

PhR 2019 Philological Readings

PHOBIA AS DOMINANT OF MODERN POLITICAL NARRATIVE

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Abstract

The term phobia (from the ancient Greek φόβος for fear) though many times transformed and applied in various fields has currently become dominant in geopolitical rhetoric. Fears condense and become articulated through multiple discourses attaining not only the status of a lens through which life is viewed but of a nodal category of politics of fear among other processes of linguistic manipulation. The focus on political phobias at the very core of politics of fear may be considered relevant due to the lack of unanimous approach to this manipulative phenomenon treated as targeted infusion in psychology, persuasion and pragmatic argumentation in behaviorism and social activity securing submission of people in political and social science. The current research treats the politics of fear as a phenomenon which surfaces in mass media thus creating “info space of fear”. The authors attempt to select the key phobia clusters of the modern political narrative used mainly by political elite as means of intentional linguistic manipulation. Linguopragmatic analysis of English-language political narrative makes it possible to distinguish twelve phobias which are grouped into four clusters. The verbalization of manipulative intentions proves that both politics of fear and phobia as its tool may be declared relevant linguistic phenomena. The findings reveal that the linguistic means of phobia manifestation form stable attitude underpinned by adherent and inherent axiological components.

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Keywords: Axiological component, cluster, phobia, linguistic manipulation, political narrative, politics of fear.



1. Introduction

1.1. Political narrative vs political discourse

Political narrative is a true reflection of the current social and political state of affairs in the modern world. Sociocultural discourses are interacting giving rise to complex communicative events. Political narrative can be defined as the narration of political events in mass media or as a combination of discourses of different genres accumulated around a certain political event (Sheygal, 2007). The given research regards political narrative as a unity of two types of discourses – political and media ones with the first in the lead as the main informative source and the latter playing the role of a transmitter shaping stories for the public.

As a field for manipulation performed by politicians producing messages with a dominant manipulative intention, political narrative has become the focus of scientific attention for linguists as well. The phenomenon of manipulation in mass communication has become the subject of interdisciplinary research for social studies, psychology, philosophy, political science, culturology, journalism, etc. However, despite such undivided attention of scientists to the phenomenon of verbal manipulation there are still lacunas to fulfill, e.g. to study methods and means of power struggle and their consequences. Taking into account the evolvement of geopolitical situation, negative emotions are now used by political elite as a token of retaining power and status. Its main tool is fear. It is intentionally transfigured into phobias which are then cultivated, distributed and constantly fueled to control and manipulate social masses.

1.2. Phobia as a manipulative means

The term phobia (from the ancient Greek φόβος for fear) though many times transformed and applied in various fields has currently become dominant in geopolitical rhetoric. Fears condense and become articulated through multiple discourses attaining not only the status of a lens through which life is viewed but of a nodal category of politics of fear among other processes of linguistic manipulation.

Politics of fear may be characterized as a new type of sociopolitical activity undertaken by the parties in interest and capable of exploiting “fear” to manipulate people. The notion of “fear” became political only at the end of XX century which may be explained by drastic changes in world politics, new economic, social and political threats. Politics of fear is implemented through the system of the agents’ objectives activated in their interviews, declarations, public statements, thus affecting their public image. As a result, fear is not a side effect of this system but the sought after effect.

The manufacture of phobic discourses and practices has become a noteworthy feature of the twenty-first-century social relations (Ramadan & Shantz, 2016). These phobias stand out in political narratives as clusters representing fear of terrorism, war, invasion, crime, migration, foreigners, human rights abuse, hacker attacks, etc. Each phobia provides frames by which people may recognize it as such in a context involving certain component markers, e.g. phobic object, agents, actions, counteractions and measures, and emotions. The latter is present as an unchanged component in every cluster even if the quality or number of other components may vary.

2. Problem Statement

The focus on political phobias at the very core of politics of fear may be considered relevant due to the lack of a unanimous approach to this manipulative phenomenon treated as targeted infusion in psychology, persuasion and pragmatic argumentation in behaviorism and social activity securing submission of people in political and social science. The current research treats the politics of fear as a phenomenon which surfaces in mass media thus creating “info space of fear”, i.e. space to form, accumulate and distribute the menace-charged information along with the pre-planned interpretation of this information by the public.

