

Journalistic Resistance to Russian Authoritarian Disinformation: The Case of Media Dissidents
in the Russia- Ukraine Wars of 2014 & 2022

by

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ABSTRACT

The Russia-Ukraine crisis is an ethno-religious and geopolitical crisis with a long history. It flared up once again in 1991 when Ukraine became independent following the fall of the Soviet Union. The arrival of Putin to power in Russia and his 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula sparked a crisis in which disinformation became one of the main weapons. Journalists working for Russian- and Russian government-affiliated media were required to echo Kremlin propaganda and disinformation (both concepts are used interchangeably in this study) on the crisis. However, some journalists resisted this demand. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 led to a repetition of Putin's use of disinformation to justify the invasion. Journalists were again expected to spread Kremlin disinformation to further Kremlin goals. This thesis explores the use of propaganda and disinformation in the Russia-Ukraine wars of 2014 and 2022, using as a case study of two Russian government media journalists, Liz Wahl and Marina Ovsyannikova, who publicly resisted Kremlin propaganda. The study also explores the role of gender in the Russian journalistic field and examines female resistance to war propaganda in the context of journalistic paradigm repair. Finally, the thesis examines how Al Jazeera (Qatar), the BBC, and CNN portrayed the resistance. The study was carried out within the framework of the following theoretical perspectives: gender and international journalism, journalistic fields, journalistic ethics, and journalistic paradigm repair. The study uses historical and textual analyses to explore the resistance activities of female journalists and international media portrayals of that resistance. It was found that, in the Russian journalistic field, women journalists were prominent against authoritarian disinformation and criticizing governments. These two female journalists, Liz Wahl and Marina Ovsyannikova were willing to publicly resist authoritarian disinformation because of their journalistic ethics and in defense of the journalistic

paradigm, despite the consequences they faced. On the other hand, Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN covered the resistance extensively in support of their colleagues and in solidarity with media freedom.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On October 8, 2022, an explosion on a bridge connecting the annexed Crimean Peninsula and the Russian mainland became international news. This explosion had far more horrific consequences since there was an ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine at the time of the explosion. Accusing Ukraine of causing the blast in the bridge, Russia unleashed deadly airstrikes on cities across Ukraine, as it has done since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war in February of 2022 (Hunder & Landay, 2022; Talmazan & Aggarwal, 2022). Why did an explosion on a bridge result in massive and significant airstrikes on the opponents? If we look for answers, we must go back to 2014, maybe back to 1991. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was founded in 1922, after the Russian Revolution of 1917. From 1956 to 1991, it consisted of 15 countries. Russia and Ukraine, both were part of the USSR from the beginning (Dewdney et al., 2023; Editors, 2023). After Russia, Ukraine was the most powerful, populous, and influential republic in the Soviet Union. Apart from this, Russia and Ukraine have a long border with historical, political, cultural, religious, economic, language, and family bonds (Masters, 2022). After being separated from the USSR in 1991, Ukraine wanted to join the European Union (EU) and the Western military alliance, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Russia did not like it, as Western organizations, like NATO and the EU, are seen as enemies. Russia sees NATO and the EU as threatening its border and sovereignty (Alexandrova, 1996). Ukraine was warned that if they joined NATO or other Western organizations, the outcome would not be favorable for the country. Russia wanted to exert control over Ukraine in order to influence Ukrainian politics. The tension between Russia and Ukraine in the post-soviet period was mainly for those internal issues.

In 2013, when Ukraine wanted to openly trade with the EU, some pro-Russian Ukrainian leaders, led by President Viktor Yanukovich, annulled the agreement under pressure from Moscow (Azarov, 2013). This led to a massive crisis in Ukraine. Between February and March of 2014, Ukraine's political situation was tense due to widespread protests. As a result, President Viktor Yanukovich resigned and fled to Russia. In the long run, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 (Ellyatt, 2022; Pifer, 2020). The situation worsened when Ukraine elected a new pro-West president, comedian Volodymyr Zelensky, in 2019 (Kaminskij, 2022). Zelensky was interested in joining the Western regional organizations, a position that was not welcomed by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Putin repeatedly stated that Ukraine was a part of Russia and that both countries would always be united (Berger, 2022; Johnson, 2022; Treisman, 2022). On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, claiming that it had launched a "special military operation intended to de-Nazify Russia's neighbor" (Bondarev, 2022, p. 38). Sixteen months later, the invasion had not had a positive outcome (Berlinger, 2022; El-Bawab, 2023; Mulvey, 2022). The consequences of this invasion affected not only these two countries but almost every country worldwide. It affected almost every sector, from international relations to economic growth. For example, grain shipments from Ukraine to other parts of the world have been severely curtailed (Delgado et al., 2023). The Russia-Ukraine war of 2022 is Europe's largest military conflict since World War II (Iddon, 2022). As of June 2023, at least 62,295 people had died, there have been 59,244 non-fatal injuries, and at least 15,000 people were missing. Approximately 17 million people have been displaced from their area, more than 8.2 million Ukrainians have become refugees across Western Europe, the United States, and Canada (UNHCR, 2023), and property damage is more than 411 billion US dollars (Reuters, 2023).

Propaganda and Disinformation in the Russia-Ukraine War

Aside from these data points, a number of other issues about the war are being debated throughout the world. One of the most important is the role of information and communication in conflict. Some of these issues include disinformation, propaganda, and misinformation. Social media platforms have influenced international news, and events such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have been called the “first TikTok war” (Chayka, 2022). Information and communication have become more accessible to circulate as online technologies have progressed (Geissler et al., 2023; Pierri et al., 2023). Consequently, information is tailored to serve the interests of the countries, individuals, or institutions distributing it (Chayka, 2022).

In both countries (Russia and Ukraine), various forms of media, such as television, radio, newspapers, the Internet, and social media, have been used to disseminate information that supports their positions and narratives. In Russia, state-controlled media outlets played a significant role by portraying “Ukraine as a failed state” caught up in internal politics and under the influence of Western powers (Kobzar, 2016, p. 1,2). Russia has used this explanation to defend its actions in Ukraine, such as the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the assistance of separatist fighters in Eastern Ukraine (Grant, 2015). In contrast, Ukraine’s state-controlled media has countered the Russian narrative and promoted a positive image of the country. As part of this, Ukrainian achievements and progress have been highlighted, as well as the country's pro-western stance and desire to move away from Russian influence (Ero, 2023). The Russian and Ukrainian governments have also been accused of using propaganda to manipulate events and influence public opinion in addition to disinformation.

While the fabrication of information is an old phenomenon, the use of technology to efficiently spread such information is a relatively recent development (Posetti & Matthews,

2018). This study uses the definition of ‘disinformation’ provided by the European Commission’s High-Level Expert Group (HLEG). HLEG defines disinformation as “all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented, and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit” (Commission, 2018, p. 3). According to this definition, the real issue of disinformation is the circulation of information which is “deliberately misleading and inaccurate” (Innes, 2020, p. 297). On the other hand, propaganda is the technique of manipulating information to shift public opinion. It only highlights or excludes informational components that are supportive of a given viewpoint while downplaying or omitting those that are not (Cummings & Kong, 2019; Walton, 1997). All personnel can use this political action, including lobbyists, advertisers, and politicians (Tandoc et al., 2018). Anything can be considered propaganda, from half-truths to lies, from facts to arguments to rumors (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2018; Walton, 1997).

Misinformation is a piece of inaccurate or false information that circulates unintentionally, whereas disinformation is intentionally disseminating inaccurate information to influence public opinion. In other words, all disinformation is misinformation, but all misinformation is not disinformation (Polger, 2023). Alternatively, propaganda spreads information to motivate public opinion, but it's mainly used for political reasons. Throughout this thesis, propaganda and disinformation are used interchangeably. Chapter II goes into more detail about those definitions.

Russian disinformation and propaganda are often termed Kremlin propaganda (Herpen, 2015; Paul & Matthews, 2016). As part of the Kremlin’s propaganda strategy, state-run media outlets like Russia Today, Pravda, and online tools like Telegram, are used in Russia and worldwide to promote the government's ideologies, viewpoints, and objectives (Abrams, 2016;

Salikov, 2019). Journalists working for Russian media have to produce and distribute news and press releases that reflect well on the Russian government (Herpen, 2015; Yablokov & Chatterje-Doody, 2021). Due to the extreme control of the media and the manipulation of information, Russians rarely hear other points of view about the Ukraine crisis (Makhortykh & Bastian, 2022). The Russian government's control of the media and journalists goes against the principles of freedom of expression set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (Dolinger, 2016).

Journalistic Codes of Ethics and Journalistic Paradigm Repair

The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) provides four significant considerations for journalists called the SPJ Code of Ethics, which includes seeking the truth, minimizing harm, being independent, and taking responsibility (SPJ, 2014). Since no laws exist to enforce these standards, it is left to journalists' unions and federations to encourage their members to abide by codes of ethics. Many journalists worldwide do not follow them. There are times when journalists protest against disinformation and propaganda that does not comply with journalistic codes of ethics. When journalists do this, they proclaim that the type of state journalism they are being made to practice is a parody of journalism, fake journalism that brings the journalistic craft to disrepute. The resistance against fake state journalism is also called journalism paradigm repair, when journalists attempt to expose activities that are inconsistent with seeking and reporting the truth. This also includes exposing the misrepresentations made by the controlling governments (Berry, 2020; Díaz-Campo & Segado-Boj, 2015; Fletcher, 2019).

Aim of The Study and Media Outlets Studied

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 had a profound impact on the global stage, extending beyond the borders of the two countries involved. It influenced major aspects such as

the food supply, geopolitics, security, energy costs, and the economy in numerous countries worldwide. One notable result was the Ukrainian refugee crisis in Europe, America, and Canada stemming from the conflict. Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2022 invasion brought about significant changes in global politics. Furthermore, the advancement of information and communication technologies and social media platforms has contributed to disseminating misinformation, disinformation, fake news, and propaganda. It is crucial to closely examine and research the issues in disseminating information to understand their nature and effects. However, the complexity surrounding the definitions of these terms creates challenges, making it harder for people to comprehend and address the problem effectively. Explaining this complexity and focusing on how journalists countered disinformation and misinformation is a significant intellectual endeavor.

Also, journalism can be misused in situations like the Russia-Ukraine conflict. More and more female journalists occupy prominent reporting roles in journalism. However, there is a need for more research into the role of women journalists in conflict areas. There is a need to delve deeper into their contributions, ethical dilemmas, and acts of resistance. Expanding research in this field would provide a better understanding of the complex dynamics of gender, journalism, and resistance in conflict situations.

There are four specific aims of this study. These are:

1. Investigate the role of gender in the Russian journalistic field.
2. Study the resistance of female journalists using two cases from the wars between Russia and Ukraine in 2014 and 2022, where female journalists reacted against authoritarian disinformation in order to uphold codes of journalistic ethics. These cases are:

- a. The Liz Wahl on-air resignation: In 2014, during Russia's invasion of Crimea, the news anchor of the American channel of the Russian TV network *Russia Today* (RT) announced her resignation live on the air, stating that she believed in spreading the truth and could not be a part of the propaganda machine of Vladimir Putin.
 - b. The Marina Vladimirovna Ovsyannikova live protest: In March 2022, Ovsyannikova, a journalist from *Channel One Russia*, interrupted a live broadcast by holding a placard that read “No War,” “They are lying to you.” “This is propaganda,”
3. Explore the details and the patterns of those acts of resistance to understand the two these journalists engaged in paradigm repair, and
 4. Analyze how Al Jazeera, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and Cable News Network (CNN) portrayed the resistance of these two female journalists.

Why Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN

Global media outlet Al Jazeera is an international satellite television broadcaster, renowned for its in-depth reporting on important international stories that other news organizations sometimes overlook. Qatar-based Al Jazeera Media Network owns Al Jazeera. It was launched as the first independent news channel in the Arab world in 1996. In Arab countries, media outlets were heavily regulated by state authorities. Al Jazeera shattered the mold by introducing a revolutionary paradigm in the field of journalism. Within a short time, it became popular in the Arab world. By 2000, Al Jazeera’s programming was broadcasted 24 hours a day in more than 20 countries, making it a key source of news in Arabic in the Middle East (Al Jazeera, 2023a). Later in 2006, Al Jazeera English became the first English-language news station with a Western Asian headquarters (Britannica, 2023; Cohen, 2009). As a result, Al Jazeera has covered several significant events in recent years, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the ongoing Syrian

conflict, the refugee crisis in Europe, and the rise of populism in both the United States and Europe. In addition, Al Jazeera excelled in its coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, political persecution, and human rights violations in many parts of the world. The war between Russia and Ukraine, which included the courageous protest by Russian journalist Marina Ovsyannikova, was one of the topics Al Jazeera examined in depth.

Additionally, Al Jazeera has been a powerful advocate for underrepresented groups globally. Al Jazeera has been making a significant impact since its inception. The impact of news and reports published by Al Jazeera is called the “Al Jazeera Effect” (Seib, 2008, p. xi) or the “Al Jazeera Phenomena” (AbdEsselem, 2023, p. 149). Because of worldwide acceptance, Al Jazeera has been the subject of much academic research. For instance, a 2022 publication by Al Jazeera presented more than 1000 academic research studies (master’s thesis, Ph. D. dissertations, book chapters, and research articles) that have been researched on Al Jazeera (Abdelmoula, 2022).

The British Broadcasting Corporation is the world's oldest and most famous public broadcaster. It was founded in 1922 (Herbert, 2013). The BBC started its journey broadcasting on the radio and continued through a magazine (1923), television (1929), and online news (the 1990s) (BBC, 2023b). BBC Online, also known as BBC News, is currently among the most widely visited websites worldwide. BBC News delivers news and current affairs to a global audience. They have a presence of 24 hours a day in more than 200 countries worldwide. In particular, they are present in more than 452 million households, 170 cruise ships, countless hotels, 53 airlines, and 23 mobile phone networks (BBC News, 2021). The BBC works independently of the British government under a royal charter (Booth, 2020).

The BBC offers in-depth analysis of breaking news and looks at the stories that lie beyond the headlines, explaining what is occurring and why. The BBC has significantly influenced

academia. In 2017, an article by Kousha and Thelwall (2017) found that the BBC has been continuously cited in Scopus, Google Books, economics, business, politics, international relations, and other publications. They found around 27,234 Scopus-indexed documents that have cited the BBC at least once.

Cable News Network is an American cable news channel and website established in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1980, Ted Turner and Reese Schonfeld founded CNN. It is now owned by Warner Bros (WBD). In the United States, CNN was the first all-news cable television station and the first television channel to air 24-hour news programming. Eighty million television homes in the United States were watching CNN as of February 2023 (CNN, 2023a; TimeWarner, 2011). After its establishment, CNN became a global phenomenon. It was the first commercial station that set standards for other news stations worldwide (Kiesewetter, 2000). Even Al Jazeera used to call themselves as “The CNN of the Arab world” (Johnson & Fahmy, 2008, p. 338). Nowadays, CNN is airing in over 212 countries worldwide. On the other hand, CNN is also a big part of academic research that seeks to identify how they portrayed or shaped public opinion regarding significant issues. The impact of CNN worldwide is known as the “CNN Effect” (Zingarelli, 2010, p. 4).

In communication and media studies, it is common to find studies that analyze the portrayal, effects, and comparison of various news portals. Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN are among the news outlets subjected to several investigations. For example, Jasperson and El-Kikhia (2003) compared the coverage of the war on terror, while Gerhards and Schäfer (2014) conducted a comparative analysis of the news coverage of international terrorism by CNN, Al Jazeera, the BBC, and German newspaper ARD. Similarly, Aguiar (2009) focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts and conducted a framing analysis of the coverage provided by Al Jazeera and CNN.

