

PRO-PEACE Vs. PRO-WAR CONCEPTUALIZATIONS IN THE LANGUAGE OF HUNGARIAN PROPAGANDA

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Abstract

The language of propaganda can be treated as a specialist language with its own specialized terminology. It is produced by groups of variously configured propaganda experts responsible for the creation of propaganda messages, placed at one end of the communication channel, together with its specific target audience that consumes these messages, situated at the other end of the communication channel. As a result of this specialized communication process, the language of propaganda is function-oriented and its focus is always put on the objectives that are to be achieved. These include shaping and manipulating public opinions. For these goals to be successful, the language of propaganda must be equipped with efficient and well-designed conceptualizations able to change and modify the way people think. Defined as such, the language of propaganda is not a purely linguistic construct, but a multimodal tool able to make use of the visual and audiovisual output as well. The interest in mental processes such as conceptualization lies at the very center of cognitive linguistics and the study of cognitive mechanisms responsible for various types of conceptualizations is of high priority in cognitively driven approaches to language. Another issue which makes cognitive linguistics suitable for this type of research in specialist languages is its long standing preference for multidisciplinary and multimodal phenomena. Applying the methodology of cognitive linguistics, the present paper aims at identifying and discussing the PRO-PEACE vs. PRO-WAR network of conceptualizations in the language of Hungarian propaganda, often compared in its mastery with Orwell's newspeak or the Soviet propaganda machinery because of its power and influence. Hungary's leading right-wing party, Fidesz-KDNP, has retained political control in Hungary ever since its landslide victory in the 2010 national elections and developed a powerful propaganda tool that is ideally customized to the culture-specific preferences of Hungarian voters. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, this research studies linguistic expressions shaping PRO-PEACE vs. PRO-WAR conceptualizations with their rich social, historical and cultural contexts.

Keywords: political discourse, specialist language, propaganda, cognitive linguistics, conceptualizations, culture-specific terms, Hungarian

1. Introduction

During the latest electoral campaign taking place in Hungary right after the beginning of the full scale Russian aggression on Ukraine, Viktor Orbán and the right wing parties in Hungary started to voice their key message of peace which sharply differed from the reaction to war in other European countries. Almost the

entire media space in Hungary started accusing the united opposition alliance of trying to drag Hungary into the war by wanting to send soldiers and weapons into Ukraine. After winning the parliamentary elections on April 3, 2022, Orbán said he viewed the war as a key factor to his electoral success, since “the Hungarian people want peace, and with a war going on in our neighborhood, they voted for the one who offers the greatest guarantee of peace”.¹ Later the rhetoric of warmongers and peace-lovers was extended and used to criticize Brussels, European countries and NATO members supporting Ukraine with arms.

The aim of my study is to analyze the linguistic tools used for the creation of language-specific conceptualizations (Wierzbicka 2013) applied as key elements in the creation of the PRO-PEACE vs. PRO-WAR political discourse which nowadays seems to dominate the Hungarian media. I will claim that these conceptualizations, to a large extent, rely on the linguistic mechanisms offered by the Hungarian language, are reinforced by its unique typological and genealogical position in comparison to other languages of the region, and are closely coordinated with stereotypes (Bartmiński 2009), historical myths and the general cultural experience or, in other words, all of them can be attributed to the specific linguistic worldview (Gład et al. 2013) and its actual realization in very particular circumstances (Schröder 2022). The language material used for the analysis comes from selected press articles, political speeches and propaganda advertisements sponsored by the Hungarian government which appeared in the period of March 2022-June 2023.

2. The language of propaganda and its conceptualizations

The language of propaganda will be understood here as a type of specialist language (Grygiel 2017, Krawiec 2022) targeted at large audiences with a specific function of manipulation or to influence public opinion with not only linguistic means, but also other multimodal tools that stand at the disposal of propaganda content makers. Its aim is to deliberately and systematically shape perceptions, (dis)inform, create knowledge and direct behavior in order to elicit a response that favors the intentions of those who implement it (Stanley 2015, Cole 2022, Diesen 2022) This is the purpose typically assumed by texts such as political speeches, news reports, newspaper articles or mass media campaigns in the form of billboards, advertisements or videos. According to Forni (2023), a typical feature of propaganda language is that it seems reasonable and commonly accepted by most of the people to whom it is addressed. Another of its features is the constant use of linguistic expressions in the form of language-specific terminology – slogans (e.g. *Fegyverszállítások helyett békét!* ‘Instead of arms shipments, peace!’) and keywords (e.g. *háborúpárti* ‘pro-war’) that refer to stereotypes,