The study of scientific works devoted to manipulation, conflict discourse, political discourse, emotional concept of “fear” allow to conclude that linguistics lacks the concept of “politics of fear”, moreover, the conceptual scope of this field has no uniform structure. Furthermore, there are no conventional linguistic definitions of “politics of fear” and “phobia”.

Thus, it is necessary to specify the place of politics of fear in the system of other verbal manipulation processes, then consider its moral and ethical aspect, as along with its destructive character one cannot deny the positive effect of manipulation. The latter must be studied thoroughly to find the ways to resist and even confront it. Moreover, phobias so skillfully utilized for manipulative purposes cannot be studied regardless of their linguistic character. It means the verbal “masks” the phobias put on, the axiological charge these forms would carry as well as their implicit use in connected speech.

3. Research Questions

The research paper seeks to do the following: 1) to investigate the mystery behind the manipulative effect of politics of fear on public in an interdisciplinary perspective; 2) to interpret the phenomenon of politics of fear within the pragmalinguistic framework with a particular focus on lexical changes and axiological component. To define “politics of fear” as a semiotic system of manipulations with its own system of intentions, communicative aims and means of verbalization; 3) to regard “fear” not only as an emotional state but as a sought outcome of manipulative act of speech; 4) to identify and classify phobias in political narrative about urgent social issues.

4. Purpose of the Study

This paper examines how news reports within political narrative about urgent dangers, hazards and threats reflect the discourse associated with the politics of fear. We aim to examine the conceptual bond between phobias cultivated by mass media and exploited by political decision makers together with public reaction and attitude to them reflected in its discourse.

An overview of the politics of fear and political narrative given in the introduction and problem statement of the given paper will be followed by an elaboration of the discourse of fear and content analysis of news reports. Pragmalinguistic and semantic data about the emerging phobias and how they are manifested in the news coverage involving social problems of migration, victimization, terrorism, abuse of rights and military conflicts will then be presented.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Sources of Data

This research made use of interviews, statements of English speaking politicians, news reports and articles of political analysts as sources of primary data collection, while the secondary data sources consisted of academic journals, internet sources using online newspapers and the literature review.

5.2. Technique of Data Analysis

The research paper employed descriptive, interpretative and information-semiotic analysis. The latter interprets the object of study as a phenomenon of social information which is kept, transmitted, accumulated and transformed by the society with the help of signs. It helps to view politics of fear within communicative interaction. The research work equally used component, definition and contextual analysis, semantic content analysis, pragmatic and axiological interpretation as well as quantitative analysis of the data for the purpose of enhancing deeper understanding of the research work.

6. Findings

When fear is used as an ideological framework through which events and knowledge of them are cast, it becomes a matter of discourse. According to Altheide (2006) a discourse of fear may be defined as “the pervasive communication, symbolic awareness, and expectation that danger and risk are a central feature of the effective environment” (p. 114).

The study of the verbal matrix of current political narratives allowed singling out 12 phobias, which were then grouped into 4 phobic clusters. They are presented in Table 01.

Table 01. Phobic clusters

Name of cluster	Name of phobia
The other	Fear of migrants
	Fear of foreigners
	Fear of refugees
Terrorism	Fear of global terrorism
	Fear of sporadic terrorist acts
Outer threat	Fear of military conflicts
	Fear of weapons of mass destruction
	Fear of rogue states
	Fear of hacker attacks
	Fear of national election meddling
Violation	Fear of the threat to democracy
	Fear of human rights violation

6.1. The phobic cluster “THE OTHER”

The phobic cluster “the other” includes three phobias and is framed around the following content components:

- 1) **problem statement** (*crisis, illegal migration, border-crossing, mixed-migration phenomenon, etc.*);

