DOI: https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2022.58.10.9

Botvyn, T., Aleksandrova, M., Krymets, L., Dobrovolska, R., & Rudenko, O. (2022). Philosophical comprehension of the formation and development of Ukrainian culture in the context of military realities: the geopolitical aspect. *Amazonia Investiga*, *11*(58), 84-92. https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2022.58.10.9

## Philosophical comprehension of the formation and development of Ukrainian culture in the context of military realities: the geopolitical aspect

# Comprensión filosófica de la formación y el desarrollo de la cultura ucraniana en el contexto de las realidades militares: el aspecto geopolítico

Received: October 27, 2022

Accepted: November 28, 2022

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#### Abstract

The article examines the impact of war on the process of development of a culture of the Ukrainian people. The purpose of scientific exploration is to analyze the existential and axiological dimensions of Ukrainian folk and national culture under conditions of war. The objectives are to understand main the geopolitical significance of Ukrainian culture in the modern socio-cultural space and to analyze the risks that war brings to the cultural development of Ukraine. The methodological basis of the research is based on general scientific methods of cultural studies: systemic, structuralfunctional, semiotic, and comparative-historical. In addition, synergetic methodological principles are involved, thanks to which it is possible to form a strategic view of Ukrainian culture in the geopolitical dimension. A promising short-term direction of research of contemporary Ukrainian culture is its axiological transformation, which is

#### Resumen

El artículo examina el impacto de la guerra en el proceso de desarrollo de la cultura del pueblo ucraniano. El propósito de la exploración científica es analizar las dimensiones existenciales y axiológicas de la cultura popular y nacional ucraniana en condiciones de guerra. Los objetivos principales son comprender el significado geopolítico de la cultura ucraniana en el espacio sociocultural moderno y analizar los riesgos que la guerra conlleva para el desarrollo cultural de Ucrania. La base metodológica de la investigación se fundamenta en los métodos científicos generales de los estudios culturales: sistémico, estructuralfuncional, semiótico e histórico-comparativo. Además, intervienen principios metodológicos sinérgicos, gracias a los cuales es posible formar una visión estratégica de la cultura ucraniana en la dimensión geopolítica. Una prometedora dirección a corto plazo de la investigación de la cultura ucraniana contemporánea es su transformación



How to Cite:

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an inevitable process under martial law. In addition, the current Russian-Ukrainian war will be another stage in the existential assertion of the culture of the Ukrainian people. So, the war, producing inevitable suffering and destruction in all possible manifestations, simultaneously becomes a kind of border, a new point of reference that gives impetus to the development and renewal of material and spiritual culture.

**Keywords:** culture, cultural identification, geopolitics, Ukrainian cultural front, history of culture, philosophy of culture.

#### Introduction

The formation of any cluster of culture takes place under the diverse influence of the sociocultural environment. This applies to folk, national, religious, professional, collective culture, etc. The cluster of national and popular culture is formed in unison with the formation of the nation. This process is long and almost always accompanied by active socio-political shifts. This is how national culture is affirmed within the nation. At the same time, even when popular culture is already formed, the factor of its legitimization in the national-state, regional, political, and, most importantly, geopolitical dimensions becomes actualized. It is in such times that national and folk culture experience moments of truth, which determine its ability to be a separate original cluster in the civilizational space.

The work aims to comprehend the formation and development of Ukrainian culture in the philosophical and attitudinal dimension, which combines existential and axiological components of culture. The task of the scientific-cultural community is to form a discourse that considers the development of Ukrainian culture in the geopolitical context. The scientific hypothesis of exploration is that military realities only



*Fig. 1.* Worldview Dimensions of Culture Source: author's own development

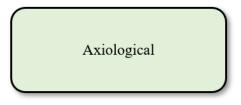
Cultural and historical upheavals are a period of actualization of both the being and value elements of culture. Wars traditionally axiológica, que es un proceso inevitable bajo la ley marcial. Además, la actual guerra ruso-ucraniana será otra etapa en la afirmación existencial de la cultura del pueblo ucraniano. Así, la guerra, que produce sufrimiento y destrucción inevitables en todas las manifestaciones posibles, se convierte simultáneamente en una especie de frontera, un nuevo punto de referencia que da impulso al desarrollo y la renovación de la cultura material y espiritual.

