



The Rise of Military Bloggers Amid the Russian-Ukrainian War

Hüseyin Özdemir

The Rise of Military Bloggers Amid the Russian-Ukrainian War

Hüseyin Özdemir

© TRT WORLD RESEARCH CENTRE

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

WRITTEN BY

Hüseyin Özdemir

PUBLISHER

TRT WORLD RESEARCH CENTRE

January 2023

TRT WORLD İSTANBUL

AHMET ADNAN SAYGUN STREET NO:83 34347

ULUS, BEŞİKTAŞ

İSTANBUL / TURKEY

TRT WORLD LONDON

PORTLAND HOUSE

4 GREAT PORTLAND STREET NO:4

LONDON / UNITED KINGDOM

TRT WORLD WASHINGTON D.C.

1819 L STREET NW SUITE 700 20036

WASHINGTON DC

www.trtworld.com

researchcentre.trtworld.com

The opinions expressed in this discussion paper represent the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the TRT World Research Centre.

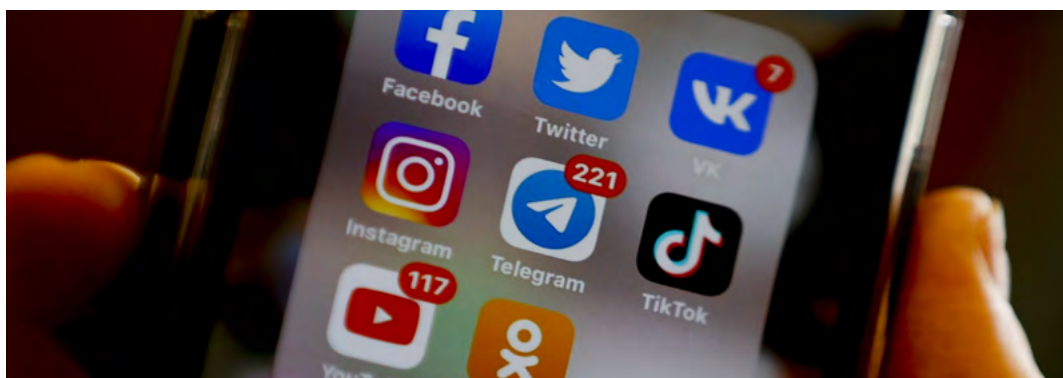
Introduction

Media outlets have agenda-setting power. Through mass media, outlets can impose on the audience what to think about. This agenda-setting power of the media was mentioned for the first time in Maxwell McCombs' and Donald Shaw's article "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media" (1972). This concept is frequently mentioned in media studies. According to Nye (2008, 94-95), this agenda-setting power aims to attract the targeted audience. This attraction is related to how developments are framed in the media. Pan and Kosicki (1993, 56) emphasise that how audiences perceive news can be changed through framing, and therefore framing is important in the news narrative. In authoritarian countries, the power to set the agenda becomes much more important because these countries try to control the media tools, which leads to a monophonic media environment. In cases such as war, especially when nationalist sentiments are brought to the forefront, this monophonic environment prepares the climate for managing public opinion.

With the war launched by Russia on February 24, 2022, it is observed that a monolithic environment has emerged in the Russian television media. Russian state channels tried to explain the reasons for the war and constantly stated that Russia's

military policies were legitimate. Commentators who oppose or criticise the war do not find themselves in the Russian mainstream media. These dissenting voices may face sanctions such as prosecution for their opinions because of the legal arrangements created during the war process. Russian television channels have painted a rosy picture of the special military operation since the first day of the war, leading to the popularisation of alternative news channels. The most popular of these channels is Telegram, a smartphone messaging app. Many Russian pro-war Telegram channels, which have millions of followers, seemed to participate in warmongering at the beginning of the war. Some organised donation campaigns for the Russian army, and many spread their ideas to justify the war. However, after certain military failures, these pro-war channels started to criticise the Defence Ministry. Although these criticisms disturb the Kremlin, the latter has a long track record in handling public opinion, thus tolerating criticism from these Telegram channels.

