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INFORMATION COMPONENT AND FACTORS OF THE HYBRID AGGRESSION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AGAINST UKRAINE

This article provides the main results of the study of the information component of Russia's hybrid aggression against Ukraine in the context of interstate relations between two countries. The relevance of this topic arises from the fact that participants in international relations are increasingly faced with new, non-traditional forms of warfare and conflict, which have become a permanent feature of the current stage of evolution in international relations. With this in mind, the article describes the key factors and components of the Russian Federation's hybrid information aggression in the context of an open military confrontation and temporary occupation of part of the Ukrainian territory. The peculiarities of the information component of the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid confrontation were studied, the security dimension of international relations, the state of which affects the geopolitical conjuncture of neighboring states in the region, primarily European, is partially disclosed.

By analyzing the main directions and factors of the Russian destructive invasion in the information space of Ukraine, it is considered that this invasion is part of complex hybrid aggression that targets the general population. In the context of determining the factors and conditions that have a destabilizing effect on the security situation in Ukraine, it would be important to consider the concept of "Russian World" and its derivatives. It is determined that one of the critical factors of socio-political destabilization of Ukraine by the Russian Federation is the concept of "Russian world" – a neo-imperial geopolitical and ideological doctrine that aims to theoretically substantiate and help practically reincarnate Russia as an imperial superpower state within the borders of 1914.

The thesis is also deduced that the Russian information policy towards Ukraine has evolved from a soft conviction in the Eurasian integration under the umbrella of the Russian Federation to hard coercion with the use of political, diplomatic, economic, energy and information levers of pressure.

Keywords: information war, hybrid aggression, information space, information security, Ukrainian-Russian relations.

Articulation of issue. The world community is increasingly confronted with new, non-traditional forms of conflict, which have become a constant attribute of the current stage of international relations. We can observe a quantitative and qualitative shift toward hybrid forms of confrontation, where the information component plays the key role. This fact requires an examination of the nature of modern information conflicts and the concept of security, which are also subject to constant change. Local information wars and hybrid conflicts of varying scale and intensity have already become a permanent form of solving political, territorial, ethnonational, religious, economic and other contradictions. This is why research into the information component of Russia's hybrid aggression towards Ukraine has become critical, given the need to assess the main threats to national security. A clear definition of the main factors of Russian information aggression will make it possible to develop effective countermeasures and neutralize destabilizing influences.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Even before the open phase of aggression of the Russian Federation towards Ukraine, Ukrainian and foreign researchers studied scientific questions of unconventional forms and methods of conducting interstate confrontations – hybrid conflicts, asymmetric and information confrontations and since 2014, the topic of hybrid aggression has become existentially

weighty. It is worth noting the large-scale studies of communication technologies by H. Pocheptsov[1] and information security by V. Horbulin[2], who have thoroughly studied the information challenges of modern confrontations. In addition, the fundamental studies of H. Perepelytsia[3], V. Kopiika[4], M. Doroshko[5] and B. Parakhonskyi[6] are devoted to the chosen topic, who described the hybrid nature of Russian aggression. S. Danylenko[7], H. Yavorska[8], E. Mahda[9], O. Yatsyuk, and other Ukrainian scholars have studied communication, political, socio-cultural, and especially information aspects of the hybrid Russian-Ukrainian war. However, the need for analytical characterization of the information component and factors of Russia's hybrid aggression towards Ukraine is still relevant.

The purpose of the study is to provide an analytical overview of the information component of Russia's hybrid aggression towards Ukraine and the specifics of its implementation in the context of interstate relations of both countries.

Statement of basic materials. The nature of Ukrainian-Russian relations is determined primarily by the antagonism of the national interests of Ukraine and Russia. This situation, in turn, puts us before the need for a fundamental analysis of the relations between the two countries and the evolution of their historical development.

It should be noted that it is the information component of hybrid aggression that comes first, because it does not require significant, compared with actions in physical space, investment of resources and forces; allows to exercise influence on a global scale, regardless of geographical distance or national borders; actually regulated by neither international agreements nor the national laws of most countries.