Additionally, Barkho (2007) explored Middle East reporting, and Fornaciari (2012) examined the coverage of the Egyptian Revolution, comparing Al Jazeera and the BBC. On the other hand, Miladi (2006) investigated the impact of satellite TV news on the Arab diaspora in Britain by comparing Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN. A study by Hossain et al. (2022) utilized computer-based text analysis to examine COVID-19-related news shared on Facebook by Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN. Furthermore, Hasan (2022) explored the portrayal of gender discourses following the US withdrawal from America's war in Afghanistan.

These studies provide valuable insights into the practices and perspectives of these news outlets in their coverage of various events and topics. Building on this existing research, the present thesis aims to investigate how Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN portrayed the resistance efforts of female journalists during the Russia-Ukraine wars in 2014 and 2022. By analyzing the news coverage provided by these outlets, the study intends to identify commonalities, differences, biases, and patterns in portraying female journalists reporting from conflict zones.

Structure of The Study

This study is divided into six parts (Figure I.1). The first part consists of Chapter I and Chapter II, the introduction and literature review. This part defines terms and presents arguments for using propaganda and disinformation interchangeably. It also discusses Russian media disinformation and propaganda. The second part of this study (Chapter III) explores the historical background of the Russia-Ukraine conflicts. The third part of this study (Chapters IV and V) presents the theory, research questions, and research methods. The fourth and fifth parts (Chapter VI) make up the results section of this study. Chapter VI of this study analyses the resistance by the female journalists who stood up to Kremlin propaganda. Chapter VI also analyses the

portrayal of the female resisters by Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN. The final part, Chapter VII concludes with the discussion and conclusion of the study.



Figure 1. 1 Structure of this study.

CHAPTER II

DEFINITION OF TERMS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Propaganda

Propaganda has been used from the very beginning of civilization. It “is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions,” beliefs, and behaviors towards predetermined ends through biased communication, manipulation of symbols, and psychological techniques (Ellul, 1965; Jowett & O’Donnell, 2018, p. 7). It involves the “management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols” (Lasswell, 1927, p. 627) and “a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events and influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea, or group” (Bernays, 1928, p. 25).

Propaganda has existed since ancient civilizations when rulers and governments used art and religious symbols to promote their ideologies and gain support from the population. According to Butt (2023), Augustus, the first Roman emperor, composed *Res Gestae Divi Augustus*, a commanding autobiography that was a prime example of propaganda. This carefully crafted work, proclaiming his god-like achievements in 35 concise statements, aimed to shape public perception and consolidate his power. Throughout this ancient period, specifically in the Ancient Near East, Greece, and Egypt, emperors made statues, sculptures, and giant monuments of themselves to prove them very influential leaders (Weissman, 2022). The resourceful Athenians used various forms of propaganda to shape opinions, despite the absence of modern media. They employed tools like games, theater, the assembly, law courts, religious festivals, and public speaking to convey political, social, and moral messages. Handwritten books also circulated to influence public opinion in the ancient world (Lasswell et al., 1969).

As early as the Middle Ages, religious institutions used propaganda to gain converts and spread their beliefs. In the 15th century, the Catholic Church used art and architecture to spread its messages, while during the Protestant Reformation, printed materials were used to spread ideas. In fact, the term propaganda came from the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith), a branch of the Vatican established by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 (Mares, 2022). As a tool to shape public opinion, governments and political parties began to use propaganda more systematically in the 18th and 19th centuries. With the advancement of mass media, information, and communication technologies, propaganda became even more sophisticated and widespread in the 20th century (Stanley, 2015). There was a huge usage of propaganda during this period to get support for wars and to defame the enemy, specifically in WWI and WWII (Connelly & Welch, 2005). Radio, film, and television became powerful propaganda tools for governments and political movements in that period. In recent years, social media and the internet have made it easier to disseminate information and ideas (Thayer, 2018). As a result, propaganda has expanded its reach and impact (Drury, 2020). For example, in the 21st century, there has been huge propaganda in terms of wars like the Afghan war, the Iraq war (Altheide & Grimes, 2005), the wars and conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, Covid 19 and its impact (Khanday et al., 2022), election coverage and influencing the public regarding whom to vote for (Moore & Colley, 2022).

People who manipulate such information are called propagandists. Propagandists can include politicians, military personnel, actors, clergy, and the general public (Day, 2022). Propagandists use several persuasion techniques to spread what they want to circulate (Henderson, 1943). Such techniques may sometimes consist of unethical and harmful methods of persuasion to influence individuals or groups (Doob, 1948; Smith, 1989). There are primarily

three types of propaganda: Black, White, and Grey. Black propaganda means using false sources or sources that do not exist, and grey propaganda refers to confusing sources that may be true. On the other hand, white propaganda means using accurate sources (Bastos & Farkas, 2019; Becker, 1949; Doherty, 1994; McAndrew, 2017). Propaganda extends beyond politics to lobbying, advertising, and missionary activities. Moreover, the form and medium of propaganda have changed with time and the evolution of technology. This includes banknotes, word of mouth, posters, stamps, photocopies, television, radio, social media, and the internet (Bentzen, 2015).

Disinformation

Disinformation is the deliberate dissemination of information to deceive people. In this thesis, the author followed the definition provided by HLEG (European Commission's High-Level Expert Group), which states that all forms of false information intended to harm the public are called disinformation (Commission, 2018). The Oxford English Dictionary (2023a, p. 1) defines disinformation as the deliberate, circulated false information to influence policies or opinions "by a government or its agent to a foreign power or to the media." Collins Dictionary phrased it as "false information leaked by a government, as to confuse another nation's intelligence operations" (Dictionary, 2023, p. 1). Disinformation is one of the greatest uses of conspiracy theories (Fallis, 2014), which are mainly circulated by providing solid and biased facts such as wrong statistics, rumors, lies, or fake news stories with data, insights, manipulated images, videos, etc. (Scannell et al., 2021). According to Weedon et al. (2017, p. 5), disinformation is "inaccurate or manipulated information/content that is spread intentionally." Disinformation can include false news, false flag operations, giving wrong quotations or articles to innocent intermediates, or purposefully amplifying biased or misleading material. Bennett and

Livingston (2018, p. 124) described disinformation as “systematic disruptions of authoritative information” to advance political goals. Disinformation is harmful when it is circulated by strategic lies and well-resourced actors, but this is not common practice (Mueller, 2021).

The history of disinformation is not so old, though there is much debate about the origin of this concept. It can be divided into words and terms for better understanding. The word disinformation derives from the Latin prefix ‘dis-,’ which means to reverse or remove information, and has been used since at least 1887 (Cresset, 1887). The Latin words ‘*dis*’ and ‘*in*’ are believed to have Proto-Indo-European roots, but the Latin word ‘*forma*’ is considerably less clear. On the other hand, the term disinformation comes from the Russian word ‘*dezinformatsiya*,’ which means spreading false information to cause harm to the community (Pacepa & Rychlak, 2013). On the other hand, Merriam-Webster claims that the word ‘disinformation’ was initially used in the 1930s by the Nazis. During the Cold War, the KGB used the term ‘*dezinformatsiya*’ to describe its black propaganda activities (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2018, pp. 21–23).

A classic example of Soviet disinformation is Operation INFEKTION, which claimed that the US invented AIDS (State, 1987; Taylor, 2016). In 1983, a pro-soviet Indian newspaper used an anonymous source to claim that the US invented AIDS. Within a few years, more than 100 newspapers around the world used this Indian newspaper as their source, and Operation INFEKTION successfully circulated this disinformation worldwide (Taylor, 2016). A fake document claiming that the US supported apartheid in 1980 led the US to begin countering disinformation (Waller, 2009). Counter disinformation means providing facts about that disinformation and debugging the disinformation by providing real scenarios. It requires a

holistic approach (media literacy, research, monitoring, fact-checking, social media takedowns, etc.) (Arnaudo et al., 2023).

First appearing in dictionaries in 1985, disinformation became an integral part of the lexicon of politics by 1990 (Bittman, 1988; Martin, 1990). As of 2001, the term disinformation had evolved into a more civil term to refer to people who lie and are intentionally misleading (Barton, 2001). With the advancement of technology, disinformation has become more circulated than ever before.

Misinformation

Misinformation is unintentionally false information that is false or accurate and has circulated without any ill motive. This is also called Fake news (Cook et al., 2015).

Misinformation can be found in various sources, including social media, news articles, and even works of fiction (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). In other words, misinformation is getting the facts false or wrong (OED, 2023b).

As a tool for propaganda and manipulation, misinformation dates to ancient times. For instance, in ancient Greece, public speakers used falsehoods and gossip to sway people's opinions and gain power (McHardy, 2019). Similarly, during the Middle Ages, misinformation was often used to spread rumors and myths about political and religious figures (Soll, 2016). Oxford Dictionary mentioned the origin of misinformation in three types: "the action of misinforming someone" dates to 1587, "wrong or misleading information" dates to 1605, whereas "an instance of misinformation (sense 1); an item of misinformation (sense 2)" dates back to 1615 (OED, 2023b, pp. 1–2). In the last century, misinformation was primarily used in political and government issues (Jerit & Zhao, 2020). For example, during World War II, the German government spread false information about its military strength and intentions to deceive

its enemies (Day, 2019; Howard, 1995). In the 21st century, the Russian government spread huge misinformation about using their advanced military weapons in the war between Russia and Ukraine in 2022, but when the war started, it was revealed that they are using more than 80 years old weapons, specifically from the 1940s (Axe, 2023; Ellery & Reals, 2023). Misinformation can be transmitted through various channels, including traditional media, word of mouth, and social media platforms. In the early days of the Internet, misinformation was primarily spread through email chains and online forums (Ecker et al., 2022). However, the emergence of social media platforms like Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook has significantly accelerated the dissemination of misinformation, enabling it to reach a larger audience more rapidly.

One prominent example of social media misinformation in recent years is its role during the 2016 US Election. It is widely believed that misinformation spread through social media influences people's voting decisions, potentially impacting the selection of the US President (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). In fields like health and science, misinformation can have serious consequences, leading to harmful actions and decisions. The spread of false information has particularly affected public health issues, such as the rise of the anti-vaccine movement, the H1N1 outbreak, and the dissemination of false information about Covid-19. The World Health Organization has even labeled the Covid-19 pandemic as an 'infodemic' due to the overwhelming amount of misinformation surrounding it (Lilleker et al., 2021).

The dissemination of false information can result in detrimental actions and decisions, highlighting the critical need for fact-checking and verifying information before sharing it. In recent years, there has been a growing concern regarding the wide distribution of misinformation, and attempts have been made to encourage media literacy and combat the misinformation war (Zubiaga et al., 2016). It should be noted that misinformation can be

transformed into disinformation when known, inaccurate information is intentionally propagated to mislead others.

Definition of Concepts: Propaganda and Disinformation as Interchangeable Terms

In the Russian-Ukraine wars of 2014 and 2022, the words ‘propaganda’ and ‘disinformation’ were used interchangeably by Russia, the European Union and NATO, and the United States State Department. The main international actors in the conflict clearly saw disinformation as propaganda and propaganda as disinformation.

President Putin and Russia

The Russian government and officials commonly use the terms ‘propaganda’ and ‘disinformation’ interchangeably, although the term ‘propaganda’ is more frequently employed. President Vladimir Putin mentioned disinformation in his 2000 Annual address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, stating that the media can “turn it into a means of mass disinformation” (Putin, 2000, p. 8). Putin has consistently used both terms interchangeably in various contexts. For instance, during a Security Council meeting on April 5, 2023, Putin said “propaganda and information aggression by the neo-Nazis and their pro-Western patrons should be suppressed” (Putin, 2023b, p. 4). Two months earlier, at the Gala concert commemorating the 80th anniversary of the defeat of the German Nazi forces in the Battle of Stalingrad, Putin referred to the term propaganda as a corrupt act by “unfriendly Western elites” (Putin, 2023a, p. 2).

In the 2022 annual meeting of the Council for Civil Society and Human Rights, Putin addressed the issue of propaganda, specifically highlighting the presence of “very mean and sneaky fake stories that are spread by foreign media and other sources of propaganda” (Russia,

2022a, p. 2). In a separate meeting held in November 2022 with representatives of public associations, Putin also expressed his concerns regarding “outrageous nationalist propaganda” (Russia, 2022b, p. 8). Furthermore, during the final plenary session of the 19th meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club in October 2022, Putin discussed the potential threat to democracy posed by labeling alternative opinions as subversive propaganda (Russia, 2022c).

During a telephone conversation on March 1, 2022, President Putin and Nicolas Maduro, the president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, both emphasized the importance of countering what they referred to as western disinformation (Russia, 2022d). In a video address commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Russian Society Znaniye on December 13, 2022, President Putin emphasized that “our main weapons against disinformation and lies will continue to be solid knowledge, truth, and love for Russia” (Putin, 2022, p. 2).

In previous instances, Putin used the term “anti-Russian propaganda” during the International Economic Forum meeting in 2017. During that meeting, he repeatedly mentioned ‘disinformation’ while answering journalists’ questions (Putin, 2017, p. 22). Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev, who served as the president of Russia from 2008-2012, and prime minister from 2012-2020, also used the terms ‘propaganda’ and ‘disinformation’ interchangeably. In a conversation with the president of Finland in 2010, Medvedev discussed “faulty information and disinformation” (Russia, 2010, p. 7). Additionally, in Russia’s draft of the International Information Security Convention in 2011, ‘disinformation’ was listed as one of the primary threats to world peace and security in the information space (Federation, 2011).

The European Union and NATO

Russian information operations concerning Ukraine are referred to as ‘disinformation’ by the European Council. The European Council is the government and political body of the European Union (EU). In the European Councils’ conclusions on Ukraine and relations with Russia in March 2015, the leaders of the European Council used the term ‘disinformation’ to describe Russia’s actions in Ukraine (Council, 2015, p. 5). They mentioned, “In line with the conclusions of this meetings, a startup team has been established within the European External Action Service (EEAS), with contributions from EU institutions” (Union, 2015, p. 1). The EU leaders also mentioned disinformation in their action plan in 2015 concerning the EU’s preparedness to “anticipate and respond to disinformation relating to the EU” (Union, 2015, p. 1). According to the action plan, the EEAS and the East StratCom Task Force launched the weekly “Disinformation Review” in November 2015 to expose and counter Russian disinformation attacks. This project is called EUvsDisinfo, and they provide weekly updates to its website and subscribers (Service, 2023). The leaders of the EU also used this term in 2012 when they described the situation of Syria and its media (Union, 2012, pp. 26, 29).

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Parliament (EP) also use ‘propaganda’ and ‘disinformation’ interchangeably. On March 2015, in a joint press statement with the then-president of Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg used the terms ‘propaganda’ and ‘disinformation’ interchangeably to indicate Russia’s activities regarding Ukraine (Stoltenberg & Kiska, 2015). Jens Stoltenberg again used those terms interchangeably in May and June of the same year (Stoltenberg, 2015a, 2015b). Following NATO’s Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow also used those terms interchangeably (Vershbow, 2015). Meanwhile, the European Parliament has also

used both terms interchangeably in its resolutions on Russia's information activities, specifically concerning Ukraine and Belarus. In the resolution of the review of the European neighborhood policy in 2015, European Parliament leaders used the term 'propaganda' (Parliament, 2015). On the other hand, when Parliament leaders recommended the EU policy towards Belarus, they mentioned the term 'disinformation' (Parliament, 2013).

