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The methodology of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict as a Trigger of the Evolution of Hybrid Information Operations

Introduction

On April 22, 2021, the last stage of the so-called active phase of the combat readiness test of the Southern Military District and the Western Military District took place – in other words the so-called unannounced readiness test of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the regions bordering Ukraine, in the occupied territories and on the Crimean peninsula [37]. The community of experts researching Russian activity in Europe was divided as to the real intentions of the sudden retreat of Russian troops - some believed that this was - examining the number of soldiers and the amount of accumulated equipment - a significant demonstration of force; others that this is a signal to Moscow's planned military operations, and still others that "the number and deployment of troops is a cause for concern, but does not fit in with the offensive model."[38]   In turn, according to the official propaganda of the Kremlin, expressed in the words of the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, General Sergey Shoygu, the maneuvers of the Russian troops were military exercises, completed with a full success, hence the decision to end them on April 23 and withdraw

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[37]   https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2021-04-28/wycofanie-wojsk-sily-rosyjskie-u-granic-ukrainy (28.04.2021).

[38] https://www.dw.com/pl/rosja-wycofuje-wojska-z-jakim-skutkiem-dla-ukrainy/a-57317908 (23.04.2021)

subunits to places of permanent dislocation[39]. In addition, General Shoygu stated that Moscow's military activities are a necessary response to the alleged and aggressive posture of NATO and the Alliance's expansion of its eastern flank[40].

The retreat of Russian troops from the aforementioned territories, on the one hand, appeased the internal situation in the Alliance, but on the other hand, left the member states with a great uncertainty as to the real intentions of the Kremlin in the event of such extensive military maneuvers. The actions taken by the Kremlin bring to mind the conduct of hybrid information operations, the main goal of which is to constantly mislead and surprise an opponent in such a way as to provide an advantage resulting from maximum surprise at the moment of an actual impact. Hence, the notion of "withdrawal of troops should be considered only as part of an information activities to reduce tension and a deliberate confusion, and not as a genuine military move."[41] Moreover, Russia has left some of its weapons and military units in the border areas, thus confirming at least the duality of its intentions. Besides, due to the prefix "hybrid", these new information operations are to combine various, seemingly difficult or even impossible to merge elements, so that the surprise effect is all the more spectacular. These items, in addition to the old and proven methods, are such tools as "media manipulation, cyber attacks, the use of agents of influence, coercion, political agitation, the use of energy resources and their prices as weapons (e.g. gas), the deployment of secret troops and proxy forces as well as providing them with weapons, equipment, training, logistic support, command and reconnaissance information "[42]. The whole matter is called "maskirowka 2.0", the foundations of which are based on secret diplomacy and an extensive preparation of the political, military, economic and information environment.

Hybrid information operations is a relatively new term in security studies that defines information operations conducted in the conditions of a hybrid conflict. Later in the article, the authors presented a short terminological overview to avoid possible misunderstandings as to the interpretation of the terms used in this piece of work. Then, the research methodology used for this paper was described, and the research methods together with applied techniques allowed to obtain an answer to the problem question adopted in these studies, indicated in this methodological part.

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[39] https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/...op. cit.

[40] Ibidem.

[41] Ibidem.

[42] Z. Modrzejewski, *Ewolucja rosyjskiej maskirowki*, Przegląd Geopolityczny 33 (2020), 65-79.

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It is impossible to delve into the methodology of carrying out any pre-planned activities without trying to understand the way people plan to think and perceive reality. Therefore, in order to obtain an answer to the presented problem question, the results of research on the Russian perception and decision-making process influencing the planning and implementation of information operations were first presented. Then, the outocmes of the research were compared with the characteristics of the Russian methodology of information influence, perfected by the Bolsheviks since the beginning of the 20th century. Due to this, it was possible not only to get closer to understanding the methodology of hybrid information operations but also to present a forecast (foresight) of the development of this methodology in the coming decades along with the advancement of global information technologies.

Terminological findings

A hybrid warfare still has not been interpreted consistently. However, it is possible to indicate the features that distinguish hybrid activities from irregular activities or a conventional combat. Quoting the Konsyshey V.N. and Parfenov R.V. "Hybrid warfare implies combining of traditional and irregular methods of confrontation. Since the doctrine first appeared in the United States, the authors analyze the place of the concept of hybrid war in American doctrinal documents regulating the use of armed forces. From a military point of view, the hybrid war is not yet a substantive type of operations"[43]. Therefore, in order to consider a given military operation hybrid, it must contain both conventional and irregular (unconventional) elements.

Gunneriusson, H, who shares this approach, pointed out that "Hybrid threats use conventional and unconventional means to achieve their goals. (…) Russia aims at attaining this by applying a holistic mix of military, political and economic means to weaken the West and to strengthen its own role as a global player (with the "West" I for simplicity mean the states which constitute EU and NATO, but it is really more a cultural approach than an organizational). The Russian approach builds on a strategy of reflexive control which as such is an old method, but the outcome of the application of this approach results in hybrid warfare which as such is a new emerging concept of warfighting ". Gunneriusson, H. also included

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[43] V.N. Konyshev, R.V. Parfenov, *Hybrid wars – between myth and reality*, World Economy and International Relations 63, (12), 2019, s. 56-66.

both combined military (conventional and unconventional) and non-military (political, economic) elements in hybrid threats[44].

