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IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE IN MODERN AMERICAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: *The discourse of American politicians like any other political figures prominently features a narrative – a system of interconnected stories that transition from one into another from speech to speech. The ideological narrative in political discourse plays an important part in myth creation in supporting the concept of Exceptional America. The potential of linguistic means, specifically, metaphors, in the narrative is typically used to achieve the main communicative goal – for example, the protection of traditional values, America's right for exceptionalism and promotion of the national interests. Context analysis of the usage of these metaphors shows that the speaker models politics as a means of protecting valuable concepts (freedom, peace, leadership, democracy, security, health, dream) which feeds into a myth in the public consciousness, be it the American dream, American exceptionalism, American freedoms or something else. In these contexts, metaphors are usually aimed at influence rather than modeling the political system. The metaphors capture the audience, show the speaker's solidarity with the public and prompt the people to engage in a dialogue with the authorities, hold those in power accountable, not be afraid, feel the unity and historical continuity of the common cause and build the future together. The conceptual metaphor is an efficient narrative technique and way to transition from language to consciousness. The modeling of the state's actions aimed at protecting the basic values of the American society activates in the addressee's consciousness a metaphorical model that contributes to a more figurative and accessible interpretation of reality. The article deals with the features of metaphor functioning in the modern ideological narrative of the United States of America, expounds the role of the metaphors in the implementation of the global communicative strategy "Us and Them" and the ensuing tactical moves.*

Keywords: *political discourse, ideology, narrative, metaphor.*

INTRODUCTION

Political discourse is characterized by the presence of dominant semantic elements that act as centers of attraction that the discourse unfolds around (the discourse of a particular politician, a political issue, a political event, etc.). These dominant elements possess a creational power, generate discourse of a particular ideological modality and determine the direction for it to unfold. To denote the means of explication of dominant semantic elements, the term "narrative" has been widely used recently. This term has featured prominently in American political discourse of recent years, moreover, the content of the notion "narrative" in the modern political discourse has significantly broadened.

B. Roberts notes that *narrative* is used in connection to political biography and autobiography, accounts of repression and persecution, historical political narratives, political analytics, the system of political beliefs etc. (Roberts, 2004). While contrasting the narrative with the slogan, D. Boyle characterizes the former as a political marketing buzzword that still has some leverage due to being new. The buzzword is a response to people's growing resistance to political marketing. Although politicians spend a lot of time searching for powerful, influential slogans, people have become immune to slogans that have ceased to be convincing, become a semantic dud. People do not trust slogans, ignore advertisements – but people do listen to stories (Boyle, 2005).

D. Boyle fairly assumes that an important feature of a narrative is its "explanatory nature". The significance of the "explanatory power" as a constitutive trait of the narrative is also noted by J. Velleman who believes that narrative can be characterized as a genre of explanation. "The narrative does not simply lay out the events but makes them comprehensible, systematizes cause-and-effect relationships" (Velleman, 2003). The comprehensibility is ensured by the fact that, in a sense, the narrative simplifies the reality. A story is invented, and facts and real events are made to fit in with it, "We seek to understand the struggle in Iraq by constructing narratives and fitting events into them" (Barone, 2006). As a result, the narrative makes it possible to comprehend complex and complicated political situations.

A political leader's success is explained by the fact that the leader has a coherent and compelling story that clearly and acceptably explains the leader's main goals to the voters. Political confrontation, especially during the election campaign, is, first of all, a competition of stories. Thus, according to James Carroll, every presidential candidate of 2008 is the central figure in an at least implicit narrative touching on a crucial national conflict: "McCain and the saga of a noble warrior, Edwards and the fight with poverty, Mitt Romney and a minority religion, Rudolph Giuliani and 9/11, Hillary Clinton and the story of the American woman, Obama and the tale of two races" (Carroll, 2007).

