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The scientific journal is published since 2011 at the "Publishing House "Science Today". Translated (eng.) version of the journal is published since 2016. Since its inception, the journal was guided by high scientific and ethical standards and today it is one of the leading political science journals in Russia.

The purpose of the journal is to promote scientific exchange and cooperation between Russian and foreign political scientists.

The journal is intended for the publication of the results of fundamental and applied scientific research. Thematic focus of the journal is reflected in the following permanent headings: "History and philosophy of politics," "Political institutions, processes and technologies," "Political regionalism and ethno-politics," "Political culture and ideologies," "Political problems of international relations and globalization."

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The Editorial Board and the editors of the journal in their activities are guided by the principles defined by VAK of Russia for scientific journals, including: presence of the institute of peer review for the expert quality assessment of scientific articles; information openness of the publications; availability and compliance with the rules and ethical standards for the submission of manuscripts by the authors.

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THE ROLE OF INFORMATION WARFARE ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE 2008 ARMED CONFLICT IN SOUTH OSSETIA

The main goal of information warfare is to influence the socio-political structure of the society in order to exert pressure with the prospect of its further subordination. This can affect both the loss of the state's authority on the international arena, and its destruction from within, thereby causing irreparable damage to the country and its allies. Information wars can lead to political changes at the local, regional, and international levels. They contribute to the emergence of new strategic alliances, as well as to the change of political centers of attraction. The relevance of the article is due to the importance of information warfare as the main component of ethno-political conflicts in the modern world, as well as the most important tool of political coercion. Information wars are one of the most important aspects of modern society due to the development of information and communication technologies. The object of this research is information wars in ethno-political conflicts. The subject of the research is the information warfare in the Republic of South Ossetia. The article analyzes theoretical aspects of the phenomenon of "information war," which has great applied significance, since the study of this phenomenon contributes to the development of strategies in matters of national security, and also reduces the degree of information and psychological influence. The author reveals the degree of influence of the information component in the course of the information war in the formation of world public opinion. The study analyzes the significance of information warfare on the example of the Republic of South Ossetia. The phenomenon of "information war" has appeared relatively recently in scientific terminology. Therefore, this aspect is not sufficiently studied, which requires further in-depth comprehensive research.

Key words: *information war, armed conflict, international community, public opinion, Yugoslavia, Republic of South Ossetia.*

The foundations of modern information warfare were formulated in the late XX-early XXI century. To achieve the goals of information warfare, it is necessary to carry out a detailed study of the existing social groups and their relations

in the society, as well as the channels, intensity and nature of their interaction with the political elite in order to purposefully influence the public opinion.

Information technologies, directly used in the information warfare, occupy a priority place if compared to other means of warfare because of the total impact on the psychological and moral status of the citizens of the opposing side.

The usage of such technologies in information warfare is somewhat dangerous because the national special services cannot fully ensure information security of their own country due to their inability to timely recognize such tool.

Propaganda is one of the technologies of information warfare. It disorients the population, leading to a decrease in the authority of the state power and its legitimacy, thereby provoking political instability and division in the society. Such processes can lead to civil strife and political conflicts [7].

The authors studying the phenomenon of information warfare can be divided into three main groups.

Supporters of the first group believe that the above phenomenon takes place during the period of peace. Such approach is aimed at solving political problems not by force, as well as applying preventive measures to potential conflicts [4. P. 68-70].

Supporters of the second group believe that the information war is a new type of fighting, where protection of one's own information space becomes no less important than resistance and use of various information technologies in information warfare. Protecting your own information field is important, because the information war continues in the time of peace and it is undeclared and unpredictable [8. P. 44-47].

Supporters of the third group, representatives of the military science, believe that information wars are not conducted in the time of peace, but are an accompanying element in the period of open military confrontation to demoralize the opposite side. In this regard it is necessary to achieve and maintain information superiority over the opponent [3. P. 73].

