THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN SETTLEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS

The tense situation in the world, witnessed in recent years, is regularly at risk to develop into serious international conflicts.

The threat of international terrorism, territorial disputes and numerous local clashes destabilize the world community, slow down its development and hinder harmonious co-existence of nations.

When reviewing the processes of international conflicts' formation, it's required to take into account intensive globalization and informatization processes taking place in the world.

Global informatization is a logical consequence of information revolution, marked by appearance of electronic computer and personal computer and the following creation of computer and telecommunication networks.

Wide-spreading of the Internet allowed, on the one hand, to get first-hand information about events in the world, on the other hand, to take part in their discussion, sometimes providing an opportunity to directly influence the course of events.

The current state of integration processes in mass media as well as methods of information transmission and the level of technology and equipment allow to speak about such a phenomenon as global information space.

It has a transborder character and starts prevailing over all fields of activities of individuals, the society and the state, acting as an important geopolitical tool.

A number of media market players can in the environment of struggle for influence in global media space refer to intentional distortion of facts with the goal to maximize profits or monopolize the industry.

At the same time, thorough analysis of the current situation can be replaced with superficial calculations and presentations, without sufficient proof and substantiation, and that in the end often leads to formation of the picture of events known to be false and aggravation of tension in the society.

Thus various mass media become participants of information and psychological conflicts and even manipulations of consciousness. Fake news, which became more frequent, and information warfare are an open threat to the world community.

"Invention", "fake", "disinformation", "propaganda" and "stove-piping", i.e. leaked faked provocative information that is also called "alternative facts", have become the main problem of today's society. These phenomena have an impact on the interests of media community, they are spoken about from the highest rostrums of international organizations, they seriously affect the home and foreign policy of whole states. They are becoming tools of geopolitical influence and can lead to international conflicts.

In March, 2017, the Joint Declaration of Freedom of Expression, "Fake News", Disinformation and Propaganda was adopted in Vienna. Diplomats are asking the UN Secretariat to start working out international strategy for fighting against fake news and disinformation, which can be compared to a virus epidemic in the degree of damage.

The problem has gone so far that even the top state official – the United States President Donald Trump – accused American mass media in "faking" and took an unprecedented measure – he prohibited officials from his Administration to have contacts with CNN reporters.

The general public's trust to mass media has been undermined as well. The skill to find information was important in the past, now it is the skill to filter it and to comprehend it critically.

In 2017, opinion polls conducted by Russian research group ZIRCON demonstrated disappointing trends. If in 2009, when the question "Where will you apply to specify or check the information" was asked, 20% of respondents named newspapers and magazines and 23% named the Internet, in 2015 the trust to mass media decreased more than twice. Only 8% of respondents will refer to printed media and 48% will surf the Internet.

Today, we hear the statement that "journalists are soldiers of information warfare" more and more often.

One not precisely worded message can become a catalyst for an international conflict in the information age, and thus information warfare can go beyond the limits of media into the real world.

The reasons of the events taking place are seen by many people in abrupt reduction of professional standards in mass media. Unfortunately, it's often difficult not to agree with that. Production of fake news, which are lies in essence but "packed" in a beautiful propagandist wrapper, brings bigger and bigger profit. There are journalist's moral and ethical values placed on one side of the scales and high incomes on the other.

Cyber attacks bring a lot of damage to mass media reputation as well. Thus, one of *The New York Times* accounts on Twitter was hacked in 2017. Unknown malefactors managed to place false information about a missile attack Russia as if intended to launch against the United States.

This example shows that fake news can seriously destabilize the world community by way of immediate spreading all over the Web.

We can state that stability of global information space is one of the guarantees to maintain stability in the world community. Today, professionalisms and ethics of mass media, ability to get and adequately analyze data are becoming the key links in maintaining the fragile world balance.

Traditional media and journalists have to solve the issue: how to resist the fake news epidemic? How not to let information warfare grow into armed conflicts in the real world?

It's required to work out a practical definition of "fake", efficiently working from the legal and law enforcement point of view. How many false facts should be in a message? 10%, 30% or 50% of the published information?

Besides, it's required to precisely define and divide the notions of "fact" and "opinion".

The search systems and social networks, state authorities and business structures are introducing fact checking systems besides mass media.

It's necessary to pay more attention and develop more actively the principles and standards of ethical journalism. Only an individual's personal choice and observance of ethical principles allow to draw the line between truth and lie, between the professions of "journalist" and "propagandist".

Mechanisms preventing penetration of extremist and terrorist ideologies into information space, should be fixed legally on the international level, and it's required from the countries to unify standards for that.

It's required from mass media to apply efforts to form the positive agenda, provide extensive coverage for global humanitarian and cultural initiatives, international exchange and regular meeting of the leaders of world powers in order to strengthen mutual understanding between nations.

According to the generally accepted opinion, the urgent problems of the world community – from diplomatic misunderstandings to armed conflicts – should be solved by dialogue of the parties, in which there is a place for both acknowledgement of individual special features of this and that country, and solidarity in respect of the principles of the international law.

Liquidation of white spots on the map of mutual understanding is possible in case the participants of dialogue (be it regions, states or cultures) have reliable and trustworthy information about each other and unbiased judgments.

Successfully carried out integration processes are also a guarantee of stability in information space.

International cooperation within the framework of mass media associations helps that to a no small extent.

Their goal is improvement of quality of the produced by the parties content and increase of modernization processes' efficiency as well as strengthening of understanding between countries, representatives of which are parties to the alliance.

There is no doubt that annual events dedicated to discussion of the urgent issues of the world information community stimulate sharing experience and cooperation of news resources, allowing to outline the further ways of development and reveal the emerging threats.

Let's not forget that meeting of professionals, forming the news picture of the world and expertly evaluating the changing global reality, are themselves the true example of inter-civilization dialogue.