Politics as Art: The Creation of a Successful Political Brand

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Abstract

The article identifies the functions of the archetypal semiotic resource, based on archetypal plots, situations, characters, and symbols, in political discourse signification and mythologization. The value framework of the discourse of the Ukrainian party "Servant of the People" was laid down by the similarly-named TV series narrative, involving archetypal patterns, consonant with the values and needs of TV viewers. The stages in the formation of the main character are associated with the Hero's journey in Joseph Campbell's Monomyth: the search for yourself; the "initiation" experienced both oneirically and in firm reality, in a form of imprisonment; and the "return" in a renewing capacity. Plotlines-associated archetypes encompass a battle of Good and Evil, the transformation from Rags to Riches, and the theme of the Hero's Task related to a monomyth's circular principle. The image of the protagonist incorporates a set of archetypal characters of the Hero, Caregiver, Innocent, Rebel or Destroyer, Ruler, Seeker, Creator, Sage, Everyman, and Jester, consonant with the individual viewer's emotional and cognitive structures. Due to their correlation with basic human values, these archetypal patterns facilitate the development of a secondary level of signification or mythologization – that of discourse-forming values. These core discourse values are most closely related to the Caregiver archetype, ambivalently embodying either the need for belonging, concern, and assistance, as well as a confirmation of one's own sense of worth. The multimodal social semiotic analysis shows a certain rearticulation of the party's discourse values. Their main values are still associated with the Caregiver archetype, embodied in the party name itself, "Servant of the people", as these values unite different people into the widest possible "inner group". However, today the core functions in the construction of party discourse belong to the values associated with the Creator archetype, addressing the highest level in the hierarchy of needs – that of Self-Actualization.

Keywords: Political discourse, archetypes, monomyth, mythologem, multimodality, signification, narrative.

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Introduction

The article focuses on an analysis of the successful election campaign of the Servant of the People party (now the ruling party of Ukraine) from the viewpoint of the cognitive-semiotic, multimodal, and narrative devices of the political brand's mythologization.

In modern interdisciplinary studies of political, advertising, and other institutional discourses with a manipulative component, the most dominant approach works according to the pragmatic, verbal, and multimodal means of such discourses are due to their social semiotic nature as a kind of mythology: while offering a certain idea, product or service, discourse mythology constructs a worldview, one of the "possible worlds", positioning a modeled reality as an objective and non-alternative one.

This world-creating feature of discourses is explained, according to R. Barthes (1973), by their mythological properties, which require that the constructed reality be perceived not as one possible point of view but as the only true one, as something "natural" or nature-bound. To this end, the meaning (the first signified) generated by the linguistic and multimodal code, in turn, becomes a form (a signifier) for the new signified – a concept that "alienates" and replaces the initial denotative meaning.

The second level of meaning associated with mythologization is based on a wide range of linguistic, figurative, narrative, iconographic, and other multimodal means. Sometimes these means appeal to archetypal structures in the semiospheres (using the term of Yu. Lotman, (2005: 205-229) or in the psyches of the addressees of discourses, since in this case the proposed angle of signification is "given" by archetypally related algorithms.

With that in mind, it seems possible to talk about two levels of mythologization: (1) the first level of discourse signification, conveyed by archetypal plots, characters and values, or first level mythologems, and (2) the second level of signification, reduced to the creation of discourse-forming values as second-level mythologems. The specifics of these levels' interactions are the main focus of this article.

Literature Review

The article proceeds from four interrelated theoretical approaches: (1) works concerned with discourse analysis through a social-semiotic framework; (2) the concept of signification and connotation levels, introduced by R. Barthes; (3) the concept of the culture-coding nature of connotative meaning; (4) the archetype studies, focused on the classification and definition of psychological and cultural archetypes.

First of all, our paper relies on studies of discourse within a social semiotics framework (Dunn and Neumann, 2016; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress, 2010; Najafian & Ketabi, 2011; Van Leeuwen, 2005), where discourse is understood "as a cognitive-semiotic wholeness with the world-modeling properties" in values "identification, construction and transformation" (Kravchenko & Pasternak, 2020: 26). This perspective of considering discourses, and, above all, institutional ones, is most characteristic of the current functional (cognitive-discursive) paradigm, within which "discourse itself becomes one of the semiotic concepts" with "emphasizing its function in social values construction and maintenance" (Kravchenko & Zhykharieva, 2020: 71). One of the central researches focuses on the study of social semiotics, the problem of discursive multimodal signs as a means of world-construction and signification (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; 2002; Jewitt, 2014).

