Propaganda Setbacks and Appropriation of Anti-war language: "Special Military Operation" in Russian Mass Media and Social Networks (February-July 2022)

Introduction

The military conflict in Ukraine has been the most important topic in the information space of Russia for more than half a year. At that, such attention to this topic by the mass media and by the citizens is by no means evidence of a free public discussion: the Russian mass media landscape and mass media consumption have seriously changed since late February 2022: hundreds of mass media outlets have been closed, access to thousands of mass media resources has been blocked, and dissemination of "fake" information about the actions of the Russian armed forces and public authorities outside Russia is now a subject to administrative and criminal liability. As a result, opinions that are independent and critical of the Russian authorities have been under tremendous pressure.

"How, under these conditions, is the Russian information agenda shaped about the "special military operation"? How is this agenda changing, and how are social media users responding to it?" — these questions have been asked by the group of researchers.

The study will last until late September: its final results will be presented in October, but interim (preliminary) reports are expected to be published in August and September, and they will be focused on individual topics of the study.

The corpus of messages on the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine has been formed using the Scan Interfax and Brand Analytics mass media and social media monitoring and analytical systems using a list of keywords setting the topic and allowing to select relevant messages in social media (VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter) and traditional mass media.

The TV channels broadcasting data have been collected since February 1, 2022; the data of the messages published in other mass media and social media have been collected since July 1.

When analysing social media, only those accounts have been taken into account, and the users have indicated Russia as their location. This approach, on the one hand, has excluded Russian-speaking users from other countries (including Ukraine) in the corpus of the studied texts; but, on the other hand, it has led to a significant bias in favour of domestic social media, practically excluding messages in the social media that have been blocked in Russia (especially Instagram and Facebook) from the analysis. The methodology details are provided in the relevant section at the end of the report.

The first report focuses on the context and the interim results of analysing the dynamics of messages in mass media and social media. TV broadcasting is under special scrutiny.

Key Findings

1. The system of state control over the mass media environment, which includes not only television and key mass media but also social media and news aggregators, was established in Russia before February 24, 2022. However, even after additional restrictions on freedom of expression were imposed — large-scale blocking of mass media and social media not controlled by the authorities, the introduction of administrative and criminal penalties for public expression of disagreement — this system has been experiencing obvious challenges with propagating an official view of the ongoing military conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

2. The broadcasting frequency of the stories about the military conflict with Ukraine reported by the main TV channels has been gradually decreasing after their maximum broadcasting frequency in late February and in early March: although the level of propaganda remains high, it has almost halved compared to the peak monthly values in March 2022.

3. The frequency dynamics of mentioning the goals of the invasion of the Russian troops in Ukraine — these are primarily "denazification" and "demilitarisation" of Ukraine, protection of the Donbas' people, and prevention of the NATO expansion — also indicate that state propaganda has been forced to actually abandon this terminology since these terms did not resonate with the public opinion.

4. Propaganda has failed to convince the Russian society of the positive impact of the introduced blocking of mass media and social media, as well as censorship. Although the words "disinformation", "discredit", and "fake" were used by the main TV channels showing explosive growth in late February and early March (which coincided with launching a campaign to restrict freedom of speech further), the June poll of the Public Opinion Foundation (FOM) showed almost equal numbers of the supporters and opponents of blocking social media and the Internet resources in the Russian society, and bypassing the blocking was not perceived as something reprehensible.

5. There is a significant gap between the rhetoric of the pro-state mass media and social media users: despite all the attempts of the Russian authorities and the state-controlled mass media to portray the ongoing events not as a war, but as a limited operation, the Russian society keeps framing it as a war. The normalised frequency of mentioning such words as "demilitarisation" and "denazification" in social media is also much lower than in the mass media (even after the mass media have significantly reduced the reference frequency of these terms).

6. At the same time, Russian propaganda is quick in analysing problems and searching for adaptation options. One of its methods has been an attempt to appropriate the Russian opposition's vocabulary and endow the words previously used by the opposition to describe the situation with many additional meanings, trying to blur the core meaning to the maximum extent. For example, "war" and "crisis" are not only used by social media but by state TV channels, too; however, the TV channels speak about "economic" or "information(al)" "war", not a real war with missiles and tanks. According to the TV channels, a "crisis " unfolds in the West, which suffers from its own imposed sanctions, but not in Russia. Russian authorities seem to be trying to use

such flipper words to take away the possibility of describing the reality from their opponents in Russian society.

1. Russian Mass Media and Social Networks: an Overview

1.1 Media consumption and the structure of the propaganda apparatus in Russia

Traditionally, Russia is one of the most "TV-centric" countries. 89% of Russians watched TV at least once every two weeks in late 2021. According to a poll by the Levada Center, TV was the key news source for 62% of Russians in 2021.

Television is a prime example of the "statist-commercialialised model" of the mass media environment: in order to survive financially, Russian TV channels rely almost entirely on commercials and broadcast a huge amount of entertainment content, but at the same time, they are affiliated with the authorities who completely determine the political content.

Until the 2010s, the authorities believed that it was enough for them to control the news content of TV channels: journalists and producers were allowed to enjoy some freedom of creativity in the domains that did not relate to politics directly. However, the lines between propaganda and entertainment content blurred after the protests in 2011-2012. As a result, a new genre of scandalous political talk shows emerged, and researchers called it *"agitainment"*: blended aggressive political and entertainment formats.

The authorities use several mechanisms to control tens of thousands of people who are part of the propaganda apparatus.

First, it is the direct coordination of what is on air by the Russian Presidential Administration through weekly meetings between the Kremlin officials and mass media chief editors. Second, there are *temniki* or "theme lists": guidelines with the instructions and general principles of covering events and topics to be covered that are prepared by a special consulting agency on a daily basis. E.g., TV reports about the economy should emphasise that sanctions first hit the West. Journalists decide how to apply this or that principle themselves. Third, journalists may improvise as they have a clear understanding of the Kremlin's line.

State propaganda on television is actively amplified and echoed in an increasingly state-controlled online environment. Online sources have challenged television's dominance in news consumption over the past decade. In 2013, 90% of Russian citizens called television the main source of news, and in 2021, only 62% of Russian citizens said the same. The number of those who rely on the Internet as a source of news has doubled or tripled: the number of those who got the news through social media grew from 14% in 2013 to 37% in 2021, and the number of those who got the news through online media grew from 21% in 2013 to 36% in 2021.

Using the Internet as a platform for getting the news is highly age-dependent. In 2020, only 50% of Russian citizens aged over 55 years used the Internet at least once a month, while almost 100% of the age cohorts of 12-24 and 25-34-year-olds did it. The same is true about getting the news: over half of Russian citizens aged 18-24 (55%) and 25-39 (54%) years say

Internet publications are their key sources of news, and only 25% of people aged over 55 years say the same. This trend is even more pronounced in social media: in 2021, 72% and 59% of Russian citizens in the age categories of 12-24 and 25-34 years called social media their main source of news, while only 22% of people aged over 55 years reported the same.

Prior to the military conflict, the main platform in terms of the number of views was the Vkontakte social media (33% in 2014, 44% in 2021), followed by Youtube and Instagram, which rapidly gained their audiences from 15% in 2018 to 37% and 34% in 2021 respectively (at the same time, according to Brand Analytics, Instagram was already Top 1 in terms of the number of active authors in 2021 (38.1 million authors per month), which was over 1.5 times more than in case of its main rivalry Vkontakte (it reached 23.8 million authors per month). Odnoklassniki ranked fourth in terms of views in 2021 (30%). The top four were followed by Tik-Tok, which was used by 16% by 2021, as well as Facebook and Twitter, which were used by about 10% and 5%, respectively.

