MEDIA MANIPULATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WAR IN UKRAINE AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract: *Media manipulation and psychological war in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova is a battleground of various psychological methods in order to subordinate the masses often under cover of alleged common good. In this regard Russian propaganda machinery is one that works perfectly since the Soviet period. Ukrainian crisis swept the struggle for Ukraine's informational space which has also affected neighboring countries, here referring to Moldova. The conflict between Ukraine and Russia now is more ambiguous because information warfare methods and techniques have become more sophisticated and aim directly to misinformation, informational intoxication and propaganda through the media.*

Introduction

Ukrainian crisis has brought up the phenomenon of psychological warfare, part of informational warfare, by using propaganda and media manipulation. Psychological warfare is defined using information against people's minds through information, disinformation, manipulation, propaganda and subliminal techniques for influencing the purpose of changing conception, attitudes, choices and enemy's behavior forces. It takes the form of operations aimed at: the national will, statesmanship, political structures, commanders and cultural heritage (Libicki, 1995, p. 10).

Dissemination of information permanently exerts influence on personal needs level and interests of the people, predisposing the individual to concrete and advantageous political behavior, which, however, is not perceived by society as imposed by the mass media. The psychological impact produced by this new type of war is a difficult subject to study; it is hard to identify the participants because of their clandestine matter.

This paper investigates methods and strategies of media manipulation that were used in Ukraine and Moldova in the context of the Ukrainian crisis. Last but not least, this paper contains ways of

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cooperation and actions, both between EU countries as well as in Moldova and Ukraine, to prevent and combat media manipulation.

1. Psychological warfare - fight with the invisible enemy

The media has a huge influence on political processes in modern society by forming mass visions on economic, political, social issues. If in the first phase of the conflict in Ukraine, Russian media reports about alleged atrocities committed by Ukrainians, easily proved to be false, later Russians began to spread conspiracy theories: for example, the crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (17 July 2014), the plane was actually filled with corpses and that Ukrainians shot it down in an operation under false flag. Currently, Russian media promotes the idea that any information source cannot be credible.

Some Russian and Ukrainian media outlets avoid publicizing certain topics of public interest, by providing incomplete information, without presenting a complex array for public, or giving them sufficient detail to understand what happens in one case or another. Psychological warfare was mainly seen by using media strategies of exaggerating the facts and by using filtering information and selection of sources. Most of the news were and continue to be unilateral, presenting reality through some alleged representatives of the regions, without providing sufficient access to central authority's position. Russia-controlled TV-channels (such as LifeNews, Россия1, Россия24, Первый канал, НТВ, РЕН ТВ) as well as Ukrainian TV-channels (like Inter, Ukraina 24), run by pro-Russia oligarchs or Russian news providers; absorb prominent positions in the Ukrainian media (Veebel, 2015). These publications and online portals illustrated Ukrainian army as criminals, murderers, and even Nazi perpetrators, while ignoring the causes of the war or discussion of Russia's involvement. This image has been created methodically, using very aggressive and emotional rhetoric. Demonstrably false stories of crucified children and raped women were created and replicated in order to discredit the Ukrainian army.

According to Yevhen Fedchenko, Ukrainian journalist and administrator of the site *stopfake.org*, the TV stations as RT (*Russia Today*) and *The Voice of Russia* are the sources of information designed to spread false information about current events, which are directed primarily towards Western audience. Russia Today has an audience of 600 million viewers (Chernichkin, 2014) and set a record of 1 billion views on YouTube. To compare, Ukrainian site *stopfake.org* that reveals Russian false news about Ukraine, have six million visitors in the first six months of existence

(March-September 2014). Therefore it is clear that the financial possibilities of the Russian propaganda succeed to cover a large enough area as to form public opinion on Moscow will (Chernichkin, 2014).

