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PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTIONS IN THE ARMED CONFLICT

Scientific and technical progress and development in the sphere of telecommunications, computer science, and multimedia has ushered in a new era – the so-called “information society”. Propaganda and information activities are a key element of psychological actions that have a long tradition and are currently an extremely effective tool for implementing the foreign and internal policy of the Russian Federation. The Russian armed forces have at their disposal a very extensive set of tools and processes that enables them to conduct such actions.

The purpose of this article is to explain the significance of psychological and propaganda actions in armed conflict. In addition, the article presents classic forms of psychological actions and a definition is proposed that reflects the specifics of these actions. This article aims to prepare the reader to learn and understand the essence of psychological actions in armed conflict. The author's considerations prove that psychological actions and propaganda are not new phenomena; rather, these actions currently have an extremely wide range of use in armed conflict. The use of psychological and propaganda actions is related the development of the internet and the role of the recipient, who through social networking, becomes an unconscious recipient and relay.

Keywords: psychological actions, PSYOPS, propaganda, military conflict.

1. INTRODUCTION

The armed conflict as a socio-historical phenomenon is considered to be the extreme case of implementing specific assumptions of the policy of states (coalitions of states), nations or social groups using various forms of violence. Despite the most terrible experiences, mankind has not been able to eliminate wars or protect themselves against their outbreak throughout history, but has constantly improved its broadly understood military instrumentation (means of combat, combat tactics, organization of troops, etc.).

At the same time, methods for preparing people for war were improved, and military actions themselves were increasingly supported by other forms of combat, known today as “unarmed violence”. These include dysfunctional and disintegrative actions in the economic, diplomatic, psychological, information and electronic sphere (Goban-Klas, Sienkiewicz, 1999).

These actions differ from armed struggle in that they do not compete with people using the most drastic methods and methods of destroying the opponent's forces and means. At

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first glance, war (armed struggle) appears to be a larger or smaller technical clash. Until recently, some futurologists even predicted that in the future armed conflicts could be fought by armed robots, and the battlefield would be without people.

These visions have not been confirmed, although it cannot be denied that the degree of automation and technicalisation of troops is increasing with almost every day. Even if devices or means replacing man completely or partially appeared on the battlefield, he would still prepare and control them (Bourne, Healy, Beer, 2003).

2. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTIONS

Military theorists and practitioners agree that man in armed conflict has played and will continue to play a dominant role. The features of a possible armed conflict, regardless of its scope, determine the special significance of the psychological factor both among the direct participants of the fight and the population at deep backs. In the conditions of high dynamics of actions, aspirations of the warring parties to take the initiative, huge losses in people and equipment, with sudden changes in the situation and the occurrence of unexpected visual and auditory stimuli – a huge psychological and physical burden on soldiers will be a common phenomenon.

As the history of many armies and the course of war conflicts shows, the state of mind and consciousness of soldiers has never been indifferent to many commanders. The differences boiled down only to a different understanding of the army spirit and to different contents, forms and methods of shaping the will to fight, involvement and discipline of soldiers (from the ideas of blind obedience, ruthlessness and domination of fear in action, to the principle of internalization of the attitudes and motives of soldiers' preaching by commanders with training and educational content).

The formation of desirable moral and combat traits of own soldiers has always been associated with attempts (more or less successful) to weaken the psychological and physical sphere of the opposing side's troops. Making negative changes in the motivational and emotional sphere of the enemy soldiers was to facilitate the implementation of the combat task. As in the past, so in contemporary concepts, the purpose of these activities has not changed.

The issue of dysfunctional psychological impact on the army and the opponent's population in armed conflict is recognized in all major armies of the world. Military conflicts have shown that not only the numbers, armament and morale of their own armies are decisive factors for victory. Since the memorable victory of the smaller army of Gideon over the much stronger; Midian army in 1245 B.C. from time to time it was testified on the battlefield that disintegration of the opponent's psyche could ensure unexpected success. For centuries, the thought of the Chinese Sun-Tzu theorist, expressed in the 6th century B.C., was confirmed in concrete military reality in the art of war: "To mislead a larger opponent and undermine his fighting spirit, you must fight by various, also non-military methods and means, using at least trumpets and lights at night, and during the day with banners and other signals" (Sturminger, 1960).