**Palabras clave:** cultura, identificación cultural, geopolítica, frente cultural ucraniano, historia de la cultura, filosofía de la cultura.

emphasize the role and importance of Ukrainian culture in the struggle for progressive values of the civilized world. So far Ukrainian culture has been seen as a regional (national and folk) cluster. Modern events require scholars to reinterpret the positioning of Ukrainian culture already in the geopolitical dimension.

Historically, these periods of formation of state cultures very rarely pass painlessly. As a rule, the formation of cultural identity is accompanied by socio-cultural upheavals experienced by the nation in the struggle for its existence. Wars, revolutions, social and economic upheavals - this is by no means a complete list of factors that arise on the path of a state's cultural identity. When successfully passing the way of formation, national culture transforms axiological achievements into existential dimensions. At the same time, folk culture acquires geopolitical status and takes its place in the system of the cultural and historical development of civilization.

National culture from the philosophical point of view has 2 key worldview dimensions (see Fig. 1.).



accompany the existence of peoples, nations, or civilization as a whole. Ukrainian culture has passed through many periods of military

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confrontations in the regions of its formation and development. Since 1991, when Ukraine gained its independence, Ukrainian culture got a chance to develop in the conditions of statehood.

An important cluster for understanding the development of Ukrainian culture is the transformation of cultural and demographic factors during the war. After all, the strength of the comprehensive national identity of Ukrainians will determine whether or not Ukraine will withstand the aggression of the occupiers. The role of ethnic, linguistic, and religious variables is largely decisive in assessing the ability to resist the enemy on a cultural and elemental level (Barrington, 2022). In some places, such resistance is just as important as weaponry or military might.

#### Methodology

The scientific exploration used general scientific theoretical methods of analysis (systemic, generalization, structural, comparative), classification. At the same time, the methodology, which is characterized by the cultural dimension, proved effective. In particular, thanks to the systematic method an attempt was made to bring all factors which determined the peculiarities of the formation of Ukrainian culture in the context of geopolitical positioning to a common denominator. Structural and functional method actualized the problems of the development of Ukrainian material and spiritual culture exactly in the conditions of military realities. The semiotic method interprets symbolism inherent in Ukrainian military and cultural tradition. The comparative-historical method allowed drawing parallels regarding the level of cultural development during large-scale military conflicts on the territory of Ukraine.

Since the war has become the reality of our days and we are witnesses of all the events, the empirical methods of research of cultural development, which rely on the observation of events almost online, are also actualized.

One important methodological approach to cultural development under conditions of war is the analysis of associations with the concepts of "peace" and "war" (Vasianovych, 2020). The appropriateness of this methodology is due to the fact that association is an ongoing process of making connections between phenomena of the cultural, social, and physical environment and reveals some hidden procedures of thinking. Along with general scientific methods, the philosophical methodology represented by the modern progressive model of the synergetic paradigm was also used. The concepts of selforganization and interdisciplinarity provide a combination of different methodologies and principles, due to which the study of the cultural development of Ukrainian culture in the conditions of war is carried out in the main dimensions of the modern picture of the world (geopolitical, socio-economic, ethical and axiological, etc.).

## Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

Sources for research on the development of Ukrainian culture in the realities of war can be divided into two clusters:

- scientific works that came out by the fullscale offensive of the Russian aggressor (until February 24, 2022);
- scholarly works with the first culturological studies after the beginning of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war.

The problems of cultural identification in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation are dealt with by N. Averianova, & Τ. Voropaieva (2020), considering the authenticity of culture as a determining factor of national self-consciousness and patriotism. New dimensions of cultural identification of Ukrainians after the full-scale invasion are considered by V. Kravchenko (2022), pointing to the symbolism of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the cultural and historical context. T. Poiarkova (2022) points out aspects of the importance of cultural identification in the confrontation with the aggressor.

