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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS: CURRENT STATE WITHIN SECURITY AND DEFENCE SECTOR

**Key words:** strategic communications, narratives, effectiveness of public administration, manipulation, disinformation.

**ABSTRACT:** In the current dynamic world the strategic communications (STRATCOM) mean a comprehensive process which is aimed at developing, promoting, and distributing the required narratives and messages of any organization in order to form and ensure its positive image, inform counterparts (adversaries) and target audiences of the organization's intents and positions, main tasks and achievements. While implementing the STRATCOM, it is very important to remember about their main rules and principles which are unique for both security and defence sector and business. Unfortunately, in the current "hybrid" measurement sometimes we should realize the effectiveness of the SC activities, thus it is necessary to define the measurements of effectiveness and performance for effective evaluation of activities.

Ukraine has been repelling the aggression in the Eastern Ukraine since 2014 within massive hybrid warfare against it. This fact has caused the initiating a range of reform and innovative processes in Ukraine. Since then, we have known about the STRATCOM in Ukraine. In (Historical retrospective analysis of formation and development of strategic communications in security and defence sector of Ukraine) we have analyzed the process of development of the SC in security and defence sector. This process was speeded and pressed up by the warfare. Moreover,

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it was implemented in line with existing NATO principles and standards. Even the definition and concept of the STRATCOM were taken from the NATO documents. However, the reality reveals the necessity to revise the term definition and consider the implementation of business processes related to communications in security and defence sector. Some nations have already passed through this transformation and changed the approach to their SC. Even NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications MC 0628 was successfully used until 2014. It is the STRATCOM baseline documents and it needed to be revised (NATO and Strategic Communications. The story so far. *The Three Swords Magazine* 33/2018, pp. 65–73).

In the article the authors make some proposals how to improve the STRATCOM definition and improve the whole process of their realization.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the actuality, importance and comprehensiveness of the STRATCOM realization process, today the public administration contrary to business has a certain problem of the communication break, especially in crisis, sometimes non-understanding of its synchronization both vertically and horizontally and importance of top level leaders involvement in communication process.

The article is devoted to the STRATCOM analysis in public administration within current challenges and threats, especially in evolving information environment and crisis, as well as the authors propose clarification of the STRATCOM definition in line with NATO nations and partners experience. The establishment of the appropriate communication with audiences is especially vital in crisis.

## ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS THAT HAVE BEGUN TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE

The recent document, such as Strategy of Military Security of Ukraine, states the importance of establishment of communication channels with population and development of capabilities of defence forces of Ukraine in terms of strategic communications in defence sphere and focuses on the achievement of the state policy objectives in military sphere, defence sphere, and military development considering conditions and restrictions

through formation and realization of effective military policy, strategic, especially defence planning, and planning of defence of Ukraine based on the euro-Atlantic principles, democratic civilian control over the defence forces, strategic communications and information policy in military sphere, defence sphere, and military development, European and euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine (On Decision of the Council of National Security and Defence of Ukraine, 2021).

The STRATCOM issues in the new history of Ukraine are actively researched in works of A. Barovska, D. Dubov, L. Kompantseva, Yu. Laputina, V. Lipkan, R. Marutyan, G. Pocheptsov, T. Syvak, M. Shklyaruk, etc.

All these works cover the development of STRATCOM system in Ukraine, its normative and legislative regulation. Particularly, D. Dubov highlights the fact that “despite the considerable number of researches (mainly, European and American researchers) and a number of proposed definitions, today we still observe essential problems in the single and integral (even at some basic level) understanding of the real meaning of strategic communications, how they should be realized and what is their result” (Strategic communications: problems of conceptualization and practical realization).