Psychological actions on the battlefield, often called propaganda – due to the means of implementation (word, sound, image, gesture, movement, light) appeared along with armed conflicts. However, until the twentieth century, they were spontaneous and intuitive, resulted from a specific combat situation, depended to a large extent on intelligence, combat experience and cunning of commanders. They were not institutionalized either in terms of

teaching or practical application on the battlefield. Contemporary methods of psychological actions (actions) were most often based on arousing fear and self-preservation instinct, disinformation and manipulation, and misleading the opponent. Content and forms referring to the rational sphere of the opponent were less frequent. It can be said that the characteristic feature of psychological actions (operations, activities) was the use of emotions during the propaganda message (*Military Conflict and Terrorism...*, June 2003).

Psychological actions ceased to be intuitive at the end of the 20th century. This was due to several theoreticians who tried to analyze some problems of armed conflict from a psychological point of view. Theorists and their studies should be mentioned, such as: *On the psychology of the great war (Zur Psychologie des Grosses Kriegs)* C. von Binder-Kriegelsteina and *Psychological aspects of attack and defense (Die psychologischen Elemente bei Angriff und Yerteidigung)* F. von Lichtensteina, both from 1893, and *Attempt of Military Psychology (Yersuche einer Militarpsychologie)* dr. M. Campaneo, *Panic in the war (Die Panik im Kriege)* col. E. Pfulf and *Panic (Paniken)* F. Starka.

If the nineties of the nineteenth century can be associated with the genesis of theoretical considerations about the role of the psychic factor on the battlefield and the possibilities of using this knowledge for military purposes, then the First World War meant that psychological actions ceased to be on the battlefield by accident and although they were initially identified mainly with the propaganda activities of civil authorities, they quickly evolved into an increasingly important tool for military operations. Psychological and propaganda operations became part of the armed struggle, and their goal, generally speaking, was to interact with other elements of military potential in the process of implementing a combat task. To this day, the thesis put forward at the time is believed that, in the right conditions of the battlefield, psychological and propaganda operations can contribute to reducing losses among own troops and to the more efficient and faster execution of a combat task. During World War I, a number of institutions and information and propaganda services were created for the needs of the war. The internal front of propaganda, initially the only and most important, with time gives way to the external front – psychological and propaganda impact on the army and the population of the opponent.

After World War I, psychological and propaganda actions were increasingly treated as a powerful weapon of war. In the period between the wars, psychological and propaganda actions gained extremely influential means: radio and film. The film fulfilled its main propaganda tasks primarily on the internal front. Radio, on the other hand, turned out to be the most universal means, as radio waves freely penetrated the borders and front lines. For the first time there was the possibility of a parallel confrontation: armed and psychological-propaganda. In the interwar period, only until 1935, more than 200 sketches, studies and monographs on psychological and propaganda issues on the battlefield were published in French, English and German. For example, some of them: L. Marchand, *L'Ofensive Moraile Allemands en France Pendant La Querre*, Paris 1920; H.M. Herne, *Propaganda in War*, London 1930; A.L. Lowell, *British Propaganda in Enemy Countries*, London 1923; H.D. Lasswell, *Propaganda technique in the World War*, New York 1927; H. Frankenberg, *Die Propaganda ais Kriegswaffe*, Berlin 1929; G. Huber, *Die franzósische Propaganda im Weltkriege gegen Deutschland 1914–1918*, Munich 1928; O. Riedner, *Die Kónigspropaganda*, Munich 1930; H. Thimme, *Weltkrieg ohne Waffen*, Berlin 1929; A. Blau, *Geistige Kriegfóhruhg*, Potsdam 1935.

Each of the warring parties tried to coordinate psychological and propaganda operations. The armies of the United States of America, Great Britain, Russia (USSR), Germany and

France, which were leaders in this process during World War I and World War II, can still boast comprehensive experience to this day.

