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An ideational level of Ukrainian counterpropaganda: the communicative-discursive dimension

Ідеаційний рівень української контрпропаганди: комунікативно-дискурсивний вимір

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Abstract

The article reveals Ukrainian counterpropaganda ideational structures against Russian propaganda during an active phase of the hybrid war.

The purpose of the research is to identify the Ukrainian counterpropaganda tools to debunk mythologemes and ideologemes of Russian narrative. The article uses the narrative-discursive analysis method to identify some narrative models of conceptualizing the war as variants of "Tales of the Just War" constructing the schematic narrative templates; structural-semantic modeling and the method of reconstruction of manipulative meanings known as the simulacrum. The main conclusions are that counterpropaganda operates with discourse-forming concepts, mythologemes and ideologemes by means of de-mythologizing, anti-mythologizing and revealing the contradictions of Russian narrative integrated with concepts-ideas of self-defense, messianism and reunification.

Demythologization relies on some national narratives, symbols, and archetypes from the memory fields of the Ukrainians and aims at counteracting Russian mythologemes in

Анотація

Стаття виявляє ідеаційні структури української контрпропаганди, спрямованої на руйнування російської пропаганди в умовах гібридної війни.

Мета статті – з'ясувати інструменти української контрпропаганди ідеаційного рівня для розвінчання міфологем і ідеологем російського нарративу. Для досягнення мети використано методи наративно-дискурсивного аналізу для виявлення наративних моделей концептуалізації війни як варіантів "Казки про справедливую війну", а також для конструювання схематичних наративних шаблонів; елементи структурно-семантичного моделювання і метод реконструкції маніпулятивних значень як симулякрів.

Основні висновки полягають у тому, що контрпропаганда діє на рівні дискурсовітвірних концептів, міфологем та ідеологем, використовуючи засоби деміфологізації, антимифологізації і виявлення суперечливості російського пропагандистського нарративу, інтегрованого концептами-ідеями самозахисту, месіанства та возз'єднання.

Деміфологізація здійснюється на основі залучення національних наративів, символів і архетипів з полів пам'яті українського народу і спрямована на протидію та руйнування основних

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oppositions: a pseudo-nation and pseudo-state vs. a full-fledged national identity and statehood; a tool of the West vs. people of Western culture; Russia as a liberator of the Ukrainians vs. a liberation struggle of the Ukrainians against Russian aggression.

Anti-mythologizing relies on current facts and events that refute propagandist ideologemes, restore a distorted "possible world" and the roles reversed by Russian propaganda.

Key words: counterpropaganda, propaganda, ideational structures, mythologeme, ideologeme, topos.

Introduction

The symbolic politics of the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war bases on Russian propaganda discourse (RPD) and Ukrainian counterpropaganda discourse (UCPD), which differ in their discourse-forming concepts, values, topoi, ideologemes, mythologemes and other structures of ideational meanings.

Symbolic cognitive predispositions of the underlying discourse of counterpropaganda and propaganda are organized into symbolic complexes "semiotizing" the present and past – with a reference to semiospheres of historical and cultural memory as the "symbolic resource" of ideational structures of Ukrainian counterpropaganda to debunk Russian propaganda mythologemes, ideologemes and underlying narratives.

The scientific relevance of the article lies in its approach to UCPD and RPD as semiotics integrities, integrated by the nuclear ideational structures that determine the tactical and strategic programs of discourses and their verbal and multimodal codes. In this vein, destroying by counterpropaganda of the basic structures of the ideational level of the enemy discourse, which ensures its structural integrity, means the destruction of the entire discourse of propaganda.

The purpose of the article is to identify ideational tools of Ukrainian counterpropaganda to debunk Russian propaganda underlying symbolic policy structures.

The objectives of the study are to reveal ideational structures of Russian propaganda specifying its discourse-forming concepts, mythologemes with symbols, national

міфологем російської пропаганди в опозиціях: псевдонація та псевдодержава vs. повноцінність і самобутність національної ідентичності і державності; зняття Заходу vs. народ західної культури; братський народ та возз'єднання vs. етнокультурні відмінності у символах, міфах, цінностях і традиціях; Росія – захисниця і визволителька українців vs. визвольна боротьба українців проти російської агресії.

Антиміфологізація базується на сьогоденних фактах і подіях, які спростовують пропагандистські ідеологеми, відновлюють спотворений "можливий світ" і ролі, реверсовані російською пропагандою.

