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The impact of wartime information strategy on defence capabilities. The case of the Russo-Ukrainian war¹

Abstract

In 2021 global arms spending reached a record-breaking level of \$ 2,11 trillion. This trend can be expected to develop due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. The Russian invasion has undoubtedly contributed to increased demand in the arms industry. The capabilities of domestic arms markets of conflicting parties is not a determining factor of the result of the war. Opponents' activities in the information environment are also greatly important, as they often determine the response of the international community, and influence the support awarded by individual states. The financing of arms supplies to Ukraine may serve as a good example of such correlation. The arms that Ukraine is acquiring surely improve the country's defence capabilities, with the support gained by Ukraine being the result of Kyiv's well thought-out and consistent actions in the information sphere. This paper aims to explain the effects of wartime information strategy on Ukrainian defence capabilities.

Key words: the Russo-Ukrainian War, Information Strategy, Strategic Communication, Defence Capabilities, Defence Industry, StratCom, Narrative

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¹ The article is an extension of the issues raised during the 17th International Scientific Conference „Defense Resources Management in the 21st Century” that took place on October 28–29, 2022 in Brasov (Romania). See M. Zadorožna, *Short Communication: The Correlation Between Wartime Information Strategy and Defence Capabilities. The Case of the Russo-Ukrainian War* [in:] *Defense Resources Management in the 21st Century*, Brasov 2022, p. 355–358.

Introduction

According to the data provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)², global arms expenditure reached a record-breaking level of \$ 2,11 trillion in 2021. States across the world increased their arms expenditures by 0,7%, making 2021 the seventh year of growth in a row. The highest arms expenditures were incurred by the United States, which allocated \$ 801 billion for that purpose. The amount was, however, 1,4% lower than in the preceding year (see table 1). China took second place, spending \$ 293 billion on arms. China's result was 4,7% higher compared to 2020. The two countries were followed by India (\$ 76,6 billion), the United Kingdom (\$ 68,4 billion), and Russia (\$ 65,9 billion). As regards Russia, it is worth noting that the country's arms expenditures increased by 2,9%, and accounted for 4,1% of Russia's GDP. Ukraine was ranked outside the top thirty countries with the highest military expenditure. Its defence expenditure amounted to \$ 5,9 billion last year, which corresponded to 3,2% of Ukraine's GDP. It should be stressed here that, since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, Ukrainian military expenditure grew by 72%.

According to the data collected by SIPRI, only eight out of all European NATO member states spent at least two percent of their GDP on defence. The fact that in 2014 there were only two such countries allows us to consider it as certain progress. The rate of such progress usually grows as a result of a crisis. This trend can be expected to develop due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. The Russian invasion has undoubtedly contributed to increased demand in the arms industry. Paradoxically, the advancement of the Ukrainian counter-offensive and Russian defeats might give a boost to some sectors of the Russian economy³. The need to supply growing quantities of arms to the front means an increase in production volume. In turn, growing production in the arms industry may compensate for the loss incurred in other sectors. This is accompanied by decisions made by Vladimir Putin, such as the signing of a law which grants the government extraordinary control over enterprises.

2 See *World military expenditure passes \$ 2 trillion for first time*, 25 April 2022, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/world-military-expenditure-passes-2-trillion-first-time> [access: 13.10.2022].

3 See *Putin's War Machine May Be Giving His Economy A Quiet Boost*, 15 September 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-15/russian-economy-seen-to-get-boost-from-outperforming-weapons-manufacturing?leadSource=uverify%20wall> [access: 13.10.2022].

As a result, such companies may be obliged to extend working hours or switch to production adapted to military needs, if necessary. Economic growth related to the arms industry might prove to be short-lived given the sanctions imposed on Russia, denying the Russian war machine access to components and technologies. As detailed data is unavailable, it is difficult to estimate how long Russian military expenditure will support the growth of domestic industries.

Table 1. The top 5 countries with the highest military expenditure in 2021

Rank in 2021	Country	Spending (\$b.) in 2021	Change in 2020–2021 (%)
1.	United States	801,0	-1,4
2.	China	293,0	4,7
3.	India	76,6	0,9
4.	United Kingdom	68,4	3,0
5.	Russia	65,9	2,9
Subtotal top 5		1304,9	

Source: Author, based on data from: D. Lopes da Silva et al., *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2021*, „SIPRI Fact Sheet” 2022, p. 2.

