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**EXPERIENCE OF COUNTERACTING RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION
BY UKRAINIAN SOCIETY**

**ДОСВІД ПРОТИДІЇ РОСІЙСЬКІЙ ДЕЗІНФОРМАЦІЇ
УКРАЇНСЬКИМ СУСПІЛЬСТВОМ**

Summary. *The article considers the problem of information manipulation of society. The development of digital technologies has not only benefited us, but also contributed to the fact that fakes have become more and they are spreading faster. Misinformation has a negative impact on economic and political processes, threatens all security and national aspects of any country. Information security has become especially important in the context of Ukraine's war with Russia. In order to counter Russian propaganda, it is necessary to understand its main points, objects and psychological effects on the individual and society as a whole. Today, Russia uses disinformation as one of the weapons in the war with Ukraine.*

Information security can be effective when it covers the whole society, institutes and institutions; media literacy of all segments of the population is formed.

It is important to study the history, main stages and tools of Russian propaganda. Analysis of the impact on the world community, the foundations of the formation of a negative and false image of Ukraine is a condition for opposing Russian propaganda.

Key words: *information security, disinformation, information manipulation, Ukraine's war with Russia.*

Анотація. *В статті розглядається проблема інформаційної маніпуляції суспільством. Розвиток цифрових технологій надав нам не тільки блага, а й сприяв тому, що фейків стало більше і поширюються вони швидше. Дезінформація має негативний вплив на економічні, політичні процеси, загрожує всім без пековим національним аспектам любої країни. Інформаційна безпека набула особливої актуальності в умовах війни України з Росією. Для того, щоб протистояти російській пропаганді слід зрозуміти її основні моменти, об'єкти та психологічних вплив на особистість та суспільство в цілому. Сьогодні Росія використовує дезінформацію, як одну з видів зброї у війні з Україною.*

Інформаційна безпека може бути дієвою коли охоплюється все суспільство, інститути та інституції, формується медіа грамотність всіх верств населення.

Важливим є вивчення історії, основних етапів та інструментів пропаганди Росії. Аналіз впливу на світову спільноту, основ формування негативного та неправдивого іміджу України є умовою протистояння російській пропаганді.

Ключові слова: *інформаційна безпека, дезінформація, інформаційні маніпуляції, війна України з Росією.*

Statement of the problem. *Misinformation is a challenge for everyone. It is broadcast on major TV channels, easily penetrates our news feed under the guise of completely innocent publications, such as from the life of the*

hometown, it is filled with anonymous telegram channels, which under the guise of insiders often promote manipulations that have a very specific purpose. And all this has direct consequences that affect everyone's life.

Disinformation can be used to manipulate citizens in elections, which ultimately determines which reforms will or will not be carried out by the state and what its foreign policy course will be. Disinformation politicizes a wide variety of topics, from language to historical issues, and deepens divisions in society, making it even more vulnerable to harmful external influences.

Political information manipulation has existed for as long as humanity has, but in recent years it has been the focus of many countries and international organizations. In 2015, the EU set up a Strategic Communications Task Force to respond to this information challenge. There is a growing emphasis on countering NATO's information in its strategic documents, and information threats are highlighted in the national security doctrines of various nations.

In 2021, two government centers were established in Ukraine to respond to such threats: the Center for Countering Disinformation under the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine and the Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security under the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy. Which was another attempt by the state to respond to this threat.

State and international institutions are far from the only ones who focus on them, and civil society and even business make a great contribution to this process. Major social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are introducing new fact-checking mechanisms to limit the spread of misinformation. In various countries, including Ukraine, there are many public initiatives and think tanks that study this problem.

Analysis of recent researches and publications. Problems of information security at the present stage, the formation of state policy in the field of information policy in Ukraine has been the subject of research by such

scientists as Teleshun S., Reiterovych I., Sashchuk H., Zaplotynskyi B., Panchenko O., Bilenchuk P., Borysova L., Dmytrenko M., Shevchuk V., Karpenko O. and others. Such scientists as Shevchenko T., Barovska A., Lukashenko A., Levchenko O., Dovnar V., Makarenko Ye., Pahnin M., Pashkov M., Dvorovyi M. wrote about methods of combating disinformation and how to resist the challenges of information warfare.

Teleshun S. emphasizes that the basis of globalization is the integration of information systems of different countries into a single global information system, the formation of a single information space, the creation of global information and telecommunications networks, intensive use of new information technologies in all spheres of public life, including public management [6].

