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MASS MILITARY PSYCHOSIS IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA: THE PERFORMATIVE DIMENSION OF COUNTERMEASURES

The article examines how to counteract the mass militaristic psychosis (MMP) in modern Russia that is unfolded in discourses and narratives of the hostile media and is consistent with societal psyche intentions.

The study's purpose is to substantiate the methods (collective and individual) counteracting causes, manifestations and consequences of MMP in the aggressor country in the context of the performative approach in psychotherapy.

Research methods: analysis of everyday discourse and media content to identify leading intentions of ideological influence, including observation and comparative analysis of the effectiveness of various psychotherapeutic methods, and axiopsychological reinterpretation of some psychotherapeutic practices.

The results. The study revealed limited possibilities for implementing psychological education and encouraging critical thinking of the militaristic propaganda recipients. Instead, in the era of dominance of performance, when contemplation has been replaced with actions, the techniques of “emotional judo” become useful that introducing careful counterarguments to remove leaders – demagogues and dictators – from power and to apply real changes in life circumstances (primarily, to achieve Ukraine's victory in the war). The forms of individual resistance to MMP, the imperial “rashism” ideology are derived from M. Seligman's PERMA formula. This is an axio-psychological interpretation of its emotional, intellectual, communicative and physical (acts) components. The article considers types of shaming used by political bloggers due to the total influence of Internet communications and widely spread invective practices in media content. The features of limited shaming in counter-propaganda are described.

Conclusions. The antidote to MMP in the latest era of Meta-modernism means the performative exposition of its causes, manifestations and consequences to achieve real value transformation in the population affected by the imperial ideology. Axiopsychological reinterpretation of the positive psychological formula PERMA consists of the following steps: emotional rejection, reflexive criticism, value-orientation unity, reliance on a sense of dignity, defense of universal values and the will to defeat an existential enemy.

Keywords: mass militarist psychosis (MMP), “rashism”, Russian-Ukrainian war, public resistance, individual resistance, shaming, performative dimension, axiopsychological reinterpretation.

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МАСОВИЙ МІЛІТАРИСТСЬКИЙ ПСИХОЗ У СУЧАСНІЙ РОСІЇ: ПЕРФОРМАТИВНИЙ ВИМІР ПРОТИДІЇ

Статтю присвячено способам протидії масовому мілітаристському психозу (ММП) у сучасній Росії, що розгортається в дискурсі та наративах ворожих медіа й узгоджується з інтенціями соціальної психіки.

Метою дослідження є обґрунтування способів протидії (колективної та індивідуальної) причинам, проявам і наслідкам ММП у країні-агресорі в контексті перформативного повороту у психотерапії.

Методи дослідження: аналіз повсякденного дискурсу та медіаконтенту для виокремлення провідних інтенцій ідеологічного впливу, включене спостереження й порівняльний аналіз ефективності різних психотерапевтичних методів, аксіопсихологічна реінтерпретація окремих психотерапевтичних практик.

Результати. Встановлено обмежені можливості психоедукації та спонування до критичного мислення реципієнтів мілітаристської пропаганди. Натомість в епоху домінування перформансу – заміни споглядання дією – корисні прийоми «емоційного дзюдо» – обережного і дозованого введення контраргументів, усунення лідерів – демагогів і диктаторів – від влади, реальна зміна життєвих обставин (насамперед перемога України у війні). Форми індивідуального спротиву ММП, імперської ідеології рашизму виведено з формули PERMA М. Селігмана. Це аксіопсихологічне тлумачення її емоційного, інтелектуального, комунікативного і фізичного (вчинкового) компонентів. У зв'язку з тотальним впливом інтернет-комунікацій і поширенням інвективних практик у медіаконтенті розглянуто різновиди шеймінгу з боку політичних блогерів. Вказано на особливості застосування обмеженого шеймінгу в контрпропаганді.

Висновки. Протидія ММП в новітню епоху метамодерну полягає в перформативній експозиції його причин, проявів та наслідків, що приводить до реальної ціннісної трансформації ураженого імперською ідеологією населення. Аксіопсихологічна реінтерпретація позитивно-психологічної формули PERMA складається з кроків почуттєвого відкидання, рефлексивної критики, ціннісно-орієнтаційної єдності, опори на почуття гідності, відстоювання загальнолюдських цінностей і волі до перемоги над екзистенційним ворогом.

