

# Destructive Constructions: Battles And Unanimity in Mass Media Discourse in and around Ukraine\*

*Las construcciones destructivas: Luchas y unanimidad en el discurso mediático dentro y alrededor de Ucrania*

Anna N. Novikova

Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea

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**Summary:** I. Introduction.—II. Contextualization of the conflict. 1. Ukrainian society. 2. The role of history and memory in the Ukrainian crisis.—III. Defining the framework for a multidimensional study of modern conflicts and media wars: focus on Ukraine.—IV. Views from the inside: «Ukrainians» – «Pro-Russians» – «Russians» opposition.—V. European perspective.—VI. Conclusions. —VII. Final reflections.

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on media representation of the conflict in Ukraine through the language of hate and violence and the creation of the image of the enemy. We will make a comparative analysis of the narratives of Ukrainian and Russian national media followed by the recently emerged information channels used by insurgents in Eastern Ukraine. We will then analyze the European Union's vision on the Ukrainian crisis and observe which discourse it chooses. While studying the conflict, we will attempt to approach it from the perspectives of different academic areas: conflict studies, mass communication studies and memory studies.

**Keywords:** conflict in Ukraine, mass media, identities, verbal violence.

**Resumen:** *Este artículo enfoca la representación del conflicto en Ucrania por los medios de comunicación desde la perspectiva del lenguaje de odio y violencia y la creación de la imagen del enemigo. Hacemos un análisis comparativo de las narrativas de los medios de comunicación nacionales de Ucrania y Rusia completadas por las de los recién surgidos canales de información de los combatientes en el Este de Ucrania. Después analizamos la visión de la Unión Europea hacia la crisis ucraniana y observamos en líneas generales qué tipo de discurso mantiene. A lo largo del estudio intentamos abordar este conflicto desde enfoques de diferentes campos académicos: estudios de conflicto, estudios de comunicación de masas y estudios de memoria.*

**Palabras clave:** *conflicto en Ucrania, medios de comunicación, identidades, violencia verbal.*

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It is important to notice that the spelling of Ukrainian toponyms does not reflect any author's preferences. An internationally accepted or a more common form is always used (i.e. Kiev, Odessa, Luhansk, Rivne, etc.). In the case of «Donbass/Donbas», we opt for traditionally more widespread «the Donbass». When using examples of news excerpts, the original form of spelling is maintained.

## I. Introduction

The present study, although it does not refer directly to the process of European integration, focuses on Ukraine as yesterday's priority of EU external policy, and to a certain extent, the EU's responsibility today.

We insist on the necessity of analyzing the Ukrainian crisis as a whole, without excluding and/or prioritizing any actor involved in it.

Even though the influence of the United States on the evolution of the crisis in Ukraine was rather significant, in this paper we will refrain from measuring its impact, considering the following reasons:

- Spatial dimension of the conflict and geographical neighborhood of Ukraine with Europe and Russia;
- Initial matter of dispute, the choice the Ukrainian government had to make (union with Europe or with Russia);
- Focus on Ukrainian internal disputes and the external triangle of relationships among EU — Ukraine — Russia (if not, it would be moved towards Russia — USA antagonism, and that is not the purpose of this study).

The practical value of this research is to provide and analyze primary data that demonstrates the way in which the Ukrainian crisis was covered by different media actors.

We will use examples of content published on websites of newspapers and broadcasters, but we will not analyze video content, in order to focus exclusively on vocabulary and not on visual images. So, this research may be qualified as a general study or an overview of tendencies concerning the subject – mass media coverage of the Ukrainian crisis in general, and the language of violence and defamation of the «other» in particular. We do not make comments on highly expressive and metaphorical vocabulary, when atrocities committed by the «enemy» are described, accepting that such vocabulary is rather easy to perceive.

As for its theoretical significance, we will try to connect three independent academic fields, such as conflict studies, media studies and memory studies, in order to put together some common concepts that may serve

for the elaboration of a methodology for future research in this urgent and ongoing sphere.

## II. Contextualization of the conflict

### 1. *Ukrainian society*

The first and most important characteristic we should keep in mind about the conflict in Ukraine is an extreme simplification produced on all levels of its representation.

First, political, secondly, media, and, finally, academic discourses on Ukraine throughout the world have been constantly oriented towards the justification of one part of the conflict and the defamation of the other.

Karina Korostelina highlighted the tendency to simplify the current conflict as a struggle between two opposed groups when the main tragic events had not yet occurred (the Euromaidan stage). She suggests that in reality there are at least five different groups characterized by five different narratives<sup>2</sup>:

- 1) Ukrainian nationalists whose power should be recognized by «Russians» (Russian-speaking population, *our explanation*). It is a «mixture of a harsh nationalism with a romantic nationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century» and their slogan is «Ukraine for Ukrainians»;
- 2) «Ukrainians disposed to cohabit peacefully with Russians in an independent Ukraine, but only if they accept complete assimilation in language and culture as immigrants». It is characteristic to the central regions where the majority speaks two languages, and sometimes is called a «bog».
- 3) Soviet identity supporters who consider that the USSR era was the best period in Ukrainian history, its «golden age». «Strong industrial sector was concentrated here, Peoples' Friendship reigned and nobody was at odds. And capitalism and the European Union is just a trap».
- 4) Multicultural narrative, probably more pro-Slavic than pro-European, that defends that both cultures, Ukrainian and Russian, are equal and «should share space, power and resources»;
- 5) Pro-European liberal intellectuals, both Ukrainians and Russians, who stand for a European future for Ukraine.

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<sup>2</sup> SULKIN, O., «Karina Korostelina: "Ukraine nuzhen lider sozidaniya"», *Golos Ameriki*, 31 January 2014, <http://www.golos-ameriki.ru/content/karina-karastelina/1841788.html>

Korostelina states<sup>3</sup> that Euromaidan united the first and the fifth narratives, nationalists and liberals, with significant support from those who defend the second narrative and aggressive far-right football fans, so-called «ultras» that in fact do not form part of any of the represented narratives. Their counterpart was represented by followers of the pro-Soviet narrative and partly by those of the «multicultural pro-Slavic» narrative, physically backed by Yanukovich's official police forces and *titushki* (paid «burly guys» and hooligans).

In the end, the primarily peaceful protest was infected by radical elements of both sides, which led to its radicalization and marginalization.

In addition to Korostelina's view that many supporters of Euromaidan had a rather vague idea of the «European way», perceiving their «European dream» as a faraway and unmaterialized alternative to their current hard life, we would like to highlight that a lot of people from Eastern Ukraine also took part in it while it was a protest for a dignified life and against corruption.

Considering the nature of the union between liberals and nationalists, it is interesting to compare the Ukrainian Euromaidan protest with the Russian protest movement of 2011-2012. This movement also occurred in Russia and it also led to marginalization and radicalization of peaceful civil manifestations, but the «united opposition» finally faced internal division and was essentially suppressed outright by the regime.

In the case of Ukraine we still observe that the accelerated nation-building process comes under a nationalist flag covered by a pro-European democratic narrative. Both internal political propaganda and external threat transformed a heterogeneous political protest into a fraternal war and reduced a complex, initially *mosaically divided* Ukrainian society to a simply *polarized* society. The polarization that the Ukrainian conflict created is now strongly represented in Russian society and, to some extent, has spread globally.

## 2. *The role of history and memory in the Ukrainian crisis*

The east-west division of Ukraine has become a dominant line of Ukrainian studies since the 1990s and has easily penetrated political discourse. Tatiana Zhurzhenko<sup>4</sup> explains such an approach by «the “Hunting-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> ZHURZHENKO, T., «The Myth of Two Ukraines», *Eurozine*, 2002, p. 2, <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2002-09-17-zhurzhenko-en.pdf>

tonization” of the Ukrainian political discourse», referring to the fact that Samuel Huntington<sup>5</sup> identified Ukraine as a «cleft country,» where East and West clash around an internal «fault line» between civilizations.

Yuliya Yurchuk<sup>6</sup> agrees that this approach is used «with a purpose of «othering», when one part of Ukraine is presented as hostile to the other part», and stresses that in general, «attention should be paid to the more complex system of differences».

Both Ukrainian scholars recognize that political parties make use of this divisional approach in order to gain electoral support in those regions where the tendency to internalize a particular historical narrative is more defined. In the words of Zhurzhenko:

In the East, the «Soviet version» of historical memory still predominates, and most Eastern Ukrainians can hardly accept the «anti-Soviet» version of Ukrainian history. But instead of trying to overcome the divided memory and reconcile the nation, the Ukrainian ruling elites cynically use it for their own interests<sup>7</sup>.

