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# THREAT SCENARIOS IN THE UKRAINE CONFLICT

Daniel WEISS<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *This paper explores metaphors used in Russian and Ukrainian parliamentary and TV debates during the Ukraine conflict from November 2013 to November 2015. It adopts proximation theory to the target domain of approaching danger illustrated by different source domains (motion, border crossing, disease, fire and explosives). It thus showcases the plight of a country whose territorial integrity has been violated and whose nationhood is questioned by its powerful neighbour and former dominator.*

**Keywords:** *proximation theory; Ukraine conflict; disease/ fire/ motion metaphor; metonymy; political discourse; threat*

## Introduction: the theoretical approach

The present study is based on a sample of about six hundred metaphors related to the Ukraine conflict and dating from November 2013 to November 2015.<sup>2</sup> The study portrays metaphors describing an approaching danger which were used in Ukrainian and Russian parliamentary debates and TV talk shows during the first phase of the Ukrainian conflict (2014).<sup>3</sup> This topic invites an analysis in terms of proximation theory, whose main characteristics, as well as its shortcomings and their possible solutions, have been outlined elsewhere (Weiss 2017). Due to reasons of space, it may suffice here to mention that the theory has to do with “representational ‘proximising’ of the subjectively remote.”<sup>4</sup> The events in question are located on the spatial, temporal and modal (later: axiological) axes of a cognitive model that was first illustrated by an analysis of Bill Clinton’s TV speech on 24 March 1999 after the beginning of the NATO intervention against Serbia in the Kosovo war (Chilton 2004: 144).<sup>5</sup> In Chilton’s later work, the modal axis was renamed into axis of ideological distance, in Cap 2013 it appears as axis of axiological proximation.<sup>6</sup> Both Chilton and Cap narrow the neologism *proximis-e/-ation*, which etymologically denotes an emotionally neutral concept, to the description of a discourse strategy that aims at depicting a direct or indirect threat and thus causing fear and anger, which will legitimise the speaker’s/author’s preventive or reactive steps.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Out of this set, one hundred and ninety examples taken from Russian TV debates stem from an unpublished MA thesis (Brunner 2015).

<sup>3</sup> The study is related to a research project entitled “The Ukraine conflict as a battlefield of conflicting legitimisation discourses.” It covered the period from 22 November 2013 until 15 March 2015 and encompassed four countries (Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Czech Republic) and four discourse types: government statements (speeches, interviews, press releases, press conferences), parliamentary debates, TV discussions and newspapers articles and reports. In the present study, the examples stem exclusively from the Russian and Ukrainian corpora. For details of methodology, data selection and theoretical approaches cf. <http://www.research-projects.uzh.ch/p21358.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Chilton 2004: 153.

<sup>5</sup> For details cf. Chilton (2004: 144 ff.).

<sup>6</sup> The first adoption of this theory to metaphors used in US administration sources relating to the Ukraine conflict has been presented in the doctoral dissertation Lichy 2015.

Before tackling metaphors that contribute to this intimidating strategy, it should be emphasized that in the case of the Ukrainian conflict, we are dealing with a more complex scenario than in B. Clinton's intervention in the Kosovo war or G. Bush's War on terror (Cap 2013). On the time axis, we see a two-stage proximation process on both conflicting sides. Russia already felt threatened by the extension of EU and NATO in 2004. The Majdan revolt allegedly added to this the endangerment of the Russian community and language in Ukraine and especially on the Crimean Peninsula. From the perspective of the Majdan winners, Ukraine likewise faced a long-term threat: this line of argumentation pointed back to the defeat of the Ukrainian independence movement after WW I and Stalin's anti-Ukrainian repressions including the holodomor famine in the early thirties. The short-term threat arose with Russia's intervention in the Crimea and the Donbass. In the case of Russia, the two-stage proximation also involved two different spaces: the long-term threat aimed at the deictic centre (the Russian Federation), whereas the short-term threat affected the periphery inhabited by the "Russkij mir", a term denoting the ethnic Russian inhabitants of countries outside the Russian Federation.