In the 21st century, classical military aggressions are being replaced by so-called "hybrid wars", which have a hidden nature and are conducted mainly in the political, economic, informational and social spheres. Armed forces are deployed in small numbers to solve individual tasks. The center of efforts is shifting from the physical destruction of the enemy in the pale of a large-scale war to the use of methods of "soft power" against the enemy country with the aim of disintegration and change of its leadership, incorporating to the sphere of its influence[10].

An example of such war is Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, which has become a long-term factor influencing the Ukrainian political, economic, military and social spheres. Russia has applied the concept of "hybrid war" towards Ukraine, which is more unique from a structural-functional view: in its form, it is "hybrid" and in content, it is "asymmetrical". The characteristic type of war was demonstrated first by the annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014, after – the support of radical elements and the full-scale invasion of Russian units in the eastern regions of Ukraine. In our case, we are dealing not just with enemy propaganda, but also with the "war of meanings" for which all possible information delivery channels are used. The main structural element in this war were simulacrums – images of what does not really exist. Examples of such figurative constructs are "Kyiv junta", "Ukrainian fascists", "atrocities of punitive battalions", "crucified boys" etc[11].

In the context of security destabilization factors, a key role is assigned to information campaigns. The confrontation of the global information society era distinguishes the principle of demassification, based on the use of information to achieve the desired effects with a significant limitation of the number of combat factors in a particular place, while increasing the speed and pace in movement of troops on the battlefield

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[3] Перепелиця, Г. (2017). *Україна-Росія: війна в умовах співіснування*. Київ: Стилос, 880.

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in order to make it difficult for the enemy to notice such movement in a timely manner. This principle of war requires an increase in the number and quality of sources of information both in the area of hostilities and outside it, which is ensured by combining into a single system of data obtained by intelligence, surveillance and recognition systems, the use of sensors as the main maneuvering elements, sensors as tools of moral and psychological influence.

Russian propaganda, disinformation and information attacks have recently become daily attributes of political and military events. Today, no one will be surprised by reports of information attacks on the computer systems of Ukrainian state institutions, theft of confidential data from closed networks or the spread of false information.

The main task of Russia's information aggression towards Ukraine is to manipulate the masses, disorientation and disinformation of citizens, intimidate the people with their power. Russian propaganda acts according to the best examples of J. Goebbels. We can definitely say that the information campaign towards Ukraine began long before Euromaidan. The Kremlin has annoyingly bent its line that Ukraine's bright future is solely in the Customs Union and the deepest integration with Russia[1].

For a clearer understanding of the negative consequences of Russia's information aggression, it is necessary to characterize the peculiarities of modern hybrid confrontation:

– non-standard, complex and multi-level confrontation, which can involve both state and non-state actors;

– combination of conventional (traditional) and unconventional means of warfare – irregular military tactics, hired forces, terrorist acts, violence, information and psychological influences, etc.;

– mobility and a high level of flexibility, as hybrid warfare always adapts to new conditions and circumstances, which distinguishes it from convention warfare;

– the use of the latest unconventional weapons, which include such widely available technologies as smartphones or personal computers;

– the use of mass communication and propaganda, taking into account the fact that for hybrid warfare, masking actions in physical space comes to the fore[2].

As it turned out, Ukraine was not ready to conduct this kind of confrontation. New challenges from the Russian Federation pose a deep threat to the information security of our country. Ensuring information security requires updating, developing and practical implementation of the regulatory framework for the concept of information policy in the field of defense on the basis of determining relevant national interests, threats and challenges in the field of information security.

The main factors that caused the vulnerability of the Ukrainian information space to Russia's hybrid aggression, in particular, are:

– lack of a clear coordinated state information policy;

– financing of information infrastructure (both public and private) on a "residual basis" due to economic reasons;

– expansion to Ukraine of foreign manufacturers of information products that objectively prevail national ones in product quality, economic opportunities, as well as apply an aggressive market strategy;

– insufficient professional level of information workers, lack of a domestic system of their training;

– technology lag of information infrastructure and its complete dependence on the supply of foreign equipment, the decline of the domestic telecommunication industry[3].

Each of these factors is able to destroy the national information space, which will lead to negative consequences for the state and society.

It is worth noting that it is the information component of hybrid aggression that comes first, since it does not require significant investments of resources and forces compared to actions in the physical space; allows to exert influence on a global scale, despite geographical distance or national borders; is not actually regulated by either international agreements or the national legislation of most countries.

