

НАПРЯМ 2. ЖУРНАЛІСТИКА В ОКУПАЦІЇ: ВИКЛИКИ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ПОДОЛАННЯ

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MASS MEDIA WEAPONIZATION AS A PIVOTAL STRATEGIC TOOL IN MODERN CONFLICTS

The 21st century has been marked for wars which are no longer fought exclusively on battlefields. The mass media – once primarily a channel for information and public discourse – has increasingly been weaponized as a strategic tool. States, political actors, and non-state groups exploit traditional and digital media platforms to manipulate the vulnerable fringes of society in terms of handling disinformation perception, dissemination of hate speeches, silencing critics and decision-making campaigns. The weaponization of media reflects the blurred boundaries between communication, propaganda, and global psychological warfare. The weaponization of mass media has been spotted for undermining democratic institutions, eroding trust in journalism, and exacerbating conflict risks thus destabilizing societies. Furthermore, it fuels conspiracy theories, amplifies impact and can escalate conflicts by inflaming ethnic, religious, or political issues. The militarization of language itself intensifies populations' polarization. Constant use of key conceptual military terms such as *“enemies,” “attacks,” “front-line,” “assault,” “battlefield”* and *“war”* encourages audiences to perceive politics and public life as permanent conflict. This fosters division, undermines democratic debate, and treats opponents not as rivals but as existential threats. As a result the social media platforms content celebrates militarism as an important aspect of everyday social media coverage for the benefit of global shady policymakers. *“Militainment”* (military + entertainment) – news coverage, particularly on television, that seems almost to revel in the suspense and excitement, and inevitably the violence and suffering of combat. The Word is coined through telescopic word formation, is a type of blending with both elements clipped. This explosion of militainment comes after months in which the military has tightly controlled

information and press movements in the war zones. “That’s Militainment!” [6]. War does not stand alone, but becomes implicitly intertwined within media weapon vocabulary used as a manipulation tool to govern the minds of communities, and routine journalistic frames for making sense of the world. In the realm of weaponization core mechanisms governments and interest groups craft selective narratives to shape public opinion for propaganda and narrative control purposes. For instance, terms such as **“information offensive”** or **“media blitz”** are deliberately used to frame communication as a battle. Fabricated or distorted content is spread to mislead audiences through disinformation and fake news. Media headlines often borrow military language such as **“bombastic attack”**, **“viral assault”**, **“digital battlefield”**, **“digital world war”**, **“war on truth”**, visually **“clean war”**, **“flame war”**, **“fake news war”** or **“junk news war”** to normalize the use of force. Media is used to weaken morale, amplify fear among people, or create tangible division by conducting psychological operations (**PsyOps**). Social media had changed not just the message, but the dynamics of conflict. How information was being accessed, manipulated, and spread had taken on new power. Who was involved in the fight, where they were located, and even how they achieved victory had been twisted and transformed. Indeed, if what was online could swing the course of a battle – or eliminate the need for battle entirely – what, exactly, could be considered “war” at all? [5, p. 11]. News outlets may describe campaigns as **“bombarding the public with messages”** or **“targeted strikes of disinformation.”** To employ censorship and media capture, authoritarian regimes frequently describe independent journalists as **“enemies of the state”** or accuse them of **“betraying the homeland”**. Online spaces are described as **“frontlines of information warfare”**, where trolls and bots “attack” or “defend” particular narratives adding digital amplification. Securing internet freedom against the rise of digital authoritarianism is fundamental to protecting democracy as a whole. The unrestricted and largely uncontrolled collection of personal data limits the human right to privacy, without which it is impossible to maintain and enjoy peace, prosperity, and individual freedom—the fruits of democratic governance—cannot be sustained or enjoyed. Global internet freedom can and must become an antidote to digital authoritarianism. The health of democracies around the world depends on it. [1]. Media reports frequently described foreign interference into U.S. Politics and midterm Elections (2016, 2018) as a **“cyber-attack on democracy”**, or a **“propaganda war.”** Campaigns were framed as **“Swing battleground states”** where narratives had to be **“won.”** The war for the White House in the USA intensified as candidates clashed in the debate. During the pandemic of COVID-19 journalists worldwide drew on war vocabulary, calling healthcare workers **“frontline**

