

THE SEMIOTIC EVOLUTION OF THE SIGNS “WAR” AND “PEACE” IN UKRAINE: 2014 – 2016



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Abstract. The article centers around semiotic approach to the issue of the perception of «oppositional symbols» of war and peace over 2014 – 2016 in Ukraine. The main findings are as follows. Over 2 years, Ukrainians began to associate the “war” with the “problem” as well as with fears and incomprehension rather than with victory, during this period, the concept of “peace” was localized within Donbas and within the talks in Minsk and dropped out of the discourse in the context of “peace in Ukraine” or “peace in Europe”. Basically, the media linked the concept of war with victims and statistics. The media did not unite “fight against corruption” with “war” / “winning the war” / “achieving peace”. “Peace” in the media is part of some situational diplomatic negotiations.

The study of “war” and “peace” in focus groups showed that the key connotation of “war” and “peace” is with the words “nothing clear”, “uncertainty”, “fatigue”. The sender of the message and the transmitter of the message (the media) rarely relate their sign system with a system of their audience. Blurring the connotations of “war” and “peace” by the media during the 2014 – 2016 did not contribute to the consolidation of Ukrainian society, but consolidation is possible, if the government’s communication will introduce a new series of semiotic symbols.

According to the author, the problem could be solved by means of elaborating and increasing the complexity of the appropriate codes. Recommendations on increasing the complexity codes are proposed by the author.

Keywords: war, peace, semiotics, code, sign.

Relevance. For the first time after the Second World War, Europe was faced with a large-scale redistribution of borders and the threat of war on the continent. Neither Ukraine nor the EU countries were ready for such challenges as annexation of the Crimean peninsula and part of Ukrainian Donbas. Debates on peace issues in Europe were reduced to private negotiations in Minsk. The primary question is: what to do if there is a new escalation of the war in Ukraine?

The answer lies, in particular, in the sphere of the consolidation of Ukrainian society. This problem could be solved by the improvement of some aspects of communication.

The article aims to cover the dynamics of changes and evaluate in interpretation connotations of “war” and “peace” in the minds of Ukrainians in the information field, to show the connection between the

nature of media content about war and peace, and the phenomena of social consciousness and to make recommendations for changes in media content in relation to the representation of “war” and “peace” in order to consolidate Ukrainian society. The article is based on the research made in the frameworks of the “Government Communication Reform” project carried out by the Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine and the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine jointly with the Communication Reform Group consultants.

Methodology. The methods used in the research were as follows: an *overview of sociological researches* (to understand the dynamics of the general mood in the country in the context of understanding the “war” and “peace” symbols); *content analysis* (to understand the reasons for these attitudes, analyzing the dynamics of the context and the use of the “war” and “peace” symbols in the

news media); *focus groups* (to simulate in the laboratory the communicative model of communication (moderator – group) to better understand the meaning of “war” and “peace” connotation, interpretation and perception; *experimental profile survey* (to understand how to specify any semiotic units associated with the “war” and “peace” and to eliminate noise).

Summary of the main research. This study is experimental. There is little of discussions and literature directly on research subject (in Ukraine and Europe). The study is based on the classical theoretical background of semiotics as a basis for this analysis: Saussure, Baudrillard, Barthes, Eco.

In this study the text as a system of signs will be considered. The first version of this analysis was suggested by Roland Barthes. According to him, textual analysis does not attempt to describe the structure of a work; it is not a matter of recording a structure, but rather of providing a mobile structuration of the text (1989).

As Umberto Eco found, the relation between a signifier and a signified – that is what the code is (1968). In terms of criticism of this approach, Deacon views the semiotics as one of the types of text analysis, rather than a comprehensive science of cultural forms (1999). Critics claim that semioticians do not always make explicit the limitations of their techniques, and semiotics is sometimes uncritically presented as a general-purpose tool.

Sociology: changes of basic perceptions in Ukraine: 2014 – 2106

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine (spring, 2014) till now (spring, 2016), the perception of the signs “war” and “peace” has undergone significant changes: from vehement patriotism in the summer of 2014 to irritation in 2016. Key mood in Ukraine in the spring – summer of 2014 was «to defend the country.» In the summer of 2014 the media clearly transmitted the thesis that “Ukraine has been attacked,” which evoked an addressee’s response.

