

VALUE ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE MYTHOLOGICAL SPACE OF A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

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Abstract: The relevance of the present study is determined by the importance of mythologization in modern global processes the formation of a multipolar world presents an example of. Each of the forming "poles" requires a mythological basis comprising and establishing its specific historical mission and worldview uniqueness. The deployment of previous narratives and the creation of new ones spreading in the media space and applying for mythological quality presents an important argument in favor of the "pole". The axiological approach to the study of myths in modern media involves referring to value analysis as a method of studying journalism. The study is based on the world-systems methodology that includes cross-cultural analysis. A study of relevant political mythology is carried out on the example of media coverage of the help provided by Russia to Italy in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. To obtain empirical data, the procedure of content analysis of media texts was used. The analysis of the state of media was performed on the empirical basis of materials provided by the InoSMI information and analytical portal and other leading Russian media. The following points are substantiated in the article: mythogenesis occurs in current political practice that can result in two mutually exclusive outcomes: further development of the myth of European solidarity, the cultural and historical community – the continuation of the historical myth, or its destruction – the realization of the operational myth. The analyzed texts demonstrate an apparent polarization of the forming mythological concepts fixing the images of Russia as an assistant selflessly helping those in need and a political actor seeking to realize their geopolitical interests at the expense of Italy. The semantic cluster groups of "Gratitude", "Independence", "Cultural interaction and solidarity", "Safety", and "Welfare" were identified based on mythological concepts. Materials of the present article present practical value to political functionaries and journalism theorists.

Keywords: myth, mass communications, values, concepts, journalism, identity, multipolarity

1 Introduction

A. Camus had an interesting assertion: "Myths are created to draw our imagination" [1, p. 306]. Here we will reflect on the content of that imagination. We will likely find there something a person lacks in their life currently, what they want to dispose of today and obtain tomorrow. In other words, the power of imagination activates the world of a person's values in mastering cultural and political reality in the process of mythogenesis based on personal mythological ideas. "These ideas create a unique historical and national tone of political culture and, in a sense, its peculiar internal quality" [2, p. 7]. In this way, a myth reflects reality, but here we should also agree with Iu. Lotman, "the world seen through the eyes of mythological consciousness must be seeming" [3, p. 526]. Thus, mythological constructions of an individual comprise two aspects one of which matches the experience of everyday perception of reality and the other corresponds to something imagined and even harmful to the human mind. In this reasoning, we return to the long-known interpretations of myth-making in human history. This appears to be no coincidence since in everything "concerning modern political mythology it becomes elusive as an object of analysis" [2, p. 19].

Nevertheless, in our study, we aim to identify not only the established facts of political mythology but also the process of mythogenesis itself. We shall derive from M. Eliade's formula – "A myth is not inherently good or bad <...> Its function is to <...> provide meaning to the world and human existence" [4, p. 139]. In periods of social crises, the need to "give meaning to the world" is particularly acute. This determines the fact that "political interests guide the cultural processes and set the version of humanity" [5, p. 17]. In turbulent times, a person follows the mythological constructions of the past exclusively instinctively, unconsciously, they do not go beyond the circle of their culture and its values; in a rational sense, an individual mostly reflects on the recently constructed political stereotypes as a platform for *contemporary* myths: "Although the tendency to consider the past as an important resource <...> can be considered a constant in modern politics, we cannot but admit that in the 20th century, especially in the second part of it, the

practices of handling this resource have significantly evolved. Recent history has become a significant part of personal experience for many people" [6, p. 12].

Modern mythogenesis have derived to a large extent from the new state of mass communication channels that came as a result of the technological revolution in mass information processes that took place at the turn of the century. This revolution has multiple sociocultural consequences. In this case, we will highlight the primary one – the opportunity to preserve even the smallest traces of media activity of a person in cultural memory. This opportunity was ensured by the mass application of the newest information carriers and the means of information distribution, the network organization of the media interaction of individuals, social groups, and communities, as well as the opening of gateways for their global inclusion in the information interaction in society as the subjects of mass communications. "Once created, a political text becomes a part of an almost infinite process of political communication <...> Due to the fundamental features of social communication both the author and the text recipients find themselves in a situation of constant cognitive and interpretative uncertainty and various situational factors not only do not distort but contribute in every way to the construction of meaning and its further interpretation, create the basis necessary for it" [7, p. 40]. In the logic of what has been said, we shall imagine the idea of how the emergence and functioning of a political myth in the current media field occurs.