The potential of domestic arms markets of conflicting parties is not a determining factor in the outcome of the war. Opponents' activities in the information environment is also of great importance here, influencing the response of the international community. Support from the international community plays a key role in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. A common opinion in the public discourse is that „America has saved Ukraine from defeat. Without its political and military power, Ukraine would be able to defend itself only for a month. Were it not for President Joe Biden, Ukraine would fall victim to European stupefaction in the face of the energy crisis. Without American arms and ammunition, the country would probably get some post-Soviet equipment from Poland, Lithuania and Estonia, and only extend its agony. But it would ultimately fall”⁴. Western arms supplies undoubtedly bolster Ukrainian defence capabilities. Although such support is dictated by geopolitical considerations, the reaction of the international community also depends on activities in the information sphere. The objective of this paper is to explain the effects of wartime information strategy on Ukrainian defence

4 P. Łukasiewicz, *Zapomniane mocarstwo*, „Polityka” 2022, no. 42, p. 44.

capabilities. The analysis was conducted in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Theoretical methods were supplemented by conclusions from meetings with the soldiers of the Ukrainian Territorial Defence Forces, who support strategic communication activities at the tactical level. These conclusions are provided in the part entitled „Increasing Ukrainian defence capabilities”.

The potential of Ukraine’s defence industry

The Ukrainian arms industry is largely the legacy of the Soviet Union. A substantial portion of the Soviet defence industry’s capabilities was located in the territory of Ukraine, and in recent years it underwent profound restructuring and consolidation, with partial privatisation. It is worth adding that during the Cold War, 30% of Soviet armed forces were deployed in the country and the moment Ukraine announced independence, around 1840 enterprises were dealing with production for military purposes (including approx. 700 enterprises engaged in strictly military production, out of which 140 were science and production entities and research centres). The major portion of these capabilities was located in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, and many of these enterprises could boast high technological levels. This can be said in particular about plants whose manufacturing activities involved rocket and space technologies, aviation, radio technologies, as well as anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles. The maintenance of enterprises after the fall of the Soviet Union was a challenge – the Soviet Army ceased to exist, and the armed forces of independent Ukraine were only at the beginning of their formation, while Ukrainian defence spending accounted for less than one percent of GDP, out of which only 10–11% was allocated for the modernisation of the army. This resulted in the bankruptcy of a vast majority of plants, and by 2013 the potential of the Ukrainian arms industry shrank to around 160 enterprises. However, this does not mean that no steps had been previously taken to transform the industry. In 2002 a presidential decree was issued concerning the structural redevelopment of industry. As a result, the Government set out directions for reforms and identified sectors and enterprises whose state-of-the-art production profiles would allow Ukraine to be competitive in foreign markets. Closed cooperation with civil research and development entities was announced at the time, along with the beginning

of ownership transformations which entailed the commercialisation and privatisation of some of the enterprises⁵.

The next step towards the reconstruction of the arms industry was to involve the establishment of the National Agency for the Defence Industry Complex in 2007, but the Agency did not commence any operations. The destructive conflict between then-President Viktor Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko hindered the implementation of the reform, resulting in a critical state of the arms industry. Internal conflict in the governing coalition led to an actual paralysis of power and a political crisis⁶. The situation deteriorated due to the ministry's difficulties in financing contracted armament programmes whose annual implementation rates reached a level of 20% of the planned amounts. The Ministry's debt to domestic arms manufacturers rose to 1,2 billion hryvnias. In the face of growing challenges, the decision was made to make another attempt at reform. This time, emphasis was placed on consolidating major enterprises under state control. The remaining companies were to be gradually privatised. Under presidential decrees in December 2010, a state-owned and vertically managed corporation called „Ukroboronprom” was established. It was composed of state enterprises manufacturing, modernising and renovating military equipment, as well as companies dealing with its exports and cooperating with international partners. The objective of the corporation was to effectively manage the state military industry and improve the effectiveness of the enterprises which were part of the corporation. It brought together such operations as procurement planning, the manufacture of arms and military equipment, R&D works, and export policy. Its establishment helped to organise a series of innovations: research – development – mass production – sales – service – disposal. Even though „Ukroboronprom” consolidated multi-product plants from various sectors of the defence industry, around a dozen enterprises subordinate to the National Space Agency did not become part of the corporation, including the „Yuzhmash” (Pivdenmash) Factory or the Mikhail Yangel Pivdenne Design Office. In 2013 divisions were created within the structures of the corporation,

