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Abstract

The article takes a linguistic-pragmatic approach using Proximization Theory (PT) to analyze threat deconstruction in a Ukrainian humorous blog. The aim is to show how threat deconstruction in a Ukrainian blogger's texts runs parallel to the reconstruction of national identity. The blog was written at the time of the war in the East of Ukraine (2014-16) that caused consequential shifts in the Ukrainians' self-perception and their perception of the Russian Federation. The notion of an ontological lacuna is introduced to account for these changes and transformations in national identity. Simultaneous processes in the deconstruction of threat and the construction of a new sense of threat under war-time conditions are analyzed as proximization operations. The purpose is to reveal how threat consolidates and motivates people for resistance. In both cases, the basic pragmatic strategy is the delegitimization of the threatening actor and the legitimization of the threatened one. The focus is on linguistic devices that change the perlocutionary effect, such as humor, semantic and dialect shifts, and obscene lexis. A set of characteristic axiological features emerged that show the shift in the construction of the Ukraine-Russia relationship from friend to foe.

Key words: proximization theory; humor; model of threat; ontological lacuna; national identity

1. Introduction

From the beginning of the Russian invasion of Eastern Ukraine in 2014, some Ukrainian blog texts were rooted in demolishing the idea of a friendly and closely related neighboring Russia, and filling this potential lacuna by other senses: fear in particular. On the other hand, opposition to Russia demanded social consolidation, and restoration of Ukrainians' self-control and self-confidence. Clearly, Russian propaganda clashed with the Ukrainian sense of national identity. The aim of the study is to show the process of threat deconstruction and the Ukrainians' national identity reconstruction in a Ukrainian humorous online blog posted by the founder of the Repka Club platform, Did Svyryd Opanasovych, between 2014-2016. The analysis concerns linguistic-pragmatic means of delegitimizing the threatening agent through its humorous portrayal. Humor and other pragmatic devices were used in this blog to mitigate fear, to unite Ukrainian society and to take stance against a reconstructed enemy. The current study focuses on:

1. discourse spaces of ‘us’ and ‘them’;
2. aspects of filling-in the ontological lacuna by presenting parallel processes that delegitimize ‘them’ and legitimize ‘us’;
3. linguistic-pragmatic devices that deconstruct threat and fear, while rhetorically reconstructing national identity through mocking and ridicule.

It is critical to note that the socio-political situation in Ukraine between 2014-2016¹ resulted in an update of the ‘ontology of the Ukrainians’, which relates to a subjectively constructed sense of reality and existence. This ontology is the core of their self-identification and includes a dichotomy of ‘self’ and ‘other’, which forms the basis of their relations with other entities in the same system. Any changes in that reality (e.g., war, socio-political processes) require a reorganization of the ontological system. The drastic change in Russia’s relation to Ukraine from friend to foe resulted in what I call ‘an ontological lacuna’. Arguably, a lacuna is a temporary phenomenon and, as a wound heals, it is gradually filled by the reality update, attributing new features to old entities in the reestablished system. Consequently, when Russia turned into an aggressor they provoked the reconsideration of its status in the Ukrainians’ ontology.

Ukrainian-Russian relations and the internal Ukrainian political situation caused the rise of patriotic spirit and desire to escape Russian political influence and Soviet legacy. The notion ‘Ukrainian’ is used in the current study as referring to the national identity of ‘the citizens of Ukraine’, though it should be born in mind that Ukrainian society is not homogeneous. Consequentially, the selected blogger aimed at Ukraine’s broad stratum of patriotic citizens across ethnic identities with the purpose of addressing the possible shift in national identity as a process, or narrative. In that sense, I follow Foucault’s view (1977, 1999) of a narrative as a device that reconstructs complex ontology by reducing its complexity. In that way, a narrative constructs national identity that may constitute and be constitutive of a group’s self- and other- perception. This is particularly so in blogs. Moreover, as blogging is becoming more popular, studies draw attention to the growing influence of bloggers and their positive and negative effects on social perception (e.g., Barlow 2007; Keren 2006; Ringmar 2007). The Repka Club (the ‘Club of Battle Surzhyk’) aimed to be a site for those who respond in a humorous way to thorny political problems. In doing so, they used the socio-dialect Surzhyk, a blend of Ukrainian and Russian spoken in various parts of Ukraine, mostly in the East and South. Although the status of Surzhyk is problematic for linguistic purists it is very persistent (Karpenko 2014: online). In my opinion, it may even be used symbolically in these blog texts as it represents multilingual and multicultural Ukrainian society as one political nation. In general, the bloggers concentrated mainly on socio-political issues, but in a humorous – sometimes bitterly sarcastic – way. The posts were added on a daily basis and evoked vivid discussions in the comments.

2. Theoretical Framework: Proximization Theory in Threat Construction and Deconstruction

The study situates within linguistic pragmatics and discourse analysis following the methodology of studying models of threat construction using Proximization Theory (PT) (Cap 2013). Due to the humorous nature of the blogs, certain rhetorical aspects of humor are addressed in relation to threat deconstruction. Proximization Theory is a spatial theory of language use and cognition, related to Chilton's Discourse Space Theory – later developed into Deictic Space Theory (Chilton 2011, 2014). The theory proposes a geometrical representation of the speaker's idea of the communicative situation where the person (actor), time, space and modality form a blend of factual, cognitive and attitudinal aspects of communication. This approach is used in political discourse analysis and allows the study of framing and shaping the map of a social, cultural or political dynamics (cf. Baldi and Franko 2015; Kaal 2017; Mackay 2015; Tileagă 2007). These approaches are similar in their spatial and temporal grounding, but slightly different on modality. Consequently, the terms vary: the original linguistic term, used by Chilton, is Modality; Cap (2013) offers Axiology, while Kaal (2017) uses Attitude and Stance. I have used Axiology as a way to analyze values and value judgments because attitudinal evaluation is central to the examined blog texts. In principle, Cap (2013: 74) holds that, 'the center-periphery distinction involves primarily a geographical and geopolitical distance, but also an ideological distance'.

The manipulative character of presenting people as 'our' (related to the speaker and the audience in morale, ideology, etc.) and 'their' (respectively, non-related or alien) has become the focus of interest of many scholars (Cap 2008, 2013, 2017a, 2017b; Kopytowska et al. 2017; Reyes 2011). Pragmatically the differentiation between 'us' and 'them' may be outlined by two processes that encompass the purpose of this study: legitimization and delegitimization. According to Reyes (2011: 782), legitimization is the process of accrediting or licensing a type of social behavior. Furthermore, Cap (2017a: 3) defines the opposite delegitimization strategy as follows:

Delegitimization can manifest itself in acts of negative other-presentation, acts of blaming, scapegoating, marginalizing, excluding, attacking the moral character of some individual or group, attacking the rationality and sanity of the other. The extreme is to deny the humanness of the other.