Ключові слова: контрпропаганда, пропаганда, ідеаційні структури, міфологема, ідеологема, топос.

archetypes, and values as their structural part, and ideologemes as prescriptions to act; to identify the tools of Ukrainian counterpropaganda that operate at ideational level and include de-mythologizing, referring to national narratives, and anti-mythologizing based on ongoing facts and events, while specifying incoherence of Russian propaganda mythologemes and ideologemes.

Theoretical framework

Both UCPD and RPD are aimed at consolidating their societies during the war, setting a way to interpret the present, symbolic past and future. The paper bases on (a) discursive-semiotic and structural-discursive approaches to political communication (Chilton, 2004; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), (b) an approach to ideology as a modern metalinguistic myth, the connotative system of simulacra that displaces the denotative level of reality (Barthes, 1973), (c) symbolic politics of internal and interstate conflicts (Kaufman, 2019).

For the article, an approach of critical discourse analysis focused on the concepts of power, history, and ideology is fundamental and it is defined as the system of opinions and beliefs put forward by a group in power (van Dijk, 2008; Wodak, 2009). The research priorities of discursive analysis intersect with the attempt made in the article to define counterpropaganda and propaganda ideology strategies aimed at accepting a social order established by discourses as "natural" by the target audience.

The article uses Michael Halliday's theory as the premise for critical linguistics to develop into an

interdisciplinary study of institutional communication. Halliday emphasizes the relationship between the grammatical system and social needs realized in the use of language. He distinguishes three interrelated meta-functions of language: (1) an ideational function that connects linguistic structures with social structure, reflecting and influencing it, (2) an interpersonal function that determines the relationship between the participants in communication, and (3) a text function that ensures the semantic and formal relations in texts, their coherence and cohesion (Halliday, 2007).

The article assumes that an ideational function is provided by such core structures as discourse-forming concepts or concepts-ideas that determine the way of signifying facts and events in discursive semiosis creating the prescriptive “possible worlds”. Concepts-ideas unify the totality of discourses of both counterpropaganda and propaganda having an explanatory force in explaining to target audiences the discourse-based possible worlds in the simplest and understandable way.

In the same way, our understanding of discourse-forming concepts is close to the concepts of “privileged signifiers” or “nodal points” in the structural-discourse analysis with their ability to unify a given social field (Torning, 1999, p. 98-99) and “arrest the flow of differences” determining the prescriptive way of designating reality in discourses and through discourses. In this perspective, discourse is conceptualized as the “the semiotic concept” with the function of “social values construction and maintenance” (Kravchenko, Zhykharieva, 2020, p. 71), and the “order of discourse” (Foucault, 1981, p. 48-78) – as a semiotic integrity, in which everything that falls out of its sign space is perceived as alien and, conversely, any anomalies consistent with this space are accepted as satisfying the norms of the truth.

The world-modelling function of discourses is based on their constructing mythologemes and ideologemes, which require that the modelled reality to be perceived not as one possible world but as the only true “natural” world. According to R. Barthes’s understanding of myth, the meaning (the first signified) generated by the linguistic and multimodal code-signifier, in turn, becomes a form (a signifier) for the new signified – a concept that “alienates” and replaces the initial denotative meaning. For example, the meanings “forced deportation”, “forced Russification” are losing in RPD their denotative basis being replaced by the mythologeme

“reunification and protection”. The mythologeme “liberation” is actualized as a connotative meaning in all RPD nominations that designate the conquest war and the invader’s actions. Along with the debunking of blatant fakes and disinformation, UCPD reveals the simulacra-based Russian mythologemes as the empty signifiers aimed to legitimize the absorption of one state by another.

From the perspective of the discursive-historical approach the article uses the concept of the topos (Wodak, 2009) as a ready-made argument that sets the audience in a favorite frame of mind appealing to value predispositions. Critical discourse analysts identifies such topoi as Burdening, Reality, History, Authority, Threat, Justice, Belonging, “Constructing a hero”, etc. For example, updating the topos of danger should lead the target audience to the conclusion that it is necessary to eliminate the source of danger. Understood in this sense, topoi are a structural part of ideologemes as illocutionary calls to action, in contrast to mythologemes, which contain the underlying narratives in a collapsed form.

