КОНФЛИКТ В УКРАИНЕ И ПРЕДВЗЯТОСТЬ СМИ

THE UKRAINE CONFLICT AND MEDIA BIAS

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Аннотация

Это расширенное эссе написано для того, чтобы изучить, какие типы предвзятости в отношении конфликта на Украине можно найти в западных печатных СМИ. Цель эссе достигается путем анализа различных случаев и событий, которые произошли в Украине во время конфликта и повлияли на международную политику. В эссе конкретно рассматривается катастрофа малазийского Boeing и Азиатско-европейская встреча. Наряду с оценкой этих двух событий в эссе описан феномен “предвзятость”, а также различные типы и причины предвзятости СМИ.

Расширенное эссе включает в себя в основном первичные данные, так как в этом случае все источники статей могут быть названы первичными. Эти источники были оценены и обсуждены с точки зрения предвзятости. Однако в исследовании принимают участие и вторичные данные. Определения и причины предвзятости СМИ были проанализированы по книгам, которые нельзя считать исходным материалом.

Вывод статьи состоит в том, что большинство событий, имевших место во время конфликта на Украине, очень предвзято освещались западными печатными

СМИ.

Annotation

This extended essay is written in order to study what types of bias regarding the conflict in Ukraine can be found in Western print media? The goal of the essay is achieved through analyzing different cases and events which took place in Ukraine at the time of the conflict and had effects on international politics. The essay studies specifically the Malaysian Boeing disaster and the Asia-Europe Meeting. However due to the limit of words it was not possible to investigate any more cases. Along with evaluation of these two events the essay presents background about bias and the different types of as well as reasons why the media is biased.

The extended essay includes mostly primary data, as all of the article sources can be said to be primary data in this case. These sources have been evaluated and discussed in terms of bias. However, secondary data is also take part of in the investigation. Definitions and reasons for media bias were analyzed according to books that cannot be counted as the raw material.

The conclusion of the essay is that most of the events which took place during the conflict in Ukraine were covered in a very biased way by western print media.

Ключевые слова: Россия, Украина, Предвзятость, Медиа, Новости, Средства Массовой Информации, Конфликт

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, Media Bias, Conflict, Media, News

INTRODUCTION

Journalists from Russia and many other countries are working together in Ukraine, attempting to report the facts they are faced with everyday. All journalists intend to shed fresh light on the political and economic situation in Ukraine. From the point of view of different media, completely opposite things happen to the Ukrainians. A phenomenon such as “information warfare” obviously takes place today and goes hand-in-hand with real war and suffering people in eastern Ukraine. There is the so-called “anti-Russia media”, which includes many western countries, America, etc. Day after day, the western media reports about propaganda on Russian TV, press and the

Internet. The Western media tries to prove the cruelty and severity of Russia, the wish of the Russian government to control the whole world and their intent to interfere and rule. It is obvious that western mainstream media are against Putin and Russia.

What we have going on in Ukraine is another true manifestation of the "New World Order" elite of the West, manipulating and attempting to control a population through fear and manipulation in the media and by overthrowing a government. They have done it the US with terrorism. "They have done it all over the Middle East and the rest of the world, and now they are doing it in Ukraine to cover up their crimes of subversion by attempting to convince the world that Russia is some sort of threat."

In my opinion, no one in America or in Europe wants Russia to generate an alternative to the EU and take power. Only the USA and the EU not Russia should rule global markets. They want Russia to agree with sanctions and other demands and regulations and become "as everyone". But Russia is a very strong opponent and defends its interests all the time. That is the reason for total disinformation in European and American media.

In this essay, I have investigated the media coverage of the war in Ukraine and how biased the western media is. My research question is as follows: "What types of bias regarding the conflict in Ukraine can be found in Western print media?" To answer this question I had to concentrate on some related topics. Firstly, I analyzed the historical, economic and political backgrounds; secondly, I defined bias and described which types of bias exist; thirdly, why is mass media biased? Finally, I analyzed articles and headlines from different western tabloid and mainstream newspapers.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Russia and Ukraine share a lot of early history. Kiev the modern capital city of Ukraine is always called a mother of Russian Cities. And everyone knows from the history books that in the era of "Kievan Rus", the country which was one of the richest in Europe of the 9th century formed old Russian nationality, which later became the basis for the formation of three nations: Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian. Russia and Ukraine were one country until the beginning of 1918. Ukraine declared its full independence from the Russian republic.



