

SUPERHERO CONTRA BUTCHER: ZELENSKY AND PUTIN IN POLITICAL CARTOONS ON RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

Abstract

The paper integrates national and international levels of political humorous discourse and proposes a multimodal analysis of the discursive dimension of the Russian-Ukrainian war and its implementation in political humor. The paper aims to analyze the distribution of supportive/subversive humor in World, Ukrainian and Russian political cartoons targeting Ukrainian president Zelensky and Russian president Putin representing the conflict parties with special attention to the presentation/setting. The distribution of supportive vs. subversive political humor is based on the analysis of target, focus and setting of political cartoons depicting Putin and Zelensky and on the interaction of verbal and nonverbal elements in the cartoons. Political cartoons can be defined by its goals, frame of reference and means. These corresponding parameters (goal-target, frame of reference-focus, means-setting) as well as the correlation between self-image/external image and supportive/subversive political humor provide the analytical framework for the paper.

1. Introduction

Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, marking a steep escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian War, which began in 2014 with the Crimea annexation. This invasion has affected international security, politics and the economy and has caused destruction of civilian infrastructure forcing people to flee their homes seeking safety and protection.

According to UN Refugee Agency more than six million Ukrainians have moved to the neighboring countries since 24.02.2022 or have been displaced within Ukraine. (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location?secret=unhcrrestricted>)

The Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict has both real and discursive dimensions. In the real dimension, it is localized (Crimea, as well as the temporally occupied territories in the East and South of Ukraine). The discursive dimension of this conflict is implemented in the international and national political discourse and media discourse. But this dimension is also present in the humorous discourse on these both levels. It needs to be researched also in this particular aspect using the new research material which is particularly unknown to Western audience (Ukrainian and Russian political cartoons).

Accordingly, the paper aims to analyze the implementation of the discursive dimension of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the Humorous Media Political Discourse at the national (Ukrainian) and international (global) level. To achieve this goal it is necessary to: 1) define the essence and the interrelations of concepts “political humor”, “political satire”, “Humorous Media Political Discourse”; 2) describe the key features of cartoons as units of humorous media political discourse and means of multimodal communication; 3) analyze the main types of interaction between verbal and non-verbal elements in the cartoons targeting Ukrainian president Zelensky and Russian president Putin with special attention to presentation/setting; 4) examine the registers of political humor on the national (Ukrainian) and the international (global) level and the differences in “Self”-image and “Other” image of conflict participants.

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2. Humor research: state of the art

Every military conflict has a discursive/cultural dimension. Recently the attention of conflict researchers has shifted from the “classical” topics towards the ‘soft/smart power’: culture, identity, values (Nye, 2008, Rosendorf, 2009, Rugh, 2009). This shift was facilitated by the ‘cultural turn’ and post-structuralist and constructivist approaches to conflict and security. (Bachmann-Medick, 2006, Hammond, 2007). Culture in general and the media culture in particular form a certain “background of meanings”, emphasizing the importance of some and downplaying other events, and thus significantly affect the political sphere. (Weldes, 2003). Humor, especially political humor is an important element of the modern culture. The existing rich scholarship on political humor tends to diverge along two lines: emphasizing the corrective constraints or the ludic possibilities. That is, scholars either stress the conservative ways in which humor relies upon and redoubles existing shared expectations at the expense of errant targets (Lockyer & Pickering, 2005, Sørensen, 2013, Rehak & Trnka, 2019) or they affirm the radical ways in which it can sponsor cognitive shifts and thereby liberate human energies (Caulfield, 2008, Kessel & Merziger, 2012, Tsakona & Popa, 2011, Brock, 2018, Damir-Geilsdorf & Milich, 2020).

Since humor is by definition based on incongruity and serves as criticism, “political humor can be defined as a communicative resource spotting, highlighting and attacking incongruities originating in political discourse and action”. (Mpofu, 2021, p. 8). Within that broad category, political satire occupies a specific role. Political satire is “a pre-generic form of political discourse containing multiple humor elements that are utilized to attack and judge the flawed nature of human political activities”. (Holbert, 2014, p.28).