The largest online news dissemination platform following social media is the Yandex ecosystem, which includes the Yandex.News news aggregator. In 2019, almost 40% of Russian citizens used Yandex.News to get the news, and only 15% of Russian citizens mentioned the Novosti Mail.ru news aggregator. After the outbreak of the hostilities, Yandex announced its intention to sell its news service and the Zen blogging platform to the VK holding; the VK holding also owns Mail.ru, Vkontakte, and Odnoklassniki. Since December 2021, the CEO of VK (which now controls the main news dissemination channels in the Russian segment of the Internet) has been Vladimir Kiriyenko, the son of the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Russia, who oversees domestic politics.

There are several ways to leverage the online environment for propaganda purposes.

First, the authorities have established a large number of online media and online channels over the past decade, and every pro-government newspaper has launched its online version. Chief editors of large online media attend planning briefs in the Kremlin and get their theme lists there.

Second, the authorities control intermediaries that make online sources more visible or invisible. E.g., Yandex.News aggregates information only from a dozen pro-government sources. According to the interviews with former employees of the company, the list of the information sources that can get into the "top" is coordinated with the Presidential Administration. Similar distortions are observed in the search queries processed by the Yandex search engine: automated content analysis shows that Yandex censors URL-links of independent media .

Third, the system of pro-government online information sources and platforms is supplemented by bots and trolls. For example, up to 80% of accounts in the Russian segment of Twitter were bots that made pro-government information sources more visible in search engine rankings at the times of some important political events (such as the annexation of Crimea).

Finally, the authorities directly or indirectly control large communities in domestic social media, which are most often pre-moderated. For instance, the pre-moderated communities of Odnoklassniki recorded daily posting of thousands of replicated messages in various topic groups, primarily in non-political ones (cooking recipes, gardening, fishing, and

amateur groups with hundreds of thousands of subscribers), during the 2021 elections to the Russian State Duma.

It should be noted separately that the trust to TV in the last decade has been very dependent on the political events, not on the growing Internet coverage. In 2010, television was trusted by 40%, and in the situation of post-election protests in 2011-2012, the trust indicators dropped to their historic low (35%). The authorities responded to the 2011-2012 protests by mobilising the propaganda apparatus and by growing trust to 50% in 2013. Later, trust in television fluctuated between 40% and 60% with sharp shifts at the times of political "failures" or "victories". By 2021, 45% of Russians trusted television. Trust in online publications and social media was slowly but steadily growing: from 15% and 10% respectively in 2013 to 21% and 23% respectively in 2021.

Thus, a system of state control over the media environment has developed in Russia, which includes not only television and key mass media but also social media and news aggregators.

1.2. Russian media after 24 February 2022

Russian media environment was largely controlled by the state on the eve of the "special military operation". In the Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Ranking, Russia has dropped from Top 142 (in 2011-2012) to Top 155 (in 2022) over the last decade. In line with the Law "On Information, Information Technologies and Information Security" dated July 27, 2006, the General Prosecutor's Office of Russia may ban information and block websites extra-judicially and immediately on more than two dozen grounds, including dissemination of information that "does not correspond to reality". The practice of blocking information resources containing criticism of the authorities has become widespread since 2012. Adoption and progressive expansion of laws on the so-called "foreign agents", as well as numerous changes in other regulatory documents, have significantly hampered the work of independent journalists.

The situation with the restriction of freedom of expression has deteriorated significantly after February 24, 2022. According to human rights organisations, just six hours after the outbreak of the hostilities, the mass media were officially warned — under the threat of blocking — that when covering the conflict, they were obliged to use only official information originated by Russian government agencies. In practice, this meant a ban on calling the events in Ukraine a "war," since the official position was that it was only a "special military operation" to "protect the population, to denazify and to demilitarize Ukraine".

In mid-July 2022, amendments to several laws came into force at once, according to which the General Prosecutor Office of Russia got the rights to demand suspension of the mass media activities or to invalidate the registration of the mass media, as well as to terminate its broadcasting license; to demand to block websites permanently; to ban foreign mass media if the state, in which it is registered, imposed a ban or restrictions on the operations of a Russian mass media. Since the grounds for the restrictions are very vague, almost any information, except the official one, can fall under them. Criminal and administrative legislation was also tightened for "fakes" about the armed forces, for "public calls to take action against security"

of Russia, for cooperation with a foreign state, international or foreign organization on a confidential basis.

Shortly after the "special military operation" started, many of the remaining independent media were blocked; many left the country (some mass media outlets and individual journalists were forced to do this even before February 2022). Ordinary Internet users have also faced restrictions and persecution for expressing their own political positions.

Blocking of independent media also affected the content of social media: according to Medialogy, the Novaya Gazeta newspaper, which suspended its release on March 28, was the most quoted federal mass media in social media in February 2022; the TV Rain channel was the leader among TV channels in this category; and the Echo of Moscow radio station was top second after "Radio Liberty". **Thus, blocking of these media has not only deprived a significant part of Russian citizens of access to alternative information but has also limited dissemination of this information in social media.**

In total, government data show that Roskomnadzor has blocked access to over 135,000 materials and 5,000 resources after the war started. According to Roskomsvoboda, as of July 11, 2022, "the number of websites blocked due to military censorship reached 5,300."

Responding to the blocking, Russian citizens have started using VPNs more often: the number of VPN users in Russia reached 24 million in May 2022 (compared to 1.6 million in February 2022), which was approximately 17% of the active Internet users. It is most likely that this share is distributed very unevenly among different age cohorts: it is higher among young users, including those under age.

As a result, restrictions on freedom of speech operate in two directions today: blocking communication channels with content not controlled by the authorities and increasing the risks of administrative and criminal prosecution for those expressing public disagreement with the official version of the events in Ukraine.

2. "Special military operation" in mass media and social networks

2.1. The failure of television to justify military aggression and a gradual decline in propaganda intensity

For Russian citizens, the hostilities in Ukraine have become a significant event, which most of them follow closely: according to the Levada Center, the level of 64% of Russians followed it very or quite closely in March; their number decreased in July to 56%, but nevertheless exceeded half of the respondents. As described above, TV continues to have a key share in the structure of media consumption among Russian citizens. Therefore, the media agenda — especially the TV media agenda — seems to be fundamental for understanding the main images of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict created by the mass media.

Although, based on the collected data, it is impossible to estimate the amount of airtime and publication activity devoted by the official mass media to the topic of the "special military

operation", it is obvious that the stories on the "situation in Ukraine" have a significant share of the media agenda (Table 1).

**Table 1. Distribution of the number of TV program messages by months,
February through to July 2022**

Month	February	March	April	May	June	July
Number of messages	2071	4341	3191	3091	2829	2222
Growth/fall in the number of messages compared to the previous month	no data	**+109.6%**	**-26.5%**	**-3.1%**	**-8.5%**	**-21.5%**