The main components of the Information Influence of the Russian Federation on Ukraine are:

– gradual reduction of Ukraine's international image in order to weaken its geopolitical significance;

– appropriate dosing and distortion of information in order to destabilize the situation in the country and implement its own policy of "controlled chaos";

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−formation of the stereotype of minority and recurrence of Ukrainians, as well as the corresponding destruction of the feelings of the nation and the people;

−dominance of the Russian language, culture and traditions to establish self-identification while displacing the Ukrainian language and culture[1].

This is confirmed by the tendency of Russian media coverage of events in Ukraine and open propaganda of their imperial ambitions, derogatory characteristics of our Homeland in the statements of Russia's top leadership, according to the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin, "...Ukraine is not even a state! What is Ukraine? Part of its territory is Eastern Europe, and part, also significant, is donated by us".

Typically, Russian TV and radio channel programs constantly used methods of "dosed" information, disinformation with simultaneous distortion of events, submission of a mix of facts and personal opinions and assumptions in their context, selective (necessary and useful only to Russia) information, information reframing, providing information such as "no comments" after preliminary setting up an object that perceives information, as well as exaggeration and silence. With the help of certain linguistic and behavioral skills and techniques, Russian journalists try to influence the psyche of the population so that later individuals think that they have independently reached a certain conclusion based on their own life experience and awareness[2].

An effective means of psychological influence remain broadcasts of FM radio stations (mostly Russian-speaking or those where the Russian-language product, is dominated by a Ukrainian-language one), which, due to the combination with musical accompaniment, significantly increase the suffrage and non-criticality of the perception of radio information directed at the listener.

The information component of the hybrid war of the Russian Federation is aimed at all three target audiences. For the external user, the image of the "legitimacy" of the Russian actions in Ukraine is composed – "the reunification of Crimea and the city of Russian glory of Sevastopol with the mother Russia" and the arguments of the Khrushchev era regarding the "injustice of Crimea's accession to the USSR in 1954", deliberately forgetting the fact that with the accession of Crimea to the USSR to the RSFSR, the Ukrainian ethnic lands of Bilhorod, Voronezh, Kursk, Briansk and Rostov regions have gone. The same arguments are absolutely valid for The Russian audience, stimulating public opinion in the right direction for the Kremlin.

The same situation has developed with the creation of the image of the illegitimacy of the Ukrainian government, which came to power through a "military coup". When in the West and in Russia the image of fascists is predominantly formed exclusively from representatives of the Ukrainian authorities and part of Ukrainians who "honor the Nazi collaborationist Bandera", the image of the "fraternal people" is depicted for the residents of ORDLO. For the territories where aggression is carried out, such propaganda created a symbolism of identifying a Ukrainian with a Bandera (nationalist), a Bandera with a fascist.

The aggressive information campaign of the Russian media, constant provocations by the preparation of rocket attacks, the destruction that the Ukrainian army allegedly carries out, affect the emotional state of people in constant stress and oppression, which contributes to even greater destabilization.

A common symbol that has a psychological impact on the population, especially Donbas and Crimea, is the idea of helping the "fraternal people", "Russian (Slavic) unity", closely intertwined with linguistic identification. Accordingly, the longstanding use of rhetoric to protect the Russian-speaking population, professed by Moscow, nostalgia for the Soviet past and greatness, finds support among the local population. Such rhetoric dictates the tactics of warfare, when rebel terrorists, directed by officers of the MRI [Russian Military Intelligence] of the Russian Federation, covering civilians, conduct military actions[3]. The separatists organize provocations by firing mortar and anti-aircraft grenades at Ukrainian army positions installed in the courtyard of tower-block residential complexes where civilians live. These actions of terrorists are trying to organize mass killings of civilians by the hands of the forces of the anti-terrorist operation, which reflects the essence of Russia's new dirty and hidden war.

A relatively inefficient but widely used method is the use of a religious component of the information campaign, in particular the creation of a "Russian Orthodox Army" in Donbas[4].

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Not so effective, but also widely used factors of psychological pressure is the appeal to local Donbas stamps, which were formed for years from the times of the Soviet Union. The use of such slogans, such as "Donbas doesn't talk wet", is aimed at only self-assurance in the power of regional identity.

