Telegram, war and propaganda

Russian and Ukrainian strategies of dissemination

Roman Kyrychenko

University of Helsinki

CENTRE FOR SOCIOLOGY
OF DEMOCRACY — CSD

General Idea of the Paper

I am endeavoring to transform my qualitative observations of war-related Telegram channels into a computational analysis to enhance the reliability of the results.
Key Statements:

- Propaganda, according to Lasswell, constitutes one of the three tools essential for winning a war.
- Presently, propaganda is not confined solely to states; individuals possess ample technical tools to disseminate information.
- Telegram boasts a permissive content policy, facilitating the presence of both warring factions.
- Intense information exchange characterizes both sides, with efforts made to propagate their respective narratives among adversaries.

Theoretical Framework I Am Developing

I am exploring two levels of propaganda:

- Narrative Level (What?) (Name calling, specific usage of language)
- Structural Level (Level of Interactions) (How?) (Information Exchange between channels)

Clusters of Narratives

In the current version of the paper, I have categorized channels into two clusters: pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian. However, the reality is more intricate, as many channels navigate a middle ground. Pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian channels exhibit fragmentation into:

- Russian and Belarusian liberal media.
- Ukrainian figures (bloggers, journalists, and politicians) with pro-Russian inclinations.
- Russian "angry patriots."
- Ukrainian military sources.
- Pro-Zelensky and pro-Poroshenko factions within Ukraine.
- Russian "voenkors" (military reporters).
- Fake Ukrainian channels.
- Bogus Russian military channels.
- Open-source intelligence (OSINT) channels.
- Others.

Name callings as feature

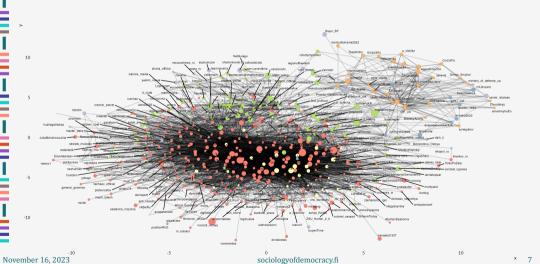| Type	Pro-Ukrainian	Pro-Russian	Importance
preposition for Ukraine	(в Украине, в Україні) v Ukraine, v Ukraine. In Russian and Ukrainian language preposition v is usually applied for independent or isolated entities	(на Украине) na Ukraine, usually applied for dependent entities, parts of something bigger (the region of the country, for example)	It's a simple way to show whether you recognize or don't recognize Ukrainian independence

Network Analysis of War-Related Telegram Channels

Numerous interaction examples between channels include:

- Simple reposts.
- Reposts with comments.
- References.
- Screenshots.
- Copying posts.
- Utilization of specific phrases (trolling).

Connection: other channel reposted by one channel

Conclusion: New Propaganda Technique?

The emerging question revolves around a potentially novel propaganda technique: infiltrating between clusters and legitimizing narratives within the enemy's domain through the extensive network of information exchange.