- 2) **agent** (*attackers, perpetrators, gangs, asylum-seekers, displaced people, animals, scum, cheats, etc.*);
- 3) **agent's characteristics** (*illegal, terrible, horrible, ugliness, unprecedented, intended, aggressive, irregular, illicit, etc.*); **agent's actions** (*theft, robbery, rape, killings, attack, assault, harassment, violence, crime, etc.*);
- 4) **effective counteractions** (*control, diminish, undo, bash, protect, deport, erect barriers, impose restrictions, etc.*);
- 5) **ineffective counteractions** (*demoralized, hollow claims, permissible, muted response, rattled, slow response, failed, get out of control, couldn't cope, etc.*);
- 6) **effect on action addressees** (*afraid, horrified, scared, vulnerable, overwhelmed, surprised, appalled, alarmed*);
- 7) **emotional response of action addressees** (*fury, dismay, anger, fear, hostility, confusion, shock*);
- 8) **consequences** (*racism, xenophobia, anti-migrant rhetoric, backlash, islamophobia, border shift, etc.*);
- 9) **emotional charge** (*influx, flood, streaming, spate, wave, uncontrolled, inflow, looming, overwhelming, overloading, massive and ongoing, etc.*).

All these content components are represented by the words with positive, neutral and negative evaluation. The axiological potential of these words is actualized through adherent and inherent components in their meaning. The axiological potential is believed to be the potential of the word to express and acquire certain attitude in the context. So, the more contextual connotations the word acquires, the higher its axiological potential is.

The lowest axiological potential is demonstrated by the words with inherent connotations only which account for the main part of the phobic cluster characteristics and are of negative nature. Each negative characteristics lays a small stone in the wall of fear which is intentionally built by the policymakers and overblown by mass media. Such characteristics create the atmosphere of danger, threat and frustration bordering on despair:

“About 1,000 men of North African and Arab origin gathered near Cologne's main station on 31 December. Smaller groups formed, first **surrounding** women and then **threatening and attacking** them. [...] More than 100 women had complained of **harassment** and **violence** at the hands of **migrant gangs** in the square outside Cologne's main railway station” (BBC news, 2016, p. 2).

“**Asylum-seekers** (who are forbidden to work while their claims are being laboriously processed) are **cheats** and **scroungers** who are **overloading** public services” (The Economist, 2005, p. 9).

“I am very worried about the news that we are getting about increasing closures of European borders along the Balkans route because that will create further **chaos and confusion**” (Sputnik, 2015, p. 2).

The words with the inherent negative connotation verbally representing the phobic cluster “the other” amount to overwhelming 90.3%. Among them there are **invectives** (abusive and criticizing words which are always forceful, unkind and rude: vermin, cockroach, dirt, scrounger, scum, etc.), **destructives** (verbs of destructive character having the seme of inflicting physical, moral and administrative harm: to attack, to bash, to deport, to kill, to rape, to assault, to grope, to threaten, to scare, etc.), **emotives**

(adjectives and nouns depicting emotional vulnerability and depressing state: afraid, scared, horrible, aggressive, alarmed, appalled, fear, anger, fury, dismay, hostility, shock, etc.), **law-terms and sociology terms** (organized crime, robbery, theft, violence, commit crime, sexual harassment, perpetrator, criminal, xenophobia, racism, etc.). The group of these words is so big and is becoming so influential that it takes its toll on lexicological principles of the English language, giving birth to new occasional words, e.g. “**Rapefugees** are not welcome!”

The remaining 9.7% is taken by the lexical units with the adherent connotations revealed only in a certain context. If for example the word “animal” which at first sight might seem quite neutral has long acquired the negative meaning and even has it registered among its definitions in any dictionary (“*informal* someone who behaves in a cruel, violent, or very rude way”), some other lexical units require micro and macro contexts to be identified as such. E.g. “fruit-picker” defined as “a person or a tool that picks fruit from trees” in the dictionary of contemporary English and as “a homosexual man, usually very flamboyant in appearance and demeanor” in the dictionary of English slang acquires the meaning of “a person jumping the border and able to get a low paid job” in the following context: “...The biggest thing that has happened in Britain in the past decade has been *the arrival of foreign workers*, both well-off and poor, who have *transformed* business, culture, food and much else. Some people like them and some people don't; but they aren't, for the most part, the *bedraggled asylum-seekers* and *fruit-pickers* the Tories would have people believe...” (The Economist, 2005, p. 10).