A final remark concerns the relation between metaphors and comparisons. The traditional but debatable understanding of metaphors as abbreviated comparisons has been somewhat downgraded in conceptual metaphor theory. Still, the terms *similarity* and *analogy* have not been banned from its metalanguage. Thus, the subtitle of Musolff (2004) is "Analogical Reasoning in Debates about Europe," Kövecses opposes the "as if-connection" for metaphors to the "through-connection" for metonymies,<sup>9</sup> and Charteris-Black asserts: "There is some psycho-linguistic evidence that when metaphors are first introduced they are processed by means of comparison".<sup>10</sup> All this justifies the inclusion of metaphors (together with metonymies) into a new overarching category under the umbrella term 'analogical reasoning',<sup>11</sup> which embraces explicit comparisons, metaphors and analogies conveyed indirectly by quotations. This category is also essential for the present study: it enables us to integrate many relevant comparisons co-occurring with metaphors in our material.

### The data

When searching for metaphors, the automatic "metaphor identification procedure" (MIP) developed by the *Pragglejaz* group was not employed since it has no Polish, Ukrainian and Czech application and provided even in its Russian version (Zajchenko 2011) rather poor results: due to its wide scope, it yields too many trivial or even dead metaphors; at the same time, it cannot cope with innovative metaphors. Therefore, the metaphors had to be extracted in a non-automatic way by close reading. The examples were mainly collected according to their degree of conventionality: the more innovative they looked, the easier they found their way into the collection. Although I did not take a quantitative approach to metaphors, it was tempting to test the procedure proposed by Charteris-Black (2014: 179), which based on a reference corpus postulates the following statistical thresholds: if a word with the specific meaning at hand occurs in  $\geq 5\%$  of all corpus entries of this word, it is considered a novel metaphor, between 5% and 50% a conventional and above 50% an entrenched metaphor. In Weiss (2018), the application of this test to the Ukrainian data is discussed in detail,

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<sup>7</sup> A broader understanding of proximation is proposed by Kopytowska (2015), who also postulates five different axes, including the emotional and epistemic axes.

<sup>9</sup> Kövecses (2014:20).

<sup>10</sup> Charteris-Black (2015: 171). This refers to Bowdle and Gentner (2007), who postulate "a shift in mode of mapping from comparison to categorization."

<sup>11</sup> For details see Weiss 2017.

including the difficulties posed by the choice of an adequate reference corpus as well as the exclusion of dead metaphors.

The simplest source of proximation metaphors is provided by the source domain 'motion'. It may be realised by expressions of walking, regardless of the degree of frozenness. One of its well-attested subdomains is 'border crossing'. It mostly provides entrenched metaphors as in "Ci zahrozy peretnut' evropejs'kyj kordon" (these threats will cross the European border).<sup>1</sup> The speaker whose utterance is rendered in example (3) below states that "Rosija zajšla za mežu" (Russia has crossed the dividing line).<sup>2</sup> Unlike kordon, meža does not mark a physical border: this act of crossing is located on the axiological axis. The proverbial red line points to the same direction. The next speaker combines it with an appropriate physical impairment metaphor:

- (1) У міжнародній політиці є таке визначення "червона лінія". Завжди кажуть, що, "якщо перейдуть червону лінію, то ми прийнемо додаткові рішення, ми розглянемо додаткові санкції, то ми посилимо тиск". Просто хотів би звернутися, щоб світ не страждав геополітичним дальтонізмом, а то вже перейдено не десятки, а сотні червоних ліній, тисячі загиблих із-за російської військової агресії.<sup>12</sup>

A temporal concept of border is involved when O. Turčinov, then member of the Ukrainian government, reminds the Speaker of the Russian State Duma Naryškin that "voennye prestuplenija ne imejut sroka давности, vaša strana sejšas perexodit očen' opasnuju čertu" (war crimes do not have an expiry date. Your country is now crossing a very dangerous line).<sup>13</sup>

A metaphorical idiom implying 'motion' appears in the following statement of a communist Duma deputy following Russia's annexation of the Crimea:

- (2) Я уже сказал, что англо-американский империализм уже одной ногой стоит на территории Украины, сейчас пауза, а далее будут действия, как во многих странах мира.<sup>14</sup>

The somewhat underdetermined closure of this fragment implies that the proximation process will go on and the personified imperialism (this term is nowadays used only by communists) might also set his second leg on Ukrainian soil.

