

# The Information Component of Modern Hybrid Wars

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**Abstract:** The article is devoted to the analysis of the definitions of the phenomenon of hybrid wars in modern international relations. An important part of the information component of this kind of wars, its elements, and the essential characteristics of special propaganda are revealed. As a case, the characteristics of the information war in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict are studied. From the standpoint of the need to resolve this conflict, the theses of the approaches of socially responsible journalism, which contributes to the promotion of peace, are also presented.

**Keywords:** Hybrid wars, information wars, the role of the media, the information component in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, J. Galtung's concept of "journalism of peace".

## Introduction: Conceptual Approaches to the Study of the Phenomenon of Hybrid Wars

In modern scientific discourse, there is no unambiguous definition of hybrid warfare. Different authors give different definitions; "war of a new type", "non-linear war", "non-traditional war", "information war".

In the literature, two approaches are defined; One, suggesting that hybrid warfare unfolds even before open actions and military confrontation, when the parties want to weaken the enemy by non-military means, i.e. this is an instrument of the Cold War. The second approach assumes that in hybrid warfare, traditional methods of action on the battlefield can be combined with the use of information technology, diplomatic, cultural influence on public opinion, economic sanctions and other methods. Here is a hybrid war (mixed war), in which the line between the state of war and peace is erased and the boundaries between conventional and new "unconventional" warfare are blurred.

The U.S. military uses the phrase "hybrid warfare" as equivalent to the term "full-spectrum operation," which is characterized by the effective use of military and non-military tools, the conduct of operations of various scales by regular troops, and the rapid response to unexpected threats.

F. Hoffmann presented a substantive study of the specifics of "hybrid wars" and their participants and highlighted the distinctive features of new wars:

- multidirectionality, i.e. they cover many areas;
- the number of participants can be unlimited;
- synchronicity of actors' actions in different directions;
- asymmetry, i.e. the actions and capabilities of actors do not always coincide;
- wars can continue behind and outside the usual battlefields;
- polymorphic, i.e. they manifest a mixture and combination of causes that led to the conflict.

## Modern Dimensions of Information Warfare and Its Elements

Information warfare is actions taken to achieve information superiority in support of the national military strategy by influencing the enemy's information and information systems while ensuring the security and protection of one's own information and information systems. G.G. Pochebtsov gives the following definition of information warfare: "increasing the volume of one's own information, making it difficult for the enemy to access truthful information, placing in the information flows of the enemy of seemingly reliable, but false information."

Fakes: classification by positions (selection, arrangement of facts), fabrication, isolation, detachment from the text, manipulation (literally, machination, processing, juggling). Fakes also include tricks, psychological techniques, socio-techniques for managing false messages, ambiguous impressions. In the modern information environment, it is not facts that come to the fore, but semantic interpretation, narratives and the confrontation of meanings are becoming an inevitable and dominant form of behavior in the media field.

A systematic way to combat fakes is the technology of fact-checking, which is enshrined in the editorial standards of the world's leading agencies.

"Commemoration" as a war of memory. Historical Memory as a Product of Manipulation of Mass Consciousness for Political Purposes. Each subject promotes a semantic historical model, which differs from a simple enumeration of previously known facts, competing with the desired historical reality for its interests and goals. Content production broadcasts this in the information media field.

Conspiracy theories as the restoration of an understandable picture of the world around us. In modern conditions, there is an "infodemic", "mediatization of society", "post-truth". An "infodemic" refers to an overabundance of information, both accurate and unreliable, that makes it difficult for people to find credible sources and guidance for action.

Trolling as an aggressive discrediting of an opponent. In Scandinavian myths, trolls are strong and ugly giants who live in the mountains. Trolling is a mockery to humiliate an opponent. Troll factories are created – these are organizations that hire people who post comments on the Internet in accordance with the goals of the ordering party, using fake profiles on social networks. Next to trolling, "hating" (hatred) is the production of unmotivated malicious posts and comments; "bullying" (intimidation), harassment, flaming (flames) inflating a discussion, an argument for the sake of an argument. Bots are also created - these are programs that automatically send messages, for example, in response to a keyword that appears.

Special propaganda as an impact on the target attitudes of the army and the enemy's population. It is aimed at reorienting target groups, studying methods of direct persuasion, intimidation, and misinformation of enemy supporters.

