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ON THE PROBLEM OF COUNTERACTING RUSSIAN INFORMATIONAL AGGRESSION IN EUROPE

Summary:
In today's 'hybrid war', which the Russian Federation wages against Ukraine, informational aggression is one of its leading components. It is necessary to explain the role and importance of information policy in this 'hybrid war' in its European space. The aim of this article is to define the conceptual components of the Russian information policy in its relation to 'Ukrainian question' in Europe and suggest adequate asymmetric strategy. We think that the existing problem of the disparity between potentials of transnational media of Ukraine and Russia could be solved through the use of European information channels, providing a high-quality and compatible information content. In addition, attention should be paid to the creation of a real picture turned into subjects for information media, and will itself change the information picture of reality. The ultimate goal is to break the 'Karaganov doctrine', which is in the basis of the Russian foreign policy strategy within the 'Ukrainian question'.

Keywords:
informational aggression, foreign information policy, hybrid warfare, Ukraine, Europe

Introduction

The current configuration of the hybrid war that the Russian Federation wages against Ukraine is such, that the victory of Russia is possible only if it reaches the state of political isolation of Ukraine in the international arena. Like Germany was unable to withstand a war on two fronts in the World War II, the Russian Federation cannot withstand the prolonged stress of economic confrontation with the West. The reasons are the same – disparity in terms of military and economic potential of the aggressor-sate with the countries of the global coalition. Inspired by the "Weimar syndrome" revanchism "brilliant victories" of Chancellor Adolf Hitler and President Putin in pre-war years were observed

over countries of Eastern Europe that were weaker in military terms. The real secret of the "victory" of Adolf Hitler in Austria and Czechoslovakia, and Putin's in Georgia lay in complicated foreign policy manoeuvres due to which they managed to avoid entering into direct confrontation with major powers for some period of time. The sense of the "big game" was not in the ability of Wehrmacht to break the military resistance of Poland, but in the success of Nazi Germany in changing the balance of political powers on the European continent without going into direct confrontation with the Franco-British alliance. Similarly, the sense of Putin's struggle is not about whether they would manage to occupy the Crimea and Donbas in 2014, but about whether he can gain recognition of the steps by the US and leading EU countries without direct conflict with them.

It should be noted that both revanchist regimes – the German one till September 1st, 1939, and the modern Russian resorted to a complex political tactics aimed at achieving this objective. Thus, among the assets of German diplomacy was the creation of the Steel Pact, as well as the agreement on the division of the spheres of influence with the Stalinist Soviet Union along with support of numerous pro-fascist groups in the USA and Europe. Together with subtle arguments in support of the annexation of Czechoslovakia completely accepted by the British Prime Minister N. Chamberlain, and expressed in his famous quotation about the irrationality of war in *a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing*[1]. Russian diplomacy also currently uses a wide range of means. It can be said that Russia's political circles, understand the importance of not crossing the borders of open conflict even better than their predecessors-revanchists. The so-called "Gerasimov doctrine"[2] or the doctrine of a "hybrid conflict" is aimed exactly at this: to use the military superiority over a weak opponent without provoking an open clash with the military power of Western countries.

The task of Russian foreign policy at this stage is to destroy the unity of Western nations in their opposition to Russia's attempts to change the system of political balance in the east of the European continent. It can be supposed that Ukraine's political isolation and discreditation of the US pro-Ukrainian policy are seen by the Kremlin as the best way out of the impasse of its own revanchist course. This achievement can be possible by means of pressure on the EU political elites and change of the public opinion directions in most EU countries.

Traditional grading divides tools of foreign policy into four groups: diplo-

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[1] Vide: D. Faber, *Munich 1938: appeasement and World War II*, London-New York 2008.
[2] В. Герасимов, *Ценность науки в предвидении*, „ВПК: Военно-промышленный курьер: (Общероссийская еженедельная газета)" – 27.02.2013, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/14632> (10.12.2016);
В. П. Горбулін, *"Гібридна війна" як ключовий інструмент російської геостратегії реваншу*, „Стратегічні пріоритети", 2014, No. 4 (33), pp. 5-12.

matic, economic, symbolic and military[3]. Directed complex usage of these tools in the framework of a strategy of foreign policy opposition is understood as "political warfare". The feature of the foreign policy is the increase in value of non-classical instruments of influence, which are mainly referred to as "symbolic" group of means. The situation of complete or partial informational dominance will allow the Russians to impose on the European countries their own vision of the "Ukrainian issue" that will have a double effect: creating the public opinion necessary for Russia and providing its political allies with convincing arguments.