This approach is supported by the overwhelming majority of scientists and military specialists dealing with hybrid actions and threats, such as F. Hoffman, C. Caryl, J. Wither, and many others[45]. It is worth quoting the words of NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmuss, who in 2014 stated that the Russian tactics of operation in Ukraine can be described as an "aggressive program of disinformation"[46].

In conclusion, it can be assumed that an informational hybrid operation is one in which the conventional information impact (mass media) will be combined with an unconventional impact (social media, text messages, parallel kinetic and information interaction, e.g. with the use of artillery fire, etc.). Therefore, the question remains whether and how the war in Ukraine influenced the evolution of this new form of information activities on the contemporary battlefield.

Research methodology

In the paper, the problem area is the evolution of information operations, and the research subjects are factors causing this evolution. This approach allowed to identify the problem situation as a hybrid warfare understood as one of the potential factors causing the evolution of contemporary information operations. As part of the problem situation, a problem question was identified to which the research conducted and described in this article was devoted.

Has the Russia-Ukraine conflict 2014-2021 influenced the evolution of the methodology of conducting hybrid information operations and how?

Both empirical and theoretical methods were used during the research. The empirical approaches applied there were the review of source materials and the conduct of diagnostic

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[44] Håkan U. Gunneriusson, 'Hybrid warfare: Development, historical context, challenges and interpretations', Icono14, 19:1 (2021), 15-37. (DOI: 10.7195/ri14.v19i1.1608).

[45] Frank G. Hoffman, 'Conflict in The 21th Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars' (2007), http://www.projectwhitehorse.com/pdfs/HybridWar_0108.pdf; Christian Caryl, 'If You Want to See Russian Information Warfare at Its Worst', Visit These Countries (2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/04/05/if-you-want-to-see-russian-information-warfare-at-its-worst-visit-these-countries/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.4b778df7877f; James K. Wither, 'Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare', Connections: The Quarterly Journal, 15:2 (2016), 73-87. (DOI: 0.11610/Connections.15.2.06).

[46] James K. Wither 'Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare', Connections: The Quarterly Journal, 15:2 (2016), 76. (DOI: 0.11610/Connections.15.2.06).

surveys in the form of in-depth expert interviews. Thus, first, empirical data was collected on the basis of recognized scientific and specialised positions, and then on this basis, an expert interview survey consisting of five questions was developed: 1. How is the Russian methodology of information warfare assessed during the Ukraine-Russia conflict 2014-2021 ?; 2. What methods were used by the Russian information war centers during the Ukraine-Russia conflict 2014-2021? Both against the Ukrainian armed forces and against civil society ?; 3. What sources of information (sources providing information to recipients / target group) did the Russians use to disseminate information? (for example phones, smartphones, radio, television, social media etc.); 4. How do Russians choose their target groups? What criteria did they use to identify the target groups? 5. What is the main goal and what are the specific goals of the Russian information warfare during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict ?

The questions were submitted to a selected group of experts representing Ukrainian scientific circles conducting research on the subject of research for this article, representatives of the Ukrainian armed forces and journalists. Most of the respondents, due to the nature of their work or military service, reserved anonymity, allowing the possibility of establishing a contact on conditions that guarantee so important to them anonymity. The study was conducted in the period 2014-2021 through study visits of one of the authors to Kharkov and with the use of electronic, telephone and audiovisual means of communication. The obtained information, despite subjecting a dozen or so experts, turned out to be surprisingly consistent with the data collected through the method of reviewing source materials, detailing the thematic issues raised by the authors of the texts. The results of the interviews, along with the outcomes of the review of source materials, have been included in the content of this work after being processed these results using theoretical methods in the form of analysis, comparison, and finally synthesis. The approaches of inductive and reduction inference were used to compile the results and to develop the answer to the problem question adopted in the article.

Russian perceptual and decision-making process

In order to present the Russian subconscious perceptual and decision-making patterns influencing the way of planning and implementing hybrid operations, the method of cultural forecasting by M. Górnikiewicz was used. In reference to the conducted empirical (diagnostic survey) and theoretical (analysis, synthesis, comparison, inference) studies, it was possible to confirm the values of cultural codes resulting from the research carried out previously by selected anthropologists, among which GJ Hofstede, ET Hall, or the outstanding MH Bond

are worth mentioning[47]. While the subject area of the research of the aforementioned anthropologists did not concern the strictly international decision-making process, which was the subject of M. Górnikiewicz's research, the values of the codes functioning on the subconscious level remained unchanged. Hence, it seemed appropriate to compile the results of the values themselves.