5 See P. Soroka, *Ukraiński przemysł zbrojeniowy i jego osiągnięcia w zakresie eksportu*, 27 May 2022, <https://portal-mundurowy.pl/index.php/component/k2/item/15631-ukraiński-przemysł-zbrojeniowy-i-jego-osiągnięcia-w-zakresie-eksportu> [access: 13.10.2022].

6 See S.M. Zakrzewska, M. Prokop, *Ukraińskie wybory prezydenckie w 2010 r. na łamach wybranych tytułów prasy polskiej, ukraińskiej i rosyjskiej*, „Warmińsko-Mazurski Kwartalnik Naukowy. Nauki Społeczne” 2012, no. 2, p. 148.

including divisions responsible for the aviation industry and aircraft technical service; precision weapons and ammunition; armoured vehicles; motor vehicle equipment, engineering and special equipment; shipbuilding and maritime structures; radar systems, radio communication and air defence.

The situation of the Ukrainian armament industry changed considerably after 2014. After Russia's annexation of Crimea, Ukraine lost 13 plants manufacturing products for export. For example, the Feodosia State Optical Plant manufactured components for Zubr (Bison) hovercrafts exported to China and T-84M Oplot tanks exported to Thailand. Shipyards in Sevastopol and Feodosia, the „Wiertolit” Research Centre, the „Fiolent” Plant, the „Chernomorets” Central Design Office, and the Luhansk Aircraft Renovation Plant were also lost. The growing threat from Russia and the need to rebuild the volume lost as a result of fights in Donbas were reasons to increase expenditure for defence purposes, and consequently the number of contracts within the domestic market. Of course, this was accompanied by an increase in import contracts, for instance for mobile radars AN/TPQ-36, AN/TPQ-48 or AN/TPQ-49 delivered by Americans as part of the programme for military and technical cooperation with Ukraine. At the same time, arms export rates were also on the rise, and the scope of cooperation with other states was being extended. The suspension of collaboration with Russia was tantamount to Ukraine's loss of an essential foreign market which had so far accounted for half of the annual export volume, and the loss of a major partner in the sphere of arms production. For example, the conflict put an end to the implementation of a joint project entailing the manufacturing of the An-70 transport aircraft⁷. Despite these challenges, „Ukroboronprom” managed to complete all government contracts by the end of 2014. It created over 2000 new jobs in the second half of the year, took over overdue payroll liabilities worth 45 million hryvnias, launched an e-procurement system, and made a further 13 enterprises profitable. The corporation included 134 Ukrainian military and industrial enterprises at the time⁸. Although these measures constituted a manifestation of good practices, „Ukroboronprom” was ranked 90th on the list of the Top 100 arms-producing and military services companies published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which meant a significant decrease in sales, reflected by the drop from the

7 See P. Soroka, *op. cit.*

8 See *Poroshenko Appoints Roman Romanov as New Head of Ukroboronprom*, 4 July 2014, <https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/212185.html> [access: 13.10.2022].

58th position in 2013⁹. This resulted from a considerable decrease in the value of local currency, reducing the value of arms sales in dollars, and from direct disruptions of production caused by the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. This was accompanied by the discontinuation of arms trade between Russia and Ukraine in mid-2014, and problems with exports. In the following years, „Ukroboronprom” has improved its position in the ranking.