Ключові слова: масовий мілітаристський психоз (ММП), рашизм, російсько-українська війна, суспільний спротив, індивідуальний спротив, шеймінг, перформативний вимір, аксіопсихологічна реінтерпретація.

Problem statement. The full-scale Russian invasion to Ukrainian ethnically and institutionally recognized territories, in addition to aversive-invective emotional and behavioural reactions, caused in overwhelming part of Ukrainians a sense of the absurdity of what is happening, shock from the attacker's irrational interpretation of the motives of its brutal actions, as well as disappointment from unfulfilled hope to civil resistance, at least initially, of the aggressor state population against the war launched by the Kremlin imperialists against a "brotherly" country (as it is described in cunning narratives of the Russian authorities and mass media). Once again, it became clear that psychopathology is not only an extreme phenomenon of the individual psyche, but also a contextually inspired mass phenomenon of the societal psyche. This is especially relevant for countries oppressed by totalitarian regimes for a long time [5].

Review of recent research and publications. First of all, let us note that such a wide problem and review of the studies covering it require a full monograph. For now, we only state the key postulates as cornerstones from which the development of an axiotherapy concept of mass psychosis can begin.

In fact, the "psychosis" term is fairly conventional and unites a wide spectrum of disorders. According to Reber et al., the modern psychiatric nosology defines deeply incorrect assessment of reality as the main feature of these disorders; so that, a person makes incorrect conclusions about the surrounding reality, evaluates incorrectly his / her own thinking and perception and insists on these mistakes even facing with evidence to the contrary. Classic symptoms include delusions, hallucinations, regressive behaviour, inappropriate mood and mildly incoherent speech. The specialists distinguish bipolar disorder, short-term reactive psychosis, schizophrenia, organic mental disorders and some mood disorders [17].

The ICD-11 describes personality disorders as severe violations of an individual's characterological constitution and behaviour [10]. DSM-5 defines personality disorders as persistent, rigid long-lasting patterns that cause significant distress or impairment and that are not a result of specific substance use or another medical condition. In particular, in DSM-5, personality disorders are divided into 3 clusters: A – paranoid, schizoid, schizotypal; B – antisocial, borderline, hysterical, narcissistic; C – avoidant, dependent and obsessive-compulsive [6; 16].

We do not discuss here possible modernizations of both classifications or analyse advantages and disadvantages of each of them. Let us highlight the main idea: according to the *holistic principle* of the organization of a human being and his / her mental functioning [21], a personality is a molar unit (indivisible whole) of society, and in turn, meaning is a molar unit of a personality, so that a value is, accordingly, a unit of the social psyche. Both, personal meanings and social values are organized hierarchically (subordinately) and sequentially (coordinately). The logical conclusion is: types of an individual's mental disorders (individual psychoses) have meaning analogues in the societal psyche (mass or collective psychoses) in a form of value pathology.

M. Kets de Vries, a modern researcher in mass psychoses, [13] relies on these implicit assumptions when he continues research on mass social phenomena after such authoritative predecessors as G. Le Bon [14] and G. Tarde [20]. Meanwhile, an academic definitions of mass psychosis is absent. Today's popular Wikipedia considers mass psychosis as a mental epidemic, based on people's tendency to imitate and to be susceptible to suggestion. Mass psychosis affects a group of people, so that group participants lose their normal ability to reason and become obsessed with something [15].

Traditionally, the studies on mass psychoses are based on the existing classification of mental disorders, extrapolating symptoms, mechanisms of occurrence and development, and in some cases, means of coping with group behaviour. Thus, F. N. Iliassov applies a *clinical approach* and examines the history and practice of Bolshevism as an alternation of different phases of manic-depressive disorder that affected the population living on the territory of the former Russian Empire, later the Soviet Union, until its collapse during Gorbachev's "perestroika" [11]. However, most studies of mass psychosis still adhere to *psychoanalytic interpretation* of its phenomena, such as projective identification, (counter)transference, regression, idealization and devaluation, the influence of an overvalued object – a demagogic leader, etc. *Existentialists* say that a frustrated need for a life meaning, anomie is the breeding ground for mass psychosis. According to *social constructivism*, the lack of "guiding myths" that would organize and direct the behaviour of large groups of people towards common goals and consolidated defence of common values causes a need for a charismatic leader-demagogue capable of producing populist narratives for a "topic of the day".