Political satire as a form of political discourse questions the existing political or social order, usually by juxtaposing the existing imperfect reality with visions of what could or should be. This questioning is determined by four elements: target, focus, social acceptability, and presentation. Together these elements regulate the range of political satire directed against political order/authority: from supportive to subversive. (Paletz, 1990). Humor that is supportive of authority can relieve tension in one or more of several ways: by using a punch line, containing a reassuring conclusion and, most

commonly, through laughter. Subversive humor, on the other hand, frequently lacks resolution, or, worse for the audience's psychological security, offers a conclusion that is widely believed to be both undesirable and painful. "The higher the target (level), the more fundamental the authority is likely to be, thus the humor has the potential to be at its most subversive. In contrast, humor that attacks the political system itself usually incorporates lower levels of authority in its ambit. The more socially acceptable a humorous text, the less subversive it is. And vice versa, daring and outrageous humor tends to be rejected, or just ignored". (Paletz, 1990, p. 486).

Contemporary political humor owes much of its popularity to the mass media: most of the genres belonging to political humor are produced and/or disseminated in this way (e.g. political jokes, memes and cartoons, satirical shows and webpages, political advertisements). Even when such humor surfaces in non-prototypical humorous contexts (e.g. political or parliamentary debates, political interviews, news reports, slogans, graffiti), it is often (re)framed and reinterpreted understood not only as a weapon of the weak or the strong but as a relational modality by the mass media. (Tsakona&Popa, 2013). Humor, then, should be implicated in discourse and power, one through which agents and audiences alike can form and manifest oppositional identities (Wilson, 2011; Kryś et al., 2017; Zekavat, 2017).

There are a significant number of publications that cover the historical, typological, pragmatic, semiotic aspects of political cartoons. Publications on the political cartoon cover two main areas of research: a) communicative functions: political communication (Mateus, 2016, Ho et al., 2021), impact on the audience and on the public opinion (El Refaie, 2010), agenda setting (Sani et al., 2012, Alkazemi, 2015); b) constructive functions: image formation (van Hecke, 2017; Herkman, 2019; Lennon & Kilby, 2020; Negro Alousque, 2020,) social/political identities (Tehseem, 2015; Issa, 2016; El Falaki, 2019).

Summarizing the theoretical approaches of various disciplines, the political cartoon can be defined as: "...a pictorial representation that uses the means of distortion or generalization to formulate a normative commentary with an emotional impact intention regarding political phenomena: persons, organizations, events". (Achtenberg, 1998: 216). Political cartoons are objects of different disciplines: cultural studies, communication studies, media linguistics, political science, cognitive linguistics, etc. Accordingly, there is a large number of interpretations of these phenomena and consequently different research methods (Johann/Bülow, 2019). Despite different approaches to political cartoons, they have transdisciplinary acknowledged features: topicality, criticism, partiality, alienation, satirical stance. (Knieper, 2002).

In earlier publications on cartoons the laughter is regarded as an immanent characteristic of the cartoon, because they make the audience laugh or/and mock caricatured persons or situations. (Hess&Northrop, 1996; Plum, 1998; Päge, 2007). It appears more appropriate to start with the question of the use of humor in cartoons, from manifest features of the cartoon. The structural elements of the cartoon interact in the following way: since cartoons are incomplete until reconciled by the audience, the nature of the incongruity determines what kind of contribution a recipient will make and hence what that text will ultimately come to mean. Once an incongruity is presented, the audience takes over in constructing the text's meaning. The cognitive contribution made by the recipient depends on what he or she brings to the table:

political knowledge, political beliefs or ideology, as well as psychological characteristics and viewing motivations. (Young, 2017).

Until now, in Ukraine there have been no systematic studies of Ukrainian and World cartoons as one of the genres of political humorous discourse. The research on political humor has been fragmentary, focusing primarily on a summarizing of existing post-Soviet approaches (Gudzenko, 2014; Hrabarchuk, 2018), on humor in Ukrainian political discourse (Kondratenko, 2019), and on framing of Ukrainian politics and politicians in political sketches (Ryabinska, 2020). These studies were mainly descriptive and focused on the analysis of verbal aspects of political humor (e.g. political speeches or TV shows).