Another example of such occasions can be illustrated by the adjective “surprised”, which is defined neutrally as “experiencing or showing a feeling of surprise”, however, the expectations of something positive become ruined by the context “Witnesses said police officers in Cologne appeared to be surprised and overwhelmed by the attacks”, portraying the picture of law enforcement body’s failure and inefficiency in fighting against massive attacks, raping and murder.

Even the neutral terms “migrant”, “refugee” and “foreigner”, after which the phobias of the cluster were named along with some other traditional terms naming the problem (e.g. migration crisis, migration phenomenon) have acquired through the current mass media context the negative connotation, thus boosting an opposite linguistic tendency of disguising and toning down the negative associations. This tendency employs euphemisms, stylistic periphrasis for the reasons of diplomacy and ethics, coining new terms of “displaced people”, “irregular border-crossing”, “border-shift”, “new gateways to the markets”.

However, the main lexical group exploited in creating the atmosphere of fear, panic and chaos bears the emotional charge and includes such stylistic devices as hyperbolic metaphors and epithets. The hyperbolic metaphor is used in modern English-speaking media for creating the effect of exaggeration, instigating fear by reevaluating the object, adding to its size, intensity, scale: a wave of attacks, an influx of migrants, a spate of robbery, an inflow of refugees, surge in attacks, a tide of migrants, a mess of foreigners, etc. The linguistic tool thus helps with the creation of a real social and political issue of intolerance and dehumanization:

...modern states tend to extend the fear of “migrants” and “others” by categorising, stigmatising and coupling migration together with major problems, such as unemployment, violence, crime, insecurity, drug trafficking and human smuggling. This tendency is reinforced by the use of racist

and xenophobic terminology that dehumanizes migrants. One can see this racist tone in the terms such as “influx”, “invasion”, “flood” and “intrusion”, which are used to mean large numbers of migrants. (Kaya, 2013, p. 69)

Another stylistic device, lacking in imagery but characterised by the intensified sense in its semantic structure, is called a hyperbolic epithet. It intentionally exaggerates the object feature oversizing it to the extent grotesque enough to spark the targeted emotional reaction. The exaggerated effect may well be implanted in the semantic structure of the word thus generating trite hyperbolic epithets: streaming, uncontrollable, giant, unprecedented, looming, overwhelming, permissible, record, etc.

The combination of the two devices is not uncommon: uncontrollable flood, record influx, flood of racism that is now permissible, etc.

The use of these stylistic devices either separately or combined helps to implement the communicative strategy of intimidation and to lay the ground for new phobias to root and bloom.

6.2. The phobic cluster “TERRORISM”

The phobic cluster “terrorism” includes two phobias and is framed around the following content components:

- 1) **problem statement** (*terror attack, terrorist attack, attack, van hit/attack, vehicular attack, assault, terrorist act, explosion, act of war, violence, barbarity, atrocity, bloodbath, gas explosion, expansion of the Caliphate, Islamist-related terrorism, terrorist threats, carnage, mayhem, “lone wolf” assault, criminal madness, evil, radicalization, separatism, extremism, etc.*);
- 2) **agent** (*terrorist, attackers, bomber, assailant, extremists, militant (group), fighter, Islamist, petty criminal, assassin, aggressor, perpetrators, suspects, the Islamic State, ISIS/ISIL, North African Islamists, jihadists, criminals, suicide gunmen, Islamists, Islamic extremists, “self-radicalized” extremists, killers, etc.*);
- 3) **agent’s actions/purpose** (*destroy, launch attacks, target civilians, get more casualties, create panic, plow into people, kill, shoot, strike, shatter, wave back and forth, hit, careen through sb., throw people aside like dolls, accelerate, coordinate the attack, destabilize, injure, drive a (rental) truck/van into sb., mow down, wound, ram sb., attack, stab, rip bombs, carry out an attack/bombings, slam into sb., commit a terrorist act, pull into sb., plough through sb., leave sb. dead, go on a stabbing spree, knock down, conduct controlled explosions, target, open fire, take hostages, explode bombs, detonate, blow oneself, fire into the crowd, plot, claim life, shed blood, take revenge against “crusaders”, plunge the knife into sb., harm, slaughter, etc.*);
- 4) **the characteristics of the problem/actions** (*deadly, worst, horrific, merciless, barbaric, tragic, violent, senseless, stripped of all moral and human values, pure evil, horrible, despicable, atrocious, cowardly, savage, abominable, impersonal, random, prepared, organized, planned, massive, act of extreme cowardice, cruel, cynical, vile, brutal, unforgivable, unjustifiable under any circumstances, etc.*);