In this regard, the social semiotic perspective of research intersects with and, to some extent, is based on the concept of signification and connotation levels, introduced by R. Barthes (1973). According to Barthes, at the level of connotation, the denotative sign or, more precisely, its meaning,

is used as a signifier of the connotative signified. In the third (mythological or ideological) order of signification, the set of constructed signs-connotatums or mythologems reflect major culturally-variable concepts related to a certain worldview (Kravchenko, Kravchenko, & Zhykharieva, 2020).

In the framework of the social-semiotic approach to multimodal analysis, the paper relies on the concept of the "semiotic landscape" (Bell, 2001; Jewitt, & Oyama, 2001; Kress & T. van Leeuwen) that underlies the structure of the visual part of a text and encompasses such constructive elements as the pattern of reading, the composition of images and the use of colors, including symbolic archetypes.

A certain contribution to the theoretical premises of the work was made by the concept of the cultural-coding nature of connotative meaning (Chandler, 2007) based on the communicators' acquired social-cultured rules. As Silverman points out, cultural codes provide a connotational framework, each term being "aligned with a cluster of symbolic attributes" (Silverman, 1983: 36). It is the connection between connotation-signification and cultural codes that supports our hypothesis about the interrelation of the second (mythological) and third (ideological) levels of signification with archetypal structures, images, and storylines - as an integral part of the cultural code.

In identifying archetypal characters, their motives-descriptors and archetypal storylines used in the analyzed discourse "Servants of the People", we focused on the works introducing the classifications of both psychological (Jung, 1976; Lindenfeld, 2009) and personality archetypes (Faber, Mayer 2009; Pearson, 2015; Shadraconis, 2013), as well as on Joseph Campbell's famous Monomyth, "The Hero with a Thousand Faces" (1949), explicating the stages of the Hero's journey towards transformation. Given that the article examines the semiotic influence of the TV series on the construction of the party's political discourse, primarily due to archetypal models that make the film "Servant of the People" a powerful semiotic resource in actualizing the value needs of viewers, works on archetypes in feature films (Indick, 2004; Izod, 2001) are also of particular importance for our study.

It is the problem of the correlation between primary and secondary mythologemes (or the actualization of archetypal mythologems as a basis for the construction of political mythologems) remaining unexplored in linguistic and interdisciplinary frameworks that determines the novelty of the topic and its relevance to multimodal studies of political discourse in the framework of its basic values construction.

Database and methods

The research material includes fragments of the script of the Ukrainian TV series "Servant of the People", in addition to the eponymous party logo and slogans. The text fragments have been singled out based on the associations of their narrative storylines with the archetypal stages of the mythological Hero from Joseph Campbell's Monomyth "The Hero with a Thousand Faces". The next criterion for selecting fragments for analysis was the presence within them of the main character's socio-communicative roles and behavioral strategies which are based on certain archetypal character patterns, their corresponding motives and values. The third criterion for the selection of material, including the logo and slogans of the party, was their intertextual continuity with the previously formed value ideologemes of party discourse, as well as the presence of verbal and multimodal means indexing some rearticulation of such discourse values.

The compound method of analysis involves (a) a social semiotics analysis to identify the party discourse function in reality signification and value-based mythologem construction and maintenance; (b) a multimodal analysis of the text's "semiotic landscape" aimed at interpreting its integrative organization and the persuasive impact of color, shapes, the composition of images, graphics, etc. used in interrelation with their interpreting verbal code as culturally and ideologically

loaded signs; (c) the elements of text-interpretive and narrative analysis (Propp, 1968; Campbell, 1949; Kravchenko, Davydova, & Goltsova, 2020) to scrutinize the archetypal plots, characters, values, symbols, themes, etc. (Howard, 2010: 29-32) constituting the first level of party discourse mythologems.

1. **The Level of Archetypal Mythologem Actualization: Archetypal Plots, Characters, and Values**.

