Hybrid War as a Phenomenon of Semantic Postmodern Discourse with Emphasis on the Military Constant as a Factor of National Security

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Abstract: The article states the core thesis about two asymmetric modes of existence of war – physical and discursive.

The purpose of the article is to substantiate the analytical and practical necessity of distinguishing between two modes of existence of hybrid warfare as a phenomenon of physical reality and as a discursive construct, as well as to raise questions about the value specificity of the relationship between them.

The methodology of work represents the implication of two asymmetric modes of war existence – physical and discursive. The relationship between the two modes can be described in particular through modern cognitive-semantic and communicative approaches. Analysis, synthesis (thesis-antithesis), description, distinction, historical perspective, forecasting and hermeneutic tools of comprehension are the core methods of this work.

In the military (material) dimension, any military confrontation in general (and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in particular) is localized, while the discourse of this hybrid war has become global. The interpretive component of hybrid warfare is implemented through discursive verbal-semiotic means. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of the concept of victory. The Ukrainian dimension embodies the postmodern practical representation of the analysis of the problem of hybrid warfare as a war of interpretations.

Keywords: *Hybrid war, national security, accent controversy, semantic discourse, conflict of interpretations, armed forces, concept of victory, postmodernity.*

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1. Introduction

Hybrid warfare is generally understood as a military action conducted by combining military, quasi-military, diplomatic, pseudo-diplomatic, informational, psycho-manipulative, economic and other means to achieve strategic political objectives. The specificity of this combination is that each of the military and non-military methods of hybrid conflict is used for military purposes and is instrumentally used as a weapon. Weaponization occurs not only in the media sphere. Similarly, all other non-military means of conducting hybrid warfare are literally used as weapons that inflict damage on enemy systems at various levels. Such a functional combination of heterogeneous phenomena and means within the framework of hybrid conflicts requires a comprehensive analytical approach by representatives of different fields of knowledge.

The Ukrainian vector of actualization of the problem is that the concept of hybrid warfare proved to be the most theoretically and practically suitable for determining the nature of Russian aggression against Ukraine. To resist and deter the aggressor, Ukraine, together with its international partners, needs to have a clear understanding of the nature and character of this conflict. According to analysts, “today the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has the official status of anti-terrorist operation, but, unfortunately, this is the only way to characterize the modernized armed confrontation at the legal level” (Komarchuk, 2018).

The purpose of the article is to substantiate the analytical and practical necessity of distinguishing between two modes of existence of hybrid warfare as *a phenomenon of physical reality* and as *a discursive construct*, as well as to raise questions about the value specificity of the relationship between them; to prove that both modes are the embodiment of *counterculture* in relation to established forms of national, military-political, information culture, which, in turn, are the basis of national security.

The methodology of work represents the implication of two asymmetric modes of war existence – physical and discursive. The relationship between the two modes can be described in particular through modern cognitive-semantic and communicative approaches, which raise questions about the nature of the relationship between texts on war (discursive practices and narratives) and the material (physical) parameters of warfare. Analysis, synthesis (thesis-antithesis), description, distinction, historical perspective, forecasting and hermeneutic tools of comprehension are the core methods of this work.

Applying systemic and historical approaches to the analysis of the “hybrid warfare” concept, the need for a comprehensive approach to the study of this phenomenon is emphasized. It is stated that to resolve conflict issues or satisfy geopolitical interests, it has become quite economically unprofitable and politically dangerous to act openly for the aggressor state, so at the end of the 20th century, humanity has faced a new way of waging armed conflict, which has been informally called “hybrid”. *This term explains the new military strategy, which combines “ordinary warfare”, “petty warfare” and “cyber warfare” and serves to combine actions involving nuclear, biological, chemical weapons and information warfare.* At the same time, the absence of the need to develop new systems of weapons and military equipment is important.

Using modern approaches to the study of the “hybrid warfare” phenomenon, this phenomenon can be interpreted as a set of pre-prepared and promptly implemented by the state actions of military, diplomatic and informational nature, aimed at achieving strategic goals.

Futurological methodology allows to state that hybrid war undermines the foundations of national security and includes the implementation of a set of hybrid threats of different types, namely: traditional, non-standard, large-scale terrorism, as well as subversive actions using innovative technologies to counter enemy military force, such as mass cyberattacks, subversive actions in the energy, economic spheres, etc.

2. Algorithms of terminological discourse. Determinants of hybrid warfare.

The term “hybrid warfare”, as researchers state, appeared in 2005 and began to be used to describe Hezbollah’s strategy in the Lebanon War in 2006 (Komarchuk, 2018). It was introduced by F. Hoffman, a former US Marine officer, and described a “suitable analytical construct to explain the success of a relatively weak opponent, such as the Taliban, Al Qaeda, or Hezbollah, against the vastly technologically and numerically superior militaries both in Afghanistan and Iraq and in the 2006 Lebanon war against Iraq and Israeli forces” (Renz, 2016; Weissmann, 2019). Since then, the lexical token “hybrid” has dominated the discussion of current and future military action to such an extent that political and military analysts, as well as journalists, have adopted it and used it as a basis for contemporary military strategies and investigative journalism. Hybrid conflicts and hybrid threats are now seen as important characteristics of the international security environment, which is in a state of systemic crisis. At the same time, the

military and analytical communities lack unity in understanding the phenomenon of hybrid warfare. Generally, problem discourse embodies the following vectors of controversy:

- The main question is whether the nature of modern warfare has changed, and whether hybrid ways of waging war are fundamentally new forms of military present and future conflicts;
- Is it really just about the use of new combinations, techniques and methods of warfare, known since ancient times, and whether the essence of the war was and remains unchanged?