Table 1 shows that **after the peak values registered in late February and in early March, the frequency of the TV reports on the military conflict with Ukraine aired by the main TV channels has been gradually decreasing**, although it remains high. This dynamics is also clearly visible on the chart that tracks mentioning the key terms of the context: "war", "Ukraine", and "military operation" (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Occurrences of context keywords
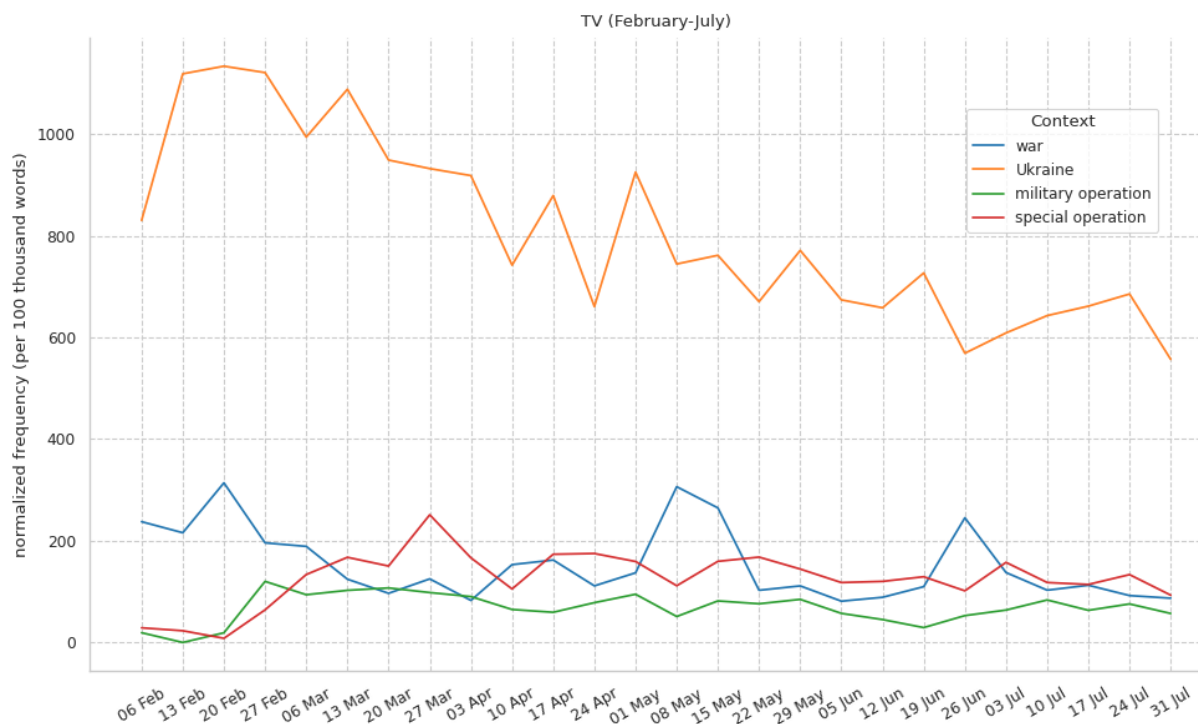
At that, the term "war" is mentioned by TV channels in any context other than the "special military operation": e.g., "war" is used in phrases like "world war", "gas war",

"sanctions war", "information war/war of fakes" or "visa war", which implies aggressive actions of "unfriendly countries" against Russia (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Spoiler "wars" (what "wars" are discussed in the TV subcorpus)
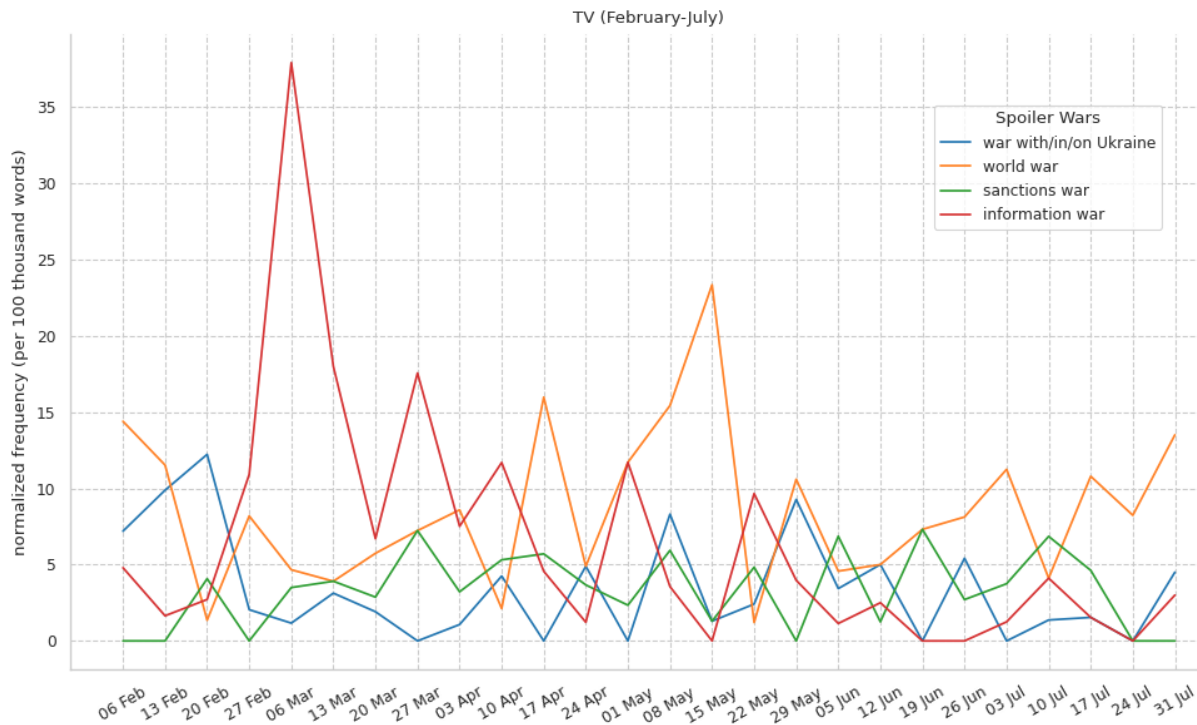

Figure 2 clearly shows that the phrase "war with/in/on Ukraine" is much less common in general than other types of "wars". At the same time, the "world war" can also be "economic", "informational", etc., and the peak of referring to "war" was during national holidays in May, when the mass media were intensively discussing World War II.

The frequency dynamics of mentioning the goals of the invasion of the Russian troops into Ukraine is revealing. Official sources primarily referred to the "denazification" and "demilitarisation" of Ukraine, the protection of the population of the LNR (Luhansk People's Republic) and the DNR (Donetsk People's Republic), the protection of the Russian language, and the prevention of the NATO expansion. **The TV's role was to convey these goals to the broad masses of Russian citizens and to help justify military aggression; however, these terms apparently have not resonated with public opinion, and state propaganda has been forced to abandon them** (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Occurrences of words describing causes and goals of the "special military operation" (SMO) on Russian television
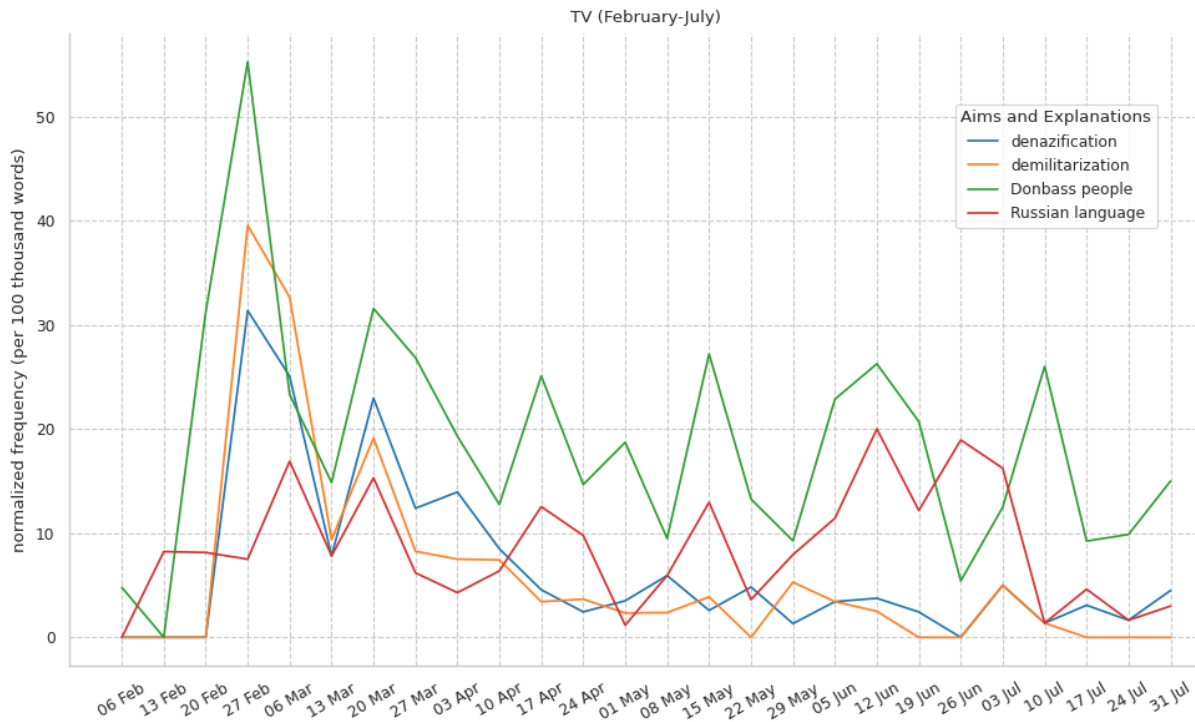