Yurchuk opposes the simplistic geographical division of the society in two categories («the nationalist west and the pro-Russian or (neo)-Soviet east»), providing examples of some new approaches of her colleagues: Olena Ivanova studying the perception of the Holocaust by different generations and Mykola Riabchuk speaking about the differences of mentalities<sup>8</sup>. In her own dissertation Yurchuk reduces the focus down to the local scale, showing the complexity of cultural memory in Rivne, traditionally labeled as Western Ukraine.

According to Taras Kuzio<sup>9</sup>, four historiographic schools emerged within Ukraine when it became independent: Russophile (Russian imperial), Sovietophile (Soviet), Eastern Slavic, and Ukrainophile (Ukrainian National). Each of these schools of thought offers its own interpretation of key historical events. Despite this apparent diversity, we could say that the process of state- and nation-building in the post-Soviet Ukraine predetermined History

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<sup>5</sup> HUNTINGTON, S., *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> YURCHUK, Y., *Reordering of meaningful worlds: memory of the organization of Ukrainian nationalists and the Ukrainian insurgent army in Post-Soviet Ukraine*, PhD thesis, Department of History, Stockholm University, 2014, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> ZHURZHENKO, T., *op.cit.*, note 3, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> YURCHUK, Y., *op.cit.*, note 5, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> KUZIO, T., «National Identity and History Writing in Ukraine», *Nationality Papers*, vol. 34, n.º 4, 2006, p. 407.

textbooks' inclination towards a Ukrainian-centered narrative<sup>10</sup>, brought to life with varying degrees of intensity by different political leaders. Only in the last three years before the crisis, Yanukovich's too straight-forward course towards rapprochement with Russia provoked a drastic change to the opposite public discourse and textbook narratives, and served as one of the detonators in the cleavage of Ukrainian society.

The use of history (Korostelina states that in the last 20 years school textbooks have been rewritten at least three times<sup>11</sup>) has always been one of the strongest arms of political struggle in Ukraine, and current conflict has immediately reactivated narratives of the contested Past.

### III. Defining the framework for a multidimensional study of modern conflicts and media wars: focus on Ukraine

Mass media played a crucial role in aggravating the Ukrainian situation, but it would be interesting to observe the «elaboration process» of Ukrainian internal division(s) before it started to appear on front pages around the world. A social-psychological perspective seems to be an appropriate one.

As every social group identifies itself, on the one hand, through values, culture, experience, its members share, and, on the other hand, differentiating from the image of «the other» it takes in mind; the binary opposition «we – they» («us – them») is a generally accepted term, *our explanation*), in the words of Boris Porshnev<sup>12</sup>, becomes the «subjective side of any community of people that exists in the reality». Tatiana Evgenyeva and Antonina Selezneva, experts in the psychology of mass political communication, provide another thought-provoking comment:

All in all, the ideas about one's own and the «other's» groups are the results of categorization and identification. Being the necessary component of the process of perceiving reality, categorization is usually based on the ready schemes existing in the group discourse and not on a per-

<sup>10</sup> In the words of Anatoly Pohribny, the deputy education minister under Kravchuk between 1992 and 1994, «Education should be directly subordinated to the demands of building an independent Ukrainian state» (cited in RODGERS, P., «“Compliance or contradiction“? Teaching “History” in the “New” Ukraine. A view from Ukraine's Eastern Borderlands», *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59:3, 2007, p. 507).

<sup>11</sup> KOROSTELINA, K., «Constructing nation: national narratives of history teachers in Ukraine», *National Identities*, 15:4, 2013, p. 404, DOI: 10.1080/14608944.2013.843515

<sup>12</sup> PORSHNEV, B., *Sotsialnaya psihologiya i istoriya*, Moskva, 1979, p. 108.

sonal experience of interaction with the different groups' members that is often absent<sup>13</sup>.

Intra- and intergroup relations may develop from so called «in-group favoritism» to excessive generalization that provokes stereotypization<sup>14</sup> of out-group image and in extreme cases leads to «out-group derogation<sup>15</sup>» by in-group collective thought. Intergroup bias has a lot in common with subtle racism, «characterized by the absence of positive sentiments, not the presence of strong, negative attitudes, towards out-groups»; patriotism («positive national pride and attachment») and nationalism («belligerence and claimed superiority over other nations») <sup>16</sup>. When «they» are perceived not only as «the other», but also as the «enemies»<sup>17</sup>, the tendency of forming the identity through the confrontation of «us» – «them» may overflow limits and provoke violence.

That is exactly what has occurred and is occurring in Ukraine, and could be schematically represented like this:

- Initial reduction of the complexity of the Ukrainian society as explained above,
- Representation of the conflict from its very beginning as a struggle of a united Ukraine for a European future against neo-imperialist Russia,
- Extreme polarization of the whole Ukrainian space according to the «us» – «them» logic,
- And finally, a burst of violence, not only an armed conflict, but it still is a civil war as well, with civilian<sup>18</sup> casualties and prohibited arms<sup>19</sup> being used by all sides of the conflict.

<sup>13</sup> EVGENYEVA, T. & SELEZNEVA, A., «Image of the “Enemy” as the Factor of Forming the National Identity of the Russian Youth», *Russian Polity*, The Russian Political Science Yearbook, 2007-2008, <http://www.russianpolity.ru/content11/>

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> HEWSTONE M., RUBIN M., WILLIS H., «Intergroup Bias», *Annual Review of Psychology*, 2002, p. 579, <http://www.psych.purdue.edu/~willia55/392F-'06/HewstoneRubinWillis.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 579.

<sup>17</sup> EVGENYEVA, T. & SELEZNEVA, A., *op.cit.*, note 12.

<sup>18</sup> HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, «Ukraine: Unguided Rockets Killing Civilians», 24 July 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/24/ukraine-unguided-rockets-killing-civilians> and «Ukraine: More Civilians killed in Cluster Munition Attacks», 19 March 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/19/ukraine-more-civilians-killed-cluster-munition-attacks>

<sup>19</sup> HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, video «Ukraine: Widespread Use of Cluster Munitions», 20 October 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixf1LEzh1fo>

The armed conflict in Ukraine requires a multidimensional definition, however, and the notion of «hybrid war» can be applied to it. Frank G. Hoffman defines a hybrid threat as «any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behavior in the battle space to obtain their political objectives»<sup>20</sup>. He completes this definition with some opinions<sup>21</sup> of military experts and specialists concerning hybrid warfare:

- The «contemporary form of guerrilla warfare» that «employs both modern technology and modern mobilization methods» (Marine Lt. Col. Bill Nemeth, specialized in Chechnya);
- The use of at least «two of four modes of conflict» – traditional, irregular, catastrophic terrorism and disruptive threat – stating that «in the future, the most complex threats would be combinations of these four» (Nathan Freier of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, USA);
- Focus on the «loci of the asymmetric battle», fought on three decisive battlegrounds «within the conflict zone population, the home front population and the international community» and emphasis on the «battle of the narratives» (Retired Army Col. Jack McCuen);
- «The best description for today’s modern conflicts», characterized by «combinations of irregular modes of conflict, including civil wars, insurgency and terrorism»(Dave Kilcullen);
- Conceptualizations «in terms of how the adversary is organized or his legal status (states and nonstate actors as proxies)» (other contributors).

We think that the weak spot of many analytical works on the conflict in Eastern Ukraine is that researchers try to seek a unique, one-dimensional definition — «insurgency», «guerrilla», «terrorism», «civil war», «foreign invasion» — that logically predetermines an explicit or implicit pointing out of who is responsible. And once again we face a reduction of complexity, and cannot see the fusion of all these elements (and those unaccounted for!) in one case of warfare.

Andrew Hoskins and Ben O’Loughlin<sup>22</sup> elaborated another concept that, as far as we can see, could be applied to Ukraine, a «diffused war», which:

<sup>20</sup> HOFFMAN, F., «Hybrid vs. compound war», *Armed Forces Journal*, 1 October 2009, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/hybrid-vs-compound-war/>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> HOSKINS, A. & O’LOUGHLIN, B., *War and media. The emergence of diffused war*, Polity press, Cambridge, 2011, p. 3.



- 1) Points out the mediatization of war,
- 2) Makes possible more diffuse causal relations between action and effect,
- 3) Creates greater uncertainty for policymakers in the conduct of war.

Hoskins and O'Loughlin state that this emerging paradigm of war does not prioritize the explanation of the causes of war, as they are «relatively stable, a matter of political and economic interests for state and non-state actors»<sup>23</sup>. But it serves to «describe and explain the changing character of war – the what, how, when and where»<sup>24</sup>. Let's study the mentioned axes in detail.

