THE CYBER DEFENSE REVIEW

REFERENCES

RT and the
Element of Disguise:
Russia's Information Weapon

Tobias Redington

ABSTRACT

Western journalists have labelled RT, Russia's state-controlled international television network, as the Kremlin's "lie machine," "Putin's weapon of mass deception," or even as an active participant in "Russia's propaganda Blitzkrieg".[1] However, there is less scholarship on the network, particularly addressing the reasons for its reported success at recruiting a global audience.[2] After a brief topography of Russian foreign-language broadcasting, this article explores this gap in three stages, first explaining why disguise is important to RT's role as Russia's information weapon. During moments deemed critical, using the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in 2018 as a case study, RT flooded the information space with false or misleading narratives to disrupt Western broadcasting. Here, critical moments denote instances of heightened tension between Russia and the West. This is a subversive campaign that utilizes information within the framework of Giles and Kelushov. During non-critical periods, RT imitates Western news outlets in content and cosmetics to build an image of authenticity and attract a trusting audience. This, in turn, amplifies RT's subversive campaign during critical moments. Interviews between RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan and Russian journalists support my analysis of RT as Russia's information weapon and provide a historical perspective on the importance of disguise since the 2008 Georgian War. Second, the article explores RT's engagement to demonstrate that this tactic is effective in attracting a faithful audience and, therefore, disrupting the narrative space. Finally, the article discusses the possibility of Western countries removing RT's broadcasting licence, and analyzes disputes between the UK's broadcasting regulator, Ofcom, and RT.

© 2021 Tobias Redington

Tobias Redington, is an alumnus of the Cambridge Security Initiative's 2019 International Security & Intelligence Programme, focuses on psychological operations and disinformation campaigns. He holds an MA in Intelligence & International Security from King's College London and a BA in Classics from the University of Exeter, UK. Tobias has also conducted research into ISIS recruitment magazines at Universität Mannheim, Germany.

Russia's Information Weapon

Founded in 2005 as "Russia Today," purportedly to provide "a Russian viewpoint on major global events," the state-funded broadcaster has developed a global brand.[3] RT's owner is an ANO, "Autonomous Non-Commercial Organisation," or non-profit, called TV-Novosti. A rebrand of the organization took place in 2009, which formally dropped 'Russia' from its name, though the organization is commonly known by its original name. Editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan claimed that this rebrand took place "so as not to scare the audience" by detaching the outlet from its Russian roots before going global and delivering content in English, Spanish, French, German, and Arabic.[4],[5] Sputnik is another state-funded media outlet with close links to RT, such as sharing Simonyan as editor-in-chief and sharing a common editorial stance. Hinting at organizational confusion, RT hosts its weekly show called Sputnik. Moreover, *Sputnik* itself is owned by Rossiya Segodnya, which translates to "Russia Today." However, RT remains Russia's most well-known and wide-reaching state-funded international broadcaster.

Critical Moments

In March 2018, RT, as well as Sputnik, attempted to disrupt the Western discourse on the chemical attack on Sergei and Yulia Skripal, who were poisoned with Novichok nerve agent in Salisbury, UK. This disruption involved flooding the narrative space with false or malign narratives to undermine trust in Western news outlets and governments. Ramsay and Robertshaw generated evidence to this claim in their study of the 735 RT and Sputnik publications in the month immediately following the poisoning.[6] Their research details 138 separate and contradictory narratives explaining the incident, including attacks on Western motives, explanations of the origins of the nerve agent,

and brazen conspiracy theories.[7] Such narratives include describing the investigation as a "witch hunt" and the UK's response as illegal; 20 narratives about Novichok, including that it could originate from the UK, US, Ukraine, Iran, or a number of other European states; 16 narratives about the Skripals, explaining the poisoning by alleging links to organised crime, to claims that Yulia Skripal brought the nerve agent into the UK and that the Skripals were never poisoned; 7 conspiratorial narratives, including that the poisoning was conducted by the UK or an intelligence agency of a third country in order to harm Russia.[8] These data confirm that RT conducts subversion campaigns, which Kuleshov defines as "spreading disinformation among the populations about the work of state bodies, undermining their authority, and discrediting administrative structures."[9]

