

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS: RETHINKING THE ISSUE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ARMED CONFLICT

ADMINISTRAÇÃO PÚBLICA DE COMUNICAÇÕES ESTRATÉGICAS: REPENSAR A QUESTÃO NO CONTEXTO DO CONFLITO ARMADO*

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Abstract: The article analyzes and summarizes the legal regulation and scientific approaches to the interpretation of the content of public administration of strategic communications in the context of the armed conflict and directions for its improvement. The formation of the institution of public administration of strategic communications in Ukraine and in the world is studied. The foreign experience of public administration in the studied area is analyzed. The main normative legal acts on the issues of public administration of strategic communications in Ukraine are considered. The system of subjects and their powers in the field of public administration of strategic communications are studied. In the context of the armed conflict, the lack of an effective mechanism for interaction between all participants in the information space can have negative consequences in the form of disinformation of the population, the spread of fakes, propaganda, and the leakage of important data. The main tasks of public administration of strategic communications in the context of the armed conflict are identified. Perspective directions of development of public administration in the studied area are determined.

Keywords: Public Administration. Strategic Communications. Armed Conflict. Information Policy. Information Space. Countering Disinformation.

Resumo: O artigo analisa e resume a regulamentação legal e as abordagens científicas para a interpretação do conteúdo da administração pública de comunicações estratégicas no contexto do conflito armado e as direções para seu aperfeiçoamento. É estudada a formação da instituição da administração pública de comunicações estratégicas na Ucrânia e no mundo. É analisada a experiência estrangeira da administração pública na área estudada. São considerados os principais

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atos jurídicos normativos sobre as questões de administração pública de comunicações estratégicas na Ucrânia. É estudado o sistema de assuntos e seus poderes no campo da administração pública de comunicações estratégicas. No contexto do conflito armado, a falta de um mecanismo eficaz de interação entre todos os participantes do espaço de informação pode ter conseqüências negativas na forma de desinformação da população, propagação de falsificações, propaganda e vazamento de dados importantes. As principais tarefas da administração pública de comunicações estratégicas no contexto do conflito armado são identificadas. São determinadas direções de perspectiva de desenvolvimento da administração pública na área estudada.

Palavras-chave: Administração Pública. Comunicação Estratégica. Conflito armado. Política de Informação. Espaço de Informação. Combate à desinformação.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the aggravation of the situation in Ukraine and the world, the states faced the issue of forming an effective mechanism to counter any encroachment on state sovereignty and territorial integrity, ensuring the inviolability of territories, the life and health of citizens. In this regard, it has become important to ensure the interaction of all public institutions both within the state and outside it. At the same time, the issue of improving strategic communications arose as a guarantee of the formation of a reliable information space and ensuring the unimpeded exchange of information both between the subjects of public administration and with the public. It is they who will ensure the development of the information and communication space, which will contribute to the organization of coordinated interaction between public administration entities and civil society institutions in setting goals, planning, forecasting and programming the development of the state in security, economy, social and other spheres. All this contributed to the adoption of a number of conceptual strategic documents defining the introduction of strategic communications as an important task of state development.

The content and features of public administration of strategic communications, its current trends and international standards, development prospects were studied in their works by a number of outstanding scientists. In particular, they considered various approaches to improving the system of public administration of strategic communications, based on national and foreign experience. At the same time, there is no common point of view among scientists on the main promising areas for the development of public administration of strategic communications in a modern state, in particular during the armed conflict, which determines the relevance of the study.

2. THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to determine the prospective directions of the development of public administration of strategic communications in the context of the armed conflict based on the analysis of scientific works and legal acts. In order to achieve the stated purpose, it is considered necessary to analyze the legal acts and scientific works of foreign and Ukrainian administrative scientists and to determine the content of public administration of strategic communications, the state of its international and national legal regulation, ways of implementation and prospects for development in the context of the armed conflict.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodological basis of the work is made up of general scientific and special methods and techniques of scientific knowledge. The epistemological method was used to determine the content of strategic communications. The use of the comparative legal method is the basis for studying the features of public administration of strategic communications in other states. The method of analysis and generalization was used to identify the main tasks and directions for the development of public administration of strategic communications in the context of the armed conflict.

