



INFORMATION POLICY OF POLAND IN TERMS OF IDENTIFYING INFORMATION HAZARDS DETERMINING THE LOSS OF THE STATE'S IMAGE AS PERCEIVED BY INTERNATIONAL OPINION

POLITYKA INFORMACYJNA POLSKI W KONTEKŚCIE
IDENTYFIKOWANIA ZAGROŻEŃ INFORMACYJNYCH
DETERMINUJĄCYCH UTRATĘ WIZERUNKU PAŃSTWA
W OPINII MIĘDZYNARODOWEJ

*Jarosław Wiśnicki** 

— ABSTRACT —

The article attempts to identify information hazards to Poland in the context of hazards determining the loss of the state's image as perceived by international opinion, indicating the metamorphosis associated with conditions characteristic for the social influence operations. The impact of tendencies in building of the national and international security, being determinants for social hazards, was emphasised. An analysis of development of information hazards, their dissemination and resonance in Poland in the period between 2016 and 2021, forms a prominent part of the article. The influence and the role of mass media in shaping of awareness were presented, revealing mechanisms for creating the public opinion.

— ABSTRAKT —

W artykule podjęta została próba zidentyfikowania zagrożeń informacyjnych Polski w kontekście zagrożeń determinujących utratę wizerunku państwa w opinii międzynarodowej. Jednocześnie wskazano na metamorfozę związaną z uwarunkowaniami charakterystycznymi dla operacji wpływu społecznego. Uwypuklono wpływ tendencji w budowaniu narodowego i międzynarodowego bezpieczeństwa, będących determinantami zagrożeń społecznych. W treści artykułu znaczące miejsce zajmuje analiza tworzenia się zagrożeń informacyjnych w Polsce w latach 2016–2021, ich rozpowszechnianie i rezonowanie. Zaprezentowane zostały wpływ i rola mediów masowych na kształtowanie świadomości, co pozwoliło odsłonić mechanizmy kreowania opinii publicznej.

* Territorial Defense Forces, Poland.

Keywords: social influence mechanisms; information; disinformation; informational operations; shaping of public opinion

Słowa kluczowe: mechanizmy wpływu społecznego; informacja; dezinformacja; operacje informacyjne; kreowanie opinii publicznej

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article was an attempt at identifying information hazards to Poland in a context of hazards determining the loss of the state's image as perceived by international opinion, indicating the metamorphosis associated with conditions characteristics for the social influence operations. A decision to analyse emerging information hazards in Poland during last five years results from the increasing influence of communication processes on our safety. The study emphasises the impact of tendencies in building of the national and international security, being determinants for social hazards. An analysis of development of information hazards, their dissemination and resonance in Poland in the period between 2016 and 2021, forms a prominent part of the article. The study presents the influence and the role of mass media in shaping of awareness, revealing mechanisms for creating the public opinion.

INFORMATION DOMAIN AS A SPACE OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE

In the contemporary world, information has become one of the most desirable commodities. Today, the security of a state, or even international communities, depends on it and its correct use. It shapes the political and economic situation, functioning and development of societies and individuals, as well as development and course of crisis situations. To supply own society with content facilitating its orientation in reality and to communicate issues of importance for the state to external recipients, individual states and international organisations conduct a specific information policy. The important tools of this policy include *public information* – covering operations related to public information, *media relations* – specifying actions directed at mass media, development of relations with them to effectively influence public opinion through them, *public affairs* – directed at development of mutually advantageous relations with public institutions, and increasingly robustly developing *e-public relations* – covering communication via the widely understood Internet. When analysing a specific area, an important

thing must be taken into account that depending on the nature of a specific area, specialist sector communication may also function. A good example here is the army, where *military public affairs* also need to be considered, understood as social information aiming at providing information from individual centres of command and development of relations with the society, both on the national and international levels. In consequence, actions in the information area, in brief, cover the protection and promotion of state interests, including informational weakening of an opponent, strengthening the will of undertaken direction of activities, morale and defensive determination of the society, as well as explaining and motivating social activity in order to prevent all hazards and to engage in supporting actions in special circumstances.