The Ukrainian arms industry was also partially privatised as part of the reform. During Viktor Yanukovich's presidency, Russian capital and Ukrainian oligarchs affiliated with Russia became involved in the process. The last decade saw substantial staff turnover, and enterprise management methods have changed. Moreover, the Ukrainian prosecutor's office instituted proceedings in the matter of irregularities identified in these areas¹⁰. A well-known private enterprise is Motor Sich in Zaporizhzhia, one of the largest manufacturers of aeroplane and helicopter engines in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Even though arms markets are heavily protected in western states, in particular against competition from non-NATO states, Motor Sich was one of the first Ukrainian companies to initiate cooperation with western partners, offering the production of helicopter motors to Americans. So far, only a relatively small proportion of the Ukrainian arms industry has been privatised.

It is worth noting that the trends related to the development of modern military technologies which would emphasise quality instead of quantity negatively affected the size of the Ukrainian arms market a decade ago. The need to depart from exceptionally bloody, destructive and mass combat of tight military formations towards more refined asymmetric operations has driven a revolution in the art of war. This has created a demand for the development of modern reconnaissance, communication or radio electronics measures, as well as automated and computerised command systems. During the ongoing war, Ukrainian software engineers have been supporting their army, developing independent systems equipped with AI solutions. Programmers have significantly reduced the costs of drones and developed capabilities for airborne reconnaissance¹¹. The advancements in this sphere allow them

9 See A. Fleurant et al., *The SIPRI Top 100 Arms-Producing and Military Services Companies*, 2014, „SIPRI Fact Sheet” 2015, p. 7–8.

10 See P. Soroka, op. cit.

11 See J. Edmonds, S. Bendett, *Russian Military Autonomy in a Ukraine Conflict*, „CNA's Occasional Paper” 2022, p. 3.

to better face one of the main challenges of Ukrainian forces, namely the lack of precision of artillery strikes. There is still a deficit of high-class products such as howitzers, French Caesars, British M777 or Polish Crabs on the market.

The background of Ukrainian wartime information strategy

Before the actual break-off of the peace process took place, Moscow endorsed the independence of two separatist regions in eastern Ukraine, explaining this by the requests of the leaders of the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic to help them repulse the aggression they had allegedly experienced from the Ukrainian army. Efforts to protect the residents of both regions became the basis of the Kremlin's narrative, reflected in official messages. Vladimir Putin announced not only that those responsible for bloody crimes would be put on trial, but also that Ukraine would be demilitarised and denazified¹². Sergey Lavrov also cast Russia in the role of a victim, calling for the restoration of democratic rule across the Ukrainian territory¹³. Similar arguments were used to justify hostile operations in 2014. The wartime information strategy of Ukraine needed to be planned in such a way as to counter Russian disinformation and propaganda attacks, and maintain the readiness of Ukrainian society to play an active part in military operations. A well thought-out Ukrainian communication strategy contributed to the country's success in the information sphere. Two government centres were established in early 2021 to minimise the risk of the Russian narrative prevailing – the Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security at the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, and the Centre for Countering Disinformation at the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine. Their establishment was necessary, as the increased traffic in the information sphere was one of the first signs of the Kremlin's propaganda. Countering Russian disinformation operations undoubtedly represents a challenge. In Russia, the main difficulty lies in Putin's efforts to monopolise the media and the entire propaganda machine, which creates an information bubble,

12 See *Address by the President of the Russian Federation*, 24 February 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843> [access: 13.10.2022].

13 See *Address by Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation at the General Debate of the 77th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations*, 24 September 2022, <https://gadebate.un.org/en/77/russian-federation> [access: 13.10.2022].

manipulating messages, statements and historical facts. Russians growing up with a coherent vision of the world and surrounded by state-building myths are fertile ground for Kremlin propagandists. According to the Russian narrative, this unlawful invasion has become „a peace-keeping mission” and „a special military operation”, a response to bloodshed and a necessary means to ensure the safety of an oppressed population¹⁴.

