

# INFLUENCE OF STATE MANAGEMENT OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS ON THE MECHANISM FOR PROTECTING THE COUNTRY'S SOVEREIGNTY

## INFLUÊNCIA DO GERENCIAMENTO ESTATAL DE COMUNICAÇÕES ESTRATÉGICAS NO MECANISMO DE PROTEÇÃO DA SOBERANIA DO PAÍS

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posição do Estado no cenário mundial. O estudo tem como objetivo desenvolver um mecanismo para o gerenciamento eficaz das comunicações estratégicas pelo Estado. Os autores do artigo consideram o conceito de comunicações estratégicas e diretrizes, mecanismos e abordagens conceituais para o gerenciamento de comunicações estratégicas. Usando os métodos de análise de documentos e pesquisa com especialistas, os autores analisam a experiência mundial de comunicações estratégicas para a condução de políticas internas e externas por vários Estados. Os autores também descrevem o papel das comunicações estratégicas na solução das tarefas mais importantes de política interna e externa. Para concluir essas tarefas, os administradores públicos precisam desenvolver e implementar estratégias de comunicação abrangentes que usem tecnologias inovadoras, levando em conta as diferentes exigências e preferências das partes interessadas. Para aumentar o efeito comunicativo do Estado sobre os públicos-

**Abstract:** In a complex international environment, strategic communications play an important role in determining state sovereignty, security, and position on the world stage. The study aims at developing a mechanism for the effective state management of strategic communications. The authors of the article consider the concept of strategic communications and guidelines, mechanisms, and conceptual approaches to managing strategic communications. Using the methods of document analysis and expert survey, the authors analyze the world experience of strategic communications for conducting domestic and foreign policies by various states. The authors also describe the role of strategic communications in solving the most important domestic and foreign policy tasks. To complete these tasks, public administrators need to develop and implement comprehensive communication strategies that use innovative technologies with due regard to the different requirements and preferences of stakeholders. To increase the state's communicative effect on internal and external target audiences, the authors propose to improve the state management of mass communications based on a dialogue model of strategic communications.

**Keywords:** Strategic communications. Public administration. Target audience. Strategic goals. Communication model.

**Resumo:** Em um ambiente internacional complexo, as comunicações estratégicas desempenham um papel importante na determinação da soberania, da segurança e da

alvo internos e externos, os autores propõem melhorar o gerenciamento estatal das comunicações de massa com base em um modelo de diálogo de comunicações estratégicas.

**Palavras-chave:** Comunicações estratégicas. Administração pública. Público-alvo. Objetivos estratégicos. Modelo de comunicação.

## 1. Introduction

Currently, the solution to the most important state tasks is accompanied by a process of strategic planning, without which the distribution of state administrative resources becomes utilitarian and ineffective. Several strategies determine an effective state. In particular, strategic communication refers to the deliberate use of communication to achieve specific goals and objectives, such as improving public awareness, changing attitudes, or promoting behavior change (Auwalu, 2021; Bondarenko et al., 2022).

Being an aspect of strategic activities, strategic communications play a decisive role in fulfilling the goals of state programs, containing inflations, and improving the living standards of citizens. The public administration of strategic communications has been a topic of interest among scholars and practitioners in recent years. According to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), effective communication is essential for successful public administration since it builds trust, manages expectations, and supports policies and initiatives (Gistjob.com, 2021).

The effectiveness of state socio-economic policies increasingly depends on the communication between public authorities and citizens (Akhmetshin et al., 2018b). For instance, D.-Y. Kim and J. Shim (2020) examine the role of communication in implementing South Korea's government policy for promoting small- and medium-sized enterprises. The authors prove that effective communication helps to build trust among stakeholders and increase their willingness to participate in policy implementation. Modern strategic communications go beyond the relationship between government and society within the country and are actively involved in such areas as foreign policy, international relations, and military affairs (Nikonov et al., 2023). At the global level, strategic communications become an important factor in ensuring state sovereignty and national security (President of the Russian Federation, 2016; Sidorov et al., 2022; Zenin, 2020). In Russia, the effectiveness of various tools of strategic communications is largely determined by affairs within the state and its international relations during the ongoing special military operation in Ukraine. Based on the above-mentioned problem, this study aims at understanding the communication mechanisms used to maintain sovereignty. The

comprehension of modern mechanisms can help build trust, manage expectations, and mobilize support for policies and initiatives.

