

MISINFORMATION

RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA

There is no person in the world who has not heard about the war taking place on the territory of Ukraine. Thanks to access to the Internet, social media or television, we are kept informed about the situation between the two hostile countries. But how can we be sure we all get the same information?

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is taking place not only in the military dimension, but also in the media.

On March 28 2022, Novaya Gazeta, one of Russia's oldest independent newspapers, announced it was suspending operations until the conclusion of the war in Ukraine. It had just received a second warning for alleged violations of the country's foreign agent law from Roskomnadzor, Russia's federal media censor, which could potentially result in a full shutdown. Since the start of the war, the Russian government has blocked or shut down all remaining independent sources of information in Russia, including the liberal radio station Ekho Moskvy, the television channel TV Rain, and the bilingual news website Meduza.

The Russian government has also blocked Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The latter is a somewhat surprising move, because—unlike Facebook and Twitter, which are used by only around 7 million and 3 million Russians, respectively—Instagram has a following of 38 million, many of whom make their living on the platform.

Russian television is also very important in spreading propaganda. There have been absurd accusations from the Russian TV station Rossiya 1 that has claimed, for example that Ukraine bombs itself. "Judging by the trajectory of the missile, the strike was delivered from the north-west where there are no Russian forces," the presenter says during the 16:00 Moscow time edition of the news 4 hours earlier.* This is just one of many examples of Russian media manipulation during the war with Ukraine. The Russian media tend to discredit everything that is valuable to Ukrainians, they discriminate against leaders, they disorganize social life through imaginary facts and events penetrating the Ukrainian elite in search of sensation and ridiculing European cultures and traditions.



Today, Russia uses several manipulative techniques including the propaganda and information war. The usual method of this information warfare is to unleash disinformation or present information in a way favorable to the aggressor. These methods allow distortion assessment of what is happening, while demoralization of citizens (potentially) provides transitions to the aggressor's side information.

Increasing numbers of younger Russians tend to get their news from independent websites or social media, and the longer the war goes on, the more images and videos of dead soldiers and prisoners of war are surfacing. But the authorities are responding to this and turning the screws on independent reporting.