¹ <https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-beszede-a-fidesz-kdnp-valasztasi-gyozelmet-kovetoen-2/>

prejudices and other conceptualization modes expressing ways of thinking or behaviors. Thus, “the language of propaganda is aimed at promoting goals or values considered relevant and reasonable” or in other words “considered acceptable in a certain socio-legal and political context” (Forni, 2023: 5).

Here the term *language of Hungarian propaganda* will refer to the linguistic, and only partially to non-linguistic output, generated by pro-government Hungarian politicians, propagandists and media in Hungary – produced in Hungarian and targeted at the Hungarian audience. This includes, first of all, speeches and statements given by ruling party politicians, the content created by the Hungarian public media conglomerate MTVA, newspaper articles – primarily appearing in the daily *Magyar Nemzet* and the weekly *Mandiner* as well as reports published by pro-government opinion-forming institutions – e.g.: *Századvég Alapítvány*, *Alapjogokért Központ*, *XXI. Század Intézet*.

The language of Hungarian propaganda is a good example of a propaganda language exerting political power and authority on the target audience. Since his party’s overwhelming, second in history, victory in the 2010 Hungarian general elections, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has been strategically using nationalism and appeals to traditional and family values to strengthen his hold on power. According to Di Meco and Hesterman (2023: 8):

While Orbán has distanced himself from the EU, he has often publicly aligned with Russia in an ideological battle against liberal values and human rights. He has adopted a strongman persona and anti-democratic practices – similar to those used by Putin – to silence opposing voices, undermine women’s rights and centralize power (Di Meco and Hesterman 2023: 8).

To achieve this goal, Orbán has built and put into motion an impressive propaganda machine.² As a result of his efforts, the Hungarian ruling party has a massive number of media outlets under its direct or indirect control.³ Hungary’s public media has become the “number one broadcaster of the Kremlin propaganda in Europe”, and Kremlin manipulative conceptualizations repeated on social media often resonate with supporters of Fidesz.⁴ Consequently, it can be concluded that Orbán’s government set up a Russia-like model of media centralization, which allows manipulation of the population through centrally-controlled (dis)information and a media empire that follows political orders. Nevertheless, the conceptualizations used by the language of Hungarian propaganda are not only Russian calques or artificially constructed tools of manipulation, but as shown in the following study of the PRO-PEACE vs. PRO-WAR conceptualizations, they are deeply rooted in the Hungarian language,

² <https://voxeurop.eu/en/hungary-propaganda-machine-at-the-service-of-viktor-orban/>

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17382824>

⁴ <https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-war-narrative-hungary-disinformation/>

history, cultural experiences. Simultaneously, they are well adjusted to the expectations and background knowledge of the Hungarian audience.

In cognitive linguistics, meaning is equated with conceptualization (Langacker 1986). It is shown to be cognitively universal in its nature, but at the same time, socially and culturally dependent and prescribed to a particular context and thus to a large extent, it is language-specific (Kövecses 2005, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2020). A conceptualization is a process of constructing concepts or networks of concepts – a way of understanding, mentally representing and remembering a given object or phenomenon and a way of showing it to others. In many respects, the conceptualization process reflects the learning and teaching processes. Conceptualizations are also used to represent attitudes and convey ideologies and other socio-political constructions communicated through language (Charteris-Black 2012). Metaphorical conceptualizations are believed to emerge from the interaction of different contexts like the physical environment, the social and cultural setting and differential concerns and interests (Benczes and Ságvári 2018). However, conceptual metaphors, or in more general terms, analogy and similarity, are not the only cognitive mechanisms available to us for conceptualizing the world (Grady 2000, Krawczak et al. 2022).