One of the fundamental bedrock of the study is the idea of the narrative-discursive nature of collective memory as being which is capable of modeling the present and future (Huysen, 2003, p. 6) and influencing the formation of national identities (Olick, Vinitsky-Serussi & Levy, 2011, p. 177) based on the text communities where collective thoughts and actions are “rooted” (Wertsch, 2008). Research of memory fields of the Ukrainian and Russian mentalities shows how much they vary from each other from the point of view of the state developing and identity considering the authentication of national narratives, symbols and archetypes, is one of the key means of destroying the myths of Russian propaganda.

Methodology

The research material includes articles of the Public Educational Project “LIKBEZ. Historical Front” (Likbez, 2022), which contains the popularization of the history of Ukraine, fragments of academic historical discourse and speeches by Russian politicians and ideologists.

The paper integrates narrative and discursive analysis with semantic syntax explanatory tools. Narrative analysis involves: (a) the transmission of historical events in the form of a narrative (Alker, 1996) based on the structure of the plot, characters, motives for their behavior, and

symbolic patterns of interaction; (b) the construction of “schematic narrative templates” (Wertsch, 2008) as abstract constructs that establish a common form applicable to a set of events. The second type of narrative analysis is used to identify the de-mythologemes and ideologemes of Ukrainian counterpropaganda, which, unlike Russian narratives, have not been studied in linguistics.

The stages of narrative analysis include: (1) the selection of texts that contain elements of the narrative structure: “agents”, “actions”, “goals”, “situation” and “means”, which are focused around recurrent motifs, allowing to identify the roles with which Ukraine associates itself, the value orientations of Ukrainian society in the confrontation” with the Russian mythologemes, (2) the arrangement of narrative structures in a causal scheme to trace the relationship between them and their coherence with the Ukrainian grand narrative and (3) the identification of schematic narrative patterns as macrostructures of the collective memory of Ukrainians, opposing Russian mythologemes and debunking them.

The article uses the structural-semantic modeling based on the classification of nuclear and peripheral semantic roles. i.e. Agent – someone who acts purposefully, “controls the situation” (Tesniere, 1988, p. 405, Fillmore, 1977), Patient, experiencing an action on the part of another participant (Chafe, 1970, p. 121-123), Instrument as an inanimate object, with the help of which something is carried out (Chafe, 1970, p. 176) and Beneficiary – as someone who loses or gains something (Chafe, 1970, p. 176).

The article uses Barthes’s R. approach to the analysis of manipulative meanings as a simulacrum by reconstructing myths as the secondary semiological system that replaces facts or events with mythologemes and ideologemes. They code symbolic messages that provide the audience's need for a simple explanation and belonging to a group. The debunking of mythologemes is aimed at destroying the RPD as a space of explanatory knowledge and discrediting the prototypical symbols of the “savior of the world”, “Moscow - the third Rome”, etc., used as text-codes that preserve the semiospheres of history and cultures, including them in the RPD symbolic circle.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of data enables to identify three core discourse-forming concepts of RPD: self-defense / self-preservation, messianism and reunification as well as ideational units of Ukrainian counterpropaganda to counteract and debunk them.

The concept-idea of self-defense / self-preservation is based on the mythologemes such as “the NATO and West proxy-aggression”, “betrayal by Ukraine”, “robbery by Ukraine of Russian territories”, “Ukraine is a puppet in the hands of the West”, “Russia is at war not with Ukraine, but with NATO”, “tool of the West”, “change of the civilizational code of Russia by Western propaganda”. These mythologemes are constantly verbalized by Putin, Russian politicians, and ideologists to substantiate the ideologemes “we were forced to war”, “war is the defense of the fatherland”, as exemplified below:

- 1) We were simply left with no other opportunity to protect Russia, our people (Putin, 2022).
- 2) I repeat: this is a forced measure, because they could create such risks for us that it is not clear how our country would exist (Putin, 2022).
- 3) We constantly faced either cynical deceit and lies or attempts to pressure and blackmail: Those who claim world domination, publicly, with impunity and, I emphasize, without any reason, declare us, Russia, their enemy (Putin, 2022).

From a viewpoint of lexical choices mythologemes that underly the concepts-ideas of self-defense / self-preservation are encoded by nominations with the semes “hopelessness” in (1) and (2), “protect” in (1), “forced” in (2), “trampled national pride”, “deceit”, “pressure”, “blackmail”, “impunity” in (3) actualizing the topos of “threat” and its associated ideologemes of “defense of the fatherland” and “we were forced to war”, implicating prescriptive actions.

