
REVIEW ARTICLES
ОГЛЯДИ

History and Evolution of International Broadcasting Systems in the World

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ABSTRACT

State-owned international broadcasting systems are media outlets that broadcast not to the domestic market of a state, but to audiences outside of it to achieve certain informational and/or ideological goals of the sponsoring state. From shortwave radio to social media pages, international broadcasting systems have come a long way to their current state. In this study, we reviewed and systematised the knowledge about the international broadcasting systems of the world's leading countries, as well as presented the most relevant knowledge about the Ukrainian international broadcasting system, its structure and the importance of information influence for the country in 2024.

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Державні міжнародні системи мовлення – це засоби масової інформації, які здійснюють мовлення не на внутрішній ринок держави, а на аудиторію за її межами для досягнення певних інформаційних та/або ідеологічних цілей держави-спонсора. Від короткохвильового радіо до сторінок у соціальних мережах міжнародні системи мовлення пройшли довгий шлях до свого поточного стану. У цьому дослідженні ми переглянули та систематизували знання про системи міжнародного мовлення провідних країн світу, а також представили найбільш актуальні знання про систему міжнародного мовлення України, її структуру та важливість інформаційного впливу для країни у 2024 році.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА: міжнародне мовлення, радіо, телебачення, нові медіа, пропаганда, Голос Америки, BBC, Deutsche Welle, UATV, France24.

Introduction

Problem definition.

Competition between countries for information influence on the world stage is one of the manifestations of the global struggle between countries with different political and economic systems. To strengthen their own position and information influence, countries create state media for international broadcasting – international broadcasting systems that deliver information using a variety of modern technologies and in different languages with one goal – to make the influence of their donor country stronger and that of their competitor weaker. The goals can vary from increasing the share of tourism to waging an information war against an adversary country. The study of international broadcasting in Ukraine exists at a certain level, but knowledge about the modern Ukrainian system of international broadcasting, which is dynamically evolving, needs to be updated. That is why this study focuses on the history and development of international broadcasting systems around the world, including the Ukrainian broadcasting system, which underwent the most significant changes in 2022 – with the beginning of the full-scale armed aggression of the neighbouring country, as well as a full-scale information war on all fronts of human consciousness.

Literature review.

In Ukraine, the issue of studying the international broadcasting system has been addressed by such researchers as V. Konakh, I. Bezzub, A. Kostrubitska, O. Hoyan, V. Hoyan, O. Dzholos, and others. The global issue of international broadcasting has been studied by S. Potter, M. Winek, A. Baipai, J. Ioffe, and others. In this study, we pay special attention to the research on shortwave radio by S. Potter (2018) and M. Winek (2009). The study will be based mainly on the works of international authors, and Ukrainian international broadcasting will be considered in the modern context.

The scientific novelty lies in the concise and thorough presentation of the history of the development and operation of international broadcasting services in different countries (including the most prominent economic leaders). The availability of all the necessary basic knowledge about the broadcasting systems of these countries in one study, which allows us to form an understanding of these systems and answer the question: “What is the purpose of international broadcasting?”. The work also provides a fresh perspective on Ukraine’s international broadcasting system.

The purpose of the study is to systematise knowledge about the international broadcasting systems of the leading countries worldwide and in Ukraine. To provide the necessary amount of information about international broadcasting systems for a better understanding of their history, significance and influence in the past and present; to lay the foundation for further research on this instrument of the state information policy.

Method

Main methods used in this study were: historical, comparative, source study, and analysis.

Results

An overview of international broadcasting systems in different countries of the world: The US broadcasting system.

Voice of America is an international multimedia broadcaster with 45 language services. It has a weekly audience of approximately 326 million users. The Voice of America provides news, information and cultural programmes through the Internet, mobile and social media, radio and television. VOA is funded by the US government through the US Agency for Global Media.

According to the media outlet's website: "Voice of America began broadcasting in 1942 to combat Nazi propaganda with accurate and unbiased news and information. Since then, Voice of America has served the world with truth, hope and inspiration" (The History of Voice of America).

In 1941, several private transmitters were leased by the US Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) to broadcast to Latin America. In mid-1941, President Roosevelt established the US Foreign Information Service (FIS) and appointed speechwriter Robert Sherwood as its first director. Sherwood rented premises in New York City, hired a staff of journalists and began preparing materials for broadcast to Europe via private American shortwave stations.

