



Justification of the minimum threshold for reaching the target audience in order to spread ideas and exert psychological influence

Liudmyla Krymets*

Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Senior Researcher, Associate Professor

Military Institute of Telecommunications and Information Technologies named after the Heroes of Kruty

01011, 45/1 Knyaziv Ostrozkykh Str., Kyiv, Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7451-5208>

◆ **Abstract.** The relevance of the article lies in the evolution of the Ukrainian army in 2014-2025, in particular the development of the means and technologies of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the field of information and psychological counteraction to attacks by the Russian Federation, taking into account current challenges. The aim of the article was to study the theoretical aspects of justifying the minimum threshold for reaching the target audience in order to spread certain ideas and exert psychological influence. The research was based on systematic and interdisciplinary approaches using synergistic principles to study complex social and information networks. The extrapolation of scientific results was used to integrate Ukraine's experience of fighting the Russian Federation into the modern scientific paradigm. It was established that the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience to spread ideas and exert psychological influence is $\approx 3.5\%$. At the same time, the effectiveness of relevant measures is determined by the interaction of favourable factors, in particular the presence of a developed interactive network, active agents of influence and prior destabilisation of the socio-political situation, as well as restraining factors related to the incompatibility of the proposed narratives with the interests of the target audience or their contradiction with its values and moral guidelines. To determine the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience, it is advisable to apply a coefficient of counteraction to information and psychological influence $\times 3$ for audiences with a high level of counter-influence, which sets the threshold at around $\approx 10.5\%$, in particular when planning psychological measures targeting the population of states with an authoritarian type of government. The practical value of the study lies in optimising fundamental approaches to the activities of the Ukrainian Defence Forces in the field of information and psychological counteraction in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, taking into account the practical experience of performing combat (special) tasks by the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

◆ **Keywords:** psychological operations; information and psychological counteraction; agents of influence; interactive networks; information space

◆ Introduction

Modern military conflicts have taken on a hybrid form, encompassing new sectors of socio-political relations. The experience of the Russian Federation's armed aggression against Ukraine has demonstrated the critical role of information and psychological countermeasures and the need to further build up the capabilities of the Armed Forces (AF) of Ukraine to conduct warfare in physical and information spaces. The range of methods used to exert psychological

influence is constantly expanding and requires the use of special technical means, integration with the media, and the use of all available channels for disseminating information. According to the United States Department of the Army (2025) guidelines, psychological operations units carry out the process of influence through the development, production and distribution of visual, audio, audiovisual, multimedia and print products and other materials of

Suggested Citation:

Krymets, L. (2026). Justification of the minimum threshold for reaching the target audience in order to spread ideas and exert psychological influence. *Bulletin of National Defence University of Ukraine*, 21(1), 68-76. doi: 10.33099/2617-6858-26-21-1-68-76.

Article's History: Received: 25.07.2025; Revised: 17.12.2025; Accepted: 27.01.2026; Published: 17.02.2026



Copyright © The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

*Corresponding author

influence, as well as psychological actions. These actions are planned as a series, and influence materials are disseminated through various means, including cyberspace, aircraft, ammunition, loudspeakers and other equipment, and face-to-face meetings, with the aim of influencing the behaviour of the target audience. Thus, the study of mechanisms for engaging target audiences in order to spread certain ideas or narratives, taking into account complex social dynamics and heterogeneous levels of activity of social communities, is a relevant area of contemporary scientific discourse. J. Jetten *et al.* (2020) considered the possibilities of influencing social dynamics through the prism of understanding the depth of the mechanisms of formation and development of socio-political and economic processes. J. Jetten *et al.* emphasised that a proper understanding of how social and economic inequality can divide society, creating new intergroup dynamics, is important for understanding deep social movements. The issue of involving active minorities to influence the formation of public opinion was considered by T. Wu *et al.* (2022). The researchers noted that active organised minorities can have a significant impact on the dynamics of opinion formation and dissemination within a large population. Two groups of representatives of convinced minorities, polarised by two competing ideas, can lead to constant indecision and uncertainty throughout the community. Similarly, the majority of the community may remain undecided for a long time when individuals regularly change their minds based on changing individual beliefs rather than social responsibility.