Picture 1. Kievan Rus

But already on December 30, (1922) Russia and Ukraine were two of the members who founded a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with Moscow as a capital city. On August 24,(1991) the Act of Independence, or the Act of Independence Square, resulted in the division of the Soviet Union to the 15 independent countries: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Ayzerbadzhan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

Russia and Ukraine were together one country and one nation without borders and misunderstandings for at least 10 centuries. So it should not be a surprise that the Russian and Ukrainian nations in fact are sisters which share: the same history, the same traditions, the same culture, the same mentality, the same religion and the same language. Therefore, what is happening nowadays is so awful. The “Ukrainian Nazi” organization called the “Right Sector” call Russian speaking citizens in east Ukraine ”terrorists” and have brought as a consequence a civil war between the eastern and western part of Ukraine. In addition, Russia is now an enemy of the government in Kiev.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BACKGROUNDS

The Economic and political relationships between Russia and Ukraine is a long story, but I would like to focus on the situation which happened right before this crisis. This

economic and political background information could shed light on why the western media is biased regarding the conflict in Ukraine.

Ukraine had a dramatic situation in their economy and they had a big debt to Russia for gas. They wanted to join the EU to stabilize their economy, but Russia offered another solution to this situation.

“Russia gave Ukraine a steep discount on gas, and promised to buy $15 billion worth of the nation's bonds in a deal struck during President Viktor Yanukovych's trip to Moscow on Dec. 17.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the new price for Ukraine would be around $268.5 per 1,000 cubic meters of natural gas, about $150 cheaper than the current price. This could save Ukraine $3.5 billion per year at current consumption rates of 26-27 billion cubic meters per year.

Putin also said that Russia will buy $15 billion worth of Ukrainian sovereign bonds, using a part of its national reserves from the National Wealth Fund, a special fund set up to absorb excessive liquidity, reduce inflationary pressure and insulate the economy from volatility of oil and gas export earnings.

He said Russia is buying Ukraine's bonds “considering the difficulties of the Ukrainian economy connected to a great extent with the world financial and economic crisis, with the aim of supporting the Ukrainian budget. “

However, many Ukrainian people reacted negatively. They blindly wanted to be part of the EU thinking that it is going to solve all their problems. They did not understand that the EU cannot give such a beneficial offer.

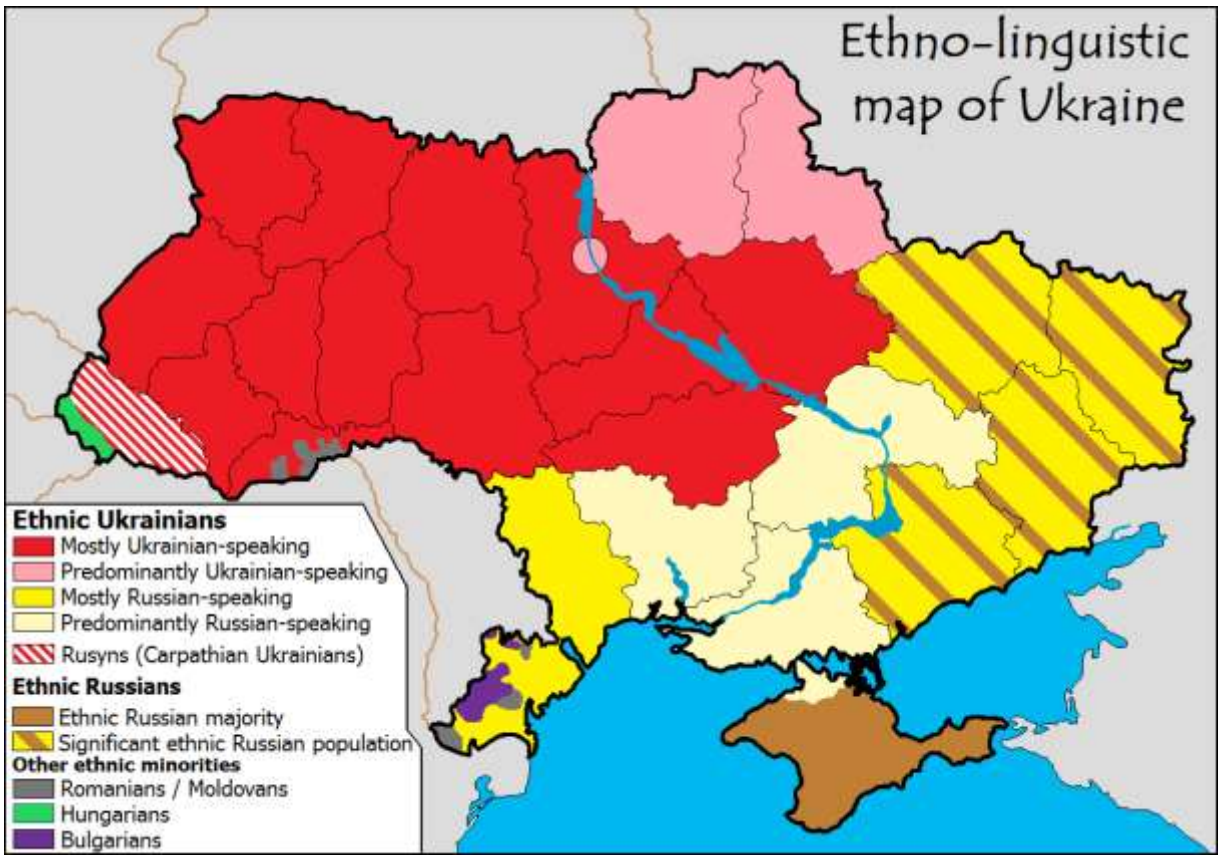
“The anti-government, pro-European protests have been raging in the country for nearly five weeks now as Ukraine continued to negotiate a new deal with Russia”

