

# TRANSFORMATION OF THE INFORMATION SPACE OF THE MILITARY-POLITICAL CONFLICT ZONE IN DONETSK AND LUHANSK

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## ABSTRACT

*The article is devoted to the analysis of the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts in Donetsk and Luhansk. The authors propose to move away from traditional models and schemes of its explanation, which are associated with the study of databases, technologies for their maintenance, mechanisms for their application, information systems, information needs of the information environment. As an alternative explanatory model offers a structural analysis of the modern Ukrainian cinema and reflection of the given information trends in popular social networks: Facebook, Instagram, Classmates, Vkontakte, Twitter, YouTube. The authors selected the film materials in accordance with reasonable criteria for their subsequent study. Then the content contained in the films was re-analyzed in online communities, pages of popular bloggers, and YouTube channels to identify tools and technologies for its positioning in order to change the information space of the military-political conflict zone. As the main methods the authors used content analysis (for structural and substantial study of film and the specifics of its positioning in social networks) and intent-analysis (to identify key intentions of the film and their representations in popular social networks), scenario analysis (required to interpret the content and intent of the dialogues of the main story lines of the films), a project-based approach (necessary for identification of stakeholders in the transformation of the information space of the zone of military-political conflict). Additional methods were: comparative models of film plot analysis, narrative analysis of film micro-plots, and methods of ideological measurement of films.*

*As a result of the conducted research, the mechanisms of binary structuring of the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts were determined. The techniques and techniques that were used to implement these mechanisms are identified. The features of the distortion of the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts are revealed.*

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**Keywords:** Information Space, Military-Political Conflict, Structure of the Information Space, Distortion of the Information Space, Technologies for Changing the Information Space

## INTRODUCTION

Military-political conflicts in the XXI century are characterized by a high speed of the main stages and phases, the rapid inclusion of new and exit of previously involved subjects, the use of ultra-expensive, high-precision weapons, the rapidly growing professionalism of law enforcement agencies, simultaneously military and information confrontations between the main participants, as well as a number of other, no less important features (Ivanov, 2016). The specifics of modern military-political conflicts form a unique structure and content of the information space in the zone where they occur, as well as in other regions of the world that have points of contact with this territory.

Social and humanitarian sciences, describing the main structural components of the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts: databases, technologies for their support, mechanisms for their application, information systems, information needs, etc., operate

in such categories as: information and psychological impact, information expansion, information lobbying, information stuffing, and many others (Borchsenius, 2016). Applying these concepts to analyze the content of the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts in Donetsk and Luhansk, experts study reports of international organizations, speeches of political leaders, news feeds of major news agencies, reports of military and civilian analysts on information security and technology, etc.

According to the estimates of domestic (Terpugov, 2018) and foreign (Kirillova, 2016) researchers, a special component of the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts is films dedicated to this topic. At the same time, experts note that the more saturated the information space of the zone of military-political conflict, the greater the variety and focus of film materials on this topic (Breitman, 2019). So, for the period from 2015 to 2020, directors from different countries made more than 4,000 professional and amateur films dedicated to the military-political conflicts in Donetsk and Luhansk.

The purpose of the article is to interpret the changes in the information space of the military-political conflict zone in Donetsk and Luhansk under the influence of modern Ukrainian cinema and social networks.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To achieve this goal, for the period from 2015 to 2020, we selected the following films of Ukrainian production: *Volunteers of the Divine Couple* (2015); *Cyborgs* (2017); *Rime* (2017); *Myth* (2018). The selection of film materials was carried out according to the following criteria: first, the films had to contain content related to the assessment of the specifics of the formation of the information space in the zone of military-political conflicts in the South-East of Ukraine. Secondly, the films had to differ in genre diversity: documentaries, feature films, full-length films, and short films. Third, film materials were selected based on their rating (not lower than 4 on popular online movie viewing portals (Brezov, 2016). Fourth, the films had to be nominated as participants in film festivals, and as a result, receive numerous reviews and reviews from the professional community from different countries. We also analyzed the materials of social networking Facebook, Instagram, Classmates, Vkontakte, Twitter, YouTube which carried a representation of basic and additional materials submitted films, identified methods and technologies such representation.