3. Methodology

Political cartoons as one of the forms of political satire can be defined by its a) goals; b) frame of reference; c) means. (Marienfeld, 1990). Political satire questions existing political or social order juxtaposing the existing imperfect reality with visions of what could or should be. This questioning is determined by target, focus, social acceptability, and presentation (Paletz, 1990). These corresponding parameters (goal-target, frame of reference- focus, means- setting) are analytical framework for this paper (Table 1).

Table 1. Analytical framework.

Analysis units	Meaning	Corresponding parameters
Target	politician and/or institution depicted in the cartoon	Goal
Focus	particular aspect of the political reality/activity	Frame of reference
Presentation (setting)	verbal/nonverbal elements, methaphors, symbols	Means

This framework is combined with the analysis of the correlation between “Self”-image and “Other”- image and supportive/subversive political humor directed against Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Russian President Vladimir Putin. This correlation is examined in the social context, shaped by the course of events related to Russian invasion in Ukraine on 24.02.2022. The paper is methodologically based on the Discourse and Multimodality Theories. We regard political cartoon not only as an instrument of multimodal communication, but also as a genre of Humorous Media Political Discourse. We define it as an interdiscursive hybrid phenomenon, which is actualized in multimodal media texts on the individual, group and social levels using discursive practices. On the individual level, persons as a bearer of political

consciousness determines for themselves certain "problem areas" of politics. These areas are becoming the subject of discursive reflection: we either identify with the ways to solve a political problem or oppose ourselves to them. This enables the social categorization of "me– they". On the group level, formation of group identity occurs in accordance with the values and ideas shared by the group. Collective identity is determined not only by internal factors (self- awareness) but also by "others". At the same time, the identity of the group influences the choice of certain discursive practices and the social categorization of "we – they". As for the social level, Humorous Media Political Discourse is determined by social and cultural context. On this level we analyze the discursive dimension of the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict considering the attitude of Western, Ukrainian and Russian society (represented by cartoonists) to this conflict and the assessment of the conflict parties (represented by presidents Zelensky and Putin).

Accordingly, the discursive dimension of the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict is analyzed using multimodal discourse analysis (MDA). It is a method that looks at not just how individual modes communicate, but how they interact with one another to create semiotic meaning. Multimodal discourse analysis is not about identifying and studying modes as isolated but rather about understanding the world as multimodal. This understanding is developed through three major theoretical bases: (1) Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics (SFL), underpinning a social semiotic (Halliday, 2006; Hodge & Kress, 1988; van Leeuwen, 2005); (2) mediated discourse analysis, underpinning a mediated action-based approach (Scollon, 2001); and (3) conversation analysis (CA), underpinning a turn-taking based approach. (Schegloff, 2007; Sacks, 1995). This paper is drawn upon socio-semiotic approach. One of the areas of MDA is multimodal metaphor. A metaphor imposes an identity relation between two parts that are conventionally (or in a given context) considered as belonging to different categories. Interpreting something as a metaphor requires deciding (1) which are its two parts; (2) which is its target and which its source; and (3) which feature(s) is/are to be mapped from source to target. Multimodal metaphors derived from "verbo-pictorial metaphors" which firstly was classified by (Forceville, 1996, p. 148). In such a metaphor, one domain (source or target) is represented in visual and the other in verbal. The methodological framework suggested in this paper (MDA) as a part of the research project "LAUGHTER DURING THE WAR: RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN UKRAINE IN POLITICAL CARTOONS AND MEMES" will be supplemented by the framing analysis and computer-based content analysis. This will allow to track and to quantify the discursive dimension of the Ukrainian-Russian military conflict with special attention to the similarities and differences in conflict depiction ("Self"-image and "Other" - image of the conflict course, conflict participants, and conflict consequences) on the national and international level of Humorous Media Political Discourse.

To study the cartoons' setting and the interaction between verbal and non-verbal elements we use the typology suggested by (Stöckl, 2004). There are 6 types of the text-image relations: a) parallelization of text and image; b) metonymic conceptual association; c) symbolization; d) metaphORIZATION (visual coding of lexical metaphors or phraseological unit; e) metacommunicative comment (explanation of the cartoon's content); f) semantic contrast and semantic analogy. The last type is implemented mostly via two or three cartoons. This typology was chosen for the paper because: 1) it covers the main logical connections between the structural (verbal and non-verbal) elements in the cartoon; 2) it correlates with Multimodality Theory, and 3) it enables a

comprehensive analysis of the cartoons' setting. The research material used in this paper contains 21 political cartoons from Ukraine, Russia and the World. These cartoons have been chosen by random sampling from the project corpus to: a) illustrate the main types of the text-image relations in political cartoons, and b) to show various perspectives of the Ukrainian-Russian military conflict in political humor (international vs. national). These 21 cartoons are an excerpt from the larger project corpus containing ca. 4000 political cartoons from 6 continents (60 countries including Ukraine and Russia as conflict parties). The project corpus was established using Ukrainian, Russian and international freely accessible sources: social media and web-galleries.