The first, mediatization, means that all available media are becoming part of the warfare and its conduct cannot be understood without studying the role of media in it<sup>25</sup>. New communication technologies make a war «accessible» to the audience; it turns into a sort of real-time game in which you (a spectator, a reader, etc.) participate. Traditional news media are, probably, those to establish the tendency and shape the angle of representation, but then *you* get involved in the process, looking through citizen media, social media and TV debates, sharing videos, reading comments of other users and leaving your feedback. The main battles do not take place in the field now, but on the Internet; army officials and rebel generals seem to always be «online», not really providing «hot news», but instead, their interpretations of events and «guides» concerning the devilry of the enemy. The fact of a school bombing becomes secondary compared to the information about who was the first this time to blame a counterpart for it, because the real «battle is for how things are seen and perceived»:

The mediatization of war matters because perceptions are vital to war – the perceptions of a public who can offer support to a war, of government trying to justify a war, and of those in the military themselves, who are trying to perceive and understand exactly what is happening as war is waged<sup>26</sup>.

Those who make war *in situ* are constantly losing their power to decide how to make it; in great measure they are guided by those who make news and by those who consume news. The information war and, as a consequence, the warfare itself, become a cycle of interconnected processes and interdependent actors. This is what Hoskins and O'Loughlin's second point

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

is about, we mean causal relations between action and effect that become more diffuse:

...the rapid development of digital media, its availability and portability, and the supreme accessibility, transferability and circulation of digital content, has thus potentially profound effects in shaping current and future events and also in transforming those «settled» in collective memory<sup>27</sup>.

So, past, present and future become unpredictable because of the amount of media data that may «emerge» or be «discovered» instantaneously. Information precedes the event, and no one can predict when a war will end. Maybe the struggle in Ukraine has reached its «peace» or will turn into a frozen conflict just because nobody knows where to push it and the ball of contradictions results too heavy to move.

The third axis of a diffused war, uncertainty in decision-making, is closely connected with the two first. Erratic communication processes turn more «disordered and unpredictable, feeding into events themselves»<sup>28</sup>, that is why sometimes the scenario of warfare can hardly be controlled.

In the case of Ukraine, the mediatization of war was overwhelming, especially during the Euromaidan and in the first months after the annexation of Crimea. Moreover, it is not only a story about the clash of two main narratives appearing in two country's respective news blocks. Thousands of Russians and Ukrainians were then and are still fighting on the ideological frontline of social media. Tons of interethnic hate and calls for violence remain there, in the comment section below news articles and videos.

It is curious to note that the «first media war in history» was the Crimean War<sup>29</sup> of 1853 to 1856, that «marked a significant shift from war as a show at which some civilian “spectators” were there, co-present to the event, to something more organized for commercial mass consumption», Ulrich Keller<sup>30</sup> notices. Is the place a mere coincidence? Or we are witnessing a modern, camouflaged and more sophisticated form of imperialism and fight for the world's hegemony?

Ideological arms and all kind of effects that social, cultural, national and other constructed and/or perceived identities provide on individual and collective behavior are nowadays indispensable instruments for waging a war.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Britain, France, Turkey and Piedmont-Sardinia were fighting against Russia.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in HOSKINS, A. & O'LOUGHLIN, B., *op.cit.*, note 21, p. 3.

*Realpolitik* is giving way to *psychopolitik*; geopolitics to psychopolitics. (...)

Increasingly, the dominant mode of conflict in the world will not be force-on-force military engagements guided by traditional principles of warfare. Increasingly, «conflict» will be something vaguer, more interdisciplinary, more to do with psychology and identity than military forces. To be very clear: The form warfare takes could still extend into state-on-state conflict, (...); but it could also include terrorism, insurgency, information war, and much else. The critical issue is the foundational dynamics of conflict, the causes of all of these various forms of warfare<sup>31</sup>.

So, specifying the framework of the Ukrainian case, we may define:

- Mediatization as an integral participative *process* that involves the spectator in the conflict;
- Media as a *channel* for its transmission;
- Creation of the image of the enemy as a main *goal* of policymakers inherent to the *logic* of the war;
- Memory and myths as part of the *content* of the information war.

These could be the key elements that create an active cycle of violence and maintain a conflict in progress. But we could also explain it in a diachronic dimension and here is where the concept of the «triangle of violence», elaborated by Johan Galtung<sup>32</sup>, really matters.

Throughout centuries, the relations of power between the political elites of two heterogeneous spaces (with changing borders) associated with Ukraine and Russia have been characterized by both cooperation and confrontation.

When *facts*<sup>33</sup> of *direct violence* between members of two communities were produced, their political elites parallelly created and diffused contested interpretations through different mechanisms of these tragic events and narratives concerning these interactions in general.

This collectively assumed and expressed «knowledge» forms a basis of *cultural violence* which can be defined as a *constant*, because mass culture does not transform as fast<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> MAZARR, M., «Extremism, Terror, and the Future of Conflict», *Policy Review*, March 6 2006, [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/Commentary/com-3\\_4\\_06\\_MJM\\_pf.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/Commentary/com-3_4_06_MJM_pf.html)

<sup>32</sup> GALTUNG, J., *Violencia cultural*, Gernika gogoratz, Gernika-Lumo, Documento n.º 14, 2003, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> By facts of direct violence we mean concrete events that impede a survival of people, e.g. Soviet expropriation of harvest from peasants who lived in south regions of the USSR (Ukrainian SSR included), or executions of non-Ukrainians by UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army).

<sup>34</sup> GALTUNG, J., *op.cit.*, note 31, p. 12.

*Structural violence* encloses *processes*<sup>35</sup> related to different forms of exclusion or forced assimilation of some social group, perceived as a norm by other groups inside a general community. This type of violence is the least visible one.

Cultural violence is transmitted through different aspects of culture to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence<sup>36</sup>.

When analyzing the Ukrainian crisis, it is not as easy to characterize separately the many cases of expressed violence, but it is rather evident that all three types of violence described by Galtung surround this conflict, that for a long time was really just a sleeping volcano.

In this paper, we study the language of violence in mass media, as one of the least visible obstacles on the way towards peace. We focus on the «hate speech» and the creation of the image of the enemy by counterparts of this conflict. First, we will compare Ukrainian national mass media rhetoric with the discourse of the Russian official media and also the narrative of the Eastern Ukrainian recently emerged media that represent militants physically involved in the fighting against Kiev military forces. After that, we will analyze the European perspective in the conflict, providing examples from the content of some top national media and Euronews as the official EU channel.

#### IV. Views from the inside: «Ukrainians» – «Pro-Russians» – «Russians» opposition

As we have explained before, the discourse on the Ukrainian crisis is mainly constructed around an «us» – «them» opposition and the creation of a negative image of the «Other» (image of the Enemy) by the main parts involved in the conflict. Counterparts describe themselves and target each other through binary oppositions, e.g. good – evil, peace – violence, democratic – undemocratic, tolerant – intolerant, respect of law/agreement – violation of law/agreement, etc. Binary oppositions are considered «the strongest form of differentiation that can be used in sense-making», as they involve only two terms which «are not just opposite sides of the same coin: they are mutually exclusive – you cannot (according to binary logic at least) be good and evil at the same time»<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> GALTUNG, J., *op.cit.*, note 31, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> HARTLEY J., GOULDEN H., O'SULLIVAN T., *Making Sense of the Media. The Foreigners: Us, Them and the Media*, Block One, Unit Two, Comedia Media Education Series, 1985a, p. 8.

Binary oppositions serve to characterize in-group members through «positive legitimating values» (legality, moderation, compromise, cooperation, order, constructiveness, openness, fairness, etc.) and out-group members through correspondent «negative illegitimate values» (illegality, extremism, dogmatism, confrontation, chaos, destructiveness, secrecy, unfairness, etc.)<sup>38</sup>.

The semantic domain of «nations/nationalities»<sup>39</sup> or, in other terms, «nationality vocabulary» determines generalizations concerning representatives of this or that nation (Ukrainians and Russians in our case), which obviously creates stereotypes and can be a source of xenophobic opinions and discrimination. The discourse concerning so-called «pro-Russian» Ukrainian citizens creates confusion because of the fact that the term «Russian» may have two different meanings in Russian language:

*russkiy* means ethnic Russian or Russian-speaking;  
*rossiyskiy/rossiiski* means Russian national or refers to the Russian state.