3. Contrast as the main cognitive mechanism behind the PRO-PEACE vs. PRO-WAR conceptualizations

Contrast-making and analogy-making constitute two major cognitive mechanisms that underlie a large body of mental operations involved in human thinking and conceptualization. Being pervasive in cognition, the two mechanisms are also responsible for shaping language structures and their mutual relations. Thus, contrast and analogy, in their most general senses, are cognitive capabilities that allow us to think about relational patterns and to create systems that involve these relations (Krawczak et al. 2022).

In its elaborated form, the rhetoric of war and peace justifying the Hungarian official standpoint toward the Russian invasion of Ukraine was first presented by the Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in his speech focused on the upcoming elections which was delivered on March 15, 2022 on Kossuth Square in front of the Hungarian Parliament. Both the place and the date were very symbolic and full of historical connotations. March 15 is the national holiday in Hungary which commemorates the outbreak of Hungarian Revolution and the struggle for freedom against the Austrian-Hapsburg rule of 1848-49. Today this date symbolizes the fight for national independence and sovereignty. It must be also stressed that before March 15, 2022 the lexeme *war*, used with reference to the situation in Ukraine, was rather avoided in state media and generally replaced by euphemistic terms such as *crisis* (*válság*), *crisis situation* (*válsághelyzet*), *conflict*

(*konfliktus*) or even substituted by a direct borrowing from the language of Russian propaganda – *special military operation* (*különleges katonai műveletet*).

Orbán's March 15 pre-election speech was full of conceptualizations based on contrast. The most important of them was the division into the negatively evaluated supporters of war and the positively evaluated supporters of peace with the extension of this binary bad/good axiology onto various political and social dimensions highlighted during the election campaign. The supporters of war were conceptualized by means of the Hungarian newly-formed adjective *háborúpárti*, where *háború* means 'war' and *párti* designates 'a supporter, a partisan of a party or adherent to some preferences'. Similarly, the party of peace was classified as being *békepárti* which stands in sharp contrast with the previous modifier. Both terms have become extremely popular in the language of Hungarian propaganda. The postmodifier – *párti* is very productive in colloquial Hungarian and it is mainly used to express opposite preferences, e.g. *kutyapárti* 'dog-lover' vs. *macskapárti* 'cat-lover', *kávépárti* 'coffee enthusiast' vs. *teapárti* 'tea enthusiast'. It is worth noting that in the English translation this analogical contrast cannot be fully rendered as the term *warmongers* – used in the official translation of Orbán's speech – does not match with *peace supporters* as neatly as their original equivalents in Hungarian.

The conceptualization of PEACE vs. WAR received additional reinforcement by the fact that the speech given by Orbán on March 15, 2022 was a culmination of the so-called *békemenet* 'peace march' – organized for the ninth time, taking place annually, massive manifestation in support of the Orbán government and the right-wing values where marching crowds from all over Hungary demonstrate on the streets of Budapest. In his speech, Viktor Orbán used a number of other conceptualizations based on contrast which were summarized in the form of choices the Hungarians must make during parliamentary election on April 4, 2022:

- (1) Békepárti jobboldal vagy háborús baloldal? Építkezés vagy rombolás? Előre vagy hátra? 'A pro-peace Right or a pro-war Left? Construction or destruction? Forward or back?'⁵

The reference to the conceptualization of PEACE vs. WAR in the form of the main election campaign slogan was displayed in blue and white colors as *béke és biztonság* 'peace and security' and appeared during Orbán's speech both visually and in wordings such as "we should preserve the peace and security of Hungary: whoever votes for peace and security votes for Fidesz".⁶ Additionally in March 2022, the newly refurbished Hungarian State Opera announced the performance of Prokofiev's *War and Peace* in Russian for the 2022/2023 season – eight

⁵ <https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-174th-anniversary-of-the-hungarian-revolution-and-war-of-independence-of-1848-49/>

⁶ <https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-174th-anniversary-of-the-hungarian-revolution-and-war-of-independence-of-1848-49/>

performances were given between January 26 and February 18, 2023 and later they were extended till June 2024 – which seems to be a good complementation for the whole propaganda campaign.