- 5) **the terrorist weapon** (*van, explosive belts/vests, vehicles, rifle, explosives, truck, (hunting) knife, bombs, the notorious TATP compound, machine guns, revolvers, nail bombs, pipe bombs, suicide belts, etc.*);
- 6) **the patient** (*civilians, victims, casualties, the suffering, wounded, injured, murdered, hostages, pedestrians, shoppers, etc.*);
- 7) **the response to terrorism/ counteractions** (*foil a second attack, make arrests, condemn the attack, pledge cooperation, besiege, sweep through the area, investigate, search for, comb the streets, offer assistance, do whatever is necessary to help, find those responsible, bring to justice, punish, stand together against, clarify the attack motivation, shoot dead, fight against terror, kill, manhunt, detain, take measures, prevent, hunt down, telephone surveillance, track, close off borders, significantly accelerate deportation of rejected asylum seekers, introduce extra security forces, temporary border controls, increase security measures, carry out raids, disrupt, cut off financing, begin a pursuit for the attackers, etc.*);
- 8) **effect on action addressees** (*injured, wounded, killed, shot, motionless on the ground, bleed, run (for their lives), drop belongings and flee, scream, weep, crawl, etc.*);
- 9) **emotional response of action addressees** (*confusion, horror, terrified, scared, sickened, shattered, dismayed, affected, etc.*);
- 10) **consequences** (*fear, mayhem, chaos, death toll, aftermath, losses, mark (on the city/country/people), leave a wound, leave a scar, outgrouping, “us” versus “them”, divide society, heighten prejudices, create social battle lines, undermine public trust and unity, cause deep and lasting harm, change (the mental geography of urban life), Islamophobia, depression, etc.*);
- 11) **emotional charge** (*wave of terrorist attacks, terror filling the hearts, grotesque face of terror, inspire widespread terror, inescapable danger, ever-present threat, plagued by terrorist attacks, the terrorism surge, bloody wave (of bombings and shootings), deadliest since the second world war, the worst witnessed in Europe, smell the odour of death, Christmas of deep sorrow, scourge of terrorism, rock a city or nation to its foundations, etc.*).

The content components of this cluster are mainly represented by lexical units with inherent negative connotations (98%), thus generating phobia with the help of the words with lowest axiological potential and explicit meanings. The given figure of 98% makes this phobia of terrorism the most obvious of all under the consideration. The leading position is taken by the **verbs of destructive character** (*kill, shoot, destroy, attack, bomb, stab, etc.*) and the **emotive adjectives and nouns** depicting emotional vulnerability and depression of the patient (*confusion, horror, terrified, scared, sickened, shattered, dismayed, etc.*). Unlike the phobia of “the other”, the agent of this phobic cluster is portrayed without invectives, he/she is named using **military, legal and political terms** (*assassin, attacker, fighter, bomber, killer, murderer, assailant, suspect, perpetrator, etc.*). This fact deprives the phobic object of excessive emotionality and adds feasibility to the image.

The remaining 2% is taken by the lexical units with the adherent connotations and neutral evaluation, turning into negative only in the context. Despite the efficiency of counteractions taken by the authorities and law enforcement agencies, proved by the use of words (listed above in the category

“response to terrorism/counteraction”), the main synthesized emotion, which is fear, feeds upon either the massive and systematic character of the phenomenon in case of the global terrorism or on the subtleness of the sporadic and random terrorist acts. Their subtleness is built round the uncommon use of common objects, such as vans, trucks, vehicles, bins. It is only logical that when something as ubiquitous as a car is used as a weapon, that will add a sense of menace to daily urban life. Years of research has found that fear can eventually divide and poison societies, hardening people against perceived outsiders, even causing them to abandon key values. This kind of attack, using one of the most ordinary objects of daily life, could heighten that effect. Another example is an ordinary bin, which may be used as a container for a bomb. The fear may grow and become responsible for the binless streets as a reminder that a bomb could be waiting around any corner. “When anything can become a weapon, that chips away at the hope that terrorist attacks are somehow predictable or controllable” (The New York Times, 2017a, p. 14).