In the army of the former USSR, psychological actions against the enemy were hidden under the name “specpropaganda”, in the Bundeswehr until recently they were called “Psychologische Verteidigung” (currently – “Operative Informationen”), in the American army “Psychological Operations” (PSYOP). In the Polish Army, these actions were described, as in all other armies of the Warsaw Pact, as “special propaganda”. Today, the problems of psychological actions have been taken over by specialized cells of the Polish army.

Both the analysis of practical psychological operations in armed conflicts after 1945 and the exegesis of the theoretical assumptions contained in the normative documents of the main armies of the world allow to conclude that there are no so-called specialists among specialists. psychological warfare fundamental differences in perceiving the role, premises, principles and tasks of psychological actions on the opponent during the war.

To sum up, it can be stated that psychological actions are a set of planned projects implemented in times of peace, crisis and armed conflict (war) directed at hostile, friendly or neutral recipients, influencing their behavior with the intention of achieving the desired political goals and military (Piątkowski, 2002).

3. THE ESSENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTIONS IN THE ARMED CONFLICT

The essence of psychological actions in the armed conflict was and will remain propaganda message affecting soldiers and the opponent's population through various forms. It will be focused especially on the emotional elements of the recipient's psyche, although impact on the rational plane of beliefs and attitudes of a potential opponent is not excluded. Psychological actions during the fight never consisted of rational discussion with the opponent. The history of wars was dominated by information and propaganda messages with a predominance of social engineering, disinformation and manipulation elements, carried out according to the purpose assumed by the sender and strictly subordinated to the military task.

Modern knowledge in the field of mass communication and the theory of crowd behavior, with a high probability allow to conclude that planning and organization of psychological actions on the battlefield will follow the following socio-technical principles:

- Domination of emotional arousals and the need to graduate and intensify stimuli. According to this principle, psychological and propaganda action should create the right mood and stimulate individual and collective emotions, e.g. doubt, fear, hatred, fears for one's own and loved ones etc.;
- Taking into account the mood of the recipients as much as possible. For this principle to be implemented effectively, it is necessary to have reliable sources of information about morale, combat values and army moods. In addition to typical espionage activities, we should reckon with actions designed to provoke and manifest our current attitudes and moods by our troops. An information and propaganda message reaching the recipients' desires is disproportionately more effective than a message whose appeals and content are inconsistent with the current moods of the recipients;
- Purposefulness and, at the same time, the necessity to use content and concepts understood by the recipient. Commanders should not delude themselves that the

enemy's propaganda and psychological actions may be incomprehensible to our soldiers. It should be assumed that the content transmitted by the opponent will be adapted to the intellectual level of our soldiers;

- The need to repeat propaganda messages many times in different versions and using different means and forms of communication. The reception of propaganda is made through individual psychological mechanisms at the recipients. Therefore, you should be aware of repeated repetitions of appeals, appeals and messages, but after introducing some modifications to the arguments. With this connects the so-called graduation principle. In order for the message to change the system of values and morale of the recipient (potential opponent), he should take as a starting point the hierarchy of values of a single soldier and environments, and only then, by making gradual changes in it, lead them in the intended direction;
- Deliberate combination of methods and means of impact (e.g. leaflet action with a radio or electroacoustic broadcast, or visual stimulus – symbol, drawing – with sound – word, sound etc.). It should be assumed that psychological activities on the battlefield will certainly be comprehensive, and the place of action, time and manner will be a combat situation. Hence, a thorough analysis of the military situation, enemy intentions, terrain capabilities and many other factors should enable our commanders to quickly and properly forecast these potential enemy actions (Zinsser, Perkins, Gervais, Burbelo, 2004).

4. PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTIONS AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF COMBAT ACTIONS

Psychological actions should be treated as an important integral part of combat operations, closely related to operational-tactical or strategic intentions. Psychological actions – similarly to artillery, although with quite different arguments – directly support combat operations or prepare them. Therefore, it is no coincidence that psychological actions are treated as a support weapon that can effectively support combat actions and facilitate their implementation. When the minds of the soldiers are controlled by paralyzing fear, fear, it is much easier to conquer them physically.

