

ISLAM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

2020.02.003. ANZHELA NOVOSELTSEVA. MEDIATIZATION OF THE SYRIAN CONFLICT IN THE NEWSPAPERS "THE WASHINGTON POST" AND "THE WASHINGTON TIMES" // *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn*, Moscow, 2019, № 2. P. 116–128.

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According to the author of the article, mediatization of international armed conflicts has now become an integral part of geopolitics. Leading publications convey their vision of events on the world stage, using various communicative strategies of interaction with the readership. A high-profile event was the Syrian armed conflict – a local civil confrontation complicated by the involvement of international organizations, world powers, military-political and extremist groups.

The situation in Syria since 2011 is characterized by conflict of interest both within and outside the country (Sunni, Shiite, ethnic Kurdish, opposition and Syrian government). External participants of the Syrian conflict include Islamist terrorist groups (ISIS, al-Nusra Front, etc.) and anti-terrorist coalitions led by the United States and Russia. Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE became part of the American coalition. Russian allies included the governments of Syria, Iran and Iraq,

later Turkey joined them. The motives of participation of each party in the Syrian conflict are based on economic, political, geopolitical, ideological, religious, social and other reasons. A high-profile conflict of interest affects the objectivity of press coverage. Among the reasons there are contradictory information coming from journalistic sources, the aspiration of the press to simplify various political phenomena. The biased media coverage of such significant international events as the Syrian conflict, Anzhela Novoseltseva emphasizes, deforms the world views in the consciousness of the audience. The author of the article identifies the communicative strategies of the newspapers "The Washington Post" and "The Washington Times," used in the press coverage of the Syrian conflict, ways of their implementation, and also draws conclusions about the information policy of the publications. The author analyzes the materials published by "The Washington Post" and "The Washington Times" from November 24 to December 15, 2017. The announcement of the defeat of ISIS in Syria, the official reactions of the leaders of the world powers – that is why, the author emphasizes, this time segment is interesting for the study.

"The Washington Post": In three weeks, 1,245 material appeared on The Washington Post's website, 48 of which focused on the Syrian conflict. Anzhela Novoseltseva notes the diversity of genres. The 18 informative notes are UN reports on the humanitarian situation in Syrian regions and the number of dead residents. A digest of world events with urgent information from Syria regularly appears on the newspaper's website. 12 of such correspondence were found. This testifies to the informative communicative strategy of the publication, during which journalists form an "agenda" for the reader. The strategy is implemented through communication tactics of informing and focus.

In the formation of the information picture, there are used framing technologies – journalists select certain facts that correspond to the position of the publication. Among the most

covered events there are the announcement of the defeat of ISIL, the attack on Sinai, peace talks on Syria in Geneva, Vladimir Putin's trip to Khmeimim Air Base, distress of the population in the Damascus suburbs of Eastern Ghouta. Within the framework of framing technology, there is repetition of the same theses in the materials. The US is losing its dominant role in Syria. Russia gains influence in the Middle East after a successful campaign in Syria: getting closer to Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Egypt. ISIS is defeated, but not terrorism. Syria's civil war is not over, Bashar Assad is a bloody dictator. The existence of 14 analytical articles indicates a desire to highlight the Syrian conflict by involving experts, politicians and ordinary citizens. The characters of four articles with elements of interviews were a Syrian journalist, the wife of an ISIS fighter, a refugee cook and a former prisoner "from Assad's prisons." The idea of inhumanity of Bashar Asad's regime is affirmed through the stories of people from different sectors of Syrian society who suffered from political repression. The presence of a manipulative communicative strategy is confirmed by the techniques of creation of a stable myth about the bloody regime of Bashar Asad.

At the same time, Anzhela Novoseltseva notes that various opinions are published on the pages of the publication. An analysis of the valuation level of information in "The Washington Post" media texts gave the following results. There is a harsh criticism of Washington in the materials. President Donald Trump's decision to end military support for Kurdish self-defence groups is condemned. In the materials it is also said that more than 800 civilians were killed in airstrikes by the American anti-terrorist coalition. Journalists also write about how American weapons fell into the hands of terrorists.

Moscow's actions "The Washington Post" are considered ambiguous by journalists. On the one hand, they talk about successful termination of the Syrian campaign, strengthening of Russia's position in the international arena, and powerful army. A lot is written about strengthening the authority of the country

at the Middle East. On the other hand, it is argued that defeating terrorists is not the only Kremlin's goal. Among the motives there are commercial interests: Russia needs B.Asad, which will not allow Qatar to lay a gas pipeline through Syria, the ultimate aim of which is Southern and Central Europe.

The purpose of most "The Washington Post" publications is to remind of the inhumanity of the Bashar Assad regime. To inculcate this thought much attention is paid to civilian casualties and the humanitarian situation in Syria. At the same time manipulative techniques of catastrophizing and repetition are used. For example, in ten materials it is described the situation of people in Eastern Ghouta, to whom the Government declared a provision blockade. One of the articles includes a manipulative approach of simplification: the author says that in a situation of civil war people so much want reforms in the country so that they do not care who will carry them out – terrorists or someone else. The assertion is counterintuitive – a complicated political process is thus driven into a binary scheme in which terrorist ideology is less evil than the Bashar Assad regime.