4. Hungarian opposition is PRO-WAR vs. government parties and their supporters are PRO-PEACE

In the language of Hungarian propaganda, the political opposition is referred to as being ‘pro-war’ and the adjective *háborúpárti* or *háborús* precedes any noun designating Hungarian opposition in general or names of any of its members. The most frequently used of these terms include: *háborúpárti baloldal* ‘pro-war left’, *háborúpárti ellenzék* ‘pro-war opposition’, *háborúpárti politikusok* ‘pro-war politicians’, *háborúpárti liberálisok* ‘pro-war liberals’. The leaders of opposition and their supporters are also called *háborúpártiak* which can be roughly translated as ‘those who want war’. This designation was used in the nationwide poster campaign launched in June 2023 by a pro-government civil organization CÖF-CÖKA, whose president László Csizmadia stated that “no other country has an opposition that has openly become an enemy of its own people”.⁷



Figure 1: A billboard campaign with leaders of opposition parties: Péter Márki-Zay, Ferenc Gyurcsány, Klára Dobrev, András Fekete-Győr and Gergely Karácsony shown as *háborúpártiak* ‘those who want war’. The caption says: *A baloldal belesodorna minket a háborúba* ‘The left would like to drag us into war’.

Informing about political events in Hungary, no matter if they are war related or not, the public mass media refers to opposition as *pro-war opposition* or other derogative and negatively loaded attributes are preferred like *szivárványkoalíció* ‘rainbow coalition’ or *dollárbaloldal* ‘dollar left’. The first of these language-specific and full of additional connotations terms alludes to the fact that before the

⁷ <https://civilek.info/en/2023/06/06/launches-a-national-poster-campaign-with-the-cof-coka-video/>

parliamentary elections in April 2022, the opposition parties polling highest with the public – the right-wing Jobbik (‘Movement for a Better Hungary’), the left-leaning Democratic Coalition and MSZP (‘Hungarian Socialist Party’), the green Párbeszéd (‘Dialogue for Hungary’) and LMP- Hungary’s Green Party (previously known as ‘Politics Can Be Different’), as well as the liberal Momentum Movement – formed a union in the December of 2020, and announced they would be running together as a coalition in the 2022 parliamentary elections.⁸ The term *dollar left*, on the other hand, is deliberately used to express contempt and serves as a constant reminder that the opposition has been receiving illegal funding from the USA or from “a network abroad”.⁹ Assumed to be a fact and frequently repeated in the language of Hungarian propaganda, this accusation has not been defended at court.

In contrast to opposition, the Hungarian ruling parties – Fidesz and Christian Democrats (KDNP) – are described as being pro-peace and acting in the national interest. This, based on contrast, conceptualization can be observed in the following examples:

- (2) A Fidesz-KDNP politikusai úgy fogalmaztak: az Országgyűlés békepárti szavazásán kiderült, hogy a dollárbaloldal háborúpárti.¹⁰ ‘Fidesz-KDNP politicians put it in this way: the *pro-peace* voting in the National Assembly showed that the *dollar left* is *pro-war*’.
- (3) A magyar baloldal inkább a nyugati világ háborúpárti álláspontját képviseli, de a magyar érdek az, hogy mielőbb béke legyen.¹¹ ‘The Hungarian left tends to take the pro-war position of the Western world, but it is in Hungary's interest to have peace as soon as possible’.

The pro-peace voting mentioned in Example 2 refers to pro-peace resolution for the war in Ukraine voted during a plenary session of the Hungarian parliament on March 31, 2023. The resolution was proposed by the ruling Fidesz-KDNP alliance to mark the anniversary of the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. The language of mass media propaganda stressed the pro-peace position of Hungarian Fidesz-KDNP politicians concluding that by adopting the resolution, lawmakers

⁸ <https://the-scroll.co.uk/2021/01/12/can-hungarys-rainbow-coalition-bring-down-orbans-regime-in-2022/>

⁹ <https://hungarymatters.hu/2023/04/17/fidesz-official-dollar-left-continuously-financed-from-abroad/>

¹⁰ <https://www.dehir.hu/belfold/kiderult-hogy-a-dollarbaloldal-haborupart-mondta-kosa-lajos-es-posan-laszlo/2023/04/01/>

¹¹ <https://hirado.hu/belfold/cikk/2023/03/12/kocsis-mate-a-magyar-baloldal-a-nyugati-vilag-haborupart-allaspontjat-kepviseli>

declared their commitment to peace and called on the international community to take steps to achieve peace as soon as possible.¹²

5. The West is PRO-WAR vs. Hungary is PRO-PEACE

According to Máté Kocsis, the head of the Fidesz parliamentary group responsible for the initiation of the pro-peace resolution, “the interest of Hungarians lies in working for the swiftest possible peace in Ukraine”, at the same time Hungarian “left-wingers” represent “Western pro-war forces”.¹³ In the language of Hungarian propaganda, the West is constantly being criticized for sending arms to Ukraine, imposing sanctions and keeping the war going. On the other hand, Hungary is portrayed as a force for peace battling against the Western war machine.