The syntactic models represent the Russian versions of the interpretation of “reality”, in which two or three participants are involved: (a) Ukraine as an explicit or implied agent of action (source of threat), Russia as the patient targeted by the threat emanating from agent, (b) the West as an explicit or implied agent of threatful actions, Ukraine as a patient who is “influenced” by agent, and Russia as a beneficiary experiencing the harmful consequences of an action.

Syntactic models iconically reproduce the manipulative reversal of roles, i.e., the Victim – Persecutor, Victim – Aggressor, Victim of blackmail – Blackmailer in the narrative plot from “Tale of a just war” with a set of actants: Ukrainian is Villain and Russia is Victim and NATO / Western World – Resident Evil that controls Villain (Kravchenko, 2022).

The concept-idea “Russia is Messiah” with “all-human vocation” to save the world is based on mythologemes rooted in the fields of Russian memory ascending to the mythologemes of “Holy Rus”, “Russia as a wandering kingdom” and “Moscow is the third Rome” put forward in the 16th century by the elder Philotheus. With the transformation of the messianic image of Russia in various historical periods, including Moscow Rus’ – Petersburg (imperial) Russia – Soviet Russia (USSR) – Putin’s Russia, these mythologemes have been preserved in all fields of Russian memory. Messianic ideas are manifested in the image of Liberation Russia in wars against Osman Empire on the Balkans in 19th century and in the First World War transforming over time into revolutionary and Soviet Russia, with the exclusive “calling” of the Russian people to the salvation of mankind.

In war 2022 the messianic mythologemes are imposed by Russian propaganda in narrative plot lines such as (a) “Liberation of Russian-speaking and pro-Russian Ukrainians”, based, in turn, on sub-narratives of “the rebirth of Nazis and fascists posing a threat to the ethnically Russian part of Ukraine’s population”, “Ukraine has taken a course towards forced assimilation, the formation of an ethnically pure Ukrainian state”, “liberation of the world from fascism, revived in Ukraine” and “freeing the world from destroying Western values” exemplified by the examples below.

- 4) It was necessary to immediately stop this nightmare – the genocide against the millions of people living there, who rely only on Russia, hope only on us (Putin, 2022).
- 5) Because it is we who are obliged to show the world the bestial essence of Ukrainianism, so that neither it, nor anything like it, will ever be reborn again; it is not enough to hoist your flag over the conditional Reichstag. It is not enough even to arrange the Nuremberg Trials for the Goebbels or Zelensky. The war will not end until we eradicate the very idea of Ukrainianness (Roy, 2022).
- 6) The mission of modern Russia in the conditions of what is happening in the West,

and this is an obvious rage, is to preserve moral values (Mozhaisk, 2022).

Messianic mythologemes are encoded by nominations at the poles of the value scale “good” associated with the actions of Liberator, and “evil” associated with the actions of Villain from whom Victims should be freed.

The “good”-associated positively connotated nominations *hope, rely*, implicate the Victim’s aspirations to be liberated. The Liberator’s actions to meet these aspirations are designated by verbs *to hoist your flag over the conditional Reichstag, to arrange the Nuremberg Trials, eradicate the very idea of Ukrainianness, to preserve moral values*. “Evil” involves in its semantic scope the ideological nomination “genocide” and pathos-based words *nightmare, an obvious rage, the bestial essence of Ukrainianism*, with the re-articulation of responsibility for criminal acts as an obligation to “one’s own group”.

“Liberating” mythologemes actualize the topoi of Burdening, Threat, and Belonging, with the reversal of the roles of “defender-aggressor”. These mythologemes underlie the ideologeme “protection and liberation”, manifested by the illocutionary force of direct or implicit commissive speech acts calling for action: *It was necessary to immediately stop this nightmare, clean from the Nazis, eradicate the very idea of Ukrainianness*.

All the narratives underlying the messianism-based mythologemes, can be schematized into the narrative plots from the “Tale of just war”: Ukrainian authorities are Villain – Ukraine is Victim / Hostage – Russia is Hero and Liberator; NATO / USA / the Western World are Villain – Ukraine is Villain’s accomplice – The World is Hostage – Russia is Hero-Liberator.

An important part of the Ukrainian counter-propaganda discourse is the actualization and generation of ideational structures that counteract the destructive informational field of the enemy. The article identifies three main mechanisms for exposing and debunking Russian ideologemes, including (a) emphasizing the incoherence of the Russian propaganda narrative in its basic ideological structures, (b) de-mythologizing, referring to national narratives, iconic figure, archetypes, and symbols of Ukrainian identity, based on the fields of memory of the Ukrainian people, and (c) anti-mythologizing focused on real facts and events that refute propaganda ideologemes.