To study the content of the selected films, in accordance with the stated purpose of the article, we used the methods of content analysis and intent analysis. Content analysis was used to interpret the content of the dialogues and monologues of the main characters in the main storylines. Intent analysis was used for deep insight into the content of the speeches of the main characters, to interpret their key meaning and direction [Mannheim, 1997]. In addition, we used interdisciplinary methods of studying the subjects of film productions. In particular, comparative models of film plot analysis, narrative analysis of film micro-plots, and methods of ideological measurement of films (Toporov, 2005).

## RESULTS

The analysis of the structural and content parts of the selected Ukrainian films, which form the perspectives of the information space of the zones of military-political conflicts in Donetsk and Luhansk, allows us to formulate the following preliminary conclusions. They can be combined into four logical blocks. Namely, the information space of the zones of military-political conflicts is represented in the studied films as follows: first, through the formation of a system of value coordinates friend-foe as a basis for positioning participants in military-political conflicts; secondly, by creating a worldview structure – civilizational-barbarians, which allows to identify the participants of military-political conflicts; thirdly, by constructing optics based on a kaleidoscope of changed and deformed values that reflect the positions of the participants in the conflict; fourthly, using the method of constructing one-sided models of perception of

information and communication threats; fifthly, using director's strategies of ideologizing the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts.

Turning to the description of the content of the first logical block, it should be noted that all four films trace the positioning of the information space in the zones of the Donetsk and Luhansk military-political conflicts in a two-pole coordinate system – friends and foes. The main characters of the films clearly divide countries, governments, and armed forces according to a binary principle (Berezhnaya, 2015). With the development of story lines going on active justification of their criticism others in the framework of the following schemes: we are not to blame – blame them, we should not bear responsibility for the consequences of the conflict they should take the brunt of this responsibility, our weapons are for deterrence and defense of their weapons needed to attack, etc. Especially clearly marked schemes of binary positioning of the information space are manifested in the dialogues of the characters of the films *Volunteers of the Divine Couple* and *Cyborgs*. The world surrounding the characters, the events and the people who fill it-is identified as hostile and as aggressive as possible. This is confirmed by the results of textual analysis (Puzyrev, 2011) (the most oft-repeated words, their combinations, the emotional coloring of key phrases of the main characters) dialogues and monologues of the participants of Ukrainian Volunteer Corps, which according to the plot of the movie *Volunteers of God's couple*, was located in the village of Sands of Donetsk region (20-45 minutes of footage) as well as data-intent-analysis of the dialogues of the main characters of the movie *Cyborg* (C, August, Saturday, Guide, etc 50-112 minutes of footage).

The content of the second logical block is formed within the framework of the system of double standards for evaluating the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts. This system is typical for the films *Rime* and *Myth*. In the dialogues and monologues of the key characters of these films, the intentions are traced, according to which the participants in the conflict are divided into civilized and barbarians. For example, in the film *Rime* - these are the dialogues of the main character Rokas with the Ukrainian military (111-120 minutes of film materials). All the actions of strangers in these dialogues are assessed as unjustifiably harsh and excessively aggressive, even in the conditions of military confrontation. Any activity of friends is certainly justified, even if the plot lines of the films demonstrate it in a similar way to the activity of strangers. Thus, the mechanism is used, according to which the image of the enemy compels to knowingly unreasonable and unjustified actions of its own, which, in turn, are justified by the fact that even more malicious intentions are attributed to the enemy (Hasanov, 1998, 194). In the short film *Myth*, this feature is not so strongly traced, but it also has a place to be. Especially in the second part of the film, which describes the final part of the life of the main character: the events on the Maidan in 2014, the suspension of the career of an opera singer, the breakup of relations with a Russian girl, the decision to participate as a volunteer in the ATO (from 6 to 11 minutes of film materials).

