

ASPECTS OF THE ROLE OF INFLUENCE ACTIONS IN THE MILITARY FIELD

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Abstract: The present paper aims to treat, as a whole and in detail, aspects of the issue of informational influence, the object of the investigation is, therefore, the variety of political-media influencing actions in the context of the social-political realities of recent years. The paper presents the basic principles of designing influencing messages and visual and written persuasive methods. Another aspect targeted in the present paper is to highlight the latent possibilities of communication with effects on the attitudes and behaviour of the military towards them.

Keywords: influencing, propaganda, manipulation, misinformation, informational protection

1. Introduction

It is challenging to try to select a specific moment in the history of the world in which influencing techniques have won a first-order role in socio-political life. Starting with the biblical legends (the famous trumpets that caused the walls of Jericho to collapse) appears that facet of propaganda called today the undermining of the opponent's morale.

The influencing techniques integrated in political and military science, in which information was given a primary role, are mentioned since the time of the Ancient East in the old Indian treatise Arthashastra (translated as "political science"). In the Renaissance era, this issue was dominated by Machiavelli's Prince. His favourite principles were "to govern is to believe" and "the end justifies the means" [1].

The basis of Clausewitz's thinking about war was the "amazing trinity" of rational, non-rational and irrational forces, i.e. strategic intelligence, chance, violence and

passion (Aristotle calls them logos, ethos and pathos) [2]. These forces constitute, to use the expression of the Prussian general, the three "magnets" between which the real war is suspended. For today's conditions, the basic structure does not change, even if passions and emotions are now more important thanks to modern mass media. Strategic intelligence must use emotions or, in any case, take them into account to achieve its political ends.

2. The role of influence in promoting the objectives of military action

The role of influence in promoting the objectives of military action is essential in modern warfare, where victory no longer depends only on physical superiority (troops and equipment), but also on the ability to shape perceptions, wills and behaviors, both of the enemy and of allies, the civilian population and international actors.

Influence is the ability of an actor to affect the behaviour of others in a manner favoured by the planner. The successful use of influence can produce changes or inhibit unwanted changes in predispositions, opinions, attitudes and beliefs, as well as in apparent behaviours.

The ability to influence actors depends on the following:

- the political, linguistic and material (financial) resources available;
- the type and amplitude of the influence exercised;
- the field in which they operate;
- competitive attempts of others to influence the same individuals;
- the size of the compliance considered.

Informational influence is effectively exercised by a source who is an expert or who has information that the target lacks. Its power lies in the arguments it invokes and in the evidence it can present explicitly or implicitly. Even the target further provides information through its behaviour and reactions, later being used against it, reaching an "agentic state" [3].

From the experience of political-military conflicts, it emerged that the proper methods of influencing are the following:

- the method of persuasion. To convince is to win! This method presupposes, first of all, studying the target in depth, gaining, as much as possible, their trust and then using the optimal messages;
- the repetition method. Repetition is the mother of influence! The printed material must be corroborated with other sources of influence and repeated as often as possible;
- the method of intimidation. Where he doesn't use persuasion, he can use threats!
- the culpability method. The idea is circulated that he (the aggrieved) is the only one to blame for what is happening or will happen;
- the method of inducing a particular emotional state (fear, panic, insecurity). It consists of broadcasting threatening messages - about the imminence of a danger, a chemical, a nuclear attack, etc.

How is it better to act on the opponent (political or military): to be bombarded continuously, day and night, with messages, or only at certain moments of the conflict? This question is often heard among experts. Opinions are, of course, divided, but this does not mean that one should act randomly.

There are some principles that any source of informational and social influence must take into account in order to have the expected effect. These are:

- the principle of the scientific approach;
- the principle of attractiveness;
- the principle of clarity;
- the principle of credibility;
- the principle of repeatability;
- the principle of opportunity.

Influence is a force multiplier. Without persuasion and without controlling the information space, military success can be limited or even nullified. In the 21st century, winning minds and hearts becomes as important as winning territory.