When analyzed in the cultural space, a myth presents the point of concentration of values and meanings. Value presents a substantial component of the structure of a myth expressing a certain constant. Meaning can be defined as a societal structure that comprises values and determines the dynamics of culture and evolution of the myth. The speculative idea of media space as a separate phenomenon of modern culture also allows using the notion of a myth as a core component participating in its value structuring and impacting the dynamic processes of meaning circulation.

The relevance of the present study is determined by the significance of mythologization in modern global processes the formation of a multipolar world presents an example of. Each of the forming "poles" requires a mythological basis comprising and establishing its specific historical mission and worldview uniqueness. In relation to personality, the mythology of the "pole" creates special forms of identity that require media confirmations through corresponding means and channels and media support via stimulating the communicative activity of the carriers of such forms. The deployment of previous narratives and the creation of new ones spreading in the media space and applying for mythological quality presents an important argument in favor of the "pole".

2 Methods

We must highlight that here we consider the modern state of the information space, therefore, we will allow ourselves to indicate two types of mythological constructions functioning in it: 1) historical myths rooted in social memory and having a high cultural status due to its reproduction in the artistic environment of an ethnos; 2) operational myths to relevant sociocultural practice and primarily reflected in mass media and everyday consciousness of society. We, therefore, highlight myth-making related to the core of culture [8, p. 10-11] and the creation of myths based on modern life. The levels of mythogenesis are undoubtedly closely related to one another, however, the modern construction of myths will be examined as transient.

The detection of contemporary mythogenesis requires either the analysis of an extensive empirical field or the identification of a political and media situation where the various characteristics of the existence of political myths of the modern information space

can be detected in a relatively narrow segment of the media sphere. In the case of the present study, the authors preferred the second option of analysis.

The media space can be described as the totality of systematically structured elements (institutions, organizations, and statuses) and the media fields they produce (functions, roles, and effects) or as a sphere of values and meanings produced by the textual and contextual semiotic structures. What is proposed as the model of analysis is text as a system comprising values and meanings as its elements and the context as a set of communicative actions arising in relation to the text. The context, therefore, includes both the information sphere, the functions of media, and the effects provoked by the publication of the text.

The objective of our study is the identification of contextual contradictions emerging in the media space and the definition of value and semantic incompatibilities impeding effective communication based on these contradictions. The object of the study is presented by incompatibilities emerging in the process of identification and assimilation of values.

The theoretical sources of the research are primarily presented by the studies on axiology of journalism and mass communication [9-11]. To define the operating concepts and specify the methodological prerequisites we referred to the studies in the fields of myth theory [12-14] and structural semiotics [3, 15]. We also deployed the positions and ideas of theorists of the world-system approach related to the analysis of historical and social processes [16, 17].

The evolution of the notion of the "world-system" originates from the definition of "world-economy" [16, p. 14], the essence of which is found in the autonomy of and organic unity based on internal connections and exchanges. "World-economy" as a capitalist system was interpreted by I. Wallerstein and was included in the group of "world-systems" along with "world empires". According to Wallerstein, the world-system is a "territorial and time space comprising many political and cultural units but, at the same time, presenting a single organism the entire activity of which is guided by unified systemic rules" [17, p. 75]. Capitalist world economy with a claim for global dominance and sociocultural universalism historically became the first virtually alienated form of human existence. In the New Age period (which starts from the 18th century in Russia) world-empires also acquire the qualities of world-systems with their own unique virtually alienated forms (which include journalism). The issue faced by every world-empire in the process of its evolution into the state of a world-system lies in a double-sided conflict between tradition and modernity on the one side and global and universal world-economy and its own world-systemic periphery on the other. Currently, the world-system methodology is developing within the framework of the concept of multipolarity – an explanatory model of the transition from a unipolar world (the dominance of the world economy) to the coexistence of macro-regions (world-systems).

