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ARCHETYPAL SCENARIOS OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to identify and analyze the key archetypal scenarios of war that are playing out in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation in various narratives and forms of representation. Based on an archetypal approach, a typology of war scenarios as a historical and socio-political phenomenon has been developed. Four scenarios are identified: colonial, Westphalian, ideological/civilizational, and religious (apostate). Based on a comparative analysis, it is concluded that the Russian-Ukrainian war is a complex interweaving of all these archetypal scenarios of war, with dominant features of colonial, ideological/civilizational and religious (apostate) narratives. It is shown that the Westphalian-type war scenario proved to be irrelevant for explaining the goals of Russia's full-scale invasion, as it does not recognize Ukraine's sovereignty and ignores legal and ethical-cultural norms of warfare. It is argued that the «war against heretics» narrative reveals Russia's true attitude towards Ukraine as an «apostate» from a «common» historical and civilizational heritage, requiring either its «conversion» or «destruction.» The eschatological pseudo-religious rhetoric of the Russian official and propaganda discourse allows for legitimizing and justifying the «denazification» of Ukrainianness through any forms of violence, up to total destruction.

Key words

war, Russian-Ukrainian war, archetypal scenario, narrative.

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1. Introduction

War in the heart of Europe in the 21st century – just 11 years ago, this phrase might have appeared on the pages of a fantasy novel in the genre of political dystopia. It seemed that classical warfare – where an artillery shell destroys a house, a ballistic missile hits a children's hospital, and terms like «volunteer,» «veteran,» and «mobilization» enter the everyday lexicon of an ordinary citizen – was not part of Europe's recent history. But reality turned out to be exactly that. In 2014, war began in Ukrainian cities, and Russia

orchestrated this war. And although Western and Ukrainian analytical centers, journalists, and Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) communities conducted dozens of investigations and obtained irrefutable evidence of Russia's presence in Crimea and Donbas, many Western media and institutions avoided calling Russia a party to the war. A full understanding of this only came after the full-scale invasion in 2022.

Today, amid open Russian aggression, which has threatened not only Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity but also the entire global system of international relations, the role of political analysis

is more crucial than ever. Society expects high-quality analysis of ongoing processes, professional forecasting and modeling of event development, and effective consultation on adopting and implementing optimal solutions for conflict resolution from expert analysts. The implementation of these socially significant tasks is impossible without a solid methodological base. One powerful source for forming such a toolkit is the methodology of archetypology, which, in conditions of hybrid political confrontation, allows for revealing its essence by identifying archetypal scenarios, researching practices of so-called «meaning-making» and constructing «worldviews,» and forming an effective toolkit for countering open aggression and cognitive influence on mass consciousness.

The aim of the article is to identify and analyze the key archetypal scenarios of war that are playing out in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation in various narratives and forms of representation to understand the nature of the conflict, its dynamics, and prospects for its resolution.

2. Materials and Methods

Drawing on classical works in psychoanalysis, literary theory, and the contributions of the founders of the Ukrainian school of archetypology (E. Afonin, M. Bodkin, Ch. Booker, J.L. Borges, Jh. Campbell, G. Durand, L. Fidler, D. Hofman, C. Jung, A. Kirby, G. Wilson Knight, G. Polti, F. Wheelwright and others), we propose understanding an archetypal scenario as a recurring pattern of events, actions, and interactions between subjects (characters) that reflects deep archetypal structures and motives rooted in humanity's collective unconscious. As a universal plot scheme or narrative, such a scenario is deeply embedded in the human psyche, evokes a strong emotional response, and feels familiar at an unconscious level.

Key characteristics of an archetypal scenario include its universality (appearing across different periods and cultural contexts), recurrence (manifesting repeatedly in various stories and situations), the presence of archetypal characters (Hero, Villain, Sage, Father, Mother, Child, Victim, Shadow, etc.), a conflictual plot and its resolution options (a scenario must contain a certain conflict that unfolds according to a predictable pattern and leads to a specific outcome: victory, defeat, transformation), symbolism (elements of the scenario often carry symbolic meaning, reflecting deeper psychological or spiritual truths), and emotionality (scenarios evoke strong emotions in viewers or readers as they touch upon fundamental human experiences).

The term «archetypal scenario» is closely linked to literary studies. Of particular importance to us are the works of the eminent 20th-century Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, who, in his programmatic essay «The Four Cycles,» attempted to categorize all major plots of world literature into four main themes (Borges, 1972).

The oldest of these is «The Siege of the City» – a plot about a fortified city that heroes storm and defend. It embodies scenarios of endless military battles, quarrels and insults, revenge and betrayal (Iliad). The essence of the plot is that the city is attacked by enemies, and the fearless citizens defend it, knowing they cannot survive the battle.

The second story is connected to the first one and is dedicated to the archetypal plot of «The Return Home» (Odyssey), where, according to the scenario, the main character undertakes a journey home, overcomes countless obstacles, and, often losing memory, tries to restore the history of their life and return to their origins.

The third story is the story of a quest («Treasure Hunt»). However, designating the plot as «quest» implies not only the search for something external (Jason, who dedicated his life to finding the Golden Fleece) but also the movement of the character's soul in search of themselves (Hamlet).

The last in this series is the plot of «The Suicide of God,» which refers to voluntary sacrifice, non-resistance to what is happening (Promethean myth, story of Jesus' crucifixion by Roman legionaries). Here, the main character seeks to become something greater than they are, to know the meaning of life, to save the world. The hero is ready to sacrifice themselves for the common good. As Borges notes, there are only four stories. And however much time we have left, we will retell them – in one form or another.

