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Analysis of factors influencing the changing nature of military conflicts worldwide

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Abstract. The relevance of this research is determined by the need for a systemic understanding of the factors that shape the evolution of modern warfare, as well as by the development of new approaches to defence planning. The aim of the article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the changing character of military conflicts worldwide, as well as the transformation and structure of conflict participants. The research methodology is based on the analysis of contemporary international security research, military-strategic documents and the generalisation of practical experience gained from modern conflicts. The article examines the key factors that determine the transformation of the character of military conflicts in the twenty-first century. It analyses the impact of global competition among states, technological development, demographic and climate change, economic interdependence, the proliferation of non-state actors and information-cognitive confrontation. Particular attention is paid to Ukraine's experience as one of the most illustrative examples of modern warfare, combining traditional and innovative forms of armed struggle. It is substantiated that future wars are acquiring a multi-domain, hybrid, network-centric and high-technology character. The practical significance of the article consists in identifying the main areas for adapting the defence planning system to the conditions of multi-domain and hybrid conflicts, in particular through the integration of artificial intelligence, cyber defence and unmanned systems. The research results may be used to improve military doctrines, train defence forces, develop mechanisms for countering information and cognitive threats, and strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure. Of particular practical value is the vision of the need to generalise Ukraine's experience in conducting combat operations in a multi-domain environment and applying decentralised command and control under the conditions of modern warfare.

Keywords: military conflict, hybrid warfare, multi-domain operations, asymmetric actions, cognitive warfare, management, personnel, planning, artificial intelligence, unmanned systems, cybersecurity.

Introduction

The security environment in the modern world is shaped by interrelated political, economic, technological and social processes that significantly change the character of military conflicts [1–3]. The scientific literature emphasises that the classical model of interstate war is increasingly being complemented by hybrid, asymmetric and multi-domain forms of confrontation [4–6]. Alongside the traditional environments of warfare, the importance of cyberspace, the information environment and the cognitive domain is increasing [7; 9; 10].

The relevance of the research is determined by the need for a systemic understanding of the factors that shape the evolution of modern warfare, as well as by the development of new approaches to defence planning. The aim of the article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the changing character of military conflicts worldwide.

A high level of uncertainty, dynamism and complexity are precisely what characterise the modern security environment. Military conflicts are undergoing significant changes under the influence of global political, economic, social and technological processes. Traditional perceptions of war as a direct armed confrontation between states are gradually losing their universality, giving way to more complex, hybrid and multidimensional forms of conflict.

Modern warfare increasingly goes beyond exclusively military confrontation and encompasses the information, cyber, economic, diplomatic and cognitive spaces. This requires a rethinking of the nature of conflict, its driving forces and patterns of development. The aim of the article is to analyse the main factors influencing the changing character of military conflicts worldwide, as well as to identify the key trends in their further evolution.

Methodological Framework

The article uses systemic, comparative, structural-functional and prognostic approaches. The

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methodology is based on the analysis of contemporary international security research, military and strategic documents and the generalisation of practical experience gained from modern conflicts.

Results and Discussions

Modern military conflicts are undergoing a profound transformation under the influence of a set of interconnected global factors that determine both their nature and the ways in which they are conducted.

Geopolitical Competition and the Transition to Multipolarity

One of the key factors in the transformation of modern military conflicts is the intensification of geopolitical competition between the leading centres of power. The modern international system demonstrates a gradual transition from a relatively unipolar model to a multipolar one, accompanied by an intensification of the struggle for resources, markets, transport corridors, technological dominance and political influence [2].

Under such conditions, the likelihood increases of both direct interstate and regional conflicts and indirect forms of confrontation, including sanctions wars, proxy conflicts, cyber operations and information influence [3].

Demographic Processes and Urbanisation

Population growth, urbanisation and the formation of megacities create new challenges for global security. Socio-economic inequality, shortages of vital resources, interethnic contradictions and political instability may act as catalysts for conflicts [5].

Combat operations in an urbanised environment are becoming particularly complex, where high population density, the presence of critical infrastructure and information saturation significantly complicate the use of traditional forms of military force [5].

Climate Change and Resource Competition

Climate change is increasingly affecting the security environment. Droughts, land degradation, shortages of water resources, food crises and mass migration processes contribute to the aggravation of both domestic and interstate contradictions [2].

In the long term, the struggle for access to water, energy and food resources may become one of the leading drivers of conflicts in unstable regions of the world [1].