The walking imagery that serves to depict the endangerment may also be expressed metonymically. A participant of a Ukrainian TV show uses the metonymy *Rosyjs'kyj sapoh* (Russian boot). The term *sapoh* belongs to the socially stigmatised mixed Ukrainian-Russian variety *Suržyk* and is actually of Russian origin, which iconically reflects the origin of the intruder:

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<sup>12</sup> A. Jacenjuk, Verxovna Rada, 23 October 2014 (In international politics, there is this expression "red line". People always say that "if they cross the red line, we will consider additional sanctions, we will increase the pressure". I would just like to make sure that the world does not suffer from *geopolitical colour blindness*, because not only dozens but hundreds of *red lines* have been crossed, [we have] thousands of casualties because of the Russian military aggression).

<sup>13</sup> O. Turčinov, Verxovna Rada, 27 June 2014.

<sup>14</sup> N. Rjabov, State Duma, 14 March 2014 (I've already said that the British-American imperialism already *stands with one leg* on Ukrainian territory, now there is a break, but then will follow such actions as in many countries of the world).

- (3) *Російський сапог* прийшов [...] Ми не можемо спокійно дивитися, коли БТри спокійно розїжджають по Криму - це наша з вами земля. *Завтра вони підуть в Одесу, післязавтра - в Луганськ. Далі - в Київ.* Будемо дивитися спокійно? Ні. Поки вони блокують без пострілу. *Завтра вони почнуть провокації, ...*<sup>15</sup>

Unlike in the preceding example, this speaker anticipates further proximation steps on the time and space axes. A right-wing deputy in the Ukrainian parliament uses a more derogatory wording, this time in a historical reminiscence and with the Standard Ukrainian term *čobit* 'boot':

- (4) Коли *москальський брудний чобіт* прийшов на мою рідну Львівську землю, коли *москальський брудний чобіт* знищив усі українські школи, дитячі садочки, ... Шептицького *заслав до білих ведмеді*.<sup>16</sup>

Compared with the preceding example, the repeated mention of the personified *boot* is more repulsive here both with regard to its attributes (*brudnyj, moskal'skyj*: *Moskal'* is a pejorative ethnonym denoting Russians) as to its deeds (destruction, deportation). The *white bear* is another metonymy closely associated with Russia's North, which on the spatial and emotional axes is more remote.

It goes without saying that the *boot* metonymy does not occur in Russian pro-Kremlin sources.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, a rather neutral variant is attested in an utterance by a critical observer from the *Doneck* front, who in a stated that "at present, it would be incorrect and premature to say that the *boot of the Russian soldier* has already stepped on Ukrainian soil."<sup>18</sup> Since here, the boot is simply conceived of as a belonging of the Russian soldier, the whole phrase remains metonymical yet its negative load vanishes.

A more playful version of the approaching danger is conveyed in the following joke about V. Putin.

- (5) Маленький Путін зайшов у великий сяючий золотом Кремлівський Георгієвський палац. Біля нього стояли два величезних охоронці. І він до них повертається каже: "Извините, пожалуйста, а где здесь можно пописать"? "Вам - везде". Тоді всі сміялися, здавалося, що це просто милий анекдот. Але насправді виявилось, що імперській політиці Путіна *везде*. І той, хто сьогодні сидить далеко-далеко в благополучній Європі - в Лондоні, Ліссабоні, Берліні, Парижі, - має розуміти, що він *пройде везде*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> A. Hrychenko, Verhovna Rada, 28 February 2014 (The *Russian boot* has come. We cannot quietly observe how Russian troops are roaming through the Crimea – this is our territory. *Tomorrow* they will arrive at *Odessa*, the day after tomorrow in *Luhansk*. Then in *Kiev*. Should we just patiently watch what's going on? No. *At present* they simply conduct blockades, without any shooting. *Tomorrow* they will launch provocations).