The United States State Department

The United States Department of State employs the terms 'propaganda' and 'disinformation' interchangeably in its official communications, especially when addressing Russian information action. For example, on August 31, 2022, the US Department of State published an article on Margarita Simonyan titled "Faces of Kremlin Propaganda: Margarita Simonyan" (State, 2022, p. 1). The introduction of that article mentioned, "Margarita Simonyan is one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's main faces of propaganda and disinformation, both internationally and inside Russia" (State, 2022, para. 1). In the fifth paragraph of that article, the US Department of State used the headline "Kremlin Disinformation- A Family Affair" to describe her family background (State, 2022, para. 5). In this article, the US Department of State used both propaganda and disinformation interchangeably while discussing the activities of Margarita Simonyan. Apart from this article, the US Department of State also used the terms propaganda and disinformation in almost every statement circulated in the past few years (Center, 2022, 2023b, 2023a). The US Department of State has a dedicated center under "The Secretary for public diplomacy and public affairs" for counter disinformation called the Global Engagement Center (GEC) (Rubin, 2023). The GEC is a US government organization countering foreign propaganda and disinformation. It publishes counter-disinformation dispatches, providing lasting lessons to combat disinformation for various stakeholders.

On the other hand, the US Department of State website has a separate section titled “Disarming Disinformation: Our Shared Responsibility,” where hundreds of propaganda and disinformation-related new releases, press releases, statements, reports, counter-disinformation dispatches, resources, and articles are placed (Center, 2023c). This section discusses the threat of disinformation and propaganda, particularly from foreign actors, and highlights the efforts of the State Department to combat this threat. It also provides tips for individuals to identify and combat disinformation and propaganda. In this section’s contents, they used both terms interchangeably. This website is affiliated with the GEC.

The Use of Propaganda In Crisis Situations

There has been a long history of using propaganda and disinformation in times of crisis. When governments and other organizations face a crisis, propaganda is a powerful tool for them to control the narrative and shape public perceptions. This practice existed in ancient times, long before these terms were coined. As the public is easy to manipulate, these techniques are prevalent worldwide. This section briefly explains how propaganda is used, its effects in crises, and how it affects public opinion. The literature demonstrates the following uses of propaganda in times of crisis:

- A. Media Control:** Media control is one of the keyways in which propaganda is used in a crisis to influence public opinion. Governments and other organizations can use their control over the media to present a one-sided view of the crisis and manipulate public opinion to serve the interests of the concerned party (Chomsky, 2002). This is a widespread technique.
- B. Social Media Propaganda:** Social media propaganda is evolving and getting more popular daily, as it needs less effort than any other propaganda technique. When there is a

crisis, providing some facts (it does not matter if they are right or wrong) can motivate and influence public perceptions. In this world of technological advancement, almost all vital media outlets are on social media platforms (Farkas & Neumayer, 2020).

Furthermore, most of them have departments that work to uphold and circulate news and reports on these platforms. Additionally, governments and organizations use social media to circulate direct or indirect propagandist messages to persuade different publics.

Sometimes, they use “reflexive control in these circumstances” (Till, 2021, p. 1364).

Reflexive control is a Russian concept that refers to control over someone’s decision by imposing assumptions (Mateski, 2016).

C. Appropriate Response: Another way of using propaganda in crisis is called appropriate response. When there is a crisis going on, a quick response can be a tool to shape public opinion (Malhan & Dewani, 2020). For example, if there is a natural disaster, a government can use propaganda to emphasize the relief efforts and other steps they have taken. It does not matter the amount of assistance; people always want to hear that the government is helping them during their crises. Some governments used this as an opportunity to gain popularity.

D. Sense of Unity and Solidarity: In a crisis, getting credit for helping people can be another way of using propaganda. This can be done by using messages emphasizing the shared experiences and challenges the people face and promoting national pride and a sense of belonging to a larger community (Lee & Lee, 1979; Leprohon, 2014). This is called positive propaganda. This type of propaganda can help to create a sense of collective purpose and motivation to overcome the crisis.

- E. Blaming Opponents:** Using facts and figures regarding an opponent's activity can help to influence public opinion during a crisis. This is a ubiquitous and powerful tool of disinformation to blame opponents for the government's failures (Benkler et al., 2018). The masses do not check the facts. In such cases, the government primarily uses figures or personalities familiar to the people.
- F. Private Propaganda:** Propaganda does not necessarily apply only to governments and state-controlled media. It is also possible for private media outlets and individuals to manipulate public opinion through propaganda, especially during times of crisis (Nikolov, 2022; Sanders, 1975). For example, during a natural disaster, private media outlets may use additional and unnecessary information to emphasize the importance of financial donations to support disaster relief efforts. In contrast, individuals may spread false information and conspiracy theories through social media.
- G. Adverse Effect:** Propaganda can also negatively affect public opinion and the resolution of crises. It can be difficult for the government or other organizations to resolve a crisis if false or misleading information is disseminated (Colomina et al., 2021). Additionally, propaganda can distort reality, which results in overestimating the government's ability to resolve the crisis and underestimating the problem's true nature and extent.
- H. Long Lasting Effect:** Propaganda can impact public opinion years after a crisis has ended (Mueller, 2021). For example, 9/11 media coverage impacted public perception of terrorism and military action in Afghanistan. Similarly, the media's portrayal of the Gulf War influenced the public's perception of its outcome and the military's role.

Soviet Propaganda Techniques: AGITPROP and Dezinformatsiya

According to a former member of the Romanian Secret Police, Ion Mihai Pacepa, the term ‘AGITPROP’ was coined by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (Pacepa & Rychlak, 2013). Agitprop is a shorthand term for “agitation and propaganda” (Russian: Агитпроп, agitprop), which describes the activities of government propaganda departments. Stalin developed it and used it in various forms of media to spread rumors and fact-based propaganda to shape public opinion. The ‘AGITPROP’ campaign was responsible for disseminating information about the Soviet Communist Party (Brown, 2013; Paul, 1950). Additionally, this campaign highlighted the significance of the Soviet Union in world politics. Pacepa remembered reading a Soviet instruction manual that indicated those terms as a Russian government strategy. AGITPROP significantly shaped Soviet society and influenced global politics during Stalin's rule (Pacepa & Rychlak, 2013). Later the Soviet KGB used the word disinformation to describe manipulating an intelligence system by injecting credible but misleading information. It was later used by the Soviet black propaganda unit Service A (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2018).

The media were an integral part of the disinformation policies of the Soviet Union. Over the decades, false articles were placed in left-leaning newspapers by the Soviet news agency TASS, then published by communist publications (Merriam-Webster, 2023). In the late 1960s and 1980s, officers from the KGB and affiliated Soviet bloc services defected, revealing covert Soviet disinformation operations (Martin, 1990). Several years later, a fake “Who is Who in the CIA” and a pamphlet called “A Study of a Master Spy (Allen Dulles)” was published in the United Kingdom (Waller, 2009). Max Holland, a journalist from the United States, claimed that Soviet archival materials demonstrate that the KGB was instrumental in spreading the myth that the CIA killed John F. Kennedy (Holland, 2003).

The relationship between the United States and South Africa was manipulated by Soviet intelligence, which launched propaganda campaigns against the White House in 1980 (Waller, 2009, pp. 159, 161). In response, President Carter became more interested in the CIA's efforts to counter Soviet disinformation. The Soviet Union launched a comprehensive disinformation campaign in 1985 to persuade the world that AIDS was invented by the United States (Taylor, 2016). This operation was called 'INFEKTION' (State, 1987).

Russian Disinformation in The Post-Soviet Era

The Soviet Union used propaganda and disinformation during the Cold War to attempt to influence Western nations. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia played a vital part in continuing propaganda and disinformation. In 2008, when Russia invaded Georgia, disinformation became more prevalent in Russia (Herpen, 2015). The European Union and NATO both recognized that Russia's disinformation was a problem, so they created special units to analyze and debunk the claims they believed to be false (MacFarquhar, 2016). The section below discusses some ways that Russia is using disinformation in the post-Soviet era.

One of the primary methods the Russian government uses to control the narrative during a crisis is its control of major media outlets. Russian government-controlled media outlets, such as RT (formerly Russia Today), Sputnik, and The Russian News Agency (TASS), serve as essential sources of information for the Russian public and are often used to disseminate the government's official narratives and discredit opposing viewpoints (Center, 2022, p. 4). *Russia Today* (RT) is a state-funded news organization based in Russia. It was founded in 2005 to promote Russia's point of view on international events and portray Russia in a positive light. However, RT's coverage has often been criticized for spreading propaganda and promoting a pro-Russian viewpoint, particularly in its coverage of Ukraine and Middle Eastern events

(MacFarquhar, 2016). Critics have accused RT of presenting a one-sided perspective on these conflicts and of not practicing balanced journalism. Despite this criticism, RT has continued to be a significant player in the international media landscape, with a large online presence and multiple language versions of its content. On the internet and disinformation age, propaganda and media bias continues to be debated. These outlets are also used to spread propaganda and false information, especially during times of crisis when public opinion is especially susceptible to influence (Paul & Matthews, 2016).

Another important tool in Russia's propaganda arsenal is social media. The Russian government began spreading disinformation on social media as these platforms gained popularity. The government has used social media to amplify pro-government voices and spread false information (Shyrokykh, 2020). This is often done by using bots and trolls to artificially inflate the visibility of specific narratives and discredit opposing viewpoints. During a crisis, the Russian government uses social media to spread conspiracy theories and deflect blame, as well as to justify its actions and maintain support for the government (Ajir & Vailliant, 2018). The US State Department investigations have identified several 'proxy sites' Russian government actors use to create and propagate false narratives (Center, 2020). Russian propaganda and disinformation were also used during the US elections to shape public opinion. Reports found that Russian propaganda hugely influences the 2016 US election (Ingram, 2017; Neuman, 2017). The Russian propaganda agency, IRA (Internet Research Agency), recruited U.S. journalists to write articles criticizing Joe Biden as part of its disinformation campaigns before the 2020 U.S. presidential election (Dwoskin & Timberg, 2020).

State-sponsored rallies and demonstrations serve as another propaganda tool for Russia. These events are used to project strength, promote unity, intimidate opposition groups, and

silence dissenting voices (Robertson, 2009). By mobilizing support for the government and generating a sense of nationalistic fervor, Russia leverages these rallies and demonstrations to maintain domestic stability and consolidate its power (Paul & Matthews, 2016).

Russia's involvement in cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns significantly challenges democratic processes. The hacking of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) during the 2016 US presidential election, allegedly carried out by Russian state-sponsored actors, is an example of how such attacks aim to sway public opinion by releasing sensitive information (Pally, 2020). Troll farms and coordinated online influence operations are employed by Russia to amplify certain narratives strategically, spread disinformation, and engage in online harassment to stifle opposing viewpoints (Silverman & Kao, 2022). The Internet Research Agency (IRA) and the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS) played a significant role in spreading divisive and misleading content during the 2016 US presidential election (Careaga & Kornilov, 2020; Parker et al., 2017).

Russia also manipulates historical narratives to foster nationalistic sentiment and strengthen domestic support. This includes downplaying Soviet-era atrocities and promoting a positive image of the Soviet Union's role in World War II. By manipulating historical narratives, Russia aims to shape public perception and maintain its influence (Forest & Johnson, 2002; Pearce, 2020; Zajda & Zajda, 2003).

Discrediting Western institutions and democracies is another goal of Russian propaganda efforts. Through disinformation campaigns that spread false narratives and conspiracy theories, Russia aims to erode trust in Western institutions and democratic systems (Karlsen, 2016; Watanabe, 2018). This was evident during the 2019 European Parliament elections, where

Russian-backed disinformation networks spread false information about the European Union to sow discord (Boyd-Barrett, 2019; Magdin, 2020).

Russia employed propaganda techniques in conflicts such as Ukraine to shape the narrative, justify its actions, and vilify opposition forces. False information, manipulated media, and alternative narratives were utilized to support Russia's military interventions (Alyukov, 2022; Bjola, 2018; Fitzgerald & Brantly, 2017). Russia engaged in hybrid warfare tactics, combining conventional military actions with propaganda and disinformation campaigns. Disinformation campaigns played a crucial role in creating a narrative of popular support for actions like the annexation of Crimea (Iasiello, 2017; Norberg et al., 2014). To further its influence, Russia promotes a narrative portraying itself as a defender of traditional values and cultural heritage, particularly in regions with shared historical ties (Liñán, 2010). This approach cultivates support and influence among specific communities or regions (Clack & Dunkley, 2022; Stoeckl & Uzlaner, 2022).

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

From Kievan Rus to the Present

Russia and Ukraine's long history shapes today's ongoing conflicts between those regions. Ukrainians were originally a part of the Kievan Rus, a powerful medieval state that existed between the 10th and 13th centuries. Varangian Rurik founded a dynasty, and his successor Oleg seized Kyiv and established the new Kievan state (Vernadsky, 1973). Under Olga and Svyatoslav, the Ukrainian Rus were united. Most present-day Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Northwestern Russian regions were part of this state. At that time, Vladimir I. Yaroslav introduced Christianity to the state, marking the peak of their political and cultural development. However, the state was divided into principalities, resulting in a civil war. Agribusiness and trade dominated Kyivan's economy, and Byzantine culture influenced its culture. Kievan Rus is said to be the common heritage of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. Russian civilization is often considered to have originated in this period (Encyclopedia, 2000; Evans, 1981).

During the 13th century, the Mongol Empire invaded Kievan Rus and divided it into smaller principalities. During the Mongol period, political, cultural, and economic development in the area was significantly impacted, leading to conflict between cultures and governments (Bagstad, 2022; M. Martin, 2017). During the 16th and 17th centuries, Ukraine was a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which included Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine. Ukraine's culture and language flourished during this time, but Poland's regional dominance was also evident. Russia and Ukraine have a complex cultural and historical relationship that has been cooperative and confrontational over the centuries. As part of its Russification process, the Russian Empire annexed much of Ukraine by the 18th century, suppressing Ukrainian culture and language (Samokhvalov, 2019; Subtelny, 2009).

The Ukrainian People's Republic was established after the February Revolution and declared independence from Russia in 1918. Later, Ukraine became a founding member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922 (Dewdney et al., 2023). The end of the Russian Empire allowed for the promotion of Ukrainian culture through *korenizatsiya* (Legvold, 2007). During the Holodomor of 1932-33, millions of Ukrainians died due to man-made famine. The Holodomor (death by hunger, in Ukrainian) was a deliberate starvation in Soviet Ukraine. It was brought about by the Communist Party and the Soviet state's repression of the Ukrainian peasantry, who resisted Soviet policies, resulting in the tragic death of millions of Ukrainians. However, there was debate among scholars about the reason behind the Holodomor; was it natural or caused by the Soviet leadership intentionally "targeting the Ukrainian peasantry for destruction" (Kulchytskyi, 2012, pp. 19, 22). The Kyiv Appellate Court declared on January 13, 2010, that the Soviet leadership: Stalin, Kaganovich, Molotov, Kosior, Chubar, and other officials were responsible for genocide against Ukrainians during the Holodomor (Liberty, 2010).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, "Ukrainian independence was declared in 1991" (D'Anieri, 2023, p. 48). While trying to establish a stable, democratic government, the country has suffered from political infighting and corruption. In the decades following independence, Ukrainians struggled to establish their national identity as a stable and democratic political system. During this period, Russia was also undergoing political and economic transformations, seeking to redefine its role and establish its identity (McCauley & Lieven, 2023). Ukraine faced many challenges in the post-Soviet era, including having to balance its relationship with Russia and the West. As part of its efforts to integrate into the European Union and establish its own national identity, Ukraine has also sought closer ties with Europe and the West (Masters, 2022).

Ukraine's efforts to turn to the West and join the European Union and NATO, like other former members of the Soviet Union, and the Warsaw Pact: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, caused serious concerns in Moscow. Vladimir Putin, who considered the collapse of the Soviet Union a great tragedy, decided to prevent NATO from reaching its western borders. Ukraine could not be allowed to join the European Union and NATO.