Reyes (2011) distinguishes several legitimization strategies: through emotions (e.g., fear), a hypothetical future, rationality, voices of expertise, and altruism. The enumerated strategies and mechanisms, if accompanied by humor, may lead to different perlocutionary effects that constitute the focus of this article in which the processes of legitimization and delegitimization are viewed as simultaneous and complementing each other in establishing an identity border between 'us' and 'them'.

However, in the blog texts the emphasis is on the axiological representation of 'them' as an aggressive and fearful actor to 'us'. According to Cap (2017a: xi), PT is 'a model of crisis construction and threat generation' and it helps to reveal 'the ways in which the discursive construction of closeness and remoteness can be manipulated [...] and bound with fear, security and

conflict' (ibid.: xi). Cap holds that 'public communication emerges as necessarily coercive' (ibid.: 2), manipulating the addressees' consciousness and directing it to recognizing and adopting the same sense of threat. Pragmatically, texts organized in accord with this model aim at enhancing a sense of threat as emotional feedback for strengthening identity. In this research, I will use the terms O_{passive} and O_{active} to denote actors – the recipient of fear (Ukraine) and the source of fear (Russia) respectively (O stands for 'object'). The use of PT (Cap 2017) to analyze the models of threat construction in political discourse paves the way to analyze threat deconstruction and national identity reconstruction via humorous axiological opposition. Hence, the (de)legitimization strategy of presenting the source of fear through emotions dominates.

3. Finding Ontological Lacuna in a Ukrainian-Russian Discourse Space

The data set for this study consisted of 30 blog posts on the Repka Club website, written by Did Svyryd Opanasovych between 2014 and 2016, with a total word count of approx. 35,000 words. The platform has not been available since May 2018, so the examples are quoted from another source that shared the blogger's texts (Did Svyryd 2014-2016). The material was selected by the method of total sampling. The criterion for this selection was the evaluative (humorous) character of discursive elements. Qualitative-descriptive and contextual-interpretative methods were used to analyze them because the focus is on the elements that actualize axiological (ideological) opposition of actors in the discourse space. Application of these methods resulted in working out the elements of the ontological lacuna in the Ukrainian's reality (see Tables 1 and 2, the classification of actors into O_{passive} and O_{active} and into intermediate groups in Figure 1) and in the elaboration of fear deconstruction processes within the discourse space of these blogs.

To process the data, PT was used to investigate models of threat construction. The proximization model allows the inclusion of extra-linguistic conditions that reveal the difference between a theoretically possible threat and an actual one. PT also helps to investigate how the blogger creates a current model of Russia as a threat and how this model fills the ontological lacuna that appeared after Russia's perception as a friend failed. Furthermore, by introducing elements of mockery, ridicule and sarcasm in the blog its author deconstructs threat and fear as a perlocutionary by-product. PT was applied with a focus on humor. Manipulation often relies on humor when aimed at social improvement, consolidation and support in political resistance. The nature and pragmatic functions of humor in various types of (political) discourse serve the pragmatic purposes of legitimization and delegitimization, foster drawing a line between 'us' and 'them' in the process of considering new political challenges, and mitigate fear. 'Humor' is understood here as an umbrella term that unites related phenomena of ridicule, sarcasm, mocking, etc. (e.g., Berger 1997; Hageseth 1988; Lefcourt 2001). First, the aspects of humorous modeling of the axiological difference between O_{passive} and O_{active} will be discussed further in section 3.4. Second, I will trace how humor facilitates processes of legitimizing 'us' and delegitimizing 'them', filling-in the

ontological lacunas in the Ukrainian's reality perception at the time of war. To implement these issues, the nature of the ontological lacuna in the analyzed blogs will be revealed and the lacuna are filled in by the new perception of O_{passive} and O_{active} on three axes of the blogs discourse space.

3.1 The Perception of Russia and Self-Perception of the Ukraine

The qualitative-descriptive analysis focused on identifying the perception of Russia and self-perception. The analysis of threat construction in blog texts on the axiological axis will reveal the ontological lacuna and mark the axiological difference established after a reconsidered self-identification.

3.1.1 The perception of Russia

Two Slavonic nations have had a long history of coexistence and ambiguous relations where Russia used to call itself 'the elder brother' metaphorically. Since 2014, Russia and its leaders have become the key element of reverse logic in the Ukrainians' ontology: national identity is based on the inference that 'we' are different from Russians. For example, in the popular poem 'Никогда мы не будем братьями' ['We shall never become brothers'] (Dmytruk 2014) the main ontological and axiological split is viewed as false kinship (brother / not brother) and in a prose 'Небратні' ['Not-brotherly'] (Kidruck 2015). The poem's most concise and emotional type of verbalization of the problem, is logically built around the aspects of the opposition 'younger vs. elder (brother)' and reveals the opposing features of national identities: freedom vs. slavery, democracy vs. tsarism, small vs. big, great vs. miserable, individuals vs. mass, and bravery vs. silence. These two examples show the place in the ontology of Ukrainians where the lacuna appeared: if we are not brothers, then who is our northern neighbor? (See Tables 1 and 2). The axiological analysis yielded a variety of examples of how the ontological lacuna was filled after the rejection of old values and acceptance of new ones, reflecting the Ukrainians' perception of Russia (Table 1).

Russia before 2013-2014	Russia since 2013-2014
brother	not brother
friend	enemy
adequate	inadequate / unpredictable
respectable	disrespectable

Table 1. Reconsidering the status of Russia before and after 2013-14

The blog texts are characterized by a set of axiological discord points in the ideology of O_{passive} and O_{active} , also known as ideologemes, or cognitive units that are linguistically expressed and include an ideological component (Nahimova 2011). Examples are 'Russian world' or 'clips':

- (1) (Surzh.) *мракобесіє на теми геополітики і великого руського міра, якому не дають приподніматися с колєн* (November 23, 2014)

[obscurantism when considering geopolitical topics and **great Russian world** that is not allowed to revive]

- (2) (Surzh.) *пребувая у благості од епохальной победи русскаго міра в отдельно взятых районах Луганської і Донецької областей* (November 6, 2014)

[being **in a divine trance from an epochal victory of Russian world/peace** in separate parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions]

- (3) (Surzh.) *духовна еліта Росії тряхнуть скрепами* (December 25, 2014)

[Russian spiritual elite **will revive**]

These ideologemes require an explanation to reveal the reason of their non-acceptance by the Ukrainians. ‘Russian world’ is an ideologeme that is rooted in the 19th century Russian ultra-nationalistic movements aiming at uniting vast conquered territories under Russian Empire; later it became the dominant political doctrine to unite these territories as a monolithic orthodox Russian-speaking world. In Russian, the lexeme *world* is homonymous to *peace* (ex. 1, 2), though in Ukrainian *world* is *світ*, and *peace* is *мир* – intentional use of Surzhyk makes the phrase ambiguous. The phrase ‘Russian world’ is intentionally sarcastically used in Russian transcription to form a logical malpractice: the sarcasm may be rendered as ‘Russian world is not peace’ (e.g., *оскал русскаго міра* [the grin of the ‘Russian world/peace’]). Mocking the Russians impunity as the alien axiological feature is maximized by the orthographic pun (ex. 1) in *великаго русскаго* [great Russian] where the spelling characteristic to the 18-19th century hints at the imperialistic roots of Russia and its nostalgia about that time; grotesque pathos sounds sarcastic when applied to the situation in Luhansk and Donetsk (ex. 2).

