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PROPAGANDA AS A FACTOR INFLUENCING THE FORMATION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL'S MASS AND COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

The role of propaganda in shaping military personnel's mass and collective consciousness has been researched. The concept of propaganda has been examined, and main differences have been defined in the impact of propaganda on mass and collective consciousness. The specificity of propagandistic influence in the military environment and the methods of "friendly" and "enemy" propaganda have been analysed, the methods of "friendly" propaganda aiming at boosting the morale of military personnel, and "enemy" propaganda aiming at destabilization and demoralization. The authors emphasize the importance of critical thinking as a key factor in forming military personnel's resistance to propaganda. The article proposes a comprehensive approach to countering "enemy" propaganda. It highlights the necessity of adhering to ethical principles when using propaganda, especially in democratic societies, and the importance of balancing between supporting morale and the right to objective information.

Keywords: *propaganda, military personnel, mass consciousness, collective consciousness, influence, information warfare, critical thinking, hybrid conflict, strategic communications.*

Statement of the problem. The hybrid nature of modern warfare is characterized by the integration of traditional military operations with non-military means of influence, including informational, economic, and diplomatic measures. This multifaceted approach significantly complicates efforts to counter aggression and safeguard national interests. In the cognitive domain, information and disinformation, alongside psychological techniques, are employed to shape the perceptions and opinions of populations, officials, military personnel, and other target audiences. These actions are designed to construct a worldview that aligns with the objectives of the propagandist, ultimately motivating target audiences to engage in, or refrain from, specific actions. Propaganda is a powerful weapon of warfare, used by both sides for internal and external audiences, such as to create an image of the enemy, reduce/increase public support for certain actions, and create an impression of threat/security. In the context of the information society and the development of digital technologies, propaganda is gaining new forms and methods of influence, becoming more targeted and adaptive to changes in the information environment. In the context of military operations, propaganda plays a

critical role in shaping the moral and psychological state of military personnel. It can be employed to bolster the morale of one's own forces, undermine the enemy's resolve, and influence the civilian population within the conflict zone. However, the ethical implications of utilizing propaganda must also be considered, particularly in democratic societies, where there is a need to balance national security imperatives with the public's right to access objective information.

The above indicates the relevance of studying the role of propaganda in shaping the mass and collective consciousness of military personnel.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

In recent years, the study of propaganda, disinformation, and fake news has gained significant traction in both academic and public discourse. Propaganda, its types and methods have been the subject of extensive research by scholars internationally [1–4] and in Ukraine [5, 6, 7]. The study of propaganda has gained new momentum in recent years due to the development of digital technologies and the increasing influence of social media. Recent studies examine the mechanisms by which disinformation spreads in online environments [8], the impact of propaganda on

political processes [9], and the development of strategies to counteract information manipulation [10]. Special attention has been given to the role of artificial intelligence in the creation and dissemination of propaganda content [11]. In the military context, researchers analyze the application of propaganda techniques in contemporary hybrid conflicts [12, 13]. Additionally, the psychological mechanisms underlying the perception of propaganda remain a key focus [14, 15], alongside efforts to enhance media literacy as a means of mitigating the influence of propaganda [16]. Overall, modern research adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating methods from psychology, political science, communication studies, and data science to provide a comprehensive analysis of propaganda in the digital era.

Currently, propaganda refers equally to negative disinformation, manipulative and deceptive practices and positive linguistic and psychological practices of communicative influence based on objective facts and contributing to the growth of support (e.g., for support of a healthy lifestyle, etc.).

The purpose of this article is to outline the specificity of propaganda as a factor influencing the formation of mass and collective consciousness among military personnel. In this study, the authors have analyzed contemporary interpretations of the term "propaganda" within the fields of security studies and strategic communications, identified the distinctive features and influential potential of propaganda in shaping both individual and collective consciousness, while also addressing the capabilities of "friendly" and "enemy" propaganda.

