

MYTHOPOESES AS A DISCURSIVE TOOL OF RUSSIAN INFORMATION WAR ON RT

Ihor Matseliukh

*Ukrainian Catholic University,
17, Sventsitskoho Str., Lviv, Ukraine, 79011
iorya@ucu.edu.ua*

The present paper explores the discursive means of creating ideologically biased myth-making narratives on the Russian state-owned media channel RT, formerly *Russia Today*. The basis for the paper is 22 news stories collected from RT's English-language webcasting service within four days in February 2025. The research is carried out within the framework of CDA of the textual level of RT's coverage, with the most typical cases exemplified in the cited excerpts.

The research relies on the works of scholars dedicated to CDA analysis of news discourse. Based on the present corpus, several journalistic aspects of myth-making discourse on RT have been singled out. Along these thematic layers, the accompanying discursive techniques that facilitate the myth-making on RT are uncovered and analyzed.

This article investigates the corpus for the evidence of a biased and distorted linguistic representation of the political tensions between Russia and the West, and the Russo-Ukrainian war in particular. It also focuses on uncovering the more illicit techniques of myth-making through CDA research and identifies the cases where linguistic discursive means are employed to render the ideological bias. Similar research is scarce in the case of RT, which makes the present article another contribution into the uncovering of propagandistic techniques of news providers.

Key words: mythopoesis, RT, propaganda, CDA, ideology, media bias, the Russo-Ukrainian war.

Introduction. Throughout world history, political myths have been often considered as the most destructive, since they increasingly become a means to spread the ruling ideologies. By effectively using the key concepts of loyalty, patriotism, collective memory, race, and combining them with selective language and societal practices, political regimes can contest the rational and moral norms of the entire civilian orders to a degree when democracy becomes endangered by autocracies [30, p. 2]. In 2023, the monitoring for the previous 18 years detected a steady decline of democratic practices in 52 countries, such as Nicaragua, Turkey, Venezuela, Iran and Russia. The latter subverts the basic human rights and civil liberties in the Crimea and other occupied Ukrainian territories, staging sham elections and implementing military conscription. The two and a half decade presidential term of the Russian leader forces out the independent media, imprisons opposition politicians, and manipulates the judiciary and media [12, p. 11]. Political support for autocracies is implemented via the allegiance with the population, propagating “sets of ideals, ends, and purposes, which help the members of

the system to interpret the past, explain the present and offer a vision for the future" [26, p. 33]. It is the media narratives that we connect our present research with, especially with its less conspicuous tactics, namely myth-making and myth-proliferation.

Except for the initial uncertainty following the start of Russia's full scale war on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, or in Russia's version the "special military operation," the Kremlin-founded webcaster RT, formerly Russia Today, pours forth dozens of news stories daily. Apart from blaming the West, rebuking the blame against Russia, and spreading all kinds of accusations against Ukraine, the EU, the US and NATO, RT pursues the goal of justifying Russia's aggression [1]. At the same time the channel actively promulgates Russia's interpretations of the war and the surrounding geopolitical tensions by disseminating multiple narratives that aim at harming both Ukraine and the "collective West," which deprives separate countries of their individuality and vies for the ways to circumvent the anti-Russian sanctions [21; 26].

The ideological priority of RT webcast consists in the justification of Russia's actions in the minds of global communities, i. e. making its political and ideological decisions seem compatible with the world order established among others at the Yalta Conference in 1945 [5; 37]. Nevertheless, the ruling political forces within Russia preclude the notion of the peoples' right and will to express their self-determination, join or leave larger alliances or be affiliated otherwise, a phenomenon that might be traced back to the origins of Asian dictatorships [27]. In accordance with this historical background, RT strives to accrue legitimization for the Kremlin's actions and aggression.

The **purpose** of this article is to study linguistic means of this legitimization in the spirit of van Leeuwen's CDA [35, p. 117] and to focus on one of its less researched tools – mythopoesis – which, along with authorization, moral evaluation and rationalization constitute the four cornerstones of legitimization.

Previous Research in the Area. Another incentive of the study is the scarcity of research on mythopoesis in the media in general [3; 32; 24; 28], with the exception of Koppel and Hansson [16]. To the best of our knowledge, no linguistic CDA research on mythopoesis on RT has so far been conducted.. Matter et al. [19] and Heppell et al. [13] stand the closest to our present research, although they offer the key-word clusters in multiple languages gleaned from an extensive corpus of RT news feed.

Most researchers, such as Snegovaya [29] and Yablokov [36], however, argue that the present myth of Russia's righteousness started acquiring its aggressiveness while the EU and its liberal values took hold in the 1990s. The coverage of the Russo-Georgian War of 2008, among others, was mainly carried out in the light of downgrading European civilization from the Russian perspective [29, p. 7].

Although the liberal democracies of the West have not yet imposed effective countermeasures against Russian disinformation [31, p. 45], NATO and the EU are intensifying research into information warfare [16, p. 111] and offer countering measures [15; 20, p. 24].

Methodology. The corpus of the present paper is compiled of 22 English-language news stories of 20,500 words on RT International in February 2025 that mention Ukraine or directly relate to the Russo-Ukrainian war. Among them there are five longer editorials of approximately 930 words per story, which exceed the average length of a news item on RT of

450–500 words by 50%. The substantial output of seven stories daily prompted our interest in applying a linguistic CDA investigation into the journalistic practices of the aggressor in the third year of Russia's war on Ukraine.