## 2. Strategic Communication At The National Level

The term “strategic communications” originated in the US military-political discourse. C. Paul (2011) claims that the earliest definition of strategic communications was provided in the Pentagon documents in 2006. Later, the White House report of March 16, 2010 mentioned the purpose of strategic communications: the formation of global legitimacy (the justification of any state actions) and the strategic goals of policy, which consists in purposeful communication and interaction with the population (White House, 2010). Representatives of various sciences began to actively join the US military-political discourse, including political scientists and researchers of state and corporate governance.

In Russian studies on strategic communications, much attention is paid to the development of their concept, principles, and features. Concerning the Russian political discourse, E.A. Vinogradova (2013) understands strategic communications as “strategically coordinated activities focused on managing target segments of the public to increase the rehearsal rating in the political arena” (p. 220). D.P. Gavra (2015) provides the following definition: “Strategic communications are the complex use of communication tools for interaction with the internal and external environment, contributing to the achievement of long-term strategic goals of a political subject through the formation of a resource-balanced program” (p. 230). N.V. Starykh (2013) defines the main principle of strategic communications, namely, the decomposition of goals or the process into basic interconnected operations. According to the scholar, a positive result is obtained through the synchronous and integrated work of all the structural elements of strategic communication. The measurability of goals is also an important principle. While building strategic communications, it is necessary to be guided by methods predicting the effect of communication activities. N.I. Chebotareva and S.S. Kovaleva (2016) argue that communications become strategic only if they are applied on a global scale and systematically, i.e. they focus on the widest audience and are characterized by a wide range of communication methods and means of influence.

### 3. Use Of Various Information Channels

Studies highlight the importance of an elaborate communication strategy in public administration using various information channels. S.V. Bogdanov (2017) searches for the most effective models for using strategic communications as a multifaceted process of influencing the thoughts, motives, and intentions of the target audience. N.V. Starykh (2013) and E.N. Bragina (2021) consider the effectiveness and efficiency of strategic communications using traditional information channels (television, radio, print) and electronic and digital technologies for presenting and exchanging information.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in using social media as a tool for strategic communication in public administration. According to a report by the World Bank (2019), social media can be a powerful platform for engaging citizens and stakeholders, providing them with information and feedback, and promoting transparency and accountability. However, the report also emphasizes that the effective use of social media requires careful planning and management, as well as the consideration of potential risks and challenges.

To improve the effectiveness of public administration of strategic communications, some scholars propose to use such innovative technologies as artificial intelligence and machine learning. For example, D. Wang and M. Zhang (2021) dwell on the use of AI in crisis communication management. The authors developed an AI-based framework that can automatically identify crisis events and generate personalized messages to different stakeholder groups based on their characteristics and preferences.

Today various information channels are used for the construction of strategic communications in many areas of public administration (Bochkareva et al., 2023). In this article, the main attention is paid to the foreign aspects of strategic communications aimed at maintaining and developing the sovereignty of states.

This study aims at describing the current organizational and legal foundations of the state management of strategic communications to maintain and develop sovereignty. The tasks are to study the concept of strategic communications, analyze the international mechanism of their functioning, determine their role in the development of state sovereignty, and present possible models for their use in the public administration system.

The research hypothesis is as follows: the effective state management of strategic communications aimed at the development of sovereignty can be improved with a systematic

and integrated approach to selecting a functional model and forming appropriate organizational and legal foundations.

#### **4. Methods**

The methodological basis of this study included theoretical and empirical methods. Theoretical methods include analysis and synthesis, a system-structural approach, a transition from a general concept to a particular one, a comparative-legal method for studying theoretical and practical approaches to regulated relations, generalization and criticism of scientific opinions on the issues under study, as well as a statistical method that showed the significance and relevance of such issues. To prove the hypothesis, we used various sources of information, including regulatory legal acts, statistics posted on authoritative websites, news provided by trusted media, concepts from the works by Russian and foreign scientists analyzing various aspects of strategic communications, including those published in journals listed by the Scopus and Web of Science.