As early as the beginning of the XX century, with the advent and spread of mass media, the power of mass media as a tool for influencing public consciousness and shaping public opinion became clear. Already in the XXI century, at the age of information technology, the importance of winning in the information field has come to the forefront. In some cases, a victory on the information front makes it possible to win over the enemy before the start of the hostilities [6].

The phenomenon of information wars has been studied by many scientists and experts. G. Murklinskaya in her research indicated that in the early 90s of the XX century, after the military operation in Iraq, the Americans created the concept of "revolution in military affairs," which focused on the conduct of "more humane" combat operations using "non-lethal" and new information technologies, which made it easier to control, manage local population and was also used for intelligence purposes.

One of the founders of the concept of information wars, M. Libiki, noted that information war is a type of conflict, the main task of which is to protect ones'

information systems, distort and manipulate the information of the opponent and prevent the enemy from accessing and processing information. According to Li-bicki, the main objective of information war is not victory over the enemy in direct confrontation, and establishing and maintaining control over all [1].

In the opinion of I. Vasilenko, “information war” is “systematic information impact on the entire info-communication system of the enemy and neutralization of the state in order to create a favorable, global information environment for any political and geopolitical operations that provide maximum control over space” [10].

On the other hand, G. Viren believes that “information war is a set of measures to influence mass consciousness in order to change people’s behavior and impose goals that are not among their interests, as well as protection from such influences” [12. P. 48].

The methodological basis of the research is the system, structural and functional methods, methods of comparative analysis and synthesis, analogy and induction.

In the modern world, the threat of information technologies influencing public consciousness in order to change the status quo in their favor is increasing. Information warfare includes various tools for the information suppression of the opponent. Today, the world community is faced with the problem of controlling the impact of information technologies in the information war, which provides a basis for protecting information resources and developing its own information security technologies.

Various approaches to the concept of “information war” have been studied, which is of great practical significance. A comparative analysis of the use of information technologies in the information war in the Republic of South Ossetia is carried out. As a result of the analysis, common features were identified in the technologies used in the information war in South Ossetia, on the basis of which it can be concluded that the Anglo-Saxon model of psychological conflict management was applied [9].

There are several main approaches to the peaceful resolution of international conflicts in the classification of models of psychological management. We are talking about the Romano-German, Middle Eastern, Anglo-Saxon and East Asian approaches. These models are based on cultural and civilizational differences, but they are complementary. According to A. V. Manoilo, the information war accompanying the August 2008 fighting in the Republic of South Ossetia “clearly corresponded to the schemes and templates of the Anglo-Saxon model of psychological conflict management” [11].

The main characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon model of psychological conflict management are:

First. Armed conflicts are initiated in places where there are already either latent conflicts or low-intensity conflicts. However, the conflict itself is not the goal. The goal is to produce PR news that focuses attention on certain points, thereby drawing certain states into this conflict.

Second. The main goal is the major participant of international relations that has a national interest in the region. Any action of the above-mentioned actor, whether active or passive in relation to the conflict, becomes a target for informational and psychological attacks.

The third. The result of information and psychological attacks during the conflict is the creation of political myths and stereotypes, substitution and manipulation of factual material, which affects the formation of world public opinion, to which, as a rule, the aggressor and the victim change places.

Fourth. Competent throw-ins in the media, and their certain frequency keep viewers in suspense and do not give them time for critical analysis and their own understanding of what is happening. The idea of a threat to the life of the entire world community is being imposed. The population ceases to assess the essence of what is happening sensibly, resulting in fear in society. The result of using this technology is to unite against an artificially created threat and legitimize actions aimed at interfering in the internal Affairs of the parties to the conflict.

