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ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE US PRINTED MEDIA IN THE INFORMATION WAR BETWEEN THE USA AND RUSSIA

The article is devoted to the consideration of methods and ways of conducting information war by the US media against the Russian Federation over the past few years. On the example of publications about President Donald Trump's links with Russia, it's possible to trace a traditional tendency to use the image of Russia as the main adversary (the so-called "enemy image"), which undermines the interests of American democracy. Under pressure from representatives of political elites and lobbyists, the US media systematically form a negative image of Russia, hindering the development of positive diplomatic, economic and political relations between the two strongest countries in the world. The authors of the study used the system-analytical method, the method of analogies, the method of content analysis and the historical-analytical method.

Key words: *USA, Russia, information, Trump, cooperation.*

Twelve years ago, the newspaper *The New York Times* ("New York Times") of 10.21.2007 published an article entitled "What's russian for 'hacker'?" by Clifford Levy, journalist and chef of the New York Times Moscow bureau, who lived and worked in Russia from 2007 to 2011. In his article, Clifford Levy wrote: "Russia has become a leading source of Internet ills, home to legions of high-tech rogues who operate with seeming impunity from the anonymous living rooms of Novosibirsk or the shadowy cybercafes of St. Petersburg) [3. P. 4]".

The journalist with full confidence declared a threat to the Internet space coming from Russian users. The only argument is the fame of the Russian system of teaching exact sciences and mathematics, as well as the indisputable conviction that only dishonest people and fraudsters live in Russia.

Among other things, other countries in the post-Soviet space from the Czech Republic to Ukraine and Kazakhstan were also named “Internet hacks.”

“Internet security experts say that only the United States and China rival Russia in hacker activity. But Russia has only 28 million Internet users, according to rough estimates, compared with 210 million in the United States and 150 million in China, meaning that Russia has a higher percentage of scammers,” [3. P. 4] the journalist wrote.

It remains to be concluded that the above article, published in the well-known quality publication *The New York Times*, can be considered the starting point of the process of disseminating views about cyber attacks by “Russian hackers.” However, in 2007, journalists considered Russian hackers to be a kind of a layer independent from the government, which acts of “heroic” motivation and ruins the lives of world companies. Today, we see a completely different situation, examples of which are also found in the US press, actively promoting this point of view.

The 2016 presidential elections in the United States traditionally became a point of hard confrontation between the Republicans and the Democrats. When the interests of the two parties and two candidates collide, practically any method of increasing own popularity and denigrating the opponent in the framework of the election campaign is used. The election campaign of candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton became the most talked about all over the world, even among the ordinary citizens.

According to the election results, the Republican candidate Donald Trump won. This event was, to say the least, shocking for many voters and caused a huge number of protests of the American population. Representatives of the Democratic Party led by Hillary Clinton could not come to terms with the defeat. Press publications about the election fraud and the interference of Russia and its government began to appear more and more often. In this situation, the American media recalled the concept of “Russian hackers”, that had been forgotten until then, united it with the activities of the Russian government in order to once again find the detested country guilty.

In May 2016, representatives of the US Democratic Party announced that their mail servers had been hacked and turned to CrowdStrike, an IT company, headed by Dmitry Alperovich, a native of Russia, whose companies in a year gained world fame [1].

Following the investigation, Dmitry Alperovich’s company provided a report that indicated that Russian special services: the FSB (Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation) and the GRU (General Directorate of the General Staff The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, better known by its former name: Main Intelligence Directorate) were responsible for hacking the mail servers of the party fellows of the US Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

The findings of CrowdStrike were subsequently repeatedly referred to by the officials and journalists who were happy to pick up the idea of finding the cul-

prits. At the same time, apart from the company's employees, no one worked with the Democratic Party computers (including the US special services).

However, it soon became clear that the data provided by CrowdStrike cannot be considered reliable. According to the American expert Jeffrey Carr, author of the book "Cyberwar from the Inside," CrowdStrike "became known to a greater extent not through their reports, which can only be called caricature" [1].

Russian information security expert Alexei Lukatsky in an interview with *Kommersant* noted that initially many experts both in Russia and in the West were surprised by "the manicism with which the company founded by former Muscovite Dmitry Alperovich accused Russia of attacking the US resources" [1].

Taking the idea of intervention by Russian hackers, sponsored by the government and special services of Russia, the US media filled the information space with publications about President Donald Trump's links with Russia. Donald Trump himself was also attacked by both the press, the American Congress and even a certain number of voters.

