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ABSTRACT

of PhD Thesis

Rhetorical Strategies of NATO in Bulgaria

*Alliance's information policy in web-based
communication channels between 2016 and 2021*

of Boris Ognyanov Tsenov

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The dissertation consists of 144 pages divided into an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion, plus a list of the sources used/references and annexes. Chapter one forms the theoretical ground of the survey. Chapter two includes a review of the public affairs regulatory environment in NATO and in Bulgaria. Chapter three encompasses the practical implementation of public affairs activities via web-based channels¹ in Bulgaria and the extent to which they influence public opinion. The conclusion involves the findings of the survey and recommendations for the improvement of the activities aimed at convincing the audiences.

INTRODUCTION

The North Atlantic Alliance has been founded after the end of the World War II by 12 countries from Europe and North America to guarantee mutual assistance in case of an armed attack against one or more of them.² Over time and as a result of the political and military situation development in Europe and around the world, the number of Allies has gradually increased. As of the end of the period covered by this survey, there are 30 Allies. Bulgaria has been an Ally since 2004.

The understanding of military-political communication has developed together with the Alliance. In the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, strategic communications are one of the elements ensuring credible deterrence and reducing strategic risks.³ The evolution of military-political rhetoric after the end of the Cold War, and of NATO communication policy in particular, is the rationale of the study. It examines rhetorical strategies and techniques used in NATO's public communication in Bulgaria in the period January 2016 – December 2021, from the year prior to the start of the WeAreNATO campaign until the beginning of the Russian military invasion in Ukraine, which has generally changed the military-political situation in the world, including NATO's understanding of the importance of military-political

¹ Компютърни програми за обмен на информация, функциониращи чрез свързаността на потребителите им с интернет, конкретно официалните интернет-страници и профили в социалните мрежи на компетентните ведомства. Терминът „веб базиран“ е дефиниран като „свързан с или изпълняван чрез мрежата (системата от свързани документи в интернет). Вж. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus [online]. Cambridge University Press, [viewed 02.04.2023]. Available from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/web-based>

² Организацията на северноатлантическия договор, или НАТО (на английски език the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation – NATO), е създадена на 04.04.1949 г. с подписването на Северноатлантическия (известен като Вашингтонски) договор между 12 държави от Европа и Северна Америка. Вж. Вашингтонски договор [online]. [Прегледан на 19.07.2022]. Достъпен от: <https://www.mtc.government.bg/bg/category/29/severnoatlanticheski-dogovor>

³ Стратегическа концепция на НАТО от 2022 г. [online]. [Прегледана на 06.04.2023]. Достъпна от: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf

communications. The change in NATO's modus operandi and the introduction of a campaign approach in communications are the main reason for the choice of the period. It includes an overview of the situation before and a summary of its results in Bulgaria immediately prior to an important military-political event which has also brought to changes in the implementation of allied communication policies. The sustainably low level of public trust in the Alliance throughout the whole period, despite the long lasting Bulgarian membership and the changed way of work, is an additional factor for the choice of theme and period.

There are no Bulgarian scientific studies of the Western military-political Alliance public communications system, including after Bulgaria's admission in 2004. This text is not intended to fully examine NATO's communication theory and practice since the 1940s, rather to study their main characteristics and their implementation in Bulgaria through contemporary electronic communication means.

The methods applied in this dissertation include content analysis of official national and international documents regulating military-political public communications activities; media survey and analysis of media content generated by competent authorities in the period 201-2021 and spread through web-based communication channels; rhetorical analysis of public messages, arguments and visual content – photo and video material.

The NATO communication campaigns implemented by competent authorities NATO Headquarters, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, through web-based communication channels⁴ in Bulgaria between 2016 and 2021 are the object of the dissertation. The focus is on rhetorical strategies of the campaigns laid down in normative documents in NATO and in Bulgaria - strategic communications and social media policies, directives and handbooks, orders, directions, etc.; official websites and social media channels posts by NATO, MoD and MFA, as well as other relevant documents and publications. The study's objective is to examine the reasons for the low effectiveness of the communications models applied for public acceptance of the Alliance's mission and values, to convince the public in the importance of Bulgarian membership and to build sustainable trust in it. The examination includes the following tasks:

- an overview of political and military-political rhetoric theory

⁴ Компютърни програми за обмен на информация, функциониращи чрез свързаността на потребителите им с интернет, конкретно официалните интернет-страници и профили в социалните мрежи на компетентните ведомства. Терминът „уеб базиран“ е дефиниран като „свързан с или изпълняван чрез мрежата (системата от свързани документи в интернет). Вж. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus [online]. Cambridge University Press, [viewed 02.04.2023]. Available from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/web-based>

- an overview and analysis of the rhetorical aspects in communication policy framework documents in NATO and in Bulgaria

- rhetorical analysis of the implementation of framework documents, incl. official websites and social media posts

- drawing conclusions and recommendations for effectiveness raising

The first chapter of the study is an overview of the basic theoretical considerations in political rhetoric and in military-political rhetoric as a branch of the political discourse from Antiquity until today. In addition, the author justifies his view on the evolution of military-political rhetoric and the need to incorporate military and military-political actors' peacetime communications as an additional area in its scope. The reasoning includes clarification of the conceptual differences between the two large 20th century military-political blocks' communication theory and practice, an overview the development of Western argumentation discourse after the collapse of the bipolar world at the end of the 20th century and identification of shortcomings in conceptual documents and in the way of their implementation in NATO and in Bulgaria from rhetorical point of view.

Chapter two includes analysis of the practical implementation of basic theoretical principles by examination of the communication policy frameworks documents of NATO and of the competent Bulgarian authorities – MoD and MFA (strategies, concepts, doctrines). Alliance's definitions on strategic communications, public affairs and the directives on their practical implementation are examined together with the place of communications in the organizational hierarchy and the views of strategic leadership on the ways to address existing problems. The lack of strategic documents on communications at national and ministerial level is underlined. There is analysis on the existing framework documents on communications indicating their weaknesses. The chapter concludes with a summary of the factors predetermining the incapability of effective communication policy implementation, and of rhetorical rules application and convincing the audiences in Bulgaria in the arguments offered respectively.

Chapter three represents a rhetorical reading of the concrete implementation of framework documents, i.e. the communication activities carried out in Bulgaria in the period 2016-2021, and, in particular, NATO HQ posts regarding Bulgaria and national competent ministries posts. There is an overview of the reasons for the choice of a campaign approach by the HQ and the specifics of the WeAreNATO campaign. The characteristics of communication in contemporary digital environment are thoroughly examined. Influence methods and techniques which are widely known and applied by classic political posters (design of the

poster, the specific in the use of text and images) are described in analytical form and supplemented by the new opportunities provided by the world wide web connectivity – hyperlink, interactivity and audience metrics. The political and military-political context, the HQ, MFA and MoD activities in the most popular web-based communication channels, as well as the sociological data on the levels of public trust in NATO are chronologically presented and illustrated. Consideration is also given to the NATO Secretary General view on communication policy as presented in his annual reports. The chapter ends with a detailed review of the analogous national reports of the MoD in which the author identified key weaknesses in the understanding and in the implementation of communication activities, predetermining its low effectiveness.

The conclusion comprises the author's findings and recommendations for increased communication activities' effectiveness, i.e. for convincing target audiences. There is a short historical review of the effectiveness of analogous block campaigns and messages spread in Bulgaria during the Cold War. There are identified similarities with modern times, both in the public attitudes towards such campaigns and in communicators' approach, factors which have been disregarded and predetermined the failure in convincing audiences. It was established that the main reason for the ineffective communications is the disregard of the rhetoric canons. Recommendations focus on increasing communication activity effectiveness by adequate implementation of rhetoric principles, conceptualized in a national strategic communications document.

CHAPTER ONE.

THEORETICAL BASE OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY-POLITICAL RHETORIC

The first part of the study includes an overview of the basic political and military-political rhetoric theory from Antiquity until today. Aristotle's findings in his treatise *Rhetoric* are indicated as the first justification of eloquence as a separate scientific branch: definition of rhetoric as "the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion",⁵ the separation of deliberative, forensic, and epideictic rhetoric,⁶ where deliberative rhetoric includes, inter alia, political and military, and the war and the defence of the country are two of the five main matters on which all men deliberate.⁷ It also includes Aristotle's views on arguments and on the importance of rhetorician's character⁸ and his attitude towards the audience⁹ for the persuasion.

Cicero is contemplated as the author who developed and substantiated rhetoric as an art. Consideration is given to the emphasis which the Roman politician and philosopher lays on the qualities which are strictly necessary to the good orator: high level of general knowledge,¹⁰ depth of thought, ability to thrill the audience,¹¹ good structure and style of the speech,¹² founded by the argument that the beautiful, sublime and dignified things are the only that last and which people admire, and these things do not necessarily bring direct, short-term benefits. Which, according to Cicero, can be only adroitly made by artists, who need to be properly assessed,¹³ and the art is the addition needed for successful persuasion.¹⁴ Cicero's statement that the great orator transcends small military leaders¹⁵ is given as an example for the importance of military political rhetoric for the country.

