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The Philosophy of War in Ukrainian Culture: A Past to Present

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Abstract: The purpose of the article is to highlight the philosophical and ideological understanding and perception of war by the Ukrainian people during its cultural and historical development. Constant wars, which have become an integral part of Ukrainian history and culture, have formed a mental readiness for such challenges. In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the research, the author uses the traditional methodological arsenal for qualitative research, namely: analysis of sources that cover the philosophical dimensions of war in Ukraine; comparative analysis of

the mental dimension of war in the past and present of Ukrainian culture; philosophical synergistic approach to determining the formation and interaction of ontological, axiological and anthropological constants of military realities. The results of the study point to the transformation of the philosophy of war in Ukrainian culture in the modern period. The current generation of Ukrainians perceives war in a new way and positions its realities in the context of cultural and historical national development and at the individual level of influence. Historically, for a long time, the wars that unfolded on the territory of Ukraine did not have a nationally oriented vector. Therefore, for the Ukrainian culture, the philosophy of war was mainly correlated with the existential aspects of other state entities, focusing on human manifestations (heroism, courage, fear, pain, suffering). The present day has added to these elements the value aspect of national identity. A promising area of research on the philosophy of war in Ukrainian culture is the actualisation of the axiological cluster associated with the real historical perspective of the establishment of Ukrainian national identity. Thus, the philosophy of war has always been a relevant concept reflected in the mentality and cultural traditions of Ukrainians.

Keywords: mentality, cultural and historical traditions, war, military outlook, wartime culture, perception of war.

Introduction

The history of Ukraine's statehood is riddled with wars, so Ukrainians have developed a military outlook and a mentality of readiness for military activity over generations. Today, the Ukrainian people are facing another test of war. At the same time, it is worth noting certain cultural and ideological changes that have emerged for Ukrainians during the current military confrontation with Russian aggression.

For a long time during their historical development, Ukrainians were at war, without their own statehood. This led to a certain ideological dissonance, as war has clearly defined targets. The war for independence, the war for territory, the war against the aggressor are all types of wars that have a clear value and purpose. For Ukrainians in the global dimension, after the Cossack era, wars took place without their identification as geopolitical subjects of war. In other words, Ukrainians actually participated in wars under the flags of countries that seized their statehood. Bloody hostilities took place on Ukrainian territories, but not in Ukraine.

This led to a certain distortion of the mental perception of the war in the context of values and goals. Existentially, the war was understandable, as the enemies against whom Ukrainians fought were actually or formally identified. At the human level, the war also has clear guidelines, and focuses on heroism, courage, and military feats on the part of those participating in the war, and suffering, fear, and despair on the negative side of the war for the civilian population. However, the value and purpose dimension of the war for Ukrainians has not been fully defined historically, culturally and mentally.

There is a somewhat paradoxical situation when the value and purpose dimensions of Ukrainians in the historical context began with the glorious traditions of the Old Russian and Cossack states and ended with them. All other wars in Ukraine were waged by other geopolitical actors and lost their value and purposeful sense of national identification. That is, Ukrainians took an active part in wars that were not their own on their own territory.

It is clear that such realities were reflected in the cultural tradition that described the realities and myths of the war; and in the ideological and mental attitudes of Ukrainians, who ambiguously perceived the meaning of the war for their people.

Research Problem

The research problem of the study is to correlate the cultural and historical experience and the realities of the present day in the issue of war in Ukraine. The philosophy of war consists of many aspects that reveal its existential and everyday practical characteristics, which later form the basis for the cultural tradition of the nation's military experience. The problem of the Ukrainian case of military cultural heritage is the unevenness of thematic achievements. The vast majority of the cultural tradition is associated with individual characteristics.

Research Focus

The focus of the study is on the return of philosophical and ideological guidelines to the national identity issue. The historical experience of Kyivan Rus and the Cossack state determined the balance of cultural and ideological characteristics of war. The current war of the Ukrainian people is again acquiring a value dimension in the context of national identification and state activity. Therefore, for Ukrainians, the cultural dimension of modern warfare is holistic, unlike cultural reflections on the First or Second World Wars, where the national and state-building components were eliminated.