<sup>16</sup> O. Pankevič, Verhovna Rada, 16 May 2014 (when the *dirty Muscovite boot* came to my beautiful L'viv province, when the *dirty Muscovite boot* destroyed all Ukrainian schools, kindergartens ... it deported Šeptyc'kyj [the Greek-catholic metropolite of Galicia, whose imprisonment at the outbreak of World War I the speaker is referring to DW] to the *white bears*)

<sup>17</sup>It may be noted that Soviet propagandistic cartoons in World War II often reduced the representation of Hitler or the Nazis to a boot with the swastika.

<sup>18</sup>Russian oppositional TV channel *Dožd'*, 29 August 2014.

<sup>19</sup>J. Lucenko, TV debate *Šuster live*, 25 July 2014 (Little Putin once entered the great gold-shimmering George Palace of the Kremlin. Next to him stood two big lifeguards. He addressed one of them: "Excuse me, where can I piss here?" "You [may] everywhere". At that time everybody laughed, it seemed that this was just a good joke. But in reality, it turned out that Putin's imperial politicians were everywhere. And those who today sit far away

Note that the shock produced by V. Putin's not too civilised language is mitigated by his age. However, the physical act remains disgusting, and V. Putin's privilege to relieve himself wherever he wants, which originally was meant as a humorous symbolisation of his power, is now reinterpreted as an omnipresent menace for the whole of Europe.

A widespread metaphor for political inferiority is the posture verb *kneel* (Russian *stojat' na kolenjax*), which is related to the universal conceptualisation 'up is dominant'. After the annexation of the Crimea, V. Putin was praised because he *podnjat Rossiju s kolen* 'raised Russia up [lit. from its knees]', thus re-establishing Russia as a dreaded military power. The following statement by a Ukrainian politician on an oppositional Russian radio channel combines the posture verb and the subsequent, even more humiliating motion 'crawl on one's knees':

- (6) Складывается впечатление, что задача – *поставить на колени* Украину, потому что Украина не может нести груз этой войны долго, потому что Украина в очень плохом экономическом состоянии (...) То есть *коллапс приближается* со всех сторон. Это фактически политика на изматывание и коллапс Украины, видимо с тем расчетом, чтобы Украина, обессилив, *приползла на коленях* и согласилась на любые условия.<sup>20</sup>

What is really approaching us here is the economic collapse that Russia is trying to cause by blocking imports of Ukrainian goods and increasing the prices of oil and gas supply. This produces a reversal of the usual picture predicted by proximation theory: a centrifugal motion directed towards the enemy on both the spatial and axiological/emotional axes. Moreover, the motion script interacts with the subordination script, which is attested in numerous other cases. For instance, a right-wing politician complains that Russians allow themselves to wipe their shoes on Ukrainians as a kind of doormat (*Ale čomu vony sobi dozvoljajut' vytiraty ob nas nohy*).<sup>21</sup> The shoes in this idiom play a humiliating but less destructive role than their close relative *boot* (example 4), which tramples on Ukrainian cultural values.

The motion concept may, of course, be realised otherwise than by walking and does not necessarily relate to a threat scenario. A train is involved when Porošenko accuses his predecessor Janukovič to 'have attempted to re-direct our express train from the West to the East' ("sprobuvav na xodu rozvernuty naš ekspres iz Zaxodu na Sxid.")<sup>22</sup> This train metaphor resumes an old Soviet tradition, which originated in Lenin's "locomotive of the revolution"; later on, the train came to symbolise the economic progress of the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup>

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in the prosperous Europe – in London, Lisbon, Berlin or Paris – should understand that he [Putin] *will get through everywhere*).

