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## **MANIPULATIVE ANTI-UKRAINIAN DISCOURSE OF THE OFFICIAL RUSSIAN MEDIA IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF ELIMINATION STRATEGIES<sup>1</sup>**

### **The Anti-Ukrainian Discourse in Russian Media: Elimination Via Manipulation**

This article contains a multifaceted cognitive, pragmatic and verbal analysis of anti-Ukrainian discourse in the Russian media from the point of view of its eliminative features. The main argument is that the discourse-forming concepts of 'Ukronatists', 'understate' and the far peripheral concept of the 'fraternal people' underpins multilevel eliminative strategies and the manipulative techniques of their implementation. The article argues that the identified discourse-forming concepts correspond to the three types of the narrative modelling of events according to the scenarios 'The Story of a Just War' and 'Fathers and Sons', and based on the metaphors of 'mental disorder', 'predatory, scientific abstraction', 'drugs/alcohol addiction' and 'a house for NATO'. These are used to conceptualise Ukraine and Ukraine-associated matters leading to the construction of eliminative strategies for denying Ukrainian national identity and statehood, polarisation, symbolisation based on group stigmatisation, extermination, explicit and implicit dehumanisation through animalisation, deindividualisation and impersonalisation, as well as delegitimisation and masking actions as counteraction and self-defence.

Keywords: anti-Ukrainian discourse of eliminationism, discourse analysis, conceptual metaphors, narrative models, pragmatic strategies, manipulative techniques.

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## INTRODUCTION

The article focuses on analysis of the anti-Ukrainian discourse of the Russian media with its features of elimination and dehumanisation aimed at covering Ukraine and Ukrainians in such a way as to justify invasion and assassinations.

Among the five forms of eliminationism (Goldhagen 2009)<sup>2</sup>, namely transformation, repression, expulsion, prevention of reproduction, or extermination, discourses primarily contribute to the transformation of people's cultural identity. However, although the other four forms concern elimination actions outside discourses rather than discourses themselves, such actions are also modelled not least by discourse semiotic codes that delegitimise a particular ethnic group or nation, creating possible worlds in which elimination becomes legitimate and natural.

With this in mind the article focuses on the specifics of creating an anti-Ukrainian discourse of elimination examined from the viewpoint of its discourse-creating concepts, manipulative strategies and techniques, as well as the metaphorical and narrative models of the conceptualisation of Ukraine, Ukrainianism and Ukrainians.

The discourse of elimination has not yet been the subject of research within the discourse-analytical framework, which determines the relevance and novelty of this study.

The purpose of this study is to identify the features of the anti-Ukrainian discourse of eliminationism (hereinafter – AUDE) at its cognitive-conceptual, motivational-pragmatic, and verbal levels of stratification.

To solve research problems, it is important to identify first whether the mechanism of elimination is something typical or something new and characteristic of the ongoing war or, in other words, when elements of the elimination discourse became part of the strategic narrative of the Russian government. To this end, it is necessary to briefly trace Russia's information campaign against Ukraine – as it was central to Russia's operations in Ukraine where “the main battle space has moved from physical ground to the hearts and minds” (Analysis of Russia's information campaign against 2015, p. 4). As noted in the NATO StratCom Center of Excellence's report, since 2007

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<sup>2</sup> The term was introduced by American political scientist Daniel Goldhagen in his book *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*.

(when narratives began to be reflected in policy documents), Russia has been using the following narratives: Russian Slavic Orthodox Civilisation in opposition to “decadent” Europe; Ukraine as integral to Eurasianism; the Russian World unites Eastern Slavs; Russians and Ukrainians are one nation; natural supremacy of Russia; clash of civilisations; Ukrainians – a pseudo-nation, unable to administer their own country and sustain their statehood; the Euromaidan – is the rebirth of Nazis and fascists (with references to the Great Patriotic War thus bringing out the hatred of Nazism) posing a threat to the ethnically Russian part of Ukraine’s population; legal and historic justifications to legitimise Russia’s actions in Ukraine.<sup>3</sup>

Without delving into the cultural-historical, political and geopolitical reasons and sources of such narratives, covered extensively in the literature,<sup>4</sup> it is important to note that the distribution of these narratives in the “friend or foe” opposition, which is archetypal and fundamental for any ideological discourse, indicates that the narratives associated with the left side of the opposition (the group of “own”) was previously central in the field of Russian propaganda, focusing not only and not so much on the Russian audience, but on target addressees such, as the residents of the east and south of Ukraine – to make them think about their future joint fate with Russia.

With the development of the political events that led to today’s war, the configuration of narratives in the information field of Russian propaganda has been changing and narratives based on the ideologemes of kinship, protection and paternal guardianship have

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<sup>3</sup> Analysis of Russia’s information campaign against Ukraine. Riga 2015.