3. The Structural Components of Influence

Influence, in a military, political or social context, is a complex strategic process that involves multiple structural components working together to change perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of a target audience. The activity of informational influence is mainly supported by the act of communication embodied in messages. It is carried out by the parties in conflict, or it aims at the process of informational protection - also called positive informational influence because it aims to obtain some beneficial effects. It is essential, however, that the message is received and the desired effect is achieved. The major involvement in campaigns of PSYOPs structures, which have the capabilities necessary to activate a wide range of tactics, techniques and procedures in the fluid and unfriendly international framework, is, in our opinion, likely to determine the achievement of the planned

effects and the achievement of the proposed objectives [4].

One of how the authorities can achieve the necessary credibility is the means of mass communication.

Through their extraordinary social impact, through more or less pertinent messages, they can have a decisive role in the unfolding of events, generating, in some situations, instability, insecurity and mistrust, and in others, raising the morale of the combatants or the population. The danger of confusion and alarm becomes much more acute in the crisis as a result of the lack of unity of action and correct guidance through the means of information. The period of crisis is characterised by relatively absolute independence and freedom of the mass media, which in this way also implicitly increases their social responsibility. This responsibility, however, most often bears the imprint of relativity and subjectivism.

The analysis of the process of the so-called institutionalised influencing highlights several structural components, which can be presented further briefly, as follows:

Sources of influencing actions. There are two broad categories of sources:

- decision-making factors (governments, significant states, specialised bodies) who lead the actual operations;
- groups of aggression, which seek to induce in public opinion a certain current, a tendency or a political decision or to form attitudes favouring hostile actions.

The specialists are under the direct authority of the "principals" (the sources of the action) and depending on the nature of the activity they are appointed:

- planners (formulate objectives, study targets, develop messages and establish dissemination channels);
- controllers (constitutes and verifies in the field the message dissemination network, belonging in the vast majority of cases to the secret services);
- agents of influence (people recruited by influence services to spread messages).

The targets are persons or groups over whom it is proposed to exert influence or ensure control, either directly or through intermediaries. Regardless of whether the target is specific (a personality with leadership qualities or a small influential group) or general (public, crowd, ally), the planner proceeds with deep and prior knowledge of the target to establish its vulnerability, respectively: lack of information, dissatisfaction and conflicting states, mental ability, morals.

In certain circles, manipulation manoeuvres are not addressed directly to the decision-makers but to those close to them. Advisors to decision-makers have always been privileged targets for this kind of informational action due to the influence they exercise over their bosses. Sometimes, a person becomes indispensable and consulted for any important decision.

In this communication war, influencing the masses has proven very effective when practised by dictatorial regimes. From this register, observers mention influential personalities who shaped the course of history through brilliant oratory formulas, fascinating without a doubt but often misleading (Hitler, Fidel Castro, Nasser, Mao, Ceaușescu).

Messages are crude, false or distorted information that must be spread, and themes represent the support and the whole of the messages. As a rule, a theme pre-exists among the attitudes and opinions of the target, the disinformant contenting himself with putting it apparently in line with its ideology and doing everything to make the false information or stratagem seem credible, innocent and logically fit into reality. Also, the moment, the conditions and the methods of broadcasting the messages and influencing themes are chosen very skillfully.

The influencing strategy includes all the procedures validated as effective in these actions, as well as the way of using them in time and space to achieve the proposed objectives, respectively the opinions,

attitudes or components that it is tasked to determine in the chosen targets and studied with meticulous attention. In the general framework, even if different procedures are brought together with intermediate objectives, the conception and management of influencing actions must remain centralised at the level of a specialised body, subordinated to superior management.

Influence is more than just communication - it is a strategic, planned and tailored process that requires a deep understanding of the context and the audience. Its effectiveness depends on the coherence of all structural components and the ability to adapt the message in real time.

4. Influence, Propaganda, Disinformation and Manipulation

Propaganda includes an "unlimited arsenal of means, goals, constantly updated and reconditioned tools shaping concepts and sometimes controlling actions" [5]. It also represents the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behaviour to obtain a response that corresponds to the interests of the propagandist. Propaganda operations are carried out by spreading printed materials (newspapers, magazines, manifestos, posters, caricatures) and with the help of radio broadcasts during the crisis. The primary tool of propaganda is undoubtedly the manifesto, disseminated in various ways. Manifestos can be introduced clandestinely into the opponent's territory and using letters or commercial parcels. The content of manifestos is very diverse: they can address feelings and emotions, or they can contain political messages, news, threats, incitement to betrayal, surrender or desertion, and the production of social frictions. As an example, it can be pointed out that the analysis of the manifestos spread by the Vietnamese in the war against the American troops shows that the themes used were, in order, the following: "dictator Phan - the lackey of the USA", "the coup

leaders are lackeys"; "the coup was American inspired"; "stand up against the bloodthirsty American officers who throw you into battle", "you will be shot and thrown into rivers"; "avoid American camps and do not use military transport"; "Vietnam's police are peaceful" [6].

