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Communication Management in Psychological Warfare: New Opportunities and new
Threats for International Security

The New Illusion Makers Coin Death: IS PsyOps in Progress
(***Paper in progress***)

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A properly organized PsyOp is not only a means of getting a target audience's support but also a way to activate participation of its members in broadcasting imposed ideas given the fact that they live in the illusion of independent thinking. Thus, originators of a PsyOp are at a task to create a special information field and to inhibit mechanisms of critical thinking and information flows comprehension.

Being at first an unknown group of militias, IS managed after a few years to become an organization with a vast geopolitical influence and made an unprecedented number of foreign fighters to march under its banner. Many educated Muslims joined the ranks of that terrorist organization to fight for the purity of faith despite the fact that ISIS itself unequivocally and rudely violated the majority of Islamic norms and traditions.

In this paper the case of IS information influence strategy as unique synthesis of skillfully adjusted interpretations of doctrinal Islamic provisions and contemporary approaches in PsyOps will be analyzed. Along with dangers that arise in case these methods are used by Islamic terrorist groups and organizations a few ways to neutralize the impact of such activities will as well be in the focus of attention.

Key words: PsyOp, communication management, terrorism, propaganda, IS

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Introduction

Increase in quantitative and qualitative characteristics of interrelation and interdependence of transformation processes in modern society naturally causes changes in the sphere of management. Transformation of managerial principles within the arising era of postmodern is characterized by a transition to veiled and mediated mechanisms of influence, i.e. a formation of contexts (Yakunin, V.I., ed., 2009; Annenkov, V.I., ed., 2013). Contextualization creates the illusion of independence of decision-making process in the consciousness of the object of influence, whereas his motivation, system of values and algorithm of actions have already been formed.

Localization, fragmentation and pluralism as the most important features of a postmodern era transform a directive top-bottom vertical model of management into a horizontal model with the network-based principle of the subsystems' organization. "Network" of a postmodern, or global information society, it is an essentially different social phenomenon which combines artificial and psycho-social networks (Annenkov, V.I., ed., 2013, 2015). The quantity, quality of information and access to it determine perception of reality, world outlook and the behavior of individuals and social groups in the global information space. Therefore the primary task of any administrative structure in this space is to create advantageous perception of reality for target audiences. A directive model of management which controls action gives way to a new model which controls consciousness, and by setting-up a necessary environment - a context - controls action, attitude and worldview. Being a universal trend of administrative policy this approach has naturally become distributed within various terrorist structures, the most powerful and dangerous of which is at the moment IS.

Conceptual framework and complex review of methods and forms of IS PsyOps demonstrate gradual increase in effectiveness of its influence on individual and public consciousness. The paper seeks to demonstrate new methods in the IS inventory that are used to broadcast radical religious ideas within the context of new managerial principles of postmodern. Relevance and timeliness of the paper lies in the urgent need to develop conscious approach in evaluating dangers that may arise in case various terrorist and extremist groups use contemporary state-of-the-art toolkit typical of new managerial tendencies to broadcast radical religious ideas and create an affinity between them and potential supporters. The author argues that the network-centric principle of the group organization and accordingly chosen forms and methods of information and psychological influence shape the concept of IS information influence strategy. The emphasis in the paper is therefore laid on the effectiveness measure of Islamic doctrinal provisions interpretations' broadcasting that serve for IS strategic purposes.

Methodology of the research is based on comparative analysis of related studies (Haroro J. Ingram, 2015; Rodger A. Bates, 2014; Isaak Kfir, 2014; Matthew D.M. Francis, 2015; Greg Simons, 2016; Jytte Klausen, 2015; Maggioni, M., Magri, P., 2015) and special reports (Stratcom COE, 2015; Brookings Centre for Middle East Policy, 2015; General Intelligence and Security Service, 2016; Kavkazskiy geopoliticheskiy klub, 2015; Threat Knowledge Group, 2015) along with analysis of experts' opinions. Initial assumptions were assessed according to the analysis of competing hypotheses method introduced by Richards J. Heuer, Jr. (Richards J. Heuer, Jr., 1999). That method based on thoughtful weighting of alternative conclusions allowed to minimize certain cognitive limitations and biases and made possible to address the issue open-mindedly.