It was identified that the values of cultural codes determine 80% of the Russian decision-making process, which means that about 20% of decisions are made on the basis of the code values of current individual decision makers. Thus, by means of cultural forecasting, nearly 80% of the content of decisions made by decision-making centers in the Kremlin[48] can be statistically predicted. To sum up, Russian decision-makers in conducting foreign policy are guided by respect for the more powerful and powerful states, while the weaker states operating outside the sphere of influence of any superpower are treated as "no man's land" that can be managed by the power that will take advantage of such the opportunity in the fastest way. The Russians show aggression in their operations only if their previous calculations show that they can win. In the event of uncertainty of winning or low chances, a Russian activity will be limited to sham actions or no actions will be taken. It happens, of course, that the Russian leaders are wrong in their calculations, as was the case with the aggression against Poland in 1920 or against Finland in 1939. In both cases, the Russian command was sure to defeat[49]. In 2008, during the Georgian crisis, Russian troops finally failed to carry out decisive military actions because of the uncertainty which powers stood on the side of Georgia by sending the Polish president as an emissary[50]. In the end, it turned out to be exclusively Warsaw's initiative, which, for obvious reasons, was first met with disbelief in Moscow, and then with a deep dissatisfaction. In the Kremlin, such the occurence was perceived as an incomprehensible and brazen intervention by the Polish president in the Russian sphere of influence, an intervention which, from the Moscow's point of view, should be reserved exclusively for other powers. Russia's activity on the international arena, apart from a strong tendency to avoid risk, is also characterized by collectivism, i.e. the desire to group as many countries as possible under its leadership and give the impression of acting on

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[47] Michael Minkov, Gert J. Hofstede & Geert Hofstede, 'Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind', Third Edition, McGraw-Hill Education (2010), 15-48.

[48] Marcin Górnikiewicz, 'Prognozowanie kulturowe zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa narodowego i międzynarodowego', Military University of Technology (2018), 155-165; 263-268.

[49] Vesa Nenye, Peter Munter, Toni Wirtanen, Chris Birks, 'Finland at War: The Winter War 1939-40', (Bloomsbury Publishing PLC. 2018), 63-283.

[50] Ibidem.

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behalf and for the benefit of a larger community. The aforementioned errors in calculations result from the overlapping efforts to meticulously prepare and plan Russian activities, sometimes with a very long advance (even in decades), and selectivity, i.e. exclusionary perception of the environment. In other words, the Russians are attempting to act globally while being mentally prepared to act at the regional level. This means that they are not able to comprehensively analyze and synthesize the reality that surrounds them, and therefore in their calculations they do not take into account all factors interacting with each other at a given time, as well as factors that will appear as a consequence of factors currently influencing each other.

As a result, information operations are perceived by Moscow as risk-free as it is almost impossible to prove their source. So in effect, the Kremlin may decide to carry out wide-ranging, very profound information influence operations on the societies of other countries at the same time without fear that any real retaliatory measures will be taken. The first known case of attempts to apply very limited retaliation measures was the case of the previous presidential election in the United States, won to the surprise of many experts, by D. Trump[51]. On the other hand, the benefits generated by the operations carried out are so high with incomparably low expenditures that as long as the international community does not even respond with severe sanctions, these operations will be advanced and the methodology of their conduct will be improved in an experimental mode, where the object of these experiments will be other societies. On the other hand, the inability to comprehensively perceive the complex global reality will at some point trigger an avalanche of consequences that no one will control anymore.

The evolution of the Russian methodology of conducting information operations

The Bolsheviks very quickly revealed interest in the methods of information influence on a society, that is propaganda[52]. This was derived from a pragmatic approach understood as the awareness of the overwhelming quantitative and qualitative advantage of tsarism. The only possibility for a handful of revolutionaries to gain an advantage over tsarism was to incite and direct the aggression of the crowd against tsarism, and propaganda was the ideal means for this purpose. Vladimir Lenin, one of the co-authors of the Bolshevik wing within the communist trend, pointed out that the thought and activity of the crowd can be managed

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[51] Robert S. Mueller, 'The Mueller Report: Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election', (Tempo Haus 2019).

[52] 'Bolshevism in art: and its propagandists', (New York: Veritas Publishing Co. 1924), 129.

by agitators and propagandists. This first group was intended to raise the emotional state of the crowd as high as possible, which made the crowd easily susceptible to suggestions, but on the other hand, the crowd's behavior was then at least partially chaotic and unpredictable. The propagandists, on the other hand, were to shape the awareness of the crowd. According to the instructions given by Lenin, while an efficient agitator could influence a crowd of 10,000, just one propagandist could effectively influence only a few hundred people. Thus, at the very beginning, Bolshevik propaganda, which later became Soviet, then Russian Soviet, and finally Russian, consisted of two basic levels of influence on people[53]:

- through emotions (agitators)

- through narration (propagandists)