Practically oriented mechanisms of protection of culture from military realities offer in his study A. Korzeniowska-Bihun (2021). At the same time, T. Kuzio (2019) suggests the format of "cultural support" for Ukrainian culture during the confrontation with the Russian aggressor.

Geopolitical aspects of the development of Ukrainian culture we find in the scientific work of P. Pereira, F. Bašić, I. Bogunovic, & D. Barcelo (2022). Kanet, R.E (2019) reveal the cultural components of a new global cold war involving Ukraine.

The cultural manifestations associated with the Russo-Ukrainian war are illuminated by V. Lazarenko (2019), analyzing the global





geopolitical climate. The problem of the concept of cultural strategy was raised by E. Götz & J. Staun (2022), noting that the process of culture formation is not a short-term phenomenon and requires historical and cultural transformations of society.

## Results

It is important to understand that the geopolitical aspect is almost the main leitmotif of the tragic events currently taking place in Ukraine (Kanet, 2019). The end of the Cold War in the twentieth century did not end the confrontation of civilizational forms of development characteristic of Western and Eastern society. Of course, globalization of the XXI century to some extent due to the economic and information sphere has somewhat reduced the level of direct confrontation, but the struggle for geopolitical influence remained relevant and manifested itself in the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Ukrainian culture in this dimension found itself in a state of absolute uncertainty.

On the one hand, trends of the last decades demonstrated the need for integrative processes in the cultural sphere. In turn, integration needed cultural openness. Moreover, the excessive openness of culture was a negative factor in the military confrontation. It should be understood that the culture of a people or a nation is a complex and diverse process that cannot change its positioning all at once. A society oriented toward integration and openness of culture automatically becomes vulnerable to the outside world. At the same time, closed societies are more ready for conflicts, because they clearly understand the boundaries of their existence and quickly and promptly respond to the violation of these boundaries by the aggressor.

It should be noted that the world cultural community uses all possible steps to support Ukrainian culture in difficult military times. In particular, the Director-General of UNESCO, A. Azoulay, noted that "we must preserve the cultural heritage in Ukraine as evidence of the past, as well as a catalyst for peace and unity for the future, which the international community must protect and preserve" (Azoulay, 2022). This position forms two main messages for the world and Ukraine:

- recognition of the geopolitical significance of Ukrainian culture as an original cluster of world cultural heritage;
- the need for practical protection and support of the culture of the Ukrainian people during

the war to preserve its prospects for future civilizational advancement.

Of course, Ukrainian culture is so multifaceted that it is practically impossible to destroy it even in the face of a full-scale attack by a powerful aggressor. At the same time, all resources and possibilities should be used to minimize the loss of domestic material and spiritual heritage.

In addition, Ukrainian culture is not exclusively the object of military realities, partly acting as a subjective element, primarily in terms of the formation of spiritual fortitude of Ukrainians in the fight against the invaders. Minister of Culture of Great Britain N. Dorries said that culture will become "the third front of the Ukrainian war", pointing to the need to extend sanction pressure on the Russian aggressor, including in the cultural sphere.

The anti-human ideology of the Russian world uses the age-old achievements of Russian culture to spread cultural and political propaganda. World-renowned achievements of Russian culture become a tool to justify criminal actions and spread imperial ambitions. Ukrainian culture is a bearer of the principles of freedom and humanism. In this ideological contradiction, we see a key civilizational confrontation.

In this context, the potential of the cultural diplomacy of Ukraine is actualized (Sheiko, 2022). Ideological confrontation of cultures in modern world should have proper the information and communication support. It is no secret that today public opinion (even the global world opinion) is formed in the information environment. The Ukrainian cultural front should direct all efforts (creative, organizational, spiritual) for decisive and reasoned condemnation of the aggressive anti-human actions of the Russian Federation. Demonstration of criminality and absurdity of the Russian aggressor is a long-term goal of Ukrainian cultural workers on a geopolitical scale, even after the active phase of hostilities is over.