Sashchuk H. claims that in the process of informatization a person has become informationally "transparent". If you have the desire and the means, any available information about a particular person can be made available and used for their own purposes by another person, a group of people, a social group and the state. Only a small part of the population can prevent unwanted access to their information. Most people do not have this opportunity and remain defenseless in this regard. In particular, such a threat has advanced with the development of social networks. After all, the vast majority of people cover all information about themselves on social networks in the open access [5].

Formulation purposes of article (problem). The aim of the research is to study the mechanisms of disinformation by Russia in the war with Ukraine. The biggest peak of information security, of course, has come right now, in the context of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. When the information consumed by ordinary Russians year after year has become so deadly that it makes one disbelieve one's own sons, grandsons, parents and relatives in general. With the help of information, not only the brains of the Russians have been washed away, but also the whole civilized world is able to convey what horrors and barbarisms are taking place on Ukrainian territories, which has a

great positive impact. After all, ordinary citizens watching this horror on TV screens are pressuring the authorities to take more radical measures to help Ukraine, whether it is tightening sanctions or supplying weapons.

The main material. In order to understand how Russian propaganda works, it is necessary to understand that it communicates with its consumer through narratives, and it is its experts who consider it to be the main structural element of Russian propaganda.

Narrative is an interpretation of events, the best example of a narrative is a myth, legend or fairy tale. Recently, the word "narrative" was introduced into fashion by postmodern philosophers. Narrative is not a description of reality, it is an instruction to understand reality. Narrative is always subjective. For example, the same war described by the victors and the vanquished looks different. At the heart of each description is its narrative - the narrator creates a model of the world in which the event takes place. The narrator, in fact, tells the audience what to think about this event.

The power of narrative is in the ease and clarity of presentation. When it is clear who is "own" and who is "foreign", who is "winner" and who is "defeated", and for whom to support and whom to condemn. And another secret of the power of narratives in their repetition.

Psychological research confirms that if people repeat a false statement many times, even if they know that it is wrong with each subsequent repetition, they will be less and less sure of it. The Russian media has fundamentally changed the paradigm of news: facts and events are used to confirm pre-prepared narratives. Once the narratives are defined, they make less use of fake news, while most of them use deliberately manipulated and distorted interpreted real events.

Also, very often, the narrative is harder to refute. Everything is clear with the fake. We declare that this is not true, but the truth is actually different.

Narratives are much more difficult, because we cannot refute manipulative judgments that are used on real fact

Since the direct military intervention in Ukraine in 2014, we as a country have been actively fighting against Russian disinformation, information operations, various fakes, manipulations, hostile narratives, as well as military, economic, diplomatic and political action - all that defines the term a hybrid war.

The hybrid attack began long before that, in 2006 Russian President Vladimir Putin officially unveiled a new ideological platform, the "Russian World". Russia had already stated at the time that it had a duty to protect all compatriots in the Russian world, who defined themselves as all Russian-speaking people not only in Russia but also abroad.

"Russian World" is a certain ideological platform. Within a few months, the term gained geopolitical significance, as is often the case in Russia, and the idea was flooded with specialized literature, explaining the concept to completely different audiences. This technology will then be used by full-time writer at the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, when the Kremlin will need to explain and encourage to join the so-called "Donbass irregulars".

And already in 2008, Putin (2008) delivered his famous speech, almost legendary, in Munich, at a conference on security. He said agreements with the West had been broken, "NATO is moving to our borders" and Russia would respond accordingly. It is from that time that the propaganda and militaristic machines work synchronously.

In 2010, Russia adopted a new military doctrine, and in 2016 Russia changed another important strategic document that defined the country's movement - the Concept of Russia's Foreign Policy. In it 2 new tasks of Russia in the foreign policy direction were named:

- «strengthening Russia's position as one of the powerful centers of the modern world»;

- «strengthening the position of the Russian mass media and mass communications in the global information space and bringing the Russian point of view to the broad circles of the world community».

Unlike Western countries, where information operations are seen as short-term tactical actions during hostilities, Russia defines them in its documents as a continuous activity that does not depend on the state of relations with a particular country. In other words, Russia considers itself in a constant state of information warfare, while the West does not.

The military doctrine of the Russian Federation since 2015 among the tasks of the Russian armed forces in third place puts the development of forces and means of information confrontation. Thus, the official security documents of the Russian Federation explicitly state that:

a) Russia believes that it is threatened by the United States, NATO and the West in general, that information warfare is part of this threat and an important component of modern warfare;

b) for Russia Euromaidan and Ukraine's refusal to integrate with it is "a new threat to national security";

c) Russia is "defending itself" from these threats through the development of information confrontation.