Certain methodological aspects of influencing large populations and mass culture in the context of the development of global information networks were examined by M. Zhylin *et al.* (2023). A distinctive feature of the study was the integration of provisions of social theory, activity psychology, social philosophy, critical global studies, in particular, and the concepts of social deliberativeness and social subsidiarity for the analysis of large social processes. The publication by O.V. Harmatiy *et al.* (2021) on the prospects of engaging a target audience in order to spread a certain idea in society was based on an analysis of socio-political movements and the organisation of social protests. O.V. Harmatiy *et al.* emphasised the importance of taking into account the historical, socio-political and economic context when retrospectively analysing social transformations of varying intensity. A. Hager *et al.* (2022) considered the possibility of exerting social influence through the prism of the actualisation of resistance movements. According to A. Hager *et al.*, many social movements face resistance in the form of counter-movements. Thus, when deciding to become politically active, a supporter of a movement must take into account the activity of both their own movement and the resistance movement of their opponents. The above authors examine the decision of a movement supporter to participate or not to participate in a protest when faced with a counter-protest. The researchers concluded that the size of the opposition group does not affect the protest intentions of supporters. However, in

the presence of strong ideological motives, demonstrators who remain in the minority become even more willing to demonstrate and defend their position. D. March-Pons *et al.* (2025) analysed the deep cognitive dimension of decision-making processes in large groups with the aim of optimising the time required to reach consensus and make decisions, as well as the factors that influence this process. The researchers proved that the formation of a complex network and the consideration of multi-vector interaction actually speeds up the achievement of consensus and reduces the time spent on discussion. However, this improvement comes at the cost of reduced accuracy in determining the best option. I. Iacopini *et al.* (2022) showed that, when complex group dynamics and interactions in groups of arbitrary size are taken into account, the critical mass of individuals capable of effectively spreading a new idea in society can be less than 10%, provided that they are highly active and convinced of the need to spread the idea. A significant common phenomenon that unites all of the above-mentioned contemporary scientific studies is the fact that the vast majority of scientists give general recommendations, describe certain ways to optimise the involvement of the target audience in order to spread a certain idea in society, describe aspects that need to be taken into account to protect against psychological influence. However, none of these studies offers a concrete answer to the question of what the minimum threshold of community member engagement should be in order to achieve a defined goal and exert psychological influence. Thus the outlined topic requires further development, an interdisciplinary approach, and in-depth retrospective analysis, including taking into account the current experience of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, given the specifics of their activities in the context of information and psychological counteraction to the enemy in the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The aim of the study was to examine and systematise theoretical approaches to determining the minimum threshold for reaching the target audience in psychological influence processes.

◆ Materials and Methods

The research was conducted on the basis of a systematic approach and a holistic paradigm, taking into account the need for a comprehensive study of the outlined problem and improving the overall effectiveness of activities aimed at organising the implementation of measures for the preparation, comprehensive support, development, application and management of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. An interdisciplinary approach, combined with the method of extrapolating scientific research results, allowed to focus considerable attention on identifying the theoretical provisions that determine the conceptual nature of existing approaches to the formation and development of interactive networks as a sphere for actualising the behaviour of specific target audiences and clarifying the essential aspects underlying them. The systemic-structural method made it possible to identify the epistemological aspects of actualising

complex behavioural dynamics, which, in combination with the historical method, made it possible to trace the genesis of the development of the subject of research in static and dynamic dimensions. The methodological apparatus of the study included the principles of synergetics in terms of analysing complex, multidimensional nonlinear systems, such as modern society and interactive social and information networks. In order to justify the minimum threshold for reaching the target audience, a comprehensive assessment of the PHIA (Probability of Harm Impact Assessment) and PMESII (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure) methodologies was carried out. A SWOT matrix was visualised and analysed to systematise strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the context of information and psychological influence. Based on the analysis, recommendations for calculating the minimum coverage threshold were formulated. An overview of trends in the development of psychological influence mechanisms in a dynamic social space and an assessment of the prospects for the evolution of social relations led to the use of sociometry, social forecasting and theoretical modelling methods. The study used NATO and US doctrinal documents and guidelines relevant to the research area (United States Department of the Army, 2021; 2025; NATO Standard AJP-3.19, 2025). In order to prevent the dissemination of sensitive information, the article deliberately does not analyse guiding documents that reveal the current structures, forms and means of psychological influence of the Armed Forces of Ukraine on the enemy and the peculiarities of information and psychological counteraction to hostile aggression in the physical and information space.

◆ Results and Discussion

Along with classic forms of military action, the aggressor country purposefully uses a whole range of means to exert hybrid pressure, including destructive information campaigns and psychological operations aimed at exerting powerful informational and psychological influence through the use of disinformation, international political corruption and manipulative technologies. It is important for the Armed Forces of Ukraine to understand the mechanics of these operations in order to organise interactive countermeasures and achieve their own goals in the context of armed struggle. The author of the classic threshold theory, M. Granovetter (1978), noted that each person has their own “threshold of involvement” – an understanding of what proportion of their environment must support an idea for them to join it. When informational influence is exerted with these thresholds in mind in a structured social network, a critical mass emerges that triggers a self-reinforcing process. However, the actual threshold for mass change can vary significantly between communities. During the 20th century, researchers V. Pareto (1916), H.P. Becker (1957) and T. Kuran (1995), who studied the processes of changing social norms and empirical thresholds of engagement at the level of individuals and social communities, noted that the actual “minimum threshold”