Special propaganda uses the following narratives;

1. We do not want war.

2. The opposing side bears full responsibility for the war.

3. The leader of the opposite camp has the face of the devil.

4. We defend a noble cause, not special interests.

5. The enemy deliberately commits atrocities, and we, if we are mistaken, then unwittingly.

6. The enemy uses non-sanctioned weapons.

7. We suffer few losses, and the enemy has many.

8. The creative elite supports our opinion.

9. Our work is holy, we cannot deviate from the will of God, but only fulfill it.

10. Those who doubt our propaganda are traitors or collaborators of the enemy.

### **Specifics of the structure and dynamics of the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine**

In its structure, the conflict is an asymmetry in which one of the parties, i.e. the Russian Federation, has an overwhelming advantage in terms of potential, military, economic power and human resources. At the same time, Ukraine, as a party to the conflict, enjoys the support of Western countries, which help it financially and with weapons. The war has become protracted, i.e. a "war of attrition", which means that the war will end when one of the parties or both of them immediately run out of resources to continue it.

#### **Key stages of dynamics:**

- 2014–2021: The annexation of Crimea, the outbreak of hostilities in eastern Ukraine, the signing of the Minsk agreements, the sluggish conflict.

- February 2022 – present: Full-scale Russian invasion, occupation of part of the south and east, significant destruction and losses.

- 2023–2025: Trench warfare, drone strikes, Ukraine's counteroffensive (2023), new Russian offensives, as well as the transfer of hostilities to the territory of the Russian Federation (Kursk region, 2024–2025).

In such a "war of attrition", the strategy of the parties "to win, but not to retreat from their positions" is manifested.

The Russian Federation puts forward, according to Ukrainian politicians, maximalist demands that it cannot meet. The Russian Federation, as you know, at the last talks on February 18, 2026 in Abu Dhabi and Geneva with US mediators S. Witkoff and J. Kushner demanded the transfer of the remaining part of the 30% of the Donetsk region that they had not conquered. This demand was unacceptable for the Ukrainian side.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict can be defined as a hybrid conflict, where many components are manifested. This is the first commercial (mainly mercenaries are fighting), space warfare (reconnaissance from satellites is actively used), the first full-scale war using unmanned aerial vehicles (i.e. using artificial intelligence). It is also an information war, and its unconditional characteristic is a huge amount of information. Content is mostly shared on

platforms without any analysis, and it is becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to sift through it quickly. Distinguishing reliable information from disinformation is not an easy task, and the speed with which information spreads on social media makes it even more difficult. In the table, we have tried to streamline only a part of the information war and its components in the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

| Media Strategies   | Justification and Goals  | Tools   | Audience   |
|--|--|---|--|
| Russia's strategy in the implementation of information policy in the conflict with Ukraine | Creating a pretext for a "special military operation" (SMO), a demonstration of force and declaring goals for "denazification" and "demilitarization".<br><br>The grounds for the invasion of the Russian Federation are that Ukraine violated the rights of the Russian-speaking population in eastern Ukraine. | Active use of pro-government media, Telegram channels and promotion of the narrative of the inevitability of victory. | Influencing the domestic audience, which should support the decision on the NWO and attempts to convince the West of the stability of the Russian economy. |
| Ukraine's strategy in the information war with Russia                                      | The Russian Federation is an aggressor country that has violated the norms of international law.   | Effective use of social networks (TikTok war), direct appeals of the president to the peoples of the world.           | Focus on demonstrating the war crimes of the Russian Federation to obtain Western  |

|   |  |                      |   |
|---|--|----------------------|---|
|   | The emphasis on the protection of sovereignty and independence, the "war for freedom".   |                      | weapons and financial assistance and support from the world community                                 |
| The effect of the information war of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in the global media | Global media are divided into pro-Western (supporting Ukraine's position), Russian and neutral, which creates different pictures of reality. | Mass media, Internet | Currently, the emphasis is on the negotiation process to resolve the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation. |

**Examples of Objective, Independent Journalism and the Media's Potential in Resolving the Confrontation**

Traditionally, peace and war are perceived as an analogue of "good" and "evil", the world of the state of creation, war – destruction, peace – life, war – death, peace – interaction, war – conflict.