This discussion paper will examine the rise of pro-war blogging, its role in shaping public opinion, and its alleged links to prominent political players. The paper will also explore the popularity of these blogs, their critical representation of the war, and possible reasons for their continued and relatively unchallenged presence.



(Aytaç Ünal - Anadolu Agency)

What role do pro-war bloggers play?

Many bloggers are located close to the war fronts and share information they have obtained with their followers. They publish detailed military reports and share coordinate information of troops and key locations through maps. These Telegram channels are very popular for international sources who want to follow the Russia-Ukraine war from a Russian perspective. These pro-war bloggers are important because they quickly share the news from the fronts, publish war maps and share their thoughts about the war with their followers from time to time. Their posts "offer a rare insight into Russia's performance on the ground" (Sauer, 2022). According to academic Arkaitz Zu-

biaga, social media offers journalists advantages such as capturing breaking news, sharing eyewitness observations, and direct information from primary sources (2019, p.2). Pro-war Telegram bloggers offer these advantages through their channels. While some bloggers are affiliated with media organisations, others continue their activities independently through Telegram, which can loosely be defined as citizen journalism. These channels, which participate in the gung-ho nationalist drift, support the legitimacy of the war. Therefore, they are often referred to as pro-war bloggers.

Who are these pro-war bloggers?

It is very important for warring parties to obtain fast and reliable news during wartime. Similarly, those who follow the war want easy access to reliable information. In this context, journalistic activities play a key role. Professor John Pavlik says that journalists reporting the Russian-Ukrainian war play "a key role in establishing what society knows or at least believes to be the truth about the war in Ukraine" (2022, p.1).

Millions of civilians in Russia rely on Telegram channels to receive news about the war. These channels address hundreds of thousands of people interested in news from the frontline. However, these channels are often subjective and have entrenched pro-Russian affinities. In addition, the information they share may be questionable or manipulated from time to time. Despite these discrepancies, many Russians want to follow such partisan and biased news because of the rise of nationalism in society (Pavlik, 2022, p.4).

As of January 11, 2023; former member of the press service of the Russian Ministry of Defence Mikhail Zvinchuk's 'Rybar'¹ channel has 1.1 million followers; former Russian Intelligence Colonel Igor (Girkin) Strelkov's 'Srelkov Igor Ivanovic'² channel has 788.000 followers; journalist Ger-

man Kulikovsky's 'Starshe Eddy'³ has 620.000 followers; Maksim Fomin's 'Grey Zone'⁴ channel has 421.000 followers; Yuri Podolyaka's 'Mir Segodnya c Yuri Podolyaka'⁵ channel has 2.8 million followers; Komsomolskaya Pravda's journalist Alexander Kots' 'Kotnews'⁶ channel has 676,000 followers; Rossiya 1 channel presenter Alexander Sladkov's 'Sladkov+7'⁷ channel has 1 million followers; Rossiya 1's correspondent Evgeny Poddubny's 'Poddubnyy ZOV Edition'⁸ channel has 879,000 followers; Russian military correspondent Semyon Pegov's 'Wargonzo'⁹ channel has 1.3 million followers; Russian military analyst Boris Rozhin's 'Colonelcassad'¹⁰ channel has 827.000 followers; Russian militia commander in Donetsk Alexander Khodakovsky's channel¹¹ has 624.000 followers; War blogger Vladimir Grubnik's 'Ghost of Novorossia'¹² channel has 166.000 followers, and the anonymously managed channel 'Reverse Side of the Medal'¹³ has 287,000 followers. Telegram channel 'Readovka'¹⁴, founded by Alexey Kostylev, has 1.5 million followers. Apart from these popular channels, there are many more¹⁵. Some of these channels' administrators are known, while others remain anonymous.