In the symbolic politics of conflict, Russian mythologemes tend to merge and overlap their semantic volumes, which leads to conflict between ideological structures. The mythologemes “fraternal peoples” and “cultural allies”, derived from the concept-idea of reunification counteract with mythologemes “invention of Ukraine” and “Ukrainians as a pseudo-nation”, associated with the same concept-idea (reunification is necessary because Ukrainians are unable to govern themselves). The mythologemes “fraternal peoples” is also discordant with the “Ukronazi” articulated in the ideologemes “deukranianization-denazification” in the narrative about the liberation of the world from fascism, with the prescriptive attitude towards the elimination of Ukrainian statehood, which manifests itself in the illocutionary force of the implicit directive as in (7).

- 7) Apparently, the name “Ukraine” cannot be kept as a title of any fully denazified state entity on the territory liberated from the Nazi regime (Sergeytsev, 2022).

The inconsistency of RPD is revealed at the level of the polyhierarchical connection between the discourse-forming concepts and their underlying mythologemes. While mono-hierarchical relations represent the subordination of mythologemes to one discourse-forming concept, polyhierarchical structure is the subordination of one mythologeme to several parallel concepts-ideas. Thus, the “liberation”-based Russian mythologemes are simultaneously derived from the mythologeme “liberation from Nazi power”, is subordinated simultaneously to the concepts-ideas “messianism” and “reunification”, collides with other mythologemes subordinated to such concepts, namely “cultural ally” and “fraternal people”. As a result, the ideologemes “deukranization-denazification” associated with the mythologeme “liberation” form incoherent meanings “liberation of Ukraine from Ukrainians”, that is, from “fascists”, who, moreover, are “our brothers”.

The incoherence of propaganda is also manifested in the reformulation of “old” mythologemes from historical fields of memory into signifiers with new content, with a narrowing of their conceptual scope up to its “nullification”. For example, the mythologeme of the “fraternal people” unfolds at the beginning of the war into a new strategic narrative “Russia is Big Brother, who must discipline Younger Brother for his own good” and narrows its conceptual framework at first to the Russian-

speaking population, which boils down to one of the strategies for legitimizing the military actions. Today, the reformulation of the mythologeme continues with a tendency to limit the “inner group” only to those Ukrainians who support Russia in its military aggression, that is those who renounce their national identity and statehood, thereby no longer presenting the Ukrainian people even as a “little brother”. It is exemplified by (8), where “one’s own group” is constructed with the maximum narrowing of the significative scope of the mythologemes “fraternal people” and “cultural ally”. This is evidenced by the filling of the lexeme *minority* with semantic content due to the fourfold repetition of the nomination *pro-Russian* and its hyponymic correlation with the hypernym *pro-Soviet*. The syntactical-semantic model in (8) delineates two participants: Russia as an agent of action, which “controls the situation”, and pro-Russian Ukrainians as a patient controlled by the agent, which is reproduced by a passive structure that is implicitly enhanced by the sirconstant of the mode of action *under our control*. At the same time, the patient is positioned as an instrument with the help of which the agent performs his actions that is explicitly designated by the semantic role “goal”: *to gather in this movement the pro-Russian forces of Ukraine under our control*.

- 8) But they are in the minority. (...) Most pro-Soviet people are also pro-Russian people. (...). This is the electorate of the pro-Russian party. (...). The minimum task is to gather in this movement the pro-Russian forces of Ukraine under our control (Perevozkina, 2022).

Ukrainian counterpropaganda not only emphasizes the inconsistency of the Russian propaganda narrative in its main ideological structures, but also destroys Russian mythologemes by demythologizing them - by attracting the fields of memory of the Ukrainian people.