The third logical block is based on the vision of the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts through a kaleidoscope of changed and deformed values. His presence is characteristic of all four film productions. Content and intent analysis of the dialogues of their main characters showed that they contain numerous attempts to replace the values of the population of Ukraine with pro – Western ones. This is manifested in the desire of the main characters of cinematic works to directly or indirectly indicate the civilizational belonging of Ukraine to Europe, and as a result of the need to distance themselves as much as possible from Russian culture. Philosophical dialogues of the existential level about the socio-cultural fate of Ukraine, about the desire to find new identification foundations of the country-are found in the scripts of all four films. However, it should be noted that in the most concentrated form, such plot moves of the screenwriters were implemented in the film *Cyborgs*. Some of the dialogues in this film have the character of an open propaganda flair [Pominov, 2016] – they repeat the theses of the Ukrainian and Western media. The other part of the dialogue – is more serious, intelligent, philosophical (the specifics of the transition dialogues to another level of vision of the socio-political reality of the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts, especially noticeable with 111 minutes of footage).

The fourth logical block consists of one-sided models (Belova, 2015) of perception of information and communication threats. These threats are positioned by the main characters of all four films mainly in a unidirectional mode. In their opinion, they come from the militia of the DPR and LPR, and include hacking and espionage, mechanisms of direct and indirect confrontation in the information sphere. A content analysis of the dialogues of the characters in the films *Frost* (with 62 minutes of footage) and *Cyborgs* (with 82 minutes of footage) have shown that the information of the zone of military-political conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk, positioned them as overly saturated with technologies of information and psychological impact on domestic and foreign policy of Ukraine. The main goal of these technologies, according to the key characters of the main storylines (Major, Saturday, Guide, Old, Mars, Psycho, Retud, etc.) is the subordination of political and economic Ukraine for further influence on it in the interests of the party that attempts such subordination.

The fifth block, the political and ideological components (Catan, 2018) of the information space of the zones of military-political conflicts, is positioned through four directing strategies. The first is related to the construction of an atmosphere of constant psychological tension. It is implemented through visual cinematic techniques. For example, images of destroyed settlements and infrastructure in the films *Rime*, *Cyborgs*, *Volunteers of God's Couple*, appeals to the memories of eyewitnesses in the film *Myth*. The second strategy is related to the transformation of individual human and general social tragedies into objects of national pride. She was fully involved in the techniques of heroization in the film *Cyborgs* (the life path of the character Major), as well as in the film *Rime* (dialogues of Ukrainian servicemen with the main character Rokas). Another technique of its implementation is used in the film *Myth*, which is permeated with the romanticization of episodes in the life of the main character (call sign Myth), which are associated with his presence in the zones of military and political conflicts. And finally, another technique – apotheosis - is implemented on a large scale in the film *Cyborgs*, where throughout the film the idea is constantly held that the country, despite the difficult problems it has, will move in accordance with the chosen course. The third strategy was fully applied only in the framework of two films – *Myth* and *Frost* through the reception of links. It implies autobiographical stories about specific questions of life, the answers to which allow us to assess the content of the information space of the zones of military-political conflicts. The fourth strategy – recipe for salvation - is used in the films *God's Couple Volunteers* and *Cyborgs*. It is based on the application of the method of religiosity (dialogues of the main characters of the film productions in the turning points of the plot lines).

## DISCUSSION

Facebook, Instagram, Classmates, V Kontakte, Twitter, YouTube, and other social networks reflect the changes in the information space of the military-political conflict zone in Donetsk and Luhansk, which are carried out by the tools of modern Ukrainian cinema. How was this implemented? Let us turn to the interpretation of this aspect in more detail. In the social network Instagram, the trends indicated in the above analyzed films were consolidated. On the pages of users with a large number of subscribers, brief reviews of the films under study were given, the most vivid quotes from their key storylines were given, and discussions with subscribers were initiated. This was done through the following tools. First, the promotion of the necessary information was realized through the active use of hashtags. It should be noted that the effect of broad audience coverage was achieved not through the use of popular tags, but through the relevance of the tag to a specific storyline of a particular film or even a separate quote from it. Tags allowed not only to increase the interest of the target audience to the content contained in the films we studied, but also to create unique tags necessary to maintain it at a high level. Also, in the social network Instagram to promote the content of films, such a tool as installation was actively used. Its most obvious use was in the process of creating promo pages that provide information about films and the main events that are associated with them. The landing page tool helped to reach new users of the social network, to motivate them to move