Objectives and ideological basis of IS information strategy

Analyzing methods of IS information influence it is necessary to determine its geopolitical objectives and ideological basis. An ideological basis of IS is a combination of pan-islamism and a takfirism that strengthens an objective trend of radicalization and islamization (Glazova, A.V., 2015). Pan-islamism is an ideology with religious and political aspects. Its

cornerstone idea is the unity of all Muslims and the need to create a unified Muslim state. Takfirism was developed in Egypt in the 60s' by Mustafa Shukri and is based on idea that many Muslims departed from initial, "true Islam" and therefore are subject to extirpation. The main difference from "salafi" views (for example) is the justification of violence along with extremely polarized evaluation system: "true believers" i.e. takfirists, and infidels - all others including non-takfirist Muslims. Respectively the very fact that non-takfirists exist is undesirable and is sees as an obstacle for the caliphate creation. Extreme danger of superficial interpretation of sacred texts of Islam that leads to the creation of such sects externalize itself in IS propaganda activities. Full of radical extremes takfirist ideology is a convenient basis for terrorist groups to achieve their political goals.

The main strategic, i.e. geopolitical purpose of IS is the creation of a caliphate – a theocratic state based on Sharia law. A caliphate as a concept is of great importance for many Muslims. Firstly, it is the memory of Just Caliphs (632-661) time. According to ulama (scientists studying Islam) "their rule was in line with the heritage of the Prophet and they were consecutive exhorters of Islam ideals" (Ali-Zade, A., 2007). Secondly, a caliphate is an ideal of a communal state system. The course of life there is subordinated to the laws of the granted revelations in sacred texts of Islam. Along with the concept of "the ultimate battle" the idea of a "caliphate" is the cornerstone of IS information strategy. "The ultimate battle" is an eschatological concept that is based on the idea of a "final battle" between the good and the evil before the Judgment Day. IS actively uses apocalyptic rhetoric to legitimize its actions for various target audiences.

According to the Brookings Institute research published in October, 2015 (Brookings Centre for Middle East Policy, 2015) the main topics of IS propaganda narratives are the following:

1) Urgency. It is highlighted that now brothers in faith suffer and perish for Islam, now the caliphate as the place for "true believers" is being created and is suffering the fight for existence, now every Muslim must help. Imperatives of action and the need of its urgent implementation are created.

2) Agency. The emphasis is laid on the involvement of each Muslim into everything that takes place in the arising caliphate. Obvious manipulative character of this narrative is in aprioristic recognition that IS actions are in the line with the norms of "true" Islam.

3) Authenticity. IS symbols, administrative structure and ideological precepts are seen as necessary attributes for the new state that gives here and now a chance to become its part.

4) Victory. The attention is focused on unprecedented efficiency of IS actions both in military and administrative aspects.

For the purpose of information influence the narratives are used in a complex. Thus, their simultaneous assimilation and subsequent broadcasting in a form of complete system of values are ensured.

According to NATO Stratcom Center of Excellence (Stratcom COE, 2015) the main objectives of IS information strategy are the following:

1) Support from target audiences. It includes not only recruiting of new fighters for military operations, but also potential recruits whose radicalization can happen later. The target audience also includes individuals who are ready to broadcast IS ideas, participate in fund raising or any other activity that will be useful for the group.

2) Creation of a uniform social structure. IS represents the so-called caliphate as the place of unity for "true" Muslims. The emphasis is laid on the dichotomy "us-them" that in particular serves as an additional security mechanism within the organization and for territories under control.