The analysis of the texts of the popularized history on the portal “Likbez”, in conjunction with the chosen academic historical studies on the memory fields of the Ukrainians, made it possible to identify plots with a similar basic motive, which are fixing points of collective memory. The article identifies 24 main narratives and 16 plot elements, combined into four schematic models based on similar main motives of Ukrainian narratives and their underlying demythologemes, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
De-mythologizing tools of the Ukrainian counterpropaganda.

| Mythologemes of Russian propaganda | De-mythologemes of Ukrainian counterpropaganda |
|--|--|
| <i>Pseudo-nation and pseudostate</i> | <i>Full-fledged nationality and continuity of statehood</i> (1) “Ukraine, not Muscovy, is a direct successor of Kyivan Rus” (Hrushevskiy, 1995), (2) the model of “flowing history” according to the Kyiv-Galich-Lithuania scheme, (3) genetic rights of the Ostrozhsky princes (the late 16th century), to “Russian lands” with the population of Galicia, Volhynia, Kiev region and Podolia, (4) the continuity of forms and trends in the life of Ukrainian society in the 16th–17th centuries with Kievan Rus, (5) the “state idea” of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi of creating an independent state from Przemyśl to the Moscow border, that is, within the borders of Kievan Rus, (6) the sovereign path of the Ukrainian People's Republic (1917-1921), its international recognition as a separate state. |
| (a) “An ancient Russian nation” as the common ancestor of the East Slavic peoples, (b) “Invention of Ukraine”, (c) “Significance for Ukraine” of Russian centralized state from its creation in the 18th century. | (7) a special role of the Varangians in the history of Kievan Rus, (8) the Ukrainian state building on European principles of federalism, from Volodymyr Monomakh to Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, (9) an active participation of the medieval Ukraine-Rus in political life of Europe, (10) parallels in historiography between the Cossacks and the European crusaders, (11) the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, (12) Ukraine as a cultural border between the East and West rearticulated into ideologeme “Ukraine is a barrier between the world and Russia's imperial aggression”, (13) kinship with an entire democratic world in the war of 2022, with a pro-European vector of development. |
| <i>Serfs / tools of the West</i> | <i>the Ukrainians are people of Western culture with kinship with Europe</i> (14) Proto-Ukrainian archetypes transformed into symbols of national identity (mother-Ukraine, feministic foundations of Ukrainian culture vs. a Russian archetype of the father-ruler with a loyal ideology, etc. (Binbin, Kravchenko, Matvieieva, 2022), (15) a distinction between the names “Rus” and “Russia”, (16) Russian oppression of the Ukrainian language, culture, Ukrainian identity itself, (18) the “chosen injuries” narrative of repressiveness of the Soviet regime (the Red Terror, the Holodomor of 1932-1933, hunger in 1946-1947, repressions, deportations, shot revival, russification, persecution of religions). |
| <i>Fraternal people, reunification</i> | <i>Formation of the Ukrainian nation is rooted in primordial ethno-cultural symbols, myths, values, and traditions; the formation of Ukrainian identity in the fight against Russia-oppressor</i> |
| (a) “One language – one culture – one faith – one Church”, (b) “gathering of Russian lands”, (c) “the expansion as a mission in expanding the boundaries of the Russian Orthodox kingdom”, (d) “the primordial desire of Ukrainians to reunite with the fraternal Russian people”, (e) “Ukrainians and Russians have always fought together”, (f) “Ukraine as integral to Eurasianism”. | (14) Proto-Ukrainian archetypes transformed into symbols of national identity (mother-Ukraine, feministic foundations of Ukrainian culture vs. a Russian archetype of the father-ruler with a loyal ideology, etc. (Binbin, Kravchenko, Matvieieva, 2022), (15) a distinction between the names “Rus” and “Russia”, (16) Russian oppression of the Ukrainian language, culture, Ukrainian identity itself, (18) the “chosen injuries” narrative of repressiveness of the Soviet regime (the Red Terror, the Holodomor of 1932-1933, hunger in 1946-1947, repressions, deportations, shot revival, russification, persecution of religions). |
| <i>Russia as a defender and liberator of Ukrainians, a guarantor of the existence of Ukraine</i> | <i>Liberation Ukrainian movements of Ukrainians against Russia / the USSR</i> |
| (a) “Protection” of the “cultural allies”, (b) without an alliance with Russia / the USSR, Ukrainians and Ukraine would have been destroyed by external aggressors, be it the Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire or the First and Second World Wars. | (19) The Cossacks liberation struggle, (20) defending and fighting for independent statehood led by Symon Petlura, (21) the liberation movement led by Netor Makhno and Ataman Zeleny, the peasants’ movements against the collectivization in 1930, (22) the Ukrainian Insurgent Army for independent Ukraine 1942-50, resistance of Ukrainians to the Soviet regime in the movement of the sixties and the Ukrainian dissident movement, (23) the Revolution of Dignity, (24) irresistibility, and selflessness of the Ukrainian people in the 2022 war, based on the centuries-old experience of a liberation struggle. |

Ukrainian narratives are characterized by their consistency. All narrative patterns are connected by causal schemes that embody one main motive – the liberation struggle of Ukrainians for their national identity and statehood that is exemplified by Ukrainian media in (9).

