Vitalii Tereshchuk, PhD in Political Science, ScD candidate

Petro Mohyla Black Sea State University, Ukraine

POLITICAL ASPECTS OF FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN BROADCASTING IN FRANCE

The article is devoted to the evolution of French foreign broadcasting policy, with special attention to its institutional and normative dimensions. Experience of France as the active participant of contemporary international broadcasting is interesting due to several factors. Firstly, it's a spectacular example of the peril of ignoring cross-border media propaganda capabilities. Secondly, it's a bright acknowledgment that an emphasis on culture, not on political or ideological content in foreign broadcasting may be a winning strategy. And thirdly, this experience demonstrates how fairly weak state foreign broadcasting can grow into one of the important players in highly competitive modern global media space. This experience can be exceptionally useful for Ukraine, whose foreign broadcasting service is still in its infancy.

Keywords: foreign broadcasting, broadcasting policy, Francophonie, national interests, France.

In a globalized world, using the media in order to ensure a proper presence in the international information space is an important part of state strategy for promoting national interests in the international arena. The competitiveness of state, its ability to achieve its foreign policy goals largely depends on the capacity to communicate its position to target audiences by different channels. More importantly, employment of cross-border media was and still is an instrument for penetration into media space of foreign nations aiming to influence public opinion. Consequently, foreign broadcasting has become an integral part of the implementation of foreign policy of many countries of the world and is considered an important component of national security.

The aim of this paper is to analyze political aspects of developing of French foreign broadcasting.

French broadcasting abroad was born in 1929 then the idea of creating a radio service for broadcasting to the territory of the French colonies. This idea was embodied in the form of the Le Poste colonial radio service, which was solemnly opened by French President G. Doumergue on May 6, 1931, on the day the international colonial exhibition was opened in Paris. Its target audience was French expatriate colonizers and a few natives, who had been trained to speak French and engage in low-status labour. In general, the potential audience was about 100 million inhabitants of the French colonial empire. The broadcasting was conducted in addition to French, as well as Spanish and English, followed by Greek, Norwegian, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Swedish and Japanese. As well broadcast in Arabic started to the Middle East and North Africa².

In the 1930s, Le Poste colonial became an instrument of propaganda, including countering the foreign broadcasting of Great Britain, the USSR, Italy and Nazi Germany. In March 1938, in accordance with the new tasks, this radio service was renamed Paris-Mondial. As the French Minister of Posts, Telegraphs, and Telephones said at the opening of the new radio service, "The French Republic today possesses a marvelous instrument that will permit it to inform peoples, however distant they may be, about its international politics, or that's to say, about its firm desire for peace". In addition to French, broadcasts were conducted in English, Arabic, Italian and German, and in early 1940, the number of foreign languages increased to 20, and included English, Arabic, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish⁴.

163

¹ Tchouaffe, O.J. (2008). *Radio France Internationale. In the international encyclopedia of communication*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 4089-4090.

² RFI (2018). *Histoire de la radio* http://radios.peuleux.eu/radios/r/rfi.html (2018, July, 05).

³ Scales, R. (2016). *Radio and the politics of sound in interwar France*, 1921 – 1939. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 259.

⁴ RFI (2018). *Histoire de la radio* http://radios.peuleux.eu/radios/r/rfi.html (2018, July, 05).

It is also worth noting the creation on July 29, 1939, of a special state administrative authority – Radiodiffusion nationale, which united all state radio stations of the metropolis area¹.

French foreign broadcasting, despite the complex international situation, at the beginning of its existence, focused more on cultural programs, rather than countering the propaganda of the Axis countries or promoting French vision of the situation in Europe and in the world. According to analysis Graves in his work "The War on Short Wave" (1941), in the first months of the war, out of every 100 programs broadcast to America by Paris-Mondial, 38 were musical, consisting of string quartets and folk melodies, 24 were programs of news and comment in English; 21 were news and comment in French or Spanish, and 17 were "cultural" talks and features, designed particularly for women and for students of art, economics and literature. The situation changed after the German invasion in April 1940 to Denmark and Norway: the first place on the air was taken by news and comments, designed to persuade American listeners to have a favorable attitude towards France and negative to Germany (34%); music programming decreased to 32%, and the music was mostly martial (military marches, etc.); the number of cultural programs remained unchanged, but the number of non-English language programs dropped to 15%. In May of the same year, after the occupation of the Netherlands which opened the way for the German troops to France, virtually all broadcast programs were devoted to the war, and in June, the broadcasts were mainly the calls to the United States to provide France with assistance².