<sup>20</sup> O. Ljaško, *Radio Svoboda*, 28 August 2014 (One gets the impression that the task is to *bring Ukraine to its knees*, because Ukraine cannot carry the burden of this war, because Ukraine is in a very bad economic condition... The *collapse is approaching* from every side. This policy indeed aims at Ukraine's exhaustion and collapse with the expectation that Ukraine will *crawl on its knees* [to the enemy] and agree with every condition whatsoever)

<sup>21</sup> A. Jacenjuk, TV show *Šuster live*, 22 November 2013.

<sup>22</sup> P. Porošenko, Verxovna rada, 16 September 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly, there were no critical or even derogatory uses of the train metaphor in Soviet propaganda comparable to those in the European discourse of the 1990s, where problem passengers, different speeds and the risk of derailment are frequently discussed (Musolff 2000: 39-56).

A not unusual conceptualisation is ‘international relations is trade’. In a conflict situation, it functions solely in a perverted form however: the *export* metaphor targets terrorism and other undesirable goods, as can be seen in the following fragment of a speech by G. Bush: “If the Middle East remains a place where freedom and democracy do not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation and anger and *violence for export*.”<sup>24</sup> The same fear manifests itself in a statement by the anchor man of a Russian TV show: “Ne proizojdet li ěksport Majdana v Rossiju” (whether there won’t happen any *export of Majdan* to Russia).<sup>25</sup> Here, the metaphor *ěksport* combines with the metonymy *Majdan*. What could be exported here is political disorder and instability, a risk which was given due attention by the Kremlin at that time. On the other side of the border, the same metaphor targets Russian ongoing activities, cf. “Krim ěksportu nafty i gazu, Rosija stala ěksportuvaty teroryzm” (Besides oil and gas, Russia started exporting terrorism); this obviously refers to the separatist forces in the South-East Donbass region, which are called “terrorists” by the Ukrainian government.<sup>26</sup> The only element of the source concept preserved in the export metaphor is ‘motion’; the meaning ‘commercial transaction’ is completely absent, since no merchandise or payment is involved.

### Disease, Wild Animals, Fire

Among the other source domains, disease metaphors follow traditional patterns. Thus, before the upheaval, Ukrainian authorities intended to “izbežat’ raspolzanie kievskoj zarazy” (to avoid a spread of the Kievan *plague*), referring to the *Majdan* partisans.<sup>27</sup> After the change of power, in the Ukrainian *Verxovna Rada* disease metaphors target the Russian interventions: “Puxlina totalitaryzmu provokuvatyme nebezpečnu xorobu” (The ulcer of totalitarianism will provoke a dangerous disease)<sup>28</sup> or “90% žyteliv Donbasu prosjat’ zvil’nyty jix vid terorystyčnoji zarazi” (90% of the Donbass inhabitants ask us to free them from the terrorist plague).<sup>29</sup> Parasites are another familiar element from the propagandistic arsenal: “Vidšukalysja ekstremisty, kotri namahajut’sja parazytuvaty na boljučyx pytannjax našoho narodu” (There have shown up extremists who try to *parasitise* on the aching problems of our people).<sup>30</sup>

Animals provide a traditional source of threat metaphors. In our context, the Russian bear, whose manifold embodiments are analysed in Weiss (2017), plays the most prominent role in this zoo. The next fragment illustrates the interplay of the two source domains ‘animal’ and ‘disease’:

- (7) ... США, как бешеная собака, бегают по миру и кусают страны, заражая их своим вирусом, и ждут, пока они очумеют, а потом набрасываются и догрызают! Мощные и сильные страны: Россия — бурый медведь, Индия — слон, Китай — саблезубый тигр, дракон — давайте объединимся и дадим наконец отпор этой бешеной собаке, заставим её соблюдать интересы всего мирового сообщества!<sup>31</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Quoted from Cap 2013: 95.