<sup>4</sup> The doctrine of the universal, worldwide significance of “holy Russia” and “Moscow as the third Rome” was put forward as far back as the 16th century, first formulated by Elder Philotheus (Malinin 1901) and became the basis for deriving all later political concepts that substantiate the “all-human vocation of Russia. The motive of the liberation of the world from its destroying Western values was substantiated in Dugin’s “Fundamentals of geopolitics. Geopolitical future of Russia” (1997), who falsified the basis of Eurasianism and put forward the idea of permanent confrontation between the powers of “Eurasia” and the civilization of “Atlantism” as the “tellurocratic” continental powers and “thalassocratic” maritime powers while “placing” Ukraine as a state that “has no geopolitical meaning” and can only exist as a “cordon sanitaire” between two civilizational centers of power (Bassin 2017, p. 182–183). The fact of the existence of “sovereign Ukraine” is designated as a declaration of geopolitical war by Russia on the part of Atlanticism and Sea Power – with subsequent metonymic transfer of the world evil to the image of Ukraine as the heir of fascism, the victory over which is a sacred duty of Russia. Thus, at a conference on the topic “Rehabilitation of fascism in the countries of Eastern Europe” Dugin raises the question of “the expediency of the existence of the state of Ukraine” (Rehabilitation of fascism in Eastern Europe. Text transcript of the press conference in RIA Novosti, November 9, 2008).

been gradually shifting to the far periphery of the field, being replaced by narratives that construct the image of the enemy – with metaphors, mythologemes, explicitly evaluative nominations that transpose the image of an enemy into the category of the animal world, a non-being or a robotic soulless creature, using the discursive strategies of dehumanisation.

The communicative model of the official anti-Ukrainian discourse is radically changing due to changes in components such as the political context which entails the transformation of other components: the addressee and the code (propaganda language). The context of the narratives constructing the “image of the enemy” can be simplified in the following chain of events: Euromaidan as an illegal coup, the annexation of Crimea; the Russian-backed separatist coup in Donetsk and Luhansk and the declared independence from Ukraine of the Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic; the strengthening interest of Ukrainians in joining NATO and the EU; and the escalation in mid-February of the fighting between Russian-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The change in contexts puts the “neo-Nazi” narrative at the centre of the informational propaganda field, which prepares the transition from a hybrid war to a “special military operation”, that is, to a full-scale war, and involves the use of a different code and a different addressee. Thus, this narrative no longer focuses on the “Ukrainian brother”, but on the Russian audience, as it legitimises murder and violence. Accordingly, the language of hatred becomes the main language code, which is presented both in an explicit form and implied by manipulative techniques. A code sample of the new anti-Ukrainian narrative is presented in Putin’s address in connection with the start of a special operation in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, when he called what is happening in Donbas a genocide. An accusing the other side of the genocide not only creates “a pretext for an invasion”, but also “demands” a solution – an adaptation of the “world” to words – when the construction of the image of the enemy contains a prescriptive (illocutionary) attitude: those who carry out genocide must, in turn, be stopped and destroyed. From the narratives that unite Russia and Ukraine into an “inner group”, there remains only the ideologeme of “protecting one’s own” – the Russian-speaking population, which is reduced to one of the strategies for legitimising military actions.

In the new narrative, based on the ideological concept of “neo-Nazis”, Russian official propaganda openly calls for the destruction of Ukrainian fascism and Bandera-followers (*banderovtsi*), which, due to the strategy of metonymic transfer and generalisation, means everyone who is ready to resist. The discourse of elimination is created using manipulative strategies, modelling the image of a soulless, inhuman enemy that can and should be destroyed to defend the world and universal human values. For this purpose, narratives of historical memory are limited to narratives of World War II and Nazi atrocities supported, since 2014, by stories about atrocities committed by pro-Ukrainian extremists.<sup>5</sup>

## RESEARCH MATERIALS AND METHODS

The source base for the article has been the speeches by the Russian politicians and ideologues V. Putin<sup>6</sup>, V. Surkov, O. Roy, D. Dubrovin, D. Medvedev, T. Sergeytsev and E. Ivanyuga. The selection criterion for the material was the presence in the texts of direct nominations, metaphors, manipulative techniques directly or indirectly related to eliminative concepts and/or conveying eliminative strategies. The research methodology involves critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2012, 2009, 2003; Van Dijk 2008; Wodak 2009; Wodak and Meyer 2009; Kravchenko 2017); some explanatory tools of pragmatic analysis<sup>7</sup>; and conceptual metaphor analysis and the elements of narrative analysis.<sup>8</sup>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The scientific studies, which contribute to the theoretical basis of this paper mostly involve three research vectors.

### *1. Integration of structural-discursive and semiotic approaches*

According to the structural-discursive approach, the discourse is considered to be a system of meanings determined by privileged

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<sup>5</sup> OSCE Supplementary human dimension meeting, April 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Обращение Президента Российской Федерации 24 февраля 2022 года. URL.: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>.

<sup>7</sup> Metaphor analysis was used in such its version as the method of conceptual integration introduced by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner.

<sup>8</sup> Narrative analysis was used as a component of discourse analysis and relied on studies identifying narrative and metaphorical models for the conceptualization of wars in the second half of the 20th century (Lakoff 2009; Lakoff and Johnson 2003; Lule 2004; Musolf 2012).

signs-symbols that combine heterogeneous elements into a relatively stable whole, thus determining a system of values and ideas. Thanks to this secondary significative meaning, the discourse constructs mythological reality and its corresponding target identities “in its own image and likeness”, placing them in one of the “possible” worlds. Consequently, the discourse is not only a construct that includes and elicits ideological values, beliefs, and conventions, but also a powerful semiotic resource for modelling these ideological phenomena and target identities.

The discourse is dominant, which manages to offer society acceptable ways to “read” the present, past and future and reach consensus in explaining universal concepts – for example, nation, national identity, justice, security, law, etc. (Chilton 2004; Foucault 1981; Hansen 2006; Hodge and Kress 1988; Kravchenko and Pasternak 2020; Kravchenko and Nikolska 2020; Laclau 2005; Wodak 2009; Wodak and Meyer 2009). Due to these conditional meanings, the discourse becomes a space of secondary semiotisation and mythologising (Barthes 1973), in which connotative simulacra displace the denotative, ontological level (reality).