2. Myth of community of all post-Soviet states

Entertainment is a very effective modern weapon in the context of manipulation of the masses, because political events and foreign news, which change every day, are poorly understood by ordinary citizens and attachment to TV channels seems to be a harmless fun. The individual feels psychological need to be attached to a media outlet that can be considered of a greater trust and that will provide a brief summary of all events in an accessible language.

Piotr Pogorzelski, notes in his book "Ukrainian borsch: from the Soviet state to dignity revolution (2015) " the gap between the reality that tries to be present on television and real life in Ukraine. Most of the TV channels in Russian are an assortment of channels, series or feature films that tell either nostalgia for the Soviet period or the adventures of heroes in post-Soviet period. An efficient Moscow media tool of influence is, what is called, the maintaining of "*myth of community of all post-Soviet states*" (Pogorzelski, 2015, p.62). By this notion, polish author considering some Russian melodramatic serials very popular not only in Ukraine or Moldova but throughout all the former Soviet countries forming indestructible concept that people in CIS countries have a common lifestyle, shared a common language of communication and common social problems. In particular there are very popular detective series (such as" *Streets of the Broken Lanterns''* or *Gluhari*" the mountain rooster") and documentaries about the Soviet army and the brave soldiers fighting in the Second World War.

However young and middle-aged people, like writer Irina Karpa, gave up watching the TV in favor of watching other entertainment on personal computer. The writer stresses she cannot understand why Ukrainians watch Russian TV series. They are ridiculous, they really showcase another reality, and other people, other problems and she feels it so in Ukraine as abroad (Pogorzelski, 2015, p. 63). I. Karpa recognizes the fact that there is no good quality Ukrainian TV production or entertainment as a viable alternative and the majority of the people watch Russian TV stations simply because are they got used to them and because they do not want to know anything else. In Moldova there is the same lack of attractive TV channels to combat big budget Russian TV propaganda channels.

The audience unconsciously attach themselves to a media outlet that step by step dictates and shows to the viewers some kind of reality, that ultimate goal is being to generate collective positive reaction to the news that follow right after the so loved Russian TV series. Thus, Russian entertainment loyal viewers have a reduced capacity to question news like that the Russian Federation could be involved in the collapse of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 that crashed on 17 July 2014. Those viewers who have unshaken confidence in Russian television will believe that it is true that the plane was hit to the ground by Ukrainian rebels and the Russian Federation has no involvement with this tragic incident. Reporting on the situation in Moldova, a big part of TV audience is attached to the Russian channels, particularly those in the Transnistrian region, and this part of population are opponents of Moldova's European path and are not even interested in arguments and benefits of EU membership.

3. Manipulation of public opinion through printed newspapers

Printed newspapers seem to be "yesterday's news" as apparently we believe that all people shall inform today only from TV channels, or from the Internet and in a lesser extent from radio. Printed newspapers still have their loyal audiences so obviously manipulative articles are precedent in many publications.

As an example of manipulative paper will serve the article from Russian newspaper "Moldavskie Vedomosti " from July 11, 2014 with the title "Закрыть все российские телеканалы, чтобы молдаване разлюбили Путина" (Close all Russian TV channels for Moldovans to no longer like Putin). The article analyzes the decision of Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual (CCA) dated on July 4, 2014 which prohibits retransmission of "Russia 24" TV channel in Moldova up to 1 January 2015. CCA decision was totally justified based on fact that "Russia 24" spread a big amount of news, reports as propaganda against the Republic of Moldova. "Moldavskie Vedomosti" newspaper fights back by this article accusing CCA decision and, as the author considers, the real reason for ceasing "Russia 24" TV channel is "unprecedented popularity in Moldova of Russian President Vladimir Putin and his policies in support of Ukraine" (Timotin, 2014)."Moldavskie Vedomosti" article's arguments resume demonstrating that a CCA decision is favorable to a particular political party, the "Russia 24" does not rebroadcast manipulation news and overall Russian TV channels have no tools to affect Moldova's European path.