Since the aim of the current paper is to uncover the mythopoetic discursive means in shaping propagandistic narratives, the CDA approaches will be applied towards identifying inequalities in power, such as Fairclough's three dimensional model of CDA [7, p. 10], adapted to the present-day circumstances of wartime propaganda, i.e.: a) text and motives for its production; b) its interaction with the audiences, including researchers, on the level of critical linguistics, to point out the sources of ideology in the language of texts [14, p. 13; 35, p. 117] and look into how the text represents reality and conceptualizes the topics it addresses; c) the envisaged social action that the interpretation of the text entails in the long run. The third precept contains the strongest and the most direct appeal to mythopoesis, since, as we have analyzed above, the underlying motive of Russia's propaganda is to undermine the liberal democracies of the West and diminish the global support for Ukraine.

Being aware of the subtle and dynamic nature of mythopoesis in propagandistic discourse, we will depart somewhat from the prescribed five CDA aspects that might reveal ideological content, i.e. 1) transitivity; 2) modality; 3) transformations (e.g., passivisations, nominalisations); 4) linguistic ordering; 5) coherence, order and unity of the discourse [7, p. 121; 9, p. 198]. Other CDA tools, broadly discussed in CDA studies, will be engaged in our analysis, i.e. transitivity and theme [6, p. 177], modality [9, p. 200] and metaphors, presuppositions and implicatures [34, p. 473], intertextuality [17, p. 40], nominalizations and passivization [9, p. 207], representation [33, p. 369], lexical choices and word connotations [6, p. 185ff] and argumentation strategies implemented via linguistic discursive means of predication, perspectivation, and mitigation [23, p. 103].

Our critical discourse analysis also focuses on the three cornerstone premises: a) description of the text; b) interpretation of the interaction processes, and their relationship to the text; c) explanation of how the interaction process relates to and impacts social action [7, p. 11].

Results and Discussion. Having analyzed the corpus in the light of critical linguistics, we may point out such thematic components of the anti-West myth-making on RT as: a) reinterpreting recent history to suite RT's narrative; b) undermining the reputation of Western and international institutions, such as the EU, the UN, NATO, or Eurovision; c) depriving Ukraine of its sovereignty and its leadership of legitimacy; d) promoting controversial and second-rank politicians who share Russia's official political view; e) positioning Russia as a cultural rival to the West; f) airing the “uncomfortable “facts” detrimental for the West's reputation.

These ideological directions are united under a larger narrative that might be described as the glorification of Russia's righteousness, its political and economic decisions, under the leadership of its president. Apart from being thematically focused, the above mentioned planes of myth creation are also brought forth by the more subtle discursive means. In our analysis, we will consider the discursive means of mythopoesis acknowledging thematic elements as inherent components of RT's myth-making.

The first aspect of myth-making is interpreting history to suit the Kremlin's aims and investments. This type of discourse stems from the Russian viewpoint and aims at undermining European values and annihilating Ukrainians' democratic aspirations, which is discernible through the structure of the following excerpt from a news story titled *Trump's 'America First' policy aiming to shatter post-WWII system – Lavrov*:

(01) *For all its shortcomings and strengths, "the Yalta-Potsdam order has provided the international system's normative-legal framework for eight decades," Lavrov said. "The UN-based world order fulfills its main task – safeguarding everyone against a new world war," the top diplomat stressed.*

However, the new Trump administration has openly stated that the framework is both outdated and "undesirable," as well as allegedly acting against US interests, Lavrov said

The text offers a seemingly comprehensive overview of historical events set against the present-day realities and consists of two opposing paragraphs, joined by *However*, which juxtaposes the two sections by drawing the line between the established norm and order and the turmoil of new geopolitical factors. Discursively, the argumentation starts with *shortcomings and strengths*, i.e. an objective interpretation of a historical period that provided relative safety and served everyone's interests. Pronoun *everyone* fulfills a dubious function, since the world has never been safe and peaceful and armed conflicts have been ravaging the planet regardless of the *safeguarding Yalta-Potsdam order*. Set in a closed verbal syntagm, pronoun *everyone* defies critical interpretation, since a more appealing notion is introduced after preposition *against*, i.e. *a new world war*. It is only natural for the reader to side with this kind of discourse, since it promised safety, which is now at risk. Discursively and ideologically, however, *everyone* functions as a unifying peacekeeping term that is usually voiced out by the truth-abiding camp. The paragraph is replete with positive or neutral formal lexemes – *international system, framework, world order, fulfill, safeguard, top diplomat*, i. e. lexemes whose original context is academic, legal and state-level operational, in other words, part and parcel of the "social imaginary" [2, p. 201]. In addition, they function structurally as either nominalizations or noun groups, which further instill the mythopoetic aspect of this discourse, precluding inquiries, e. g. What kind of order? What other tasks? [14, p. 22].

Another discursive value of this excerpt is the three hyphenated compounds, enabling a still more compact information load in a succinct and efficient academic style. Most importantly, though, as seen throughout the corpus, the idea of keeping the world safe comes from Russia, unlike after, *However*, which, in a manner of the Cold War, draws a dividing line between the worldviews and creates a subconscious dichotomy *safe vs. unsafe*, the latter being called forth by this contrastive adverb alone followed by the adversarial governmental institution that loses its legitimization against the *Yalta-Potsdam* joined historic agreement. Even if political decisions and institutions do become *outdated* in the long run, here, placed next to attribute *undesirable*, this micro-discourse indicates that a single state threatens a long-established world peace-keeping institution.

