



The Coverage and Reception of
the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict



Finanțat de
Uniunea Europeană
NextGenerationEU



Planul Național
de Redresare și Reziliență



UNIVERSITATEA
LUCIAN BLAGA
— DIN SIBIU —

Marginal narratives in the coverage and reception of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

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Agenda

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- Major and Minor Narratives: Conceptual Delimitation
- The Major Narrative:
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Major and Minor Narratives: Theoretical Frameworks

- Neumann, Klaus. (1992). *Not the Way It Really Was: Constructing the Tolai Past*.
- The book lies at the intersection of several fields of investigation: anthropology, oral history, postcolonial politics, and epistemological critique.
- Neumann follows in the footsteps of ethnographers such as A.L. Epstein and T. Scarlett Epstein, who studied power relations and the economic dynamics of communities in Melanesia and South Asia, as well as Jan Vansina, who emphasized oral traditions or histories as valuable sources for reconstructing the past.
- The book is characterized by narrative polyphony—it is a weave of voices and narrative threads—since Neumann analyzes different versions of the same event, introduces the tension between official history and oral memory, and highlights the limitations of historical methodology (chapter *The Pieces Don't Fit*)—history is not a coherent whole.

Major and Minor Narratives: Theoretical Frameworks

- Continuing Neumann's thesis, along the lines of E.P. Thompson and Walter Benjamin, Chris Ballard (2022), in *Marginal History, History and Anthropology*, argues that history should not be reduced to the official narrative alone.
- Clifford Geertz (1973)—*Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight*. Geertz analyzes the cockfights in Bali, explaining them not merely as a game, but as a microcosm of that society, a metaphor for the social structures and power relations within the community.

Major and Minor Narratives: A Conceptual Delimitation

The Major Narrative is characterized by:-
official character

- ideologica: vorbeste despre națiune, suveranitate, libertate

- ideological dimension: it speaks about nation, sovereignty, freedom

- linearity

- a source of legitimacy for collective identity

- disqualification of alternative versions, which are considered myths or folklore

The Minor Narrative is characterized by:

- fragmentariness (unusual, often discontinuous episodes)

- questioning of the official narrative

- focus on small contexts and details (names, gestures)

- emotional value; it reflects feelings, personal reactions, direct experience

- humanizes the conflict; relies on personal memory

Major Narrative:

- Order of the XXV World Russian People's Council "The Present and Future of the Russian World": <https://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/6116189.html>
- **The Reactivation of the Russkiy Mir Myth:**
A "spiritual unity space", legitimizing the "special military operation" as a stage in the "national liberation struggle of the Russian people against the criminal regime in Kyiv and the collective West behind it, which has been taking place on the lands of Southwestern Russia since 2014."
- **Defense rhetoric;** the watchword is "to defend": "life, freedom, statehood, civilizational, religious, national, and cultural identity," as well as the right to live on one's own land within the borders of a single Russian state.
- **Missionary status** as a defender against the "attack of globalism" and the degenerate and decadent West.
- **The doctrine of the triune Russian people**, promoted for over three centuries, which justifies the "military operation" and control over Belarus, claims that the Russian people are composed of Great Russians (Velikorussy), Little Russians (Malorussy), and Belarusians – considered sub-ethnicities of historic Russia.

Deconstructing the Myth of Imperial Russia. Mikhail Shishkin, *My Russia*

- "A personality split, a divided consciousness – of saying one thing while thinking and doing another – that was the reality of an entire nation. When a lie separates from itself, it becomes capable of constructing a new reality, and that reality is us (...) We should not call this a mere injustice, for it springs from the will to survive — in a camp called Russia, fenced with barbed wire" (From *My Russia*, chapter "The Paradox of the Lie")
- "The enormous chasm between power and the people became a trauma from the very birth of the nation."
(This structural rupture between the ruling elites and the masses begins with the founding brutality of medieval power following the Mongol invasion, deepens during the Tsarist Empire, and erupts violently during the Bolshevik Revolution and Stalinist terror.)

Case study: The clothes worn by Zelensky cost 110 euros. In comparison, just Putin's jacket costs 12,000 euros. (<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/hainele-pe-care-le-poarta-zelenski-costa-110-de-euro-in-comparatie-doar-geaca-lui-putin-e-12-000-de-euro.html>)



The **multimodal message** is conveyed through the use of multiple semiotic resources: spatial mode, dominant color palette, and the blurring of human figures.