Russian Annexation of Crimea

In 2013, when the interim government of Ukraine signed a trade agreement with the European Union, it seemed like a step towards joining the European Community. When the then-pro-Russian Ukrainian president, Yanukovich's decided not to sign an association agreement with the EU, preferring to sign a trade agreement with Russia and accept a loan bailout, a large-scale protest began (Al Jazeera, 2013). Ukrainians wanted to become part of the Western world rather than remain under Russian influence. The protests grew in size and scope, the demonstrators demanded Yanukovich's resignation and the departure of the Azarov government. There were violent clashes in Kyiv between protesters and Berkut special riot police in January and February of 2014. As a result of the clashes, 108 protesters and 13 police officers lost their lives, and many others were injured. From 18-20 February, Ukraine experienced its deadliest clashes since independence. Activists with protective gear led the protesters toward parliament, where police opened fire on the demonstrators. On the following day, Yanukovich and the parliamentary opposition reached an agreement regarding an interim unity government, reform of the constitutional system, and early elections. Later that day, the police abandoned Kyiv's central area, and protesters took it over. During the evening of that day, Yanukovich fled the city and ultimately went into exile in Russia (Reuters, 2014).

The Kyiv Revolution of Dignity of February 2014 was not free from cost. Alternatively, it is called the Euromaidan Revolution or the Ukrainian Revolution. Yanukovich was overwhelmingly removed from power by the Ukrainian parliament on February 22. His claims that the vote was illegal led him to ask Russia for assistance. Ukraine's southern and eastern regions were rocked by pro-Russian protests after Russia denounced the events in Ukraine as a coup. Russia soon annexed Crimea after occupying it (Myers & Baker, 2014; Vasovic & Croft, 2014). Separatists declared independence from Ukraine in Donetsk and Luhansk, resulting in the Donbas war (Melkozerova, 2023). As a result of the Minsk Accords, Russia, Ukraine, France, and Germany signed ceasefire agreements in 2014 and 2015. The Accords were signed to end the Donbas war, which erupted after Russia annexed Crimea and pro-Russian separatist movements took control of Donetsk and Luhansk (BBC News, 2014b). However, many view these accords as ambiguous and have failed to bring lasting peace to the region. Despite the ceasefire agreements, fighting in eastern Ukraine continues, and both sides regularly accuse each other of violating the terms of the Accords.

Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Comedian Volodymyr Zelensky became the president of Ukraine with more than 70 percent of the votes in the second round of the elections in April 2019 (Kaminskij, 2022; Mulvey, 2022). Pro-Western Zelensky campaigned on a promise to reconcile with Russia and restore Donbas to the country, hoping to find a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict. In 2021-2022, however, tensions between Russia and Ukraine resurfaced as Russian President Vladimir Putin sought to prevent Ukraine from aligning with NATO and its allies. A security guarantee was demanded of Putin from the Ukrainian government to ensure Ukraine did not join NATO, and NATO's troops were withdrawn from countries that joined the alliance after 1997.

This demand was seen as a direct challenge to Ukraine's sovereignty, and the conflict between the two countries escalated once again (Masters, 2022). On February 24, 2022, the Russian military invaded Ukraine, leading to a large-scale conflict. The fighting has resulted in thousands of deaths, millions of refugees, and displaced civilians, with Ukraine accusing Russia of violating its territorial integrity and international law. The conflict has significantly impacted the region and raised concerns about the potential for broader conflict between Russia and other countries (Kirby, 2023; Kryzhanivsky et al., 2023).

Russia-Ukraine conflicts have been shaped by various historical factors, including political and economic tensions, longstanding grievances, and animosities. Post-Soviet Ukraine seeks closer ties with the West and NATO, while Russia tries to maintain its influence over its former Soviet territories. Economic sanctions and diplomatic actions have been imposed on Russia to resolve the crisis (Hosoe, 2023). Ukraine's economy and social fabric have also been affected by the political and military conflict. The conflict has displaced thousands of people, which disrupted trade and investment. The conflict has also caused political and social divisions within the country, as different regions and communities have taken different positions on their future. Russia has also been affected by the Ukrainian crisis, as it has been isolated from international communities and faced economic sanctions. Additionally, the conflict has impacted Russia's political landscape, making it more authoritarian and intolerant of dissent (Aliu et al., 2023; Fernández et al., 2023; Hodes, 2023). The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is complex and multifaceted, and its resolution will require sustained efforts by all parties involved, including the international community.

CHAPTER IV

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Theoretical Perspectives

This study of propaganda and disinformation in the Russian-Ukraine conflict was carried out within the theoretical framework of the journalistic field advanced by Bourdieu (2005, 1994), the journalistic ethic of truth-seeking, truth-telling, and being accountable (SPJ, 2014), journalistic paradigm repair (Steiner et al., 2012; Vos & Moore, 2020), and gender and international journalism (Steiner, 2017). Bourdieu's theory presents journalism as a field that has a number of settled, autonomous rights and privileges, including freedom of expression. This perspective explains journalistic practice in the field. On the other hand, journalism ethics recommends the right course of action in journalistic practice, while paradigm repair shows us why journalists react and defend journalistic activities in times of crisis. Gender and international journalism focus on the role and place of gender equality in journalism.

Journalistic Field Theory

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu developed the journalistic field theory in the 1970s and 1980s. His 1996 televised lecture, *Sur la télévision* (On Television), described the “French journalistic field and its relationship to economic, political, and power fields.” The lecture was translated into English in 2005, giving it a “wider audience in the international journalism field” (Maares & Hanusch, 2022, p. 737). The theory offers a conceptual framework for understanding media relations and journalism in broader cultural and social contexts. Scholars argue that the theory has significantly impacted the broader journalistic context. The theory argues that journalism is an independent profession that aims to inform the public about societal, economic,

and political concerns. However, journalism can sometimes be shaped by the political and economic interests of the owner group (Bourdieu, 2005). This concept and theory have significant implications in media and communication studies. For example, it discusses how controller groups influence independent professions like journalism. It also discusses how technology and other factors have shaped journalism, resulting in a decline in journalism outlets and organizations (Benson, 1999). The theory provides a framework for evaluating the crisis facing journalism and its role in shaping a society's political and economic environment (Benson & Neveu, 2005).

Bourdieu was interested in how social capital and power dynamics influence social and political institutions, especially the media. He referred to the interconnected social and cultural frameworks as the 'field.' These fields influence institutional practices and norms (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Dickinson, 2008). Bourdieu's focus on competition, class distinctions, and professional autonomy in media analysis complements the new institutionalist perspective, highlighting the importance of differentiation and journalist independence (Benson, 2006). The theory also helps with "comparative and historical contextualization" (Maares & Hanusch, 2022, p. 737). It tells us that journalism and journalists are essential to shaping society. However, the practice and independence of the journalistic field are not the same all over the world. They differ based on geographical location, human rights, religious rites, and other relevant issues. Eko (2019) discussed several journalistic fields around the world (European, American, African). In his study, he compared different journalistic fields and showed how external factors (religious rites, governmentality) influence journalism. In his journalistic field theory, Bourdieu (2005) also discussed how external matters influenced journalism's regular or autonomous practice.

Journalistic Ethics of Being Accountable and Transparent

The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) has established a code of ethics that provides guidance for journalists to conduct their work in an ethical manner. Initially adopted in September 1926 at its annual convention, the code has undergone revisions and was last updated in 2014 (Slattery, 2016). According to SPJ (2014), the code comprises four key principles: the pursuit of truth and accurate reporting, minimizing harm, acting independently, and being accountable and transparent. The first principle emphasizes the importance of journalistic accuracy and fairness when presenting information. The second principle focuses on minimizing harm in all possible aspects. Journalists are encouraged to be honest and courageous in their reporting while considering the potential consequences and striving to prevent unnecessary harm. The third principle highlights the significance of journalistic independence. Journalists should avoid affiliations or biases that may compromise their integrity. By maintaining independence, journalists can uphold their credibility and integrity in the long term. The fourth principle emphasizes accountability and transparency. Journalists are expected to take responsibility for their work and be transparent about their sources and methods. They should promptly and prominently acknowledge and rectify any mistakes. Also, journalists are encouraged to expose unethical conduct within the journalism industry, even within their organizations (Culver, 2017; SPJ, 2014).

This study examines the actions of two female journalists working within the journalistic field and exemplifies the accountability principle outlined in the SPJ's code of ethics. They courageously exposed unethical conduct within their organizations, demonstrating their commitment to ethical journalism. According to SPJ, 'ethical journalism' involves taking personal responsibility for one's work (Farley et al., 2014; Sacino, 2012). There are five parts to

this section. Overall, the SPJ's code of ethics serves as a guiding framework for journalists to uphold professional standards, honesty, and integrity in their reporting. As this has been a guiding framework for journalists since 1926 and is also a matter of academic research, this study used this framework as a theory to discuss and figure out why women journalists resisted their organizations.

The complete code of ethics is included in Appendix B.

Journalism as a Way of Seeing Things- Journalistic Paradigm Repair

Journalism provides a unique perspective that the general public may not have access to. However, ethical mistakes can occur in journalism when the values of the profession are not prioritized. To uphold journalistic integrity, journalists and media organizations should acknowledge their mistakes and take appropriate steps to rectify them. This process is known as journalism paradigm repair, which involves addressing and resolving errors that occur in journalism (Chan & Lee, 1984). Journalists serve as a reflection of society, and the public relies on journalists to present an accurate picture of the world. However, there are instances where journalists or media owners deviate from the fundamental principles of journalism. In such cases, a paradigm shift is necessary. When damage occurs in journalism, there are individuals who advocate for repairing the harm caused. Journalistic paradigm repair plays a vital role in correcting errors and biases from previous reports, ensuring the profession's credibility to the audience (Steiner et al., 2012).

To carry out paradigm repair effectively, journalists employ diverse discursive strategies. One approach involves defending the journalistic paradigm by emphasizing its indispensable role in fostering a free and democratic society (Eko & Hellmueller, 2018; Ryan, 2001). Journalists may argue that the paradigm is under attack from those who seek to manipulate the flow of

information, thereby highlighting its significance in providing unbiased reporting (Koliska et al., 2020; Yanqiu & Matingwina, 2016). Additionally, journalists may challenge the critics of the journalistic paradigm, accusing them of bias, lack of knowledge, or unpatriotic motives (Mindich, 1998; Panievsky, 2022). By doing so, they aim to discredit the arguments against the paradigm and emphasize the importance of an independent press (Chan & Lee, 1984). Moreover, journalists can reaffirm journalism's core norms and values, underscoring the vital principles of objectivity, accuracy, and fairness (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). They can argue that these principles are fundamental for upholding a free and democratic society (Eko & Hellmueller, 2018).

Journalistic paradigm repair also encounters specific challenges within different countries and media landscapes. For instance, the rise of opinion writing in Russian and German journalism posed significant challenges to the societal importance and professionalism of the profession (Litvinenko, 2013). Addressing these challenges requires a revision of journalistic concepts and standards to uphold the profession's vital social functions.

It is essential to acknowledge that paradigm repair does not always protect the journalistic paradigm. At times, the threats to the paradigm may prove too formidable, leading to its erosion or compromise (Hindman, 2005). Furthermore, paradigm repair can have adverse consequences. Journalists engaging in this strategy become defensive and less inclined to critically examine their work (Bustamante & Relly, 2021). Consequently, this defensive stance can potentially diminish the overall quality of journalism (Besley & Prat, 2006; Mindich, 1998).

The two journalists in this study, Liz Wahl and Marina Ovsyannikova, both acknowledged the errors made by their news organization and demonstrated resistance in an attempt to repair the damage, although their efforts may have been limited. Research has demonstrated that journalists perceive errors in their work as personal and professional attacks,

motivating them to seek ways to restore the damage caused actively (Steiner et al., 2012). Over the past decade, there has been a concerted effort by journalists to repair the dominant news paradigm against challenges posed by the internet. However, this effort has weakened over time (Ruggiero, 2004). As Carlson (2012) suggested, it is necessary to extend the paradigm repair approach beyond individual incidents and consider them indicative of widespread paradigmatic challenges.

Considering the dynamic nature of the journalistic paradigm, paradigm repair is an ongoing and intricate process. As the paradigm evolves, journalists must continuously adapt their discursive strategies to safeguard them against emerging threats and uphold their relevance in a rapidly changing media landscape.

Gender and International Journalism Theory

Gender is a social construct consisting of roles, expectations, and behaviors assigned based on one's sex (Lorber, 2018). Gender significantly influences almost all aspects of journalism, from news production to consumption (Holman & Perreault, 2022). The relationship between women and the media, as well as the broader connection between gender and the media, is a continuous debate in journalism that has gone on for decades (Carter et al., 1998; Chambers et al., 2004; De Bruin, 2000; De Bruin & Ross, 2004; Gill & Gill, 2007; Steiner, 2017).

However, gender bias can harm journalism quality by perpetuating exclusionary practices and reinforcing harmful stereotypes (Ihle, 2023; Žuffová, 2023). To address these issues, it is crucial to develop a theoretical framework that explores the role of gender in journalism, identifies gender bias, and proposes strategies for creating a more inclusive and equitable media landscape.

Gender and international journalism theory provides a lens to explore issues about female journalists, their resistance, and the feedback they receive from their organizations. Globally,

journalism remains predominantly male-dominated, with men constituting the majority of journalists and holding most managerial positions in editorial hierarchies (Hanitzsch et al., 2019). This gender disparity is reflected worldwide. For example, in the United States, male journalists often cover “high-status areas of news production, particularly politics, and business.” At the same time, women are frequently assigned to “soft news, human-interest stories, and features” (Steiner, 2017, p. 1). Research conducted in Norway also revealed significant underrepresentation of female sources in articles, except for lifestyle content (Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019). In India and South Africa, female journalists perceived newsroom culture as predominantly masculine, limiting their influence and perpetuating professional stereotypes (Rao & Rodny-Gumede, 2020). Ejaz et al. (2022) faced difficulties in researching climate journalists in Pakistan due to the lack of representation and the inadequate presence of women in the country's media sector. In light of these issues, the study by Bamezai et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of integrating gender equality into mainstream media and journalism education.

Gender and journalism theory investigates how gender influences journalism practice and the potential impact of gender biases on news content. Gender biases can perpetuate stereotypes about women in journalism, such as the narrow portrayal of women as either the bitch or the ditz, overlooking the diversity and complexity of women’s experiences (Schowalter, 2009). However, it is crucial to note that women are not passive victims of these biases, as female journalists often face different standards than their male counterparts (Steiner, 2017). Steiner (2017, p. 1) also found that women journalists were sexualized and visualized in broadcasting through “explicit scrutiny of their bodies, hairstyles, clothing, and voices.” However, they were invisible in the management sector, leading to a stark disparity in representation and power dynamics within the media industry. Changes in warfare, technology, and news media have led to a “feminization of

war reporting,” with cost-cutting measures and the belief that audiences prefer women on screen contributing to the increased employment of female journalists in this domain (Williams, 2019).

Additionally, newspapers and organizations sometimes use women on the front pages to present “women’s standpoint” and boost circulation through publicity. Additionally, female journalists covering war face a higher risk of sexual violence, harassment, pressure, censorship, and so on. These challenges are not limited to female journalists reporting on the war alone (Koirala, 2020; North, 2012, 2016; Safa & Akter, 2015; Walsh-Childers et al., 1996). Many female journalists who experience sexual attacks and other types of harassment choose not to report them to their supervisors for fear of being taken off their assignments. However, some journalists often resist and challenge gendered expectations and stereotypes through their actions and words. This resistance takes various forms, such as speaking out against harassment or advocating for greater representation of women’s perspectives in news coverage.