The global world economy is based on the myth of individual liberty of a person, which, in turn, presents a foundation of liberal ideologies and identity understood as personal autonomy. Every world-system is forced to produce (or historically reanimate) the myths ensuring its integrity and value consistency. Identity in world-systemic relationships is viewed as a form of membership of an individual in the community of a "pole" of the world-system. The formation of this identity type involves multiple agents among which is the world-systemic media that not only execute the myth translation function but are themselves based on the "attitude towards media as a national and cultural value" [10, p. 319].

The axiological approach to the study of a myth in modern media involves value analysis as a method of journalism research [18, p. 222-232]. The present study is based on the world-system methodology that includes the application of

cross-cultural analysis. To acquire empirical data, we deployed the procedure of content analysis of media texts.

Deriving from the statements described above, we referred to the study of a specific situation and chose the media coverage of Russian humanitarian aid provided to Italy for the fight against the coronavirus infection (COVID-19) in 2020. According to TASS, "from March 22 till the morning of March 25 15 airplanes transporting about 11 Russian military virologists and epidemiology specialists of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, eight medical and nursing teams, equipment for the diagnosis and disinfection landed in Italy. Russian specialists work in an area in North Italy that has suffered from the coronavirus pandemic the most – the city of Bergamo" [19]. An unusual situation has formed – Russian military transport aircrafts landed in a NATO country in close proximity to the important bases of this military-political bloc; moreover, the difficulty of handling this fact was caused by the fact that it was military rather than civilian epidemiologists who arrived to help, and the accusations of them previously working in Syria began to spread quickly [20]. As is widely known, the policy of Italy as a member of NATO regarding the internal conflict in Syria is diametrically opposite to Russian. Moreover, in the most significant European media and, consequently, in public opinion there is a long-established myth of a "dictator Putin" and the "authoritarian Russia". Therefore, the fact of Russian medical professionals' arrival to Italy served as a trigger for cognitive dissonance that became the core of political myths produced by this situation.

In the framework of world-system analysis, this case presents an object of special interests: a semi-peripheral (according to Wallerstein's understanding) country provides help to a capitalist core member country. Understanding of the sociopolitical situation prevailing in the world affected by the pandemic and the attempts of analyzing the countries' political strategies and specific actions as the stages of implementation of these strategies lead to the intensification of meaning flows circulating in the world-systemic media.

It can be concluded that there is a reflective transition from the first Ockhamian intentions (things existing reality) to the second Ockhamian intentions (concepts about these things) taking place. Along this transition, mythological concepts accumulate meanings and the generation of forms of spreading these concepts occurs. In an attempt of making sense of the role of an author in these processes, we inevitably conclude their transition from an intention as an orientation of consciousness towards a certain object towards a communicative intention contributing to the representation of specific concepts in the text.

Referring to the corresponding materials of the InoSMI¹ information and analytical portal allows us to analyze this non-standard media situation. The practice of this portal involves the systematic publication of fragments of articles from leading world media on relevant topics with an opportunity to access the original – the full text of the source, which allows identifying the predominant world press tendencies in covering political, economic, cultural, and sports events. We must note that the InoSMI portal presents a project of RIA "Novosti" and is therefore not free in its conceptual focus on the search for various materials about Russia in world media. However, the sample of materials about Russia is representative in this way: foreign publications about Russia selected by InoSMI for publication contain information allowing analyzing the conditions of political mythogenesis.

We also selected 74 pieces of material from Russian media ("Meduza", "Izvestia", "Delovoi Peterburg", "Novaia gazeta", "Vzgliad", RIA "Novosti", "Gazeta.ru", "Lenta.ru", RBK, "Tsargrad", TASS, "Rossiiskaia gazeta", "Moskva24",

¹InoSMI is a portal of analytical reviews undertaken on an ongoing basis. It is owned by the Russian Information Agency (RIA) "Novosti" and financially supported by the Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation (Rospechat).