The uniqueness of the "Servant of the People" party discourse lies in the fact that it involves efficient techniques for modeling the future course of events, some of which have never been used before in the election campaigns of any country. The party discourse was based on a complex of discursive strategies, the main body of which included: 1) the eponymous Ukrainian hit TV series *Servant of the People*, a film that predicted, or rather, constructed, the course of events in the presidential election campaign of 2019 and after it; 2) the involvement of a number of archetypal images, which, due to their heterogeneity, are consistent with a picture of the world as being constituted of different kinds of people. 3) the attraction of archetypal plots; 4) the successful use of verbal and iconic-pictorial codes: symbols, slogans, the stylistics of the image in political advertising, the type of graphics, choice of color, composition, etc.

The TV series "Servant of the People": The Appealing Archetypal Plot and a "Possible World" that becomes Reality.

The political comedy *Servant of the People*, in which the main role was played by Volodymyr Zelensky, a famous showman and actor, a successful producer, and the current President of Ukraine, became the highest-rated series on Ukrainian television in 2015, that is, four years before the presidential elections.

For our study, it does not matter whether the use of the narrative television series was one of the pre-planned strategies of the current ruling party's electoral discourse or if it was the success of the series that triggered the creation of the party and led to its electoral victory. The objective of the study is to identify why cinematic history was able to become a powerful semiotic resource for a qualitatively new political discourse and the creation of a new group project identity.

The plot of the film is presented as an exciting narrative about an ordinary history teacher becoming the president of the country. First of all, the genre of narrative itself presupposes its definite world-modeling function. According to the linguists (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001) who analyze the models of narratives in various communicative spheres, a narrative does not simply reproduce reality, but creates its own, crafting one possible world and shaping its own model of events.

In this regard, it is important to find out exactly what the values embodied in the narrative series about the story of a poor teacher who unexpectedly becomes president are and how they became the basic values-concepts of a new political discourse.

This narrative is built on a set of core values that align with basic human needs, promoting human motivation and identification with a specific group identity.

The narrative in the TV series is a story of success and a Hero undergoing a wonderful transformation (based on the archetypal plot of a protagonist's magical transfiguration found in fairy tales and mythology). The concept of "success" refers to key cultural values and, according to the Abraham Maslow's theory (Maslow, 1943), to the basic need of the individual for self-actualization. In terms of discursive strategies, any narrative of success somehow involves the self-identification of the addressee (viewer, reader, voter, client, etc.) with the winner in question, which helps to increase one's self-esteem through identification with a successful group. Jacques Lacan draws

attention to the connection between identification and the logic of desire and pleasure. According to this famous philosopher and psychoanalyst, it is the joy of involvement in a group that helps in the implementation of various "identity" projects.

On the other hand, the attractive power of the television narration of "Servant of the People" is associated with its inherently universal and archetypal scenarios and characters, which are "isomorphic" (using the term of Yu. Lotman, 2005) to the semiospheres of the addressees, i.e. their semiotic cultural experience. A comparison of the TV narrative with the famous Monomyth ("The Hero with a Thousand Faces") by Joseph Campbell makes it possible to distinguish in the series' plot the three archetypal stages associated with the Journey of the mythological or fairytale Hero that are necessary for his transformation:

1) the beginning of the path, inner struggle and search for yourself: The main character of the series is constantly faced with obvious sabotage, resistance to reforms, a hidden war of the oligarchs, and compromising stories about the president and his team in the media; at times the Hero begins to doubt that he is able to lead the country, that he is on the right path.

2) the "initiation" results in an internal transformation when a person either wins, moving to a new level of development, or is defeated in order to accept the challenge again with new strength. The hero in the series experiences both an oneiric and real initiation. The oneiric initiation is experienced when the hero is betrayed twice in a dream – first by his best friends and later by his own citizens when the Ukrainians leave their homeland en masse in search of a better fate. The real "initiation" of the main character occurs in the form of his betrayal and imprisonment.

3) the "return" in a new capacity, with the potential for great change.

Archetypal storylines, in their turn, involve situational archetypes, associated with the themes and types of conflict, that is: the battle of Good (the new president and his team) versus Evil (the corrupt oligarchs, initiating all kinds of intrigue) with the obligatory victory of Good; the tale of going from "Rags to Riches" (the main character rising from a poor teacher to the status of being president of the country); The Hero's Task, and the circular principle.

Thus, Campbell's book talks about the circular principle of building a monomyth: The full circle, according to the rule of monomyth, requires that the Hero now begins his final task - delivering the Runes of Wisdom, the Golden Fleece, etc., that is, giving people something that can help "revive a community, nation, planet or ten thousand worlds." Similarly, the Hero of the TV series sets himself the almost messianic task of "reviving the country", completely cleansing it of corruption, and igniting a kind of revolution in the minds of the people.