The campaign's sophistication is notable in its adaptation to Western developments on the case. For example, following then Prime Minister Theresa May's 12 March speech to the UK Parliament which attributed the Novichok nerve agent to Russia, RT responded with a flood of narratives contesting the origins and existence of Novichok and presenting the poisoning as a Western political stunt. These narratives often were promoted by high-ranking Russian government officials, such as Sergey Lavrov, Dmitry Peskov, and Maria Zakharova, which generated extensive mainstream UK media coverage. Ramsay and Robertshaw describe this as "the most successful means by which pro-Russian narratives were inserted into Western news outlets."[10] A key element of this success was the high quantity of publications, which deluged the total narrative space, priming their leak into mainstream discourse.

Such narrative flooding exercises are typical of RT during critical moments. In 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea, RT unleashed a similar campaign of disinformation, accusing Ukrainian demonstrators of Nazi sympathies and ignoring the Ukrainian government's point of view.[11] This caused such strain among the news anchors that Liz Wahl quit live on air, refusing "to be part of a network funded by the Russian government that whitewashes the actions of Putin."[12]

Non-Critical Periods

During non-critical periods, news reports typically are more subdued and RT functions as a normal news agency seemingly committed to reporting quotidian items that would arouse no suspicions of a clandestine political agenda, which RT often takes to a point of surreal mundanity, assigning undue attention to trivial news items. For example, on August 6, 2019, the top RT headline commented on outrage at British businessman Lord Alan Sugar's mockery on Twitter of Labour politician Jeremy Corbyn.[13] Shortly after, the RT headlines praised a 21-year-old's attempt to install a bionic eye for himself in Vladivostok.[14] These bizarre areas of focus for any news outlet are more than bizarre for a channel whose mission is to "acquaint the international audience with the Russian point of view" on "major issues of our time."[15]

However, Glenny further observes that "the annoying thing about RT is that some of the reporting is very good and genuine."[16] RT interviews host politicians from across the political spectrum, from George Galloway, who has his own show, to Nigel Farage. RT can provide updates to basic political developments much like the BBC or CNN. In addition, RT looks like any normal western news outlet. Pomerantsev has noted that the channel has "the thumping music before the news flash, the earnest pretty newscasters, the jock-like sports broadcasters."[17] One could interpret this as evidence that RT is simply just another news outlet.

Disguise

Yet RT's Simonyan herself concedes that this image of normality masks the true design of RT. In an interview in 2012 with the Russian daily Kommersant, she justified RT as a necessary taxpayer expense for "conducting the information war [...] against the whole Western world."[18] Simonyan developed her vision of a nuanced impression of RT, which projects normality during journalistic lulls interspersed between narrative floods, such as those identified following the Skripal poisoning: "it's impossible to start making a weapon only when the war already started!" Like a proud parent, Simonyan even declares that this information serves as an adjunct to the Ministry of Defence. The element of disguise is crucial to this model.

In 2013, Simonyan expanded on the importance of disguise in another interview with a Russian online newspaper, *lenta.ru.*[19] After reaffirming her vision of RT as "a weapon like any other," to be "used in critical moments." she insisted that RT does not aim "to start a revolution in the USA," which to her would be "laughable and crazy." Rather, Simonyan said, RT aims "to conquer an audience." She continues, "[i]n a critical moment we'll already have grown our audience, which is used to come to us for the other side of the truth, and of course we'll make use of that." Simonyan's words reveal RT's elaborate system of disguise, with the channel fronting as a normal news channel in order to recruit a trusting audience that may be exploited during 'critical moments.'