Note the intensity of the destruction of cultural monuments by Russian troops, for which their material or spiritual value is not at all important (Tkachenko, 2022). Given the scale of war crimes related to the cultural sphere, we can raise the question of cultural genocide, which is implemented by the Russian aggressor during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

As Kravchenko (2022) argues, along with the military confrontation there is a symbolic war of



identities between Ukraine and Russia. Ukrainian culture has historically been a hostage of "fateful geography," when the geopolitical interests of the outside world determined the internal transformations of national and popular clusters.

Such notion as strategic culture (Götz & Staun, 2022) is characteristic of modern scientific and cultural discourse. Each government forms the principles and concepts of cultural development strategy. For Ukrainian culture historically the strategy was balancing between the East and the West, as geographically and economically Ukraine was actually at the crossroads of interests of major geopolitical world players. With gaining independence and the actual withdrawal from Russian rule. Ukraine still remained in the orbit of interests of its northeastern neighbor. Cultural ties between the states were used as a separate important lever of influence. At the same time. Ukrainian culture of the last decades has passed a way of integration into values of the Western world, which became possible thanks to the globalization of the world socio-cultural space. With the external free development of Ukrainian culture, a geopolitical conflict of interests still existed implicitly, which matured first into Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and reached its climax in 2022 with the beginning of full-scale armed aggression.

The cultural cluster in the era of war is permeated by myths and stereotypes on both sides of the conflict (Kuzio, 2019). Culture produces both creative and translational content through which mental or ideological support for public opinion is provided. Stereotypes produced by Russian culture have hardly worked in Ukraine, the consequence of which is the absolute rejection of the Russian invasion by the majority of Ukrainian citizens. The reason for this collapse of "cultural support" was the focus on propaganda for the Russian-speaking consumer, which was only perceived in the internal Russian political system. On the other hand, the flow of Russian aggressive-imperial ideas was not perceived by Ukrainians, who are culturally and historically characterized by values based on freedom.

We can assert that the cultural and historical attitudes of Ukrainian society play an active, practically oriented role in the formation of an effective and efficient worldview paradigm of the Ukrainian nation and culture. There is a process of state coordination of the development of society and culture. The society forms the value of cultural reference points, which, in turn, are transformed into the existential dimension, which is a vital condition for the existence of society.

Krasivskyy & Pidberezhnyk (2021), analyzing the state and problems of cultural security of Ukraine, hypothesized that "ensuring the development and permanence of the sphere of culture, the formation of a single Ukrainian socio-cultural space based on the Ukrainian language, historical memory, spiritual values, cultural traditions is one of the priority national interests of the Ukrainian state at the present stage".

The components of spiritual and material culture in periods of social upheaval become reference points of values. War destroys the traditional order, generating uncertainty. In such a situation, it is values that become a lifeline for people who are victims of war realities. At the same time, a process of value cultural transformations takes place directly in the hall of war. The principles habitual for peaceful life may radically change under force majeure circumstances. But whatever radical changes may characterize the development of culture under the conditions of war - humanistic values, the rule of law, and human freedom remain fundamental and unshakable in the paradigm of Ukrainian culture.

The notion of cultural struggle was activated in Ukraine after the events of 2014 with the beginning of the aggression of the Russian side (Zhurzhenko, 2021). However, Russia's hybrid form of warfare caused a certain veiling of the enemy's aggressive plans. Hybrid wars of the twentieth century became an arena of confrontation in the cultural sphere as well. While previously the issue of restrictions on Russian culture had been a subject of debate in Ukrainian society, after the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Donbas, Ukraine began to pursue a stricter cultural policy. Restrictions began to take effect at the legislative level, and the prohibition of elements of Russian culture that posed a danger to Ukrainian society was actively implemented. Ukrainian society was still divided in its views on the cultural limitations of the Russian cluster.

However, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops in 2022 became a catalyst for the process of total non-acceptance of Russian culture. Russia became associated with suffering and destruction. Ukrainian culture became an element of the fight against the Russian aggressor.





#### Discussion

Ukrainian culture has undergone an evolutionary path, establishing itself as an original cluster of world culture. An important aspect of geopolitical nature is the issue of the correlation of national culture with folk and regional culture. As for the correlation of worldview principles of Ukrainian folk and national culture, there is a dominant commonality in this context. Ukrainian national culture has become a logical continuation of the folk culture cluster.

Actualization of the category of identity is quite a complex problem in the scientific discourse (Averianova & Voropaieva, 2020). When considering cultural identity, two fundamental aspects should be separated: the format of culture, stating its achievements and value principles; the content of culture, determining the role and place of culture in the system of global culture and civilizational development. The war becomes the catalyst, which has a direct format culture. influence the of on simultaneously determining the content strategy of the geopolitical dimensions of culture.

There are quite a lot of risks for cultural identity in today's fast-moving globalized world. Ukrainian culture of the times of independence became a hostage of many socio-cultural problems, which gradually eroded the essence of the cultural identity of the Ukrainian people. In the conditions of war, the society rallies and gets a chance to form a national mentality, the basis of which is the cultural identity.

The culture of a country that experiences a military invasion automatically develops defense mechanisms (Korzeniowska-Bihun, 2021). The effectiveness of these devices depends on many factors (cultural, attitudinal, social). One such mechanism is the model of anthropological protection in its spiritual dimension. While body armor protects a soldier from a bullet, cultural protection involves leveling an attack on the mind, psyche, belief, or information space.

As a rule, cultural-anthropological defense is generally accepted in the global civilizational dimension. At the same time, the identity of popular and national culture uses its strengths to organize an effective defense system under conditions of war.

Cultural identification is an important practiceoriented cluster, which is used in the conditions of war. Methodologically, cultural identification involves a clear division into insiders and outsiders, leaving no chance for the enemy to disguise or integrate. The practice of turning a state's population into insiders/outsiders in peacetime is unacceptable because it violates human rights and freedoms. At the same time, in times of war, this principle of separation has a right to life and makes the cultural front one of the important factors in confronting the enemy (Poiarkova, 2022).

One element of the contemporary Russian-Ukrainian war is the Ukrainian self-victimizing narrative (Lazarenko, 2019), which involves the positioning of Ukrainian culture as a victim of Russian aggression. Such moments are traditionally quite common in military confrontations, especially with the prevailing aggressor. However, we can state the dangers associated precisely with such positioning of domestic culture in the conditions of war. The position of weakness in the cultural and mental manifestation is risky because it can form in the geopolitical dimension the request for peace on the conditions of the aggressor, which is unacceptable in the current situation. We already observe in the information space of Ukraine and the civilized world messages about warweariness and the need to stop the active phase of the war as soon as possible. Now the culturalmental front must pursue its policy in unison with the military-political efforts of Ukraine. Such a format will ensure the unity of Ukrainians and promote a common understanding of the sociocultural realities of today.

"Being Ukrainian is a worldview construct shaped by national identity and an understanding of pain as an integral part of the identity of Ukrainians, who have experienced centuries of war. Historical trauma is experienced more broadly in the national-cultural dimension and follows from the general experience of pain". (Cancio, Kuptsevych-Timmer & Omori, 2020).

The cultural and historical tradition of the Ukrainian people includes centuries-old interpretations of the pain and trauma that result from war.