3) Fear dissemination. Cruelty and uncompromising stance of terrorists that is broadcasted in the form of verified for target audiences media content multiplies psychological effect of intimidation. The underlying message is the futility of resistance. On the other hand the same message due to its zero tolerance carries recruiting function, causing empathy within target audiences.

4) Distribution of information about the progress in caliphate creation process and discreditation of opponents' counter-messages. Complex information influence allows IS to create the illusion of efficiency of its actions targeted at stabilizing the administrative economic activity in the occupied territories and ability to ensure safety for the population.

As it has been already mentioned, the main objective of any administrative structure of a postmodern era is to create a special information environment - a context - to transform world outlook, feelings and will of objects of influence in the necessary direction, introduce in their consciousness certain behavior models. IS therefore forms a special system of evaluation filters and an alternative world outlook for target audiences. Certain imperatives are implanted in their consciousness thus ensuring behavior models favorable to the group.

According to Haroro J. Ingram (Haror J. Ingram, 2015) a complex information influence of IS includes customized appeal to the factor of perception and the factor of a pragmatic assessment. The factor of a pragmatic assessment includes safety, stability and life sustenance. Media coverage of military and political activities of the group supports this factor by means of synchronization between a narrative and the action. At the same time IS discredits narrative-action link of a warring party and focuses on the lack of alternatives of the course that is carried out by the group. The factor of perception consists of a complex interaction of out- and intra group identity aspects together with a "problem/decision" concept. Decision expediency is based on association with the group and opposition of "the group" to hostile "others". External group identity is associated with the concept "problem", whereas intra group identity is associated with the concept "decision". IS is associated with an image "good guy", "defender", "competent", "righteous", "kind". All that doesn't correspond to a conceptual ideological basis of the group is associated in the consciousness of the objects of influence with an image "stranger", "enemy", "lie", "incorrectly", "hostile".

Powerful information resonance targeted at wide audiences is ensured by means of parallel and unidirectional use of the two above mentioned factors. The created evaluation filter exerts a mobilizing effect that motivates to act those who hasn't made their mind yet and gives a strong ideological impulse to those who made the first steps on the way of radicalization. Adaptation and reconcilement of separate elements of content for target audiences from western countries along with a wide broadcast and interpretation of those events that appeal to the factor of pragmatic assessment and the factor of perception strengthens media resonance and influence on target audiences across the globe. Complex synchronization of coordinated and interconnected in purposes, tasks and time forms and methods of information and psychological influence carried out by IS corresponds to the definition of a psychological operation thus making it possible to describe this type of information influence as fundamental in administrative practice of this terrorist group.

Interpretation of canonical provisions of Islam in an advantageous way is a fundamental factor in exerting information and psychological influence and creating the information field around the group. Activity of IS strongly contradicts to doctrinal provisions of Islam and has no relation to religion at all (Fetva, 2015; Open Letter to Al-Baghdadi, 2014). For the purposes of information influence IS skillfully uses Koranic ayats and suras out of their initial context along with the statements of authoritative religious figures and scientists. A correlation of an action and its media interpretation to the necessary statement or ayat takes place. The effect of influence is amplified by a refraction of this complex through in advance designed prism of eschatological narratives (apocalypse, the final battle of supporters of "true" Islam, salvation). Evaluation filter created by IS in the information space gives emphasis to the expedient interpretations and downplays detrimental ones.

It is important to understand that Islam is not just a religion; it is a way of life that regulates all aspects of everyday activity of an individual. By cfreating a special information field and skillfully manipulating with aspirations of Muslims, jihadist religious groups of IS type entirely corrupt and deform cognitive processes of an individual or a group, gradually preparing them for more radical religious ideas. Influence thus is directed to the main level of individual and public consciousness as the system of concepts, views and world outlook of a society in

general, and partially to the deep level of public consciousness that makes itself evident in ethics, morals, concepts, values and spiritual traditions of the people.