Simonyan also explained why it was the 2008 Georgian War that brought home to Russia the importance of disguise in her Kommersant interview, where she describes the lessons of the conflict, which was seen by the Kremlin as a military victory but a propaganda defeat: "There weren't enough, and there aren't enough, English-speaking talking heads. People who understood how and why they should go on air with CNN, and how to behave in a studio so they would not get their throats torn out by Western journalists. As a result, Russia looked so pale compared to the Georgians, it broke my heart. [...] It's as if we suddenly realised that there are nuclear weapons in the world and rushed to develop them. This was the main mistake." The interviewer then asks: "Have any lessons been learned? Is there an anti-crisis mechanism? Is there any understanding that it is necessary to water, for example, the flower called Russia Today, so that it will grow into a mighty tree, and could be used as an information cudgel at need?" Simonyan responds, "I think so. [...] In 2008, it became absolutely

clear to everyone why this is needed, why we need such a thing as an international television channel representing the country." Simonyan here identified the components of the disguise. "English-speaking talking heads" blend in with their BBC or CNN counterparts, along with individuals who know how to present genuine journalism during non-critical periods and thereby avoid "getting their throats torn out." Six years after the interview, following the Skripal poisoning, the "mighty tree" of Russia's information weapon stood tall.

Before the Georgian War, rather than undermining Western narratives, RT sought instead to promote Russian ones.[20] Cooper says "when the channel was first created, it was presented as an effort to present news from a Russian perspective. The point now seems to be much more about promoting conspiracy theories."[21] For example, the narrative flood that took place after the Skripal poisoning did not take place in the aftermath of the 2006 Litvinenko poisoning. RT was eerily silent on this issue, receiving scathing criticism from the West for their lack of comment on the incident.

In light of Simonyan's comments, RT's guise of normality becomes more obviously a mimic of Western news outlets comprising various strata. The stock news items about fury at Lord Sugar's tedious tweets or outlandish tales about bionic eyes are imitations of stock news items, creating a hyperreal depiction of journalism, in which the norm is more normal than normal. The slick transitions and graphics seem over-the-top, closer to stage directions than to genuine production cues. During critical moments, RT's flooding of the narrative space manufactures a blurring between fiction and reality for its conditioned audience. True to Kuleshov's theory on subversive campaigns, RT spreads "disinformation among the populations about the work of state bodies, undermining their authority, and discrediting administrative structures."[22]

However, Simonyan's statements about RT are markedly more reserved when talking to Western journalists: typically, she reverts to claiming that it conveys "a Russian viewpoint on major global events." In her 2013 interview with *Der Spiegel* she claimed that RT seeks to prove "that there are more stories out there than the 10-a-day that you usually encounter" on CNN and the BBC.[23] Shortly after, she interrupted and evaded the reporter's challenge that "many are comparing [RT] to the Ministry of Defense." In her 2016 interview with the *Financial Times*, she similarly claimed "that mainstream western TV channels, especially CNN and ABC, show the same thing" as RT.[24] With Western journalists, and hence Western audiences, Simonyan avoids describing information weapons and deception campaigns. This may cause her to believe that Western audiences will not hear of her near-gloating comments in Russia about the efficacy of RT's disguise with Western audiences.

Giles represents a popular school of thought that views Russian subversion campaigns like this as "broadly recognisable as reinvigorated aspects of subversion campaigns from the Cold War era and earlier."[25] This article indicates that RT is part of a more sophisticated strategy than its Cold War predecessors, especially in its ability to adapt according

to past failures. The station is an advancement from *Pravda*, the Soviet Communist party newspaper, or *Radio Moscow International*, which produced easily identifiable propaganda.[26] This strengthens Galeotti's conclusion that "Russia is clearly seeing the kinetic and the non-kinetic as 'interchangeable and mutually supporting,' moving away from the traditional Western assumption that 'subversion, deception, and the like' are all 'force multipliers' to the combat arms, not forces in their own right."[27]

RT's inability to host experts, however, betrays an otherwise persuasive disguise. The channel claims that all guests are diligently vetted: "We care a lot about their credibility. We often invite commentators with alternative views who are not welcome on mainstream stations. Some are quite renowned, such as [Marxist philosopher] Slavoj Žižek."[28] Some of the most perplexing items feature 9/11 truthers, UFO sightings, and celebrities like Steven Seagal and Pamela Anderson serving as experts. Anderson even appeared on RT to defend Julian Assange against rape charges. In the wake of the 2017 Manchester bombing, RT invited for comment two obscure Western journalists and a serial apologist for Syrian President Bashar Assad. All blamed the attack on Western foreign policy in the Middle East. This issue looks set to worsen, as more legitimate experts and commentators vow to stay away from RT. This illustrates that, upon scrutiny, RT's image of authenticity is betrayed by its inability to host legitimate experts.