Interesting for the study of culture in war is a comparative analysis of the concept of struggle and military confrontation (primarily on a cultural basis) in different environments. A group of researchers (Girnyk, Krylova-Grek & Khan, 2021) investigated differences in the understanding of conflict in Ukrainian and Indian culture. The results of the scientific exploration demonstrated common semantic elements in the two cultures: war, struggle, aggression, and



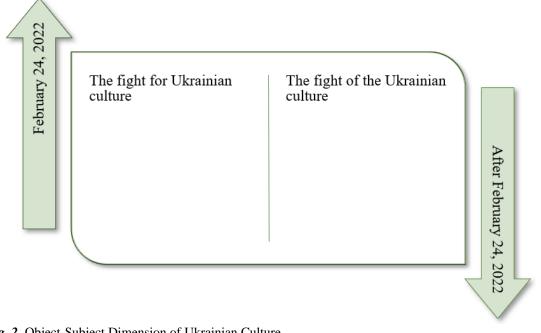
dissent. At the same time, socio-emotional motifs prevailed in Indian culture, in contrast to the Ukrainian cluster, which is more focused on the national (self-identification) and social (heroism) factors in the conflict. Such results indicate that culture positions war differently in its worldview paradigms, depending on national, popular, social, or mental attitudes.

The effects of war on the cultural environment are comparable to the effects on natural processes in territories where active hostilities take place (Pereira, Bašić, Bogunovic & Barcelo, 2022). A common factor linking military action is the uncertainty about the negative effects on both nature and culture. Direct losses and destruction can be determined, but regarding the delayed consequences, there are quite a few problems in the cultural cluster. Because natural recovery processes are more obvious, in contrast to cultural processes consisting of many variables, each of which is capable of transforming the prospects of the entire cultural sphere. For example, the social aspect, quite relevant during the war. In particular, in the post-war period, cultural development will be significantly influenced by the social composition and activity of society. If social indicators will be low, then accordingly the further development of Ukrainian culture will face serious problems.

Historical reality and civilizational development are characterized by rather brutal constants. War in the geopolitical dimension is not only suffering and destruction but also opportunity. "The idea of modern Ukraine should be based on the process of getting rid of the postcolonial syndrome and the formation of Ukrainian culture based on the traditions and sentiments of national culture. The position of the state in this regard should be compatible and consistent with the common goals of real independence" Svyrydenko & Możgin (2019).

In sociocultural discourse, there is the idea that each generation experiences special and extraordinary times, full of unique changes and progressive elements (Levyk, 2020). It so happens that the modern Ukrainian generation has been tested by war. Ukrainian culture is in a state of struggle, faced with the inability to achieve security through geopolitical principles. However, this has not led to disillusionment (at least existentially) with the principles of the Western world. At the same time, the process of integration of Ukrainian culture into the civilized world community has not stopped, which demonstrates the goal of the Ukrainians' struggle for their independence, freedom, and cultural identity. Nowadays the "dual role" of Ukrainian culture is being actualized: self-preservation and integration.

The conceptual model of interpreting the culture of the Ukrainian people is changing, reorienting its object-subject dimension. After the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, conceptual changes in consciousness and worldview take place, see (Fig. 2).



ISSN 2322-6307

*Fig. 2.* Object-Subject Dimension of Ukrainian Culture. Source: author's own development



#### Conclusion

It should be understood that the war on the front will not be the end of the war between the civilized and anti-human dimensions and will continue in political, economic, and cultural manifestations. Ukrainian culture will face further harsh confrontation with the aggressive Russian cultural attack, which lasted all the years of independence (and before that all the centuries of coexistence of Ukraine and Russia). At the same time, before the full-scale Russianof 2022. Ukrainian war this cultural confrontation had a localized regional character. After Russia's military anger, this confrontation became a subject for the entire civilized world. The Ukrainian cultural struggle reaches a new level and becomes a geopolitical process.

In scientific discourse, the principle of struggle for Ukrainian culture - for its preservation, development, etc. - has always spread. While Ukrainian culture becomes one of the fronts of struggle against the Russian aggressor. The process of struggle of Ukrainian culture with a hostile cultural and ideological dimension begins. Culture acquires signs of a self-sufficient element of national identity to fight against the aggressor. Thus, the geopolitical dimension of the culture of the Ukrainian people is formed, which once again in history confirms its status in the system of civilizational socio-cultural space.

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