Research Aim and Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to highlight the peculiarities of the formation of the integrity of cultural and historical perception and understanding of war by Ukrainians. The mental understanding of war in today's realities is transforming in the context of the synergy of all components of the philosophy of war: existential, value and human dimensions. The task of scientific research is to bring to a common denominator all the dimensions of the philosophical interpretation of war in the context of the cultural and historical tradition and the modern realities of the Ukrainian people.

Literature Review

The problem of war in Ukrainian society has become acutely relevant since the outbreak of Russian aggression in 2014. In 2022, with the start of the full-scale invasion, the military issue was diversified in all aspects of scientific, philosophical and creative nature.

War affects all spheres of social activity without exception, so it is worth noting the aspects related to the impact of war on individual and social institutions:

- the educational sphere, which lays the foundations of values through the educational and upbringing process, forming the mental principles of the philosophy of war for children and youth (Lavrysh et al., 2022);
- the military sphere, which is facing new formats of warfare (Perepelytsia, 2021) and delegates military innovation as a cultural reference point for belief in success;
- political Krickovic & Sakwa (2022) and geopolitical Aldea (2022) spheres, providing society (both Ukrainian and international) with an understanding that democracy and dictatorship are still competing on the global planetary stage, using war as a means to achieve results (Kögler, 2023);
- the socio-economic sphere, which demonstrates the supremacy of the Ukrainian people's desire to join the progress of the civilised world Piliaiev (2019) and determines the level of readiness for this stage;
- the historical sphere (Belavusau, Gliszczynska-Grabias & Mälksoo, 2021), which determines the nation's military experience in fighting enemies and the formation of targeted war priorities in the historical and civilisational Yurchuk (2020) and national dimensions (Penkala, Derluyn & Lietaert, 2020);

- mental, legal Cherviatsova (2020), religious Levyk et al. (2020), linguistic Pchelintseva (2023), cultural Luce (2023) in the context of the need for each of these clusters to determine their position on the war and create a common potential to fight the aggressor;

A separate manifestation of the formation of a cultural tradition in the context of traditional warfare is the concepts of “war of cultures” Khomyakov (2023), “new culture of war” Dias (2022), “cultural vulnerability” Legkauskas (2023), “cultural strategy” Götz & Staun (2022), “strategic culture” Shaheen (2023), which were actualised on the example of fundamental worldview differences between the Russian and Ukrainian peoples.

Research Methodology

The methodology used in the article is based on a combination of general scientific and philosophical research methods. The problem of cultural and mental characteristics of war in the worldview of Ukrainians is considered through the prism of analysing the scientific discourse on the military and cultural tradition in Ukraine in the past and present. The article analyses 54 sources by means of:

- generalisation of the existing conceptual dimensions of war in Ukrainian culture;
- comparing the nature of the perception of war by Ukrainians in different cultural and historical periods;
- modelling a holistic format for understanding the war in Ukraine, taking into account historical experience and the realities of today.

The study is based on an analysis of the literature, which was selected according to the relevant criteria:

- The search was carried out in centralised scientometric databases and platforms: GoogleScholar, Springer, SageJournals, Taylor@Francis;
- The articles were selected in the time period starting in 2020 to obtain up-to-date data on the problem of the philosophy of war in Ukrainian culture;
- The keywords used to select the literature correspond to the topic of the proposed study: war, philosophy of war, cultural traditions of war, mentality, national consciousness;
- restrictions for the authors were limited to the exclusion from consideration of Russian-language sources and works by Russian authors who support Russian aggression against Ukraine; the analysis included works by foreign authors that highlight the conceptual dimensions of the philosophy of war, which positively affects the integrity of the consideration of this issue in the context of the Ukrainian case of the cultural and historical military tradition.

It is worth adding the relevance of using a synergistic philosophical methodology, which helped to achieve the goal and implement the tasks set out in the article, which were reduced to the conceptual correlation and organisational synchronisation of the ontological, axiological and anthropological components of the philosophy of war in Ukrainian culture.