Engagement

Aside from its flaws, an estimation of RT's success in attracting an audience should dictate an appropriate response from the West. Engagement is a quantifiable factor which, to some degree, indicates success at gaining an audience, many of whom likely perceive the outlet as credible. RT's popularity on *YouTube* indicates its success at audience recruitment appears to make up for the attention deficit on television. RT is the most engaged news network on *YouTube,* with more than 10 billion views across its channels and over 4 million subscribers. The *YouTube* channel uploads segments from its television channels, amplifying them to the vast audience. This is largely due to RT's practice of purchasing the rights to sensational footage, for instance, that of Japan's 2011 tsunami, and repackaging them with its logo. Though this indicates that its online success owes to dubious tactics, the success nonetheless strengthens RT's disguise.

RT news channels have also expanded at a rapid pace in the last 15 years. Al-Yaum (RT Arabic) was launched in 2007, while RT Actualidad (RT Spanish) followed suit in 2009. In 2011, RTDOC was launched alongside RUPTLY, a video news agency started with subsidies from Moscow to offer professionally produced videos at affordable prices to broadcasters. These both provide even more material to attract a trusting audience during non-critical periods. RT is now located in 16 countries with bureaus in 21 cities, including Washington, New York, London, Paris, Kiev, New Delhi, Cairo, and Baghdad. RT's London office is remarkably luxurious, looming large over Big Ben and the MI5 and MI6 headquarters. The more RT grows, disguised

as a genuine news outlet, the greater the engagement, and the greater its success in recruiting a trusting audience.

But even a modest trusting audience poses a risk of societal harm, given the toxicity of RT publications during critical moments. In 2016, the "Pizzagate" conspiracy mired Hillary Clinton's election campaign. This groundless theory claimed that a paedophilia ring linked to members of the Democratic Party had been discovered through Clinton campaign manager John Podesta's emails, published by *WikiLeaks* in 2016. The theory alleged the emails contained code words for paedophilia and human trafficking, naming Comet Ping Pong restaurant as a meeting ground. Ben Swann, a former RT contributor who ran his own media outlet entertained the claims, alongside social media platforms and forums. After admitting the absence of any mention of trafficking or paedophilia in the emails, Swann said "there are dozens of what seem to be strangely worded emails about pizza and handkerchiefs. Self-described online investigators say that those words in the emails about pizza, and the talk of handkerchiefs is code language used by paedophiles."[29]

The laughable case took a serious turn on December 4, 2016, when Edgar Maddison Welch walked into Comet Ping Pong with a loaded AR-15 assault rifle and a loaded .38 calibre revolver. While inside the restaurant, which was crowded with customers, including children, Welch fired the rifle multiple times and threatened staff. District Court proceedings concluded that Welch was "motivated, in part, by unfounded rumours concerning a child sex-trafficking ring that was being perpetrated by high-profile individuals" at the restaurant.[30] Whilst the vast majority of the public viewed the Pizzagate conspiracy as ludicrous, a single believer can wreak havoc, so large audiences are not always necessary in order for an information weapon like RT to inflict serious damage upon society; disguise only needs to convince one person.

The statistics, however, indicate that RT has attracted a sizable faithful audience, thus maximising its devastating potential as an information weapon during critical moments. As McFaul, US ambassador to Russia under Obama, comments, "there is a demand in certain countries for this alternative view, an appetite, and we arrogant Americans [or Westerners] shouldn't just think that no one cares."[31] Especially when one considers the stormy forecast for the future of journalism. The rise of DeepFake, a highly realistic manipulation of audio or video, is of great concern because this technology is increasingly accessible and increasingly difficult to detect.[30] RT has already demonstrated that it is quick to harness the latest technological advancements. In 2016, RT pioneered the first 360-degree HD video from aboard the International Space Station, while RT360, a special app for delivering 360 content, won the Short Award for Best Photo and Video App in 2017. An RT publication of a DeepFake video in which, for instance, Theresa May revealed to a colleague a plan to poison Sergei Skripal in Salisbury is a sobering thought for journalism and international relations. The image of a volatile adolescent RT is startling, the prospect of the organization in its maturity is even more alarming.