The narrative was very crucial because in the case of the Russian methodology it was a narrative referring to a specific ideology, and philosophical, religious or religious views. These two methods of interaction have been combined many times by referring to themes evoking as high emotions as possible from the common history of selected nations, and then linking this strand with a specific ideology or views[54]. The Russians, as efficiently as white propaganda (based on facts), also used gray propaganda (confusing facts with untruths, which was supposed to make the promoted untruth more credible) and black propaganda (promoting obvious lies, usually based on generating strong emotions in recipients)[55]. In the course of the passing decades, the means of transmitting information have changed, but the methodology of information influence has remained the same (at that time, the names of information activities have also changed: from propaganda to social control and social engineering[56]). Today, in Russia, the information influence functions under similar names as the so-called in the West, that is: political marketing, public relations, promotion, positioning, tagging, etc. This also explains why it is so difficult for Russian information influence centers to permanently influence the mentality (awareness) of the societies of the so-called The West. They usually function without a strong attachment to a specific ideology, and the whole philosophy of life focuses on everyday existence imbued with consumerism to a greater or lesser extent. A specific gateway to the minds and hearts of the next generations of Europeans and Americans could be an eco-philosophy, which could transform into an ideology over time. It is also no coincidence that those groups that are at least partially susceptible to Russian information

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[53] Vladimir Volkoff, 'Psychosocjotechnika dezinformacja – oręż wojny', (Komorów: Antyk 1999), 26-49.

[54] Ibidem, 26-28.

[55] Lesław Wojtasik, 'Psychologia propagandy politycznej', (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe 1986), 26-41.

[56] Ibidem, 267-360.

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campaigns in the European Union and the United States are extreme left-wing and right-wing groups[57], including the aforementioned pro-environmental groups genuinely interested in the welfare of the entire planet. A key catch for Russian propagandists is their strong belief in a chosen philosophy of life / ideology, which in turn generates emotional attachment to certain views[58].

The second ground of the Russian information influence, often confused with the first one, is the so-called disinformation, i.e. misleading the object of influence. It is an element that has been perfected since the beginning of the Russian information influence machine, and at the same time an element that fits perfectly with the terminological assumptions of hybrid information operations[59]. It should be remembered that the Russians have achieved true mastery in this field. Of course, the methodology of disinformation is based on the above-mentioned two grounds of influence. For example, willing to mislead someone, first of all, strong emotions are generated (disturbing a reliable judgment of a situation) correlated with the a defined narrative (philosophical / ideological / religious) in order to direct the thinking of the object of influence in a completely different direction, making it impossible to determine the actual state of the selected event (e.g. an attack, a catastrophe, an assassination, an escape, a change of a direction of an attack, etc.). To this end, it is necessary to define the specificity of the target groups, which on the one hand is strong and, on the other hand, a weak side of the Russian centers of information influence. Strong, because in the case of ideological groups, the specification is usually very accurate and highly effective. Weak, because in the case of non-ideological groups, this specification is usually wrong. There is also a third component that is completely ignored in the development of these specifications, namely not taking into account the so-called dormant cultural codes, i.e. subconscious perceptual and decision codes that are inactive until a specific event occurs. An example of that is the outbreak of the war in eastern Ukraine, which turned out to be a stimulus for activation the codes of patriotism completely inactive in times of peace[60]. In other words, decades of regular anthropological and social research by Russian social surveys have not been able to reveal these codes because they remained inactive. As a result, the research

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[57] Jessikka Aro, 'Trolle Putina', (Wydawnictwo SQN 2020), 279-289.

[58] Katarzyna Zysk, 'Defence innovation and the 4th industrial revolution in Russia', Journal of Strategic Studies (2020). (DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2020.1856090)

[59] Benjamin Jensen, Brandon Valeriano, Ryan Maness, 'Fancy bears and digital trolls: Cyber strategy with a Russian twist, Journal of Strategic Studies', 42:2 (2019), 212-234, (DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2018.1559152)

[60] Emil Filtenborg, Stefan Weichert, 'Is eastern Ukraine slipping back into a full-blown war?' (2021), https://www.euronews.com/2021/04/12/is-eastern-ukraine-slipping-back-into-a-full-blown-war. (12.04.2021)

showed that in the event of a war, about 90% of the Ukrainian society will remain neutral or leave the country, and only 10% of the population will be willing to fight, some of it on the side of the separatist republics, and only some on the side of Ukraine. It happened completely different. What is more, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine also activated a similar code within the Polish society (of course on a much smaller scale due to the remote nature of the potential military threat), which could be observed in 2014-2016 on the basis of the dynamically growing accession of people willing to join various types of civil defense organizations[61]. Ultimately, this grassroots social movement was well managed by the Polish Army in the form of a new type of armed forces: the Territorial Defense Forces consisting mostly of civilian volunteers (after joining the TDF they were appointed to professional soldiers), and only a smaller part of professional soldiers which is the permanent staff of Territorial Defense Forces[62]. There is no doubt that if the war had not broken out in eastern Ukraine, the vast majority of Ukrainian society would still remain in a patriotic apathy, and Poland would probably not have been able to establish Territorial Defense Forces due to the small number of volunteers.

Coming back to the methodology of disinformation, this is the leading ground of the Russian information influence. At the same time, the influence of targeted shaping of social awareness is used to a much lesser extent. The exception here is the Russian society, which, for obvious reasons, has been subject to such influence since the beginning of the communist movement in Russia. Probably, based on decades of experience related to the unsuccessful export of communist ideology to other societies, the Kremlin recognized that this way of influencing is very expensive, but not very effective. In those countries (except Russia) where the communist system was established, it was not based on the mass support of the population expressed through a nationwide revolutionary insurgency as Lenin would have liked, but on the top-down imposition of previously prepared structures of people's government supported by armed forces and state security bodies[63]. In conclusion, disinformation is much cheaper and faster, and ultimately it is possible for a certain period of time to delay or even prevent decision-making centers of other countries from taking measures that would restrict or prevent Russia from engaging in foreign activities that could harm the strategic interests of different states.