The examination of current academic development of political and military-political rhetoric begins with the works of the Belgian scientist Chaim Perelman, often called the man who revived the rhetoric in the 20th century. Consideration is given to his view on the 'new rhetoric' which covers the entire field of informal reasoning and his claim that if rhetoric

⁵ Аристотел. *Реторика*, изд. „Захарий Стоянов“, София: 2013, p. 50.

⁶ Ibid, p. 57

⁷ Ibid, p. 60

⁸ Ibid, p. 50

⁹ Ibid, p. 114

¹⁰ Цицерон, Марк Тулий. *За оратора*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 1992, p. 187

¹¹ Ibid, p. 235

¹² Ibid, p. 259

¹³ Ibid, p. 276

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 209

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 275

focuses on discursive techniques aimed at provoking or strengthening the theses offered, then its role in politics is central.¹⁶ An emphasis is laid on Perelman's findings that without common commitment, a spiritual union around common values, there is no political community,¹⁷ there is neither majority, nor minority, there are rather two antagonistic groups that collide, where nothing is important but the power struggle,¹⁸ as well as on his view that historical facts prove that military dominance does not last if combatants are not convinced that they are fighting for the good cause. The denial of ideologies, according to Perelman, leads to dominance of the stronger, as if there is no good cause, there is no bad cause either, and the whole political life shrinks to stupid battle of conflicting personal interests.¹⁹

The specifications of political rhetoric in modern democracy are studied in the works of scientists from Bulgaria and from the USA. The review of foreign studies begins with the work of the American scientist Hugh Rank, whose works in the beginning of the 1980s, although presenting internal USA perspective, bring out definitions which are in many cases universal for the Western world.²⁰ Attention is given to his finding that political rhetoric in modern democracy has some inherent complexities: the sheer number of speakers, quantity of information, diversity of viewpoints, variety of candidates and issues clamoring for attention, which often makes people drop out completely.²¹ This is supplemented by Rank's view that the sentence which sums up the basic content of political rhetoric is: "I am competent and trustworthy; from me, you'll get more (good) and less (bad)."²² Important points are Rank's specific observations that people have distinguished competency apart from moral virtues, and political speakers themselves, when attacking their opponent, mostly use personal attacks (ad hominem arguments²³), because of the inability to prove or disprove false charges about motives or intentions. Rank's claim that politicians prefer to speak on more abstract matters such as 'good' and 'bad', as the higher level of abstraction is, the more agreement they get,

¹⁶ Perelman, Chaim, et al. "Rhetoric and Politics." *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1984, pp. 129–34. In *JSTOR* [online]. www.jstor.org [Viewed 25.08.2023]. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237397>

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 130-131

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 132

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 133

²⁰ Rank, Hugh. Analyzing Political Rhetoric. *The English Journal*, vol. 69, no. 9, 1980, pp. 38–43. In *JSTOR* [online]. www.jstor.org [Viewed 25.08.2023]. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/816378>.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 38

²² *Ibid*, p. 39

²³ Argumentum ad is a logical error in the process of proof, representing the provision of an evaluative characteristic of the opponent's personality, unrelated to the truth of his thesis. A variant of the "substitution of the thesis" fallacy. In Стефанова, Нели. *Кратък терминологичен справочник по обща и политическа реторика*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2015, p. 38

mainly due to the opportunity abstract categories provide people to recognize their own specifics.

Contemporary Western political rhetoric is further studied through the research of George Lakoff, American scientist, who examines political rhetoric by his framing theory. Similarly to Rank, Lakoff brings out several basic views which are generally valid for the Western world. According to him, the most important brain structures for our politics can be studied from the perspective of the mind. They are called “frames”, mental structures that shape the way we see the world, thus the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions.²⁴ According to Lakoff, from audience’s point of view, framing is about using language which fits its worldview. Hence, successful reframing of public discourse means a change of the way the public sees the world, a change of what is considered common sense. It is an ongoing process of accessing what the communicator and the like-minded others already believe unconsciously, making it conscious and repeating it until it enters normal public discourse. Lakoff indicates that in order to achieve social change, reframing requires a change in public discourse, and that requires a communication system. Thus, he has developed Aristotle’s view on the deficiency of logical reasoning, pointing out that reframing requires a lot of time and hard work, as people would not ‘wake up’ when communicators just present them facts about a certain reality in an effective way.²⁵ An emphasis is laid on Lakoff’s statement that re-framing is opposite of manipulation, it is about bringing to consciousness the deepest beliefs and modes of understanding of the communicator and his like-minded people, learning how to express them in a way that will allow those who share these beliefs to understand what they most deeply believe and to act on those beliefs.²⁶

The overview of Bulgarian scientific research in the field begins with one of the earliest theoretical views on political rhetoric outlined by Andrey Toshev in the very beginning of the 20th century: that it is a section of the oral eloquence, held by statesmen on public affairs, having the most powerful influence on human brain, with the addition that genuine political eloquence can be developed only in worthy and truthful discussion of important state issues.²⁷

In recent times, there is a review of Neli Stefanova’s statement that political rhetoric is functional generic term which unites politics and rhetoric by power relations. Attention is paid

²⁴ Lakoff, George. *The All New Don’t Think Of An Elephant*. Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction: 2014, p. xii

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 33

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Тошев, Андрей. *Ръководство по риторика и красноречие*. изд. „Хр. Г. Данов“, Пловдив: 1901, pp. 116-118

to the clarification that political eloquence is related to public governance and activity of man, and it is the avant-garde of oratory.²⁸ The six sustainable characteristics of political rhetoric brought out by Donka Aleksandrova are also taken into consideration: that it is strategic symbolic activity; created to respond an urgent need; formed in a way to influence specific audience; oriented in the context of public governance; with pragmatic and ritualistic functions, subordinate to the same context; and consistent with the historical tradition and practice.²⁹ As an important point is mentioned Stefanova's addition that another unalterable characteristic and goal of political rhetoric is its orientation towards the production of political consensus.³⁰

As regards military rhetoric, consideration is given to Neli Stefanova and Velichko Rumenchev definitions that it is one of the political rhetoric's varieties.³¹ In this part the author brings out his view that military-political rhetoric shall also include military and political actor's peace time communications on security and defence issues. The reasoning has several points, the first of which is the fact that military rhetoric no longer exists in its millennia-old two-component form of vertical communication and harangues. The October revolution in Russia and the end of the World War II are identified milestones which turned national military-political communication into block activity. There are outlined differences in the practical implementation of communication theories in the two competing systems developed after the 1940s. Analysis of the evolution of Western-type communications is made, until the current understanding of communications as a strategic function in support of the policies and operations, the definitions of the separate public communication activities are also brought out. In the conclusion it is stated, that these are the activities included in the social-political layer of military oratory, implemented in peace time to provide public understanding and support.

From this point of view, there are identified weaknesses in the NATO public affairs framework documents: first, the misunderstanding of the need of compliance with the rhetorical rules (the five canons of rhetoric), then, the fact that they do not set out creative, but formal implementation approach. Gaps in the understanding of information environment were also identified: three important factors, named by Gerasim Petrinski 'time, information and power deficiencies',³² as well as failure to comply with factors and barriers to effective

²⁸ Ibid pp. 97-100

²⁹ Александрова, Донка. *Метаморфози на реториката през XX век*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2013, р. 308

³⁰ Стефанова, Нели. *Политическа реторика*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2018, pp. 102-103

³¹ Вж. Стефанова, Нели. *Политическа реторика*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2018, р. 255 и Руменчев, Величко. *Реторически класификации*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2004, р. 426

³² Петрински, Герасим. *Късноантична и византийска канонична реторика*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2014, р. 45.

listening, identified by Donka Aleksandrova: the use of the already mentioned formal approach in communications without activeness, detail, balance between familiar and unfamiliar, empathy, etc., non-compliance with the overburdening, prejudices, psychological and emotional barriers and other specifications of audiences in the process of preparation and dissemination of messages.³³ In this context, there are noted the need of higher level of trust realized by the NATO HQ and the findings of psychologists and philosophers on the need of concrete and definite threat to reach that goal.

³³ Александрова, Донка. *Основи на реториката*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2013, pp. 290-292

CHAPTER TWO

PUBLIC COMMUNICAITONS FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS IN NATO AND IN THE COMPETENT BULGARIAN MILITARY-POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

The overview of Alliance's strategic communication documents starts with the fundamental one - NATO Strategic Communications Policy - PO(2009)0141.

It defines NATO Strategic communications as the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities – Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations and Psychological Operations as appropriate – in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims.³⁴ NATO Strategic Communications aim to contribute to general public awareness, understanding and support to NATO and its activities, operations and policies, and in achieving their successful functioning and implementation. Public Diplomacy is defined as NATO civilian communication and outreach efforts and tools responsible for promoting awareness of and building understanding and support for NATO's policies operations and activities in the short, medium and long term. Public Affairs is the NATO civilian engagement through the media to inform the public of its policies and activities, and Military Public Affairs – the function responsible for promoting NATO's military aims and objectives to audiences.³⁵ The systematization of the framework documents in the NATO Public Affairs Doctrine Hierarchy is noted.³⁶

The analysis includes the basic moments and the good systematization of the framework documents from the point of view of strategy, concepts, policies and directives, powers and responsibilities. The shortfall noted from rhetorical point of view is the non-compliance with the basic rhetorical rules. In addition, the documents are designed in a formal style, typical for the Organization, in the same way as all other regulations, without taking into consideration the fact that the communication is creative activity, not a formal action, executed in the standard military vertical manner, obeying clear written orders.