"Kommersant", "RussiaToday", "Ekspert", "Vesti", "Rosbalt", "Moskovskii komsomolets", "Komsomolskaia pravda", "Pervyi kanal"). The choice of media was shaped by the need to exclude the ideological and genre bias from the analysis of publication texts. Therefore, our sample comprised news agencies, actual online media, online versions of traditional media, print media, television channels, as well as media with a pronounced liberal ideological orientation (for instance, "Novaia gazeta"); state-owned media ("Rossiiskaia gazeta"); Russian media based abroad ("Meduza"), conservative ("Vesti"), religious ("Tsargrad"), and business ("Delovoi Peterburg", "Kommersant") media.

The chronological scope of the study: March 21, 2020 (first reports indicating Russia was going to send humanitarian aid to Italy to combat COVID-19) – May 1, 2020.

Content analysis was organized in the following manner. In analyzing the pre-selected texts, we identified the appearing lexemes in semantic clusters corresponding to a certain mythological concept. We then attempted to evaluate the degree to which the mythological concept affected the state of the myth in the Russian media sphere and ultimately the formation of contextual contradictions arising in Russian media space.

3 Results and Discussion

We will mark the publications selected from the InoSMI portal as media episodes composed of articles by regular authors of newspapers in Italy, Great Britain, France, Poland, China, Egypt, Germany, Finland, Denmark, the USA, etc., responses/reviews of the responses of readers of these publications, and "comments" of InoSMI readers. (However, in one part of the study of materials of the portal the most recent materials of Russian origin were not taken into account due to being incompatible with the conditions of the objective of researching mythogenesis in the countries of the EU).

In the period ranging from March 21, 2020, to April 21, 2020, the authors of the InoSMI portal located 280 media episodes there publicists, correspondents, and politicians discussed the help provided to Italy by Russia:

- 1) in every second publication of the sample (taken as the general population according to the object of the study) the fact of humanitarian aid is used as a media event to build the author's conception of the political state of modern Russia on;
- 2) in one-third of the sample of publications the "example of Italy" serves as an argument in the discussion of the future of the EU after the pandemic.

In the first case, mythogenesis can only be identified as the continuation of political myth-making about Russia, the authors of such publications are typically the largest actors in the media sphere; in the second case, the political agenda of the day is examined mostly based on already existing myths about the history of Europe. This part of mythogenesis appears to be primarily linked to the core of cultures of countries where the examined newspapers and publications are posted.

In the context of resolving the next ensuing objectives of the study a sample of 15 media episodes (5% of the general population) obtained through secondary sample analysis and compiled using the search function of the InoSMI portal by "help", "coronavirus", and "Italy" keywords presents the most interest. The sample included only those articles and reader opinions that accentuated the political views/values of their authors related directly to the participation of Russian military doctors in the fight against the Apennines pandemic. Compilations of readers' opinions that demonstrate the contradictory structure of the audience's values and presents a base of operational mythogenesis of current political practice present special significance.

We compiled the opinions of readers of newspapers published in Italy [21], Poland [22], and Bulgaria [23, 24]. The statements'

authors simultaneously belong to the general European audience and the audiences of particular EU member countries. In accordance with this gradation, it was found that the fact of cooperation of Italy and Russia in the fight against coronavirus lead to the emergence of a range of relevant mythologemes based on a certain interpretation of European solidarity values. We conducted a new analysis of the selected opinion compilations focused on the research questions allowed to identify 32 typical reader statements of readers who belonged to the EU member countries and related to the declared European solidarity values.

Not the most significant portion of these statements was composed of phrases where solidarity in the time of hardship was interpreted in a wider sense – both within and outside the EU. The image of Russia accompanied by confidence in the ideas that "Together we will win", "Help is better than inaction", "There are facts in favor of the Russians" [21], "A noble gesture of Russia" [22], "Reciprocity is needed" [23; 24] was only found in nine reader statements (7% of the whole sample of reader responses). In contrast, we identify 11 statements combined into these most clearly expressing anti-Russian rhetoric:

- distrust of Russian doctors is expressed – "their identity cannot be established, they fought in Syria" [21];
- confidence in the aggressive nature of Russia and its leadership is demonstrated – "Putin cheats" [21], "Putin is a criminal" [23], "Russia is an aggressor" [24].