<sup>25</sup> V. Solov’ev, TV show *Poedinok*, 30 January 2014.

<sup>26</sup>A. Jacenjuk at a government session, 16 April 2014.

<sup>27</sup> *Kommersant*, 28 January 2014.

<sup>28</sup> O. Turčinov, 20 May 2014.

<sup>29</sup> O. Ljaško, 4 June 2014.

<sup>30</sup> M. Čečetov, 20 June 2014.

<sup>31</sup> V.S. Zoločevskij, State Duma, 26 September 2014 (...the US is *running around like a mad dog* and biting countries, *infecting* them with its *virus*, then waits until they *go mad*, and later it *pounces* on them and *bites them to death!* The powerful and strong nations, Russia, the brown bear, China, India, the elephant, the

Here, the *mad dog* belongs to the two source domains ‘disease’ and ‘wild animals’, which are now both exploited by the speaker. First, he elaborates the idea of disease, cf. *biting, infecting, virus, go mad, pounces, bites to death*. The target of this mapping (what kind of disease?) remains unexplained. In the subsequent sentence, he extends the animal domain, complementing the *dog* by the metonymies *bear, elephant, sabretooth tiger* and *dragon*. Note also the transformation of the initial comparison *like a mad dog* into the anaphoric metaphor *this mad dog*.

The political zoo also includes mythical animals, such as hydras and dragons. And finally, animal-like personifications may fulfil the same function: “Moskva poklala tudy lapy svoji zahrebušči, ščob znyščyty Ukrajinu” (Moscow laid its *greedy paws* here to destroy Ukraine).<sup>32</sup>

Our last source domain relates to ‘fire’ and its derivatives. Fire metaphors play an important role in Proximation theory.<sup>33</sup> The underlying conceptualisation ‘danger is fire’ is, however, only one of quite a few different mappings: hope, enthusiasm, anger and purification are other possible targets.<sup>34</sup> In the polemics about the Ukrainian conflict, ‘danger’ is the only target where fire metaphors occur. The following excerpt contains no less than five instances of the word *fire* and two other words that semantically imply a fire:

- (8) У нас *пожар*. Это не внутренний *пожар*. Не мы *подпалили* наш дом. Не люди на Донбассе *развели* этот *пожар*. Этот *пожар* пришел из-вне.... А Украина граничит, в частности, с четырьмя странами членами ЕС. Помогите нам, потому что это в ваших интересах. Вы помогаете себе, помогая нам. Если *пожар не затушить* здесь - он распространится дальше.<sup>35</sup>

This message follows a rather typical pattern in Ukrainian proximation discourse: the danger comes from outside but has already reached us and may expand elsewhere, beyond our borders. Thus, this example works as a warning for the West and is reminiscent of example (5) with its hint on V. Putin’s omnipresence.

In the next quotation, the Western efforts to extinguish the fire proves counterproductive: “during the events in Ukraine we saw many representatives of European countries and of the US State Department acting as if they tried to *extinguish the fire with oil*.”<sup>36</sup> This collocation is a one-scope blend of the two regular collocations *extinguish a fire* and *pour oil in(to) the fire*. Although it looks like a conventional, sarcastic metaphor, it is not attested in the Russian National Corpus.

On the other hand, Russia may also be blamed for its inadequate behaviour in the face of the Ukrainian crisis, as an oppositional Russian politician points out in the following comparison:

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sabretooth tiger or dragon, let us unite and resist to this mad dog, let us force it to respect the interests of the world community!)

<sup>32</sup> O. Ljaško, 19 September 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Cap 2013: 62, 80 f., 123.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Charteris-Black 2014: 198 ff. See also Charteris-Black 2016.

<sup>35</sup> G. Nemyrja, Verxovna Rada, 29 August 2014 (We have a *fire*. This is not an internal *fire*. It was not us who *set our house on fire*. The people from Donbass did not initiate *this fire*. *This fire* came from outside... Ukraine borders on four members of the EU. Help us, since this is in your own interest. You help yourselves by helping us. If the *fire* is not *extinguished* here, it will continue to spread).