An analysis of World War I and II and armed conflicts after 1945 shows that psychological and propaganda actions on the battlefield aimed, in addition to lowering and collapsing the morale of enemy soldiers, to cause panic, inclination to desertion, simulation or to stop fighting, to disrupt command systems, misinforming commanders, obstructing proper assessments made by staffs and making the right decisions, as well as exhausting the physical and mental capabilities of soldiers.

Western theorists believe that actions against the army and the opponent's population should include, first of all, propaganda effects on specific environments, personal groups, as well as formal and informal teams of specialists. Their goal would be to destroy morale and disintegrate the system of values and beliefs of the recipients, and even control their behavior. The main task in this respect is to be fulfilled by the method of providing short, concise current information that will arouse interest corresponding to the needs of the recipient. The design of the content and forms of this information should provide specific effects in the targeted target groups in the form of states of uncertainty, loosening of discipline, feelings of anxiety, weakening the cohesion of groups, crews, staff, departments, attitudes of passive or active resistance. In this interaction, it is recommended to

comprehensively use all factors and circumstances, such as national and national differences, religious contradictions, violation of interpersonal relations, political tensions, combat fatigue, losses etc.

Propaganda in certain combat situations can also be used to trigger specific actions by enemy soldiers, such as informing them about the time, place and ways of indulging in captivity, or showing them other ways to leave the battlefield (FM 3-05.301, August 2007).

Secondly, the impact harassing soldiers, mainly by constantly attacking their mental sphere and nervous system, and disrupting the rhythm of mental and physical activities of the body. The susceptibility of soldiers to destructive impact and the way of emotional and imaginative experience (e.g. threat to life, concern for the fate of loved ones, reactions to the view of the death of colleagues, overcoming fear, etc.) will depend on personal predispositions, personality structure, strength of the nervous system, etc. Therefore, one should take into account the occurrence of various forms of reaction of soldiers, with directions difficult to predict, and thus impossible to immediately limit and eliminate. According to Western theorists, keeping enemy soldiers within the reach of strong impact of various stressors is one of the basic, unconventional ways of military action. It is assumed that by using the lowering of morale occurring in the opponent, his unfavorable position, deficiencies in satisfying basic needs, long-lasting emotional tension or disruption in command, it is possible to intensify the stress in the opponent's soldiers with adequate stimulation so that no increased combat actions will be needed to achieve victory. Such assumptions are justified by views on the anticipated forms of response of each person in a situation of strong stress. Well, it is stated that responses to stress usually take place in two main forms that differ from each other: in the form of stress control reactions and in the form of defense responses against stress (FM 3-05.301, August 2007).

A characteristic feature of stress control reactions is that they serve to remove it and at the same time maintain the initial course of action – so they are positive, because they ensure the achievement of the set goal (e.g. defense or attack), despite the existence and presence of multilateral factors threatening the lives of soldiers.

The main property of defense responses against stress is that they serve to protect the personality of soldiers against the harmful effects of stress, but at the same time giving up the achievement of the goal of the action taken previously. The most common forms of defense are physical removal from a stressful situation by escaping, failing to perform any action, order, retreat, which can lead to aggression against those who prevent it, and seeking help from others, even the enemy. The occurrence of such defensive reactions indicates that the soldier has lost control of the situation, i.e. is unable to control the course of events on the battlefield – in line with the intentions of his own or the commander. Attention should be paid to the fact that combat stress is a factor triggering fear or anger, with threat stress often causing fear.

According to American assessments, fear will cause an inevitable need to withdraw from the fight, which can sometimes be manifested by reluctance to perform tasks or to participate even in an easy combat task. It may also lead to actions aimed at ensuring safety instead of focusing on the effectiveness and success of a given task. As a consequence, threat stress through fear can, under certain conditions, lead to panic.

Another extremely important factor influencing disintegration on the sphere of the psyche is physical fatigue, further compounded by the lack of sleep. There is no doubt that the future battlefield will limit the possibilities of night rest to an unknown extent. This will be of great importance for military readiness. In the light of current research, especially the

lack of sleep factor can have a decisive impact on the psychological reactions of soldiers on the battlefield, which will clearly undergo negative changes. This is due to the specific physiological properties of each person's nervous system, which are characterized by the following general features:

- functioning of the body in a 23–25 hour cycle,
- existence of the lowest operational efficiency in hours. 3.00–6.00,
- the need to provide at least 4 hours total sleep during the day.