However, the number of readers' opinions following the political myths of the history of the united Europe that have been forming for the past two decades is also symptomatic – there were only five of those (4%). This finding can indicate that in pandemic conditions the voices of dedicated supporters of the EU are heard more rarely than usual which is consistent with Noelle-Neumann's theory suggesting that a person can experience "fear of isolation" when they find themselves in conditions where they seem to be in the minority. This presents "the driving force unwinding spiral of silence" [25, p. 36]. This assumption can be supported by the fact that half of the positions expressed by the readers are extremely difficult to qualify strictly in any way. Again, in full accordance with the "spiral of silence" theory, this part of the readers has yet to go through a stage Noelle-Neumann characterizes as "the last-minute shift" [25, p. 68]. The conditions for this shift, however, are not present yet.

The adherence of the thinking part of the readership to the political myth of European solidarity could not but unfold in their expression of concern/critique of the slowness of Western leaders in the context of medical assistance to the people of Italy coming from Russia, China, and Cuba: "What did the Germans or French do for us?", "The EU deviates from the solidarity principle" [21]; "Russia is helping and where is the USA?" [22]; "The EU may end up at the graveyard of history" [23]; "The EU is compromised" [24]. As expected, there are few critical statements – 8% of the entire sample.

Finally, in statement compilations, we indicate diametrically opposite positions originating equally from the myth of solidarity of the European countries. In the first case, there are calls for media actors to "temper the anti-Russian paranoia" [21]; "Those who write about spies rather than help are idiots", "The world needs reciprocity" [24]. In the second case, adherence to the myth of solidarity leads to aggressive conclusions: "Russian doctors in Italy are "the little green men"" [22]; "Exterminate Putin's aggressors!", "Medical assistance is a hybrid war" [24]. Characteristically, no aggressive statements were observed in the Italian audience.

Verdicts expressed by the audience of readers primarily derive from social reality and, naturally, from the political views cultivated in the mass media, in this case – the ones related to the ideology of the EU. The range of identified media episodes includes a certain number of newspaper publications written by regular employees of well-known newspapers. Their political views are familiar to readers and their evaluations of the current

events are predictable. Thus, the articles of these authors are within the formed mainstream of the "publisher – author – reader" media symbiosis. Examining the content of articles included in the study sample, we can easily identify the outlines of the ideological link between the newspaper and its audience.

For instance, the Italian "La Stampa" and the Swiss "Blik" are convinced that the doctors who arrived in Italy previously worked in Syria and no help can be expected from them, as they can be unable to save patients due to being experts in biological weapons [20; 26]. The Danish "Jyllands-Posten" states ironically: Putin "took on the role of savior of the world and sent aircraft with aid in the form of medical equipment to Serbia, Italy, and the USA 'from Russia with love'. <...> But the grim reality has caught up with the authors <...> of aid campaigns intended as a goodwill campaign on behalf of Putin and his sanctioned country" [27] and "La Stampa" clarifies that today "Russia, being in an emergency situation due to coronavirus, helps us guided not at all by the extremely limitless kindness of its people and the traditional friendship connecting the two countries, therefore, the fate of Italy is at stakes" [20]. "Putin is invading", "Medical equipment supplies from Russia are useless" [28], the Russian military "is two steps away from the NATO military bases" [26] – those are the anxieties shared by many European media.

A Russian politologist O. A. Belykh notes that "the direct relationship between the tendentiousness of an article and the growth of emotionality and aggression in its discussion" [29, p. 41]. The positions of authors of newspaper articles and the opinions of their readers on the help of Russia to Italy in the fight against the pandemic are directly affected by the dominance of the political myth of the union and mutual help of the EU countries. While the mythologeme itself is not questioned, the evaluations of its stability vary greatly. Therefore, the mythogenesis takes place in current political practice, which can result in two mutually exclusive outcomes: either further development of the myth of European solidarity, the cultural and historical community – the continuation of the *historical* myth, or its destruction – the realization of the *operational* myth. It is possible that, instead of the operational myth, a bifurcation will emerge within the mythogenesis – either the historical convergence with Russia in the renewed world or the inevitable geopolitical confrontation with it. The final answer will probably be provided by half of people that have not made their decision yet, the one we discovered during the analysis of readers' responses. However, the "last-minute shift" is only prognosed at the moment.