The notion of *скрепи* [clips] (ex. 3) is a pathetic lexeme for ‘ties’ that came to life after 2000 and is widely used as an ideologeme in Russian culture to introduce the neighboring, usually orthodox, Christian peoples into the ‘Russian world’. This ideologeme is mocked when combined with the verb *тряхнуть* [to shake] that usually collocates with the noun *старина* [the state of being old] comprising a set phrase ‘to do something one could do when he was young’. In this way, the author ridicules at the incongruity of old imperialistic Russian ideas and the modern state of world politics.

One of the latest Russian ideologemes is the idea that the Crimea has been a Russian territory since long ago and it symbolizes the power of Russian defence. The ideologeme (‘Crimea is ours’) is sarcastically verbalized as one word as it is perceived as a slogan of the supporters of its annexation:

- (4) (Ukr.) *‘кримнаш’*
[Crimea is ours]

O_{passive} values bear the resemblance to Soviet ideology (*комсомольський дух / душок* [Komsomol spirit] (-ок is the diminutive suffix in the lexeme *spirit*); or the ideology of street gangs:

- (5) (Rus.) *‘сила в правде’* (January 26, 2015)
[the strength is in the truth]
- (6) (Surzh.) *свято уверовал в ефективність чотирьохчленного алгоритму: ‘приезд – наезд – откат – от’езд’* (January 26, 2015)
[he has got a divine faith that a four-step algorithm **‘come-hit-payoff-and-run’** is effective]

(5) is a quotation from a popular Russian film of the 90s ‘Брат’ [‘Brother’] and its sequel, where the idea of brotherhood is presented in the light of relations in a cruel gang who have their own truth.

Other axiologically alien notions include the idea that Russian people let things happen relying on luck, chance or the way it happens, not trying to make a conscious decision (7), or confidence (8):

- (7) (Ukr.) *такий чинник міжнародної політики, як ‘русское авось’* (January 6, 2015)
[such a reason of international politics as **‘Russian somehow’**]
- (8) (Surzh.) [...] *уверенность, шо Господь Бог йому шото должен* (January 6, 2015)
[**confidence** that God owes him something]

(8) illustrates the disagreement of the blogger with Russian impunity. This axiological and ontological gap between the actors reaches its maximum when O_{active} is delegitimized as insane (9) and having different moral norms:

- (9) (Surzh.) *Модна в Росії етом сезоне шизофренія має всі ознаки пандемії* (June 4, 2015)
[Fashionable in Moscow **schizophrenia** has all the features of a **pandemic** this season]
- (10) (Surzh.) *показне міролюбіє* (June 26, 2015)
[ostentatious **peacefulness**]
- (11) (Surzh.) [...] *валяє дурака та притворяється невинним* (October 10, 2016)
[**fools around** and **pretends innocent**]

Moreover, the Russian President is characterized as the one on the edge of exclusion:

- (12) (Surzh.) [...] його **ніхто** не любить, **ніхто** йому не вірить і всерйоз його слова **ніхто** не воспринімає (January 1, 2015)
[**nobody** loves him, **nobody** believes him and **nobody** or takes his words seriously].

3.1.2 Ukrainians' self-perception

The re-evaluation of 'the other' facilitated new self-identification, prompted by such questions as: are the Ukrainians dependent on Russia (a former empire) – 'younger brothers' as they used to be named in the Soviet Union times – or do they live in an independent state with their interests in economy, social and political life, with their own language and culture? Based on the reverse logic, the blog texts fill the lacuna with a stronger self-perception and identity, as shown in Table 2.

Ukraine before 2013-2014	Ukraine since 2013-2014
dependent	independent
weak	able
alone	supported
one of similar	different

Table 2. Reconsidering Ukrainian's national identity before and after 2013-14

National identity is restored by means of self-legitimization, which was actualized via the mechanisms of defining 'our' ontology as in the following examples:

- (13) (Ukr.) **наша** Армія, **наші** хлопці
[**our** Army, **our** guys]
- (14) (Ukr.) популярність батьки Махна (December 29, 2014)
[Father Makhno's popularity]
- (15) (Ukr.) Майдан – **чисто український** феномен (December 29, 2014)
[Maidan is a **peculiar Ukrainian** phenomenon]

National identity was also restored by appealing to the voices of expertise (16) and emphasizing dedication to the common aim (17-18):

- (16) (Surzh.) *садісти* засідають в Єврокомісії (March 13, 2015)
[**sadists** head the European Commission]
- (17) (Ukr.) *небайдужі* громадяни (e.g., March 18, 2015)
[**concerned** citizens]
- (18) (Surzh.) *помагаємо* армії (e.g., March 12, 2015)
[**let's help** our army]
- (19) (Ukr.) *фантастична здатність українців до самоорганізації* (November 22, 2014)
[a fantastic ability of Ukrainian of **self-organization**]

Examples (13-15) illustrate Ukrainian self-sufficiency as an aspect of national identity restoration because the country has its army and traditions to defend its independence, e.g., Father Makhno was one of the leaders of the Ukrainian movement for independence in 1917-1922 known for his anarchistic ideas; Maidan ('square' in Ukrainian) is the central square in Kyiv (Independence Square) that became the center of resistance during Yanukovich's regime in 2013-2014. It gave name to these revolutionary events (see Note 1). Example (16) illustrates Ukrainian restoration of confidence because it is supported by the EU which imposed sanctions on the Russian Federation – in this way the empty space of 'a friend' in the ontological lacuna is filled in. Examples (17-19) present the unity of Ukrainians in opposing the enemy as another important aspect of national identity. Thus, the texts under analysis help simplify and construct the system of changes in the Ukrainians' ontology where one of the entities (Russia) has been transformed into an antipode ('not brother', 'enemy'). On the one hand, the texts show a way to determine the axiological elements of the lacuna left after these changes because reverse logic fosters new self-identification and national identity. Firstly, it allows drawing an axiological demarcation between 'us' and 'them', and secondly, the discourse space widens, metaphorically speaking, to the West because the EU and the West in general take the place of a friend in the renewed ontology. The latter is analyzed in 3.2.

3.2 Spatial Axis in Representing the Fearful Object and Self-Identification

This reverse logic influences the organization of the spatial axis because O_{active} and $O_{passive}$ appear to be in strong opposition in space too. The spatial axis of the blog texts has two opposing centers: that of the threatened object (Ukraine, $O_{passive}$) and that of the threatening object (Russia, O_{active}); each center is marked by an attitudinal humorous device to draw not only a geographical but also an ideological line between these centers. The pragmatic means is intentional-emphatic humorous representation of the O_{active} .