Countering Russian disinformation on the international stage is also challenging. In this case, the difficulty arises from the fact that Russians counter western messages using alternative information¹⁵. References to the West are a constant element of Russian rhetoric. The Kremlin has accused the West of taking advantage of Ukraine, pursuing aggressive policies and promoting anti-Russian sentiment. According to Lavrov, this is evidenced by Western countries’ demonstrative references to Moscow’s plans to wage a nuclear war. As the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated, such a war is only in western minds, not in the minds of Russian politicians. In an attempt to make his claims credible, he quoted the statements made by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, US President Joe Biden, head of French diplomacy Jean-Yves Le Drian, and UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss. „I would like to stress once again that we are not discussing the issue of nuclear war or third world war in our conversations. It is necessary for them to keep public opinion in the West under constant stress, to continue anti-Russian sentiment [...]”¹⁶ asserted Lavrov. To legitimise the narrative about Russia’s efforts to restore peace in Ukraine being under western manipulation, the Head of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also referred to the part of the war doctrine of the Russian Federation which sets out the conditions for using nuclear weapons. „We do not have [there – M.Z.] any escalation to de-escalate, as western analysts are trying to impute to us”¹⁷ he assured.

14 See M. Zadorožna, *Causes of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict according to Russia*, „The Bulletin of the Academic Centre for Strategic Communication” 2020, no. 2, p. 16.

15 A similar mechanism could be observed in the case of the annexation of Crimea. In Russia, it was mainly based on recognising Crimea as Russian territory, while at the same time attempts were made to convince the international community that Crimean residents had decided about their future themselves.

16 *Лавров считает, что Запад вынашивает планы насчет ядерной войны*, 3 марта 2022, <https://tass.ru/politika/13946889> [access: 13.10.2022].

17 Ibidem.

The above elements constitute the foundation of the Russian narrative, which has been successfully countered by the Ukrainian wartime information strategy. The coherence of the information policy in Ukraine is based on emphasising Ukraine's role as a victim and on creating President Zelensky's image as a hero fighting evil. The information strategy relies on the use of authentic human emotions which are in contrast to Russian imperialism, militarism and efforts to evoke fear. The development of an institutional framework for strategic communication was an indispensable step, although Ukraine had set the right direction in the information sphere as early as 2014. After the Russian Federation used its armed forces, Ukrainians noticed that their voice was absent in the international media sphere. As a response, they launched the foreign-language TV channel. They opened new television and radio stations with the residents of occupied territories in mind. The aforementioned Ministry of Culture and Information Policy was also implemented, one of its tasks being to run information campaigns aimed at supporting Ukrainians who have fled Donbas and Crimea. Since 2014 Ukrainians have become better at discerning between facts and Russian disinformation. They fact-check and turn to official communications of government agencies. It is currently one of the objectives of strategic communication to maintain their trust in state authorities¹⁸.

Increasing Ukrainian defence capabilities

The war between Russia and Ukraine demonstrates that an opponent's activities in the information environment have a great impact on the effectiveness of battlefield operations. The encounter with such extraordinary disinformation pressure necessitates a coherent information strategy, addressed not only to the country's citizens but also to the international community. In Ukraine, the strategy is boosting morale, thus increasing Ukrainian defence capabilities. After the Russian invasion began, it became apparent that information from the front line alone is not as important as messages which would bring faith in victory, hope and motivation to Ukrainian society. The purpose of disseminated news items was to arouse citizens' enthusiasm and readiness to fight. It was decided that the most harmful piece of information to soldiers

18 See M. Zadorožna, *Strategicznie o... Ukraińskich Wojskach Obrony Terytorialnej. Spotkanie z żołnierzami ukraińskiego WOT z Kijowa*, „Biuletyn Akademickiego Centrum Komunikacji Strategicznej” 2022, Special no., p. 11.

was the news that their colleagues, and other defenders, were in retreat. „If no one surrenders, everyone stays in their positions. It is the strongest motivation possible”¹⁹, explained Lieutenant Andrii Kovalov, spokesman of the 112th Brigade of the Ukrainian Territorial Defence Forces. Wartime information policy cannot allow for the loss of fighting spirit or the feeling of resignation given that the information strategy uses symbols which are aligned with the overall narrative. These symbols included, for example, the wedding ceremonies of soldiers, which not only demonstrated resistance but also created a message of hope. When the Russians announced to the world that they were successfully reaching the centre of Kyiv, Ukrainians shared a video of a wedding organised near the front line. Contrasted with the joyful images of soldiers being blessed by a military chaplain, Russian messages became absurd. Field weddings, exposing Kremlin propaganda, soon became an everyday reality. Their symbolic dimension allowed a response to Russian hybrid attacks using equally hybrid methods. The applied informational solutions effectively motivated Ukrainians to fight, unlocking their defence potential.