TV (February-July)

Figure 3 shows that after the peak of referring to "denazification" and "demilitarization" in late February and in early March, there was a sharp decline in this indicator. The normalised frequency (i.e., average value per 100,000 words of the collected corpus) of using the word "denazification" has been fluctuating at a low level since late May, which is confirmed by mass media reports that the Kremlin has been abandoning this term due to lacking resonance with the public opinion. "Demilitarization" has also been disappearing from the TV agenda; however, both terms continue to be actively used by officials (e.g., by Senator Klimov, State Duma Speaker Volodin, and Deputy Chairman of the Security Council Medvedev).

Figure 4. Frequency of mentioning NATO in the plots and programs of Russian television
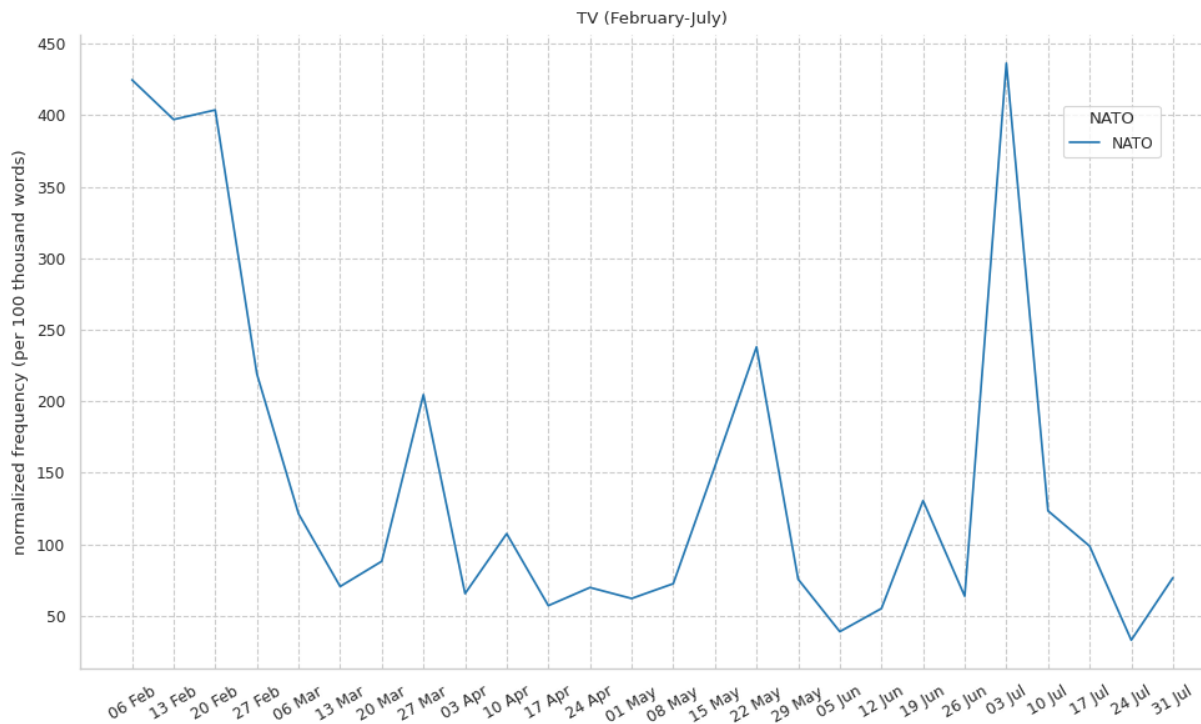
In addition, the number of stories about the danger of NATO's expansion increased significantly on the eve of February 24, 2022 (the second peak occurred during the NATO summit in Madrid on June 28-30, 2022), but the frequency of mentioning NATO was significantly lower in other periods. Thus, the general trend was downward: Russian TV has been discussing the key terms associated with the justification of the military invasion, much less over time.

The topic of the Donbas population turned out to be the most noticeable against the backdrop of "denazification" and "demilitarisation". Its frequency also correlates with the phrase "Russian language" in the context of protecting the population. These words were used more intensively during significant ideological holidays: Victory Day (May 9) and the Day of Russia (June 12). Apparently, it was supposed to leverage the symbolic resources of these national celebrations to legitimise the "special military operation" (SMO); however, the largest scope in terms of both duration and peaks fell in March, that is, when the hostilities started. Another peak was observed in the first week of July after the Russian troops seized Severodonetsk and Lysychansk (many TV reports were about "improving" life in the "liberated cities").

Figures 5 and 6 clearly show how, along with the outbreak of the hostilities and massive propaganda in late February and early March, the vocabulary aimed at inciting hostility within the Russian society against the opponents of the military aggression has been used more actively on TV.

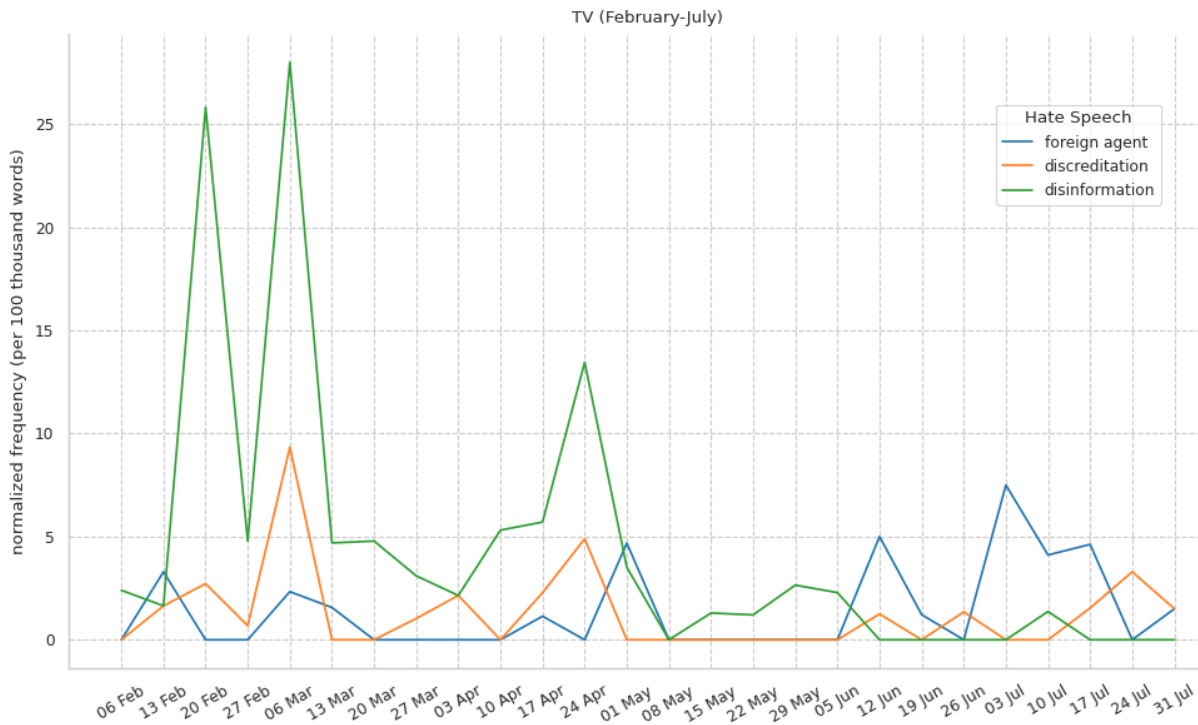**Figure 5. Russian TV's hate speech during the "special military operation" (SMO)**