The myth of the "orderly Yalta-Potsdam world" is further expounded in the corpus, notwithstanding the fact that communist regimes were established in Eastern European countries trampling the basic freedoms, contrary to the 1945 agreements, the breach of which made the former Soviet Union the occupier of Eastern Europe [5; 38]. Instead, RT widely

glorifies Russia's victory in WWII and denies legitimacy of NATO's expansion to the East, achieved by the will of the peoples, not by the military force like in the former Warsaw pact [37].

The exclusion of this information on RT International is another testimony to a myth about the "world order," traceable in excerpt (02) from a news story *Fyodor Lukyanov: Why global powers can't agree on a New World Order*:

(02) *The Yalta-Potsdam agreements emerged from the ashes of a global war, with victorious powers jointly dismantling the challenger to world domination. This unprecedented collaboration gave the Allies the moral and political authority to shape the world order. Despite the intensity of current conflicts, particularly in Ukraine, it is incorrect to equate them with a world war. Much of the planet views today's clashes as internal disputes among powers unable to fully conclude the Cold War. While sympathies vary, most nations prefer to stay on the sidelines, minimizing their own risks and costs.*

Deeming itself a "victorious power," since, apart from the battleground advantage, Stalin gained unlimited political dominance abroad, and by keeping in check *the challenger to world domination*, ruled indiscriminately within the Warsaw Pact and beyond. But discursively, the text attributes the high qualities of *the moral and political authority* to Russia's dominance in the post-Soviet space; in fact, one of the RT site rubrics is called "Russia and FSU"; in this way the shared identities overlap, or are rather united, even equaled by *and*.

The reasons behind the metaphorical *ashes of a global war* might be many, such as poetic glorification of the heroic past, but in its discursive mythopoetic, value lies the fact that lexeme "war" in RT's present-day discourse refers exclusively to WWII, thus downplaying the Russo-Ukrainian war, presumably with the intention of diverting global communities from the realities of Russia's incursion into a sovereign neighboring nation. Additionally, Russia's war on Ukraine is tucked among other numerous *conflicts* or *clashes*, as if implying that their inevitability makes them *de facto* a part of reality; and the specifying adverbial phrase, *particularly in Ukraine*, presupposes that it is one of many. Moreover, the reader's attention is further diverted by the noun group, *the intensity of current conflicts*, where they acquire a more independent position via the preceding genitive *of*, thus putting into the head position an abstract noun devoid of concrete reality or convincing mental pictures, discursively highlighting the *conflicts*.

From this place onwards, the author assumes a preaching stance, visible through the vocabulary selection, especially nominals, *incorrect, internal disputes, minimizing risks, sympathies vary*, and his treatment of global communities, *most nations, much of the planet*, assuming the "correct" position in modern geopolitics and elevating his rectitude at the expense of casting accusations at the adversary [10, p. 18]. At the same time, the passage promulgates a passive attitude towards global events, *prefer to stay on the sidelines*, which makes countries easier to succumb to the conqueror.

One of the most telling examples of presuppositions in the service of ideological myth-making is in (03) from a news story *Rape and torture: Will the West cover for Kiev's war crimes?* Subtitled *Atrocities that happen on the inconvenient side of the barricades must not be swept under the rug* by Tarik Cyril Amar, a historian from Koç University, Istanbul:

(03) *Because a West that always claims the moral high ground must finally understand itself: it is no better than others, and, given its extremely aggressive conduct since the end of the Cold War – not to adopt a longer, also plausible perspective – it may well be worse.*

Discursively, the title offers a pronounced example of presupposition on the ground of a follow-up question, thus implicitly stating the prior existence of the unproved phenomenon *per se*. Without the question, the title would lose most of its declarative persuasiveness; but with one it acquires dynamics and storyline, and its discursive existence. According to RT, the West acts as an accomplice in war crimes, another leading thread of RT's mythopoesis.

The precipitous negativity towards the West is somewhat lessened in *a West* presuming that there are other facets of the West, apart from the one that claims high morality. Whether an editorial oversight or levelling up to the inanimate *it, itself*, the resulting presupposition is the annihilation of *the moral high ground* emphasized by the tentative *claims*. Adverb *finally* explicitly states the West's failure to comprehend and draw conclusions about the existing reality. The descriptive clause lists *its extremely aggressive conduct*, which is taken as a given; and offers a secondary subordination, *not to ... perspective*, thus confining the most uncouth information in the least questionable syntactical position [14, p. 90]. However, this discursive insertion triggers further presuppositions, silencing down the uncomfortable events that remain unnamed; our inquisitive minds, on the other hand, rarely stay dormant and inadvertently work their ways to find out the truth. Finally, the idea closes with what had to be proved, i. e. to show that the West is no better or even worse than the sponsor of RT.

Even though the idea of being *no better than others* adds objectivity to argumentation, the discursive arrangement of the utterance puts a heavy blame on the West excluding the past and present-day wrongs inflicted by the current Russian regime:

In its Ukraine-related messages, RT is discursively and metaphorically drawing a new map and insisting on a world order according to Russian definitions. Coming from the news item titled *Zelensky admits Ukraine doesn't control rare-earths Trump wants*, excerpt (04) inflicts a forceful split of Ukraine's territory, with the subtitle introducing a changed American rhetoric, *US aid should be offered to Kiev only in return for access to natural resources, US President Donald Trump has proposed*:

(04) *Around \$7 trillion of Ukraine's total mineral wealth is in its former Donbass regions of Donetsk and Lugansk, according to Forbes. ... Most of these territories came under Russian control after Donetsk and Lugansk voted to join Russia in 2022. Both declared independence in 2014 from Ukraine after the Western-backed Maidan coup in Kiev.*

Since the wording reflecting the assessment of Ukraine's mineral wealth does not cite its total amount, this impressive value stands out unmatched to the overall nation's wealth and is likely to get etched in the minds of the readers as Ukraine's total. Even though the genitive case *of* is activated, it might be understood dubiously as a part or a whole. The noun group *its former Donbass regions* discourages any questioning where Donbass belongs, prompted by placing the adjective inside it [14, p. 30]. Likewise in *the Western-backed Maidan coup*, where besides the above feature the group's proper nouns acquire the negative coloring of the final head-noun.

