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***THE BATTLEFIELD IN THE MEDIA SPACE:
DISPELLING KREMLIN NARRATIVES***

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METHODS

- Political positioning (positioning theory, Davies/Harré 1990) - historical retrospection.
- CDA with CDA analytical categories from the discourse-historical approach (DHA): discourse topics by van Dijk (positive Self-presentation and negative-Other presentation (macro-ideological strategies), enhancement or mitigation of 'our'/'their' good/bad traits. The socio-semantic approach of van Leeuwen.
- The discursive strategies and linguistic means of their realization (conflict and polarized positions as discursive constructs evoked by linguistic structures, rhetorical figures and argumentation strategies. (KhosraviNik)
- van Dijk - discursive strategies : “actor description”, “evidentiality”, “generalization”, “hyperbole”, “metaphor”, “self-glorification”, “number game”, “victimization” etc.
- Historical and cultural contexts and political implicatures. Three vectors of the analysis (Fairclough- text, discourse practice, socio-cultural practice) with explanatory tools (by van Dijk) with stylistic analysis and Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black).

Materials

The corpus for the research-open-access newspapers and magazines published in the United States, Canada and Great Britain

(2021- present).



REUTERS



The New York Times

**BUSINESS
INSIDER**

**The
Economist**

Results and Discussion

In the most common Putin propaganda narratives [17], Russia uses disinformation as a weapon in the war unleashed on the territory of Ukraine as the metaphor describes:

This is how Russia weaponizes disinformation.

19.03.2022 [Financial Times].

Myth 1 X: “Ukraine’s alleged absence from a 17th century map of Europe is evidence that Ukraine has no historical legitimacy as a country”.

Ridicule, labelling, evidentiality strategies:

1. Russian President Vladimir Putin has outlined the historical basis for his claims against Ukraine in a controversial new essay that has been likened in some quarters to a declaration of war. The 5,000-word article, entitled “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians,” was published on 12 July and features many talking points favoured by Putin throughout the past seven years of undeclared war between Russia and Ukraine.

2. Others identified numerous imperial echoes and thinly veiled threats in Putin’s attempt to play amateur historian. Stockholm Free World Forum senior fellow Anders Åslund branded the article “a masterclass in disinformation” and “one step short of a declaration of war.”

3. Melinda Haring, Deputy Director, Eurasia Center, Atlantic Council: Putin’s delusional and dangerous article reveals what we already knew: Moscow cannot countenance letting Ukraine go. The Russian president’s masterpiece alone should inspire the West to redouble its efforts to bolster’s Kyiv ability to choose its own future, and Zelenskyy should respond immediately and give Putin a history lesson.

4. Brian Whitmore, Non-resident Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council: Vladimir Putin’s inaccurate and distorted claims are neither new nor surprising. They are just the latest example of gaslighting by the Kremlin leader. ... Putin’s claim that the “true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia” is grotesquely disingenuous. It shows him to be a revanchist ruler who is prepared to construct false historical narratives to justify his imperial dreams [Atlantic Council].

Myth 2 X: “Western sanctions are fostering the Russian economy”

The discursive strategy of the number game:

1. Russia's current-account surplus cratered almost 80% during the first nine months of 2023 from a year earlier to \$41 billion. The country's revenues from energy, a key economic driver for the oil-rich nation, dropped 41% year-on-year to just \$25 billion in the seven months through July.

2. Meanwhile, the rouble is another sign of economic weakness. It has dropped 10% against the US dollar since Vladimir Putin's invasion – and that's despite the Bank of Russia repeatedly raising interest rates in a bid to prop up the currency .

hyperbola:

Lastly, war itself is having an impact. Russia is now facing record worker shortages because so much of its population have either been called up to fight or chosen to emigrate, according to data published in April [Business insider].

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Myth 3 X: “We do not intend to impose anything by force”

the evidentiality strategy, victimization :

1. Ukrainians are being denied healthcare and free movement unless they take up Russian citizenship, evidence suggests. The European Broadcasting Union (EBU), an alliance of public service media including the BBC, interviewed refugees for the investigation. They spoke of relentless pro-Russian propaganda in the occupied lands.

2. One refugee from the occupied territories, Larysa, told the EBU's Investigative Journalism Network that one of her friends was not provided with insulin for her diabetes – a key part of treatment – until she applied for a Russian passport.” [BBC]

Myth 3 X: “We do not intend to impose anything by force”

The strategy of evidentiality, labelling (2, 3) and ridicule (4-5) strategies

1. Russia is forcing Ukrainians in Russian-occupied territories to accept Russian citizenship by engaging in a systematic push “to make it impossible for residents to survive in their homes” unless they do so, according to a newly released report from the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab.

2. The violations detailed in the report “are classic war crimes in the sense that they are restricting or limiting through this process people’s ability to access critical services and resources that Russia is required to allow all people to access, such as healthcare, and humanitarian systems,” Yale Humanitarian Research Lab’s Nathaniel Raymond told CNN Wednesday.

3. Yale’s Humanitarian Research Lab has done extensive work looking into Russia’s alleged war crimes, including its program of forced deportation of Ukrainian children – a crime for which the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

4. According to one of the researchers who compiled the report, when residents in these areas are pressured into accepting Russian citizenship, they are also “strongly encouraged” to renounce their Ukrainian citizenship, and those with municipal or public jobs are required to do so.