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[61] Jakub Gilewicz, 'Ilu chętnych do Obrony Terytorialnej?' (2017), https://www.trojmiasto.pl/wiadomosci/Ilu-chetnych-do-Obrony-Terytorialnej-n113579.html (19.06.2017).

[62] https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/wojska-obrony-terytorialnej (24.01.2022).

[63] Rafał Brzeski, 'Wojna informacyjna – wojna nowej generacji', (Komorów: Antyk 2014), 193-245.

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Methodology of disinformation

As part of the disinformation methods used by Russian information influence centers, two main approaches can be distinguished against the background of many years of observation[64]:

- directing recipients of a narrative to a wrong direction of thinking about a selected event,

- disseminating in the media possibly the largest probable version of events related to the selected incident, the real course or conditions (external, internal) of which are to remain camouflaged - this method can be figuratively called "information fog" or "information smokescreen".

Out of these two approaches, the second one is the most common, often supported by hateful messages addressed at people or information centers whose activities are not consistent with the versions promoted by Russian information influence centers. Usually, the Russian centers exploit information support from the so-called private media users (youtubers, bloggers, people with a sufficiently high number of followers on Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook, etc.), who are provided with information that may arouse their curiosity, and whose further spread is a part of the adopted method of the so-called "Information fog[65]".

In reference, we can talk about the division of the structure of the Russian media news into state and private institutions enhancing Russian information activity (associations, foundations, publishing houses, radio, press, television, media active in virtual space, etc.). The third type of information media is the aforementioned private persons who have a sufficiently large, informational "range of destruction", but who do not conduct a formally registered media activity.

In practice, the scheme of action using the "information fog" method consists in the gradual spreading of various narrative strands about a specific event in the public media space, utilising the Russian state media for this purpose, the above mentioned private information centers and private persons. Then one carefully observes which of the popularised narrative strands have gained the greatest publicity to be later promoted, so that they disseminate as far as possible and quickly reaching the largest audience possible from the selected country or countries (usually the emphasis is on selected countries, not the global public opinion)[66]. As a result, after some time (even several weeks), at least a few if not a dozen versions of a given event are circulating in the public media, which means that an average recipient is not able to distinguish the correct (true) version of the event, and what is more, in accordance with the

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[64] Ibidem, 25-54.

[65] Aro, 'Trolle Putina', 193-231.

[66] The results of a diagnostic survey in the form of an expert interview conducted in the period 2014-2021.

principles of human functioning of perception, it is most often the general rejection of all versions and the arrangement of a given event as irrelevant to the recipient's daily life[67]. In other words, in this way, the public opinion of the selected country or countries is discouraged from exploring a given topic and finding out the truth (especially if the true version of events could negatively activate a specific society against Russia). As a result, the lack of public interest in a presented topic means that public opinion does not exert any pressure on the rulers in a given country, and therefore politicians also have no interest in entering the line of confrontation with Moscow regarding a particular event surrounded by "information fog"[68].

In the meantime, a massive influx of hateful messages against competing media is carried out, including private persons who have a strong influence on the public opinion of a given country or countries (e.g. renowned journalists), so as to weaken these people emotionally and mentally, and on the other to take away their credibility, thus impoverisihing the impact of information generated by these people against the interests of Russia. It should be clearly emphasized that the activities intended to hate on the indicated persons are mainly used by private persons, and then, if necessary, the pro-Russian private media is launched, only in case when it is absolutely necessary to activate the Russian state media[69].

Virtual reality has opened up completely new possibilities of influencing public opinion, which Russian information influence centers not only use on a mass scale, but also constantly experiment, trying to improve their working methods. It is therefore worth referring to the above general characteristics of the Russian methodology of information influence on the ground of information influence during contemporary hybrid operations, i.e. hybrid information operations. At the same time, it must be stressed out that the Ukrainian side directly affected by this influence had to quickly develop defense mechanisms and counter the information influence on the separatists and the Russian side.

Methodology of hybrid information operations

The Russian side, supporting the more or less overt separatists from Donetsk and Luhansk, transferred the experience gained from the above-described informational influence on societies of the so-called West. Thus, several target groups were identified from the Ukrainian society, using the criterion of different political views, usually correlated with the

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[67] Anatolij Golicyn, 'Nowe kłamstwa w miejsce starych', (Komorów: Antyk 2007).
[68] The results of a diagnostic survey in the form of an expert interview conducted in the period 2014-2021..
[69] Aro, 'Trolle Putina', 7-24.