for changing community behaviour varies depending on the level of education, sphere of activity and orientation of community members and is equal to $\approx 20\text{--}25\%$ of active supporters. However, the above-mentioned authors considered, for the most part, the natural process of spreading ideas and did not take into account the capabilities of modern information networks, information and communication technologies, and means of informational and psychological influence. At the beginning of the 21st century, R. Nelson & P.A. Bancel (2011) completed a long-term experiment designed to assess the possibility of correlations in data flows generated during major world events. The project demonstrated that the behaviour of different types of systems can be changed by directed mental intention and synchronised activity, showing subtle changes associated with group coherence. In turn, L. Oleinyk (2024) described the risks that increase the possibility of effective manipulation of public consciousness and the intensification of informational and psychological influence on target audiences in connection with the globalisation of information processes and the active development and mass application of information technologies.

A target audience is a group of people (individuals) united on the basis of certain criteria and indicators (gender, age, income, education, place of residence, profession, etc.) at whom certain measures of influence are directed (NATO Standard AJP-3.19, 2025). The ability to influence the attitudes of certain target audiences towards specific events, actions of the leadership and the state as a whole, and ultimately the decisions based on these attitudes, through direct and/or indirect communication, is a key feature of psychological influence. The effectiveness of psychological influence can be assessed using certain groups of indicators, among which the indicators of target audience coverage are of particular importance. E. Rogers' (2009) work explained the peculiarities of the spread of new ideas, technologies and practices through social systems. E. Rogers also considered the role of agents of change and critical mass. According to this concept, $\approx 16\%$ is sufficient for the spread of any idea in society, of which 2.5% are opinion leaders and 13.5% are early followers. J. Xie *et al.* (2011) concluded that in the process of achieving social consensus, the prevailing opinion of the majority of the community can be quickly changed by a small group of a convinced minority. J. Xie *et al.* proved that $\approx 10\%$ of convinced representatives of a particular community (people who sincerely support a new idea) can ensure the rapid establishment of consensus in favour of the acceptance and support of this new idea by the unconvinced majority, provided that these agents are not subject to reverse influence. In their simulations, the authors calculated the critical value of the minimum number of a committed minority capable of effectively spreading a new idea among the unconvinced majority of a given community from within, which is 9.79%. The numerical value $\approx 10\%$ is used as a rounding of this number. J. Xie *et al.* emphasised that if the convinced minority in a community does not reach the

threshold of $\approx 10\%$, its influence will spread very slowly, but as the proportion of the convinced minority increases above $\approx 10\%$, the time to full acceptance of the idea in the community decreases dramatically. M. Turalska *et al.* (2013) analysed the cooperative decision-making model (CDMM) to study the influence of a convinced minority on group behaviour during a crisis. It has been proven that in times of crisis, when there is ambiguity about a particular social issue, a very small but convinced minority can bring about significant changes in social consensus. The CDMM model showed that during a “crisis” when the network is unstable, even a very small ($\approx 5\%$) convinced minority can have a significant effect in multidimensional networks due to a temporarily increasing correlation in the network. D. Mistry *et al.* (2015) concluded that an active, committed minority (which more often initiates social contacts itself) can reduce the critical minimum number of the target audience needed to spread a new idea among the unconvinced majority to $\approx 7\%$.

E. Chenoweth (2020) proposed a rule regarding the level of target audience participation necessary for the success of a resistance movement, calling it the “3.5% rule.” According to this rule, if approximately 3.5% of the population is actively involved in the movement, significantly broader public support can be expected. In the long term, such sympathy can transform into growing political pressure. Among the successful campaigns that E. Chenoweth identified as complying with the 3.5% rule are the Singing Revolution (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, 1987-1991), the Velvet Revolution (Czechoslovakia, 1989), the Rose Revolution (Georgia, 2003), the Cedar Revolution (Lebanon, 2005), the Egyptian protests of 2012-2013, and the protests in Sudan in 2019. The 3.5% rule was named as a goal by climate activists, who argued that if enough people joined the movement, change would happen. However, this level of public engagement is currently far from being achieved (Serhan, 2021). In 2025, the 3.5% rule became prominent in protests against Donald Trump, particularly in opposition to US immigration policy. Activists from the 50501 movement initiated nationwide protests under the slogan “Hands Off” on 5 April 2025. In a widely circulated statement, the organisers emphasised that this action was the fourth nationwide day of action and was seen by them as part of a long-term strategy. The movement’s goal is to build peaceful civil resistance and achieve a level of engagement that, according to historical examples, is about 3.5% of the population and is capable of bringing about significant socio-political transformations (Cone, 2025). Despite the widespread popularity of the “3.5% rule” in the scientific community, E. Chenoweth has repeatedly pointed out that this rule does not apply to political leadership, strategic planning, organisational capacity or sustainable development. According to the researcher’s estimates, the effectiveness of both non-violent and armed resistance in the world has been declining since 2010, as a result of authoritarian regimes learning from their own historical experience, coordinating their actions and training their

security forces to prevent any manifestations of civil disobedience. Accordingly, E. Chenoweth advised civil activists and resistance movements to take these changes into account and adjust their tactics accordingly.

