

WAR CORRESPONDENT - A DISTANT ANALYST IN THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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Abstract

The Euro-Atlantic world is used to the existence of conflicts in the East or the Middle East, but it did not imagine that it would live, in the third millennium, a war in Europe. Political decision makers got used to Russia's verbal, conditioned and physical aggressiveness against Georgia, in 2008, and Ukraine, in 2014, but they did not imagine that it would actually engage in a military confrontation against a sovereign state. Due to existing precedents, political analysts thought, starting with 2021, that Russia, through its exercises on the Ukrainian border, only makes force demonstrations in order to consolidate its dominant position on the European energetic market and preserve Ukraine as an uncertain state, a buffer area, between it and the NATO and EU member states. The European information agencies were also sceptical regarding Russia's intention of attacking Ukraine and, with the help of the information provided by chancelleries, head of governments or presidents, who visited president Vladimir Putin, questioned the US intelligence warnings of imminent warfare. What we did not imagine, however, happened, meaning that Russia attacked Ukraine, but what Vladimir Putin imagined, meaning the success of a special operation, did not happen and Russia finds itself engaged in an undeclared war against Ukraine.

Keywords: *journalism, war, dimension.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The last decades of the 21st century proved that wars among states might exist without any war declarations, known as armed conflicts, with the purpose of not necessarily conquering the territory of the state, but of eliminating a regime accused, either founded or unfounded, of using behaviours which go against the rules of democracy.

We got used to being actors in distant conflicts and to living wars through the real-time images offered by the media, and more recently to being emotionally involved and to express our opinion in the social media.

The world is full of political, security or war analysts who speak about, with or without any access to real information or with or without any modesty, the causes, actions or future developments of the conflicts.

The abundance of information, in an unknown percentage between reality and fake news or fake perceptions, between information operations, informational operations and propaganda, make us acknowledge the subjectivity degree of an analysis. Moreover, it seems that there is an urgent need, when it comes to analysis, of understanding the fact that any action, either political or military, does not appear out of the blue, that is was previously prepared, that the necessary triggering context was prepared and that its purpose can be declared, induced or fake, and therefore a pertinent result cannot be guaranteed, also because analysts have less information than decision makers.

In the war between Russia and Ukraine, currently extended outside the borders of the two states, one can notice that there are some of the characteristics of the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria, but it is very different in terms of the actors' behaviour as well as the effects produced by them.

An analysis of the factors which led to this war, as well as the way in which it takes place, alongside the idea of some predictions regarding its ending, involves taking the risk of subjectivity and turning the analysis into an essay on war. The risk is only worth assuming from the perspective of the manner in which the security dimensions were analysed, estimated and used in the action plan and whether or not they are exploited on the field, as well as the effects they trigger.

2. WAR CORRESPONDENT IN THE MASS MEDIA STUDIO

When we speak about war journalism it is necessary to accept the fact that not every media trust can afford to send its employees in a theatre of operations, either because of the risks or because of the costs. Moreover, it is important to analyse the manner in which the press agency or trust wishes to bring to the public's attention everything that took place during the conflict. Also, we must acknowledge the fact that nobody stops a good war correspondent from appealing to specialists in order to clearly describe the events and their effects.

It is important for the less experienced audience to present events in direct relationship to their effects over it and less centred on the technical or purely military data. A war journalist, in the studio or in the newsroom, has to focus on a structured approach of the phenomenon and the value of the information sources. The military consider that a structured war approach assumes a permanent antithesis between the dimensions that the aggressor uses in relation to the attacked actor.

In order to be clearer, I shall analyse the manner in which US military (JCS, 2018) approach the conflict through the expression DIME (diplomatic, informative, military, economic) versus PMESII (political, military, economic, social, informative, infrastructure), because the attacker usually uses four dimensions in order to attack the six dimensions of its adversary, who tries its best to protect them and seeks to weaken those of its aggressor.

The diplomatic dimension, from the perspective of the attacker, assumes the preparation action of the international environment regarding the fairness of war, and from the perspective of the one who is under attack it represents the action of engaging, both the public opinion and the neutral states, into an action of condemning or punishing the aggressor state.

The role of the war correspondent does not only refer to observing the event, but also to inviting specialists, either former state employees or foreign affair analysts from which, with the help of a well-structured dialogue, they can

obtain explanations regarding causes, actions, effects and perspectives. Professional ethics obliges the journalist to analyse the behaviours of both actors, their interests and the manner in which they have prepared their strategies and whether they manage to fulfil their goals or not.

When it comes to the war between Russia and Ukraine, a journalist must know not only what is happening, but he must also have information about the previous behaviours of the actors, their relations with third parties, the economic interests and the actions taken as operations to model the conflict.