place of residence. The soldiers were treated on the one hand as a separate group, but taking into account the place of origin and maintained contacts with the appropriate civil environment (family, friends). On the one hand, actions were taken to weaken the morale of the soldiers and spread disinformation about their own actions on the front line, on the other hand, information influence addressed at the society was taken in order to blunt the initially very high support of the Ukrainian society for the government and the war.
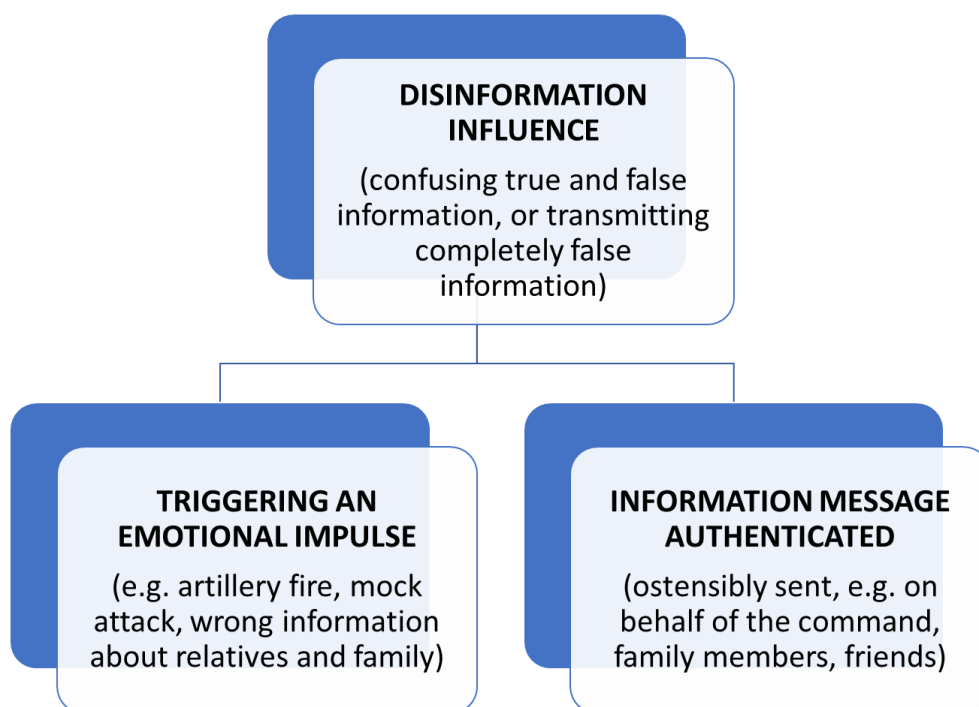
Moreover, in the first months of the war, the Russians took advantage of the fact that Ukrainian soldiers carried private cell phones on the front lines. Russian information influence centers sent soldiers text messages with misleading information about the situation on the front line. The sender of the text messages was apparently the Ukrainian command or a family / friends, texting about what they learn from the media and from neighbors, and what soldiers may not know. These actions were aimed at undermining morale, which could lead to Ukrainian troops leaving their positions and surrendering them to separatist troops without a combat. It also happened, in order to strengthen the psychological effect, that the information - for example - about breaking the front by the advancing separatist army, and the counducted point artillery fire was meant to give credibility to the provided information. At first, the soldiers received messages about the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops in connection with the advancing enemy, and a moment later the artillery fire was launched nearby to cause a strong emotional reaction and "force" them to escape. In conclusion, the Russian information influence centers used disinformation (the so-called gray or black propaganda) towards the enemy's soldiers, making the transmitted content more credible by causing an emotional impulse and sending messages on behalf of institutions or people respected by the victims of these influences[70].

Russian information influence centers also used methods of "bombing" Ukrainian soldiers with information that was intended to trigger a strong emotional disturbance, which significantly reduced their combat effectiveness. A number of false information about death or illness in the family, alleged cheating by girlfriends / wives, putting life and health of soldiers at risk due to private and dirty interests of Ukrainian commanders, spoiled/contaminated food, malfunctioning ammunition, which use could result in disability or death due to corrupted connection between the Ukrainian command and the suppliers of

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[70] The results of a diagnostic survey in the form of an expert interview conducted in the period 2014-2021.

arms and ammunition, etc was provided. Additionally, in order to prevent the possibility of quick clarification of the sown doubts, cellular communication was temporarily disrupted[71].

DISINFORMATION INFLUENCE

(confusing true and false information, or transmitting completely false information)

TRIGGERING AN EMOTIONAL IMPULSE

(e.g. artillery fire, mock attack, wrong information about relatives and family)

INFORMATION MESSAGE AUTHENTICATED

(ostensibly sent, e.g. on behalf of the command, family members, friends)

Diagram of the synthesized disinformation influence used during the 2014-2021 conflict in eastern Ukraine as information support for military operations under hybrid information operations.

In the second half of 2014, the Ukrainian command, aware of the threats resulting from the informational influence of the Russian centers and the use of telephone locations to track the position of Ukrainian troops (during the first months of military operations, it was one of the main reasons for incurring heavy losses, despite the fact that the fighting took the form of a trench war), prohibited soldiers to carry private cell phones with them during frontline operations. The effect was immediate: the effectiveness of the Russian fire dropped dramatically, as did the ability to affect the morale of the enemy's troops. At that time, the Russian information centers were forced to use the means of war propaganda known from the fronts of both world wars, i.e. scattering propaganda materials, which turned out to be highly ineffective against young people serving in the army who were too accostumed to use modern mass media[72].