The factor distinguishing the 21st century is an increase in the political activity of societies and social hazards, the scale and size of which long ago have gone beyond the borders of states and continents. Today, they represent a fundamental determinant in building of national and international security. Liberalisation of territorial protection of states, especially within the borders of the European Union, as well as mass migrations from the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and, recently, from Ukraine, support escalation of social hazards. A close relationship between social and other groups of hazards needs to be noted, including those of military nature that may be a consequence and a result of the conducted aggressive policy, especially of the neighbouring states. Following an analysis of current migration problems, as well as experiences gained during the pandemic, main causes of social hazards can be identified, concerning: depreciation of the state authorities, depreciation of the Polish Army, a level of citizens' internal security, a level of social security resulting from the economic condition of the state, the state identity representing mainly the area of attacks resulting from conducting a historical policy depreciating ages of the state's achievements, as well as falsifying those pages from the history that for many reasons seem inconvenient for a person executing relevant activities, ethnic and religious divisions, national and class antagonisms, and pauperisation of the society and restricted access to education, culture and recreation. Those components significantly influence relations between individual entities and are a result of information hazards determining the loss of the state's image. This factor appears to play increasingly significant role in strengthening the international reliability. Mass media are its intrinsic part, and their role becomes more pronounced in terms of an influence on the shaping of public opinion.

AN ANALYSIS OF SUSCEPTIBILITY OF INFORMATION AREAS
ON CONDUCTING OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE OPERATIONS

Our times are characterised by multi-faceted informational operations aiming at influencing the recipient's will and, therefore, their activities. It should be noted that this is not only a domain of politicians or economists, but also of military officials, increasingly often distinguishing this area when planning their operations. This situation results from a battleground of the new generation wars, being the human mind, specific social groups, and situational awareness of decision-making centres. Showing a certain historical parallel, the 19th century Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz should be mentioned here, who in his conversation with Prince Friedrich Wilhelm described the rule of the will of nations in such words: "a will governs strong men like an absolute ruler", and added: "as the light concentrates in the very heart of the fire, so the will joins all human forces [...], subdues the nations, and, in its magnificence, deprives wise men of wisdom" (Strachan, 2009, p. 90). Therefore, it appears obvious that the success of actions of this kind results from obtaining an informational advantage over the opponent.

In conditions of the global networking, the public discourse focusing on information attacks, causing disorientation of societies and the information noise, becomes particularly important. Taking into account events occurring currently behind Polish eastern border, it should be said that undertaken activities change their nature and cover increasingly newer areas. During last few years, Poland, being on the eastern flank of NATO, has been experiencing the intensifying info-aggression particularly strongly. The intensity of conducted activities results in the destruction of the image of Poland by diminishing its standing on the international level, and in consequence, also in the structures of the European Union and NATO. In a context of informative actions directed against the country on the Vistula, many researchers of these events propose theses indicating that escalation of intends of external entities may pose a threat to the security of the state, or even states forming an eastern border of international alliances in Europe.

When analysing studies concerning the influence of disinformation on social perception of the crisis situation, it turns out that it is not possible to capture sources of intoxication of the informational environment, remaining within limits of studies on statements and debates conducted only on one plane. A comprehensive approach to the studied area covers areas of the social influence, like politics,

economy, and other contributing to development of a position at the international level and maintaining national social cohesiveness. Arguments confirming their influence and the influence of a world of values of a given community on significant decisions made by them, as well as on a way on waging military conflicts, can already be found in works by Thucydides or Sun Tzu. The Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz used to say that war was a part of the same continuum including trade, diplomacy, and all other relations occurring between nations and governments (Singer & Brooking, 2019, p. 30). This means that studying of trends, i.e., fragments of wider social entirities, separated according to specific terms, is to a large extent conducted by silent knowledge, and only in some cases, assumptions forming that knowledge can be expressed *explicite*.