Phraseology typical of political discourse as a whole (Chilton, Lakoff, 1995; Musolff, 2000; Musolff et al., 2001; Ritchie, 2003; Zinken, 2003; Vertessen, De Landsheer, 2005; Sedykh et al., 2020; Amatov et al., 2020) obtains distinctive features in the narrative discourse. Thus, political narrative prominently features references to precedent texts; metaphors are built into the system and serve the achievement of a highly specific communicative goal. The narrative is more "literary" than political discourse. Such popularity of the narrative in the political discourse of the United States of America (the USA) (admittedly, like many other countries) led us to consider narrative techniques of using linguistic units (particularly metaphors) and the global strategy that these techniques are subordinate to.

METHODS

There are two established trends of analyzing political discourse in linguistics: descriptive and critical (Fairclough, 1985; 1993). The critical approach, which is primary in this study, is aimed at studying social inequality reflected in the discourse, and the scholar openly advocates for those oppressed and deprived of rights. According to T. van Dijk, "there cannot be an aloof, let alone a 'neutral', position of critical scholars" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). This study was conducted within the framework of the critical approach with the use of its methods and techniques.

RESULTS

We identified about ten communicative micro-roles of US politicians' self-presentation, although, the most recurrent within the framework of the ideological narrative are the following three:

1. The leader. Without a doubt, the leader of any country and even more so the president of the USA, a country that seeks a lot in the modern world, should always look like a worthy leader since this is what the leader's voters counted on when casting their votes.

2. The defender, protector. Since one of the most important values, both vital, social and political, is security, the president's communicative self-presentation in the value-personal micro-role of the "defender" of the interests of the citizens who elected them and the state as a whole seems rational.

3. The fighter. This communicative value-personal model meets the expectations of voters who want to see a president who can fight both social injustice and shortcomings in the government apparatus within the state and threats in the foreign-policy environment.

These roles are often used together within the same context, so in the discussion, we will not differentiate the quoted excerpts from public speeches of American politicians based on this criterion.

DISCUSSION

For a political party, a narrative is, first of all, an idea or a set of ideas, a doctrine underlying the party ideology. We can say that this type of narrative is a party manifesto. The parties facing the challenge of coming to power realize that their problems are largely related to the lack of a coherent narrative. For example, analysts on the US Democratic Party often state the need for a "strong", impressive narrative. *"The Democrats need a compelling narrative of their own, in particular a populist narrative"* (Nunberg, 2006, p. 116). Such ideological narratives that feature in the fund of precedents texts of American political culture are R. Reagan's *Morning in America: Prouder, Stronger, Better* and G.W. Bush's *Compassionate Conservative*. Reagan's narrative was born as a television advertisement for the politician's second presidential term. The advertisement titled "Prouder, Stronger, Better" opened with the words "Morning in America again"; the video (footage of Americans going to work) was accompanied by a story in a calm optimistic tone about the economic recovery associated with Republican policies. Bush's narrative arose out of the Republicans' urge to attract democratically inclined voters. The narrative is an attempt to combine a traditionally conservative approach to the economy (the principle of individual responsibility) and a focus on improving social security, helping citizens in need:

For two centuries, America has served the world as an inspiring example of freedom and democracy. For generations, America has led the struggle to preserve and extend the blessings of liberty. And today, in a rapidly changing world, American leadership is indispensable. Americans know that leadership brings burdens and requires sacrifice (G.W. Bush). Various political myths closely adhere to (or sometimes intertwine with, grow out of or form) the ideological narrative. An example of the ideological narrative about modern American political discourse is the concept of *Exceptional America*. There is an opinion that to be successful with the voters, the Democrats must reclaim the most important narrative in US political history (Kurlantzick, 2006). The idea is that America is not one leader among many but an exceptional, moral and generous country that can inspire other nations. "Europeans may cite examples of amoral or self-interested US foreign policy. But the exceptionalist narrative, drawing as it does on the country's founding utopian vision, resonates with Americans" (Kurlantzick, 2006). The function of the stereotype about America as the promised land of freedom and the stereotype of American exceptionalism consists in forming and regulating the political consciousness of the society.