The following two sentences attribute agency to Ukrainian entities, *territories came, Donetsk and Lugansk voted, both declared*, implicitly stating Russia's non-interference and portraying it as a neutral side, even as a welcome protector. Furthermore, in both subordinate clauses the key historical events are presented via an ideologically skewed interpretation, *voted to join ..., the Western-backed*.

The title of the news item *Zelensky calls for nukes to 'stop Russia'* offers disturbing CDA results in terms of creating another myth and weaving it into RT's discursive reality, especially when this linguistic approach deals with power distribution in the first place [6, p. 201].

Passage (05) is construed from a Russian viewpoint, *Russia has argued, Russian officials have also repeatedly stated*, concluding it with the blaming rhetoric, *The US consigned the memorandum to irrelevancy*:

(05) *Russia has argued that Ukraine never had any nuclear weapons to begin with, as the Soviet assets legally belonged to Moscow. Russian officials have also repeatedly stated that the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which resolved possession of the outstanding nuclear weapons, was then undermined by NATO's eastward expansion, which threatened Moscow's vital security interests. The US consigned the memorandum to irrelevancy by backing the Maidan coup in Kiev in 2014.*

This authoritarian position is further consolidated by the myth-resembling historical retrospect, *to begin with*, and presupposes the insecure status of the former nuclear arms in Ukraine; in addition, the following subordinate clause offers the information in a covert way of taking it away from the main predication, thus discouraging further questioning [14, p. 48]. In the same way the narration of Ukraine's dubious possession of the said weapons is also placed into a subordinate construct. The only open predication is *Russia has argued that...*, which in itself yields little if questioned.

A similar pattern persists in the second sentence, with a reporting verb *stated* as the predicate emphasized by *repeatedly*, which stresses the inability of the West to comprehend clearly. The passive construction with the final position for the agent makes it even more pronounced, and the noun group *NATO's eastward expansion* again offers an unquestionable proposition of a closed construct, i.e. aggressive encroachment towards Russia. The fact that Russia positions itself in such a vulnerable light assists in sustaining the myth of turning Russia's offensive into a defensive, which is encapsulated in the final subordinate clause. Noun group *Moscow's vital security interests* implicates that threats against Moscow are to be eliminated in the face of the enemy's *expansion*, whose last unforgiving straw for Moscow's attack on Ukraine was *backing the Maidan coup in Kiev*; and, unlike the main predicate, this information functions as the undisputable given [14, p. 88].

Moreover, the passage is discursively construed in a way that the wish for the banned weapons does not originate from the Russian side, as it is only *the Soviet assets* that belong to it. The closest to the nuclear weapons agency is Ukrainian, so that RT triggers the myth of Ukraine's wish for the weapons.

Taking a look back on the corpus articles, we come to a conclusion that the three initial ones, i.e. a) the Kremlin's reinterpretation of recent history; b) staining the reputation of the West, and c) depriving Ukraine of its legitimacy, are pervading each story with an intensity ratio roughly corresponding to the above listing. The three remaining ones, d) promoting

controversial and second-rank politicians; e) positioning Russia as a cultural rival to the West; f) airing the uncomfortable “facts,” are less directly related to mythopoesis on RT; however, they represent some of the most vivid cases of ideologically biased discourse.

Taken from the same news story as (03) above, excerpt (06) reinforces the message by attributing it to other Kremlin politicians, whose names are never used without their full credentials:

(06) *It is true that, at the same time, Russian media and politicians treat the crimes already as fact: Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, for instance, has underlined that the atrocities of Russkoye Porechnoye must be acknowledged and widely publicized, even if the West and Ukraine pretend to be deaf to this kind of news. Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry, has denounced the crimes as typical of the “terrorist and Neo-Nazi” Kiev regime, which, she stressed, is supported by the West.*

The introductory sentence blends the allegations of *crimes* into *fact*, which is already aired by *Russian media and politicians*. Discursively, though, this notion is implicit in the noun phrase *the atrocities of Russkoye Porechnoye*, where the concept is sealed as a given. As a composite predicate of a passive construction, it has no alternative, because of *must*, but to be recognized, in the absence of addressees, by all those capable of cognition. The following subordinate structure, *even if ...*, however, forefronts the explicit agency, *the West and Ukraine*, with the predicate group wording of stylistically lower register, *pretend to be deaf*, which contrasts with the previous lexis attached to the Russian side, *true, treat the crimes, fact, atrocities*. Furthermore, this sentence is three times longer than the recommended average of about 20 words [3, p. 23], or in most journalistic manuals, e.g. in Purdue University Writing Lab, and the ideas compete for attention, so that the final clause is likely to be among the most memorable segments. The closing sentence introduces another politician, whose authorship is stressed again, *she stressed*, and the presupposition of a history of similar deeds, *the crimes as typical*, is in line with RT’s mythopoesis about Ukraine. In the final noun group, *the “terrorist and Neo-Nazi” Kiev regime*, the head noun *regime*, meaning, according to the Cambridge dictionary, “a particular government or a system or method of government,” which is mainly used in disapproving contexts, thus adding to the myth of the illegitimate government.

