

Informational Aggression in Context of Epistemological Models of Info Sphere

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Abstract—The paper is devoted to some aspects of information wars that exert a great influence on any member of modern society in our contemporary world. The authors of the paper introduce the concepts of “Other” and “heroic” and discuss the approaches to the interaction in the infosphere. The emphasis is put on the process of interaction (collision) of wills and interests of political subjects. The problems of infowars are considered in the light of totality, conflict, egocentrism, isolation, fatalism, relativism and other approaches. The authors also describe the interaction models that provoke a rupture of the epistemological system and the primary reality in the sphere of practical activity, splitting consciousness and increasing the general level of information and active aggression. In the framework of retrospective and prospective, the authors are able to single out relevant approaches to the description of the info sphere and informational aggression. In all cases, the authors are confronted with incomplete images of the world, declaring their completeness and practical significance. The problem is that there are models that predict an impending civilization crisis at the global level and claim to be the universal recipe for overcoming this crisis.

Key words—*infowars, approach, model, confrontation, society, communication*

I. INTRODUCTION

Information as a means of aggressive interaction is a component of many historical episodes and reflected in cultural monuments [10]. The impression is that this is almost a normal state in any intercultural contacts, where interpenetration and mutual assimilation are not a conscious and voluntary choice; accordingly, “... every person, military or civil, participates in the information war in one form or another”¹.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

However, this approach is dominated not so much by the objectively observed aggression of the communication partner, as by the subject’s own aggression on the presence in the information field. Any interaction with the Other in this system is automatically reduced either to subordinating oneself to the Other, or to subordinating the Other to oneself, and this generally reduces any communication (and at the interpersonal level) to the format of “war of all against all”. In this case, we should (by analogy with the concept of Carlyle’s history [16]) speak of

a “heroic” approach to interaction in the info sphere, since the determining point here is the process of interaction (and collision) of more or less conscious wills and interests of political subjects. All decisions and actions have a goal realized by political subjects, which in retrospect can be reconstructed in accordance with the principle of “who benefits”, and politics is both a way of self-awareness and a sphere of self-realization of these subjects. All forms of confrontation, including informative, are not the goal, but the inevitable consequence of the basic lack of resources and the desire to preserve and multiply “our own”, including to the detriment of the “Other”. With the political process reaching the global level and the absorption of the “frontier” by recognized political subjects, the awareness of limiting development by the existence and informative activity of the “Other” – and, as a result, the level of confrontation in communications – should increase under the heroic model. The strategic value of this approach becomes the “continuity” and “security”, the preservation of the established cultural paradigm, and “Other” clearly marked as a “threat”, which requires either counter activity, i.e. aggression and expansion (with a natural backlash, and as a result, escalation of the conflict), or self-isolation (“the Iron Curtain” in the USSR, the concept of the “sovereign internet” in modern Russia, the information isolation of the North Korean population, “the Great Chinese firewall”, etc.). Thus, when describing this model of interaction of subjects in the infosphere, the term «heroic» should be supplemented to “*heroic-paranoid*”.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

It is noted that the description of the info sphere from the heroic-paranoid positions gives an internally consistent result, as demonstrated by the works of adepts of various geopolitical schools [1, 5, 17]. However, its use in the practice of forming a complex of managerial decisions (including in the field of public administration) leads to a number of critical problems: *God’s chosen by people*. The installation of the hierarchy, “knowledge of one’s place” requires the unconditional authority of power, personification and irremovability (see the phenomenon of “personal structures” of Alexander, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, Ford, Stalin, Castro, “lack of alternatives” in Yeltsin’s and now

¹ V. Markomenko, Deputy of General Director of the Federal Agency of Governmental Communications and Information (FAGCI) under the President of the Russian Federation (“Izvestia”, 1997, August 12)

Putin's) is a source of inevitable crisis in a situation when a change of government is necessary;

Totality. The isomorphism, transparency and irremovability of the structure make it necessary to use the one that is closest (convenient) to the ruling elite as the only admissible epistemology and declare any deviations as “alien” and “hostile”. In the case of real or imaginary coincidence of the epistemologies of internal dissidents and external counterparties of the info sphere, a conclusion is formulated about the deliberate engagement of the dissident (“Russian money” as a source of popularity of ultra-right parties, Euro skeptics and separatist movements, labels like “The fifth column”, “Washington Obcom”, “Soros’ money”). Hence, the desire in any situation to look for the only source, “the center of power”, “the beneficiary”, which leads to a fascination with “conspiracy theories”. It forces the elites to spend enormous resources on control, while in a multinational and multicultural society (for example, in the Russian Federation) the task seems to be generally unrealizable in practice. At the level of society, it leads to an increase in internal tension, an increase in the level of aggression, and ultimately to the dominance of the cynical mode in the info sphere and the destruction of the national socio-cultural community.