As in many languages there is no such distinction and the only possible term «Russian» («ruso», etc.) is used, public opinion assumes and generalizes messages concerning both citizens of Russia and Russian speakers. So, the term «Pro-Russian», diffused globally by the media, as the name for Ukrainian citizens living in the Donbass (a term which generally appears in a negative context) directly stigmatizes Russian language speakers worldwide and/or Russian citizens as unequivocal supporters of the Russian authorities' policy. A small polling survey we conducted revealed at least 5 cases of rejection to speak Russian with Russian speakers outside of Russia as a sign of opposition to Putin's policies and solidarity with «normal», Ukrainian speaking Ukrainians.

The most famous, long-established ethnic slurs Russians and Ukrainians utilize to identify each other in a colloquial pejorative manner are *khokhly* (means «a common haircut of cossacs») for Ukrainians, and *moskali* («moscovites, residents of Moscovia») and *katsapy* («goatee beard») for Russians.

The actual conflict created a lot of new slang items<sup>40</sup>, but now the focus is not put as much on the ethnicity or nation, but on the target's supposed re-

<sup>38</sup> HARTLEY J., GOULDEN H., O'SULLIVAN T., *Making Sense of the Media. The Representatives*, Block One, Unit Three, Comedia Media Education Series, 1985b, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> VAN DIJK, T. (Ed.), *Discourse and Communication. New Approaches to the Analysis of Mass Media Discourse and Communication*, vol.10, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1985, p. 239.

<sup>40</sup> Snob.ru, «Obamka, Putler i ukrop. Vyshivanka protiv vatnika», 16 March 2015, <http://snob.ru/profile/29264/blog/89523?v=1441282205>

gional identity or ideology. All these words constitute a language of hate and deepen internal Ukrainian and international Russian-Ukrainian conflict<sup>41</sup>.

Ukrainians associated with nationalistic feelings are called:

*ukry/ukropy* (phonetic similarity, *ukrop* means «dill, an aromatic plant»),  
*vyshyvatici* (*vyshyvanka* is the national Ukrainian clothing, the word was supposedly created in opposition to *vatniki*),  
*pravoseki* (derived from *Pravyi sector/Right sector*),  
*svidomye* (Ukrainian patriots and nationalists),  
*maidanutye* (literally «become mad by (Euro)Maidan», sounds vulgar).

Those who are supposed to sympathize with the rebellion in Eastern Ukraine are called:

*kolorady* («Colorado potato beetle», refers to those who wear black and orange St. George's ribbon, popularly used in Russia as a symbol to commemorate the Second World War and currently associated with those who fight for the Donbass and support Russia),  
*vatniki* (originally, cheap cotton-padded jacket, means «someone with pro-Russian jingoist views»),  
*zelenye cheloveчки* (literally «little green men», masked unmarked soldiers in green uniform in Crimea, identified as Russian military),  
*lugandony* (residents of Luhansk and Donetsk, sounds close to *gandon*, rude slang word for «condom»),  
*daunbass* (refers to the Donbass, association with Down syndrome).

We should point out that most of these words do not appear in official media, at least not on television. But they are highly popular in social media and Internet memes<sup>42</sup>. This would also be very interesting research to undertake, but in this article we focus on another type of vocabulary.

Studying the construction of the image of the enemy in Russia and Ukraine, we identify a general semantic field, «Radicalism and Violence», common to both discourses.

We define the frame «Terrorism/Separatism» as a dominant narrative of Ukrainian national discourse (see Table 1). Of course, these two concepts do not mean the same thing, but words related to them share political media space and create a direct association: «separatists in the Donbass are terrorists».

<sup>41</sup> VYZHUTOVICH, V., «“Ukropy” protiv “koloradov”», 18 December 2014, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, <http://www.rg.ru/2014/12/19/filolog.html>

<sup>42</sup> KARPIAK, O., «Vata s ukropom: yazyk politicheskikh memov», *BBC Ukraine*, 8 August 2014, [http://www.bbc.com/russian/society/2014/08/140808\\_ukraine\\_new\\_internet\\_memes](http://www.bbc.com/russian/society/2014/08/140808_ukraine_new_internet_memes)

The main lexical items used in this narrative are: (Russian) occupants, terrorists, *boeviks* (*boiovik* in Ukrainian), anti-terrorist operation (ATO), mercenaries (*naimanets* in Ukrainian, *naemnik* in Russian), aggressors, extremists, bandits, insurgents, separatists and pro-Russian rebels.

**Table 1**  
Frame «Terrorism/Separatism»

Headlines	News excerpts	Date and source of publication
*Slaviansk will become a symbol of victory over <i>Russian mercenaries and terrorists</i>	*[Turchinov]: «Today is the crucial day in the <i>fight against terrorism</i> in the East of our country. Separatists wanted Slaviansk to become a symbol of the fight against our Motherland, but precisely this town will become a symbol of victory of an independent and united Ukraine against <i>Russian mercenaries and terrorists</i> », —the President of the Verkhovna Rada was quoted by his press-secretary. The Parliament will rapidly study materials concerning deputies <i>suspected in separatism</i> in case these documents come from General Prosecutor's Office.	08.07.2014, Holos Ukrainy ( <i>The Voice of Ukraine</i> )
*We have to punish not only <i>terrorists</i> , but also <i>their allies</i> .	*According to MP [Andrei Pavlovsky], residents of towns <i>liberated from terrorists</i> have passed him the list of complaints on <i>terrorists' allies</i> of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic. (...) There are 42 people on the list and there is confirmed information concerning <i>support of terrorist groups</i> by 15 of them.	21.08.2014, Holos Ukrainy ( <i>The Voice of Ukraine</i> )
You are running out of time, Europe	It's time to face <i>the truth</i> . Western «media democracies» are a crucial agenda-setter for politics. The fact that they continue to use the term « <i>pro-Russian separatists</i> » and not « <i>Russians</i> » at this stage makes them allies of the Russian president and allies for his expansionist plans.	06.02.2015, Euromaidan Press
*One day in the ATO zone: <i>occupants</i> continue to destroy the Donbass	*The fight between Ukrainian troops and <i>Russian occupants</i> continues in the Donbass; <i>terrorist groups</i> continue concentrating their firing activity in districts of Donetsk. Throughout the day, the <i>enemy</i> violated the ceasefire 99 times total. The <i>boeviks</i> used artillery five times, mortar launchers 33 times, grenade launchers and small weapons 81 times, and tanks shells five times. In response, <i>ATO groups</i> fired using weapons not prohibited by the Minsk Agreements.	03.08.2015, Ukrinform

Headlines	News excerpts	Date and source of publication
<i>Russian proxies</i> attack ATO forces 90 times overnight	<p>The combined <i>Russian-separatist forces</i> attacked Ukrainian army positions in eastern Ukraine 90 times overnight, using banned artillery systems 14 times, mortars 31 times, tank shells five times and multiple rocket launchers once, the press center of the <i>Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO)</i> wrote on Facebook on Thursday.</p> <p>«The <i>enemy</i> was most active near the Ukrainian-controlled port city of Mariupol. At the end of the day, the <i>militants</i> started firing 120mm on our positions in the villages of Starohnativka and Novoselivka Druha, and twice in the village of Chermalyk. At 18:00 Kyiv time, the <i>mercenaries</i> started firing 152mm artillery systems on ATO forces in the village of Prokhorivka from the militant-controlled village of Starolaspa. In addition, after 22:00 Kyiv time, they were firing 152mm artillery systems on our units in the villages of Orlovske, Lebedynske and Starohnativka. At 21:05 Kyiv time, the <i>occupiers</i> started firing Grad multiple rocket launchers on the Ukrainian positions in the village of Bohdanivka.» the report reads. (...)</p> <p>«At 19:30 Kyiv time, the <i>Kremlin-backed mercenaries</i> started firing tank shells on the village of Troitske in the direction of Artemivsk. And at about 21:00 Kyiv time, they started firing 120mm mortars and infantry fighting vehicles on the Ukrainian armed forces in the village of Zaitseve.» the press center said.</p>	27.08.2015, UNIAN
<i>Illegal armed groups</i> continue the escalation of the conflict in the area of ATO	<p>According to the ATO press center, from 6 pm, Aug.27, <i>Russian-backed terrorists</i> continue the escalation of the conflict in the ATO region.</p> <p>In total, <i>illegal armed terroristic groups</i> violated the ceasefire regime 109 times. 15 times militants used artillery, 34 — mortars, once — MRLS «Grad».</p>	28.08.2015, Ministry of Defense of Ukraine
* <i>Boeviks</i> of DNR are shooting civilians: three murders in a week	<p>*It is stated that as a result of being drunk and the careless handling of firearms, <i>mercenaries</i> have shot civilians. «Following these facts, the Command of <i>Russian terrorist corps</i> started an inspection of unaccounted weapons and ammunition, that <i>occupants</i> intentionally hide», — said in the main office.</p>	13.09.2015, Ukrayinska Pravda ( <i>Ukrainian Truth</i> )

\* symbol denotes original text in Russian with English translation by the author of this study.