Against the backdrop of the above accolade to the Russian politicians, excerpt (07), coming from the same news story, strips Ukrainian leadership of every valour except *style*, further developing a disparaging discourse, *wasting its soldiers’ lives, strategically absurd, to-the-last-man stand*:

(07) *The region on the border with Ukraine is, of course, the site of the worse than pyrrhic incursion which Kiev launched into Russian territory last August. Since initially being overrun, the territory under the control of Ukrainian forces has unsurprisingly been shrinking under a Russian counterattack, while Kiev has been wasting its soldiers’ lives on yet another strategically absurd and tactically mulish to-the-last-man stand in classic Zelensky style.*

The temporary and predictable nature of this military maneuver is emphasized by *initially being overrun, has unsurprisingly been shrinking*, again because of *counterattack*, which reiterates the idea of the defensiveness of Russia’s military actions. Discourse marker *of course* reinforces the truth of RT’s story of the futile incursion into the Kursk region, and the adverb *unsurprisingly*, being of arbitrary and thus biased nature, carries a degree of prophecy

and the proof of the *pyrrhic incursion*. In the similar way *tactically mulish* functions, which is opulently and negatively connotational in terms of a culturally shared metaphor of being stubborn and unwise. And such moves on behalf of the Ukrainian army are reportedly many, as presupposes the word group *yet another*.

Taken from the news item *Putin approves establishment of rival to Eurovision*, subtitled *Russia will host the Intervision Song Contest later this year, according to an order signed by the president*, excerpt (08) draws on cultural history to promote Russian initiatives:

(08) *A similar contest of the same name was held from 1965 to 1977 and served as an alternative to Eurovision for Eastern Bloc countries. Participants included the USSR, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary.*

The revived version is planned to include BRICS nations, members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and other interested countries. Russian officials say that the event will be free from political restrictions, allowing a wider range of participants.

Again, the implicit message of the story is that Russia acts in response to an earlier event, which, it claims, was practising tendentious treatment of participants, but the chain of events never goes beyond the trigger-precedent that actuates the present news item; i.e. the Russia's war against Ukraine, which caused the shift in geopolitics, is excluded from the RT discourse. Having imposed the ban on Russian and Byelorussian performers, the Eurovision Song Contest spawned ire in the two countries, which provides another example of the cultural story turned political.

In the predominantly binary nature of contrasting values, lexeme *alternative* usually introduces a reaction towards the tradition or precedent, and offers a solution, hope or, at any rate, a development, which is a welcome sign for any existential phenomenon. An alternative is also an expectation of improvements, pointing out that the original Eurovision contest offered inadequate conditions back in the 1960s–70s. This historical reference seconds the present-day decision to set up a revived alternative with the background knowledge implication that the European values have never waivered. It is worthy noticing that RT often refers to the bygone geopolitical names, in this case three former countries, *the USSR, East Germany, Czechoslovakia*, which ceased to exist. Along with one of the rubrics on the RT home page “Russia and FSU”, this tendency might be an intentional trigger to revive the former days of the communist rule, still welcome by some remaining diehards [11, p. 48; 22, p. 22].

The second paragraph opens with the passive and produces a favourable impression of teamwork, especially after the listing of *BRICS, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)*; the inclusive and imprecise *and other interested countries* implicates an infinite number of the candidate countries with the underlying message of the open door policy. The presupposition in the last sentence, *will be free*, hints at the existing political maneuvering in the traditional Eurovision song contest; taken in the light of the preceding passage, this idea is backed up by the historical reference, *from 1965 to 1977*. This deeply rooted bias will eventually be “eradicated” by *Russian officials* that would *free* the event *from political restrictions*. It is peculiar that the promise of such political freedom comes from a country which in many international ratings, such as transparency, corruption, and democracy, ranked 150th out of 167 countries in Democracy Index in 2024; in NGO Transparency International, it ranked as the 154th corrupt country out of 180 [8].

Disregarding these statistics, the upbeat rheme of the closing sentence of excerpt (08) consists of a promise of eliminating *political restrictions*, as well as welcoming *a wider range of participants*, presupposing a narrower range of contestants admitted into the original Eurovision contests.

Excerpt (09) comes from a larger editorial titled *Fyodor Lukyanov: How Covid-19 reshaped the global order*, where Russia and its belligerent foreign policy are excluded from explicit agency; instead, the pandemic, in RT's interpretation, is to blame for the collapsing world order. In step with its title, the editorial averts the focus from the Russo-Ukrainian war, started by Russia in February 2022, to Covid-19 of 2019-20, expounding its status and impact on European geopolitics, as if packaging Russia's militaristic invasion among the global, mostly economic, consequences of the pandemic:

(09) *The pandemic revealed the inefficiencies and lack of credibility of international institutions. The “every nation for itself” approach that dominated the early months of the crisis further eroded trust in global norms and fueled the legitimization of national self-interest as a guiding principle.*

In many ways, the Ukraine crisis that followed the pandemic mirrored the earlier disruption. Just as the pandemic severed global connections out of necessity, geopolitical decisions in 2022 further fractured the international order. Yet, once again, the world did not collapse.