The scientific novelty consists in the development of the content and features of public administration of strategic communications in the context of the armed conflict, the development of promising areas for its improvement.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The problem of strategic communications has been actively discussed over the past two decades. This issue has acquired particular relevance in the scientific and expert developments of the United States and Western European countries. However, despite a considerable amount of research on strategic communications in the world, there are still significant problems in the unity of defining the content and features of their implementation. The most interesting and integral in this matter is the experience of the United States, which has overcome the difficult path of understanding the importance of

strategic communications, the need for their normative regulation and effective practical application.

The prerequisites for the introduction of strategic communications in the USA were the need for a new approach to the communication of official structures, which arose as a result of the fact that after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the West lost the communicative struggle to terrorists and insurgents every time. It was recognized that the communication activity of official structures is mostly limited to the reaction to enemy propaganda. This is what determined the need for skillful adaptation to warfare in the modern media era (Dimitriu, 2012). In 2004, the Defense Science Board of the US Department of Defense prepared the "Final Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communications". It defined strategic communications as "a variety of tools used by the state to generate understanding of global relations and cultures, engaging in a dialogue of ideas between people and institutions, advising decision makers, diplomats and military leaders on what consequences for public opinion will be political decisions and influences on attitudes and behavior through communicative strategies" (Rowland, Tatham, 2010). The report also suggested (Information Operations: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures. Field Manual, 2003) to form in the US National Security Council:

Q Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communication;

Q Strategic Communication Committee within the National Security Council. The Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communication should chair a Strategic Communication Committee. Its members should have the equivalent of under secretary rank and be designated by the Secretaries of State, Defense and Homeland Security; the Attorney General; the Chief of Staff to the President; the Director of the Office of Management and Budget; the White House Communications Director; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of the Agency for International Development; and the Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors;

Q Independent, non-profit, non-partisan Center for Strategic Communication.

A more precise definition of the concept of "strategic communications" in the Pentagon documents appeared in 2006 (Paul, 2010, p. 19). The main goals, objectives and organizational forms of strategic communications in the United States were also identified in the report of the White House of the US Congress in 2009 "National Framework for Strategic Communication". It stated that strategic communication is the process of

integrating audience and stakeholder perception research and incorporating the results into policy, planning, and operations at every level. Strategic communication is the direction along a single vector of a large number of different activities (for example, the political process, public relations, information operations, etc.), each of which has an impact in support of national goals. Strategic communications essentially mean the exchange (i.e., during communication) of meanings/ideas in support of national goals (i.e., strategically). For this process, listening is as important as broadcasting (US Department of Defense, 2004).

In the presence of constant threats to the inviolability of states, the issue of strategic communications was developed and implemented in other countries, along with the USA. They actively developed in the international space as well. Both national entities responsible for strategic communications and interstate ones were created. Many of them are non-governmental, which is explained by the specifics of their activities and the need for constant interaction with the public. Among the most developed international non-governmental organizations, we can single out the following: Freedom House (USA), British Council (Great Britain), Alliance Française (France), Dante Institute (Italy), Confucius Institute (China).

In 2007, the sphere of strategic communications was institutionalized in NATO, where a separate division was created - the Strategic Communications Directorate. Subsequently, on its basis, the Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (StratCom) was created, which introduced into scientific circulation the definition of strategic communications as the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims. It also defines the main capabilities/components: public diplomacy, public affairs, military public affairs, information and psychological operations (Pelepeichenko, 2017; NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence). Article 14 of the Paris Protocol granted the Centre the status of an international military organization and 7 member countries of the Alliance signed memorandums of understanding on its functioning: Estonia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and the United Kingdom. Among the main tasks of the Centre are: development of programs to promote the development and harmonization of the doctrine of strategic communications; conducting research and experimentation to find practical solutions to existing problems; "learning the lessons" of the use of strategic communications during military operations; increasing training and educational efforts and interaction opportunities (Barovska, 2015, p. 150). In

2015, the Strategic Communications Partnership Roadmap between Ukraine and NATO was signed.

The sphere of strategic communications also developed in the European Union. In the EU's Joint Framework to counter hybrid threats, it was noted that the perpetrators of hybrid threats can systematically spread disinformation, including within the framework of targeted campaigns in social networks, seeking to radicalize individuals in order to destabilize society and control political views. The ability to respond to hybrid threats using sound strategic communication strategies is essential. Ensuring rapid factual responses and increasing public awareness of hybrid threats is a key factor in creating social stability (Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats a European Union response, 2016).