The West is often referred to as *nyugati hatalmak* ‘western powers’ or *nyugati világ* ‘western world’ which according to Máté Kocsis, “instead of using its power, influence and military superiority to force peace or an immediate ceasefire, is drifting further into war by delivering ever more powerful and effective weapons”.¹⁴ The EU, on the other hand, more frequently appearing as *Brüsszel* ‘Brussels’ or *brüsszeli bürokraták* ‘Brussels bureaucrats’, in Viktor Orbán’s words, was brought into being to keep peace, but has now become “a pro-war institution”.¹⁵ It should be stressed that in the language of state propaganda, Hungary is conceptualized in opposition to the negatively depicted EU, while at the same time, the image of *háborúpárti nyugatiak* ‘pro-war Westerners’ is confronted with images of brave, innovative, independent Hungarians who always act in favor of peace.¹⁶

Viktor Orbán is portrayed in the language of Hungarian propaganda as one of only two pro-peace leaders (*békepárti vezető*) in Europe – the other one being Pope Francis.¹⁷ As a result, it is not surprising that according to the opinion poll carried out in June 2022 by the favorably disposed toward the Hungarian government Nézőpont Institute, four-fifths of all Hungarian voters (78%) and 91% of Fidesz voters are convinced that Viktor Orbán “stands on the side of peace”

¹² <https://hirado.hu/belfold/cikk/2023/03/31/elfogadtak-a-kormanypartok-bekeparti-hatarozatat>

¹³ <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/kocsis-hungarian-left-wingers-represent-western-pro-war-forces>

¹⁴ <https://infostart.hu/belfold/2023/04/02/vilaghaborurol-es-atomhaborurol-beszelt-kocsis-mate>

¹⁵ <https://mail.infostart.hu/belfold/2023/03/31/orban-viktor-az-emberek-elindultak-a-beke-iranyaba-europaban>

¹⁶ This can be illustrated by the interview given by Viktor Orbán for the Kossuth Radio on March 31, 2023 <https://kormany.hu/beszedekek-interjuk/miniszterelnok/orban-viktor-interjuja-a-kossuth-radio-jo-reggelt-magyarorszag-cimu-musoraban-20230331>

¹⁷ <https://magyarnemzet.hu/belfold/2022/05/ma-ket-bekeparti-vezeto-van-europaban-ferenc-papa-es-orban-viktor>

(*a béke pártján áll*).¹⁸ At the same time, according to 56% of Hungarians, Joe Biden, the President of the United States of America, can be described as the supporter of the war in Ukraine. George Soros, a long-standing enemy and black character in the Hungarian state propaganda, is attributed with the same function by 42% of Hungarians. According to the opinion poll carried out by the IDEA Institute in May 2023, 42% of Hungarians believe that “the Western side” (*nyugati fél*) is responsible for the war while 37% blame Russia for it. Hungarians in their majority accuse Ukraine, the USA and the EU for causing the war. Meanwhile, only a tenth of governing party voters think Russia is responsible for the conflict.¹⁹

This anti-Western sentiment, which can be very well felt in Hungary, has its deep and far reaching roots in history. First of all, Hungarians feel betrayed by the West because of being forced to sign the Trianon Treaty in 1920, which was in fact imposed on them by Western powers and sealed the loss of two thirds of Hungary’s territory (Kaczmarek et al. 2022). As a result, this event still lives as the biggest Hungarian tragedy and an unhealed wound in the memory of Hungarians. Furthermore, Hungarians blame the West for not helping them and betraying them in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Viktor Orbán made an allusion to these bitter national memories in his March 15, 2022 speech by stressing that Hungary does not want to be a “pawn sacrificed in someone else’s war” and because of that it will not “send soldiers or weapons to the combat zones”.²⁰ This approach is also reflected in Orbán’s major economic strategy for Hungary called Eastern Opening (*keleti nyitás*) whose objective is to reduce the dependency of Hungary on trade, as well as its reliance on social and political planes, with the West through increased commerce and cultural relations with countries in Asia, particularly China.