¹ <https://t.me/rybar>

² <https://t.me/strelkovii>

³ <https://t.me/vysokygovorit>

⁴ https://t.me/s/grey_zone

⁵ <https://t.me/yurasumy>

⁶ <https://t.me/sashakots>

⁷ https://t.me/Sladkov_plus

⁸ <https://t.me/epoddubny>

⁹ <https://t.me/wargonzo>

¹⁰ https://t.me/s/boris_rozhin

¹¹ https://t.me/aleksandr_skiif

¹² https://t.me/s/ghost_of_novorossia

¹³ <https://t.me/rsotmdivision>

¹⁴ <https://t.me/readovkanews>

¹⁵ Note that accounts can be deleted, channel names can be changed, and message content can be changed in the Telegram messaging app.

Telegram and citizen journalism

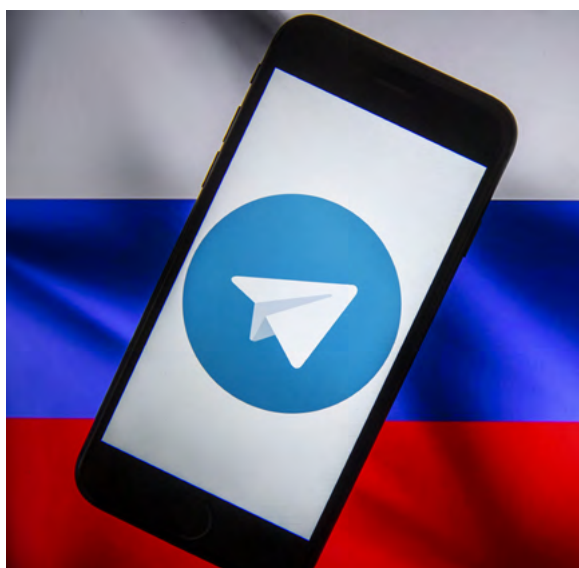
With the technological revolution, the use of smartphones worldwide has led to a new definition of journalism. Forsberg (2001) defines this type of journalism as mobile news journalism, while Campbell (2007) defines it as mobile digital journalism. Pavlik (2001) defines it as mobile journalism, and Wall (2018) defines it as citizen journalism. Of course, these definitions consist of similar parameters: use of the internet, mobility, and decentralised journalists or citizens. All of this is related to online journalism. Social media has changed social practices. According to Karaoglu (2022), this change is reflected in the news media and journalism is extended to alternative social media platforms. This change also allows the reaction to news events more quickly than ever before and the more direct and swift interaction of news consumers with social media tools (Bowd, 2016).

Citizen journalism is a type of journalism in which opinions can be announced to large masses without intermediaries. Anyone can conduct journalistic activity using internet technologies, and these stories can offer the audience an alternative narrative instead of the mainstream media. Mainstream news rules do not apply to citizen journalism because citizen journalists are less concerned about the limitations of sharing their criticism. Wall (2018) says that the information shared by citizen journalists is attractive because "the citizen journalist can provide content unavailable elsewhere; it can help meet a seemingly insatiable desire for ongoing streams of information, particularly

during times of intense conflict". It would not be wrong to say that pro-war bloggers engage in citizen journalism activity. Telegram is an instrument of this type of journalism.

The Telegram messaging application is very suitable for blogging and citizen journalism due to its features. Firstly, anonymous messaging channels can be created in Telegram without using a real ID. Secondly, there is no restriction on the number of followers of these channels, so many channels can deliver their messages to millions of people without having to reveal their real identities. The fact that messages can be deleted and modified retrospectively makes Telegram attractive. In addition, channel managers can delete the posts or the whole channel from all its followers if they wish to delete it. Thanks to emojis, the reactions of the followers of the channels to the messages can be measured and observed. Many channels also keep the ability to comment on messages turned on. These reactions can be seen as the positive or negative participation of the audience addressed by the channels.