Identification of cognitive clichés of an incorporated message distorting the image of Poland is a starting point for further analyses. Throughout the analysed last five years, the Republic of Poland has been presented as a non-democratic state inhabited by anti-Semites where there is no equality in law, minorities are oppressed, there are no civilised legal standards, and women have no rights. Furthermore, Poland is also accused of atrocities during World War II, thus indoctrinating the society about a pact with fascists (e.g., theses appear in the informational space that “Poland had a pact with the Third Reich”), erection of death camps (information about “Polish death camps” appear in the information space) and complicity in relation to crimes of the Holocaust (e.g., theses appear in the informational space that “without contribution of Poles, the Holocaust would be impossible”), growing rich by murdering Jews, and now a lack of will to return the stolen property. Incidentally, the subject of anti-Semitism has been exploited from the beginning of the existence of Reborn Poland in 1918. This issue re-emerged repeatedly throughout the inter-war period, and the years of World War II were the time when it was used to settle issues at the international level particularly intensely. This last area related to the Jewish claims related to the heirless property concerns not only the state of Israel, but also people of the Jewish origin scattered all over the world. The importance of this area is emphasised by eastern media, which refer to the diplomatic dispute in the following way: “In a new diplomatic conflict between Poland and Israel, none of the Western allies supported Warsaw. It is not the first time when Poland is completely boycotted by the West. At the same time, the situation on the East is not better: Warsaw almost does not cooperate with this side, focusing its main diplomatic efforts on the West and its area of influence. Poland is becoming a pariah of the global policy” (Nosowicz, 2021).

Therefore, when applications of the areas quoted above, representing sources of informational areas directed against the country on the Vistula, are considered, it should be remembered that there is a man behind each decision. The man, whose susceptibility to manipulation is continuously tested. The man who is the main aim of the waged war to win hearts and minds. All this clearly proves that each decision, even on the top level, is prepared by people. People who sympathise with a given religion and culture, and first of all, people listening to public opinion. People subjected to socio-technical processing. People making decisions, usually consistent with the will of voters. It should be emphasised that the conducted narration concerning areas that are so sensitive is very efficient, because it is based on existence of real dangers, which are appropriately modelled in accordance with beliefs and emotions of the target group of recipients. In consequence, it is widely disseminated by circles susceptible to those influences and treated as a certainty that is not a subject for further discussion. Therefore, in a critical situation, in consequence of an appropriately prepared, orchestrated and strongly resonating anti-Polish propaganda, Poland's partners and allies may turn away from it. Maciej Świrski, referring to the today's deconstruction of the Polish reality, thinks that: "It seems that currently it is even more dangerous for Poland than falsifying of our history, because an issue of specifically understood human rights dominates both the public debate, and the media agenda" (Świrski, 2021, p. 31).

One of the very important part of the manipulation is the fact that the society increasingly often becomes resonator of issues, for which it would not die. Intensification of this trend becomes a consequence of the networking of the community. Possibly, a certain reversing of susceptibility to inoculation of intoxicating messages would be obtaining a certain level of social resistance, and therefore, not giving consent to thinking for you. Disinformation, which has been accompanying us for centuries, today, due to the Internet, transformed into an infodemic, becoming a tool of "soft influence". This possibility is increasingly often used by international legal entities wishing to achieve strategic objectives, by changing preferences of other actors in the international relations, without a need to use force to exert influence.

Within the discussed issues, a concept of soft influence formed by analysts from the Defence Studies Centre at the Russian Centre of Strategic Studies becomes particularly important. In scientists' opinion, *soft power* is nothing more but one more tool or, in broader context, technology of geopolitical war aiming at dominating the opponent by taking over "mental" control over mechanisms

responsible for forming foreign, internal and economic policies by country elites, as well as forcing the world of own values on people of the attacked, or as one should rather write, infected country. In the first place, leading elites, and power and intelligence structures become a target for this type of “soft aggression” (Sykulski, 2019, pp. 90–94). In consequence, the *soft power* is executed in three merging areas. The first of them is a daily communication having short-term consequences – to a large extent, it concerns direct personal contacts, the second is communication focusing on achieving medium-term objectives implemented to a large extent by media of a local character, and the third one is communication having a character of long-term systemic influence, also involving public diplomats. All these actions mainly lead to the influence through the world of values, roles and ideas, to finally contribute to a change in the attitude of a widely understood recipient, starting from the lowest social groups up to opinion formers and decision makers in terms of a conducted policy of a given international entity (Łoś, 2014). In consequence, the use of *soft power* focuses on influences and shaping of perception of the reality, and therefore, on directing the public opinion both on micro- and on macroscale.