Moreover, we should not forget that Hungarians tend to identify themselves in opposition to Slavs and other neighboring nations and in opposition to the West in general, being aware, at the same time, of constituting a part of Christian civilization. They often stress their uniqueness and the fact of being different, having distinct origins and speaking a language which is not related to any of the Indo-European languages. Indeed, Hungarian is an Uralic language with substantial typological and lexical Turkic affinity which makes it quite unique.²¹ On the other hand, Hungarians often refer to the frequently repeated stereotype,

¹⁸ <https://magyarnemzet.hu/belfold/2022/06/nezopont-intezet-orbannal-csak-ferenc-papa-bekepartibb>. The same conceptualization is used in expressions such as: ‘Hungary stands on the side of peace’ or ‘Hungary stands on Hungary’s side’ which were formed in response to accusations that Hungary always stands on the wrong side of history – on the losers’ side in World War I, on Hitler’s side in World War II and now on Putin’s side.

¹⁹ <https://index.hu/belfold/2023/05/11/reprezentativ-felmeres-vizsgalat-adatfelvetel-haboru-velemeney-orosz-ukran/>

²⁰ <https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-174th-anniversary-of-the-hungarian-revolution-and-war-of-independence-of-1848-49/>

²¹ Since 2018 Hungary has been an observer with the right of requesting full membership in the Organization of Turkic States, formerly called the Turkic Council or the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States.

according to which they are a small country (*Magyarország kis ország*) with no relatives, but with strong national ties – one of the keywords behind this conceptualization is *összetartozás* ‘togetherness, national co-operation and support’. That is another reason why Hungarians are often afraid of globalization processes that include westernization and migration, treating them as a threat to their national identity or a danger to the so-called “new Hungarian identity” shaped by Orbán regime.²²

In the language of Hungarian propaganda, the conceptualization of the opposition between the pro-war West and pro-peace Hungary is also realized by the metaphor of two military camps being in conflict with each other. One of these camps is referred to as *háborúpárti tábor* ‘pro-war camp’ or *háborús tábor* ‘war camp’ and the other one is termed *békepárti tábor* ‘pro-peace camp’ or *béketábor* ‘peace camp’. The word *tábor* is language- and culture-specific as it contains connotations related to the history of Magyar tribes and Hungarian nomadic heritage. Equally entrenched in the Hungarian language and full of additional culture-specific conceptualizations is the compound *béketábor* ‘peace camp’. It evokes the association to the eastern (Soviet) block of communist (socialist) countries that was formed after World War II and which was popularly called *béketábor* ‘peace camp’ in Hungarian – a semantic calque from the language of Soviet propaganda. In response to this conceptualization of presenting Hungary as the leader of the peace camp and the West as the war camp, the US ambassador to Hungary David Pressman (another black character in the language of Hungarian propaganda) in his video message recorded on the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine stated that there is neither a “peace camp” nor a “war camp”. There is only Russia, and with it those who do not acknowledge Russia’s responsibility for the continuation of the war. For thirty years, the United States and their European allies have been fighting for a peaceful, united and free Europe.²³

6. Other PRO-WAR vs. PRO-PEACE related conceptualizations and their extensions

The war in Ukraine is presented as taking place very close to Hungary – next door (*szomszédunkban*), close to us (*mellettünk*), in the immediate vicinity (*Magyarország közvetlen szomszédságában*). The Hungarian government declared “the state of war emergency” (*háborús veszélyhelyzet*) on May 24, 2022 which is still in power. The effects of war are shown to be directly felt by Hungarians. The language of propaganda concentrates on emphasizing that it is Hungarians who are the biggest victims of war and as a result they are in need of immediate ceasefire and peace.