Thus, Anzhela Novoseltseva notes, The Washington Post, while covering the Syrian conflict, used various communicative strategies depending on the genre of the text and idea. The dominant strategy of the publication is conventional: there is pluralism of opinions, the overreaching-goal is to establish a dialogue. The pages of the publication present various opinions on the policy of Washington, Moscow and Damascus – from encouraging to critical ones. The existence of serious criticism of the US government proves general liberal orientation of the publication. At the same time, there are signs of manipulative strategy: journalists used manipulative techniques in forming an unambiguously negative attitude towards the Bashar Assad regime. "The Washington Post's" information policy on the Syrian conflict is characterized by the researcher as discontent with the Pentagon's ineffective actions in Syria. The general idea

is that the United States needs to get rid of Bashar Assad and win back from Russia the authority it gained in the Middle East.

“The Washington Times”: During three weeks, “The Washington Times” website published 701 articles and only 11 directly or indirectly concerned the Syrian conflict. This figure is four times less than the number of materials published by “The Washington Post.” In terms of the proportion of material devoted to Syria, it is about 4% in “The Washington Post,” while 1.6% of the total number of publications is in “The Washington Times.”

Journalists focused on the following events: the statement of the Turkish Prime Minister on the need to make Bashar Assad leave his office, the investigation of the American fighter of ISIL, the statement of Russia on the defeat of terrorists in Syria, the spread of the ISIL group to the north of Afghanistan, the conflict of the Syrian government and the opposition. The main points of the publication: Bashar Assad must leave, his regime is inhumane. Russia is gaining influence in the Middle East, while the US is losing it. The main reason for destabilization of the situation in the Middle East is the “Arab Spring” and poor foreign policy of Barack Obama. Military cooperation between the United States and Russia in Afghanistan is a positive scenario.

Genre analysis demonstrated that two information notes and five information reports were published during this period. The presence of relating to news texts suggests an informative communicative strategy for the publication. This strategy is implemented through communication tactics of informing and emphasis. According to the researcher, it is possible to talk about the technology of media framing in the formation of the insufficiently complete Syrian “agenda” of “The Washington Times.” Journalists select and repeat certain facts, concentrate on specific topics, ignoring others. It is necessary to note the neutral position of the publication against Donald Trump – in general, fierce criticism of it does not sound, that is peculiar to other materials of the publication.

The Kremlin's actions in Syria are mentioned in three materials at least. The texts hardly mention the merits of the anti-terrorist coalition, even the defeat of ISIL is presented as epiphenomenon. Although it is noted increased importance of Moscow in the Middle East region, it is sometimes asserted the superiority of anti-terrorist coalition in the region led the U.S. One of the journalists' goals is to show that the statement about the defeat of ISIL in Syria is not the end of the war.

In general, Anzhela Novoseltseva emphasizes, the dominant communicative strategy of the publication is conventional, there are rather estimated evaluations of journalists, various opinions on Moscow and Washington. It is also stressed the importance of the U.S. anti-terrorist coalition in Syria, and it is not so much said about Russia's merits. At the same time, the publication expresses a completely definite outlook on the official Damascus. Here it is possible to see the presence of manipulative and regulatory communicative strategies. The main goal is to demonize the personality of Bashar Asad, distract its readers from the terrorist threat in Syria and remind of the civil war.

In conclusion, the researcher notes that the complicated multilevel conflict of interest in Syria is not adequately represented in both publications and does not reflect the external reality. The narrative is deformed primarily because of its fragmentation, biased selection of facts and events. Publications do not analyze the causes and consequences of the civil war in Syria, the reader is simply made to think that if Bashar Asad is eliminated, the Syrian people will instantly take the path of prosperity. This approach of journalists, according to Anzhela Novoseltseva, is absolutely unprofessional. Moreover, in both publications mentioning the name of the Syrian leader, manipulative communicative strategies are used.

"The Washington Post's" information policy on the Syrian conflict can be characterized as discontent with inconsistent actions of Pentagon and especially Donald Trump. "The Washington

Times” does not allow itself sharp criticism of the White House, journalists prefer to blame all foreign policy failures of the former US president and his administration. There are also obvious differences in the presentation of materials. While “The Washington Post” is characterized by modal communicative strategy – an explicit display of editorial estimation of events, vivid and emotional criticism, “The Washington Times” is focused on neutral narration and considered evaluations.

Both publications use a conventional communicative strategy which overarching goal is to establish a dialogue between Russia and the United States. It is noteworthy, Anzhela Novoseltseva notes, that “The Washington Times” writes about the need to establish a dialogue with Moscow in terms of military cooperation in the countries with a terrorist threat, even despite variant readings about the fate of the Bashar Asad regime, interaction sets for dialogue. “The Washington Post,” on the contrary, directs the reader toward confrontation, pursuing the idea that the United States needs to get rid of Bashar Asad and regain from Russia the authority it has gained in the Middle East.

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KAMIL AZIMOV. SHIITE FACTOR IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN // *The article was written for the bulletin “Russia and the Moslem World.”*

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