Research Results

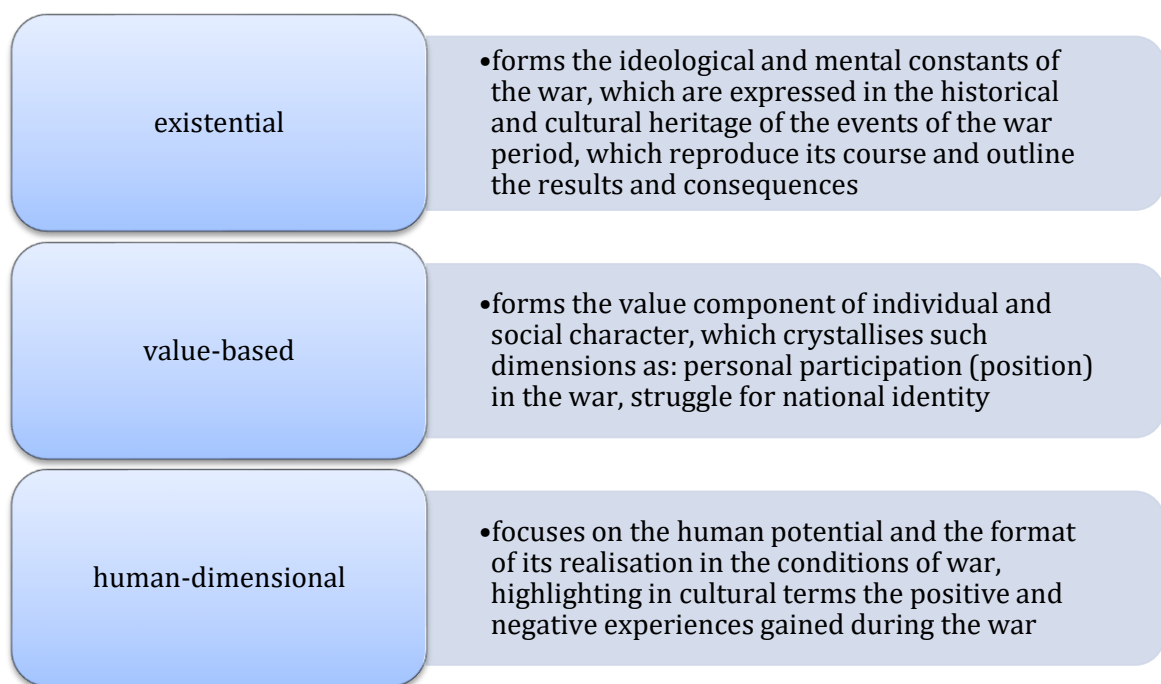
The scientific and philosophical discourse has shaped the priority directions of positioning the war dimension in the worldview paradigm and cultural tradition. Philosophy tries to cover the issue of war in all its clusters. In order to form a coherent system of views in the context of the philosophy of war, the following aspects should be interpreted and covered:

- ontological, in which war is a socio-cultural phenomenon with its own essence and nature and is characterised by the parameters of the global geopolitical social order;
- axiological, in which war is characterised by a set of value constants that, on the one hand, allow recording negative manifestations of violence and cruelty; on the other hand, form positive individual and social characteristics that are formed during or as a result of war;
- anthropological, which expresses the full spectrum of the human intellectual and moral state of being in war.

Each of these main clusters determines the factors that influence the creation of the socio-cultural space of war and the cultural tradition of war in the form of the heritage of material and spiritual culture (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1

Cultural Space of War in the Context of Philosophy Clusters



Source: authors own development

These constants form a holistic paradigm of knowledge and perceptions, realities and myths of war, which is expressed in cultural life. In the world culture, wars form special paradigms of ideological, mental, cultural and historical traditions. In particular, Eastern philosophical thought did not find expression in Ukrainian culture due to the impersonality of war participants (Danilova et al., 2022) and the priority of the “mission of war”.