The Covid-19 epidemic brought attention to the phenomenon of mass psychosis. Numerous scientific conferences, public debates, confidential investigations dedicated to panic moods were held all over the world;

paranoid versions of a virus artificial origin appeared, as well as persecutions / punishments of perpetrators. In contrast to this, a movement appeared to devalue the newest epidemiological threat, which slowed down the pace of vaccination [2; 19].

The study purpose is to outline possible counteracting the mass psychosis causes and consequences in the context of the current performative approach in psychotherapy, generated by globalization and the use of information-communication technologies.

Qualitative **methods** were used in the study: the analyses of everyday discourse and media content to determine leading intentions (hidden motives) of social behaviour in communities, as well as included observation and comparative analysis of the effectiveness of various psychotherapeutic methods.

Presenting the main material. Each of these approaches mostly focuses on the signs and causes of the phenomenon, but experiences difficulties when tries to extrapolate the personal psychotherapy methods to the psychotherapy of society as a whole. Psychological education, changing the worldview of mass-madness infected communities by their convictions with logically ordered and fact-based arguments is rejected by the influence addressees (“You are lying!”). It would seem that there are unlimited opportunities for finding reliable information and critically evaluating different points of view in the era of hawk-eyed information technologies. However, the perceptual filter constructed by propaganda (by Russian one, in this case) does not pass meanings that do not agree with the axiological matrix inspired by it, and therefore any conversational psychotherapy of large groups and communities is unable to break through the protections of subconsciously learned ideologue.

In this regard, some specific tips for countering social delusions may be helpful. For example, the so-called “emotional judo”, designed to sow doubts about the validity of certain people’s beliefs. To arise these doubts, it is necessary to show the consequences of people’s behaviour. People need to understand what will happen to them if they continue on the path they are on. Whatever counterarguments are put forward; they need to be introduced very subtly. Direct disagreement with their opinion will be useless. In fact, pointing out an error will only strengthen their defences. Instead, when interacting with them, realistic information – as opposed to the false information they are given – should be brought into the discussion in a non-intrusive way, which will allow them to weaken their resistance. In many cases, humour can be a very effective tool to counter any kind of propaganda.

Another important step compensating the mass psychosis is *removal of demagogic leaders* from power and influence. In fact, their elimination will itself be a form of healing. In our case, when the closest associates of V.V. Putin are overthrown, it will begin to lift the mass psychosis spell. However, this is not enough. People who are under the spell of a leader – a demagogue and a dictator should be re-educated. An accepted deception is a consequence of one’s own psychological protection against pain and disappointment because the most progressive and developed part of the world does not want to return to its imperialist past, has made its choice in favour of democracy, but not authoritarianism; multiculturalism, but not the supremacy of one nation on the other; the humanistic orientation of technological innovations, rather than obscurantism and unrestrained militarization, etc. If Russian people support the second of the above alternatives, then they need to falsify reality (“It is NATO and its satellite Ukraine that forced Russia to defend itself. Russia will never attack first!”). Here, conviction alone is not enough.

The most important thing is to *change the circumstances* that led to false beliefs. Reducing inequality of any nature – economic, ethnic or gender – is very helpful in preventing the mass psychotic ideas from coming to the fore. Everyone knows that in modern Russia there is a gap between the incomes, rights, privileges, conditions and quality of life of different population groups. It is easier to control people who are poor, disenfranchised, poorly educated and isolated from broad communications by infusing them with ideas of a special mission, a unique path and a leading role in a hostile, corrupt world: “We will make everybody to respect Russia!”. If there are no grounds for such respect, then, according to this logic, others should fear Russian. Hence the permanent threats to use nuclear weapons, to transform one’s envy of the more successful into a vengeful desire to kill, rape, steal, triumphing from the temporary compensation of one’s own inferiority.

The given examples of mass psychosis combating illustrate a performative approach in psychotherapy, consistent with the emerging era of Metamodernism, which means replacing contemplation with actions, in the process of which a personality experiences “liminality”, and by achieving it, he / she achieve an internal value transformation [3; 9]. Even without knowledge of this methodological trend, the common-sense conclusions contain a radical condition for overcoming the mass militaristic psychosis that prevailed in Russia: only *the victory of Ukraine* in the war unleashed by them can bring Russian state and society to its senses. The above methods, as well as many others not presented in this publication, are valid, but often palliative. Military victory is a necessary axiological “surgery” for those affected by mass psychosis, when axiological therapy in its deep-dynamic, top-existential, interactive-discursive dimensions reveals its powerlessness.

