, or exclusion from communication events. In particular, during the presidency of Volodymyr Zelenskyi, the Presidential Office introduced the practice of invitations to press conferences, which has replaced free access to such events for journalists (BBC News Ukrainian, 2019).

Meanwhile, cases of pressure on the media are not limited to access to events. For example, in October 2024, the editorial office of “Ukrayinska Pravda” publicly stated that there was

systematic pressure from the Office of the President of Ukraine. This included blocking government speakers from speaking with the publication's journalists, pressure on business partners to terminate advertising cooperation, and the president's emotional communication with journalist Roman Kravets. The editorial board emphasized its independence and warned that any attempts to influence its work would be made public and would have an international reaction (Detector Media, 2024).

Additionally, there have been cases of pressure on journalists that can be seen as a form of harassment. One of the largest incidents in this context was the events of 2023-2024 when the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) summoned hundreds of journalists for so-called "interviews". During these meetings, SBU representatives tried to obtain information about the journalistic projects they were working on, their professional contacts, and their interaction with international media. In some cases, journalists were forced to take a polygraph and disclose confidential information. Such actions were explained by the need to ensure national security in times of war, which gradually contributed to their normalization as part of the communication practice between government agencies and journalists (Kukhar, 2024, November 12).

Another form of pressure on journalists is the limitation of access to combat zones. In particular, male journalists may be informed of the possibility of being recruited into the Armed Forces of Ukraine if they work without military guidance. In addition, journalists may be denied renewal of their accreditation or prohibited from conducting field interviews, which creates dangerous and vulnerable conditions for them (Kukhar, 2024, November 12).

In the spring of 2024, investigative journalist Yevhen Shulhata faced a case of pressure that caused a wide response in the journalistic community. On April 5, Shulhata's investigation into the elite real estate and the origin of the wealth of the family of the head of the SBU's cybersecurity department, Ilya Vityuk, was published. The next day, two people in military uniform, who introduced themselves as employees of the Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Center (TRC), handed the journalist a summons right in the supermarket. Prior to the publication of the investigation, the editorial office received hints that it was inappropriate to publish the material, which led the media to suspect that they were being intimidated into disobeying these warnings. This case was perceived as an attempt to use military structures to put pressure on journalists (ZN.UA, 2023).

Such restrictions are widespread and applied at different levels. For example, at the local level, representatives of district or village authorities can deny a journalist access to a crime scene, arguing that they do not have the necessary press card or accreditation. In this way, certain "filters"

are implemented that significantly limit the freedom of journalistic activity (Kukhar, 2024, November 12).

In April 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a statement on the value of freedom of speech during martial law, emphasizing the importance of unimpeded access to information and the absence of censorship (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022). However, in practice, journalists do face limitations, such as being denied access to places of events or pressure from government agencies.

One of the challenges the ongoing war in Ukraine has brought is the principles of freedom of speech and the professional practices of journalists. Among the most significant issues are the rise of self-censorship, military censorship, and restricted access to information.

According to the results of research conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA in cooperation with Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation with the support of Freedom House Ukraine, self-censorship has become a dominant issue during wartime, often exceeding the impact of regulatory limitations or fear of harassment. Its self-censorship framework is usually less flexible than the existing rules and regulations on the spread of information in wartime (Bondarenko et al., 2023, p. 8). According to the data, the primary drivers for self-censorship included (Bondarenko et al., 2023, p. 27):

- Fear of making mistakes or difficulty in verifying information (65%)
- Personal beliefs (44%)
- Public opinion and pressure from media owners (37% and 35%, respectively)

As reported by more than 50% of journalists, there is an existence of self-censorship, and 78% of journalists stated that the number of cases of self-censorship has increased since the full-scale Russian aggression. Furthermore, the data indicates that the primary reasons for self-censorship are personal beliefs, fear of losing a job, public opinion, or the fear of making a mistake or having difficulties in verifying the information. (Bondarenko et al., 2023, p. 47).

At once, as stated by respondents, the same degree of freedom of speech in the traditional sense that existed before the war cannot be maintained under the conditions of wartime realities. Almost every component of warfare and related fields is subject to speech restrictions. Only a relatively small part of respondents - focus group participants - believe that the situation with freedom of speech in Ukraine is now critical (Bondarenko et al., 2023, p. 17).

As part of a discussion summarized in the article “Between a Journalist and a Citizen: Challenges Faced by Ukrainian Media During the War”, Roman Kulchynskyi, chief editor and co-founder of Texty.org.ua, notes that he has observed an increase in self-censorship among

journalists. They think several times before writing about any of the problems at the battlefront. They are worried whether it will harm our defense capabilities. As he explains, “It's a very thin line. If you don't criticize the government's actions, it won't correct its mistakes and improve. Freedom of speech should be protected, but at the same time, we should not help the enemy” (JTA, 2022).

Angelina Karyakina from “Hromadske” notes that during a full-scale war, journalists have developed coordinated approaches to covering information. In particular, they tend not to disclose the locations of shelling to avoid the risk of helping the enemy. At the same time, such restrictions cause difficulties, as delays in publishing important information can reduce the effectiveness of the media. In addition, limited access to the frontline areas makes it difficult to cover events, which creates distrust among the audience. Viewers, noticing inconsistencies between media reports and military testimonies, question the comprehensiveness and reliability of the news (JTA, 2022).

The article “No to breaking standards, yes to self-censorship” explores the insights shared during a discussion of how the war has forced journalists to reconsider their professional standards. Olga Musafirova, a correspondent in Ukraine for “Novaya Gazeta”, noted that she is forced to apply self-censorship in her work due to the nature of her work in the Russian media. She emphasized that as a citizen of Ukraine and an experienced journalist, she takes into account her professional reputation and responsibility for the use of information. Being aware of the specifics of working for a foreign publication, Musafirova independently limits the content of her materials to avoid potential risks or distortion of the information provided (Detector Media, 2017).

Andriy Kulikov, journalist and head of the NGO “Hromadske Radio”, noted that he had to consider whether to limit himself in covering certain information or in providing airtime to people with controversial views. He shared an example of self-censorship from his own experience when he decided not to disclose information about a battalion commander he knew from peacetime because he wanted to remain known only by his callsign. Kulikov also emphasized that restrictions should not be imposed if it is only in the interests of the state, but admitted that he had thoughts about refraining from giving the word to some individuals or withholding information.

One of the cases of resistance to legitimate journalistic activity in November 2024 was the denial of access to the site of a Russian drone attack in one of Kyiv’s residential neighborhoods (Jack House). Journalist Kateryna Malofeyeva and Sipa correspondent Dmytro Kovalchuk reported that their work was obstructed by the housing estate administration and security guards. Malofeeva noted that she faced rudeness and denial of access to the 33rd floor of the building where the fire occurred. According to her, the security guard even threatened to use force. Dmytro Kovalchuk also

confirmed the denial of access to the scene, despite the public importance of covering these circumstances (Institute of Mass Information, 2024).

This case, one of many, is an example of the gap between the declared principles of freedom of speech and their realization in times of war. Interfering with the work of journalists in such situations undermines not only their professional rights but also the ability of society to receive reliable information.

In a time of war, the media environment becomes a key tool for building international support and delivering important messages. Ukrainian journalists often face challenges when trying to gain access to officials who increasingly cooperate with foreign media. This trend reflects the global nature of the information struggle but also opens up new discussions about the role and place of Ukrainian media in communication.