Summary of the main material. In this study, propaganda is understood as a systematic effort to manipulate beliefs, attitudes, or actions through the use of symbols and messages [17], particularly through the organized dissemination of information to shape specific views, values, and behavioral patterns. While propaganda based on factual and accurate information serves as a foundation for strategic communications, the term itself was discredited during World War II, becoming synonymous with deception and falsehood [18]. In the context of public administration, propaganda functions as a tool of soft power, as well as information and psychological operations, both in peacetime and wartime, evolving according to situational dynamics. Propaganda is intentional, goal-oriented, and distinguishable from ordinary discourse by its strategic nature. Effective propaganda typically appeals simultaneously to reason, emotion, and morality.

In today's information society, propaganda remains a powerful tool for shaping public consciousness, both mass (on a national and global scale) and collective (within a professional group). Our research demonstrates that the effectiveness of propaganda and its methods vary significantly depending on whether it targets mass or collective consciousness. We will analyse the key differences in approaches to propaganda for these two types of consciousness and examine the factors that influence the effectiveness of propaganda techniques in each case.

Mass consciousness is characterised by the heterogeneity of the audience, lack of direct interaction among its members and a high degree of anonymity. Propaganda targeting mass consciousness employs broad audience outreach through media and social networks. At the same time, propaganda messages are often simplified to the level of easy-to-understand slogans and images, which resonate with a diverse audience, enabling effective influence. A key feature of propaganda aimed at mass consciousness is the emphasis on emotional appeal, often invoking basic emotions such as fear, anger, or enthusiasm, to mobilise the masses. Additionally, key messages are regularly repeated to reinforce them in mass consciousness, and existing social stereotypes are leveraged to quickly shape desired attitudes.

In contrast to mass consciousness, collective consciousness is defined by shared values and beliefs, a strong sense of group identity, and active interaction among group members. Propaganda directed at the formation of collective consciousness is usually more targeted and takes into account the specific characteristics of particular social groups. In the context of collective consciousness, propaganda messages are often built around the key values and norms of the target group, emphasising its uniqueness and distinction from others. Group opinion leaders play a crucial role in spreading propaganda ideas, and crafting a common narrative [19] – which shapes a common understanding of the group's history and future – is a central objective of such propaganda.

A comparative analysis of the effects of propaganda on mass and collective consciousness reveals several significant differences. In particular, the impact on mass consciousness is often more superficial and focused on short-term reactions, while the impact on collective consciousness is usually deeper, aiming at long-term changes in beliefs and behaviour. Concerning the sustainability of the propaganda effect, it is worth noting that in the case of mass consciousness, it can be unstable

and requires constant reinforcement, while in the context of collective consciousness, the effect is often more sustainable due to the integration of propaganda ideas into group identity. The mechanisms of propaganda dissemination also vary. Thus, for mass consciousness, it is mainly media and social networks, but for collective consciousness, it is a combination of media influence and interpersonal communication within the group. Critical analysis is less prevalent in mass consciousness, whereas collective consciousness, although operating within group norms, may exhibit a higher degree of critical thinking. Feedback mechanisms are limited in mass consciousness, while collective consciousness allows for active feedback within the group, facilitating the adaptation of propaganda techniques. The effectiveness of propaganda techniques is heavily influenced by the correct choice of approach, tailored to the characteristics of the target audience. Understanding the differences between mass and collective consciousness is crucial for developing effective propaganda and counter-propaganda strategies.

Propaganda influences the formation of the mass and collective consciousness of military personnel, with important consequences for their behaviour and performance of duties. The propaganda influence on military personnel has its unique characteristics, due to the specifics of the military environment and the psychological characteristics of those performing military service. Let us look at the key factors that determine the effectiveness and mechanisms of propaganda influence in the context of the armed forces, namely: the closed environment of military units, strict hierarchy, and psychological stress associated with the specifics of service.