The interpretation of each of these plots can form the basis for both an artistic and philosophical reinterpretation in the context of the tragic realities of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation. After all, literature often gives us tools to understand complex and painful aspects of human experience. Undoubtedly, all these archetypal scenarios, superimposed on the events of the last decade, generate numerous discursive narratives of the Russian-Ukrainian war. It is precisely these narratives that form the source basis of our research.

Overall, the foundation of our methodology can be based on defining an archetypal scenario as a «self-generated model» which, despite being capable of external changes, contains an unchanging value-semantic core, manifested in metaphorical forms and symbolic interpretations. Archetypal scenarios,

as universal structures/matrices in which archetypal plots consistently change depending on the temporal context, become an inexhaustible source for forming narratives and identities during military conflicts.

Specifically, by relying on content analysis of media materials (news reports, analytical articles, social media posts from both sides of the conflict to identify dominant storylines) and discourse analysis of the language, metaphors, and symbols used by the parties to create convincing stories about the war, legitimize actions, and form identities, we can investigate the dynamics and chronology of the Russian-Ukrainian war's unfolding within the context of typologizing its archetypal scenarios.

Thus, we will attempt to identify which archetypal scenarios are refracted in the realities of the Russian-Ukrainian war and, on that basis, outline its key characteristics.

3. Literature review

The academic interpretation of war considers it a socio-political phenomenon, representing one of the forms of resolving socio-political, economic, ideological, national, territorial, religious, and other contradictions between states, peoples, nations, classes, and social groups by means of armed violence. War is a continuation of politics by violent means and is associated with a change in relations between political actors.

Currently, within the Ukrainian academic and expert community, several directions have already formed in the conceptualization of the Russian-Ukrainian war as a historical and socio-political phenomenon. This refers, first and foremost, to its interpretation within the categories of military-strategic, civilizational, national liberation, existential, and post-imperial approaches and studies.

From a military-strategic perspective, this war synthesizes elements of fourth, fifth, and sixth-generation warfare. Alongside conventional weaponry, it employs high-precision weapons, air and missile defense systems, control systems for all types and methods of military operations, and information (including cyber) confrontation. The war begins to exhibit characteristics of asymmetry, non-contact, and unlimited scope, which allows it to be classified as hybrid.

It should be emphasized that an aggressor's key objective in hybrid warfare is the transformation of identities. For example, the cognitive segment of the Russian Federation's hybrid war against Ukraine aimed to activate a Soviet identity, which was quickly restored within the Russian Federation based on the

system-forming mythologem of the «Great Victory,» the reincarnation of the Soviet-era symbolism, and the introduction of the aesthetics of «Old Songs about the Main Things» into mass culture. The main front of the hybrid war, whose beginning was marked by Russia's unfriendly actions against Ukraine as early as autumn 2003 near Tuzla Spit Island in the Azov Sea, became the information front. Moscow's strategic directions for offensive actions included its own internal Russian information space, «carpet bombing Ukrainian citizens with disinformation, and creating a favorable information environment for itself in the West» (Mahda, 2015). Moscow's arsenal of hybrid influence includes economic pressure, rewriting history, the language issue, practices of symbolic politics, intense influence of the Russian Orthodox Church, support for separatist movements, and so on.

At the same time, many researchers insist on highlighting the civilizational nature of the Russian-Ukrainian war. For instance, A. Kyrydon and S. Troian emphasize,

Ukraine's unwillingness to fit into the Russian civilizational paradigm of development, its orientation towards pan-European and Euro-Atlantic democratic values became the decisive motive for Russia's modern 'crusade' against Ukraine in political, social, cultural, informational-ideological, and armed terms (Kyrydon, Troian, 2022, p. 526).

However, in our opinion, the main problem with this approach lies in the methodological difficulties inherent in the civilizational understanding of history itself.

Closely related in meaning are interpretations of the Russian-Ukrainian war as national liberation and an existential war. P. Hai-Nyzhnyk (2022), V. Hrytsiuk and O. Lysenko (Lysenko, 2022; Hrytsiuk, Lysenko, 2023) and others define it in their works as a «war for life,» a defense against the «denazification» proclaimed by the ideologists of Rashism, which implies the destruction of Ukrainianness as a phenomenon.

The imperial, and consequently colonial, nature of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine is highlighted in the scholarly works of V. Smolii and O. Yas. These scholars see the main meaning of the Russian-Ukrainian war

in Russia's attempt to restore the old, practically colonial dependence of Ukrainians, and simultaneously, through a severe crisis or even destruction of the modern world order, to carry out a new delimitation of the world, at least of the post-Soviet spaces (Smolii, Yas, 2022, p. 13).

Based on this approach, the Russian-Ukrainian war is viewed as a prologue to «the third world war,» a proxy conflict of key geopolitical players, and so on.

In summary, it should be noted that in the fourth

year of the full-scale Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, the nominative discourse of this war is still ongoing. Alongside attempts to form its academic definitions («Russian-Ukrainian war,» «full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine,» etc.), its emotionally colored metaphorical definitions are also widely used: «patriotic war,» «national liberation struggle,» «liberation struggle against Fascism/Nazism/Rashism,» «fratricidal war inspired by external forces,» «proxy war,» «war of attrition,» «struggle of good and evil / light and darkness,» and so on.

4. Results and discussion

In view of the above, despite the wide palette of definitions, designations, and metaphors, we will try to define the nature and essence of the Russian-Ukrainian war based on the typology of war archetypes as a historical and socio-political phenomenon. Undoubtedly, this is an extremely complex task, as it is very difficult to avoid subjectivization in its assessments. However, to prevent this, we will attempt to turn to the historical context.

Our proposed typology is based on criteria defined by the war initiator's position on the questions: «Who am I fighting against?» and «What am I fighting for?» The answers are outlined by the markers «Our / Alien» and «Resources / Meanings.» Accordingly, four archetypal war scenarios can be identified: colonial, Westphalian, ideological / civilizational and religious (apostate).