In the rhetoric of the main representatives of the American political elite of the last two decades, both from the Republican and the Democratic parties, the narrative is multifunctional: the narrative plays a role in both self-presentation and myth creation. Among the myths, the myth of American superiority holds the central place. The regular reproduction of this myth helps to maintain the image of a patriot and the use of militaristic metaphors helps to strengthen the suggestive effect of the political text. Thus, American exceptionalism was often the key point in public speeches of the former US Secretary of State John Kerry who saw this exceptionalism, first of all, in the fact that the US takes on the burden of leadership in overcoming any challenges, no matter what dangers it may involve:

As I've said many times before, America is not exceptional simply because we say we are. We are exceptional because we do exceptional things, both where there are problems as well as where there is promise, both where there is danger as well as where there is democracy. I am optimistic that we will continue to do these exceptional things. I know we have the capacity. I know that's who we are, and it's who we've always been (J. Kerry).

US political leaders continue to remind that there will always be those who disagree with such exceptionalism, which poses a threat not only to national interests but also to the very way of life of Americans. The conceptual metaphor allows one to model traditional values and American exceptionalism in the public mind as an object of attack, a victim and the actions taken by the US leadership to protect them are viewed positively:

*We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its **defense**, and for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and **we will defeat you*** (B. Obama).

*Let's remember that our leadership is defined not just by our **defense against threats**, but by the enormous opportunities to do good and promote understanding around the globe – to forge greater cooperation, to expand new markets, to free people from fear and want* (B. Obama).

*The Second Amendment, like Christianity, the Second Amendment **is under siege**. And I say, and I say it in all seriousness: Hillary Clinton is going to abolish the Second Amendment if she becomes president... and we're going **to protect** the Second Amendment* (D. Trump).

Extremism is seen as one of the main threats to American values and the American way of life; therefore, military actions, including real, non-metaphorical ones, aimed at protecting the American values, are perceived positively. The right to these actions is also often reinforced by invoking the myth of American exceptionalism:

*To overcome extremism, we must also be vigilant in upholding the **values our troops defend** – because there is no force in the world more powerful than the example of America (B. Obama).*

In the last example, the peculiar "semi-metaphorical" usage of the verb "defend" – "to protect, to safeguard" is interesting. The fact is that B. Obama is talking about American troops, and the troops are used for defense purposes as well. However, in the literal sense of the word, the troops defend not values but something more specific, material: territory, population, the ruling class, etc. The metaphorical nature of the statement lies in the fact that the American troops that the president is talking about are "on the defensive" not in their own country and even on the approaches to the country, but far beyond American borders – in Afghanistan, the Middle East, the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, etc.

The appeal to historical events and American exceptionalism is an integral part of the ideological narrative, and the appeal to the stories of one's relatives is aimed at bringing together two different conceptual areas – politics and everyday life of ordinary Americans, which positively affects the image of the "people's president" being created. Naturally, the Republicans do not ignore the idea of spreading and maintaining the same myth but already in their favor. Like B. Obama, Mitt Romney maintains the notion of US superiority over other countries. In the phrases *We're Americans, we can do anything* or *You're an American and you don't quit*, one can see both hypnotizing and the creation of the opposition "We" – "They", where "We" is America and "They" is the rest of the world. The politician assigns the US the role of the center in the new system of global security and an integral assistant in the fight against common threats.

An analysis of the speeches of US political leaders confirms that the semantic and rhetorical components of reasoning are interconnected since by activating a mental model in the addressee, the speaker can influence both the interpretation of the message and the addressee's subsequent actions. The author as the creator of the message focuses the recipient's attention on the semantic centers of political speech using rhetorical means. Comparison of the American politicians' texts of speeches makes it possible to identify, on the one hand, the central position of the values of *freedom, peace, leadership, democracy, security, health, dream* in American political discourse and, on the other hand, confirm the stability of these values based on the frequency of use in the corpus of the texts under study. The need to defend these fundamental values has led to frequent usage of war-related metaphors. Moreover, the use of military vocabulary looks natural considering that one of the most important functions of the political discourse itself is the fight for power; therefore, political discourse initially contains a rich foundation for the metaphorical use of military vocabulary.

