

Public Opinion Polls as an Instrument of Propaganda of the Invasion of Ukraine

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Abstract : This paper is focused on the news coverage of public opinion polls about Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in Russian state-controlled media. After the announcement of the start of the so-called "Special Military Operation" on February 24, 2022, the number of publications of the results of public opinion polls increased many times over, and the poll numbers began to be discussed on social media and in the Kremlin's official informational agenda. Headlines like "72 Percent of Russian Citizens Support the Operation " or "Russians Believe in Victory in the Special Military Operation" have become prominent parts of Russian state propaganda news stories and newspapers. At the same time, public opinion in Russia, as a concept and model, differs from the generally accepted democratic concept and has its own specifics. As a result, public opinion polls and their results, especially after February 24, have a number of features in the form of the dominance of the discourse of political elites in the media, which leads to a decrease in public awareness, the prevalence of the effect of joining the majority and a high number of non-responses due to fear of reprisals. The aim of this study was to determine the role of public opinion polls in the system of Russian war propaganda in Ukraine. For this purpose, were selected publications of the Russian media, the agenda of which corresponds to the official information policy of the Russian authorities. First, using frame analysis for the categories "Explicit trust", "Implicit trust", "Implicit distrust" and "Explicit distrust", provided by Irina Dusakova, the broadcast level of trust in the data of public opinion polls was determined. The results of this phase of the study showed that the Russian media broadcast an absolute level of confidence in public opinion polls regarding support for the war in Ukraine. The second stage of the study was the content analysis of publications. The categories of this analysis were derived from Anna Morelli's 10 Principles of Military Propaganda and Haavard Koppang's Definition of Propaganda to determine the purposes of the use of public opinion polls by Russian propaganda. The results of the study not only confirmed the widespread hypothesis that public opinion polls in Russia are used as a tool of state propaganda, but also showed that their purpose is to demonstrate the consolidation of society in support of the war and President Vladimir Putin.

Keywords : propaganda, public opinion, public opinion polls, Russian studies

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