There is still no definite answer to this question. However, according to contemporary researchers, “the situation of warfare does not eliminate the need to address theoretical issues, and such consideration of it would be a dramatic mistake, because in war the correct assessment of the nature of military phenomena is directly related to the development and testing of defense from aggression. This is a key issue for Ukraine today” (Yavorska, 2016c).

Some military theorists categorically deny the essential specifics of hybrid wars, while others insist that such specifics exist. It is unacceptable for many experts to overuse the term “hybrid”, because, as a result, it can be used so widely that it loses its meaning.

The vagueness and uncertainty of the nature of modern conflicts is reflected in the multiplicity of terminological names for a wide range of phenomena:

- *hybrid war*,
- *conflicts in the “gray zone”*,
- *gray wars*,
- *unrestricted conflicts* and others that aim to distinguish modern wars from traditional or conventional types of armed conflicts.

Analyzing the degree of scientific development of the problem, it should be emphasized that in general the science of international law lacks an understanding of the “hybrid war” concept. Various aspects of the study of hybrid warfare technologies are revealed in a significant number of scientific works by both foreign and domestic scientists. There is a widespread belief (M. Guy) that the term “hybrid war” is simply a designation of a set of quite old methods and means of waging ordinary war (Komarchuk, 2018). A. Ermolayev noted that the lexical token “hybrid warfare” was proposed in the late 20th century in the United States to identify a conflict that combines standard full-scale military actions, local

actions by irregular armed groups, and information campaigns. The term gained wide popularity with the beginning of the armed conflict in Ukraine. This is how the world expert community characterized Russia's actions against our state. Since then, the "hybrid warfare" phenomenon has become the subject of study not only of the journalistic but also of the scientific community (Ermolayev et al.). O. Sytnyk, researcher of the problems of war and its types, defines hybrid warfare as an armed confrontation, simply as a weapon; in addition to the traditional, there are also special technologies, information, technical and global network devices (Sytnyk, 2017). One of the most authoritative analysts, well-known Ukrainian politician, author of the monograph "The World Hybrid War: Ukrainian Forefront" V. Horbulin notes that Russia has applied the concept of "hybrid war" against Ukraine, which is largely unique from a structural and functional point of view: it is "hybrid" in form and "asymmetric" in content. Moreover, the information factor in some cases becomes an independent component and is no less important than the military factor. Although many scientists and researchers point to the "hybrid" nature (Horbulin, 2017).

The negative result of such scattered terminology, according to experts, is the following: the fact of excessive use of additional terminological "stickers" for the current conflicts, their obsessive repetition outside the in-depth reflection on the core of the problem makes some experts doubt whether to talk about new forms of warfare, and perhaps it is more correct to consider the latest conflicts as the use of classic methods of force and strategies, the effectiveness of which is enhanced by the use of advanced technologies in combination with the conscious use of vulnerabilities of Western security structures (Echevarria & Antulio, 2016).

At the same time, the fact remains that contemporary forms of warfare create a significant number of new military, legal, as well as social, moral and other problems that require immediate solutions.

However, everything has its reasons, including phenomena unique from all points of view which are called hybrid conflicts, etc. That is why a brief overview of the history of the presence of the military factor in the actions (or inactivity) of certain political forces not only represents the Ukrainian experience of the preconditions of a hybrid conflict, but also emphasizes the universal gaps in politics as an art of managing in general.

"Hybrid wars" are a phenomenon of the 21st century. However, national history and national historical memory already have the experience of losing independence due to a hybrid conflict with the neighboring state.

In this regard, F. Turchenko and H. Turchenko, among other things, claim: *"... But in the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations, some of these techniques have been used before. In 1917-1921, many of these methods were already used by Bolshevik Russia in the fight against Ukraine. This was the response of the former imperial metropolis to the attempt of Ukrainians to defend their independence, proclaimed in January 1918 by the Central Council. Ukraine did not want the Bolshevik dictatorship, the destruction of democratic freedoms, "red terror" and the return under the control of Russia, now Bolshevik one. In response, regular troops went to Ukraine from Russia under the red flag of the communist revolution and the false slogan "to help the fraternal people in the struggle against the world bourgeoisie". They were helped in all possible ways by the local "fifth column" of Bolsheviks and other pro-Russian elements, who were particularly active in the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine. Then Ukraine lost its independence for many decades"* (Turchenko F. & Turchenko H., 2015, p. 146).

The controversy over the process of formation, development and reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine lasted with varying intensity during 1991-2020. Scientists, military and civilian experts, representatives of political and civic organizations actively participated in it. While in the first half of the 1990s such rhetoric was colored in the mood of post-Soviet pacifist euphoria, then later, after the first global and regional security challenges to Ukraine, Ukrainian political parties and movements started talking about strengthening military security and the role of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the process of state formation. At the same time, the formation of a single vision for the development and reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and their development prospects did not exist. Later, in line with the state-building processes at the turn of the 1990s, the "foundation" of the concept of the Ukrainian army was laid among "informal" civil-political organizations formed by the national-patriotic part of Ukrainian society. After the process of transformation and politicization, it moved from the theoretical and conceptual plane to the practical one, embodied in a number of legislative initiatives and decisions by the state authorities of the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR that were in discord with Soviet legislation in the military sphere.