Numerous actions that are defaming and destroy the image of Poland are conducted continuously. They translate into the state of the Polish security at the national and international levels. Theses resounding in the social discourse, although naturally not supported by any evidence, only by publications in which the principle of an authority is widely used, influence the recipient. It should be emphasised that according to the said principle, not every person will verify information that is “sealed with trust”. A very good illustration for the use of the described technique are statements of the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin. One of such examples are his words spoken before celebration of the 75th anniversary of liberation of the German Nazi death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau and the International Day in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust on January 27, on which the following comment was made: “[...] Several days later, information about Putin’s words concerning the RP ambassador in Berlin in 1934–39 reached media. Putin called Lipski, referring to German documents taken after the war from Germany to USSR, an anti-Semite and a bastard. As Putin said, when he read documents, containing Lipski’s note on his conversation with Hitler, ‘he was shocked’” (Onet, 2019). Witold Jurasz, writing the said commentary, addressed this incident in the following way: “However, Kremlin’s story has one more, even more dangerous, aspect. Vladimir Putin’s words are addressed to Jewish circles, and his aim is to provoke another Polish-Jewish

scandal” (Onet, 2019). The Russian propaganda machine commented with these words of “Rossiyskaya Gazeta”: “When the Polish leader Andrzej Duda decided not to participate in events commemorating 75th anniversary of liberation of Auschwitz by the Soviet army, planned for January 23, [...] many people in Israel probably breathed a sigh of relief. A leader of the country that in the Jewish state is unofficially considered as an ally of the Holocaust, did not have any moral right to be present among leaders of the countries which liberated prisoners of the camp” (Polskieradio24.pl, 2020). The conducted historical policy develops a narrative aiming at charging the executioner’s crimes to the victim. The continuity of conducted actions and their consistent nature affect emotions felt towards the country on the Vistula. To a large extent, these emotions are a manifestation of decisions taken by people, who are not soulless algorithms. When analysing the discussed subject, the Russian narration of the meeting held in the capital city of Ukraine, Kiev, on March 15, 2022, needs to be mentioned. Participants of this event included the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Prime Minister of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki with the Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński, and the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Petr Fiala and the Prime Minister of Slovenia Janez Janša. On the next day, “Russian Pravda” published an article entitled “Poland, the ‘Hyena’ of Europe, Drags World into the Third World War”. On pages of one of the most widely read Russian newspapers, Lyubov Stepushova publishes contents accusing Poland of attempts to start the third world war, and of constant attempts to expand its territories at the expense of its neighbouring states. Furthermore, she said that the real aim of the visit and activities towards Ukraine was to make it the colony of Poland and to get economic benefits from it (Stepushova, 2022). The main part of her study are events which, in the author’s opinion, confirm the thesis presented in the title:

- After the end of World War I, Poland occupied Western Ukraine and Western Belarus – the territories of the Russian Empire that the young Soviet state was not able to protect. In spring of 1920, Poles organised in Ukraine Jewish pogroms and mass executions. Poles shot down over three thousands civilians in Rivne, and about four thousand Jews in Tetiiv. Thousands of captured Red Army soldiers were shot in Polish camps. Only in 1939, these lands were liberated by the Soviet army.
- In the same 1920, Poles captured Vilnius and surrounding lands – just about one third of the territory of the Republic of Lithuania. After the war, the USSR returned these lands to Lithuania.