Telegram has advantageous features with its discussion tools and capacity to collect feedback (Karaoglu, 2022, p. 188). The fact that the file sharing limit is high compared to its counterparts and that it had been used for news dissemination and propaganda purposes in Ukraine and Russia before the war began makes this app the natural and popular choice for war bloggers (Sauer, 2022). In addition, channel owners can earn financial income by sharing advertisement posts. For these reasons, the Telegram platform is suitable for citizen journalism. Social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have been banned in Russia, leading users to free alternative apps such as Telegram. According to statistics, in the first eight months of the war, the use of Telegram in Russia increased by 58%, and the content shared on channels increased by 24% (Cherny, 2022). It should not be forgotten that propaganda elements can also take place in citizen journalism and can be used for disinformation. The frequent use of Telegram has led decision-making government mechanisms to direct their interest towards this media area.



(Ali Balıkcı - Anadolu Agency)

Alleged links with the government

Another issue that needs to be addressed is whether these channel owners, who are influential and have links with the Russian government. For example, Igor Strelkov (Igor Girkin) is a former Federal Security Officer (FSB). Similarly, Maksim Fomin is linked to Russian private military companies and served within pro-Russian rebel units in Donetsk (Stepanenko et al. 2022). Likewise, Yuri Podolyaka is accused of being financed by the Russian Government ("Yuri Podolyaka" n.d). Online newspaper *The Bell*¹⁶ and *Database of free Russia Forum*¹⁷ states that some journalists with popular Telegram channels, such as Alexander Kots and Alexander Sladkov, are under indirect Kremlin control. Also, Rybar's manager Mikhail Zvinchuk is said to have links to the Wagner group (Kilner 2022). Interestingly, German Kulikovskiy, who has privileged access to inside sources, announced the start of the Russian military attack to his followers before February 24, 2022.

It is interesting to note that when Vladimir Putin announced the establishment of a 'task force' for mobilisation and social support to secure the support of the public for Russia's invasion of Ukraine (December 21, 2022), this

'task force' included several figures mentioned above. The list includes Mikhail Zvinchuk, manager of the channel: 'Rybar', Semyon Pegov, manager of the channel: 'Wargonzo', and Evgeny Poddubny, manager of the channel: 'Poddubnyy ZOV Edition' (Borogan & Soldatov, 2022). Another channel owner, Alexander Khodakovskiy, is a Russian militia commander in the Donetsk region of Ukraine.

Many Telegram channels earn revenue via ads. Advertisement is the most visible way to generate revenue for Telegram channels. However, it was alleged that some channels receive funds through informal means due to their relations with the Government (Pankratova, 2022). Another way for these channels to make an income is to collaborate with other channels and brands. Thus, both the number of their followers increases, and their footprint expands. It is also claimed that these Telegram channels have connections with some businessmen and parliamentarians (Pankratova, 2022). When scrutinised, investigative journalists have mentioned direct and indirect relations between the Russian Government and these channel owners.

Why are they important and popular?

In such an environment where dissenting voices are brought under control, it has become more important to get information from the field, and that is why Telegram bloggers have started to share information that is more detailed, and at a faster pace, than that which is provided by Russian television media.

Many Telegram channels already existed before the war, but the number of followers exploded after the Ukraine war. For example, according to Tgstat data¹⁸, in January 2022, the 'Starshe Eddy' channel run by German Kulikovskiy had 32,000 followers before the war. This number increased to 624,000 in a year. Similarly, other channels have multiplied their followers. The main reason these channels have become popular is the widespread interest in the war. The briefing of the Russian Defence Ministry and the Russian television media has often been lacking. Thus, Telegram channels have filled this gap with new images, special news, and analysis articles. It can also be said that these channels share messages along nationalistic/

patriotic lines to consolidate their followers. From time to time, they may even adopt a more aggressive stance than the Kremlin or irresponsibly propose using nuclear weapons, which would cause an apocalypse.

The fact that the Russian Ministry of Defence has not shared the number of missing/wounded soldiers for a long time raised deep suspicions. Such distrust is one of the reasons that made the popularity of Telegram channels. The Russian Defence ministry's dubious claims about its military successes on the battlefield drew a rosy picture. However, according to several Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) accounts, such embellished depictions seem unrealistic. For example, the widely accurate OSINT blog 'Oryx'¹⁹, demonstrated with visual evidence the heavy military losses Russian troops suffered in the war's first months. Alexander Kots, the owner of 'Kotnews' channel, accused the authorities of hiding 'bad news' about the situation on the ground (Sauer, 2022).