F. Daza (2022) analysed Ukrainian non-violent civil resistance to Russian occupation during the active phase of the Russian-Ukrainian war between February and June 2022. In his work, the researcher identified 235 non-violent acts of resistance across the country related to the organisation and implementation of the resistance movement against the Russian invaders and conducted 55 interviews with Ukrainian political and social leaders, scholars and activists. F. Daza concluded that widespread public mobilisation and organisation crystallised into hundreds of non-violent protests (148 cases), refusals to cooperate (51 cases) and non-violent interventions (36 cases). Geographically, most of these actions took place in the southern regions (Kherson and Zaporizhzhia), demonstrating the resilience of non-violent resistance in the occupied regions. In February and March 2022, public protests temporarily dominated, but their number decreased dramatically at the end of March due to increased repression and abductions of activists in the occupied territories. Starting in April, non-violent resistance transformed into “invisible” communication actions, refusal to cooperate, and non-violent interventions that created parallel self-government structures. Non-violent resistance in Ukraine in 2022 was analysed using M.A. Beer’s (2021) classification, according to which non-violent methods are divided into three categories:

- 1) protest (an act of active expression of will): mainly symbolic actions aimed at persuading opponents or third parties to change their policies or to express their rejection or disagreement with them;

- 2) refusal to cooperate (act of evasion, sabotage): based on refusal to support or obey the opponent’s practices at the political, social or economic level;

- 3) non-violent intervention (act of engagement): when an activist group takes a more active role in intervention to prevent an opponent from achieving their goals or to create parallel structures of self-sufficiency or governance that marginalise the opponent’s actions and at the same time meet the needs of the population.

The study by L. Krymets *et al.* (2023) also addressed the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the psychological resilience of Ukrainians and their willingness to continue active resistance, as well as mechanisms for protecting the population from external influences. In the process of countering Russian aggression from 2014 to 2025, all components of the Ukrainian army, and especially the means and technologies possessed by the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the context of information and psychological counteraction to the enemy, underwent significant transformations. During 2022-2025, the Armed Forces of Ukraine in general and the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in particular are actively developing a system for studying and implementing experience (SIE). The SIE system is designed

to collect, summarise and analyse information on problematic issues (best practices), identify their main causes and solutions (repetition), as well as to disseminate and implement experience in the activities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in order to improve the effectiveness of training and application, and ensure the actualisation of the development of the capabilities of the troops (forces). It defines effective techniques and methods for studying and implementing experience in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which reduces the risk of repeating mistakes and increases the chances of achieving a positive result. In accordance with modern scientific approaches based on the analysis of practical experience in performing combat (special) tasks, a psychological operation is considered as a set of coordinated and interrelated psychological actions, activities, series and measures of influence in terms of purpose, task, place and time. These measures are carried out by specific forces and means of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other components of the defence forces according to a single concept and plan. They are aimed at influencing the mentality, moral state and cognitive abilities of specific target audiences, as well as changing their behaviour patterns in order to create favourable conditions for achieving political, strategic and operational goals and the use of defence forces and means (Krymets *et al.*, 2023). The attitude of the target audience towards the information received in the communication process is formed at the level of its awareness, acceptance or rejection, rethinking and further transmission. The nature of these processes is determined by the completeness, reliability, relevance, significance of the information and the way it is obtained. In the special operations units of the US Armed Forces, the structural unit that interacts directly with the target audience and motivates it to behave in a certain way is the psychological operations detachment (United States Department of the Army, 2025). Detachments often require external support for the production, distribution and dissemination of certain influence materials. A detachment may carry out a wide range of missions aimed at influencing a target audience, including:

- 1) conduct tactical disinformation activities in support of friendly unit manoeuvres;
- 2) conduct operations using loudspeakers in support of kinetic actions;
- 3) conduct aerial information dissemination activities;
- 4) support non-combatant evacuation operations;
- 5) develop the resistance potential of foreign security and defence forces;
- 6) carry out psychological influence to provide information support for combat operations;
- 7) plan and implement interaction with opinion leaders, etc.

Analysing the target audience for psychological influence requires military personnel to search for and process large amounts of information. Typically, the situation was assessed using the PMESII method through comprehensive monitoring of the information space of a specific target audience. During the analysis, among other things, “centres of

gravity” are identified: critically important objects (institutions, communities, leaders) for the stability or change of the socio-political or economic context. “Centres of gravity” are very diverse. They can be local leaders, criminal groups or important infrastructure objects. To assess potential “centres of gravity”, a tool such as SWOT analysis is used. SWOT analysis is a planning tool used by NATO countries at all levels (strategic, operational, and tactical) to assess situations where an organisation or individual must make decisions to achieve a goal (United States Department of the Army, 2021). The SWOT analysis matrix is shown in Figure 1.