In the process of analyzing the Russian media, we identified the following groups of semantic clusters and mythological concepts (Table 1). We must note here that the repetition of lexemes responsible for the formal illustration of the concept is determined by the varying interpretations of it by different authors. Therefore, the attribution of a certain lexeme to a semantic cluster and a mythological concept was performed at the contextual level and the level of semantic relation of a lexeme to other lexemes in the text under examination. The overall number of materials exceeds the number of examined texts since many of them contained more than one concept ("Russia as a rescuer and a friend", "Russia as a political actor and a tormentor", "Russia as a friend and an economic partner", etc.). The manner in which the concept unfolded forms the poetics of the myth in its narrative nature.

Table 1: Groups of semantic clusters and mythological concepts

Semantic cluster/mythological concept	Tone	Concept deployment lexemes	Number of materials containing mythological concepts
Gratitude/"Russia as a rescuer"	Positive	Italians, help, magnanimity, generosity, upscale, flag, betrayal	27
Cultural interaction and solidarity/"Russia as a friend"	Positive	Italians, the European Union, borsch, home, victim, friends, respect, Russophobia	18

Welfare/"Russia as an economic partner"	Neutral	Italy, the European Union, money, sanctions, value (material), crisis (economic)	11
Independence/"Russia as a political actor"	Negative	Italy, the USA, the European Union, benefits (political), resentment, indignation, trust, trick, geopolitics, diplomacy	24
Safety/"Russia as a tormentor"	Negative	Italy, media, LaStampa, futility, insolvency, useless, profit, discontent	17

The first two clusters ("Gratitude" and "Cultural interaction and solidarity") contribute to the formation of a positive image of Russia, reinforce positive assessment attitudes in the audience, and have a positive tone. The "Welfare" cluster can be labeled as contextually neutral: in the analysis of statements related to gratuitous or beneficial nature of the help provided by Russia we encountered various evaluations ranging from the justification of the principle of reciprocated assistance to the demonization of Russia as an open rival of the EU in general and Italy in particular. Finally, the last two clusters ("Independence" and "Safety") contribute to the formation of a negative image of Russia and its reinforcement in the media discourse. Further on, we will examine these clusters in greater detail.

The analyzed texts demonstrate an open polarization of the forming mythological concepts fixating either the image of Russia as an assistant selflessly helping those in need or the image of Russia as a cunning political actor seeking to realize their geopolitical interests at the expense of weakened Italy. An observation important to note here is that in the formation of a positive image of Russia the authors typically use the "Italians" lexeme, while the negatively toned mythological concepts are predominantly formed with the lexeme of "Italy". A concept contributes to the deformation of the unity of a state and its people in the consciousness of the audience, there is a sharp distinction between the people who are positive towards Russia and the government that is negative towards it. A comparison can be made: "Italians thank Russia for help and scold the EU" [30] versus "Italy demands apologies from Russia" [31].

Aside from the "Italians" lexeme, the "Gratitude" cluster contains several unexpected variations of positive image formation. A positive image of Russia is often built at the expense of a simultaneously forming negative image of the EU that did not come to the aid of Italy at a difficult moment. This aspect is highlighted through the incorporation of mentions of state symbols into the concept: "As a token of gratitude, Italians remove the EU flags from the streets and hang Russian flags in their place" [32].

In the "Cultural interaction and solidarity" cluster, it is worthy to highlight several materials telling about borsch cooked by Italians for Russian doctors: "Italians tried to thank their foreign colleagues and cooked borsch as well as they could. Beside it, they put a sign saying 'Sorry, it's our first time'" [33], "Many users considered the Italians' move touching. In the comments, borsch was called a sign of respect and a beautiful gesture" [34]. We must note, that the "Italians" lexeme is actively used here as well.