To address gender bias in journalism, several approaches can be implemented. Increasing women's representation within newsrooms is crucial for promoting gender diversity and incorporating a more comprehensive range of perspectives into news content (Winchester & Browning, 2015). Training and awareness programs can equip journalists with the knowledge and tools to recognize and avoid gender bias in their reporting practices. Creating a culture of accountability through editorial guidelines, peer reviews, and open discussions on gender-related issues encourages self-reflection and challenges existing biases (Bradley, 2005; Byerly, 2013; Steiner, 2017).

Gender and journalism theory draws from multiple disciplines, including sociology, psychology, and communication studies, to understand and analyze the complex dynamics of gender in media (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2021). An interdisciplinary approach enriches our

understanding of how gender influences news production and consumption, facilitating the development of comprehensive frameworks for addressing gender bias. The Muted Group Theory, proposed by Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener in 1975, is relevant in the context of gender and journalism (Ardener, 2005). Ardener (2005) explored how marginalized groups are silenced through language manipulation based on factors like gender, age, skin tone, religion, origin, or social class. This theory helps us understand how women's voices and experiences may be marginalized or muted within newsrooms and media narratives due to the dominance of male-centered norms and values in journalism (Ogundoyin, 2019; Tayo-Garbson et al., 2021). Women journalists often encountered challenges in effectively expressing their perspectives and influencing the news agenda, leading to the limited representation of their experiences in news content. This study talks about the resistance of female journalists against their news organization, where female journalists did not just quit because of huge censorship and gatekeeping.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study focus on the role of gender in the Russian journalistic field, female journalists' resistance to Kremlin propaganda, and how Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN portrayed this resistance. The first research question seeks to understand the role of gender in the Russian journalistic field, particularly within the context of conflicts.

RQ1: What is the role of gender in the Russian journalistic field in the context of conflicts?

The second research question centers on two female journalists who resisted Kremlin propaganda. To gain a deeper understanding, the author examines the journalists' resistance

narratives and statements in order to comprehend their motivations and tactics. This research question highlights the patterns of resistance.

RQ2: How did the female journalists in this study resist Kremlin propaganda in the Russia-Ukraine wars of 2014 and 2022?

The third research question explores journalistic resistance and paradigm repair. To address this question, the study analyzes the narratives surrounding the resistance to observe how the journalists contribute to paradigm repair. This research question provides further insights into the process of paradigm repair.

RQ3: How did the female journalists under study engage in journalistic paradigm repair?

The final research question delves into media representation, specifically how Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN represented the resistance of these female journalists. The study scrutinizes news articles, videos, and interviews to examine how each media outlet reported on the incident.

RQ4: How did Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN represent the resistance of these female journalists?

By examining these research questions, the study aims to shed light on the role of gender in the Russian journalistic field, the strategies employed by female journalists to resist Kremlin propaganda in the Russia-Ukraine wars, the engagement of these journalists in paradigm repair, and how Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN portrayed their resistance.

CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a multi-method research approach to address the research questions. The selected approaches for this research were historical analysis and textual analysis.

Historical Analysis

Historical analysis is one of the most used research methods in social science research. It refers to analyzing the archival documents of history to gain insights into past organizations, individuals, and events (Ventresca & Mohr, 2017). It includes evaluating evidence, primarily documents in various forms (books, newspapers, articles, arts, the internet, archives, etc.). The historical analysis method helps to identify and ascertain a clear picture of history and assists one in understanding the significance of specific historical events (Thorpe & Holt, 2008). In addition, it helps to shape the present meaning and guides future meanings (Stern, 2006). These methods can also be used in non-historical research to analyze contemporary documents and texts, including digital sources like electronic databases, emails, and web pages (Ventresca & Mohr, 2017). According to Grigg (1991), the historical method has three elements: research, analysis, and synthesis. Research helps to identify and locate the sources from which we obtain evidence, analysis helps to critique texts both externally and internally, and synthesis helps to interpret the events or terms. Scholars added, “History is more than a narrative of the past,” emphasizing how and why events occurred instead of who, what, where, and when (Cole et al., 2022, p. 12). According to the word analysis of Google Books’ Ngram Viewer, historical analysis in academia has increased over time (Viewer, 2023). (See Fig. V 1)

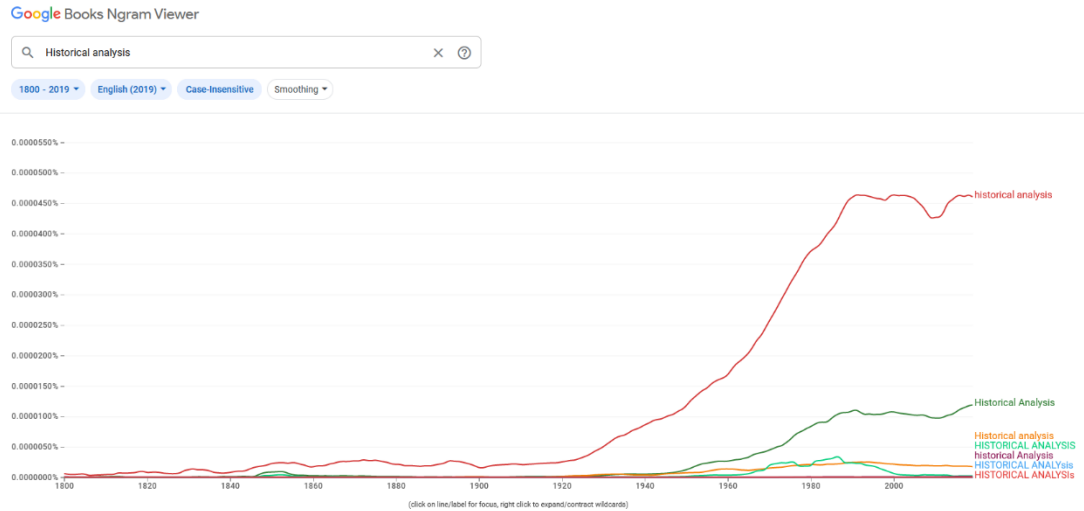


Figure 5. 1. The uses of historical analysis over centuries; Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer

This study examines the Russia-Ukraine conflicts and the resistance of female journalists within the context of the histories of these conflicts. Analyzing historical events is crucial in gaining deeper insights into the subject matter. Therefore, this study adopts historical analysis as a method to comprehensively understand the historical conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, the utilization of propaganda, and the instances of women journalists resisting authoritarian disinformation. The documentation of the Russia-Ukraine conflicts and the use of propaganda is primarily found in history books and scholarly research articles. This study utilized resources such as Google Scholar, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and university libraries to access relevant literature on the topics. Historical analysis can be carried out to examine the use of a specific word. For instance, Stern (2006) explored the origins of the concept of ‘brand,’ tracing it back to its earliest usage approximately 1500 years ago. Similarly, this study followed the same approach by delving into the historical origins of ‘propaganda,’ ‘disinformation,’ and the ‘Russia-Ukraine conflicts,’ enabling a comprehensive understanding of these phenomena.

Compared to ‘propaganda,’ ‘disinformation,’ and the ‘Russia-Ukraine conflicts,’ the resistance efforts of women journalists in general, and women journalists in the Russia-Ukraine conflicts in particular, have received little attention in the existing literature. To bridge this gap, this study employed alternative research methods. A combination of Google searches and Wikipedia was utilized to gather information on the resistance of women journalists. After finding the initial information about those journalists, a particular historical analysis method was applied to examine the facts and events related to the resistance efforts of these journalists. This method involved gathering specific information from newspapers and other sources such as web pages, blogs, and social media. This study’s primary objective was to analyze female journalists’ resistance against authoritarian disinformation in the context of the Russia- Ukraine conflicts.

Additionally, it analyzed the historical debates that have transpired between Russia and Ukraine, emphasizing the role of propaganda during times of crisis. While books and research articles provided valuable insights into the conflicts and propaganda, alternative research methods were employed to address the limited representation of women journalists’ resistance efforts. By adopting a historical perspective, this study aimed to unravel the complexities of the Russia-Ukraine conflicts and shed light on the significance of propaganda during times of crisis.

Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is a heavily used method in the field of communication. Researchers use this analysis as a method to examine the deeper meaning of messages that appear throughout a variety of media. Documents, movies, newspapers, paintings, web pages, and other media can all produce data for textual analysis. These data types serve as the study’s ‘texts’ and are utilized to evaluate the meanings, values, and messages they provide (Smith, 2017). This message can be in any form; recorded, spoken, visual, or even linguistic (Burrows, 2004). Textual analysis is

important in research methods, as sometimes messages influence millions and reflect larger societal structures (Hawkins, 2017). According to McKee (2003), textual analysis explores how individuals within a specific context make sense of the world around them. McKee (2003) emphasizes that a text can be interpreted and utilized in various ways, depending on the perspectives and backgrounds of the individuals who engage with it. In this view, the meaning and significance of a text are not fixed or absolute but somewhat contingent upon the subjective interpretations and experiences of its viewers or readers. This method involves closely engaging with the work and examining its details without imposing excessive preconceptions. It raises questions that research aims to address beyond simply uncovering information (Belsey, 2013).

Textual analysis has three goals: it assists academics in assigning meaning to the text, understanding how elements outside it may affect it, and criticizing or evaluating the text (Frey et al., 1992). Textual analysis requires specific tasks based on the study's discipline norms as it is used in various disciplines. In communication research, textual analysis has a limited ability to show correlations between events or make predictions. Instead, the method enables researchers to write precise descriptions of how individuals and groups use texts over time (Frey et al., 1992; McKee, 2003; Roberts, 2000). Another disadvantage of this method is that the textual details can be overdetermined and carry multiple meanings simultaneously (Belsey, 2013).

Unlike quantitative approaches, qualitative textual analysis does not start with a fixed theory or test variables but instead explores how interpretations inform our understanding of social life (Smith, 2017). Altheide & Schneider (2012) proposed a five-stage process for qualitative textual analysis in media studies. The process involves selecting a problem, reviewing related documents, ongoing coding, conceptual refinement, and compiling findings into a report. The focus is on understanding the character of social life through the analyzed texts.

In media studies and social sciences research, textual analysis is vital in answering research questions. By stating the researcher's expectations, research questions provide a grounding framework for the analysis (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). Therefore, textual analysis helps researchers find empirical evidence, draw conclusions about social structures, and illuminate the underlying politics or social context (Caulfield, 2022). In this thesis, the strategy of McKee (2003) was used to understand the factual aspects or unseen parts of selected texts more in-depth. This study examined the two female journalists' statements and messages when they publicly protested and questioned the ethics of the news organization they worked for, focusing on their motives for protesting in the context of Russia-Ukraine issues. The study also examined interviews the journalists under study gave to several news outlets as part of their resistance. The study included a textual analysis of those video messages, articles, and statements to seek the patterns and details of the resistance of those female journalists.

Another section of this study explored media representations of the resistance of those journalists. The focus was on how Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN covered those events. The study included a textual analysis of published articles from Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN to answer the research questions. To find relevant articles for this analysis, the study used three approaches: A search of news outlets' official websites for articles on the subject, using keywords like 'Liz Wahl' and 'Marina Ovsyannikova.' This method yielded almost all relevant articles. The three official websites of those media networks are:

Al Jazeera: <https://www.aljazeera.com/> (Al Jazeera, 2023b)

The BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/> (BBC, 2023a)

CNN: <https://www.cnn.com/> (CNN, 2023b)

As search engines like Google, Bing, Baidu, and Yahoo help people search for specific things more efficiently, they are integral to academic research. Regarding academic search engines, Google and Google Scholar are popular and effective if they can be appropriately used (Meals, 2023). To find additional articles, the study did a search on Google, using search phrases such as ‘Liz Wahl BBC’ and ‘Marina Ovsyannikova Al Jazeera.’

Lastly, the study used artificial intelligence to identify any overlooked articles. Artificial intelligence and chatbots are now used in academic studies to make things easier and more productive (Lin, 2023). The article used ChatGPT, Google Bard, and Bing to find additional articles. ChatGPT, Google Bard, and Bing were requested to provide a list of articles concerning these journalists and media. For example, they were instructed to provide articles related to Liz Wahl and Marina Ovsyannikova with the following search strings: ‘Provide me all the BBC news articles about Liz Wahl’ or ‘Provide me the news coverage of Al Jazeera regarding Liz Wahl.’ ChatGPT and Google Bard were unable to locate relevant links. Only Bing was able to provide links to articles relevant to the question.

All video texts were transcribed. In order to organize the news articles, videos, and other relevant materials, the author collected them in a word document arranged by the media outlet, the publication date of each article, video, or other relevant material. Fifty-three documents were listed and manually analyzed to determine media representations of the journalists and events under study. The number of documents related to Liz Wahl was 17, and the number of documents related to Marina Ovsyannikova was 36. Al Jazeera had 1 document regarding Liz Wahl and 13 documents regarding Marina Ovsyannikova. The BBC had 5 and 12 documents, respectively. On the other hand, CNN had 11 documents on Liz Wahl and Marina

Ovsyannikova, respectively. However, some articles were overlooked because the researcher did not have internal access to those website portals.

Table 1 presents the data found through websites, Google, and artificial intelligence searches. The complete lists are included in Appendix A.

Table 5.1 Number of news portrayals by Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN

Name	Al Jazeera Coverage	The BBC Coverage	CNN Coverage	Total
Liz Wahl	1	5	11	17
Marina Ovsyannikova	13	12	11	36
Total				53

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS

Role of gender in the Russian Journalistic field in the context of conflicts

The first research question was concerned with figuring out the role of gender in the Russian journalistic field. In order to answer the research questions, a historical analysis of events where female journalists played a significant role in the Russian journalistic field was carried out. In the Russian journalistic field, many journalists have been victimized for a long time. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 17 journalists have been killed since the Russia-Ukraine war started in 2014 (Sanon, 2023). The data on harassment are unknown, as some incidents remained unreported. There are many incidents of resistance against the Russian authoritarian government's circulated disinformation. However, people who resisted the authoritarian disinformation are primarily women (Dewhirst, 2018). This study also found that female journalists were prominent and upfront regarding resistance against authoritarian disinformation. Furthermore, most of them paid a heavy price for their resistance. Some were killed for criticizing the government, and some were accused of false acquisitions like terrorist connections (Aitkhozhina, 2020); some had to leave their workplace or even flee the country. A few examples of Russian female journalists who have been victimized for resisting the authoritarian Putin regime are given below.

Anna Politkovskaya was a journalist, columnist for the Russian daily newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*. She was a human rights activist who gained international acclaim for reporting on the Chechen war. She was critical of the Russian government's handling of the conflict and was assassinated in 2006 (Arkhangelsky, 2016), allegedly retaliating for her reporting (BBC News, 2006a, 2006b; Odynova, 2009). Vyacheslav Izmailov, a former military officer and colleague of

Politkovskaya at *Novaya Gazeta*, disclosed at least nine prior attempts on her life (G. Brown, 2011). In June 2014, five men received prison sentences for the murder. However, the mastermind behind the contract killing and the individual who provided the financial resources for the act remains undisclosed (Roth, 2014).

Anastasia Baburova was also a journalist for the Russian daily *Novaya Gazeta*, which is noted for its critical coverage of the Russian government. In 2009, she was shot and killed while walking with another human rights lawyer who was also murdered in the incident. Baburova had been investigating the activities of neo-Nazi groups in Russia at the time of her death (Bigg, 2014; Journalists, 2023).