Figure 5 shows that in late February and in early March there was an explosive growth in using the words "disinformation" and "discreditation". Concurrently, there has been a surge in the frequency of using the word "fake" (Figure 6). **This coincides with launching a campaign to limit freedom of speech even more: Russian TV had to justify the introduction of blocking and censorship in general, while Russian citizens had an extremely ambiguous attitude towards this.** The poll of the Public Opinion Foundation (FOM) conducted in June 2022 indicated that 31% of respondents were positive about blocking social media and Internet resources and 27% of respondents were negative about this (up to 50% in 18-30 year cohort). For comparison, according to the Levada Center, the introduction of censorship was supported by 60% of respondents in 2016. At the same time, the FOM's survey also showed that only 18% of respondents believed bypassing blocking was reprehensible, compared to 38% of those who did not think so.

Another peak in using the word "disinformation" was in mid-April, when Russian television accused the US State Department of disinformation in connection with the battles for Mariupol (Ukraine), and at the same time, Vladimir Putin attended the RUSSIA – LAND OF OPPORTUNITIES forum, where he met with Russian bloggers and discussed the information war. In late June and in early July, there was also a surge in the use of the word "foreign agent", which was associated with the State Duma's adoption of amendments to laws that tightened the legislation on "foreign agents".

Figure 6. Frequency of the word "fake" on Russian television

TV (February-July)
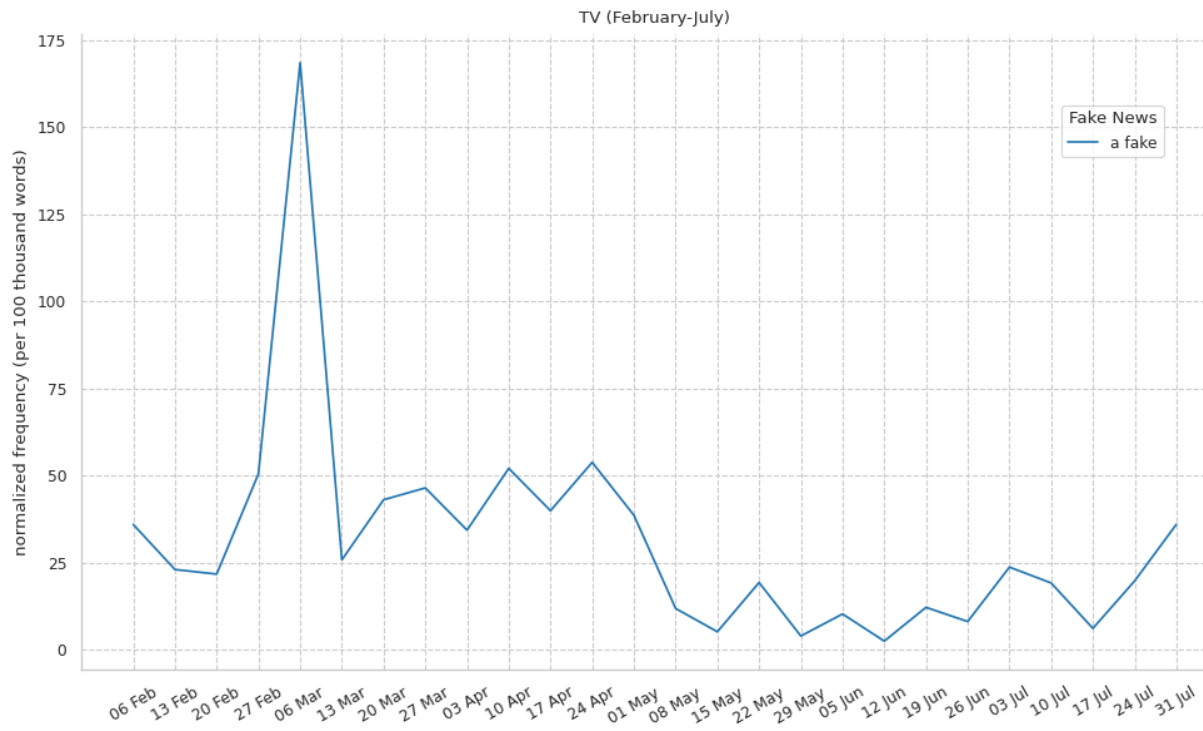
2.2. Economic consequences of the military aggression on the air of federal TV channels

The beginning of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine has led to the adoption of harsh international sanctions against the Russian Federation: blocking of bank cards, withdrawal of foreign companies from the domestic market, cessation of foreign currency supplies, rising prices and other consequences that have directly affected millions of citizens and have been widely discussed in society. As the main channel for disseminating the official point of view, television could not stand aside. Indeed one sees a surge in using the words "sanctions" and "crisis" on TV (the phrase "higher prices" is used much less frequently, but this is perhaps because the terms in the form of phrases are generally used less often) (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Economic agenda as spoken about on война с/в/на Украинавойна с/в/на Украина Russian television

TV (February-July)
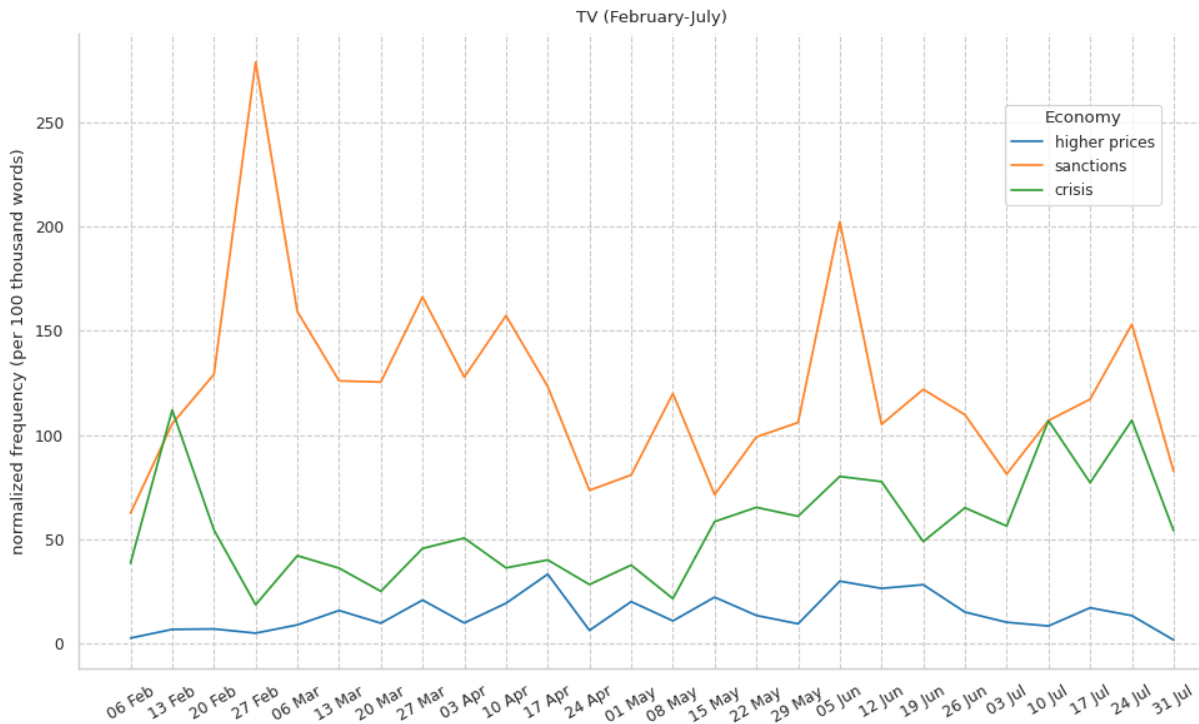
Based on the graph in Figure 7, it could be assumed that Russian television has become quite active in covering crisis phenomena in the domestic economy, but Figure 8 shows that this is not the case at all.