¹⁶ Russia's pro-war bloggers become a serious threat to the Kremlin." 2022. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://thebell.io/en/russia-s-pro-war-bloggers-become-a-serious-threat-to-the-kremlin/>

¹⁷ "Database of Free Russia Forum Putin's List - Kots Alexander" 2019. Accessed 22.01.2023. <https://www.spisok-putina.org/en/personas/kots-2/>

¹⁸ <https://tgstat.ru/en/channel/@vysokygovorit/stat/subscribers>

¹⁹ Oryx Blogs' full list is available on here: <https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-equipment.html> (access date: 22.01.2023)

Why do they criticize the war?

These channels, which heavily criticised military setbacks and losses on the battlefield, were nationalistic and supportive of the Government at the beginning of the war. Some Telegram channels even collected financial support and donated this support to the army (Troianovski, 2022). In addition, these pro-war bloggers share the information they have obtained using OSINT methods such as observation, location learning, and image comparison, along with the sharing of critical notes they have obtained from the field on their channels.

However, because of the military defeats in the field, critical voices of the Russian Ministry of Defence began to rise, and the army war tactics came into the spotlight. Of

course, after major military blunders, it is normal to question the general conduct of the war. Both the repressive environment brought about by the war and the constraining legal environment (e.g., the 'fake-news law') make these criticisms difficult. However, considering that the Russian media has become a quasi-monolithic sphere, it may be easier to understand why pro-war bloggers are fearless in their criticisms and that such criticism is at least in part emotionally driven. Pro-war Telegram channels, which criticise the Government and the military, combine information from the battlefield with their analysis and present it to their readers. These analyses often include comprehensive and detailed assessments of the source itself.

'Fake-news law' and the 'privilege' of pro-war bloggers

A study conducted by Park et al. (2022, 19) observed that the shares on social media increased immediately after the start of the war in February of 2022, and this shows that both pro-war posts and opposition posts against the Russian attack increased. Although The Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media, abbreviated as Roskomnadzor, banned media outlets from using words like 'war, attack and invasion' (Tebor, 2022), the big step came with the introduction of the law known to the public as the 'fake news law'.

On March 4, 2022, the Russian Parliament passed a law in which those who spread 'false information' would be sentenced to 15 years in prison. Under the law, which Putin signed on the same day, anyone who spreads 'false information' or shares posts that 'discredit' the Russian military could face fines or up to 15 years in prison.

Park et al. (2022, 19) report that many independent media outlets have stopped their work because of this law, while others have decided not to publish news about Russia's aggression against Ukraine. According to a report by Amnesty International (2022), Nastoyashchee Vremya, TV Rain, Echo of Moscow radio station, Meduza, Mediazona, Republic, Sobesednik, grassroots activism portal Aktivatika, BBC News Russian Service, Voice of America Russian Service, and Deutsche Welle in Russian were censored. In

addition, TV Rain and Znak.com decided to stop broadcasting news about the war, while Novaya Gazeta decided to take down its articles about the war. According to the same Amnesty International report, "the threat of criminal prosecutions has also led to an exodus of journalists from Russia," and more than 150 journalists have moved to other countries (Kirby, 2022).

On the day the 'fake-news law' went into effect, access to the sites of Facebook and Twitter was blocked due to their disseminating 'inaccurate' information about the conflict in Ukraine. The next day, two investigative reporting outlets Vazhnye Istorii and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), were placed in the 'undesirable organisations' category. Access to almost all news sites originating from Ukraine has been banned. In addition, at least 140 people have been detained under the 'fake-news law' (Amnesty International, 2022).

The Pro-war Telegram channels have become popular among the public in a short time because the Russian people find the Russian media's performance inadequate. Although a law called 'fake-news law' was enacted about a month after the start of the war, which stipulates a 15-year penalty for those who share false information, we see that war bloggers are permitted to share their content as of January 2023.