Brian Bonner, former editor-in-chief of the Kyiv Post, highlights the significant frustration experienced by Ukrainian journalists due to their limited access to high-ranking officials like Dmytro Kuleba after the full-scale war. Reflecting on his own experience, Bonner notes that while he had the opportunity to interview Kuleba multiple times when he was foreign minister, such access has since become unattainable for many local journalists (Kukhar, 2024, October 18). Brian Bonner explains, that the reason for this is that the West is sponsoring Ukraine, and the Ukrainian government “needs to be talking to these audiences”. Thus, epy government had to shift its focus and talk to outlets like CNN, which can provide millions of viewers, rather than Ukrainian outlets like the “Kyiv Post” or “The Kyiv Independent”, which have a much smaller audience. He describes the prioritization of international media by Ukrainian officials as a deliberate tactic and a reasonable strategy, though it remains challenging for Ukrainian journalists who lose direct access. He emphasizes that no international journalist, regardless of their expertise, can fully match the depth of understanding possessed by Ukrainians living in their homeland, with its unique cultural and linguistic context (Kukhar, 2024, October 18).

According to Bonner, another reason the Ukrainian government prefers to engage with international media it’s also because international journalists lack the deep knowledge that Ukrainian journalists have about issues like corruption or who’s corrupt. If the government engages with Ukrainian media, it risks being asked more probing questions about corruption and other sensitive topics. Instead, they want to keep the focus solely on the war, avoiding those tough questions. (Kukhar, 2024, October 18).

While military censorship is intended to protect national security, it frequently produces uncertainties causing more obstacles for journalists. Even when the information's security

significance is questionable, officials have declined access to it recalling to the martial law. This has raised questions regarding censorship's inconsistent implementation. Additionally, journalists face limitations while covering military operations, casualties, and sensitive topics like missing people or quantity of victims in the military. Such restrictions are partially driven by fears that detailed reporting could be exploited by adversaries. However, the lack of transparency risks eroding public trust in the media and democratic institutions (Bondarenko et al., 2023, p. 30).

Ukrainian documentary photographer Maksym Dondyuk, who has been shooting videos and photos from the frontline since 2014, shared his thoughts on censorship under martial law in an interview for the independent online media "Zaborona". In his opinion, discussing the real losses in the Armed Forces of Ukraine during the war is necessary, as silencing the problems creates a distorted reality. He draws attention to the gap between the official statements of the authorities and the real situation at the front, where soldiers often face a lack of ammunition, significant losses, and exhaustion. Such situations can sometimes be the result of tactical decisions, but their lack of transparency raises questions in society (Zaborona, 2023).

Thus, restrictions on access to places of events are often explained by security considerations or administrative obstacles, but they pose a risk of weakening public trust in official structures and the media. In the context of war, transparent conditions for interaction between the state, society, and the media must be ensured - this factor is crucial for maintaining trust in journalism as a key tool of democracy and respect for freedom of speech.

2.3. Phenomenon and Impact of The Unified Telethon

Following the information and military challenges posed by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Ukraine's largest commercial broadcasters, the Rada TV channel, and Public Broadcasting have united to create a 24-hour news marathon, "Unified Telethon", to keep citizens informed of relevant and most important events. The telethon airs programs of "Suspilne Novyny" (United News), "Rada Parliamentary TV Channel", "SLM News", "Studio 1+1 TV" and Radio Company, "INTER TV Channel" and "We Are Ukraine".

According to the "Fakty" news agency, this initiative has become one of the world's best and unique examples of self-regulation in the media, as well as an effective practice of public-private partnership. The United News Telethon is a living self-regulating structure that meets the challenges of the times (Fakty, 2024).

According to a 2023 InMind study ordered by Internews, viewers highly rate the telethon as an official source of information due to its live coverage, concise format, expert participation, 24/7 news availability, regular changes of hosts and channels, unified content, and ability to unite society. However, interest in the telethon is declining due to several issues. These include a lack of real-time coverage compared to Telegram channels, censorship and an overly patriotic presentation of news, repetitive content throughout the day, and a lack of positive materials not related to the war, such as news about culture, education, art, or history. As to the continuation of the telethon, respondents' opinions were divided. Supporters of its continuation emphasize that for many viewers, especially the elderly, it is the only constant source of information (Internews Ukraine, n.d.).

Still, public trust is falling (according to a poll conducted by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation in cooperation with the Razumkov Center sociological service, public trust has dropped by 43%), especially as citizens increasingly receive news from social media and other sources (Chesno, 2024).

Alongside, media experts repeatedly criticize the "United Telethon" as a tool of control and censorship by the authorities. Yet, if we compare the quantitative indicators of political promotion and paid-for materials on the air of the marathon according to Detector Media's monitoring with the indicators of the same TV channels three years ago, we see that even the air of the "marathoners" has become cleaner of political discussions (Detector Media, 2024).

There is a divergence of opinions on the role of the "Unified Telethon" during the war. Some see it as an important source of information security, while others criticize it for its lack of independence and repetitive content. This division of opinion demonstrates the different expectations of the public from the media in times of crisis.

Despite the current criticism of the "United Telethon", Alya Shandra notes that in early 2022 the situation seemed optimistic. The Telethon became an important element of the information flow that made Ukrainians confident in their ability to win. This feeling, albeit based on a somewhat distorted information frame, created a powerful boost of confidence that inspired society to achieve incredible results. The Kharkiv and Kherson operations took place during a period of high social cohesion and belief in victory, key successes that could not have happened without the high fighting spirit of Ukrainians. At this stage, there was even a large-scale enrollment of citizens in self-defense brigades, demonstrating the uniqueness of this phenomenon (Kukhar, 2024, November 7).

At the same time, the phenomenon of the "Unified Telethon" can be evaluated from two perspectives. On the one hand, it can be seen as an example of the state's monopoly control over the

information space, which led to a distorted perception of the real capabilities of Ukrainians. On the other hand, the Telethon should be seen as part of a broader social context that reflects the general social trends of the time.

Today, criticism is still here as it is still functioning on the initial wave of emotional charge that occurred two years ago. This creates a dissonance with current public perception. Perhaps its role now looks anachronistic. Public enthusiasm is fading, as complex systemic problems that need to be resolved, arise.

We can assume that its function has become less relevant. Still, it is important to understand that without this starting impulse, without the initial charge of confidence that victory is possible, the situation could have been different.

This confidence became the foundation that supported society in the first weeks of the war. The initial energy still affects our confidence in our ability to win. In a war, losing faith in victory means losing the ability to fight, and this is the enemy's main task - to break the will for resistance. Telethon played a crucial role in this, as, despite controversial views, it initially played a key role in consolidating society and mobilizing the spirit of defiance. But in the current environment, its importance is becoming less important, as there is a need to address systemic problems, given that the war is dragging on for a long time (Kukhar, 2024, November 7).

To summarize, the phenomenon of the "Unified Telethon" lies in its unique role as an instrument of information security and consolidation of society during the war. This was the first time in the history of Ukrainian media that leading TV channels united to present common content to the public. This method allowed the population to receive information, which was especially important during the fight against Russian propaganda and the conditions of martial law. It also minimized the influence of the private interests of media owners on the presentation of news, which could otherwise lead to manipulation. This allowed us to maintain a certain level of trust in the content despite the martial law (Detector Media, 2024).

2.4. War Media Practices and Their Relevance to Ukraine

Journalism has a built-in relationship with military conflicts since whenever there is a military engagement, it will always be at the center of media attention. This relationship has a long history: from the Crimean War of 1854-1856, when William Howard Russell's reports became the first large-scale journalistic testimony from the battlefield, to the 2003 Iraq War, where the widespread use of embedded journalism influenced the way the war was covered.

Military conflicts not only affect the content of journalistic materials but also determine the direction of the profession itself. The term “shooting war” effectively captures the essence of both military affairs and photojournalism, given that the design of cameras is derived from the sighting systems used in artillery. Similarly, the various methods of communication that bring news from the battlefield home have their roots in technologies first developed to allow soldiers to communicate with each other (e.g., telegraphy and radio) or to covertly gather information about their enemies’ fighting capabilities (Rai, 2000).

This connection has evolved along with technology, but its essence remains the same: journalism is a tool that sheds light on what is often hidden. The Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022 was another confirmation of this, as the media not only document events but also actively counter disinformation by amplifying the voices of truth in the global space.

In the context of studying the changing role of journalism since the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it is also important to pay attention to the examples of other countries. This will contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformations taking place in the Ukrainian media space, as well as allow us to trace general trends in the development of journalism in the context of military conflicts.