The emotional charge of the cluster is again maintained by stylistic devices, such as metaphors, epithets, similes. They bring the charge to the boil by drawing an exaggerated picture of an imminent threat, global and consuming danger, having no equals in scale and force in the whole history of mankind:

“Police reported that at least 128 people had been killed and up to 300 more injured – including 80 critically – in the six attacks, France’s **deadliest since the second world war** and **the worst witnessed in Europe** since the 2004 Madrid railway bombings” (The Guardian, 2015b, p. 2).

“France has been **plagued by a series of terrorist attacks** over the past few years and has remained in state of emergency since 2015” (RT, 2018, p. 8).

“I am deeply shaken by the terrible news from Barcelona. Once again, **terror has shown its grotesque face**” (The New York Times, 2017b, p. 42).

6.3. The phobic cluster “OUTER THREAT”

The phobic cluster “OUTER THREAT” includes five phobias and is framed around the following content components:

- 1) **problem statement** (*nuclear weapons proliferation, nuclear threat, war, conflict, direct confrontation, cyber attacks, spying, disinformation, meddling*);
- 2) **agent** (*states of concern, rogue states, evil-doer, rogue nations, defiant regime, outlaw states, China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Panama, Afghanistan, state sponsors of terrorism, Russian hackers, Chinese hackers, Russian military intelligence*);
- 3) **agent’s characteristics** (*hard to predict, formidable enemy, inhumane*);
- 4) **agent’s actions** (*missile attack, build nuclear weapons, deploy a long-range missile, damage arms control, harbor terrorist, spy on, hack a computer, look for dirt, search for compromat, ignore international law, strike, violate the agreement, destroy, find vulnerabilities, social media influence campaign, alter information, block the data, intimidate, targeted malware discrimination, gather intelligence, manipulate, target electricity grid, mount long-running cyber espionage campaign, infect with spyware*);
- 5) **weaponry** (*weapons of mass destruction, biological weapons, chemical weapons, surface-to-air missiles, surface-to-surface missiles, nukes, threatening weapons, combat troops, malware, malicious software, computer worms, computer Trojans, false numbers and narratives, cyber espionage techniques, fake news campaign*);

- 6) **addressees** (*defenseless nation, voters, victim computers, civilians*);
- 7) **consequences** (*atrocities, war, war mushroomed, full-scale conflict, catastrophic war, raise fears of a backlash, threaten the homeland, direct risk to US personnel, install fear, fatal results, widespread destruction, displaced people, ungovernable megacities, death toll rise, create distrust and suspicion, discredit organizations, change vote, deceive election officials, disrupt elections, large security breach, steal passwords, malicious functionality, drive a wedge, serious repercussions*);
- 8) **counteractions** (*put up a missile defense, tackle rogue states, take pre-emptive measures against, take tough actions against, economic sanctions, ostracism, re-vamp Nato's forces, deter the rogues, peace-keeping, step up pressure on, ground troops, radar planes, allied intelligence, urge to dismantle nuclear programmes, thwart attacks, stop illegal weapons shipment, nuclear non-proliferation protocol, confiscate gadgets, pioneer open investigation, conduct thorough investigation, think up angry and amusing headlines, undermine the Russian strategy, launch a preemptive strike against, fortify elections, take down fake accounts, accuse of interfering*);
- 9) **emotional charge** (*aghast, devastating results, malicious applications, hypocritical invasive methods, alarming, tough American stance, axis of evil, saber-rattling, personification of evil, the role of a bad guy, pull the plug on détente, find every snake in the swamp and to drain the swamp, squalid criminals, outposts of tyranny, recalcitrant states, pariah states, international bogeyman, bear the scars of an artillery attack, a game of tit-for-tat, play up the danger, inexorable intensification of violence, toxic inheritance*).

The lexical components under analysis have positive, neutral and negative evaluation, accounting for 2%, 18% and 80% respectively. Positive meaning is conveyed through scanty “*peace-keeping*” and “*pioneer open investigation*”, neutral evaluation is mostly conveyed in diplomatic and political terms “*deploy a long-range missile*”, “*military intelligence*”, “*voters*”, “*civilians*”, “*conduct thorough investigation*”.

