



War and Armed Conflict in the Information Space

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ABSTRACT

New generation of wars is characterized by the effective application of information – from information and combat actions support to the actual information war. Sociopolitical processes are impacted by means of mediatization. Acquiring specific content, noopolitics becomes an important activity of government institutions. It seems to have the capability to realize national interests and information security. The article identifies the distinctive features of information support of combat actions and information war as a product of the mass-media technology. The authors aim to identify the specificity of mass media war and criteria for its manifestation.

Keywords: Information War, Mass Media, Mass-Media War, Armed Conflict

JEL Classifications: D83, F52, O31, O33, O38

1. INTRODUCTION

The opposing sides in wars and armed conflicts pursue goals with specificity in various areas: Spatial and geographic, political, economic, spiritual and ideological. In the spiritual and ideological area, it is the spread of misinformation that compensates and changes the value and meaning of life benchmarks, dementalization of nation. In real life, these objectives are closely intertwined and realized in joint areas. Hence the appeal of experts to analyze the boundary forms of conflict opposition (Bukharin, 2007; Tsyganov and Kadymov, 2008). But the peculiarity of information influence and its main aim are united – “firm securing of most of the strategic resources of the victim country by the aggressor country. At that, the ‘transfer’ of these resources is carried out by the elite of the victim country voluntarily, because it is not perceived as the seizure by the enemy, but rather as cooperation and mutual assistance” (Karyakin and Kozin, 2014).

In scientific terms, it is extremely important to find a difference between conventional information counteraction and even fight,

which is fully justified and legitimate, when each of the parties proves their values and benefits, and the information war, during which the forms and methods of lies, misinformation and deception dominate, with the aim to break the resistance during the combat actions and dementalize the nation, change values and social guidelines in peacetime. It is necessary to clarify the objective factors and subjective conditions for the emergence of information war, criteria of its manifestations and peculiarities in the mass-media area, which can be termed as mass-media war.

2. METHODOLOGY

Theoretical and methodological basis of the study was general scientific principles of structural and functional analysis – A method of research of system objects in conjunction with the specific historical research method, making it possible to trace the genesis, formation and development of the object in its relationship with other phenomena of social and political area. Application of the principle of historicism is completed with using the principle of an interdisciplinary approach, since the phenomenon

of noopolitics, wars and armed conflicts is directly related to philosophy, journalism and political science. The complexity of the study allows showing the problem in its political aspect. Coverage of wars and armed conflicts is studied from the point of view of the unity of empirical and theoretical, global and local. Method of critical realism was also used. This method of philosophical study of the reality is commonly used to explore and understand not only the everyday reality, but also the broader social and cultural contexts that influence it and shape it through “means, canons and resources.” Among the methods used in the study, the method of content analysis of publications in the media can also be distinguished, which has traditionally been used to study texts. Despite the abundant literature on information war, the scientific researchers face many outstanding issues related to delving into the complex processes of information warfare. While experts in the field of information technology fight, due to using specific facts, figures and the actual physical processes and material objects, have well advanced in their ideas about the ways, forms and methods of its organization, the information and psychological area is yet considered quite abstract. Mass-media war is even more insufficiently explored – First and foremost, because of the complexities of its research as a virtual phenomenon, to which the applicability of existing methods of forecasting is very conditional.

3. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Mass information has become an effective and highly efficient factor in social development. High saturation of society with technical means of information, globalization of information space on the one hand, democratization of public life, erasing national borders, expansion of individual rights and freedoms on the other hand did not just lead to humanization and rationalization of social relations, but also to aggravation and appearance of new contradictions, to the search for new opportunities to resolve them. Inclusion of information in the category of the most important resources has actualized the problem of struggle for the possession of this resource, for the right to distribute this resource and use it for own purposes, especially when defending and securing the national interests of states. The problem is addressed by the development of the information strategy and the emergence of a new paradigm based on the use of “soft” rather than “brute” force, dominated by the primacy of ideas, spiritual values, moral norms, laws and ethics. As a result, experts have turned to noopolitics as the method of implementation of foreign policy in the information age. “Noopolitics is a form of political leadership that is needed to interact with the noosphere, the widest information space of consciousness that combines cyberspace (or ‘Network’) and infosphere (cyberspace plus mass media)” (Grinyaev, 2004). The term was introduced by the American scientists Arquilla and Ronfeldt: Noopolitics is an international political strategy in the information society, which emphasizes the primacy of ideas, interests, norms, laws and morality – it will rather work through “soft power” than “brute” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1999). Mass media not only help bring together the countries and peoples in their ability of peaceful co-living, but also bring to face and confront the differences and divergences that were not previously included in the “agenda.” New definitions of noopolitics appeared in the scientific literature, defining it as an information strategy (Nikonov, 2013).