In this regard any newspaper reader who considers more sources of information should realize that the message of the article is at least questionable. In comparison, ''Timpul de dimineata'' (Time), one of the most popular Romanian language newspapers, started a campaign to publish articles that warn about Russian propaganda in Moldova *Timpul de Dimineata* (2014). During this campaign, columnists give the name of the owners of the main Russian TV and radio stations that considers being toxic for Moldovan informational area and even urges to boycott them. Therefore newspapers "Moldavskie Vedomosti" and "Timpul de dimineata" are publications with editorial policy opposing each other and each media outlet defends in its kind the interest of the funders or financier. Newspapers also must keep their readers in digital era when printed newspapers tend to disappear in favor of more attractive sources of information.

How should we read newspapers? This requires reading and analysis of several publications of different political orientations, so first of all several doubts appear about the content of the paper therefore generating the necessity to consult other sources. Only then the ability to identify manipulation in media will appear. In this context, unfortunately loyal readers of the newspapers "Moldavskie Vedomosti " and "Timpul de dimineata" and are not habitual to read the newspaper of each other, because they consider themselves opponents. Thus said, Russian-language readers do not read Romanian language newspapers and vice versa. The language barrier is one of the obstacles but often supersede human ignorance to listen to another opinion.

4. The invasion of cyberspace trolls army

The Internet is a cyberspace of communication offering currently the first platform of interaction between people. Every citizen has the right to present their idea, to unite with others in virtual groups and to start or pursue a civic initiative of any kind at will. Or so we are left to believe. Unfortunately at the moment we find that social networks, personal blogs or informational platforms, declaring themselves independent, but serving as a tool of manipulating the population by forming a public opinion favorable to the ruling political class. In this context, there is a group of people that are willing for a financial remuneration to spread through comments, posts to multiple social networks favorable information about his employer that are often the politicians in power. These computer workers are called *trolls* and their general task is to improve the image of their boss in cyberspace in order to hide or discredited those information sources that reveal their true identity.

''Trolls army'' workers in political purposes are a widespread phenomenon in the Russian Federation but also maintained abroad. Recently it has been discovered a "cell of trolls" in Finland,

the Finnish authorities suspect that the source of financing is Russian Embassy in Helsinki. Putin used the trolls in the "information war" with Ukraine, after the annexation of Crimea and during the conflicts with its eastern neighbours (Esanu, 2015).

Newspaper ''The Guardian'' warns in an analytical study about the fact that hundreds of bloggers are paid to flood forums and social networks in Russia and abroad with messages against the West and with comments favorable to Kremlin (Shaun, 2015). The Guardian writes about identifying a building in St. Petersburg, Russia, that housed hundreds of bloggers working on forums, social networking who wrote reviews for Western publications tinted favorable, with remarks approving the policies of Vladimir Putin. So, trolling means to create multiples blogs and fake accounts on major social networks (Odnoklasniki, Vkontakte, Facebook, Twitter etc.) and had to spread different pro-Kremlin messages composed by editors who also monitor their activity.

Editor's strategy was to create a mix of news which would be difficult to realize the attempts to manipulate public opinion. This can be achieved by creating a flow of information both through non-political posts (such as fashion news or culinary recipes) and political comments that are strictly created by editors and multiplied by trolls. "We had to write 'ordinary posts', about making cakes or music tracks we liked, but then every now and then we had to throw a political post about how the Kiev government is fascist, or that sort of thing. There are posts about "Europe's 20 most beautiful castles" and "signs that show you are dating the wrong girl", interspersed with political posts about Ukraine or suggesting that the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny is „corrupt," as recognized one former employee of the troll enterprise (Shaun, 2015). Therefore it can be noted the same strategy of capturing the attention of the public through television by showing entertainment channels before broadcasting news bulletin.