Galina Timchenko worked for Lenta.ru, one of Russia's popular blog news sources. Timchenko was sacked in 2014 when the website released an interview with a far-right politician (Arkhangelsky, 2016). The Russian authorities charged the website with breaking Russia's new law prohibiting 'extremist' communication. When Timchenko was fired suddenly, 39 Lenta.ru staff also left the outlet in protest against the decision. Later, Timchenko and many of her colleagues fled to Riga, Latvia, and founded *Meduza*, a news website in Latvia that continues covering complex themes in Russia (Pahlke & Zach, 2023). In 2022, she received the Committee to Protect Journalists' Gwen Ifill press freedom award (Journalists, 2022)

Tatyana Felgenhauer was a journalist for Ekho Moskvyy, an independent radio station in Russia. In 2017, Felgenhauer was stabbed in the neck by an individual who broke into the radio station's studio. She survived the attack but was severely injured. The attack was widely perceived to be the result of Felgenhauer's critical coverage of the government (Carroll, 2017; Walker, 2017). *Meduza* and Felgenhauer are both listed on the Russian government's 'Foreign Agents' list. The Russian foreign agent list is a government registry that identifies, marks, and

tracks what it believes to be foreign-funded individuals and organizations involved in political activities against Russia (Daucé, 2015).

Svetlana Prokopyeva is a journalist and Ekho Moskvvy radio program contributor. She was prosecuted for ‘justifying terrorism’ in 2019 after commenting on a terrorist act in Russia (Higgins, 2019). If convicted, she risked up to seven years in prison; however, she was acquitted in 2020 (Higgins, 2020). In 2020, she was awarded a CPJ international press freedom award for her bravery. She also had to flee from Russia to save her life. She lives in Latvia and criticizes the authoritarian Russian government from there (Journalists, 2020).

Irina Slavina was a journalist and the editor of the online news publication Koza Press. In 2020, she set herself on fire outside the police station in Nizhny Novgorod, reportedly in protest against the authorities’ harassment and persecution (Rainsford, 2020). She died as a result of her injuries (Reuters, 2020).

As the examples above show, Russian women journalists face challenges, abuses, and harassment while working for Russian or foreign media outlets covering the country. The government has tightened its grip on the media, creating barriers for journalists critical of the government or those covering sensitive topics. Harassment, intimidation, and violence are common. Working safely and freely became increasingly difficult due to the government's crackdown on critical reporting and independent media. Some journalists resort to self-censorship to avoid reprisals. However, responses have varied, with some journalists protesting the harassment and media control. This study found that women journalists in Russia played a crucial role in resisting government propaganda and shedding light on overlooked issues. Their bravery and dedication contributed significantly to the fight against government censorship.

Women journalists working in the context of Russia served as exemplary figures in the journalistic field.

Resistance to Kremlin Propaganda in the Russia-Ukraine wars of 2014 & 2022

The second research question was concerned with the details of resistance by the women journalists against Kremlin propaganda. Among several female journalists who resisted authoritarian disinformation, this study focused on and analyzed the resistance of Liz Wahl and Marina Ovsyannikova, two journalists who worked for different Russian government-controlled media outlets. To answer the research questions, a textual analysis of those journalists' resignation narratives and statements was carried out. The aim was to understand and explain the resistance.

Liz Wahl

Liz Wahl is an American-born journalist who worked at the American bureau of the Kremlin-funded and controlled international television organization *Russia Today* (RT) from 2011 to 2014. After the Russian annexation of Crimea took place in 2014, she became increasingly uncomfortable with the network's coverage of the annexation as time passed. Following a report that alleged that fascists and neo-Nazis dominated the new Ukrainian government, on March 5, Wahl resigned on-air from the live program (Kirchick, 2014). She went off script and critical of RT, stating that the network was covering up Putin's actions and that she could not be a part of that. She announced, "I could not be part of a network funded by the Russian government that whitewashed the actions of Putin" (Wahl, 2014, p. 1). She added, "I am proud to be an American and believe in disseminating the truth. And that is why, after this newscast, I am resigning" (Edwards, 2014, p. 2). Wahl stared at the camera for five seconds before the network switched to commercials.

In response to Wahl's resignation, RT denied the accusations and denounced the reporter. In a statement, RT management stated that Wahl wanted to garner public sympathy. They called the way Wahl resigned a “self-promotional” stunt. They said that everyone has some opinions and values. If someone disagrees with the editorial position, they have several places to express their view, not by doing it as unprofessionally as she had done (Byers, 2014b, p. 1; Carroll, 2014; Simonyan, 2014; Today, 2014). Liz Wahl responded to RT's statement by saying: “It makes me feel sick that I worked there” (Carroll, 2014, p. 2). “It is not a sound news organization, not when your agenda is making America look bad,” she added (Kirchick, 2014, p. 4).

The video of Wahl’s resignation went viral within hours. She was interviewed by major American news outlets, including CNN (Botelho, 2014), Fox News, News Nation, and MSNBC (MSNBC, 2014). Several shows invited her to appear, including *The View*, Brian Stelter, Eric Burnett, Anderson Cooper, Stephen Colbert, and so on. *On Politico*, Wahl published a tell-all article titled, “What it was like to work for the Russian propaganda machine, and why I quit on live TV” (Wahl, 2014, p. 1). She narrated her early career, recruitment at RT, and frustrations while working for the Russian-funded network (Wahl, 2014). In the article, she described the censorship and pressure she faced at RT and how it clashed with her journalistic ethics and personal values.

Marina Ovsyannikova

Marina Vladimirovna Ovsyannikova is a journalist from Russia with almost 20 years of experience in the media industry. As a reporter, she was part of *Channel One Russia*’s main TV channel and a staff member of the evening newscast, *Vremya (Time)*. While at Channel One, Ovsyannikova produced what she later described as Kremlin propaganda. She worked hard to promote the Russian government’s viewpoint, often presenting news stories favorable to the

Kremlin while downplaying or ignoring information that was critical of the government (Méheut, 2023). The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 changed her perspective on the Russian government. After initially supporting Putin, Marina Ovsyannikova became alarmed when she saw the Ukraine war images. They were reminiscent of the Chechen war she had experienced as a child. Her original plan was to protest against the war near the Kremlin, but she ultimately did not. In 2022, Ovsyannikova interrupted a *Vremya* broadcast to protest Russia's invasion of Ukraine and became an international news sensation. During the *Vremya* evening news broadcast on March 14, 2022, a program that usually had an audience of millions, she appeared behind the anchor with a Russian and English language mixed handwriting poster with the hand-written statement, “Stop the war, do not believe the propaganda, here you are being lied to.” At the same time, she shouted, “Stop the war! No war!” Shortly after, the broadcast switched to a recorded segment (Al Jazeera, 2022c; Sivtsova et al., 2022). Russian viewers had not previously been informed that the Russian invasion of Ukraine was a war, as state-controlled media outlets typically toe the government's line. Ovsyannikova’s protest was very unusual. She protested what she saw as an unjust war and expressed her distaste for Putin’s propaganda machine and the texts that journalists were being made to read (Sivtsova et al., 2022). Ovsyannikova was arrested, interrogated for 14 hours, fined, and put on pre-trial house arrest.

This study found that both female journalists who resisted Kremlin propaganda employed similar strategies and displayed consistent resistance patterns. They voiced their dissent publicly on live television, ensuring their message reached a wide audience. Their discomfort with being part of a propaganda machine led them to seek opportunities to speak out against the system. Notably, both journalists opted to interrupt live programs to protest the Putin disinformation machine. This created an uncomfortable situation within their respective news organizations.

However, their acts of resistance did not come without consequences. Both journalists faced subsequent backlash from their employers due to their actions. Despite the potential fallout, they remained devoted to their actions, boldly asserting that the information being propagated was false or misleading. These findings highlighted the shared tactics and motivations of the two journalists as they resisted the influence of Kremlin propaganda.

Engaging in code of ethics and paradigm repair.

The third research question was concerned with journalistic resistance, code of ethics, and paradigm repair. To answer this question, the study looked at their narratives of resistance to see how the journalists upheld journalistic ethics and engaged in paradigm repair. This research question provides more details about how these reporters engaged in upholding journalistic ethics and repairing the journalistic paradigm that had been brought into disrepute by the Putin regime's propaganda.

Liz Wahl

After Liz Wahl resigned from *Russia Today*, she was interviewed by many media outlets worldwide. In an interview with *The Daily Beast*, she revealed that while she was aware of the challenges she would face when she joined RT, she still tried to maintain an objective stance throughout her tenure there. When she faced and observed barriers against journalistic ethics, she started thinking about leaving the news organization. She said her supervisors censored and manipulated her work while working at RT. Consequently, Wahl believed she had no choice but to leave the network to maintain her integrity (Kirchick, 2014). According to Wahl, the Kremlin exerted a subtle but pervasive influence over RT, an influence that was not always evident to outsiders. She believed journalists working there know what is expected of them and tend to conform to the network's agenda to succeed. Wahl also revealed that RT management would

manipulate younger and more inexperienced employees, rewarding those who complied with the network's narrative and punishing those who did not. Despite the network's motto being “Question More,” Wahl said that to succeed at RT, journalists must suppress concerns and play the game (Kirchick, 2014; Wahl, 2014).

Liz Wahl remembered interviewing a man from Mali who shared his experience of living under sharia law and witnessing amputations of limbs. That person also mentioned how the French military intervention was positively received. However, Wahl claimed that this was “one of best interviews.” However, it was not aired as it did not conform to RT’s narrative, which was to portray all western military interventions as imperialistic (Kirchick, 2014, p. 3).



Figure 6. 1. Screenshot of Liz Wahl announcing her on-air resignation from RT. Source: Daily Mail, 2014

As an insider at RT, Liz Wahl was familiar with the network's marketing tactics, which targeted young Western audiences who distrusted mainstream media and political institutions. However, Wahl believed that despite RT’s efforts to appeal to this demographic, the network's message came from an authoritative source: the Kremlin. Although Liz Wahl ignored her

conscience while working at RT for two and a half years, she cared more about the network's YouTube viewers: around 1.2 billion. She believed that these viewers were most affected by RT's frequent and intentional manipulation of the truth. Wahl felt sorry for these people because they sincerely believed that RT was a reliable source of information and represented the right side of the story, which she found astonishing (Kirchick, 2014).

After leaving RT, Wahl became an investigative reporter for Newsy (Scripps News, 2017) and delivered speeches at conferences such as the Hague Peace Conference and Canada's Parliament about foreign interference in the digital age (Estrada, 2019). She announced in January 2019 that she would run as a Democrat for the 23rd congressional district in Texas in 2021 (Bowden, 2019; Estrada, 2019). By resigning from the RT, Wahl upheld the SPJ journalistic code of ethics, which means being responsible for the news she read to audiences. Wahl was an excellent example of resistance. She went against the organizations she worked for and announced to viewers that they produced propaganda and disinformation. Wahl understood these practices were parodies of journalism and that she needed to step up and uphold the spirit of journalism. She needed to point out the unethical practices of RT as part of journalistic paradigm repair. She said, "I cannot be part of a network that whitewashes the actions of Putin" (Kirchick, 2014, p. 2). Journalistic paradigm repair meant standing up against a very powerful authoritarian government. She could have just quit the channel, but she did not. Instead, she chose to uphold journalistic ethics and defend the journalistic paradigm.

Marina Ovsyannikova

After Ovsyannikova's protest during a live broadcast went viral, it gained significant attention globally. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked her for her protest. French President Emmanuel Macron publicly acknowledged her and offered her asylum. She was

praised for speaking out against propaganda by Russian opposition politicians, but her action was described as ‘hooliganism’ by Dmitry Peskov, the Russian government spokesperson (Associated Press, 2022; Jack, 2022). Lev Shlosberg, a leading member of the Russian opposition party, stated that “five seconds of truth can wash away the dirt of weeks of propaganda” (Associated Press, 2022, p. 2). Within hours, Ovsyannikova's protest brought attention to the growing number of resignations at state-run television stations. Kirill Kleimyonov, the head of *Channel One Russia*'s news division, said Ovsyannikova was a British agent because she had contacted the British embassy before she went on air to protest. However, the UK Foreign Office denied that any such contact with her had taken place (BBC News, 2022b).

In a video recorded before the live broadcast interruption incident, Ovsyannikova expressed her shame for working for what she referred to as Kremlin propaganda. She stated that she regretted spreading false information on the television screen and was embarrassed for allowing the Russian people to be brainwashed. She also admitted to silently observing the inhumane actions of the regime (BBC News, 2022c).



Figure 6. 2. Journalistic paradigm repair in action, Screenshot of Marina Ovsyannikova interrupting live broadcast of Channel One; holding placard against war—source: Kanal, 2022.

After her protest, Ovsyannikova was arrested and fined 30,000 rubles (equivalent to around \$280) for the prerecorded video. The government accused her of organizing an unauthorized event (Safronova, 2022). During her interrogation, she was detained without access to her lawyer for more than 12 hours, raising concerns about the fairness of her treatment. Many people worldwide saw her as a brave journalist who had taken a stand against an authoritarian government, and they were shocked to see her treated so harshly (Méheut, 2023; Super, 2023). Marina Ovsyannikova's case has drawn attention to the challenges faced by journalists who speak out against the government in Russia. Later, according to her lawyer, Ovsyannikova escaped her pre-trial house arrest, broke the tracking bracelet she had to wear, and fled to Europe (Al Jazeera, 2022h; Preussen, 2022). In February 2023, it was reported that Ovsyannikova had taken refuge in Paris, France, with her daughter (Super, 2023). If convicted, Ovsyannikova could have been sentenced to a maximum of 15 years in jail under Russia's laws against spreading disinformation regarding the invasion of Ukraine.

Russia has passed several laws aimed at controlling the media and opposition politicians. These included the 2019 Fake News Law (Oremus, 2022), the 2019 Disrespect to Authorities Law (Balmforth, 2019), the 2020 COVID-19 Fake News Law (Pravo, 2020), the 2022 War Censorship Laws (Ivanova & Dik, 2023), and so on. Those laws are relatively identical. They laws seek to combat the spread of false information by foreign governments and organizations allegedly threatening Russia's national security. Foreign media outlets, journalists, and bloggers are required to register as foreign agents with the Ministry of Justice and label their content as such. The law allows the government to block websites and social media platforms if they are deemed to be spreading false information. Per the law, dissemination of false information is punishable by fines or imprisonment of up to 15 years (Troianovski & Safronova, 2022). The law has been criticized for being too broad and vague, allowing it to be used as a tool to suppress free speech and dissent. Many Russian media platforms, including Colta.ru, Snob magazine online, Znak.com, The Bell magazine online, and Novaya Gazeta, were forced to cease reporting on the Russian invasion of Ukraine due to the 2022 war censorship laws. Because of this law, the media and the public are forced to use the term 'military operation' instead of war or invasion when they are referring to the Russia-Ukraine war (Safronova, 2022; Troianovski & Safronova, 2022).

Like Liz Wahl, Ovsyannikova played a significant role in standing up for journalistic ethics and repairing the tarnished journalistic paradigm. Russians hardly knew that there was a war going on. Ovsyannikova spoke on live TV, saying, "They are lying to you" (Hislop, 2022, p. 1). This was a great message and a way of upholding journalistic codes of ethics. Like Liz Wahl, she also spoke against her news organization and attempted to repair the journalistic paradigm. She was aware of the consequences she might face after the action. However, she has continued

to speak out against the Russian government's actions in Ukraine, using social media and other channels to share her views. Her case has become a symbol of the fight for media freedom in Russia, and many people worldwide continue to support her and advocate for her rights.

This research project highlighted the significant role played by Liz Wahl and Marina Ovsyannikova in contributing to journalistic paradigm repair. Both journalists acknowledged that their respective organizations were not adhering to proper journalism ethics, which compelled them to speak out against their employers. They intended to defend the principles of journalism itself. For instance, Liz Wahl emphasized her belief in disseminating the truth. She expressed her motivation to inform viewers about the misleading coverage of RT, stating, "I wanted to let viewers know why—to tell the truth about RT and its misleading coverage" (Wahl, 2014, p. 4). Similarly, Marina Ovsyannikova had the same intention of cautioning audiences by saying things such as: "They are lying to you" and "You are being zombified by Russian propaganda" (Davies, 2022b; Jack, 2022, p. 2). Both journalists sought to alert the audience that what they watched on TV was not genuine journalism. By speaking out against their employers, they defended the journalistic paradigm and practiced ethical journalism.