If Ukraine had studied more of the processes taking place in Russia, we would probably have been less surprised by the flow of disinformation that has befallen our society since Euromaidan. And it was and is an integral part of the military seizure of Crimea and the occupation of Donbass. For example, military strategists from different countries are still trying to understand why Russia managed to occupy the Crimea so easily. It is believed that one of the good reasons is a successful disinformation campaign. Eyewitnesses of the Crimean occupation recall how many Crimean people were frightened by rumors of a train with armed Bandera members who were about to come to teach them a good lesson. Of course, no train arrived. This was one of the fabrications of the

Russian information forces, because of which the Crimean people began to look at Russia as a savior from the armed Banderites (banderivtsi).

Thus, misinformation has helped Russia occupy Crimea with minimal military costs and losses. It is these asymmetric actions that can be more effective than traditional military ones and are mentioned in Russia's security documents.

What nonsense can be heard from the central Russian TV channels is not just propaganda - it is part of a military strategy to conquer our state, but not with a traditional war, it is called a "hybrid war". This is a war in which the aggressor achieves political goals by combining methods of disinformation and active measures.

Here is what the main Russian propagandists said about Ukraine during the 8 years of war in the east of our country:

- Civil war continues in Ukraine, it is a question of delegitimizing of the institution of power in Ukraine, especially the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which according to their reports: kill civilians, break the truce, suffer terrible losses and defeats;
- Ukraine is an understate, inferior state, it means one that cannot cope;
- Russia helps Donbass and Crimea
- Russophobia flourishes in Ukraine;
- fascists and radicals are destroying Ukraine;
- Ukraine is a puppet of the West, in 2020 it was finally formed into a narrative in the so-called external management;
- Russian-speaking people are being persecuted in Ukraine, one of their favorite topics.

The anti-Russian position of the Ukrainians, as they say, is the cause and justification of Russia's aggressive behavior, and not the other way around - Russia's aggression, which results in an appropriate attitude. That is, the

Russians seem to have a right to righteous anger against "treacherous and Russophobic Ukrainians".

It can be concluded that the Kremlin's narratives about Ukraine were extremely stable, and this was their strength. Russian propaganda has been repeating the same content for years, confirming these narratives.

The history of Russian disinformation in Ukraine really began with Euromaidan, so its roots grow from there. According to a study by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, the core of Russian propaganda is a quasi-logical chain (Fig. 1).

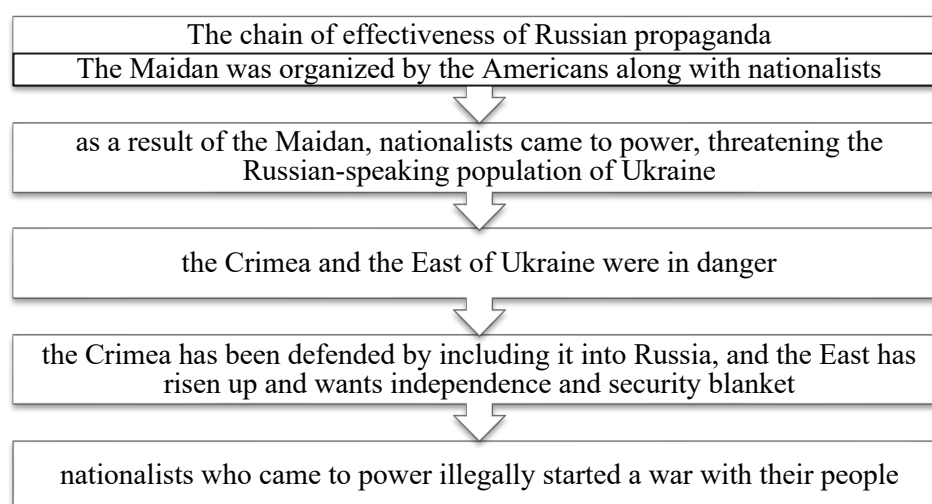


Fig. 1. The chain of effectiveness of the Russian propaganda [7]

According to further research conducted by the non-governmental organization Detector Media, most residents of the south-east viewed Euromaidan as an armed coup, with a total of about 31% in Ukraine believing so. (2019) This stratum of the population was needed by Russia, so it supported his beliefs, constantly nourishing the narrative.

Another narrative is the war in Donbass, there were also correlations with the regions. The Ukrainians in the south-east were more likely to blame Ukraine than Russia for the start of the war, and less likely to believe that it continued because of Russian military support for the so-called "LPR" and "DPR." And although in the south-east they did not agree 100% with the Russian narrative,

but a much larger share of those who are unsure. And one of the purposes of disinformation is not only to promote thought, but also to confuse (2019).