<sup>36</sup> V. A Vasil’ev, State Duma, 26 February 2014.



- (9) мы являемся великой державой, которая должна вести себя, по идее, как великая держава, а не как страна, которая пытается восстановить былое могущество за счет соседа: когда у него пожар, нужно у него унести телевизор или угонять машину.<sup>37</sup>

In this speaker's view, Russia's annexation of the Crimea and its military support for the separatist movement in the Donbass region are paralleled to the theft of these territories from its legitimate owner.

A *smouldering fuse* combines the idea of 'motion' (the approaching fire) with an ensuing explosion, cf. the following quotation from a debate in the Russian parliament: "It's a fuse which has already been smouldering for several months, now it may explode every moment."<sup>38</sup> According to Charteris-Black's threshold of less than 5% of occurrences in the reference corpus<sup>39</sup> (here: the Russian National Corpus), Russian *fital'* 'fuse' in this political meaning is a novel metaphor. This holds all the more for the collocation *fital' tleet* 'the fuse is smouldering'.

Explosives offer a more threatening concept than mere fire, therefore they often occur in proximation imagery. In a Russian TV show, Ukrainian politicians are accused of tolerating a terrifying explosive development: "vremja pokazet tu strašnuju minu zamedlennogo dejstvija, kotoruju segodnja oni vospitali v svoej strane" (time will show the terrible *delayed-action mine* that they have brought up<sup>40</sup> in their country).<sup>41</sup> One may only surmise that what this speaker has in mind is the approaching danger of an alleged fascist regime in Ukraine. The leader of the Russian communist party even considers the outcome of the *Majdan* riots a greater danger than the nuclear catastrophe of *Černobyl'*: "Na Ukraine vzorvalsja političeskij Černobyl', po svoim posledstvijam on gorazdo opasnee jadernogo" (In Ukraine, a *political Černobyl'* exploded, whose consequences are way more dangerous than the nuclear one).<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusions

This study discussed two different types of 'proximation' imagery (metaphors, metonymies and comparisons) that affect the Ukrainian territorial integrity. 'Motion' is not a threatening concept in itself, nor is it the sub-concept 'border-crossing': here the danger had to be expressed contextually except with 'red lines' and 'expiry dates', which presuppose some kind of prohibition. 'Disease', 'wild animals', 'fire' and 'explosion', on the other hand, unequivocally signal a threat scenario. In some examples, two or more sources were blended or intertwined, such as 'motion', 'fire' and 'explosion' or 'animals' and 'disease'. Moreover, as examples (4) and (6) showed, 'motion' may also combine with the target domains 'destruction' and 'subordination'. Sometimes we find a combination of source and target within one NP, cf. "ulcer of totalitarianism."

<sup>37</sup> G. Gudkov, *Dožd'*, 29 August 2014 (We are a great power which should behave like a great power and not like a country that tries to restore its former power at the expense of its neighbour: when *there is a fire at his place*, one carries away his television or steals his car).

<sup>38</sup> O. Nilov, State Duma, 27 February 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Charteris-Black (2014: 179).

<sup>40</sup>The metaphorical clash of *bringing up a mine* looks very much like a catachresis. Native speakers find this combination bizarre.

<sup>41</sup>D. Orlov, TV show *Vremja pokazet*, 16 September 2014.

<sup>42</sup>G. Zjuganov, State Duma, 5 February 2014.

It does not come as a surprise that the same source domains are used by the Russian side to depict the dangers threatening the Russians on Ukrainian territory. The study also illustrated the interplay of metaphors, metonymies and comparisons: in example (4), it was the metonymical boot that caused the destruction, and example (7) showed the typical pattern of an initial comparison ('like a mad dog') engendering the metaphor 'mad dog' in the subsequent text. On the whole, the imagery used was not innovative in the sense sketched out by Charteris-Black (2014) but appeared in fresh contextual combinations.

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