5. Many of the policies described in the report can be traced to the Russian federal government, researchers said, with one noting that Putin “is clearly deeply involved in this.”

1. “The second part here is that this is a unique and specific dynamic of the broader campaign by Russia to erase Ukrainian national identity and Ukrainian sovereign state existence,” he said [CNN].

Myth 4 X: Kremlin wants to protect children in regions it illegally occupies.

The discursive strategies of personalisation and victimisation :

KHERSON, Ukraine, March 3 (Reuters) – The moment her grand-daughter was born, Olha Lukina, 65, rushed to a registry office. It was one of the last still providing Ukrainian citizenship for newborns in the southern city of Kherson which was then under Russian occupation. Baby Kateryna became Ukraine's newest citizen that day in May, born into one of the country's darkest times. Later in the occupation, Russia required all newborns to receive Russian citizenship, said Leonid Remyga, chief doctor at Kherson City Clinical Hospital, the city's only working hospital [Reuters].

The strategies of ridicule (“saving”), **labelling** (“war crime”, “kidnapping children”), **evidentiality** (“the subject of international outrage”, “Biden said during his address”)

1. While Kremlin officials argue that they are “saving” the children by removing them from their homes, international watchdogs have called the forcible removal of Ukrainian kids – including infants as young as four months old – a war crime.

2. “Russia alone stands in the way of peace. It could end this today,” Biden said during his address. “Instead, as the threat of famine still stalks families around the globe, Russia is bombing grain silos in Ukraine and separating families, kidnapping – this is what I can't get over – kidnapping thousands of Ukrainian children.”

The ridicule strategy about the mentioned Russian “humanitarian actions”, **the descriptive adjective with negative connotation** (“an audacious bid to dismantle its future”):

Ferit Hoxa, Albania's representative to the UN, called the deportations “an audacious bid to dismantle its future” of Ukraine, adding that Moscow”, has failed to convince the world that its re-education camps and forced adoptions are, as portrayed, humanitarian actions” in an August statement

The strategies of evidentiality (1) and **number game** (2) :

1. “In the situations examined, Russian authorities transferred the children to areas occupied by the Russian Federation in Ukraine, including Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Crimea, or deported them to regions in the Russian Federation, such as Moscow or Krasnodar,” a spokesperson for the UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine told Insider. “There, Russian authorities temporarily accommodated the children in hospitals, social institutions, or camps.”

2. An official estimate from the Ukrainian government puts the total number of forcibly displaced kids at just under 20,000. Though some 18,000 have been found, per Ukraine's count, more than 500 are counted among the dead, and 1,241 “disappeared”. [Business insider]

Myth 5 X: “Our actions in Ukraine are dictated by only one thing – to end the war that was unleashed by the West and its satellites against the people who live in the Donbas.”

- labelling strategy- “up-is-down narrative”:

1.This is the culmination of Mr. Putin’s up-is-down narrative portraying Ukraine, the country that his forces have repeatedly carved up through occupations and annexations, as a terrifying threat to Russia.

- **ridicule, labelling** strategy “false claim”, “superficial claim of humanitarian intervention”

2.This may be the most important line of Mr. Putin’s speech, as a seeming statement of war aims far beyond his superficial claim of humanitarian intervention. His reference to “demilitarize” is being widely read as a threat to subjugate the Ukrainian state as a whole, neutering its ability to defend itself and therefore its sovereign autonomy. Russian forces have already struck at Ukrainian military installations across the country.

3.And Mr. Putin’s use of “denazify,” in context with his false claim that Ukraine’s democratic government is a neo-Nazi dictatorship, is seen as a threat to topple that government outright. Western intelligence agencies have warned for weeks that Moscow may be plotting to install a pliant dictatorship in Kyiv. [The New York Times].

Myth 6 X: Russia has achieved its lowest ever unemployment rate, saying that this is the result of a strong economy.

Number game and evidentiality, metaphors :

1. Over the past decade, GDP in advanced economies has grown by 22%; across the world as a whole it has risen by 41%. Should projections of a 15% contraction be right, by the end of the year Russia's economy will be 7% smaller than in 2012. Russia has not just lost a decade of growth – be it in economics, health or happiness. It is moving into the past.

2. Russia's military casualties, the officials said, are approaching 300,000. The number includes as many as 120,000 deaths and 170,000 to 180,000 injured troops. The Russian numbers dwarf the Ukrainian figures, which the officials put at close 70,000 killed and 100,000 to 120,000 wounded. Russians are fewer, poorer and more miserable than a decade ago [Economist].

Conclusions

- Political positioning: narratives and categorisations to position themselves or others both explicitly and implicitly. Implicature and presupposition, grammatical, lexical variation- linguistic means for more implicit positioning.
- Negative framing of fake Russian with discursive strategies of **evidentiality, victimization, number game, personalisation, ridicule, irony and labelling** (metaphor, metonymy, irony, idioms, phraseological units)
- Russia - destructive semantic roles, the negative semantic field associated with Russia responsibility. The overlexicalization, the semantic field for Russia being “law infringement”.
- Negative connotation descriptive adjectives, nouns and idioms and ironical quotations, categorical assertions, lack or mitigators and hedges.