from the page in Instagram to the page of the film itself. In addition, its use contributed to the active promotion of social events and campaigns that were directly or indirectly related to the presentation of a particular film. The tools of the carousel, in turn, allowed publishing the most vivid images of films related to the military-political conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk in the form of a capacious social post. This tool was one of the most effective in terms of attracting new users to view the necessary content. Unlike the carousel tools, the history function was less efficient. Especially during the end of the screening of films about the military-political conflict on the screens of large cinemas. However, short views of the stories during the initial advertising and promotion stages of the films had a powerful social effect. Especially if the stories were customized to specific target audiences and evaluated by various tools that measure the scope of coverage. An equally important tool of Instagram, which was used for additional promotion of film content, is working with bloggers. As a rule, these were bloggers who enjoyed authority and popularity among different groups of subscribers of the translator accounts. Bloggers were both socially active individuals in a certain area, and well-known personalities in society as a whole. The promotion of the content of the films, carried out by them, significantly increased the reach of the target audience. And finally, another tool by which individual fragments of films were promoted to target audiences – targeted advertising. It allowed for a more targeted impact on the target audience of films, selecting target groups according to age and territorial criteria.

As for the tools for promoting the content of films about the military-political conflict in the South-East of Ukraine in Facebook, they can be classified into several groups. The first group is based on the technological solutions of messenger day. These solutions are similar to stories in Instagram and allow you to activate the target audience, regardless of how a particular content is ranked. Personal messages, which allowed you to create and send this technological solution, allowed you to track the reaction of users to certain storylines of films, to the dialogues of specific characters. In this context, it should be noted that the creators of the movie-affiliated Facebook pages actively used such technology as chatbots to answer the typical questions of their target audience. It is worth noting that the analysis of such bots showed that their creators used fairly simple conversational scripts that did not allow them to fully cover the dialog needs of the target audience. The next two technologies that were used to promote the content of movies on Facebook are covers and notes. The former is focused on creating calls to action. The second focused on fixing important information about movies in the central parts of the pages created in Facebook. As for online broadcast technologies, their use was significantly limited. They were mainly involved in the premiere screenings of films in the first few days of their release. To achieve a higher effect, online broadcasts were most often conducted by public opinion leaders in a particular area. Most often, in combination with online broadcasts, such technology as circular content was used. It was implemented by re-publishing the most striking episodes of live broadcasts as independent posts about the released film and reviews on it. Finally, the most effective tool for promoting the content of films about the military-political conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk on the Facebook network was unique content. Shots that were not included in the film, deleted dialogues of the main characters, additional material that reveals the main plot lines more widely-helped to influence the target audience more effectively.

Instagram and Facebook social networks, in contrast, promoted the content of films about the military-political conflict in the South-East of Ukraine in the social network Classmates in an artificial way. In particular, on the thematic pages that were created in support of the films, the attraction of new subscribers was carried out through a third-party tool for artificially increasing the rating of Olike. With this tool, the Internet community created around a particular film received rapid promotion by artificially attracting followers, and then the gradual growth of the interested audience began. The constant blocking of such communities by the administrators of the social network testified to their artificial ratings. A similar tool – cerebro-focused on identifying active users in other communities and promoting their own community through their capabilities also worked with varying success. In the first few days after the release of films about the military-political conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk, this tool allowed to attract new

participants to the community. However, in the future, its work was blocked by the network administration on the basis of identifying a large number of suddenly occurring user requests. Another tool that was actively used by the creators of websites and communities in Classmates - publer, was used to search for publications about films dedicated to military and military-political conflicts, with a high conversion rate, with their subsequent affiliation with films about the military-political conflict directly in the South-East of Ukraine. This tool was actively supplemented by SEO technologies based on the promotion of movie content based on a keyword. This made it possible to quickly and effectively expand the target audience to include new groups and communities. Keywords about movies were most often placed in the names of communities, in their brief descriptions, in statuses, in the names of key topics that were discussed in these communities, in the most popular publications. Also, the smmplanner technology was used as a typical technological tool. It was used to implement automatic publications about films (photos and video materials) at the right time for the creators of online communities. Integration with other social networks made it possible to use this tool most widely. In cases where feedback from the target audience was required, this tool was used in combination with the repost tree. Through it, the leaders of the Internet communities assessed the interest of users in the value of the main and additional content containing information about the military-political conflict in the South-East of Ukraine. And, finally, the most effective and widely used tool for replicating the content of films was Kairos. This tool, based on artificial intelligence software solutions, built content replication in such a way as to get the maximum coverage of the target audience and at the same time exclude cold participants from its composition.