In the arsenal of psychological aggression, misinformation is an essential component, along with propaganda, disorientation, intoxication and psychological isolation.

Basing political and military decisions on unrealistic bases is one of the objectives of disinformation. It is a topical issue with very likely amplification prospects. The successes in the field of political and military actions confirmed the suspected power of the word. Along with the offensive aspect of disinformation, the political and military body must know how and with what means to counter the effects of its use by the adversary.

To classify it as a combat weapon, we can add the following components: the specialised structures for designing, planning and carrying out their combat actions; the specific missions within established forms of combat; the overall mission; its fighting means; the methods and procedures for countering (combating) this weapon.

One of the most brilliant theoreticians of war seems to have been Sun Tzu, who, 500 years before our era, was concerned with the profitability of war by looking for means to replace the lack of troops. Indicating, incredibly suggestively, that "the entire art of war is based on deceit, trickery, illusion" [7], the oriental sage concludes that disinformation allows the production of chaos in the leaders' thinking. Thus, today, disinformation itself, thanks to the informational explosion, can become an effective experimental "war machine".

According to American specialists, psychological operations (PSYOPs) are "...operations planned to transmit selected information and indicators to a foreign audience, which will influence the

emotions, motivation, objectives pursued and, ultimately, the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups and individuals” [8]. In all situations, PSYOPs must be accepted as an essential segment, which efficiently complements a wide range of activities in the diplomatic, informational, military, economic or other segments of interest. Thus, the valence of PSYOPs as a force multiplier, as well as a form of non-lethal actions, an aspect targeted with predilection in hybrid warfare, must be accepted.

Psychological operations, designed to massively affect the morale of the opposing Force, will be intertwined with information and public relations operations. The denigrating effort will be expanded and perpetuated through written and audiovisual media, particularly penetrating global and national target audiences.

Virulent actions will be initiated aimed at waging cyberwar and compromising the activity of the target state's major institutions, affecting critical infrastructure and destabilizing governance [9].

The analysis of the psychological actions that took place in the war in the Gulf area, known until now, highlighted at a strategic level the following significant objectives of disinformation, strategically used: shaking (respectively, maintaining) confidence in victory; the inoculation and maintenance of trust (respectively, lack of faith) in commanders, war plans, equipment and armaments, logistical capacity; causing and maintaining fear, insecurity and panic; the triggering of mass protest movements and demonstrations, to deepen the chasm between the rulers and the ruled in the countries involved in the conflict; provoking and stimulating among the fighters some reactions contrary to the political ideals promoted by the leaders; the favourable influence of domestic and international public opinion.

Influence is promoted by circulating carefully processed information, characterized by heightened possibilities of

manipulation, capable of modifying the attitudes and behavior of the target audience. The result may consist in following a certain predetermined pattern, non-involvement, acceptance of the suggested line of conduct and testing of a desired behavior. As a priority, it may be about altering or modifying the consciousness of the national identity of the target audience [10].

Manipulation is a type of psychological and social influence that aims to "determine a social actor (person, group, collective, crowd) to think and act in a way compatible with the interests of the initiator of the influence, and not with his interests, by using certain techniques which intentionally distorts the truth, leaving the impression of freedom of thought and decision." [11] Manipulation transforms the subject into a mere means, into a passive object, depersonalising it. Rapid technological change and reborn international instability provide persuasions with many new and potentially harmful opportunities to manipulate things with less or more devastating tactical or strategic consequences.