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[71] The results of a diagnostic survey in the form of an expert interview conducted in the period 2014-2021.

[72] The results of a diagnostic survey in the form of an expert interview conducted in the period 2014-2021.

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Discussion

It is also worth taking into account the dynamic changes in the global methodology of information influence on the whole society by adjusting a form and content of a message to the level of an individual participant. The beginning of the 21st century brought two breakthroughs in the progress made in this field. The first turning point was the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring, an event which completely remodeled the balance of power in North Africa and partly in the Middle East[73]. The second one was the involvement of Cambridge Analityca in the presidential elections in the United States, and later in the referendum process in Great Britain, dedicated to remain or exit the European Union by this country[74]. Both in the first and in the second case, the outcome turned out to be a huge surprise for most of the experts who have been following the elections and referenda in both countries for years. Especially the activity and method developed and applied by Cambridge Analytyca showed how enormous potential lies in combining the methodology of informational influence with modern means of communication in the form of social media, and in this particular case in the form of Facebook. One does not need a great deal of imagination to realize that such a powerful mechanism of influencing human perception and the decision-making process was and is the object of interest of the world's leading powers, including Russia[75]. The decision of the Ukrainian command to completely ban the use of private cell phones by soldiers during their official tasks (e.g. at the front) was in this situation not only very prudent, but actually the only decision that could have been made. On the other hand, it can be assumed that the Russian information centers, on the one hand, are trying to repeat and develop the Cambridge Analytica methodology through Kremlin-controlled social media both in Russia and other countries, especially in those that are in the area of Russian strategic interests, such as Ukraine. It can therefore be assumed that the methodology of influencing civilians through modern communication technologies will advance on the basis of automatic (using AI - Artificial Intelligence) collection and classification of personal data of users of these media, in order to later generating an individually tailored persuasive message also with the use of AI[76]. Control over the perception and behavior of a society in different countries is in fact the control over the majority of the political process in

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[73] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/17/what-is-the-arab-spring-and-how-did-it-start (17.12.2020).

[74] https://globalsecurityreview.com/cambridge-analytica-darker-side-big-data/ (10.06.2019).

[75] Katarzyna Zysk, 'Defence innovation and the 4th industrial revolution in Russia', Journal of Strategic Studies (December 2020), 543-571, (DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2020.1856090).

[76] Ray Kurzweil, Christopher Lane, 'How to Create a Mind', (Prelude 2014).

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democracies dependent both on the election results and the fluctuation of the behavior of its own electorate. It can be said that while in the case of the so-called the Arab Spring, the agitation model was used (referring to the words of V. Lenin), Cambridge Analytica has already applied a completely automated propaganda model on a mass scale. The difference is that in the times of Lenin, one propagandist could effectively influence the consciousness of several hundred people, and modern automated information influence systems can immediately affect all users of a given social medium in the world. The only limitation is the users' access to phones with Internet and a dwonloaded application appropriate for a given medium. Ultimately, it may happen that troops fighting on the front and largely protected from informational influence will be withdrawn and disarmed by political decision-makers who are no longer so immune to parallel informational influence both on themselves and on their own electorate.

It is also worth mentioning the methodology of gradual influence on the collective consciousness of the selected society developed in the Soviet Union, in such a way as to lead to the collapse of the so far professed system of values, ensuring this society cultural cohesion / identity, and, as a result, the ability to collectively oppose possible threats. This method was called "ideological subversion", and its goal was a very slow, calculated for 20-30 years, gradual change of the value system of subsequent generations in such a way to let leading emerge many different social groups with extremely different world views in a given society, and then easily spark, among these groups, conflicts weakening the political decision-making process of the entire state[77]. Ultimately, it would lead to an externally inspired crisis in a particular country, bordering on a civil war, which would allow the Soviet forces to enter and take control of the situation. The key stage in this method was the phase called "demoralization", that is, the aforementioned breakdown of the so far homogeneous cultural and national identity into many different, often extremely opposite social groups. With the use of modern information technologies, it is much simpler than in the times, when young generation representing the main object of influence, used only the press, books, radio and television. Nowadays, every young person in developing and developed societies has an access to a telephone that she/he does not part with it and always uses for several hours a day. This means that using the methodology applied by Cambridge Analytica as part of the "ideological diversion", it is possible to shape young generation in accordance with any predetermined pattern with almost no risk of failure.

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[77] Tomas Schuman, 'Love Letter to America', (Maxims Books 1984), 46.

Final conclusions

Referring to the problem question posed at the beginning, it seems that the 2014-2021 Russian-Ukrainian conflict accelerated the evolution of the methodology of conducting hybrid information operations at the strategic / operational level, generating two parallel (equally important for achieving the assumed military and political goals) paths of information influence during wars:

- influencing enemy soldiers by lowering morale and misinforming the enemy command about actual movements of their own troops; achieving military goals without losses;

- influencing a society of a given state, so as to influence political decision-makers at the same time, inducing them to make decisions in accordance with the will of the state acting for information purposes – a support in achieving political goals in a very cheap way.