According to the author, these weaknesses in the regulations is, to a certain extent, compensated by the annual NATO Communication Strategies, basic documents spread by the Office of the Secretary General and providing basic guidelines. They are developed in

³⁴ NATO Strategic Communications Policy – PO(2009)0141 dated 29.09.2009, p. 1-2. [Viewed 03.12.2022]. Available from: <https://info.publicintelligence.net/NATO-STRATCOM-Policy.pdf>

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ NATO ACO&ACT PA Handbook – 2014, p. 2

compliance with the basic political documents - PO(2009)0141 of 29.09.2009 and the annual NATO Summit Declarations. They use audience-led approach, which provide the opportunity to prioritize issues that are important for NATO audiences, thereby increasing the perceived relevance of NATO and support over the medium to long term. According to the annual strategies, communications assessment and evaluation of communications forms the bedrock of NATO's communications, and communicating the value of NATO to our priority home audiences is primarily the responsibility of Allies, who should support this effort with robust evaluation. Essentially, the strategies are program documents for asserting three theses (called communication pillars): NATO protects, NATO unites, and NATO strengthens. Their target audiences are the youth and the women, and the intensity of dissemination and the specifications of the arguments and channels used are adjusted to audiences' specifics. The objective is to predominantly use the theses in communication activities which underline the benefits from the Alliance and are understandable to all. An important point is the focus on the importance of binding any 'proactive' communication activity to one of the three theses. A key moment is the stress on sociological data over the last years indicating that the Alliance constantly fails to improve young people's and women's awareness and understanding. The theses are practically disseminated and argued through Alliance's communication campaigns. The digital vector is key for the strategy implementation, to reach target audiences, to learn from them and for direct interaction, when possible. Of importance for the present study is the emphasis on the fact that the implementation of the strategy to a large extent depends on Allies' 'proactive' participation, who bear the primary responsibility for engaging their own home audiences. The importance of national activities is also underlined in the three most significant tasks in the final part of the strategies: engagement with audiences; building on the campaign approach and improving communicator's network. Attention is drawn to the fact that annual communication strategies provide communication teams freedom to be creative in fulfilling the tasks within the conditions set. It is emphasized that despite their declared adaptation to audiences, strategies' target groups do not include young people from Southeastern Europe (incl. Bulgaria), nor are there relevant activities, regardless of the sociological data on the very low levels of public understanding and support to NATO. From this, according to the author, arise the ambiguity about the reasons and the way of including Bulgaria in the WeAreNATO campaign and about the planning and reporting of actions by the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense regarding the campaign. In addition to this, it is stated that despite the clear responsibility of the member countries to inform the public opinion in their territory about the decisions taken within the framework of their membership in NATO, incl. for their participation in Alliance

operations and actions,³⁷ in Bulgaria, 17 years after the country became an Ally, no documents have been created regulating national communication activities in the military-political sphere at the international, governmental, ministerial or departmental level.

The lack of conceptual documents on communications in Bulgaria was brought out as a main point in the entire study.

Attention is drawn to the fact that, in the period under review, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have a strategic communication policy document. The communication activities of the Ministry are listed in Art. 44 of its regulations, regulating the activities of the "Presscenter" directorate,³⁸ and represent guidelines for the practical implementation of the organization's general and ongoing publicity/transparency activities.

The absence of a strategic document on communications in the MoD is also reported, although the preparation of one is indicated in a number of key national acts, incl. in the 2010 Defence and Armed Forces White Paper.³⁹ Only in the so-called third pillar of defense planning - the doctrine of the armed forces⁴⁰ developed on the basis of the National Defense Strategy and defining the fulfilment the armed forces' tasks specified in the strategy, a strategic communications definition is included, analogous to the definition and views of strategic communications of NATO. The research draws attention to the fact that these basic provisions are not applied in the subsequent normative acts and in the practical implementation of public communications activities. The analysis of the rules for the activity "Public relations" in the Ministry of Defense, announced by Order No. OX-32 of 20.01.2012 of the Minister, chronologically preceding the doctrine of the armed forces, shows that the activity is not scheduled in the context of strategic communications, but as an independent one. It is also taken into account that the document itself has serious weaknesses in wording, structure and systematicity, which leads to the conclusion that the tasks listed in it,⁴¹ even if perfectly executed, cannot lead to the achievement of the goal. The definitions and details of the three main functions are also very weak and incomplete. In summary, all these shortcomings of the

³⁷ MC 0457/2 NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs dated 08.02.2011, p. 15. [Viewed 10.01.2022]. Available from: <https://www.nato.int/ims/docu/mil-pol-pub-affairs-en.pdf>

³⁸ Устройствен правилник на МВНР. [Viewed 04.01.2022]. Available from: <http://bit.ly/46iLnhM>
It should be noted that in 2022 the name of the Presscentre Directorate was changed to Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy, without any changes in the activities written in the regulation.

³⁹ Бяла книга за избраната и въоръжените сили на Република България, р. 64-65, [Viewed 04.01.2022]. Available from: https://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/drugi/20101130_WP_BG.pdf

⁴⁰ Доктрина на Въоръжените сили на Република България. [Viewed 04.01.2022]. Available from: https://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/strategicheski/20171211_Doktrina_VS.pdf

⁴¹ Раздел II, т. 5, т. 8 и т. 9 от приложение към Заповед № ОХ-32 от 20.01.2012 г. на министъра на избраната за обявяване на правила за дейността „Връзки с обществеността“ в Министерството на избраната, структурите на пряко подчинение на министъра на избраната и Българската армия

document make it practically inapplicable in real daily work (with the exception of the technical instructions on the hierarchy, on the order of providing information, etc.), respectively unable to contribute to the effectiveness of public communications.

As particularly indicative, the situation was brought out that in the instructions of the Minister of Defense on the defense policy for 2019-2020, it was ordered to prepare a draft communication strategy by the end of 2019.⁴² Despite explicit written instructions, such a document, until the completion of work on the present work (end of 2023), has not been prepared. This gap, according to the author, is the main factor predetermining the non-fulfillment of what is foreseen in the conceptual documents (the White Paper and the doctrine), respectively the low effectiveness of military-political communications.

It was also reported that, despite the lack of strategic, tactical and operational documents on public communications, an Information Center of the Ministry of Defense was created to implement the information policy of the Ministry of Defense through the possibilities of military printed, audio-visual and electronic means of mass communication (...) development of information products in implementation of the communication campaigns of the MoD.⁴³ The author's view in this case is that the functioning of such a center, as well as the implementation of all other communication activities, in the absence of a system, of a fundamental communication document, of plans, reports and control, in no way reduces the chaotic and spontaneous formation of the image of the institution, and, as sociological data for the entire period under study will prove, has no effectiveness in persuading the public. The conclusion is reached that public diplomacy in the military-political sphere in our country is neither defined nor planned as an activity.

The chapter ends with several conclusions. First of all, it has been established that the problem with the misunderstanding in NATO of strategic communications and the importance they have on the overall activity, which is observed to varying degrees throughout the Alliance,⁴⁴ is particularly acute in Bulgaria and is expressed in a lack of thinking about the problem in general, and lack of a concept paper, even of the formal approach implemented by NATO HQ. This, in turn, predetermines the impossibility of regulating and building a communications system and connecting it into an allied network, and the activity is reduced to

⁴² Указания на Министъра на отбраната по отбранителната политика и за провеждане на преглед на отбраната. [Viewed 11.01.2022]. Available from: https://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/cooperation/20190222_Ukazaniya_na_MO_po_OP_i_Pregled_otbrana.pdf

⁴³ ПМС 54/2010. [Viewed 04.01.2022]. Available from: http://militaryclubs.bg/sites/default/files/PMS_54_UP_MO_15042020.pdf

⁴⁴ Tatham C., LePage, R. NATO Strategic Communication: More to be Done? [Viewed 13.01.2022]. Available from: https://www.naa.mil.lv/sites/naa/files/document/1_DSPP%20PP%201%20-%20NATO%20StratCom.pdf

simply informing disinterested audiences about events, activities or processes. It is pointed out that in order to gain understanding and support, the public needs to be not just informed, but convinced. From this conclusion is derived the second, namely the need for the organization to speak to the audiences about them, and not about itself, i.e. clarifying, using a creative approach, with knowledge and application of basic rhetorical rules, why an event/phenomenon/action/process is a problem for the public, why the military and military-politicians can and will take action to solve it, and why it will be good for the audience.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY THROUGH WEB-BASED CHANNELS BY THE NATO HQ AND BY THE COMPETENT BULGARIAN INSTITUTIONS - MFA AND MOD

The review and analysis of the practical implementation of the regulatory framework begins with NATO's official announcement of the start of the WeAreNATO communication campaign, born of the need to remind citizens that the Alliance is the main guarantor of their security.⁴⁵ It is stated that the main goal of the campaign is to increase the understanding of the Alliance and its functions in the modern world, through the use of branded multimedia content, and the main target audience is young people who grew up in peacetime.⁴⁶