Conflicts in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) were among the most important for the development of war journalism at the beginning of the 21st century. Though they cannot be compared to some other conflicts in terms of scale, their impact on changing approaches to war coverage was decisive. Specifically these wars saw a shift from the traditional reporting format to an interactive and technology-oriented approach. The emergence of 24/7 news channels and the active use of online platforms allowed the public to follow events in an almost real-time mode (CNN (2003). It put additional pressure on journalists who had to not only inform but also fight disinformation and censorship. Knowledge of this experience can be important for understanding how the role of a journalist changes during a war, particularly in the current information landscape of Ukraine.

The practice of embedded journalism gained widespread recognition during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 when hundreds of journalists were sent to military units to provide real-time reporting. Embedded journalism refers to integrating journalists within and under the command of one military faction during a conflict. Embedded journalists and photographers are assigned to a particular armed forces division and allowed to be present with soldiers in battle areas. In response to complaints regarding the lack of access provided to reporters during the Persian Gulf War

(1990–91) and the early years of the Afghanistan War, the U.S. Department of Defense implemented embedded journalism during the Iraq War (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.).

The development of war journalism contributes to the development of journalism itself, as it brings new challenges in the need to adapt to change. One advantage of embedding was that it provided greater safety for journalists who occasionally became targets of violence from one or more factions in a conflict. Many non-embedded journalists and media workers - the vast majority being Iraqi - lost their lives during the Iraq War, either in battle or due to targeted killings. In 2007, U.S. forces accidentally killed two independent journalists from the Reuters news agency when a helicopter gunship pilot misidentified their camera as a rocket-propelled grenade launcher. (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2007). Such circumstances draw attention to the uncertainty in the evolution of war journalism, where independent journalism is frequently sacrificed.

During the war in Iraq, the key problem of American war journalism was not only the danger to journalists but also their heavy dependence on official military sources, which limited the possibility of independent information gathering. This led to the fact that journalists, in particular those embedded with military units, had limited access to alternative points of view, which affected the objectivity of their coverage. As Douglas Kellner notes, over-reliance on military sources can turn journalists into repeaters of official messages, reducing the credibility of their work (Kellner, 2008, p. 325).

Since the fall of Baghdad in April 2004, the situation for journalists in Iraq has reached a critically oppressive state that it was almost impossible to carry out their work. After decades of covering foreign affairs, veteran journalists reported that the conditions in Iraq were among the most challenging they ever faced. Journalists are regularly becoming targets, making the job harder than ever. There is a significant reliance on local journalists, fixers, translators, and drivers for stories. This led to a lack of independent reporting during the US assault on Fallujah in November 2004, with only a few journalists reporting from the Marines. The scale of the physical destruction of Fallujah was only made known several weeks after the event, and the numbers and identities of Iraqi dead and injured were never reported (Kellner, 2008, p. 387).

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 also revealed similar challenges for war journalism, including the safety of journalists and the need to balance official sources with independent investigations. However, unlike the situation in Iraq, the development of new technologies and the proliferation of alternative platforms such as Telegram and YouTube have allowed Ukrainian journalists, bloggers, and citizens to actively document events even in the war

zone. At the same time, dependence on official sources remains an urgent problem, as accuracy and objectivity of information are of key importance in a time of war.

Serhiy Nikitenko, editor-in-chief of the Kherson-based newspaper “Most”, recalls to the case when, after publishing photos of the bottom of the Kakhovka Sea, his team was subjected to considerable pressure from the militaries and the military administration. At the same time, other photographers later published similar photos after receiving permission from the command. This situation illustrates the contradictory policy of access to information when some media face restrictions and others receive priority access. This creates challenges for the independence and objectivity of war coverage (Detector Media, 2024).

Comparing the challenges for the media during the conflicts in Iraq and Ukraine, we can see common trends that were also evident in the Vietnam War. In all cases, the media played a key role in shaping public opinion, often under pressure from military and political structures. Despite the differences in technology and conditions, each war teaches that the balance between transparency and security is difficult but essential for public trust.

The experience of previous conflicts influences the formation of approaches to war coverage and media control. This is especially evident in the concept of the “Vietnam syndrome”. The term refers to the mistaken belief that the US media was opposed to the South Vietnamese government and the US military during the Vietnam War. This belief has influenced political and military control of the media in subsequent conflicts, such as the Gulf War in 1991, Grenada, Panama, and the Falklands War (McLaughlin, 2016, p. 112).

Between 1965 and 1975, American forces and advisors supported the South Vietnamese government in its efforts to defeat the Viet Cong, resulting in a high level of direct interaction between the media and the US military. A turning point occurred in 1968 when the North Vietnamese army launched an unexpected attack on the South Vietnamese government. This event caused a loss of consensus among Washington elites and led to a decline in public support for the war. (McLaughlin, 2016, p. 112).

The Johnson and Kennedy administrations were sensitive to domestic comments in the elite press and negative news from Vietnam. This disproved the official narrative that the military was winning the war. The Pentagon and White House responded to disappointing information with enthusiastic forecasts and analyses. To help sell the war, Johnson even reached out to General Westmoreland and other military commanders in Vietnam. Tactical errors, strategic incompetence, and a high rate of death are historical accounts of unattached journalists in Vietnam affecting public morale and military security. The reality, however, was different. (McLaughlin, 2016, p. 113).

A similar situation occurred in the Soviet Union in the 1980s, when the government, trying to avoid losing support for the war in Afghanistan, demanded that the bodies of the dead be delivered in sealed zinc coffins to avoid media interference (and consequently public disclosure) (Rai, 2000).

That is why the connection (dependence) between the audience's interest in the war and its perception as “theirs” is strong. Wars that have elements of “shared participation” or heroic stories are more likely to generate more interest among the media and the public. For example, during the Gulf War, heroic stories, such as the use of Patriot missiles or the liberation of Kuwait, significantly increased the interest of the audience. After all, long-running conflicts or “other wars” are often kept out of the spotlight (Rai, 2000).

This dynamic of audience engagement also highlights how governments and media can use narratives and control mechanisms to shape public opinion during conflicts. The relationship between press freedom and national security becomes particularly visible in situations where reporting is perceived to support or undermine national interests. A notable example of this is Israel’s recent legislative measures to regulate the activities of foreign media.

In April 2024, in the face of increased activity by Palestinian groups and tensions on the borders with the Gaza Strip, the Israeli parliament adopted a law that gives the government temporary authority to ban foreign news networks from operating in Israel if security services believe they are harming national security. This law allows the Prime Minister and the Minister of Communications to close foreign media outlets and confiscate their equipment for up to 45 days, with the possibility of an extension (Reyes, 2024).

Today, the experience of Ukraine correlates with the experience of other countries more than ever and is proof that the media plays a key role in covering the war for Ukrainians and international audiences. The use of digital platforms such as Telegram, YouTube, and the “ Unified National Telethon” allows for prompt public information about the war and attracts international support. In addition, Ukrainian journalists actively cooperate with international media, which contributes to a global understanding of events. In particular, journalists from publications such as “The Kyiv Independent” and “Ukrayinska Pravda” regularly provide information and commentary to leading global media outlets such as the BBC, CNN, and The New York Times. Stories about the defense of Ukrainian cities and the role of volunteer initiatives have become an important tool for maintaining the interest of the international community.

The role of frontline correspondents is becoming increasingly challenging. The lines between combatants can be unclear, and journalists may find themselves caught in friendly fire or

targeted for abduction and murder. Even with reductions in foreign coverage by news organizations and the shuttering of international bureaus in recent years, numerous reporters continue to assemble in conflict areas, equipped with advanced lightweight technologies that allow immediate satellite transmissions unimaginable in previous wars. But despite the dangers, journalists are still motivated to report from battlefields in high-risk places (Tumber, 2009, p. 387).