soldiers,” and named the spread of the virus as a “**biological enemy**,” and government policies as “**weapons against the pandemic**.” Media alike employed militarized vocabulary emphasizing on “**hybrid warfare**,” “**information front**,” “**Twitter wars**,” “**netwars**” and “**disinformation offensive**.” As A. Bowers notes, “however destructive wars may be, they have a generative effect at the linguistic level.” [2]. During the military operation in Iraq, the media recorded a whole series of lexical neologisms, such as “coalition of the willing,” “operation Iraqi Freedom,” “catastrophic success,” “**FIBUA** (Fighting in Built-Up Areas),” “**MOUT** (Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain)”. It is possible to understand a neologism based on context and analysis of its structure. For example, the phrase “**fireworks display**” [fire + work + -s + dis- + play] meant “fireworks.” During the Gulf War, it acquired another metaphorical meaning – “the first reports of the bombing of Baghdad.” The currently popular word “**embed**” [em + bed [V] > [N]] means “a journalist who covers events taking place in a military unit” – “As prospective **embeds** – journalists planted among America’s fighting forces – we were given a crash course in all things military ...” [7] “As military journalists who are going to join American combat units to cover their actions in the press, we took a course in survival in war conditions”. Researchers note the speed with which new vocabulary formed during the Iraq conflict is spreading, primarily due to round-the-clock news coverage from the theater of war. Colorful expressions from speeches by presidents and defense ministers are entering common usage and permeating popular culture. Thus, after the Gulf War, reporters, comedians, and politicians began to play on the phrase “**the mother of all**,” which became a model for the creation of many clichés based on the stylistic device of repetition and was dubbed “the mother of all clichés”: “the mother of all retreats” (D. Cheney); “the mother of all monologues” (J. Carson); “The mother of all battles” (Saddam Hussein) “the mother of all briefings” (H. Norman Schwarzkopf) (thisdayinquotes.com). “the mother of all sanctions” (R. Menendez) (Smolinski, 2022 [6]. The examples of lexical innovations cited above testify to the current stage of the militarization of the English language at the beginning of the 21st century. Every military conflict contributes to the expansion of the English-language military lexicon. The mass media plays a significant role in the spread of new vocabulary, serving as a means of popularizing innovative lexicon. The Abbreviation **WMD** short for Weapons of Mass Destruction was used by Social media as the new “**weapon of mass distraction**”. On Sept. 5, 2025 the 5th President Donald J. Trump signed an executive order changing the Defense Department’s name to the Department of War as a secondary title. The order – the 200th signed by the president since taking office – authorizes Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and **DOD** subordinate officials to

use secondary titles like "**Department of War**", "Secretary of War" and "Deputy Secretary of War" in public communications, official correspondence, ceremonial contexts and non-statutory documents within the executive branch, according to a fact sheet released by the White House [3]. President Donald Trump and U.S. border czar Tom Homan also sought to downplay controversy over Trump's social media post on Saturday in which the president declared, "Chicago about to find out why it's called **the Department of WAR.**" The posting generated angst and accusations that the Republican president was declaring war on a major Democrat-led city. "We're not going to war. We're going to clean up our cities. We're going to clean them up so they don't kill five people every weekend. That's not war. That's common sense," Trump said. But Democratic U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth said it was "clear the president of the United States essentially just declared war on a major city in his own nation." [4]. The weaponization of mass media represents one of the most pressing challenges of the modern information age. It is not merely a byproduct of technological change but a deliberate strategy of influence and control. Addressing it requires a combination of media literacy, institutional resilience, technological safeguards, and global cooperation. In the era where "**information is power**", protecting the integrity of mass media has become a matter of national and international security. Empowering citizens to critically evaluate sources reduces vulnerability to manipulation. Strengthening free, transparent journalism is vital in countering disinformation. Social media companies must adopt stricter policies against coordinated disinformation campaigns while balancing free speech concerns. Further research aims to study the extralinguistic factors on the evolution of new military lexical subsystem.

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ТУЗЛИНСЬКИЙ КОНФЛІКТ У ПРОЕКЦІЇ ГІБРИДНИХ ЗАГРОЗ 2014 РОКУ

Терміни «гібридна загроза», «гібридна війна» використовуються сьогодні в кожній другій-третій публікації. Значна частина населення країни вже розуміє їх значення. Двадцять років тому, в подіях 2003 року, ці терміни уживалися лише небагатьма вузькоспеціалізованими фахівцями. Наша сучасна обізнаність з'явилася завдяки численним дослідженням, в тому числі і в рамках міжнародних освітніх проєктів, серед яких вагоме місце посідає проєкт програми Еразмус + «Академічна протидія гібридним загрозам», якій виконували українські університети разом з європейськими партнерами протягом 2019–2024 років [1]. Учасником проєкту, з поміж восьми українських ЗВО, був і внутрішньо переміщений у наслідок першої, гібридної фази українсько-російської війни, Горлівський інститут іноземних мов, який представляють автори тез.

Одним з головних доробків учасників проєкту став Глосарій, в якому, на підставі вивчення матеріалів провідних європейських структур та дослідників, надано шість основних пояснень терміну «гібридні загрози». Зокрема визначено, що гібридними загрозами називають «скоординовані та синхронізовані дії, які навмисно спрямовані на системні вразливості демократичних держав та