Razumkov Center Study (1): “Readiness to join the army voluntarily to go to war among men under the age of 55 years old – 30 %, i.e. 1/3 of all men liable

for military service. 60 % of Ukrainians come out for using force against terrorists. 28 % – only for the talks”¹.

During 2015 a fundamental change in the war perception was observed: people felt a desire to just “stop the war,” often – “by all means.” Exactly one year later (spring, 2015) the willingness to use force in Ukraine halved. The survey found that men had serious doubts as to whether to join the army. More than half of Ukrainians called a priority for the government to stop the war in Eastern Ukraine. That is – to “stop” and not to “win.” The war reduced to the territory of Donbas, it does not relate to the whole Ukraine. Fears about the war reinforced sharply. Hryvnia devaluation and economic problems replaced the military theme. At the end of 2015, the war became the category of a “problem”. At the end of 2015, Ukrainians associated “peace” with “peace in Donbas” rather than with “peace in the country.”

The results of a sociological survey conducted by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology in January 2015: 33.2 % of residents of Ukraine were in favor of continuing the Ukrainian army military operations which would result in the liberation of the occupied territories².

The results of “National reconciliation” sociological survey conducted in January by the International Center for Political Studies, with the support of the Netherlands Embassy to Ukraine³: “Task №1 for the Ukrainian government is to stop the war: 67.2 %.

The results of a survey conducted by GfK Ukraine from February 2nd through February 15th, 2015: A third of the Ukrainians believe that the government should make any concessions to stop the war. “40 % of Ukrainians fear the war with Russia. This is the greatest fear among the population.”

¹ Survey of Razumkov Centre, “Public opinion on social and political situation in Ukraine” 25–29 April 2014”. Available at <http://nbnews.com.ua/ua/tema/121343/>

² Survey of the Kiev International Institute of Sociology in January 2015 r. Available at http://24tv.ua/kozhen_tretiy_ukrayinets_vistupiv_za_prodozhennya_ato___opituvannya_n529982 Available at http://ndialog.org.ua/uploads/files/rezultati_%20sociologichnogo_%20opituvannya_%20-%20regionalniy_%20rozriz/00_Survey_Ukraine_ua.pdf

³ The survey of International Center for Political Studies, with the support of the Netherlands Embassy to Ukraine 25 December 2014 to 19 January 2015. Available at http://ndialog.org.ua/uploads/files/rezultati_%20sociologichnogo_%20opituvannya_%20-%20regionalniy_%20rozriz/00_Survey_Ukraine_ua.pdf

The results of a survey conducted by Center for Social Studies "Sofia" in May 2015⁴: More than 60 % of respondents believe that the war must be stopped even by abandoning the occupied territories.

In 2016, the war has been finally tagged as "problem." War and peace are drowning in the waves of messages about the economic crisis in Ukraine and overcoming corruption.

The results of a survey conducted by "Rating" sociological group⁵ commissioned by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and funded by the Government of Canada. Respondents interpret the war as a problem along with corruption. Optimism – at the level of the last period of Yanukovich (2013): only 15 % believe that the country is following the right direction. As to the war, Ukrainians do not see any positive prospects. Thus, 60 % of the respondents consider military operations in Donbas to be the main problem of Ukraine.

Thus, over 2 years, Ukrainians began to associate the "war" with the "problem" as well as with fears and incomprehension rather than with victory, during this period, the concept of "peace" was localized within Donbas and within the talks in Minsk and dropped out of the discourse in the context of "peace in Ukraine" or "peace in Europe."

Role of Media (2014–2016) and content analysis

Having analyzed the above perception of the recipient ("Receiver") / recipient of messages, let us return to a closer consideration of messages from the sender ("Transmitter") of messages about war and peace.