Figure 8. Types of "crises" on Russian television
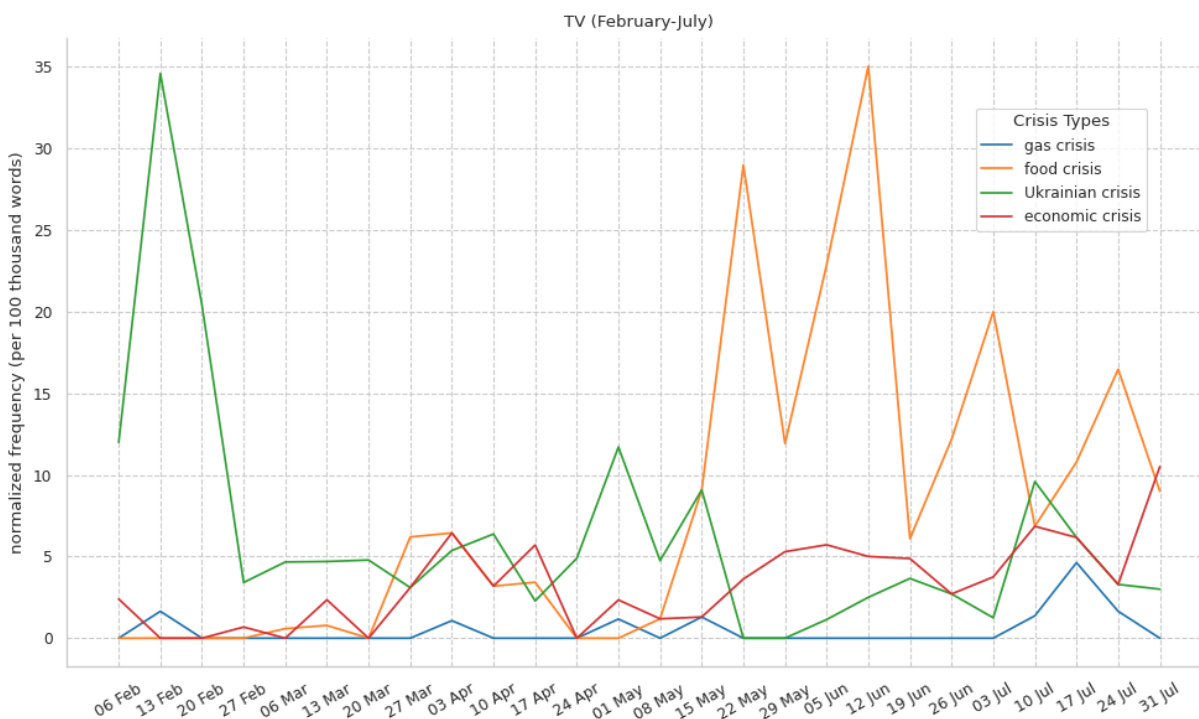

TV (February-July)

Figure 8 shows that the producers of Russian TV programs try to divert their viewers' attention from the domestic economy's problems by talking about the challenges faced by the economies of other countries, primarily those that have imposed sanctions against Russia. Thus, the word "crisis" means the "Ukrainian crisis", the "food crisis", the "gas crisis", and many other types of crises, mainly in Europe and the United States.

In this case, the same thing happens with the word "war": Russian TV channels endow words that seem undesirable to them in a public discussion with numerous new meanings in an attempt to blur them as much as possible. It is as if the Russian authorities try, with the help of such semantic ambiguity, to take away the possibility of describing reality from their opponents in Russian society, appropriating the vocabulary of the Russian opposition. "War" and "crisis" do exist in the information field, but "war" is now becoming "economic" or "information(al)" and not the real one with missiles and tanks, and "crisis" is only possible in the West that suffers from its own sanctions, but not in Russia.

3. Gap between official and public discourse

This section is preliminary as the study of Russian social media users' publications about the "special military operation" (SMO) has just begun: it covers only one month of observations (July 2022), and this is only the very first attempts of analysis. However, at this stage, the press and online media reports are added to the data on the language of Russian television.

First of all, it is striking that the word "war" is much more commonly used in the subcorpus of social media than in the mass media (Figure 9). The phrase "military operation" is not very noticeable against the backdrop of other keywords that set the context of the study.

The word "Ukraine" has been used quite often in both subcorpuses. Still, the dynamics was somewhat different in July: the frequency of using the word has been fairly stable on social media, and there was a surge of interest in the mass media during the third week, and then the intensity dropped below average.

Figure 9. Discrepancies in frequencies of "war" in mass and social media
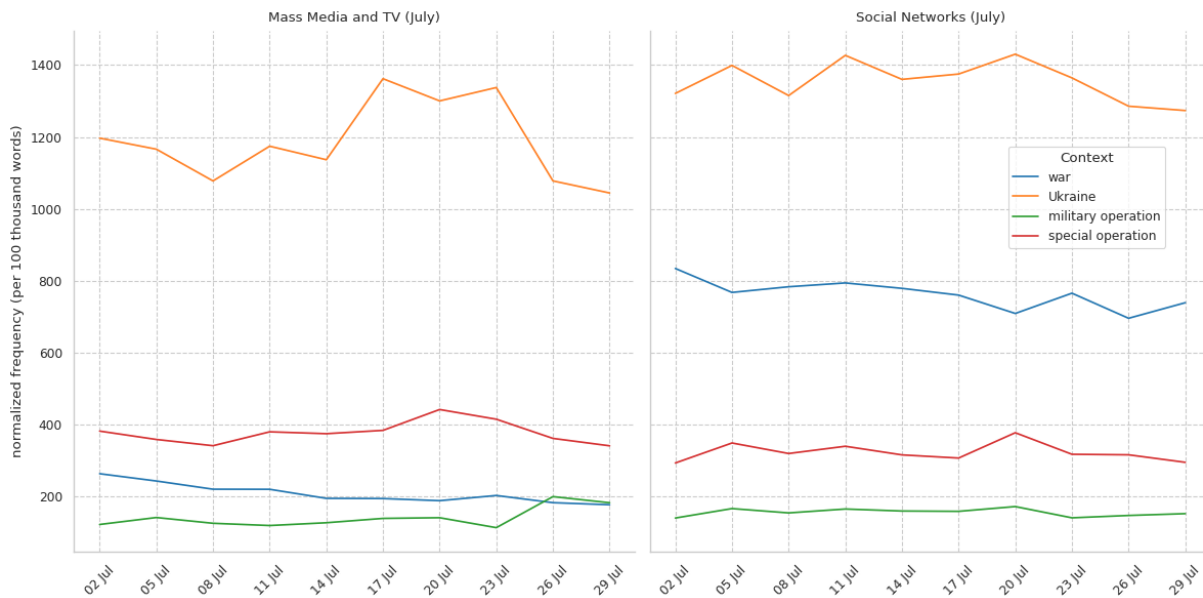
The gap in the frequency of using the word "war" in mass media texts and social media messages becomes more visible because, despite the repression of the opposition for using this word in relation to the ongoing hostilities, it continues to be used in social media in its direct meaning for indicating the "special military operation" (SMO). **Thus, despite all the attempts of the Russian authorities and the state-controlled mass media to portray the ongoing events not as a war but as a limited operation, the Russian society keeps realising this is a war. Moreover, judging by the messages verified "manually" by the authors, this is also typical for the supporters of the authorities.**