In addition to archetypal plot associations, the TV narrative applies a variety of archetypal patterns that are activated at successive stages of the formation of the Hero and externally manifest themselves in his socio-communicative roles depending on the nature of his responses to various challenges. As Carol Pearson (2015) writes in her famous book "Awakening the Heroes Within", "The heroic quest is about saying 'yes' to yourself" - it is a quest for wholeness. Therefore, the appeal of the series' Hero is that he is an ordinary person who changes the world for the sake of other people. His image evokes an emotional, cognitive, and conative response in his fellow citizens because his "monomyth" is a story that may repeat itself at any time and among any group of people.

A historian by profession, the hero of the film uses his intelligence and analytical capacities to find connections and the essence of the current state of affairs, thus displaying the archetype of the Sage. He is also not afraid to destroy what does not work or hinders the further development of the country, showing some elements of the Rebel or Destroyer archetype. He retains faith in goodness and justice, trusts in people and stays optimistic (like the archetype of the Innocent), and seeks every possible way (as with the Seeker archetype) to transform reality in accordance with the principles of

good and justice (in accordance with the archetype of the Creator). Finally, he monitors the implementation of these changes (the Ruler archetype) so as to ensure the stability, safety, and predictability of the development of the country entrusted to him.

To foreground the archetype in mass media is usually sufficient to mark it with signs-attributes (to use the term of C.G. Jung (1976) which embody an archetypal characteristic or fix a certain stage of its development. It is often undertaken with the help of the mechanism of reduction. For example, the archetype of the Innocent is indexed by plots or dialogues, foregrounding their credulity, idealism, and some degree of detachment from reality. It is activated by such sign-attributes as the attempt of the newly elected president to convince the deputies to change from luxurious business cars to bicycles.

The key archetypally-based social role of the Hero is reflected in the title of the film and, later, in the eponymous title of the party. The role of the Servant of the people appeals to the basic need of every ordinary person to feel their importance, to be able to trust and rely on someone. In this case, the obvious archetypal basis of the social role of the "Servant of the people" is the Caregiver archetype, which connotes "generous compassion and readiness to care for others". The basic value to which the use of the archetype appeals is the third need in the pyramid of values-needs (according to Maslow (1943), namely, "the need for belonging and love." The actualization of such a value allows the construction of an "in-group" with the involvement of a very wide audience scope.

Incidentally, some researchers identify the Servant as an independent cultural archetype while emphasizing that "the Servant engages aspects of our psyche that call us to make ourselves available to others for the benefit and enhancement of their lives" (Myss, Appendixes)

Another archetype that embodies a similarly basic need, "belonging to a group", is the archetype of the Everyman, who is recognized as an average, relatable person found in everyday life. The President in the TV series lives in an ordinary apartment on the outskirts of Kiev with his parents and older sister, he borrows money and uses public transport or a bicycle to get to work. Sometimes in his social roles, he even reveals the archetype of the Jester, providing humor and comic relief peppered with occasional wisdom.

So, each archetypally based role played by the TV series' Hero is associated with a certain basic value, addressing the predispositions and expectations of an infinitely diverse group of people united by their love for the series and its main character. As a result, the TV narrative constructed a new projective identity as part of legitimizing the future discourse of the Servant of the People party based on a set of discursive values consonant with archetypal motives: the need for belonging, love, appreciation, and respect (the motive of Caregiver), the need for in-group unity (the archetype of the Jester), for safety and security (the Hero and Ruler archetypes), etc.

At the second level of the signification-mythologization of a political brand, the stable connotations of the party with the above values are consolidated, and new discursive concepts are constructed to offer a certain means of signification.

2. The Level of Political Mythologem Reinforcement and Rearticulation

Intertextual continuity at the level of archetypal values and roles can be traced in today's discourse of the party. For example, in the current election for the position of mayor, the discourse of "Servant of the People" is primary indexed either by markers of the "individual approach" (I will hear everyone) or by the metonymic attribution of state-scale (or at least city-scale) importance to the voters in simulated personal addresses using the informal "you": "Ukraine is you!", "Kiev is you!", etc.