Let us consider each of them.

4.1. Colonial War: «Treasure Hunt»

If, from the initiator's perspective, the war is waged against the «Alien,» and its goal is to gain access to material resources and ensure unimpeded control over them, then we are talking about a colonial war scenario. This scenario is based on the archetypal confrontation between civilization and barbarism. Such a war implies a high degree of violence and a very low adherence to legal and moral norms of warfare.

The archetypal scenario of a colonial war is characterized by a number of recurring elements and dynamics that have manifested in various historical contexts. Firstly, this includes imperial ambition as a driving force and the initiator's sense of superiority. Colonizers believe in their supremacy and their «right» to dominate other peoples, whom they often consider «backward,» «savage,» or in need of «civilization» or «salvation.»

The next characteristic of a colonial war is the imbalance of power and the technological superiority of the initiator. This disparity in military might always lead to the unfolding of war as an asymmetric conflict, where colonizers wage a more «conventional» war, while indigenous populations resort to guerrilla tactics, resistance in small groups, or other unconventional methods of struggle (boycotts, sabotage, underground movements, preservation of cultural traditions, etc.). The strategic goal of resistance is the expulsion of colonizers, the achievement of national self-determination, and the restoration or acquisition of sovereignty.

An integral characteristic of a colonial war scenario is extreme violence. To justify it, colonizers often dehumanize the indigenous population, portraying them as «uncivilized,» «barbaric,» or «dangerous.»

Colonial wars are also characterized by a prolonged period of overcoming their consequences. Besides political instability, economic dependence, and social inequality, colonialism inflicts deep cultural and identity traumas, leading to the loss of language, traditions, and historical memory. The process of decolonization and the restoration of national identity can be lengthy and complex.

The proposed scenario characteristics of a colonial war allow identifying specific archetypal structures that reflect the inequality of parties, the motivations of colonizers, and the resistance of the colonized. These include such archetypal antitheses as «Civilizer» versus «Barbarian,» «Discoverer» versus «Savage,» «Hero-Conqueror» versus «Wild Enemy,» «The White Man's Burden» versus «Ungrateful Native,» «Struggle for Resources» versus «Obstacles to Progress,» «Liberation from Tyranny» as a justification for exploiting local conflicts, «Cultural Exchange» as a justification for assimilation, «Rebellion of Savages» as an antithesis to «National Liberation Struggle.»

Unfortunately, in the discourse of the Russian-Ukrainian war there are clear practices of using archetypal structures of the colonial narrative that Russia employs to justify its aggression and influence the perception of the conflict. In this regard, it is important to note that Ukraine is an independent state, and the comparison to a colonial war reflects precisely the Russian perspective and the aggressor's actions, not a legitimate status of relations between the two countries.

For example, the system-forming archetypal conflict of the colonial discourse, «Civilizer» versus «Barbarian,» occupies a central place in Russian propaganda. This propaganda often attempts to portray Ukraine as an «artificial» state with a «wrong» identity, governed by «nationalists» and «fascists» who allegedly oppress the Russian-speaking

population and destroy «common history.» Russia, in turn, is depicted as the «elder brother» bringing «liberation» and «correct» civilization. This echoes the colonial narrative of a «civilizing mission.»

Another key narrative of the Russian-Ukrainian war is the antithesis of «Discoverer» / «Gatherer of Lands» versus «Severed Territory.» The idea of «Russkiy Mir» (Russian World) implies that Ukraine is supposedly a «primordially Russian» territory that was «unjustly torn away» or is under external influence. Russia presents itself as a force that «returns» its «historical lands,» ignoring Ukraine's sovereignty and its right to self-determination. This resembles colonial notions of «developing» and «annexing» territories.

Russian propaganda may portray the war as «assistance» to Ukraine to free itself from «Western influence» and the «Nazi regime,» even if the majority of Ukrainians resist this «help.» Ukraine, which resists, is presented as «ungrateful» and «brainwashed.» This is how the archetype of the colonial scenario «The White Man's Burden» (in a distorted form) versus «Ungrateful (Younger) Brother» operates.

In the focus of the archetypal conflict «Hero-Liberator» versus «Nationalist/Fascist,» Russian military personnel are depicted as «liberators» of the Ukrainian people from the «Kyiv regime,» while Ukrainian defenders are portrayed as «nationalists,» «fascists» or «terrorists» who need «denazification» and «demilitarization.» This creates the image of a colonial «punitive expedition» against «rebels.»

Although the direct seizure of resources is not the main declared goal of the so-called «special military operation,» control over Ukraine gives Russia significant geopolitical advantages, access to economic assets, and increased influence in the region. Ukraine, as an independent state, is seen as an obstacle to the realization of these imperial ambitions. In this context, the colonial archetype of «Struggle for Resources» (indirectly) versus «Obstacle to Influence» can be included in the discourse of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The colonial archetype of «Cultural Exchange» / «Reunification» (imposing Russian identity) justifies Russia's attempts to impose the Russian language, culture and historical interpretation of Ukraine, denying the distinctiveness of Ukrainian identity. Resistance to this is seen as «Russophobia.» All of this, in our opinion, is analogous to colonial assimilation policies.

Another archetypal antithesis used in the discourse of the Russian-Ukrainian war is the contrasting narratives of «Marionette Uprising» and «National Liberation War.» On the one hand, Russia supported separatist movements in eastern Ukraine, presenting them as «popular will,» while Ukraine's

resistance was portrayed as the suppression of «legitimate protest.» At the same time, Ukraine views this as externally inspired aggression and fights for its territorial integrity.

It is important to emphasize that these archetypes are tools of Russian propaganda aimed at distorting reality and justifying unprovoked aggression against a sovereign state. Ukraine is a victim of aggression and is fighting for its right to existence and independence.

