

Vira Haponenko

Doctor of Political Science, Associate Professor,
Head of the Political Technologies Department,
Kyiv National Economic University Named After Vadym Hetman
haponenko.vira@kneu.edu.ua
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1004-3165>

INSTITUTIONAL COUNTERACTION TO INFORMATIONAL WARFARE IN UKRAINE

Abstract.

The article analyzes the peculiarities of Ukrainian institutional system connected with informational policy, its opportunities and weakness in counteraction to informational war.

The importance of the topic is based on the great hidden influence of propaganda on military actions in Ukraine by changing people's values and minds.

The main discussed topics are evolution of the informational policy institutions, their development, effectiveness and weaknesses in counteraction to informational warfare. In general, the threats to informational safety are lack of preventive measures, insufficient attention to civic education, development of patriotism, active citizenship, democratic values and principles.

As a conclusion, the author proposes a wide understanding of the institutional system of counteraction to informational war. In particular, it should include state and civil institutions of decommunization, cultural memories, Ukrainian language and traditions popularization.

Keywords: *political institute, public opinion, state informational war, propaganda, information security, information policy.*

Statement of the problem in a general form and its connection with important scientific or practical tasks. Informational pressure, propaganda, and disinformation is one of the greatest part of current Russian military aggression. It has taken place for centuries, preparing the background of colonial policy under many nations, Ukrainians in particular. It has created so strong stereotypes around the World that they couldn't be broken even because of modern transparency of information, digital technologies or good sense. The danger of informational war is its latent hidden form. A great amount of people believe in nonsense myths which is profitable for the ruling group. Untruth became a part of public consciousness and mind.

As a state policy informational war has its own institutional design. In modern society the institutional war is not only a dependent media but also all institutions which support authoritarian regime (education, science, culture etc.).

Today's informational unsafety in Ukraine is a result of imperial policy and rhetoric both historical and modern. Political institute is a system of rules and sustainable relations. That's why our government should create as strong system of institution as it necessary to resist enemy's influences.

The goals and objectives of the article. In this article we are going to find out main clusters of institutional counteraction to the informational war. For achieving this goal the evolution of informational policy institutes should be analyzed first.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The theory of informational warfare have a long history of research. We can mention works of M. Taddeo (Taddeo,2020), D. Bolton (Bolton, 2021), M. Libicki (Libicki, 2020). They gave modern definition of main article's terms.

The counteraction to Russian propaganda became rather popular topic in whole world. Foreign researches like N. Jankowicz (Jankowicz, 2020), Information Wars in the Baltic States (Information, 2022) are very interesting because they helpful for compare with domestic studies.

The results of Ukrainian researches made by N. Galipchak (Galipchak, 2022), T. Koroluk (Koroluk, 2023) are rather close to article's subjects. They can fulfill our discussion. There are also modern Ukrainian monographs which pay attention to the role of communicative aspects during the military aggression: B. Parahonskiy and G. Yavorska (Parahonskiy, 2019), I. Semenets-Orlova (Fundamentalni..., 2023), Ja. Vermenych (Vermenych, 2023).

Highlighting previously unresolved parts of the general problem, to which the article is devoted. Despite a great number of previous researches there are some unresolved questions, in particular: how to make counteraction to informational war permanent and effective, how to transform it to institutional form.

Results and discussions.

The evolution of institutes' informational policy in Ukraine.

In 1991 after the declaration of independence Ukrainian government received the opportunity to create and develop its informational space by passing judicial documents and establishing new institutions.

These processes were primarily aimed at:

- eradicating the worldview post-colonial dependence of the Ukrainian people;
- building a foundation for democratic values and European identity;
- providing protected information environment;

- preventing further imposition of the inferiority complex of Ukrainians.

A set of regulatory and legal documents was successfully developed to achieve these aims, and the organizational structuring of institutions regulating information policy took place. *The first stage* of the institutionalization of the information environment includes the development of the foundations for the information sector.

The regulatory basis for the institutions of information environment comprises:

- The Constitution of Ukraine, which guarantees the right to freedom of speech, free expression of one's thoughts, views and beliefs, arbitrary use and dissemination of oral and written information (Konstytutsia).

- The Law of Ukraine «On Information» which regulates information circulation, defines the main information concepts, establishes the principles of relationships in information sector, such as the right to openness, accessibility, reliability, completeness of information, respect for the preservation and protection of personal information, information security (Zakon).

- Laws of Ukraine «On Printed Mass Media (Press) in Ukraine», «On Television and Radio Broadcasting», «On State Support of Mass Media and Social Protection of Journalists», «On the National Informatization Program», «On Information Agencies», «On Electronic Documents and Electronic Document Circulation», «On Scientific and Technical Information», «On Communication» which regulate separate areas of mass media functioning.

