

Andrii Kyrychok

PhD (Social communications),
National Technical University of Ukraine
"Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute",
Senior Lecturer
Kyiv, Ukraine
akyrychok@ukr.net

THE ASPECTS OF CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH AS A FACTOR IN THE EFFECTIVE COUNTERACTION TO HYBRID WARFARE

Abstract. Today Ukraine is in a condition of hybrid warfare. Direct hostilities pale into insignificance. They are replaced by indirect, political, economic and informational leverages. Informational aspect of hybrid warfare is extremely important because the victory of a party in a big way depends on it. It is particularly difficult to confront this type of aggression, but possible. That is why, crisis communications are intended to assist in this. Since crisis communications are aimed to counteract information aggression, this type of activity has a lot of problems associated with the opposition to information aggression. This article divides these problems into problems of exactly crisis communications, issues arising in the information war and the problems of reputation formation, as the original factor, which suffers as a result of informational influence on him.

Keywords: crisis communication, hybrid warfare, informational war, communication defense

Formulas: 0, fig.: 0, tab.: 0, ref.: 17

Introduction. Crisis communication is one of the disciplines that fall within the scope of public relations. Accordingly, a significant number of problems are common in nature. The most significant problem that occurs during a crisis is a problem of professional ethics. It lies in the fact that the public relations specialist is intended to solve problems caused by crisis where a parallel conflict between the objective and ethical component, in achieving the desired result, arise.

The aim of the article is to analyse the main problems in the field of crisis response to hybrid threats.

Analysis of the investigations. We consider it appropriate to synthesise the problems in the field of crisis communication. In our opinion, the most global problems in the informational war are the issues of truth, credibility and transparency in the information environment. In other words – it is a problem of ethical component. Ethical component, as a rule, is determined by the following factors: behavioural morality; social responsibility; financial standing of the protected company. In the event of a national scale of the crisis – it is an economic situation in the country.

The problem of ethic component has its dualism. On the one hand, each PR-specialist should be responsible and follow his own ethical standards. On the other – the ethical problem also applies to the participants of the crisis. First of all it concerns the party who commits the information aggression [Chaplygina].

Traditionally, the discussion of the professional status in public relations always involves the problem of ethical activity of PR-specialists. Although, since its independence Ukraine have already formed a certain cohort of professionals, theoreticians and practitioners in the field of PR, and the discussion of this problem, as a rule, is limited to discussion of a particular situation [Fajnshtid 2013].

The scientist A. Cutler from the California University of Design and Communications analysed the methodological problems in the field of public relations and crisis communications in particular. He noted that a major problem is that scientists nowadays devote very little attention to research methodology in communication and to the searches for new appropriate solutions for receiving more reliable data. The scientist draws such conclusion relying on the analysis of publications in the most prominent branch journals "Journal of Public Relations Research" and "Public Relations Review" [Cutler 2004]. Other scientists L. Morton and L. Lin from the University of Queensland in their investigations confirmed the conclusions of A. Cutler. The researchers have published scientific material, which demonstrated data analysis, which was conducted by them in the period from 1975 to 1992 and involved studying of the content of publications specialized in public relations. Scientists have estimated that the number of qualitative researches prevailed over quantitative researches in about 20% [Morton 1995].

A. Cutler also indicated that a significant number of problems in the field of public relations and crisis communications are associated with inefficient use of practical analysis [Cutler 2004]. The biggest problem for scientists is that in more than half cases, where researchers were using practical analysis, they could not separate out the most effective method of problem investigation.

Another significant problem is the imbalance between theory and science and practical component. During the analysis of research in the field of crisis communications A. Cutler concludes that most scientists conduct their studies not properly. According to A. Cutler, some of them possess theory of poor quality, some hypothesize improperly. Most studies repeat each other, even using the same material.

Scientists D. Gilpin and P. Murphy from the University of Denver assume it a problem that many studies consider crisis communications only as a communication process or process of image and reputation restoration. This approach, in their view, ignores the huge number of other problems in the field of crisis communications. They also say that the crisis management experts often use the communicative aspect in the shape of management of subordinates. However, without focusing on the purpose of crisis process and crisis coping D. Gilpin and P. Murphy claim that anti-crisis experts often act in the context of uncertainty, adaptability and improvisation, which increases the risk of crisis aggravation. In their opinion, the most effective approach is the activity aimed to certainty, goal orientation and control over the process [Gilpin, Murphy 2008].