Analysis of recent research and publications

Analyzing the theoretical background of the problem we have to pay attention to three groups of sources. The first of them is represented by numerous works that analyze Soviet propaganda in the context of the strategy and tactics of Soviet "political war" against the West. For example, this includes the works by F. C. Barghoorn[4], L. B. Kirkpatrick[5], H. D. Lasswell[6], D.Chotikul[7]. Focusing on these works, we are grounded on the assumption that there exists some possible unity of the Soviet and the post-Soviet approaches used by the contemporary Russian expert community, intelligence services, and journalists of propaganda media. Soviet actions of political subjugation of Eastern Europe in the second half of the 1940s, suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the regime of "normalization" of Czechoslovakia in 1970 become a subject of an in-depth research as a case study close to modern Russian imperialist policy[8]. The second group includes the research of modern foreign experts analyzing the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, including its information component. In particular, that includes the works by T. Kuzio[9], T. Thomas[10], E.

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[3] G. A. Almond, *Public Opinion and National Security Policy*, "The Public Opinion Quarterly", 1956, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 371-378.

[4] F. C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet cultural offensive; the role of cultural diplomacy in Soviet foreign policy,* Princeton 1960.

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[8] L. Borhi, *Interpreting and Dealing with the Ukraine Crisis: Some Implications and Lessons from History*, "Governance Studies at Brookings", 2014, No. 5, pp. 1-8.

[9] T. Kuzio, *U.S. support for Ukraine's liberation during the Cold War: A study of Prolog Research and Publishing Corporation*, "Communist and Post-Communist Studies" 2012, Vol. 45, No. 1–2, pp. 51-64.

[10] T. Thomas, *Russia's Information Warfare Strategy: Can the Nation Cope in Future Conflicts?*, "The Journal of Slavic Military Studies" 2014, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 101-130.

A.Wilson[11], J. Ćwiek-Karpowicz[12], A. Unwala and S. A. Ghori[13], H. A. Conley, T. P. Gerber[14], S. Blank[15] and others. The events in Estonia in 2007 and Georgia in 2008, after all, the beginning of a hybrid war against Ukraine triggered research of Russian information expansion. The third group is represented by works of Ukrainian political scientists. In particular, these are research works by V. Horbulin that analyze the nature of "hybrid" conflict as Russian policy and technology of foreign aggression[16]; research on Russian technology of manipulative propaganda[17]; analysis of the Russian system of media influence[18]; establishment of the strategy of state information policy of Ukrainian representation in the world[19].

The aim of the article

The aim of this article is to analyze the informational component of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in the European space in connection to its hybrid aggression against Ukraine and to determine the means of combating this course on the part of Ukraine.

Presenting main body of material

Currently it is admitted that Russia's informational aggression is based on the doctrine of "hybrid warfare". The difference between a "hybrid war" and the military conflict in its usual sense is in a key task in the "hybrid" strategy. It was formulated by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation V. Gerasimov and lies in holding the situation of military confrontation in the "sub threshold" range. The "threshold" means the limit at

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[11] A. Wilson, *Ukraine crisis: what it means for the West*, New Haven 2014.

[12] J. Ćwiek-Karpowicz, *Limits to Russian Soft Power in the Post-Soviet Area*, "DGAP analyse" 2012, No. 8.

[13] A. Unwala, S. Ghori, *Brandishing the Cybered Bear: Information War and the Russia-Ukraine Conflict*, "Military Cyber Affairs" 2015, Vol. 1, pp 1-11.

[14] H. A. Conley, L. Moore, T. P. Gerber, *Russian Soft Power in the 21st Century: An Examination of Russian Compatriot Policy in Estonia*, Washington 2011.