Structural-discursive proaches contribute to the introduction in this article of an operational unit termed discourse-forming concepts that determine the specifics of the pragmatic and verbal characteristics of the AUDE.

## *2. Interdisciplinary research on the discourse of elimination.*

Among the interdisciplinary studies, the results of which form the basis of this article, should be noted the study of genocide (Moshman 2007; Staub 1989), its genesis (Goldhagen 2009; Stanton 2009) as well as the specifics and types of dehumanisation (Giner-Sorolla, Leidner and Castano 2011; Goff et al., 2008; Haslam and Loughnan 2014), which is understood in this article as the stage, method, and condition for the implementation of genocide.

In particular, elimination strategies have been identified in the article within the framework of the stages of genocide, as introduced by Stanton (2009), that is, classification, symbolisation, discrimination, dehumanisation, organisation, polarisation, preparation, persecution, extermination or genocide itself and its denial. The five principal forms of elimination were developed by the American political scientist and historian Goldhagen, who distinguishes the successive stages of eliminationist as transformation – the destruction of group

identities, repression, expulsion, the prevention of reproduction, and extermination (Goldhagen 2009).

In our opinion, such stages as classification, symbolisation, dehumanisation, and polarisation, singled out by Stanton (2009), are a kind of preparatory stage for the first stage, identified by Goldhagen (2009). And it is precisely at the preparatory stage that the leading role belongs to the discursive construction of the ideas and values of genocide, which prepare the subsequent transition from the “semantics” of language to the “pragmatics” of specific actions.

In revealing the manipulative techniques in the AUDE, the article to a certain extent relies on the specifics of the dehumanisation discourse identified by Volpato and Andrighetto (2015: 31), namely de-individualisation, the transformation of the people into an impersonal mass, and the deprivation of the moral traits of those groups affected by violence. An important research prerequisite for the article has also been the differentiation of the types of dehumanisation into blatant dehumanisation and subtle dehumanisation (Haslam and Loughnan 2014: 399–423). The first type correlates, in turn, with animalistic dehumanisation aimed at depriving the target group or the whole nation of human features by their identification with animals. The second type deals with mechanistic dehumanisation when outwardly dehumanised subjects look like humans, but inwardly they are positioned by discourses as robots and impersonal machines (Haslam 2006).

### *3. Political science and linguistic research on the methods of anti-Ukrainian propaganda in the Russian information field.*

The problem of psychological warfare and the anti-Ukrainian manipulation of the media has been addressed to varying degrees in political science and a number of linguistic studies that clarify the myth of the commonality of all post-Soviet states as well as main narratives on Ukraine, such as “Brotherly Nations”, “External Governance of Ukraine”, “Forced Ukrainianisation” and “Ukrainians are Nazis” (Irfan and Khaja 2019; Saran 2016). In covering the problem of the formation of anti-Ukrainian narratives and their substantiating ideologemes (in our terminology – discourse-forming concepts), a certain contribution was made by the work of Darczewska (2014), which explains the annexation of Crimea by Russia in the context of the confrontation between “Eurasian civilisation” and “Atlantic civilisation led by the United States”.



## DISCUSSION

Based on the paper's hypothesis that the features of eliminationism should be identified at all levels of the AUDE stratification, the project aims to study these features at the three main levels of discursive analysis: cognitive-conceptual, motivational-pragmatic and verbal.

The three levels of analysis roughly correspond to the discourse research algorithm, in the terms of Norman Fairclough, integrating the microanalysis of texts under consideration with the macroanalysis (Luke 2002: 100) of social formations and power relations that primarily impact the texts' signifying properties in discursive semiosis. Following Fairclough, we use successive stages of analysis – from description through interpretation to explanation. A level of description termed by Fairclough as “discourse as text” corresponds in this article to the verbal level of analysis focused on manipulative techniques and moves to implement elimination strategies. Elimination strategies themselves constitute the motivational-pragmatic level, which correlates with the stage of interpretation or “discursive practice”. The explanation stage, or the “social practice” facet of discourse -analysis, is termed in our article as the cognitive-conceptual level. The methodological heuristic of this paper is not only in the terminological modification of the levels but also in the specification of the units of analysis at each of the indicated levels. In particular, the study of the cognitive-conceptual level is based in our study on four aspects of the analysis including: (a) discourse-creating concepts-ideas; (b) their sub-concepts; (c) conceptual metaphors and (d) narrative models for the conceptualisation of events. It should be noted, however, that the term “discourse-creating concepts-ideas” introduced in this article, replaces the notion of privileged signs-symbols, accepted in post-structuralist discourse analysis. Such terminological substitution is aimed at a clearer categorisation of the function of such units in constructing the structure of discourse.

COGNITIVE-CONCEPTUAL FEATURES OF THE AUED:  
*DISCOURSE-CREATING CONCEPTS AND THEIR SUB-CONCEPTS*

Based on critical discourse analysis, the article identifies that the AUDE under consideration relies on three main concepts-ideas implicating the elimination strategies, which are displayed in Figure 1.