Conflict. The heroic approach is aimed at war by definition, does not consider the available resources and ignores costs.

Egocentrism, turning into complacency. Command and administrative epistemology is based on the assumption that action based on ideals is a privilege and an exceptional quality of “our own”, since only “own” epistemology and our own ideals are considered relevant. The existence of a different norm, ideals and sincerity is not allowed – or is described in terms of the “empire of evil”, “Mordor”, etc. Accordingly, it is assumed that opponents *always* appeal to ideals exclusively for propaganda purposes, in practice only by masking their interests with their help. An illustrative example is the system of *mutual* accusations between Western and Russian politicians – in neglecting international law, the interests and lives of civilians in various countries, human rights and moral norms. Substantive dialogue in such conditions is possible only in the “cynical” mode of *Realpolitik*, which impedes mutual understanding and distorts the strategic perspective, making it impossible to correctly predict the actions of communication partners.

Isolation. The heroic approach in the info sphere was initially focused on the preservation of borders. Such preservation is possible only if the internal discourse is declared as self-sufficient (“spiritual braces”, “the only true doctrine”, “true faith”, etc.), that is, subject to the tendency to ignore the *information component of the information field*, which in this case turns exclusively into the sphere of hostile or friendly intentions. Ultimately, this installation excludes the possibility of taking adequate political decisions due to the lack of access by the elite to an objective picture of reality replaced by ideological doctrine.

Attempts to go beyond the confrontational modus are concepts of tolerance, complementarity of cultures, the separation of values and interests, “the open society” [8], and finally the idea of the inevitable erosion of national communities as a logical consequence of the development of “the information society” [2; 4]. A typical approach for this model to the historical process can be called a “*revolutionary*” or “neo-Marxist”: due

to economic expediency, humanity is supposed to move to a more advanced, “comfortable” stage (post-industrial society, transhumanism, technological singularity) [3, 9, 15], which will replace the previous formation due to greater economic efficiency, as a result of which the old cultural code will be superseded by the new one. Conflicts in the info sphere in this case lose their functions of the confrontation of civilizations and turn into a chaotic, pseudo-conscious collision of dying and emerging discourses in search of balance (like the religious wars of the emergence of an industrial society in Europe) [3, 4]. In its turn, as an ideal, communication is viewed as equal interaction, complementarity and interpenetration in the process of sociocultural co-creation (Habermas’s “communicative action” [6]). Subjects of all levels of complexity interact equally in the info sphere. Conflict-based binary logic of “one’s own and others” is replaced by the concept “pastiche”, multicomponent coordinate system in which the necessary approach is updated by the subject situationally. Accordingly, any community exists only “here and now”, inevitably transforming into the next moment of historical time and transforming its own history and culture as necessary, which removes the question of preserving cultural boundaries and, therefore, makes any aggression redundant; in the extreme case, the role is the cultural game. If the heroic-paranoid model fundamentally perceives the Other as a threat, and the Future as a space of threats, and in this sense is retrospective, then in the evolutionary approach we are talking about multiplicity, flexibility, complementarity, and openness to the future — that are, prospects. This, however, does not make the analyzed model flawless; rather, on the contrary, it highlights a number of strategic problems:

Fatalism. Leaving outside the scope of this study the question of the correctness of historical determinism, we note that the future of the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” [7] up to date belongs more to the sphere of ideology than to economic reality. The technologies necessary for this now exist either as unrealized (artificial intelligence, complete synthesis of food, cheap public energy, transhuman and biomodifying technologies), or as partially implemented projects with unclear prospects (renewable energy, robotics, 3D printing, nanotechnology). Thus, in the field of communications, this approach is more ideological, in extreme forms - a religious dogma, than a scientifically correct description of the predicted future of humanity.