In the first toolkit of the initiative, campaign is defined as planned sequence of communications and interactions that leads to a defined, measurable outcome. This means bringing together a selection of media activity, PR, advertising, digital media content, public diplomacy and strategic engagements so that all communications are integrated and complement each other to achieve the campaign objectives.⁴⁷ There is noted the planning so that specific message emphases vary by country and are developed to reflect the context, needs and perspectives of different audiences. Attention is also paid to the guidelines that the security and safety arising from joint work should be constant and always present, that the messages of the campaign should be woven into the overall activity. Included are the messages that are key to the campaign: that NATO members are committed to mutual support and protection; that NATO members are stronger because of membership and that NATO acts as a guarantor of the security and safety of its members. They emphasize the main benefits of membership in the Alliance - security, safety, personal contribution and development, opportunities. It is also noted that the manner in which they are embedded in messages, implicitly and/or literally, with images and text, is deemed to be specified in detail in the Campaign look and feel toolkit section. The instructions in the manual are mandatory and concern mostly the technical layout of the messages, generally in the form of a poster - placement of the image, the main text and

⁴⁵ NATO Defence and Security Campaign Toolkit, p. 1, [Viewed 11.11.2022]. Available from: <https://www.act.nato.int/application/files/7415/6529/0612/nato-dsct.pdf>

⁴⁶ NATO steps up efforts to increase public understanding of Alliance's role. In *NATO* [online]. Nato.int. 2017. [Viewed 25.08.2023, 14:58 EEST]. Available from: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_144018.htm?selectedLocale=en

⁴⁷ NATO Defence and Security Campaign Toolkit, p. 1, [Viewed 11.11.2022]. Available from: <https://www.act.nato.int/application/files/7415/6529/0612/nato-dsct.pdf>, c. 3

the additional information, the NATO emblem, the fonts and the type of narrative that can be used.⁴⁸

Attention is paid to the fact that images have a leading role in the campaign. According to the guidelines, they must successfully connect with the audience on an emotional level. A good image will tell the story realistically, humanly and naturally. Regardless of its plot, those who watch it should begin to understand why NATO is important in their daily lives.⁴⁹

Based on the examples illustrating these instructions in the manual, it is concluded that it actually summarizes the basic rules for creating a poster that the American researcher of Hungarian-Jewish origin Peter Kenez defines as ‘the quintessential form of propaganda: Its message can be quickly grasped by the most unsophisticated viewers; its appeal does not depend on rational argument; and it is capable of advertising a commercial product as much as of selling a political idea.’⁵⁰

The analysis of poster specifications begins with the finding that the image – a painting or a photography – intended for political use is coded, loaded with meanings by default, and the text in the poster plays a supporting role, aimed at strengthening the effect of the image. There are noted Roland Barthes’ views on the importance of the text as a ‘parasitic message designed to connote the image i.e., to imbue it with one or several secondary signifiers’⁵¹ and that in an ideological aspect, this is a smart way of leading to a preliminary chosen meaning and in this choice lays the morals and the ideology of the proponent.⁵²

The view advocated in the research is that in a broader rhetorical context, the two components of the political poster - the image and the text, could be viewed as the premises of the enthymeme whose conclusion is formulated by the viewer.⁵³ This instrument could be exceptionally effective given the enthymeme’s psychological effect of making the audience feel that they have come to the conclusion by themselves, which is the reason why they accept it as their own. In this sense, the political poster might be defined as a political metaphor with enormous aesthetic, emotional and sense-giving role, which is a function of its capability to provoke the attention of the public by phrases, calling in the recipient’s mind situations which are personally binding and based on analogy.⁵⁴ If the poster in political communication unifies

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 5

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 33

⁵⁰ Kenez, Peter. *The Birth of the Propaganda State*. Cambridge University Press, New York: 1985, p. 111

⁵¹ It refers to the photographic image, perceived primarily as a mechanical recording of reality. In Барт, Ролан. *Въображението на знака*. изд. Народна култура, София: 1991, p. 527

⁵² Ibid, p. 528

⁵³ Аристотел. *Реторика*. изд. „Захарий Стоянов“, София: 2013, p. 178-179

⁵⁴ Стефанова, Нели. *Политическа реторика*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2018, p. 346

the message and its carrier, the dissemination channels are the public places where it is posted, and the political actors are the proponents, and the audience are then practically all citizens: supporters, opponents, as well as people who are not interested in a specific political formation or in politics as a whole. The specifications of the poster as a message carrier used in specific dissemination channels practically ensure its 'delivery' to all citizens and provide it with the possibility to influence every single 'consumer' because it acts quickly, at an emotional level and is accepted without focusing, which is needed for written and oral forms of political messages. Its specification to impact emotionally makes it a unique instrument for reaching the uninterested audiences.

The review of the historical prerequisites for the wide exploitation of the potential of the poster as an instrument of political propaganda begins in 1918 in the USSR. The main reasons are two: the political and economic circumstances in the country and the specifics of the poster when broadcasting a message. In the conditions of a society backward in its development compared to the West, anarchy, collapse in the economy, mass unemployment and famine, the poster, with its peculiar monologue for, is especially suitable for the Bolshevik approach of imposing ideas by not allowing a confrontation of points of view. It is relatively cheap to manufacture and disseminate and at the same time it is very effective in reaching the target audiences because the perception of its message does not require literacy and rational assessment.

It is noted that nowadays national and international information campaigns on key political issues are being carried out in a pluralistic media environment and are designed to inform the citizens, build trust into national and international institutions and 'immune' audiences against third-party information efforts aiming at compromising NATO and EU member countries and lowering the levels of trust of the internal audiences. WeAreNATO is an example of such a campaign. It would be difficult to draw a parallel between the USSR campaign in 1917 and the NATO campaign in 2017 because of the differences in the scales, in the purposes and concepts, and in the political, economic, and social contexts. Nevertheless, insofar as both are politically motivated and the purpose of any information campaign is to build trust between the proponent and its audiences, and to gain support for the policies implemented, some similarities in the characteristics of their target audiences can be revealed: a predominant percentage of people not interested in politics and with low level of (in modern times – functional) literacy.

The practically oriented NATO PR-guidelines do not include academic justification of

the instructions included. It is noted, that there is almost full conformity between the conceptual and technical approaches and practices for the creation of a classic political poster and for the creation of a modern political post in a digital social media. Images are considered a key resource for the effective presentation of the mission and values of NATO.⁵⁵ It is emphasized that composition is the key to an interesting, story-telling message.⁵⁶ The accompanying text must be short, clear, and concise, answering the W-questions (who, what, when, where, why and how much (cost), and explaining what is happening on the image.⁵⁷

In addition, it is established that despite being part of a military-political information campaign, WeAreNATO posts do not include the classic contradiction of good and evil, which characterizes political messages. Formally the posts follow the guidelines for active dissemination of the messages.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, in Bulgaria the messages are not capable of convincing the audience in the proponent's theses.⁵⁹

There is developed a view that the lack of clear contradiction between good and evil, of clearly defined adversary and of personal interest for the recipient of the message, makes it impossible to achieve the effect of the enthymeme and to convince the audience. Abstract presentation of the opponent in the WeAreNATO campaign weakens its effect and leads to a failure to channel and mobilise the target audiences' energy, to the inability to transform the social situation into political relevance⁶⁰ and energy. The lack of specificity is crucial to losing the audience's attention and to its unsuccessful engagement with the messages and hence with the Alliance's mission and goals. Donka Aleksandrova recommends the use of a publicist style in the informative genre in digital media posts according to the formula 'words – confined, thoughts – unleashed'.⁶¹ This radio and TV broadcast recommendation could be fully applied

⁵⁵ NATO ACO/ACT - Public Affairs Handbook – 2020, p. 210. [Viewed 31.10.2020]. Available from: достъпна на https://shape.nato.int/resources/3/website/PA_handbook.pdf

⁵⁶ NATO ACO/ACT - Public Affairs Handbook – 2014, p. 221

⁵⁷ NATO ACO/ACT - Public Affairs Handbook – 2020, pp. 218-219. [Viewed 31.10.2020]. Available from: https://shape.nato.int/resources/3/website/PA_handbook.pdf,

⁵⁸ Key messages are described in „We are NATO. Defence and Security Campaign Toolkit“, p. 4. [Viewed 20.8.2020] Available from: <https://www.act.nato.int/application/files/7415/6529/0612/nato-dsct.pdf>

⁵⁹ According to Gallup International, between October 2014 and December 2017, trust in NATO varied between 33 and 38%, and distrust - between 48 and 44%. As of July 2020, three years after the start of the "We are NATO" campaign, trust is 32%, and distrust is 50%. In Възстановяване на доверието в ЕС и НАТО. Положителни очаквания за председателството. В „Галп интернешънъл“ [online]. www.gallup-international.bg. 2017. [Viewed 09.09.2020]. Available from: <https://www.gallup-international.bg/36675/restoring-confidence-in-the-eu-and-nato-positive-expectations-for-the-presidency/>. The data published on the "Alpha Research" sociological agency website for the same period differ in the wording of the questions and in the values obtained, still not registering confidence above 50%, nor a lasting and significant trend of its improvement. In Отношение към членството на България в НАТО. In „Алфа ризърч“ [online]. alpharesearch.bg. 2022. [Viewed 23.08.2022]. Available from: <https://alpharesearch.bg/monitoring/11/>.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 332

⁶¹ Александрова, Донка. *Основи на реториката*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2013, p. 269

in the digital media post development. It might be added that the representation of specific information, suggestion without abstract themes and terms, comments and analyzes, meets all the preconditions for high effectiveness in reaching and engaging target audiences.