To sum up, a characteristic feature of hybrid information operations is the treatment of both military (enemy soldiers) and non-military targets (enemy civilians, including political decision-makers). When observing the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, it can also be assumed that the information influence on a society is permanent: both before and during the conflict, and probably also after its end.

At the tactical level, this influence adopts a model of influencing through content (propaganda) and / or emotions (agitation), and the character of the content is less often narratively oriented messages, and more often is disinformation aimed at introducing an "information fog" preventing an opponent from finding out about a situation, and further confusing may eventually lead to the adoption of an appropriately strongly promoted narrative at the right moment.

The change compared to the information-supported military operations conducted so far is very important, because previously it was crucial to overpower or destroy the enemy's armed forces was crucial and the capture of the civilian population, and the selected country was a secondary effect of vanquishing the enemy's defense. In the hybrid model, the enemy's armed forces are treated as a less important element of a given state, which does not even need to be destroyed or overpowered, because it is enough to take control of the behavior of a given society to ultimately influence the actions taken by the enemy's armed forces. The leading idea behind this new approach to conducting information operations in a hybrid version was expressed hundreds of years ago by the famous Chinese commander Sun Tzu: "For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill".

Currently, the Kremlin is investing heavily in developing the forces and resources that will allow Russia to control a large part of the Arctic before the real race among all the powers for the development of technologies enabling competition for the deposits and routes of the northern part of the globe begins. Sooner or later, this race will also include Antarctica. Russian decision-makers are aware that Russia does not have such an economic base as, for example, the United States or China, and therefore it is already putting a lot of effort into taking the best possible positions before the seriously competing powers join the race. In other words, the Kremlin is seizing a convenient opportunity to reserve the most attractive areas for itself through the fait accompli, and at the same time to prepare for the future competition for an equally attractive Antarctica. Russian policy makers are prone to developing long-term plans and targets, often counted over decades. These targets do not always work according to the will of their authors, but this is a peculiar feature that distinguishes Russian decision-makers from representatives of many other nationalities. If we take the above for granted, we can come to the conclusion that the current war in Ukraine serves the temporary protection of Russian interests in the Black Sea basin, but at the same time, in line with the idea of a diversion, it is an excellent smokescreen that distracts the world's attention from the actual actions taken against Ukrainian society through modern means of collective communication. Once it is able to actually influence the perception, behavior and decision-making process of the younger generation, the Kremlin will have the ability to control Ukrainian politics. Then the hostilities in eastern Ukraine will no longer be needed.

Streszczenie:

Artykuł analizuje zidentyfikowaną wcześniej metodologię prowadzenia rosyjskich operacji informacyjnych wobec społeczeństw europejskich w oparciu o doświadczenia wyniesione z hybrydowego konfliktu rosyjsko-ukraińskiego. W badaniach nad tym zagadnieniem zastosowano metodę przeglądu materiałów źródłowych, obserwacji oraz wywiadów eksperckich. W zakresie metod teoretycznych zastosowano metody analizy, syntezy i porównania. W celu opracowania prognozy prawdopodobnego rozwoju tak zidentyfikowanej metodologii wykorzystano metodę prognozowania kulturowego do identyfikacji wzorców percepcyjnych i decyzyjnych oraz metodę analiz wielowymiarowych i analiz trendów.

Konflikt rosyjsko-ukraiński o Donbas był jednym z pierwszych konfliktów nowego typu, z jakimi musiała zmierzyć się ludzkość w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku. Konflikty tego typu łączyły elementy militarne na równi z cywilnymi, co powodowało, że łącząc dwa pozornie nieprzystające do siebie elementy w całość, zaczęto je nazywać konfliktami hybrydowymi. Innym bardzo ważnym atrybutem tych konfliktów jest powszechne i do pewnego stopnia nowatorskie wykorzystanie technologii masowego komunikowania, takich

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jak media społecznościowe, wiadomości tekstowe wysyłane bezpośrednio na telefony cywilów i żołnierzy, publikowanie zmanipulowanych treści na popularnych internetowych portalach informacyjnych. Prowadzone działania informacyjne są wówczas ściśle skorelowane z równoległymi operacjami wojskowymi, a nawet akcjami społecznymi.

Ten nowy układ międzypaństwowej agresji stał się możliwy dopiero w erze informacji i postindustrializmu – co jest przypisywane krajom rozwiniętym. Szybko rozwijająca się technologia komunikacji masowej wraz z technologią życia codziennego (np. Internet) przemodelowała możliwości prowadzenia działań zmierzających do przejęcia kontroli nad zasobami innych krajów poprzez przejmowanie kontroli nad społeczeństwami. Konflikt na wschodzie Ukrainy to tylko preludium do tego, co ma nadejść. Jednocześnie dzięki temu preludium można zaproponować prognozę przyszłych kierunków rozwoju cywilizacyjnego społeczeństw zaawansowanych technologicznie, a także metodologię przyszłych działań hybrydowych.

Słowa kluczowe:

Bezpieczeństwo, stabilność gospodarcza, globalizacja, Europa Wschodnia

Key words:

Security, economic stability, globalization, Eastern Europe

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