The social network Vkontakte was also a platform for active promotion of the content of films about the military-political conflict in the South-East of Ukraine. It should be noted that the stakeholders used the official methods of distributing information content: targeting and marketing platforms. As for the first tool, the target audience was involved by attracting new subscribers and automatically generating applications. Mostly subscribers were attracted to pre-created groups through the use of Olike technologies, which made the methods of working with it similar to the methods of involving interested individuals in the social network Classmates. The second tool, the market platform, was based on the creation of numerous advertising records in various communities. Through the internal system Vkontakte, they were later transmitted for subsequent publications to the administrators of popular groups related to this topic. As the analysis showed, the placement of such posts containing the main and additional content of films about the military-political conflict in the South-East of Ukraine was carried out through the service sociate. It allowed stakeholders to select the communities they needed according to a variety of different criteria, taking into account the available statistics and their attendance indicators.

As for the promotion of the content of films about the military-political conflict in the South-East of Ukraine on the YouTube network, we can particularly note the following technological solutions that were used for this purpose in this social network. First, the content of the films was promoted through so-called internal optimization. It made it possible to quickly bring individual fragments of films to high positions in the hands of Google and Yandex search engines. We came to the conclusion that this technology worked especially effectively for medium - and low-competitive user requests. It was based on a point selection tags to the videos (the tags associated with these films, affilirovany with tags more popular films), on the correct formulation of the headers (most of them contained a short or detailed calls to action) on the selection of the primary images and clear images (used common military symbols), for an expanded description of the rollers (search engines actively indexed such descriptions), on the establishment of a system of active review (created disputes and discussions on story lines of the films) on the overlay (under rollers, target links were created to open the content of the films, which could be used to go to various communities).

The second method of promoting content through films about the military-political conflict in the South-East of Ukraine was based on external optimization technologies. Most of

them can be classified into four groups: conducting active campaigns for various services (auto links to the videos), mass posting links in other social networks (create a separate teasers on social networks), buying advertising (actively created short videos, which were reproduced at the beginning of the show other popular videos; long commercials, some of which users could miss; banners on other sites with a brief content of a particular video), active cooperation with popular bloggers (bloggers were selected based on the following criteria: the number of subscribers is not less than 10,000; high average audience coverage; high level of audience engagement).

Instagram, Facebook, Classmates, V Kontakte, and YouTube were the main platforms for the promotion of the main and additional content of films about the military-political conflict in the South-East of Ukraine. In turn, Twitter was an auxiliary platform. Through this social network, additional thematic content was placed in semi-automatic mode. Several communities in different social networks were integrated. Also, Twitter services were used to attract the target audience. At the same time, the facts of the presence of so-called bots were excluded. Only real participants who showed a steady interest in the content of the films were actively involved.

## CONCLUSION

The study of the information space of the zones of military-political conflicts in Donetsk and Luhansk through the prism of modern Ukrainian cinema and communities in social networks allowed us to draw the following conclusions. First, the information space is positioned in a binary system of value coordinates. Film directors in monologues and dialogues of actors present the information environment of military-political conflicts polar: friends-strangers, civilizational-barbarians, those who commit the right actions – those who make unforgivable mistakes, etc. Such a binary structuring of the information space of the zones of military-political conflicts, in the films analyzed by us, throughout most of the film materials, is formally simplified, and only in some micro-plots draws the viewer's attention to the complex existential problems of socio – political reality, giving them, in addition to binary, multidimensional dimensions. Secondly, the information space of the zone of military-political conflicts, represented in film materials, is built on the basis of the principle of diffusion of traditional values, guidelines and attitudes of Ukrainian society and values inherent in the Western way of life, positioned in foreign films of a similar genre and plot. Thus, the possibilities for the interpenetration of information spaces of military-political conflicts occurring in different regions of the world are constructed. Third, the information space of military-political conflicts formed in cinematic materials is characterized by the use of complex directorial strategies of ideologization, which are implemented through the use of point techniques and technologies that correspond to the plot lines of specific films.

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