As a result of analyzing the texts of speeches, the models used in rhetorical strategies were identified, one of the components of which is a value-significant concept. The idea behind creating a rhetorical effect is to eliminate the logical opposition "part-whole" when the speaker, actualizing any part of the mental model, say, with a positive connotation, expands a positive assessment to the entire given model. For example, most often the concept of *freedom* is perceived as an object of defense in the mental model "*defense*" which is activated by the verb *to defend* in such combinations as *defend freedom* and the noun *defense* in the *defense of freedom*.

The appeal to value-significant concepts in the texts of political speeches allows one not only to increase the pathos of the speech and preserve the continuity of the value system but also create new meanings due to "reframing" – the transition from the old vision of the situation to the new one proposed by the speaker, essentially, the transfer of the already known the mental model into a new, yet unfamiliar context. The working principle of this mechanism as a process of forming a new meaning lies in the use of new linguistic means of description, leading to the creation of new meanings and a change in the existing understanding of the state of affairs. B. Obama expressed his ironic attitude towards G.W. Bush's favorite slogan, *war on terror*, in one of the politician's speeches where Obama called the war on terror political football:

*And now, after three long years of watching the same back and forth in Washington, the American people have sent a clear message that the days of using the **war on terror as a political football** are over. That policy-by-slogan will no longer pass as an acceptable form of debate in this country* (B. Obama).

By placing the metaphor in a different contextual model, B. Obama changes the positive coloring of the expression *war on terror* created by G.W. Bush to a negative one based on interpreting the latter through the concept of a sports game, which seems to be incompatible with the military situation. The analysis of the short story of the value structure of *war on terror* shows that coloring can invade and change the value system, but such changes can be temporary and depend on the political course of the country. Thus, the introduction of new names for phenomena of reality into the ideological narrative turns out to be a manifestation of language as an activity aimed at changing the world. The analysis of the texts of American political speeches showed that the "reframing" of the main themes of the politician's speech is associated with rhetorical strategies aimed at convincing, informing, making an emotional impact, inspiring confidence and attracting the addressee's the attention.

When studying the rhetorical potential of strategies, we noted that the incompetent use of the latter can turn a political speech against its creator. In one of the speeches, G.W. Bush uses a rhetorical method of personification and a statement about values with the pragmatic goal of drawing attention to the work of a volunteer organization with the military name "Peace Corps":

And then we've got the Peace Corps, and the Peace Corps is a way for Americans to help teach the world about the universal values that we hold dear, the true nature of America, which sometimes is distorted around the world (G.W. Bush).

The verb *teach* here acts as a trigger that activates the mental model "teaching process". Usually, this model entails a teacher who somehow shares knowledge and experience with the student. However, by personifying the concept of the *world*, G.W. Bush creates a certain imbalance in the distribution of roles: the Americans are in the role of the "teacher" and the whole world is in the role of the student. Implicitly, this is perceived as a situation when the whole world is not sufficiently educated and needs help from the teacher. Here we can also note a certain paradox between the mental model "teacher-student" and the characterization of values using the adjective *universal*: it hardly makes sense to teach what is already well known (Vashtalova, 2009). An important role in creating the image of a political leader is played by the so-called micro-roles that the audience associates with a particular politician and the narrative is one of the key means of actualizing these micro-roles within the framework of the dominant communicative strategy of self-presentation.