Such information strategy has an unquestionable influence on geopolitics. The messages being developed particularly highlight the effectiveness of anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons that Ukraine acquires from western countries. The objective of such a narrative is to encourage the West to increase supplies. It should be noted that during the initial months of the Russian invasion, some western states would refrain from explicit judgements and postponed their decisions. Although Russian operations constituted an attack against the security system established after World War II and had a huge impact on the balance of power in Europe, the initial reactions of the international community were understated and cautious – even disappointing at times. Many European Union (EU) Member States, especially Germany, opposed to supplying Ukraine with military equipment, afraid that this would cause relationships with Russia to deteriorate. The scale of the invasion, its potential consequences, and Ukrainian communication measures gradually changed the approach of the international community. For instance, information about Russian war crimes (e.g. the massacre of civilians in Bucha) provoked various states to take a more explicit stance. Consequently, an increasing number of countries would

19 A comment made during a meeting organised on 1 June 2022 at the War Studies University in Warsaw. The meeting was hosted by the Academic Centre for Strategic Communication. Own materials.

express their solidarity. As Lieutenant Kovalov said: „At the moment Putin is fighting the entire free world, and Ukraine is fighting for the entire free world. If the free world cares about its safety, it should help Ukraine”²⁰.

The help Lieutenant Kovalov called for has had a measurable form for years. Even if the local interests of individual EU Member States at first hindered the adoption of a clear stance, such countries ultimately changed their approach. Such change was demonstrated by decisions to deliver grenade launchers, anti-tank, anti-aircraft and machine weapons, as well as ammunition and fuel to Ukraine. Between 2014 and 2021, financial support for Ukraine amounted to € 1,7 billion in the form of grants from the European Neighbourhood Instrument, € 5,6 billion in the form of loans as part of the macro-financial assistance programme, € 194 million as humanitarian aid, and € 355 million through foreign policy instruments. Since 2014, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development have provided over € 10 billion in loans to Ukraine²¹. Today, the European Union continues to effectively provide support to Ukraine. The support measures are also accompanied by explicit declarations and assurances that all available resources will be deployed to assist in stopping unprovoked and brutal Russian aggression. Unprecedented solidarity has also been declared by the West. In June 2022 US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken informed the public about preparing the 11th military package worth \$ 700 million, covering precision HIMARS missiles with a range of approx. 80 km, ammunition and parts for 155 mm calibre howitzers, helicopters, armoured vehicles and javelin anti-tank missiles. At the same time, Secretary Blinken expressed his conviction that the unity of the West in the matter of Ukraine would be maintained, and that the United States would support Ukraine for as long as the war continued. The words were confirmed by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who added that although a uniform approach was costly, the West would pay an even higher price without it²².

20 Ibidem.

21 See *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Ukraine Relief and Reconstruction*, European Commission, Brussels, 18 May 2022, COM(2022) 233 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0233> [access: 22.01.2023].

22 See *Blinken: Nowy pakiet pomocy wojskowej to dokładnie to, czego potrzebuje Ukraina*, 1 June 2022, <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1228165%2Cblinken-nowy-pakiet-pomocy-wojskowej-dokladnie-czego-potrzebuje-ukraina> [access: 13.10.2022].