It was analyzed content of the following TOP 7 media: "Ukrayinska Pravda" (online) "Obozrevatel" (online), Tsenzor.net (online), "Segodnya" (print media), "Argumenty i Fakty" (print media), TSN (1+1 channel, TV), Podrobnosti (Inter channel, TV) протягом 3 periods: April-May 2014, April-May 2015, January-February 2016. Метою стало assess

⁴ The survey of the Center for Social Studies "Sofia", May, 2015. Available at http://tenews.te.ua/news_all.php?id=5737

⁵ The survey of the sociological group "Rating" commissioned by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and funded by the Government of Canada, 2016. Available at http://24tv.ua/golos_ameriki_ukrayintsi_divlyatsya_iz_pesimizmom_u_maybutnye_doslidzhennya_n648584

content by the topics we have dealt with mentions of the words «war / ATO» and restoration / achievement / resumption / establishment of "peace" in the texts. To assess frequencies of mention of the words "victory" and "corruption" in the context of the topic it was considered the published works where "victory" + "war / ATO" and "corruption" + "war / ATO" as well as the course of combat operations/statistics are mentioned jointly in a single text: published works with information about casualty rate and course of combat operations, statements of the ATO headquarters.

The content analysis has shown that

1. Basically, the media linked the concept of war with victims and statistics:

- the greatest number of published works for all the periods under review (79 %) was devoted to informing about casualty rate of the Ukrainian army and about military operations;
- as part of the topic "Course of combat operations/statistics" casualty rates were reported in the majority of published works

2. "War" is weakly associated with "victory" in the media: "victory" was mentioned in 13 % of publications on "War / ATO." The maximum index of mentions was recorded in April and May of 2015.

3. The turning point in the content – 2015. New topics in the war context were introduced: the negative impact on the economy, visa-free regime with the EU and the war as an obstacle. "War / economics" was the most represented in April-May of 2015. A substantial part of publications in this period covered the negative impact of war on the economy due to the loss of production in Donbas. At the same time the impact on a visa-free regime with the EU was actively discussed. The number of publications which covered the war in Donbas as an obstacle to obtaining a visa-free regime, and those which disproved such an impact was much the same.

4. The media do not give the audience prospect of peace in Ukraine in general and in Europe. They localize it within Donbas. The phrase "Peace in Donbas" was more than 2.5 times frequent than "Peace in Ukraine" in the periods analyzed. In January-February of 2016, an incidence of "Achievement / Resumption of peace" was reduced by almost half as compared to the same index in April-May of 2015.

5. "Peace" in the media is part of some situational diplomatic negotiations, with which the people of Ukraine have nothing to do, rather than a strategy for Ukraine, a target behavioral model, a picture of the future (e.g. social, state, and political and economic stability of the country), or a result of the victory

of Ukraine and its international allies. The highest incidence of “Achievement / Resumption of peace” was in April–May of 2015. Statements of Ukrainian foreign leaders about participation of peacemakers are the most widely used sources in this context (e.g. The US intends to influence the achievement of peace in Ukraine – *Nuland. The RF MFA statement* said that to achieve peace in Ukraine it is necessary to carry out a constitutional reform. *Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany*, has promised full support to Ukraine for achieving peace in the country and modernizing its economy). Peace resumption was also mentioned as a condition for resuming social benefits in the occupied territories.

6. The media did not unite “fight against corruption” with “war” / “winning the war” / “achieving peace” (e.g., “fight against corruption” as part / condition for winning the war, etc.): “corruption” was mentioned in 5 % of all publications on “War/ATO.” In January–February of 2016, a percentage of mentions was twice that in April – May of 2014.

7. In 2016, a phenomenon called “communication noise” is observed in the media. Many new notions of “war” are emerging. In January–February of 2016, the proportion of publications which had not covered military operations in Ukraine significantly increased. Many mentions of the word “war” were in the context of military operations in other regions of the world. The phrases “energy war”, “transit war”, “war in power”, “war between politicians,” etc. were often used as well.

Thus, in 2014–2016, media mainly associate the war with victims, problems in the economy, pessimism, logistics, Donbas (and not the whole of Ukraine and Europe). Mass media associated peace with diplomatic negotiations and statements of European and American diplomats, «Minsk process».