- Poland was the first state to conclude a non-aggression pact with the Nazi Germany. It was signed in Berlin on January 26, 1934, for a period of ten years.
- In 1938, Poland in the alliance with the Nazi Germany captured Czechoslovakia. Hitler took the Sudetenland, and Poland the Cieszyn Silesia. This forced Winston Churchill to say that Poland “with hyena appetite [...] joined in the pillage and destruction of the Czechoslovak State” (Stepushova, 2022).

An analyses of contents distorting the image of Poland, especially in the eyes of recipients in the East, results to conclusion that the actions of a great emotional intensity are conducted with the increasing force, aiming at stimulating objects of informational influence by impacting their cognitive zone. The undertaken activities focus on stimulating fear among recipients. The effect of the influence is achieved by using a whole range of techniques, starting with strengthening of stereotypes, myths, and prejudices by saturating with dedicated cognitive clichés using usual patterns, and functioning social sympathies and antipathies, to drawing up of a polarised world. To strengthen the informational load, all kinds of associations are used, using a principle of general acceptance, and conviction about an obvious character of specific beliefs. To create information missiles, catchy news created according to the need of a given moment are used, being a compilation of partly true, partly falsified information. An immanent feature of the impact is the polarisation of judgements and opinions. Intoxicating messages present the world divided into the good and the bad one. This way, the targets for the influence are left no space for analyses. Making decisions is facilitated by indicating the one and only desirable direction. The clearly specified direction for activities is also used to stimulate social unrests.

Another area in which operations of social influence are activated is the crisis related to the coronavirus pandemic. Information attacks became particularly intense at the time of introduction of vaccines. The new reality, surprising to the world, and accompanied by the enormous information noise, became in fact a battleground between the truth and the lie. Information missiles saturated the public space with sensational slogans depreciating the use of vaccines, like infertility, blood clots, chipping of humanity, etc. The aim of this informational action was to sow unrest and promote false information. These actions aimed at stimulating specific social reactions, and at undermining credibility of state institutions and information provided by media. Referring to this situation, Professor Jemielniak said that “this entire phenomenon is based on the fact that

when somebody close to us, whom we trust, shares some information, then we will not necessarily additionally verify it” (tvn24.pl, 2021). The researcher is of the opinion that a vast number of untrue information comes from artificially blown up conversations on Twitter. They are strengthened by portals known for spreading disinformation, coming, among others, from Russia, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and India (Jasiński, 2021).

Another area of informational attacks resulting from a specific situation in Ukraine and Belarus are Polish Armed Forces. The only messages available were created on a basis of fictional interviews and manipulated quotes, statements of crucial commanders, and non-existing or unidentified sources. Other are created by establishing false authorities (experts) or fictitious 3rd sector organisations commenting on activities conducted for defence purposes. A special example here is the Territorial Defence Force (TDF), which are a target for continuous attacks concerning circumstances of their forming, training, and expansion. This fifth type of Armed Forces was established to strengthen the defence of the Republic of Poland by saturating with trained citizens places being their ‘Small Homeland’, and its usefulness, despite its very “young age”, was proven during numerous activities, both operational and certified during numerous military exercises, as well as during emergency actions. An example of TDF involvement in emergency activities all over Poland was its activity during the COVID-19 pandemic as a part of activities under a code names of “IMMUNE SPRING”, “DURABLE RESISTANCE”, or “STRONG SUPPORT”. Another example is the TDF involvement in support for the Border Guard and operational units at the Poland border with Belarus. Yet another example is its involvement in emergency situations at their permanent regions of responsibility, in form of removal of damages caused by floods and hurricane storms, actions related to ASF, or assistance in extinguishing of large area fires, as it was the case at the Biebrza bogland. Another diminished aspect is creation of human resources, which cannot be overestimated in terms of creation of RP Armed Forces capacities in the event of war. This real strengthening of the state security became a target for informational attacks. Its depreciation in the eye of the society oscillated around applied cognitive clichés, by introducing into the information space slogans such as “cannon fodder”, “Macierewicz’s army”, etc. The social discourse was supplemented with memes, which spread along the network in a flash, developing the undertaken narrative. Initially, this tool of mass communication was perceived as an element of an online fun. With time, they have become a significant mean of expression in communication, providing building material to create the reality.