After the restoration of Ukraine's independence on August 24, 1991, the leadership of the young state was faced with the issue of real protection of state sovereignty and territorial integrity. Thus, the full-fledged construction of the Ukrainian army began. As far as Ukrainian political forces had no own experience in military construction, in the first years after the restoration of state independence, the problems of creation and

development of the Ukrainian army, as well as of the national security system in general were solved *intuitively* by politicians, alongside with construction of other state institutions. It was decided that the construction of the Armed Forces of Ukraine should be conducted on the principle of “*reasonable sufficiency*” both in number and structure and in armaments (Tkachuk, 2019b). In general, given the difficulties of the transition period, the Ukrainian political elite managed to reach a consensus on the issue of military construction: they began to build the Armed Forces of Ukraine on the basis of a powerful military formation inherited from the USSR. The planned reduction and reform of the Armed Forces has practically begun. The legitimization and institutionalization of such an extremely important government body as the army took place very quickly and without much incidents. At the same time, minimal control over the military sphere was established by the legislative and executive power.

In the second half of the 1990s, the problems of Ukraine’s military policy and the development of its Armed Forces were not among the top priorities of Ukrainian political parties and movements, but at the same time they were not out of their attention. The need to restructure the army resulted, first of all, from the primary role of the country’s defense capabilities in ensuring and strengthening its sovereignty, the place of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the system of security agencies and state institutions. Ukrainian political elite considered the issue of military construction in the country through the prism of socio-political realities, pointing out that the country needed a highly professional army formed of contract servicemen. In the future, in conditions of underfunding of the military sector, geopolitical challenges, as well as internal political confrontation within the country, it was not possible to implement the proposed programs of reform and development of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In addition, the military sector remained characterized by a *lack of professional justification for defense spending*, which would take into account the real economic capabilities of the state and geopolitical realities. This led to reducing the level of technical and material support of formations and parts. The level of combat readiness of the troops, the state of mobilization reserves, technical and material support of formations and units, and the degree of their staffing were steadily declining (Tkachuk, 2019b). Due to socio-political and socio-economic factors during 1994-2005, the declared intentions to reform the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the military sphere in Ukraine failed to be implemented: a severe economic crisis in the country

(1993-1998), a political crisis in the early 2000s postponed indefinitely the possibility of transferring the army to the professionalization. It was also not possible to provide quality support and development of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, because in the conditions of the actual reduction of the army, three times such reform was not accompanied by in-depth scientific analysis, but rather dictated by the economic situation: there was no improvement in the supply of the army, but, on the contrary, its operational effectiveness and combat readiness decreased.

The above problematic overview shows that, in general, Ukrainian politicians have received a strong impetus to increase efforts to develop and make decisions related to the country's European integration after the Orange Revolution and Yushchenko's victory in the presidential election. In the conditions of a kind of reorientation of the Ukrainian political establishment to the western military-political blocs, the issues of national security and proper functioning of the Armed Forces of Ukraine became especially important. Trying to learn from foreign experience in military construction, the priority was to create a small modern army, staffed by professionals, comprehensively enforced, equipped with the latest models of weapons and military equipment (Tkachuk, 2019a). The 2006 Ukrainian political crisis ended with the split of the "Orange Coalition" (BYuT, "Our Ukraine", SPU) and contributed to the formation of an "anti-crisis coalition" consisting of the Party of Regions, SPU, KPU, and to the appointment of Viktor Yanukovych as Prime Minister of Ukraine. The political crisis caused by the collapse of the "Orange Coalition" caused a situation where in the country with pro-European President, the adoption of legislative initiatives and executive branch were under the de facto control of pro-Russian political forces. The internal political crisis in Ukraine did not allow political parties to demonstrate in practice the implementation of their election programs in the field of national security and reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. At the same time, the change in the balance of power in parliament has shown that Ukraine is once again at the crossroads of geopolitical choice with a predominant pro-Russian "tilt".

After a short period of geopolitical maneuvering, Ukraine gradually shifted from a Euro-Atlantic course to a policy of state neutrality, which was actively supported by the Russian Federation. The amount of funding of the Armed Forces did not meet not only the regulatory but also the minimum need, and did not take into account the existing level of inflation. In practice, this meant further political and economic dependence of official Kyiv on

Moscow. At the same time, the voices of a number of political forces warning of the danger of such a political reversal – BYuT and Our Ukraine–People’s Self-Defense Bloc – remained unheard. After all, the use of pro-Russian and anti-NATO rhetoric helped Party of Regions leader Viktor Yanukovych win the 2010 presidential election, which only strengthened Ukraine’s Russian-centric security foreign policy (Tkachuk., 2018a).

In 2010-2013, active changes took place in the field of military construction and development of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which were aimed at weakening the state’s defense capabilities. The process of reforming the Armed Forces of Ukraine after the victory of Viktor Yanukovych the President of Ukraine (2010) and the appointment of Mykola Azarov the Prime Minister of Ukraine (2010) was essentially the collapse of combat-ready military units. At this time, the number of personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was gaining special importance. Measures to improve the military education system, introduce a multilevel system of sergeant training, to intensify the process and forms of recruitment of civilians in the military service allowed to keep the number of contract servicemen at the level of previous years, although the decades of unresolved problems in the army caused by insufficient funding for the military sphere manifested themselves.