An article by journalist Michael McFaul in *The Washington Post* confirms the position of the American media about the full confidence of the society and the authorities about Russia's intervention in the US presidential election and their view of this fact as a violation of sovereignty. "As FBI Director James B. Comey described on Monday (20.03.2017), the Russians 'were unusually loud in their intervention,' violating our sovereignty by meddling in one of our most sacred acts as a democracy and not seeming to care if they were exposed. The Russian theft and then publication of private data from the Democratic National Committee and Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta produced a significant impact on our electoral process. Clinton's image was damaged continuously by daily media coverage of these stolen emails. Of course, many factors combined to produce Trump's victory, but Putin's intervention most certainly played a contributing role [7]."

Again, Russia and the government, headed by President Vladimir Putin, are accused of interfering and waging hacking attacks on the American presidential elections, without presenting any evidence of criminal activity or vote rigging. Like ten years ago, the main tactics are unsubstantiated accusations. US media actively and repeatedly express the same thoughts and come out with outright insinuations. This method has repeatedly brought its results, and the press has repeatedly become a weapon in the hands of the American authorities.

Especially surprising are the articles in such high-quality publications as *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and other oldest newspapers with a rich history, that once proclaimed a course of serving people and cited the right of all citizens to receive reliable information. In fact, these publications are losing their objectivity and are being transformed into global tabloids.

Journalist Kent Harrington in his article for *Project Syndicate* also categorically declared that the Russian government intervened in the US presidential

election, but described it as from another side of the issue: vulnerability of the US citizens to external media manifestations.

“Russian President Vladimir Putin’s intelligence operatives chose wisely in mounting their social media attack. Facebook hosts nearly 80% of all mobile social media traffic, while Google accounts for close to 90% of all online-search-related advertising. By inundating these two platforms with automated messages from tens of thousands of bogus user accounts, Russia was able to stoke discord along economic, racial, and political lines [6]”.

“Still, Russia’s success in targeting American voters with bogus news could not have succeeded were it not for the second problem: a poorly educated electorate susceptible to manipulation. The erosion of civics education in schools, the shuttering of local newspapers – and the consequent decline in the public’s understanding of issues and the political process – conspire to create fertile ground for the sowing of disinformation [6]”.

The author of the article says that the intervention of the Russian government headed by President Vladimir Putin in the 2016 elections is a historic event for the American democratic system. But it is also emphasized that such event is a symptom of more serious problems in America, whose society does not fully understand its own political system. The problem, according to Kent Harrington, lies in the uneducated generation of the young electorate, who is most affected by social networks and who completely lacks understanding of the fundamentals of citizenship.

The new president of the United States, Donald Trump, who does not want to acknowledge the press statements about Russia’s intervention, is also under attack from the media and ordinary Americans. Jennifer Rubin in his article for *The Washington Post* calls President an “easy prey for Russia”. “President Trump’s authoritarianism, narcissism and racism threaten our democracy, but his gullibility threatens our national security. A man so uneducated and incurious about the world is willing, like his followers, to buy any crackpot conspiracy theory that makes its way to him via the Infowars... On the world stage, that makes him a sitting duck for slick manipulators and experienced flatterers [5]”.

Jennifer Rubin repeats Charles M. Blow in his article “Siding with the Enemy” for *The New York Times*. “The truth here is that we are seeing in real time how the president’s personal paranoia impedes our national policy and our national interests. The uncomfortable fact here is that Trump is pursuing his own interest, not American interests. And, on the question of Russia attacking our elections, Trump and Putin’s interest align against the facts and against America. That alone is beyond inexcusable. Trump is betraying this country by trying to curry favor with his new comrade [2]”.

The flow of information (or rather, misinformation) about Russia’s “interference” in the presidential election has been going on since the end of 2016. For nearly three years, US officials have spoken on this topic through the media, with-

out finding objective arguments, much less evidence. One can recall the events in South Ossetia in 2008, the events in Ukraine since 2014, and even the years of the Cold War, when typical US methods of waging information wars were visible. As in the Cold War years, the media is assigned the main role in shaping the image of the enemy in the eyes of the public. But today the influence of the media has become even more significant, after all, given the rapid development of the information technologies, information, regardless of its quality, can spread to the entire globe in a matter of minutes. And when the end users of information have to deal with a deliberately low-quality product in the form of political propaganda or outright disinformation, this extremely negatively affects public opinion in general and international communication in particular.