The effect of these posts is achieved when blog and comments readers accept posted information on the social networks and considers that being real one supporting by giving ''like'' and ''share''. Therefore information distribution occurs through *Facebook friends* that not even suspect that they help trolls. Propaganda and information manipulation is accomplished through ''snowball effect", meaning that a comment, seemingly harmless, is perceived as a reality and is increasingly distributed among friends of your friends on social networks.

For more clarity it will be described a sequence of troll's action under a concrete example. The start is choosing an event that occurs in several media sources, for example, the Charlie Hebdo shooting in Paris (7 January, 2015).

Editor's task is to show the Kremlin in a positive light in the general perception of Internet users, which can be reached through troll's comments. The trolls worked in teams of three.

First post news with the message: *"Vladimir Putin contacted the French leader immediately, despite the bad relations between Russia and the west"*

The other two trolls will interfere with supportive comments about Putin's correct gesture on the phenomenon of terrorism nowadays, with comments such as: *"The Russian leader has always stood against aggression and terrorism in general. Thanks to the president's initiatives, the number of terrorist acts inside Russia has decreased dramatically."*

Plus the necessary act to denigrate the United States, and the trolls here will bring abusive posts, for example, against Jennifer Psaki, former spokesman for the US State Department. Trolls will recall the incident in 2014 when Ms. Psaki appeared at a press conference in one boot, actually wearing a transparent orthopedic boot used in cases of traumatic injury to the leg. However, without a closer look you can really see that Ms. Psaki has a naked foot. Russian media at that time preferred to say that Ms. Psaki was forgetful and wear one boot.

Therefore, the trolls will post video of this incident and will comment mischievous:

"Jennifer Psaki looked stupid without one boot. She is the face of USA and appears barefoot in public? He has no shame, no honor, and no nobility, actual US image is built on lies and hypocrisy ..."

Following these posts will be other comments denigrating the US, but with sympathy for the victims of Paris and of course pro-Kremlin messages.

Thus, it was created a core of information that web surfers are ready to join and distribute voluntarily on social networks on the basis of "snowball effect' 'method. Note that international events are consumed very quickly in the informational cyberspace but the impression about the reaction of one or another political actor remains in the collective memory, which also determines the political leaders to engage not only specialists in Public Relations, but also hundreds of workers that make an army of trolls.

The Guardian points out that not all trolls are fanatics or followers loyal to the Kremlin regime. Many of them work just for money even if aware that spread propaganda and negative nonsense in the comments.

"If every day you are feeding on hate, it eats away at your soul. You start really believing in it'' as said by a former worker (Shaun, 2015).

The LiveJournal blogger, who spent two months working as a troll, was paid around 45,000 rubles (£520, $790) a month, to run a number of accounts on the site. The highest paid are trolls who

speak English and comment online articles of the prestigious New York Times newspaper and the British television BBC. But besides good knowledge of English language editors actually require an essay which shows the candidate's political beliefs. Only in this case those will convince that fully support the Kremlin and may be promoted to receive a higher remuneration.

Finally, the work of these bloggers is illegal because all of whom were employed unofficially received money only in cash, had to hide their IP addresses, were forbidden to discuss their work with friends and the only document they signed on employment is one that is obliged to not disclose the work they perform. Therefore we can qualify trolls social network's posts a secret activity but which was born as a result from initiatives founded and designed by specific state structures; we might suspect that they offer not only working conditions but also protection in the event of any charges as participants in the cyber warfare. In any case no one could provide evidence that Russian state structures have any links with so called, "trolls army".

5. Dispute reflection in Ukraine by Russian stations retransmitted in Moldova[1]

The monitoring period: 10 to 24 April 2014.

The TV stations monitored: Rossia 24, RTR, Pervyi Kanal.

Object of monitoring: the main news and discussion channels / live talk shows aired in prime-time.