Journalistic approach to the assessment of this phenomenon leads to the fact that any intensification of information exchange during the exacerbation of international relations gives reason to declare the beginning of the information war. Therefore, reports of “oil wars,” “bank wars,” “milk wars,” “sanctions wars,” “road wars,” etc., appear in mass media. This can be explained by the fact that the category of “war” and other similar concepts are convenient as the categorical tools for description of the phenomena of a new era, which in their consequences and damage are comparable to war. All of them reflect the conflict – A conflict in which opposing, conflicting parties are trying to impose their will on the opposing side, using a certain reason for the conflict or its subject.

However, such an approach to the evaluation of these phenomena, in our opinion, is fraught with the danger of forming a lightweight, covert attention to real information war, fraught with the danger of a new time.

The complexity and uncertainty of formation of conceptual representations about the information war as a kind of social conflict, the primary means of which is information, are indicated by the presence of a wide variety of approaches to its definition. Manoilo identifies three large groups of scientists investigating these social processes and phenomena (Manoilo, 2008). Representatives of the first group – Pocheptsov, Rastorgouev, Pirumov – reduce the concept of information war to specific information activities and operations, information methods and means of corporate competition or armed struggle. The second group, dominated by representatives of the military departments and military researchers, attribute the information war to the area of military confrontation (Kostarev et al., 2014; Vorobyov and Kiselyov, 2014). But if the western notions and settings for this type of warfare are recorded in directives, regulations and manuals for the armed forces, in our country they are presented in the theoretical views of the researchers, such as Grinyaev, Modestov, Rodionov, Kostin, Komov, Frolov, Markomenko and others. The third group unites the authors who consider the information war a phenomenon of a peaceful period of interstate confrontation, which allows to achieve foreign policy goals in a non-violent (as opposed to power – military) way. These are views of Emelyanov, Vorontsova, Streltsova, Prokofiev, Serebryakov, Krutskikh, Fedorov et al. (Belyaev, 2014; Lisichkin and Shelepin, 1999; Tkachenko, 2011; Pocheptsov, 2000; Panarin, 2008; 2011; 2014).

Radical change in the geopolitical picture of the world, the increasing role of the world public opinion, achievement by many states of the informational stage of development, revolutionary changes in technology and weaponry and many other reasons have caused a change in the structural components of the armed confrontation. Spiritual component of military force, as well as the material, has undergone a thorough transformation during the development of mankind in the continuous wars and armed conflicts. According to Litvinenko, Kurysheva and Potolokova, it is connected with social media, new media, the development of internet communications, new forms of political communication on the Internet (Litvinenko, 2012), as well as with the development of internet technology (Kurysheva and Potolokova, 2013). While the initial impact on the mind, the psyche and the enemy’s will was

mainly indirect – through inflicting losses with “inclusions” of the informational influence – dissemination of lies, misinformation, and later through the propaganda and the organized psychological impact, at the present time the information influence acquires independent nature in the form of information support of combat operations and information operations. But one-way or another, with an increasing role of a spiritual component, the respective capabilities and degree of exposure to the media as a weapon also increased. From a signal indicating the start of the battle and the fiery speech of the leader to information war as an independent phenomenon of political confrontation – this is the metamorphosis of the information in the armed conflict.

Information technology minimizes the use of physical violence. However, the impact of information can also be violent when the power of the information violence imposes values, forcing to recognize them as legitimate. At the same time, the underlying power relations remain latent. The use of modern information weapon characterizes the historical tendency of transition from wars with the physical destruction of the enemy to wars focused on the demoralization of the enemy, suppression of their will and ability to resist.