The closed environment of military units fosters conditions conducive to the formation and dissemination of propaganda messages, as limited access to external sources of information increases the receptivity of military personnel to internal communication channels. In the context of information isolation, military personnel tend to place greater importance on official sources of information, which facilitates the spread of propaganda narratives. The closed environment strengthens strong group ties and identities. This, in turn, enhances the effect of groupthink [20], which can lead to the uncritical acceptance of information aligned with group norms and values.

The military structure is characterised by strict hierarchy and discipline. On the one hand, the clear chain of command ensures effective top-down communication. Soldiers tend to place greater trust to messages from superiors, thereby amplifying the

influence of official propaganda. On the other hand, the culture of obedience and adherence to orders can limit critical thinking, leading to uncritical acceptance of propaganda messages. This can result in lead to the adoption of propaganda narratives without adequate analysis or evaluation.

Military service, often associated with high levels of stress and psychological strain, increases susceptibility to emotionally charged messages, as people tend to trust information that appeals to emotions more in times of increased stress, which is often used in propaganda techniques. Psychological strain may create a need for simple and clear explanations of complex situations. This phenomenon, known as "cognitive closure" [21], can facilitate the acceptance of simplified propaganda narratives offering straightforward and unambiguous explanations.

This study also examines the distinction between "friendly" and "enemy" propaganda.

"Friendly" propaganda, aimed at boosting the morale and motivation of military personnel to perform their tasks and defend the country, highlights the achievements of the armed forces, the military's role in national defence, the stories of war heroes, and other events designed to strengthen morale. "Friendly" propaganda emphasizes achievements in scientific and technical spheres, developments of social and cultural infrastructures, and improvement of living standards, which can contribute to the creation of a positive image of the country and its military. Propaganda is a powerful tool that can be used to motivate the military and shape their perceptions of the enemy. However, its use requires a delicate balance and adherence to ethical principles. Overuse or unethical application of propaganda can have adverse effects, undermining military morale, fostering distrust in government and deepening societal divisions.

To achieve its objectives in the military environment, "friendly" propaganda employs a number of methods such as ideological training, patriotic education, the formation of the enemy's image, and the glorification of military service. Ideological training aligns the worldview of military personnel with the state's official ideology and military doctrine. Patriotic education focuses on fostering loyalty to the country and readiness to defend its interests, and involves studying the country's history, military traditions, and heroic deeds of the past. The creation of the enemy's image stereotypes and dehumanizes the adversary. The glorification of military service enhances the prestige of the military profession and forms a

positive image of a serviceman, which is implemented through the promotion of military exploits, honouring heroes, and creating a positive image of the military in the media.

It is important to note that the excessive or unethical use of propaganda techniques can have negative consequences for both individual soldiers and the armed forces as a whole. Propaganda must be grounded on true facts and real events, avoiding fabrication or distortion. It should appeal to patriotic feelings, unity and defence of the homeland, without inciting hatred towards individuals or groups based on their nationality, race, religion or other characteristics. Furthermore, democratic freedoms, such as access to diverse information sources, freedom of expression, and the right to criticism, must be protected. Propaganda should not be used as a tool to suppress dissent or total control of the information space.

"Enemy" propaganda has emerged as a powerful tool of hybrid warfare in the modern information space. This study outlines the key characteristics of "enemy" propaganda, its methods, impact on military personnel and strategies for counteracting it.

"Enemy" propaganda is marked by its deliberate, systematic, adaptable, and multimedia nature. Propaganda campaigns have clearly defined goals and target audiences, are continuous and consistent, creating a cumulative effect, and adjust swiftly to changes in the military-political situation. Various communication channels – such as social networks, radio, and television – are used to maintain relevance and effectiveness. Common methods of "enemy" propaganda include disinformation, psychological pressure, undermining confidence in the command, exploitation of internal contradictions and the promotion of surrender. Disinformation is the dissemination of false or distorted information with the intent to mislead. This may include fabricating news of military defeats, exaggerating the strength of one's troops, or spreading rumours of command betrayal. Psychological pressure is exerted by creating an atmosphere of fear and hopelessness among military personnel. Methods include intimidation with inevitable defeat, emphasis on the difficulties of military life, and appeals to family guilt. Confidence in the command is undermined by attempts to destroy the vertical of power by spreading information about corruption among the leadership, highlighting command mistakes, and provoking conflicts between different levels of the military hierarchy. Exploitation of internal contradictions is the use of existing social, ethnic or