²² <https://visegradinsight.eu/how-viktor-orban-built-the-new-hungarian-identity/>

²³ <https://www.portfolio.hu/global/20230224/pressman-nem-letezik-sem-beketabor-sem-haborus-tabor-599174>

First of all, the war affects Hungarians living in Transcarpathia, who are presented as deprived of their ethnic rights and, as a result of that, they are generally believed to be persecuted in Ukraine, and now additionally suffer because Ukraine does not want peace. This is also the reason why many Hungarians are of the opinion that Ukraine is to blame for starting the conflict and unleashing the war.²⁴ Due to failing to respect the rights of minorities, Ukraine fully deserves what happened to it. Thus, it is not surprising that these words of Viktor Orbán are frequently repeated in the language of Hungarian propaganda: “This war is not our war, we can’t win here, instead we can lose everything and if we want our country to prosper, we need peace, we must stay out of this war”.²⁵

Apart from the hardships suffered by the Hungarian minority living in Ukraine, being conceptualized as an integral part of the whole nation,²⁶ Hungarians are also presented as victims of war due to economic problems resulting from the war. Thus, problems such as high inflation and rising costs of living are shown to directly depend on the choice between WAR and PEACE. Since war equals inflation, putting an end to war means putting an end to inflation. This conceptualization is linguistically realized by such keywords and language-specific expressions as: *háborús infláció* ‘wartime inflation’, *háborús szankciók* ‘war sanctions’, *elhúzódó háború és a brüsszeli szankciók okozta energiaválság* ‘protracted war and the energy crisis caused by Brussels sanctions’ as well as Orbán’s slogans and statements such as: *Amíg nincs béke, marad a háborús gazdaság és a szankciók* ‘As long as there is no peace, the war economy and sanctions will remain’, *Ha lesz béke, nem lesz infláció* ‘If there is peace, there will be no inflation’, *Az orosz–ukrán háború egy lokális háború lenne, de a nyugati gazdasági szankciók globális gazdasági háborúvá változtatták* ‘The Russian-Ukrainian war would have been a local war, but Western economic sanctions have turned it into a global economic war’. According to the government spokeswoman Alexandra Szentkirályi, commenting on the results of the “national consultation”, the EU sanctions have failed to stop the war, and instead have caused and continue to cause extreme economic hardships.²⁷ The conceptualization message carried

²⁴ This opinion was expressed, among others, by an influential Franciscan friar Csaba Böjte. <https://mandiner.hu/kulfold/2022/03/bojte-csaba-haboru-kulfold-ukrajna-oroszország>

²⁵ <https://kormany.hu/hirek/ez-nem-a-mi-haborunk-20220401>

²⁶ The fact that Hungarians are one nation no matter if they live in Hungary or abroad is frequently stressed in the language of Hungarian propaganda which sometimes results in awkward or not fully comprehensible translations into English like this official English version of Viktor Orbán’s speech with the following opening address: “Ladies and Gentlemen, Celebrating Hungarians from within our borders and beyond them – and special greetings to those from Transcarpathia who are with us today.” <https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-174th-anniversary-of-the-hungarian-revolution-and-war-of-independence-of-1848-49/>

²⁷ <https://hirado.hu/belfold/cikk/2023/01/15/szentkiralyi-alexandra-a-magyarok-elsopro-tobbseggel-utasitjak-el-a-sulyos-karokat-okozo-szankciokat>

out by the propaganda billboard campaign, with a picture of a falling bomb, is clear – the EU is the real aggressor, not Russia, and Hungarians are the real victims of war (Figure 2).



Figure 2: “Brussels sanctions are destroying us” – a billboard promoting the “national consultation” in which 97% of respondents rejected the EU’s war sanctions.

Another method of fighting for peace used in the language of Hungarian propaganda is shocking the Hungarian public with images of war, soldiers dying in the trenches, orphaned children, ruined houses. The horrors of “Ukrainian war” and calls for immediate peace are presented in commercials, video broadcasts on public media, billboards and newspaper advertisements.²⁸ They show that any kind of resistance by the Ukrainians and their fight has no sense as the war is unwinnable – it only causes death, tragedy and suffering to the whole world, including Hungary. It is often stressed that Hungarians (citizens of Ukraine) die in this war and others have to take part in the war against their will. In these pro-peace campaigns, maps with Crimea belonging to Russia or images of Ukrainian cemeteries are shown as in this case of the mass grave in Iziium (Figure 3). However, the fact that the graves contain bodies of people, showing signs of torture, who were killed by Russian forces during the battle for and subsequent Russian occupation of Iziium was hidden in the propaganda message.