In general, the legislative system of Ukraine affirms the equality of relationships in information sector, the principles of media democratization, the openness of various branches of social life, the principles of the information policy of the state aimed at equal interaction between society and the government. It recognizes the role of new information technologies in ensuring economic, social and political development.

At this stage, a system of non-state institutions of the information environment is developed. Of course, mass media occupy a special place among them. As an institution of democracy, it promotes the implementation of the principle of openness and transparency of the political system, provides opportunities for monitoring the activities of the authorities. The organizational system of mass media includes various means and channels of information transmission as well as the leading state body, the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting.

At the same time, some contradictions of the institutionalization of the information environment were not resolved at the first stage, in particular:

- No precautions were taken against the transformation of mass media into a tool of state propaganda and manipulation of public opinion. The possibilities of imposing far-fetched, artificially fabricated problems through mass media, speculating on national feelings, etc., which leads to confrontation, polarization of society, and the growth of conflict potential are particularly threatening (Couldry, 2003). That is, the principle of freedom of the press must be combined with legally approved restrictions on the disclosure of state secrets, dissemination of anti-state and separatist ideas, violations of moral norms and the ethical code of journalists, insults to the honor and dignity of any person or group. Unfortunately, these risks were not taken into account at the initial stage of the state building.

- The trend of mass media commercialization, insufficient attention to ensuring economic independence of mass media, the absence of independent alternative sources of funding, which would make it possible to value the rating and authority of one's media channel more than the remuneration from interested parties. Ukrainian mass media often belong to certain business or political groups. They compete with each other in the information environment, ensuring the diversity of information sources, but not contributing to the legitimacy of the mass media institution in society. The content of informational messages is dictated by the motive of making a profit and increasing the rating of the channel. Mass media do not cover socially significant issues, do not perform an educational function and do not promote effective communication between state authorities and the public.

- Destructive influence of the media on the consciousness of citizens due to the enhanced role of governmental informational resources under the conditions of a low level of political culture. Journalists and intellectuals usually have a high level of support in society. Unfortunately, they may represent the interests of a narrow group of people. According to N. Couldry, media power can be defined as the concentration of the symbolic ability to «construct reality» (both actual representations and credible fictions) in media institutions (Coldry, 2003). Today, it is a common practice to write commissioned articles, TV broadcasts, disseminate false information or fake news, distort and suppress true information at the initiative of sponsors of specific information channels.

- Unregulated functioning of international information systems and institutions in Ukraine within the framework of mass media

globalization. The absence of borders in the dissemination of information, unified standards of behavior can give positive results when it comes to the exchange of experience regarding democratization in various spheres of public life, openness and transparency of information, accessibility to broad segments of the population. However, there is a negative risk of hostile informational influences, the control over the media environment by several powerful transnational corporations, which makes it possible to give a one-sided or biased coverage of information.

- Non-regulated activities of online mass media.

Therefore, the development of institutions in information environment urgently needed the formalization of the communication rules, compliance with the requirements of journalistic ethics, the definition of the confidentiality of information, and various types of secrecy.

We associate *the second stage* with the growth of information threats and the need to adapt the information environment to hybrid warfare. The most important achievements of this stage are:

- The development of public radio and television projects, public broadcasting. For example, in 2013, an independent channel «Public Television» of the National Public Television and Radio Company of Ukraine was established. It is financed by the State Budget of Ukraine and by means of commercial revenues, but state bodies do not have the right to interfere with the policy of the company. According to the law, its tasks include comprehensive and impartial dissemination of information about socially significant events in Ukraine and beyond; consolidation and integration of Ukrainian society; promotion of the Ukrainian language and culture, as well as national minorities; satisfaction of informational, cultural and educational needs of the population; encouraging the strengthening of Ukraine's international authority (Zakon).

- Functioning of public institutions in the information sector (Union of Journalists of Ukraine, «Committee for the Protection of Press Freedom», Union of Ukrainian Journalists «Independence»). We believe that their main task is to ensure the value norms for the functioning of mass media. It can be achieved by monitoring the effectiveness of guarantees of press freedom, compliance with journalistic ethics, and publicizing the facts of pressure on mass media by the authorities or certain political forces.

- «Ukrainization» of domestic media. In 2019, the Law of Ukraine «On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as an Official Language» was finally adopted. It regulates the use of the Ukrainian

language in various public spheres (Articles 20–42). The activities of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council were focused on providing 77% of Ukrainian television content on national TV channels (the content of the EU, the USA and Canada makes 19%), reducing the share of Russian content to a historic minimum of 4%. In general, in 2019, the share of the Ukrainian language on the air of national TV channels comprised 94% (Rezultaty).