Media Representations

Al Jazeera on Liz Wahl

Liz Wahl made an international news headline when she resigned on air from Russia Today in 2014. Though her resignation went viral and got coverage in almost all media outlets worldwide, it was somehow overlooked by the Middle East-based media platform Al Jazeera. No articles or news stories on Liz Wahl's resignation were found. Liz Wahl's coverage in that media was limited to an opinion piece published in July 2014 by Remi Piet, a Florida International

University research associate on foreign policy and political economy (Piet, 2014). The article briefly mentioned Liz Wahl and two of her colleagues, Abby Martin and Sara Firth. The opinion focused on the Russian government's tightening control over its foreign language broadcaster, *Russia Today* (RT). It discussed biased reporting on the shooting down of a Malaysia Airlines flight over Ukraine. Al Jazeera attached a link to another newspaper, *The Guardian's* coverage of Sara Firth's resignation, titled "Russia Today reporter resigns in protest at MH17 coverage," the article then mentioned Sara Firth (Plunkett, 2014). Accordingly, Al Jazeera may have given limited attention to Liz Wahl's resignation while focusing more on Sara Firth's resignation and Russian media coverage. Overall, Al Jazeera's coverage of Liz Wahl was limited and lacked in-depth analysis.

The BBC on Liz Wahl

There were several (at least five) BBC News reports on Liz Wahl's resignation and its aftermath, including the reactions of other media outlets and the Russian government. When Liz Wahl resigned from RT on March 6, 2014, a BBC News article titled "Russia Today TV presenter Liz Wahl quits on air" detailed the events (Watson, 2014). In that article, the BBC added clips of Liz Wahl's resignation as well as one of her colleagues, Abby Martin, criticizing Russian military action in Crimea. The BBC mentioned Liz Wahl's action as "personal concerns about Russia's occupation of the Crimea region of Ukraine" (Watson, 2014). In that one-minute sixteen-second video attached by the BBC to the article, they quoted almost all of Liz Wahl's resignation script.

Another BBC News article on the same day discussed the Crimea parliament's decision to request Russian membership (BBC News, 2014a). Liz Wahl's resignation was briefly mentioned in the article, linking it with Abby Martin's criticism of Russia. On the 8 March 2014, the BBC

made historical comparisons in the program “Vladimir Danchev: The broadcaster who defied Moscow” (Ennis, 2014). In this article, Liz Wahl and Abby Martin’s actions are compared to Radio Moscow World Service (RMWS)’s presenter Vladimir Danchev’s actions in the 1980s. Liz Wahl’s resignation video was also attached to this article. A BBC News follow-up article on March 14, 2014, reported that Liz Wahl was among RT’s ‘naïve’ journalists (Zurcher, 2014). Wahl’s resignation video and her background as a former RT journalist were included in the article. In the last part of that article, the writer stated that Abby Martin and Liz Wahl’s on-air criticism would impact RT in the long run. By mentioning this, the BBC portrayed the importance of Liz Wahl’s resignation.

Throughout their coverage, the BBC has provided ongoing updates on Liz Wahl’s resignation from RT, including its implications for media freedom in Russia. RT’s propaganda and Russia’s involvement in Ukraine were cited as reasons for her resignation. As a reliable news source, the BBC provided in-depth coverage of Liz Wahl’s resignation. In addition, the coverage highlighted the challenges independent journalists face in the country and the role media outlets play in government propaganda.

CNN on Liz Wahl

A wide range of coverage was provided by CNN regarding Liz Wahl’s resignation from Russia Today (RT) in March 2014. Wahl’s decision to quit her job on live television and her criticism of RT’s pro-Kremlin propaganda was featured in several articles and videos on the network. Even after the initial incident, CNN continued to provide updates on her situation. In addition, they tried to connect Wahl’s resignation to similar incidents and Russian censorship policies. CNN was one of the first news channels to interview Liz Wahl after her resignation. “Anchor quits: I cannot be part of a network ‘that whitewashes’ Putin’s actions,” by Greg

Botelho, featured a video clip from CNN presenter Anderson Cooper's 360 show that described Liz Wahl's resignation video (Botelho, 2014). In that video, Liz Wahl explained why she resigned and the work environment at RT. In response to a question like, "Why today?" Liz Wahl responded that the RT continuously censored her interviews and other work. That is why it was tough for her to stay quiet. In that interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper, Liz Wahl mentioned that "the propagandist nature of RT (had come) in full force." "RT is not about the truth; it is about promoting a Putinist agenda," Wahl told CNN. "And I can tell you firsthand, and it is about bashing America," she added in that interview (Cooper, 2014b). Also, CNN ran a video of RT reporter Abby Martin criticizing Russia's invasion of Crimea. There was also a link to a Twitter post where Wahl explained her motivations.

In addition to text-based articles, CNN covered Wahl's resignation in other ways. The network also posted an interview with Wahl titled, "Russia Today anchor resigns on-air" on its YouTube channel, which had over 753,733 views by June 18, 2023 (Cooper, 2014a). This is the same video interview with Anderson Cooper attached to the first article. Later, on the same day, CNN uploaded the full interview with Anderson Cooper on its website. It was titled "Former RT anchor on why she resigned on-air" (Cooper, 2014b). Also, on March 6, CNN published another video interview of Liz Wahl with Piers Morgan about Wahl's decision to resign (Morgan, 2014).

CNN's other trademark program, *Reliable Sources* with Brian Stelter, interviewed Liz Wahl twice. In those interviews, Liz Wahl spoke about her experiences working at RT, her reasons behind leaving RT, and the impact on her life. Besides, she also talked about media censorship and press freedom issues of journalists working in an environment that the government controls. Those two video interviews were posted to CNN's website on March 9, 2014, and March 23, 2014. They were titled "Breaking up with Vladimir Putin" and "Putin TV

in chaos,” respectively (Stelter, 2014a, 2014b). In both videos, Brian Stelter briefly introduced “Putin’s Propaganda” channel RT and its effect and widespread circulation in the United States. In the second interview titled, “Putin TV in Chaos,” Liz Wahl and Brian Stelter discussed issues regarding chaos in Kremlin-funded news organizations. They provided an update on tensions at RT following Wahl's resignation.

Reporting on Russia-related topics by CNN continued to feature Liz Wahl later on. For example, Wahl discussed the growing tension between Russia and Turkey in an article titled “Putin signs economic restrictions aimed at Turkey” in December 2015 (Whitfield, 2015). Though the topic was signing economic restrictions in Turkey imposed by Putin, CNN made a connection to Liz Wahl, introducing her as a former RT reporter. In this video interview, Wahl criticized Putin’s actions and their consequences. In January 2016, when former MSNBC host Ed Schultz joined RT’s American branch, CNN also connected the story to Liz Wahl and Abby Martin’s actions in connection to RT’s censorship policy (Byers & Stelter, 2016). Reliable Sources featured Wahl again in 2016, discussing the media's response to Russian hacking during the 2016 election. During her talk, she addressed the failure of newsrooms to recognize Russian hacking (Stelter, 2016). Six years later, a February 2022 article explored how journalists covered the conflicts in Ukraine and Russia in the face of misinformation (Stelter, 2022). Liz Wahl was also featured in this article under the “Newfound scrutiny of Russia Today” section, where she criticized some journalists who acted as propagandists of RT. CNN also attached a detailed article from The Daily Beast, which featured her quote from her resignation in 2014.

Finally, on March 1, 2022, CNN published, “DirecTV expels RT from its lineup, dealing a major blow to the Russia-backed outlet in the US.” In this article, CNN discussed RT’s media policy regarding Ukraine. In the last part of this article, CNN mentioned and attached Liz Wahl’s

story, who had quit RT criticizing it eight years ago (Darcy, 2022). CNN's coverage of Liz Wahl's resignation was comprehensive, providing updates long after the first event. CNN produced informative and insightful coverage of Wahl's resignation by interviewing her and providing commentary on broader issues.

Comparison of Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN on Liz Wahl

Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN covered Liz Wahl's resignation in at least 17 articles and videos. The BBC News highlighted a broader concern about Russia's media censorship and propaganda in its extensive coverage of Wahl's resignation. In Al Jazeera, an opinion piece published by Remi Piet referenced Wahl's resignation, but no new information or analysis was provided. A central theme of the article was the challenges Russians face with regard to freedom of speech. Wahl's resignation was just one example. As with BBC News, CNN covered Wahl's resignation extensively. She was interviewed by Anderson Cooper shortly after her resignation. Several online articles about the event were also published by CNN, including three analyses by Brian Stelter. CNN also covered censorship and propaganda in Russia beyond Wahl's resignation with interviews and analysis.

Marina Ovsyannikova

Al Jazeera on Marina Ovsyannikova

Since March 2022, when Marina Ovsyannikova interrupted a Russian TV news program with her anti-war protest, Al Jazeera has published at least 13 articles about her. The first article, "Russia-Ukraine War: Marina Ovsyannikova Interrupts Russian Show," was published on March 15, 2022, and details the incident (Al Jazeera, 2022c). Al Jazeera attached videos of her protest and discussed the appraisal and criticism of her action worldwide. Also, Marina Ovsyannikova's

affiliation with the Inter-regional Association of Human Rights Organizations, ‘Agora,’ was highlighted. Al Jazeera referred to the video published on social media by Ovsyannikova before the incident. In this article, they also talked about the law imposed by the Russian Parliament and the consequences that Ovsyannikova might face. The second article, also published on March 15, reports growing concerns about the journalist’s whereabouts since she went missing after the incident (Al Jazeera, 2022a). Her supporters fear that Russian authorities may have abducted or arrested her. It was mentioned in this article that the UN Human Rights Office and Amnesty International had taken some steps to determine her whereabouts after she went missing. This article attached a screenshot of Marina Ovsyannikova’s protest and the video.

In the third article, published on March 15 and updated on March 16, Ovsyannikova was reportedly fined and may be sent to prison (Al Jazeera, 2022b). Al Jazeera mentioned Ovsyannikova’s protest as an “extraordinary show of dissent.” The article also reported the reactions of world leaders regarding the protest. The news network published another article on March 16 announcing Ovsyannikova’s release (Al Jazeera, 2022d). It was a statement by United Nations Human Rights Office (UNHRO) that Al Jazeera covered in their portal's “Press Freedom” section. On the same day, Al Jazeera published another article titled “Russian TV protester resigns, turns down asylum offer.” In this article, Al Jazeera portrayed Ovsyannikova as a patriot who had turned down an asylum offer from France (Al Jazeera, 2022e).

Al Jazeera has strongly advocated for press freedom and human rights in addition to reporting on specific stories. Aiden White, the president of the Ethical Journalism Network, wrote in an opinion piece published in Al Jazeera in April 2022 about the importance of supporting journalists working in dangerous or repressive environments (White, 2022). In this article, Marina Ovsyannikova was represented as a “global sensation,” and the writer expressed

concerns about the safety and freedom of those who resisted. On July 28, 2022, Al Jazeera reported that Ovsyannikova had been fined again for her comments regarding the conflict in Ukraine (Al Jazeera, 2022f).

In an article published on October 5, 2022, Ovsyannikova was portrayed as having escaped house arrest (Al Jazeera, 2022g). Al Jazeera also mentioned the consequences that Ovsyannikova might face because of her criticism of the Russian Military. Twelve days later, Al Jazeera reported that she had fled the country and gone to France (Al Jazeera, 2022h).

The BBC on Marina Ovsyannikova

The BBC published at least 12 articles regarding Marina Ovsyannikova. On 14th March 2022, when Ovsyannikova disrupted Russia's flagship evening news program, the BBC published a story titled, "Ukraine war: Demonstrator disrupts Russia's flagship evening news broadcast." The BBC mentioned Ovsyannikova as an "Anti-war demonstrator." They attached the videos of Ovsyannikova's protest and social media posts where she discussed details about Kremlin propaganda (BBC News, 2022a). On March 15th, an article titled "Ukraine war: Protester exposes cracks in Kremlin's war message" provided in-depth information regarding Ovsyannikova's protest (Shevchenko, 2022). This article detailed *Channel One's* popularity and reported that Ovsyannikova's unwanted incident created a sensation among Russians, including journalists. The BBC added that some Russians might hear the word "war" for the first time because of Ovsyannikova, as media and journalists were instructed to use "special military operation" to "demilitarize and denazify" Ukraine (Shevchenko, 2022, p. 2). In the report, Ovsyannikova was portrayed as a hero, upholding journalism's ethics.

The BBC published at least two reports on Ovsyannikova being interrogated by Russian authorities for 14 hours, during which she was pressured to confess to acting on behalf of foreign

interests (BBC News, 2022c; Davies, 2022a). On March 15, the BBC published a 48-second video of Ovsyannikova speaking to reporters outside the court. When asked why she did it, Ovsyannikova replied that it was her anti-war decision because she did not like Russia starting the invasion. In that video, she said she knew about the consequences as her children live with her. The next day, the BBC published another information-based story regarding the resistance of journalists working for Russian media. The article “Russia’s state TV hit by a stream of resignations” reported that, after Marina Ovsyannikova, several journalists worldwide that work for Russian media also resigned. In this report, the BBC portrayed Ovsyannikova as influencing other journalists to resign (Kirby, 2022). During an interview with the BBC, Ovsyannikova accused the Russian media of “zombifying” the people and stated that her TV protest aimed to raise awareness of the government's disinformation campaign. She also mentioned facing conspiracy theories because of her action (Davies, 2022b). On April 11, 2022, the BBC reported that a German outlet *Die Welt* had hired Ovsyannikova. The BBC reported that the newspaper’s editors were pleased as they saw Ovsyannikova as the defender of journalistic ethics despite many threats and governmental oppression (BBC News, 2022d).

On July 28, 2022, the BBC published an update on Ovsyannikova’s ongoing trial over her protest against the war. Throughout the article, Ovsyannikova was portrayed as a strong woman who cared about disseminating the truth (BBC News, 2022e). The BBC reported Ovsyannikova’s escape from Russia on February 10, 2023. In this article, the BBC talked about the reasons for her escaping, “As a result of being followed by the Russian security services, the journalist had to leave the country as quickly as possible” (Williamson, 2023, p. 2). In this reporting, Ovsyannikova criticized the Russian government's actions in Ukraine. She also mentioned why she escaped, “I had no choice left” (Williamson, 2023, p. 3). On the other hand,

in this report, she acknowledged the help she received from Reporters Without Borders. The BBC's coverage of Marina Ovsyannikova sheds light on the difficulties independent journalists face in Russia. Ovsyannikova's story illustrated the dangers of speaking out against the government and the importance of press freedom.

CNN on Marina Ovsyannikova

CNN reported Marina Ovsyannikova's story in at least 11 articles and videos detailing her protest, its consequences, her escape from Russia, and her ongoing battle for justice. The earliest articles about Ovsyannikova to appear on CNN were published on March 15, 2022, shortly after she had protested on live television. An article titled "Journalist interrupts live Russian state news broadcast to denounce invasion of Ukraine" described the incident and the message that Ovsyannikova conveyed (Murphy, 2022). Additionally, the article highlighted the risks that Ovsyannikova faced for speaking out against the Russian government. CNN described Ovsyannikova's act as a "bold protest." They mentioned that the live video of the interruption had been removed from that channel's portal, but the video had gone viral online. CNN also contacted Marina Ovsyannikova's lawyer to get an update on her situation when she could not be located after the protest. Later, the same day, CNN published a combined report to update Ovsyannikova's situation (Goldman, 2022). CNN attached a video story at the beginning of the article and a screenshot from her protest. In the attached video titled, "Do not believe the propaganda: Russian TV protester is released from questioning," they added Ovsyannikova's protest, the video she posted on social media before the protests, and the consequences she faced, including her appearance in the court with her lawyer. The main article, "Russian TV journalist who protested Ukraine war on-air turns up in court," provided details about the hearing from the court.