General trends. The monitoring showed that the monitored TV stations were manipulative (in particular RTR, Rossia 24) resorted to deliberate misinformation in an attempt to demonize the authorities in Kiev and victimize separatists in the southeast. Handling occurred particularly by exacerbating the facts, the information filtering and selection of sources by tone of coverage of the subject. Most of the news were unilateral, presenting reality through the prism of alleged representatives of the regions, without providing sufficient access for central authorities to present their position. The images used by some media sending messages able to cause panic among the population, to create a feeling of anarchy and chaos.

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[1] From monitoring report of the campaign launched against information manipulation by the Independent Press Association (API) with the supportof Free Press Unlimited (Netherlands) and National Endowment for Democracy (USA).

Monitoring on Rossia 24

In many cases, stories were accompanied by video presenting helicopters, armored cars with flags of "People's Republic of Donetsk" cars in flames, people with hoods on their heads, pogroms, shootout, fires, deaths, and funerals of those killed. Note that although the monitoring period, which was relatively quiet during the Easter holidays, there were no clear cases of manipulation by video images, media experts from Ukraine reported after several cases of crass manipulation of information and video. A good example of this is the broadcast on Rossia 24 (16 May 2014) about a fake report, with fake images taken from the archive of TV station. Thus, at minute 3:22 of the report "*Priseaga pod stvolami: pocemu iz Natgvardii ubegaiut kontraktniki*" (in translation - "Oath under weapons threat: Why contracted soldiers escape from National Guard") broadcasted images of the Donetsk region of Ukraine representing a dead body presented as National Guard deserter who had been killed for treason by Ukrainian forces (Arsenichev, 2014). In reality, these videos were filmed on 18 November 2012, during anti-terrorist operations of the Russians in the town Baxanionok, Kabardino-Balkaria region of the Russian Federation. This case proves malicious misinformation and may be classified as propaganda, reportage pointing deliberately false information in order to demonize one side in the conflict.

In relation to the representatives of the regions which seek federalization, often in Rossia 24 reports are used such terms as "*popular army members,*" "*activists*". Officials of Kiev central government were labeled like "*murderers*", "*Slaviks*", "*Kiev Junta*", "*fascists*", phrases that are used abundantly in newsletters of 22 and April 23, 2014. Some news used formulations able to cause adverse reactions and panic among the population such as, for example, phrases like "*at first just beat him now threatens with execution*" (the news about beating Oleg Tariov from 18 April 2014) or "*already know that among those who are planning their attack there are 11 thousand civilians from the National Army and the Right Sector*" (the news of 24 April 2014) (Asociatia Presei Independente din Moldova, 2014).

Monitoring on RTR post

RTR post prioritized topics that were related to the negotiations and the Geneva agreement; intention to hold a referendum on May 11, 2014 in the southeastern regions of the right to self-determination; operation carried out by soldiers in Kiev after which one person was killed and several were injured; discovery of weapons with "Right Sector" symbolism; restrictions on the Ukrainian border with Russian citizens aged between 16 and 60 years; Kiev's decision to initiate anti-terrorist

operation following the murder of a deputy; Slaviansk siege; Luhansk miners' protest; hysteria "green men" ("Zeleny chelovecki") and hunting rewards of them.

The main messages sent through RTR news were: number of cities protesting against the Kiev policy increases day by day, people struggle for federation, for their right to speak their language are ready to pass the barricades; activists easily takes in possession military equipment; activists do not surrender to avoid being persecuted and exterminated later. Also, to viewers are send the idea that the new leadership of the Ministry of Defense is showing a total inability to lead the army, officers and soldiers are neither fed nor properly prepared, are kept in unsanitary conditions, the army is currently led by representatives "Right Sector," and this has led soldiers and officers to seize weapons and to rebel against those who govern them; Ukrainian soldiers refused to fight under the Maidan leadership; soldiers, policeman pass by the people's army. Another assumption was formulated by news that representatives of "Right Sector" assault peaceful citizens want Oleg Tariov execution (presidential candidate); members of "Right Sector" are junkies. Other messages launch idea of US involvement in events in Ukraine and conflict escalation. Washington is accused of a global crisis need not to pay enormous foreign debt, and the conflict with Russia as part of the scenario. It is also heavily promotes the idea both heroism and unity of the Russian people, who prefer to die to defend their homeland during war and military force that holds Russia, which has capacity to strike back (April 21, 2014). To give weight and credibility to messages, the news often refers to the opinion of Vladimir Putin expressed during live communication with citizens, eg allegations against US or characteristics of the philosophy of Great Russian people.