In conclusion, the Russian-Ukrainian war bears many hallmarks of a colonial war, albeit in a specific historical context. Russia's imperial ambitions, the ideology of a «brotherly people» denying Ukrainian independence and nurturing the archetype of the «Maloros» (Little Russian) as a «younger brother,» the aggressor's significant military superiority, the resistance of the Ukrainian people, the brutality of the occupiers, and Ukraine's striving for self-determination – all these reflect many elements of the archetypal scenario of a colonial war. However, in our opinion, a key essential feature of a colonial war is absent in the situation of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation: the colonizer does not seek to reformat the indigenous population's cognitive worldview. Under conditions of subjugation and achieving mercantile goals of colonization, the local population is confined within its beliefs, traditions, and autochthonous culture, which acquires exotic characteristics and often, in modern consumer society, becomes a sought-after commodity in the tourism market. Nevertheless, comparing the Russian-Ukrainian war with a colonial war using an archetypal approach helps to understand Russia's imperial ambitions and its way of thinking, which is rooted in a colonial past.

4.2. European Westphalian – Type War: «The Siege of the City»

Let us consider the next variety of an archetypal war scenario, where, according to our typology, «Our own» fights against «Our own,» and the war's purpose is «Resources» (profit, gain, interest). In this case, we are talking about Westphalian-type wars, which form the basis of the European historical and cultural code of war as a «noble cause.» This term is used to describe armed conflicts that occurred in the European theater of military operations, whose scenario was finally solidified within the framework of the Westphalian system of international relations, which emerged after the signing of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, ending the Thirty Years' War in Europe. In the context of this study, we are interested in the idea of a specific European culture of war, formed on principles of nobility, honor, codes of chivalry and officer integrity, magnanimity towards

enemies, adherence to clear rules and norms of warfare, and so on.

In reality, defining a single «archetypal scenario of European war» is difficult due to the centuries-old and diverse history of conflicts on the continent. However, we can identify several common archetypal narratives of «war for resources» waged between equal participants («Our own» against «Our own»). First, these include «wars of succession» or «dynastic conflicts,» where wars unfold due to claims to thrones, territories, marriages, and family ties between monarchical houses. This also includes «wars of national liberation or unification,» where wars are fought for the creation of national states, liberation from foreign rule, or the unification of disparate territories considered part of one nation. Although colonialism is usually associated with expansion beyond Europe, the continent also experienced wars for the redistribution of spheres of influence, territorial gains, and the establishment of hegemony of some states over others (see: the experience of the Napoleonic Wars, and, in part, World War I). In certain periods of European history, wars took on the character of a struggle between different political or ideological systems or even civilizational blocs (see: the religious wars of the 16th–17th centuries, World War II, and, indirectly, the Cold War).

However, despite the wide palette of war manifestations—from wars of succession to ideological confrontation—which prevents us from speaking of a single «archetype of European war,» a unique culture of war has formed on the European continent over centuries under the influence of history, philosophy, religion, art, and social institutions. It is distinguished by several key factors: militarism, the cult of the army, and the heroization of war; state sovereignty and balance of power; rationalization of goals and pragmatism; technological advancement and reliance on the development of the military-industrial complex; the formation of a culture of remembrance and the strengthening of pacifist sentiments; and the implementation of concepts of the law of war and international humanitarian law, aimed at limiting brutality and protecting victims of conflicts.

It is important to note that the culture of war in Europe is not monolithic and has undergone significant changes throughout history. After two world wars and the processes of European integration, there has been a tendency towards a decrease in interstate conflicts and a growth in the value of peace and cooperation. However, the echoes of the Balkan Wars of the 1990s and the tragic events of the Russian-Ukrainian war serve as a reminder of the resilience of some archaic conflict models and the difficulty of definitively overcoming the «habit

of war.» The Russian-Ukrainian war, unfortunately, demonstrates certain negative aspects of such a «habit,» particularly imperial ambitions, nationalism, brutality, and the struggle for sovereignty. At the same time, the aggressor completely disregards the legal and humanitarian components of the European culture of war.

Regarding the directly repeating patterns and characteristics of Westphalian-type wars, it should be noted that these archetypes are generalizations, and specific Westphalian-type wars could have had their unique characteristics and motivations. However, these patterns reflect fundamental changes in the understanding of war and international relations that occurred after the Peace of Westphalia and largely determined the nature of conflicts until the end of the 20th century. We are talking about such archetypal constructs as «War as an instrument of state policy, as a legitimate tool for achieving state interests,» «Balance of power,» «State sovereignty as an inviolable foundation,» «Professional armies and the bureaucratization of war,» «Rationalization of goals,» «Diplomacy as a continuation of war by other means.» The constant competition between states for territory, resources, and influence in a particular geographical space, where war became one of the manifestations of this competition, gave rise to the archetype of «Geopolitical Competition.»

Undoubtedly, the Russian-Ukrainian war has some elements of a Westphalian-type war, but it also goes beyond its confines. First, it is a war between sovereign states. Second, both sides declare the protection of their national interests, although their understanding and legitimacy are subjects of sharp disputes. Third, the war is waged by professional armies, although mobilized forces and volunteers later began to play a significant role.

However, other characteristics do not allow it to be classified under this archetypal scenario. For example, this is Russia's desire for regional dominance by preventing Ukraine's rapprochement with the West, which violates the principle of sovereign equality of states, one of the key tenets of the Westphalian system. Russia's aggression is accompanied by a denial of Ukrainian sovereignty and identity. The war has a strong ideological component on Russia's part, which goes beyond pragmatic national interests and includes the ideas of «Russkiy Mir» and «denazification.»