Therefore, in fact the decision of the Ukrainian ex-President Viktor Yanukovych to stay in economic union with Russia cost conflict, crisis and many deaths, which the whole world is facing at the moment.

Information about the real state of affairs in Ukraine remains scarce and insufficient, not enough to draw sound conclusions. Especially the fact that Ukraine is taken apart by two forces: one consists of people who take the side of Russians in the east and the

other who support extremists in the west. It means that Ukraine has had contentious politics from the very start. Ukraine is reacting to military actions going on as well as the intrusion of the Russian army.

Nobody possessing common sense would ever imagine it desirable and beneficial for both countries for war to happen and this kind of turn of events to unfold.



Picture 2. Ethno-linguistic map of Ukraine

Moreover, we can clearly observe that the whole string of events was initiated and supported by the European governments and the United States.

However, the government with Yanukovych in the lead had an adverse effect on the opinion of the European Union. The head of the Russian government suggested assistance and the neglect of the European Union forced Kiev to seek support from Russia.

As for America's participation and involvement in the conflict, confrontation between the USA and Ukraine together with Russia came into being. After the situation in which Russia rejected leading military actions as a response the use of chemical weapons in

Syria it so happened that American adopted a negative attitude toward Ukraine and Russia.

Further, both the European Union and the USA can be blamed for the fact that they allowed politics to interfere and guide them in pursuing their objectives. In their greedy eyes, the small Ukraine is seen as a land which needs a landowner to control every crop. In view of the economic growth and growing prosperity of the capitalists, it could be beneficial for Ukraine to become integrated into the world economy.

However, this step would eventually lead to imbalance in the Russian economy. As a result, there we could expect struggles and disputes to arise between Russia and the West to higher levels as well as pressure and suppression. This possible outcome could also be interpreted differently: either in a positive light or in a negative. From the point of view of the military, the remilitarization could lead to a large number of satisfied defence contractors.

The integration and the consolidation of NATO and the Ukraine has been a cherished dream. This is one of the reasons why the media has been so prejudiced against Russia since the old Soviet times.

MEDIA BIAS

Definition: There are many different definitions of “media bias”. However, I decided to choose this one.

“Media bias**:** refers to the bias of journalists and news producers within the mass media in the selection of which events and stories are reported and how they are covered. The term "media bias" implies a pervasive or widespread bias contravening the standards of journalism, rather than the perspective of an individual journalist or article”.

WHY ARE THE MEDIA BIASED:

When it is not possible to cover and report everything correctly, selectivity is invented. Governments start to influence mass media and biases it in many countries all over the world including covert and overt censorship. Who are reporting the news and who are the owners of the media, how do they select the material and who is making these advertisements and what is their actual aim?

In his publication “The language of News Media” Allan Bell describes and comments on an influential list of qualities that make a story not simply informative but typically newsworthy (i.e. eligible for coverage as material suited to the new genre). According to Bell, negative events make the basic stuff of 'spot' news. Involved in negativity are a number of concepts such as damage injury or death, which make disasters and accidence newsworthy.

In their publication “Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media” Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky present a “propaganda model” they claim that propaganda is not the sole function of the media, but “a very important aspect of their overall service” especially “in a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest”

In their propaganda model, Herman and Chomsky present five “filters” that are responsible for media bias.

The first filter that influences media content is that ownership of the media is concentrated among some of the largest corporations of the world.