Mitroff I. believes that a significant problem lies in the reluctance of the company to analyse its mistakes and reasons of the crisis. He associates these with the fact that people are afraid of responsibility for the crisis and therefore do not want to analyse the reasons, not to reveal that the blame rests with them. However, the scientist stresses on the need for such analysis. He describes it as the process of creation of anti-crisis team, which would be engaged in a kind of "anti-crisis literacy" [Mitroff 1996]. This team should

consist of employees of all departments and should analyse the causes of failure to overcome the crisis, considering internal and external factors. Management, in turn, should monitor whether these standards are carried out, what kind of climate prevails in the team and whether the ones who organized the process of overcoming of post-crisis syndrome in the company were awarded.

Research results. Analysing the problem of country's reputation generation, being a component of effective anti-crisis communication formation, the following aspects should be pointed out.

The first is the problem of fragmentariness of public communication policy. This applies both to communication strategy of the country and to legal enactments that reinforce this strategy. The authorities, who are designated to develop the reputation of our country only in certain aspects, perform their functions that is reflected on the quality of formation of Ukraine`s reputation. Here we also include the lack of comprehensive program to create the reputation of Ukraine and ineffective communication between government agencies and the public.

A significant problem is the low level of mutual understanding with the mass media in the promotion of state reputation. It is general practice, that different media defend different notions. In order to build a national strategy of image promotion we should act consistently, which is not yet possible because of the crisis in all spheres of state management and public life [Hlushhenko 2016].

Another problem is the lack of a clear reputation of Ukraine as a state. A large proportion of people still associate Ukraine as part of Russia. This number of people is becoming smaller due to the changes taking place in our country since the early 2000s. But at the same time, this problem exists and one of the goals in the formation of national reputation should be positioning of Ukraine as a strong and independent state, which under no circumstances is a part of Russia [Shtefano 2014].

A significant problem is also the presence of Ukraine in the informational space. We believe that this problem can be attributed not only to the state but also to the problems of Ukrainian society as well. The strategy of formation of national reputation and presence in the global informational space should be elaborated by joint efforts of the public and the state [Shnajder].

The fifth problem is the low efficiency of Ukraine in communicative counteraction to hybrid aggression from Russia. With more powerful battery of communication tools, including agents of influence and lobbyists, Russia spreads advantageous information about Ukraine, as the "Failed state" – a country that did not happen. In addition, Russia distributes any other beneficial information not feeling much resistance on the part of Ukraine.

In the context of the review of the problems of research in the field of crisis communications we consider it appropriate to examine the problems of research of information war as a component of effective crisis response in hybrid warfare.

An important problem is an issue of bringing our own ideas by means of national informational product. Here we have quite disappointing statistics. For example Russia, which generates its own content in most instances borrows western model through movies, music and so on. Percentage rating of film product in Russia is 15% against 85% in favour of American cinema [Pochepcov 2015].

We believe that it is necessary to focus on another category of film product – TV series. There is a problem of borrowing of this type of content from Russia. It is significant that 87% of content of “Ukraine” channel comprises of Russian and Russian-speaking series [Pocheptsov 2015]. And this is not the whole list of problems associated with the national crisis in the information space.

We can identify such reasons of informational crisis in Ukraine. First of all it is a high political bias of Ukrainian information space from other countries, especially Russia. There are so-called “blind spots” in the information space as a lack of sufficient intellectual, children's and educational content. Information space is very poorly protected, that is why the crisis situation arose. We also tend to accept others' values and ideas and they dominate over our own [Pocheptsov 2015].

According to H. Pocheptsov “information war – is a constantly changing subject through its active use in military or civilian environment. This dynamic complicates the analysis and synthesis in this area” [Pocheptsov 2015]. Here is an example of the differences that exist today in the interpretation of the concept “information warfare.” For the first, various state institutions may use different definitions of one and the same concept depending on the specifics of their activities. For example one may use the term “public diplomacy” another uses “information war.” This leads to the fact that scientists may not pay attention to some aspects of the problem.

For the second, the field of military affairs undergoes changes. For example, the term “information warfare” is often replaced by “information operations”. According to experts this happens because the term “information warfare” can be used only during the war, while the term “information operation” may be used persistently.

Pocheptsov H. also spoke about the issue of perception of the term “information warfare”. The publicity usually associates this term with external actions forgetting that the information war can be purely internal. As an example, let us remember political information war, aimed at discrediting of opponents in order to raise their rating.

For the fourth, nowadays, the use of the information component in the war increasingly prevails over direct military action, leaving the principle of physical destruction behind and preferring moral oppression of the enemy. The military concluded that the majority of direct military tasks can be performed with the information component. This encourages creating separate departments to conduct information operations.

For the fifth, scientist F. Luntz predicts that in the future mankind will be no more interested in the news as such. In fact, a new information space will appear. Scientists predict future world, as a world without news, because the next generations will no longer be interested in the news. [Luntz 2009] In our opinion, such situation is indeed possible, but in the period of escalation and powerful crisis this interest will reappear.