- Developing of a state-building national idea, strengthening of national identity. Military events united the people of Ukraine and disproved many myths about the differentiation of society.

At the same time, the institutional system responded slowly and inconsistently to challenges concerning:

- Ensuring information security, in particular countering disinformation about military operations in Donbas. State institutions acted «on the run», overcoming the consequences of the lack of preventive measures to ensure information security. In 2014, the issues of developing cyber security standards, state policy regarding countermeasures against information aggression of foreign states, determination of the mechanism of counteracting negative informational and psychological influence, protection of journalists working in places of armed conflicts and terrorist acts became especially acute.

During 2014–2019, the broadcasting of 86 foreign TV channels on the territory of Ukraine, of which 74 are of direct Russian origin, was restricted (Rezultaty...). The Information Security Strategy was adopted only in 2021 (Strategija...). However, even today, preventing the spread of unverified, incomplete, biased, unreliable information, populism, etc. with the aim of manipulating public opinion, political rhetoric, increasing the ratings of certain political forces are still the unsolved tasks in ensuring information security. Instead, new tasks arise, for example, the spread of European values for successful integration into the EU, development of the ideology of peace and statehood of Ukraine in the post-war period.

- Ensuring the competitiveness of Ukrainian mass media, their ability to provide quality content for consumers, which will increase the level of trust in this institution.

- Using mass media potential for informational and explanatory work, raising the political and legal culture of the population. Thus, in the conditions of a military conflict, a system of information assistance to affected people regarding the possibility of protecting their rights should work more effectively. Ukrainian translation of the conclusions of the UN on the events in the East of Ukraine and other international

documents on the protection of rights should be provided. Besides, information should be disseminated not only through electronic media, because people, who were forced to leave their place of residence, do not always have access to the Internet.

In general, we agree with the opinion that in Ukraine, the methods of direct pressure on mass media by the government (when instructions were given from state authority to press and media) yield to a negative informational and psychological influence on the Ukrainian audience by means of using reality construction technology that controls how events are covered (Kostetska, 2017).

We are observing *the third stage* of institutionalization of Ukrainian information environment after the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation. During this period, crisis communication with the public through mass media became a priority task. Objectively, this entailed the narrowing of freedom of the press.

The new communication rules were characterized by:

- regularity of notifications from the authorities. According to the classic principles of crisis communication, information messages from the top state officials are made public every day, and in critical situations — immediately, with constant clarification of data. In addition, mass media must contribute to the reduction of tension and conflict in society by discussing passive forms of protest and monitoring public sentiments (slacktivism, blockchain).

- revitalization of international communication, that is implementation of public diplomacy at all levels.

- increasing the audience of electronic mass media which have become widespread because they are perceived as environment for the expression of various opinions and views, including oppositional ones, free from censorship. Users view online media as a «mouthpiece» of public opinion due to easy mechanisms for providing feedback from the public through user comments, various polls and surveys.

We agree with the statement that online communication between the community and the government provides the only opportunity today to quickly and affordably clarify the expediency of major political decisions, to provide effective feedback from society to the government when discussing proposals and analyzing the results of governmental decisions. Online mass media, L. Kochubey rightly observes, create opportunities for more informative participation of citizens in the political life of Ukraine, reinforce the phenomenon of transparency, openness of activity and responsibility of power structures, strengthen channels of interactive communication between citizens (Kochubej, 2017).

However, the weakness of social networks is the lack of liability for spreading false, unverified information or even outright fakes, which can be too dangerous in wartime.

In general, the functioning of political institutions in the information sector requires further regulation of information security guarantees, compliance with journalistic ethics, the availability and equality of various information channels and sources of financing their activities, taking into account the trends of mass media globalization and using positive potential of online media.

The system of institutional countermeasures against information warfare.

Of course, supreme authorities are involved in ensuring information security. The President of Ukraine is the spokesperson and symbol of our state in international relations and at the national level. Unfortunately, in the history of Ukraine, there were cases when the head of the state not only underestimated the communication aspect of politics, but also openly damaged the image of Ukraine, finding himself at the center of scandals.

The Verkhovna Rada is the highest public institution that enacts laws, particularly in the field of information security. However, the work of the parliament in this area is not very fruitful. The issue of regulating the information sector was raised in January 1997, when possible threats in the information sector were identified and the need to minimize unauthorized interference with the Ukrainian information environment was declared («National Security Strategy of Ukraine»). Besides, information policy was discussed at parliamentary hearings in 1999 and 2001 on «Information policy of Ukraine: the state and prospects» and «Problems of information activity, freedom of speech, compliance with the law and the state of information security of Ukraine», but their conclusions were not implemented in practice.