Response

The West must act robustly. In the UK, Ofcom fined RT £200,000 in 2019 for failing to comply with rules on impartiality.[33] This was largely based on the current affairs programmes RT aired between March 17 and April 26, which failed to "preserve due impartiality," mostly in relation to the Skripal poisoning. That confrontation followed a series of Ofcom-RT disputes over violating the UK broadcasting code,[34] including sanctions in 2015 over a "series of misleading and biased articles" about BBC coverage, and requiring RT to broadcast a summary of Ofcom's findings.[35]

These penalties appear ineffective. Ofcom has found more RT programmes guilty of partiality than those of any other broadcaster.[36] Yet RT has continued to subvert journalistic integrity during critical moments in recent years, just as following the Skripal poisoning. On 20 July 2019, for instance, large protests in Moscow demanded that opposition candidates be allowed to register for municipal elections in Moscow. RT grossly understated the crowd size as 12,000,[37] which multiple Western media outlets, including BBC and Reuters, reported at a minimum of 20,000.[38] The Digital Forensics Lab, a testament to the value of open-source research tools, corroborated the crowd density and clear boundaries of the crowd with the use of Google Maps satellite imagery and the MapChecking online tool to precisely measure that the protest more likely at 22,000.[39]

Given these repeated offences, removing RT's broadcasting licence both in the UK and in all other affected countries is a possibility. In 2018, some in the UK House of Commons urged the more drastic penalty of removing RT's licence.[40] On March 13, 2018, Ofcom suggested it could review RT's licence, "should the UK investigating authorities determine that there was unlawful use of force by the Russian State against the UK" in Salisbury.[41] In July 2019, RT and *Sputnik* were banned from a media freedom conference in London for playing an "active role in spreading disinformation."[42] Thus even journalists–usually among the strongest of champions of free speech–may be reaching the end of their patience.

The UK would not be the first European county to ban the broadcaster. In 2014, the business news-focused RBK-TV joined a growing list of Russian channels banned in Ukraine.[43] The National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine said the move was made "in the interest of information security," and, specifically, because the channel violated the European Convention on Transfrontier Television and current legislation in Ukraine. In 2015, Moldova's Coordination Council on Television and Radio (CCA) banned the Russian channel Rossiya 24 permanently,[44] stating that the station, and several others like it, constantly distorted facts and manipulated public opinion in stories covering annexation of Crimea. In March 2019, Latvia's National Electronic Media Council (NEPLP) imposed a three-month ban on the retransmission of Russian language channel Rossiya RTR.

Relations in recent years between the West and Russia have been more strained since the end of the Cold War, and RT is among the issues of contention. The history described above reveals why disguise is a key element of RT's tactics of recruiting and then manipulating a trusting audience during critical moments. This article attempts to more deeply analyze RT than has occurred to date, with direct reference to RT content, as well as journalists' interviews with Margarita Simonyan, which support the interpretation of RT as an information weapon. This situates RT within a wider conversation of the anti-West subversive campaigns of Putin's Russia as espoused by Kuleshov. RT's disregard for lesser punitive measures issued by the UK would also strongly support the revocation of RT's broadcasting licence by Western nations, which not only would remove RT from television screens, but could lead to the closure of RT's overseas offices, thereby undermining RT's ability to publish articles and online content. Equally important, this would publicly unmask RT as the Russian information weapon. In the face of public criticism, this would undo the powerful element of disguise, along with the negative effects of RT's upon Western society. Simultaneously, countries taking this action would demonstrate solidarity and thereby strengthen international ties around the democratic values of a free press.