We use the term "micro-role" in the meaning of an integral part of a political leader's socio-political macro-role. When expounding this issue, it should be noted that implicit information has enormous influencing potential due as "implicit information is easily perceived by the addressee and influences the formation of an opinion about the advertised object, bypassing the procedures for analytical processing of information carried out by a person" (Pirogova, Parshin, 2000, p. 74). An integral part of the self-praising technique is the personal pronoun "I":

I can make America safer. I believe America is safest and strongest when we are leading the world and we are leading strong alliances. I also know how to lead those alliances. I have a better plan for homeland security. I have a better plan to be able to fight the war on terror. I know I can do a better job in Iraq. I can do a better job of training the Iraqi forces to defend themselves, and I know that we can do a better job of preparing for elections. (G.W. Bush)

I am going to appoint the toughest and smartest, and I know them all, trade negotiators to fight on behalf of American workers. (D. Trump)

I certainly haven't won every battle I've fought. But leadership means perseverance and hard choices. You have to push through the setbacks and disappointments and keep at it. (H. Clinton)

A politician's speech often features anaphoric repetitions that begin with the personal pronoun *I* and a verb in the form of the future tense, for example, "I will fight/strengthen/reform". The use of repetitions, anaphoric in particular, allows a candidate to repeatedly emphasize the intention to protect and defend the interests of potential voters. However, promises made by candidates for the presidency of the US are often voiced in the first person plural, the speeches contain the personal inclusive pronoun *we* as well as the modal verb structure "have got to" (something must be done) or other words and expressions indicating the inevitability, the need for a particular step. Combined, this lends the promises a tone of "cooperative mindset". Thus, the voter feels involved in solving the urgent tasks of the head of state and their future administration:

*It never feels good to put your heart into a cause or a candidate you believe in – and to come up short. I know that feeling well. But, as **we look ahead** to the battle that awaits, let's remember all that unites us* (H. Clinton).

A vivid example of the actualization of the "fighter" micro-role can be an excerpt from B. Obama's inaugural address:

*...for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and **we will defeat you*** (B. Obama).

To express the metaphorical content of the communicative value-personal micro-role of the "fighter" in American political discourse, the following linguistic means with value connotations are used: to fight, to defeat sb. (sth.), to struggle, to battle, to oppose, etc.

CONCLUSION

The rhetorical repertoire of American politicians is diverse, but the technique of self-presentation is, perhaps, universal and can even be applied independently from the global opposition "Us and Them". Self-presentation is the management of the impression that the politician wishes to make on the audience to influence it; this is the speaker's "personal presentation", a verbal demonstration of their personal qualities, the so-called self-portrait. The strategy of self-presentation, as demonstrated by the analyzed material,

is actualized by techniques of self-praise, promises, demonstration of professional success – both within the framework of the global strategy "Us and Them" and outside it. One should also note that the second important part of this strategy – negative presentation of opponents – is not used outside the global strategy. In any case, we have not found such an application. The technique of self-praise in the ideological narrative is based on the politician's desire to present themselves in the most favorable light, to describe their personal qualities, merits and talents and is largely based on the manipulative potential of metaphors.

It should be noted that the choice of an object for a metaphorical attack by US political leaders, as well as the general ideological message of the narrative, directly depends on the current American and foreign political situation and the politician's individual views at a certain period. When, for example, B. Obama used the communicative technique of promising to defeat terrorists and their associates, Obama's competitor from the Republican Party M. Romney, using the same narrative tactics, called poverty, ignorance and injustice as the most important enemies of the US at that time:

*We will be ever vigilant and never vulnerable, and we will **fight our wars against poverty, ignorance, and injustice** – for those are the **enemies** against which our forces can be honorably **marshaled*** (M. Romney).

In the above excerpts from American politicians' speeches, there is an "evolution" of anti-values, as if completing the cycle. If Mitt Romney argued that the main problem in the country was poverty and injustice, then the incumbent President of the US B. Obama considered the fight against terrorists and their associates a priority at that stage. In turn, the candidate from the same party H. Clinton returns to social problems but at a higher level – the solution, in the politician's opinion, is possible only if the nation "unites in the coming battle". Finally, D. Trump who won the last presidential race cited external threats as the main problems – from migration to the economic war with China. Time will tell whether this cycle is repeated or American politicians choose some other priorities as the object of their ideological narrative. However, in any case, the narrative remains and, obviously, for a long time will be an important tool of propaganda and manipulation in the hands of both American and many other politicians.

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