In general, researchers estimate France's efforts of foreign broadcasting at the eve of the war and even after its start as not very successful. The country did not have the proper experience and, moreover, treated foreign propagandistic radio services in a very liberal way, refusing direct attacks on enemies and deliberately refraining from direct rebuttals to German and Italian propaganda, unless radio stations of these countries aired false information demanding "correction". The weaknesses of the French foreign broadcasting of the pre-war period are also marked by high a proportion of cultural programs, and the tendency only to respond to the propaganda of Germany and Italy, rather than to actively introduce political ideas³.

After the fall of the Third Republic and the establishment of the Vichy regime, Paris-Mondial stopped broadcasting (the latest transmission was on June 17, 1940, with the speech of Marshal Pétain, appointed the day before the President of the Council, announcing the cessation of the fighting and the request for an armistice). In the French occupation zone, the new radio service named Radio-Paris was organized under the supervision of Propaganda-Abteilung Frankreich – the propaganda service of the German military command in the occupied zone of France created for the control and censorship of the press, broadcasting, literature, cinematography, and cultural events. Radio-Paris was in charge of disseminating German propaganda in French over the world, and its name was the same as a name of the pre-war Parisian radio station, which was to mislead the listeners⁴. France itself, under the terms of the Armistice Agreement, had no right to engage in international broadcasting.

At the same time, "Free France" movement (La France Libre) which led the struggle to liberate France from the German occupation and the regime of Vichy, also used the potential of broadcasting. The leadership of the movement understood that one of the reasons of France's defeat was the successful propaganda of Nazi Germany, which France could not confront. Therefore, the use of broadcasting as the only accessible mean for propaganda influence on the population of the occupied country has become an important component of the movement's non-military activities.

One of the areas of these activities was the cooperation of Free France with the British company BBC. The importance of this cooperation for the movement was, first of all, in the possibility to carry out direct radio propaganda on the territory of occupied France from the British territory. The partnership began with de Gaulle's speech on 18 June 1940 appealing for French people to resist and continued thereafter⁵.

¹ Décret relatif à l'organisation de la radio-diffusion (1939). *Journal officiel de la République française*, 30 Juillet 1939, 9626–9627.

² See: Graves, H.N. (1941). War on the short wave. New York: The Foreign Policy Association, 19-20.

³ See: Scales, R. (2016). *Radio and the politics of sound in interwar France*, 1921 – 1939. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 261-262.

⁴ Renard, D. (2018). Histoire de la Radio-Télévision en France (1901-1967). *TelesatMedias*.

https://telesatmedias.com/histoire-de-la-radio-television-en-france/ (2018, July, 06).

⁵ See: Brooks, T. (2007). *British Propaganda to France, 1940–1944: Machinery, Method and Message*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 31.

However, the movement leaders understood the weakness of dependence on the British counterparts, which, moreover, tried to influence the content of "Free France" propaganda programs. According to de Gaulle's decision, Radio Brazzaville service was created, the first tests of which took place on September 11, 1940, and the official broadcast was launched on December 5. The purpose of the radio was to restore the confidence of the French in their forces and ability to fight, and the crushing critique of Vichy collaborative regime. With the help of the radio, de Gaulle attempted to return France to the war, showing that, in cooperation with the Allies, victory was possible. The assistance of Radio Corporation of America (RCA) has allowed to radically increase the power of the radio station. Officially opened by de Gaulle on June 18, 1943, it was able to broadcast in 6 directions: 1) to North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, France and the United Kingdom; 2) Central Europe, Russia and the Eastern Mediterranean; 3) to the Far East; 4) Madagascar, Union of South Africa and Australia; 5) to South America; 6) to North America. Influence and significance of Radio Brazzaville as a propaganda tool is confirmed by the fact that the Germans had to use black broadcasting technologies to counteract it: in 1942, the fake radio station with the same name was installed in occupied Paris¹.