political differences to create divisions. This includes emphasising inequalities in the treatment of different groups of military personnel or provoking inter-ethnic conflict. The promotion of surrender attempts to convince military personnel to lay down arms by promising humane treatment or favourable conditions in captivity.

The impact of "enemy" propaganda on military personnel can be classified into four main categories according to the effects it produces – psychological, cognitive, behavioural, and social. The psychological effects include a decrease in morale and motivation, an increase in anxiety and stress, and a sense of hopelessness. Cognitive effects are seen in the deterioration of critical thinking skills, reduced trust in official sources of information, and the formation of a distorted picture of reality. Behavioural effects are associated with diminishing combat effectiveness, increased likelihood of desertion or surrender, and disrupted discipline and subordination. Social effects are a manifestation of the weakening of military unit cohesion, exacerbation of internal conflicts, and a decrease in trust between military personnel and commanders.

In this sense, it is important to build the resistance of servicemen to "enemy" propaganda, in particular through the development of critical thinking, which includes the ability to analyse, evaluate and compare various sources of information to understand the essence of events and phenomena. In order to effectively counteract "enemy" propaganda, it is necessary to apply a comprehensive approach that includes information security (restricting access to hostile information resources, monitoring and blocking channels for the dissemination of "enemy" propaganda), media literacy (teaching servicemen to critically analyse information, developing skills to identify fake news and manipulations), counter-propaganda (prompt refutation of "enemy" disinformation, proactive dissemination of truthful information), psychological support (providing access to psychological assistance, carrying out measures to support morale) and strengthening internal communication (improving information exchange between different levels of the military hierarchy, ensuring transparency in the activities of the command).

Critical thinking is key to identifying propaganda's objectives and making informed decisions based on objective and complete information. Since propaganda, both "friendly" and "enemy", uses the same mechanisms to influence the hearts and minds of people, including military personnel, critical thinking sets filters for both types

of propaganda, and thus, the resistance to propaganda formed in the minds of military personnel offsets the impact of propaganda methods, even if they are used to promote state and/or institutional strategic narratives.

Conclusions

Propaganda remains a potent tool for influencing public opinion, especially in the context of modern hybrid conflicts. Its objectives extend beyond military victory, aiming at a comprehensive destabilization of society and the erosion of trust in state institutions.

In the military environment, propaganda exhibits distinctive characteristics due to the specific nature of this environment. Key influencing factors include the closed environment of military units, the rigid hierarchy and discipline, and the psychological pressure associated with military service. Methods of military propaganda include ideological training, patriotic education, formation of the image of the enemy, and the glorification of military service. The efficacy of these methods is contingent on the context in which they are applied and the characteristics of the target audience. Propaganda can have both positive and negative consequences for military personnel. On the one hand, it increases combat readiness, strengthens loyalty to the command, and supports morale. On the other hand, its excessive use can limit critical thinking, lead to the dehumanisation of the enemy and cause psychological difficulties during the return to civilian life. The ethical considerations of using propaganda in a military environment include the need to balance the need to maintain morale with the right to objective information, the responsibility of the command for the content of propaganda, and the potential negative consequences of excessive exposure to propaganda messages.

"Enemy" propaganda represents a significant threat to the morale and operational capability of military forces. It is characterized by deliberate, systematic, and adaptable campaigns delivered through multimedia platforms. The main methods include disinformation, psychological pressure, undermining confidence in command, exploiting internal divisions, and promoting surrender. The impact of "enemy" propaganda on military personnel can have psychological, cognitive, behavioural, and social effects that negatively affect the combat capability and cohesion of military units. Effective counteraction to enemy propaganda requires a comprehensive approach that includes

information security, media literacy, counter-propaganda, psychological support, and strengthening internal communication. Critical thinking is a key factor in building the resistance of military personnel to propaganda, both "enemy" and "friendly".