It is taken into account that there is no sociological data on the efficiency of the classic tangible⁶² political poster, an emphasis is laid on the qualitatively novel aspect which the digital media provide for the poster today i.e. the interactivity: the opportunity for direct and systematic, evaluating and statistic feedback. It is reminded that convincing effect could be hardly reached if in their message the proponent talks about themselves, instead of addressing the audiences. A strange contradiction in the WeAreNATO guidelines is also noted. On the one hand, they emphasize that reaching the audience and sharing the message is more about the audience's relationship with others than a direct response to the proponent.⁶³ On the other hand, the large part of the campaign's main messages and statements are about NATO and the smaller number of messages which address audiences are short and abstract.⁶⁴ Based on the campaign's guidelines, it is concluded that NATO does not follow the basic public speaking requirement set out by Cicero as 'complying with the audience, its opinion and will'⁶⁵ - a conclusion which is testified by the sociologic data indicating the unambiguous failure of the campaign to reach the audiences. Despite its intent to engage its audiences, NATO keeps talking to them about itself instead of addressing them, and hands down pattern-generated communication directions to the implementing experts instead of stimulating creativity, thus not complying with another basic Cicero's postulate that the good speaker is not a template-following craftsman but an artist, relying on its experience, education and giftedness. The development of detailed guidelines containing the craftsmen' PR-alphabet also raises the question about the level of trust between the PDD and the implementing experts, and the question about the quality of the PR system itself.

A conclusion is made that systematic work on the preparation and the dissemination of messages incl. via classic or digital political posters is an opportunity for attaining higher efficiency in convincing the audiences. The poster is an appropriate option for a first and then regular step of a welldeveloped message system, aimed at convincing the audience.

⁶² Refers to an image with text applied to paper, vinyl, fabric, wall or other material medium and intended for public display.

⁶³ NATO ACO/ACT Digital Media Management Guide, p. 21. [Viewed 20.08.2020]. Available from: https://shape.nato.int/resources/3/website/Digital_Media_Management_Guide.pdf

⁶⁴ NATO Defence and Security Campaign Toolkit. Version 1. 2017, p. 4-8. [Viewed 30.08.2020]. Available from: <https://www.act.nato.int/application/files/7415/6529/0612/nato-dsct.pdf>

⁶⁵ Цицерон, Марк Тулий. *За оратора*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 1992, p. 304

A further identified shortcoming of NATO's public communications, in the context of abstract speaking, is the lack of political leadership. The campaign talks about and demonstrates advances, technologies, capabilities, achievements, humanitarian actions, but does not show individuals to embody these advances, the campaign itself and the Alliance, and whom audiences can believe. Psychological research strongly suggests that people are most impressed and influenced by (surprising) actions of other people, especially (if they appear) trustworthy.⁶⁶ Images, videos and statistics complement messages, build credibility and impact, but people are the engine. In this sense, the main necessary condition for increasing the persuasive effect of the campaign is the presence of specific persons - clear, visible in many places, recognizable and enjoying trust.⁶⁷ According to the author, the need for specificity, like the WeAreNATO campaign itself, stems mostly from the large time period separating today's materially prosperous Western world from the last major conflict. As the HQ points out itself, young people born in Western Europe, the USA and Canada have grown up in a peaceful and developed/developing world where their basic rights, freedoms and benefits are not threatened from within, and this good standard of living is one of the main reasons for their lack of interest in the outside world, including not admitting that there might be a threat from outside.⁶⁸

It is pointed out that, after leadership, one of the most easily implemented opportunities to achieve concreteness and to convince target audiences that the political issue of security is in their interest is the systematic rebuttal of arguments against the idea of the Alliance or against itself Alliance in a manner giving it the appearance of regular standard communication through the usual departmental communication channels. Of great benefit to persuasive effectiveness would be the Aristotelian approach of detecting and refuting false claims made by opponents on all topics, as this would render them unreliable.⁶⁹

The use of this technique can be in two-sided arguments, in reflection type posts/comments, or for direct opposition. Here, the author presents a view that nowadays social networks represent a vector for the dissemination of political messages, analogous to newspapers (and material carriers of information in general) in the time before the discovery of electronic means of communication. In this sense, Kandinsky's definition was applied to them, that they are "the most obedient servants of success and the plebs, who trade under the

⁶⁶ Канеман, Даниел. „Мисленето“. изд. „Изток-запад“, София: 2012, р. 188-191

⁶⁷ Аристотел. „Реторика“, София, изд. „Захарий Стоянов“, 2013, р. 114.

⁶⁸ NATO steps up efforts to increase public understanding of Alliance's role. In *NATO* [online]. Nato.int. 2017. [Viewed 25.08.2023]. Available from:

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_144018.htm?selectedLocale=en

⁶⁹ Аристотел. *Реторика*. изд. „Захарий Стоянов“, София: 2013, р. 229

motto 'whatever you like',⁷⁰ even today increasing their effectiveness because they are interactive and stimulate the sharing primarily of information that is liked/consumed (to a potentially huge number of users), and help build 'bubbles' of like-minded people⁷¹ that catalyze the sharing effect of only what is liked/consumed.

In conclusion, it is stated that Aristotle's views on political eloquence are practically impossible to be applied adequately and to have a convincing effect in the military-political sphere in Bulgaria, mainly due to the lack of a conceptual document and the reduction of the communication activity of the Ministry of Defense to formal and dry information about things that have already happened that lack what would attract the attention of a wider audience. From the point of view of Perelman's theory, NATO communications, incl. the WeAreNATO campaign have a speaker (the organization itself) and an audience, but they lack the conclusion of the reasoning, i.e. the discursive techniques, aimed at reconciling the meaning of theses that are presented to the audience for approval prior to taking certain political/military actions, are not applied.⁷²

For the needs of the research, in the third chapter there is an overview of the articles published on the official pages of NATO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense (nato.int, mfa.bg, armymedia.bg), on their official Facebook profiles and on their official YouTube channels, in the context of the important domestic and foreign political events concerning the Alliance and Bulgaria as an ally country. It is found that during the entire period under study (2016-2021), regardless of the national, regional and global political context, the publications of each of the competent institutions were very few in number, a few dozen in total in all platforms, strictly informative, with a very low number of reads, shares and comments. Sociological data for the period show the lack of change in public attitudes towards NATO, with the level of approval in none of the years exceeding 50%, respectively, the level of disapproval not falling below 30%.

Based on this, a number of conclusions are drawn. First of all, the review of the actual actions clearly shows the lack of a system for the purposeful creation of content for the specific

⁷⁰ Кандински, Василий. *За духовното в изкуството*. изд. „Изток-запад“, София: 2016, p. 43.

⁷¹ Filter bubble is a situation in which someone only hears or sees news and information that supports what they already believe and like, especially a situation created on the internet as a result of algorithms (= sets of rules) that choose the results of someone's searches. In: Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus [online]. © Cambridge University Press, [viewed 02.04.2023]. Available from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/filter-bubble>

⁷² Perelman, Ch. "RECHERCHES INTERDISCIPLINAIRES SUR L'ARGUMENTATION." *Logique et Analyse*, vol. 11, no. 44, 1968, pp. 503. In *JSTOR* [online]. www.jstor.org [Viewed 26.05.2023]. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44083726>.

target audiences (in Bulgaria), for the publication of the materials, their insufficient number, as well as the low interest in reading and sharing the publications. All of them are the result of the formal approach to public diplomacy activity (as a "top-down" obligation), the lack of understanding of it, and subsequent poor performance and low results. The formal approach, in turn, is due, as already indicated, to the lack of understanding of the problem at the highest management level and the resulting lack of conceptual documents. The exception in viewability is made by videos, specifically those that have a more dynamic plot.⁷³

As stated, the materials are essentially journalistic for which online platforms have been used as a means of simple coverage/repost. An additional contribution to the low popularity of the materials published by the HQ (including articles and posts on social networks) is the fact that they are in English. This automatically excludes from the number of readers half of the representatives of the target groups of the campaign in Bulgaria at its beginning (2017) and a slightly smaller part by 2021.⁷⁴ From a rhetorical point of view, it is obvious the non-observance of the Ciceronian view that in order to attract the public the orator (in this case the communicator) must inform, predispose and excite them, clearly only the first should be the case, and the rest should be 'dissolved' in the speech.⁷⁵ NATO's Public Diplomacy Division guidelines spell out this vision with a practical PR focus, stating that the material being published should be a balanced mix of information, entertainment and fun.⁷⁶

If the materials to a certain extent contain and provide information about what is happening in the military-political field, their statistical indicators are categorical about their inability to predispose and excite the public. In this sense, it is concluded that materials published through web-based channels lack two of the three basic Cicero conditions for audience attraction, ultimately leading to an inability to secure understanding and support. This hypothesis is confirmed by the sociological data for the studied period. In 2016, the year before the start of the WeAreNATO campaign, the communication activities of the Alliance in relation to Bulgaria and the Bulgarian competent institutions did not differ in substance and intensity from those in 2021, accordingly there was no serious difference in public attitudes towards the Alliance.