According to Pirumov, the information war in peacetime, which mainly consists of the intelligence-gathering and political and psychological operations against the enemy and ensuring the own information security, is mostly hidden. In the period of threat, the information component is aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of the planned military operations. But with the outbreak of the combat operation, the information resource of the enemy is massively impacted, the reduction of combat capabilities of the own forces is prevented, measures are taken to reduce the moral and psychological stability of the enemy and to neutralize information that affects the morale of the own forces, the intelligence-gathering activities are carried out, and the secrecy of actions of the own forces is ensured (Pirumov and Rodionov, 1997).

4. DISCUSSION

Historically, some authors consider days of ancient China and ancient Rome as the beginning of the information wars, when the use of deception, misinformation or misrepresentation of the enemy influenced the course of the armed confrontation. Despite the fact that information as a weapon of moral and psychological impact has an ancient history, it would be wrong to evaluate attempts to use deception or frightening signs and signals as the beginning of the history of information wars. It is difficult to agree with the statement of Professor S.P. Rastorgouev that “information wars on our planet were conducted since people have learned to speak, understand, and in accordance with this understanding to intimidate and fool each other” (Rastorgouev, 2003), because we can’t even speak of the beginning of chronology of the conventional wars from this period. It is quite common to consider any informational intensification of conflict interaction of the parties as the information war.

Another extreme characterizes the studies in which the authors relate the opportunity to manifest the information wars to future

wars, suggesting that, on the one hand, in the long term this will be caused by the technological capabilities of information influence and domination of the information component in the conflict-prone counteraction, and on the other hand – by the rejection to use weapons of massive fire destruction (nuclear, chemical and conventional) (Slipchenko, 2002). Experts in the field of study of wars and armed conflicts call informational support of battles and preparations to them an information war, which is quite fair. This information component of combat actions consists of two elements. The first of these is information and technology, which implements the concept of network warfare. “According to the authors, network confrontation or network-centric warfare is the best term proposed to date to describe the way of organization and conduct of warfare in the information age” (Grinyaev, 2004). The network war is conceptually based on the information superiority, which allows to increase the combat power of the forces by effectively connecting smart objects into a single information space of the theater of military operations. Ultimately, this allows to achieve widespread awareness, to increase the speed of bringing orders, higher tempo of operations, more damaging effect, greater vitality and degree of self-synchronization. In the network war, the battlefield transforms into the concept of battle space, which along with the traditional goals includes the goals of the virtual sphere – emotions, perception and mind of the enemy forces. This aspect is given little attention in scientific works on the network war.

The second element of the information component of combat actions is aimed at the purposes of the virtual sphere, which solves a crucial task of information and psychological impact. American experts consider psychological operations as actions to bring certain information to the American and foreign audiences about the goals and objectives of military operations, as well as to provide opportunities for the command to bring up information through mass media to a potential enemy about intentions and capabilities of US forces and their allies. Within the framework of psychological operations, the work is carried out on the establishment and maintenance of relations between the forces and the civilian authorities, organizations and local communities in the friendly, neutral and hostile areas of deployment of units and subdivisions of the US Army. Thus, it can be seen that the combat actions in the information space in the information war are conducted in the technical and psychological areas. In the technical area, objects of effects of protection are information technology systems. Moral and psychological stability of the armed forces, public opinion of the population of the opposing side in the conflict and third countries are exposed during the information and psychological warfare.

Goals of the information war are reached through such impact on the enemy, in which they: (a) Cannot provide decent resistance due to loss (distortion, destruction) of an information resource of combat actions; (b) on their own, without coercion (because of fraud or beliefs) make decisions that are favorable to the attacking side.

Means of conducting a cyber war are very diverse: Computer viruses characterized by high penetration ability through various channels in the programs, securing and breeding them, suppressing

and disabling them; “logic bombs,” “werewolf programs,” “information killer programs” integrated in information and control centers of military and civilian infrastructure in advance, and distorting, destroying information or disrupting the functioning of software and hardware by the signal or at a preset time; programs of unauthorized access to information resources of the enemy to steal intelligence-gathering data; means of suppression of enemy information systems, integrating in them to displace the information or launch the propaganda intervention; biotechnological tools that are based on cell engineering and incapacitate computer boards; means of integrating viruses, logic bombs, werewolf programs, information killer programs, software affecting the staff (“zombieing”) into information systems (viral guns, integration in microprocessors, international computer networks, etc.); mass media.