The issue of strategic communications management has become widespread in Great Britain, in particular, in the sphere of administration of the country's defense forces. Here, they are convinced that strategic communications should work to strengthen state sovereignty and promote national interests by using all types of defense to influence all sectors of society. Strategic communications should make a decisive contribution to the development and implementation of the national strategy, which is understood as a set of ideas, preferences and methods that explain activity (diplomatic, economic and military), contribute to the achievement of the set goal (Dzoban, 2018).

In March 2011, the Note (explanatory note) to the first Joint Doctrine (JDN) Strategic Communication: The Defence Contribution was published, which became the starting point for the UK Ministry of Defence to better understand the content, purpose and value of strategic communications. It stated that strategic communications was a cross-departmental affair under the leadership of the Cabinet and the UK National Security Council (Strategic communication: the defence contribution, 2012). In 2019, the United Kingdom developed a Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications in the United Kingdom (Kazanzhi, 2016).

The experience of Estonia, which is one of the leaders in Europe in the direction of strategic communications, especially in the digital sphere, deserves special attention. It is Estonia, thanks to the functioning of the Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership (ECEAP), that provides advisory support for the development of this direction in Ukraine. In 2014, the Estonian government introduced the position of strategic communications advisor and established a communications bureau, which includes information analysts and communications planners. The Bureau provides general coordination of outgoing messages and coverage of the official position of the state on certain issues. In addition to the

specified bureau, separate structures dealing with strategic communications operate in the ministries of defense, foreign affairs, and economy in Estonia. In general, strategic communications perform preventive and defensive functions. One of the important directions of their work today is countering fake news of the Russian Federation.

According to NATO's requirements for the development of the communication sphere, all processes should become more simplified and faster, which is a necessary condition for information and communication aspects to become the basis of all levels of policy formation, planning and implementation of strategic communications in the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces. Strategic communications acquire the greatest importance precisely in the context of ensuring national security, the formation of a national idea and the unification of Ukrainian citizens around it, as well as the development of a unified approach to the formation of national interests, which at the same time must be considered as the most modern and promising form of action in the information space (Decree No. 612, 2017).

Military operations on the territory of Ukraine since 2014 prompted the state leadership to take measures for the active development of the strategic communications system, as a guarantee of reliable information to society, exchange of information between public institutions and the public. To date, the process of forming a strategic communications system continues in Ukraine. The Information Security Strategy, approved by the Decree of the President of Ukraine dated October 15, 2021, states that the state authorities of Ukraine have implemented a number of organizational and practical measures to strengthen their own institutional capacity in the field of strategic communications, but no effective coordination and interaction mechanism has been created between all state authorities involved in the implementation of measures to counter threats in the information sphere. The above weakens the opportunities for the development of a comprehensive strategic planning of the information flow, the implementation of systemic communication activities of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the unification of all key actors in the field of information relations, the subjects of the formation and implementation of state policy regarding the effective protection of the national information space, the assertion of a positive image of Ukraine, the implementation of the goals of protecting the national security of Ukraine in the information sphere (Decree No. 685, 2021).

In the context of the armed conflict, the lack of an effective mechanism for interaction between all participants in the information space can have negative

consequences in the form of disinformation of the population, the spread of fakes, propaganda, and the leakage of important data. In addition, the lack of reliable channels for the exchange of information may cause improper or untimely performance of tasks by public administration entities, including the defense forces. In this regard, the Information Security Strategy fixed the creation of an effective system of strategic communications as one of the goals. The main goal of the creation and development of the strategic communications system is to guarantee effective information interaction and dialogue between state authorities, local self-government bodies and society on issues related to crisis situations, as well as the establishment of a positive image of Ukraine, informational support for the advancement of the state's interests in the world. Effective formation of its international information activity will allow Ukraine to carry out proactive information activities, inform the world community about the events in Ukraine and its temporarily occupied territories, progress in reforms and positive internal changes in the state, despite the existing armed aggression against Ukraine, about the key decisions of state authorities on strategic issues of the development of the state, which will contribute to a better understanding of the domestic and foreign policy of the state by international partners, provide international support and improve the image of Ukraine as a reliable and expected partner (Decree No. 685, 2021).