The victory of the Revolution of Dignity and the change of power in Ukraine increased the level of public demand for rapid positive changes in the country and in all spheres of socio-political life. However, in the military sphere, the catalyst for rapid and effective reforms was Russia’s military aggression, which threatened the continued existence of Ukraine as a sovereign state. Given the factor of the Russian military threat, the problems of developing the Armed Forces of Ukraine and strengthening Ukraine’s defense capabilities became a key component in the campaign rhetoric of political parties and movements in the early parliamentary elections in 2014. The main topics for pro-European political forces were: defending the country and restoring peace, focusing on securing victory in the conflict, supporting the army and other military formations, members of the anti-terrorist operation, removing non-aligned status and joining NATO (Tkachuk, 2018a, 2018b). At the same time, along with solely declarative statements about the expediency of strengthening the state’s defense capabilities, political forces from the pro-Russian segment of Ukrainian politics proposed to resolve the situation provoked by Russia in a number of regions through negotiation, pointing to exclusively “internal” military events in Ukraine. The main elements of their party propaganda were the

demands for the implementation of the “peaceful path”, the disarmament of volunteer battalions as “illegal armed formations” along with the preservation of non-aligned status. The events of 2014 and the complete unpreparedness of the state for military aggression necessitated radical changes in approaches to the formation of the principles of state policy in the field of military construction and development of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Today the country is in a state of hybrid war, Ukraine’s top politicians declare the position of a “regime of silence”, society is in a state of multi-vector total uncertainty and disappointment. The phenomenon of loneliness in the format of “forced isolation”, “abandonment” and “traumatic loneliness” have become a noticeable sign of existence. “Loneliness as a trauma is perhaps the most dangerous embodiment of the above phenomenon. The classic embodiment of the latter is PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) – a condition “beyond the possible” – according to the classical definition by K. Jaspers” (Aleksandrova & Khrypko, 2020). Stormy fashion for virtual communities and new hybrid types of culture (virtual culture, digital culture, videogame culture (Horban et al., 2020), etc.), which produces a crisis of authentic culture of anthroponymy, fashion for nicknames, simulacra, kitsch; mixed identity, uncontrollability, and even anarchy carry, given the interpretive paradigm of hybrid warfare, a potential threat to the harmony of life and national security in general. As the researchers noticed, a new name (“nickname”) redistributes roles and establishes links that may or may not have a way out of cyberspace into real. Nicknames, in turn, mix or nullify traditional cultural anthroponymy, which in turn undermines the foundations of civil society and the traditional understanding of the state as a guarantor of national security (Khrypko & Iatsenko, 2019). Analysts often interpret this tendency as the embodiment of the phenomenon of “turning point” in the space of state security – “... Moreover, the marginal and assimilative tendencies concern a sphere of Ukrainian surnames. The change of surnames is much more dramatic, as the whole history of family, region, and country demonstrates. “A name is a choice, motivation, aspirations, a parents’ gift. A surname is inheritance. It is a clan’s sign, family’s code, a symbol that connects us with a world of our predecessors, with a history of our family. A name is something that is acquired “here and now”; however, a surname is a voice from eternity, a gift from the predecessors’ will” (Khrypko & Iatsenko, 2019 b). Fashion or personal thoughts regarding the loss of Ukrainian authentic name-surname giving tendencies led to the

cultural marginalization and ethnic traditions' violation" (Levyk & Aleksandrova, 2020).

The above features actualize the need for optimal concretization of the problem; for a clear, politically competent professional analysis of the discourse of hybrid warfare as a sign of social, cultural, political, psychological and geopolitical existence.

3. Dualism of modes of hybrid war existence – physical reality and discursive construct.

The war phenomenon a priori belongs to those problems that will always remain of interest or in the scientific discourse. From ancient times, the topic of war has been an important subject of analysis, and nowadays there is an increasing number of such studies. After the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the number of works on hybrid wars is growing rapidly. War in general and new forms of warfare in particular are gradually becoming the subject of interdisciplinary research. Communicative and cognitive aspects of the study of war increase their relevance.

Contemporary wars are considered by experts as a kind of broader concept – “*armed conflict*”, which provides for two mandatory components – the presence of organized armed contingents and involvement in hostilities of a certain intensity (Members of the Committee, 2010). It follows from this definition that war is interpreted as primarily a physical, material phenomenon – a weapon (tanks, planes, missiles, ships, etc.), its use, strikes, defensive actions, destruction of objects. Human losses, the deaths of the military and civilians in the conflict also belong to the physical sphere. It is in the physical dimension that the loss of human life is final and irreversible.

War as a physical and material fact always has the following analytical triangle: cause – course – consequences. The fact (of a war) must be caused and its possible and real consequences should be analyzed. That is why, a priori, physical actions on the battlefield are constantly accompanied by processes of their discursive comprehension, verbal description and analysis. There can be no disagreement – “The connection between war and words, texts and stories is long-standing and not accidental: it is not accidental that the ancient Greek name of war “*pólemos*” (from which the word “*polemic*” comes) united in its meaning both armed and verbal battles. There is every reason to believe that the discourse on war and war in the physical dimension appear at the same time. An armed conflict of any level comes

into existence as a war – that is, a historical, social, humanitarian and other event – only within its discursive (primarily verbal) understanding” (Yavorska, 2016c).

So we can state that the physical mode of existence of war is always accompanied by its discursive mode. Wars acquire the meaning and status of war only together with discursive forms. The bloodiest confrontation is not a war until stories are told about it. Myths, historical chronicles, novels, reports, monographs, works of philosophers and historians, reports of experts and analysts, works on martial skills, military law, etc. – the list of textual and social forms of understanding the phenomenon of war and interpretations of particular military events can be extended and expanded almost indefinitely. The interpretive activity of virtual communities, that generally form a separate information (and not only) front, can be distinguished. These various activities are united by its symbolic (semiotic) nature. Reflection on war, like all other types of reflection, unfolds in a discursive dimension. We can state that wars are inseparable from verbal, discursive practices. And, along with mythology, created around the war, we can see information as a means of confronting, so, hybrid war can also be complemented by informational war as another important part of its non-physical appearance (Filipec, 2019).