The complexity of the study of mass-media war is evidenced by the following list of tasks that can be solved by conducting information warfare of the so-called “second generation”: Creating an atmosphere of soullessness and immorality, negative attitude to the cultural heritage of the enemy; manipulation by public consciousness and political focus of social groups of the country population in order to create political tension and chaos; destabilization of the political relations between the parties, associations and movements to provoke conflict, incite distrust, suspicion and aggravation of political struggle, provoking repressions against the opposition and even civil war; reduction of information provision of governing bodies, inspiration of erroneous management decisions; misinformation of the population about the operations of the state bodies, undermining their authority, discrediting the government; provoking social, political, ethnic and religious conflicts; initiation of strikes, riots and other acts of economic protest; difficulty in making important decisions by governing bodies; undermining the international prestige of the state and its cooperation with other countries; damage to the vital interests of the state in the political, economic, defense and other fields.

In our opinion, these tasks constitute the main content of the mass-media war presented in journalism as a contemporary information war.

Rastorgouev correctly notes that “journalists do not bother to carry out analytical work on the understanding terms such as “information war” and “information weapon” that they attributed to the media world, and in an environment where professionals keep silent, a situation of “information fog enveloped in mystery” emerges (Rastorgouev, 2003). However, the journalists are soldiers of the information war front. According to the report of the human rights organization “Reporters without Borders,” for the part of 2014, 66 journalists were killed worldwide. Many categories of a clearly military nature are applied in journalism – “information bombs,” “information mines,” “information attacks,” “information blockades,” etc., which are not paid attention in scientific researches.

In our view, the theory of mass-media war requires serious development and deepening, despite the fact that many studies

have focused on precisely this phenomenon, as we have noted. The first step is to define more precisely the use of the category of “information war” as applied to phenomena prior to a conventional war and accompanying it (cyber war, network-centric warfare) and to the evaluation of the phenomenon that we call mass-media war. The category used in journalism is not essential for consumption in everyday life, but it is very important in the development of policy in the field of national security in general and information security in particular. Unfortunately, in the studies devoted to the mass-media war, the authors focus on the certain special features of the social and information processes and rotate the use of categories “information war,” “psychological war,” “cold war,” “moral and psychological war.” It should be kept in mind that the features characterizing these phenomena are common in the use of the impact of information and psychological nature, the purpose of which is to change the system of values and established norms of behavior. Due to intense impact of mass media, the cultural and ideological expansion by bringing the outside foreign cultural values has been implemented and continues to be implemented.

5. CONCLUSION

We will denote just some issues that are relevant to the research and development of the theory of mass-media war (for readability and due to incompleteness of terminology, we will use the term “information war” later in this article). The distinctive features of the information war as a special form of political confrontation in the new environment are the stated goals, intensity of information impact, funds involved and methods used.

The level of incompatibility and hostility of interests of the parties in the conflict creates its objective basis. The degree of use by the parties of the existing media for confrontation is the subjective side. This degree depends on the political will of the political elite (political leader), focus on achieving excellence and victory in confrontation, as well as the development of information and communication infrastructure. Therefore, information and conflicts (in the broad sense) by the degree of tension and intensity can be divided into information wars and information conflicts (in the narrow sense).

Information war involves preliminary goal setting by the side that implements it, formulation and drafting tasks to the relevant agencies and bodies that implement it. At the same, the enemy is impacted in intense, massive mode. In contrast to the information conflict, where the information confrontation can be one-time and short-term, information war, as a rule, has a longer duration and, most importantly, more significant and weighty consequences. Informational influence in the information war is characterized with different depth, richness of forms and methods, there is a struggle of values, worldviews, ideologies. This is the most acute form of information confrontation between states, with the hidden control of the political, economic, diplomatic, social, military, and other processes of the state of the enemy in its course. The main subjects are the foreign services of the state, special services, outreach structures. The basic tool is mass media and communications.

As part of the expansion of research of the conflicts based on information technology, a more detailed description and characterization is required of such forms of conflict information confrontation as information collision, information blockade, information operations, and information threats.