4. Research results

In this section the main types of interaction between verbal and nonverbal elements in the cartoon will be examined followed by the analysis of supportive/subversive political cartoons targeting Ukrainian and Russian presidents.

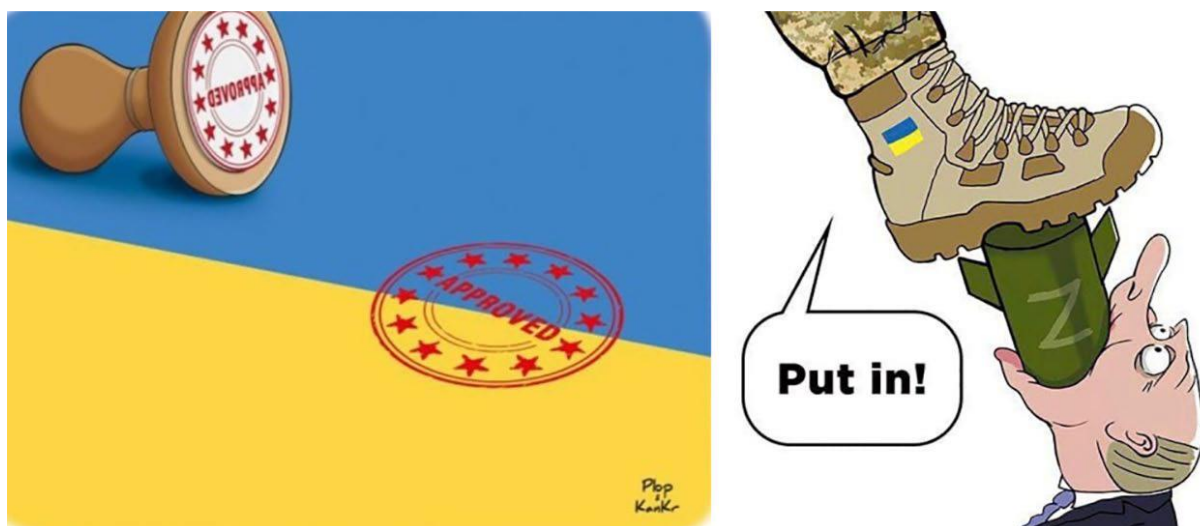


Figure 1. Parallelization.

Available at: <https://cartoonmovement.com/cartoon/approved;>
[https://censor.net/ru/news/3357935/ejenedelnye_uroki_patrioticheskogo_vospitaniya_vvodyatsya_v_shkolah_rf.](https://censor.net/ru/news/3357935/ejenedelnye_uroki_patrioticheskogo_vospitaniya_vvodyatsya_v_shkolah_rf)

In figure 1a we see a seal with stars on the background of the Ukrainian flag and a stamp with the inscription "approved". Two non-verbal elements (flag and seal) symbolize Ukraine and the EU. The third element (stamp) together with other non-verbal ones interact with verbal element ("approved"). This parallelization of text and image is context-dependent and "tells" us a story about one of the milestones on the long way of Ukraine to EU – from membership application (28.02.2022) to the granting of candidate country status (23.06.2022). Another example of parallelization of text and image is figure 1b. The non-verbal elements (a soldier's boot with a blue-yellow flag, a missile with the letter "Z") symbolize the Ukrainian armed forces and Russian aggression, respectively) interact with another non-verbal element (Putin with a missile in his throat) and a verbal element (PUT IN). This interplay with the surname of the Russian president is a kind of cartoonist's call to fight back against Russian aggression (social context).



By Dave Granlund

THE TALE OF TWO GREAT ARMIES



Figure 2. Metonymic conceptual association and symbolization.

