CURRENT ISSUES OF MILITARY SPECIALISTS TRAINING IN THE SECURITY AND DEFENCE SECTOR UNDER CONDITIONS OF HYBRID THREATS

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**USE OF TECHNOLOGIES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND REFLEXIVE CONTROL IN FIGHTING HYBRID AGGRESSION**

*In current world the coexistence of propaganda, disinformation, psychological pressure, attacks against information and communication systems is the same challenge as conventional weapons. The effective scenarios of fighting against hybrid threats are based on the use of current technologies of strategic communications, military conflicts’ agents control and information processing. The report defines place, aim, scope and features of strategic communications. The integrated use of strategic communications technologies and reflexive control is proposed for development of scenarios of fighting against hybrid threats.*

**Keywords:** modern hybrid warfare; strategic communications; information technologies; reflexive control.
Introduction

Problem statement. “Hybrid” aggression of Russian Federation (RF) against Ukraine using various conventional and unconventional tools for pressing Ukraine, forcing it to change strategic choice and current state structure is a serious challenge for national security. Fighting against hybrid threats and revealing hybrid attacks, especially at early stages are more comprehensive. Enhancement of fighting methods, including information and communication ones, use of modern scientific methods form a real problem. Considering controversial opinions of scientists and practitioners concerning use of strategic communications (SC) in fighting against hybrid aggression, it is worth to define SC place, aim, scope, and features, develop recommendations for integrated use of SC technologies and reflexive control in fighting against hybrid aggression [10].

The analysis of recent researches and publications. Modern fighting strategies based on information weapons as one of key deterrence factors are considered in works of one of military theoreticians F. Hoffman [1], Jim Mattis, former US DOD Secretary, M. Kaldor, professor of London School of Economics, works of RAND Corporation and foreign researchers [2]. The SC issue is also discussed in national documents of defense planning and national scientists studies [9–11].

Purpose of the report. To define SC place, aim, scope, and features, develop recommendations for the integrated use of SC technologies and modern theory and control methods in fighting against hybrid aggression.

Main part

The “strategic communications” term consists of two words. The “strategic” word means top political level communications, society, and international audience. The “communications” word means national values and capabilities aimed at improving national strategic stance compared to the adversary’s stance. The
“communications” word means both the dialog and “top-down” information activities.

The “strategic communications” at modern stage of society development underline the significance of integration of all tools of influence on particular people, target audiences, and country. Meanwhile, the issue of SC influence on decision-making and control processes within “hybrid” warfare is still unresolved.

For the first time the issue of SC development in Ukraine was raised after the beginning of the Russian aggression in 2014 within NATO Wales Summit decisions. The Alliance provided advisory, practical, and technical support, including there was initiated the project of development of national strategic communications centre and situation centers with critical state authorities.

In order to enhance the activities related to SC implementation within “hybrid” aggression the NATO standards are used for development of SC policy, planning, and implementation at all levels.

The “strategic communications” term agreed with NATO terminology is currently officially used in the Ukrainian law after use in Military Doctrine of Ukraine where the SC means “coordinated and appropriate use of the state communicative capabilities such as public diplomacy, public affairs, military relations, information and psychological operations and actions aimed at state aims promotion”.

Particular aspects of SC use in fighting against “hybrid” aggression are considered in national defense planning documents. One of priorities of fighting against “hybrid” aggression is continuous improvement of legislative and normative SC documents. The RF “hybrid” approach makes the information sphere as the key fighting field.

Ukraine faces the newest information cognitive technologies aimed at stirring up national and religious hatred, propaganda of aggressive warfare, coup d’état or infringement of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Special units of RF armed forces deployed in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts within information and
According to RF officials, the “hybrid” aggression is aimed at establishing external control and total control over state administration when the dominant agent (aggressor, group of states, transnational corporation, syndicate) forms necessary and appropriate conditions for domination over the object (aggression object, social group, society) in order to control fully and totally the sovereignty and territory, other important, but vital signs, except for capitulation of the armed forces [5]. Thus, the Russian view of modern warfare is based on the idea that the main battlespace is the mind and, as a result, new-generation wars are to be dominated by information and psychological warfare, in order to achieve superiority in troops and weapons control, morally and psychologically depressing the enemy’s armed forces personnel and civil population [6]. One element of Russian resurgence that captivates Western defense circles is the emergence of new generation warfare [8]. SC play the key role in achieving the “hybrid” aggression aim, which key tool is information, comprehensive armed actions are the support element.

The control system tasks in “hybrid” aggression are in saving and change of aggression object state according to the defined strategy. Usually, this task is realized through the feedback, i.e. information on the aggression object state, external environment influence on it, and results of “hybrid” actions (guiding teams). Accordingly, the control structures involved in the “hybrid” aggression exist due to information flows. If the flow is insufficient for decision-making, the information is non-qualitative and obsolete, the control processes are ineffective. Thus, the control effectiveness during the “hybrid” aggression depends on information quality and the key element is feedback channels between the aggressor and the aggression object which are used for coordination of all involved structures.

The feedback principle means the necessary element such as information exchange, thus, control within “hybrid” aggression means information process with feedback. Otherwise, the feedback
can be considered as potential channel of reflexive control. These channels are strategically important.