If we say about individual resistance to mass psychosis, then defence mechanisms, such as denying that mass psychosis can master an individual, are counterproductive. It is clear that the denial of reality is precisely a symptom of individual susceptibility to mass madness, and not an escape and a salvation from it; moreover:

denial is by no means opposition. Each psychotherapy approach offers its own coping strategies in critical situations. Defence in the form of denial belongs to psychoanalysis, but psychoanalysis points to sublimation and compensation as productive forms of self-mastery and control over the environment.

Let us try to reconstruct the achievements of positive psychology, initiated by M. Seligman, in order to deduce from them, for example, forms of resistance to mass psychosis. The well-known conceptual formula of the scientist – PERMA configured from the first letters: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, accomplishments – describe an individual's subjective well-being and components of his / her happiness [18]. T. Ben-Shahar transformed this formula into a unity of five indicators: physical, intellectual, communicative (in relationships), emotional and spiritual well-being [7], which resonates with the author's principle of integral subjectivity [3].

Transforming these concepts into the context of the current situation and standing on a reflexive position of the enemy state citizens, we can identify the following forms of resistance to the mass militaristic psychosis in Russia, richly flavoured with imperial ideology – the so-called “rashism”:

1. *Emotional resistance* – rejection of xenophobic postulates, chauvinistic instructions and crimes against humanity (anger, hatred, disgust, etc.);

2. *Intellectual resistance* – critical thinking, the condition of comprehensive awareness of the state of affairs in one's own state, the world, at the area of hostilities; it requires extensive ethno-cultural and political-legal erudition in order to debunk destructive mythologies, fakes and ambiguous (conflict) meanings;

3. *Communicative resistance* – value-orientation solidarity with like-minded people, joining a group of resistance to the dictatorship, organizing mass anti-war actions, etc.;

4. *Spiritual resistance* – in a sense of aspiration towards the transcendent existence of a personality in a global dimension, it means finding answers to the questions: “Do I live to impose my will on others and force them to obey?”, “Do authoritarianism, despotism contribute more to my self-realization than democracy?”, “Is my vocation to play by the rules imposed on me or to take the initiative along with assuming certain obligations, to meet challenges, using chances?”;

5. *Physical (acting) resistance* – struggle (overt and underground); the first – under the condition of thorough preliminary preparation, taking into account various risks, to resort to variable protective measures if necessary. A radical example can be the propaganda and military raids of the Russian Volunteer Corps and the Legion of Freedom in the frontline regions of Russia. A passive example of struggle is the flight of conscript-aged persons abroad in order to avoid participation in the Russian-Ukrainian war on the aggressor's side.

We should note that the insufficient positive psychological elaboration by an individual of the mental map of events, his / her attitude to them, uncritical assessment of capabilities of his / her influence on the state, his / her community or any other PERMA component weakens the effect of other components on mass psychosis resistance.

As for Internet influence on citizens' political consciousness, directing such consciousness into the desired direction by certain political actors, it deserves special attention. The illusion of a conscious political choice by media message recipients is created through a purposeful (often biased) selection of facts, the replacement of an objective, honest event description with their subjective versions and with narratives with clearly emphasized ideological intentions. An important role in this process is played by politically engaged bloggers, whose influence on ideological settings at least equal, if not exceeds, that of television.

In particular, shaming is a formidable tool of a manipulative, propagandistic, uncompromisingly evaluative nature. It means a discriminatory practice that consists in criticizing, ridiculing, humiliating people for something that is perceived as a flaw, something indecent or shameful [12]. The psychological and historical rationale for invective practice in the context of everyday and extreme existence in war conditions is given in the article by S. D. Lytvyn-Kindratyuk [4]; the author sees her task in a more applied aspect.

The term “shaming” is derived from the English word “shame”. It is interesting that the similar-sounding Ukrainian word “shelma” is used to characterize a clever, cunning person, and “shelmuvati” is used to express condemnation, to slander, to brand with shame, to accuse of dishonesty.