Attempts to isolate Russia economically and politically have not succeeded in dismantling the global system. Instead, the system has adapted, becoming more fragmented and less rule-bound. The much-touted ‘rules-based order’ of liberal globalization has given way to a more pragmatic, albeit chaotic, approach to international relations.

The subjectival agency of *pandemic, approach, geopolitical decisions in 2022, the system, attempts to isolate Russia and the much-touted ‘rules-based order’ of liberal globalization*, ranging from neutral to defensive to overtly sarcastic, is anything but disconnected from Russia; even its invasion into Ukraine is glossed over in the closed noun phrase *the Ukrainian crisis* that eliminates responsibility and discourages further questioning [14, p. 20]. The text is replete with noun groups, *international institutions, global norms, guiding principle, earlier disruption, global connections, and nominalizations, inefficiencies, legitimization, attempts, dismantling, approach, blurring agency and thus responsibility*.

The overall message of this news article and the selected excerpt might be considered as the epitome of Russia's myth-making strategy on the ground of its discursive techniques of oblique references to global actors. In fact, they are absent from the narrative, and in their stead appear highly abstract notions listed above, with the exception of *the world*, which, in the context of global crises, is least informative. The only discursive player is Russia, used as a direct object and thus posing as a victim in *Attempts to isolate Russia*. Both this fact and the deprecating content towards the “otherness” put the state-run RT and its sponsor on the righteousness plane due to the irrevocable nature of communicating the blame [10, p. 18].

Another means of denigrating the enemy and a significant component of RT's myth-making is connotational intertextuality as exemplified by the extended nominal construct of the last subject. Lexeme *tout* comes from trade language and is predominantly used in advertising; its functioning here introduces the notion of the West peddling its liberal values

in a forceful manner, *attempts to isolate*; moreover, its origin and nature casts another streak of tarnish on the outdatedness of European and American liberal values. The '*rules-based order*' that follows immediately introduces the ironical attitude of RT towards the Western civilization; set within the quotation marks it undermines democratic values of the West and prophesies its demise.

Finally, the enemy's name comes to the fore in excerpt (10), from the same news article as (09), in the extended nominal construction, which, discursively, leaves no doubt as to the "true nature" of NATO's expansion; with the emphasis of the possessive case that attributes all the wrong-doing to its master, *Washington's geopolitical maneuvering in Eastern Europe*:

(10) *Washington's geopolitical maneuvering in Eastern Europe is one manifestation of this 'rules-based order' – the explosive consequences of which are now evident in the ongoing Ukraine conflict.*

This construct is one of the most typical nominal structures that put unquestionable blame on the opponent. If we rearrange this subject into a predication, *Washington maneuvers geopolitically in Eastern Europe*, the information would be more evenly distributed across the sentence members; however, this more ubiquitous and typical sentence arrangement, being more open, would weaken its ideological appeal, as the predicate *maneuvers* becomes open to questions. In the original, on the other hand, it is found in the center of the closed noun group, while the predicate *manifestation* designates a non-informative category that calls for further explanation, which again is set in another closed construct following the dash.

RT's wording of the final subordinate clause puts the blame for the Russo-Ukrainian war on Washington, disregarding the will of the people of Eastern Europe, probably in a manner of Russian imperial ways of brainwashing its population with the Kremlin's propaganda [3; 22; 25].

There is also another side of Russian myth-making, namely the wording of the messages, which in core structures hinges on the abstract and non-specific vocabulary, e.g. *manifestation, maneuvering, consequences, conflict*. Such discourse raises more questions as one reads along, as we have seen in excerpt (09). Then, at some strategic point, political entities come into play, *Washington, Eastern Europe, Ukraine*, as if called upon to fill up the void after the cascade of abstract nouns, nominalizations and noun constructs, such as listed above in excerpt (09).

Apart from the above considerations, the presuppositional deduction of *one* signifies that the *consequences* are many; and, being unspecified, they raise a specter of the infinite array of versions triggered by the larger discourse of RT's news stories, editorials, reviews, cross-references and comments. This aspect of building and disseminating propagandistic myths through creating and filling out the void of informational inquisitiveness is a lesser researched topic of propagandistic discourses, which might combine critical linguistics and cognitive psychology.

These random selections from the corpus of RT news stories from February 3rd to 6th, 2025, related to Ukraine, exemplify the myth-making policy of RT towards Ukraine and the West at the textual level of the larger propagandistic discourse of the official Kremlin.

Conclusions. CDA of our corpus brings forth RT's tendentious coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war, evident in Russia's manipulation of discursive means of textual representation as seen in the above analysis. These include agency or its suppression, presuppositions and more episodic implicatures, noun constructs and nominalizations, authorization and

rationalization, exclusion from blameworthy contexts, intensive manipulation of noun phrases and nominalizations. Apart from these, RT's myth-making journalistic practices extend to avoiding verbal references to Russia's attacks, and to death and suffering caused by Russia's atrocities.

Strategic structuring of the journalistic discourse allows Russia to avoid associating with both negative deeds and unfavorable wording not only as subject-matter, but by the mere textual avoidance of the proximity with one. References to the negative, as the CDA of the corpus indicates, are attributed exclusively to Ukraine and the West. Linguistically, Russia is surrounded by lexemes of positive combinability and connotations with numerous references to its magnanimity through metaphors, abstractions, authorizations, irony and sarcasm. Other journalistic techniques include, among others, the excessive use of abstract and generic nouns followed by a toponym or lexemes with specific reference that might be called upon to compensate for the informational void of the former. In this manner, numerous predication in RT's discourse, especially the nominal predicates, tend to be devoid of specific meaning; instead, subordinate structures are more likely to carry the key informational load and to smuggle information in a less conspicuous way.

