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**The decline of humanist poetics.
Faces of information warfare in hybrid conflict
on the example of Russia's 2022 war with Ukraine**

Abstract

The main purpose of the article is to show the face of information warfare and the resulting threats in the cited armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine. In addition, it serves to present the overall manifestations of hybrid warfare, with an indication of specific examples from the ongoing war. In the article I will use works on the definitional analysis of hybrid and information warfare, as well as examples from the ongoing hybrid conflict of the Russian Federation with Ukraine. Modern hybrid conflicts are complex operations, distinguished by the use of a wide range of methods of affecting culture, society, economy, finance, history, human psyche and information. At the same time, they do not mean complete victory for any of the parties, given the fact that there is no guarantee of achieving all goals and interests in each of the mentioned dimensions. The most significant area of influence in hybrid warfare is information, which is a key tool for influencing people. Information manipulation and propaganda directly contribute to the destruction of human consciousness and the ability to think rationally.

Keywords: hybrid warfare, information warfare, propaganda, war of consciousness destruction

Since at least the 2013 popular protest known as Euromaidan, the Russian Federation's planned, successive and large-scale hybrid war against Ukraine has been ongoing. Russia's 2014 military attack on Crimea and its 24 II 2022 aggression against sovereign Ukraine are its most brutal manifestations. Modern hybrid conflicts not only mean the use of conventional weapons, but the entire spectrum of methods of affecting culture, society, economy, finance, history, human psyche

and information. It also does not mean complete victory for any of the parties (despite often undisputed victories on the battlefield), given the fact that there is no guarantee of achieving all goals and interests in each of the mentioned dimensions¹. The most important area of influence in hybrid warfare is information which is a key tool for building opinions and influencing people through persuasion, manipulation and propaganda. The functioning of Russian society in the era of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine is a prime example of this. This article primarily serves to show the face of information warfare and the resulting threats in Russia's evoked armed conflict with Ukraine. In addition, it aims to present the overall manifestations of hybrid warfare, with the indication of specific examples from the ongoing war.

Symptoms of hybrid warfare

The term hybrid means „crossbreed”, an individual formed from the crossing of two genetically different individuals belonging to different species, varieties or races. It also means „something (...) that is composed of different elements, often incompatible with each other”². With regard to modern armed conflicts, the concept of hybrid can be understood as the coexistence of „old” and „new” elements of wars, classical armed conflicts and „post-modern” wars. It is usually an asymmetric conflict, clashes between national armies and regular armies, primitive weapons and military super-technologies. It is a struggle for territories, resources, identity and national values based on the confrontation of parochialism and cosmopolitanism³. Such a broad spectrum of influence of hybrid conflict becomes particularly dangerous in the hands of those with an unstable moral system. Thus, as Frank Hoffman notes, „a hybrid threat is any adversary using a combination of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminality at the same time and on the same battlefield to achieve political goals”⁴. An example of an adversary so defined is Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin, who, together with the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, is conducting a hybrid operation on Ukrainian territory on an unprecedented scale.

¹ D.T. Lasic, *Strategic Implications of Hybrid War: A Theory of Victory*, Fort Leavenworth 2009, p. 11.

² *Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN*, Warszawa 1980, p. 290; *Wielki słownik wyrazów obcych PWN*, Warszawa 2008, p. 518.

³ A. Gruszczyk, *Hybrydowość współczesnych wojen – analiza krytyczna*, [in:] *Asymetria i hybrydowość – stare armie wobec nowych konfliktów*, eds. W. Sokała, B. Zapała, Warszawa 2011, p. 11.

⁴ F. Hoffman, *On Not-So-New Warfare: Political Warfare vs Hybrid Threats*, „War on the Rocks” [28 VII 2014], <http://warontherocks.com> (20 III 2022).

Contrary to popular opinion, the creators of the concept of „hybrid warfare” are not of Russian origin, but US military analysts. The term emerged after the difficult experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq, where, despite a clear military and technological advantage, the United States was unable to resolve the confrontation to their advantage with a much weaker opponent. On the basis of strategic analysis, the Americans developed their own methods of various mass actions, primarily of propaganda and intelligence and cultural and social nature⁵. The forerunner of the use of the term „hybrid warfare” is Thomas R. Mockaitis. In his publications, he described the British expeditionary campaign of the 1990s⁶. In turn, Col. William Nemeth, in his publication *Future war and Chechenya: A case for hybrid warfare*, pointed out that hybrid warfare will be one of the main problems of the Western world in the XXI century⁷. In 2008, the U.S. Marines’ *Vision and Strategy [by] 2025* document noted that hybrid warfare will bridge the existing differences between traditional wars and irregular conflicts, acts of terrorism and crime⁸. This notion took on particular importance after Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. The *Military Balance 2015* report, after analyzing Russia’s actions against Ukraine at the time, identified the three most important features of hybrid warfare as:

The use of conventional and special forces with propaganda operations to intimidate and incite and foment ethnic conflict, rapid strikes combined with cyber-attacks and the establishment of new political structures, the establishment of economic relations with the use of social support measures to consolidate gains and prevent the return of the pre-conflict status quo⁹.