Focus groups

Let us consider the sign systems of “war” and “peace” closer, through in-depth interviews with consumers of media messages. What does the code of these two concepts include? Are there any common lines between the message sender and receiver? How to achieve a single code and a single conceptual system?

As part of the interview it will be seen how people interpret and respond to messages about war and peace in Ukraine: what they are ready for, and what not.

Qualitative research methods – a series of focused group interviews (FGI) – were used for focus group research. Target group: adult population of the capital – men and women aged 22 to 50: FGI №1: male / female (50/50); specialized secondary / higher education (50/50); 22–30 years old; FGI №2: male / female (50/50); specialized secondary / higher education (50/50); 31–40 years old; FGI №3: male / female (50/50); specialized secondary / higher education (50/50); 41–50 years old.

The task of interview during the focus groups: to decipher the codes associated with “war” and “peace.” A code is a concept widely used in semiotics, which allows us to reveal the mechanism of generating the meaning of the message. According to Weaver Shannon, in the information theory code is defined as the aggregate (algorithm) of signals. In Umberto Eco’s works “code”, “semiotic structure” and “sign system” act as synonyms. In other words, “code” can be defined in three ways: (1) as a sign structure; (2) as rules of combining, ordering the signs or structuring method; (3) as an occasional mutual correspondence of each sign to a single signified (1968).

In focus groups it was studied semantics and pragmatics: encoding of text signs and their interpretation by those who use them.

The focus group research had shown that the perception of the concepts were as follows:

GROUP №1. The general understanding of the situation in the “youngest group” (22–30 year-olds): “Yes, it seems, judging by the content of Ukrainian mass media, that there is no peace.” And it should be noted that in the news there are a lot of stories about victims, complete uncertainty, it is unclear what ordinary people should do. Moreover, the “youth” wants to get rid of “pain” symbols, which are transmitted by news broadcasts. There is a clear desire “not to win”, but rather that Russia just “left us in peace.”

GROUP №2. In the “middle group” (31–40 year-olds) we were suddenly faced with a semiotic phenomenon, which Roland Barthes describes as a “myth”. In general, “myth” is the subject of a separate research, but we cannot leave it unattended: instead of 2014–2016 “hybrid war” realities, people are willing to accept only the symbols and signs associated with World War II in the Soviet Union (1941–1945): the content, on which they grew up and which completely captivated their perception of war. The fundamental intuition of this focus group was, according

to Jean Baudrillard, feeling the world inauthenticity, given to us in our cultural experience, its infestation with parasitic, secondary ideological senses. According to Baudrillard, we are witnessing a "simulacrum". People decode "war" and "peace" in connection with the sign system, created in the USSR. For example: "war – it is to take a gun and go kill", "war – it is, like in 1941, but now the situation is different."

GROUP №3. The oldest group (41–50 year-olds) showed complete distrust of the media, more than others inclined to the "conspiracy theory" against them.

The analysis of the focus groups members' perception of the concepts yielded the following findings. The key connotation of "war" and "peace" is with the words "nothing clear", "uncertainty", "fatigue". The study of "war" and "peace" in focus groups showed that the sender of the message and the transmitter of the message (the media) rarely relate their sign system with a system of their audience.

Moreover, the abundance of signs characterizing war becomes information noise and confuses the recipient's formed slight idea about what is happening in the country.

Connection with the theory: "U. Eco's Bulb"

To understand work of the whole communication chain, taking into account the code system decryption, we will take Umberto Eco's famous example-diagram with a bulb from "The Absent Structure" (1968): When the water level rises, one of the two conventional bulbs that signal the threat or absence of threat is lighted, and the valley inhabitants take appropriate measures.

That is, if you take the position of a Ukrainian common person, over two years they constantly see in front of their eyes (in the media, primarily) 2 bulbs, 2 semiotic oppositions, a certain permanent binary system: "war" – "peace." Let us mark, for example, a red bulb – this is war. A green bulb – this is peace. These oppositions determine both information space, and social state.