A cause-effect chain of events tends to suppress Russia-the-agent and foreground Russia-the-victim when the context is anti-Russian; at the same time, Russia, as the subject, is more likely to occur when it puts forward initiatives and solutions, exudes care or sorrow for the plight of the less fortunate. Reference to the authority of political leaders or experts is the key ingredient of myth-making via legitimization in RT's content, such as political and military decisions.

The myth-creating techniques also presuppose the high frequency of the above discursive practices, constantly justifying Russia's offensive campaigns, claiming misunderstanding of Russia's intentions. Among the more ubiquitous political motifs, RT emphasises the negative traits of the Western camp, their hypocrisy and malice. Furthermore, as a leverage to mislead the readership, RT offers irrelevant but often repetitive information, e.g. in the news article *Fyodor Lukyanov: How Covid-19 reshaped the global order*, which focuses on the unrelated but strongly emotional topic with a plausible intention to suppress the loss of life and ruination in the present war of Russia against Ukraine.

As the researchers on political myth point out, political myth making identifies itself as "an ideologically marked narrative, which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group" [18, p.157]. This quotation summarizes the principles of myth disseminating on RT and its empire-reviving strategies; they, at certain historical points, may produce socially shared meanings that engulf societies and veil alternative visions: "What makes a political myth out of a simple narrative is the fact that the work on this narrative can, in a certain context and for certain subjects, come together and produce significance" [2, p. 178].

Regarding the evolution and ideological elaborateness of myth making on RT, we come to a conclusion that this aspect of propagandistic discourse has been developing rapidly in recent years and acquired the character of a verbal warfare. As such, it offers new grounds for future CDA research, which might shed more light on the ideological intricacies of Russia's broadcasting techniques, raise informational literacy, and prevent the spread of ideologically biased narratives.

REFERENCES

1. Bond Sh. Why Russia's broadcaster RT turned to covertly funding American pro-Trump influencers. URL: <https://www.npr.org/2024/09/25/114246/russia-today-rt-election-influence-tenet-indictment>
2. Bottici Ch. *A Philosophy of Political Myth*. 1st ed. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2007. 256 p.
3. Butcher E. War of Narratives: Russia and Ukraine. 2022. URL: https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/war-narratives-russia-and-ukraine?utm_source=chatgpt.com
4. Cutts M. *The Oxford Guide to Plain English*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2020. 208 p.
5. Yalta Conference. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Yalta-Conference>
6. Fairclough N. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 2006. 272 p.
7. Fairclough N. *Critical Language Awareness*. London : Routledge, 2013. 240 p.
8. Fleck A. Freedom, corruption, democracy: Russia's poor record. URL: <https://www.statista.com/chart/34187/russia-ranked-on-various-indices/>
9. Fowler R. et al. *Language and Control*. London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979. 240 p.
10. Gaufman E. *Security Threats and Public Perception: Digital Russia and the Ukraine Crisis*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 256 p.
11. Ghodsee K. *Lost in Transition: Ethnographies of Everyday Life After Communism*. Durham, NC : Duke University Press, 2011. 320 p.
12. Gorokhovskaia Y., Grothe C. *Freedom in the World 2024: The Mounting Damage of Flawed Elections and Armed Conflict*. Freedom House. URL: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/FIW_2024_DigitalBooklet.pdf
13. Heppell F., Bontcheva K., Scarton C. *Analysing State-Backed Propaganda Websites: a New Dataset and Linguistic Study*. URL: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2310.14032.pdf>
14. Jeffries L. *Critical Stylistics. The Power of English*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 272 p.
15. Kanet R. Moscow and the world: From Soviet active measures to Russian information warfare. *ACIG*. 2024. Vol. 3. № 1. P. 35–57.
16. Koppel J., Hansson S. How Russia deflects accusations of cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns: an analysis of the rhetorical strategies of RT. *Sojateadlane*, 2022. URL: <https://www.kvak.ee/files/2023/01/Sojateadlane-19-2022-Julius-Koppel-Sten-Hansson.pdf>
17. Kristeva J. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. by T. Moi. New York : Columbia University Press, 1986. 300 p.
18. Magdy R. Mythos politicus: a theoretical framework for the study of political myths. *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies*. 2020. Vol. 6. № 2. P. 155–178.
19. Matter D. et al. Temporally stable multilayer network embeddings: a longitudinal study of Russian propaganda. URL: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2307.10264.pdf>
20. Meister S. (Ed.). *Understanding Russian Communication Strategy: Case Studies of Serbia and Estonia*. Stuttgart : Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, 2018. 120 p.
21. Newspeak. How Russia blurs reality with a newspeak: the collective West. *Detector Media*. 2023. URL: <https://disinfo.detector.media/en/post/how-russia-blurs-reality-with-a-newspeak-the-collective-west>
22. Ost D. *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*. Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 2005. 320 p.
23. Reisigl M., Wodak R. The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Eds. R. Wodak, M. Meyer. 2nd ed. London : Sage Publications, 2008. P. 87–121.