[15] S. Blank, *Russian Information Warfare as Domestic Counterinsurgency*, "American Foreign Policy Interests" 2013, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 31-44.

[16] V. Horbulin, *The „Hybrid warfare" ontology*, „Стратегічні пріоритети" 2016, No. 1 (38), pp. 4-13; В. П. Горбулін, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-12.

[17] Т. О. Ісакова, *Маніпулятивні технології Російської Федерації під час анексії Криму: особливості застосування*, „Стратегічні пріоритети" 2015, No. 4 (37), pp. 74-82.

[18] В. Ф. Ткач, *Спецпропаганда як інформаційний складник гібридної війни Росії проти України*, „Стратегічні пріоритети" 2016, No. 1 (38), pp. 99-109.

[19] Т. В. Черненко, *Пріоритети державної інформаційної політики в умовах гібридної війни*, „Стратегічні пріоритети" 2015, No. 4 (37), pp. 83-93.

which the military nature of the conflict and Russia's participation in it as an aggressor country will be apparent to the world public opinion. Thus, the "hybrid" conflict by its meaning is, nonetheless, a war. This distinguishes it from "political war" a strategic course, which is implemented for a long time, and in which military means are not the main tool. The logics of a "threshold" points to the fact that the "hybrid conflict" suggests two objects of force implementation by an aggressor country: direct (now Ukraine) where combination of military, informational and psychological operations, economic pressure is to lead to overall demoralization of the society and to the loss of the will to resist; and potential - countries that may join the conflict on the side of the victims of aggression. As for the second object aggression is mainly informational, and the leading direction of its actions is public opinion, expert groups and political elites. Informational and psychological operations are to prevent definite identification of the aggressor country in the public eye and to prevent the formation of the direction of public opinion that will determine moral readiness to support national governments in their decisions to assist the victim of aggression. Another object of "hybrid conflict" for the Russian Federation is now the USA and the EU nations.

Applied in practice the considerations given above lead to the following hierarchy of tactical objectives of information policy of the Russian Federation in the European direction:

- concealing Russia's direct involvement in the conflict in the east of Ukraine;
- creating a media image of the internal "civil conflict inside Ukraine";
- creating a negative media image of Ukraine;
- separating Crimean issue from the issue of the settlement of the conflict in the Donetsk region.

Operational level of the goals of the information policy includes the following:

- moral and political isolation of Ukraine;
- destabilization of Euro-Atlantic moral and political unity and isolation of the USA as a country that provides the most consistent support of Ukraine;
- reverse demoralization of Ukrainian society (through demonstration of unfavourable attitude of European nations).

Analysis of the strategic level of Russian informational struggle in "hybrid conflict" indicates that it is based on the fundamental direction of Russian foreign policy in the "Ukrainian issue" which was articulated at least in the early 1990s by Russian political scientist and expert D. Karaganov. "Karaganov doctrine" provides image, informational and political isolation of Ukraine, connecting it to the community of post-Soviet countries and its inclusion into the

"sphere of influence" of Russia[20].

What specification does this "hybrid" information policy get in its practical implementation? As a rule, attention is drawn by technological means used by Russian diplomats and propagandists. For example, systematic use of disinformation and attempt to use manipulation technologies. We consider it appropriate to focus on a common logical model of information presentation. We assume that human thinking is logical and more often manipulative techniques are only of secondary importance, with the task to "back up" some argumentative blogs by some semblance of authenticity, the general scheme of which nonetheless must be logical and not contradictory. Or have the appearance of such. Moreover, the most often the debate is not about the facts as such, but around their interpretations and assessments.

Thus, in a specific sense, informational aggression of Russia is manifested in the formation of logical informational models, which advocates of the Russian Federation inspire or support and disseminate among European mass media and communications (MM&C) (Group A - the image of Ukraine as a party to the conflict, Group B - the image of Ukraine as a part of the former Soviet Union; group C - Ukraine in the context of European home policy).

A-1. The media image of the "civil war in Ukraine" is a leading principle for Russian propaganda. It also provides major efforts and ultimate goals of Russian diplomacy in "hybrid conflict" – "reformatting" of Ukraine by introduction to its political system puppet "autonomies" as a constituent of state building.