During the Crimean conflict, the Russian Federation used the following methods characteristic for the hybrid warfare:

- 1) asymmetry, understood as differences in the military potential of the two states;
- 2) irregularity (intermediary warfare) based on the use of troops consisting of the local population and mercenaries from eastern Ukraine (also referred to as volunteers) for liberation actions, whose actions were inspired and coordinated by Russia;

⁵ A. Gruszcak, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

⁶ M.A. Piotrowski, *Konflikt nigdy nie jest prosty: amerykańska teoria i doktryna wojen oraz przeciwników hybrydowych*, „Sprawy Międzynarodowe” 2015, no. 2, p. 10.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

⁹ *The Military Balance 2015. The annual assessment of global military capabilities and defense economics*, London 2015, p. 45.

- 3) information warfare, the purpose of which was to justify Russian rights to seize the Crimean Peninsula and to present the actual Russian involvement in the conflict;
- 4) psychological warfare, which includes the conduct of maneuvers and the concentration of regular Russian troops near the Russian-Ukrainian border (Russia's actions prior to 24 II 2022);
- 5) economic warfare, manifested by withholding gas supplies and raising the price of gas and lowering pipeline pressure. This was aimed at initiating „reverse transmission of Russian gas from third countries”;
- 6) activity below the threshold of war, i.e., the unambiguity of large-scale direct intervention by Russian troops (periodic small-scale border violations, the presence of so-called „green men”, i.e., soldiers unidentified in terms of nationality);
- 7) ambiguity, consisting of frequent changes in Russia's position in relation to the conflict on Ukrainian territory;
- 8) non-linearity and low intensity of the course of the conflict, i.e. Russia's grading of the intensity of the conflict;
- 9) the synergistic effect, which is based primarily on the comprehensive and multi-track impact of the Russian side on the security of the area of the Ukrainian state and on its socio-economic situation;
- 10) non-standardization of actions, which is based on Russia's focus mainly on actions that are difficult to neutralize by the Ukrainian side¹⁰.

The variety of actions in hybrid warfare is a rarity in the history of wars to date. The Ukrainian example has become a functional determinant of conflicts in their global nature.

Modern hybrid conflict is characterized primarily by coadaptation and convergence, the combination of functional elements of two disparate systems. Convergence, understood as a systemic convergence, enabling the bridging of differences, in relation to security issues, „means integrating physical, logical, informational and personal resources to improve the efficiency and operational effectiveness of those responsible for countering and combating threats and managing risks”, Artur Gruszcak points out¹¹. According to Daniel Todd Lasica, the hybridity of war understood in this way is a logical combination of strategy and tactics, aimed at mixing different types of military action¹². Moreover, it is the result of the convergence of conventional warfare and special operations

¹⁰ K. Wąsowski, *Istota i uniwersalność rosyjskiego modelu wojny hybrydowej*, „Sprawy Międzynarodowe” 2015, no. 2, pp. 46-47.

¹¹ A. Gruszcak, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

¹² D.T. Lasica, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

principles¹³. The combination, adaptation and convergence of the various systems enables the adversary to operate efficiently and, by design, is intended to enable it to achieve any strategic objectives. As Michael Evans notes:

We are facing a strange mix of pre-modern and post-modern conflict – a world of asymmetric and ethno-political warfare – in which machetes and Microsoft programs mix, while apocalyptic millenarians shod in Reeboks and wearing Ray-Ban glasses dream of acquiring weapons of mass destruction¹⁴.

It is also worth mentioning that in a hybrid conflict, the very act of declaring war also becomes ambiguous, which, according to the concept of General Valery Gerasimov, often has no real use or, as is the case now, is called by the aggressor in a different way (for example, „special military operation”)¹⁵.