In December 1941, FIS made its first broadcast to Asia from a studio in San Francisco. On 1 February 1942 – less than two months after the United States entered World War II – FIS made its first broadcast to Europe via the BBC's medium and longwave transmitters. Broadcaster William Harlan Hale opened the German-language program with the words:

We bring you voices from America. Today, and every day from now on, we will talk to you about America and the war. The news may be good for us. The news may be bad. But we will tell you the truth" (VOA Through the Years).

This is how the American foreign service was named Voice of America.

It is also worth mentioning here the words of the first director of the Voice of America, John Houseman, about the need to broadcast truthful and unbiased information: "

We really didn't have much choice. Inevitably, the news that VOA had to bring to the world in the first half of 1942 was almost all bad. As Japanese attacks followed one another with disgusting regularity and the Nazi armies advanced deeper into the USSR and the Middle East, we had to report our failures without downplaying them. This was the only way we could build a reputation for honesty that we hoped would pay off on the distant but inevitable day when we would begin to report on our own invasions and victories." (VOA Through the Years).

The wording about "future invasions and victories of our own" is interesting, as it once again confirms the thesis that the task of foreign broadcasting is to spread the state propaganda, help it in confrontation with others through information influence, and create a positive image, even if actions demonstrate the opposite. Global adversaries of the United States have repeatedly claimed that Voice of America is engaged in spreading American propaganda.

In addition to VOA, there are also subsidiary broadcasters Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. Their main goal was to broadcast to the Eastern Bloc countries de facto occupied by the USSR after World War II: Poland, East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and others. Radio broadcasting was carried out in the native languages of these countries and extended to the territory of the USSR, including Ukrainian-language radio stations. The "enemy voices" were actively tried to be jammed with the help of electronic warfare (Calyk, 2016).

After the collapse of the USSR, in 1995, Radio Liberty moved to Prague in the Czech Republic, where it operates today. Further actions of the American international broadcasting were a reaction to Russian aggression in Europe, first with the occupation of certain territories of Georgia, Echo of the Caucasus began broadcasting, and then with the occupation of Crimea and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Krym.Realii and Donbas.Realii. Besides, anti-war rhetoric

intensified with the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 through such projects as Siberia.Realii, Sever.Realii, Caucasus.Realii, etc.

With the advent of the television and later the digital era, American foreign broadcasting began to actively broadcast and develop online and social media.

British Broadcasting Corporation – BBC.

The history of the BBC dates back to the 1920s. Guglielmo Marconi, one of the creators of radio, provided his London studio for the first BBC broadcasts in 1922. At that time, there were no rules or standards in the radio industry (1920s: History of the BBC). He immediately began to innovate, experiment, and organise his team. A newly appointed chief engineer, Peter Eckersley, helped the service expand. The creation of the Radio Times classifieds shop can be considered the first attempt to monetise the radio business. It was owned by the BBC from 1923 to 2011 (About Radio Times and the RadioTimes.com team). In 1936, the BBC launched television broadcasting.

During the Second World War, the BBC played a very important role in the military propaganda of the Allies, maintaining the morale of the population, broadcasting to the occupied territories through powerful BBC stations, and transmitting news from the front (Potter, 2018). It was using the BBC's facilities that the Voice of America broadcast its news to Europe.

Today, the BBC is one of the world's leading media outlets, and its professional standards document is considered a reference, including by the Ukrainian National News Agency Ukrinform, which is part of the Ukrainian foreign broadcasting system (BBC Editorial Guidelines).

During the Cold War, the BBC became the "Voice of Britain" in countering Soviet propaganda in the occupied territories of the Eastern Bloc, including a regular nightly programme from the BBC German Service, the East Germany Programme, addressed to Germans who remained on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Unlike American stations broadcasting to Eastern Europe, such as Radio Free Europe (RFE), the BBC pursued a softer propaganda policy and did not spread the idea of an active uprising against the communist regime (Studdert W. Letters without signature).

Broadcasting in Britain's "national interest" depended on the trust of listeners in the BBC as a source of truthful news. This was a lesson learnt from the experience of the Second World War and became a cornerstone of editorial policy, as explained by Maurice Latey, who joined the BBC's German Service during the war. He wrote the following:

We realised at a very early stage that the truth was not only the best propaganda, but that we had no alternative but to tell the truth, since we had no great successes to report at the time. And although we were constantly reporting defeats, our only hope was to build a foundation of trust." (Webb, The Long War).

The BBC's view on international broadcasting was clearly expressed by Oliver Wheatley, the BBC's broadcast editor who has worked for the BBC for most of his life:

The foreign service operates in a world in which the free flow of reliable news and information by governments to their own people is highly unstable... As long as this situation persists, millions of people of all colours, creeds and nationalities around the world will know enough to know that their governments are not telling them the truth and will seek to listen to the source they believe provides the best information service. And that source has undoubtedly been the BBC since 1939." (Webb, The Long War).