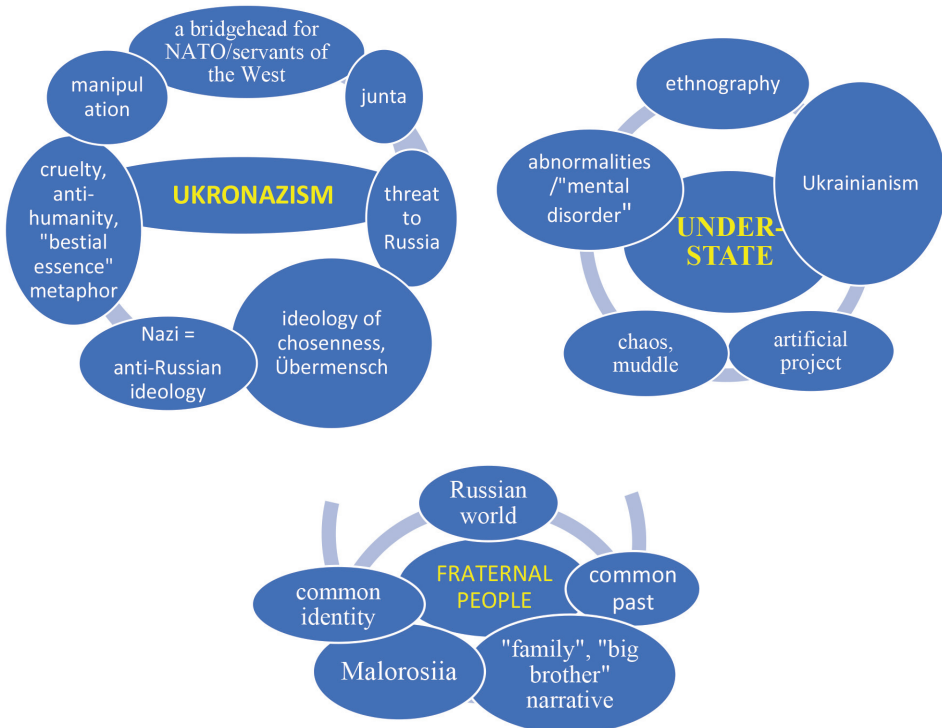


FIGURE 1  
Discourse-creating concepts



In turn, each of the concepts is revealed in the sub-concepts, which are presented in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2  
Discourse-creating sub-concepts



An analysis of the texts created before and after 24 February 2022, show a change in the configuration of the discourse-forming concepts and their role in structuring the anti-Ukrainian discourse. In particular, the concept-idea of “fraternal people”, which in pre-war texts was at the centre of the discursive space, is clearly moving to the far periphery. This means such a concept still retains its discourse-forming potential but is displaced from the center by the concept of “Ukronazism”. The concept of “under-state” still remains in the near periphery.

In this regard, the discourse analysis in this article focuses mainly on the conceptual, pragmatic, and verbal manifestations of the concepts of “Ukronazism” and “under-state”.

#### CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS

Discourse-constructing concepts and their associated elimination strategies are conveyed by the conceptual discriminatory metaphors used in the Russian media in relation to everything associated with Ukrainian statehood, identity and independence. The formation of metaphors involves the input of source conceptual domains (i.e., the conceptual spheres “providing” the characteristics to designate the target conceptual domain), such as MENTAL DISEASE, CHAOS, ANIMAL WORLD or PREDATORY, DRUG – ALCOHOL ADDICTION, ETHNOGRAPHY.

Let us analyse the structure of certain metaphors based on the theory of conceptual integration.

The concept of UNDER-STATE in its sub-concepts such as ethnography, abnormality, Ukrainianism, and muddle is manifested in the metaphorical models shown in Table 1.

*Есть украинство. То есть специфическое расстройство умов. Удивительным образом доведенное до крайних степеней увлечение этнографией. Такое кровавое краеведение. Сумбур вместо государства. (В. Сурков)* (There is Ukrainianism. That is a specific mental disorder. Surprisingly brought to the extreme degree of passion for ethnography. Such bloody local lore. A muddle instead of the state). (V. Surkov)

History has proved it is impossible for Ukraine to exist as a nation-state, and any attempts to “build” such a nation-state naturally lead to Nazism. Ukrainianism is an artificial anti-Russian construct that has no civilizational substance of its own, a subordinate element of an extraneous and alien civilisation. (T. Sergeytsev)

The collective West is in itself the architect, source, and sponsor of Ukrainian Nazism. (T. Sergeytsev)

Zelensky and his “sausage” puppeteers. (D. Medvedev)

TABLE 1  
Metaphors presenting the discourse-creating concept  
of UNDER-STATE

METAPHOR 1		
Input source space	Generic (common) features	Input target space
mental illness	Pathological behaviour, signs of “abnormalities”	defending Ukrainian statehood
BLEND SPACE: The idea of Ukrainian statehood is a mental disorder. Topos: “Danger to others”, i.e., for Russia. Strategies: “implicit mechanistic dehumanisation”. Denial of adequate “human” behaviour of the people/ethnic group.		
METAPHOR 2		
A passion for ethnography, A project constructed by the Western world, A puppet show	an artificial construct run by Western powers	Ukrainian state identity Ukrainian authorities (are a puppet)
a passion for ethnography = fanaticism, a project constructed by the Western world = an instrument against Russia	violence, intolerance, a danger to others	danger of defending Ukrainian statehood
BLEND SPACE: Ukrainian identity is a fanatical fascination with ethnography deprived of reality, dangerous to others. Topoi: “vanity”, “infertility”, “danger”. Strategies: “implicit mechanistic dehumanisation”. Denial of adequate “human” behaviour of the people – ethnic group.		

