

Ukraine's independent media in war time



THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN CONFLICT

- Maintaining independent media is critical in war time; access to non-biased information contributes to a sense of security and trust among the population as well as accountability for those in power that is conducive to high morale, resilience and mobilisation among communities that carries over into war-fighting effectiveness.
- "The truth is the first casualty in war" - due to desires to contribute to the war effort and maintain morale, journalists can enter into self-censorship, while conflicts have frequently seen free press and journalists targeted by aggressor forces.
- In the digital age, independent media arguably faces more obstacles than ever before; disinformation, cyber attacks and the sheer volume of information make cutting through the noise and maintaining audience attention while preserving independence difficult. Ukraine has become a case study in how to do so.

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[Ukraine World](#)
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[Hromadske Radio](#)

[Hromadske.ua](#)
[Novoe Vremye](#)
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[Radio Svoboda \(Freedom\)](#)

[Kyiv Independent](#)

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HOW IS INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN UKRAINE COPING?

1. One of the primary concerns is **funding**. Prior to the conflict, the majority of independent media funding came from advertisements. After the invasion, the advertising market has collapsed by over 90% (according to the Ukrainian Cultural Ministry). One of the solutions for this has been crowdfunding online as well as reaching out directly for foreign investment from NGOs and emergency government funding.
2. Ukrainian independent media has also recognised that they cannot fight an information war alone; and so have pursued **partnerships**. They frequently attend workshops on cooperation and training for connecting with Western audiences, while also appealing to foreign partners like the New York Times and Elon Musk's Starlink. At the same time, they have drawn attention and support to free Russian media, who can provide access into Russia and expose its people to the reality of the Kremlin's "special military operation."
3. To maintain interest and **prevent fatigue**, independent media in Ukraine tends to focus on "telling stories in the first person" (the average person's contribution) as well as avoiding the trap of only showing suffering; showing cultural events, animal welfare and humour amidst the destruction. All of this is conducted on a range of platforms for maximum audience reach; television, radio, Facebook, telegram and tiktok.

SURVIVING THE AFTERMATH OF CONFLICT

- Prior to the invasion, Ukraine's media landscape was dominated by a handful of oligarchs; the conflict has allowed independent media to surpass their reach and demonstrate their value as part of a vibrant, democratic state.
- After the conflict, many have expressed hope that a major part of the reconstruction effort will be to sustain independent media's current momentum through sufficient funding. To which the Ukrainian Culture Minister has expressed strong agreement.
- But before this can be achieved, Ukraine must achieve victory. Increasingly, international voices have called for a peace settlement with Russia that others have criticised would be conceding defeat and encourage further aggression against Ukraine by the Kremlin in the future. At the same time, audiences in the West are becoming preoccupied with price rises, while the Ukrainian narrative is failing to gain traction with audiences in the Global South; creating a "Ukraine Fatigue."
- Ensuring a positive outcome for Ukraine will require bringing full diplomatic pressure of the International Community on the Kremlin and its enablers. This will require a dynamic strategy for reaching into the Global South and supporting independent Ukrainian media.