Currently, they are also an interesting example of stigmatisation, as their reliability is very difficult to be verified by their recipient. A reaction to “semi-truths” or downright lies spread through them is always delayed and usually its reach is much more limited when compared to the reach of the initial information. The popularity of this communication tool is increasing rapidly, becoming more and more important component of mass culture influencing changes occurring in our reality. Today, it is not multi-page studies or long presentations that describe specific events. Today, the network community immediately sums up a given situation that occurred in the social space with memes, which are very simple and easy to create, even for people with limited IT competences. The information flow in the digital space spreads through virus-like linking of content between network communities. The meme is like a thrown stone or a spoken word, which cannot be taken back. In the widely understood cultural changes, we are becoming the pictorial society again, in which attacking with information armed with memes becomes increasingly stronger. Doctor Rafał Cekiera thinks that: “With popularisation of memes, increasingly higher number of subjects is being processed by ‘meme machines’. With a significant certainty, a thesis can be proposed that today memes become a mean of expression in communication about the entire social life, and are a new online medium, visual or audiovisual, carrying information, comments, and opinions” (Cekiera, 2021). Analysing the influence of this tool on the management of “awareness industry”, an important aspect must be taken into account, i.e., that the influence in social media is one of the least expensive and the most effective in the entire range of measures used to shape opinions of the mass recipient.

From the point of view of discussed content, the issue of human rights is important and it dominates in the social, and therefore informational space. This subject specifically dominates the public debate and fills the media agenda. The issue of observance of human rights on the border with Belarus is another subject heating up the social discourse. The narrative accompanying these events uses the incomplete determination of terms ‘refugee’, ‘immigrant’, and ‘emigrant’. The resonance of harms suffered by people and the punch aimed at the soft underbelly of the Polish nation, referring to emotions and our historical experiences, is a fertile ground for informational activities. The word “refugee”, being a specific catalyst, is so strongly embedded in our sensitivity that in 2015, the chapter of Polish linguists unanimously (for the first time in its history) chose that noun as the word of the year, and with the votes of Internet users, “refugee” also won the national online plebiscite organised by the University of Warsaw

(Cywiński, 2017). The consequences of resounding of such important subject include, on the one hand, increasing social divisions, while on the other, putting the rule of law and formed alliances to the test. Taking those last ones into account, it is worth to take a closer look at the escalating subject.

At the end of 2021, China started to address the crisis on the border between Poland and Belarus. A certain discrepancy in the message should be noted. English-language media, mainly associated with Hong Kong, on a basis of Western sources of information, unanimously blamed the Belarusian side for initiating and escalating this crisis. They also indicated the support of the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and the United States for activities undertaken by the Polish side. On the other hand, the Chinese state-owned media to a large extent promoted the Belarusian and Russian point of view. Here, the Chinese point of view should be presented more extensively, as it disseminates information in the wide geopolitical context. The main theses presented in Chinese state-owned media include:

- treating the conflict as yet another stage of the conflict between the European Union and the Russian Federation (the role of the United States and the United Kingdom is emphasised, indicating an analogy with the events in Ukraine);
- emphasising tensions in relations between Poland and the European Union, concerning ensuring safety on the eastern border of the European Union;
- a discrepancy in interpretation of terms ‘refugee’ and ‘emigrant’, in a context of evaluation of security procedures conditioning the situation on the border between Poland and Belarus.

The adopted narrative proves the increasing more international nature of this crisis, and also emphasises alliances and writes new scenarios for the events of yesterday.