As shown in Table 1, metaphorical models, determined by the discourse-creating concept-idea of UNDER-STATE, conceptualise Ukrainian statehood-identity as a mental disorder, a dangerous ethnography-based fanaticism and a muddle. Metaphors are associated with topoi – the basis of causal argumentation schemes that justify the transition from arguments to conclusions and set out the further development of the anti-Ukrainian discourse. The topoi of “uselessness”, “infertility”, “danger” justify the elimination strategy of denying the existence of Ukrainian national identity and statehood, becoming part of the argumentative elimination scheme: “If THEY are useless – barren – dangerous, they need to be corrected or replaced.”

The concept of UKRONAZISM in its sub-concepts such as a bridgehead for NATO – servants of the West, a threat to Russia, cruelty and anti-humanity, Nazi ideology, and ideology of chosenness, is manifested in the metaphorical models shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
Metaphors explicating the discourse-creating concept  
of UNDER-STATE

METAPHOR 3		
Input source space	Generic (common) features	Input target space
A person who wants to settle in a new place as “at home”	The desire to take root, to settle for a long time	NATO forces – metonymic generalisation of the whole Western world (anti-Russia)
BLEND SPACE: In its hostile intentions against Russia, NATO feels at home in Ukraine. Topoi: “infertility”, “controllability”, “danger”. Strategies: “implicit mechanistic dehumanisation” of Ukraine as a depersonalised weak-willed subject of the implementation of someone else’s anti-Russian plans.		
METAPHOR 4		
Drug – alcohol-dependent subject	Dependence on NATO weapons	Ukraine
BLEND SPACE: Ukraine is voluntarily dependent on and fully controlled by anti-Russian forces. Topoi: “infertility”, “controllability”, “danger”. Strategies: polarisation and symbolisation (hostile to Russia, anti-Russian); “implicit dehumanisation” – the denial of adequate behaviour of the people – ethnic group.		
METAPHOR 5		
Beast, predator, reptile	habits and actions of animals: cruelty, desire for domination and cold-bloodedness in killing others	The way to defend Ukrainian statehood
BLEND SPACE: Ukrainianism as an inhuman (predatory, animal) attitude towards others. Topos: “danger” to the world. Strategy: “blatant dehumanisation” through animation, denial of human traits.		

(...) на наших же исторических территориях, – создается враждебная нам “анти-Россия”, которая поставлена под полный внешний контроль, усиленно **обживается** вооружёнными силами натовских стран и **накачивается** самым современным оружием. (В. Путин) (On our own historical territories, an “anti-Russia” hostile to us is being created, which is placed under complete external control, is intensively settled by the armed forces of the NATO countries and is pumped up with the most modern weapons). (V. Putin)

Потому что именно мы обязаны показать миру звериную сущность украинства, чтобы ни оно само, ни что-то подобное никогда больше не возродилось. (О. Рой) (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). (O. Roy)

Украина не может считаться государством, это террористическое квазигосударство, отравляющее существование всем своим соседям. Как раковая опухоль, она пускает метастазы распада далеко за свои границы. Украина подлежит ликвидации как политическое образование (Ukraine cannot be considered a state, it is a terrorist quasi-state that poisons the existence of all its neighbours. Like a cancerous tumour, it spreads the metastases of decay far beyond its borders. Ukraine is subject to liquidation as a political entity). (E. Ivanyuga)

Они находятся в постоянном военном угаре с недолгими паузами на причудливые наркотические сны (They are in constant war frenzy with short pauses for bizarre drug dreams). (D. Medvedev)

Отрываясь от своей матери, Украина превращается в одержимую бесами дурочку, в злую гадюку, которая существует лишь для того, чтобы впитаться в ногу врагу и умереть (Breaking away from her mother, Ukraine turns into a demon-possessed fool, into an evil viper that exists only to bite into the enemy's legs and die). (E. Ivanyuga)

The identified metaphorical models revealing various aspects of the concept-idea of UKRONAZISM are associated with the topoi of “controllability” and “danger” sustaining the further elimination scheme: “if THEY are dangerous, THEY must be destroyed as the elimination of danger”; “if THEY are controlled by anti-Russian forces, THEY are dangerous and must be destroyed to eliminate the source of the threat”.

Consequently, the pragmatic of “action”, determined by the discourse-creating concept of UKRONAZISM involves the elimination strategy of “extermination, destruction” and its substantiating strategies of “explicit dehumanisation” through animalisation, delegitimation, de-individualisation, impersonality and masking actions as counteraction and self-defence.

#### NARRATIVE MODELS FOR THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF EVENTS

In constructing basic conceptual models for the representation of the events related to the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian media uses three main metaphorical narratives that correspond to the identified discourse-creating concepts.

The concept of UKRONAZISM with the topos “threat to Russia” draws on the narrative of self-defence as a variant of the tale of a just war. In this narrative, the actors are arranged as follows:

- *Russia* is the victim and hero at the same time.
- *Ukraine – Anti-Russia* is the villain.

– *NATO, the United States, and the Western world* are demonic forces, resident evil, controlling the villain.

The concept of FRATERNAL PEOPLE with the topos of “protection – patronage” (by Russia) is associated the narratives of “father and sons” or “adults and children” with the following distribution of roles:

– *Ukraine* is a naughty teenager or younger brother who cannot handle himself and, moreover, is dangerously armed.

– *Russia* is the father or big brother who must discipline the adolescent or the younger brother for his own good.

The concept of the UNDER-STATE with the topos of “self-threat for Ukraine” underpins the narrative of salvation from the tale of a just war with role positioning such as:

– *Ukrainian power* is the villain.

– *Ukraine* is the victim and hostage at the same time.

– *Russia* is the hero and liberator.