During the war or military conflicts media functions as an essential link between those engaged in combat and those who are more remotely involved in or witnessing war through indirect means. These challenges underscore the crucial need for journalists' access to conflict zones and highlight the importance of keeping open communication between the media and military to ensure the objectivity and relevance of the information provided.

2.5. Ethical Standards and Journalist Safety in War

In the context of the war in Ukraine, the role of a journalist is complemented by new challenges and responsibilities. They witness events that are part of history and can have a significant impact on society. The journalist becomes a chronicler who at the same time assumes responsibility for ethical coverage of these events and for the safety of not only himself but also others. Journalists' safety and ethics are related; they are two sides of the same coin. In a crisis, it is impossible to uphold ethical standards without making sure oneself and others are safe.

The code of professional ethics for Ukrainian journalists is available in multiple versions. As a result, the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine adopted a modern code of ethics for journalists in 2002. The final version was approved in 2013 after the text underwent multiple revisions and updates since then. Although the code is not mandatory, journalists' non-compliance with professional ethical standards is one of the reasons for the lack of trust in the Ukrainian media (Ulybin, 2023, p. 95).

One of the key documents that sets ethical standards for journalists in Europe is Resolution 1003 (1993) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the Ethical Principles of Journalism. It defines journalism as an important element of democracy, obliging journalists to adhere to the principles of truthfulness, objectivity, and respect for privacy, and avoid sensationalism, manipulation, and the spread of misinformation while emphasizing their responsibility to society (Council of Europe, 2007). Although there are clearly defined rules and laws, reality often demonstrates complexity and dynamics that are not always fully adjustable within written norms.

One of the key aspects of journalistic ethics in times of war is the maintenance of the principles of privacy. Privacy is essential for self-development and managing social roles, but its definition in a digital society constantly changes, making it a complex concept in communication and media ethics. It is crucial in journalism, where authors, editorial teams, and producers must decide whether news coverage should adhere to ethical standards. Social media and other digital media platforms that don't adhere to journalistic standards are often expected to do so (Lee Plaisance, 2018, p. 11).

The Council of Europe offers extensive instructions for journalists covering war zones and other crises in the document "Compilation of Council of Europe standards relating to journalism in situations of conflict and crisis" (2022). The significance of moral journalism in times of war is emphasized. While reporting on events, journalists should uphold the values of objectivity and truthfulness and refrain from disseminating hate speech and false information. While publishing for human tragedies, special attention is given to the necessity of maintaining the privacy of information sources and avoiding overly dramatic reporting (Council of Europe, 2022).

While working in a time of war, journalists face a difficult choice between the public importance of a topic and a person's privacy while communicating with victims or their relatives. The case when the personal data of a woman who suffered from the shelling of a residential building in Kyiv was made public was a resonant one. An advisor to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Anton Gerashchenko, shared a video of the victim of the shelling of a Kyiv residential building's Russian passport on Telegram. The name, date of birth, and document number were disclosed and the information was used by numerous media outlets. Even if the information comes from official sources, journalists still should adhere to the Code of Ethics, according to the Commission on Journalistic Ethics' (CJE) statement on the case (Kuzmenko et al., 2023, p. 129).

One of the challenges faced by Ukrainian journalists covering the war is to find a balance between the public importance of information and the risk that its publication may be harmful. Adherence to professional standards such as efficiency, accuracy, and reliability is not enough to make the right decision in specific situations. This is where the ethics of a professional journalist plays an important role (Kuzmenko et al., 2023, p. 127).

For example, on April 29, 2022, journalist and blogger Denys Kazanskyi reported before the Ministry of Defense that the village of Ruska Lozova in the Kharkiv region had been liberated. The information was widely disseminated in the Ukrainian media, after which Hanna Malyar, the Deputy Minister of Defense, stated that the author of the post "in the same post published two more things that should not have been publicly written" and that after that "the escalation began" and the

Ukrainian military suffered losses, including one killed and 12 wounded (Kuzmenko et al., 2023, p. 126).

Inconsiderate decisions by journalists that contradict the ethical standards of the profession lead to public distrust of their work. This, in turn, leads to a decrease in the level of perception of important information and undermines trust in the media in general. After the Russian air strike on the Kyiv Armored Plant on April 16, 2022, accusations were made online against journalists from the 1+1 TV channel who had broadcast a report from the plant a few days before the attack. Even though the story was filmed in the plant's workshops and the journalists did not name the enterprise, critics believe that the information was sufficient to identify the location and determine the exact coordinates. In favor of the journalists is the fact that the filming took place with the permission of the plant's management and the Ukroboronprom concern, which includes the plant. This means that the management of the plant and the concern were familiar with the story, angles, speakers, and other details (Kuzmenko et al., 2023, p. 126). Such a case study shows that a dialog between journalists and military leaders under martial law is extremely important. This exchange of information promotes greater transparency and avoids misinformation. In addition, cooperation between these parties can help to form an adequate public perception of the situation at the front.

When it comes to publishing photos and videos, journalists must maintain a fine line between professional duty and ethics. Journalists often face ethical challenges when they publish images of blood, violence, and suffering. Discussions around these issues are often heated in times of war or conflict, especially when patriotic feelings may force journalists to present the "right" narrative and refrain from using visuals that the audience may find demoralizing (Lee Plaisance, 2018, p. 13). In particular, the Commission on Journalism Ethics (CJE) Guidelines (May 4, 2022) emphasize the need for a balanced approach to the use of photos and videos depicting victims. It is important to avoid the frequent use of images and materials that show the consequences of violence, such as blood, the bodies of victims, or the last moments of their lives. The photo of a woman's hand with a red manicure, which conveys the tragedy without violating ethical standards, has become one of the most expressive symbols of the brutal massacres in Bucha. In most cases, hiding such images on social media by design allows users to decide for themselves whether to view such content (Kuzmenko et al., 2023, p. 18).

Larysa Hubina, Channel 5 TV presenter, as part of the discussion covered in the article "Telling the truth without distorting it with clickbait. Media professionals on the main challenges and trends in the media", emphasized that the competitive media environment and the struggle for audience make journalists use bright, clickable headlines and news. In turn, this creates a risk of

distorting the real picture of events through the manipulative presentation of information (Detector Media, 2024).

These challenges are also confirmed in the scientific literature. As noted in an article from the book “Communication and Media Ethics”, in the current era of “fake news”, the relationship between technology and the truth has also gained more attention as journalists set a higher priority on speedy publication than accurate reporting. Technology has blurred genres and provided nurturing space for “native” content, causing ethical debates that were once less mainstream. Citizens as consumers might be impacted as persuasive messages are driven out of public discourse (Wilkins, 2018, p. 24). In such circumstances, journalists are faced with the question of how to maintain truthfulness and not lose the trust of the audience if the format of the presentation changes under the pressure of a global trend. The Commission on Journalistic Ethics also provides advice to journalists on how to act in such cases. The tips include avoiding sensationalism and clickbait in headlines, such as “Streets covered with corpses: the most horrific footage of the occupiers' atrocities, 18+”. To get more translations or more vivid emotions from the reader, online media can provide links to similar news or publications. For example, news about the burial of an Armed Forces soldier may be accompanied by links to reports of funerals of other soldiers in the area or region or high-profile deaths of civilians. This can devalue the death of a person, present him or her not as a person with his or her own biography, but as a “unit of statistics”, create the impression of a “death conveyor belt”, and cause helplessness in the audience (Kuzmenko et al., 2023, p. 19).

“Detector Media” analysis of wartime journalism practices also provides insight into the ethical dilemmas faced by Ukrainian journalists. Anastasia Stanko, secretary of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, stated that she could recall many cases when Hromadske TV kept silent of its own free will. One example was when journalists found out how Ukrainian soldiers actually died near Shchastya. The official version was that a disruptive group had entered the battle, killing the combatants and two Ukrainian soldiers. However, the journalists discovered the truth from their close friends: the grenade was detonated by the unit’s soldiers over an argument, which led to the deaths of two soldiers. But the little daughter of one of the victims was told that her father died as a hero. And the journalists made a personal choice not to disclose this information (Detector Media, 2017).