In the days of increasing tensions in international relations, a discredited country loses the trust of its allies and is at a risk of political isolation. Thus, it becomes a threatened country. Informational actions distorting the image of Poland significantly influence the public opinion and are able to undermine the obligations of its allies and weaken their loyalty. Today’s clashes between groups of interests occurring in the informational space are conducted, to a large extent, through the media. At the threshold of the 21st century, it can responsibly be said that communication, not only in Poland, the European Union or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, has grown to become a factor that directly

determines the perception of the security environment by citizens of international communities. Today, not only the success of joint missions and operations depends on the message effectiveness, but also the future of international relations and effectiveness of projections of an ability to deter and to prevent conflicts. Today, local or international disputes, not so long ago conducted behind the closed doors, are practically available to everybody. Local conflicts affect global decisions, to the extent not seen ever before. The applied cognitive clichés result in emotional vibrations of their recipients. This is confirmed by a reception by the public opinion of subjects with key words such as “fascism”, “anti-Semitism”, “intolerance”, “racism”, “discrimination”, “undermined independence of the courts”, “threats to democracy”, “a country of despotism”, “anti-vaxxers”, “refugee”, etc. We receive a given message in a way depending on the religion, culture in which we grew up, sexual orientation, our financial situation, as well as myths, stereotypes, and cognitive clichés. Therefore, a given fact is understood in a different context, depending on a target group. Their cognitive value is very limited, although they evoke strong emotions, therefore, the use of this technique, especially on the mass scale, supports disinformation having an ideological or political context. Considering this aspect, the opinion of Denis McQuail should be considered, who thinks that: “Much effort in media production is devoted to devices for gaining and keeping attention by catching the eye, arousing emotion, stimulating interest. This is one aspect of what has been described as ‘media logic’, with the substance of a message often subordinated to the devices for presentation” (McQuail, 2012, p. 88).

The role of media in shaping of the social opinion

Here, an attention should be paid to relations between informational actions and areas of influence on social attitudes and behaviours. Their shaping is possible, for example, by instruments from the areas of education, culture, law, economy, technology, religion, and media, with a simultaneous consideration of a long-term and multi-faceted action requiring an interdisciplinary attitude. This last area, due to the subject of this study, should be expanded more. Media, which we are discussing, play a particularly important role in the process of shaping social changes. They may uncover and publicise emerging social problems, thus focusing the public opinion’s attention on a given subject, promote specific methods for solving disputable issues, as well as monitor occurring events and effects of their influence on the recipient. One of the rather important parts

is a mechanism of creating social problems within the public awareness. It is focused on the recipient's perception, i.e., things on which the public opinion should focus. Its source becomes of a secondary importance, although it is not irrelevant. Media, not only the mainstream ones, but also social media, have a significant influence on the character of the information load, and their effectiveness was demonstrated during so-called colour revolutions. Ewa Lipska, referring to their nature, notes that: "Tools and concept of the social marketing may be used to exert the influence on each entity that plays a role both in initiation and in conducting social changes. This approach still assumes striving to influence attitudes, but not only at a level of individual behaviours in the target group, but also on other entities in any way involved in possibilities to solve a given social problem at its different stages" (Lipska, 2010, p. 316). With this attitude towards the social marketing, for obvious reasons the communication tools used to conduct the informational policy gain in importance.

Social engineering used in the social marketing is a modern tool positioning a given subject in the agendas presented above. It should be emphasised here that the work of information creators starts long before the agendas are approved. They are mainly focusing on escalating a given subject, gaining the public opinion attention. Walter Lippmann thought that it is people who create cognitive maps of the world surrounding them on a basis of media information. This American intellectual created a concept of so-called pseudo-environment, i.e., an image of the world constructed by media, but reflecting the reality only in a fragmentary way. He also thought that the public opinion reacts to the pseudo-environment, and not to the actual reality. This situation stems from the fact that media reports are not based on experiences of recipients, but on media relations (McCombs, 2008, p. 3). Analysing the structure of media messages, we discover techniques governing creation of the reality. So in reports on crisis or political situation, it can be noticed that the presented fact and its interpretation are somehow added in the package of the delivered message. So we receive the message together with its interpretation. In one message, the sender includes all answers to questions that may appear in this regard. In consequence, they deprive us of an option for an independent analysis of the subject, and therefore, the use of alternate sources of information. In the times when the saturation of the informational environment makes impossible for each and every one of us to process and, certainly, to absorb information, this results in a partial cognitive disability, with media playing a role of a kind of guardians for it. The conducted analyses lead to an image of media as an effective tool of power that may exert influence in many

different ways. Therefore, it seems justified to propose a thesis that media may both enslave and liberate, unite and divide, support changes or prevent them. Although the presented picture is formed of different opinions, which are not always consistent. Furthermore, the richness of mechanisms and technologies for multiple reproduction and distribution grows, making the informational attacks increasingly effective.