Countermeasures

Taking into account the bove-mentioned features and consequences of IS activity in information space the following methods to decrease efficiency and discredit the activity of the group are suggested.

1) Purposeful destruction of IS information centers. Production of the most part of media content takes place in the centers of the so-called "medium level"(Haroro J. Ingram, 2015), i.e. media infrastructure of the main cities in administrative districts of the occupied territories. It is important to understand that IS media centers, being a "loud-hailer" of its activities, are the main hubs of information and recruiting network distributed in the global information space. Information hubs in other countries follow the guidelines from the main centers. Destruction of the main information hubs breaks continuous communications within IS information network and distorts the "word-action-image" complex in actual media content of group. Decrease in quantity of the let-out content and its inconsistency will lead to considerable decrease in the efficiency of information and psychological acts of the group.

2) One of the major elements of the developed information counteraction system against is the joint and coordinated activity of public and government institutions.

a) Efficiency of IS information strategy is based on the quantitative superiority and the coherence of actions of those Internet users who support its activity. For example, "Media a battalion Al-Battar" (IS special unit that operates in the information space) in 2014 had more than 3000 users, and this unit is not the only one (Brookings Centre for Middle East Policy, 2015). Coordination of action of such number of users makes it possible to block and discredit promptly practically any counter-measures which are directly or indirectly targeted at the group. There is no such number of experts and coordination of their actions in the structures that carry out counteractions against IS in the information space. Joint efforts of governmental and public institutions will increase dramatically the number of active and interested participants. Joint actions of experts will develop the framework of the counter-strategy and in due time coordinate activity of the participants – non-specialists, whose number is obviously more. The reverbing effect created by a large number of "voices" will strengthen purposeful influence and increase efficiency of any counter-measures. The network principle of the organization of such interaction will make the structure more resistant against counteraction from IS.

b) It is of urgent importance to cooperate with Islamic educational public organizations. Educated and authoritative ulama can clarify for target audiences a duality, glaring distortion and falsity of those narratives of the group that use Islamic world outlook. To discredit this type of narratives is the cornerstone in the development of counter-influence system of measures as they primarily are targeted at public consciousness of median and deep levels. Consultations of ulama and their vigorous activity in the information space will allow to effectively counteract the information "infection" of target audiences with IS media content.

c) Development of special programs and a support of public organizations that are engaged in Islamic humanitarian and educational activity is important as well. It is necessary to understand that a potential recruit will unambiguously give preference and trust to brothers in faith when special activities are carried out to create an adequate image of IS in his mind. Coordinated work of such public structures will help to stop dissemination of radical and extremist ideas, promote faster socialization of the former members of group.

3) Efficiency of IS activity is based on the balance between ideological basis of group and an upper-structure which consists of the "word-action-image" complex that appeals to emotional and pragmatic factors. The mismatch of vertical (basis – upper-structure) and horizontal (a triangle "word-business-image") correlations is seen as a conceptual basis of the information counteractions strategy against IS.

Conclusion

IS unique character is revealed in the fact that no other terrorist group has incarnated so obviously achievements and tendencies of information society of a postmodern era and used them to strengthen it's influence. IS information space doesn't have an equivalent among other terrorist structures and has a high centripetal potential. Carefully verified ideological basis gives the chance to present practically any action of the group in compliance with its tactical and strategic objectives. A favorable for target audiences system of perception is created in IS information space by means of powerful tools of information and psychological influence.

The world community urgently needs to understand how dangerous the use of modern tools of influence on individual and public consciousness by terrorist and extremist structures can be. It is vitally important to define efficiency limits of a complex influence of these tools on target audiences in the regions where Muslim population is prevailing. Underestimation of terrorist structures capabilities, lack of the adequate and coordinated counteraction measures can lead to uncontrollable dissemination of radical religious and extremist ideas in various regions of the world. In its turn it can considerably dramatize the military-political situation in those regions.

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