Continuing the topic of international relations, it should be noted that since 1917, Russian-American relations have always been strained, if not difficult. Russia and the United States are two great (nuclear) powers trying to find something in common despite a radically different approach to most issues on the international agenda. Different mentalities, views on politics, and especially on democracy. For representatives of the authorities of the two countries, it has become customary to argue about various issues that arise, to abandon the search for mutually beneficial solutions, to be in constant confrontation and completely avoid cooperation. And if Russia is trying to come to a common denominator and find common ground for mutual interests based on the principles of equality in relations, such approach is unacceptable for the United States.

It is therefore not surprising that the American political elite did not accept the new president Donald Trump (again choosing the method of accusations and false conclusions), who repeatedly pointed out to the need to restore cooperation with Russia. In addition to the information about "Russia's aggression," which is so popular in the media engaged in nothing more than tricking the audience, information about Trump administration's and President's personal collusion with the Russian government to achieve victory in the elections has been actively promoted.

Like any information about Russia, advantageous to the political elite of the United States, facts usually play no role in it; only repetition of allegations is important.

The official line was quite predictable, it was only necessary to introduce it in the media: the Russian government headed by President Vladimir Putin ensured Trump's victory in the elections. As always, everything connected with Russia had the effect of a bombshell. A huge number of publications in the press and the Internet, mass insanity on the issue of Russian threat and undermining of the sovereignty of the United States. All this was done in order to divert attention from the really important problems.

What really surprises the authors is that Russia is accused of what the United States has been doing for a long time and much more actively, it's enough to recall at least the events in Iraq, Libya and even earlier – in Yugoslavia.

Since Donald Trump during the election campaign advocated the development of good relations with Russia, media representatives found him to be a hidden enemy acting in the interests of the enemy side, who must be eradicated. However, it is possible to read between the lines that the flow of information on the interference in the presidential elections and on the threat to US democracy hides the following facts: positive diplomatic relations with Russia can stop the profitable war launched against it and also deprive the United States of the possibility of maintaining its military superiority.

It can be noted that it was after the defeat of the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton that the media actively promoted the line of intervention of the Russian government and the “Russian hackers” in the 2016 presidential elections. Hillary Clinton explained her defeat in the book “What happened” by the machinations of Russia as the enemy [4]. The American media, in turn, saw this as a gold mine that can be used beyond the defeat of Hillary Clinton in the presidential election.

The other side of the role of the US media is that today they have lost their competitiveness due to the growing popularity of social networks and Internet publications. The once-powerful press propaganda system has fallen into disrepair. And the topic of Russia’s interference in presidential elections and fake news on Facebook gave the media new opportunities with the help of which the press regained a significant market share and renewed popularity.

With the growth of the number of subscribers, the United States media continued to popularize the idea of hacker attacks from Russia, connections of the president’s closest circle with Russian citizens, etc. The image of the country as an enemy of American democracy continues to be used as a pretext for new war crimes and aggression by the United States and NATO.

After the support and accession of the Russian-speaking region of Crimea, Russia’s participation in supporting Syria, the media in every way used the line of “Russian aggression,” which can be used repeatedly. This line is very suitable also for describing the intervention in the US election. Accusations against Russia help to destroy every Russian-American peace initiative. The most obvious examples are the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the INF, ABM Treaty and the discussions that have already begun in the United States about the non-renewal of START-3. Nobody asks about facts or evidence. They are not needed in order to blame anyone of treason (even the US President himself), who at least maintains contacts with Russian officials in the framework of peaceful initiatives and cooperation. It is surprising that few people ask the logical question: who benefits?

One of the negative manifestations of such situation as a whole is the fact that Russia is becoming an enemy not only for the American continent. Russia is accused of interfering in the elections in Europe and surprisingly Russia’s participation in the 2017 Catalan events is not discussed.

Russia as the enemy is the main topic of informational strategy distracting the attention of the world community from the real problems of not only America, but the entire global community.

Information wars that are conducted on a par with armed international conflicts undermine all modern pillars of international law and civilized society. Methods of information wars, aimed at the mass consciousness, harm international relations and destroy any manifestations of cooperation between countries. It upsets that the media are a weapon in the hands of the ruling elites of the states, and do not defend the ordinary citizens. By filling the information space with falsified, unsubstantiated news and publications, the media undermine the trust of the mass audience and fail to fulfill its main function: the provision of reliable information guiding the audience in a changing reality. One can to the opinion that representatives of the mass media have forgotten about the right of the citizens to receive true and truthful information, and that this right is one of the basic human rights. This is not the last example of the negative role of the media in the international processes, which reflect even more negative tendencies: corruption of modern media, incompetence of the journalists, inability to objectively evaluate the situation and so on. It remains to hope for positive changes, which, according to the authors, are still very long to wait for if the current trends maintain.

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