Separately, the level of brutality and the number of war crimes committed by Russian troops should be noted, which significantly differ from the notions of «civilized» warfare within the Westphalian system (although such crimes also previously occurred). The hybrid nature of the Russian-Ukrainian war

takes it beyond the Westphalian archetype. Parallel to military aggression, Russia uses a wide range of non-military methods: propaganda, cyberattacks, economic pressure, and so on.

Therefore, the Russian-Ukrainian war can be viewed as a conflict unfolding against the backdrop of the Westphalian scenario yet simultaneously violating its key principles and demonstrating elements that go beyond its framework, approaching a colonial war with signs of genocide and other archetypal scenarios, which will be mentioned below.

This conclusion is further confirmed by the analysis of the narratives of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the context of the key patterns of the Westphalian scenario.

The key differences between the Russian-Ukrainian war and the classical Westphalian model lie in Russia's total disregard for international law and accountability in this war. For Russia, pragmatic defense of national interests is not the key goal in this war. This war is not a «war for resources.» Its motives, in our opinion, are reflected in narratives about «brotherly peoples,» «denazification,» «Russkiy Mir,» «going to heaven» and so on.

Thus, the Russian-Ukrainian war has certain features that resemble Westphalian-type war archetypes, especially regarding state interests, sovereignty, and the balance of power. However, the modern context, including ideological factors, the role of non-state actors, and information warfare, makes this conflict significantly more complex than the classical model.

The tragic irony of the situation, in our opinion, is that Ukraine in this war is trapped within the standards of the Westphalian scenario, with its architecture and ethics, while Russia views it through the lens of a different archetype.

4.3. Ideological War / Conflict of Civilizations: «The Return Home»

The next (third) type of archetypal war scenario, when, according to our criteria, the initiator («Our own») enters into conflict with the «Alien» with the goal of establishing a monopoly right to form the only true worldview, is the archetype of «Ideological War» / «Conflict of Civilizations.» Each variant of this archetype has its specifics, but in both cases, it is not about competition for resources, but about a war of meanings.

Ideological war is traditionally viewed as a conflict in which the main struggle occurs at the level of ideas, values, worldviews, and political systems. This does not necessarily involve direct military actions, although it

may accompany them or be their underlying cause. The primary goal of ideological war is to change the beliefs, values, and behavior of the target audience, undermine the legitimacy of the opposing ideology, and disseminate one's own. Such a war often has a non-violent character in its initial stages. However, the consequences of «quiet,» «cold» competitions can be the resetting and reloading of the entire system of international relations and a shift in poles on the geopolitical map of the world.

Key characteristics of an ideological war include the presence of an ideological conflict, a struggle for the consciousness and feelings of the adversary, the use of information influence technologies, long-term duration, and a latent character. At the heart of ideological confrontation are different value systems, political doctrines, religious beliefs, or social philosophies. The main goal of such a war is to influence people's thoughts, emotions, and beliefs, to form a new identity. The weapons in such a war are propaganda, disinformation, cultural influence, education, and the media sphere. Ideological conflicts often last for decades or even centuries, and the line of confrontation can be blurred and run through various spheres of public life. In such a war, the emphasis is placed on soft power tools, and conventional warfare methods are used only if it is impossible to achieve superiority in the competition of ideological projects.

The cognitive nature of ideological confrontation transforms it into a battle of narratives. In their arsenal, the archetypes familiar to us from biblical and ancient times always find their rightful place. Firstly, perhaps the most common archetype is «Good versus Evil.» Here, one side is presented as the embodiment of good, light, progress, and justice, while the other is portrayed as absolute evil, reaction, and injustice. The main intrigue in the archetypal scenario of ideological war is the struggle of the «Hero-Liberator» versus the «Tyrant-Oppressor.» In this context, one ideology presents itself as a force that liberates the oppressed, brings the light of knowledge, or social justice.

Another widespread mythologem in the scenario of ideological wars is the archetype of the «Golden Age» versus «Decline.» Here, there can be several interpretations. In the first variant, one side of the conflict appeals to nostalgia, depicting the past as an age of harmony, prosperity, and moral purity that was lost due to the influence of a hostile ideology. In another case, the ideological narrative may present the current state as a decline, from which only the acceptance of its principles and values, leading to a new «golden age» in the future, can deliver. An indispensable archetype of ideological war is also the antithesis of «Truth» versus «Falsehood.» Each side in

an ideological war strives to present its worldview as true, scientifically substantiated, and morally correct.

The ideological war scenario also always contains the archetype of «Order» versus «Chaos.» As a rule, one ideology may position itself as a force that brings stability, legality, and order, preventing the destructive chaos that the opponent's ideology allegedly brings (conservative forces opposing revolutions). The other side may portray the existing order as unjust and repressive, claiming that only through the destruction of the old is it possible to establish a just new order (revolutionary movements fighting against totalitarian or authoritarian regimes).

Undoubtedly, these archetypes are not exhaustive and often intertwine in specific ideological conflicts with narratives of civilizational rivalries. Indeed, closely related to the ideological war scenario, where «Our own» fights against «Alien» for the right of cognitive domination, is the scenario of the «conflict of civilizations.» The term «conflict of civilizations» was proposed by American political scientist Samuel Huntington, who argued that after the end of the Cold War, the primary source of conflicts in the world would not be ideological or economic differences between states, but «cultural and civilizational fault lines» (Huntington, 1993). Most likely conflicts would occur along «fault lines» between neighboring civilizations. States divided by civilizational fault lines («cleft countries») could become an arena for internal conflicts. Thus, the future lies in the polarization of the world based on civilizational identity. In the arsenal of cognitive tools of any conflict of civilizations, the key archetypal constructs are «Us» versus «Them,» «Defense of Identity,» «Holy War / Mission,» «Trauma and Historical Memory,» «Siege,» «External Enemy» and so on.