## MOTIVATIONAL-PRAGMATIC AND VERBAL MANIFESTATIONS OF THE AUED

The motivational-pragmatic properties of the AUED rely on eliminative strategies, which, in turn, are based on the verbal manipulative techniques of their implementation.

The analysis of eliminative strategies was carried out considering the determination by the discourse-forming concepts.

One of the common elimination strategies in the AUDE is that of disguising military action as counteraction and self-defence. The strategy is provided by a set of manipulative devices, including: the manipulative technique of creating a simulacrum through role reversal; the use of direct and indirect intertextual allusions aimed at associating Nazism and Nazi ideology with the idea of Ukrainianism; “labelling”, often combined with the distortion either of the denotative meaning or the structural “internal form” of the words; disclaimers, as manipulative moves of expression of disagreement, antipathy, misunderstanding, under the guise of agreement, sympathy and understanding; the hoax tactics of deliberate misleading, which flouts the cooperative maxim of truthfulness of information; the evocation of negative emotions of the target audience, aimed at blocking the ability to critically comprehend; and the tactics of forming cognitive presuppositions as a format for presenting further information.

Each of the identified manipulative techniques can be illustrated with specific examples.

A simulacrum-based reversal of roles involves the shift in the roles of *victim – persecutor, judge – offender, prosecutor – accused, deceiver – deceived, invader – victim of aggression, blackmailer – victim of blackmail*, purposefully blurring the real situation.

*Blackmailer – victim of blackmail*

*Россия не может чувствовать себя в безопасности, развиваться, существовать с постоянной угрозой, исходящей с территории современной Украины* (В. Путин) (Russia cannot feel safe, develop, exist with a constant threat emanating from the territory of modern Ukraine). (V. Putin)

*Invader – victim of aggression*

*Нам с вами просто не оставили ни одной другой возможности защитить Россию, наших людей, кроме той, которую мы вынуждены будем использовать сегодня.* (В. Путин) (We simply have not been left with any other opportunity to protect Russia, our people, except for the one that we will be forced to use today). (V. Putin)

*Представим себе, что Россия вынуждена применить самое грозное оружие против украинского режима, совершившего масштабный акт агрессии, который опасен для самого существования нашего государства* (Imagine that Russia is forced to use the most formidable weapon against the Ukrainian regime, which has committed a large-scale act of aggression that is dangerous for the very existence of our state). (D. Medvedev)

One of the most frequent manipulative techniques is the use of intertextual allusions related to Nazism and Nazi ideology.

*Украинское государство в нынешней конфигурации с нацистским политическим режимом будет представлять постоянную, прямую и явную угрозу России* (The Ukrainian state in its current configuration with the Nazi political regime will pose a constant, direct and clear threat to Russia). (D. Medvedev)

The allusion to Nazism is combined in the AUED with a distorted re-interpretation of the denotative meaning of the notion “Ukrainianism”.

*Denazification* will inevitably include *de-Ukrainisation* — the rejection of the large-scale artificial inflation of the ethnic component in the self-identification of the population of the historical Malorossiya and Novorossiya territories (T. Sergeytsev).

*Являясь по сути холопами запада, укронацисты искренне считают себя уберменни, а всех других – недочеловеками. Мало водрузить свой флаг*



*над условным Рейхстагом. Мало даже устроить Нюрнбергский процесс для геббельсов или зеленских. Война не закончится до тех пор, пока мы не искореним саму идею украинства. (В. Рой) (Being essentially the serfs of the West, the Ukonazis sincerely consider themselves *Übermensch*, and all others are subhuman. It is not enough to hoist your flag over the conditional Reichstag. It is not enough even to arrange Nuremberg Trials for Goebbels or Zelensky. The war will not end until we eradicate the very idea of Ukrainianism). (V. Roy)*

By means of intertextuality, this fragment implements strategies of transposition and overgeneralisation, which was pointed out by Teun van Dijk (2001, 2005) as the basic cognitive strategies of any ideological discourse.

Thus, the strategy of transfer is implemented by transferring negative connotations from one cognitive area (from the past) to another cognitive area (the present). Indirect allusions, namely the transliteration from German *убермени* (*Übermensch*) and the nomination *недочеловеки* (subhumans) at the level of connotative meanings refer to the ideology of the National Socialists.

Direct allusions such as “*флаг над Рейхстагом*” and “*Нюрнбергский процесс*” perform a number of functions: (a) implying the meaning of “victory over Nazism” and the messianic role of Russia associated with victory; (b) implying Russia’s victory over the “idea of Ukrainianism” according to the scheme (as it was then, so it will be now); (c) implicitly equating the concepts of “Ukrainianism” and “Nazism”, fixing this substitution of concepts at the level of presuppositions – that is, knowledge that cannot be refuted and goes without saying.

A similar function of forming stable connotations between the “Nazism” seme and key concepts associated with the Ukrainian state, power and resistance is performed by synonymous identification of the Ukrainian president with iconic figures of Nazi Germany using the derogatory general nomination.

The latter example implements a strategy of overgeneralisation and transfer. Overgeneralisation is achieved through the “distribution” of a proper name, that is, the name of a Nazi ideologist, into the category of common nouns, resulting in the designation of not so much a personality but an idea. The transfer strategy is based on the association of characteristics connoted by the name of the Nazi ideologist with the Ukrainian president. This transfer is carried out through discursive implicature, triggered by violation of the

cooperative maxim of the relevance (logical and semantic coherence) of the information. The implicature restores the semantic link between two synonymous names, based on the connotative “Nazism” seme.