A-2. The propaganda image of a "civil war" usually requires a definition of the "evil" side of the conflict. Thus, the Russian propaganda builds up a storyline of "war crimes", where the Armed Forces of Ukraine become the side to be accused, and Ukraine is to be entirely blamed for the sufferings of civilians.

A-3. Russian propagandists contribute to shaping the image of Ukrainians as "Nazi collaborators", people who should bear collective responsibility for the crimes committed during the WWII and for participating in the Holocaust. Creating media image of "Nazi Ukraine" has become widespread and clearly diverts considerable efforts of Russian propaganda.

A-4. Russia tries to provide informational support to those forces in the East of Europe which realize historical and cultural conflicts of the past. This includes Ukrainian-Polish discrepancies, anticipated by Russia conflicts between Ukraine and Romania, Ukraine and Hungary and well as the conflict around "Rusyn" identity.

B-1. Support of the image of Ukraine as a "failed state". Following this line the emphasis can be given to the problems of corruption in Ukraine, crime, lack of capability of government and society. The image of *suppression of minorities (sexual, regional, linguistic, national, etc.) by the corrupt authoritarian government* rises numerous allusions on international experience and automati-

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[20] T. K u z i o, *Ukraine-Crimea-Russia: triangle of conflict,* Stuttgart 2007.

cally places Ukraine in the public opinion of European citizens to the group of "third world" countries, whose difficulties are caused by internal systemic problems, and not by external aggression.

B-2. Attempts to present Ukraine as an integral part of the post-Soviet world, preferably, a regional group of Russian ethnicity, by the force of geopolitical circumstances separated once from the main territory of Russia.

C-1. Introduction of Ukrainian issue in the overall context euro-sceptical views in the EU countries. Here Russia is grounded on the ideology and concept of many EU political forces that oppose deepening the European integration process, further enlargement or even speak for exit of their countries from this integrational unit. Abuse of the topic of migrant crisis, the use of the referendum on the European Association Agreement became fertile ground for the spread of such concepts of informational confrontation. Russian means of informational influence, such as satellite channel RT actively promoted in the Netherlands the political circles, who tried to turn the referendum on the ratification of the European Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU into a referendum on EU enlargement and on the deepening of European integration. They succeeded in this scenario.

C-2. In the framework of this scenario, Russia tries to position itself as a defender of right, "traditional" values. Ukraine is assigned with the role of the next "project" of multiculturalists and leftist liberals.

C-3. Proof of the economic benefits that European countries lose because of the sanctions regime, introduced in response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine makes a separate semantic unit of Russian propaganda in Europe. Undermining the sanctions regime needs to provide information support to those forces within the EU that share this goal.

C-4. Close to this is the task of informational support of the actions to legitimize Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula. Russian propagandists build arguments on some controversial provisions: the right of "Crimean people" to self-determination, on the basis of Kosovo precedent, the "historic" right of the Russian Federation to the territory with close ethnic and cultural population (i.e., in fact, on artificial post-Soviet borders).

C-5. Russia 's information mouthpieces voice arguments of Russian diplomacy, trying to justify the right of the state to a definite "sphere of influence", where Ukraine should be included, and to comply with which any alleged violations by the Western countries of their commitments in the process of NATO expanding exist.

Informational campaign of Russia on "Ukrainian issue" is related to the broader project of Russian foreign policy ideological repositioning of the country and interference in the internal political processes of the EU as, in fact, it existed during the Cold War. This is especially dangerous in the countries, which under certain circumstances have become a "weak link" of the counter-aggression front; because of economic weakness as the countries in the south of

the continent, or by the relevance of euro-sceptical opinions, such as the Netherlands. Russia is trying to influence the process of setting the agenda and shaping public opinion in European countries. This time, the aggressive foreign policy of the Russian Federation is explicitly (deliberately) blocked with rightist political forces and positions its state as a bastion of "traditional values". In the Cold War time foreign policy of the Soviet Union was blocked with leftist groups and positioned the Union as a "peace camp" and the champion of social values.