The connection of war with verbal events, performatives confirms the role given to the actual *declaration of war*. The declaration of war is a linguistic and a social act at the same time. Not without reason in the traditional consciousness and contemporary public discourse there is an idea that the real, “correct” war is only a *declared war*. At the same time, at the level of generally accepted ideas the *undeclared war* is such that it deviates from a certain idealized pattern. Although under international law after 1945, the official fact of declaring war is not decisive for recognizing that war or armed conflict exists *de jure*. The UN Charter does not say anything about the significance of the declaration of war for international law. Article 2 of the Geneva Conventions of 194 states that their provisions apply in all cases of armed conflict, not just in cases of wars that have been formally declared (Members of the Committee, 2010). However, for the public consciousness, the connection of war with the word and discursive forms is more important than abstract legal norms. The role of the fact of declaring war at the level of established cultural stereotypes (Mitrović, 2018) is fundamental.

The fact of declaring war can be replaced by another form – by any version of legitimizing the conflict. “With the help of the legal system, the

state as an arbiter is forced to restrain aggression and protect the rights of all its citizens in order to prevent chaos. But even at the state level it is not always possible to resolve conflict situations peacefully, so there is a need to legitimize the use of weapons in some cases to protect state (public) interests. The period of legitimization of an armed conflict is called a war, the subject of which is exclusively the state” (Komarchuk, 2018).

War and peace as social events are related to the word, although war is associated with sound and peace is associated with silence (for example, the expression “silence mode” used to denote a ceasefire under the Minsk agreements). To start a war, it is enough for the leader of one of the parties to declare it orally. But for the formal end of the war, as a rule, written documents are required. No wonder war is *declared* and peace is *signed*, and the signing of peace agreements is usually the best way to stop the conflict and to finish the warfare (Patel, 2019). We can also mention the folk version of hints of a possible war – conversations, rumors, i.e. verbal actions and events that occur before the war and accompany the war. Such conversations-signs, as a rule, have a collective author, which enhances their significance: “People are saying that there will be a war”.

The debate (verbal disputes) over the “correct” name of the war in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea, the demands to “call this a war” have become an important component of the current hybrid conflict. The designation “anti-terrorist operation” (ATO) is often perceived in the public dimension as not reflecting the essence of the conflict between states and the role of the Russian Federation as an attacker. A separate issue for public debate is the name “*hybrid war*”. Is it a real war? From the point of view of common ideas, the answer is “no”. This is refuted by public perceptions. “*This war is for destruction. It is us or them. No matter how “hybrid” and “false” it may seem to someone*”, Anton Sanchenko, a well-known Ukrainian blogger, Ukrainian writer, translator, publisher, and developer of information retrieval and analytical systems writes, thus reflecting everyday public ideas about the current events on the borders of Ukraine prevalent in society.

Thus, it can be generally concluded that war is waged both in material (physical) and in discursive dimensions. Accordingly, to determine the essential features of war, it is necessary to consider two modes of its existence:

- *war as a phenomenon of physical reality;*
- *war as a discursive construct.*

The correlation between the two modes can be described in particular through modern cognitive-semantic and communicative approaches, which raise questions about the nature of the relationship between war texts (discursive practices and narratives) and the material (physical) parameters of warfare.

4. Mixedness and asymmetry of discursive and material modes of hybrid confrontation: global vs local

The Ukrainian experience resonated with more than just topical issue of hybrid conflicts. Despite the presence of many works on hybrid warfare, the number of which has increased sharply after 2014 and continues to grow, much of the questions of the theory and practice of hybrid warfare in general and the specifics of the Russian hybrid war against Ukraine in particular remain unanswered. When trying to analyze a hybrid war, it resembles a moving target that appears and disappears from view in an unpredictable way. With a significant amount of confirmed facts and data on hybrid hostilities, experts face difficulties in interpreting them. Volodymyr Horbulin notes that as a result of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, some basic theses on the nature of hybrid hostilities will need to be clarified and even revised. First of all, this applies to the widespread notion of the asymmetric nature of hybrid threats as those used by a weaker opponent against a party with significantly greater military, technological, and human potential, mainly by non-state actors against nation-states. This thesis, common in the early stages of the development of the hybrid warfare concept, arose under the influence of the concept of “war on terror” and was further developed in the concept of hybrid combat operations (Horbulin, 2017, p. 16). However, in developing the concept of hybrid warfare, the thesis was put forward at the initial stages that the source of hybrid challenges could be not only non-state actors, but the range of regular and irregular tactics would be further expanded (Hoffman, 2009).

In the military (material) dimension, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is localized, and today, in addition to the occupied Crimean Peninsula, it covers part of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine (ORDLO). Instead, the discourse related to the events in Ukraine has acquired a global dimension, at the same time varying significantly at the local (Ukrainian internal), interstate (Russian-Ukrainian) and global levels. These three main dimensions of the information discourse of war are related to different, often controversial interpretations of events.

The informational and semantic specificity of the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war in 2014-2016, in comparison with the previous conflicts, which were related to wars of this type, in our opinion, is the following:

1. the intensity and breadth of coverage of the audience of information influences, which has acquired a global dimension (domestic (Ukrainian), interstate (Russian-Ukrainian), international),
2. the systematic and comprehensive use of media and new media;
3. the creation of a new discourse of war, aimed at the destruction of existing and the formation of new interpretive and semantic mechanisms of perception of reality (Horbulin, 2017, p. 41).

The analysis of the discourse of hybrid war presupposes attention to its verbal component and the socio-semiotic constructs created with its help. To do this, it is necessary to identify discursive mechanisms for the production of meanings disseminated by the media and social networks in connection with the Russian aggression in Ukraine and its consequences. The discourse of hybrid conflict is not limited to the media; it goes beyond it. In addition to paper, electronic and Internet media, it covers a wide range of social communication, from private conversations on various forms of confrontation to negotiations between diplomats trying to find a *diplomatic solution* to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. "The last formula", as V. Horbulin, one of the most authoritative analysts in Ukraine on this issue says, "is a striking example of a discursive construct that not only refers to the concept of peace, but also fits into the detailed narrative of peace as a special, self-sufficient value, as this narrative was formed in Europe after the Second World War. The concept of *diplomatic solution* belongs, in our terms, to the global level of the discourse of war" (Horbulin, 2017, p. 41-42).