It is important to note that the use of propaganda should be limited and carried out in accordance with the principles of democracy, freedom of opinion and respect for human rights. Propaganda by the state and law enforcement agencies should be based on factual and accurate information. This is particularly important for maintaining morale, readiness for combat and supporting strategic narratives.

The study of propaganda as a factor shaping the mass and collective consciousness of military personnel underscores the complexity and multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. Ongoing research and adaptation of propaganda strategies are essential, both for leveraging propaganda for one's own strategic purposes and for countering "enemy" propaganda. The critical challenge lies in balancing the need to bolster morale with the preservation of ethical standards and the cultivation of critical thinking among military personnel. This research remains particularly pertinent in the context of contemporary information warfare and hybrid conflicts, where propaganda plays an increasingly central role.

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ПРОПАГАНДА ЯК ФАКТОР ВПЛИВУ НА ФОРМУВАННЯ МАСОВОЇ ТА КОЛЕКТИВНОЇ СВІДОМОСТІ ВІЙСЬКОВОСЛУЖБОВЦІВ

Наведено результати дослідження ролі пропаганди у формуванні масової та колективної свідомості військовослужбовців. Розглянуто поняття пропаганди як систематичного зусилля з маніпулювання віруваннями, ставленнями та діями людей за допомогою символів і повідомлень. Виділено ключові відмінності у впливі пропаганди на масову та колективну свідомість. Вплив на масову свідомість часто має більш поверхневий характер і орієнтований на короткострокові реакції, тоді як вплив на колективну свідомість зазвичай глибший і спрямований на довгострокові зміни в переконаннях та поведінці. Особливу увагу приділено специфіці пропагандистського впливу у військовому середовищі, яка зумовлена такими факторами, як замкнене середовище військових частин, суворі ієрархія та психологічне напруження, пов'язане зі специфікою служби. Проаналізовано методи «своєї» пропаганди, спрямованої на підвищення морального духу військовослужбовців, та «ворожої» пропаганди, яка має на меті дестабілізацію і деморалізацію. Методи «своєї» військової пропаганди охоплюють ідеологічну підготовку, патріотичне виховання, формування образу ворога та героїзацію військової служби, причому ефективність цих методів залежить від контексту застосування та особливостей цільової аудиторії. «Ворожа» пропаганда характеризується цілеспрямованістю, систематичністю, адаптивністю та мультимедійністю. Основні методи містять дезінформацію, психологічний тиск, підриг довіри до командування, експлуатацію внутрішніх суперечностей та пропаганду капітуляції, при цьому вплив «ворожої» пропаганди на військовослужбовців може мати психологічні, когнітивні, поведінкові та соціальні ефекти, які негативно позначаються на боєздатності і згуртованості військових підрозділів. Авторки підкреслюють важливість критичного мислення як ключового фактора у формуванні резистентності військовослужбовців до пропаганди, оскільки критичне мислення допомагає визначити цілі пропаганди та робити свідомі висновки на основі об'єктивної інформації.

У статті запропоновано комплексний підхід до протидії «ворожій» пропаганді, який містить заходи з інформаційної безпеки, медіаграмотності, контрпропаганди, психологічної підтримки та зміцнення внутрішньої комунікації. Наголошено на необхідності дотримання етичних принципів під час використання пропаганди, особливо в демократичних суспільствах, а також на важливості балансу між підтримкою бойового духу та правом на об'єктивну інформацію.

Ключові слова: пропаганда, військовослужбовець, масова свідомість, колективна свідомість, вплив, інформаційна війна, критичне мислення, гібридний конфлікт, стратегічні комунікації.

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