In 2014, the conditional Russian narrative spread in Ukraine because it was the first, and because it was repeated over and over again in different variations for 8 years. Based on its analysis, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2015) concluded that Kharkiv, Odesa Oblast and Donbass were the most exposed to Russian disinformation, and the West was the least exposed (Fig. 2).

As Ukrainians often heard conflicting assessments, both versions often coexist in their brains, for example, 45% believe that the war in eastern Ukraine lasted both because of Russia's military support and the interest of the Ukrainian government and oligarchs. This is how misinformation works, with frequent repetition of theses embedded in the subconscious, and not necessarily critica.

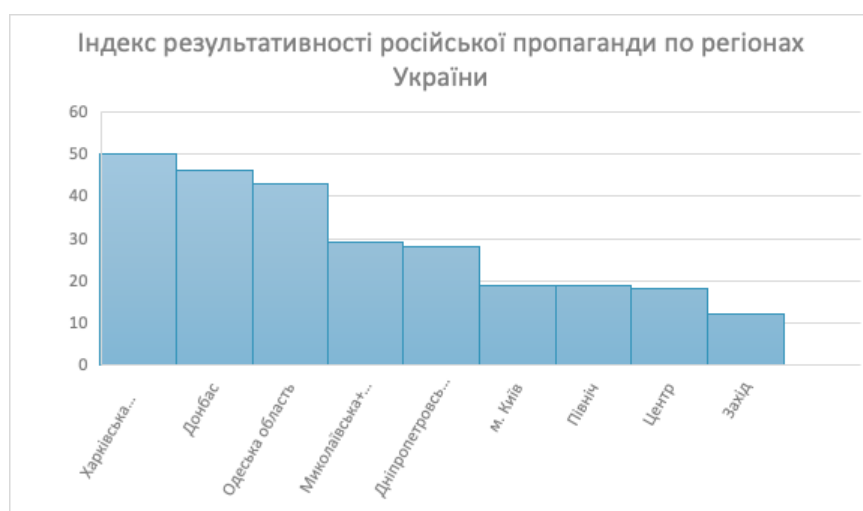


Fig. 2. Index of effectiveness of Russian propaganda in the regions of Ukraine [7]

The main material. One can see that Kremlin propaganda throughout its history has had a tremendous impact on Ukrainian society. It was one of the reasons for the beginning of the conflict in Donbass in 2014 and such an easy occupation of the Crimea. In general, it was aimed at splitting Ukrainian society

by injecting information about the most painful points of citizens, such as: language, distrust of power, arbitrariness of oligarchs, and so on. And, surprisingly, it had a real result. After all, even the greatest patriots of Ukraine worked for this. Real facts were taken, and information was disseminated and gained scale, later raising society.

These technologies should be inferred and prevented in the future by ensuring an appropriate legislative process to ensure that journalism standards are met. The main challenge today is how to take systematic steps to respond to Russia's information war. At a time when information is increasingly being used as a tool in war, it is necessary to respond flexibly to today's challenges and make appropriate decisions and laws.

If we mention the actions that need to be taken by public authorities in Ukraine, we must first pay attention to all cases of concealment of the truth by Ukraine, which have been committed since 2014 and which damaged the international image of Ukraine. There is no need to copy Russia's approaches to propaganda and disinformation. Instead, it is necessary to find a way of communication that would be open and truthful (paying attention to both negative and positive aspects). If we mention the actions that need to be taken by public authorities in Ukraine, we must first pay attention to all cases of concealment of the truth by Ukraine, which have been committed since 2014 and which damaged the international image of Ukraine.

There is no need to copy Russia's approaches to propaganda and disinformation. Instead, it is necessary to find a way of communication that would be open and truthful (paying attention to both negative and positive aspects). It is necessary to carry out more active communication with citizens of the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. It is necessary to increase the number of transmitters, build new towers for broadcasting TV and radio signals. It is important to produce special information products for citizens living in the temporarily occupied territories in eastern Ukraine and the Crimea. Equally

important is the blocking of the signal of the Russian and separatist media in the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government.

It is also worth paying more attention to creating and disseminating one's own narratives, which will be more effective in combating disinformation than refuting it each time.

It is important for Ukraine to create a regime of maximum support for the work of international journalists (primarily from the EU and NATO). For this purpose it is necessary to organize professional services of recording, translation, consultations, finding contacts for those journalists who work with Ukrainian topics. This will help to talk about Ukraine on the world stage, and will begin to refute the narratives that the Russian Federation has been spreading to an international audience for many years in a row.

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