The archetype "Caregiver" is embodied, first of all, in the naming of the party "The Servant of the People", addressing, on the one hand, the motives-basic needs of people, forgoing indifference for displays of concern and compassion in addition to assistance in building structures sufficient for life and health. On the other hand, given the ambiguity of archetypes as a reflection of the ambivalent elements of the psyche, the party's naming appeals to feelings of self-respect and self-importance in terms of socio-status through the associative connection between the servant and master concepts.

The specifics of constructing the new discourse-forming concepts determining the pragmatics of the party's current actions are illustrated with the example of the party's logo, which unites such multimodal means as shapes, colors, and verbal code (see Picture 1).

Picture 1. The logo of the party "The Servant of the People"

The compositional integrity of the logo is ensured through its semiotic landscape, integrating its verbal part with its layout, the composition of images, and the use of color in its main constituents, providing a careful balance of color contrast. A saturated light yellow is juxtaposed with a saturated dark blue. Thus, the image of yellow letters on a blue background vs. blue letters on a yellow background creates a contrast in hue and value. The green background echoes the two green letters written on an asymmetrical white square associated with a sheet of white paper. In addition to color contrasts, special meaning is implied by the contrast between capital letters in yellow (DEPUTATE) and lowercase letters in blue (servant of the people), which, in turn, graphically differs from the combination of the oblique capital letter "Z" and lowercase letter "e" in " Ze".

At the level of symbolism, it is emphasized that, despite the social status of DEPUTIES (parliamentarians, emphasized by the single-level heavy capital letters), they must be servants of the people, which reduces their significance by "lowering" them to lowercase letters. The greatest semantic meaning falls on the letters Ze, which are polysemantic, symbolizing several concepts at once. First, they are associated with the first letters of the surname of Vladimir Zelensky, the founder of the party and the current president of the country. Secondly, Ze is associated with greenery, spring, and renewal, and in this case, the logo's green background combined with its green letters (additionally emphasized by the exclamation mark in "Зе!" (Ze)) iconically convey the atmosphere of rebirth and renewal. Thirdly, it is a reference to Generation Z, to whose values the discourse of the new power is mainly oriented, cultivating creativity, individuality, and calling.

The white color as a background of the main symbolic message, in its turn, archetypally connotes purity, peace, and innocence, which distinguish the purity of Generation Z from the corruption schemes of those following the ideology of the permissiveness of power. A composition in the form of three rectangular shapes - white, blue, and yellow, with the placement of a three-component verbal code on them, can symbolize the trinity of the idea (Ze), the form of its implementation (servant of the people), and the performer (deputy).

Additional symbolic connotations are associated with the association of the colors yellow and blue, so prevalent in the composition, with the yellow and blue flag of Ukraine.

In this regard, it is important to note that the color scheme of the political advertisements released by "Servant of the People" has not changed for several years, which is an indicator of the value of the stability of the party discourse, since the transition of colors often indicates a change in political beliefs and political course.

The logo layout corresponds to the order of information processing by the addressee and the usual pattern of reading, that is, the placement of the main concept of the message ("Зе!" (Ze)) is carried out in the upper part, while the "actual" information lies at the bottom, in the "statement" domain (saying that the "DEPUTATE is the servant of the people").