Available at: <https://www.wctrib.com/opinion/cartoons/editorial-cartoon-for-x-2021-1;>
<https://starecat.com/the-tale-of-two-great-armies-tractor-towing-russian-tank-washing-machine>

Figure 2a depicts a bus over the abyss. Two rescue trucks are trying to pull it out. The source domain is represented by the nonverbal elements and the target domain is represented by the text inserts Ukraine, NATO and Russia. The bus metonymically represents Ukraine, and the trucks symbolize NATO and Russia. This actualizes metaphors WAR=ABYSS, NATO=RESCUE CAR, RUSSIA=RESCUE CAR. But each of the rescue cars is pulling the bus, which is hanging over the abyss, in his own direction. This provide the social context of the cartoon, rendering the message "Both NATO and Russia are trying to win Ukraine over, each to their side, fighting over a prize". Figure 2b uses symbolization. The upper part of the cartoon (a tractor with a Ukrainian flag pulling a Russian tank) symbolizes the resistance of Ukrainians, the lower part (a Russian tank pulls a cart packed with products and household appliances with a Ukrainian flag) are symbols of Russian looting in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories. The interplay of the verbal element (caption "The tale of two great armies") with non-verbal ones (tank, tractor, and supermarket cart) activates the visual narrative and enhances the satirical effect. Social context of the cartoon is shaped by Russian Army's marauding in Ukraine, which called itself "the second army in the world" and bravery of Ukrainians.

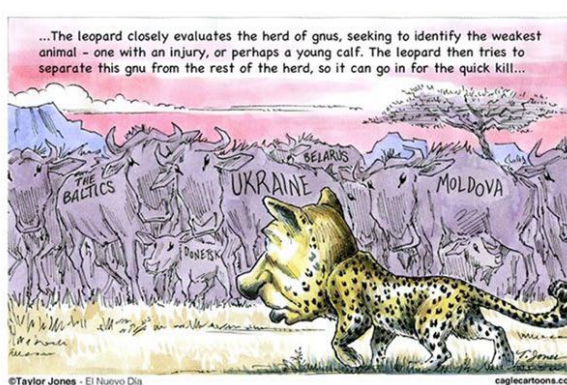


Figure 3. Metaphorization and metacommunicative commentary.

Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/telegraph-cartoons-april-2022/>;
<https://www.cagle.com/taylor-jones/2015/02/putin-stalks-his-prey>

Figure 3a depicts a ship that has been hit and is sinking. In the foreground is Putin, who says „All going swimmingly “. This verbal element actualizes the idiom which means „everything is happening in a satisfactory way, without any problems. “ At the same time this verbal element contrasts with the image of the sinking ship and Putin's confused face. Social context of this cartoon is the sinking of the Russian cruiser “Moscow” on 14. April 2022 and the discrepancy between Russian statements and the real military situation. Figure 3b is an example of a meta- communicative comment (explanation of the content of the cartoon). The cartoon depicts a leopard sneaking up on a herd of antelopes (Source domain – HUNTING). Target domain is implemented by the nonverbal and verbal elements (Baltic republics, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus are ANTELOPES, PUTIN=LEOPARD). The main semantic load in this cartoon is carried by the text which describes the hunting strategies of this predator in detail: “The leopard closely evaluates the herd of gnus, seeking to identify the weakest animal, one with an injury, or perhaps a young calf. The leopard then tries to separate this gnu from the rest of the herd, so it can go in for the quick kill”. This meta-communicative comment in combination with nonverbal element renders the message “Putin is a predator” and “Ukraine is his prey”.



Figure 4. Semantic analogy and semantic contrast.

Available at: <https://www.cagle.com/dave-whamond/2022/04/never-again/>;
<https://theweek.com/politicalsatire/1011274/the-limits-of-support>

Figures 4a and 4b are examples for the semantic analogy and the semantic contrast respectively. Figure 4a consists of two images with captions. The left part of the cartoon depicts a destroyed city. One of the buildings displays a swastika (a symbol of fascism). The verbal element evokes an association with the slogan “Never again”, which appeared as a call to prevent the repetition of war crimes in WW2. The non-verbal element in the right part of the cartoon is almost the same, but with one exception – instead of the swastika symbol, we read the letter “Z”. The verbal element (“again”) in combination with the “Z” (symbol of rashism) and nonverbal element (ruined houses) activates the semantic analogy (fascism = rashism). Rashism ('Russian' + 'fascism') is

a term describing the political ideology of the Russian state during the rule of Vladimir Putin. This ideology is based on the ideas of the 'special civilizational mission' of the Russians and expansionism, supporting regaining former lands by conquest. The focus of the cartoon is the Russian war crimes and the rashism as a successor of the fascism. The social context is shaped by Russian bombings and destroyings of civil buildings in Ukraine.