The substitution of motivations. The concepts of Apel [by 2] and Habermas imply an ethically oriented “restart” of human relations through the info sphere as an instrument of conscious communication. However, the attempts of traditionalist structures, relying on the principles of an “open society”, to enter communication with this society according to the proposed rules, upholding their discourse as possible and — within the framework of the concept of plurality of complementary discourses — are acceptable, meet resistance as “being contrary to the ideals of tolerance and openness”. The “open society”, thus, directly declares the inequality of discourses built on other grounds. As a result, elites who form a conservative agenda and their supporters perceive the doctrines of openness, multiculturalism, etc. not as a real (or emerging) sociocultural perspective, but as a manipulative ideological construct, an attempt by means of propaganda proclaiming tolerance for the, destroy the Other as self-sustaining and competitive discourse, destroy its

¹ That is, the “Regional Committee”, like as “Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union” – popular Russian Internet meme, denoting external control by US government

cultural and political ontology. Thereby this confirms the original justification of the heroic-paranoid model, and this, in turn, calls into question the possibility of building a social system based on the principles of complementary discourses.

Relativism. The principle of free competition and complementarity of discourses in the info sphere leads not only to free “horizontal” interaction of moral and amoral, legal and illegal, but also to the competitiveness of antiscientific, anti-technological and anti-information discourses. As a result, the subject is influenced by a variety of information objects, with neither time nor authoritative reference points of analytical perception. Since the de-hierarchical placement and interaction of discourses also covers the space of culture and history (which turn into modifiable and multiple discourse, into an environment of arbitrariness, free co-creation of subjects), a specific subject is deprived of the opportunity for rational choice between discourses, which excludes the possibility of responsible actions both in the communicative and in the social sphere. The remoteness of interaction, the non-binding nature of the consequences and the unpredictability of the jointly generated result of any activity transform a person of the information age from a supervisor to a super-consumer who is guided only by his own will and does not recognize morality and responsibility – if morality and responsibility are not part of actual discourse. The adepts of the information revolution appeal to hedonistic settings. The cognitive activity of the subject (especially in the context of relativism) or productive creative, especially social activity (if these actions are not part of the framework of optional discourse) are not supported by the existing computing. Reality turns into a kaleidoscope of gaming activities that do not imply a responsible approach, and are selected according to the criteria of momentary desire and the maximum expected pleasure.

The substitution of reality. Any digitization technology assumes, at the input, the interpretation of data through signal quantization processes, which leads to quantization errors. In the information environment, we can encounter images of reality of unimaginably high quality of authenticity, and the quality of shooting, processing and broadcasting already seems to be superior to the ability of ordinary human perception (these are, for example, gig pixel graphic samples). As a result, the subject has a feeling of knowledge of reality, based not on knowing the reality itself, but its image translated by another subject through the interpretation tool developed by the third subject; at the same time, the toolkit of modification and the environment of relativism makes it easy to change any data in any desired direction. If we compare the capabilities of the subject of the modern info sphere with those possessed by his predecessors, it turns out that in the grassroots and even middle segment the quality of information flow (especially in the non-verbal sphere) has increased, but this is achieved at the cost of leveling the elite segment of perception. Like relativism in the criteria for evaluating information, the digital medialization of the info sphere de facto impedes any adequate cognitive activity of the subject.

Pseudomorphoses. The consistent implementation of the liberal principles in the info sphere systematically turns into their opposite, which leads to the questionable authenticity of the initial attitudes. Thus, the plurality of information flows is accompanied by a generalization of control over communication channels (in this case, the project Ilona Mask on creating a global Internet infrastructure can be considered as a critical point). Control over communication channels and big data technologies, which allow analyzing personal data and communication preferences of *each* subject of the info sphere, looks like

freedom in particulars with total control over the image of the world in its essential elements. The principle of openness, the rejection of privacy, also works on this. In a similar way, individualization of production takes standardization to a deeper level - to the level of development of modular schemes for any consumer goods, from products to cars, by the type of LEGO designer, or the production of consumables for 3D printing. The erosion of political and cultural borders, multiculturalism and tolerance in this case is not the inevitable logical consequence of a change in the mode of production, but an ideological simulacrum designed to adapt the division of economic and political power in favor of TNCs.

Instead of a socially responsible actor of communicative action, an ideal subject of the info sphere is a subject with an unbalanced pyramid of needs, lack of criteria for assessing reality, devoid of both a sense of authenticity of the present, and permanent and reliable knowledge of someone else's and own past, respectively, incapable of development, movement future, but stochastically drifting from illusion to illusion. These characteristics fit quite well the clinical picture of dissociative psychopathology; accordingly, this approach to describing the info sphere can be described as “*dissociative-psychopathic*”.