⁷³ It should be noted here that the viewership of the videos cannot be precisely established, as the different platforms republishing a video only show the number of views it has received through the respective platform, sometimes in approximate values.

⁷⁴ The mastery of foreign languages by the population in Bulgaria is in: *Ползване на чужди езици*. НСИ [online]. www.nsi.bg. 2017. [Viewed 19.01.2022]. Available from: <https://nsi.bg/bg/content/3537/ползване-на-чужди-езици>

⁷⁵ Цицерон, Марк Тулий. *За оратора*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 1992, p. 148

⁷⁶ NATO ACO/ACT Digital Media Management Guide, p. 21. [Viewed 20.08.2020]. Available from: https://shape.nato.int/resources/3/website/Digital_Media_Management_Guide.pdf

The final findings are that, despite the unequivocal results of sociological surveys of public attitudes in Bulgaria regarding NATO and the need to change the approach and increase the effectiveness of communication activities, during the entire period studied no strategic, operational or tactical public communication documents are planned or adopted in the country. In the Annual Reports On The State Of Defense, information policy activities are reported, despite the lack of a regulatory document. In the reports for 2016,⁷⁷ 2017, 2018 and 2019, the information policy is considered solely as publicity and disclosure of various aspects and activities of the MoD, described as achieving transparency. The emphasis in all of them is on the number of published/broadcasted media materials during the year. The misunderstanding of the nature of strategic communications, their goals and activities, and understanding them only as publicity, is clearly visible. Logical errors were also made in the justifications and the reporting of the effectiveness of the activities. The fact that documents which contain such substantial and obvious errors have passed through so many levels, incl. the highest state, and were approved without the errors being corrected, according to the author shows that the downplaying of communication activities in security and defense is projected from expert through departmental (MoD) to the top management level (government and parliament). The durability of this tendency guarantees the permanent low efficiency of communication activities in general. It is noted as important that the communication activities of the main adversary - the Russian Federation, aimed at influencing public opinion and attitudes during the period of the present study, also had practically no impact.

⁷⁷ Доклад за състоянието на отбраната и въоръжените сили на Република България 2016, р. 11-12. [Viewed 11.01.2022]. Available from: https://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/cooperation/20181005_Doklad_za_sustoyanieto_na_otbranata_VS_2016.pdf

CONCLUSION

1. Findings:

It is difficult to unambiguously determine what type of arguments the Bulgarian society would be inclined to accept regarding the necessity and benefits of NATO and what rhetorical strategies would be effective. Historical documents show that, as with the modern WeAreNATO campaign and its messages, the population in Bulgaria was disinterested and skeptical of similar (coming from outside) campaigns and messages spread in the country after the end of the Second World War and the inclusion of the country in the bloc governed by the USSR. There are probably many reasons for this apathy, but the following important points highlighted by Tsvetan Davidkov and missing in campaigns, both in the past and today, can be pointed out as key from a rhetorical point of view: the need to form a positive attitude in the audience towards the defended thesis,⁷⁸ to indicate of the discrepancy between certain social phenomena and their description and explanation by the audiences,⁷⁹ to prove the advantages of the seemingly risky and uncertain new thesis compared to the existing opinion,⁸⁰ etc. In view of the focus of the present study, there are two further reasons that are of particular importance.

The first was determined by the British legion in Sofia in the 1950s as a sober assessment of the Bulgarian people about the realities. About the effect of the Hungarian events in Bulgaria in 1956, the British ambassador in Sofia, Richard Speight, points out: "...in the end almost nothing happened, because the Bulgarian does not easily take up hopeless causes...",⁸¹ and about the elections in 1957 - "...voters, however, seemed overwhelmingly apathetic to what they clearly saw as a farce...".⁸²

The possible grounds for the realistic assessment of the current situation are many, but as far as the mass audience is concerned, two can be identified as the most important. The first stems from the compulsory military service for all men over the age of 18 until 2007, which led to their clear familiarization with the current state and capabilities of the armed forces. The second stems from the impression made by non-professional public communications activities.

⁷⁸ Давидков, Цветан. *Аргументите в лекционната пропаганда*. Партиздат, София: 1986, p. 29

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 34

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 37

⁸¹ Димитров, Димитър. *Светска България през три британски мандата*. изд. BBC London, Лондон: 1994, с. 8

⁸² Ibid, p. 22

The second reason for apathy can be sought in the nature of functioning of the totalitarian regime, which includes a combination of repression, blocking the exchange of information with the outside world and improving the standard of living compared to the beginning of the regime. All of these together, lasting for a very long time, lead to a change in attitudes that, as the data show (results from elections, including almost a decade after the collapse of the regime, and from attitudes towards the main erstwhile enemy three decades later), is quite durable. In this sense, it is interesting, given the professional and thorough analyzes of the British diplomats, that despite the accurate observations and correct analysis of the situation, their proposals made on that basis to reach out to the public and the expected results of that outreach then, are (historically proven) completely incapable of achieving the goal, probably because of a shallow knowledge of the regime's methods and folk psychology, i.e. of the way these methods affect that particular people. Indicative in this aspect is the view of Ambassador Anthony Lincon, described in his report from the end of November 1963 - "We will not suddenly overthrow the regime by these means, but a wider knowledge of the alternative Western way of life and governance cannot help but convince the Bulgarian society of the hollowness and detachment of their current system."⁸³

Observations on the information policy towards Bulgaria nowadays clearly show that the same approach (awareness and display of abstract benefits) is being applied today (although today there is access to any information) to achieve the goals of the NATO information campaign, again with no result. The reasons for this failure are also similar and are probably rooted in ignorance of the essence of the unpopularity problem, the nature of the power that imposed persistent mental stereotypes on the thinking of Bulgarians, as well as in the lack of a creative approach and in relying on achieving conviction with simple informing. The lack of consideration of the permanent disinterest of young people in politics, incl. external and internal, is also not insignificant, the indicators of which during the communist period do not differ significantly from those of the present.⁸⁴

From the data presented so far, it can be concluded that the main factor for the failure of information policies is the non-observance of the rhetorical rules in the implementation of the communication policy - finding the appropriate material, their arrangement, styling, planning (purely time-wise) of their implementation and distribution. Translated into the

⁸³ Ibid, p. 134

⁸⁴ About the interest of the Bulgarian youth in awareness of political life (outside the all-encompassing state communist propaganda) in the 1970s see: Колева, Даниела, Грозев, Костадин (съст.). *История, митология, политика*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2010, p. 380

language of PR, this means a lack of system in the planning and execution of activities. In this sense, it can be added that, in addition to introducing order and setting the possibility of control, the presence of a functioning system does not allow gaps in one or another component to affect the overall impact. As Vertov points out, "the exposition ... goes not along the channel of words, but along other paths ... along the equivalent of many channels, it goes along deep paths, sometimes throwing a dozen words to the surface. The movement of thoughts, the movement of ideas goes along many wires, but in one direction, towards one goal... Before us is a great symphonic orchestra of thoughts, where the accident with one of the violins or one of the cellos does not interrupt the concert. The flow of thoughts continues even when one of the interwoven wires is broken." ⁸⁵

The lack of regulatory documents at all levels (strategy, program and plans) basically has as an immediate result a chaotic and fruitless performance of communication activities (including lack of synergy). In this specific case, it leads to the spontaneous formation of the image of the Bulgarian armed forces and NATO, hence the impossibility of building trust in and support for them. The absence of a system is also the reason for gaps in the practical implementation of activities. Based on the analysis of the publications during the studied period, it can be concluded that the main among these omissions are non-observance of rhetorical (and PR) rules:

- the objectives of the activities/campaigns are not clearly formulated,
- target audiences are not defined and researched,
- adequate ways of creating and spreading the messages are not defined,
- appropriate messages are not prepared,
- no feedback is sought/results are not measured,

or as stated above - the five canons of rhetoric are not observed in the planning and execution of communication activities.

These gaps at the central and national level have a number of effects, of which the following can be pointed out as most important:

- failure to convince audiences (in addition, the neutral and disinterested cannot be won over, and stereotypes, freely or purposefully formed, cannot be overcome);
- low levels of trust in NATO (respectively of public support);

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⁸⁵ Вертов, Дзига. *Статии. Дневници. Замисли*. Изд. „Наука и изкуство“. София: 1977, p. 177

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In summary, based on the analysis of materials published and of sociological data on their effect, it can be stated that the specific results of the implemented information policy are generally reduced to a simple reflection of events that have already happened, an echo, which, in general, does not reach audiences, and in cases where it, to some extent, does, its content fails to persuade or build trust or support.