For the sixth, information wars are increasingly forced to change the format in which they influence on society. More and more often, we can see the way influence occurs in an entertaining format, in various humoristic programs. This happens because it is the only opportunity to reach to some target groups. Experts call this format “soft news”, so they differ from the format “hard news” that is presented in the standard information programs [Baum 2003].

For the seventh, in the future, information submission will take place in

other formats. British scientist N. Davis speaks about one of the following formats: "Journalism without journalists is becoming a new phenomenon of the information space, to which few people pay attention. And this is not a social media, but the process of filling of modern newspaper with content. It turns out that 60-70% of the materials are created without the participation of journalists. This includes such well-known British newspapers like Times or Guardian" [Davies 2003]. Nowadays these changes have already begun. Self-taught bloggers and amateur news sites are becoming more popular and replace the classic online journalism.

For the eighth, journalists in their publications try to influence deeper level of consciousness; respectively the materials will be deeper in nature. Such approaches are associated with NLP, psychology and neuro marketing [Lakoff 2009].

For the ninth, the field of information warfare is an interdisciplinary area. It is difficult to highlight only one branch that would fully reflect the essence of this phenomenon. For example, the military in their workings began to explore and to use the level of narrative, which beside the point, was borrowed from the literature [Gorka 2009].

For the tenth, there is an increasing reliance of military corps from civilians. The military needs the support of the masses both in the internal and in the external environment. This reliance encourages military to work with the civilian population more actively.

For the eleventh, H. Pocheptsov highlights this aspect in understanding of information war phenomenon. "The active use of such communicative tool as naming is becoming very indicative. The term "Friends of Syria", for example, designates enemies of the regime of President Bashar Assad. Successful designations enable to launch conflict interaction, required by their authors" [Pocheptsov 2015] We can designate many examples of naming in Ukrainian reality. In hybrid warfare Russia often uses words such as hunta, banderivtsi, coup and other.

As we can see, the problem of understanding of the phenomenon "information warfare" also has a great range of smaller but very important aspects. The resolution of these problems will enable to acquire the tools of information warfare and understand the essence of this concept more effectively.

Drawing attention to the conceptual framework on issues of information warfare research let us note the workings of A. Filimonov, who studied the problem of creation of effective protection system of national information systems (NIS) and he identified the following problems:

1. External factors, which cover all the external conditions during the formation of effective national information environment, where the research and development of various national information resources take place. These are:

- Interconnection of national and international information systems. Today, the functioning of NIS in almost all countries shapes global information system [Filimonov]. Thus, if one information system begins to behave aggressively towards others, an imbalance occurs, which can lead to unpredictable consequences. In one form or another, these processes occur constantly, but for the last ten years, humanity has entered a completely different phase of information confrontation.

– Dependence of information structure from public infrastructure in general. NIS cannot function separately from other public infrastructure systems, it is part of them and it highlights their work. The list of these structures includes: administrative, transport, economic, energy and telecommunications [Filimonov].

– Partial or full control of the strategic forces by private sector, which in turn depends on the economy. Private information systems are one of the important components of the NIS. Their impact on this structure is quite noticeable in all aspects, because problems of security of individuals are a part of a global information system of the country [Filimonov].

– Legal environment, where many social institutions and government branches exist. The legal aspect is always very sensitive to the information component. Additionally, different branches perform one and the same laws in various manners that in turn can provoke a crisis in the information environment and make a negative impact on the NIS [Filimonov].

2. Estimates that are important for the development of protection strategy may be based on the analysis of the features of the information war. These features include:

– “Information infrastructure is vulnerable to attack. While this in itself is a threat to national security, its scope and level greatly enhances connection of information infrastructure with traditional strategically important infrastructures, which in the future will only expand. That creates new possibilities to a potential opponent” [Filimonov]. The expansion of the information space is always a problem for protection from cyber-attacks and crisis calls.

– The problem for the country, which is protected from cyber-attacks, lies in the fact that the party who provides information aggression can remain unnoticed for a long time. This applies primarily to cyber-attacks because a virtual space is very vulnerable during the information war.

– The lack of clear legal standards that could classify violations that occur in the information war.

This range of problems associated with information war is not limited. Scientist G. Arquilla identified the following issues related to the information war:

– “Development of information sphere and its cooperation with military sphere” [Arquilla 2007]. The problem lies in the actual accretion of these two spheres of influence. This effect is imperceptible to the common man and is aiming: to sow panic, to stimulate the emergence of the crisis, create an information basis. In general, the accretion of these two spheres can have a positive impact on the future of humanity, but recent trends in information wars show that this relationship will be increasingly stronger.