The lexemes and phrases that comprise the O_{passive} group are:

- **Ukraine and its representatives:**³ (*Україна* [Ukraine], *Порох* (*Петро, Петро Олексійович*) [Porokh, Petro, Petro Oleksijovych], *Мустафа Джемільов* [Mustafa Dzhemiliov], *Рефат Чубаров* [Refat Chubarov], *фашисти в Києві* [fascists in Kiev], *(київська) хунта* [Kiev junta⁵], *злопихателі встаючої з колін Росії* [zealously vied people who envy Russia trying to revive], *небайдужі громадяни* [concerned citizens] and others);
- **Foreign allies:** (*ціла баронеса Ештон* [a real Baroness Ashton], *єврокомісари* [eurocomissioners], *страни НАТО* [NATO countries], *мірові лідери* [world leaders], *весь цивілізований світ* [all the civilized world], *норманські садисти* [Norman sadists], *уважаємі нормандські партньори* [respectable Norman pertners], *Ангела Хорстовна* [Angela Hornstovna], *чорношкіра бестія Барак Хусейнович* [sable-skinned devil Barack Husejnovich] and others);
- **Army and military groups:** (*українська армія* [Ukrainian army], *наша Армія* [our Army], *наші хлопці* [our guys] and others).

The lexemes and phrases that comprise the O_{active} group are:

- **Russia and its representatives:**⁴ (*Росія* (РФ, Х**лостан, Москвабад, Запоребрик) [Russia (RF, Н**lostan, Moskvabad, Zaporebrik)], *Путін*, (*Х**ло, Х**луша, воно, мишавий пацієнт, зажравшийся кремльовський дебіл, московський дурачок, Блядімір Блядімірович, гадьониш, ботоксне чмо* and others) [Putin (Н**ю, Н**lusha, it, miserable patient, Kremlin gluttonous imbecile, Moscow fool, Bliadimir Bliadimirovich, baby snake, botox prick)], *комнатна собачка Дімка Медведєв* [pet dog Dimka Medvedev], *Сірожа Глазьев* [Sirozha Glaziev], *пічальна лошадь Лавров* [sad horse Lavrov], *скоморох Піськов* [doofus Pis`kov], *Шойгу* [Shojgu], *обезумевший Чуркін* [crazy Churkin], *госдура* [gosdura] and others);
- **Russian allies:** *новий президент Абхазії* [a new President of Abkhazia], *його угорський послідователь Вітя Орбан* [his Hungarian follower Vitia Orban], *северокорейський лідер Кім Чен Ін* [North Korean leader Kim Jong Un], *президент Венесуели Мадуро* [President of Venezuela Maduro];
- **Army and military groups and the propagandistic machinery:** *русо-фашистські війська* [Russian-fascist troops], *руско-пропаганда* [Russian propaganda], *російські гавнюньоси* [Russian shit news agencies], *бойовики* [militia], *оркі* [orchs], *романтичеськи настроєні простодушні ополченці, які в мирной жїзні пишуть вірші, радується пташкам, нюхають ромашки, а также клей і п'ють палітуру* [romantic-minded simple militia members who used to write verses in peaceful life and now are glad to hear birds, smell chamomiles as well as glue and drink polymers dissolved in alcohol] and others).

Linguistic representations of O_{passive} emphasize the respect for this group and legitimate its representatives, for example, forming patronymics (in bold print) of foreigners in a kind and humorous way like *Ангела Хорстовна* [Angela Hornstovna] referring to Angela Merkel or *Барак Хусейнович* [Barack Husejnovich] to Barack Obama; or exaggerating the high aristocratic roots of our allies (like the use of the pronoun *цїлий* [real] with the lexeme *baroness*). The author names American President *Обама чорношкіра бестія* [a sable-skinned devil] – this metaphoric phrase bears a humorous compliment hinting on the hellishly clever plans of treating O_{active} . It is worth mentioning that the author regularly changes the logic and evaluation, and consequently the connotation of words *хунта* [junta], *фашисти* [fascists], *садисти* [sadists] to a positive one. Thus, members of the Normandy contact group² are humorously called sadists as they support Ukraine in its pro-European movement making Russia agree to a compromise. Surzhyk has limited use, mostly in phrases mocking Russians (like in *злонихателі встаючої з колєн Росії* [zealously vied people who envy Russia trying to revive]). The phrase is in Russian transliteration, except the preposition *з*.

Lexical expressions of the O_{active} center are various though the lexemes bear connotative meanings expressing alien moral values. ‘Their’ space on this axis is *Х**лостан* [H**lostan] and *Запоребрик* [Zaporebrick]. H**lostan is perceived as a totalitarian Asian state (compare, *Afghanistan*, *Pakistan*, etc.) where *Х**ло* [a putz] rules. Zaporebrick is a result of whole-phrasal compounding of the phrase *За поребрик отойду!* [Step **behind the curb!**] pronounced by one of soldiers without any insignia (‘a green man’) in the first days of Russian invasion in Eastern Ukraine. The lexeme *Домбас* [Dombas⁶] marks the part of the intermediary discursive place (ex-‘our’) that was invaded by O_{active} . In this case, mockery at the opponent is achieved by making the intentional spelling mistake as low-educated Russian-speaking people do). These means help the author to draw a line between the civilized world and the barbarian one of the supporters of these quasi-republics.

Generally, a range of derogative mockery and cursing addressed to Putin actualizes the meanings of inadequacy and loss of respect. These disrespectful nicknames were born in masses of common people and are not intentionally created by the blogger (consider the Ukrainian football fans’ song, plates on cars, graffiti and other semiotic bearers of similar evaluative character). The most popular is the obscenity *х**ло* [[h**lo], ‘a putz’], meaning ‘a bad and unreliable man’, which is very strong and can refer to a person treated with contempt for his sneakiness; (*чмо* [chmo] is much milder and describes a person’s miserable appearance and moral or physical condition). In example (20), the blogger explains why *х**ло* is capitalized and migrated to the class of personal names.

(20) (Surzh.) *С етїм фамїлійом [Х**ло] йому жить і с неї он і помрьот* (February 12, 2015)

[He is destined to live with this surname [H**lo], and he will die with it].

The lexeme *X**ло* acquires derivational modifications to show diminutive attitude to the referent (Russian suffix *-уш* in *X**луша*). In (21) the blogger hints at *O_{active}*'s fear of world leaders:

- (21) ... в решті питань **X**луша** буде вимушений відступити, старанно **вимиваючи за собою підлогу, щоб за ним не смерділо** (February 9, 2015)

[... **H**lusha** will have to give up, **cleaning the floor after himself not to smell**]

The intended distance between 'us' and 'them' is increased by the emphasis on their low morality:

- (22) *Те, що X**ло жопой почувував холодне прикосновеніє скамейки в Гаазі <...>. Значить **бздить, гадьонии*** (December 16, 2016)

[The fact that H**lo felt the chilling touch of **the bench in the Hague** with his ass<...>. It means **he is afraid, a baby snake**].

In (22) a mild swearing (*гадьонии* [a **baby** snake]) is applied to Putin and expresses a minimum threat in the present, but possible future harm from a child of a snake (Russian suffix *-онии* means 'a child of' or denotes a youth who made something blameworthy or dishonorable (Yefremova 2000)).