The difference between the official discourse and the rhetoric used by the social media users is also noticeable when comparing the frequency of using the words "denazification", "demilitarization" and the phrase "inhabitants of Donbas", which were used to justify the beginning of the hostilities (in the latter case, it meant "protection of the inhabitants of Donbas") (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Usage of keywords designed to justify the goals and causes of the "special military operation" (SMO) in mass media and social media
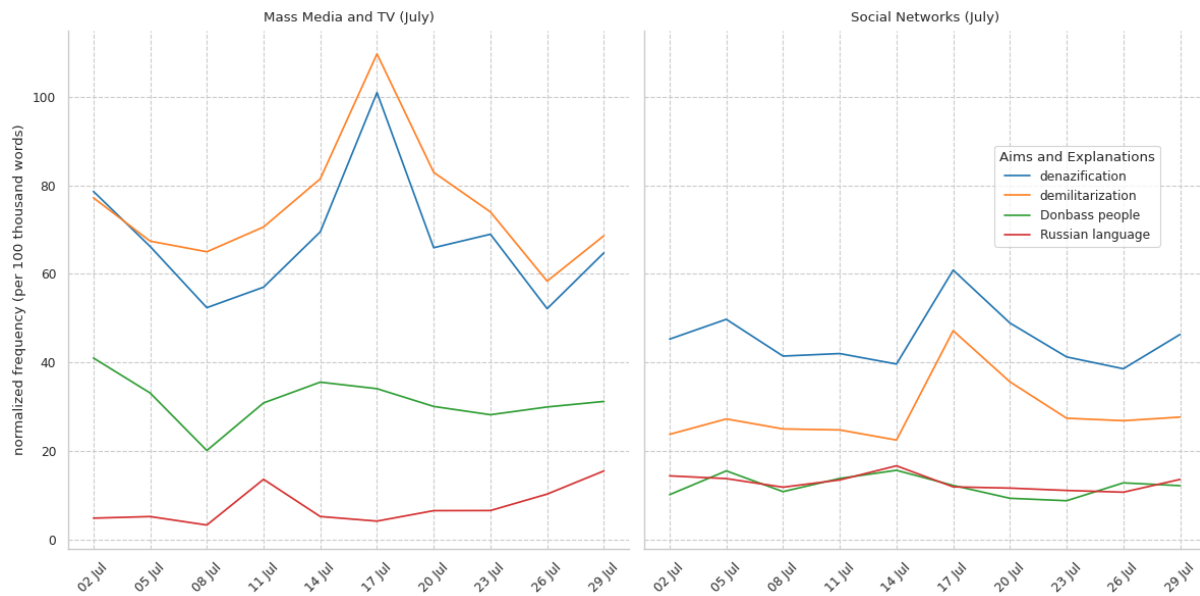

Figure 10 clearly shows how less often on average social media users use official terminology to explain the causes and goals of the ongoing events. The surge in mentioning "denazification" and "demilitarisation" on July 17 was connected to the statement by Senator Klishas after the Ukrainian side threatened to destroy the Crimean bridge. This is one of those cases where officials continue using the terminology that the propaganda is gradually abandoning.

It is possible that in the social media messages, these terms, which are rather unusual for the Russian ear, are somehow rethought and changed by social media users (e.g., the frequency of using the words "fascist", "Nazi", etc. in relation to Ukrainians and the Ukrainian government has yet to be checked). However **it is obvious that even the frequency of using the words "denazification" and "demilitarisation" in mass media, which has significantly decreased since March, turned out to be much higher in mass media than in social media. This rhetoric was indeed not fully accepted by Russian society, including the supporters of the authorities.**

At the same time, Figure 3 shows that **the use of these words in TV propaganda has shrunk to a minimum by the end of the first month of the hostilities. This indicated that Russian propaganda is typically quick in analysing problems and in searching for adaptation options, which we have yet to identify.**

There is a similar situation with the description of the economic consequences: the frequency of mentioning the words "sanctions" and "crisis" (of all types) in social media is much lower than in mass media (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Economic difficulties in the mass media and social media messages

However, social media seem to be much more receptive to the official rhetoric inciting hatred for "internal enemies". The conversion rate between mass media and social media is higher in the case of such words as "foreign agent", "discreditation", "disinformation", and "fake" (Figures 12 and 13).

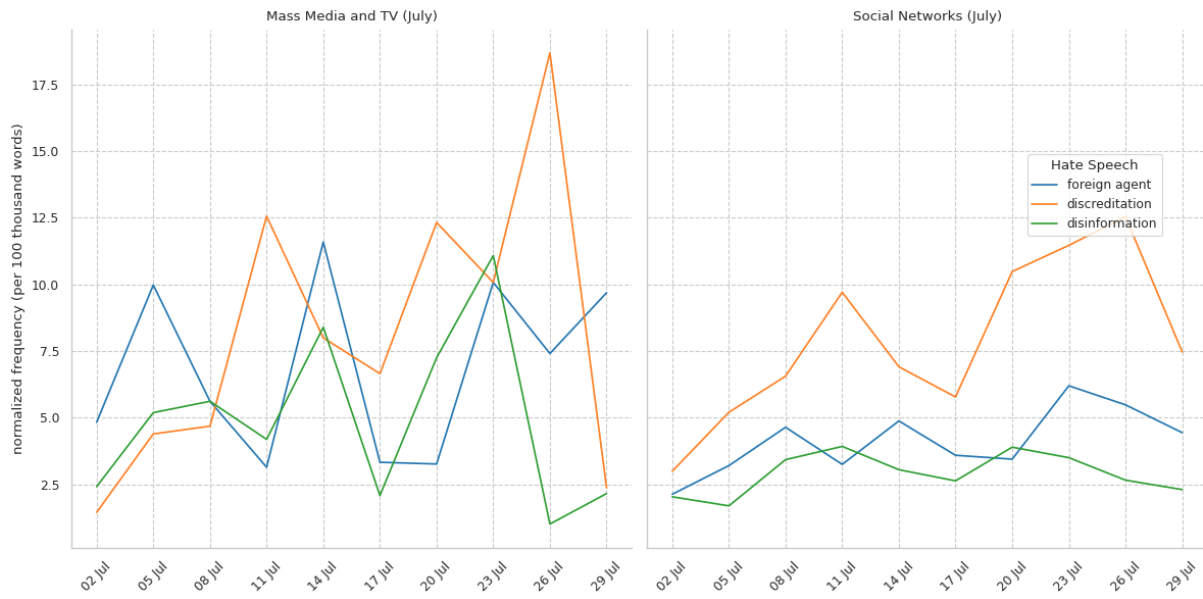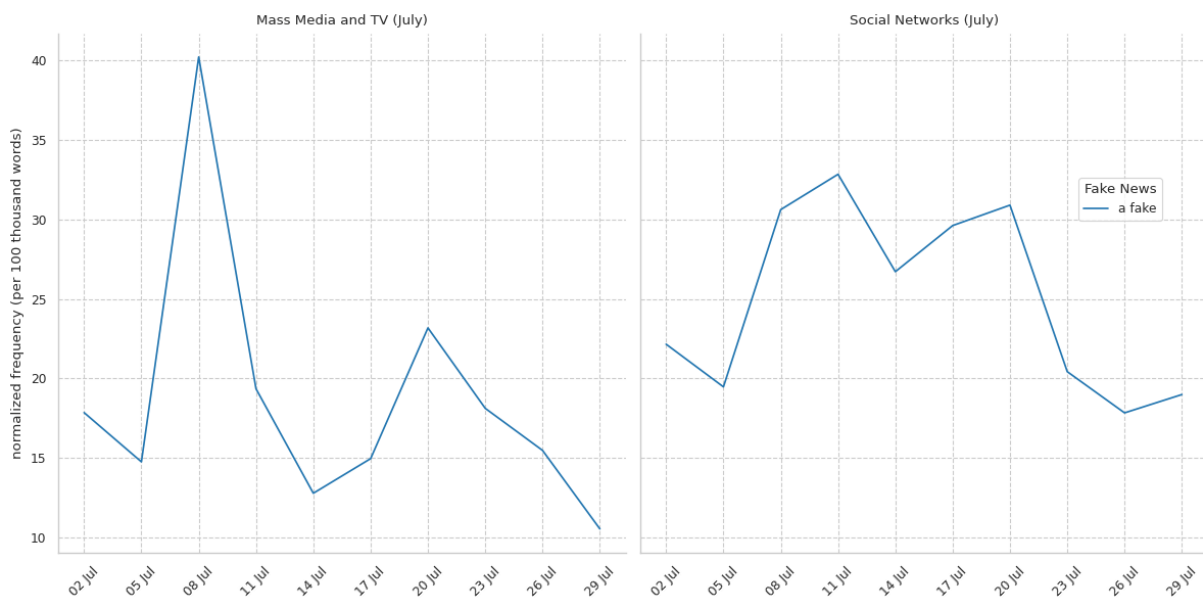**Figure 12. Hate speech in mass media and social media**