Thus, regarding the new discourse of the ruling party, one can speak of a certain rearticulation of values. The privileged signs that order the sign space of discourse are now the values of creativity, non-standard thinking, multitasking, digital thinking, etc. associated with Generation Z and renewal. At the same time, these values determine the structure of the discourse, along with the already established value concepts of non-indifference, concern, compassion, assistance, and self-respect, which are appealing for other older generations of people and still form the main mythologemes of the party.
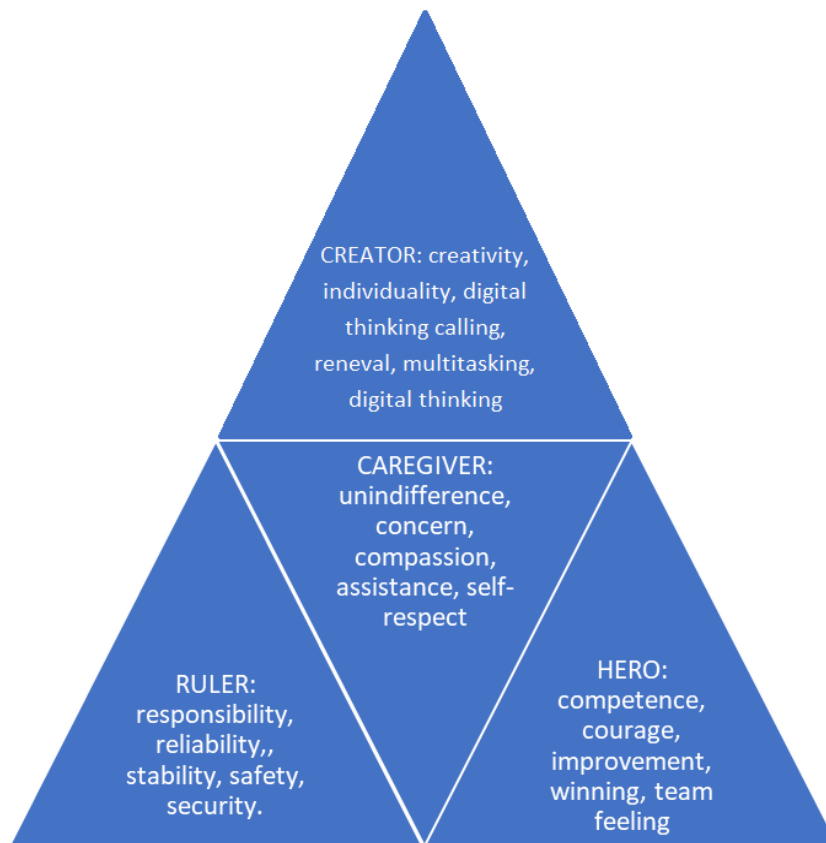

Figure 1. Needs and Archetypes Correlation Pyramid

Conclusion

The paper contributes to the problem of the interrelation between two levels of mythologization in successful political discourse – the primary mythologems, based on universal cultural codes, involving archetypal storylines, characters and needs as a semiotic resource for secondary mythologization – the level of discourse-forming values, connotated by party naming, slogans, recognizable politicians, and even the color range associated with the party discourse.

The narrative premise of the discourse of the future ruling party "Servant of the People" was the series of the same name, the impact of which is to a certain extent explained by the inclusion of archetypal cultural plots and situational archetypes, as well as other archetypal patterns such as characters and color-associated symbols that are ingrained in the public's collective conscious/subconscious and offer a "ready-made" algorithm for interpreting events. The series' plot as it relates to the formation of the protagonist as a creator, reformer, and "servant of the people" involves three of the archetypal stages associated with the Hero's journey in Joseph Campbell's Monomyth, that is: the search for yourself at the beginning of the Journey; the "initiation" experienced both oneirically and as a real test of betrayal and imprisonment; and the "return" in a renewing capacity to revive the country. Its situational archetypes or themes associated with archetypal plotlines include a battle of Good and Evil, "Rags to Riches" and the Hero's Task related to a Monomyth's circular principle. Archetypal characters that reveal various aspects of the protagonist's identity in the process of his "journey-transformation" appeal to emotional and cognitive structures of various people who recognize themselves in the archetypal manifestations of the Caregiver, Everyman, Innocent, Rebel or Destroyer, Ruler, Seeker, Creator, Sage, Everyman and Jester.

The principal archetypally-based social role of the Hero is fixed by both the title of the film and by the eponymous title of the party "Servant of the People". It is most closely related to the Caregiver archetype, embodying basic human needs for belonging and love, concern, compassion, and assistance and, at the same time, addressing feelings of self-respect and one's own sense of worth.

A set of archetypal patterns correlate with basic human values, which explains the series' narrative impact on the construction of "Servant of the People party" discourse and the new projective identity as a part of its legitimization. In such a way, archetypal patterns facilitated the secondary level signification or mythologization – the level of discourse-forming values.

A comparison of these values with the modern discourse of the party based on the use of the method of multimodal social semiotic analysis showed that the center of the semiotic space of discourse associated with the Caregiver archetype and its corresponding values has somewhat shifted to the periphery, and the central function in the construction of party discourse is occupied today by values associated with the Creator archetype (see Figure 1). This means that the values of a lower level in the hierarchy of human values, namely, of the second (Security and Safety Needs), third (Social Needs), and the fourth (Esteem Needs) level in Maslow's five-level pyramid of values, give way in party's discourse to the highest level in the value hierarchy – the need for Self-Actualization.

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