In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the archetypal scenario of «Ideological War / Conflict of Civilizations» is refracted in a wide palette of images, clichés, and mythologems. After all, the Russian-Ukrainian war is not only an armed conflict but also a deep ideological confrontation in which each side tries to impose its worldview and justify its actions.

Among the key archetypes of ideological war used by both sides to mobilize support and form their own identity are the archetypes of «Victim» and «Aggressor.» For instance, Ukraine often appears as an innocent victim of unprovoked aggression from Russia, which is depicted as a brutal aggressor violating international law and sovereignty. Russia, conversely, tries to present itself as a victim of «Western expansion» and «Ukrainian nationalism,» asserting that its actions are a «liberation mission» to protect the Russian-speaking population and

«traditional values.» In this narrative, Ukraine appears as an instrument of the West or as a «Nazi regime» oppressing its own population.

The next archetype of the ideological scenario, widely used in the discourse of the Russian-Ukrainian war, is the dichotomy of «Hero» versus «Traitor.» Ukraine heroizes its military personnel and civilians who resist Russian aggression, presenting them as fighters for freedom, independence, and European values. Those who cooperate with the occupiers are considered traitors. Conversely, Russia creates the image of «special operation heroes» who «liberate» Ukrainian land from «Nazis.» Ukrainians who resist are often depicted as «nationalists,» «militants,» «terrorists,» while Ukrainian citizens who support Russia are given the status of «liberated ones,» those who were «returned home.»

The constitutive archetype of «Our own» and «Alien» in the realities of the Russian-Ukrainian war is interpreted by the Ukrainian side as a narrative about its distinctness and uniqueness, about its own history, culture, and identity, different from Russian, where Russia appears as the «alien,» the «invader» who tries to destroy Ukrainian distinctiveness. In contrast, Russia promotes the idea of a «single brotherly people,» to which Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians allegedly belong, where Ukraine is just a «temporarily lost son.» «Aliens» in this context are «Western forces» that «split Slavic unity.»

Through the lens of the archetypal dichotomy of «Good» and «Evil,» Ukraine presents its struggle as a confrontation between the forces of good (Ukraine and its allies) and the forces of evil (Russia and its accomplices). Russian aggression is depicted as barbarism, genocide, and a violation of all moral norms. Russia often uses a mirror image, presenting itself as a force fighting against «Western evil,» «globalism» and «decadence,» with Ukraine being merely an instrument of this evil.

Important for understanding the nature of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation is the archetype of «Past» and «Future.» Ukraine often appeals to its European future, its aspiration for democracy and integration with the West, contrasting this with the «imperial past» that Russia allegedly imposes. In turn, Russia exploits nostalgia for the Soviet past or imperial grandeur, presenting the war as a return to «historical roots» and the restoration of a «just world order.»

This list is organically complemented by the scenario archetypes of the conflict of civilizations, which often appeal to notions of fundamental civilizational differences. This refers to such constructs as «West versus East» (or «Europe versus Eurasia»),

«Defense of one's own civilization from an external threat,» «Civilizational Mission» and «liberation,» «Conflict of Values» as a civilizational boundary, and the archetype of the «Barbarian» and the «Civilized World.»

For example, in the wake of the archetype «West versus East» (or «Europe versus Eurasia»), Russian propaganda actively promotes the narrative of a confrontation between «traditional Russian spiritual values,» which are often identified with conservatism, patriarchy, and a special path of development, against «Western liberal decadence» (which includes LGBT+ rights, multiculturalism, extreme individualism, etc.). In this context, Ukraine is often portrayed as a traitor to its «true» civilizational origins, «captured» by the West. In turn, Ukraine manifests the civilizational context of the war in the rhetoric of its European integration course and in contrasting democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law with authoritarian tendencies often associated with the Russian political system. In the coordinates of «East – West,» Ukraine sees its future unequivocally within the European civilizational paradigm.

Both sides often appeal to fundamental differences in values. (See: archetype «Conflict of Values» as a civilizational boundary). Russia emphasizes «traditional» values, while Ukraine highlights its commitment to democratic freedoms and human rights, which it associates with European civilization. This difference in values is presented as a deep civilizational chasm.

Ukraine often portrays Russian military personnel as «barbarians» who commit atrocities, destroy cultural heritage, and observe no rules of war. This emphasizes the aggressor's civilizational backwardness in the eyes of Ukraine and its allies. Russia, for its part, may try to depict the Ukrainian government as «uncivilized» or «radical,» using narratives about «nationalism» and «extremism» (the archetype of «Barbarian» versus «Civilized World»).

Thus, the scenario of all the above-mentioned archetypes of the ideological and civilizational cycles of the war of meanings are not exclusive and often intertwine, creating a complex and emotionally charged cognitive struggle that accompanies the armed conflict. They are used to shape public opinion, justify one's own actions, and demonize the adversary both domestically and internationally.

4.4. War for Faith as a War against Apostates (Heretics): «The Suicide of God»

The last type of archetypal war scenario presented in our proposed typology is a war for faith or a war against

apostates (heretics). In this case, the war initiator («Our own») directs aggression against «Our own» as a heretic, an apostate, with the aim of punishing them for betrayal and returning them to the fold of true faith. There is no talk of pragmatic motives for war here at all. Such a war for faith undoubtedly has a fanatical, doctrinal character. It is characterized by an extreme degree of violence, uncompromisingness, dehumanization, and total disregard for norms and rules.

The main characteristics of such a war scenario include a doctrinal (religious) justification of violence, dehumanization of the enemy-apostate, a desire for absolute doctrinal (religious) homogeneity, involvement of special institutions to combat apostasy (heresy) (inquisition, special services, punitive bodies), broad mobilized political participation of the population (believers), an eschatological perspective of polemics, a high degree of symbolization and ritualization, persecution and accusation of apostates of sins, dissent, non-systemic practices, and disregard or violation of generally accepted moral norms, where in the fight against «enemies of faith,» cruel and inhuman methods may be used that would be considered unacceptable in other contexts.