The ontological aspects of the war in Ukraine are shaped by the statement of differences between peoples (Akaliyski & Reeskens, 2023) and the rejection by one of them (Beddingfield, 2023) of the status and self-determination of the other (Hordiichuk, 2023). This is how the “metapsychic model of the occupier” (Mosiichuk, 2023) and the response of the Ukrainian people to this stimulus are formed. As a rule, existential dimensions do not affect the mass practical and everyday culture, being in fact in a passive state of waiting, activated only in the presence of a military threat. The implementation of this scenario was typical for Ukrainian culture, which actually “fired” its potential, contributing to the containment of the enemy on all fronts (including cultural, psychological, and mental). With the onset

of the existential threat to the nation's existence caused by the full-scale Russian invasion, the cultural front instantly started working, producing cultural artefacts from the first moments of the war (from phrases with profanity, morally addressed to the enemy, to the latest technological developments in weapons for its physical destruction).

Another motivational characteristic of the Russian-Ukrainian war is a kind of return to the historical tradition in which an individual solves global geopolitical problems based on his or her own position rather than on the existing international rules of the game (Lebow, 2022). Cultural accents focused on highlighting the figure of the individual lead to stable trends in the public consciousness that are designed to serve as mass zombification. At the same time, constructive cultural manifestations during the war are designed to achieve completely different goals - to create an image of a hero, a defender - which is typical for Ukrainian culture in any war, regardless of the historical era.

The human dimension of the philosophy of war is associated primarily with such subjects of war as defending soldiers, civilian victims, and forced participants in war. It is clear that in this segment, the cultural tradition is focused on describing anthropological manifestations (Meylahn, 2022): pain (Cancio, Kuptsevych-Timmer & Omori, 2018), suffering, fear, heroism, courage, bravery, etc.

A feature of the cultural dimension of modern warfare is the opposition of positive values of Ukrainians to the destructive and criminal actions of the aggressor. The contrast of the heroes (Kordan, 2022) has a decisive influence on the perception of the cultural interpretation of the realities of war. Being on the "right side" of historical development forms a holistic picture of the world in Ukrainian culture and threatens the enemy with decline and oblivion. The dichotomy of truth and lies is quite subtly identified in cultural heritage (Munawar & Symonds, 2023). Therefore, Ukrainian culture has every chance to develop on the principles of goodness and freedom.

Among all the dimensions of the philosophy of war, the value aspect stands out, which has a strategic and conceptual impact on culture, rather than a direct one. In the course of war, the values of society are affirmed and new ones emerge, which are designed to existentially protect the state and the people. In particular, the element of national identification, which is characterised by several important components, is becoming more relevant:

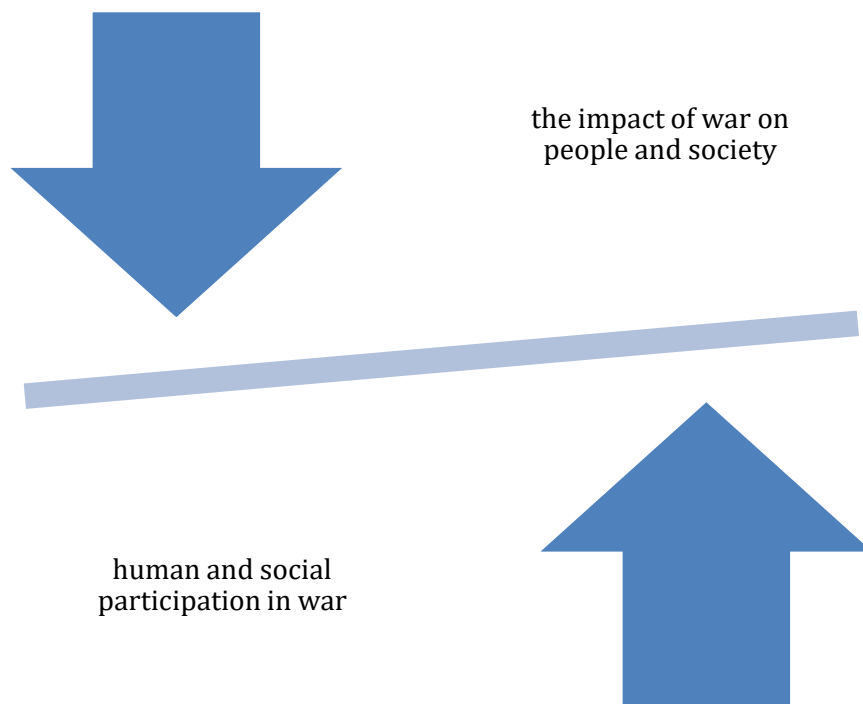
- national resilience (Goodwin et al., 2023) - the ability and willingness to protect the Ukrainian state, family, and individual;
- national integration into the democratic world (Radchenko et al., 2023) - the desire to join a democratic and civilised international community;
- individual identification with national activism (Klymanska, Klimanska & Haletska, 2022) - personal position on the war and uniting Ukrainians to repel the enemy;
- radicalisation of national sentiment (Kulyk, 2023) - the desire for revenge and restoration of justice in the confrontation with the aggressor;
- the finalisation of the process of Ukrainian state-building and the formation of the Ukrainian nation (Penter, 2021) - the target orientation of the centuries-long aspiration of Ukrainians for freedom and independence.