Along with retrospective and prospective, we can single out another relevant approach to the description of the info sphere and informational aggression. This approach, combining the elite concept of personality, characteristic of both Eastern and Western philosophical schools, with practical developments of the military and managers, based on the description of the principle of uncertainty of the external environment [12, 14]. The communicative environment is assessed simultaneously as a resource and a challenge, a space of opportunities and threats, which require maintaining the stability of any structure of creativity, adaptability and system analysis of incoming information. The theory of uncertainty again highlights the personality, the hero, but the hero of a different warehouse than the “sacral ruler” of the heroic model. In a situation where the influence of factors is multiple and simultaneous, when a key parameter can be defined erroneously, and when a catastrophe can be postponed, but not excluded, and the most important task is not to avoid a tidal wave, and to climb its crest, the hero becomes a charismatic leader, a risk taker, an adventurer. N. Taleb directly indicates as prototype figures of pirates, conquistadors, adventurers; accordingly [11], we are talking about an “*adventurous*” approach, which presumes conflicts in the info sphere as a necessary and inevitable, but not exclusive component of information exchange.

At first glance, the epistemology of uncertainty, focused primarily on the adequacy of world-description, on the deconstruction of mythologies and the instrumental nature of knowledge, seems to be the most correct and promising. This, however, does not mean the absence of its critical deficiencies:

Neuroticism. Well-being is falsely. Being in «a comfort zone» is a source of underestimation of a changing reality, an attempt to stay in this zone is a source of suffering. The normal state of the subject is the awareness of the pressure of the environment – it gives an incentive to development. The development of itself is also not an end in itself, but renewable resource in a situation of uncertainty. We get the classic recursion where “you need to run very fast just to stay in place”. At the same time, since the subject considers him as a resource of survival, and also considers its external structures, we should speak about the inevitable depreciation of the human resource – i.e. the subject consciously works on self-exhaustion, which affects his

condition. The hero of the changing world is an emotionally unstable neurotic with an unpredictable and often unjustifiably aggressive reaction to any case, and this is such an essential point that the definition of this model should be changed to “*adventurous neurotic*”.

Cynicism. A survival resource by definition is *everything* — values, norms and ideals, cultural myths and religious beliefs — to the extent that they can be useful for survival. Principles are accepted not because the subject divides them, but because they are profitable here and now. Since there is no reason to believe that this logic is not generally accepted outside the subject, any attempt at communication should be considered as an attempt to annex «I» as a resource for the survival of the “Other”. In practice, it means a global *crisis of confidence* in external structures and proclaimed values, appeals, ideals and norms — and, not so much, leads to a shift of subjects to the heroic mode of action, but rather to the development of indifference, sociocultural passivity [13].

Lack of strategic perspective. The adventurous-neurotic approach perceives the world and the subject as purely utilitarian, and this means that its carrier is fundamentally incapable of setting objectives beyond the horizon of events. If this approach is optimal in the era of the collapse of the old discourses, then it is not capable of producing a meaningful alternative. Typically, in this sense, is the scornful attitude expressed by the same N.Taleb [11] to the fundamental science.

IV. CONCLUSION

It should be emphasized: an analysis of the three most common models for describing the info sphere led us to a choice of definitions borrowed from psychopathological terminology. In this case, they are not used in the direct sense, but as a symbolic image, appropriate to indicate the essential metaproperties of the epistemological systems under consideration. Each of these approaches is completely closed on itself, internally consistent, two of them perceive objective reality as secondary and secondary to the used concept of reality, the third denies the subject of communication the right to any properties except instrumental, i.e. ultimately — in independence, destroying the ontology of the individual. Each of the approaches is built on the mental rejection of other approaches and at the same time consistently incorporates these approaches into its own world description system as threats of one kind or another. Finally, each of the models provokes a rupture of the epistemological system and the primary reality in the sphere of practical activity, which leads to a split of consciousness and an increase in the general level of [18].

information and often active aggression. In this case we are not talking about the fundamental infidelity of these models. The point is that in all cases we are confronted with *incomplete* images of the world, declaring their *completeness* and practical significance on the basis of internal consistency. The problem is that in all three cases we have models that predict an impending civilization crisis at the global level and claim to be the universal recipe for overcoming this crisis. However, if the crisis *really* becomes a bifurcation point, then it is pointless to talk about any recipes that guarantee the right choice, since none of the existing cultural paradigms or value systems will remain intact. The only thing that can be argued for sure is that everyone will have to make an existential choice in one form or another.

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