## **CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN STRATCOM**

Current information environment is crisis in deed, thus it needs a comprehensive response and crisis communication, which could be both the milestone of any organization and be dangerous for its existence and be a new opportunity to check the working effectiveness and possibilities under these circumstances. The digital character, digitalization and crisis conditions are the fertile ground for breaking the effective communication, discoordination among all STRATCOM elements. The public administration as a component of political administration means a range of all forms of realization of state power as whole; activity aimed at executing laws and other normative legislative documents through different forms of power influence on administration objects (Concepts, essence, forms, and methods of public administration). The essence of the public admin-

istration foresees the implementation of a number of actions for realization tasks assigned, cooperation of actors and influence of administration objects.

Thus, the research of STRATCOM term in different countries demonstrates the connection of STRATCOM with the effective public administration, promoting the state goals, formation of its positive image considering the national interests and similar principles of their implementation. Thus, the US “National Framework for Strategic Communications” (2010) defines the “strategic communications” as the synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations professionals (National Framework for Strategic Communication, 2010). Moreover, it is important that the mentioned document includes the responsibilities of public authorities concerning STRATCOM implementation. The similar responsibilities are presented in the Doctrine of Information Security of Ukraine dd 2016 (On Doctrine of Information Security of Ukraine, 2016).

The DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms 2011 refers to the STRATCOM as “focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power” (DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 2011). Meanwhile, the DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms 2021 does not contain the STRATCOM term and defines the following term “commander’s communication synchronization – a process to coordinate and synchronize narratives, themes, messages, images, operations, and actions to ensure their integrity and consistency to the lowest tactical level across all relevant communication activities” (DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 2021). In simple terms the coordinated process should ensure the transfer of narratives, messages to both external and internal audiences. The challenge

of this definition is in the speed of information distribution in the contested information environment, thus the proactive character of communication of any entity considering audiences expectations. Synchronization and coordination could ensure that the messages are heard and perceived.

The British approach to the STRATCOM term in the national security and defence sector refers to the “advancing national interests by using all Defence means of communication to influence the attitudes and behaviours of people”, and the STRATCOM defence definition means advancing national interests by using Defence as a means of communication to influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of audiences” (Joint Doctrine Note 2/19 “Defence Strategic Communication: an Approach to Formulating and Executing Strategy).

The STRATCOM became popular in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and are now being actively implemented in defence. The British approach means that the STRATCOM should work to advance national interests by using all forms of defence to influence the behaviour of the target audiences. The STRATCOM should make a decisive contribution to the development and implementation of a national strategy, which is understood as a set of ideas, preferences and methods that explain the activities (diplomatic, economic, and military) and lead it to the goal (Strategic communications: about the problem of the essence understanding).

The STRATCOM should be an integral part of the national strategy and provide a convincing means of explaining ideas. These tasks execution requires the actors of the STRATCOM process to develop and adapt key messages through communication channels in a timely manner. The continuous dialogue with the audience and monitoring its reaction will help to adjust correctly and timely the chosen strategy.

According to the British experts, it is necessary to recognize the importance of thoughts and internal and external audiences, international community, Diaspora, especially those who form the public opinion, as well as understand better the culture, people motivation, and keep state-

ments of the state policy (Strategic communication: the defence contribution (JDN 1/12)).

The UK scholars and practitioners state that today information and public awareness are no less important than the concepts of manoeuvre and force. Unfortunately, in the past, too little importance was given to information during operations. Understanding that building trust or changing the attitudes and behaviours of a selected audience can be as useful, if not greater, as useful in achieving operational goals.

Strategic communications is, first of all, a certain philosophy, partly the ability to explain the phenomenon and organize processes. The philosophy of strategic communications is a key element, as it underlies the approach of the British analysts to achieve the desired results such as the coordination of words, images and actions to exercise influence.