Currently, the BBC Russian Service is actively disseminating an anti-war position in Russian after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Some materials are gaining wide publicity and will have a cumulative effect in the long run, as it once was with the USSR and the Eastern Bloc countries ("Nas nazyvali miasom", 2023). The BBC Ukrainian Service is also active.

International Broadcasting System of France – France 24, RFI.

As stated on the website of the French broadcaster:

France 24 is an international news channel broadcasting 24/7 around the world in French, Arabic, English and Spanish. France 24 presents the French view of world politics through a network of 160 correspondents located in almost every country in the world. The channel is available via cable, satellite, DTT, ADSL, mobile phones, tablets and connected TVs, as well as on YouTube in four languages. France 24 has around 63 million followers on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. (Who are we? Liberté Égalité Actualité).

France 24 started broadcasting in 2006 and has a focus on “new media” – broadcasting via the Internet through a website, video hosting and social media. TV5Monde and RFI (French International Radio) can be considered the predecessors of France 24. The origins of French international broadcasting lie in Le Poste colonial (colonial radio), as a means of broadcasting news favourable to France in its colonies, founded in 1931. At that time, the estimated audience of the radio station was potentially 100 million listeners throughout the French colonial empire (Radio France Internationale).

During the Second World War, the radio station became a mouthpiece for Nazi propaganda in French at the facilities of RFI (which was then called Paris-Mondial). The “war of the radio waves” began, with the French government in exile and collaborators of the Vichy regime broadcasting propaganda in front of each other. Émissions vers l’étranger (“Foreign Affairs”) was another name for French international broadcasting after the liberation of Paris.

In 1975, French international broadcasting was renamed RFI, a name that is still in use today. The complicated history of decolonisation of Africa and participation in the Cold War made the French broadcaster very important for maintaining the country’s international image during active armed conflicts in Africa and in the information confrontation with the USSR.

International Broadcasting of Germany – Deutsche Welle, Radio Berlin International.

We will examine German international broadcasting from the period of foundation of Deutsche Welle (German Wave) and Radio Berlin International. On 3 May 1953, DW Radio was first broadcast from Cologne. Founded by the German government, it was intended to convey the values of the young republic to other countries and support Germany’s inclusion in the international community. Initially, DW broadcast only on shortwave and only in German. The first foreign languages appeared in 1954, and by the end of 2021, the total number of broadcasting languages was 32.

DW Radio really came into its own during the suppression of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops. In response, Deutsche Welle significantly increased its broadcasts to Eastern European countries in their native languages as the Cold War continued to escalate (Tellmann, DW Milestones).

The United States did not recognise East Germany until 1974, when relations between the two German governments improved somehow (A Guide to the United States’ History of Recognition). The DW significantly helped in the recognition of Germany, as they promoted their government as legitimate. In response, in 1959, the GDR’s international shortwave broadcasting, Radio Berlin International (RBI), was launched in East Berlin. Between 1955 and 1975, RBI broadcast in 17 different languages, including English, French and Arabic. By 1976, RBI was producing 338 hours of weekly content for an international audience. RBI’s last broadcast was on 2 October 1990, the day before German reunification, when the GDR officially ceased to exist by joining the Federal Republic of Germany. The last words of the English-language programme were “Take care and good luck”. After that, the song “The End” by The Doors symbolically sounded (Simmonds, Radio Berlin International). This was one of the harbingers of the end of the Cold War.

The RBI was charged with spreading Marxist-Leninist ideology. The broadcast also aimed to establish international recognition of East Germany as a legitimate state by distributing many colourful promotional materials about life in the GDR to listeners around the world. In particular, souvenirs related to the symbols and ideology of the GDR and the propaganda of communist ideology were sent by mail. Such cultural diplomacy was particularly successful in India, mainly

in rural and suburban areas (Bajpai, 2021). The RBI's content schedule was flexible and often changed depending on which world events offered the greatest return for socialist propaganda.

At the same time, the multilingual nature of the broadcast allowed RBI employees to cross a certain line and discuss topics forbidden by the authorities, as their superiors rarely understood foreign languages such as Swahili and Arabic. This shows the ideological influence of democratic countries on the GDR (Radio Berlin International. Wikiwand). After German reunification, the RBI ceased to exist as a separate entity and its facilities were incorporated into the Deutsche Welle.

International broadcasting of the USSR – “Radio Moscow” and the Russian Federation – Russia Today, Sputnik.