It is also worth touching on the sustainability of psychological processing of the population and occupied territories. It is the psychological factor that is the main reason for the significant outflow of the population from the Donbas, both in the direction of Russia (caused by hysterical calls of the Russian media) and to safer regions of Ukraine. There is no doubt that Russia will continue to test the nerves of Ukrainians for resilience. Instead, Ukrainians still need to find a "good cure" against the psychological terror of the "Russian brothers".

Information aggression of neighbors was carried out throughout Ukraine, but it proved to be effective only in the most Russified regions – in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, where the non-official doctrine of the "Russian World" was rooted the most. Political pressure and economic sanctions of the West limit Russia's use of direct military aggression towards Ukraine. Therefore, the information component has every chance to become the main factor in the confrontation between Kyiv and Moscow. Thus, in a hybrid war, information security is one of the priorities in protecting the state sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, national interests, consolidating society and restoring the territorial integrity of our Homeland[1].

In the context of determining the factors and conditions that destabilize the security situation in Ukraine, it would be important to consider the concept of the "Russian World" and its derivatives.

One of the critical factors of social and political destabilization of Ukraine by the Russian Federation is the concept of "Russian World", it is inherently a non-imperial geopolitical ideological doctrine, which aims to substantiate theoretically and help practically reincarnate Russia as an imperial superpower in the borders of 1914.

At the beginning of its development, the "Russian World" was the ideological basis for the geopolitical formation of the Eurasian Union, that is, the restoration of the former USSR in new conditions, the most important component of which was to be loyal to pro-Russian Ukraine. However, later the concept was formed to justify direct military aggression towards Ukraine: "to protect the Russian and Russian-speaking population"[2].

It can be reasonably assumed that the concept of the "Russian World" is in fact a modernized version of the traditional Russian great-empire idea. And this idea, in turn, cannot be implemented without Ukraine. Therefore, "Russian World" in any of its variants is clearly or covertly hostile to the Ukrainian national idea, to the Ukrainian statehood.

It is clear that the imperial ideologue and practitioners primarily mean Ukraine, without which this Russian imperial project will never be realized. Only thanks to the joining of the Cossack state Hetmanate Muscovy became the Russian Empire. Without Ukraine, the Russian Federation has been in the status of a regional leader for 25 years and, despite all the "titanic efforts" of the Kremlin, cannot reach a higher level. In the end, this was one of the reasons for the modern Ukrainian-Russian war, namely, the desire to return Kyiv to the geopolitical orbit of Moscow, the final destruction of The Ukrainian statehood, the complete assimilation of Ukrainians. One of the effective elements of the implementation of this geopolitical plan was to be the so-called "Russian World" as a concept-justification and justification of Moscow's non-imperative policy[3]. Based on this concept, the information policy of the Russian Federation was transformed into total military disinformation aggression aimed at demonizing and completely discrediting Ukraine.

Conclusions. In general, Ukrainian society faces a serious challenge to Russia's hybrid aggression. Hybrid warfare is a war, and the main instrument of it is the creation of internal contradictions and conflicts in the state chosen for aggression, followed by their solution to achieve the political goals of aggression, which are usually achieved by war. Moreover, the Russian Federation expresses all the information components and means of the information war towards Ukraine – the media, Kremlin-bots, community opinion leaders, attempts to split the self-identification itself, propaganda stamps and clichés, disinformation and discredit.

Russia's information aggression towards Ukraine, as an important component of the hybrid war, is unprecedented in its content, scale and orientation. Its main features are that it began long before Russia's

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military aggression towards Ukraine and continues to accompany it at all stages, adapting in advance to current goals and objectives.

All information propaganda and disinformation projects, operations and activities are aimed at all segments of the population and all regions of Ukraine, as well as the population of Russia and western countries – respectively, with different target installations and tasks. As a result, Russia's hybrid aggression towards Ukraine has become a long-term factor influencing the national security of our country.

To sum up, today the Russian Federation's aggression towards Ukraine is the most complete and indicative example of a new generation war – hybrid warfare. Comprehensive analysis of the information component of this war allows us to understand in detail its forms and methods of warfare, which in turn will allow organizing more effective counteraction and leveling the existing negative consequences.

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