The second filter is that of advertising, which has invaded the U.S. mass media and provides a major part of the media's income.

The third filter is that of sourcing, where “the mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest”. The media rely largely upon news provided by corporate and government sources, which have developed great expertise at “managing” the media.

The fourth filter is “flak”. “The ability to produce flak, and especially flak that is costly and threatening, is related to power.” In order to carry the most weight with media corporations, flak (defined by the authors as “negative responses to a media statement or program”) has to be produced “on a large scale, or by individuals or groups with substantial resources.” Those powerful individuals and groups, then, are likely to be the White House, ad agencies, corporate sponsors, applying (complaining) to the media companies, or putting pressure on stockholders and employees to then pressure the media companies.

The fifth filter is the ideology of anticommunism, which is an important part of western

political culture. As the authors claim “when anticommunism fervor is aroused, the demand for serious evidence in support for claims of 'communist' abuses is suspended by the media, and charlatans can thrive as evidential sources”.

TYPES OF MEDIA BIAS:

“Bias by omission: For every news story that is selected, there are many others that are left out. Do the news stories you see show a balanced view of real life? What are the characteristics they have in common? (e.g., Are they mostly about violence, famous people, wealth?) Do some news sources include items that are ignored by others?

Bias by emphasis: What stories are on the front page or “at the top of the hour?” Which stories get the largest headlines or the first and longest coverage on TV or radio? Consider how this placement influences people’s sense of what is important.

Bias by use of language: The use of labels such as “terrorist,” “revolutionary,” or “freedom fighter” can create completely different impressions of the same person or event.

Bias in photos: Unflattering pictures can create bad impressions, and partial pictures of scenes can completely change the context of an event.

Bias in the source: An article about a cure for cancer written by a drug company is not the same as an article by an independent researcher. Often, private companies, governments, public relations firms, and political groups produce press releases to gain media exposure and to influence the public.

Bias by headlines: Some headlines can be deceptive, as their main purpose is to grab attention. Many people read only the headlines, which can create a distorted sense of what is really going on, or turn a non-event into a sensational event.

Bias by repetition: The repetition of a particular event or idea can lead people to believe that it is true, very widespread, and much more important than it really is.

Bias in numbers and statistics: Statistics need to be interpreted; they are often used to create false impressions.

Bias by spin: Bias by spin occurs when the story has only one interpretation of an event or policy, to the exclusion of the other; spin involves tone – it’s a reporter’s subjective comments about objective facts; makes one side’s ideological perspective

look better than another."

MALAYSIA AIRLINES FLIGHT 17 (MH17/MA S17)

On 17 July 2014 a regularly scheduled international passenger flight that was on the way from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur crashed near Torez in Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine, and 40 km away from the territory, which is controlled by pro-Russian separatists. All 283 passengers and 15 crew on board died. It is presumed that it has been shot down.

However, very little attention was paid to the investigation of the Malaysian Boeing accident, its causes and numerous barriers to conducting the investigation. All attention of western media was focused on sanctions against Russia and its interference in the Ukraine conflict.

"(CNN) -- Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 broke apart in the air after it was hit by a burst of "high-energy objects" from outside, a preliminary report by Dutch aviation investigators said Tuesday.

Flight 17 came down in eastern Ukraine on July 17 in an area controlled by pro-Russian separatists. Of the 298 people killed, around two-thirds were Dutch.

The U.S. and Ukraine have accused pro-Russian separatists operating in the region of downing the plane with a missile.

The Dutch Safety Board report supports the theory of a warhead exploding in close proximity to the passenger jet, but it doesn't point any fingers at who might have fired it."

The Dutch Safety Board report said that there was no reason to point any fingers yet, but nonetheless after less than 24 hours after this dramatic catastrophe a popular British Newspaper called "The Sun" started to sell newspapers with a headline, which was really provocative "Putin's Missile". Before any investigations and judgments had been completed, and even before investigators could reach the place of the tragedy, "The Sun" already knew whom they should blame. In the next few days "The Sun" was supported by other famous newspapers: The "Daily Mirror" printed the headline "Putin's victims", the "Daily Express" presented the headline " Putin's rebels blew up the plane", the "Daily Mail" quoted the father of one of the victims in its headline

"Putin's killed my son", "The Daily Telegraph" wrote "Russian gangsters killed our loved ones, say British Families", "The Independent" wrote the headline saying "The fingers point at Putin".