All media, including magazines, newspapers, and radio stations in the USSR, were directly subordinated to the state. The Bolsheviks quickly realised the power of the media to influence their own population and foreign “potential communist revolutionaries”. “Radio Moscow covered these very issues that were of vital importance to the Bolsheviks. As researcher Mark Winek of the American University in Washington writes:

With Lenin’s message of world revolution, the radio could spread the movement to Europe and Africa. Within two years of the founding of the Moscow Radio Laboratory in 1922, ten radio stations were operating in the Soviet Union. With the development of the new state, the Soviet leadership realised the need for international broadcasting. The creation of Radio Moscow met this need. Founded in 1929 with French, English, and German, programmes expanded to Swedish, Turkish, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, and Russian by 1932” (Winek, 2009).

Communist ideology was alien to most Western listeners, but the Soviet government, through Radio Moscow, sought to increase the presence of Russian narratives. The expression “not everything is so straightforward” has become familiar and characteristic of our generation, with which Russian propaganda has been trying to justify military aggressions, occupations of other countries, crimes and oppression against the population since the 1930s. Sowing doubts among the population of democratic countries, allegedly demonstrating multiple views on the situation and that “Russia also has its own interests” – this has been and is the strategy of the Kremlin propaganda apparatus. Only the forms and methods of influence change over time. The radio war in Europe continued throughout the Cold War. In order to reduce the influence of Western propaganda, “jammers” were built throughout the USSR and the Eastern Bloc countries – active radio jamming stations that tried to “jam” the airwaves of Radio Liberty, Deutsche Welle, and other international broadcasters in the West (Winek, 2009).

With the collapse of the USSR, international broadcasting was transferred to a new channel, Russia Today. The huge structure of the RT TV channel had enjoyed free access to Western audiences for many years, and until 2022, it was broadcasting directly from studios in Washington and London (Rosijiske inomovlennia jak instrument manipuluvannia hromadskoju dumkoju). This international broadcasting channel was developed with diligence and large state funding. When the Russian president made a speech on television saying that the collapse of the USSR was the greatest geopolitical disaster of the 20th century, this speech marked the intensification of confrontation with Western countries and laid the foundation for the tragic events of 2014 and 2022. The new channel was named Russia Today and headed by Margarita Simonyan, who had already demonstrated her loyalty to the regime by 2005. During the tragic events in Beslan, when the Russian authorities concealed the details of the hostage-taking and a failed assault that led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians, Simonyan said only what was agreed upon “from above.” Some point out that it was her story before the assault that led to the escalation of the situation and the deaths of many hostages (Khmelnytska, 2022). Since then, all armed aggressions and interventions by Russia have been accompanied by information support in English, German, Spanish, French, and Arabic. The channel’s format was created by experts who had experience working for the BBC and CNN (Ioffe, 2010). With the beginning of Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, Russian

international broadcasting began to receive much more funding, and over the past 10 years, it has only grown. According to the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensics Lab:

Through 2023. Russia has relied on its extensive toolkit to conduct information operations, including the use of coordinated fake networks on social media, exploitation of regional grievances against the West, hacking attacks, and document forgery, among other tactics. Among other tactics. Russia spread a combination of old and new narratives to undermine Ukraine domestically and internationally, seeking to discredit its reputation with Western partners and neighbouring countries (Digital Forensic Research Lab, 2024).

In 2014, after the start of the armed aggression against Ukraine, the multimedia information platform Sputnik was also launched. According to a study by the National Institute for Strategic Studies of Ukraine:

The main concept of the new Sputnik news agency is to keep the Internet user in its information field. Using anti-Western rhetoric, manipulating unpopular topics that were ignored by other players in the information market, RT has systematically increased and continues to increase its audience despite the specificity of its content. According to rough estimates, Sputnik's funding and development will be at the level of \$75 million per year." (Rosijske inomovlennia jak instrument manipuluvannia hromadskoju dumkoju).

The number of languages used for information influence is simply staggering, as is the amount of information whose sole purpose is to clog the audience's information space, cast doubt on everything, and spread the idea that "not everything is so straightforward", thus facilitating any active operations against target countries as part of a hybrid war.

International broadcasting system of Ukraine: UATV, Ukrinform, FREEДОМ.

In accordance with the current legislation, the international broadcasting system of Ukraine consists of the Ukrainian National News Agency "Ukrinform" and the State Enterprise "Multimedia Platform of Foreign Broadcasting of Ukraine".