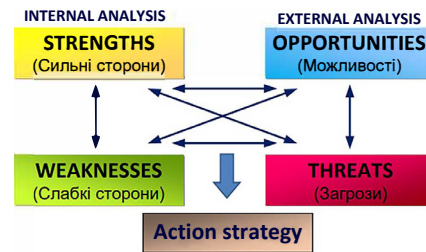


Figure 1. SWOT analysis matrix

Source: NATO Standard AJP-3.19 (2025)

The matrix is named after the first letters of the priority areas that need to be researched: strengths and weaknesses, favourable factors or opportunities and threats. Strengths – the characteristics of the target audience, factors and facts that give an advantage over the enemy when conducting a military operation, as a result of implementing an influence measure or conducting an action. Weaknesses – characteristics of the target audience, factors, facts that put the task or troops at a disadvantage. When researching the weaknesses of the target audience, it is advisable to take into account the potential vulnerability to socio-political and economic influence of members of the target audience. Favourable factors or opportunities – elements (subjects) of the target audience that the military command can use (engage) in its interests. Threats – elements of the target audience that can cause problems for the execution of combat (special) tasks. Among the threats are: censorship, possible countermeasures by the authorities, the likelihood of blocking channels of information dissemination, the threat of public refutations by official structures. The overall conclusion should assess whether the state of the target audience environment contributes to the effective performance of special tasks by units, and in the event of a negative result, identify the factors that will have the greatest impact on their implementation. The effectiveness of a psychological operation is assessed by the degree to which tasks are performed to achieve the desired psychological effects among the target audience. Effectiveness indicators are not the same for each operation (campaign, action, influence measure) and are formed during the analysis of target audiences.

The practice of information and psychological countermeasures by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, in particular

the Special Operations Forces, confirms the relevance of E. Chenoweth's (2021) approach to determining the minimum threshold for reaching the target audience at 3.5% for the success of information campaigns, public actions and resistance movements. It is important to note that in the context of psychological operations, when analysing the level of coverage of target audiences, it is advisable

to take into account a number of conditions that directly or indirectly affect the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience in order to spread a certain idea and exert psychological influence. The results presented in Table 1 are derived from the experience of performing special tasks in the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Table 1. Conditions affecting the minimum threshold for attracting the target audience

Condition	Impact on threshold/effectiveness
Dynamic interactive networks	Positive impact on the promotion of specific narratives
High activity of influential agents	Positive impact on the promotion of specific narratives
Destabilised situation	Mostly positive impact on the promotion of specific narratives, provided that there are agents of influence and support from information networks
Contradictory ideas that do not correspond to the interests or moral norms of the target audience	Negative impact on the promotion of specific narratives. The threshold should be higher (x2)
Limited resources (time, funds and personnel constraints)	Negative impact on the promotion of specific narratives. The threshold should be higher (x2)
Counter-influence (counter-action, counter-propaganda)	Negative impact on the promotion of specific narratives. The threshold will be significantly higher (x3). Agents of influence may lose their influence and be attacked

Source: developed by the author

As shown in Table 1, and according to the results of the study, the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience in order to spread a certain idea and exert psychological influence on mentality, moral state, cognitive abilities, and behaviour under favourable conditions is $\approx 3.5\%$. The favourable factors that together make it possible to set the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience at $\approx 3.5\%$ are:

- 1) the existence (formation, maintenance) of an interactive social and information network;
- 2) the presence of active agents of influence and/or influence groups that help to disseminate (promote) the necessary ideas, messages, and narratives in the information space;
- 3) the prior destabilisation of the situation also has a positive impact on the promotion of certain narratives in society, but only if active information networks and the permanent activity of agents of influence are present (supported).

Unfavourable factors that significantly affect the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience during psychological influence measures are:

- 1) low activity of the information network;
- 2) contradictory ideas that need to be disseminated (messages, narratives that do not correspond to the interests of the target audience or contradict its moral norms);
- 3) limited resources (restrictions in time, material and technical support, and the number of performers).

All these negative factors together require a doubling of the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience ($\approx 7\%$). To clarify the feasibility of such an increase, it is recommended to conduct an impact analysis using the PHIA probability scale (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2025). The most significant factor that could jeopardise the overall success of the influence operation is the presence of active countermeasures and/or counter-propaganda by the adversary. Under favourable circumstances, this factor can only be partially offset by the sum of favourable factors,

but it cannot be completely neutralised, so it must be taken into account. In conditions of active information countermeasures to psychological influence measures, the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience should be increased threefold and fixed at $\approx 10.5\%$. Summarising the above scientific approaches and practical experience of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in performing combat (special) tasks in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, it can be generalised that in order to spread certain ideas and exert psychological influence on specific target audiences, it is sufficient to convince and/or encourage approximately 3.5% of its composition to take active action. Provided that there is minimal opposition to this active group in its location, it is highly likely that its influence will quickly spread to the general public, which will ensure the achievement of socio-political or military goals. It is important to emphasise that when calculating the recommended number of target audience members to be engaged, factors that positively contribute to and hinder the exertion of psychological influence must be taken into account (Table 1).