We can see some different types of bias in these headlines as well as the



Picture 3. Coverage of tragic incident mentioned above

Bias by omission: All these newspapers omit the information that there was no investigation being made and that is too early to make any critical conclusions. They are playing with people's minds. The result was disinformation, stereotypes, disrespect to the country, rising of conflicts.

Bias by emphasis: All these tabloids put these headlines on the front page, thus making it the most important article of the day and getting people interested in it.

Bias by use of language (labeling): For Example such words as "Looters", "Victims", "Rebels", "Blew Up", "Gangsters", "Killed" all of them have a negative connotation and as a consequence negative reaction of the readers.

Bias in photos: All these newspapers print the related photos most of the time ~~its~~ images of casualties. Therefore, they are proving their statement. Readers believe and feel sorry.

Bias in the source: All these newspapers are independent researchers and normally

they are responsible for telling people the correct information and they have a reputation as true tabloids, so they can influence the readers mind and not so many people will think about how honest they are.

Bias by headlines: These headlines grab attention right away because they are short with a font of a huge size and in bold style. They are really provocative, so when you will just read one of them, you can already understand what's going on, and have the wrong understanding of a situation.

Bias by repetition: If the newspaper put the topics a few times on the front pages, people will think that it is automatically true. For example, “The Sun” printed a similar headline a few days after “Putin's missile” namely, “Putin's Looters Rob Brit Victim”.

Bias by numbers and statistics: All Newspapers included the exact number of casualties “298” in their articles, this made people feel sad and sorry.

Bias by spin: This event with the plane was only shown from one point of view, only subjective comments without objective facts. The tabloids were showing people which side they should choose and no other options were given.

THE ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM) SUMMIT IN MILAN ON OCTOBER 16-17, 2014.

In an article, which appeared in the New York Times on October 17th written by Jim Yardley and David M. Herszenhorn, the authors put great emphasis on the fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin made Angela Merkel wait. They mentioned it in the headline “Making Merkel Wait, Finding Time for Truffles”. What makes it worse is the fact that Vladimir Putin actually found time to eat truffles. The word truffles is associated with opulence and luxury. Later on in the article the authors again referred to the headline, “The men talked and enjoyed truffles until about 4 a.m., whereupon Mr. Putin departed, leaving him barely four hours before he enjoined European leaders, including Ukraine's president, Petro O. Poroshenko, for a pivotal breakfast meeting.” This gives the reader the impression that Putin deals very carelessly with important state matters. This careless attitude is further emphazised by the statement that instead of being humble he “...even told an off-color joke about the anatomical difference between a grandpa and grandma at a late afternoon news conference.” and that “...he

introduced his peace plan on a napkin.” In the article, Putin's visit to Milan was described as a “Helter-Skelter blitz” which was “Only the latest demonstration of an unpredictable, often theatrical, diplomatic style that he has employed during the Ukraine crisis to throw his rivals off balance”. “Helter Skelter” is a song written by Paul McCartney. The term “helter-skelter” not only has the meaning of in “disorderly haste or confusion”, but is also the name of a spiraling amusement park slide. The "Blitz" was the period of sustained strategic bombing of the UK by Nazi Germany during the second world war. For many people the word “blitz” has very a negative connotation.

The article also mentioned that Mr. Putin made time for Mr. Berlusconi at 2 a.m. and that “The two men do have a colorful history, vacationing together and becoming close friends.”

The article also quotes Nina L. Khrushcheva, a professor of international affairs at the New School in New York and the great-granddaughter of Nikita S. Khrushchev. She called Putin “an exhibitionist”. The fact that this is a quote by an important person is supposed to prove that the authors' message and negative attitude towards Putin is correct and justified.

CONCLUSION

In order to conclude my extended essay it would be suitable to repeat the research question one more time: “What types of bias regarding conflict in Ukraine can be found in Western print media?”

Firstly, the background for bias that is observed in the Western print media was analyzed. According to my research and investigation, there are three types: historical, economic and political. Every kind of background is highly important for a complete understanding of the topic.

Secondly, media bias was defined, reasons for biased media were described, and all the types of bias listed.

Furthermore, two cases that relate to the conflict in Ukraine, the main topic of my investigation, were analyzed and evaluated. The Malaysian Boeing incident and the Asia-Europe meeting were analyzed in terms of bias. All the types of prejudices that

could be found in the discussed cases have been listed and evaluated.

In conclusion, almost every event covered by the Western print media demonstrates a wide range of different forms of bias if a closer look is made. However, to understand and clarify the topic better it would be beneficial to analyze more sources and events as well. Due to the word limit, it was impossible to make complete analysis of all sources and events.

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