During the monitoring period, RTR post was mimicked diversity of opinions. Thus, for example, in the story about "the discussion of Putin with people" it was announced that during the presentations followers annexation of Crimea had the right to reply, but also those who did not support the idea, such as for example Irina Khakamada, former leader of the Party "Nash vybor ". However, for her statements are selected only passages praising Putin.

Monitoring on Pervyi Kanal

Although during the monitoring period, Pervye Kanal had less news about the situation in Ukraine (total 20) in comparison to channel Rossia 24 and RTR, however, the subject was approached from the same perspective, namely about the separatist regions supported by Federation Russian. Relevant news sent messages to viewers according to which Ukraine do not wants to uphold the agreement in Geneva; regions residents are not satisfied with the new leadership in Kiev and the

referendum would escape them from poverty; Lugansk residents want to join Russia, and those of Donbas afraid to stay in the city as central authorities sent army against the people (April 18th 2014).

In the news and talk-show appear armed soldiers, broadcast images of funerals, military aircraft, barricades, armored cars. Journalists use such terms as "*Donetsk People's Republic*", "*popular army*", "*popular army members*," "*People's Government*". In contrast, those who do not support separatism are presented as "*radical*," "*nationalists*". In the talk-show "*Politics*" from April 24, 2014 opinions were expressed in a position to incite hatred and violence such as, for example, the statement that "for *the country you must be ready to kill and die. When you have a political dialogue, we must be ready to defend and die. (..) I opt for annexation of East Ukraine or death.* "

The monitoring showed that the vast majority of stations analyzed systematically propagated the idea of separatism in south-eastern regions of Ukraine. Media outlets monitored various used methods / techniques of propaganda to promote Russia's position in the conflict, such as:

- *rumors* (about Ukrainians and people who speak English having weapons of foreign production fighting alongside rebels);
- *misinformation* (rigging video images, some reports including archival footage filmed a few years before, in a different place*);*
- *manipulating information* filtering information, distortion of messages, labels etc., able to contribute to a positive image of regional and followers of the federalization, (portrayed as victims, heroes who fight for the right to self-determination and their right to their land);
- *Putin – portrait as authority*, omniscient, conciliatory figure. Central government in Moscow headed by President Putin knows the history and character of Russian people able to die to defend homeland;
- These materials can lead to stereotypes about the central authorities and the Ukrainian army (incompetent, impotent aggressors).

The phrases used to reflect the protagonists involved in the conflict were often antagonistic (referring to representatives of the separatist regions were used such phrases as, "took possession", "defends", "defend their land" "inhabitants and peaceful protesters", "heroes who defend their homeland," "activists". In contrast, referring to representatives of the central government and the military were used such phrases as - "fighting their own people", "assault peaceful inhabitants", "army is hungry", "technique is degraded","Right Sector members are alcoholics, drug addicts, murderers").

In conclusion, we determined the use of filtering topics, subjective information about the motives and the way in which events unfolded during the reference period, pseudo diversity of views and opinions expressed through selecting sources expressing the same thought and transmitting the

same message and not including alternative sources. Also there were used manipulating texts and images, including constant repetition of lexemes to operate at the subconscious level of targeted audience, they were all able to distort messages to misinform and manipulate public opinion regarding the subject of Ukrainian dispute.