Thus, a war for faith against apostates (heretics) is characterized by a deep doctrinal (religious) motivation for violence, a desire for dogmatic purity, and involvement of political institutions and believers in the fight against those who deviate from accepted beliefs. Among the numerous archetypes of the war-for-faith scenario, several system-forming ones will be highlighted.

The archetype «Defense of the Sacred» versus «Desecration» reflects the struggle to preserve shrines, dogmas, rituals, and faith itself from those deemed to desecrate, distort, or deny them. One side acts as the defender of the sacred order, the other as its destroyer.

In the archetype «True Faith» versus «Heresy/Falsehood,» one side is convinced of possessing absolute truth and considers the opponent's beliefs false, deceptive, and leading to perdition. War is seen as a necessity to cleanse «heresy» and convert the misguided.

The archetype «Chosen People/Community» versus «Pagans/Infidels» justifies the self-perception of a side chosen by God, a bearer of true faith and a special mission often associated with spreading their faith or punishing «infidels.» The other side is seen as outside the bounds of salvation or an obstacle to fulfilling this mission.

Wars for faith can often acquire an eschatological dimension, where the conflict is viewed as part of a

final battle between Good and Evil, God and Satan (or their analogues). In this case, we are talking about the archetype of «Apocalyptic Battle» between «Forces of Light» and «Forces of Darkness.» Victory in this war may be considered decisive for the fate of the world and salvation.

Another important component of the archetypal scenario of a war for faith is the motive of «Martyrdom» and the confrontation between «Heroes of Faith» and «Persecutors.» This archetype focuses on the suffering and heroism of believers who are persecuted for their faith. The conflict can be presented as a struggle for religious freedom or as a test of faith, where martyrs become symbols of steadfastness and inspiration for others.

A war for faith is inconceivable without the archetype of «Restoration of Purity» versus «Decline.» Some religious wars may aim to return to an imagined «golden age» of faith, cleansing it from later layers, compromises, or «corruption.» Opponents in such cases are depicted as those who have deviated from true principles and led to decline.

Undoubtedly, these scenario archetypes of war for faith are not rigid categories and can intertwine in various images and patterns in specific cases. Thus, in the Russian-Ukrainian war, certain archetypes of the apostate scenario can be observed, which are widely used for propaganda purposes and influence the perception of the war by different sides.

For example, through the lens of the archetype «Defense of the Sacred» versus «Desecration,» Russian propaganda often presents the war as a defense of «traditional values,» «Orthodox faith» and «Holy Rus'» from the «godless West» and «Nazis» who allegedly desecrate these values in Ukraine. Ukraine, for its part, defends its territory, identity, and freedom from an aggressor who encroaches on its sovereignty and cultural heritage, including religious shrines.

The archetype «True Faith» versus «Heresy/Schism» justifies the attempts of the Moscow Patriarchate and Russian propaganda to portray the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) as «schismatic» and uncanonical, in contrast to the «canonical» Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. Although a significant part of the UOC-MP believers and clergy distanced themselves from Moscow after the onset of the full-scale invasion, the narrative of fighting for the «correct» faith is only gaining momentum in Russian propaganda.

The idea of «Russkiy Mir» (Russian World), actively promoted by the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian authorities, is based on the archetype «Chosen People/Civilization» versus «Others.» At the

heart of this idea are elements of the exclusivity of Russian civilization, its special spiritual mission, and its opposition to the «decaying West.» In this context, Ukraine is seen as part of this «Russkiy Mir» that has committed apostasy and must return under Moscow's influence.

This list would be incomplete without the archetypes of «Apocalyptic Battle between Good and Evil» and «Martyrdom.» In the sermons and statements of pro-Russian figures, the war is often depicted as part of a broader spiritual struggle against the forces of evil, where Russia plays the role of defender of «true» values. And apocalyptic motifs are always present in the nuclear threats of Moscow's leaders. It is enough to recall Putin's words, which have already become an internet meme: «We, as martyrs, will go to paradise, and they will simply croak.»

It is important to note that archetypes of the war-for-faith scenario are almost absent in the Ukrainian discourse of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation. For Ukrainians, the Russian side of the conflict is marked exclusively as «Alien.» Most Ukrainians, regardless of their religious affiliation, are united in defending their country against Russian aggression and actively distance themselves from the «Russkiy Mir» project. At the same time, the use of war-for-faith scenario archetypes is a key tool of Russian propaganda for mobilizing supporters and justifying aggression. Apostates cannot be forgiven. They face only «denazification» as «eradication of disease,» «sanitary cleansing,» «disinfection,» «scorched earth,» «solution of the Ukrainian question,» genocide[KP1.1]. Thus, «denazification» in the Russian scenario of war with apostates is a metaphor for the total destruction of Ukrainians who do not support Russian aggression and the idea of «Russkiy Mir.»

5. Conclusions

The Russian-Ukrainian war is a multidimensional conflict that is difficult to unequivocally fit into a single archetypal scenario. However, analyzing the key archetypal scenarios of war playing out in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation across various narratives and forms of representation has allowed a deeper understanding of its causes, dynamics and potential consequences.

Our proposed typology is based on criteria defined by the war initiator's position on the questions: «Who am I fighting against?» and «What am I fighting for?» The answers are outlined by the markers «Our / Alien» and «Resources / Meanings.» Accordingly, four

archetypal war scenarios can be identified: colonial, Westphalian, ideological / civilizational, and religious (apostate).