2. Recommendations:

The rules and methods of persuading the audience in a given thesis have been established and developed in the thousand-year history of the art of rhetoric. From this point of view, their implementation in the form of a communication system by a state and/or organization would result in achieving a high level of trust, effectively counteracting the actions of third parties to destroy unity. PR techniques and technologies are clearly regulated and are not of interest to the present study. As it was justified above, the shortcomings and the main reasons for the inefficiency in the information activity are mostly of a rhetorical nature, and from a rhetorical point of view, to overcome them, it is necessary to implement systematic actions on:

- 2.1. Setting clear goals
- 2.2. Detailed research of target audiences
- 2.3. Developing a system of outreach and persuasion

The conceptual and technical systematization of the work has been discussed in detail in the text so far. Regarding the practical activity of reaching the target audiences and persuading them, in addition to the need for a conceptual document, sub-documents systematizing the work and compliance with rhetorical rules, some specifics of the environment in Bulgaria should also be taken into account, the most important of which (in view of the levels of trust in NATO) are the persistent sympathies of the Bulgarian population towards Russia, combined with a lack of interest in (respectively ignorance of) political processes at the national, regional and global level. The combination of these two factors generally results in limited, stereotyped thinking, incl. on military-political issues, an indicator of which is the sociological data on the persistently low levels of public trust in NATO. The American researcher Walter Lippmann defines stereotype as a form of perception that attributes a certain character to the information from our senses before it reaches the mind. He points out that we humans first define most things and then see them, instead of the other way around, and that the stereotypical view of the world is due/predetermined by our moral codes, social

philosophies, and political campaigning. According to him, stereotypes always have a high emotional charge, they are a "fortress of tradition" in which we feel safe, and there is nothing more amenable to education or criticism than them. He adds that it is possible for them to be so consistently and powerfully passed down through the generations from parents to children that they almost seem like a biological fact.⁸⁶

At the very beginning of the XXI century, Lakoff further developed these views, incl. in terms of political communication, in his framing theory. In modern times, Jowett and O'Donnell point out that the way we perceive the world is based on complex psychological, philosophical and practical habitual thought patterns carried over from our past experiences. Perception is the process of extracting information from the outside world and from within ourselves. Each person has a field of perception that is unique to him and is shaped by the impact of values, roles, group norms and self-views.⁸⁷ According to them, changing or shaping these perceptions can be achieved by changing the language used and visual symbols. The formation of perceptions makes it possible to manipulate cognitive functions, thereby influencing attitudes.⁸⁸

In this sense, to overcome negative public attitudes, specific actions can be taken, including:

- Implementation of techniques to strengthen positive and weaken negative stereotypes regarding NATO

Given the difficulty of combating stereotypes and the lack of need for general changes in the thinking of the entire society, the application of techniques to reinforce certain stereotypes is an appropriate tool for the purposes of NATO's information campaign. This technique was formulated by the Russian researcher Vikentiev,⁸⁹ and its use in a military aspect and in relation to the Bulgarian armed forces is considered by Sasho Vodenicharski.⁹⁰ As ways to strengthen negative stereotypes (in this case - about the actions of the opponents), avoidance of problems, reminders of previous failures, unfair comparisons are indicated. In order to strengthen positive stereotypes, the following are proposed: excluding the target object of communication (in this case) from unpleasant situations for him, joining him to ongoing

⁸⁶ Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion*. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick: 1998, pp. 81-98.

⁸⁷ Jowett, Gareth, O'Donnell, Victoria. *Propaganda and Persuasion*. SAGE Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks: 2012, p. 8

⁸⁸ Ibid. pp 9-11

⁸⁹ Викентьев, Игор. *Приёмы рекламы и Public Relations*. изд. „Бизнес-пресса“, Санкт Петербург: 2001, pp 53-55

⁹⁰ Воденичарски, Сашо. *Техники за засилване на влиянието на стереотипите на целевата аудитория*. В „Сборник доклади от годишната университетска научна конференция на НВУ „Васил Левски“ 19-20 ноември 2009 г., т. 1, Издателски комплекс на НВУ „Васил Левски“, Велико Търново: 2009, pp 63-71

processes, presenting him as a participant in a "fight-win" type process, overcoming his fears and concerns.

It is noteworthy that both cited authors do not consider techniques to reduce the effect of stereotypes. The reason is most likely a view, similar to Lippmann's, that combating stereotypes is extremely difficult and the results are very difficult to predict.⁹¹ The techniques for strengthening the effect of positive stereotypes, considered by Vikentiev in the advertising aspect and by Vodenicharski in the national-military aspect, can also be used in relation to the stereotypes of the Bulgarian target audiences for both the national armed forces and NATO, and for the strengthening of negative stereotypes - to counteract foreign influence.

To reduce the effect of negative messages and attacks based on or relying on audience stereotypes, the aforementioned Intensify/Downplay model developed by Hugh Rank to analyze persuasion techniques can be used.⁹² The model does not deny the other factors – the personality of the speaker, the topic, the situation and the motives, but offers a way to study the form of persuasion, with the help of which to recognize the ways of amplification and belittling in communication. Intensification, according to Rank, is achieved through the use of repetition, association, and speech composition, and downplay - through omissions, diversion of focus, and audience confusion. Although these are well-known rhetorical techniques, it can be said that the model proposed by Rank, although created for the purpose of analysis, is fully and deliberately applicable in modern communication by the speaker in terms of attacks based on negative and baseless stereotypes. As has been said, the probability of overcoming stereotypes is very small, but the application of the techniques described by Rank will contribute, on the one hand, to deflecting (rather than fighting) baseless attacks, and on the other hand, to strengthening the confidence of the positive, and probably to the wavering audience as well.

To counteract negative attitudes, the methods described by Georgi Karastoyanov as "omega persuasion techniques"⁹³ aimed at eliminating or neutralizing natural human resistances can be applied - depersonalizing the request, using narratives, redefining relations, acknowledging the resistance, giving of choice.⁹⁴ The reasons for the lack of change in public

⁹¹ Липман посочва, че сблъсъкът на стереотипното мислене с различаваща се от него реалност може да няма ефект върху него, може противоречащият факт да бъде приет като изключение, което потвърждава правилото, а в редки случаи да промени в различна степен възприятието за света. Вж. Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion*. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick: 1998, p. 100

⁹² Rank, H. Intensify/Downplay. (1977). *College English*, 39(1), 109–111. In *JSTOR* [online]. www.jstor.org [Viewed 25.08.2023]. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/375826>

⁹³ Карастоянов, Георги. *Психология на преднамереното влияние*. Изд. „Изток-Запад“, София: 2012, p. 151

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 166-170

attitudes on military-political issues, for a period much longer than the one covered in the present work, are numerous. The continuation of this trend in a dynamically changing international security environment, which both in the recent past and in the period under study, seriously affects Bulgarian national interests, speaks of inertia, which, as Karastoyanov points out, is aimed at the past and not at the future.⁹⁵ The author adds that this is one of the most difficult resistances to overcome, however, the application of omega techniques can be very effective when the motivation (in the case of target audiences) is ambivalent, i.e. when both their desire and resistance are strong,⁹⁶ a characteristic characteristic of Bulgarian society, which in its very large part supports the country's membership in the European Union (related to prosperity), but does not approve of NATO membership (the guarantor of this prosperity).

- Opposing the thesis of freedom against the thesis of power

Although at first glance it seems to be an element of the previous point, the opposition of the two theses can be used in a rhetorical aspect as an enthymeme in which the missing conclusion is provided to the audience, generally as a clash of the thesis of freedom and democracy, which is the thesis of NATO, with the power thesis that is the once common Eastern and current Russian thesis. The current nostalgia in society for (its own view of) former strength and sympathy for the one who has remained strong or presents himself as such is based on this persistently formulated stereotype of strength. The contradiction between being recognized and equal member in the club of the free and rich and being a silent part in the domain of the strong can be presented in different ways, incl. through:

- demonstration of the current military scale of the bloc and the capabilities of the opposing country;
- demonstration of today's way of living in the Alliance and in former Eastern Bloc countries, non-NATO and non-EU, and third countries;
- juxtaposition between the pre-1990 realities, the lifestyles of people on both sides (e.g. a manifestation in the East and a rock concert in the West).

Other specifics that are also important to take into account are the misunderstanding of the nature and way of functioning of the current Alliance, as well as its differences from the former one. The persuasion in the need and importance of the Alliance can also be achieved with the enthymeme effect in various ways, incl. by:

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 166

⁹⁶ Ibid, pp. 174-175.

- making it clear that the membership, security and prosperity are not for granted, rather they are something that is worked for every day, accompanied by evidences of help being provided for problems we cannot tackle alone;
 - demonstration of real assistance and benefits from the membership, with concrete people and concrete results, together with demonstration of the achievements of more developed (not necessarily older) member countries;
 - clearly emphasizing the irrelevance of ethnic and (alleged) religious arguments, alongside showing the well-known fact that caring for the own livelihood and health/immunity is personal.
- Identification of a clearly visible opponent:

As stated above, people are mostly influenced by (actions of) other people. Donka Petrova specifies that it is easier to hate and demonize a concrete image, a person, than an abstract idea.⁹⁷ In this sense, the clear display of anyone (person, organization and/or country) carrying out actions against basic values/rights and/or leading to poverty, isolation, violation of rights, as well as unambiguous hostile actions of clearly identified third parties against the Alliance, will most likely have the effect of perceiving him to a greater or lesser extent as an adversary. This in turn will help unite the allied societies for the common cause.