However, as contemporary researchers note, in a situation of war with the use of conventional military means, with real physical destruction and death, "peaceful" concepts may be ineffective. Moreover, the direct application of "concepts of peace" can cause an additional layer of conflictual meanings (Yavorska, 2016c).

The perspective factor in this hybrid war works in such a way that, acting by discursive means, the aggressor tries to identify himself as a peacemaker, attributing the role of the attacker to the object of attack. Ukraine's strategic partners are sensitive to these interpretations through references to peace as an absolute value (Horbulin, 2017, p. 41-44). It is absolutely expected and logical that their national interests are to end the conflict as soon as possible, to eliminate the hotspot in Europe, on the EU's

borders and on NATO's eastern and south-eastern flanks. Ukraine's role as a victim of aggression is certainly recognized as part of the illegal annexation of Crimea, but the armed conflict in Donbass is interpreted with a great deal of uncertainty. Instead, in this general context, due to the predominance of the aggressor's military and general national potential, and within the framework of the formula adopted with the assistance of Western partners on a "peaceful way to resolve the conflict", it is not possible for Ukraine to fully argue that the right to defense the object of aggression is inalienable and is limited only by the general rules of international humanitarian military law. At the same time, the aggressor country, according to researchers, "does not in any way recognize itself as a party to the conflict, but creates conditions for ensuring a military presence ... in the country subjected to aggression on a long-term / permanent basis (in the form of "peacekeeping forces" or separatist armed groups)" (Mahda, 2015, p. 175).

Given the global dimension of discursive conflict implementation, this aspect of hybrid aggression needs special attention. The designation of civil war is based on a frame in which the concept of victory is negated, but the goal of achieving peace comes to the fore. Instead, a just war, that is, a war against the aggressor, implies victory in order to establish peace. Thus, the concept of peace, denoting the "normal" or "ordinary" state of society, in the mirror of cognitive-semantic analysis is derived from the concept of war and a specific way of categorizing it (Yavorska, 2016a).

Discursive practices are implemented through certain strategic narratives (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin & Roselle, 2013). The discourse of war is associated with certain types of narratives. The interpretation of war and conflict depends on how they are conceptualized. One or the other narrative schemes designate events and define their participants (actors) differently. The choice of terms to describe the conflict (*war between states, civil war, occupation, frozen conflict, Cold War*, etc.) entails appropriate plot and interpretation schemes and determines according to them the participants in the confrontation (opponents and allies, enemies and friends, locals and refugees, partisans and collaborators, "us" and "them") and the nature of the relationship that exist between them (Yavorska, 2016b). At the same time, the difference of interpretations is, finally, due to the perspective factor – the position of the party in the conflict.

5. Clash of interpretations: dissonance and mutual rejection

Hybrid threats lies between states of war and peace (Schmid, 2019). It creates the difficulty in conceptualization of existing phenomena, which blur the borders between traditional views on war phenomenon. The conflict over the dominance of interpretive models of the postmodernity is the most noticeable cut of the epistolary genre (both scientific-analytical and everyday populist). Conflict of interpretations becomes a separate type of information weapon. That is why the interpretation of hybrid warfare as “*not exactly a war*” is quite common. This understanding of the content of war is beneficial primarily to the aggressor. The victim of the conflict in some way finds himself in the conditions of multidirectional loneliness (imposed isolation, alienation, etc.) (Aleksandrova & Khrypko, 2020). The state can also be lonely, especially at the beginning of the legitimization of a military conflict.

For the phenomenon of hybrid warfare, the question of understanding and perception of events is particularly important, because during hybrid wars, the problem of interpreting the main components of the cognitive frame of military conflict (combat) comes to the forefront. These are such concepts as:

- 1) the parties to the conflict (opponents),
- 2) the subject-matter of the “dispute” (a problem to be resolved by war),
- 3) the purpose of the parties, as well as the specifics of the accompanying components of the frame,
- 4) the intensity of the struggle,
- 5) the duration of the conflict,
- 6) tools,
- 7) methods and means of warfare,
- 8) spatial and temporal location of the event,
- 9) the final result (components of the frame of military conflict are given taking into account the data of the FrameNet resource on the general frame of “*hostile encounter*”, which at the lexical level includes nouns *war*, *battle*, *struggle* and other concepts in this line) (FrameNet), (Yavorska, 2016c, p. 45).

The concept of hybrid warfare is based on a cognitive frame that remains undefined. Deviations from the established frame of war – purpose, weapons, participants, destruction, victory/defeat, etc. – give rise to

numerous incompletely predictable effects that affect political and military decisions.

Each of the elements of this frame receives several interpretations in the process of hybrid conflict, despite the fact that in physical reality they correspond to the same state of affairs.

Thus, in the process of Russian hybrid aggression against Ukraine, several versions of the parties to the conflict have been formed. Namely:

1. In the first version, it is a war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine with the participation of regular armed forces of both sides, as well as irregular local formations in the Donbas (separatists, terrorists) controlled and supplied with weapons by the Russian Federation.

2. At the same time, in the second version, authored by the Russian Federation, it refuses to acknowledge itself as a party to the conflict (despite the indisputable facts of its participation recorded by Ukraine and international structures) and imposes its own interpretation according to which the Ukrainian authorities (the “Kyiv Junta”) are at war with the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine in the Donbas.

3. According to the third version, disseminated by influential international media agencies, there is a conflict in Ukraine between the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the “insurgents” supported by the Russian Federation in the East of the country.