Of fundamental importance in the development of the theory of information war is to take into account such its feature as a fundamental change in spatial and temporal boundaries. While in a conventional war – at least in the wars of the 20th century – there was the concept of the front and rear, the global nature of the information space erases these representations; borders of contact with the enemy do not exist in the information war. In such a war, impact on the consciousness of the people is held both from outside and inside the country, and the latter is crucial. In this situation, a so-called “fifth column” plays a significant role in the information fights. The formal start of the information war should be considered as the approval of the relevant official documents – concepts, doctrines, laws, policies, statements and speeches of the government officials. This is also proved by the recognition of the beginning of the information war by the opposing party to the conflict. There are also secondary, indirect evidence and circumstances that allow the country to enable any means of confrontation. New technical communication capabilities allow officials, even without making statements at official meetings, receptions, briefings, etc., to indirectly trigger an exacerbation of information fight, escalate the situation and control the information flows.

Just like a conventional war, the information war should include specific strategy and tactics. The tactics can be seen in a set of techniques, methods and tools, the art of political strategists and specialists engaged in it. They are all designed by theorists, were successfully applied and continue to be applied in wars of past, present and will be applied in future with even greater intensity. But what about the strategy? The strategy is defined by political attitudes of the parties, the objectives of confrontation. The main difference of the information war from the military conflict is subversive activities in the field of information in relation to the other party with the strategic objectives.

A credit should be paid to the western experts for having a rich practice of both information operations and information war. American experience in information war is successfully assimilated by other countries as well, particularly those with common strategic interests.

Change of political regimes in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Moldova, Tunisia and Egypt was held without external force action through the establishment of an external management control over motivation of participants of the protest movements. A lack of effort of the opposition in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya has been supplemented with armed intervention.

Information confrontation in various forms as a conflict has as an energy source in form of the information that actuates the protest groups. Such nodal points of global information networks as Twitter and Facebook initiate protest movement. Provoked for

“revolutionary” actions through information attacks from social networks Facebook and Twitter, the Arab societies have set in motion a revolutionary tsunami that swept across the Middle East; social networks has become a kind of “fuse” of social unrest in the form of a “flash mob,” which was organized by sending messages about planned rallies and protest actions through social networks, e-mail and mobile phones, to a pre-selected “clientele” – their clients of influence in the Arab East, who by the outside signal gathered at the right time and in the right place the protesters using the so-called “word of mouth” (Karyakin and Kozin, 2014).

The nature of the content of the information space associated with the crisis in Ukraine suggests the deployment of “mass-media war” against Russia. All of its features are clear: First, the recognition by the Ukrainian authorities of Russia being the aggressor country: “The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine recognizes the Russian Federation as the aggressor state and encourages international partners of Ukraine to prevent impunity of those guilty of crimes against humanity committed from the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine,” – says the text approved by the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine announced Russia as the aggressor country and accused it of crimes against humanity. <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2015/01/27/ukraina-obyavila-rossiyu-stranoyagressorom-vinovnoy-v-prestupleniyakh-protiv-chelovechnosti.html>); second, the ban on Russian journalists by the resolution of the Verkhovna Rada: It provided to “temporarily, until the end of the special operation in the Donbas suspend the accreditation of journalists and technical staff of some Russian mass media in the government of Ukraine.” (Rada voted to limit the work of Russian journalists in Ukraine. <http://rian.com.ua/story/20150212/363402287.html>); third, the revision of historical facts and events in the textbooks and the statements of officials: “We all remember the invasion of the USSR to Germany and Ukraine,” – said Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk in the air of the German TV channel ARD (Yatsenyuk: During World War II, the USSR invaded the Ukraine and Germany. <http://ria.ru/world/20150108/1041812617.html#ixzz3UIXL2rFW>). It is more difficult to assess the nature of the war (defensive, offensive) due to the fact that the Russian side has not decided on the possibility and necessity of its conduct and actions of the Russian side resemble information campaigns.

Despite the widespread use of the category “information war” both in the scientific literature and in journalism, the theory of “information war” remains a subject of discussion in scientific research and military research circles.

It is necessary to distinguish between the use of information as a weapon in the ongoing conflict in peacetime and wartime. It is therefore advisable to characterize these phenomena by using categories of “information war” and “mass-media war.” The use of mass media as the information weapon, i.e. to suppress the will of the enemy, to impose the own values, to demoralize nation, and as a result – to achieve superiority over the enemy – is the goal of mass-media war.

The distinctive features of information war as a special form of political confrontation in the new environment are the stated

goals, the intensity of information counteraction, the means and methods used.

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