The **persuasive meaning** is constructed through various semiotic devices:

- **Framing**, which suggests power;
- **Visual symbols**, such as flags;
- **The luxury jacket**, which conveys authority.

Linguistic triggers: quantifiers

- *"Putin's jacket costs more than an average Russian's two-year salary."*
- *"Zelensky wears clothes and shoes that cost no more than £100. The hoodie is £10, trousers £26, T-shirt £5, and shoes £51. The total is £92, approximately €110 or 550 RON."*

Case Study: *Volodymyr Zelensky dresses almost exclusively in Ukrainian clothing brands, which he has made famous since the start of the war with Russia.*

<https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/volodimir-zelenski-se-imbraca-aproape-exclusiv-cu-marci-de-haine-ucrainene-pe-care-le-a-facut-celebre-de-cand-a-inceput-razboiul-cu-rusia-4367777>

- Deixis:
- “The sporty clothing of the president, who must now manage the war started in his country by the Russians **vs** the leader of the Kremlin appeared in front of tens of thousands of supporters of his war in Ukraine wearing a Loro Piana coat that can be bought in Russia for 1.5 million rubles.”
- – the use of Ukrainian brands causes people to order T-shirts similar to those worn by the President of Ukraine,
 - the minimalist clothing style and the rejection of official suits.

Case study : <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/rusii-au-cautat-pe-google-zcum-sa-ti-rupi-o-mana-acasa-imediat-ce-putin-a-anuntat-mobilizarea-la-razboi.html>

- **Stereotyping:**
 - the collective category materialized through a plural noun,
 - lack of individualization.
- **“Cultivating ambiguity:”** camouflage-style military pants alongside a civilian hoodie (a symbolic alignment with Zelensky's attire, whose photo in a hoodie has become an iconic image).



Case study [Ucrainenii au sărbătorit pentru prima dată Crăciunul pe 25 decembrie. Schimbarea reprezintă o ruptură de Rusia - Știrile ProTV \(stirileprotv.ro\)](http://stirileprotv.ro)

Identity-driven shift (the construction of one's own identity through a rupture from Russia) generates polarization between the Church in Russia and the one in Ukraine, between the Julian and the Gregorian calendars.

Ideological positioning is expressed through negations:

- “we can no longer be part of the Russian world,”
- “no enemy can take our holiday from us,”
- “[the Orthodox Church] did not align with the one in Russia.”
- **Performative verbs** of the *verdictive act*,
- The **discourse marker** “however,”
- The **lexeme** *invasion* becomes a linguistic trigger.

Narratives of Solidarity :

- The unification of Romania and Ukraine through a National Peace Park
The story of **Olga Kopylova**, a Ukrainian refugee in Moldova, who managed during wartime to expand her fish restaurant chain from Ukraine to Romania, in Constanța.
Identity construction through storytelling (De Fina 2003) – an important component of interactionist research. Through narratives, individuals give meaning to their existence, define their identity (Somers 1994), and simultaneously exert **a persuasive influence** on others.
- The story of actors **Mihai Călin** and **Richard Bovnoczki** from the National Theatre in Bucharest, who were forbidden to display a message of support for Ukraine and to raise the Ukrainian flag on the theatre building.
- The project of **Channel 5**, the oldest news station in Ukraine, where presenters posed nude and raised funds to purchase **walkie-talkie communication devices** for the army.
- The request from **Romanian transport companies** to the authorities to recognize **Ukrainian drivers' documents** and allow them to be employed.
- The story of **Viktorina Apanasenko**, who **cooks for soldiers** and was selected to represent Ukraine at the **Miss Universe 2022** pageant.
- The **pitch invasion** during the Portugal vs. Uruguay World Cup match by a fan **advocating for Ukraine and Iranian women**.

Conclusions :

- **Minor narratives:** part of strategies for emotional balance aimed at an audience fatigued by too many reports of war and death.
- They impact the receiver by **involving them in the discovery of meaning**, making them a **partner in the construction of significance**.
- They **make visible the cracks in the major narrative** by promoting ideas of **solidarity, identity redefinition, and identity construction**.

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