4. There is also a version spread from the Russian Federation that Russia is at war with the West (alternatively, with the USA) on the territory of Ukraine (Yavorska, 2016c, p. 46).

Thus, even in defining the parties to the conflict, there is an ambiguity, which further negatively affects diplomatic efforts, becomes an integral part of the information war, and so on. In other words, *the conflict of interpretations during hybrid warfare is used as a type of weapon along with other non-military components of hybrid action* (Horbulin, 2017, pp.49-50).

The clash of narratives with opposing versions of events should not, however, be fully compared to a conventional military clash. The “battle of narratives” and the battle in physical reality differ not only in the characteristics of the structures being damaged, but also in the duration and consequences – “this is more like a protracted competition than a battle with winners and losers” (Ministry of Defence, 2011).

Contradictions of interpretations correlate with contradictions of designating the conflict (*proxy war, war, civil conflict, interstate conflict, undeclared war, hybrid war, etc.*). The presence of numerous inconsistent names confirms

the importance of this aspect for the awareness of events in Ukraine by general public.

The obvious and irrefutable evidence of the existence of an international armed conflict has been essentially ignored by a large part of the international community for several years. Many Western politicians and experts consider the events in Donbas an internal conflict, tending to the aggressor's version and not considering Russia as a party to the confrontation (see, for example, data on Ukraine in the large database of armed conflicts at Uppsala University) (Uppsala Conflict Data Program). The format of the Minsk talks is based on an understanding of the nature of this conflict as an internal Ukrainian, which constantly limits the effectiveness of our diplomatic efforts. Non-recognition of the role of the aggressor assigned to the Russian Federation fundamentally distorts the content of the events taking place in Ukraine. The Ukrainian vector of actualization of the problem once again emphasizes the universal conclusion that hybrid war as a global confrontation arises in the conditions of new principles of geopolitical system, which is now determined by "internal lines of tension between the zone of stability, where the legislation and international law prevail... and the sphere of uncertainty, which is characterized by disregard for the law, numerous local conflicts" (Parakhonskyi & Yavorska, 2015)

According to problem analysts, one of the features of hybrid warfare is that complete military victory, in contrast to traditional warfare, is impossible for either party (Lasica, 2012, pp. 24-25). This transfers the solution of the question to the dimension of meanings that are formed by discursive means. In other words, in a hybrid war, victory in the field of physical reality is transferred to the cognitive dimension of war. Here, in all forms of facts and epistolary representation, we are again faced with a conflict of interpretations.

In the case of Russian-Ukrainian aggression, contemporary researchers naturally come across several completely contradictory and logically inconsistent interpretations of victory. Here are a few: thus, according to Russian expert S. Karaganov, Russia believes that it has defeated the West and continues to "re-educate" it (Horbulin, 2017, p. 52). At the same time, some German politicians are inclined to believe that transatlantic unity defeated Russia by peaceful means – in fact, Germany won by avoiding the resumption of a new Cold War. It is significant that both approaches are about victory in terms of the conflict between Russia

and the West (Yavorska, 2016c, p. 46). Although the interpretation of events (results of the conflict) is extremely opposite. On the one hand, this demonstrates the dependence of the concept of victory on how interpreters understand who are the main participants in the conflict. On the other hand, this example shows that even if participants are identified in the same way, it does not prevent everyone from declaring themselves the winner at the same time.

For Ukraine, the issue of victory is vital, but we do not have a single clear formula today. It is clear that, unlike the aggressor state and partner countries, in the cognitive frame of war from the perspective of Ukraine we have two main participants: Ukraine as an object of aggression and Russia as an attacking country. Victory for Ukraine should be conceptualized as a victory in the fight against the aggressor.

However, the connection between the concepts of victory and defeat in the frame of a hybrid war remains unclear. According to the rules of “ordinary” war, victory must be declared by a special verbal action (similar to the action of declaring war). The victorious side declares the end of the war, and the opposing side declares itself defeated.

But this scenario in the conditions of a hybrid war is almost unbelievable. The aggressor who does not acknowledge his role as a participant in the conflict and represents himself as a peacemaker does not envisage, accordingly, any recognition of his defeat. It is even more difficult to talk about the meaning of victory and defeat in conditions when time and forms of ending the hybrid conflict remain uncertain.

In everyday use, in the Ukrainian public discourse, on the Internet, the word *victory* acts as the opposite not of *defeat* but of *betrayal*. In addition, the *victory* is used as a designation for a variety of internal political contradictions which are quite far, at first glance, from the situation of hybrid warfare, especially from the situation in Donbas.

This rather unusual situation, the case of the spread of contextual synonyms *betrayal/victory* in the form of an Internet meme, transfers the narrative of victory over an external enemy to the narrative of victory over one's own *criminal authority* (another popular Internet meme). Thus, we have a situation of reproducing the model of opposition *people – authority*, inherited from the events of the Revolution of Dignity in winter of 2013-2014. These symbols in contemporary texts and individual statements are used in the context of criticism of the government as a means to blame government officials for deviating from “Maidan ideals” and *betrayal* of these ideals

(Yavorska, 2016b) (rarely – and more often ironically – is spoken of *victory* for the approval of the public, which manages to defend its interests). Thus, the model of opposition between *the people and the authority* during the Maidan in winter of 2013-2014 partially retains its role in the typologically similar confrontation between the public representatives and the government (although the government has changed during this time).

However, if we take into account that one of the goals of the Russian hybrid war against Ukraine is to undermine the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government and to fuel the domestic political contradictions, this case of seemingly “illogical” interpretation of *victory* as an antonym of *betrayal* fits perfectly into the discursive context of hybrid aggression. Although the clear game connotation of the *betrayal/victory* opposition partially reduces the possibilities of its destructive application.