1. Archetypal Scenario of Colonial War: («Our own» versus «Alien.» Goal – realization of pragmatic interests / establishment of control over resources. High degree of violence and dehumanization of the adversary. Basic narrative «Treasure Hunt»). Colonial wars are characterized by the metropole's desire for subjugation and exploitation of the colonized territory's resources. They are often accompanied by dehumanization, the imposition of one's own culture, and the denial of the right to self-determination. The classical colonial narrative is based on the archetypes: «Civilizer versus Barbarian,» «Discoverer versus Savage,» «Hero-Conqueror versus Wild Enemy,» «Liberation from Tyranny» as a justification for exploiting local conflicts, «Struggle for Resources» versus «Obstacles to Progress,» «Cultural Exchange» as a justification for assimilation, «Rebellion of Savages» as an antithesis to «National Liberation Struggle.»

2. Archetypal Scenario of Westphalian-Type War: («Our own» versus «Our own.» Goal – realization of pragmatic interests / establishment of control over resources. Warfare is regulated by legal and ethical norms. Basic narrative «The Siege of the City»). Westphalian-type wars (named after the Peace of Westphalia of 1648) are conflicts between sovereign states that recognize mutual legitimacy and the right to existence. Their goal is usually the redistribution of territories, resources, or spheres of influence, rather than the destruction of one of the states. The main characteristics of the archetypal scenario of a European Westphalian-type war are symmetric warfare between sovereign states, national interests as the main driving force, rationalization of war aims, pursuit of a balance of power, professional armies, adherence to a certain legal regime of warfare, aestheticization and heroization of war. This archetype of war became entrenched in modern European culture, where war is a consistent algorithm of actions, a rationally organized ritual with its own ethics and aesthetics.

3. Archetypal Scenario of Ideological War / Conflict of Civilizations: («Our own» versus «Alien.» Goal – proving worldview superiority and establishing a monopoly right to cognitive domination. Often implemented in a hybrid mode. Basic narrative «The Return Home»). This archetype is based on the scenario of confrontation between two subjects («Our own» versus «Alien») with the aim of proving worldview superiority and establishing a monopoly right to form one's own worldview. This does not

necessarily imply direct military actions, although it may accompany them or serve as their basis. Each variant of this archetypal scenario has its specifics, but in both cases, it is not about competition for resources, but about a war of meanings. The dramaturgy of hybrid and conventional conflicts of this type is based on the conflict of «Good» and «Evil,» «Hero-Liberator» and «Tyrant-Oppressor,» «Golden Age» and «Decline,» «Chosen Ones» and «Others,» «Truth» and «Falsehood,» «Order» and «Chaos,» «West» and «East,» «North» and «South,» etc. The cognitive nature of ideological/civilizational confrontation transforms it into a battle of narratives.

4. Archetypal Scenario of War for Faith (War against Apostates): («Our own» versus «Our own.» Goal – punishing the object of aggression for betrayal and returning it to the fold of true faith. Characterized by an extreme degree of violence, uncompromisingness, dehumanization, and total disregard for norms and rules. Basic narrative «The Suicide of God»). In this case, the war initiator («Our own») directs aggression against «Our own» as a heretic and apostate. Such a war is characterized by the irrationalization of goals and a doctrinal nature. The goal of such a war is not simply to win, but to convert or destroy the «heretic» who threatens the purity of the doctrine. System-forming archetypes of the war-for-faith scenario include «Defense of the Sacred» versus «Desecration,» «True Faith» versus «Heresy/Falsehood,» «Chosen People/Community» versus «Pagans/Infidels,» «Apocalyptic Battle» between «Forces of Light» and «Forces of Darkness,» «Martyrdom» and the confrontation of «Heroes of Faith» and «Persecutors.» In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, this archetypal scenario is tightly intertwined with ideological and colonial wars. For the Kremlin, Ukraine, which has chosen the European path of development, is a «heretic» who has apostatized from the «canons» of «Russkiy Mir» and «historical Russia.» Russian propaganda demonizes Ukrainian identity, calling it «artificial» and «anti-Russian.» Russia's goal in this war is to «convert» Ukraine back to the «correct» identity or to «destroy» it as an independent entity.

Extrapolating the aforementioned archetypal scenarios onto the realities of the Russian-Ukrainian war has yielded several observations. The Russian-Ukrainian war is a complex intertwining of all these archetypal war scenarios, with dominant features, at first glance, of the colonial and ideological narratives.

Specifically, the colonial aspect of the war is evident in Russia's ambition to destroy Ukrainian statehood, assimilate its population, and control its resources. The ideological aspect is reflected in the clash between the authoritarian ideology of «Russkiy

Mir» and the values of democracy, freedom, and European choice that Ukraine champions. While the «conflict of civilizations» scenario partially explains the deep-seated disagreements, it risks oversimplification and overlooks internal factors. In contrast, the Westphalian-type war scenario has proven irrelevant for explaining the goals of Russia's full-scale invasion, as Russia disregards Ukraine's sovereignty and ignores established legal and ethical-cultural norms of warfare.

We believe that it is precisely the «war against apostates» narrative, often disguised as a colonial or ideological conflict, that reveals Russia's true stance toward Ukraine as an «apostate» from a «shared»

historical and civilizational heritage, demanding either its «conversion» or «destruction.» A significant portion of Russia's official and propaganda discourse is built upon this archetypal war scenario, with its eschatological, pseudo-religious rhetoric of «Holy Rus,» «fighting Satanism,» «desecrating holy sites,» «holy war,» «martyrdom,» «cleansing from defilement» and so on. This narrative enables the legitimization and justification of the «denazification» of Ukrainian identity through any form of violence, up to total annihilation. Understanding this will allow for a clearer definition of the conflict's nature, its dynamics, and the prospects for its resolution.

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