Oleksiy Pogorelov, a member of the board of the National Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine, emphasizes that compliance with journalistic standards depends on the level of professional training of both journalists and editors. In his opinion, basic ethical standards are the foundation on which additional requirements can be built, given the martial law in Ukraine. This

position was supported by Anastasia Stanko, who believes that established ethical principles cannot be transformed even in critical conditions. She compared the situation to a car accident, noting that it is unethical to show a person unacceptably, just as it is unethical to show a military officer in a way that may violate his or her dignity (Detector Media, 2017).

Accordingly, on the one hand, this means increased requirements for professional ethics, as journalists are forced to deal with complex moral issues: how to publish shocking footage without traumatizing the audience, how to truthfully cover military losses without undermining the morale of society, and how to avoid hate speech and propaganda while remaining objective in the face of strong emotions.

On the other hand, they face an equally important challenge - ensuring their own physical safety in war zones, which is crucial to fulfilling their professional mission. Specialized organizations are being created to support journalists in the extraordinary conditions of war. One of them is the 2402 Foundation, founded in the first days of the full-scale invasion. Its activities are aimed at training journalists in first aid skills and rules of conduct in combat zones. This ensures their confidence in their actions (while also ensuring ethical standards) and allows newsrooms to receive accurate and responsible information. As the number of journalists at the front increases, the organization helps prepare them to work in difficult conditions (2402 Foundation, n.d.).

The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU), with the support of international allies, has established Journalistic Solidarity Centers that organize and conduct training and other educational activities to help journalists do their jobs in the face of war. They focus on topics such as safety in combat and occupation, radiation safety, fact-checking, the work of fixers, and more. In addition, the centers provide legal, technical, psychological, and medical assistance (National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, n.d.).

Thus, in the context of war, the role of a journalist changes from an “observer” to a “chronicler”. Journalists are forced to deal with ethical issues regarding the balance of truth and privacy. At the same time, this change in role requires additional skills, such as ensuring their own safety in war zones and quickly adapting to new realities.

2.6. Telegram’s Role in War Reporting

After February 24, 2022, the problem of obtaining up-to-date information became extremely acute in Ukraine, and rapid news reporting became a priority. This was due not only to the speed of informing about events, as the media were not always available, but also to several situations: the occupation of territories and the shutdown of Ukrainian television and communication networks,

blackouts, and the complete absence of information space, information warfare, and the need (especially in the temporarily occupied territories) for alternative sources of information. As Telegram channels have functions of creating inner chats, they also became an essential communication tool between citizens within cities to help each other in difficult times. For this reason, the Telegram platform, which was already a powerful communicator in Ukraine, began to develop more rapidly, taking the place of a leading information and communication channel.

After a year of functioning, Telegram, which was developed by Russian developer Pavlo Durov in 2013 as a pilot project, began to overtake WhatsApp, the most widely used messaging app at the time, and expand throughout numerous nations. The founder of Telegram claimed that it was the safest messenger that existed. As a result, its user base expanded quickly in nations with restricted or blocked access to free media. In particular, this messenger served as a tool for opposition movements in Belarus and Iran during a specific time (Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute NGO, 2023, p. 13).

Since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion, the audience of the Ukrainian segment on Telegram has grown considerably. Based on the findings of the survey by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) in December 2022 at the request of the Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute (UMCI), 63.3% of Ukrainians began subscribing to and reading Telegram channels to receive news after 24 February 2022, whilst before the full-scale invasion the high was only 35.9% (Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute NGO, 2023, p. 4).

NGO “Ukrainian Institute of Media and Communication” presented the results of the study conducted in 2022 “How million-dollar telegram channels function and win the audience”. Based on the results, a list of the 10 most popular Telegram channels was compiled (Zmina Human Rights Centre, 2023):

- “Trukha Ukraine” (“Труха Україна”)
- Local or localized Telegram channels (without a specific name)
- “News of Ukraine | War” (“Новини України | Війна”)
- Zelenskiy Official
- TSN.News / TSN.ua (ТСН.Новини / ТСН.ua)
- “Ukraine Online” (“Україна Online”)
- “Ukraine 24/7” (“Україна 24/7”)
- “Lachen writes” (“Лачен пише”)
- “Ukraine 24 (“Україна 24”)
- “Ukraine NOW (“Україна NOW”)

To quickly access important information about events occurring in the country, the media users have also changed their information sources priorities. Despite that “Unified Telethon” in the first months of the invasion played a crucial role, despite that Ukrainians shifted to social media (Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute NGO, 2023, p. 12).

With over 735,000 subscribers, Telegram is frequently the first platform where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyi shares his daily video addresses, news about prisoner exchanges, and government changes. While civilian volunteers utilize the app to raise money for drones and other equipment, Ukrainian brigades put slick combat videos and drone footage of attacks on Russian forces to boost national morale and help in recruitment (Ivanova & Miller, 2024).

Telegram allows publishing information in a few clicks, which, together with the platform’s user-friendly interface, allows a wide range of people to use it, regardless of their level of technical knowledge. This accessibility of the platform allows all users to choose from a large number of Telegram channels to subscribe to, according to their information needs.

This encouraged media organizations to adapt to the new realities and develop their Telegram channels, among which the most popular are the official pages of such media outlets as TSN (@TSN_UA), UNIAN (@unian_net), Ukrainska Pravda (@ukrpravda_news), Hromadske TV (@HromadskeUA), Radio Liberty Ukraine (@radiosvoboda) and BBC News Ukraine (@BBC_ua). Channel 24 (@channel24), Liga.net (@liga_net), Novoe Vremya (@novoe_vremya), and Detector Media (@detector_media) also play an important role in providing information space.

The platform also allows you to create your own Telegram channels to spread news, share experiences, or organize assistance. In addition to official channels, such as the Office of the President of Ukraine, representatives of the Main Intelligence Directorate or the Armed Forces of Ukraine, or large media companies, personal channels of citizens, journalists, and bloggers have become widespread. This has contributed to the formation of a decentralized information space where news can be disseminated without censorship.

On the one hand, this freedom supports the principles of freedom of speech by creating a platform for alternative sources of information. However, the absence of Telegram moderation creates significant risks: the spread of disinformation, fake news, and propaganda. Pro-Russian sources actively use these opportunities to spread destructive narratives and manipulate public opinion.

An article published by the Global Investigative Journalism Network analyzes the role of Telegram in modern investigative journalism and disinformation research. Jane Lytvynenko, an investigative journalist and disinformation expert, noted during a webinar of this organization that

Telegram does not restrict or censor content containing scenes of violence and cruelty, which makes it a convenient platform for the rapid transmission of any information and it provides journalists with the largest amount of data of all social networks (Global Investigative Journalism Network, 2024).

As disinformation grew during the war, Telegram became an important source of information for journalists, but also a platform for spreading false narratives. To work more effectively with content when new realities give rise to even more disinformation, journalists use third-party tools to help analyze data from Telegram channels and chats. As noted in the article, services such as “TGStat” and “Telemetr” provide an opportunity to track audience dynamics, analyze the popularity of publications, and identify potentially manipulative or disinformation channels (Global Investigative Journalism Network, 2024).

While modern tools allow journalists to analyze content on Telegram, they don't solve the problem that is fundamental to the platform: the anonymity of channels. This anonymity, which simplifies the dissemination of any information, at the same time makes the work of independent journalists much more difficult. The lack of knowledge of the real owners of such channels and the absence of legal mechanisms to regulate their activities prevent them from disproving disinformation and protecting the reputation of journalists and media.