The informational dimension represents an extremely important one from the perspective of the war correspondent as it involves information regarding the battle field, information used by specialised structures in order to mislead the opponent and information on the public relations aimed at the public. This dimension is one in which access to real information is quite difficult as each party is interested in saying as little as possible about the vulnerability and amplifying the threat element as much as possible. Moreover, in some states, the information operations for the opponent and the neutral people are mixed with the public relations operations, making the reality knowing process quite difficult.

The journalist has the duty to assure that the analysts invited to the dialogue are specialists in the field, that they analyse information from open sources with a certain degree of astringency, that they acknowledge the fact that since they are no longer active, they do not have access to secure information or to the manner in which they are used in the decision-making process.

Referring to the war in Ukraine it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the journalist has to be extremely skilful in using mass and social media information as most of the times they stem from uncertain sources, that the filmed material can be faked, that the conflict parties will seek to describe the small achievements in as much detail as possible and then hyperbolize them. It is worth remembering the fact that European military and civilian analysts have less information than the American ones, and that is why it is important to have well-selected sources, both in terms of notoriety and of certainty.

The military dimension is one in which the adversary estimates the military capacity in order to ensure victory, war support and the manner in which its allies might contribute, the attacked actor will seek to analyse the manner in which its capacities correspond to the requirements of the conflict and especially to the manner in which it shall build new alliances in order to overcome the power of the adversary.

Within this dimension journalists do not possess a high degree of expertise and the field is not one easy to understand by the public and that is why it is advisable for the guests to belong to the military fields and be directed towards a holistic analysis and less towards the stages of a military operation.

Analysing the situation in Ukraine it is necessary to emphasize the fact that journalists have access to more information regarding the situation of the Russian army and to less information about the Ukrainian one, that information is distorted, especially since Russia is extremely attentive when it comes to the manner in which it informs its population about the development of the military operations. It is also important the fact that this dimension benefits from a large number of satellite, media and social media images and therefore it is difficult to establish what is useful and what creates confusion.

The economic dimension, from the perspective of the attacker, refers to both its capacity of supporting the war and guaranteeing access to resources and the external market, and from the perspective of the aggressed state it is about the ability to produce or import military equipment, and also to produce or import food for the population.

A war correspondent has to understand the connections that each actor has with the globalised market, see which are the internal vulnerabilities, which are the external threats and make a clear distinction between the economic analysts specialised in the global market.

In reviewing the conflict in Ukraine, the gravity centre of the Russian economy should be seen in the energy market and the gravity centre of the Ukrainian economy in the ability to produce and market agricultural products. In this sense, it is important to follow and analyse

which are the actors or the infrastructure elements that influence the war effort. It is also important to analyse the international financial market and how the big players position themselves with or against them.

The social dimension represents, from the perspective of the attacker, a moral problem of the population in supporting the war. However, for the attacked state, it represents an issue of refugee management, of human resource recruiting for the war more than for the adversary and for the resilience of the population in government and in victory.

The war correspondent is challenged to analyse the social system and its role in the other dimensions more and not to fall into the trap of emotions caused by human suffering. In this regard, the analysis should focus on how public opinion in the country of the actors reacts behaviourally and how it produces regional or international effects.

The approach of the social dimension in Ukraine proves the fact that the resilience of the population is preserved by the president, through good and constant communication, and in Russia this dimension is held under control through misinformation and therefore the balance of international sympathy is won by the Ukrainians.

The infrastructure dimension represents a field sought to be destroyed by the attacker and protected by the one under attack, but its significance is offered by diversity as it refers to communications and communication.

The war correspondent has the predilection of looking at destructions and overlooks the manner in which this infrastructure facilitates the success of the one who is under attack and may hinder the mobility of the attacker. The specialists invited have to know the processes of transporting energy, the road and rail mobility, the communication systems, in order to provide services to the population and identify how it helps or prevents actors from achieving victory.

In the case of Ukraine, it is interesting to analyse the manner in which Russia acted in order not to paralyse the entire transport system, the interested manner in which it protected the energy networks, as well as the manner in which it was not prepared to answer to the fact that the Ukrainian state's communication system,

destroyed by the Russian army, was quickly replaced by a private one offered by an American company.

3. IN STEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

The war represents a social action and it has to be analysed as such.

War journalism does not assume the obligation of the correspondent to be present in the operation theatre. The war correspondent does

not have to have military training, but he must be able to identify the phenomenon and correlate it with the specialist. The war correspondent is an investigation journalist and therefore he must perceive war as an investigation phenomenon.

References

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