In the cultural space, value standards affect almost all practice-oriented areas of social activity. Therefore, it is the value factor that determines the cultural product created during or as a result of war.

The philosophy of war aims to ensure a balance between the external factor and the internal potential of a person (see Figure 2).

Figure 1

Cultural Space of War in the Context of Philosophy Clusters



Source: authors own development

Cultural dimensions express the course and outcome of war, in effect reproducing the material and spiritual (Soboń, 2023) dimensions that are realised during this process. The role of philosophy is to prevent a significant imbalance in this dichotomy. If the impact of war on a person significantly outweighs his or her actual or potential participation in it, this will create conditions for categorising war, strongly eliminating the human factor. When the role of human participation in war outweighs the value and purpose dimensions of war, this creates conditions for the personalisation of war with the loss of meaning, goals and strategies.

Discussion

War is usually a reflection of the confrontation between two parties that have different views on social structure and development. Under such conditions, the participants in this confrontation form strong views and beliefs. Therefore, for the Ukrainian people, the Russian invasion, in addition to the practical and vital format of military activity, has also acquired a powerful meaningful character. Obviously, the meanings (and in the context of socio-cultural turbulence caused by all the ghosts of war) cause a number of contradictions that are embedded in the content and format of the cultural space and cultural heritage of the modern war.

The results of the study correlate with the views of contemporary philosophers who confirm the thesis of the multidimensionality of cultural tradition in the context of the philosophy of war. In particular, the study by the team of authors (Mudrakov, Hapchenko, & Kozachenko, 2023) proposes “three contexts of analysis - semantic, practical philosophy and philosophy of knowledge - according to which criteria are established to determine the state of cultural identity of Ukrainian”.

Certain aspects of the research findings contradict the opinions of thinkers who insist on the need for centralisation of cultural dimensions during the war as a socio-cultural cataclysm. In particular, Olzacka (2023), noting the positive aspects associated with the dismantling of the Soviet cultural heritage (and as a cultural heritage of military heroism in the fight against fascism (McGlynn, 2020), warns against excessive liberalisation of cultural processes. In the same context, Smith & Dawson (2022) suggest that we should not deviate from the paradigm of realism of the cultural environment in order to avoid unnecessary mythologisation of this war in the future.

Instead, Yekelchuk (2022) identifies the bias of cultural dimensions as a problem that can overshadow successes on the frontline. Cultural policy during the war and post-war reconstruction should be based on the principles of unity, equality and diversity (Brantly, 2023), which will contribute to the formation of a cultural heritage that reflects the realities of the war and generates the value constants of Ukrainian national identity. Cultural symbols, reinforced by victory in the arena of war, have every chance of forming a new brand of self-sufficient Ukraine (Fomenko, 2023) in the international space (Khromeychuk, 2022), which will be associated with freedom and justice.

The socio-cultural paradox of the philosophy of war is that the stereotypes of a peace-loving Ukrainian nation (Lichterman, 2022) are in demand only if the warlike nature of Ukrainians is realised in the struggle for their own state. Despite all the activity of the cultural cluster, the key characteristics of the war and everything related to it will be determined by the historical memory generally accepted by society (Borovyk, 2020). This format has already had a negative impact after the realities of World War II, when fighters for Ukraine's independence and fighters against fascism became not heroes but criminals in public opinion. It is worth focusing efforts in the present to prevent the mistakes of the past, which, in the distorted results of war, always have catastrophic consequences for the national paradigm. Historical narratives (Klymenko, 2022) should be synchronised with the cultural heritage, reinforcing it with ideological and ideological content.