Proclamation on June 3, 1944, of the Provisional Government and its real creation on September 9, 1944, after the liberation of most of the territory of France, including Paris, raised the question of the further fate of French foreign broadcasting. De Gaulle, with the understanding of the importance of it, created "Broadcasting Abroad" service (Emissions vers l'Etranger), which began its work on January 1, 1945. The broadcast was conducted on in 20 languages (Arabic, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, and Swedish), targeting 46 countries of the world². A special role in the creation was allocated to two sections: the German, which was responsible for the demoralization of the Nazi troops, and the Spanish, which was supposed to oppose the Franco regime. However, after de Gaulle's resignation, the level of attention to foreign broadcasting decreased significantly: the budget was cut, some languages disappear from the air, although new languages were introduced³.

Thus, with the beginning of the Cold War, broadcasting to most of the Eastern European countries was stopped, but during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the volume of programs in Hungarian increased for a few weeks. At the end of the 1950s, in a context of increasing tensions in the French colonies of North Africa, France intensified its broadcasting in the Maghreb region, in particular, in an effort to counter the transmissions from Egypt supporting nationalist movements and the independence of Algeria. However, after the declaration of independence, the volume of broadcasting to the region reduced. In October 1960, at the height of the Berlin crisis, broadcasting in Russian with the participation of Russian emigrants from 1920s was restored, but it was quite diplomatic, as far as the French Foreign Ministry did not want to participate in the radio battle between the USSR and the West, so as not to harm the Franco-Soviet relations⁴.

It should be noted that the feature of the post-war broadcast of France was that since 1945 (Decree of March 23rd), any private broadcasting was prohibited⁵, which meant the introduction of a state monopoly, which lasted for about 40 years. This limited to a certain extent France's ability to manipulate the status of radio services broadcasting abroad, since all of them clearly could position themselves exclusively as state (in this context we can recall the practice when for a long time while Cold war "Radio Free Europe" and "Radio Liberation" concealed their funding from US CIA, and they were presented as a private American propaganda network).

Also, the administrative structure of broadcasting management has changed: instead of Radiodiffusion nationale, on March 23, 1945, the new public institution named "French broadcasting" (Radiodiffusion française, RDF) was created, which in turn was transformed into "French Radio and television broadcasting" (Radiodiffusion-télévision française, RTF) on February 9, 1949. In 1964, it was decided to reform the RTF to give it a new status and greater autonomy. The law of June 27, 1964, transformed RTF into the Office of French Radio and television broadcasting (Office de radiodiffusion-

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¹ Cornil-Frerrot, S. (2018) Le rôle de la radio. *Fondation de la France Libre*. http://www.france-libre.net/role-radio/ (2018, July, 06).

² Nelson, M. (1997). War of the black heavens: the battles of Western broadcasting in the Cold War. Syracuse University Press, 109.

³ RFI (2018). Histoire de la radio http://radios.peuleux.eu/radios/r/rfi.html (2018, July, 05).

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Journal officiel de la République française (1945). *Ordonnance n 45-472 du 23 mars 1945 tendant au retrait des autorisations des entreprises privées de radiodiffusion*, 23 Mars 1945, 1583.

télévision française, ORTF), which lasted until the end of 1974. All these structures were subordinated to the Ministry of Information and were in charge for state foreign broadcasting. It should be noted that foreign broadcasting was funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹.

The reload of the system of foreign broadcasting was due not least to the domestic political situation that arose in 1968. The biased coverage of events related to national protests and strikes by the state mass media caused a sharp critique by both the public and journalists, one of the manifestations of which was the strike of the employees of the ORTF. As a result of these events, several attempts were made to legislatively increase the autonomy of the ORTF, the failure of which eventually led to its elimination by the law of August 7, 1974² and the creation of seven independent bodies on its place. Radio broadcasting functions were transferred to Radio France, a national radio company created on January 1, 1975. Within Radio France the radio service Radio France Internationale (RFI) was created, and its launch was accompanied by a sharp decline in the languages used in programming – from 17 to 14 (only English, Spanish and German remained). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs holds funding for foreign broadcasting³.