Russia's war with Ukraine, despite its military nature, is almost a model hybrid conflict. In it, we can identify both completely new spaces of influence and previously known methods that have been reevaluated. This war takes place primarily on the following levels: political, ideological, military, economic, economic, socio-cultural, genetic-ecological, historical, psychological and informational. At the outset of the discussion, I will present examples of the above-mentioned activities.

War on the political level means Russia's strenuous efforts to make Ukraine lose its strong position in the international arena and thus the support of Western allies. This is happening, for example, by carrying out numerous false flag provocations. The most recent media reports, dated 25 X 2022, concerned the belief that the Russians were preparing a terrorist act using nuclear materials and radioactive waste stored at the seized Zaporizhzhya power plant. In doing so, there was false information, proclaiming that Ukraine was about to use a „dirty bomb” created from the materials stored at the power plant. This type of information has already appeared many times¹⁶. So far, the smoothly functioning American and British intelligence services, working with Ukrainian intelligence, have thwarted any such incidents by providing the world with advance information.

¹³ R.G. Walker, *SPEC FI: The United States Marine Corps and Special Operations*, Monterey 1998, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴ M. Evans, *From Kadesh to Kandahar. Military theory and the future of war*, „Naval War College Review” 2003, no. 3, p. 137.

¹⁵ В. Герасимов, *Ценность науки в предвидении*, „Военно-промышленный курьер”, 27 II 2013, <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632> (31 XII 2022).

¹⁶ *Czy Rosja planuje atomową prowokację? Co się dzieje w zaporoskiej elektrowni?* [25 X 2022], <https://www.radiopik.pl/3,104660,czy-rosja-planuje-atomowa-prowokacje-co-sie-dzie> (16 XI 2022); *Wywiad wojskowy: na piątek Rosja szykuje prowokację w elektrowni atomowej* [18 VIII 2022], <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1401520%2Cwywiad-wojskowy-na-piatek-rosja-szykuje-prowokacje-w-elektrowni-atomowej> (16 XI 2022).

Hybrid warfare on an ideological level, means influencing the views of society on key concepts such as good and evil, life and death, society and nation, duty and obligation, friend and foe, self and stranger, and so on. This is the imposition of schemes for a new order in terms of the hierarchy of values inherent in the views of the aggressor. It is worth mentioning that ideological warfare is also underway in Russia itself, through clashes between Vladimir Putin and supporters of the invasion of Ukraine, believing that Putin is too dilatory in pursuing the idea of a „ruskiy mir”¹⁷.

The military plane means actual aggression with infantry, heavy equipment and artillery. In this text I will not devote more attention to this issue. What is of interest, however, is the economic plane of hybrid warfare, understood as exerting financial influence, for example, through the collapse of the hryvnia, attempts to destroy Ukraine’s grain trade, deprive Ukraine of access to the sea, and recent efforts to „plunge Ukraine into darkness” by depriving it of access to electricity, running water and heating, carrying out terrorist attacks, including rocket fire on critical infrastructure.

The war on the economic level stands unchanged from the 2014 conflict. It primarily means restricting the supply of energy resources and raising their prices. It also means sabotaging pipelines and lowering their pressure (for example, the explosion of the Nord Stream II pipeline, which remains unexplained to this day), and changing the rules of payment for gas supplies (payment in rubles), which is inconsistent with international agreements.

A very important element of hybrid warfare is also the socio-cultural plane. This is the imposition of Russian cultural patterns on the Ukrainian population in the occupied territories, and the ongoing instillation in the Ukrainian people since at least World War II of absolute adherence to the „Ruthenian world” and „Ruthenian order.” This is an attempt to destroy the human ability to define one’s own identity.

A dangerous symptom of hybrid warfare is war on the genetic-ecological plane, including, above all, acts of genocide (for example, the March 2022 Bucha murder), kidnapping Ukrainian children, and affecting entire generations by bringing about ill health in citizens, which will often end in death as a consequence.

The historical plane, relevant to propaganda, is also interesting and important. It is dominated by the conviction „rewrite the history of a nation, and you will conquer it”. Using historical myths to legitimize claims to the so-called „post-Soviet space”, Russia is denying Ukraine’s right to statehood, propagandists proclaiming the lie that it was only granted statehood by Joseph Stalin. Historians are

¹⁷ ISW: *Rozłam ideologiczny w Rosji. Putin ma problem po utracie Chersonia* [13 XI 2022], <https://www.rp.pl/konflikty-zbrojne/art37400701-isw-rozlam-ideologiczny-w-rosji-putin-ma-problem-po-utracie-chersonia> (15 XI 2022).

certain that the history of Ukraine goes back at least to the time of Rus and the baptism of Vladimir in 988¹⁸. Meanwhile, Russians are convinced that only they are entitled to the legacy of Kievan Rus and that Ukraine is a fictitious state. This view is echoed by many Russian intellectuals, including TV journalist, political scientist and columnist Mikhail Leontiev, who stated in a 2009 interview that:

There is no such country Ukraine. It is a fictional reality, invented by people who hated Russia and those who are called Ukrainians. Ukraine exists thanks to the Western element, which is the product of a rape-enforced change of identity¹⁹.