Some war bloggers, such as former journalists or soldiers, may remain anonymous or unidentified. This way, some of these channels can make public criticisms against the Government from a protected position, while others are composed of people who support the war with their pro-government comments and adhere to a nationalist line. Although we see that contradictory voices are not allowed within traditional or mainstream Russian media, Telegram channels continue to broadcast, and it is said that the Russian Government tolerates these channels (Stepanenko, Kagan, and Mappes, 2022). Roskomnadzor, the state agency responsible for supervising media content in Russia, controls information shared on the internet.

For this reason, in recent months, many channels that engage in war blogging have been scrutinised for reasons such as spreading fake news, sharing prohibited content, and defamation (Mash, 2022). The main reason for the investigation of Telegram channels is their criticism of the Russian Ministry of Defence and its decisions for the war. From time to time, these channels are shared as 'enemy lists' (Wargonzo, 2022). From the Ukrainian government officials' point of view, these pro-war bloggers "systematically disseminate narratives in line with Kremlin propaganda to justify Russia's actions" ("Awaiting Sanctions", 2022).

The Kremlin's view

The argument that most of these channels are co-opted by the Kremlin has some validity. These channels influence public opinion to support Russia's war on Ukraine (Pavlik, 2022, p. 3). Putin's speech at the Defence Ministry Conference on December 21, 2022, reflected the Government's perspective on the criticism of pro-war bloggers. Accordingly, Putin told military officials that constructive criticism by civilian initiatives in the war should be considered promptly. According to Putin, "there are always problems in such major, complex work - it can be emotional, but we need to hear those who do not hush up the existing problems but strive to contribute to their solution" (Trevelyan & Cordell, 2022). For this reason, a 'task force' was created²⁰ to ensure coordination between the Government and bloggers. This task force, which consists of 31 members, includes many pro-war bloggers among its members. A Russian state official, Andrei Turchak, heads it. The

duties of this 'task force' include informing Putin monthly and reaching the public about mobilisation. Some of the Telegram channels that criticise the Government and the military have announced that they receive financial offers through intermediaries in exchange for sharing posts that focus on individual military achievements (Wargonzo, 2022).

Criticisms of pro-war bloggers were added in addition to the heavy criticism of the anti-war bloggers who were already present in the face of demoralising developments such as military failures, the mobilisation process, tactical mistakes, and retreats. These bloggers are often outspoken as they address the negative outcomes of Russia's military actions. Some raise their voices about failures by sharing messages on their microblogs.

²⁰ Presidential order on creating a task force is available here: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202212200054>

Are these military bloggers untouchable?

Considering the 'fake-news law', it is possible to say that the limits of criticism in the country have narrowed considerably. However, the high tolerance of Telegram channels, which increases the doses of criticism, is quite remarkable. There may be several reasons for this.

First, some Telegram bloggers already have alleged links with the Government. In an interview with the Guardian, Russia expert Mark Galeotti said that most bloggers are "connected to or protected by figures within the military or security agencies" (Sauer, 2022). The managers or owners of some Telegram channels are former government officials, retired members of the military or journalists with political connections. Considering their backgrounds and networks, it would be a surprise to expect the Kremlin to treat pro-war bloggers like it treated anti-war journalists and news channels.

Second, pro-war bloggers emphasise their patriotic credentials when making their criticisms. Thus, rather than questioning the war and its motives, they criticise its method and military strategy. These criticisms are aimed at decision-makers in the Russian Defence Ministry and incompetent frontline troopers, not Putin's decision to go to war. There is a consensus on the pro-war Telegram channels about the main ideas that Putin has been using to justify the war for a long time.