Because of some mess in the United States related to understanding of the STRATCOM essence, the United States Department of Defence was proposed the 5-stage process of the STRATCOM in 2012. At first, it is necessary to define audiences and those perceptions which are expected from audiences for communication of the Department of Defence, and then the Department of Defence reaction to communication is forecasted. Plans are then identified and developed to fill the gap between what the Department of Defence wants to communicate and what the key audience is likely to hear. At the last stage it is possible to implement, monitor, and evaluate, if necessary, make changes to the plan (DOD Strategic Communication: Integrating Foreign Audience Perceptions into Policy Making, Plans, and Operations). The United States underpins that the STRATCOM is the process of integration of elements of audiences and stakeholders perception during decision-making, operations planning and conducting at every level.

In the European Union the STRATCOM division is responsible for effective and reliable communication, fighting against disinformation, narrative formation and enforcement of the general media environment, and work with civil population in the appropriate regions.

A significant deficiency of the implementation of the STRATCOM at the national level is the lack of a clear algorithm of interaction between government agencies in terms of the STRATCOM implementation.

On March 31, 2021, the Centre for Strategic Communications and Information Security, which is established under the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, was presented. Authorized employees of the Centre for Strategic Communications and Information Security will focus their work on:

- the STRATCOM, including development of the Russian counter-narratives, conducting information campaigns, integration of the Ukrainian narrative into daily Government communication;
- formation of the online resource which will actively respond to information attacks; and
- regular notification of Russian hybrid aggression at the international level, joint development of mechanisms to counter disinformation with international partners (Centre for strategic communications and information security was presented, 2021).

On May 7, 2021 the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyi signed the Decree No.187/2021 “Issues of Centre for Countering Disinformation” and approved the Statement on the Centre for Countering Disinformation (Issues of Centre for Countering Disinformation, 2021). According to the Statement, the mentioned Centre is subordinated to the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine. This Centre ensures fighting against existing and future eventual threats to the national security and national interests in information sphere, reveals and fights against disinformation, propaganda, destructive information influences and campaigns, as well as prevents manipulations of the public opinion (Issues of Centre for Countering Disinformation, 2021).

Authorized persons of the Centre for Counteracting Disinformation will participate in the development of the STRATCOM system, organization and coordination of measures for its development; will participate in the development and implementation of the Information Security Strategy of Ukraine, analysis of the state of its implementation, in particular on the effectiveness of measures to fight against disinformation; will participate in the creation of an integrated system for assessing information threats and responding to them promptly; develop methodologies for identifying threatening information materials of manipulative and disinformation nature; promote cooperation between the state and civil society institu-

tions in fighting against disinformation and destructive information influences and campaigns, organization and participation in information and education activities to improve media literacy of society; study, summarize and analyze the experience of other states and international organizations in fighting against disinformation and prepare proposals for its use in Ukraine (Issues of Centre for Countering Disinformation, 2021).

The Centre for Counteracting Disinformation established at National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine and the Centre for Strategic Communications and Information Security at the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine should establish clear cooperation between all the STRATCOM entities at the state level.

In general, the STRATCOM is a comprehensive philosophical concept of the existence of the state, the protection of its values and interests, based on the narrative, which is the history that supports the decisions made by public authorities.

## CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, taking into account the world experience of successful implementation of the STRATCOM activities and the continuity of public administration and STRATCOM processes, when planning the STRATCOM activities, the formation of the STRATCOM system in general, it is important to take into account the key target audiences. If you understand your audiences, understand their aspirations and expectations, you can build effective communication and successfully implement public administration in a crisis. The non-governmental sector works in the same way today – it works with its audiences.

Summarizing the above, it should be noted that currently the most pressing issue for Ukraine is to create an effective mechanism of public administration to establish a coordinated process of dissemination of national strategic narratives, messages, both external and internal audiences, and synchronization of interaction between all the government agencies. The introduction of a new structural and organizational model

of public administration in the direction of the STRATCOM, the definition of tasks, functions and rights to exercise powers and responsibilities of management for this area of activity will ensure effectiveness in the STRATCOM system as a whole.

Establishing effective work in this area will provide advantages in promoting the goals of the state, the formation of its positive image, taking into account national interests and current challenges in the information sphere.

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