This indicates that Ukraine is the product of nations such as Poland, Germany, Israel and the United States. It is hard to find a more deceitful transmission of history.

Similar symptoms of war on a historical level concern information on Polish-Ukrainian relations. On 17 IX 2022, the Russian state agency Ria Novosti circulated a rumor that, as part of reparations, President Andrzej Duda would like to receive permission from Russia to annex the Lviv Oblast, granted to Ukraine by the decision of the so-called Big Three (Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill) at the Yalta Conference on 4 II 1945²⁰. This refers to the resolution of the Polish Sejm on war reparations from Germany, adopted on 14 IX 2022, which included a provision that „Poland has not received adequate compensation also for losses caused by the USSR²¹”. The said document was presented as follows:

The Sejm of the Republic of Poland states that Poland has not yet received adequate financial compensation and reparation for the material and non-material losses suffered by the Polish state during World War II as a result of the aggression of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. These losses require the necessary estimate to be determined and presented as the basis for taking appropriate action against the Russian Federation.

¹⁸ A. Reid, *Borderland: A Journey through the History of Ukraine*, Phoenix 1998; S. Yekelchik, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation*, Oxford 2007; N. Jakowenko, *Historia Ukrainy od czasów najdawniejszych do końca XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 2000.

¹⁹ „Нет такой страны – Украина” [18 I 2009], <https://www.rosbalt.ru/news/2009-01-19/net-takoy-strany-ukraina-3626634> (10 IX 2022);

²⁰ „Aneksja Lwowa”. Nowa „teoria” Rosji, a w niej nazwisko Dudy [17 IX 2022], <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/ukrainski-zdrajca-mowi-o-aneksji-lwowa-powoluje-sie-na-prezydenta-dude-6813242178386656a> (10 IX 2022).

²¹ *Uchwała Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 14 września 2022 r. w sprawie dochodzenia przez Polskę zadośćuczynienia za szkody spowodowane przez Niemcy w czasie II wojny światowej* [14 IX 2022], [https://www.sejm.gov.pl/media9.nsf/files/MPRA-CJ9PGL/%24File/Uchwała ws. Dochodzenia przez Polskę zadośćuczynienia za szkody spowodowane przez Niemcy w czasie II wojny światowej.pdf](https://www.sejm.gov.pl/media9.nsf/files/MPRA-CJ9PGL/%24File/Uchwała%20ws.%20Dochodzenia%20przez%20Polsk%C4%99%20zadostuczynienia%20za%20szkody%20spowodowane%20przez%20Niemcy%20w%20czasie%20II%20wojny%20swiatowej.pdf) (1 IV 2023).

Adequate reparation is also required for the enormity of the harm done to Polish citizens. The occupation by the USSR of the territories of the Second Polish Republic resulted not only in suffering caused by repression and deportations to Siberia in the thousands, but also in the mass murder of Polish citizens – genocide, including the crime of Katyn²².

The Polish state would thus seek „a pretext to start negotiations with Moscow on the fate of the western part of Ukraine²³”. Similar revelations appeared in the Russian media already at the beginning of the war. Also, of interest are the fake posts from 30 X 2022, published on social media platforms Twitter and Telegram, which read: „Poland will annex the Lviv Oblast – a bill on the association of Poland and the Lviv Oblast will be signed by the end of this year” (spelling of all posts original). A purported statement by Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, was also posted:

A historic moment that our nations, divided by the criminal Soviet regime, have been waiting for. Poland will come to Ukrainian soil not as an occupier, but as a brother and ally. It will be a mutually beneficial cooperation that will give Ukraine a strong economic boost and show the whole world – it does not matter who is formally the master of the land, what matters is the prosperity and well-being of the people living on it²⁴.

This type of disinformation appears constantly in the Russian narrative. On 17 I 2023, a crafted screenshot showing a purported weather forecast on Polish television, where the territory of Poland includes the Lviv Oblast, hit the web²⁵. The station's logo was pasted in, as was the presenter coming from TRWAM TV. The manipulated material is intended to convince Russian public opinion of the validity of the theses put out by Russian propaganda. As one can easily see, in a hybrid war with a historical basis, the most sensitive points of Polish-Ukrainian relations are hit, with the aim of dividing the two nations.