Umberto Eco states that the code thus establishes a kind of conformity between the signifying (*lighted or extinguished bulb, red or green – auth.*) and the

signified (*the water reached or did not reach zero / war or peace – auth.*). However, in our case it means nothing but readiness of a device to respond to the received signal (1968).

The main question is how do people respond to the alarm signal (the receiver of the information)? For example, in Eco's theoretical model, in case of a threat, people immediately undertook something to save themselves: blocked the water, etc. And what do we have in reality in Ukraine?

Judging by the results of the focus groups, we get the following reaction of the receiver. As media are stuck at the statistics of victims and pictures of ruin and do not specify what it all means and what can be done about it (instructions / action plan), then, in spite of the "red bulb" ("threat!", "war!"), the receiver would rather quickly get rid of discomfort that is illustrated by the national sociology: more than 40 % of respondents in 2015 want to stop the conflict in almost any way (up to renouncing the territory), and more and more people do not feel threat (which could mobilize to act, as in the summer of 2014), but fear that is likely to paralyze the will of man.

Judging from the focus groups, the receiver does not know the algorithm of actions in case of identifying the "war" sign (red bulb, for example). Possible reasons:

- either the signified is not exact or incorrectly coded
- or there is information noise

Umberto Eco offers to solve such communication problems by increasing complexity of the source code, that is, to provide the receiver with additional information. In this case, as suggested by Eco, we can add another 2 bulbs (blue and orange, for example), increasing combinatorial coding capabilities. In this case, says Eco, we will double the cost of communication, but decrease the risk of error associated with the occurrence of noise and misunderstanding.

Problem solution – elaborating the code

After the focus groups, there were formed a number of hypotheses regarding the complementary (elaborate) coding of war and peace messages. Together with the existing elements of the code, it was decided to carry out an express experiment unusual for

semiotics – a small quantitative study to cut off the unnecessary and concentrate on the priority. The problem of additional studies – to verify the potential of the elaborated "war–peace" code based on the information picture as of 26.02 – 03.03.2016.

Extra-semiotic symbols of opposition for the study:

- Characteristics of vital expectations of the situation in Ukraine: victory / defeat (or a lot of victims)
- Characteristics of "peaceful negotiations" time: will be long / will end soon
- Characteristics of the "war" time: will be long / will end soon
- Characteristics of war attributes ("internal front"): war and fight against corruption, war and rapid reforms, war and new technologies, war and development of Ukraine.
- Testing perception characteristics of "1 typical information day", when the receiver gets a lot of contexts at the same time: the role and place of the text symbol "victory of Ukraine in the war," compared with other topics of the day: "war and economy", "war and social problems", "war and humanitarian aspects", "war and the statistics of victims" and so forth.
- Characteristics of a sudden force majeure period: how the recipient receives conscription and military situation in the country through the media – positive or negative expectations.

The questionnaire survey was carried out to reveal information noise and code elaboration. The results are as follows:

Survey conclusions which confirm the results of focus groups and national scale public opinion studies:

- "war" symbol is statistics of victims;
- "war" is an obstacle to reforms.

Conclusions regarding information noise:

1. The most dangerous information noise (overabundance of symbols and signs) was in the question on mobilization, conscription and martial law in the country. The answers were almost evenly distributed between "positive", "negative" and "neutral". By and large, we see that "negative" and "neutral" prevail over "positive", which is unacceptable and dangerous for the system of mobilization signs/symbols

2. There is sheer noise in the context of the question "Do the media show that the war in the East influences the speed of reforms?" The answers were equally divided. At the same time, it is one of the key challenges for Ukraine: the faster the reforms, the faster victory in the war, as national and international observers often say.

Conclusions regarding code elaboration.