6. How to fight in psychological warfare?

A positive example when the EU takes action against Russian propaganda is cooperation between Germany and Estonia in the media. German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier announced in a press conference in Tallinn (4/17/2015) that Germany and Estonia will start cooperating in the media sphere, with the aim of counterbalancing Russian propaganda. The two countries intend to cooperate in public media sphere, with the aim of strengthening civil society, promoting education and counterbalancing Russian disinformation. In this sense, Deutsche Welle (DW), and Ainar Ruussaar, a board member of Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR), signed an agreement between the two organizations, with DW expected to support the new Russian language TV-channel ETV+ (Tambur, 2015a). Germany will also start supporting basic and advanced training channels for journalists and journalism students via German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Editorial internships in Germany for interested Estonian journalists via International Journalist's Programme (IJP) will also be offered (Tambur, 2015b).

Lithuania has launched a legal process to stop the translation of the programmes of Russian TV channel Ren TV Baltic for three months starting from January 2015 (Richter, 2015). According to the motivation, the station's programmes on the war in Ukraine spread one-sided information and were instigating war and hatred. The allegations were backed by the opinions of media experts from the University of Vilnius. The commission also decided to launch the banning procedure of two other Russian channels, RTR Planeta and NTV Mir Lithuania because of lacking of journalistic objectivity, transmitting unproven information and propaganda. Broadcasting of these two channels has already been banned for three months (spring of 2014). The highest term for banning according to Lithuanian law is one year. Russia has already criticized the plan put forward by Lithuania, Estonia, Denmark and the UK to counter Russian propaganda, stating that creating a counterpropaganda channel goes against the freedom of press.

As a defense tool, Republic of Moldova builds online platforms informing about propaganda and media misinformation. For example, *mediacritica.md* is an information portal that combats the

phenomenon of propaganda and manipulation in the press and fosters critical media consumers in Moldova. This site is a platform for a national campaign that aims to inform consumers of media propaganda and disinformation about the phenomenon and to prepare them to identify false information disseminated by the media, and social networks. Also Independent Journalism Center is the creator of media education project which aims to inform young people about the dangers of media manipulation. Students from several Moldovan schools and high schools will be able to participate in a new round of media lessons to learn how the media works, what is the media's role in society, what rules must be observed on writing a news etc. (Media Azi, 2016). Media literacy is an absolute novelty in Moldova and will definitely help increase the awareness of youngsters on media manipulation.

Conclusions on Republic of Moldova case

Republic of Moldova suffers as a result of psychological war and media manipulation. Many Moldovan media outlets are using various methods / techniques of propaganda to promote Russia's position in the Ukrainian conflict, Transnistrian conflict or pro-Russian view regarding European Integration of Moldova. Currently, the big part of media, unfortunately, is depending, financially of goals of Moldovan oligarchs. In this respect Moldova doesn't have any protection in psychological war started by Russian Federation. Even more, media manipulation is an excellent tool on population control so the access of equidistance information among Moldovans is very low. Russian TV channels domination amplifies the impact of Russian policies in Moldovan society by keeping the existence of a set of stereotypes positivist related to Russia's President Vladimir Putin, in particular.

Totalize with conclusions about Russian propaganda in Moldova, it is clear that policies of "soft power", via news and entertainment, promoted by Russia have a particularly serious impact including due to the complicity of the political class in Moldova. No government and no political party have not been able to promote policies to strengthen the population based on the spirit of citizenship, by overcoming the Soviet past, overcoming conscious ideological and ethno-linguistic clichés inherited from the USSR. The ruling parties ignore all claims of the Moldovan society in terms of combating the effects of Russian media manipulation. Instead, they seek possibilities of establishing "traditional relationships" with the Kremlin administration and not try using state resources to counter the consequences of informational war.

Therefore *media manipulation* and *psychological war* in Ukraine and Republic of Moldova is a struggle to conquer the minds of the people through various psychological methods in order to

subordinate the masses often under the guise of illusion of receiving freedom and control of information. The difficult of psychological war research is in their clandestine weight.

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