²⁸ <https://magyarnemzet.hu/kulfold/2023/02/megrazo-felvetelek-terjednek-az-ukrajnai-haborurol-tomegek-tuntetnek-a-beke-mellett-video>



Figure 3: “Enough of the war! It’s time for peace!” says the full-page advertisement in the daily Magyar Nemzet.

In conclusion, the language of Hungarian propaganda equates war primarily with economic sanctions that cause rising prices and higher costs of living for all Hungarians, but the government protects them against it by introducing a series of anti-war measures such as *rezsicsökkentés* ‘reduction of rent and communal fees’, *árstop* ‘price limits for selected food and fuel products’, *kötelező akciók* ‘mandatory store promotions’. Peace, on the other hand, is conceptualized not only as social welfare benefits guaranteed by the state, but also safety and the national interest. The latter can be illustrated by this Orbán’s statement: *Mi felkínáltuk az alkalmat a baloldalnak, hogy a háborúpárti álláspontról átjöjjön a békepárti állásponthoz, hogy átálljanak a nemzeti érdek oldalára.*²⁹ “We offered the left an opportunity to switch from a pro-war position to a pro-peace position, to switch to the side of the national interest”.

7. Conclusions

While the majority of Western allies provide military support for Ukraine, Hungary refuses to do so and does not allow the arms shipments to be transported through Hungarian territory. Hungarian media spread Russian narratives, criticize Ukraine and the West in general for inciting the war and propagandize the stance that Kyiv should simply stop fighting. In order to refute the accusations that Hungary is pro-Russian, the Hungarian propaganda machinery, in an Orwellian style, started to disseminate the claims that Hungary is pro-peace. To achieve these

²⁹ <https://kormany.hu/hirek/a-bekepárti-javaslat-a-tuzszunetrol-szol>

goals, a specialist language of propaganda has been developed with specific conceptualizations and terminology.

The PRO-WAR vs. PRO-PEACE related conceptualizations in the language of Hungarian propaganda are, first of all, based on contrast and bad-good opposition. Thus, these conceptualizations are primarily modeled by means of very simple, axiological in their nature, and propaganda-friendly WAR IS BAD vs. PEACE IS GOOD metaphorizations. My study focused mainly on conceptualizations motivated by more elaborate conceptual metaphors such as HUNGARIAN OPPOSITION IS PRO-WAR vs. GOVERNMENT PARTIES AND THEIR SUPPORTERS ARE PRO-PEACE, which are intended to influence the domestic political scene, and WEST IS PRO-WAR vs. HUNGARY IS PRO-PEACE, whose goal is the manipulation of the way western countries are perceived in Hungary. Other conceptual metaphors, correlated to the PRO-WAR vs. PRO-PEACE conceptualization, that have been discussed, include PEACE IS SAFETY vs. WAR IS UNSAFETY, PEACE IS PROSPERITY vs. WAR IS ECONOMIC CRISIS, PEACE IS NATIONAL INTEREST vs. WAR IS FOREIGN INTEREST.

However, like conceptual metaphors that generate them, also these conceptualizations are not able to brainwash the subjects exposed to the propaganda stimulus or reprogram their minds, but rather, they allow new information to be incorporated into the previously existing knowledge by being correlated with already familiar experience and reinforce well known stereotypes. The referred studies on the language of propaganda show that in order to be manipulated, we must be open for the reception of the propaganda output. The PRO-WAR vs. PRO-PEACE related conceptualizations, applied in the language of Hungarian propaganda, have proved to be so successful because they meet the expectations of the Hungarian public. First of all, they are grounded in a specific cultural context, they are full of historical allusions, they resonate with national ambitions and the keywords that trigger them are language-specific. Secondly, they are uttered by authoritarian leaders like Viktor Orbán and the sources that provide them – like public media – are trustworthy or at least are assumed to be reliable and highly professional. In other words, these conceptualizations do not model a new picture of the world, but adjust new events to the Hungarian worldview, making them logical and understandable for average people for whom they sound reasonable and convincing.

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