Third, some Telegram channels may also be part of the political design in the country. Since the beginning of the war, critical changes have been made in command of the army. The main reasons for these changes are the war's prolongation, mounting losses, and inability to achieve the original objectives. For example, the war's failures increase

the pressure on Sergei Shoigu (Sweeney, Stein, and Armitage, 2022). Political groupings and conflicts that take place behind closed doors may also be reflected in Telegram groups. Some Telegram groups are sharing messages suggesting that certain commanders must be replaced. These messages reach hundreds of thousands of people, causing public pressure. This suggests that it is possible to use Telegram groups as a weapon for political gains.

Another reason is related to absorbing anger. Despite the heavy criticism of pro-war Telegram channels for a long time, the most important reason why most channels are left unscathed is that they absorb people's anger against failures in response to Russia's military setbacks. According to Pavel Luzhin, who spoke to the Guardian, these channels "provide an outlet for a section of the Russian population to vent their anger about the failures in Ukraine," adding that the Kremlin is wary of nationalist backlash (Sauer, 2022). Leaving a space where those who do not believe in the rosy picture depicted in Russian media can share their anger allows the dangerous pressure that can come with public opinion to be diffused and reassures politicians to some extent. The Russian Government may be reluctant to ignore the reactions of nationalist Russians.

Lastly, the Kremlin wants to preserve some valves that relieve public pressure. Controlling public anger by limiting it to a certain arena can still be productive for the state. The opposite scenario, in which there is no way to gauge reactions, can be scarier. Tensions could flare up suddenly, causing internal turmoil within Russia. For the Russian administration, internal tensions are the least desirable scenarios during wartime.

Conclusion

The Kremlin seems willing to accept criticism for the reasons explained earlier. Consequently, the Kremlin will continue to keep these bloggers politically closer. Pro-war bloggers can be considered one of the primary sources of news from the battlefield. However, whether they will be a threat to the Kremlin or not will depend on the Russian

military's performance in Ukraine. Additional blunders and mounting losses will probably escalate right-wing reactions against the Russian Government.

References

- Amnesty International. 2022. "Russia: Kremlin's ruthless crackdown stifles independent journalism and anti-war movement." Amnesty International. Last Modified 10.03.2022. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/03/russia-kremlins-ruthless-crackdown-stifles-independent-journalism-and-anti-war-movement/>.
- "Awaiting Sanctions." 2022. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://sanctions.nazk.gov.ua/en/sanction-person/21874/>.
- Borogan, Irina, and Andrei Soldatov. 2022. "Putin's End-of-Year Message — Embrace the Forever War." Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://cepa.org/article/putins-end-of-year-message-embrace-the-forever-war/>.
- Bowd, Kathryn. 2016. "Social media and news media: Building new publics or fragmenting audiences?". In M. Griffiths & K. Barbour (Eds.), *Making Publics, Making Places* (pp. 129-144). The University of Adelaide Press.
- Building new publics or fragmenting audiences?" In *Making Publics, Making Places*, edited by Mary Griffiths and Kim Barbour, 129-144. University of Adelaide Press.
- Campbell, Scott W. 2007. "A cross-cultural comparison of perceptions and uses of mobile telephony." *New Media & Society* 9 (2): 343-363. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444807075016>. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1461444807075016>.
- Cherny, Vasily. 2022. "After blocking foreign social networks, Telegram grew by more than one and a half times (После блокировок зарубежных соцсетей Telegram вырос более, чем в полтора раза)." Last Modified 07.10.2022. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://br-analytics.ru/blog/rus-social-media-sept-2022/>.
- Forsberg, Kerstin. 2001. "Mobile Newsmaking." Göteborg University, Sweden.
- Karaoglu, Gulhanim. 2022. "News Production and Consumption Practices in Online Journalism: A Cross-Platform Review." *Selçuk Ün. Sos. Bil. Ens. Der* 48: 184-194. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.52642/susbed.1102932>.
- Kilner, James. 2022. "Founders of major Russian war blog with Wagner Group link are fantasy role play fans." Last Modified 23.11.2022. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2022/11/23/founders-major-russian-war-blog-wagner-group-link-fantasy-role/>.
- Kirby, Paul. 2022. "Russia's state TV hit by stream of resignations." Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-60763494>.
- Mash. 2022. Last Modified 14.10.2022. Accessed 10.01.2023. <https://t.me/breakingmash/39083>.
- McCombs, Maxwell E., and Donald L. Shaw. 1972. "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (2): 176-187. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2747787>.
- Nye, Joseph S. 2008. "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (1): 94-109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699>.
- Oryx. 2022. Attack on Europe: Documenting Russian Equipment Losses During The 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine." 2022. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://www.oryx-pioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-equipment.html>.
- Pan, Zhongdang, and Gerald M. Kosicki. 1993. "Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse." *Political Communication* 10 (1): 55-75. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10584609.1993.9962963>.
- Pankratova, Irina. 2022. Who runs the Rybar military telegram channel: The Bell investigation. *The Bell*. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://thebell.io/kto-vedet-voennyy-telegram-kanal-rybar-rassledovanie-the-bell>.
- Park, Chan Young, Julia Mendelsohn, Anjalie Field, and Yulia Tsvetkov. 2022. "Challenges and Opportunities in Information Manipulation Detection: An Examination of Wartime Russian Media." *arXiv:2205.12382*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2205.12382>.
- Pavlik, John. 2001. *Journalism and New Media*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press. ---. 2022. "The Russian War in Ukraine and the Implications for the News Media " *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications* 8: 1-17.
- "Putin Forms Mobilization Task Force Featuring Military Blogger." 2022. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/12/21/putin-forms-mobilization-task-force-featuring-military-bloggers-a79759>.
- "Russia's pro-war bloggers become a serious threat to the Kremlin." 2022. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://thebell.io/en/russia-s-pro-war-bloggers-become-a-serious-threat-to-the-kremlin/>.