Figure 4b consists of two parts. The left part depicts an American holding the Ukrainian flag. He says: "Our support for the people of Ukraine is unwavering!". In the right part the same man is depicted (but already without the Ukrainian flag) saying "As long as gas prices don't get too high". The cartoon focuses on the dependence of the West on Russian gas and its impact on support for Ukraine. The interaction of the nonverbal and verbal elements as well the contradiction between verbal elements in both parts of the cartoon evokes the semantic contrast. The social context of the cartoon is the rapid increase in energy prices as a result of Russian full-scale aggression in Ukraine.

The World and Ukrainian cartoons targeting the Russian president often depict him next to Hitler and/or Stalin. (Figure 5). The source domain in both cartoons is HISTORY. Figure 5a uses visual metaphors PUTIN=ZOMBIE and PUTIN=CHILD of STALIN and HITLER as well symbols from Nazi Germany, Soviet Union and modern Russia. This is an example for the symbolization and for subversive humor. Figure 5b contains images of Hitler and Putin and text "Good boy" (PUTIN =DOG, HITLER =DOG OWNER. It uses parallelization rendering the message "Putin is the successor of Hitler".



Figure 5. Zombies and 'GOOD BOY'. Available at: <http://leparatonnerre.fr/2022/06/10/dessiner-la-guerre-en-ukraine-entretien-avec-lartiste-kousto/>; <https://mobile.twitter.com/dariobanegas>

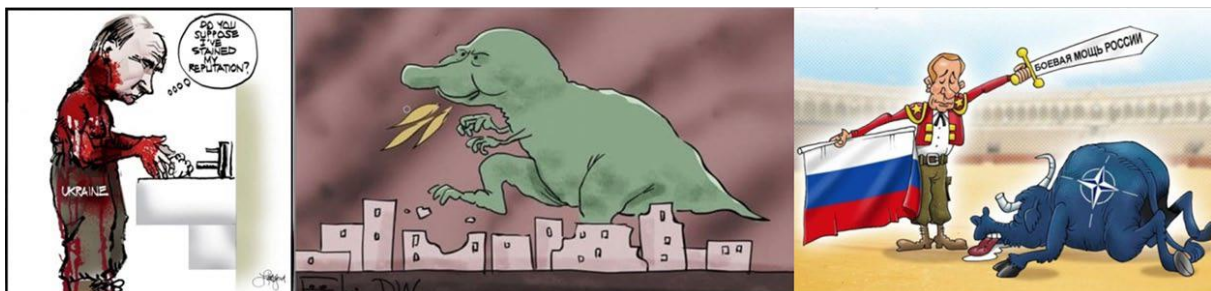


Figure 6. Putin-Godzilla and Putin-toreador. Available at: <https://cartoonmovement.com/cartoon/putin-bloodthirsty/>; <https://www.dw.com/ru/kto-vinovat-v-razrusheniiukrainskih-gorodov/a-61214287/>; https://nitter.domain.glass/mon_liz1/status/1519651097580871682#m.

Figure 6a also uses parallelization. The nonverbal element (the image of blood-covered Putin washing his hands) interacts with the insert “Ukraine” on his clothes). Figure 11 is also an example for metaphorization (visual coding of the phrase “to stain reputation”) making Russian president responsible for war crimes.

Among Russian cartoons there are examples of both supportive and subversive humor. The main topics of cartoonists opposed to Putin are his war crimes: the destruction of Ukrainian cities and the killing of the civilian population. (Figure 6b). The cartoon uses symbolization and depicts Godzilla walking past destroyed houses and breathing fire. There is no verbal element in this cartoon. Godzilla has the face of Putin. This “transformation” activates the metaphor PUTIN=GODZILA, rendering the message “Russian president is the relentless killing machine” and making him responsible for the war crimes (main focus of the cartoon).