Achieving the specified goal will be carried out by performing the following tasks:

determination of a system of interaction on issues of responding to a crisis situation, post-crisis communication, preventing the onset of a crisis by analyzing the prerequisites for a crisis and crises that have taken place in the past;

establishing effective interaction between higher-level state authorities, central executive authorities and regional state administrations in order to develop a unified position by state representatives on issues arising in a crisis situation and in the post-crisis period;

establishing effective interaction between state representatives and the public by ensuring a systematic dialogue between state bodies and the media, journalists, representatives of new media on issues arising in a crisis situation and in the post-crisis period;

ensuring the stable functioning of the foreign broadcasting system of Ukraine by creating and distributing an information product through satellite, on-air terrestrial analog and digital broadcasting channels, broadcasting in cable networks outside Ukraine, including in English, Russian and other languages;

creation in the foreign broadcasting system of Ukraine and ensuring the functioning of the state radio broadcasting service to foreign countries; ensuring the presence of the programs of domestic television companies in the multichannel networks of other states by facilitating the creation by national television channels of satellite foreign versions (taking into account the language of distribution) for distribution of programs outside Ukraine;

ensuring that the world community is informed about the events in Ukraine and conveying the official position of Ukraine to representatives of foreign states and the media; use of the sign (brand) of Ukraine "Ukraine Now" in order to promote and advance the interests of Ukraine in the world;

development and dissemination of positive narratives and information campaigns abroad, which will increase the level of recognition and better understanding of Ukraine among foreign audiences, as well as the establishment of the image of Ukraine as a democratic European state moving towards full membership in the EU and NATO, is an integral part of the European political, economic, cultural, educational and information space, takes part in solving global problems and shares experience in areas relevant to the international community.

The Military Security Strategy of Ukraine, approved by the decision of the National Security Council of Ukraine of March 25, 2021, defines one of the goals of the implementation of state policy in the military sphere, the sphere of defense and military construction as the development of the capabilities of the defence forces of Ukraine regarding strategic communications in the sphere of defense (Decree No. 121, 2021). That is, one of the priorities of the state activity in the field of national security is the development of strategic communications as a guarantee of reliable exchange of adequate information both between subjects of public administration and with the public. Strategic communications in this normative legal act are defined as coordinated and proper use of the state communicative capabilities: public diplomacy, public relations, military relations, informational and psychological operations, measures aimed at promoting the state goals. The system of strategic communications in the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces includes a set of officials and units of military administration bodies, permanent and temporary working bodies (groups), which perform certain functions and tasks in permanent deployment points and/or as part of the control points of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces (Decree No. 612, 2017).

To date, a number of legal acts have been adopted in Ukraine that determine the legal basis for the development of the strategic communications system and establish the powers of public administration entities operating in this area. A number of departments operating under ministries and central government bodies deal with the issues of proper information support for both public administration entities and the public. In addition, an important role in this process belongs to non-governmental organizations that are also actively working, especially in the context of the armed conflict.

In the context of military operations on the territory of Ukraine, the leading role in the sphere of strategic communications is given to the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, which is responsible for providing official information on the course of the war, ensuring the security of the population and the state. The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces have identified the following ways to implement the strategic communications system: promoting and supporting the development and public relations process in the military sphere through:

conducting information events for civil-military cooperation, conducting proactive communication with the involvement of key leaders, holding public events to increase understanding of the policy of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces by the Ukrainian society; carrying out work to increase the level of understanding of strategic communications by the leadership of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces; understanding the importance of each serviceman and employee of the Armed Forces in the system of strategic communications; establishing interaction between the structural subdivisions of the apparatus of the Ministry of Defence, the General Staff, military command and control bodies, institutions and organizations of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces, as well as other departments involved in the communication process, which will increase the efficiency of internal communication and the ability to counter negative information impact on personnel;

systematization of the process of identifying and responding to challenges and threats in the information space, which includes the involvement of units that are entrusted with the functions of conducting information, psychological operations and actions in cyberspace;

counteracting information operations against Ukraine, manipulation of public consciousness and dissemination of distorted information, protection of national values and strengthening the unity of Ukrainian society;

improvement of the system of crisis planning and management in the field of defense by developing documents and plans that regulate the algorithm of actions during crisis situations;

development of public diplomacy and military support of public diplomacy, holding information events within the framework of international military cooperation; development of a system for disseminating key messages in accordance with the existing narrative (through the communications channels of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces) to create a single line of information;