The "Welfare" cluster is attributed to the neutral type since it contains both the diametrically opposed assessments of Russia's economic interests in Italy and a wide range of neutral materials without pronounced evaluations. Moreover, the formation of this cluster and the corresponding mythological concept was promoted by Vladimir Putin himself who said the following about Russian help to Italy: "This is not a one-way street. In Italy, we purchase pressure sensors without which the production of ventilators in Russia would be impossible" [35].

The mythologization of Russia as a political actor aggressively standing up for its interest is still common in Russian media discourse – especially in its online part. The actively used

lexemes include the names of countries and supranational entities (Italy, the USA, the EU): "In her interview to the Tgcom 24 news channel on March 26, Simona Viola, the president of the pro-European liberal party +Europa, noted it is difficult for her to imagine Russia simply helping without any secret motives. Why the military? Why not civil assistance? <...> The politician noted that Russia wants to destroy the EU" [36].

Finally, the Russian media actively spread the word of the Italian newspaper "La Stampa" that, referring to anonymous sources in the Italian government, called Russian help 80% useless. This largely contributed to the formation of a mythological concept that can be indicated as a continuation of the previous one: here Russia is viewed not just as a political actor who actively stands up for its interests, but as a tormentor that provided no actual help to Italy. Russian media either use the "Italy" lexeme, or directly state the source of the information – "La Stampa" newspaper as if attributing the responsibility of the formation of this concept either to the country as a whole or to the specific organization.

It is necessary to add that the nomination dominant in all the analyzed publications was the one that served as a media event – the help of Russian military doctors. It is quite apparent that the background/context for the mythologization of Russia as a political actor was formed by the stable myth of the aggressive foreign policy of Russia. However, while the foreign press, as cited above, ask a rhetorical question of why the provided help was military rather than civil reinforcing the provocative meaning of the situation, Russian media are also focused on the demythologization strategy. This is the way in which materials on partnership in the fight against the dangerous virus appear: phone conversations between the Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Italian counterpart Lorenzo Guerini, a consultation in Rome with the chief of the interspecific operational command of the General Staff of the Armed forces of Italy, Lieutenant General Portolano on the issue of participation of Russian military specialists, machinery, and equipment in the fight against the infection [37], the period of practice for Russian military doctors working in Bergamo that would allow them to "compare the approaches, treat patients in accordance with Italian laws and regulations, draw up documentation" beforehand [38]. The purity of intent is emphasized by the details from the stories of the doctors themselves about their completely peaceful life: buying yogurts, juices, vitamins in a pharmacy to maintain strength after hard work. Each of these "sorties" into the city is accompanied by emotional remarks from Italians who recognize Russian doctors by their military uniforms: "Grazia, Russe!" [38].

In general, the real event of humanitarian aid to Italy from Russian military doctors became an impetus for the formation of an intense dissonant media narrative. Having turned into text, this event "became available for experiencing multiple times – for participation on the part of those people who were not its direct executors" [39, p. 23]. The uniqueness of this narrative is found in the fact that it is "patchworked" from the individual experience of people who apply their own evaluation criteria for the assessment and mastery of political reality sometimes being captivated by imagination as a constant companion of every mythologized consciousness.

Appealing to the value consciousness as "a certain horizon of consciousness that allows a person to establish their value relations with the world and become a subject of learning the value qualities of existence" [40, p. 66], a mythologized concept executes its function of destination: it is directed towards a particular portion of the audience forming and reinforcing its cognitive distortions expressed, in particular, in the formation of subjective beliefs (as well as prejudices and stereotypes) in relation to "other" and "alien" world-systems.

A mythological concept is realized through its continuous (extended in time) representation in multiple forms and, at the same time, remains unstable and easily abolished under the effect of historical processes, which is promoted by its open

nature. As was rightly noted by Roland Barthes, a concept is "in no way an abstract, sterile entity, but rather a condensate of unformed, unstable, foggy associations; their unity and coherence depend primarily on the function of the concept" [13, p. 82].