Today's "right" positioning of Russia in principle does not include the use of elements of "tough" image and related stereotypes of public consciousness. On the other hand, the informational component of this policy grows. During the Cold War, the USSR relied on the information capacity of its political satellites, currently, Russian diplomacy is trying to use actively the available modern technologies "direct" information channels, especially television channel RT, practiced at home technology of the "imitation of public opinion" in communication in electronic networks etc. These actions are quite professional when, for example, are used by RT as a media platform for internal opposition in European countries, introduction of "Ukrainian issue" in the context of current European policies (migration crisis) relying on Russian-speaking Diaspora and others.

What promising countermeasures can the Ukrainian diplomacy use to neutralize the informational aggression of the Russian Federation?

Definitely, the units of reasoning used by the Russian propaganda often contradict to the facts, they are internally logically contradictory and in conflict with one another, making them open to criticism. One of the examples is the position of the Russian side about the incident with shooting down a Malaysian airliner on July 17th, 2014. We believe that the current problem of disparity between its potential transnational media in Ukraine and Russia could be solved through the use of European informational channels, adhering to high ethical standards of journalism and (or) sharing the position of Ukraine. The establishment of compatible quality and convincing informative content, related to the European internal political agenda and discourse, is absolutely necessary. Moreover we should pay attention at the need to create the actual picture which, being converted into information precedent for MM&C changes the information picture of the reality itself. That is, we can talk about trends of creation of logical conceptual blocks of information that can destroy the information strategy of aggression that is imposed by Russia. In particular, the counteraction to "Karaganov doctrine" as in its basis.

The fundamental importance of the separation from the former Soviet Union. Among these units, we consider critically significant ones that outline Ukraine amongst "post-Soviet unity" CIS nations. Reaching individualized perception of Ukrainian as a distinct national with its ethnic identity and mass consciousness of Europeans is essential. Ukrainian identification with the

community of nations in Central and Eastern Europe, rather than one of the Eastern Europe, Eurasia, the post-Soviet is necessary.

Another promising direction of the informational counteraction as we see it is an image repositioning of Ukraine under the slogan: *Ukraine is not a problem but a solution*. This trend implies a rejection of the exploitation of the image of the recipient country, in the broadest sense. Without rejecting assistance in overcoming the consequences of Russian aggression and the implementation of radical social and economic reforms, Ukraine should abandon the exploitation of the stereotypes of the 1990s as the *the EU membership aspiring country*. With the increasing euro scepticism that image is currently counterproductive and associated with a number of negative stereotypes in public mind. Instead, positioning Ukraine as a country of opportunities, cooperation with which the EU opens the range of positive opportunities can carry informational and favourable political consequences. This positioning will facilitate the position of political forces friendly towards Ukraine as well as EU ruling circles in Brussels.

Ukraine is a country of freedom. In our view, emphasizing Ukraine as a free country may contribute to the positive repositioning of the image of Ukraine. Unfortunately, this view which is not inconsistent with the facts and confirmed by experience, does not enjoy proper coverage and informational accent. Unlike other countries with which Russian propagandists are trying to associate Ukraine, Ukraine maintained a democratic system, existence of opposition and freedom of speech and conscience – the leading institutions of free society. It must be underlined, as the fact that it is in Ukraine where a European resident can feel in cultural individually, but mentally and institutionally familiar environment that contrasts sharply with Russia.

Regionalization of information space. After all, we believe regionalization of informational policy to be the necessary information emphasis. Moderate integration of regional information space of Ukraine into the regional and Centre and East European one is potential. This policy, in particular, creates conditions, in the long term, for registration of regional relations of strategic partnership with mutual obligations. Currently, Ukraine has no such relationship with any country.

Conclusions and recommendations for further research

Thus, opposition to information aggression from the side of Russia needs of asymmetric responses that would take into account differences in their media potential of Ukraine and Russia. Reliance on information infrastructure of most European countries through the establishment of adequate quality parameters for the logical and accented content, based on an adequate information picture of the events responds to the needs of such asymmetric information policy. The leading areas of logically accentuated Information Policy of Ukraine to counter

Russian aggression is seen by us as the image breakaway from the post-Soviet Ukraine, branding it as a country of freedom and country opportunities, implementing regional integration of MM&C.

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