Of peculiar use is the personal pronoun *воно* [it]: although grammatically of neutral gender, it may also refer to a male (less often to women or children, expressing tenderness). The grammatical meaning of 'it' is 'object, countable/uncountable, singular, of neutral gender', although in colloquial speech it may be used with disdain (Velykyi 2005: online) referring to drunk men. The grammatical pun is based on the discord between the grammatical meanings of the lexemes *воно* (it) and the diminutive *x**ло* and their actualized reference as they are applied to the man; it allows a number of inferences: neuter/masculine gender, but drunk/small/miserable.

In example (23), the transitional ontology of Ukrainians at-war is constructed by the opposition of the mentally disabled object of threat (Putin) to the rest of the world, with the Ukraine at the center of its discourse space. In this construction, powerful world leaders are referred to as doctors actualizing the mechanism of appealing to the voices of expertise.

- (23) (Surzh.) *Вообще-то він мріє порішати всьо з **главврачом Обамою**, но у главврача неприйомні дні і X**лу сказано сначала обійти **профільних врачей. Профільні доктора в нормандськом форматі** готові оглянути **пацієнта**, но лише если він продемонструє готовність співпрацювати з **медиками*** (January 13, 2015)

[Actually, he dreams to solve all problems with **the Dean of Medicine Obama**, but it's not visiting day, and H**lo was given the advice to see **health experts** first. **Health experts in the Normandy format**² are ready to see **the patient** only in case he shows readiness to cooperate with **the doctors**].

Humorous labeling of world leaders and their relation to the Russian President as a role opposition of doctors and a patient is regularly exploited in the blog texts and is important in delegitimizing O_{active} and threat deconstruction.

Surzhyk occurred in a number of examples of reference to O_{active} mocking the object of threat: (Surzh.) *пичальний* [sad], *пацієнт* [patient], *модна* [fashionable], *продемонструє готовність співпрацювати* [will show his readiness to cooperate] and many others. Russian obscenities are also used, for example, (Rus.) *Владимир* [Vladimir] → (Surzh.) *Блядімір* [Bliadidmir] where a phonetic pun allows expressing the comparison of the disrespectable President with a whore (*Whore* is *блядь* [bliad`] in Russian). This pun labels the opponent and emphasizes his discreditable behavior and the discord with the existing world order.

The analysis of the blog texts shows that the 'we' vs. 'they' opposition is not that obvious because in a hybrid war things are never black and white. In between the extremes on the spatial axis, there are groups of transitional character that support the threatening object or home opposition in both Ukraine and Russia. The updated system of the subjective worldview shows that the national identity is not fully formed yet.

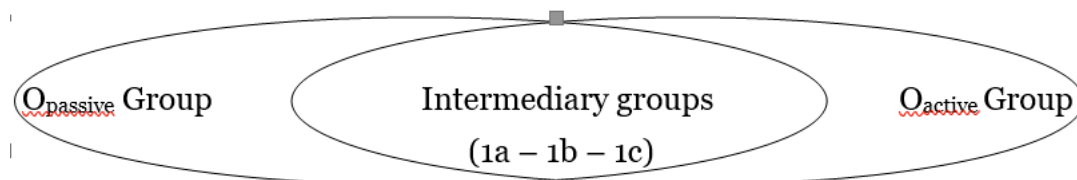


Figure 1. The position of the intermediary groups

Considering the space axis in the blog texts, the alphabetic order of the intermediary groups shows closeness to 'us':

- 1a. (Ukr.) *розумні люди в Росії* [clever people in Russia] (September 13, 2016);
- 1b. (Surzh.) *доморощені істерички і панікьори* [home-grown drama queens and alarmists] (December 16, 2014); (Surzh.) *полезні врагам ідіоту* [idiots useful for the enemy] (February 25, 2014); (Surzh.) *плеяда політиків, які по умственному розвитку – дитській сад вторая четверть* [a pleiad of politicians who are equal to children in their intellectual development] (September 8, 2014);
- 1c. *Мудачук* [Mudachuk] – a blend of the swearing '**mudak**' ([mudack] is a pretentious and deceitful though sneaky and underhanded person) and the surname of Putin's relative-in-God and Ukrainian politician Medved**chuk**]; (Surzh.) *синапатісту* [supporters of the separate

political role of Ukrainian regions, firstly, Donetsk and Luhansk]; (Surzh.) *ватніки* [derogative for the supporters of the ideological, political, economic and cultural dependence of Ukraine from Russia, citizens of Ukraine].

Another dynamic aspect of the spatial axis is the use of verb phrases of motion and directionality construed as markers of movement of threatening objects towards the deictic center Cap (2017a). The analysis of texts shows that the importance of motion and direction is almost neutralized in conditions of war when tangible death, threat and fear dominate mass media and Internet news about the frontiers. At such times there is no need to generate further fear. The hybrid war suggests new aggressive actions in addition to the traditional ones thus clashing repeatedly with the stable ontology of life in accordance with international laws. Mostly, Russia imposed this war-like hybrid influence via mass media:

- (24) (Surzh.) *Вся подобна херня придумуєця в Москві і вбрасуєця в інфопростір; долгоіграюща медіабитва* (August 29, 2014)

[All this **shit is invented in Moscow** and **is infiltrated into the information space**; long-lasting media battle]

The incredibility of the lie produced by Russian journalists and official representatives is emphasized by the swearing *херня* ([hernia] – an incredible thing or fact or idea). Hybrid war actions are expressed, not as dynamic events but rather as a group of mental actions and states, as for example in:

- (25) (Surzh.) [...] *десантніки кажеця заблудилися, но точно він не знає, бо Шойгу ще не доложив* (February 25, 2014)

[the paratroopers **seem to** have lost their way **but he doesn't know exactly** as Shoigu hasn't reported yet]

- (26) (Surzh.) [...] *план договоритися обо всьом за спиною* (February 25, 2014)

[**a plan to settle** everything behind their back]

- (27) (Surzh.) [...] *валяє дурака та притворюється невинним* (September 30, 2016)

[**fools around** and **pretends** innocent]

However, the sense of directionality remains dominant though it acquires a shade of 'intentionality'. The blogger ridicules Putin's alleged intention to fool others, pretending to be a commoner by misspelling the verbal ending -*тця* / -*тьця* that reflects their pronunciation in Surzhyk – *цця* [ts`a].

Since these blogs were created in a style similar to everyday reports on current events, the author sometimes had to review news directly from the battlefield. The analyzed texts contain few phrases expressing the impact of the

threatening object as post factum of the events or the non-stop aggressive impact, as in (28).