The history of Ukrainian foreign broadcasting dates back to the Ukrinform news agency, the national news agency of Ukraine, a source of information on political, economic, social, scientific, cultural, and public life in Ukraine and abroad.

The history of Ukrinform began on 16 March 1918. In 1918–1919, during the Ukrainian People's Republic times, it was called UTA, UkrTA (Ukrainian Telegraph Agency), later renamed by the Communists to BUP (Bureau of Ukrainian Press) and UkrROSTA (Ukrainian-Russian Telegraph Agency).

Since 1921, the name of the agency was stable – RATAU (Radio Telegraph Agency of Ukraine) for almost seventy years, until 1990, when the name Ukrinform (Ukrainian National News Agency) first appeared. In 1996, the agency was renamed again and became known as SINAU (State Information Agency) until 2000, when it was returned to the name Ukrinform and granted the status of Ukrainian National News Agency. In 2015, Ukrinform underwent a renewal procedure and joined the newly created international broadcasting system of Ukraine (24. Law of Ukraine, 2016. "On the International Broadcasting System of Ukraine").

Today, Ukrinform has the largest network of regional and international offices in Ukraine. The agency's correspondents work in all regions of Ukraine and in 10 countries: The United States, Canada, Germany, France, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Latvia, and Turkey. News is published in Ukrainian, Russian, English, German, Spanish, French, Japanese, and Polish.

"Ukrinform provides its readers with a complete and objective picture of events daily: it publishes more than 300 news items, including exclusive commentaries and interviews, photo reports, and infographics (About us. UKRINFORM website).

On 1 October 2015, UATV, a Ukrainian international broadcasting channel aimed at a wide international audience, was launched, broadcasting in Ukrainian, English, Crimean Tatar, Arabic, and Russian. It was broadcast on the same channel, at different times of the day in different languages.

In the context of military aggression, information support for Ukrainian narratives comes to the fore.

As of 2024, Ukraine's international broadcasting is represented by many convergent broadcast channels. Satellite broadcasting is retained by the Russian-language FREEДОМ, which also includes private media groups in Ukraine.

However, Ukrainian international broadcasting is not limited to satellite: the Ukrainian broadcasting system has developed a wide system of digital channels to disseminate information on various platforms:

- Video hosting platform YouTube;
- Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Threads social networks;
- TikTok social media app;
- Telegram messenger.

The traditional news team creates content that is subsequently distributed in English, Spanish, Arabic, Ukrainian, and Russian, i.e., several media are combined based on one platform. Convergence and a high level of digitalisation allow Ukrainian international broadcasting to effectively disseminate pro-Ukrainian narratives with a relatively small budget of state funding, when competitors sometimes have ten times more funding.

E.g., the annual funding for the projects of the State Enterprise "MPIBU" (Multimedia Platform for International Broadcasting of Ukraine) is measured in a couple million dollars (Pylypenko, 2023), but this is nowhere near the billions of dollars in propaganda investments made by the Russian Federation (Kreml vyrachaje 1,5 miljarda dolariv, 2022).

These results are also affected by the specifics of the mission of Ukrainian international broadcasting: the protection and promotion of pro-Ukrainian narratives, not just counterpropaganda.

One of the most influential channels of Ukrainian international broadcasting at the time of the study was the English-language digital channel UATV English. It has 420,000 subscribers on YouTube, and the total number of video views exceeds 250 million. UATV English is used to influence the target audience in Ukraine's most powerful partner countries. E.g., the share of views by country is as follows: USA (28.3%), UK (12.7%), Canada (8%), Australia (4.8%), Germany (4.7%) («UATV English» otrymav 400 tys., 2023). An informal approach to informing the audience, a high level of tabloidization of media elements, and the development of a community of regular viewers involved in content creation through social media elements have been fundamental changes in the approach of UATV English since 2022, when the media became the main state broadcaster in English in the digital space. It was these changes that allowed us to keep the audience's interest during two years of full-scale war.

Conclusion

Over the last hundred years, wireless information transmission has evolved from simple radio to satellite broadcasting of audiovisual content and a whole layer of interactive "new media" where users can communicate, consume information and react to it in almost real time.

Countries with great ambitions and influence on the global economy (the US, UK, Germany, France) are actively developing and investing resources in their own broadcasters, which attract audiences abroad.

With the advent of the Internet and new media, this work has become much cheaper, and with the investment of small material resources, it is possible to actively implement information operations, spread disinformation or, on the contrary, counteract it. Further research into the Ukrainian system of foreign broadcasting will help to establish the patterns of development of the state's information influence in accordance with the external and internal threats that stand in its way.

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