In the case of Russian official (See Table 2.1) and the Donbass militants' (See Table 2.2.) discourses, we can determine the frame «Fascism/Nazism». As was stated on multiple occasions, the Second World War (the Great Patriotic War in Russian terms) was chosen as a central topic of political propaganda in Russia. In this account, crimes committed by Nazis with collaboration from some Ukrainian nationalist groups<sup>43</sup> (they perceived it as a way to fight against Soviet power) were connected with today's conflict.

Among the main lexical items used in this narrative we can name: fascists, (neo)-Nazis, extremists, radicals, Ukrainian nationalists, anti-Semites, banderovities (*banderovtsy*), the Bandera *junta*, Kiev *junta*, punishers (*karateli*), punitive operation (*karatelnaya operatsiya*), cleansing (*zachistka*) and *pogroms*.

**Table 2.1**  
Frame «Fascism/Nazism»

Headlines	News excerpts	Date and source of publication
*Ukrainian siloviki (security forces) started the <i>cleansing</i> of Donetsk	*«Azov” and “Shakhtersk” battalions started the <i>cleansing</i> of Donetsk» —communicated Battalion Deputy Chief of Public Relations Igor Mosiichuk of the Council of Kiev, via Facebook	04.08.2014, RBK
*The Telegraph: <i>neo-Nazis</i> and <i>mercenaries</i> are fighting with militias of South-Eastern Ukraine	*According to the journalist, some of those who came to pay last respects to their friend, did not hide that they are <i>Nazis</i> and one of them had an <i>SS emblem</i> tattoo on his neck. As the author of the article concludes, such personalities discredit Kiev authorities and give cause to call Ukrainian government a « <i>fascist junta</i> ».	11.08.2014, Russia Today
* <i>Genocide</i> . Thousands of residents of the Donbass were brutally killed by <i>karateli</i>	*These are the graves of local residents, <i>tortured and executed</i> by Ukrainian soldiers. The most terrible facts communicated before by militias, have been confirmed, and they prove only one thing: National Guard «volunteer battalions»' <i>karateli</i> committed genocide in Donbass land.	25.09.2014, Rossiiskaya gazeta

<sup>43</sup> Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).

Headlines	News excerpts	Date and source of publication
*Putin called reunification of Crimea with Russia a historical justice.	*The most important thing, the head of state underlined, was to understand what people living in Crimea want. «What do they want? To stay within Ukraine or to be with Russia? — said Putin. — If people want to return to Russia and don't want to be under the reign of <i>neo-Nazis, radical nationalists and banderovtsy</i> , we don't have any right to abandon them, and this is absolutely a matter of principle».	26.04.2015, Interfax
*Heroization of <i>banderovtsy</i> : Kiev passes to the next level in rewriting history	*Ukrainian President Petr Poroshenko received for signing a law that heroizes <i>banderovtsy, petlyurovtsy and other bandits</i> who were operating in the territory of Ukraine in the XX century. Now all of them are recognized as fighters for independence. Ukraine gives them privileges and recognizes rewards obtained from <i>fascists</i> for the extermination of Russians, Jews and Poles. On the threshold of a Victory Day, <i>Hitler's allies</i> do not leave the TV screen.	08.05.2015, Rossiya 1
*Victory à la miners	*Kiev's propagandists have for a long time surpassed <i>Joseph Goebbels</i> and the Ministry of Truth, described by Orwell. They are telling fairy-tails about «tons and tons» armor militia divisions from Altai, being too ashamed to recognize that those who once again crushed them were generally local people.	04.06.2015, I z v e s t i y a (News)
* «Right Sector» wants to repeat 2 May in Odessa	* <i>Extremists of the «Right Sector»</i> are preparing another bloody provocation in Odessa. (...) According to the web portal [«Russkaya Vesna»], it would be comparable to the May 2 <sup>nd</sup> tragedy of last year.	09.08.2015, TV channel «Zvezda»

\* symbol denotes original text in Russian with English translation by the author of this study.

**Table 2.2**  
Frame «Fascism/Nazism»

Headlines	News excerpts	Date and source of publication
Mariupol: people's investigation of <i>junta</i> crimes	The Odessa horror did not stop <i>junta</i> 's criminal march. They leave a deadly trail all over Ukraine, and «East&South» movement activists will take every effort to investigate and prove each of their terrible crimes.	14.05.2014, R u s s k a y a Vesna ( <i>Russian Spring</i> )
Number of <i>Kyev Junta</i> 's Atrocities Increases in the Donbass While Its Army is Cracking Down	Returning to ongoing bloodshed in the Donbass where every day civilian people are killed by Ukrainian troops it must also be said that <i>Kyev junta's forces</i> are about to destroy the Donbass industrial complex which is a very developed one. Shelling copies, chemical [sic], metallurgical and mining industry factories and manufactures in the Donetsk area <i>junta</i> provokes not only social but an ecological disaster at the region.	29.08.2014, R u s s k a y a Vesna ( <i>Russian Spring</i> )
*Starobeshevo: after massive atrocities and executions of <i>occupation authorities</i> , people's power came to the town	* <i>Fascists</i> brutally executed the communist Vyacheslav Kovshun from Grinka village. He tried to prevent <i>pogromers</i> from «Azov» from destroying monuments to Lenin and heroes of the Great Patriotic War. The <i>bandits of Lyashko</i> first fiercely beat and then shot Kovshun.	24.12.2014, LNR Segodnya (LNR Today)
* The Head of DNR handed to OSCE a flag with a <i>swastika</i> removed from a Ukrainian tank	*Aleksandr Zakharchenko, the head of the Donetsk People's Republic, handed to members of OSCE a flag with the <i>fascist swastika</i> removed from a Ukrainian tank, communicated in yesterday's meeting by Maksim Leschenko, chief of Head's department.	28.05.2015, DNR-news
*LNR news: <i>Ukrainian Nazis</i> don't plan ceasefire	* <i>Ukrainian Nazis</i> violated the ceasefire twice in the preceding day in the zone controlled by the Popular militia of LNR, the Ministry of Defense of the Republic communicated. <i>Ukrainian Nazis</i> also persevere in attempts to provoke LNR army to engage in combat. So, during the night two provocations by the Ukrainian army were recorded.	06.09.2015, «News Front»

Headlines	News excerpts	Date and source of publication
*Woman combatant Yolka: «The war is not finished yet»	* «...he suddenly moved his tank toward <i>karateli</i> , went out to the field, even without stopping the motor. Made some shots, turned and left. It was so fast and unexpected that <i>natsiki (Nazis)</i> became muddled and didn't respond in time. (...) the <i>Ukropy</i> couldn't even recover consciousness.	07.10.2015, «Novorossiia» Agency
*Dmitry Puchkov: a <i>Nazi state</i> is bred decisively and successfully close to the borders of the Russian Federation	*Defender of the Fartherland Day in Ukraine is celebrated the 14 <sup>th</sup> of October. Last year Petr Poroshenko decided to change its date (the 23 <sup>rd</sup> of February before) (...) On this day in Kiev and towns in Western Ukraine, <i>neo-Nazis</i> traditionally held a march in honor of <i>militants of OUN – UPA</i> . So, now <i>executors</i> are honored by the state. <i>Karatel of UPA</i> is now an example of defender of the fatherland for all Ukrainians.	14.10.2015, Antimaidan

\* symbol denotes original text in Russian with English translation by the author of this study.

The examples provided above demonstrate how two parallel simplified negative images of the «other» are created and diffused in their respective countries. The audience receives these kinds of messages:

- 1) Russia and pro-Russians in the Eastern Ukraine are enemies of Ukraine. Being pro-Russian is very bad. Those who support them will be considered terrorist allies and will be punished. Russia wants to restore its empire, so it invaded Ukraine and the Russian people are directly responsible for it. Europe should be rougher towards them. In the current war the enemy does not respect agreements, uses prohibited arms and always attacks first.
- 2) Ukrainians are nationalists, many of them radical nationalists and fascists. Even during the Second World War many of them collaborated with the Nazis, killing and torturing other Soviet people/our compatriots, and now they are using the same cruel methods. They are enemies of Russian citizens and the Russian speaking community living in Eastern part of Ukraine that has always wanted to form part of Russia. This population needs our help and protection.