Figure 13. Usage of the word "fake" in mass media and social media

It is likely that this rhetoric turns out to be simply more familiar and habitual since the topic of "foreign agents", "fakes", and other types of alleged discrediting by the opponents of the authorities has been worked on by Russian propaganda for several years already.

Methodology

The corpus of messages on the war with Ukraine has been formed using the Scan Interfax and Brand Analytics mass media and social media monitoring and analytical systems using a list of keywords setting the topic and allowing to select of relevant messages in social media (VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter) and traditional mass media. The following keywords have been used to form the corpus of texts: "war", "special operation", "military operation", "SVO" (special military operation), "special operation", "military operations", "denazification", and "demilitarisation".

When analysing social media, only those accounts have been taken into account, and the users have indicated Russia as their location. This, on the one hand, has excluded Russian-speaking users from other countries (including Ukraine) in the corpus of the studied texts; but, on the other hand, it has led to a significant bias in favour of domestic social media, practically excluding messages in the social media that have been blocked in Russia (e.g. Instagram) from the analysis. A complete list of the used mass media is presented in the Appendix.

The resulting corpus has been checked for duplicates and irrelevant messages, which have been removed from the final analysis. The general quantitative parameters of the corpus are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Composition and scope of subcorpuses, by media type, July 01, 2022, through to July 31, 2022 (after pre-processing)

	messages	words	sources
Mass media	15,801	4,857,345	252*
social media	407,955	88,842,056	70

Note: This number does not include 25 TV channels and individual TV shows added to the electronic mass media for benchmarking the July 2022 data.

The distribution of text data by the source is shown in the diagrams in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Key sources of textual material from mass media (including TV) and social media (by the number of messages)
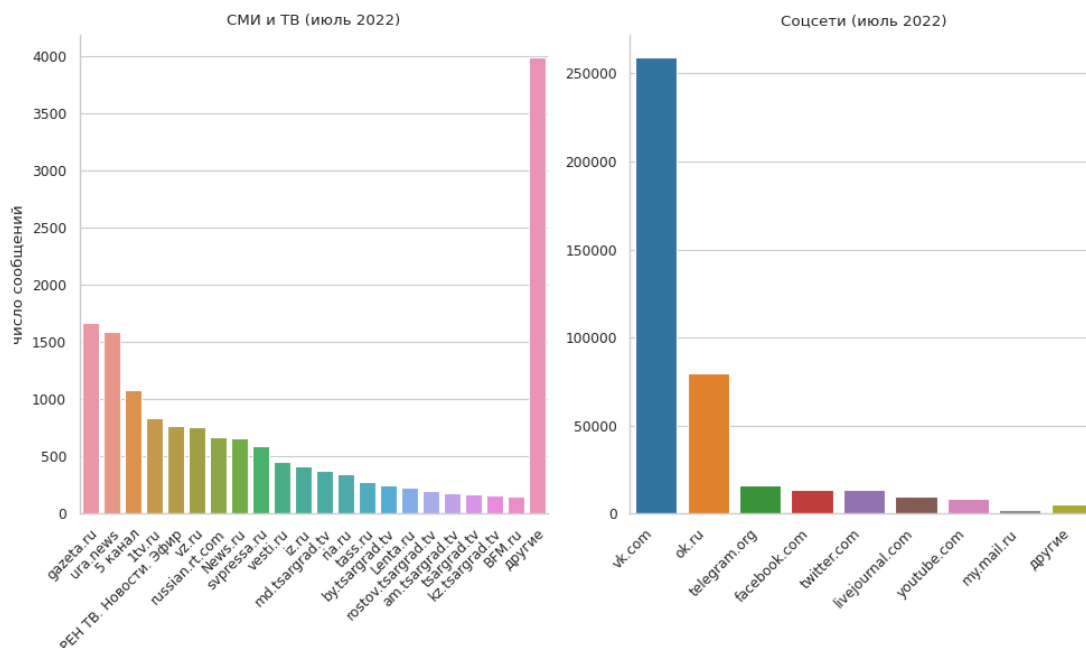
The social media subcorpus is represented mainly by messages from three platforms: *vk.ru*, *ok.ru* and *facebook.com* (they make up 90%). Figure 14 shows all social media whose messages cover 99% of the subcorpus. This is due to the fact that only those accounts have been taken into account and that the users have indicated Russia as their location. A wide variety of sources characterises data on mass media: Figure 14 shows media outlets whose publications makeup 75% of the corpus.

Moreover, a balanced corpus of transcripts and descriptions of TV shows and TV reports was collected (transcripts account for 53.3%) from February to July 2022 using the same search queries (keywords). The size of this corpus (divided by months) is presented in Table 3.

The corpus is poorly balanced by sources. 88% are messages from four TV programs: Channel One (1tv.ru) and REN TV. News, Channel 5.Izvestia, Russia24.Vesti (from 26 available sources).

Table 3. Distribution of TV texts by months
(VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter),
February through to July 2022

	messages	words
February	2071	682,921
March	4341	1,007,946
April	3191	725,511
May	3091	688,986
June	2829	663,199
July	2222	573,977
TOTAL	17,745	4,342,540

The keyword frequency analysis was based on lemmatised data, i.e. taking into account the inflexions in the Russian language. The keywords were grouped under several themes (general context, causes and goals of the war, freedom of information and speech, economic consequences).

Words with higher frequency in each group are placed in separate charts. As "war" and "crisis" words are concerned, data are provided on the changes in the reference frequency of the typical phrases containing these words.

Table 4. Quantitative parameters of the July subcorpus on mass media / TV and social media

weekend	Mass media and TV		Social media	
	messages	words	messages	words
03 Jul (three days in total)	603	203,565	24,801	6,786,437
10 Jul	2,688	1,055,738	96,082	24,770,505
17 Jul	2,601	963,096	95,152	25,198,551
24 Jul	3,006	1,019,948	89,847	23,754,558
31 Jul	5,807*	2,130,150*	87,819	23,593,527

Note: the * symbol denotes the data obtained after the list of the monitored mass media was expanded.

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