NOTES

1. A multilingual selection of journalistic receptions of RT: T. Dowling, '24-hour Putin people: my week watching Kremlin 'propaganda channel' RT' *The Guardian*, March 29, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/nov/29/24-hour-putin-people-my-week-watching-kremlin-propaganda-channel-rt-russia-today, accessed August 6, 2019; A. Macho, 'Der Propaganda-Sender des Kremls in Deutschland' *Handelsblatt*, November 21, , 2014, https://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/it-medien/russia-today-der-propaganda-sender-des-kremls-in-deutschland/11016084.html, accessed August 7, 2019; S. Lobo, 'Putins Geniestreich' *Spiegel Online*, November 28, 2018, https://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/netzpolitik/wladimir-putins-wirkmaechtige-propaganda-in-sozialen-medien-a-1240829.html, accessed August 7, 2019; J. O'Sullivan, 'Russia Today is Putin's weapon of mass deception. Will it work in Britain?' The Spectator, December 6, 2014, https://www.spectator.co.uk/2014/12/the-truth-about-russia-today-is-that-it-is-putins-mouthpiece, accessed August 7, 2019; T. Sculthorpe, 'Kremlin mouthpiece RT faces three more Ofcom investigations into whether it broadcasts pro-Putin propaganda' *Mail Online,* May 21, 2018, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5753461/Kremlin-mouthpiece-RT-faces-three-Ofcom-investigations.html, accessed August 7, 2019; A. Troianovski and J. Warrick, 'Agents of doubt: How a powerful Russian propaganda machine chips away at Western notions of truth' *The Washington Post*, December 10, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/world/national-security/russian-propaganda-skripal-salisbury, accessed August 7, 2019; M. Weiss, 'Russia's Propaganda Blitzkrieg' *The Daily Beast,* October 4, 2017, https://www.thedailybeast.com/russias-propaganda-blitzkrieg, accessed August 7, 2019.

2. On RT's use of conspiracy theories as a Russian diplomacy tool, see I. Yablokov, 'Conspiracy Theories as a Russian Public Diplomacy Tool: The Case of *Russia Today* (RT)' in Politics, 2015, Vol. 35, 3-4, 301-315; On RT's presentation of Russia, see G. Miazhevich, 'Nation branding in the post-broadcast era: The case of RT' in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2018, Vol. 21.5, 575-593.

3. 'About RT,' https://www.rt.com/about-us, accessed August 9, 2019.

4. N. Von Twickel, 'Russia Today Courts Viewers With Controversy' *Russia Beyond*, March 23, 2010, https://www.rbth.com/articles/2010/03/23/230310_rt.html, accessed August 6, 2019.

5. M. Bodner, M. Kupfer, and B. Jardine, (2017) 'Welcome to The Machine: Inside the Secretive World of RT' The Moscow Times, June 1, 2017, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/06/01/welcome-to-the-machine-inside-the-secretive-world-of-rt-a58132, accessed August 9, 2019.

6. Narratives, for the purpose of the study, were identified as 'any statement within an article that offers a coherent explanation of the circumstances leading to the poisoning, or the motives of actors involved in the event or its aftermath'; G. Ramsay and S. Robertshaw (2018), Weaponising news: RT, Sputnik and targeted disinformation, The Policy Institute, King's College London, 128-135; the study used Steno, an open source article analysis tool, http://stenoproject.org, accessed August 7, 2019.

7. Ramsay and Robertshaw, Weaponising news, 27.

8. Ibid., 28-31.

9. Yu. Kuleshov, et al., 'Информационно-психологическое противоборство в современных условиях: теория и практика' (Information-Psychological Warfare In Modern Conditions: Theory And Practice) in Vestnik Akademii Voyennykh Nauk, 2014, 46, No. 1, 106.

10. Ramsay and Robertshaw, Weaponising news, 22.

11. B. Nimmo, 'Question That: RT's Military Mission' Digital Forensic Research Lab, January 8, 2018, https://medium.com/dfrlab/question-that-rts-military-mission-4c4bd9f72c88, accessed August 7, 2019.

12. RT America, 'RT America's Liz Wahl Resigns Live on Air', 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2h79v9uirLY, accessed August 9, 2019.

13. RT, 'Galloway blasts Lord Sugar for 'sacrilegious mockery of Christian martyrs,' asks Pope to intervene' RT News, August 2, 2019, https://www.rt.com/uk/465657-galloway-sugar-skulls-corbyn, accessed August 8, 2019.

14. E. Neskarov, 'The Transhumanist: Russian student who lost sight after explosion developing bionic eyes for himself' RT News, August 6, 2010, https://www.rt.com/news/465859-blind-bionic-prosthetic-nekrasov-russia, accessed August 8, 2019.