– “Strengthening of network organizations” [Arquilla 2007]. This trend can be seen for quite a long time. Internet is one of the largest fields of battle in the information war. In fact, the victory of the internet gives a huge advantage to one party. Thus an increasing network of organizations appears that defend the need for the point of view of each party. These organizations can only be network-based, or can be the representatives of real organizations and to defend their opinion online. The emergence of a large number of such organizations is a sign of the active phase of information war and reducing of information freedom of a person.

– “The multimedia essence of information operations” [Arquilla 2007]. Such actions have no real foundation. They are based on multimedia content

that has fully or partially fake character. Fake stories, photos and mounted pictures are very popular in the information war. The purpose of such means is to blur the line between truth and falsehood and to impose their point of view.

We also consider it appropriate to review problems that have enabled Russia to seize the advantage in the information war. One of these problems is the partial loss of personal information and virtual space and its replacement by Western values and benchmarks. In other words, Ukraine borrows the information content without producing its own. That is why the problem of adopting others' values arises.

There is the problem of so-called "reference" to the Soviet past because of "the constant repetition of Soviet mental paradigms on television, radio and newspapers" [Pochepcov 2015]. This reduces the level of perception of modern information links by population. A large proportion of the population of Ukraine still has strongly pronounced Soviet stereotypes that create obstacles and barriers when trying to influence them.

Conclusion. For the last few years we had the opportunity to observe not only aggressive actions towards us but also an increased interest from other countries. This dynamic, of course, can have its advantages, if properly use information leverages onto the international community. At the same time, the above mentioned problems cause a huge number of obstacles to overcome informational influence on our country and to build a fundamentally new strategic information model and to strengthen the country. Solution of these problems will help to improve the reputation of Ukraine on a global stage, will strengthen its internal information defence capacity and will significantly weaken the enemy.

References

- Arquilla, J., & Douglas, A. B. (2007). *Information Strategy and Warfare: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 260 p.
- Baum, M. A. (2003). *Soft news goes to war. Public opinion and American foreign policy in the new media age*. Princeton: Oxford.
- Chaplygina, A. *Osnovy i problemy professionalnoj etiki v PR*. Retrieved from pr-club.com/assets/files/pr_lib/pr_papers/chaplygina.doc.
- Cutler, A. (2004). Methodical failure: The use of case study method by public relations researchers. *Public Relations Review*, 30(3): 365–375.
- Davies, N. (2003). *Flat Earth news*. London, 312 p.
- Fajnshtmidt, E. A. (2013). *Antikrizisnyj PR*. Moskva, 102 s.
- Filimonov, A. F. *O razrabotke v SShA sistemy mer po zashchite nacyonalnoj informacionnoj infrastruktury*. Retrieved from edu.vspu.ru/doc/groups/220/678/8.doc.
- Gilpin, D. R., & Murphy, P. J. (2008). *Crisis management in a complex world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gorka, S., & Kilcullen, D. (2009). Who's winning the battle for narrative? Al-Qaida versus the United States and its allies. *Influence warfare. How terrorists and governments fight to shape perceptions in a war of ideas*. Westport: J.J.F. Foster, 433 p.
- Hlushhenko, K. S. (2016). *Problemy formuvannia imidzhu centralnykh organiv vykonavchoi vlady: systemnyj pidhid. Derzhavne upravlinnya: udoskonalennya ta rozvytok*. Retrieved from <http://www.dy.nayka.com.ua/?op=1&z=957>.
- Lakoff, G. (2009). *The political mind*. New York, 320 p.

- Luntz, F. I. (2009). *What Americans really want...really. The truth about our hopes, dreams and fears*. New York, 318 p.
- Mitroff, I. I., Pearson, C. M., & Harrington, L. K. (1996). *The essential guide to managing corporate crises: A step-by-step handbook for surviving major catastrophes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Morton, L. P., & Lin, L. (1995). Content and citation analyses of public relations review. *Public Relations Review*, 21(4): 337–349.
- Pochepcov, G. G. (2015). Suchasni informacijni vijny. Kyiv: Vydavnychyj dim Kyievo-Mogylianska akademiya, 495 s.
- Shnajder, I. M. *Mizhnarodnyj imidzh Ukrayiny: problemy ta shliahy reformuvannia*. [Retrieved from http://www.rusnauka.com/16_ADEN_2010/Politologia/68511.doc.htm].
- Shtefano, A. P., & Racza, O. B. (2014). *Ukraina iak brend*. Retrieved from <http://intkonf.org/shtefano-ap-ratsa-ob-ukrayina-yak-brend/>.

Data przesłania artykułu do Redakcji: 10.03.2017
Data akceptacji artykułu przez Redakcję: 15.03.2017