Sauer, Piotr. 2022. "We have already lost': far-right Russian bloggers slam military failures." Accessed 15.01.2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/08/we-have-already-lost-far-right-russian-bloggers-slam-kremlin-over-army-response>.

Stepanenko, Kateryna, Frederick W. Kagan, and Grace Mappes. 2022. "Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 20." Accessed 10.01.2023. <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-20>.

Stepanenko, Kateryna, Katherine Lawlor, Karolina Hird, Angela Howard, and Frederick W. Kagan. 2022b. "Ukraine Conflict Updates 2022" Last Modified 31.12.2022. Accessed 22.01.2023. <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-updates-2022>

Sweeney, Lucy, Lucia Stein, and Rebecca Armitage. 2022. "Vladimir Putin's ambitious defence chief Sergei Shoigu was once the 'heir apparent'. Ukraine's war could bring him down." Last Modified 15.10.2022. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-10-15/putin-ally-sergei-shoigu-faces-criticism-over-ukraine/101524134>.

Tebor, Celina. 2022. "Russia increases censorship with new law: 15 years in jail for calling Ukraine invasion a 'war'." Last Modified 08.03.2022. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/ukraine/2022/03/08/>

[russia-free-speech-press-criminalizationmisinformation/9433112002](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/ukraine/2022/03/08/russia-free-speech-press-criminalization-misinformation/9433112002).

Trevelyan, Mark, and Jake Cordell. 2022. "Russian army must tackle problems it has suffered in Ukraine: Putin." Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-promises-meet-all-russian-armys-needs-ukraine-2022-12-21/>.

Troianovski, Anton. "Drones. Crutches. Potatoes. Russians Crowdfund Their Army." 2022. Accessed 22.01.2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/28/world/europe/russian-soldiers-military-supplies.html>

Wall, Melissa. (2018). Citizen Journalism: Practices, Propaganda, Pedagogy. 10.4324/9781351055703.

Wargonzo. 2022. Last Modified 14.10.2022. <https://t.me/wargonzo/8702>.

"Yuri Podolyaka." n.d. Accessed 11.01.2023. <https://blogsmi.com/yuri-podolyaka>.

Zubiaga, Arkaitz. 2019. "Mining social media for news-gathering: A review." *Online Social Networks and Media* 13: 100049. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.osnem.2019.100049>. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2468696419300047>.