15. 'About RT,' https://www.rt.com/about-us, accessed August 9, 2019.

16. T. Dowling, '24-hour Putin people: my week watching Kremlin 'propaganda channels' RT." *The Guardian*, November 29, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/nov/29/24-hour-putin-people-my-week-watching-kremlin-propaganda-channel-rt-russia-today, accessed August 7, 2019.

NOTES

17. P. Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: Adventures In Modern Russia*, Faber & Faber, 2017, 89; J. O'Sullivan, 'Russia Today is Putin's weapon of mass deception. Will it work in Britain?' *The Spectator*, December 6, 2014, https://www.spectator.co.uk/2014/12/the-truth-about-russia-today-is-that-it-is-putins-mouthpiece, accessed August 7, 2019.

18. A. Gabuev, 'Нет никакой объективности' ('There is no objectivity'), Kommersant, July 4, 2012, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1911336, accessed August 7, 2019; archived: http://archive.is/Vy4i0, accessed August 7, 2019; English translation: B. Nimmo, 'Question That: RT's Military Mission' Digital Forensic Research, January 8, 2018, https://medium.com/dfrlab/question-that-rts-military-mission-4c4bd9f72c88, accessed August 7, 2019.

19. I. Azar, '«Не собираюсь делать вид, что я объективная » Интервью с Маргаритой Симоньян' ("I'm not going to pretend that I'm objective," an Interview with Margarita Simonyan), lenta.ru, March 7, 2013, https://lenta.ru/articles/2013/03/07/simonyan, accessed August 7, 2019; archived: http://archive.is/RzLyk, accessed August 7, 2019; English translation: B. Nimmo, 'Question That: RT's Military Mission' Digital Forensic Research Lab, January 8, 2018, https://medium.com/dfrlab/question-that-rts-military-mission-4c4bd9f72c88, accessed August 7, 2019.

20. M. Bodner, M. Kupfer, and B. Jardine, 'Welcome to The Machine: Inside the Secretive World of RT' *The Moscow Times,* June 1, 2017, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/06/01/welcome-to-the-machine-inside-the-secretive-world-of-rt-a58132, accessed August 9, 2019.

21. M. Bodner, M. Kupfer, and B. Jardine, 'Welcome to The Machine: Inside the Secretive World of RT.'

22. Yu Kuleshov, et al., Information-Psychological Warfare In Modern Conditions, 106.

23. B. Bidder, ''The West Never Got Over the Cold War Stereotype'' *Spiegel Online*, August 13, 2013, https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-russia-today-editor-in-chief-margarita-simonyan-a-916356.html, accessed September 13, 2019.

24. M. Seddon, 'Lunch with the FT: Kremlin media star Margarita Simonyan' *Financial Times,* July 18, 2016, https://www.ft.com/content/7987e5c2-54b0-11e6-9664-e0bdc13c3bef, accessed September 13, 2019.

25. K. Giles, *Handbook of Russian Information Warfare,* NATO Defense College, 2016, 24; see also, V. Madeira, 'Haven't We Been Here Before?', *Institute of Statecraft*, 30 July 30, 2014, http://www.statecraft.org.uk/research/russian-subversion-havent-we-been-here, accessed August 7, 2019; and S. Oates, The Neo-Soviet Model of the Media' in *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2007, Vol. 59, No. 8, 1279-1297.

26. For information on Soviet propaganda, see H.D. Lasswell, 'The Strategy of Soviet Propaganda' in *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, 1951, Vol. 24, No, 2, 66-78; S. Luehrmann, 'THE MODERNITY OF MANUAL REPRODUCTION: Soviet Propaganda and the Creative Life of Ideology' in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 363-388.

27. M. Galeotti, Hybrid, ambiguous and non-linear? How new is Russia's 'new way of war'?' *Small Wars & Insurgencies,* 2016, Vol. 27, No. 2, 291.

28. M. Bodner, M. Kupfer, and B. Jardine, 'Welcome to The Machine: Inside the Secretive World of RT.'

29. R. Ho, 'CBS46' Ben Swann fired after attempt to bring back Reality Check' *AJC*, January 29, 2018, https://www.ajc.com/blog/radiotvtalk/cbs46-ben-swann-fired-after-attempt-bring-back-reality-check/NeAW6LA1crpuxoGqmszkKP, accessed August 9, 2019.