The anonymity of Telegram channels, which has become one of the key factors of their popularity, at the same time creates serious challenges for the work of independent journalists. The lack of transparency about the owners of such channels and their responsibility for the information they publish makes it difficult to deny defamation or counter disinformation in the legal field. This is especially critical when anonymous channels become tools for discrediting media outlets and experts, creating a negative attitude towards them in society. For example, journalist Yuriy Nikolov emphasizes the difficulty of proving in court the falsity of accusations spread by anonymous Telegram channels due to their lack of transparency. This jeopardizes the reputation of independent journalists and anti-corruption activists (Detector Media, 2024).

A similar situation was witnessed with “Detector Media”, which was accused of collaborating with opposition politicians and “information campaigns” against the President. Anonymous channels were also used to attack the IMI director, Oksana Romaniuk, and the editor-in-chief of “Ukrainska Pravda”, Sevgil Musayeva, making unfounded accusations about their professional activities and personal motives (Detector Media, 2024).

Telegram has also evolved into a platform for sharing personal data in various contexts. During the first week of the invasion, certain types of channels appeared to assist people in locating

missing relatives. In addition to covering a wide range of war-related subjects and areas, Telegram has evolved into a platform where certain war activities are conducted (Nazaruk, 2022, p. 220).

One of the most popular features of Telegram is bot services that inform the public about air threats in a real-time. These bots provide timely alerts about missile strikes, drone flights, or other dangers, allowing citizens to react quickly. Thus, Telegram has turned into a multifunctional tool for informing and ensuring security in times of war. Some of the most popular Telegram bots are: Air Alert Bot (@air_alert_ua_bot), Alerts in Ukraine Bot (@alerts_in_ua_bot), Radar Bot (@radar_bot), Air Shield-Bot (@airshield_bot).

However, the rapid spread of information comes with a significant threat: the inability to respond quickly to the dissemination of prohibited information under martial law. Due to insufficient moderation, images and videos of drones or missiles are often shared without censorship, which enables the enemy to adjust their next strike immediately.

Considering this, crowdsourced intelligence enforces strict rules against sharing sensitive information. It is not permitted to disclose specifics regarding the locations of Ukrainian military forces or their movements, nor is any information about the outcomes of Russian missile strikes allowed before official announcements are made (Nazaruk, 2022, p. 220).

Telegram provides extensive opportunities for both citizens and journalists. However, along with its accessibility, convenience, and speed, the platform is becoming a center for the spread of disinformation, which in turn undermines the work of professional journalists. The platform also contributes to the devaluation of journalistic work, as readers increasingly choose to receive information from unverified Telegram channels that publish news faster, but not always reliably. It changes traditional journalism: journalists need not only to search for news but also to analyze a large amount of information from the audience, separating facts from rumors or misinformation.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis aims to analyze Ukrainian journalism from the perspective of the transformations that took place during the post-Soviet period and are taking place currently, in the context of the Russian full-scale invasion. The conclusions are intended to reflect the main findings of the research and provide insights into possible future changes in Ukrainian journalism, in particular after the victory, as it will mark a turning point in the country's history.

a. Historical and socio-political transformations of Ukrainian media

Ukrainian journalism has faced significant changes over the past 10 years with the start of the Revolution of Dignity. These transformations correspond to the characteristics of historical and, accordingly, political and social changes in post-Soviet countries. This is characterized, first of all, by the long-lasting authoritarian control of the authorities over the media and the established censorship by both the state and the closely connected player - the oligarchs. The prolonged control built a wall between the government, the media, and society, which prevented citizens from making decisions on important issues in the country, as they were based on persistent manipulation, concealing of real facts, and pro-Russian narratives. Journalists were limited in their ability and tools to cover truthful information. However, the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity were the main critical points in changing the role of journalism. These events changed the course of the country's development and consequently transformed the Ukrainian media landscape into a more stable structure with more independent media, pluralism of opinions, and public trust. But in contrast to the direct successor of the USSR, i.e. Russia, Ukraine managed to build relations between the three " players": government, media, and society. This relationship is not firmly established, given the new defining stage in the history of the country, albeit it has laid an essential foundation for future development.

b. Evolving role and concept of journalism during the full-scale invasion

With the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022, journalism took on new functions and more strict requirements in terms of responsibility. In the context of the fight against disinformation and active information warfare, journalists were forced to adapt to new standards and features of the profession. They have been given the role of informing not only Ukrainians but also the whole world about the events in the country since the first days of the invasion. This creates new challenges when a journalist has to choose his or her position - a professional who has to cover

events neutrally, or a patriot who wants to draw as much attention to certain aspects as possible. The media landscape of 2022 managed to mobilize the whole country, making it overlook controversies in the government and focus on one main enemy. Accordingly, journalism should adapt to the topics that are relevant to citizens (in the context of today, these are: the future of Ukrainian borders, the victory plan, and cooperation with European international organizations), but the problems of war remain one of the everyday topics in the news.

c. Censorship and freedom of speech during the conflict.

The martial law in Ukraine has changed the range of topics that can or cannot be covered and the corresponding restrictions in the context of censorship. This is consistent with the experience of foreign media in military conflicts, as censorship issues are accompanied by ethical and security dilemmas in a situation where any published material can be used by the enemy. In wartime, a thin line between censorship and freedom of speech becomes critical to preserving democratic values. Restrictions may be motivated by security needs, but their duration and transparency should be regulated to avoid undue control and conflicts between the military and political leadership and the media.

d. Potential scenarios for the future of Ukrainian journalism in the post-war period

Taking into account the experience of Ukrainian journalism in the past and present, its future lies in progressive development. A distinctive characteristic of the Ukrainian media throughout history has been the desire for independence and the building of a democratic society. The end of the war in Ukraine may come with several challenges including changes in authorities, the implementation of new laws that might limit the media's freedom of speech, mistrust from citizens, and economic difficulties in reconstructing the country and financing specific projects. However, Ukrainian journalism has shown adaptability and persistence, adapting to the many challenges it has faced in recent decades. Based on such experience, we can suggest that Ukrainian journalism will be able to find effective models of work even in the post-war period. However, the future will depend on the media's ability to maintain its independence, develop further in such aspects as digital platforms, and international journalism, and balance between freedom of expression and security in the face of a complex political and social climate.

The results of the research provide a deeper understanding of the development of journalism in Ukraine in the context of post-soviet influence, as well as an analysis of contemporary phenomena such as "embedded journalism", journalism of conflict, and the transforming role of the

media in the context of both information and armed war in the 21st century. The study opens up new perspectives for understanding the adaptation of journalism to modern challenges and its impact on shaping public opinion and maintaining social resilience during military conflict.

e. Future directions for research

The research findings indicate the need for further analysis of such aspects as the use of the latest digital platforms for informational manipulation, the spread of disinformation in times of war, and the impact of these processes on the formation of trust in the media in the post-conflict period.

For instance, a more in-depth study of pro-Russian propaganda and Russian influence through the media can be conducted. Such an approach would allow for a more detailed analysis of the mechanisms of influence, channels of propaganda, and their impact on public perception. A further direction would be to study the spread of propaganda and disinformation through modern digital platforms such as Telegram. The ongoing war in Ukraine serves as an example of how Telegram became spread as a source of up-to-the-minute information, but it was also developed into a platform for mass manipulation, fake news, and psychological operations (PSYOP). This subject is extremely relevant, as it reflects the current tendencies in the use of media during military conflicts. Thus, further research in this area can contribute to understanding the impact of the information space on society during the war, as well as contribute to the development of strategies to counter propaganda and disinformation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview with Respondent 1 (Brian Bonner, conducted on October 18, 2024)

Question: It feels strange, though, that international media gets more information than Ukrainian journalists. Can this lead to a decrease in trust the Ukrainian media?

Response: “Every time there’s a major international event, like the war or revolutions, there’s a surge in international interest. But after that, it fades away. One reason the government prefers talking to international media is that those journalists don’t know as much about Ukraine. They won’t ask the tough questions about corruption.

This is called “access journalism” - if you want an interview with Zelensky, you need to be from a big, influential outlet, and they have to trust you. Ukrainian outlets don’t qualify for this kind of access, and the government isn’t open to criticism.