The main empirical method was an expert survey and mathematical processing of its results. Within the framework of this method, 30 respondents were interviewed, including employees of public relations departments, media and mass communication committees of regional governments, and press relations services of senior officials in three constituent entities of Central Russia. We selected PR managers and specialists as experts, having at least 10 years of professional experience and/or having written at least three articles on this topic published in journals included in Scopus or Web of Science. All respondents were informed about the survey objectives and the possible publication of its results without exposing their personal data.

We sent an email to each respondent and asked them to name the most important properties of strategic communications used in public administration to maintain and develop sovereignty.

After receiving answers from the respondents, we grouped and determined the number of answers (in %) for each group.

## 5. Results

State strategic communications and sovereignty have been topics of interest among scholars and policymakers in recent years. Sovereignty refers to the supreme authority of a state over its territory and people, while strategic communication refers to the use of communication to achieve specific goals and objectives, such as promoting national interests and shaping public opinion (Gerodimos, & Justinussen, 2015).

According to a report by the European External Action Service (EEAS), state strategic communications play a crucial role in protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country. The report emphasizes that strategic communications can be used to counter disinformation and propaganda, promote democratic values, and enhance the resilience of societies against internal and external threats (EEAS, 2019).

A potential threat that can affect stability in society is the influence of external factors on electoral processes in the country. An information impact through advertising campaigns leads to the fact that part of the potential electorate, acting as an object of such an information impact, does not receive the necessary objective information. There is a strong focus on a narrow target segment of voters who directly or indirectly influence the political result (active voters) (Sellers, 2010); less attention is paid to the rest of the electorate. Scholars highlight the importance of differentiating this process since the objects of influence have different information on political issues that is difficult to verify. The disinformation of the population is effective since the targeted impact on vulnerable members of society creates an alternative mass discourse (Sultănescu, 2019). It is based on the notions of a failed state system and discrimination of power. Strategic communications are designed to neutralize false information through the targeted and constant information impact and displacement of negative messages in the information field.

In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the impact of foreign interference and disinformation on the sovereignty of states. According to a report by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (Fredheim, 2019), hostile actors, such as state-sponsored trolls and bots, seek to undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions and sow discord and division in societies. The report emphasizes the need for states to develop effective strategic communications to counter these threats and protect their sovereignty.

To enhance the effectiveness of state strategic communications, some scholars have proposed the use of new technologies, such as AI and big data analytics. For example, K.

Kertysova (2018) explores the use of AI in detecting and countering disinformation campaigns. The author developed an AI-based system that can automatically analyze social media data and identify suspicious patterns of activity, such as coordinated inauthentic behavior and propaganda.

The modern information society is characterized by deep integration and globalization processes, in which traditional territorial, socio-cultural, and state-political barriers are gradually erased. This can create an image of the world, where social groups and individuals are gradually freed from traditional ties and foundations. This idea was widely supported by the Western political community, which promoted the political doctrine of domination and unipolarity and set the vector of development for the entire world (Beckley, 2018).

More and more media and news agencies are being taken under political control by state structures, which conditions a politically biased information flow (Gazetov & Khomenko, 2022). For instance, the international news agency Reuters distributes the information necessary for the British authorities, having concluded a contract with the British government back in the 1960s and presenting only the Western position. Western public authorities control the largest Internet companies and make them wage an information war against Russia. Thus, the EU adopted the Digital Services Act. It states that Google, Meta, Amazon, and Apple are obliged to promote only the official opinion on current events and remove content that does not correspond to it (Rees, 2022).