Economic Interdependence and the Vulnerability of Global Systems

Globalisation has led to the deep integration of states into global production and supply chains. This creates both new opportunities and new vulnerabilities. Disruptions to logistics systems, energy blackmail, trade restrictions and sanctions mechanisms are increasingly used as instruments of strategic influence [6].

Thus, the economic component is becoming an integral element of modern military confrontation.

The above-mentioned global trends are accompanied by a rapid technological revolution that is fundamentally changing the ways in which combat operations are conducted.

Artificial Intelligence and Automation

Artificial intelligence is becoming a key element of modern military systems. Its use accelerates information processing, supports decision-making, improves intelligence effectiveness and enables the control of autonomous platforms [1].

Advantage is gained by those states that are able to integrate digital technologies rapidly into military processes.

Unmanned and Robotic Systems

The mass deployment of unmanned aerial, ground and maritime systems is significantly changing the character of combat operations. Relatively inexpensive assets can effectively strike high-value targets, changing the traditional “cost–effectiveness” ratio in warfare [9].

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Cyberspace as a Battlefield

Cyberspace has become a fully fledged theatre of military operations. Cyberattacks against critical infrastructure facilities, financial systems, transport, government communications and the media may produce strategic consequences without the use of physical force [7].

New Types of Weapons

The development of hypersonic systems, precision weapons, electronic warfare assets, directed-energy weapons and space technologies has a significant impact on the speed, scale and dynamics of modern conflicts [1].

As a result of the above-mentioned changes, the structure of conflict participants is also being transformed.

Modern conflicts are characterised by a growing number of participants. In addition to states, non-state armed formations, private military companies, transnational corporations, international organisations and networked communities play a significant role [6].

This leads to the blurring of boundaries between state and non-state structures, the complication of deterrence mechanisms and the growing role of indirect forms of struggle.

Proxy wars are acquiring particular importance, within which external actors support local forces through the supply of weapons, funding, intelligence information and political support [3].

The changing character of actors is directly linked to the emergence of new forms of warfare.

Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare involves a comprehensive combination of military and non-military instruments of influence. Military operations are complemented by information campaigns, cyberattacks, economic pressure, sabotage and the manipulation of public opinion [3; 9].

Multi-Domain Operations

Modern wars are conducted simultaneously in several domains: on land, at sea, in the air, in space, in cyberspace and in the information environment. Success is determined by the ability to integrate actions in all these spheres into a single operational concept [1].

The specific features of modern Ukrainian experience consist in the fact that operations, depending on the space (domain) in which they are conducted, may be land, air, maritime, information, psychological, cyber and electromagnetic [11].

Cognitive Warfare

The struggle for the consciousness of the population, trust and legitimacy plays a significant role. Disinformation, psychological influence and the formation of strategic narratives are becoming important instruments for achieving political and military objectives [7; 8].

Decentralisation and Networked Models of Interaction

Modern military formations are increasingly operating in a decentralised mode, using digital command and control systems and horizontal models of coordination. This increases flexibility and the speed of response to changes in the situation [1].

Ukraine's Experience

In the context of the above-mentioned trends, Ukraine's experience is particularly illustrative, as it has become one of the key examples of the transformation of modern warfare. The full-scale armed conflict has demonstrated a combination of traditional and new forms of conducting combat operations, including multi-domain operations, the mass deployment of unmanned systems, the integration of intelligence data with precision weapons and the use of digital command and control technologies [9; 10]. High adaptability of troops, the significant role of international support, as well as societal resilience and the development of the volunteer movement have also become important factors of effectiveness.

Thus, Ukraine has effectively become a kind of laboratory of modern warfare, the experience of which is already influencing the formation of military doctrines, the development of defence capabilities and the training of the armed forces of many states. The generalisation of the results

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obtained indicates a transition from an industrial to a network-centric model of warfare, where the key role is played not only by technological advantages, but also by the speed of adaptation, management effectiveness and the level of societal resilience [6]. Ukraine's experience confirms that even with limited resources, a state is capable of achieving significant results through innovation, international coalition support and flexible approaches to the organisation of defence [8; 9].

Conclusion

The character of modern military conflicts is changing significantly under the influence of the interaction of global factors. One of the main drivers of transformation is the intensification of competition between states under the conditions of the transition of the international system from a unipolar to a multipolar model, accompanied by the struggle for resources, influence and technological dominance. Demographic processes and urbanisation have an important impact, increasing social inequality, political instability and conflict potential in the urban environment. Climate change causes resource shortages, migration processes and the intensification of the struggle for access to water, energy and food.