Figure 6. Putin-Godzilla and Putin-toreador. Available at: <https://cartoonmovement.com/cartoon/putin-bloodthirsty/>; <https://www.dw.com/ru/kto-vinovat-v-razrusheniiukrainskih-gorodov/a-61214287/>; https://nitter.domain.glass/mon_liz1/status/1519651097580871682#m

An example of supportive humor targeting Putin is figure 6c. This cartoon uses the parallelization of text and image and symbolization. The nonverbal elements (Putin in a bullfighter costume holding a sword) and the defeated bull with a broken horn at Putin's feet symbolizing NATO interact with the verbal element (the inscription “Russia's combat power”). This interaction activates metaphors PUTIN=TORREADOR and NATO= BULL. The focus of this cartoon is the military advantage of Russia over NATO.

As next we analyzed the setting of the World, Ukrainian and Russian cartoons targeting President Zelensky. According to the project corpus data, where the cartoons analyzed in this paper come from, Ukrainian cartoonists do not depict Zelensky since 24th February 2022. They focus on symbolic presentation of Ukraine or Ukrainian soldiers linked with historical periods (e.g., Cossack warriors). Figure 7a uses metonymic conceptual association. (The Cossack metonymically represents Ukraine), combined with parallelization of text and image (mustache and forelock with inscriptions “javelin”, “bayraktar”, “himars”). Figure 7b lacks a verbal element. The non-verbal element depicts Ukrainian soldiers protecting children with their bodies from Russian missiles. In the background we see a man hiding behind a shield with the NATO symbol. The cartoon uses symbolization and focuses on the indecisive politics of NATO and the leading role of the Ukrainian military in protecting Ukraine and Ukrainians.



Figure 7. Ukrainian heroes. Available at: <https://theweek.com/political-satire/1010814/ukraines-superman>



Figure 8. Superheroes Zelensky and Putin. Available at: <https://theweek.com/political-satire/1010814/ukraines-superman/>; https://sports.yahoo.com/7-cartoonszelenskys-bravery-standing-105808884.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9sZW5zLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAJASyLIGCpKISWet7az1Eag7JIIMGEQF7BDYJkOTHgCmWGiASv_VVIfWzSuD5QcKYnFihWUIhTsQD66Jsq3nea1bxM50GW-Bs5c1uzhzPqUucl3USFokxzZIT095PwOxTpZiDt7u7yKJN41ZYLs7_hG45N1sbuPpHPkPcu2KW00G.

Figure 8a uses parallelization of text (A super hero emerges... and inscription Zelensky) and image (Ukrainian president in Superman's costume) activating metaphor ZELENSKY=SUPERMAN. Figure 8b is based on semantic contrast depicting Ukrainian president as a national leader supported by the people and opposing the militant Putin who is alone surrounded only by his weapons. This opposition is supported also by the verbal element, more precisely by different spelling – “Strongman” Putin and “strong man” Zelensky.



Figure 9. NO WAR.WITHOUT ZE AND WITHOUT VLA. Available at: <https://www.diredonna.it/vauro-bufera-vignetta-naso-di-zelensky-accusa-antisemitismo-3387168.html/>; <https://cartoonmovement.com/cartoon/volodymyr-zelenskyy>.

Figures 9a and 9b are examples of the subversive humor in World cartoons. The cartoon (Fig.9a) depicts Russian and Ukrainian presidents, but the main semantic role plays the verbal element “No war... without Ze and without Vla!”. Using the parallelization of the text and image the cartoonist considers Ukrainian president as an accomplice of Putin and makes him coresponsible for the war.

Another cartoon (Fig. 9b) depicts Ukrainian president as a soldier wearing a military helmet with the Ukrainian flag in the background. These nonverbal elements are combined with two verbal elements (parallelization). The insert “A gift from Germany” alludes to the supply of 5000 helmets from Germany to Ukraine at the beginning of Russian invasion (social context). Another verbal element “I am a comedian” refers to the past activities of Ukrainian president as a director of a comedy show. This text contrasts with the image of Zelensky wearing German helmet and his facial expression. The focus of this cartoon is Zelensky’s possible disability as a Supreme Commander. According to the project corpus data, Russian cartoons depict Ukrainian President only in a subversive way. This kind of humor is represented also in figures 10a and 10b.