- (28) (Ukr.) *Російські Гради шмаляють* (February 2, 2015)
[Russian **Grads are shooting**]

Mostly, verbal nouns are used instead of verbs, but that does not contradict the basic sense of action and its impact:

- (29) (Ukr.) *атаки на позиції сил АТО* (February 3, 2015)
[**attacks** on CTO's force positions]
- (30) (Ukr.) *активізація бойовиків на театрі воєнних дій*
(January 25, 2015)
[militia's **activization** on the theatre of war]
- (31) (Surzh.) *дійства в Донецькому аеропорту* (January 26, 2015)
[**actions** in Donetsk airport]
- (32) (Ukr.) *злочинний обстріл мирних кварталів Маріуполя*
(January 26, 2015)
[criminal **shooting** of peaceful residential areas in Mariupol]

In these examples there is no place for mockery and banter: the object of threat is named in accord with the object of reference – *бойовики* [militia] – whose impact is gruesome and fearful.

Another aspect of the spatial axis is anticipation of the future (Cap 2017a). In the blog texts, it is viewed as foreseeing rather than expressing a possibility of the indefinite impact. Linguistically, NPs are used alongside VPs and predicative phrases:

- (33) (Ukr.) *готувати асиметричний удар по хунті* (September 2, 2016)
[**to prepare** an asymmetric **blow on the junta**];
- (34) (Surzh.) [...] *війна штука дорога, гривня нестабільна, вопрос з газом так і не вирішений, тому взимку, в крайньому случаї навесні Україна дозріє і тагда вже Х**ло буде дїктувать условия. А пока він буде грати роль непрічасного і кругом невінного* (August 27, 2014)
[any war is an expensive thing, hryvna is volatile, the natural gas problem is not solved yet, so in winter, in spring at most, **Ukraine will ripen**, and then H**lo **will dictate the terms**. Still, he **will pretend innocent and not being involved**]

These examples show that, instead of using lexemes denoting abstract concepts, the author prefers word combinations with verbs and verbal nouns expressing concrete aggressive actions (*удар* [blow], *буде диктувати умовля* [will dictate the terms]), plans for undermining the wellbeing of the threatened object (*Україна дозріє* [Ukraine will ripen]) and deceitful behavior (*буде грати роль несприятельного і кругом невинного* [will pretend innocent and not involved]). In this way, the author transmits the idea of the possibility to prepare for this impact and denies the possibility to believe the opponent.

Another mechanism of deconstructing threat is the minimal use of lexemes expressing despair and fear (*угроза* [threat], *трагедія* [tragedy]); instead, words expressing quite an opposite standpoint are used:

- (35) (Surzh.) [...] українська **запеклість** і восточне **коварство** об'єднались та дійсвують (September 8, 2016)

[Ukrainian **perseverance** and Eastern **cunning** united and are acting]

- (36) (Surzh.) Сохраняем **бадьорий бойовий дух** (May 21, 2016)

[Keep our **spirits up**]

- (37) (Surzh.) [...] **іменно весела злість** і є самим лучшим настроєм під час війни (January 26, 2016)

[it is **merry anger** that is the best mood at the time of war]

Example (35) verbalizes intentional opposition of Ukraine and Russia (as an eastern type of state governing) on the spatial axis via axiological incompatibility. Here, the author stresses perseverance of both objects to win. Concrete actions desirable in these circumstances are verbalized by VPs, as in the next examples:

- (38) (Surzh.) [...] допомагаєм нашій Армії та ведемо здоровий спосіб життя. І слідім, щоб візде парядок був! А не те, шо січас ☺ (February 25, 2014)

[help our army in every way, lead a healthy lifestyle. Mind that order is kept here! Unlike now! ☺]

- (39) (Surzh.) При цьому **нада сохраниять ясний тверезий розум**, щоб бачити, що твориться навкруги і **правильно оцінювати** сложившюся ситуацію. Щоб розуміти, яким може бути дальнейший розвиток подій (January 26, 2015)

[In these circumstances, **we must be calm and sound** to see what is going on around us and **evaluate the situation adequately** to realize what further events may be]

These VPs prevail and bear the connotation of unity and solidarity because these desirable actions are expressed by verbs in the Imperative Mood and in combination with modals expressing obligation.

The analysis of the spatial axis shows that the discourse space of the blog texts has a clear demarcation between ‘us’ and ‘them’, which is based on axiological opposition. However, the space contains other elements, namely intermediary groups. Representatives of O_{active} are marked by linguistic-pragmatic means of mocking the lack of sanity and moral values. The sense of directionality of O_{active} 's aggressiveness has a variational shade of ‘intentionality’ that suits the conditions of hybrid war. Thus, anticipation of a possible threat turns into predictability of O_{active} 's actions and their impact.

3.3 Temporal Axis in Representing the Fearful Object and Self-Identification

Fearful object and self-identification can be represented in terms of Time. In the blogs, present time markers included modifiers such as *січас* [now], *в цих умовах* [in these conditions]. Causative-consecutive constructions of past-to-present development reflect the author's intention to analyze the current events to the full degree (e.g., *цим пояснюється, що...* [it explains that...], *в результаті якого* [as the result]):

- (40) (Surzh.) [...] **всю життя бздів**, що легіони НАТО будуть марширувати коло російських кордонів **і пожалуйста – сам признається**, що... (January 27, 2015)

[he **has been afraid all his life** that NATO legions will be marching at the Russian border, **and here you are** – he **admits** that...]

These logical chains help to build the time line and to perform the pragmatic function the blog's author intends to realize, i.e., an explanation of what is happening, calming down and restoring the ontological order.

When referring to the facts of war confrontation, the blog texts did not mention dates of events. Instead, geographical personal names and names of important political events were used as markers of the impact of a past event that has influenced the ‘now’ on the temporal axis. For example, the annexation of the Crimea, the invasion of Luhansk and Donetsk and negotiations in Minsk⁸ are key events that resonate in the Ukraine today:

- (41) (Surzh.) [...] **два года тому Крим взят на абордаж і отбуксірован в ‘родную гавань’**, а на Домбасе проведена операція прикриття і подготовлена почва для проведення операції ‘Размен-1’ (October 3, 2016); **потом случился Мінськ-1, далі Мінськ-2** (October 3, 2016); [Україна] **ішла на Мінську зустріч після Іловайська** (January 12, 2015)

[two years ago the Crimea was boarded and towed to the ‘native harbor’, the operation under cover was held in **Dombas** and the ground was prepared to hold the operation ‘Exchange-1’; then **Minsk-1** happened, and then **Minsk-2**; [Ukraine] went to Minsk meeting **after Ilvaisk**⁹]

The present-to-future projection transmits the sense of anticipation or suggestion accordingly. Present expectations are verbalized mostly by means of rhetorical syntactic constructions, such as general questions *чи не настав час переходити до...* [isn't it time to start ...]; real conditionals such as *если* [if] + Present Tense Verb..., *то...* [then] + Future Tense Verb. Imminence of consequences is observed in phrases like (42) where a future fact finds proof in the present. The key pragmatic role belongs to the emphasizing particle *вже* [already], as in:

- (42) (Surzh.) *Завтра в Лондоні починається судейне розбиральство і вже зараз є заяви про те, що ...* (January 26, 2015)

[**Tomorrow** legal proceedings **begin** in London, and **now there are already** statements that...]