The emphasis on the synergy of the human and value clusters of the philosophy of war and their expression in the cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people is actively supported in contemporary scientific discourse. Heroism as a value should be correlated with the protection of the rights of the defending soldier and the recognition of his status in society (Wanner, 2021). The already familiar image of a forgotten and unappreciated warrior at the social and state level will be a verdict for Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian people. Therefore, the problem of social destruction (Nikolko, 2023) in Ukrainian culture will become relevant and will need to be resonated and addressed.

Promising areas of discussion on the philosophy of war in Ukrainian culture and in the global civilisational process of development are the use of the principles of multiculturalism, pluralism and interdisciplinarity (Moldovan, 2022). The example of the Ukrainian people's war for freedom in modern realities has demonstrated the imperfection of pragmatic supremacy in the organisation of the social order. The present, full of dynamics, requires flexibility. These concepts are reflected in culture in the form of universalisation of human, material and mental resources. In the context of the philosophy of war, scholars propose a "heuristic structure for reflecting the consequences of war" by considering the format of culture creation in the form of a wave and a reverse flow. That is, first, an array of cultural heritage is created, which is represented in the form of a stream of waves, and then, public opinion identifies the truly significant things, leaving the rest to the role of mass culture. It is worth noting that with the development of information and technological potential, this format of wartime culture can be implemented quickly and efficiently (Kysliuk, 2023).

Conclusions and Implications

Thus, the philosophy of war is a kind of regulator in the issue of war coverage and the creation of cultural space and cultural heritage of this stage of society. During a war or in the period of evaluating its results, powerful drivers of culture creation are elements that are directly and practically related to the war. Under such conditions, there is a threat of forming false or distorted value and purpose principles of the cultural environment of war. Therefore, the actualisation of the axiological cluster of the philosophical characterisation of war, along with its existential and anthropological dimensions, allows us to present a holistic worldview of events and promote positive mental attitudes and moods among war participants. The diverse perception, understanding, and expression of war by individuals and society allows for the creation of a relevant and value-enriched cultural tradition of Ukrainian society, which is experiencing one of the most tragic pages of its history.

Suggestions for Future Research

Prospects for further research on the coverage of the philosophy of war in Ukrainian culture are not in the statement of philosophical cases that characterise this cultural and historical event, but in changing the dominant dimensions of its description and analysis. It is obvious that in the hot phase of military confrontation, anthropological dimensions, which represent heroism or negative manifestations in the life of a particular person, are primarily relevant; and existential constants, which indicate the global nature of the event for the nation and the target orientations of the war. After the war is over, its results and consequences will be analysed mainly by pragmatic and rationalistic dimensions, which will lead to the actualisation of the axiological cluster of philosophical understanding. Thus, the Ukrainian cultural heritage will be shaped by the activity of the military phase of the conflict.

At the same time, it is time to create a paradigmatic structure for the philosophy of war in Ukrainian culture. The relevance of such a format has repeatedly proved its effectiveness in the context of the cultural and historical tradition, as the essence and manifestation of war have become a value and target orientation for national formation and a driver of their development or transformation into a better version. The vast majority of Western communities have formed their ideals of existence in the context of the experience of war. In historical terms, war becomes a factor in the birth or revival of a society. Philosophy, in its turn, should clearly distinguish between the cultural, social, political and mental consequences of war in order to prevent blurring of the key value and goal constants that are the existential and pragmatic results of war.

Fixing or stating the facts of war events, creating creative content of a military nature is not enough for a holistic expression of realities in the contemporary socio-cultural space. Information technology tools can successfully and effectively cope with such tasks. At the same time, the philosophy of war actualises the value, human and existential manifestations of war, which should be generalised into the constants of the cultural and ideological paradigm of Ukrainians. The philosophical discourse, guided by the principles of interdisciplinarity and synergy, is obliged to provide rational and mental meanings to the elements of the cultural heritage of war.

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Conflict of Interest

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