Research in the USA shows that historically, prevention and response preparedness has focused on the biggest disaster that had hit preparers⁹⁸ in this case World War II and the subsequent Cold War, as well as modern hybrid threats), which, however, is not necessarily the worst thing that could come in the future. Kahneman also points out that over time, memories fade, and so does anxiety,⁹⁹ which requires measures to maintain vigilance, by recalling and maintaining associative links, and a "healthy fear" to guide action.¹⁰⁰

In relation to this contradiction, it can be added that the lack of a specific opponent also makes it difficult to attract and even more difficult to retain the attention of non-engaged audiences, as well as those who do not fall into the target audiences, or who are target audiences but think, that the topic is not their problem or is not a problem at all.

- Building opinion leaders, especially for target groups.

From a rhetorical point of view, opinion leaders mostly put into practice the classical Aristotelian proof by character mentioned in the first part of this study. In this sense, and in

⁹⁷ Петрова, Донка. *Аудиторията – анализ и реторическо въздействие*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София: 2021, р. 254

⁹⁸ Канеман, Даниел. *Мисленето*. изд. „Изток-запад“, София: 2012, р. 152

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 153-154

addition to the above-quoted thought of Andrey Toshev, that only sincere excitement is capable of touching the souls of the audience, it can be pointed out that such proponents can only be people who are well-prepared and truly convinced of the rightness of the cause; leaders who can direct target audiences' attention first to their own problems, then to political processes, and then to military policy. They would also be of great importance in educating and subsequently winning over the target audiences for the idea.

- **Indication of objective long-term benefits for the Bulgarian society and for its individual members personally.**

The abstract and concrete benefits to which the society and its individual members strive can be deduced from the audience surveys during the preparatory process of an information campaign. The message that the achievement of these benefits is best accomplished precisely through the membership of the Alliance can be integrated into the communication system.

A good rhetorical option for the implementation of this approach is the inclusion of two components in the information activities: clearly indicating that the activities of the Alliance contribute to material/social improvement and that they are based on spiritual/cultural values/traditions. The likelihood that information without material benefits will receive any attention is minimal, and it will most likely be passed over as part of the general noise. It is also important to bear in mind that the material improvement, without clearly indication and clarification of its reasons, holds the risk of being accepted as something that happens by itself or attributed to factors that have nothing to do with it. In this sense, it is also important to maintain a balance - the campaign should reveal the truth, neither exaggerate nor reduce the benefits, nor the contribution of the driving forces/mechanisms. The strength of the campaign/messages in this case will come not from the hype, but from the cultural/spiritual basis of what is being done (the Aristotelian propositions of proof by character and persuasion by interest already described). In these messages, the key organization should be present discreetly, unobtrusively, but invariably, to be perceived as a speaker, a conductor of actions and their results.

- **Clear addressing and engagement of the disinterested, especially among the representatives of the target groups.**

Of particular importance in this aspect are the possibilities and methods for adapting messages to the audience.

In order to achieve the objectives of building and maintaining understanding and trust in NATO, especially among the young and non-politically interested, attracting and retaining their attention is key. Psychological research shows that the two most powerful attractors of attention are sex and violence.¹⁰¹ In this case, due to the nature of the organization and its activity, the element of force and its demonstration is natural and inherent. For its use in front of the public, only a good artistic and technical selection of the illustrative material - photos, video and sound - is necessary. For the same reasons (the seriousness of the topic and the organization), the question of using the sexual element is more sensitive and cannot be directly applied (in the way advertisements do), especially since the field is not directly related to gender (unlike cosmetics and clothing), which does not mean that it cannot be used at all. However, strict sense and control over usage is required to limit published material to the allusion of masculinity and femininity, through elements that naturally fit into the representation, small details but important elements of (perceived) masculine/feminine (but elements of body and behavior other than and not exhibiting gender markings). A good example of such communication material is the pregnant female oceanographer from the Italian Armed Forces in the country's video for the WeAreNATO campaign.¹⁰²

The skillful and professional weaving of these elements into the campaign will attract the attention of representatives outside the target audiences, incl. to the uninterested. The need for careful integration also stems from the fact that these attractors are not universal and, moreover, they are complex and heterogeneous in their impact, and their effect must be ensured only to attract attention (only as an opening move) so that they can convey the important messages without causing negative reactions (protests, legal proceedings, etc.), negative effects on the organization and a drop in trust in it.

These materials would have an additional effect if they managed to capture the essence of the people/activities being presented. According to Chavdar Mutafov, one of the results of using this approach (in art in general) is that this "banality", this "simple art" flattens, removes the "imaginary border between the personality of the artist and the impersonality of the audience."¹⁰³

According to Walter Lippmann, to attract the disinterested, the problem must be presented as something that matters to them, and they must be given the opportunity to enter

¹⁰¹ Чалдини, Робърт. *Пред-убеждаването. Скритите механизми на ефикасното влияние*. изд. „Изток-запад“, София: 2016, p. 113

¹⁰² The Italian oceanographer [video file]. [Viewed 02.04.2023]. Available from: <https://youtu.be/Ry3CwHFNgkM>

¹⁰³ Мутафов, Чавдар. Банално изкуство. В: *Изток*, 1926, № 41, p. 1

into a struggle, a contest.¹⁰⁴ Another American psychologist, Everett Dean Martin, adds that “nothing so easily grabs the general attention and generates a crowd as competition of any kind. The crowd unconsciously identifies its members with one competitor or another. Success allows the winning crowd to "triumph" over the losers. Such a moment becomes symbolic and serves the Self to heighten its sense of significance.”¹⁰⁵ Edward Bernays provides the best description of the impression that can be created and maintained to attract disinterested representatives, especially target audiences: “We must take sides. We should be able to take sides. From the dark corner of our being as spectators, we must come on stage as heroes and fight for the victory of good over evil. We must breathe into the allegory the breath of our life.”¹⁰⁶

It can be summarized that the implementation of the described recommendations will contribute, at least as far as Bulgaria is concerned, to the achievement of the medium and long-term goals of the Alliance, formulated in the NATO2030 report - improving communications, increasing understanding, combating disinformation, immunization against foreign propaganda, consolidation.¹⁰⁷

In summary, it can be stated that the communication activity carried out by the NATO HQ and the competent Bulgarian national bodies - the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the web-based communication channels, does not have an impact on the Bulgarian public attitudes towards NATO in the studied period (situation is the same several years before and a few years later). Non-compliance with the rhetorical rules in planning and implementing communication activities can be pointed out as one of the main reasons for the lack of results from the information campaigns of the Alliance, carried out through web-based communication channels in Bulgaria. Its most serious evidence is the lack of a national regulation on communications and relevant departmental acts. Despite this, and despite the publicly stated goals of the strategic communications of the Alliance, no actions have been taken and no actions are expected to be taken to substantially change the activity. More than a year after the end of the period studied and after the beginning of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022 and led to the acceptance of new allies into the Alliance, there have been no political and structural changes in Bulgaria regarding strategic

¹⁰⁴ Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion*. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick: 1998, p. 126

¹⁰⁵ Martin, E. D., *The Behavior of Crowds: A Psychological Study*. New York, 1920, pp. 23-24. [Viewed 02.04.2023]. Available from: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/40914/pg40914-images.html#Page_11

¹⁰⁶ Бернайс, Едуард. *Формиране на общественото мнение*. изд. „Изток-запад“, София: 2020, с. 130

¹⁰⁷ NATO 2030: United for a new era. Analysis and recommendations of the reflection group appointed by the NATO Secretary General. p. 48. [pdf file] . [Viewed 20.07.2022]. Available from: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf,

communications. There is no decision at a higher state administrative level to create a government office for strategic communications, national and departmental conceptual documents (strategies, plans) for the implementation of communication activities have not been prepared, the structural changes carried out in the MFA (only at the end of 2022) , are entirely formal and mainly boil down to changing the names of the line directorate from "Presscenter" to "Strategic Communications". The lack of conceptual documents on strategic communications is predetermining the impossibility of effective work by complying with rhetorical rules, respectively for the results and the conviction of the Bulgarian society of the need for membership in the largest and most sustainable modern military-political union.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

1. This dissertation is the first Bulgarian rhetorical study of NATO communications in Bulgaria. It examines Alliance's and national public communications framework documents and their practical implementation in Bulgaria through web-based communication channels.
2. The research supports the rhetorical interpretation and analysis of the socio-political discourse of an important moment in modern military-political history.
3. The rhetorical specifics of the North Atlantic Alliance are examined in relation to the Bulgarian historical and political context. It highlights points of key importance to the abilities of communicators in the country and at the NATO HQ to convince target audiences of the theses defended.
4. The main contribution is the rhetorical recommendations made at the end of the study, directly related to the effective implementation of the communication policy of the Alliance in the Bulgarian context. They provide specific rhetorical and argumentative prescriptions and guidelines for formulating messages to realize strategic communication goals.

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