The results of the study are consistent with the conclusions of L. Lucchini *et al.* (2022), who demonstrated that interaction between a committed minority and the majority of the community is a determining factor in the success of collective action even in complex social environments, as it influences the behavioural attitudes of large groups and the final outcome of collective processes. At the same time, N. Koudenburg *et al.* (2025) emphasised the ability of ideological minorities to initiate the transformation of social norms by forming new ideas about the identity of the majority, which directly affects group behaviour. In the context of implementing measures of informational and psychological counteraction to enemy influence with the aim of spreading ideas and forming attitudes that determine the mentality, moral and psychological state, and cognitive characteristics of the

Ukrainian population, the results obtained correlate with the conclusions of S. Galam & F. Jacobs (2007), according to which the absence of organised counteraction to psychological influence creates conditions under which even a small but highly motivated group of agents of influence is capable of ensuring the rapid formation of a consensus in favour of supporting certain ideas by the majority of the population. Similarly, according to D.J. Watts & P.S. Dodds (2007), the activity of a small group of agents of influence can significantly reduce the critical threshold value of the target audience share required to spread ideas in society. In view of this, the implementation of systematic resistance and organised counteraction to hostile information and psychological influence, in particular the neutralisation of its agents, is of strategic importance for the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The conclusions of F. Daza (2022) are also important for justifying the minimum threshold of target audience coverage for the purpose of spreading ideas, modifying behavioural patterns and creating favourable conditions for achieving the set goals. These conclusions demonstrated the decisive influence of organised counteraction to Russian propaganda and political repression on reducing the resilience of the resistance movement in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in 2022, which led to a significant reduction in the intensity of radical resistance by pro-Ukrainian activists. Taking into account the practical experience of implementing measures of influence and the results of the above-mentioned studies, in which a convinced minority is considered resistant to reverse influence, it is advisable to determine the critical minimum threshold for engaging the target audience, taking into account current factors of influence. In real conditions, psychological, economic and socio-political pressure can significantly alter the behaviour of audiences, which requires an adaptive approach to its fixation. When calculating the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience during the planning of psychological influence measures, it is recommended to take into account the coefficient of counteraction to information and psychological influence at a rate of $\times 3$ for the target audience that is subject to significant systemic, organisational, and informational counter-influence from the media, agents of influence, and other means of the adversary. However, it should be taken into account that in the context of information counteraction and the implementation of psychological influence measures on target audiences who are members of authoritarian regimes, they, in turn, are permanently subjected to significant psychological pressure from state authorities and pro-government propaganda. Thus, taking into account the risks on the way to achieving goals and exerting psychological influence on target audiences that are subject to information and propaganda countermeasures, the approximate minimum amount of target audience engagement should increase in proportion to the increase in counter-pressure on it from propaganda.

◆ Conclusions

The study confirmed that each target audience has unique characteristics and is influenced by different events, factors, incentives, and previous experiences. Correctly determining quantitative and qualitative characteristics, understanding the specific conditions and vulnerabilities of the target audience, selecting high-quality channels for disseminating information and methods of argumentation make it possible to achieve an effective psychological impact on its behaviour. According to the results of the study, the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience in order to disseminate a certain idea and exert psychological influence on their mentality, moral state, cognitive abilities, and behaviour should be $\approx 3.5\%$. However, when calculating the overall effectiveness of engaging the target audience, it is necessary to take into account factors that contribute to and hinder the implementation of influence measures. It has been established that the effectiveness of the implementation of measures is facilitated by the presence of a developed interactive network, the involvement of active agents of influence, as well as prior destabilisation of the situation. At the same time, the effectiveness of these measures is limited by the low level of activity of the target audience, the presence of conflicting ideas and narratives that do not correspond to its interests or conflict with moral and ethical norms, as well as a shortage of available resources. The most significant factor that could jeopardise the overall success of an influence operation is the presence of active countermeasures and/or counter-propaganda by opponents. According to experience in carrying out special tasks and the results of modern scientific research, this factor can only be partially offset by the sum of the favourable factors listed above, but cannot be completely neutralised.