1. Knowing from the media monitoring in 2014–2016 (see above), that the term "victory of Ukraine in the war" occurred only in 13 % of all messages of given categories, it is important to confirm or refute the hypothesis that people associate the text symbol "war in Ukraine" with "victory of Ukraine in the war." In this survey, it was asked the question about "victory" in different wordings. The result: as compared with other symbols of the war, our respondents

Table 1. Perception of terms "WAR" and "PEACE" (Internet, TV, radio, written press)⁶

| № | | Kyiv | Chernivtsi | Dnipropetrovsk | Total |
|---|--|------|------------|----------------|-------|
| 1 | What do the Ukrainian media most often associate the war in the East with? | | | | |
| | with victory of Ukraine | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| | with victims | 32 | 48 | 25 | 105 |
| | with something else | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| 2 | What term do the Ukrainian media associate Minsk process with? | | | | |
| | with long-term process | 25 | 29 | 16 | 70 |
| | with an urgent necessity to make decisions | 6 | 14 | 12 | 32 |
| | with something else | 5 | 4 | 5 | 14 |
| 3 | What duration do the Ukrainian media associate ATO in Donbas with? | | | | |
| | it will take a long time | 22 | 32 | 22 | 76 |
| | it will end soon | 11 | 11 | 4 | 26 |
| | other | 2 | 6 | 6 | 14 |

⁶ Method: a survey of 3 groups (an average of 35 people each) in 3 cities. Confidential. Respondents: young people 18–22 years old (all – students) who have yet to encounter either mobilization or military conscription. In total, 118 people were surveyed.

| | | | | | |
|----|---|----|----|----|----|
| 4 | Do the media combine “war in the East” with “fight against corruption?” | | | | |
| | Yes | 11 | 13 | 10 | 34 |
| | No | 23 | 32 | 23 | 78 |
| | with other issues | 1 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| 5 | Do the media combine “war in the East” with “new technologies” (medicine, manufacturing, innovative weapons, etc.)? | | | | |
| | Yes | 14 | 30 | 22 | 66 |
| | No | 21 | 19 | 9 | 49 |
| 6 | What theme do the media most often combine “war in the East” with? | | | | |
| | Economy | 3 | 19 | 5 | 27 |
| | Social problems | 10 | 17 | 9 | 36 |
| | Humanitarian aspects | 10 | 27 | 10 | 47 |
| | Information resistance | 10 | 10 | 9 | 29 |
| | Statistics (firing, victims, etc.) | 27 | 40 | 19 | 86 |
| | Victory of Ukraine | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| | Defeat of Ukraine | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | In what context does the theme of the war most often appear in the media? | | | | |
| | the war blocks reforms | 20 | 10 | 11 | 41 |
| | the war stimulates reforms | 2 | 9 | 5 | 16 |
| | neither one nor the other | 13 | 30 | 16 | 59 |
| 8 | What tone of the news about mobilization/ conscription have you come across most often? | | | | |
| | positive | 11 | 9 | 9 | 29 |
| | negative | 13 | 13 | 9 | 35 |
| | neutral | 13 | 26 | 12 | 51 |
| 9 | What tone of the news about possible introduction of martial law have you come across most often? | | | | |
| | positive | 4 | 7 | 1 | 12 |
| | negative | 16 | 28 | 19 | 63 |
| | neutral | 15 | 14 | 11 | 40 |
| 10 | How often have you come across the phrase «the victory of Ukraine in the war» in the media? | | | | |
| | often | 14 | 6 | 5 | 25 |
| | not often | 21 | 43 | 27 | 91 |
| | other | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 11 | Media messages about the war in eastern Ukraine are most often associated with: | | | | |
| | opportunities for Ukraine development | 3 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| | risks for Ukraine development | 26 | 35 | 25 | 86 |
| | neither one nor the other | 9 | 10 | 6 | 25 |
| 12 | Do the media show that the war in the East should influence the speed of internal reforms in Ukraine? | | | | |
| | yes | 16 | 17 | 18 | 51 |
| | no | 19 | 28 | 14 | 61 |
| | other | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 |

barely notice the sign of “victory” in the media. Thus, the perception of “victory” by the receiver is almost identical to the frequency of the message “victory” sent by the “transmitter” (media and speakers in the media). Thus, “victory” is the first possible element for elaborating the code “war” / “peace.”