The activities of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine contribute to countering information warfare.

The activity of public relations services within central and local authorities also plays an important role in countering disinformation. With the development of decentralization processes, connections with local self-government bodies are gaining special importance.

The National Security and Defense Council belongs to the system of state institutions designed to ensure information security. However, the Information and Analytical Center was created at the National Security and Defense Council only in 2014. The Center for Countering Disinformation also functions in its structure, an entity established in accordance with the decision of the National Security and Defense

Council of Ukraine dated March 11, 2021 «On the establishment of the Center for Countering Disinformation» and put into effect by the Decree of the President of Ukraine # 106 of March 19, 2021.

Recent events in Ukraine make us take a broader look at the institutional opposition to information warfare. Many factors in the development of information environment were considered secondary. They include a language issue, the formation of historical memory, and decommunization. To overcome this contradiction, a system of relevant institutions is being formed. These institutions are not only to regulate the activities of mass media. In a broad context, they are related to scientific, educational, linguistic and cultural spheres, as well as the policy of decommunization, etc.

Institutions that contribute to the development of the Ukrainian language. According to the law on promoting the functioning of the Ukrainian language, the position of the Commissioner for the Protection of the Official Language was created. Their duties include protecting the right of Ukrainian citizens to receive information and services in different spheres of public life in the official language, removing obstacles and restrictions in using the official language. To fulfil their obligations, the Commissioner submits proposals to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine to ensure the effective implementation of the relevant state policy, comprehensive development of the official language in different spheres of public life, and assistance in meeting the language needs of Ukrainians living outside Ukraine. They also monitor the implementation of legislation on the official language and state target programs; consider citizens' complaints regarding compliance with the requirements of the legislation on the official language; conduct official investigations and bring to disciplinary liability officials who violate the legislation on the official language; annually publicly report on their activities.

Despite the recognition of the Ukrainian language as the only official language, no punishment was foreseen for the use of the Russian language at the level of officials and high-ranking officials, in the field of business and service. In addition, no measures were taken to increase the prestige of the Ukrainian language, to eradicate the imposed imperial and Soviet stereotype about its «unfashionability». No state programs were administered for the public to learn the Ukrainian language. Citizens had the opportunity to learn the official language only on personal initiative, at their own expense. However, since the knowledge of the Ukrainian language is not mandatory for everyday life and employment (in contrast to English), there are few people willing to learn it.

As of 2023, there are 473 free Ukrainian language courses in Ukraine, including 13 regional programs (Kremin, 2023).

Institutions for the policy of decommunization.

An important stage in the process of institutionalizing the information sector of Ukraine was the adoption of the Law of Ukraine «On Purification of Power» (2014), which has regulated the process of lustration aimed at establishing democracy, the rule of law and human rights in Ukraine. Another law was adopted in 2015 «On Condemnation of Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and the Prohibition of Propaganda of their Symbols».

The activities of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance were significantly intensified in order to implement the tasks defined in the laws regarding the implementation of decommunization. Its aim is to provide a comprehensive professional evaluation of the theory and practice of communism in the history of Ukraine during the 20th century, organize events and analyze citizens' appeals concerning decolonization, refutation of historical fakes, etc.

One of the elements of decommunization is the renaming of cities, towns, streets, establishments and educational institutions after world-famous Ukrainians, including ATO heroes, writers, politicians, scientists, and musicians.

Conclusions.

From the beginning of 90s Ukrainian society created all official (governmental and civil) institutes for counteraction to informational war. All the media have equal rights to provide their activities. This is the reason for decrease in quantity and influence of Russian media and separatist's or aggressive rhetoric.

At the same time public and regional media need financial and other support. Many measurements were too weak to form social values and too late to escape from propaganda destructive influence. Unfortunately for a long time there were no studies on democratic and patriotic values, civil participation. There was no monitoring of fake sources. Finally, according to polls, many Ukrainians believed in Russian myths and some leaders share them in different kind of communications. In edition state institutes paid very little attention to Ukraine's image, sharing information about real Ukrainian history, culture, traditions, modern achievements in economic, science and other areas.

Each year Russian fakes and narratives increase in Ukraine and World. For minimize such problem in future the counteraction should be permanent and systematic. The effective system of informational monitoring should be created by Parliament Comity to avoid manipulations, hate and aggressive speech, ethnic and ideological

intolerance. The professional ethic of journalist, media workers should be developed to sharing only truth and checked information. Educational institutions should support civil and political studies to create open public space and strong civil society. Public organizations can influence on creation systematic program of life-long civil education.

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