It could also be interesting to think about the nature of the «codes» each country chose. Russian discourse connected to fascism may be seen as a local code, addressed mainly to internal audience in order to consolidate public opinion and achieve national approval of external policy. And vice

versa, Ukrainian discourse is constructed around universal codes: terrorism as a global threat and separatism as a threat to nation-states. This is a rather intuitive comment, but it could reflect the two countries' predispositions: Russia is more likely to fence off the world, trying to create a «closed-door club» with post-Soviet allies, the Eurasian Economic space; Ukraine tries to give an impression of itself as a democratic country and seeks to integrate into the group of the world's successful elite.

## V. European perspective

Unfortunately, many European scholars (whether due to having assimilated the rivalry scheme «Europe – Russia» or being personally offended by Russian propaganda that blamed the EU for supporting the *coup d'État* in Ukraine) have provided a one-sided view of the situation. A typical study on the Ukrainian conflict (especially in 2013–2014, from the denial to sign the Agreement of Association until active combat operations broke out) was a mirror image of the Russian state narrative, which simplified, looked like this: «they (Ukrainians) are like us and have wanted to be with us, but evil Russia/Europe/Americans...»

The European part of the history of the Europeanized region of Ukraine (when it was a territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire) was generalized and taken as a proof of the existence of close ties between Ukraine and Europe, while South-Eastern Ukrainians and their historical experience and contested interpretations were not taken into account; this European version was diffused as the «All-Ukrainian» narrative.

As far as we can see, the rivalry between Putin's Russia and the idea of «fight for Ukraine» was the mainstream in Europe during the first months of the beginning of the conflict.

The explanation prevailing in the West is that of a «bad» Russia pressuring Ukraine to abandon its European dream and consistently undermining the very sovereignty of the Ukrainian state. The «bad Putin» theme is a variation on the topic. (...) This war is much helped by the demonisation of the opponent, which goes on all sides of the conflict, inside and outside Ukraine itself. Moreover, ethnicisation of the essentially political and economic differences between Ukraine's regions makes compromise more difficult to reach<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> MOLCHANOV, M., «Russia as Ukraine's "Other": Identity and Geopolitics», in Pikulicka-Wilczewska, Agnieszka & Sakwa Richard (Eds.), *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, E-IR Publishing, Bristol, 2015, p. 215.

It seemed that at the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, Europe was holding a dialogue with the pro-European political elites and was satisfied with the popular support of the Euromaidan. The «Crimea effect» was shocking for all of the «civilized world» in the sense that no European leaders or policymakers had foreseen the proximity of internal collapse of Ukrainian society. Poroshenko was a candidate of hope, supposed to resolve all of the accumulated problems, but the first thing he did was re-launching the «Anti-Terrorist Operation» in the East of the country. We can remember that Putin was also a candidate of hope for Russia way back in 1999; he also started out with a «small victorious war» against terrorism in Chechnya...

The atrocious combat in Eastern Ukraine and the Malaysia Airlines plane crash in the summer of 2014 finally seemed to wake up European leaders and work on the Minsk agreements started. We could say that it was a moment of a slight change in European media discourse towards greater neutrality and an attempt to avoid a war of words. Until the summer of 2014 European media had maintained a unanimous voice (in support of Ukraine and critical of Russia) and was not very different from the United States' perspective. After that, rather interesting investigations and multilateral analytical articles started to appear. For instance, the BBC and its regional (Ukrainian and Russian) centers, made some curious reports<sup>45</sup> from the Donbass, providing first-person points of view of local civilians. Euronews' television broadcast rubric «No comment» may also serve as a good source of non-biased information. In some French newspapers we have seen events described without national connotations, e.g. just «rebels» or «insurgents» of the Donbass are mentioned instead of the typical classification «Pro-Russian rebels». In Germany at that same time, some protests against the humiliation of Russia were also held. All these cases were observed and taken into consideration during the preliminary search of data for analysis, but are not included in this research because the focus is different.

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<sup>45</sup> KHOMENKO, S., «Ukraine crisis: Life on street dividing Ukraine and Russia», *BBC Ukrainian*, 29 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34066101>

**Table 3**  
European perspective

Headlines	News excerpts	Date and source of publication
<p>**Kiev mobilizes the Army to crush the <i>pro-Russian insurgency</i> in the East</p>	<p>**In this industrial and mining region that leads the insurgency against the policy of Kiev, ex-Berkut Special Intervention Troops have defected to the opposition, and the number of cities controlled by <i>pro-Russian sectors</i> grew last Sunday. Victims were also registered this morning in the surroundings of Slaviansk, where at least two people —an officer from the Ukrainian Security services and a <i>pro-Russian activist</i>— died and several were wounded in incidents during the first attempt to start the «<i>anti-terrorist operation</i>».</p>	<p>13.04.2014, El País</p>
<p>Ukrainian troops begin military operation to «destroy <i>foreign invader</i>»</p>	<p>The mayor of Slavyansk, where <i>pro-Russian armed men</i> have seized police and security service buildings, said on Ukrainian television on Tuesday that troops from Russia and Crimea had been involved in the takeovers.</p> <p>«Today they actually seized city hall,» Nelya Shtepa said on the channel 112 Ukraine. «There are definitely <i>green men</i> there today, they aren't hiding that they're from Crimea, from Russia,» she said, referring to the unmarked soldiers Russia deployed to take control of Crimea last month, who are popularly known as «<i>little green men</i>».</p> <p>Shtepa had initially supported the takeovers on Saturday, walking among the <i>pro-Russian protesters</i> filling the streets in a bright pink jacket and calling the <i>occupiers</i> «our guys». (...)</p> <p><i>Pro-Russian protesters</i>, many of them armed, continued to occupy government, police and other administrative buildings in at least nine cities in the country's Russian-speaking east of the country, demanding broader autonomy and closer ties with Russia. The central government has so far been unable to rein in the <i>separatists</i>, and many of the local security forces have switched to their side.</p> <p>Early on Tuesday, <i>pro-Russian separatists</i> pulled out of one building they had occupied in Kramatorsk but then seized another in the same town, officials said.</p>	<p>15.04.2014, The Guardian</p>

Headlines	News excerpts	Date and source of publication
Ukraine crisis: Troops surround <i>pro-Russian</i> stronghold	<p><i>Pro-Russian groups</i> have reacted angrily to the deaths of many <i>separatists</i> in a fire in Odessa in the south on Friday. (...)</p> <p>Our correspondent says passions are running very high following the deaths in Odessa, with <i>pro-Russian activists</i> in Luhansk and Donetsk attacking government buildings.</p> <p><i>Pro-Russian gunmen</i> in Mariupol set fire to barricades and videos showed a branch of PrivatBank, a bank owned the <i>pro-Kiev governor</i> of Dnipropetrovsk, being burned down.</p>	04.05.2014, BBC
Ukraine forces and <i>pro-Russian rebels</i> in deadly clashes	<p>Approximately 20 <i>pro-Russian separatists</i> were reportedly killed in clashes with Ukrainian security forces on Friday, as they attempted to seize control of a police headquarters in the eastern port city of Mariupol.</p> <p>Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said fighting broke out after «terrorists» tried to storm the building, only to be confronted by government security forces. Some <i>separatists</i> reportedly fled the scene, seeking shelter in the city.</p> <p>One police officer was killed in the violence, while another five were wounded, Avakov said.</p> <p>«A <i>terrorist group</i> of about 60 men armed with automatic weapons attacked the police headquarters... About 20 <i>terrorists</i> were destroyed and four taken prisoner,» Avakov said in a statement on his Facebook page. «To those who come with weapons and who shoot and who take hostages, torture them, rob people, hiding behind various slogans — to them there can be only one answer from the Ukrainian state — annihilation». (...)</p> <p>The West and Kiev accuse Russia of working to undermine Ukraine, while the Kremlin accuses them of blocking any attempt at conciliation with the east.</p> <p>Interfax news agency quoted Miroslav Rudenko, a leader of the self-proclaimed «People's Republic of Donetsk», a <i>pro-Russian entity</i> staging this weekend's referendum, as saying, «After what they (Ukrainian forces) did today in Mariupol, after that number of dead, there can be no talk of peaceful dialogue.»</p>	09.05.2014, France 24