The main activity of state-controlled strategic communications aimed at supporting the sovereignty of Russia focuses on the internal target audience. This is carried out in the following areas:

- Protection against disinformation, including prohibiting or restricting the activities of external information sources and foreign agents focused on discrediting the Russian armed forces in the Russian information field;

- Explaining the true goals of state policy to the population, including through speeches by the President of the Russian Federation, and providing updates on the situation and foreign policy of the Russian Federation through press releases by services of the President of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation;

- The creation and maintenance of information flow in the media and social networks and through instant messengers (Telegram channels), creating a positive image of the Russian armed forces, fighting against disinformation, and forming a negative attitude towards the actions of the US and European countries that threaten the sovereignty of Russia (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The results of the survey on the significant properties of strategic communications used in public administration to develop the sovereignty of the Russian Federation

Question	Properties	Distribution of answers, %
What properties of strategic communications have the greatest impact on the effectiveness of supporting and developing national sovereignty?	Countering disinformation	23
	Positive message focused on the expectations and preferences of the target audience	16
	Continuous and long-term impact	13
	Open and fair information disseminated through strategic communications	24
	Widespread use of the dialogue model of strategic communications	24

## 6. Discussion

The genesis, manifestations, and development trends of the concept of strategic communications presented in this article remain relevant. There are still active discussions around these issues. The main function of strategic communications on a global scale is to establish and maintain the legitimacy of the state. First of all, this includes speech practices used to strengthen, overthrow, undermine, gain control of, or replace the existing discourse on the issues that are important both for the subject of a communication strategy and for the target audience (Price, 2015). The process of implementing a communication strategy might differ from the given direction and be dynamic and multivariate; its results are difficult to predict (Price, 2015). This viewpoint causes fair objections. Many experts believe that communications can be characterized as strategic if their implementation is guided by the expected result (Akhmetshin et al., 2018a; Dudo & Kahlor, 2017). This result might represent an attitude, belief, or knowledge. In addition, it can mean changing or creating something. Communication can both succeed and fail. For example, there were communication failures in relations with the Islamic world during the global war on terrorism waged in response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the invasion of Iraq. The publicly announced strategy of promoting freedom in the Middle East



by President G.W. Bush, theses about the need to establish a free Iraq at the heart of the Middle East and claims that as long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export were interpreted by Islamic extremists as another attempt by the so-called “Western crusaders” to impose their values on Muslims. As a result, the more the US promoted its goal of establishing democracy in Muslim countries, the more it gave the Islamists a reason to see an analogy with the Crusades (Corman, 2006).

This example demonstrates the inefficiency of strategic communication as a monologue since it reproduces its meanings and is limited to the transmission of unambiguous and simple messages, which can lead to an undesired result. According to S.V. Bogdanov (2017), dialogue models are more effective for working with target audiences, i.e. representatives of other cultures and adherents of other values. In these models, communication is understood not as the transmission of a message from the sender to the recipient but as a complex process of interpreting the actions of a particular subject and making judgments about their thoughts, motives, and intentions. Within the framework of dialogue models, such negative components as pressure, manipulation, deceit, and propaganda are secondary or completely excluded from strategic communications (TASS, 2021). An emphasis is laid on creating and maintaining common values, finding new meanings, and carrying out dialogue and joint activities between public authorities and target audiences (Bogdanov, 2017). Dialogue models need to be developed to form a positive image of Russia among the external target audience.

To increase the effectiveness of an information impact on target audiences, especially external ones, it is necessary to systematize strategic communications in public administration. This systematization should include the selection of the main communication model that allows for achieving a positive result when working with an audience with different ideologies, a clear setting of communication objectives and tasks, the appointment of responsible executors, and the creation of an appropriate personnel structure and technological base. Systematization should be built over the basic document (the Communication Strategy of Russia) that must be developed as soon as possible. One of the goals defined by this document should be strengthening state sovereignty.

## 7. Conclusion

Modern strategic communications are among the most important tools used by various forces to develop or threaten sovereignty as one of the basic foundations of statehood. Strategic communications are closely related to a country's sovereignty since they can be used to protect national interests, counter disinformation, and increase the resilience of society. To achieve these goals, states need to develop and implement effective strategic communications that use new technologies and consider the changing nature of internal and external threats.

The state management of mass communications in the Russian Federation does not fully comply with the concept of strategic communications since it lacks a clearly defined and developed communication model in terms of modern requirements, clear principles, and other features defined by the communication concept. The effective use of strategic communications for solving various state tasks, including the development of sovereignty, can be achieved through systematizing communication activities based on the state strategy. Thus, the research hypothesis has been proven. Further studies should analyze modern information wars.

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