One of the most influential factors in the transformation of warfare is technological development. The spread of artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, cyber capabilities and new types of weapons is changing the ways in which combat operations are conducted and the very essence of war. Meanwhile, economic transformations and new energy dependencies create additional vulnerabilities related to critical resources and global supply chains. Inequality and the governance crisis also play a significant role, contributing to internal conflicts and the radicalisation of societies.

A characteristic feature of modern conflicts is the growing role of non-state actors, in particular private military companies, transnational corporations and non-state armed formations. This blurs the boundaries between state and non-state structures and contributes to the spread of proxy wars. Modern conflicts are acquiring a multi-domain character and encompass land, sea, air, space, cyberspace and the information environment. Simultaneously, the boundaries between peace and war are being eroded through the active use of hybrid methods, information operations and cyberattacks.

The cognitive dimension of warfare is acquiring particular importance, where disinformation, psychological influence and the manipulation of public consciousness become instruments for achieving strategic objectives without the direct use of force. In parallel, combat operations are becoming decentralised: elements increasingly operate autonomously, using digital technologies and artificial intelligence. Cyberspace is becoming a fully fledged battlefield, while the development of hypersonic missiles, autonomous systems and directed-energy weapons increases the speed and risk of conflict escalation. The technological convergence of digital, biological and physical technologies creates both new opportunities and new threats.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the conducted research, it is appropriate to recommend adapting the defence planning system to the multi-domain and hybrid character of modern conflicts. Priority areas should include the development of digital command and control technologies, the integration of artificial intelligence, cyber defence and unmanned systems into the structure of the defence forces, as well as enhancing the ability to adapt rapidly under the conditions of the high dynamics of combat operations. Particular attention should be paid to the development of interagency and international coordination, strengthening the resilience of critical infrastructure and improving mechanisms for countering information and cognitive threats.

Meanwhile, a promising area of further research is the examination of the impact of technological convergence, autonomous systems, cognitive warfare and cyber operations on the evolution of military conflicts. The systematisation and generalisation of Ukraine's experience in

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conducting operations in a multi-domain environment, decentralised command and control, integrating civilian technologies into the military sphere and ensuring societal resilience under the conditions of a protracted war are also of practical significance. The results obtained may be used to improve military doctrines, train defence forces and develop modern security strategies.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest regarding the subject matter of the article.

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Аналіз факторів, що впливають на зміну характеру воєнних конфліктів у світі

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Анотація. Актуальність цього дослідження зумовлена необхідністю системного осмислення чинників, що визначають еволюцію сучасної війни, а також виробленням нових підходів до оборонного планування. Метою статті є комплексний аналіз факторів, що впливають на зміну характеру воєнних конфліктів у світі, трансформацію і структуру учасників конфліктів. Методологія дослідження ґрунтується на аналізі сучасних міжнародних досліджень безпеки, воєнно-стратегічних документів та узагальненні практичного досвіду сучасних конфліктів. У статті досліджено ключові фактори, що визначають трансформацію характеру воєнних конфліктів у XXI столітті. Проаналізовано вплив глобальної конкуренції держав, технологічного розвитку, демографічних і кліматичних змін, економічної взаємозалежності, поширення недержавних акторів та інформаційно-когнітивного протиборства. Окрему увагу приділено досвіду України як одному з найбільш показових прикладів сучасної війни, у межах якого поєднуються традиційні та інноваційні форми збройної боротьби. Обґрунтовано, що війни майбутнього набувають багатодоменного, гібридного, мережевого та високотехнологічного характеру. Практичне значення статті полягає у визначенні ключових напрямів адаптації системи оборонного планування до умов багатодоменних і гібридних конфліктів, зокрема через інтеграцію штучного інтелекту, кіберзахисту та безпілотних систем. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані для вдосконалення воєнних доктрин, підготовки сил оборони, розвитку механізмів протидії інформаційним і когнітивним загрозам, а також зміцнення стійкості критичної інфраструктури. Окрему практичну цінність становить бачення необхідності узагальнення досвіду України щодо ведення бойових дій у багатодоменному середовищі та застосування децентралізованого управління в умовах сучасної війни.

Ключові слова: воєнний конфлікт, гібридна війна, багатодоменні операції, асиметричні дії, когнітивна війна, управління, персонал, планування, штучний інтелект, безпілотні системи, кіберзахист.