These perceptions have not only entered the system of values that are transmitted from generation to generation through oral and written sources, history and fiction, they explain the relationships between social subjects at the micro, medium and macro levels.

Journalism of the world. One of the main approaches to the activity of the mass media (mass media) as the most massive mediator between objective reality and the audience is framing, which is defined as the focused attention of the audience on a certain quality of the object.

"Peace journalism" suggests a number of arguments in favor of the need to move from the demonstration of war to its manifestation of peace as its alternative.

The author of the concept of "journalism of peace" J. Galtung proceeds from the fact that the transformation of a conflict in the direction of its resolution can be

carried out through interference in its internal dynamics. It is necessary to break the vicious circle consisting of conflict perceptions, communications, and actions.

The main thing is not to focus on confrontational themes and plots that recreate the image of the enemy, which multiplies hatred and conflict patterns of behavior, but on the possibility of resolving the conflict through a change in the way of perception.

Peace as an option, or an alternative for covering the war, can have certain justifications, serve to de-escalate the conflict (at the level of mass perception in this matter). In addition, the demonstration of war and conflict interactions without reference to the possibility of a state of peace and cooperation (at least at the micro level of everyday examples) can provoke the continuation of the war and the inability to resolve the conflict.

J. Galtung proposes the transformation of the conflict with the responsible participation of the media.

- From orientation to events related to hostilities, to move to orientation to coexistence, interaction (at least at the macro level).

- Instead of focusing on the war zone, demonstrating options for resolving conflicts... to look for a solution that is beneficial to everyone.
- From a narrow understanding of the conflict as a fixation on who started it (with accusations), it is proposed to voice the opinions of all participants in the conflict, to try to convey to the audience their feelings, perception of the conflict, war as a problem that requires joint solutions.
- Instead of a reactive stance of journalists who expect violent acts to start covering, a proactive stance is offered through reporting warning about the risks and opportunities to avoid those risks.
- In addition to focusing on the killed, wounded, and destruction, we should talk about psychological traumas, the destruction of cultural values, since they are also important.
- The fight not only against untruth in the enemy's position, but against untruth in general, including in one's own information activities.

The media as a communication sphere never stand aside from existing armed conflicts. On the contrary, they are always active participants.

In the XXI century, the media play an important role and are part of everyone's life. The information war is no less important than the real one – the armed one. And sometimes it can be even more cruel. Relatively recently, the war affected the media, now on the contrary, we see that a significant role is given to the media in the creation, process and resolution of armed conflicts. The further fate of armed clashes depends on what information is presented by the media, in what context it is presented.

The mass media and the media in particular today are a great way to ignite any conflict and influence its development. It is the media that can also influence the end of the conflict.

In developed countries, it is impossible to carry out any military action without appropriate information training. Journalists believe that war should seem to people just, enemies should seem terrible, and the military from their country should be real heroes, saviors.

### **Information Field and Opportunities for Conflict Resolution in Ukraine**

A good example of the influence of the media on the development and end of the conflict is the war in Vietnam, where this influence was significant. Throughout the war, a large number of journalists and reporters visited the war, who broadcast a live picture of events from the war. In the early years of the conflict, the U.S. media was heavily influenced by

government management of information flows. But as more American families acquired televisions, it became easier for citizens to follow the war. Journalists who visited the conflict zone were interested in the course of hostilities and the discrepancy between official statements and what they saw on the ground.

By the mid-1960s, it became obvious that the war was not going in favor of the United States and South Vietnam, despite the optimism of official statements. As citizens received more and more information from the field, public opinion began to lean against U.S. involvement in the war.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, we can assume that, of course, this is no longer just a conflict, but a war that multiplies hatred between the two peoples. The longer it lasts, the more difficult it will be to get out of this state. All wars end someday. Analysts suggest that it will continue for decades to come, and may be part of an impending world war, in which NATO countries and the Russian Federation themselves will face and may come to the use of nuclear weapons. That if the parties manage to contain tensions, then it will turn into a low-intensity conflict like between Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. A way out of it, of course, should be sought by everyone, including the media in the first place. Journalism in the name of peace always takes the position that this war, like others, has no justification. The resource of negotiations was far from being exhausted and it was necessary to look for a responsible peaceful solution.

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