Headlines	News excerpts	Date and source of publication
« <i>Terrorists and bandits</i> » will be punished, vows Ukraine's Poroshenko	Ukraine's president-elect Petro Poroshenko vowed to punish « <i>terrorists and bandits</i> » Friday after <i>pro-Russian rebels</i> downed an army helicopter in eastern Ukraine, killing 12 troops — including a senior general. «We have to do everything we can to ensure no more Ukrainians die at the hands of <i>terrorists and bandits</i> . These criminal acts by the <i>enemies of the Ukrainian people</i> will not go unpunished.» Ukrainian news agencies quoted Poroshenko as saying.	30.05.2014, France 24
Ukraine re-launches « <i>anti-terrorism</i> » operation against <i>separatists</i>	Less than a day after announcing the end to a ceasefire, the Ukrainian military has begun striking <i>pro-Russian separatist</i> strongholds in the country's east. Kyiv has vowed to free the land from the « <i>terrorists</i> .»	01.07.2014, Deutsche Welle
Mass conscription in Ukraine to counter «rise in <i>Russian attacks</i> »	Ukraine's parliament has approved a mass military call-up for the country's conflict in the east amid security warnings that <i>Russian forces backing separatist rebels</i> have sharply increased their activity. «We are seeing the resumption by the <i>enemy</i> of full-scale attacks and advance by the <i>rebels and Russian troops</i> , resulting in a full-scale continental war.» Oleksandr Turchynov, the head of Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council, told parliament, adding that 8,500 Russian regular forces were now deployed in eastern Ukraine. At least a dozen civilians died when a passenger bus was caught by an explosion at a checkpoint on Tuesday. Kyiv blames <i>pro-Russian rebels</i> . They deny responsibility. A resolution passed by the European Parliament on Thursday called for <i>EU sanctions against Russia</i> to stay in place. MEPs condemned <i>Russia's «aggressive and expansionist policy»</i> and urged the EU to come up with a plan to «counter <i>Russian propaganda</i> ».	15.01.2015, Euronews

Headlines	News excerpts	Date and source of publication
Russia is accused of «financing <i>illegal armed groups</i> » — Council of Europe	<p>Russia is coming under increasing diplomatic pressure over its alleged involvement in the Ukraine crisis.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has directly called on Moscow to stop <i>financing terrorism</i>.</p> <p>In Ukraine itself, parliamentary members have designated Russia as an «<i>aggressor state</i>» which deputies say could pave the way for consequences under international law.</p> <p>The vote which also included a declaration that <i>Russian backed republics</i> in eastern Ukraine are to be considered <i>terrorist organisations</i> has been described by Moscow as an «act of delirium».</p>	27.01.2015, Euronews
**Kerry sees as impossible to «close the eyes» in the face of the <i>Russian intervention</i> in Ukraine	<p>**His arrival in the Ukrainian capital occurs while Washington is considering the possibility of supplying arms to the Ukrainian government, for the purpose to stop the advance of the <i>separatists</i>. The main obstacle of this idea is that Moscow may increase its assistance to the <i>pro-Russians</i>.</p> <p>The escalation of tensions between Washington and Moscow has been growing since March when Crimea was annexed <i>by the Russians</i>. The President Barack Obama has no intention to cede: «We will continue these two lines: pressing Russia and supporting Ukraine», he said last weekend in an interview with CNN.</p>	05.02.2015, El Mundo
Kharkiv bombing: Kiev says unrest could spread West	<p>Ukraine says a bomb blast in Kharkiv, a city outside its eastern conflict zone, could mean the unrest by <i>pro-Russian separatists</i> is spreading. (...)</p> <p>Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko described the blast as a <i>terrorist attack</i>:</p> <p>«<i>Our opponents, our enemies</i>, have tried to destabilise the situation in the country. As you know there was an <i>act of terrorism</i> in Kharkiv, and our special security services were able to prevent an <i>act of terrorism</i> in Odessa.»</p>	22.02.2015, Euronews

\*\* symbol denotes original text in Spanish with English translation by the author of this study.

In Table 3 we can explore some examples extracted from top European media sources. As we can see, European media generally adopted the Ukrainian way of denomination of groups fighting in the Donbass against Kiev forces: «Pro-Russian rebels» and «Pro-Russian separatists», which not only stigmatizes «Russianness»<sup>46</sup> as something bad, but also brings strongly negative connotation to the terms «rebellion» and «separatism». Referring to the idea of Europe as a political space for representation of «stateless nations», this connotation could sound self-destructive (we can explain this by the fact that mainly national sources were used for the selection of material in this study).

At the same time, we can notice that almost all references to the «Terrorism» frame appear in quotations, which may indicate that Ukrainian certainty in defining the war and the enemy in these terms does not seem as obvious to the European news media and policymakers.

Apparently, European media consider themselves representatives of the Ukrainian side of the conflict and that is why Poroshenko and his ministers are frequently cited. Putin and Lavrov are also oft-quoted personalities. However, unrecognized leaders of Donetsk and Luhansk are quoted less often.

Despite the rather evident inclination of the European media discourse towards the Ukrainian government's narrative, we can see a clear dynamic moving towards greater neutrality in the representation of the conflict and a sincere desire for its diplomatic resolution. The increase in civilian casualties and aggravation of the situation finally led European leaders to understand the fact that the underlying reasons for the Ukrainian crisis were not as simple as it seemed at first.

The non-stop pressure on Ukraine to choose between East and West, Russia and Europe, etc. turned out to be one of the great mistakes committed in this story. There is an eternal image of the enemy, opposite poles and rather vague attempts to reach a compromise. Though, it is understandable how difficult it is for Ukraine to decide for itself and subsequently take responsibility for its decisions when surrounded by ideological constructions (made by a respected historian in this case!) like the following:

The rival is not a Soviet rival, and it's not exactly a Russian rival, although it comes from the Russian Federation. The rival is this Eurasian project. <...> Someone is mounting a cultural, ideological and political attack on the European Union as such. <...>

Europe will be together, or Europe will be Eurasia.

<sup>46</sup> In *El Mundo* a direct accusation of Russians, not Russian authorities, of annexation of Crimea appears («desde que *los rusos* se anexionasen en marzo la península de Crimea»).

Ukraine is the European present. We have now reached a point where Ukrainian history and European history are very much the same thing, for good or for evil. The European Union is no longer alone in the world. The European Union can no longer delude itself that it has no enemies<sup>47</sup>.

Tatiana Zhurzhenko explains that historically, Ukrainian nationalism was not always connected to the «West», because during the interval between the two World Wars «the nationalists criticized liberal democracies for neglecting the national issue and collaborating with the communists and the Soviet power» and «only after the fall of the Berlin Wall the Ukrainian national identity was reconstructed by the intellectual elites as “European” (or rather “Euroatlantic”)»<sup>48</sup>. The scholar raises a provocative question: «“Weak” or “open” identity?»<sup>49</sup> and seems to be right! Diversity could be not a defect, but an advantage (if it is managed appropriately, of course). And Zhurzhenko continues: «Who can prove that Russia cannot be “European” (and even more so than Ukraine)? And why should being “Russian” exclude being “European”?»<sup>50</sup>

## VI. Conclusions

The present research aimed to analyze the language of hate and violence in news pieces concerning the conflict in Ukraine.

We have grouped different media actors according to the main thematic tendency they choose while constructing their respective narratives about the issue.

Russian national media and recently emerged information channels in Eastern Ukrainian territories represent the frame «Fascism/Nazism» and its discourse is constantly using parallels with the Second World War and the Soviet/Russian people’s fight against the Nazis.

Ukrainian national media could be identified with the frame «Terrorism/Separatism», because these are the two main references used to describe the Eastern Ukrainian insurgency and the Russian role in it.

The European media discourse is more likely to be constructed following the Ukrainian model, though there are some exceptions and recent

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<sup>47</sup> SNYDER, T., «Not Even Past: Ukrainian Histories, Russian Politics, European Futures», public lecture, international conference «Ukraine: Thinking Together», Kiev, 15-19 May 2014, <http://krytyka.com/en/solutions/podcasts/video/public-lecture-timothy-snyder-not-even-past-ukrainian-histories-russian>

<sup>48</sup> ZHURZHENKO, T, *op.cit.*, note 3, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

changes. We have to notice that only national newspapers and large international broadcasters were selected, in order to determine the dominant narratives, addressed and accessible to the average citizen.

About thirty news articles in each of four groups, more than one hundred in total, have been analyzed, and the most relevant excerpts of them are represented in this paper, organized in four tables. We have identified a general semantic field, «Radicalism and Violence», whose discursive categories are common for all studied cases.

Our research suggests paying attention to these discursive categories that are widespread in mass media content, as they act as mechanisms to construct new and reactivate old negative associations for counterparts that maintain interethnic hate and impede conflict resolution after the ceasefire.