strengthening intelligence activities, which will provide a deeper and more complete understanding of the capabilities, interactions and influences of all key actors in the operating environment, provide the commander with the necessary information in terms of strategic communications, and also allow the commander to understand this information at the proper level, also in the interests of preparation and conducting by the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces of counter-propaganda measures and informational and psychological operations within the framework of strategic communications;

use of all sources of information for further integration, analysis for timely and appropriate use for communication and information activities;

development of Ukraine bilateral relations with NATO member states, implementation of the principles of the Alliance in all areas of military activity to achieve the criteria required for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, including by receiving direct assistance from foreign experts (advisers) on defense issues;

effective use of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with partners and allies in the military sphere;

constant improvement of the qualifications of representatives of strategic communications subjects through training with the involvement of specialists and on the basis of NATO member states;

generalization and implementation of practices based on the acquired experience.

The issue of developing strategic communications is enshrined not only in legal acts, but has also become the subject of research by Ukrainian and foreign scientists. Thus, T. Syvak believes that the following areas of activity are relevant in the direction of the formation and development of strategic communications: creation of a systemic approach to strategic communications at the national level; improvement of the communication coordination mechanism between different authorities (interagency communication); changing the approach from crisis (reactionary) communications to risk management

(proactive communication); provision of professional training of specialists in strategic communications (Syvak, 2019, p. 85).

In order to fulfill these tasks, the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine established the Office of Strategic Communications, which was entrusted with the responsibility of organizing and implementing state information policy measures in the military sphere, coordinating and synchronizing strategic communications measures of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The main tasks of the Office of Strategic Communications: organization, coordination, synchronization and control over the implementation of strategic communications activities in the Armed Forces of Ukraine; ensuring effective interaction between subjects of strategic communications of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; developing the capabilities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in matters of strategic communications and assessing them; development and clarification of planning documents for the strategic use of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other components of the defense forces in terms of issues of strategic communications (Office of Strategic Communications, 2021).

In addition to the above-mentioned department under the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, the Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security was created to counter external threats, unify the efforts of the state and public organizations in the fight against disinformation, respond promptly to fakes, and promote Ukrainian narratives. Key tasks of the Center: development of strategic communications (development of counter-narratives of the Russian Federation, conducting information campaigns, inclusion of Ukrainian narratives in the daily communication of the Government); countering disinformation and building resistance to it. Constant notification of information attacks against Ukraine on the Center's resources, in particular on the web portal, FB page, and Telegram channel; raising awareness of hybrid threats (developing and conducting trainings for civil servants, in particular for representatives of communication units); regular reporting on hybrid aggression from Russia at the international level, development of disinformation countermeasures together with international partners (Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security under the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, 2022).

Having analyzed the tasks of the main subjects of the administration of strategic communications and ways of implementing the strategic communications system, it is possible to determine the main directions of public administration in this area in the context of the armed conflict, namely:

- 1) development of strategic communications;
- 2) organization, coordination and control over the implementation of measures of state information policy and strategic communications;
- 3) counteracting misinformation and fakes within the state and in the international community;
- 4) development and inclusion of Ukrainian standards in the daily communication of public administration entities, ensuring their interaction and coordination on this issue;
- 5) raising awareness of hybrid threats at the national and international levels;
- 6) assessment of the capabilities of subjects of public administration of strategic communications;
- 7) strengthening intelligence activity in order to obtain the most complete and accurate information;
- 8) creation of a single line of information submission;
- 9) development of public relations in the military sphere in order to inform them about the policy and activity of the state.

5. CONCLUSION

In the context of martial law, the issue of public administration of strategic communications has acquired particular relevance. The state, represented by its authorized bodies and officials, is conducting large-scale work to form a reliable information space. The main management entities in this area have been identified, their powers have been determined, interaction and coordination have been ensured. At the same time, the main role is given to the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as the entities that have the most accurate and reliable information. Work is underway to inform the population on a large scale about the course of the war, counter the spread of fake news, and establish reliable channels to supply information. At the same time, many issues in this area need further resolution. In particular, it is necessary to form an agreed vision of the concept of strategic communications, ensure the uninterrupted supply of information and the stability of information flows, intensify counteraction to disinformation in Ukraine and the world, and ensure high-quality training of specialists in strategic communications.

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