Ukrainian journalists aren’t going anywhere. There’s no substitute for them. International journalists come and go, but Ukrainian journalists are the ones who know the details about the roads, the neighborhoods, and the Defense Ministry - things that Ukrainians care deeply about. Ukrainian journalism will still be essential, especially because the country doesn’t speak English as its main language”.

Question: It seems like a tactic. The Ukrainian media doesn’t get access, but international media does because they reach a wider audience. Is that right?

Response: “Yes, it’s a tactic, but also a good strategy. The government knows that America and Europe are funding Ukraine, so they need to be talking to international media. It’s frustrating for Ukrainian journalists because they don’t get the same access, but international journalists don’t have the same knowledge of Ukraine. Being Ukrainian gives you a unique understanding of the country that international journalists don’t have”.

Appendix B: Interview with Respondent 2 (Alya Shandra conducted on November 7, 2024)

The following appendices include full transcripts of interviews conducted in Ukrainian. All translations are provided by the author and were used in the thesis to support key arguments. Selected excerpts from this interview were used in the main body of the thesis to support key arguments.

Question: How do you assess the transformation of Ukrainian journalism since the Revolution of Dignity?

Response (in Ukrainian): "За останні 10 років відбулося справді дуже багато змін в українських медіа. Треба, мабуть, почати з того, що медіа – це надважлива складова демократична суспільства. Від них залежить, чи люди взагалі будуть мати достатньо інформації, щоб обирати собі владу, яка буде їм підзвітна і тримати її підзвітно. Це абсолютно ключове для демократії - мати незалежні медіа. Якщо на початку Майдану, у 2013 рік, я пам'ятаю, що це поле було домінноване лігархічними медіа, домінноване медією, в якій важко було взагалі сказати, важко було дізнатися про ситуацію в країні. Незалежних джерел було дуже мало".

Translated response (translated by the author): "Over the past 10 years, Ukrainian media have undergone significant changes. Media are an essential component of a democratic society. They determine whether people have sufficient information to elect accountable authorities and keep them accountable. This is crucial for democracy - to have independent media. At the beginning of Euromaidan in 2013, I remember that this field was dominated by oligarchic media, where it was difficult to get a clear picture of the situation in the country. Independent sources were very scarce".

Question: What challenges did Ukrainian journalists face during the transformation?

Original response (in Ukrainian): "Маю на увазі, тоді теж тягнулося, що багато каналів були у власності олігархів. Так, звісно. Мало того, багато каналів були такими проросійськими рупорами. Були великі можливості для російських інформаційних операцій, російського культурного впливу. Це була тотальна домінація, це була орієнтація на Москву. Савік Шустер, були канали, "Інтер" навіть, всі ці Медведчуківські канали, то що після Майдану, "112", "NewsOne". Теж були величезними такими операціями, каналами впливу Росії. Важко взагалі уявити після цих 10 років, наскільки проросійською була наша країна, наскільки вона була в

російській тіні і мислила себе як частиною російського інформаційного простору. Українські там журналісти, вони просто тупо брали там новини з російських сайтів і перепощували. Тобто з російських новинних агентств. Таке явище, як, наприклад, міжнародна журналістика, вона просто була неіснуючим. Наприклад, "Європейська правда", як виникла в 2014 році, вона вирішила, що пора вже якось самостійно мислити, самостійно дивитись на світ, на процеси, які відбуваються в світі".

Translated response (translated by the author):
"But back then, many channels were also owned by oligarchs. Moreover, many channels acted as pro-Russian mouthpieces. There were significant opportunities for Russian information operations and cultural influence. It was a total dominance, a complete orientation toward Moscow. Savik Shuster, there were channels, even "Inter", all those Medvedchuk-owned channels like "112", and "NewsOne". These were huge operations, and channels of Russian influence. It is hard to imagine now, after these 10 years, just how pro-Russian our country was back then, how deeply it existed in Russia's shadow and perceived itself as part of the Russian information space. Ukrainian journalists would simply take news from Russian websites and repost it — essentially from Russian news agencies. The concept of international journalism, for instance, simply did not exist. For example, when "Yevropeiska Pravda" was founded in 2014, it marked a turning point, deciding that it was time to think independently and look at the world and the processes happening within it from a Ukrainian perspective".

Topic: The role of the "United Telethon" in 2022

Original response (in Ukrainian):
"Ви правильно сказали, що на початку 2022 року все було дуже райдожно, був телемарафон, і українці були впевнені, що вони виграють. Це було через те, що було таке інформаційне поле викривлене, скажімо так, дуже оптимістичне. Але подивіться, до чого воно призвело. Це призвело до того, що з того часу українці отримали такий заряд впевненості в тому, що вони можуть виграти. На цьому заряді впевненості вони робили дива. Коли суспільство було злагаджене, коли українці вірили в те, що вони можуть, взагалі росіян, свої території вигнати. Відбулася і Харківська операція, і Херсонська операція. Це не могло б відбутися без злагодженності, без високого бойового духу українців. Ми можемо дійсно казати, що це був телемарафон, ось влада зробила монопольний контроль над інформаційним простором, і тому було таке викривлене спільняття українцями своїх сил. І зараз ми бачимо, що насправді

сили наші не такі великі. Можна розглядати це з такого боку, а можна розглядати навпаки телемарафон як частина українського суспільства, як відображення такого певного загального тренду. ”

Translated response (translated by the author):

“You are correct in saying that at the beginning of 2022, everything seemed very optimistic. There was the Unified Telethon, and Ukrainians were confident that they would win. This was because the information space was, let’s say, somewhat distorted - overly optimistic. But look at what it led to. It resulted in Ukrainians gaining a powerful boost of confidence that they could win. With this surge of confidence, they achieved remarkable things. When society was united, when Ukrainians believed that they could, they were able to push the Russians out of their territories. Both the Kharkiv and Kherson operations took place. These achievements could not have happened without cohesion and the high fighting spirit of Ukrainians. We can indeed say that the Unified Telethon played a role in this. The government established a monopoly over the information space, which led to a somewhat distorted perception of Ukrainians' strength. And now we see that, in reality, our strength is not as great as we thought. This can be viewed in two ways: either as a distortion or alternatively, as the Telethon being a part of Ukrainian society, reflecting a broader general trend”.

Topic: The concept of “Anomy” and its reversal during critical societal events

Original response (in Ukrainian):

“Anomy reverseal - це коли раптово суспільство починає вірити у щось, вірити у себе. Воно перестає бути пасивним і починає вірити в ідеали. Починає вірити в те, що воно може досягти цих ідеалів. Українське суспільство постсердянське, воно дуже пасивне характеризувалося. Цей сплесок відбувся під час Майдану. І цей сплесок відбувся на початку війни. Українці, коли виникає загроза, що вони втратять те, що вони мають, раптово починають розуміти, що взагалі-то Україна - це важливо. Це суспільство, що ми будуємо - це важливо. Наша історія - це важливо. Наша влада - це важливо. Під час війни всі раптово повірили, що ми виграємо, Україна буде краще. Так, здається якась така впевненість, що завтра буде краще, що Україна йде в правильному напрямку. На початку війни всі переконані, що все йде в правильному напрямку. Чому? Тому що Україна бореться за себе, за свою свободу.”

Translated response (translated by the author):

“Anomy reversal is when a society suddenly begins to believe in something, to believe in itself. It

stops being passive and starts believing in ideals. It starts to believe that it can achieve those ideals. Ukrainian society, characterized by its post-Soviet mentality, had long been marked by passivity. This surge of belief occurred during the Euromaidan and again at the beginning of the war. When faced with the threat of losing what they have, Ukrainians suddenly begin to realize that Ukraine is important. The society we are building is important. Our history is important. Our government is important. During the war, everyone suddenly believed that we would win and that Ukraine would be better. There was this sense of confidence that tomorrow would be better, that Ukraine was moving in the right direction. At the beginning of the war, everyone was convinced that everything was going in the right direction. Why? Because Ukraine was fighting for itself, for its freedom".