At the formal level, a kind of intragroup marker that unites denotatively incoherent proper nouns is the grapho-stylistic device of writing proper names in lower case (small letters).

The next manipulative technique involves “labelling” (*холопы запада*/ “serfs of the West”, *українацисти* – “Ukronazis”, Nazification of Ukraine, Ukrainian Nazism, a Nazi, Banderite Ukraine) in combination with the distortion of the “internal form” of a compound word:

Ukronazism poses a much bigger threat to the world and Russia than the Hitler version of German Nazism. (*T. Sergeytsev*)

We do not need a *Nazi, Banderite Ukraine*, the enemy of Russia and a tool of the West used to destroy Russia (*T. Sergeytsev*)

*И дело тут вовсе не в символике нацбаттов – идеология украинства нацистская по своей природе. Являясь по сути холопами запада, українацисты искренне считают себя уберменни, а всех других – недочеловеками* (*В. Пой*) (And the point here is not at all the symbolism of the National Battalions – the ideology of Ukrainianism is Nazi in nature. Being essentially the serfs of the West, the Ukronazis sincerely consider themselves Übermensch, and all others are subhuman). (*V. Roy*)

The local context in the last example highlights the first stem of the word “Natsbats” as a derivative of the word “Nazi” instead of the word “national”, from which, in fact, the abbreviation is formed.

One of the techniques in the AUED is disclaimers as manipulative moves of feigned objectivity, compassion, empathy, etc., which convey the tactics of implicit disagreement under the guise of consent.

The current nazified Ukraine is characterised by its formlessness and ambivalence, which allow it to disguise Nazism as the aspiration to “independence” and the “European” (Western, pro-American) path of “development” (...) and claim that “there is no Nazism” in Ukraine, “only a few sporadic incidents”. *Indeed, there isn’t a main Nazi party, no Führer, no full-fledged racial laws* (only a cutdown version in the form of repressions against the Russian language). *As a result – no opposition or resistance against the regime.* (*T. Sergeytsev*)

The fragment below demonstrates the feigned acceptance and compassion, which flouts the cooperative maxim of quality of information as the speaker is not sincere in expressing his attitudes towards Ukrainian soldiers:

*Их живая сила (“сапоги на земле”) — это нацбаты и ВСУ. По большому счету это практически такие же славяне, только с тщательно перепрошитыми нацистской и антироссийской пропагандой мозгами (Д. Дубровін). (Their manpower (“boots on the ground”) is the national battalions and the Armed Forces of Ukraine. By and large, these are practically the same Slavs, only with their brains carefully sewed by Nazi and anti-Russian propaganda). (D. Dubrovin)*

A disclaimer and a corresponding violation of the maxim of truthfulness of information are marked by two mechanistic metaphors, that is, the Ukrainian army is the “boots on the ground”; the brains of Ukrainian soldiers are an artificially modelled construct. Both metaphors convey connotations of depersonalisation, de-individualisation, and therefore are a means of subtle or mechanistic dehumanisation: Ukrainian soldiers outwardly remain human, but actually they are robotic and devoid of human features.

The additional markers of the manipulative move are lexical-semantic means connotating the doubts about the Slavism of Ukrainians: both the parenthesis *By and large* and the adverb *practically* implicate the meaning “not completely”.

All propagandistic techniques used in the AUDE have a common manipulative component, such as the hoax tactics of deliberate misleading, which flout the maxim of quality/truthfulness of information. As a rule, such a technique is employed implicitly as a motivational basis for other manipulative moves, such as role reversal, the distortion of denotative meanings, disclaimers, etc.

With maximum explicitness, hoax tactics are manifested when combined with the technique of attracting the negative emotions and feelings of the audience, especially fear blocking the ability of people to critically comprehend what is happening. The latter is displayed by the following examples:

*Откровенно заявляют они и о том, что претендуют на целый ряд других российских территорий. Теперь претендуют ещё и на обладание ядерным оружием. (В. Путин) (They openly declare that they lay claim to a number of other Russian territories. Now they also claim to possess nuclear weapons). (V. Putin)*

*Zelensky wants to quickly join NATO. Great idea. Just begging the North Atlantic Alliance to hasten the outbreak of World War III. (D. Medvedev)*

Along with the tactic of mystification, which flouts the maxim of the quality of information, no less frequent in the discourse under consideration is the tactic of reducing complexity, which

simultaneously violates two maxims – the quality and quantity of information:

*Украины нет. Есть украинство. (...). Борщ, Бандера, бандура есть. А нации нет. Брошюра “Самостийна Украина” есть, а Украины нет.* (В. Сурков) (There is no Ukraine. There is Ukrainianness. There is borsch, Bandera, bandura. And there is no nation. There is a brochure “Independent Ukraine”, but there is no Ukraine. (V. Surkov)

Deliberate flouting of the cooperative maxim of the quantity of information becomes a manipulative move to implement the strategy of metonymic transfer of the peripheral features of Ukrainian history or culture (borsch, Bandera, bandura) to denote the whole – Ukraine or the Ukrainian nation. Such identification of Ukraine with certain ethnographic and historical concepts is a manifestation of the elimination strategy of humiliation/discrimination. In addition to disregarding the maxim of the quantity of information, the set of words to denote incompatible concepts of “borsch, Bandera, bandura” is also a violation of the cooperative maxim of relevance, which, in accordance with the principle of cooperation, triggers the restoration of semantic coherence at the level of discursive implicature. Based on the technique of synecdoche, each of these concepts replaces Ukraine at the stylistic level but cannot be its substitute at the ontological, that is, denotative level, which becomes an argument in favour of the key phrase of the speaker “*А нации нет*” (There is no Ukraine). The presupposition that “Ukraine does not exist” is further consolidated due to three repetitions of this idea, antithesis and symploce (the combination of anaphora and epiphora, that is, lexical repetition at the beginning and end of segments of speech).