Another example of the use of the historical plane in the hybrid war can be seen in Dmitry Medvedev's statements about the referendums held by the separatist republics in the occupied territories of Ukraine. The former Russian

²² *Ibidem*, p. 2.

²³ A. Nitkiewicz, *Rosyjska telewizja uderza w Polskę. „Przeoczyli” jednak istotny szczegół* [25 XI 2022], <https://wydarzenia.interia.pl/raporty/raport-ukraina-rosja/aktualnosci/news-rosyjska-telewizja-uderza-w-polske-przeoczyli-jednak-istotny,nId,6434067> (23 XII 2022);

²⁴ G. Sieczkowska, *„Projekt ustawy o stowarzyszeniu Polski i Obwodu Lwowskiego” – kolejna odsłona rosyjskiej dezinformacji* [4 XI 2022], <https://konkret24.tvn24.pl/swiat/polska-stowarzyszy-sie-ze-lwowem-to-rosyjska-dezinformacja-6191951> (23 XII 2022).

²⁵ *Rosyjska propaganda rozpowszechnia wymyśloną mapę. Sreparowali „materiał TVP”* [18 I 2023], <https://www.tvp.info/65726705/fake-news-rosjan-przerobili-prognoze-pogody-tv-trwam> (2 II 2023).

president, following in the footsteps of propaganda, stresses that the takeover of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics is an act of historical justice, which is expected to „change the vector of Russia's development for decades²⁶”.

Psychological warfare is also taking place in the realm of hybrid conflict. This is terror, intimidation, torture and other manifestations of physical and psychological violence, serving to break the will to fight and resistance of the conquered people. This also includes the aforementioned deprivation of Ukraine's access to electricity, running water and heating.

The last level is information warfare, aside from conventional warfare, is perhaps the most important space of hybrid warfare, influencing its other levels. It is linked to strong propaganda, which I will discuss later in the article.

Information warfare and war at the level of consciousness

Nations with open information systems, with free access to information sources, are particularly vulnerable. Ukraine's information space, unlike Russia's, is not consolidated in one hand. It is a ground susceptible to the influence of propaganda, dating back to Soviet times²⁷. It is well known that whoever controls the information space controls the state. This is done primarily using modern mass media and modern telecommunications technologies (including cell phones). It is worth mentioning that the control of information is one of the hidden systems operating within the information society, fully dependent on the influx of current data. In this way, unaware of the threat, the information society, often against its will, becomes a tool of hybrid warfare²⁸.

The most important feature of the information society is the production, collection and circulation of information. This is an essential condition for its functioning²⁹. For members of such a society, technology and digital technology become one of the most important aspects of life and professional work³⁰.

²⁶ H. Ossowski, „*To będzie nieodwracalne*”. *Pojawił się wpis Miedwiediewa* [20 IX 2022], <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/propagandowy-wpis-miedwiediew-zabral-glos-w-sprawie-separatystycznych-republik-6814513516968768a> (22 XII 2022).

²⁷ J. Hajduk, T. Stępniewski, *Wojna hybrydowa Rosji z Ukrainą: uwarunkowania i instrumenty*, „*Studia Europejskie*” 2015, no. 4, p. 135.

²⁸ O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *Wojna informacyjna zagrożeniem dla bezpieczeństwa ludzkości*, [in:] *Walka informacyjna. Uwarunkowania – incydenty – wyzwania*, ed. H. Batorowska, Kraków 2017, p. 71.

²⁹ M. Golka, *Czym jest społeczeństwo informacyjne?*, „*Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny*” 2005, LXVII, vol. 4, p. 254.

³⁰ E. Żywucka-Kozłowska, R. Dziembowski, *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne w perspektywie wybranych aktów prawnych Unii Europejskiej*, „*Media – Kultura – Komunikacja Społeczna*” 2021, 3 (16), p. 77-90.

Information is treated in this value system as a product, a commodity for sale, capital and an element of war and manipulation, as the main driving force of modern civilization. The information is relatively inexpensive, and thus can be widespread³¹. Its wide availability is followed by hidden manipulation and influence on human consciousness. It is an extremely dangerous phenomenon. Consciousness fully manipulated becomes a completely dependent, submissive and obedient to authority system. The ultimate consequence of the above processes and the lack of control over the transmitted content may lead to the mass extermination of separate nations and even the collapse of global civilization. Cyberspace is becoming an arena for these activities, playing an important role in modern armed conflicts, where one of the key areas of influence is the human's mind.