30. United States of America vs Edgar Maddison Welch, 18 U.S.C. § 924(b) *United States District Court for the District of Columbia*, 2016, https://arstechnica.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/pizzagatewelchfederal.pdf, accessed August 9, 2019.

31. Quoted in S. Erlanger, 'Russia's RT Network: Is It More BBC Or K.G.B.?' *The New York Times,* March 8, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/world/europe/russias-rt-network-is-it-more-bbc-or-kgb.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fworld&action=click&contentCollection=world&region=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=sectionfront&_r=0, accessed August 7, 2019.

32. For the startling possibilities of DeepFake, see H.K. Hall, 'Deepfake Videos: When Seeing Isn't Believing' in *The Catholic University Journal of Law & Technology*, 2018, Vol. 27, 1, 51-77; T. Kwok, 'More Than Meets The Eye: Deepfake Technology and the Erosion of Public Trust' in NATO Association of Canada, July 8, 2019, http://www.natoassociation.ca/more-than-meets-the-eye-deepfake-technology-and-the-erosion-of-public-trust, accessed August 9, 2019; M. Maras and A. Alexandrou, 'Determining authenticity of video evidence in the age of artificial intelligence and in the wake of Deepfake videos' in *The International Journal of Evidence & Proof*, 2018, Vol. 23, 3, 255-262.

NOTES

33. Ofcom 'Ofcom fines RT £200,000' *Ofcom*, July 26, 2019, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/media-releases/2019/ofcom-fines-rt?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=twitter&utm_content=mobile%2520handsets.

34. B. Nimmo, 'Ofcom And RT: The Background' *Digital Forensic Research Lab,* March 14, 2018, https://medium.com/dfrlab/ofcom-and-rt-the-background-1cbeeab77c6b, accessed August 6, 2019.

35. J. Jackson, 'RT sanctioned by Ofcom over series of misleading and biased articles' *The Guardian*, 21 September 21, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/sep/21/rt-sanctioned-over-series-of-misleading-articles-by-media-watchdog?CMP=twt_a-media_b-gdnmedia, accessed August 5, 2019.

36. M. Bodner, M. Kupfer, and B. Jardine, 'Welcome to The Machine: Inside the Secretive World of *RT*.'

37. E. Odinokov, 'Protesters rally in Moscow over barring of opposition candidates from city council election' RT, July 20, 2019, https://www.rt.com/russia/464645-protest-rally-moscow-election, accessed August 5, 2019.

38. BBC News, 'Moscow protest: Thousands demand fair elections' *BBC News,* July 20, 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-49057803, accessed August 5, 2019; T. Balmforth, 'Russian opposition vows to hold Moscow protest despite crackdown' Reuters, July 25, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-politics-opposition/russian-opposition-vows-to-hold-moscow-protest-despite-crackdown-idUSKCN1UK1B5, accessed August 5, 2019.

39. B. Nimmo, 'Kremlin Outlets Downplay the Size of the July 10 Protests in Moscow' *Digital Forensic Lab*, July 29, 2019, https://medium.com/dfrlab/kremlin-outlets-downplay-the-size-of-the-july-20-protests-in-moscow-56a36aa5b9f5, accessed August 4, 2019; MapChecking available from: https://www.mapchecking.com, accessed August 9, 2019.

40. BBC News, 'Russian spy: MPs want Russian TV station UK licence 'reviewed'' *BBC News*, March 12, 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-43377833, accessed August 3, 2019.

41. Ofcom, 'Statement on RT news channel' *Ofcom*, March 13, 2018, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/media-releases/2018/statement-on-rt-news-channel, accessed August 2, 2019.

42. BBC News, 'Russia's RT banned from UK media freedom conference' *BBC News*, July 9, 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-48919085, accessed August 5, 2019.

43. C. Dziadul, 'Moldova bans Russian channel' *Broadband TV News*, May 28, 2015, https://www.broadbandtvnews.com/2015/05/28/moldova-bans-russian-channel, accessed August 5, 2019.

44. Ibid.