Figure 10. MORE. . . MORE. . . MORE!!! . . . MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN. Available at: https://twitter.com/Flor_De_Cristal/status/1540074466520211457/photo/1/; <https://caricatura.ru/list/shiz/url/shiz/kolgarrev/2483/>.

Figure 10a shows Zelensky sitting with his mouth wide open, full of weapons. The non-verbal element is supplemented by a verbal one ("More! More! More! ") This parallelization of the verbal and nonverbal elements activates the metaphor ZELENSKY=GLUTTON. The cartoon's focus and the social context are constant requests of Ukrainian president for the military assistance to Ukraine and weapon supplies from the West.

The figure 10b depicts Ukrainian president sitting at the dinner table. Zelensky is wearing military uniform and holding small Ukrainian flag in his hand. The nonverbal element interacts with verbal ones (letter Z and text "Mene mene tekel upharsin"). Here we have symbolization and parallelization. This cartoon uses the biblical plot (Daniel 5:26-28). During the feast held by Babylonian King Belshazzar the words "Mene mene tekel upharsin" appeared on the wall, prophesying the impending demise of Babylonian kingdom. The cartoonist draws parallels between King Belshazzar and Ukrainian President "predicting" Zelensky's imminent death and further disintegration of Ukraine.

5. Conclusions

This paper is the author's contribution to the national and international discourse on Russia's full-scale aggression in Ukraine. This discourse is mainly implemented in political statements, media texts, literary and artistic works. But the discursive dimension of Russian-Ukrainian war is also reflected in the national and global political humor. It needs to be researched using the new research material which is particularly unknown to Western audience (Ukrainian and Russian political cartoons). Political cartoons are not only a research material and a document of the era, but also a weapon in the fight against the aggressor. The paper integrated national (Ukrainian) and international (global) levels of Humorous Media Political Discourse. Political humor on these both levels is operating in two registers: 1) mostly supportive (international level) and totally supportive for Ukraine (national level); 2) sometimes subversive for Ukraine (international level) and mainly subversive (Russian cartoonists).

The analysis of supportive vs. subversive humor in political cartoons depicting Ukrainian and Russian presidents was based on the MDA with the special attention to different types of text-image relations in political cartoons. The text-image relations establish the presentation/setting of supportive vs. subversive humor, affected by the target and the focus of political satire. These relations construct the "Self"-image and "Other"-image of conflict parties represented in cartoons by President Zelensky and President Putin.

The discursive dimension of the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict was analysed on the social level of Humorous Media Political Discourse considering the attitude of Western, Ukrainian and Russian society (represented by cartoonists) to this conflict and the assessment of the conflict parties (represented by Ukrainian and Russian president). Subversive humor targeting Putin (the "Other"-image) is represented by World, Ukrainian, and some of Russian cartoons. The Russian president is often depicted next to Hitler and/or Stalin or blamed for war crimes. The supportive humor targeting Putin can be found only in Russian cartoons (the "Self"- image).

World cartoons targeting Ukrainian president (the "Other"-image) are both supportive and subversive. In supportive cartoons Zelensky is often depicted as a strong state

leader and as Superman. Subversive World and Russian cartoons depicting Zelensky (the “Other”-image) refer to his former activities as a comedian, his dependence on the West, his inability to run the State and to be a Supreme Commander.

Ukrainian cartoonists focus on symbolic presentation of Ukraine and Ukrainian soldiers using historical parallels. Putin is depicted only in a subversive way (the “Other”-image). These differences in the “Self”-image and the “Other”-image of conflict participants are determined by the fact that international, Ukrainian and a part of Russian community, represented by their cartoonists are opposing Russia represented in cartoons by Putin. On the other hand, the Russian community represented by its cartoonists is opposing the world and Ukraine represented by Zelensky.

The analytical framework and typology of text-image interactions in the political cartoon suggested in the paper reflect the logical connections between the structural (verbal and non-verbal) elements in the cartoon and correlates with the Theories of Discourse and Multimodality. This enabled a comprehensive analysis of the cartoons’ setting.

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