The object of information warfare is „people's consciousness, an attempt to change people's respective perceptions of reality and live in a world of illusion. It is based on the ability to manage and manipulate public consciousness in order to subjugate people's will³²". It primarily uses modern media for the transmission of false propaganda, disinformation and the provision of intelligence material, which becomes the basis of so-called cyber warfare. Cyberspace becomes important in an operational sense, exerting influence not only on machines, but also on human minds. Thus, information warfare is played out primarily at the consciousness level. Its principles are laid down in the doctrine of total war, which was initiated in the USSR as early as 1987. In it, Russia uses the experience of the United States, NATO, the European Union and its own, still from the Soviet era³³. As Olha and Sergey Vasyuta note:

At the core of the concept of war 'to defeat consciousness' is the destruction of the human capacity for identification, that is, for self-determination of who a person is trying to be and within which cultural and historical tradition. Once this capacity is destroyed, the subject can be given or induced some other identification, which for unknown reason is needed from the outside. Identification is based on the basis of imagination – the ability to produce images and essential symbols. It is the symbolic rule and the imagination itself that are stratified or broken down in the first place³⁴.

The essence of the war of consciousness was recounted by Yuri Gromyko. He noted that the objects of defeat and destruction in this war are certain types

³¹ B. Stefanowicz, *Informacja*, Warszawa 2004, p. 78-80.

³² O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

³³ *Ibidem*, s. 72.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, s. 73.

of mentalities. Thus, as a result of the war of consciousness, certain types of consciousness must be destroyed, thus reorganizing communities³⁵. The process of destruction in consciousness warfare takes place through:

- 1) brain injury, disrupting the memory and functioning of the cognitive information processing system, which reduces the level of consciousness operation, such as through chemicals, poisoned air and food, radiation, etc.;
- 2) disintegration and primitivization of the organization of the information-communicative environment in which consciousness functions;
- 3) occultism, i.e. the influence of manipulated forms of communication on consciousness;
- 4) subliminal or psychotropic messages, distributed through information channels, which destabilize or destroy the work of consciousness;
- 5) the breakdown of social identification, leading to a change in the form of self-determination and to depersonalization³⁶.

Russian thought also stresses that „the target of destruction in the war of consciousness is the enemy’s cultural shell, and just as culture is the core of civilization, it is a matter of destroying civilization³⁷”. It is worth mentioning that the first victims of such a functioning system – with the exception, perhaps, of the destruction of civilization – were Russian society, today almost completely de-realized and indoctrinated, in which a kind of „brainwashing” was carried out. A demoralized society is no longer able to separate truth from fiction. Russian society today functions in terms of an „unbelieving Thomas” who will believe, not so much if he „sees”, but rather will believe if he „feels”. Real information has no meaning until it begins to affect representatives of that society.

Evidence of the above can be seen, for example, in the actions carried out by activists at the beginning of the conflict, which consisted of showing Russian citizens photos of the war in Ukraine and the now famous attempt to convey facts about the war in comments left in reviews of Russian restaurants on the Google platform. Also, of interest were the activities of the hacker and activist group called Anonymous. They hacked government websites, corporate cameras and the phones of ordinary Russians making the public aware that the so-called „special military operation” is an imposture. None of the actions above have so far resulted in the expected social revolution in Russia. Only direct contact with the war has an effect on society, although here, too, the level of consciousness degradation carried out on professional soldiers and conscripts, in an alarming number

³⁵ Ю. Громько, *Оружие, поражающие сознание, – что это такое?* [13 II 2016], <http://www.pereplet.ru/text/grom0.html> (2 IV 2023).

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

³⁷ В.М. Петрик, *Соціально-правові основи інформаційної безпеки*, Київ 2007, p. 73.

of cases, affects the degree of their brutality and boundless obedience. It is worth mentioning at this point that during World War II, Wehrmacht soldiers attacking Poland in 1939 were administered drugs that caused disorders of consciousness, the disappearance of ethical values and the illusion of superhuman strength. This served to raise the level of their cruelty. This was an example of actions directed at the destruction of consciousness. It was recently established that Russian soldiers sent to the front were given Viagra. Rape thus became a deliberate tactic to dehumanize the victims³⁸.