The reflexive control based on theoretical developments of V. Lefebvre specifies the effective use of comprehensive tools permitting to influence the adversary’s decision-making favorable for other party as a result of formation of certain situations or demonstrations of potential threats [4]. According to V. Lefebvre, the reflexive control means the “process when of one of the parties provides the other party with the decision-making basis” [5]. So, the feedback communications substitute the adversary’s motivation factors in order to force him to take unfavorable decisions.

Thus, the applicable aspects of the reflexive control are strategically important, are the effective tool of the “hybrid” aggression and SC, could have advantages compared to conventional tools. Using behavioral stereotypes, psychological aspects, personal data on team members (biographical data, traditions, etc.), the reflexive control enables to increase chances to achieve victory, meanwhile, this tactics includes adversary’s detailed and qualitative information, which is received due to appropriate digital capabilities and software. The reflexive control tools include actions aimed at target intellectual forms and methods of the armed aggression except for the traditional terms such as camouflage (at all levels); disinformation, provocations, attention reflection; formation of tense information flow which processing requires resources; cognitive dissonance with decision-making function blocking; adversary’s resources exhausting for solving unimportant tasks or fake threats; stimulating contradictions in allies’ environment; psychological pressure, etc.

While fighting against the “hybrid” aggression the SC is deemed to be activity which is coordinated at strategic (military political) control level and aimed at controlling the decision-making processes both within country (country group) and outside it to achieve the victory. For this purpose SC fulfill to main functions such as internal – ensure communications with conflict subjects; external – communications with external environment.
The external communications ensures fighting system resilience, the internal communications which is related to military conflict control ensures permanent relation between control agents and objects raising the information importance. The absence of reliable information results in stagnation of control structure which works in inertial manner and ineffectively causing the collapse of the whole system.

Thus, the most important element of the fighting against the “hybrid” aggression is the communications process i.e. direct relation and feedback among all agents [7].

The adversary takes the necessary decision by changing the perception. Perception means the active process forming, not fixing the reality. While taking decisions the adversary uses information on conflict region, own troops and other party troops, and their combat capabilities. Based on SC technologies the influence on channels of information reception and messages content are ensured. The adversary uses the up-to-date optimization methods and searches the best solution. However, this solution would not be the best one chosen by us. In order to take own best solution it is necessary to know how the adversary forms the solution based on information which is deemed to be true. The SC ensures functioning of national system of strategic, defense, and operative planning, as well as reduction of effectiveness of the adversary’s operative planning system.

When the decision-making process is targeted, it is necessary to ensure security of own strategic and operative function. Information, cultural, structural, and normative deficiencies in decision-making process on national security could threaten the country’s security in fighting against the “hybrid” attacks.

Considering this fact, it is possible to define the following three main SC tasks within fighting against “hybrid” aggression: adversary’s demoralization, legitimization of own actions in the population eyes, mobilization of target groups, and support of own political elite. In order to solve the SC tasks it is additionally necessary to forecast the adversary’s behavior, imitate his decisions
depending on conditions, and choose the most effective information influence, this influence channels.

In order to use effectively SC technologies and reflexive control in fighting against “hybrid” aggression we propose to use the complex of the following activities:

- to focus SC efforts on conflict control;
- to define the responsible authority on SC planning and use;
- to develop plan of SC use where the aim, capabilities evaluation, frameworks, target audiences, information transfer channels, information provision methods, messages structure and orientation, media relations, asymmetric communications, and expected results should be specified;
- to ensure the use of all electronic communications — e-outlets (magazines, newspapers, and information agencies), social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and etc.), messengers (Telegram, Viber), blogs, and mobile communication;
- to develop dialog among conflict parties by ensuring equal information production and consumption by the conflict parties to develop messages depending on situation and audiences, as well as initiate conflict control;
- to consider the frames of traditional media;
- to implement activities against information interception and processing by the adversary in order to negative change and spread in social media and traditional media;
- to ensure permanent monitoring of new media;
- to develop and implement automated monitoring system of new media, social media, other messages and information accumulation;
- to consider impossibility of total control of information spread through new media;
- to ensure influence on adversary’s decision-making and control process through narratives replacement;
- to ensure synchronization and structuring of all output SC information processes, exclude differences in facts assessment criteria;
• to ensure SC influence on service members and other combatants, civilians in the conflict region, and civil-military relations;
• to take the appropriate place in the process of development of national security strategy as mechanism of aim and actions relation;
• to develop national concept of fighting against “hybrid” warfare, its understanding and perception by target audiences; and
• to develop the single universal approach to SC within “hybrid” aggression by business and marketing rules.

The use of SC technologies within information warfare is an important resource of the “hybrid” warfare. The SC effectiveness defines the victory possibility during “hybrid” aggression.

Conclusions

The strategic communications are the integral element of the national security of Ukraine within RF “hybrid” aggression, propaganda, and disinformation about Ukraine in media and social media.

The military political misbalance of forces around Ukraine, ineffectiveness of the international law rules, economic, political, and military problems result in necessity to enhance the state SC system. The SC opportune and effective enhancement is vital in prevention of current challenges and threats to national security of Ukraine, their revealing, and response to them.

References

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