At that time, the following priority directions of foreign broadcasting were defined: in 1975, broadcasting began to the African region (so-called Southern Canal, Chaîne sud), mainly to French Africa, which France regarded as a zone of its privileged influence in the Third World; in 1976 – to the French-speaking audience of the United States and Central America (Western Channel, Chaîne Ouest); in 1977 broadcasting started to the CEE countries (Eastern Channel, Chaîne Est); in the same year, broadcasting in Portuguese is restored, due to political transformations in the country; in 1981, the announcement of a martial law in Poland was an impetus for the restoration of broadcast in Polish⁴.

The modernization of French foreign broadcasting occurs after coming to power of F. Mitterrand. In 1982, a five-year RFI development plan was adopted, which included the operation of world-wide French-language service and the creation of services in foreign languages.

At that same time, the normative provision of state foreign broadcasting was formed. The Law "On Audiovisual Communications" of 29 July 1982 determined that the tasks of the state TV and radio service were to serve general interests, which includes, in particular, the promotion of spread of French culture in all its forms abroad and participation in the dialogue between cultures, in particular French-speaking as well as satisfying the information, entertainment and cultural needs of the French people abroad⁵. In addition, this Law shaped the system of national radio and television broadcasting companies, which includes a separate national company for broadcasting abroad⁶. Such a company, according to the Decree of September 17, 1982, becomes Radio-France International⁷.

The law of September 30, 1986, which liberalizes the French media space, makes RFI independent from Radio France on January 1, 1987. In accordance with this law, the responsibility was defined for the foreign broadcasting service for the design and programming of sound broadcasting for international distribution, including programs for French people abroad (Article 44)⁸. The Law of April 1, 2000, amended Article 44: RFI was responsible for contributing to the dissemination of French culture through the design and programming of sound broadcasting programs in French or in foreign languages intended for foreign audiences as well as for French residents living abroad. This company provides an information mission relating to French and international news⁹.

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¹ RFI (2018). Histoire de la radio http://radios.peuleux.eu/radios/r/rfi.html (2018, July, 05).

² See: Journal officiel de la République française (1974). *LOI n 74-696 du 7 aout 1974 relative à la radiodiffusion et à la télévision*, 7 Août 1974, 8355-8358.

³ ENTREPRISE RFI (1975). Radio France Internationale, la cinquième chaîne de Radio France. RFI.

http://www.rfi.fr/contenu/20100127-1975-radio-france-internationale-cinquieme-chaine-radio-france (2018, July, 13).

⁴ RFI (2018). *Histoire de la radio* http://radios.peuleux.eu/radios/r/rfi.html (2018, July, 05).

⁵ Journal officiel de la République française (1982). *LOI n* 82-652 du 29 juillet 1982 sur la communication audiovisuelle, 30 Juillet 1982, 2431.

⁷ Journal officiel de la République française (1982). Décret n 82-793 du 17 septembre 1982 portant création d'une société nationale de radiodiffusion sonore pour l'étranger dénommée Radio-France internationale, 18 Septembre 1982 2812

⁸ Journal officiel de la République française (1986). LOI n 88-1067 du 30 septembre 1986 relative à la liberté de communication, 1er octobre 1986, 11759.

⁹ Journal officiel de la République française (2000). Loi n 2000-719 du 1 août 2000 modifiant la loi n° 86-1067 du 30 septembre 1986 relative à la liberté de communication, 11904.

In 1997, RFI buys the RMC Moyen-Orient radio service, created in 1972. This gave French foreign broadcasting service a fairly powerful broadcasting tool in Arabic for the Middle East and the Maghreb region – by then, the audience of the radio service was 16 million. Since 2006, the radio service is called Monte Carlo Doualiya (MCD)¹.

Today, according to RFI official website, broadcasting is carried out in fifteen languages: French, English, Cambodian, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Spanish, Hausa, Mandingo, Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese, Swahili, Persian, Romanian, Russian and Vietnamese. Considering the modern technical capabilities of broadcasting, besides the air, is carried out via the Internet, satellites and cable networks.

The first French broadcast channel, TV5, was launched in 1984, and in 2006 it was renamed TV5 Monde. The channel is broadcasting in French, distributing cultural programs, films and news to 200 countries around the world, thus serving as a tool for the policy of Francophonie. The mission of the channel is to promote French-language creative work as well as the French language, but also to deliver multilateral and international information everywhere in the world².

