

LOGOS AND PATHOS. HUMANITIES IN THE CONDITION OF WAR

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

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The Donbas war is a tragedy for people in Ukraine and a threat to international law and order. Yet it is also a challenge for the cultures, languages, and humanities in post-Soviet societies. The goal of this joint issue of the *Topos Journal* and *The Ideology and Politics Journal* is to uncover changes that our cultures are undergoing under the impact of the war.

This issue is based on reports delivered at the conference “Logos and Pathos: Humanities in the Condition of War” which was organized in Minsk in October 28-29, 2017. After debates at the conference and a peer review process, the selected papers were updated and were compiled into a volume of contemporary scholarly reflections on cultures in war. War in Ukraine was the central topic for the deliberations of authors who represent different disciplines and countries, including Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. Casting this

discussion in a regional framework anticipated that it is *our war, our wartime*. We cannot imagine future of our region and our societies while ignoring the fact of this war and avoiding our visions of it.

For the citizens of Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, the Donbas war constitutes a special trauma since our countries were connected not only by a common past but also by an ideological code of “brotherly Slavic peoples.” Recurring revolutions in Ukraine, periodic political and economic conflicts between Belarus and Russia, and waves of nationalist movements have long been shaking relations among the three independent states in recent decades. However, the “brotherhood” myth remained strong, especially among older generations adhering to Soviet habitus and sharing common views on many historical events. But the war was such a cultural shock that it destroyed the myth and the war itself has turned into deep collective trauma.¹ Emerging gaps in the social imagination have been filled in by propagandist phantasms drawing a new image of the world, which predefines the humanities’ gaze and undermines the demand for alternative sources of meaning.

The ongoing war has been followed by new forms of propaganda which transcend the traditional scope of propagandist support for military actions on a given territory. New technologies provide propagandists with new opportunities, which is changing the nature of war and spreading the language of aggression and hatred across the Eastern Europe. This propaganda predefines the way we perceive—what and how we feel—the

¹ United Orthodox church seems to be the last moral and institutional factor supporting the myth of the “Slavic brotherhood.” The current attempt of separation of the Ukrainian Orthodox church from Russian one is just another cultural shock with obvious political consequences.

war and everything connected with it. Under these circumstances, humanities have a special mission: to resist propaganda, its normalization of war and *militarization of the Eastern European Life-Worlds*. This mission is especially significant because discussions of new military conflicts among our countries play a central role in the mass media and public discourse. The war—as political instrument and threatening future—has turned into some sort of *idée fixe* of our public discussions. In this context, intellectual efforts that can offer an alternative to militarist propaganda are highly needed. The conference tried to respond to this need, as does this volume.

This issue consists of three thematic parts. Articles of the first part focus on the global context and key concepts crucial for understanding the “undeclared war” in Ukraine. Valeria Korablyova focuses on the crisis of European modernity as a framework for interpretation of the global significance of local conflicts, the specificity of the “hybrid war,” and the erosion of the nation-state. Boris Kashnikov analyzes the change of the very nature of war and its interpretations in the contemporary world. While revising the traditional differentiation of terrorism and war, the author rejects the validity of the classical opposition of terrorism and just war. In so doing, he touches on the issue of intersection between universal principles and subjective teleology. The phenomenon of ideology implied in that issue becomes a central theme in the article by Pavel Barkouski, who studies characteristics of post-ideology as a new phenomenon arising due to modernity shifts. All three articles are epistemologically united around the task of rethinking fundamental concepts and principles of modernity in order to find an appropriate language for depicting contemporary reality.

Authors of the second part focus on the attitudes and reflexive practices used by researchers in social sciences and humanities for analysis of socio-political processes in Ukraine. Here, the common point is the *affected* thinking: the condition of those who study the ongoing conflict can be described in terms of trauma, interestedness, engagement, involvement etc. In her article, Tatiana Shchytsova argues that emotional dispositions of humanities research do not coincide with the dominant affective regimes of social life. She demonstrates that humanities can help reveal deep structural changes in the contradictory socio-political experience of Ukraine. Darya Malyutina conducted series of interviews with scholars who study Ukraine. The author describes how the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict has influenced communication among scholars and academic institutions. Ihar Padporyn identifies the possibility of a particular attitude in the work of those who study war: namely, the attitude of witnessing. His hermeneutics of a witness offer a new perspective in understanding the war, i.e. relating to war as to specific *conditio humana*.

The third chapter is organized around cultural, anthropological, and socio-political aspects of information and discursive wars. This part starts with an article by Andrei Gornykh dedicated to a genealogy of the ideological dispositions of the “Donbas separatists.” Gornykh argues that this ideology refers to the contradictory history of Soviet modernization. The author describes the contemporary history of the Donbas in terms of deindustrialization and its psychological—affective and phantasmatic—consequences for the local workers who lost their economic and symbolic status. Uladzislaŭ Ivanoŭ studies how contemporary

Belarussian language reflects the realities of Russian-Ukrainian war and accepts the “language of war.” Based on sociolinguistic analysis, the author also shows the correlation between ideological positions and a specific vocabulary of the “language of hatred.” Aleksei Krivolap, on the contrary, focuses on the possibility to use mass media for promotion of a “culture of trust” in Belarussian society. The author argues that in the times of information war, trust and loyalty to Belarussian language is an important practice of solidarity. And Aleksandr Sarna analyses communication among citizens in the opposite terms: he shows how conflicting discursive practices form the urban public space.

We hope that the publication of these papers will help fulfill the goals of the conference debates. Scholars who work in the field of the humanities cannot directly stop the war, but they can create preconditions to change how societies perceive the war and propaganda. In their scholarly and social activities, intellectuals can act as mediators between the everyday life of rank-and-file citizens and different expert communities. By analyzing the human condition and various spheres of social-cultural life, humanities scholars contribute to explication and actualization of the meanings and emotional dispositions that orient and motivate decision-making in expert communities.

Thus, taking the aforementioned into account, the editorial teams of *The Topos Journal* and *The Ideology and Politics Journal* offer this joint issue as simultaneously a scholarly and a civil project. This volume is addressed to all interested scholars and wider audiences, and aims at strengthening the regional solidarity of those who share an antimilitarist mission of thinking.