The group of words with negative evaluation mostly includes those with the inherent negative component. The negative component is manifested in all the groups listed above, with 1% of words acquiring derogatory meaning in the context. It is noteworthy that the fear cultivated by this cluster becomes national, pinpointing concrete adversaries. Thus, the names of states such as *China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Panama and Afghanistan* become negative in meaning, as they are repeatedly called “*rogue states*” and “*outlaw states*”:

“Regimes in Afghanistan, Syria, Burma, the former Yugoslavia, Belarus, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Panama, Sudan and Zimbabwe have all been demonised at various times. Post-2000, **rogue states became**, officially, “**states of concern**”, “**outlaw states**”, “**pariah states**” and “**outposts of tyranny**” (The Guardian, 2015a, p. 9).

The phrases “*Russian hackers*” and “*Chinese hackers*” are supposed to inspire fear and remonstrance on the part of the reader: “**Chinese entities** operating with the assent of the government in Beijing already have **mounted long-running cyberespionage campaigns** against United States government agencies, the defense industry and American private companies” (The New York Times, 2018, p. 4).

The emotional charge varies from the euphemistic “*states of concern*” and moderate “*defiant nations*” to the point-blank “*evil-doers*” and “*axis of evil*”, thus the cluster is characterized by the whole spectrum of gradation in evaluation.

Fear is intensified by numerous stylistic devices: trite metaphors (*axis of evil, scars of an artillery attack, international bogeyman*); epithets (*toxic inheritance, malicious applications*); hyperbolic epithets (*formidable enemy, inexorable attack*); barbarisms (*kompromat*), periphrasis (*outposts of tyranny*), allegory: “We’re going to **find every snake in the swamp we can**, but the essence of the strategy is to **drain the swamp**” (The Guardian, 2001, p. 7), meaning to find weapons of mass destruction in rogue states and denuclearize the state.

To sum up, the lexical components of this cluster are mostly stereotyped and clichéd bringing back the narrative of the Cold War era, modernized by new concepts related to computer technology. The dominant attitude is negative with the core semes “death”, “enemy”, “destructive weapons” and “attack” whose major role consists in instilling a sense of fear and insecurity.

6.4. The phobic cluster “VIOLATION”

The phobic cluster “VIOLATION” includes two phobias and is framed around the following content components:

- 1) **problem statement** (*systemic racism, violence against women, homophobic and transphobic violence, sexual abuse, human rights violation, attacks on religious minorities, racial disparities, police abuses, domestic violence, threat to democracy, threat to democratic institutions*);
- 2) **agent** (*government, authorities, security force, police officers, armed group leaders, president, totalitarian rulers, officials, system of justice, militia gangs*);
- 3) **agent’s characteristics** (*hostile to criticism, perpetrators, uncultured, poor, stupid, unlawful, unable to address the root causes, weak commitment, shrewd demagogues*);
- 4) **agent’s actions** (*exert influence, dismiss critics from their jobs, block independent media websites, stifle freedom of expression, attacks on LGBT activists, prosecute activists, excessively restrict freedom, detain and fine protesters, ban on homosexual relations, surveillance, tougher rule, harassment, torture, clamp down on free speech, cover-up and misreporting, beating by prison guards, suppress protesters, commit abuses, block access to Internet, interfere in the criminal justice system, roll back protections, stymie legislature, curb civil liberties, undermine institutions, denounce journalists*);
- 5) **addressees** (*sexual minorities, religious minorities, women, the poor, free media, racial minorities, protesters, civilians*);
- 6) **addressees’ counteractions** (*peaceful protests, protest against, demonstrate against, bring to justice, strike, raise funds, organize volunteers, reduce jail population, advocate protections, take steps against, condemn violence, demonize the oppressor, build coalitions, criticize the president’s administration, raise separatist flags*);
- 7) **agent’s counteractions** (*acknowledge violations, implement measures to improve police, curb abuses, support significant reforms, try to divert people from jails*);

- 8) **consequences** (*heavily restricted freedom of speech, detention, harassment, torture, face trial, imprisonment, be under arrest, suspended from university, overcrowded prisons, high level of inmate violence, killed, violent oppression, injured, criminal defamation suits, democracy is plagued, erosion of democracy, increasing isolation, democracy decay, unraveling of democratic norms*);
- 9) **emotional response of addressees** (*frightened, intimidated, oppressed, suppressed, aghast, feel like pawns*);
- 10) **emotional charge** (*scorched-earth tactics, beat the crap out of protesters, cause a stir, harsh policy, chronic problem, little progress, plagued by violence, quashed with tear-gas, plagued democracy, deliver a one-two punch, devastating impact, etc.*).