In their efforts to draw the attention of the international community, Ukrainians also disseminate news items about any gestures of support coming from the West. Information about a concert that Bono and the Edge from U2 gave at the Kyiv metro in May 2022 spread around the media instantly. The performance also featured a singer from the Ukrainian band Antytila, Taras Topolia, who joined territorial defence forces shortly after the outbreak of the invasion and has been in active service as a medical staff member. Antytila also performed with Ed Sheeran during a concert organised in August 2022 in Poland. After the performance the musicians raised the Ukrainian flag, thanking Poles for the support they have been giving and asked for further assistance. Information about all instances of support in the cultural dimension arouses the interest of the international community and draws its attention to the ongoing war. For Ukrainian society, it is a source of motivation and an expression of solidarity, boosting their morale and engagement. The engagement was demonstrated not only by the surge of volunteers wishing to join the territorial defence forces since the initial days of the full-scale conflict triggered by Russia. The local support system was also developed spontaneously. A coherent information strategy has built national unity and informed social sentiment. Ukrainian nationals continue to actively respond to the appeals made by government authorities and the army. The Ukrainian public's engagement in reporting the movement of the Russian army may serve as a perfect example here. This was made possible thanks to a Ukrainian chatbot – a tool developed by the Ministry of Digital Transformation²². Close cooperation with civilians to obtain information facilitates the monitoring of the movements of enemy groupings. This solution also influences defence capabilities, given the lack of information about the operations of regular Ukrainian armed forces. In media communications emphasis has been placed more on the successes of volunteers who joined the territorial defence forces. Such a narrative not only stresses the scale of social mobilisation but also improves the security of operations and poses difficulties for the Russian side.

23 See https://t.me/evorog_bot [access: 13.10.2022].

Conclusions

Operations in the information domain will not defend a country's territory but may provide favourable conditions for military activities. As regards Ukraine, an effectively implemented information policy contributes to the building of a supporting context and is a determining factor of universal mobilisation. It is, however, not always the case. It might happen that such information and propaganda machines will become a destabilising factor and a source of chaos. Psychological factors play a crucial role in both situations. Social sentiment is shaped through information and propaganda activities, and the case of Ukraine proves that such sentiment may fully reflect the activities of authorities and state institutions. The cohesion of the Ukrainian wartime information strategy is a favourable factor, and it fits in well with the requirements of the contemporary information environment.

The examples provided above – building messages aimed at maintaining Ukrainian society's readiness to fight, communications created with the use of symbols, stressing the effectiveness of anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons acquired from the West, informing the public about war crimes or social engagement in tracking the movement of an enemy army – prove that the information strategy adopted in wartime is not only capable of boosting morale but also triggers a favourable response of the international community. In both cases, the wartime information strategy increases defence capabilities. Therefore, not only the potential consequences of the ongoing war but also proper information strategy influences the support for Ukraine from the international community. Although such support improves Ukrainian defence capabilities, it does not balance the asymmetry of the combat potential of the opposing parties. The support Ukraine particularly needs is one which would allow the country to fight off the strikes of armoured and mechanised forces. Providing new arms to the army does not guarantee the success of the counter-offensive, but provides real perspectives for conducting such operations. If the Ukrainian counter-offensive forces Russia to resort to mobilisation and shift to the war economy, the military conflict could transform into a clash of the economic potentials of Russia and the West. Taking into account the West's declarations on the continued support for Ukraine in the military dimension, and further sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation, such bout between the economic potentials would create a context that is favourable to Ukraine.

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Wpływ wojennej strategii informacyjnej na zdolności obronne. Studium przypadku: wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska

Streszczenie

W 2021 roku globalne wydatki na zbrojenia osiągnęły rekordowy poziom 2,11 bln dolarów. Trwająca wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska pozwala przewidywać, że ten trend będzie się rozwijał. Rosyjska inwazja niezaprzeczalnie przyczyniła się do wzrostu popytu na wyroby przemysłu zbrojeniowego. Jednakże potencjał rodzimych przemysłów skonfliktowanych stron nie przesądza o wyniku trwającej wojny. Ogromne znaczenie ma również aktywność przeciwnika w środowisku informacyjnym – aktywność ta nierzadko determinuje reakcje społeczności międzynarodowej, wywiera wpływ na udzielane przez państwa wsparcie. Finansowanie dostaw uzbrojenia dla Ukrainy stanowi przykład takiej zależności. Pozyskiwane uzbrojenie niewątpliwie zwiększa ukraińskie zdolności obronne, przy czym wsparcie, jakie otrzymuje Ukraina, jest m.in. wynikiem przemyślanych i konsekwentnie realizowanych działań Kijowa w sferze informacyjnej. Celem artykułu jest wyjaśnienie wpływu wojennej strategii informacyjnej na ukraińskie zdolności obronne.

Słowa kluczowe: wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska, strategia informacyjna, komunikacja strategiczna, zdolności obronne, przemysł obronny, StratCom, narracja