The next day, Marina Ovsyannikova was interviewed by CNN's Christiane Amanpour. In the detailed interview, Ovsyannikova spoke about her protest and the consequences she is facing. She was portrayed as a courageous journalist with journalistic ethics in the interview. Ovsyannikova stated that even her mother had been brainwashed by the Kremlin propaganda circulating through state TV. She stated that it was impossible to stay silent (Amanpour, 2022a). She was aware of the consequences that she might face. Still, she was determined to uphold journalistic values. In addition, she expressed the hope that her protest would inspire others in Russia to speak out in opposition to the war. Later, CNN also published another short clip of her interview titled "Marina Ovsyannikova: I wanted to show Russians are against war" (Amanpour, 2022b). Another video article titled "Marina Ovsyannikova: My life has changed irrevocably" was another short clip from that interview that portrayed her life struggles when she protested (Amanpour, 2022c).

In May 2022, CNN's Erin Burnett interviewed Ovsyannikova regarding her incident. In this interview, Ovsyannikova discussed what happened to her after she spoke out against the Russian invasion of Ukraine. According to her, she was fired from her job, and her passport was confiscated, effectively placing her under house arrest. Ovsyannikova discussed her protest's impact on her family and the support she has received from people worldwide (Burnett, 2022b). In a second video, published in May 2022, Ovsyannikova provided an update on her progress following her viral protest (Burnett, 2022a).

Ovsyannikova's Trial and Escape from Russia

Additionally, CNN covered the legal and political repercussions that Ovsyannikova faced due to her actions. An article from July 30, 2022, reported on Ovsyannikova's trial, where she was found guilty of discrediting the Russian armed forces by a Moscow court (Picheta & Hardie,

2022). The article titled “Russian journalist who led on-air protest found guilty of ‘discrediting Russian armed forces’ by Moscow court.” In this article, Ovsyannikova’s protest was described as “dramatic.” According to another CNN article titled “Russian journalist who protested on live television escapes house arrest,” Ovsyannikova went missing after escaping house arrest on October 4, 2022 (Krebs & Chernova, 2022). In addition, the article detailed the charges that Ovsyannikova faced. Ovsyannikova has continued to advocate for the rights of journalists and the need for freedom of the press in Russia despite her escape. In an interview with CNN's Erin Burnett in February 2023, Ovsyannikova discussed her daring escape from Russia to France with her 11-year-old daughter (Burnett, 2023). During the interview, Ovsyannikova described the harrowing experience of speaking out against Russia's war in Ukraine and the consequences that followed. She received threatening messages before deciding to flee the country. She felt like a target.

CNN’s coverage of Marina Ovsyannikova's story has been comprehensive and in-depth. Throughout the broadcast, viewers can gain a deeper understanding of the journalist's escape from Russia, her legal troubles, and her ongoing advocacy for freedom of the press. Aside from providing detailed information concerning Ovsyannikova’s personal story, CNN’s coverage has shed light on the broader context of Russia's war in Ukraine and the risks journalists face when speaking out against government actions. Even in the face of adversity, CNN has raised public awareness about the importance of free and independent media.

Comparison of Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN on Marina Ovsyannikova

Though Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN extensively covered the events surrounding Marina Ovsyannikova’s protest, the tone and focus of their reports differed. Those three media outlets published at least 36 news articles and videos about her. The coverage of Ovsyannikova

by Al Jazeera was relatively balanced and informative. It was found that Ovsyannikova's dramatic escape from Russia, subsequent interviews with the media, and fines that she incurred for discrediting the army were highlighted by Al Jazeera. In addition to highlighting the broader political context of the conflict, Al Jazeera also focused on how Russian propaganda shaped public opinion. The BBC offered a more critical view of the Russian government's response to Ovsyannikova's protests than the other outlets. Ovsyannikova's fines and her interrogation were extensively covered by the outlet as well as her colleagues' lack of support. The outlet covered the disruptions to Russia's flagship news broadcast and other journalists' resignations. The BBC portrayed Ovsyannikova as a torch bearer for the Russian people, the first journalist to tell Russians that war was ongoing. The BBC's reporting also discussed the broader political context of the conflict, as well as the impact of Russian propaganda.

CNN coverage of Ovsyannikova was similarly informative but focused more on the specifics of her protest and its aftermath. CNN interviewed Ovsyannikova, and she talked about all the details of her protest and the consequences. In terms of that, CNN portrayed more personal struggles and acted as a support group for the voices protesting against the authoritarian government. CNN's coverage portrayed Ovsyannikova as a brave journalist the Russian government had targeted for speaking out. CNN's reporting also highlighted the impact of Ovsyannikova's protest, showing how it sparked debate and brought attention to the war in Ukraine. Although the coverage of Marina Ovsyannikova by Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN varied slightly in focus and tone, all three outlets covered the story extensively and provided insightful reporting on the events surrounding her protest. CNN emphasized the more personal story, while the BBC's coverage was more critical of the Russian government's response and the impact of her protest. Al Jazeera's coverage was balanced and informative.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

The Russia-Ukraine war has had a profound global impact, affecting various sectors such as the economy, energy, sovereignty, defense, and more (Mbah & Wasum, 2022). This thesis explored the use of propaganda and disinformation in the Russia-Ukraine wars of 2014 and 2022, using case studies of two Russian government media journalists, Liz Wahl and Marina Ovsyannikova, who publicly resisted Kremlin propaganda. The study also explored the role of gender in the Russian journalistic field and examined female resistance to war propaganda in the context of journalistic paradigm repair. Finally, the thesis examined how international media portrayed the resistance of the female journalists.

Propaganda and disinformation have played a significant role in this conflict, creating international sensation alongside Russia and Ukraine's use of advanced weapons (Alyukov, 2022; Mejias & Vokuev, 2017). However, there is some confusion between the terms 'propaganda' and 'disinformation' among the general public. To alleviate this confusion, this is one of the few studies showing that governments and regional organizations use propaganda and disinformation interchangeably. This study suggests using the terms interchangeably and focusing more on their effects than the meaning of their terms.

The study emphasizes that a general definition of propaganda and disinformation is needed to avoid this confusion. This study suggests that propaganda/disinformation deliberately disseminates false information to manipulate public perception and control situations. It is employed by governments, opposition groups, organizations, and individuals alike, with propagandists and disinformers involved in such activities. Identifying them (propagandists and disinformers) can be challenging, as they can be prominent figures like actors, national figures,

artists, sportspeople, volunteer activists, teachers, etc. The study proposes future discussion and research is needed on this topic.

The Russia-Ukraine wars of 2014 and 2022 have also had a significant impact on the field of journalism, reshaping its landscape. These conflicts have exposed how media outlets are influenced by authorities and media owners, leading to media censorship and manipulation of ethics (Nygren et al., 2018; Pavlik, 2022). While journalists played a crucial role in upholding journalistic ethics and resisting disinformation during these wars (Pavlik, 2022), this study found that female journalists were prominent in the conflicts. This study offers valuable insights into the role of women journalists in Russia's journalistic field, their resistance against authoritarian disinformation, and their defense of journalistic ethics. By applying Bourdieu's (2005) theory, the study examines the motivations and behaviors of journalists within the Russian context. It underscores the prominent role of women journalists in challenging government propaganda and criticizing the authorities. They courageously stood against authoritarian practices and made a substantial impact at a significant personal cost. Besides journalists, various groups in Russia have protested the invasion of Ukraine. Anti-war demonstrations, petitions, and open letters have emerged as forms of opposition. Public figures, including people from cultural and political spheres, have publicly expressed their discontent with the war (Dubina & Arkhipova, 2023; Ziener, 2023).

The study was carried out within the framework of journalistic ethics (SPJ, 2014) and paradigm repair (Steiner et al., 2012), demonstrating how female journalists in Russia resisted Kremlin propaganda during the Russia-Ukraine wars of 2014 and 2022. Liz Wahl and Marina Ovsyannikova are notable examples of journalists who resisted the propaganda and disinformation surrounding these events. Despite facing potential consequences, such as

harassment and reprisals, these journalists remained steadfast in their commitment to truth-seeking and being accountable, showcasing the resilience of journalistic values even in crises. Additionally, the study supports Linda Steiner's (2017) gender and international journalism theory, which emphasizes the significance of gender within journalism.

Despite the personal costs they endured, Liz Wahl and Marina Ovsyannikova were widely recognized as brave protectors of journalism ethics by major international media outlets. Their acts of resistance received extensive coverage, including interviews and opinion articles, and resonated globally. Specifically, Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN were interested in publishing and portraying Liz Wahl and Marina Ovsyannikova's stories worldwide. All three media interviewed them, published opinion articles, and continuously followed up on their situation, indicating the media's concern towards them.

The findings of this study resonate with similar studies conducted previously. Bulut and Can (2023) explored the experiences of female journalists in authoritarian regimes, emphasizing their role in challenging state-controlled media. Khamis and El-Ibiary (2022) discussed the issue within the Egyptian journalistic field. Steiner (2017) examined gender dynamics in journalism within conflict zones, acknowledging the unique challenges women journalists face and their contributions to alternative perspectives.

From a practical perspective, this research emphasizes the importance of protecting and supporting journalists engaged in critical reporting and resistance against authoritarian control. Media organizations can foster an environment that encourages independent and courageous journalism by recognizing and acknowledging the bravery and dedication of journalists, especially women journalists, in Russia. Policymakers can benefit from these findings by

understanding the challenges faced by journalists in repressive environments and implementing measures to safeguard press freedom and the rights of journalists.

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of women journalists in Russia and their resistance against media control, several limitations should be acknowledged. This study focuses on women journalists in the Russian journalism field context. Eko (2019) described how the journalistic field differs from place to place so this study may limit the general journalistic field. On the other hand, this study used artificial intelligence to find relevant articles and information regarding journalists who resisted Kremlin propaganda. However, artificial intelligence failed to provide the information needed. This study suggests that, though AI increases productivity (Curtis, 2023), relying on artificial intelligence can create different inaccurate dimensions in academia.

To conclude, this study sheds light on the significant role played by women journalists in Russia, their resistance against authoritarian disinformation, and their dedication to journalistic ethics. It aligns with relevant theories, providing insights into the motivations and behaviors of journalists in the Russian journalistic field. The study underscores the importance of media freedom and the need to support and protect journalists facing harassment and repression. By amplifying the voices of marginalized journalists, the industry can move towards inclusivity and resilience while upholding the principles of truth-seeking and accountability.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

News List Collected for Analysis

Name	Al Jazeera Coverage	BBC Coverage	CNN Coverage	Total
Liz Wahl	1	5	11	17
Marina Ovsyannikova	13	12	11	36
Total				53

Al Jazeera on Liz Wahl

1. In opinion page published an opinion: Russia: RIP freedom of speech?
By Remi Piet, 31 July 2014
<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/7/31/russia-rip-freedom-of-speech>

BBC on Liz Wahl

1. Russia Today TV presenter Liz Wahl quits on air.
6 March 2014
<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-26468837>
2. Ukraine crisis: Crimea parliament asks to join Russia
6 March 2014
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26465962>
3. Vladimir Danchev: The broadcaster who defied Moscow
8 March 2014
<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26472906>
4. Russia Today home to 'naive' journalists
14 March 2014
<https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-echochambers-26585033>
5. Russian TV man defies state 'propaganda'
16 June 2015
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33140294>

CNN on Liz Wahl

1. Anchor quits: I can't be part of network 'that whitewashes' Putin's actions

Greg Botelho, CNN, March 6, 2014

<https://www.cnn.com/2014/03/05/world/europe/russia-news-anchor-resigns/index.html>

2. Russia Today anchor resigns on-air (2014) - YouTube
Mar 5, 2014.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE3hGrf4s8I>
3. Former RT anchor on why she resigned on-air - CNN Video
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Appendix B

Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics

Revised September 6, 2014, at 4:49 p.m. CT at SPJ's National Convention in Nashville, Tenn.

Preamble

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. Ethical journalism strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and thorough. An ethical journalist acts with integrity.

The Society declares these four principles as the foundation of ethical journalism and encourages their use in its practice by all people in all media.

Seek Truth and Report It

Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work. Verify information before releasing it. Use original sources whenever possible.
- Remember that neither speed nor format excuses inaccuracy.
- Provide context. Take special care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing or summarizing a story.
- Gather, update and correct information throughout the life of a news story.
- Be cautious when making promises, but keep the promises they make.
- Identify sources clearly. The public is entitled to as much information as possible to judge the reliability and motivations of sources.
- Consider sources' motives before promising anonymity. Reserve anonymity for sources who may face danger, retribution or other harm, and have information that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Explain why anonymity was granted.
- Diligently seek subjects of news coverage to allow them to respond to criticism or allegations of wrongdoing.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information unless traditional, open methods will not yield information vital to the public.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable. Give voice to the voiceless.

- Support the open and civil exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Recognize a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government. Seek to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open, and that public records are open to all.
- Provide access to source material when it is relevant and appropriate.
- Boldly tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience. Seek sources whose voices we seldom hear.
- Avoid stereotyping. Journalists should examine the ways their values and experiences may shape their reporting.
- Label advocacy and commentary.
- Never deliberately distort facts or context, including visual information. Clearly label illustrations and re-enactments.
- Never plagiarize. Always attribute.

Minimize Harm

Ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

- Balance the public's need for information against potential harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance or undue intrusiveness.
- Show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage. Use heightened sensitivity when dealing with juveniles, victims of sex crimes, and sources or subjects who are inexperienced or unable to give consent. Consider cultural differences in approach and treatment.
- Recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast.
- Realize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than public figures and others who seek power, influence or attention. Weigh the consequences of publishing or broadcasting personal information.
- Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity, even if others do.
- Balance a suspect's right to a fair trial with the public's right to know. Consider the implications of identifying criminal suspects before they face legal charges.

Consider the long-term implications of the extended reach and permanence of publication. Provide updated and more complete information as appropriate.

Act Independently

The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public.

Journalists should:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived. Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and avoid political and other outside activities that may compromise integrity or impartiality, or may damage credibility.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; do not pay for access to news.

Identify content provided by outside sources, whether paid or not.

- Deny favored treatment to advertisers, donors or any other special interests, and resist internal and external pressure to influence coverage.

- Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.

Prominently label sponsored content.

Be Accountable and Transparent

Ethical journalism means taking responsibility for one's work and explaining one's decisions to the public.

Journalists should:

- Explain ethical choices and processes to audiences. Encourage a civil dialogue with the public about journalistic practices, coverage and news content.
- Respond quickly to questions about accuracy, clarity and fairness.
- Acknowledge mistakes and correct them promptly and prominently. Explain corrections and clarifications carefully and clearly.
- Expose unethical conduct in journalism, including within their organizations.
- Abide by the same high standards they expect of others.

The SPJ Code of Ethics is a statement of abiding principles supported by explanations and position papers that address changing journalistic practices. It is not a set of rules, rather a guide that encourages all who engage in journalism to take responsibility for the information they provide, regardless of medium. The code should be read as a whole; individual principles should not be taken out of context. It is not, nor can it be under the First Amendment, legally enforceable.

Sigma Delta Chi's first Code of Ethics was borrowed from the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1926. In 1973, Sigma Delta Chi wrote its own code, which was revised in 1984, 1987, 1996 and 2014.

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