It was proven long ago that listening to or viewing violence primes aggressive cognitive-associative networks. «Chronically accessible constructs, such as hostile attributional biases, also have been proved to influence the interpretations people make about the behavior of others»<sup>51</sup> and of unfolding events. It not only increases the probability of aggressive actions by individuals, but also makes all types of indirect (and therefore rather invisible) violence in society acceptable. The sustainability of any conflict is conditioned by the interest of its observers (as simple as the interaction of supply and demand!) and is directed by mass media.

## VII. Final reflections

Without knowing the force of words, it is impossible to know more.  
Confucius

Of all the weapons of destruction that man could invent, the most terrible and the most powerful was the word. Daggers and spears left traces of blood; arrows could be seen at a distance. Poisons were detected in the end and avoided. But the word managed to destroy without leaving clues.

Paulo Coelho

«Us and Them» song by Pink Floyd

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<sup>51</sup> BUSHMAN, B., «Priming effects of media violence on the accessibility of aggressive constructs in memory», *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24:5, 1998, pp. 543-544, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bbushman/98b.pdf>

In this article we have tried to demonstrate the complexity of the Ukrainian society and the means by which the conflict was ideologically reconstructed. It seems paradoxical that such sophisticated modern technologies could provide such simplified everyday information that the world starts thinking in «good» – «bad» oppositional categories.

Another paradox is that social and international relations are not constructed to consider Future perspectives, cooperation or results that can motivate different groups. On the contrary, the Past reigns and determines the Present, and, while being manipulated, it constantly puts new obstacles in the path towards normal socialization, internationalization, etc.

The Memory of tragic events that is supposed to prevent future conflicts constantly shows an opposite side of the coin: contested interpretations of these events, «different memories» and in most cases, mutually exclusive memories reinforce the intensity of the war of words, where everyone defends his/her/their absolute Truth.

Memory and Truth are the sort of categories that can never be universal. That is why all speculations on the uniqueness of someone's memory or truth do not make the world fair, but instead can only provide new exclusions from someone's narrative, creating a new spiral of violence.

In times of war, Media takes a fragment of Memory and throws it to the hungry crowd, then it repeats, and wars never end. Media has become a universal channel for transmitting the language of violence; it is speaking *in the name of* conflicts and *for* them. We, spectators, become passive participants of a conflict, because we consume, create a demand, and contribute to the continuity of the war. We then begin to transmit the obtained information to others and to fight for our absolute Truth, and the cycle repeats.

Violence in any of its forms is a destructive structural element, common to War, Media and Memory. When we use language of violence, of «othering», when we operate with «easy-to-digest» stereotypes, we form part of a cycle of violence. Because *we* become Media, *we* start to transmit violence, new negative memory emerges and a conflict deepens.

The easiest way to define the Ukrainian crisis was as a Russian aggression, creating another «us» – «them» opposition, but now not even just regionally, but globally, because the world has been divided between those who are against Russia and those who fear Russia or at least do not reject it for something good it signified in the past. Russia and «Russianness» is now strongly associated with aggressiveness.

In the case of Ukraine, the impact of the information war differs regionally. Ukrainians are generally seen as victims and evoke the world's soli-

parity. Meanwhile, Russian propaganda created a hostile collective image of Ukrainians as radical nationalists and fascists.

The Ukrainians from Eastern Ukraine disappeared from every narrative; they are excluded from each public space. By now, these people who are both «not Russian enough» and «not Ukrainian enough» are trapped between two giants, blaming each other at the middle of a bridge constructed on top of people's lives. And a spindle mechanism of cultural violence is working nonstop to create narratives for future generations and for more complex and oversimplified conflicts in the future.

Have you ever noticed that the topic of Ukraine recovering Crimea and the Donbass is often discussed in terms of territory, as if it were an unpopulated area, a people-free land? The importance of the return is reiterated but without the inclusion of people who think differently, it would seem.

If Ukraine could be defined as a buffer-state, its South-Eastern part may be considered a buffer-zone, speaking in the same terms, but on the local scale. If we continue to constrict the scope, surprisingly, there will appear in even finer detail, more buffer-communities (somewhere in-between the industrial and rural Donbass, probably?). But why should it be considered a buffer, which sounds more like a black hole where everything disappears? Why can't diversity be a positive value instead of something predetermined as bad?

We do not know what will happen with the Donbass. Peace has yet to come.

What is rather evident is that there is a great rupture within Ukrainian society and the degree of interethnic hate is far too high. Now it is important to begin the work of restoring trust in one another —the trust in a Person as the highest value of humanism— neither in a nation nor an identity as the absolute truth.

We cannot foresee the future, but we haven't seen the recent past of the Donbass either, we all were too occupied by constructing opposite narratives and «othering». A lot of voices have been heard in this study, but those of the Donbass people have not been heard. We know nothing about the Donbass because we have all been shouting.

Now it is time to hear the voice of the «other», of a local «other», who we have hurt. If this article is worth reading, it is for its last page. Rimma Fil, a journalist from Donetsk and coordinator of an aid fund for those who live under the threat of bombings, speaks about the war, about which only the people of the Donbass and mothers, whose boys died fighting, know something. The rest of us are living in a world of destructive constructions, sure of the truthfulness of our history and today's story.

Poison of aggressiveness<sup>52</sup>

3 October 2014

It's difficult for me to gather words in sentences. I've seen a video of Donetsk being shelled the 1st of October.

I've seen my fellow townsmen killed. Absolutely peaceful men and women. Someone is lying in the middle of the road with a flask of water. He brought the water indeed...

The grief settled down in Donetsk. A huge grief of a universe.

You speak of ceasefire? I don't know where it is.

My dear district near the airport is shaking with explosions. If the windows are trembling here, what is happening there?

Over there, can't speak of living, people are trying to survive. Now, right now, in the township close to the airport alone, six thousand people living. There are hospitals. Even a non-evacuated hospice, as someone has to take care of people who are dying anyway, regardless of war.

Someone «from the top» is fighting for a strategic point – an airport.

Bargaining. Negotiations. Big politics. Geopolitics.

And people? Just a token coin...

Who, apart from those who send repair-and-renewal brigades and firefighters to the area damaged by bombs, cares about the residents of this frontline zone that live without water, electricity and gas, making food on the fire when shelling stops for a while?

Sometimes they aren't even mentioned in the reports of combat operations. The war will write everything off.

A society of cynics. An ideology of great lies. And misled people. Who are they with? Or rather, against whom?

The level of aggressiveness exceeds the limit. Everyone against everyone. To humiliate and to trample on, to throw down and to crush. Doesn't matter who. A monument, a clerk in a dustbin, or just whoever stands against the majority opinion. It absolutely doesn't matter who is right. Human laws are changing into the laws of a wolfpack. The cause of revolution will forgive everything.

A society in times of war doesn't like those who are weak. Here they are, pecking like ravens at each other on social media. Until reaching hate, damning and dirty language. For having left. For having stayed.

The world became black and white. Ukry and vatniki. Karateli and rashisty. All of them are former friends, relatives, fellow townsmen. People, separated by war.

Where to find the power to unite? Which thread will sew all of this?

In the press conference I'm telling...

...how the «Aidar» battalion used our 10 cars with humanitarian aid as a «human shield», – «because you are transporting it for separatists!»

<sup>52</sup> FIL, R., «Yad agressii», *Donetskiye novosti*, 3 October 2014, our translation from Russian, <http://dnews.donetsk.ua/blogs/16/2014/10/03/371.html>



In another military camp, volunteers are taken prisoners, because they carry food for Nazis, as they said.

...how we were taking an old couple out of the shelling-zone. She is paralytic. He was indecisive for a long time, afraid that she wouldn't stand it. Finally he made a decision. On the road. Shelling all around. And he is stroking the hand of his all-life helpmate with his trembling senile hands. The entire time. Hand in hand.

...how a refugee child draws his mother, himself, a cat and a tree in a session with a psychologist. He doesn't draw a house. Because he doesn't have one anymore.

I am talking while I see the eyes of the journalists from the capital. Terror-stricken eyes. And questions afterward, «Is everything really true?!»

Yes, it is true. Everything is true. In a war nobody shoots with flowers. None of the sides.

And the fear of death is the same. A priest I know told me how soldiers were asking him for crosses at a checkpoint, and ten kilometers after, at an enemy checkpoint, asking for blessings.

When I see the eyes of my journalist colleagues full of horror, I understand that speaking about it is vitally important. In order to stop dividing «us» and «them».

Many years ago there was a rubric in the newspapers «If I were...» and then «a mayor», «a president», etc.

So, if I were someone who decided something, I would do everything in order to declare a moratorium on any aggression.

In order to come to a truce, you need peace in your heart.

And there is none. A poison of aggressiveness affected it.

Do you have an antidote?

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