On 21 IX 2022, Vladimir Putin announced the so-called „partial mobilization” of Russian citizens. This sparked violently repressed protests in many cities, most notably Moscow and St. Petersburg. In addition, in immediate reaction to the address, Russians bought up all available airline tickets, stood in huge lines at the border with Finland in an attempt to flee the country and the most frequently searched search term on the Internet became the question „how to break a limb at home?”. These are the first major public protests since the beginning of the war. Russians were silent on the news of war crimes, but they are protesting in a meme when the war has arrived at their doorstep, affecting their children, husbands and fathers. This is happening for a reason.

A pillar of the state of so-called „social ignorance”, or to put it more bluntly, „social blindness”, is primarily disinformation, in its many manifestations. The first of these is the transmission of faulty information and the modification of its flow, through so-called „white noise”, that is, the replacement of true information with its false versions, supported by falsified evidence. Another manifestation of disinformation is disinformation „from the opposite”, that is, conveying true information in such a way as to make it appear false. There is also the so-called terminological „mine-laying” understood as distorting the true essence of important general concepts³⁹.

The above assumptions are confirmed both in the sphere of military operations in Ukraine and in the space of digital operations, which have an important role in this war. Online operations consist of both protection and acquisition of intelligence materials of an operational nature. Since the beginning of the war, we have noticed, primarily on the Ukrainian side, an increased caution in terms of press materials released, as well as activities in the public sphere aimed at securing important information regarding current military positions. This includes an appeal not to share photos of deployed military equipment online, especially on social networks. A photo of a Russian tourist taken on 20 VIII 2022 in Crimea against the background of S-400 air defense systems near Yevpatoria became

³⁸ „Rosyjscy żołnierze dostają viagrę, by móc gwałcić ukraińskie kobiety” – podaje ONZ [18 X 2022], <https://zycie.hellozdrowie.pl/rosyjscy-zolnierze-dostaja-viagre-by-moc-gwalcic-ukraińskie-kobiety-podaje-onz> (2 III 2023).

³⁹ O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

famous. Unaware of the mistake he made, the Russian pointed out the geolocation of the launcher, which was destroyed by Ukrainian forces⁴⁰.

Another example of digital warfare is the interception, by the Ukrainian side, of the phone calls of Russian soldiers. They confirm speculations about the army's low morale, equipment deficiencies, corruption in the military, war crimes, as well as symptoms of changes in consciousness among Russian citizens. They repeatedly contradict their relatives' direct accounts of the situation at the front, urging them to commit crimes, rape or theft, strenuously telling their interlocutors that what they experience first-hand is a lie from the West.

Of course, the key mechanism of information warfare is propaganda, i.e. the introduction of such perceptions of events into the public consciousness as to manipulate the entire population. Russian propaganda uses a number of proven tools of manipulation known back to the Cold War era. Unfortunately, Western societies have for years ignored important indications of Vladimir Putin's imperial motives, believing that this is merely a form of self-creation. Nowadays, any signals coming from media propaganda are scrupulously analyzed, such as the numerous threats to use nuclear weapons. An example is the statement on 18 IX of this year by Putin's chief advocate Olga Skabeyeva and State Duma deputy Andrei Gurulov, who threatened on the Rossiya 1 channel to launch a nuclear attack on Britain during the funeral of Elizabeth II⁴¹. Similarly, in Putin's already described address, he warns Western countries that defending Russia's territoriality may require the use of nuclear weapons, stressing that, quote: „This is not a bluff⁴²”. The key elements of Russian propaganda have been mentioned by Olha and Sergei Vasyuta. These are:

- 1) Emotionalization. Some nations are more sentimental or emotional, and some have problems with the past, which is exploited in propaganda by using commonly known epics. Examples of the above include emphasizing Germany's Nazi past and its responsibility for World War II, reminding the Russian public of the Polish occupation of the Kremlin in 1612, exaggerating on television the importance of the „Patriotic War” waged by Russia after the Third Reich invaded the USSR, etc.

⁴⁰ *Rosyjski turysta sam wskazał cel. Wystarczyło to jedno zdjęcie* [22 VIII 2022], <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/rosjanie-sami-wskazuja-cele-na-krymie-turysci-publikuja-zdjecia-680404242-7533984a> (28 IX 2022).

⁴¹ *Szaleństwo w Rosji 1. Groźą uderzeniem atomowym. Padła data* [20 VII 2022], <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/szalenstwa-w-rosyjskiej-tv-grozili-atakiem-nuklearnym-na-wielka-brytanie-6814346029869920a> (10 XII 2022).