The specificity of hybrid warfare requires the creation of one’s own convincing understanding of the content of victory over the enemy. The vision of the desired post-war scenarios involving the principles of international law in terms of *post-war rule (jus post bellum)* and their modification for the conditions of a hybrid war and in terms of the responsibility of the hybrid aggressor become especially important.

However, today the topic of the end of the war, apart from the demands to punish the aggressor and considerations about the fate of Crimea and Donbas, is almost not represented in the Ukrainian public discourse. It is unclear what this means at the level of human lives, which makes the current war fundamentally different than the discourse of the Second World War, where this theme was conceptualized as “a return to peaceful (pre-war) life”. In contemporary Ukraine, such a “peaceful” narrative is imposed by some members of the opposition, but it is too poorly aligned with current domestic and international realities.

When the possibility of a convincing final military victory over the aggressor is remote, the cognitive dimension of hybrid warfare comes to the forefront, the success in which requires the consistent use of discursive means, the creation of an effective strategic narrative in terms of Ukraine’s national interests.

In the conditions of a hybrid war, when the decisive military victory loses its absolute character, the problem of achieving one’s own national goals and hindering the achievement of the enemy’s political goals comes to the fore. The main political goal of Ukraine is to continue its existence as a sovereign independent state. Instead, Russia’s hybrid aggression against

Ukraine was conducted for the political purpose of subjugating it, destroying Ukraine's sovereignty, and returning it to the sphere of Russia's geopolitical influence. It is envisaged to achieve this goal with the help of three political demands formulated before the beginning of the hybrid war, their implementation (together or separately) could indicate the defeat of Ukraine. These are the federalization of our state, the official status of the Russian language as the second state language, and a change in the foreign policy course, that is, Ukraine's legally fixed refusal of European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

The military aspect of victory over the aggressor is ensured by increasing Ukraine's own military power both for defense purposes and as a deterrent to the attacker. At the same time, *when there are not enough resources for an unconditional military victory, which also results in a huge number of casualties, victory in a hybrid war can only be achieved by failing to meet the aggressor's set of political demands.* These political demands of the Russian Federation remain unchanged throughout the war. Thus, Ukraine's victory – at the cognitive level – will be to prevent the implementation of these demands of the Russian Federation and to continue to maintain its existence as an independent state.

6. Conclusions

War as a socio-political phenomenon is endless. Along with the development and technologicalization of the main spheres of life activities in the world, the war progresses and is modernized depending on the needs and realities of geopolitical modernity. Given this fact, in today's armed conflicts, the *"information front"* is actively used together with the *"military front"*, which is significantly reflected in the thoughts, beliefs and actions of the population of the countries in conflict and of the world. The success of the use of the "information front" is due to the use of various technologies for manipulating the consciousness of society. The interpretive component can surprisingly be crucial in the concluding plane of a conflict.

The phenomenon of hybrid warfare has two main modes of existence – material (physical) and discursive. These two modes are asymmetric. In the military (material) dimension, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is localized, covering part of the territory of Ukraine, however, the discourse of this hybrid war has become global. The interpretive component of hybrid warfare, or the cognitive dimension of hybrid warfare is implemented through discursive verbal-semiotic means.

We would like to hypothetically classify military confrontations in the following three dimensions:

Traditionally, military theory uses a number of specific criteria for typifying a military conflict, which make it possible to consider all its main aspects. In particular, the criteria for dividing conflicts into types are: the degree of coverage of reality; scope; type of parties to the conflict; socio-political system of these parties; the nature of socio-political relations; degree of organization; level of escalation, etc. The classification of military conflicts is related to the main forms of their manifestation and existence. Depending on the form of manifestation, which is determined by the methods of using military force by the opposing parties, there are *hidden (latent) and overt conflicts*. The combination of qualitatively different elements in a military conflict causes a great variety of forms of its existence, which consist of a *combination of three models of war – formal, informal and gray zone warfare*.

Formal war is a clash between the armed forces of one state and the armed forces of another. Such a clash is accompanied by a formal act of declaring war (Komarchuk, 2018).

Informal wars are armed conflicts in which at least one or both sides are non-state actors. New threats that emerged after the end of the Cold War led to the phenomenon of the gray zone, i.e. the combination of war and military action with organized crime (such as the conflict in the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria).

Hybrid threats include a range of different regimes of war, including standard weapons, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts (including violence and coercion) and criminal disorder. The interpretive component in this context embodies the function of a weapon.

Consideration of differences in the understanding of new “mixed” forms of hostilities *raises the question of whether contemporary approaches to hybrid warfare have very different perspectives, depending on **the position of the parties to the conflict and their goals***, as well as the impact of “point of view” on countering hybrid strategies threats and hybrid attack. Fundamentally, the physical mode of existence of war is always accompanied by its discursive mode. Wars in fact acquire meaning and status of war only together with discursive forms. The bloody confrontation is not a war unless stories are told about it. Its symbolic (semiotic) character unites the interpretive contexts of coverage of a war. Reflection on war, like all other types of reflection, unfolds in a discursive dimension. We can say that wars are

inseparable from verbal, discursive practices. In a certain way, any war is a war of interpretations.

All this brings the problem of international environmental standards of information policy and security in general to the urgent agenda.

- The optimal presence of a military constant in the actions and documents of political forces can neutralize the informative and physical impact of hybrid practices.
- “Hybrid warfare” as an umbrella term only emphasizes the inability or unwillingness of politicians to adequately respond to the military threat and legalize the conflict by recognizing the identities.
- The ethical component of information culture can potentially end any confrontation, even at the primary level.

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