An additional means of strengthening the connotations of commonality between the notions of *borsch, Bandera, bandura* is the use of the phono-stylistic technique – the selection of words with alliteration (the letter “b”) and assonance (Bandera, bandura) to deepen the “meaningful connection” between concepts.

The AUDE also often uses tools that create presuppositions designed for the unobtrusive formation of knowledge that cannot be denied, does not cause rejection, and provides a cognitive basis for the perception of subsequent information.

The mechanism of formation of such presuppositions relies on a structural or semantic complication of the thematic (left) part of the statement, which requires some additional cognitive efforts to

be interpreted. Due to this, the rhematic part, which is intended to become new presuppositional information, is taken for granted.

*(...) это Первая мировая гибридная война. Которая идет не столько на украинском театре боевых действий, сколько в мировой экономике в виде торговых, логистических и финансовых войн, а также в медийном, культурном, кибернетическом пространстве и даже на научном треке (примером которого является военно-биологическая деятельность США на Украине ...). (Д. Дубровін) (This is the First World Hybrid War. Which takes place not so much in the Ukrainian theatre of operations, but in the world economy in the form of trade, logistical and financial wars, as well as in the media, cultural, cyberspace and even on the scientific track (an example of which is the US military biological activity in Ukraine). (D. Dubrovin)*

Due to the fact that some of the information is given in brackets, the semantic emphasis of the phrase is focused on the concept of the “world hybrid war” and its manifestations. At the same time, an example that illustrates the peripheral facet of such a war is perceived as verified information that forms the presupposition about Ukraine as a springboard for US biological projects to develop biological weapons directed against Russia.

A similar mechanism for the formation of presuppositions can be illustrated by the following fragment:

*По военно-биологическому (а может быть, и коронавирусному) направлению было бы очень интересно сначала увидеть дальнейшие результаты расследования МО РФ по материалам из биологических лабораторий США, полученным в ходе спецоперации на Украине. Возможно, китайские коллеги еще смогут к этим данным что-то добавить. Посмотрим. (Д. Дубровін) (In the military-biological (and possibly coronavirus) direction, it would be very interesting to first see the further results of the investigation of the Russian Defence Ministry based on materials from US biological laboratories obtained during a special operation in Ukraine. Perhaps, Chinese colleagues will be able to add something to this data. We will see). (D. Dubrovin)*

The perception of information as a presupposition, which forms the background knowledge for further interpretation, is carried out by shifting information intended to be the presupposition, from nominative to peripheral, that is, the attributive and objective parts of the phrase: *дальнейшие результаты расследования МО РФ по материалам из биологических лабораторий США*. The semantic focus of the message is not that US biological laboratories have been identified, but that the results of investigations of such laboratories will be

important in confirming Ukraine's involvement in the development of biological weapons. Consequently, the very fact of the existence of US biological laboratories, as well as the presence of compromising evidence in them, becomes information that does not require proof, forming a cognitive presupposition of the target audience.

Another presupposition is information about some preliminary results that indicate Ukraine's involvement in the development of biological weapons. This presupposition is marked with the adjective *дальнейшие* – further [results]: if further results are expected, it means some previous ones were already obtained.

In addition to presuppositions, the fragment of speech under consideration actualises discursive implicatures – due to words of feigned uncertainty, which are markers of flouting the maxims of quality (confidence of the speaker in his words) and transparency of information: *а может быть* (possibly), *и коронавирусу; Возможно* (perhaps) *китайские коллеги еще смогут к этим данным что-то добавить*. The violation of maxims is, accordingly, a trigger of discursive implicature, which should restore the insufficient semantic link at the implicit level.

Within the critical context in the logical model, “it may not be so, but” markers of uncertain modality are considered to be the markers of confident thought. According to the communicative maxim of relevance, the meaning of “perhaps the Chinese have information about Ukraine's involvement in the development of biological weapons” should actually be interpreted as “the Chinese have exactly such information”; the meaning of “Ukraine is possibly involved in the emergence of the coronavirus” means “Ukraine is certainly involved”.

In addition to manipulative techniques, the discourse of Russian politicians and political scientists contains direct calls for the destruction of the state of Ukraine and everything associated with Ukrainianism:

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

The Banderite elites must be eliminated; their re-education is impossible. (T. Sergeytsev)

And who said that in two years Ukraine will even exist on the world map? (D. Medvedev)

## CONCLUSIONS

The cognitive-semiotic space of the anti-Ukrainian discourse of elimination is structured by the opposition of discourse-forming concepts, on the one hand, UNDER-STATE, UKRONAZISM, and on the other, – FRATERNAL PEOPLE. Each discourse-creating concept is organised by sub-concepts defining various aspects of the content development of the homogeneous discourse.

The article's main conclusion is that through metaphorical models, manipulative strategies and pragmatic tactics the official Russian discourse constructs the image of the enemy with the use of certain elements of eliminationism, sanctioning the right to extermination. These elements include: denying the existence of Ukrainian national identity and statehood; symbolisation-based group marking; "explicit dehumanisation" through animalisation; "implicit mechanistic dehumanisation"; delegitimation; de-individualisation; and disguising destructive actions as countermeasures and self-defence.

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