⁴² *Putin przemówił do narodu po raz pierwszy od rozpoczęcia wojny w Ukrainie. Ogłosił częściową mobilizację* [21 VIII 2022], <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/putin-przemowil-do-narodu-po-raz-pierwszy-od-rozporozczenia-wojny-w-ukrainie-oglosil-czesciowa-mobilizacje-6814504722144096a.html> (10 XII 2022).

- 2) Demonization of the enemy. Ukraine is portrayed as a regime state, corrupt and imbued with Nazi ideas. Before the outbreak of the war, Ukraine's submission to Western influence, including primarily manipulation by the United States, was emphasized, and the threat of an attack by Ukraine on the Russian Federation was pointed out.
- 3) The war that will end all wars, i.e. emphasizing the historical role of a just and law-abiding Russia in a world of corruption (the importance of this is constantly emphasized both by the Kremlin's chief ideologue, called „Putin's brainchild”, Alexander Dugin, and by Patriarch Kirill I of Moscow and All Russia, who has called for war with Ukraine).
- 4) The dishonesty that is always present in propaganda during wartime, involving manipulation of content, misrepresentation, humiliation, intimidation, promoting deception, building information chaos, exacerbating internal conflict, threats and discouragement, inciting ethnic and religious hatred, and building conspiracy theories⁴³.

Propaganda thus becomes an important element in the information war of consciousness destruction, inhibiting the ability to think logically and constructively.

Conclusion

Unlike the 2014 conflict, the current situation in the information war between Ukraine, or more accurately, between all of Western Europe and Russia, has changed significantly. It seems that the Western media and intelligence institutions have tipped the balance in favor of Ukraine (at least in terms of information). We have probably noticed this since the beginning of the conflict, including in the propaganda sphere, where Russian influence was limited only to its national borders and at most other eastern states located in the Russian sphere of influence (e.g. Belarus). Today, Russia's influence on the societies of European countries is negligible. At Russia's disposal are left cyberattacks and the use of so-called „useful idiots” who regularly and unwittingly comment on events, sowing disinformation and information chaos on profiles, blogs and social networks. It seems that the Western world has become supremely immune to the information hype coming from Russia, immediately breaking their hidden agendas. It remains to be hoped that this situation will continue at least until the end of the conflict. Invariably, the incomprehensible attitude of Russian society, almost completely incapable of revolt, remains an important problem. The collective consciousness of Russians formed in this way may be due to the fact that, perhaps from the beginning of Russia's existence, its citizens have not been fully free

⁴³ O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

people. Centuries of tsarist absolutism, Bolshevik totalitarianism, Stalinism, the Soviet era and, finally, the current pseudo-democracy invariably shaped an attitude of absolute obedience and servility to authority. Thus, one can conclude that the Russian people have never experienced true freedom, unlike the Ukrainian people, who are fighting to preserve their recently won independence.

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Abstrakt

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Upadek poetyki humanistycznej. Oblicza wojny informacyjnej w konflikcie hybrydowym na przykładzie wojny Rosji z Ukrainą w 2022 r.

Głównym celem artykułu jest ukazanie oblicza wojny informacyjnej i wynikających z niej zagrożeń w przywoływanym konflikcie zbrojnym Rosji z Ukrainą. Ponadto służy on zaprezentowaniu ogółu przejawów wojny hybrydowej, ze wskazaniem konkretnych przykładów z toczącej się wojny. W artykule posłużę się pracami dotyczącymi analizy definicyjnej wojny hybrydowej i informacyjnej oraz przykładami pochodzącymi z trwającego konfliktu hybrydowego Federacji Rosyjskiej z Ukrainą. Współczesne konflikty hybrydowe to skomplikowane operacje, wyróżniające się użyciem szerokiego spektrum metod oddziaływania na kulturę, społeczeństwo, gospodarkę, finanse, historię, psychikę człowieka oraz informację. Przy tym nie oznaczają one całkowitego zwycięstwa którejkolwiek ze stron, zważywszy na fakt braku gwarancji osiągnięcia wszystkich celów i interesów w każdym z wymienionych wymiarów. Najistotniejszym obszarem oddziaływania w wojnie hybrydowej jest informacja, stanowiąca kluczowe narzędzie oddziaływania na człowieka. Manipulacja i propaganda informacyjna w sposób bezpośredni przyczyniają się do wyniszczania ludzkiej świadomości oraz zdolności do racjonalnego myślenia.

Słowa kluczowe: wojna hybrydowa, wojna informacyjna, propaganda, wojna na wyniszczenie świadomości

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