Regardless of the occurring changes, the importance of the mass media in modern societies is clear. They are a main source of opinions about the social reality and definitely a plane for development and maintaining the social identity. They are characterised by a force potentially acting in favour of a new type of cohesiveness, which can join scattered individuals under one national, regional, and local feeling. The fact that they can intensify the social atomisation and evoke emotions, like nothing else ever before, is also of importance. Mass media practically monopolised the information flow, penetrating all areas of our lives. In consequence, their importance for many interest groups increases. When referring to the social construction associated with the essence of the message, Denis McQuail wrote: “[...] the picture of ‘reality’ that news claims to provide cannot help but be a selective construct made up of fragments of factual information and observation that are bound together and given meaning by a particular frame, angle of vision or perspective. Social construction refers to the processes by which events, persons, values and ideas are first defined or interpreted in a certain way and given value and priority, largely by mass media, leading to the (personal) construction of larger pictures of reality” (McQuail, 2012, p. 115). According to this statement, we are regularly confronted with a selective area of the society. In consequence, this picture shapes our opinions and values. This is consistent with the opinion of C. Wright Mills, who perceives media as a basic source of the sense of identity and social aspirations.

SUMMARY

This study discusses the most important issues concerning the information policy of Poland in terms of identifying information hazards determining the loss of the state's image as perceived by international opinion. The conducted analysis clearly shows that the intensity of undertaken activities is always shaped by obtaining a susceptible and popular social and cultural context. Today, the range of options for influencing the society is very extensive. The issues presented above do not

discuss all information hazards, but indicate the areas of waging an “invisible war”. Definitely, the conducted analysis indicates that the greatest distributor of the content intoxicating the public space are media. The areas of deconstruction of the image of Poland presented above are not addressed solely to foreign recipients. They also have an internal influence. They are a clear influence on the man in the street, and through them, on authorities and experts, because the experts are dependent on the authorities, and they, in turn, on the public opinion. The intensity of undertaken activities is always shaped by obtaining a susceptible and popular social and cultural context. The conducted informational activities undermine our national values and invade our lives with imported products of informational influence, filling the cognitive space. Many of the activities shaping reception of events described above are executed by evoking feelings referring to the nationality, citizenship, and civilisation background, of various intensity (e.g., from patriotism to chauvinism, from piety to fanaticism), depending on needs, emphasising the emotional or rational sphere. A tool frequently used in this area, as described in a joint publication by Marek Wrzosek, Szymon Markiewicz and Zbigniew Modrzejewski, is: “creation of various kinds of more or less fictional dangers (from specific countries, international organisations, international corporations, or crime groups). The following is created: as an illusion of lack, of losing something (a territory, resources, etc.), myths, clichés, collective perceptions of a sphere (e.g., civilisation community of the Orthodox Church), and collective historical imagination is created” (Wrzosek, Markiewicz, & Modrzejewski, 2019, p. 20). Information that is both a sword and a shield, in actions conducted below the threshold of war, apart from attacking may also be a factor facilitating efficient defensive activities and building of a uniform system to prevent intoxication of own information environment. In the practice of emergency actions it is assumed that information increases the situational awareness, therefore, it increases knowledge not only of those in command and their teams, but also of all people directly involved in actions and of the entire society, by providing relevant information. Therefore, because information may effectively contribute to distortion of the picture of activities conducted in the grey zone, then it is possible to fight the opponents not only in the tangible (combat measures), but also in the intangible (information) dimension. Reaching this place we become aware that development of a uniform information policy of the state and the associated media policy conducted in an atmosphere of trust, free of manipulation and replacement of reliable information with fake

news dissemination of which leads to destabilisation of the international order, becomes a strategic tasks for modern states.

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