The present-to-future line is marked by evidential modality: logical inferences connect evaluations that allow distinguishing O_{passive} from O_{active} on the spatial axis and predicting the possible development of events on the time axis. Phrases like (43) and (44) imply that the object of threat is predictable and insane, and this is common knowledge:

- (43) (Surzh.) *ожидаема інтервенція руссо-войск* (February 25, 2014)

[**the expected** intervention of Russian army]

- (44) (Surzh.) *Ми вже давно нічому не уділяємося, а дієвля Х**ла давно опровергли антинаукову гіпотезу, що етот діятель дружить со здоровим смыслом* (January 13, 2015)

[We are **not surprised** any more, and H**lo's actions have refuted the unscientific hypothesis that this personage is with his sensible hat on]

The sense of presupposing the conditions of a possible threatening impact is explicit in the next phrases:

- (45) (Surzh.) [...] [*йому*] *позарез нужна ярка локальна победа в зоні АТО, яка дозволить йому диктувати умовія на переговорах* (February 2, 2015)

[he] **badly needs** a bright local victory in the zone of CTO that **will allow** him to dictate the terms at negotiations]

- (46) (Surzh.) [Путін] **не покидає мрії жестоко проучити хунту і Запад** (February 3, 2015)

[[Putin] **constantly dreams of teaching** junta and the West a **tough lesson**]

The presupposed condition of fearful actions in these examples is the personality of the Russian leader and his policy. The connection of what is necessary or desirable for O_{active} and the future consequences for O_{passive} is linguistically explicit. Still, the pragmatic by-product of such evidence facilitates the deconstruction of fear as it hints at its predictability.

Verbalizing alternative views of the future (either consequences or general predictions) is of high pragmatic value in the analyzed blog texts as the intention of mitigating fear and mobilizing society demands explanations of what is to be expected for both O_{active} and O_{passive} in the future. Modal meanings of evidentiality, knowledge and opinion explicitly express alternative views on future events in the definite and indefinite future:

- (47) (Surzh.) *В зв'язі з цими обмінами хамськими заявами **многі задумуються, чи не слід готуватися до масштабної інтервенції Росії. Дід думає, що до такого сценарію треба завжди готуватися** іменно для того, щоб його не було. **Но** в даному випадку **всі події вкупі із офіційними заявами свідчать про** чергову попитку **запугать** хунту ілі **спровоцірувати** її на якуто херню. Хунта Х**лу не пидигрує і **покашо** демонструє **решительность та видержку*** (January 18, 2015)

[In connection with this exchange of insolent statements **many people start thinking if we should be ready to the full-scale intervention of Russia. Did think that we must always be ready** to this scenario so that it could never happen. **But**, in this case, **all events taken together with** official statements **demonstrate** another attempt to **frighten** junta or **manipulate** it into some bullshit. Junta does not play along and **yet** demonstrates determination and self-possession]

Alternative opinions of the representatives of O_{passive} are given to stop panic and facilitate a rational view, though they do not exclude each other as unlikely perspectives. They are implied by the modal verb *треба* [must] and the lexeme *готуватися* [to be ready]. The adversative conjunction *но* [but] introduces further evidential grounding of a rational view on future events (*свідчать про* [to prove], *запугать* [to frighten], *спровоцірувати* [to manipulate into]) and the conclusion that now the situation is not that bad (*покашо* [yet]). Syntactically, the modality of knowledge and opinion is expressed in object clauses after the main clause that contains a modal

expression of prediction with a certain degree of doubt or uncertainty, or suspicion (Ex. 48-51):

- (48) (Surzh.) [...] в діда **ощуценіє**, шо... (February 25, 2014)
[Did **feels** that...]
- (49) (Surzh.) [...] *существує* много **признаків** того, що... (February 6, 2015)
[there are **a lot of signs** that ...]
- (50) (Surzh.) [...] **шото** мені **підказує**, шо... (November 17, 2014)
[something hints that ...]
- (51) (Surzh.) [...] діда не покидає **внутреннє** **ощуценіє**, шо... (January 27, 2015)
[Did cannot get rid of **the inner feeling** that ...]

The intention to show the complicated situation and impossibility to know the future is expressed in longer passages, as in the next example:

- (52) (Surzh.) *Дід не думає, шо останні теракти інспіровані Кремльом, а також не думає, що в Москві є серйозні можливості впливу на мусульманський світ – не нада переоцінюватъ можливості Х**ла. З другого боку, спокуса посодействуватъ ісламським фундаменталістам велика і дід не ісключає, шо Х**ло від спокуси не удержитъся* (January 12, 2015)
[**Did does not think that** the latest terroristic acts are inspired by the Kremlin, **he also does not think that** Moscow can influence the Muslim world seriously – there is no need to overestimate H**lo's possibilities. **On the other hand**, there is a temptation to assist Islamic fundamentalists, and **Did does not exclude that** H**lo will not resist this temptation]

Threat deconstruction is achieved by using present-to-future reference in compound sentences with adversative relations where 'now' is opposed to the victorious future with an emphatic modality of assurance:

- (53) (Ukr.) *До фінішу ще далеко, але ми точно переможемо* (January 22, 2015)
[Finish is far ahead **but we shall win, for sure**]
- (54) (Surzh.) *Маєм налаштуватися на тривалу боротьбу, гартуючи залізну волю і спокійну впевненість в Перемозі. Тримаємо **впевнений** темп, перескакуємо через тіла впавших панікйорів і спокійно біжимо далі* (January 22, 2015)

[We **must** tune for long lasting struggle, steel our will and calm confidence in Victory. **Let's** keep up the **stable** pace, jump over the bodies of falling alarmists and run farther]

- (55) (Ukr.) *США офіційно **заговорив** про нові санкції. А 12 лютого розгляне...* (January 27, 2015)

[USA officially **declared** new sanctions. And on the 12th of February they **will discuss**...]

The continuity of struggle allows the author to make the blend of the past and future on the temporal axis, as in (55).

The author's tactic of motivating the readers for self-identification and rational thinking is revealed through causative-consecutive logical chains on the past-to-present and present-to-future time lines and occasionally past and future unite. These pragmatic tactics make the threat construction different from the examples from politicians (see Cap's work). Politicians tend to impose their opinion and manipulate the perception of the addressee. On the other hand, Did Svyryd leaves space for readers to form their own worldview, while challenging the dominant worldview.

3.4 Discussion

The thirty blogs under analysis reflect transformations in Ukrainian self-consciousness and worldview of the Post-Maidan and At-War period. The image of the neighboring Russian Federation underwent the most significant changes up to a complete reconsideration. In the circumstances of war and conflict, the axiological confrontation became the predominant creative force of self- and other-identification and, as a result, of new national identity construction. The analyzed texts of Did Svyryd's blogs showed that spatial and temporal axes bear the connotation of axiological values and clearly demarcate 'us' and 'them'.

As the material of the blog texts shows, threat deconstruction and national identity reconstruction are two parallel pragmatic processes. According to Sørensen (2016: 2), mocking dominant ideas about what is true and right in the 'other axiology' shows solidarity on an alternative axiology. Section 3.1, sums up the axiological aspects of transformations in the ontological lacuna of the Ukrainians' consciousness.