I.V. Erofeeva suggested using the concept of "mediatext axiosphere" to describe the space accumulating spiritual (mental) values: "the construction of this sphere should be examined <...> at three levels: the pragmatics of axiosphere, the syntactics of axiosphere, and the semantics of axiosphere. The problem of mediatext axiosphere that includes the issues of the functioning of major concepts and archetypes of a national worldview in the media is directly related to the genre (postmodern) specifics of the existence of the spiritual sphere, the structural (ritual) components of its organization, and the technological instruments of affecting" [11, p. 278]. The interpretation of substantial values and the myth itself as a communicative system or a message is expressed in the definition provided by R. Barthes: "From here it follows that it can be neither a thing nor a concept or idea; it is a form, a way of designating" [41, p. 265]. In Barthes's description, a myth contains a form of the "designated" and the meaning of the "designating" which are in constant playful interaction. A world economy that, aside from the dominant myth of the individual liberty of a person, declares the right for mythological interpretation prioritizes the external, the formal, and the aesthetic. Such an interpretation forms the structure of a myth fixating its fluctuation, temporality, and conditionality. This relation to a myth and its value core presents a significant communicative advantage of the global world economy as it allows to destroy myths and devolve world-system values based on personal representations and the denial of absoluteness per se.

In journalism, as a virtually alienated form of a world-system, the contradiction of mythological interpretation is expressed in the problem of the objectivity of an author's statement and their product in general. O. F. Smaznova identifies two forms of the modern mythological: the "big" (or the native) myth as an ideally typical model of worldviewing and "a mythoid as a mythical story or image endowed with an exclusively personal philosophical meaning, created in an individual mythological impulse, but capable of acquiring a sociocultural, supra-individual meaning – a phenomenon that is not comprehended ideally typically, but rather biographically" [14, p. 319]. In a journalistic text, this contradiction is resolved through achieving conformity between content and genre forms and in context this issue is settled through coordination of social and individual meaning. The problem of objectivity acquires a certain shape for a communication researcher: "it is obvious that the true essence of a myth can be seen through 'getting used' to the forms of the mythological activity of consciousness, but then the myth is lost as an object and appears as existence" [15, p. 192].

The dense circumnuclear sphere of the world presents an integrated individual reality of images of reality based on personal ancestral experience, experiences, and memories. The essence of a myth as the reality of the world, the object of direct perception is most clearly expressed in its circumnuclear structures [12, p. 121]. The external sphere of a myth in the media sphere encounters the totality of virtual flows impacting the dense sphere and the core with the goal of correction or destruction. One of the authors of the article describes such a communicative process through the categories of the opposition between a value and an anti-value: "The moral alienation of a person and even entire social groups is not so much of a basis for abandoning the production of values rather than a favorable environment for replacing it with anti-values. For this reason, it must be said very clearly: openness and democracy of the press can no longer be a filter preventing the media sphere from being penetrated by both the explicit denial of values and the meanings that appear under the guise of their reinforcement" [9, p. 36]. In the structures of world economy, the cultivation of openness and democracy creates the conditions for the devaluation of the dominant myth about the freedom, which inevitably falls into its own trap of relativism, is questioned, criticized, and ridiculed.

4 Conclusions

Appealing to the values of their audience, the world-systemic media use mythological concepts that, in turn, are formally represented through the use of corresponding lexemes. The identifies clusters and the corresponding mythological concepts indicate the significance of the value of society polarization reflected in media. These concepts may co-exist and even interact but are also capable of hindering effective communication through the creation, fixation, and promotion of conflicting political myths in the media sphere.

The key issue of impact is acquiring communicative compatibility allowing the effective modification of mythological structures. The process of achieving communicative compatibility results in the structuration of world-systems into "ours", "other" and "alien" ones occurring as a result of the process of achieving communicative compatibility reflects in the media reproduction of mythological concepts engraved in the texts by authors and activating the sequence of value associations.

The world-systemic media establish connections between myths creating unified and consistent mythology, informationally support the myths that are already present in the public consciousness and participate in the structuring of culture. The space of a myth includes a core of the myth-making process that presents the world as meaningful, – the structure and periphery where communicative interactions take place, including the reflection of aggression that destructs the integrity of the world-system of elements. Preservation of integrity is a primary objective of the world-system, and the execution of this objective presents the key function of the world-systemic media ensuring the accumulation of values and the circulation of meanings.

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