To calculate the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience, it is recommended to take into account the coefficient of counteraction to information and psychological influence at a rate of $\times 3$ for a target audience with a significant level of counter-influence. The level of counter-influence should be determined on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the current situation, in the process of analysing the target audience during preparation for the influence event. As a result, the minimum threshold for engaging the target audience in order to spread certain ideas, exert psychological influence and change behaviour patterns should be set at $\approx 3.5\%$ for audiences with no (minimal) level of counter-influence, $\approx 10.5\%$ for target audiences with a significant level of counter-influence. Given that the population of states with authoritarian types of government is under the permanent aggressive influence of state institutions and propaganda, when planning psychological influence measures, it is advisable to take into account a fixed minimum threshold for engaging the target audience at $\approx 10.5\%$. Promising avenues for further research include studies aimed at analysing the effectiveness of psychological influence measures on various target audiences in the context of information and psychological confrontation under conditions of modern military conflicts.

◆ Acknowledgements

The author expresses gratitude to the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine for their assistance and moral support, thanks to which this research became possible.

◆ Funding

None.

◆ Conflict of Interest

None.

◆ References

- [1] Becker, H.P. (1957). *Modern sociological theory in continuity and change*. New York: Holt, Riechart and Winston.
- [2] Beer, M.A. (2021). *Civil resistance tactics in the 21st century*. Washington: ICNC.
- [3] Chenoweth, E. (2020). *Questions, answers, and some cautionary updates regarding the 3.5% rule*. Cambridge, MA: Carr Center for Human Rights Policy.
- [4] Chenoweth, E. (2021). *Civil resistance: What everyone needs to know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [5] Cone, A. (2025). *Organizers say millions turn out for anti-Trump "Hands Off" rallies nationwide*. Retrieved from https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2025/04/05/anti-Trump-protests-nationwide/6321743859607/#google_vignette.
- [6] Daza, F. (2022). *Ukrainian nonviolent civil resistance in time of war: An analysis of trends, impacts, and challenges facing nonviolent action in Ukraine between February and June 2022*. Barcelona: ICIP & Novact.
- [7] Galam, S., & Jacobs, F. (2007). The role of inflexible minorities in the breaking of democratic opinion dynamics. *Physica A: Statistical Mechanics and Its Applications*, 381, 366-376. doi: 10.1016/j.physa.2007.03.034.
- [8] Granovetter, M. (1978). Threshold models of collective behavior. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(6), 1420-1443. doi: 10.1086/226707.
- [9] Hager, A., Hensel, L., Hermle, J., & Roth, C. (2022). Group size and protest mobilization across movements and countermovements. *American Political Science Review*, 116(3), 1051-1066. doi: 10.1017/S0003055421001131.
- [10] Harmatiy, O.V., Basarab, M.M., Serdali, B.K., Akynbekova, A.B., & Beldibekova, A.T. (2021). Potential of social networks' use in the protest movements. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(3), 1341-1354. doi: 10.52462/jlls.96.
- [11] Iacopini, I., Petri, G., Baronchelli, A., & Barrat, A. (2022). Group interactions modulate critical mass dynamics in social convention. *Communications Physics*, 5, article number 64. doi: 10.1038/s42005-022-00845-y.
- [12] Jetten, J., Mols, F., & Selvanathan, H.P. (2020). How economic inequality fuels the rise and persistence of the Yellow Vest Movement. *International Review of Social Psychology*, 33(1), article number 2. doi: 10.5334/irsp.356.
- [13] Koudenburg, N., Jans, L., & Jonker, M.N. (2025). Entrepreneurs of sustainable identity in groups that value similarity or diversity: Trajectories of change. *TFO Collections*, 20(1), article number 2540411. doi: 10.1080/15534510.2025.2540411.
- [14] Krymets, L., Chornyi, V.S., Cherkovniak-Horodetska, O., Sadykova, V., & Manzia, Y. (2023). *The impact of the Russo-Ukrainian war on the psychological resilience of Ukrainians and information warfare*. *Synesis*, 15(4), 407-420.
- [15] Kuran, T. (1995). *The inevitability of future revolutionary surprises*. *American Journal of Sociology*, 100(6), 1528-1551.
- [16] Lucchini, L., Aiello, L.M., Alessandretti, L., de Francisci Morales, G., Starnini, M., & Baronchelli, A. (2022). From Reddit to Wall Street: The role of committed minorities in financial collective action. *Royal Society Open Science*, 9(4), article number 211488. doi: 10.1098/rsos.211488.
- [17] March-Pons, D., Pastor-Satorras, R., & Miguel, M.C. (2025). Non-linear inhibitory responses enhance performance in collective decision-making. *Communications Physics*, 8, 119. doi: 10.1038/s42005-025-02046-9.
- [18] Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. (2025). *RESIST 2: Basics of the methodology for monitoring and analyzing the information space*. Kyiv: Ministry of Defence of Ukraine.
- [19] Mistry, D., Zhang, Q., Perra, N., & Baronchelli, A. (2015). Committed activists and the reshaping of status-quo social consensus. *Physical Review E*, 92, article number 042805. doi: 10.1103/PhysRevE.92.042805.
- [20] NATO Standard AJP-3.19. (2025). *Allied joint doctrine for civil-military cooperation*. Brussels: NATO Standardization Office (NSO).
- [21] Nelson, R., & Bancel, P.A. (2011). Effects of mass consciousness: Changes in random data during global events. *Explore*, 7(6), 373-383. doi: 10.1016/j.explore.2011.08.003.
- [22] Oleinyk, L. (2024). *Propaganda: From disinformation and influence to operations and information warfare*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.
- [23] Pareto, V. (1916). *The mind and society* (Vol. 1). Firenze: G. Barbera.
- [24] Rogers, E. (2009). *Diffusion of innovation*. Kyiv: Kyiv-Mohyla Academy Publishing House.
- [25] Serhan, Y. (2021). *Can 3.5 percent save the planet?* Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2021/11/cop26-climate-activism/620641/>.
- [26] Turalaska, M., West, B., & Grigolini, P. (2013). Role of committed minorities in times of crisis. *Scientific Reports*, 3, 1371. doi: 10.1038/srep01371.