According to the assessments of Western specialists, lack of sleep in combat conditions will limit the physiological efficiency of the brain and thus reduce its efficiency. As a result, the soldier will become less sensitive to external stimuli, which will have a particularly negative impact on the performance of tasks that require high divisibility and concentration of attention. Errors in human activity occurring in such situations result precisely from the overlooking of important information or its underestimation. In practice, this means that a soldier may not notice the enemy's maneuver or other threat, and the commander may make the wrong decision because of missing important information. Physical fatigue resulting from a sharp reduction in the amount of sleep will first result in a decrease in physical performance and endurance, expressed in memory failure, prolonged reaction time, reduced logical thinking skills, increased difficulty in communicating with others, and then, in prolonging such state, induce a wide range of mood changes – from excitability and euphoria to anger – to depression.

Third, modeling information processes. One of the features of the future battlefield will be the highly complex information situation. This will be expressed on the one hand by the huge demand for information by commands, staffs, human teams and individuals, and on the other by the existence of many barriers to the flow and flow of information between cells and teams vertically and horizontally. For example, according to French theoreticians, the operation of people with leadership functions can be relatively easily disturbed by disinformation in the command and control networks of the enemy's troops and directly on the battlefield by imitating army movements and some other acoustic elements of combat. Disinformation actions are carried out in close cooperation with specialized services and troops.

Psychological actions during armed conflict are divided into three types, based on scope and scope: strategic, tactical and consolidative. Strategic actions are directed against the population and armed forces throughout the territory controlled by the opponent. As a rule, they take place without a temporal and spatial connection with combat operations. For this reason, the results of these actions are visible only after a long time.

This is how American theorists view the essence and tasks of strategic psychological actions:

“Strategic psychological combat actions are directed against the entire armed forces with simultaneous impact on its population. They are carried out in conjunction with or independently of combat operations. Immediate results of these actions are not expected. Their effects can be seen only after a long time. These actions lead to lowering, weakening, upsetting the opponent's mental resistance, disintegrating his morale and eliminating him from the fight” (FM 3-05.301, August 2007).

Tactical psychological actions are conducted against opponents on the battlefield and its people in the belts and on the directions of tactical and operational relationships. They are planned by specialist officers of senior staffs, and they implement organic and assigned psychological surgery sub-units. The main task of tactical psychological actions is to prepare, support, and in favorable conditions even to replace combat operations with psychological and psychotechnical means. Thus, psychological combat actions with a tactical dimension are strictly speaking an organic weapon of support. They are supposed to facilitate and ensure the performance of tactical and operational tasks at the cost of the smallest losses of own troops.

It is stated that achieving goals in tactical psychological operations will be fostered by:

- lost battles and heavy losses suffered by the opponent,
- insufficient supply,
- weaker qualifications of commanders,
- unsuccessful information about neighbors and the situation behind,
- prolonged fighting,
- illness among soldiers and medical services' shortcomings,
- lack of adequate information about the opponent and the military situation,
- desertions and arbitrary distance,
- actions of national minorities and people who do not identify with political goals and combat tasks.

Consolidation psychological and propaganda actions are conducted mainly among our own population. In principle, the burden of these actions lies on civilian institutions responsible for order and security during the war. The army joins these actions because their effects relate directly to the needs, interests and situation of the armed forces. Therefore, the basic task of consolidation actions is to absolutely ensure backroom discipline, neutralize and control the spontaneous reactions of the population (panic), ensure mobilization and emergency ventures, and ensure freedom of maneuver of own forces.

In theoretical considerations it is emphasized that the use of weapons of mass and precise destruction can cause a huge shock and even the collapse of all organizational forms of society, the disappearance in many cases of conscious and deliberate action of people. Therefore, favorable conditions may arise for causing mass panic, whose specific "chain reaction" may be initiated by a specific psychological and propaganda action.