- 9) *We aim to show the endurance of the struggle for statehood and military traditions, as well as the connection of generations that embodied and embody this struggle* (Sokolova, Hai-Nizhnyk, 2022).

In addition to de-mythologemes, Ukrainian counterpropaganda uses anti-mythologemes, by relying on facts and events, debunking propagandistic mythologemes as signifiers with distorted meanings with the restoration of reversed roles.

Thus, the mythologemes “concern for the population of the occupied territories” and “genocide against the Russian-speaking population” derived from mythologeme of “defense and liberation” are debunked by anti-mythologeme of “genocide” of Ukrainians in such semantic components as “forced deportation”, “restriction of movement”, “forced mobilization”, “Ukrainians as “cannon fodder” and “human shield”, “forced russification”, “repressions” as exemplified in (10), (11), (12) and (13).

- 10) It's not even mobilization, it's just slavery. People are literally being sent to slaughter; From the very beginning, residents of ORDLO - even those with Russian passports - were used as cannon fodder (Hudkova, Chernovol, 2022).
- 11) The occupiers do not allow the civilian population to cross the demarcation line and leave the occupied territories of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions (Polishchuk, 2023).
- 12) This “picking up” of men is the consequence of the genocidal nature of this war. (Shulgat, 2022).
- 13) A complete ban on everything Ukrainian. Threats to teachers and parents – filtering camps and deprivation of parental rights. A “brainwashing” lesson, during which young Ukrainians will be told about the “greatness of Russia” and the “baseness” of its historical enemies – Ukrainians and the West (LB.ua, 2022).

The anti-mythologeme “genocide” debunking the mythologeme of “protection and concern” is encoded by the words that explicitly (*genocidal*)

or implicitly (*filtration camps, slavery, cannon fodder, “brainwashing”*) actualize the seme “genocide”, by verbs and verbal phrases to designate the enemy actions (*sent to slaughter, “picking up”* of men, completely *russify, threaten*) and their consequences (*a complete ban on everything Ukrainian, deprivation of parental rights*) – actualizing the topoi of Reality and Inhumanity, and restoring roles inverted by propaganda: “Defender – Victim” into “*Genocider – Victim*”.

The syntactic models involve such semantic roles as Agent of Genocide (Russia), Patient (the Ukrainians in the occupied territories), Predicates (the inhuman actions of the agent), as well as goals varying in terms of violence, from destruction to assimilation.

The mythologeme Ukraine as a “Nazi state” is debunked by anti-mythologemes “Russia is a fascist state”, with tactics of shifting the RPD accusations onto the accuser. An effective counter-propaganda tool for implementing these strategies is the involvement of international expert opinion as in (14), which in rhetoric is called Testimony – a method of persuasion with an “appeal to authority”. International expert opinion, voiced from an impartial side, opposes Russian mythologemes and restores inverted roles.

- 14) The report of The New Lines Institute and Raoul Wallenberg Centre reasonably concludes that Russia bears State responsibility for breaches of Article II and Article III (c) of the Genocide Convention to which it is bound (New Lines Institute, 2022).

Conclusions

Ukrainian counterpropaganda operates at the level of discourse-forming concepts, mythologemes and ideologemes debunking them by de-mythologizing, based on the national narratives, archetypes, and symbols of Ukrainian identity from the memory fields of the Ukrainian people; anti-mythologizing based on real facts and events that refute propaganda ideologemes; and revealing incoherence of the Russian narrative in its basic ideational structures integrated by concepts-ideas of self-defense / self-preservation, messianism and reunification.

De-mythologization is aimed at counteracting and destroying the basic mythologemes of Russian propaganda in the opposition: a false nation and a false state vs. a full-fledged

nationality and continuity of statehood, serfs / tools of the West vs. people of the Western culture and origin, Fraternal people and reunification vs. ethno-cultural differences in symbols, myths, values and traditions; Russia as Defender and Liberator of Ukrainians vs. Liberation struggles of the Ukrainians against Russia. Anti-mythologization restores the distorted world of parallel reality with the correction of inverted roles.

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