Table 1: Common manipulation techniques

Technique	Description	Example
Fear	Panic is created to force a reaction	"If you don't vote for X, the country will collapse"
Disinformation	False information is spread	"The vaccine contains chips"
False choice (false dilemma)	Only 2 extreme options are presented	"You're either with us or you're with the terrorists"
Labels	Labels are applied to discredit	"Anyone who protests is an extremist"

Transfer of authority	False authority is invoked	"An anonymous doctor says that..."
Repetition	Message is repeated obsessively	Simple and common political slogans

In the tactical field, informational manipulation is done by launching a massive amount of manifestos, "free passage" tickets, and broadcasting of statements, communiques, news, and appeals through the mass media. In the Persian Gulf War, the main themes addressed were the justification of the war waged by the multinational force, accusations against the Iraqi leader aimed at creating a gap between the political-military leadership and the troops, intimidating and discouraging the Iraqi forces and population, arguing General Schwartzkopf's statement that this war will be a "technological shock and a psychological shock" (which, by the way, was fully confirmed by the scale and paralysing effect of the air offensive); the call to abandon the technique from combat positions, specifying that the forces do their best not to bomb innocent people, aiming only to destroy the means of combat; the call to Iraqi soldiers to surrender, as the only way to save their lives.

The effectiveness of intertwining attacks with psychological actions was evident in the sense that, after the first days after the outbreak of hostilities, the means of research of the allied forces discovered that the defence and sheltering positions of the tank crews were gradually moving away from the locations of the combat vehicles, reaching as the distance between them should be 300-1,000 m.

Manipulation is a form of abusive influence that exploits human weaknesses and lack of information to gain control over behavior or opinions. Identifying and combating manipulation involves critical education, access to quality information, and vigilance

over information sources.

5. Conclusions

In history, there have always been rivalries and contradictions generated by the mirage of the power to dominate and dispose of other people. Power relations have produced specialised means of domination, of discouraging disobedience.

In this context, informational influence is indispensable in stopping, respectively, amplifying differences and misunderstandings of all kinds. By establishing an arsenal of means, methods, procedures and techniques for persuading the targets, a current trend towards subversive forms of aggression is taking shape. The preferred approach to society, through non-military means, to the detriment of armed forms of action, favors the indirect collapse of government authorities and state institutions in areas of interest [12].

Informational aggression with its forms (manipulation, misinformation, rumour, media lie, propaganda, subversion) and its countermeasures are considered relatively symmetrical activities, which means competencies, procedures, messages and effects are found face to face.

Information assurance (understood as a system of actions and informative-formative measures agreed upon and brought together according to goals, missions, objectives, place and time) must be carried out according to a unique conception and plan to influence the formation of positive public opinion on the situation and prospects for the evolution of it, for the neutralisation (mitigation) of the consequences, for the informational-psychological influence and the consolidation of the moral resistance of the population. The analysis of the activity of the national and foreign press services of the power structures allows for highlighting, mainly, the following directions: persuasive influencing, informational anticipation, use of current events and satisfaction of informational requirements.

The main methods of information assurance in crises can be press conferences and briefings of political leaders for mass media representatives, radio and television calls, censorship of media materials from the event area, unmasking people who spread rumours, literature, audio-video materials that intentionally compromise political actions, that incite religious and national riots, etc.; discrediting the leaders of extremist, nationalist and terrorist formations, disclosing adverse political programs, their mottos and theses.

For a durable and effective information defence, the following catalogue of protective measures could be established in crises: normalisation of the situation; development of resistance potential, awareness of suggestion capacity; accurate, permanent, timely, written and precise information; checking information sources, exercising a reserved attitude, relaxing through humour; warning against rumours, discovering canvassers, immunising the population; combating the "scapegoat" reaction; not giving up on denials.

In conclusion, influence plays a significant role in the military domain, being used to advance political and strategic objectives, to counter security threats, and to ensure the effectiveness of military operations. The use of influence in this area must be carried out by ethical and legal principles to avoid abuses and escalation of conflicts. The world is now in a new millennium, where new risks and threats to security have led it to reconsider the generally human values that bind states and nations together. The role of influence in the military domain is crucial and can be approached from several perspectives, either to promote peace and stability or to protect national interests and security.

In the military, influence is a silent but extremely powerful weapon. It complements military action by shaping perceived reality, which is essential in gaining support, weakening the enemy, and achieving strategic objectives. Without effective influence, military actions risk being rejected or generating counterproductive effects.

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