Although three types of propaganda are distinguished, the most effective in combat psychological actions is the propaganda of so-called black. Black (hidden) propaganda creates the appearance that it comes from sources other than in reality. One of the most important forms of action in the sphere of black propaganda in the event of war is the launch of a series of carefully camouflaged radio stations. They may appear under the banner of fictitious "resistance groups", "special soldier radio stations" or various types of "opposition and patriotic" stations. The activity of black propaganda under the banner of opposition groups and organizations will not, of course, be limited to attacking the critical links in the social structure. Within it, various information about alleged discrepancies in the army or in the political leadership of the state can be widely disseminated. These actions may be accompanied by a campaign inspiring society to insubordination and resistance against authority. In relation to the armed forces, the acts of black propaganda may consist, for example, in arousing and maintaining anxiety of soldiers about the fate of their loved

ones, familiarizing them with swinging documents, ordinances and orders, and instructing them on “safe” ways of desertion (Volkoff, 1991).

By signaling some of the only hypothetical forms and methods of black propaganda in the sphere of radio transmission, it should be emphasized that the possibilities in this area are significant. The attacker from the position of black propaganda is in a favorable position. He has the ability to choose the object of action and the forms and methods of reaching it. The framework limiting this form of activity are the technical possibilities to reach the target object and the ability to learn and use all the social, mental, language and mentality nuances (Nowacki, 2013).

In the programming of actions against troops and the population in case of conflict, much attention is also paid to the printed word. Traditional forms of visual propaganda include various leaflets with general political and specialist content, the so-called leaflets, passes, situational maps and more. The category of special materials includes all counterfeits of official documents and materials that contain content harmful to the recipient (Satterfield, Seligman, 1994).

In periods of political crises and during armed conflict, psychological actions will play a special role. Their main task will be to exert psychological influence on the opponent's behavior in order to reduce morale and his will to fight. According to the assumptions, the main effort of psychological actions is to be focused on awakening self-preservation instinct and creating emotional states conducive to the breakdown of the will to fight, involvement and discipline of soldiers and the population. Military theorists believe that the nature of future military operations will create favorable conditions for psychological operations primarily due to the use of modern weaponry with enormous firepower. The feeling of constant threat and persistence of a state of strong nervous tension and high mental loads – which in turn creates favorable conditions for psychological impact – are additionally favored by factors such as: the rapid pace of modern operations, the widespread use of sea and air commandos, the operation of special-purpose troops and subversive groups at the rear of the troops, new types of weapons and equipment etc.

5. CONCLUSION

An analysis of literature and combat experience shows that one of the basic techniques of psychological actions has been and will continue to be the manipulation of the recipient's consciousness. The psychological sense of manipulation, generally speaking, consists in limiting or eliminating control and defense mechanisms of consciousness in order to impose specific views on the individual. Already mentioned Sun-Tzu almost 2600 years ago in the work *Martial Arts* included the sentence: “The highest skill in the art of war is to subordinate the enemy without a fight”. Sun-Tzu devotes a lot of space to tactics, combat operations, marches, land use, fire, upholding the fighting spirit, but he finds resorting to the use of weapons a final and least desirable solution. “In war, the best policy is to master an enemy state intact, destroying it is a last resort”.

Psychological actions were and will remain part of the armed struggle. Their purpose is, by using all means appropriate for these actions, to cooperate in the implementation of a combat task. Under the right conditions, psychological actions can contribute to reducing your own losses as well as more efficiently performing a combat task. As a form of fighting, psychological actions are distinguished by specific features and are determined by objective

and subjective premises. Knowledge of them by commanders, staff officers and specialized bodies is necessary for the process of command and control on the battlefield to be effective.

In the information age, the need for useful information becomes one of the most important tasks in the sphere of psychological actions. Currently, information is treated as a strategic resource, and the Internet and instant messengers are another space involved in the process of psychological actions. The advantage obtained in this respect becomes not only a guarantor, but even a condition for a safe armed confrontation, not only on the scale of a single soldier, but also in relation to the armed forces or the state (coalition).

The article is an analysis of psychological and propaganda actions in armed conflict that affect direct relations on the battlefield. The text contains a description of the key threats associated with the use of psychological actions and is an important argument in proving the thesis of the need to develop capabilities, not only of the armed forces, in this respect.

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