- [27] United States Department of the Army. (2021). *FM 3-57: Civil affairs operations*. Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate.
- [28] United States Department of the Army. (2025). *FM 3-05: Army special operations*. Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate.
- [29] Watts, D.J., & Dodds, P.S. (2007). Influentials, networks, and public opinion formation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(4), 441-458. doi: [10.1086/518527](https://doi.org/10.1086/518527).
- [30] Wu, T., Zuheros, C., Liu, X., & Herrera, F. (2022). Managing minority opinions in large-scale group decision making based on community detection and group polarization. *Computers & Industrial Engineering*, 170, article number 108337. doi: [10.1016/j.cie.2022.108337](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cie.2022.108337).
- [31] Xie, J., Sreenivasan, S., Korniss, G., Zhang, W., Lim, C., & Szymanski, B.K. (2011). Social consensus through the influence of committed minorities. *Physical Review E*, 84(1), article number 011130. doi: [10.1103/PhysRevE.84.011130](https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevE.84.011130).
- [32] Zhylin, M., Maraieva, U., Krynets, L., Humeniuk, T., & Voronovska, L. (2023). Philosophy of mass culture and consumer society: Worldview emphasis. *Amazonia Investiga*, 12(65), 256-264. doi: [10.34069/AI/2023.65.05.24](https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2023.65.05.24).

Обґрунтування мінімального порогу охоплення цільової аудиторії з метою поширення ідей та здійснення психологічного впливу

Людмила Кримець

Доктор філософських наук, старший науковий співробітник, доцент
Військовий інститут телекомунікацій та інформатизації імені Героїв Крут
01011, вул. Князів Острозьких, 45/1, м. Київ, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7451-5208>

♦ **Анотація.** Актуальність статті зумовлена еволюцією складових українського війська у 2014-2025 рр., зокрема розвитком засобів і технологій Сил спеціальних операцій Збройних Сил України у сфері інформаційно-психологічної протидії атакам Російської Федерації з урахуванням сучасних викликів. Метою статті було дослідження теоретичних аспектів обґрунтування мінімального порогу охоплення цільової аудиторії задля поширення визначених ідей та здійснення психологічного впливу. Дослідження базувалося на системному та міждисциплінарному підходах із застосуванням синергетичних принципів для вивчення складних соціально-інформаційних мереж. Застосовано екстраполяцію наукових результатів для інтеграції досвіду боротьби України з Російською Федерацією у сучасну наукову парадигму. Встановлено, що мінімальний поріг залучення цільової аудиторії для поширення ідей та здійснення психологічного впливу становить $\approx 3,5\%$. Водночас результативність відповідних заходів зумовлюється взаємодією сприятливих чинників, зокрема наявністю розвиненої інтерактивної мережі, активних агентів впливу та попередньої дестабілізації соціально-політичної обстановки, а також стримувальних факторів, пов'язаних із невідповідністю запропонованих наративів інтересам цільової аудиторії або їх суперечністю її ціннісним і моральним орієнтирам. Для визначення мінімального порогу залучення цільової аудиторії доцільно застосовувати коефіцієнт протидії інформаційно-психологічному впливу $\times 3$ для аудиторій із високим рівнем контрвпливу, що зумовлює фіксацію порогу на рівні близько $\approx 10,5\%$, зокрема під час планування психологічних заходів щодо населення держав з авторитарним типом управління. Практична цінність дослідження полягає в оптимізації фундаментальних підходів до діяльності Сил оборони України у сфері інформаційно-психологічної протидії в умовах російсько-української війни з урахуванням практичного досвіду виконання бойових (спеціальних) завдань Силами спеціальних операцій Збройних Сил України

♦ **Ключові слова:** психологічні операції; інформаційно-психологічна протидія; агенти впливу; інтерактивні мережі; інформаційний простір