2. The second area for elaborating the code is the time factor. It has to be clearly declared that victory is the main thing, no matter how long it will take. It is important not to mislead people by signals of a rapid end of the war, when we border on the state that does not recognize the right of

Ukraine to exist. Thus, the symbol "a long time" will permit us to do away with footless expectations (which plunge people into depression), both in the country and in external communication (will strengthen the consolidated position of the Ukrainian diplomats and our European allies on the background of the "enemy", who aims to quickly get rid of sanctions).

3. The third elaboration of the code is due to the need to describe "peace" in detail as a kind of target model of the state. That is what will come after the victory. How do the media see peace we are striving for? Thus, complementary symbols to elaborate the code "peace": "fight against corruption as part of the strategy to achieve peace", "fast reforms", "new technologies."

4. Based on the previous conclusion, it's obvious that it is necessary to transform the symbol "war" as an "obstacle" or "problem" into the code system of "possibility", "path to victory", "path to peace," "path to the state of which we are dreaming."

The code elaboration should be made according to the following recommendations:

- the public inquiry "what for?" should be answered. That is, to give motivation for consolidation, enthusiasm and moral stability of those who go to the army, are engaged in logistics, volunteering, have returned from the front, are engaged in business, for opinion leaders and ordinary citizens. In other words, we have to introduce the concepts of "victory" and "peace" as the target model of the entire state, and describe in detail what it means. The same is also true for the European media, because the European civilization has come up against an unprecedented challenge since World War II (repartition of borders);

- it is important to balance the news stories about the "statistics of victims" and "path to the victory";

- it is important to elaborate the code "path to victory"; it should be characterized by an optimistic tone, and additional sign symbols;

- Ukrainian and European media should use the time symbols clearer: "the war will last as long as it is necessary to achieve victory";

- the sign system of "war" and "winning the war" should be explained: this does not mean to bomb the enemy and hoist the Ukrainian flag on the ruins (this is the Soviet myth of the war). Instead: the economy mobilization, fight against corruption (in fact, according to the laws of war), mandatory physical and basic military training of young people and target groups (training camps, for example, 2 weeks a year for all men of a certain age), etc.;

- the imbalance of perception "peace – it's somewhere in Minsk" and "war – somewhere in Donbas" should be corrected as soon as possible, because without mobilizing all resources of the country it will be difficult to achieve real peace;

- the government of Ukraine should understand that potential recruits to the army are disoriented; specifically for them and their families it is necessary to develop a clear, simple and unambiguous information campaign using code elaboration described above. It is important to stop spreading the fear by reporting the casualty rates; instead, the agenda of the summer of 2014 should be returned: an analysis of threats to the stability of the entire state system.

Conclusions. Semiotic study of "oppositional symbols" of war and peace over 2014 – 2016 shows not only the dynamics of the state of Ukrainian society (from high mobilization readiness to "inability to understand what is happening"), but it is also important from the prognostic point of view. The analysis may show how certain social groups will react in a situation such as the war escalation. It is obvious that the dynamics became negative after the media and key media speakers changed their information policy in 2015. Blurring the connotations of "war" and "peace" by the media during the 2014 – 2016 did not contribute to the consolidation of Ukrainian society, but consolidation is possible, if the government's communication will introduce a new series of semiotic symbols.

A Ukrainian source of information about war and peace (e.g., media) rarely encode their messages so that they are properly understood by the addressee.

Semiotics enables the state communication policy to balance the sign systems in the information flows and form a stable and unified code system, which will allow to communicate "the same language" with different communities inside and outside of Ukraine on the basis of studies deeper than this one.

In this study, the most valuable data were obtained during in-depth interviews with focus groups, which, undoubtedly, require development to a full scale national study. During group work, we were able to trace code systems interaction not in isolation but during the communication process: the message sender (moderator) – the recipient (respondent). These laboratory conditions allow extending the results of research to state practical communication.

The resulting tool for elaborating the coding can be practically applied by any state source of information.

Prospects for further research in this area include the study "Semiotics in modern international peace negotiations", it makes sense to spread this study to the EU, because the challenges that are facing the world are common to all, and are not necessarily related ex-

clusively to the war in Ukraine. Obviously, information readiness for potential threats is no less important than political, economic, technological and military ones. Semiotics can improve the quality of state information stability during the probable aggression.

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