Therefore, political media shaming focuses on mistakes, miscalculations, immoral acts, character defects, addictions, dubious passions, etc. of people in power, authorities, leaders of political forces and public opinion, which they try to hide, with the implicit aim of causing damage (often irreparable) to their business and moral reputation [1]. At the same time, the publicly articulated goals are to “bring to light” various types of “evildoers”: “swindlers”, “thieves”, “rascals”, “populist liars”, “traitors” etc. by publicizing facts, hitherto unknown information about certain events, deeds, character traits, etc. Thus, political bloggers assume the function of strict social control over the political elite's activities and lifestyle, positioning themselves as fighters for justice and democracy.

We should note the dual usage of the “shaming” term. In a broad sense, shaming refers to a wide spectrum of collective ideas regulating various spheres of human life. Thus, we can distinguish between: bullying – a systematic manifestation of violence aimed at humiliating a victim; mobbing – harassing an employee at

the workplace; gaslighting – manipulation aimed at making an interlocutor doubt his / her mental normality; trolling – provoking an opponent to an excessive emotional (stressful) reaction, psychological intoxication; body-shaming – making fun of an individual's appearance that do not match fashionable standards of beauty; slat-shaming – criticism, most often of women, for sexual emancipation; hating – statements and actions motivated by hatred of an opponent etc.

An important feature of shaming, in its narrow sense, is finding the information about actions of an influential public figure that indicates that he / she has violated the law and moral norms, but he / she maintain and even strengthen his / her power, authority, gain fame or acquire fortune [8]. The noble, publicly articulated goal of such shaming is to debunk the inflated authorities of those who have become an idol for generations or a standard for imitation, to undermine or destroy their reputation. The hidden goal is to position the media message author as an expert (or even a judge) in the inappropriate behaviour of a media personality mentioned in the media message.

The diametrically opposite examples of political media shaming exist in the patriotic spectrum of Ukrainian bloggers: on the one hand, S. Poyarkov, A. Babchenko, S. Sternenko, M. Oleshko (shaming in the broadest sense) and on the other, D. Bigus, Yu. Butusov, B. Bereza, M. Tkach, D. Chekalkin (shaming in the narrow sense).

The first category of political bloggers uses various shaming of political figures whose self-presentation and rhetoric contradict to their real actions. Any means are used to defame and slander these people: mockery, distortion, labelling, threats, devaluation, which are abundantly strung on certain reliable facts, forming an offensive denunciation frame for a certain value content.

The second category of political bloggers bases their messages on insider information, confidential sources and their own journalistic investigation that contain convincing evidence and arguments and lead media content consumers to independent conclusions, albeit conditioned by the content and logic of the presented materials.

The political video blogs of T. Berezovets, V. Portnikov, D. Kazanskyi and O. Kushnar are examples of a weighted expert-value position combining the professional presentation of important current information with its objective analysis and a patriotic civic position. Such a position is especially valuable during the war, when the need to fight with a united front for victory over the aggressor is combined with the need to combat corruption, primarily in arms procurement, for deployment of own production in Ukraine, the army supply etc.

Conclusions. The performative exposition of the causes, manifestations and consequences of mass militaristic psychosis in modern Russia debunks the imperial ideology of great power chauvinism, the aggression justification in order to preserve the criminal dictatorial regime of V. V. Putin. The means of such exposition are: photo and video materials, eyewitness accounts on the occupying army crimes, excursions to the plundered cities and villages of Ukraine. However, the most effective means of healing from mass psychosis would be: participation of prisoners in liquidation of destructions caused by aggression, involvement of the Russia civilian population in the post-war reconstruction of Ukrainian infrastructure, payment of reparations, etc. Only such active (performative) axiotherapy of large Russian groups will enable them to come to repentance and moral catharsis.

The logical psychotechnical steps of individual resistance to mass psychosis from the positive psychology perspective reconstructed by the author's vision is the following: emotional rejection, reflective criticism, value-oriented unity, reliance on a sense of dignity as opposed to selfishness, envy, superiority, etc., struggle to defence the universal human values and will to victory over the existential enemy.

The blogger segment of the Internet media plays an important role in counteracting the consequences of delusional ideas and invective practices of the modern Russia media. In general, only an honest, socially responsible blogosphere can serve as an example of a respectful attitude towards media consumers, encouraging them to think, elaborate reflections and correct generalizations about the causes and consequences of covered events, while avoiding overt or veiled shaming of the authorities, political actors, etc.

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