The desire of France to have its own global television channel, reinforced, in particular, by the experience of CNN influence on public opinion during the Gulf War, as well as by the emergence of new international TV channels in the global media space (Euronews, BBC World, Al Jazeera, etc.), triggered the launch in December 2006 of the new television channel named France 24: on December 5, broadcasting began on the Internet, the next day – French and English TV channels. The following year, April 2, the Arabic-language TV channel was launched³.

For the purpose of uniting in one structure of all state-owned media in France relating to foreign broadcasting, on April 4, 2008, the state-owned Audiovisual extérieur de la France (AEF) holding is established. This holding included radio services RFI together with Monte Carlo Doualiya, and television service France 24. In 2014, the holding changed its name to France Médias Monde. According to the official website of the holding, its weekly audience is about 100 million.

Creation of a new structure, which included both radio and television broadcasting services, caused the need for re-stating foreign broadcasting tasks. The law of March 5, 2009, amended the Law of September 30, 1986. According to it, the company responsible for the French audiovisual sector abroad has a mission to promote the dissemination and promotion of French language, of French and Francophone cultures, as well as the influence of France in the world, notably through the programming and broadcasting of television and radio programs or online public communication services relating to French, French, European and international news⁴. Such statement of the mission of French foreign broadcasting service is active till now.

The decree of January 25, 2012, specified the tasks of the national company in the field of foreign broadcasting. In particular, the objective of the foreign audiovisual sector is to promote the influence of France and the Francophonie and to promote democratic and republican values at a global level. The company in charge of the outside audiovisual sector of France aims to propose an alternative to the existing media on the international scene by offering in several languages, on all the media, a French vision of the international news. Foreign broadcasting service must also promote French and Francophone culture in all its diversity. The realization of this ambition implies strengthening the international media presence of France⁵.

Conclusions.

1) France, despite its rather active attention to the development of broadcasting, both within its borders and within its colonial empire, was unprepared to actively use it for foreign policy purposes,

¹ PEULEUX (2018). *MONTE-CARLO DOUALIYA*. http://radios.peuleux.eu/radios/m/montecarlodoualiya.html (2018, July, 05)

² TV5 Monde (2018). *Présentation*. http://www.tv5monde.com/cms/chaine-francophone/tv5monde/La-chaine/p-5857-Presentation.htm (2018, July, 12).

France 24 (2018). France 24, the company. http://www.france24.com/en/company (2018, July, 12).

⁴ Journal officiel de la République française (2009). LOI n 2009-258 du 5 mars 2009 relative à la communication audiovisuelle et au nouveau service public de la télévision, https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/eli/loi/2009/3/5/MCCX0821956L/jo/texte (2018, July, 14).

⁵ Legifrance (2012). Décret n 2012-85 du 25 janvier 2012 fixant le cahier des charges de la société nationale de programme en charge de l'audiovisuel extérieur de la France. https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/eli/decret/2012/1/25/MCCE1132195D/jo/texte (2018, July, 14).

in particular, in the context of the outbreak of the Second World War. France's propagandistic efforts were clearly weak compared to Nazi Germany's effective propaganda machine, and the lack of real counterpropaganda as well as of pro-active position in using the mass media to establish French agenda aggravated the country's vulnerability.

- 2) The role of broadcasting as an instrument of cross-border propaganda was well-rated by the Free France movement, which not only formulated the objectives of broadcasting which were adequate to the realities and objectives of liberation, but also managed to ensure an efficient broadcasting, both with the help of Allies and on its own.
- 3) The period of the Cold War was marked by distancing France from the use of broadcasting in the ideological confrontation between the USA and the USSR. The emphasis on promoting French culture and language, while preserving political neutrality, shaped the format of foreign broadcasting which has been preserved to this day.
- 4) The emergence and growth of the influence of global news TV channels have also been a challenge for the French foreign broadcasting service. The desire to have own "voice" in the international media space, to use media potential to advocate the Francophonie and counter the dominance of Anglo-Saxon culture prompted France to rethink the role of broadcasting in its foreign policy strategy. It was manifested both in the normative dimension (identifying specific goals, objectives, and priorities of foreign broadcasting) and in the institutional dimension (a special international TV channel France 24 and national holding which integrates and coordinates the work of all foreign broadcasting services of France.

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