24. Rossoliński-Liebe G., Willem B. Putin's abuse of history: Ukrainian 'nazis', 'genocide', and a fake threat scenario. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*. 2022. Vol. 35. № 1. P. 1–10.
25. RSF-Reporters Without Borders. From Russia to Serbia: How RT spreads the Kremlin's propaganda in the Balkans despite EU sanctions. 2024. URL: <https://rsf.org/en/russia-serbia-how-rt-spreads-kremlin-s-propaganda-balkans-despite-eu-sanctions>
26. Rudolf D. B. Stories you cannot defeat! Political myths as cultural integration and legitimization strategies of autocratic regimes. *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*. 2022. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12286-022-00520-0>
27. Schmidt C. Values and democracy in East Asia and Europe: a comparison. *Asian journal of German and European Studies*. 2018. Vol. 3. Article 10. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40856-018-0034-9>
28. Smart Ch. How the Russian media spread false claims about Ukrainian Nazis. *The New York Times*. 2022. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/07/02/world/europe/ukraine-nazis-russia-media.html>.
29. Snegovaya M. Disinformation, Euroskepticism and pro-Russian Parties in Eastern Europe. Washington, D.C. : FRF, 2021. URL: https://thinktank.4freerussia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Disinfo_Snegovaya.pdf.
30. Tamse C. The political myth. *Britain and the Netherlands* / eds. J. Bromley, E. Kossman. Dordrecht : Springer, 1975. P. 1–15.
31. Thornton R. The changing nature of modern warfare. *RUSI Journal*. 2015. Vol. 160. № 4. P. 40–48.
32. Treyger E. et al. The Denazify Lie: Russia's Use of Extremist Narratives Against Ukraine. Santa Monica, CA : RAND Corporation, 2025. URL: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA3450-1.html.
33. van Dijk, T. Discourse and manipulation. *Discourse & Society*. London : SAGE Publications 2006. Vol 17. № 2. P. 359–383.
34. van Dijk T. Critical discourse analysis. *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* / D. Tannen et al. (eds). 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ : Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015. P. 466–485.
35. van Leeuwen Th. Discourse and Practice. New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2008. 208 p.
36. Yablokov I. Conspiracy theories as a Russian public diplomacy tool: The case of Russia Today (RT). *Politics*. 2015. Vol. 35. P. 301–315.
37. Lysenko O., Dereyko I. Krymska Konferentsiya 1945, Yaltynska Konferensiya 1945 [The Crimean Conference of 1945, Yalta Conference of 1945]. *History Encyclopedia of Ukraine*. Smoliy V. et al. (eds.). NAS of Ukraine. Kyiv : Naukova Dumka, 2008. Vol. 5. 568 p.
38. Shurkhalo D. 80-littia Yaltynskoyi Konferentsiyi. Yak Rusvelt i Cherchil postuplylsia Stalinu [80th Anniversary of Yalta Conference. How Roosevelt and Churchill yielded to Stalin]. 2025. URL : <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/istorychna-svoboda-yaltynska-konferentsiya-80-rokiv/33303098.html>.

SOURCES

- (01) Trump's 'America First' policy aiming to shatter post-WWII system. Lavrov. <https://www.rt.com/news/612134-trump-shatter-order-lavrov/>.
- (02) Eighty years after Yalta, here's why it can't be repeated. By Fyodor Lukyanov: Why global powers can't agree on a New World Order <https://www.rt.com/russia/612157-global-powers-not-agree-world-order/>.
- (03) (06) (07) Rape and torture: Will the West cover for Kiev's war crimes? <https://www.rt.com/news/612166-russia-accuses-kiev-troops/>.
- (04) Zelensky admits Ukraine doesn't control rare-earths Trump wants <https://www.rt.com/russia/612197-ukraine-doesnt-control-minerals/>.
- (05) Zelensky calls for nukes to 'stop Russia' <https://www.rt.com/russia/612177-zelensky-demands-nukes-west-nato/>.
- (08) Putin approves establishment of rival to Eurovision <https://www.rt.com/russia/612168-putin-backs-eurovision-rival/>.
- (09) (10) Fyodor Lukyanov: How Covid-19 reshaped the global order <https://www.rt.com/news/612125-how-covid-19-reshaped-global-order/>.

*Article submitted 12.05.2025
Accepted for publication 11.06.2025*

МІФОПОЕТИКА ЯК ДИСКУРСИВНИЙ ЗАСІБ РОСІЙСЬКОЇ ІНФОРМАЦІЙНОЇ ВІЙНИ НА КАНАЛІ RT

Ігор Мацелюх

*Український католицький університет,
вул. Свєнціцького, 17, м. Львів, Україна, 79011
iorya@ucu.edu.ua*

У статті досліджено дискурсивні засоби створення ідеологічно упереджених наративів, або, за термінологією критичного дискурсивного аналізу (КДА) – міфотворення, на російському державному англомовному медіаканалі RT. Підґрунттям послужили тексти 22 англомовних новин, зібраних на каналі RT протягом чотирьох днів у лютому 2025 року. Дослідження проведено в межах дискурсивного аналізу текстового рівня висвітлення новин на RT. Теоретичною передумовою дослідження є роботи науковців-лінгвістів, присвічені КДА новин.

На основі аналізу корпусу виявлено декілька тематичних аспектів міфотворення та проаналізовано супутні дискурсивні техніки міфотворення на RT. У статті схарактеризовано упереджену лінгвістичну презентацію політичної напруженості між Росією та Заходом, зокрема у російсько-українській війні. Також зосереджено увагу на виявленні більш прихованих особливостей міфопоетики за допомогою КДА та визначено дискурсивні засоби, які використовуються для відображення ідеологічної упередженості.

Ключові слова: міфопоетика, RT, пропаганда, КДА, ідеологія, медійна упередженість, російсько-українська війна.