In these blogs, delegitimization of O_{active} and threat deconstruction is achieved via sarcasm, ridicule and mocking appearance, physical and mental condition of O_{active} as well as its low moral values. The linguistic means of creating humorous effects are labeling, swearing, lexical, grammatical and phonetic pun, diminutive-derogatory word formation, logical-evaluation shifts and writing in Surzhyk, while standard Ukrainian is used when the author reports on war events and casualties or when he refers to positive components of 'our' space; Russian transliteration is used to emphasize the axiological gap.

The parallel process of self-legitimization and national identity restoration focusses on mocking 'their' axiology and legitimizing 'us' as independent and different (see the classification of the lexemes presenting O_{active} and $O_{passive}$ in

section 3.2). The axiology of Ukrainian values is verbalized by such abstract nouns as *добробут, мир і злагода* [wellbeing, peace and concord], *порядок* [order], a concrete noun *традиції* [traditions] or NPs like *природні анархісти* [innate **anarchists**] (other examples are 14, 15, 17-19). It is worth mentioning that in the author's axiological mapping, to be an innate anarchist does not contradict the notion of order. It rather adds to the freedom-loving nature as a part of the Ukrainians' national identity and distances from 'them' axiologically. The lack of democracy in 'their' space is marked on the spatial axis (see section 3.2.). Still, the author reveals the remains of similarity between 'us' and 'them' in the Soviet axiological background and the existence of intermediate groups in the discourse space (cf. Figure 1).

The analysis of the blog texts shows that the author intends to emphasize historical opposition in axiologies of the O_{active} and $O_{passive}$. This implies that Ukrainian national identity is built on the long-lasting memory of painful coexistence. Linguistic representation of the axiological opposition with the threatening object is made both with the help of church-Slavonic (e.g., *уверовал* [believes divinely]) and Russian transliteration to emphasize this opposition and express distancing from the target of humor in time and space.

The ontological lacuna in the Ukrainians' worldview is filled in by new elements that take the empty space of, for example, friendly entities. 'Our' space spreads motivated by the axiological closeness to European values as contradictory to Russian ones. In the texts, the authors mark 'our place' by new representatives (see the list of $O_{passive}$, examples 23, 40, 42, 55).

Reverse logic allows filling in this ontological lacuna with restored aspects of national identification. It is reflected on the spatial and time axes: e.g., 'if the threatening object is insane/disrespected/childish/unlawful/etc., we can oppose him because we are different'.

4. Conclusion

The axiological approach to blog-text analysis presented here has been facilitated by the application of PT and has shown some of the mechanisms and means of fear mitigation in a socio-political context of war in terms of space, time and axiology. The blog under analysis presents a discursive space that has two extremes, O_{active} and $O_{passive}$, though the area of intermediary objects is also defined (see Figure 1). This opposition is based upon the parallel processes of legitimizing $O_{passive}$ and delegitimizing O_{active} thus exposing a new revised perception of 'us' and 'them' as normal (respectable and supported) vs. abnormal (mentally sick, physically disabled and morally defective). The reverse process of threat deconstruction is realized via parallel pragmatic strategies, i.e., the delegitimization of the threatening object strengthens legitimization of the self. These strategies reflect the actual re-evaluation of the formerly accepted axiological order that suffers from the aggression and develops ontological lacunas. Attitudinal and evaluative grounds of outlining the borders of 'our' and 'their' spaces facilitate drawing the ideological border between them. From a PT perspective, the threat

construction model is reversible, though, under the influence of extra-lingual factors, the elements of the structure appear to obtain a different value.

The three represented axes of time, space and axiology are obviously dominated by the latter as the fundamental principle of building ontological systems of 'our' and 'their' worlds. Spatial and temporal axes bear certain modifications like minimizing remoteness, indefinite future senses and approaching factor in at-war conditions when the act of transgression and invasion remains in the pre-text. The sense of directionality is accompanied by intentionality; the impact of the threatening object (possible or actual) is also minimized as it is obvious; the effects of the threatening object impact are contrary (minimum of fear and maximum of support).

The blogger's communicative aims include not only fear reduction but also building a new ontology. Consequently, the linguistic devices he chooses are lexical and grammatical ways of expressing supposition and foreseeing the future, conditions and results, causative-consecutive relations, continuity as well as knowledge and opinion, doubt, uncertainty and suspicion. The discursive devices used in this analysis are humor and space and time framing. The interplay between them makes for a strong perlocutionary model that is accessible with a proximization approach. Although delegitimization is mostly used for the strategic stimulation of an affect (fear), in at-war conditions the reverse effect may be achieved when applied in the form of non-violent humorous resistance. Humor facilitates the re-evaluation of self- and other-perception, shifts and the introduction of new values in the ontological lacuna. From the pragmatic point of view it promotes further axiological distancing from the threatening object and reconstruction of national identity. Legitimization of 'us' is grounded on reverse logic by reasoning 'our' social relations and political ideas, by appealing to the voices of expertise and emphasizing dedication to the common aim. The mechanisms of marginalizing the object of threat and emphasizing its insanity actualize transformations in the perception of 'the other'. The application of PT could be fruitful in investigations in before-conflict and at-conflict communication in political discourse and other fields of communication.

Notes

1. In the Winter of 2014, the Ukraine came through the number of socio-political changes caused by the inability of ex-president V. Yanukovych to lead the country to the association with the EU. One of the key events of that period is Maidan (or 'the Revolution of Dignity') and the Russian occupation of the Crimea as well as part of the Luhank and Donetsk regions.
2. The Normandy contact group is a diplomatic group of senior representatives of four countries (Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia) to resolve the war in Eastern Ukraine; in this context only three members are meant (excluding Russia).
3. Porokh, Petro are the nicknames for President Pero Poroshenko; Mustafa Dzhemiliov and Refat Chubarov are the leaders of the Crimean Tatars.
4. Dimka Medvedev – Dmitrij Medvedev, Russian Prime Minister (2012-2020); Sirozha Glaziev – Sergej Glaziev, Russian politician; Lavrov, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs; Pis`kov – Peskov, Putin's Speaker; Shojgu, Russian Minister of Defence; Churkin, a late representative of Russia in the UN.

5. Russian media and political circles accused the Ukraine in a military coup d'état, and refused to recognize the President as they believe he heads the pro-fascist national movement in the Ukraine.
6. Дoнбaс is the correct form.
7. Grad: a multiple rocket launcher.
8. Minsk-1 (2014) and Minsk-2 (2015) were successive stages of negotiations of the Normandy group (Ukrainian, French, German and Russian leaders) in the capital of Belarus, Minsk
9. Ilovaiskis a town in the Donbas region where the fiercest battles between the Ukrainian and Russian armies and their supporters were held in 2014; the Ukrainian army was encircled and despite the agreement to let the army leave the territory, Russians did not keep their promise. As a result, the official number of those who died is 368, about 500 people were captured and 18 missing
10. Komsomol is the only political youth organization in the former Soviet Union that propagated communism.

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