The content components listed above represent the lexis with mostly neutral and negative evaluation, the latter being inherent in the **verbs of suppression** (*exert, dismiss, block, prosecute, restrict, detain, fine, ban, clamp down on, suppress, interfere, stymie, denounce*), the **verbs of destruction** (*kill, attack, beat, stifle*) and the **emotives** (*frightened, devastating, intimidated, decay, plagued, etc.*). Positive evaluation is obvious in the verbs and phrases denoting counteractions to all kinds of violation (*bring to justice, acknowledge violations, implement measures, to improve police, curb abuses, support significant reforms, to divert people from jails*).

The axiological potential of the lexical units in the cluster is the lowest if compared with the other three, which might be explained by the fact that the lexical units used in describing violation are political and law terms that label the crime admitting no ambiguity and misinterpretation by the reader.

The emotional charge of the cluster is mainly manifested in trite metaphors and trite epithets (*democracies wither, plagued democracy, stifle democracy, scorched-earth tactics, chronic problem*):

“There has been **an erosion of democracy** on so many levels this year” (The New York Times, 2016, p. 7).

However unusual it may seem, but this cluster propagates fear by stating how formidable the problem is through conventional means and clichés, thus intensifying the fear and the urge for the immediate response to the violations.

7. Conclusion

The paper dwells on the linguistic manifestation of “politics of fear”, defined as a semiotic system of manipulations with its own system of intentions, communicative aims and means of verbalization. It has been proved that the political narrative works against all norms of diplomacy and ethics of political communication by choosing mainly to explicate instead of implicating the inherent negative attitude. This explicitness does not always give the insight into the real state of affairs which proves that the political elite with the help of mass media and for its own political gain shapes the required emotional charge. It resorts to intimidation, threats and exaggeration to feed current phobias and trigger new ones among the population to satisfy its own interests. Fear is known to be one of the basic emotions which is easy to exploit, as no other means robs the mind of its power to think straight and analyze the reality as fear. The language in its turn is a mirror that reflects the work of fear on the semantic and pragmatic levels.

The phenomenon of fear is revealed in terms of political narrative where it blooms and manifests itself in twelve key phobias. These phobias stand out in political narratives as 4 clusters representing fear of “the other”, “terrorism”, “outer threat” and “violation”. Each cluster is framed around certain content components, represented by the words with positive, neutral and negative evaluation. The latter dominates in its inherent form in all four clusters ranging from 78% in “violation” cluster to its maximum of 98% in the phobic cluster “terrorism”. The first three clusters create the atmosphere of fear, panic and chaos through the emotional charge, which is verbalized by various stylistic devices, whereas the cluster “violation” lacks imagery and intensifies fear through conventional means and clichés.

All four clusters exploit contradictive means to intensify the aggressiveness of negative emotions on the one hand (high flown vocabulary, metaphors, hyperboles, epithets, etc.) and to mitigate it diplomatically on the other hand (euphemisms). The clusters demonstrate other linguistic and extralinguistic discrepancies, e.g. unlike “terrorism” and “violation” representing threats of dubious character (inner and outer), “the other” and “outer threat” presuppose the external source of peril and interstate efforts to counter it, thus, boasting the abundance of stylistic devices. Besides, the clusters are disproportioned in the number of phobias.

Despite qualitative and quantitative differences, all four clusters are intertwined, their phobia-elements overlap, forming cross-links, infiltrate other clusters and “migrate”, their borders are unstable and even blurred. Phobic elements interlock (“the other” ↔ “outer threat” ↔ “terrorism” ↔ “violation” ↔ “the other”), thus generating the vicious circle of fear.

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