The fifth and final stage is direct intervention in the internal affairs of a state under the guise of a peacekeeping operation in order to strengthen its own military presence in the region.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Georgia, nationalist leaders led by Z. Gamsakhurdia came to power. The policy pursued by that regime, including gross violations of the main rights and freedoms of national minorities living in the GSSR, caused the national liberation struggle of these peoples and led to the formation of new states – the Republic of South Ossetia and the Republic of Abkhazia. The first attempt to restore territorial integrity in the early 90s ended with the defeat of Georgia in both republics. In August 2008, Georgia made another attempt to annex the territory of the newly formed states [13].

The Russian operation aimed at “Forcing Georgia to peace” did not allow Georgia to implement the operation “Clear field,” which meant destruction and expulsion of ethnic Ossetians from their historical homeland. In South Ossetia, the fighting was accompanied by an information war, which was waged in varying degrees by both sides with the support of the allied countries, primarily Russia and the United States.

The Georgian-Ossetian war of 2008 was accompanied by a tough information confrontation in the international arena, including manipulation mechanisms and elements of information warfare. According to most scientists and experts, Russia, which enjoyed full support of the population inside the country, won a convincing victory on the battlefield, but lost the information war to Georgia.

It should be noted that in the information war in August 2008, Georgia and a coalition of Western countries worked both in the internal and external information space. While South Ossetia worked only in the internal information space, and the Russian Federation exclusively in the external information field.

The information war between Georgia and the Western coalition against South Ossetia and the Russian Federation, its geopolitical ally and main strategic partner, began long before the military invasion of the Republic of Georgia into the Republic of South Ossetia. The illegal arrival of Mikhail Saakashvili to power as a result of the “rose revolution” in Georgia in November 2003 can be considered the initial stage of the information war that led to the 2008 war [11]. Information about the allegedly downed Russian drone, interception of Russian missiles, arrests of peacekeepers with allegedly prohibited weapons, etc. periodically appeared in the information field, thereby creating the hostile image of the Russian Federation preparing to invade the territory of Georgia in the international information field. These actions were aimed at replacing the image of Russia as a peacemaker and guarantor of stability in the region with the image of an aggressor. In parallel with spreading disinformation about Russia, Georgia presented the image of the legitimate leadership of South Ossetia as a criminal regime that kept the entire population of South Ossetia, allegedly dreaming of returning to the jurisdiction of Georgia, in fear. Georgian media published photos and personal data of public and political figures of South Ossetia, declaring them criminals, opening criminal cases against them on far-fetched charges, thereby trying to demoralize the Republic’s leadership by analogy with the techniques used in Yugoslavia. By 2008, having formed the public opinion of the population of Western countries in a way that was beneficial to Georgia and its allies, Georgia prepared ground for a military invasion of the territory of South Ossetia. That situation was similar to the situation created by the United States and NATO in respect of Iraq and Yugoslavia [5].

Since the beginning of hostilities in 2008, the Internet and all Russian TV channels were blocked in Georgia. The population had access only to local and Western sources of information, which showed a one-sided picture and distorted existing realities. The destruction and numerous victims as a result of the massive bombing of South Ossetia by Georgia, recorded in photo and video materials, were distributed in the world media as the results of Russia’s invasion of Georgia. Unlike Georgia and its allies, South Ossetia and Russia were not ready for an information war. Having won the real war, Russia lost the information war.

From the above, it should be noted that:

- the information war of Georgia and the Western coalition against South Ossetia and Russia was successful;
- the world public opinion was prepared for Georgia’s invasion of South Ossetia;
- in the information war around South Ossetia, the media in the hands of Western political strategists often turned from sources of information into a source of disinformation, thus forming world public opinion in the direction favorable for them;
- South Ossetia, under constant pressure, limited opportunities and lack of access to international political and information platforms, was unable to put up a

decent resistance to Georgia and Western countries in the information field, thus losing the information war on the international arena. But nevertheless the information war inside South Ossetia was won;

– despite losing the information war, Russia and South Ossetia won the real war, which resulted in the recognition of South Ossetia as an independent and sovereign state by the Russian Federation on August 26, 2008. Russia thus initiated the process of international legitimization of the Republic of South Ossetia.

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