Appendix C: Interview with Respondent 3 (Kateryna Sergatskova conducted on November 12, 2024)

The following appendices include full transcripts of interviews conducted in Ukrainian. All translations are provided by the author and were used in the thesis to support key arguments. Selected excerpts from this interview were used in the main body of the thesis to support key arguments.

Topic: Media rhetoric shaped by state policies

Original response (in Ukrainian):

“Риторика медіа під час війни формується не самими журналістами чи редакціями, а переважно державними органами, які відповідають на суспільні запити. Журналісти намагаються знайти відповіді на важливі питання, які хвилюють суспільство, наприклад: “Що відбувається на лінії фронту?”, “Яка ситуація у містах, де проживають внутрішньо переміщені особи?”. Саме ці запитання визначають тематику та зміст медійного контенту”.

Translated response (translated by the author):

“Journalists attempt to answer key questions that concern society, such as: “What is happening on the front line?” or “What is the situation in cities hosting internally displaced persons? ” These questions define the topics and content of media materials.”

Topic: State-controlled communication strategy and its impact

Original response (in Ukrainian):

“Держава, зі свого боку, обирає певну концепцію взаємодії з медіа та суспільством. Під час війни, коли проблем значно більше, ніж можна оперативно вирішити, комунікаційна стратегія фокусується на менш проблемних аспектах. Мета - створити позитивне враження і знизити рівень занепокоєння. Наприклад, замість висвітлення критичних ситуацій на фронті, акцент робиться на успішних аспектах реорганізації збройних сил України або інших сферах, щоб “заспокоїти” аудиторію та створити враження, що ситуація не є настільки катастрофічною, як здається”.

Translated response (translated by the author):

“The state, on the other hand, chooses a specific concept for interacting with the media and society. During wartime, when there are significantly more problems that can be promptly resolved, the

communication strategy focuses on less problematic aspects. The goal is to create a positive impression and reduce public anxiety. For instance, instead of highlighting critical situations on the front line, the emphasis is placed on successful aspects of the reorganization of Ukraine's armed forces or other areas, to "reassure" the audience and create the impression that the situation is not as catastrophic as it might seem."

Topic: Challenges faced by journalists

Original response (in Ukrainian):

"Свобода слова часто суперечить інформаційній концепції, впровадженій державними органами в умовах війни. Журналісти, які прагнуть висвітлювати суспільно важливі теми, нерідко ризикують, що робить цю професію однією з найбільш небезпечних у світі. Якщо діяльність журналістів стає невигідною для влади, вони можуть зіткнутися з різкими відповідями, обмеженням доступу до інформації або виключенням із комунікаційних заходів. Зокрема, під час президентства Володимира Зеленського Офіс Президента запровадив практику запрошень на прес-конференції, що замінило вільний доступ журналістів до таких подій. Крім того, спостерігаються випадки залякування журналістів. Один із наймасштабніших кейсів припадає на 2023–2024 роки, коли Служба безпеки України (СБУ) викликала сотні журналістів на так звані "інтерв'ю". У цих ситуаціях представники СБУ намагалися дізнатися, над якими матеріалами працюють журналісти, з ким співпрацюють і з якими міжнародними медіа взаємодіють. Деяких із них змушували проходити поліграф і надавати конфіденційну інформацію. Подібні дії були обґрунтовані умовами війни, що, своєю чергою, сприяло їхньому поступовому нормалізуванню. Ще однією формою тиску є обмеження доступу до зони бойових дій. Наприклад, чоловіків-журналістів можуть попереджати про можливість призову до лав Збройних сил України, якщо вони працюють без супроводу військових. Також журналістам можуть відмовити в поновленні акредитації або заборонити проводити опитування на місцях, створюючи для них небезпечні умови. Такі явища є поширеними і застосовуються на різних рівнях. Наприклад, на рівні району чи селища місцева влада може відмовити журналісту в доступі до місця злочину, обґрунтовуючи це відсутністю прес-карти чи акредитації. Таким чином, створюються своєрідні "фільтри", які обмежують свободу журналістської діяльності".

Translated response (translated by the author):

“Additionally, there have been instances of journalists being intimidated. One of the most significant cases occurred in 2023–2024 when the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) summoned hundreds of journalists for so-called "interviews." In these situations, SBU representatives sought information about the journalists’ ongoing projects, collaborators, and interactions with international media. Some were even forced to take polygraph tests and disclose confidential information. These actions were justified by wartime conditions, contributing to their gradual normalization. Another form of pressure involves restricting access to combat zones. For example, male journalists may be warned about the possibility of conscription into the Armed Forces of Ukraine if they work without military accompany. Journalists may also be denied accreditation renewal or prohibited from conducting on-site surveys, creating hazardous conditions for their work”.

Topic: The impact of the Revolution of Dignity on the media landscape

Original response (in Ukrainian):

“До цього журналістика, пов'язана з висвітленням таких подій, які ми називаємо civil unrest, була маргінальною сферою роботи журналіста. Протестні події були й до Майдану, звісно: це Помаранчева революція та певні інші протести. Але в таких масштабах це стало відбуватися вперше. Власне, на Майдані сталися розстріли — люди загинули, і це вже було чимось, із чим українські журналісти, принаймні більшість із них, не стикалися. Це змінило напрямок розвитку журналістики в Україні, тому що все більше людей почали цікавитися конфліктами, вивчати попередній досвід інших журналістів в інших країнах. Наприклад, вони почали вивчати досвід Арабської весни на Близькому Сході: події в Сирії, Єгипті, Іраку. Також почали досліджувати досвід балканських країн під час громадянської війни, події в Чечні, Дагестані та загалом на Північному Кавказі. До Майдану абсолютна більшість медіапростору, як я сказала, на 95% контролювалася олігархічними структурами - телеканалами, що належали олігархам. Це були люди, які володіли корпораціями, мали своїх представників у Верховній Раді та використовували медіа як засоби впливу на маси. Через Майдан відбулися зміни в політикумі: змінилися еліти. Відповідно, ті, хто раніше контролював медіа й мав величезний вплив на масову свідомість, втратили свої позиції. Таким чином змінився медіаландшафт: стало більше незалежних медіа. Це факт. Багато журналістів відійшли від олігархічних структур. Наприклад, саме таким чином у 2013 році сформувалося “Громадське телебачення” - ще до Майдану. Також з’явилися “Громадське

радіо” та кілька інших медіаорганізацій, які проявили себе як незалежні структури, що працюють на громадян, без впливу бізнесових верхівок”.

Translated response (translated by the author):

“Before this, journalism related to covering events we call civil unrest (civil uprising, public protest, or conflict) was a marginal area of journalistic work. Protest movements did exist before the Maidan, of course, such as the Orange Revolution and some other protests. However, events of this scale occurred for the first time. On the Maidan, shootings took place - people died - and this was something that Ukrainian journalists, at least most of them, had never encountered before. This changed the direction of journalism in Ukraine because more people began to take an interest in conflicts and study the prior experiences of journalists from other countries. For instance, they started to examine the experience of the Arab Spring in the Middle East, including events in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. They also delved into the experiences of Balkan countries during the civil war, as well as the events in Chechnya, Dagestan, and the North Caucasus in general. Before the Maidan, the vast majority of the media space - as I mentioned, about 95% - was controlled by oligarchic structures, specifically TV channels owned by oligarchs. These were individuals who owned corporations, had their representatives in the Verkhovna Rada, and used media as tools of mass influence. As a result of the Maidan, changes occurred in the political system: the elites changed. Accordingly, those who previously controlled the media and had enormous influence over public consciousness lost their positions. Thus, the media landscape changed: more independent media outlets appeared – that is a fact. Many journalists moved away from oligarchic structures. For example, this is how “Hromadske TV” was formed in 2013, even before the Maidan. Additionally, “Hromadske Radio” and several other media organizations emerged, establishing themselves as independent entities working for citizens without the influence of business elites”.