HYBRIDS IN THE AGE OF POST-TRUTH

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Summary

Our age which is frequently described as that of post-truth has been witnessing an abundance of hybridization. Hybridization abounds in social sciences and in social practices – in media and communication, in education, in politics. It is helped along by the spread of Internet which makes gluing together any disparate entities very easy. Post-truth is often associated with the instrumental use of disinformation or the 'weaponization' of information. This is why facilities to combat the spread of fake news have been set up in many countries. The article attempts to discuss the hallmarks and markers of hybrid discourse in this light and illustrate its mechanism and mis/use. Linguistic hybridity was studied in detail by Maria Georgieva in her papers and chapters on globetalk where she provides excellent examples of lexico-semantic and lexico-grammatical mixes. This paper highlights some groups of hybrids from a socio-pragmatic perspective.

Key words: ***post-truth, hybrids, cognition, discourse, pragmatics, global social practices***

If you compare: My love 2 u; Vikberg is $atan; GMO; Buckwheat porridge (kasha) with parmeggiano reggiano; Pokemon go; Peaceful war/Войномир; Chimera – you will probably be at a loss to figure out what those seemingly unconnected phrases and slogans have in common. The answer is that they are all hybrids. A hybrid is defined in Merriam Webster online as something het-

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erogeneous in origin or composition (hybrid, n.d.). It may be, for example, an offspring of two animals or plants of different races, breeds, varieties, species, genera, a person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions, a thing made of two different elements, or even a word formed from words which originated in different languages, e.g. television – Greek *tele* and Latin *vision*. *Pokémon go* gam*e*, a relatively new hybrid, is a combination of virtual and non-virtual reality. Vikberg (former president of Iceland whose financial scandal triggered off protest rallies in the country – IP) is described as $atan, and the alternating codes – letters and symbols – are intended to provide a concise and graphic labelling of his scandalous activities. Other examples suggest biological mixtures, oxymora, lexico-semantic mixes, etc.

Hybrids are a typical feature of post-modernism. The funniest of them perhaps is the ultimate hybrid in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, a mix of a man and his bicycle (Perianova, 2014). Marketing, advertising, communication and media studies comprise a host of hybrids. New media narratives are often hybrid genres which use hybrid discourse. Advertising, for example, often features short stories in commercials, so it is difficult to figure out what one is watching until the punch line. Note worthily, in social sciences hybridization is a concept that emerged from post-colonial studies, particularly the work of Homi Bhabha (1994). It is used in relation to globalization because same products are available everywhere whereas different people make use of products in different ways. The quintessential hybrid was mythical chimera, a monstrous creature, composed of parts of multiple animals – an eagle, a serpent, a goat. Whereas some hybrids are useful, others like GMO are believed by many to present a long-term danger for humanity. The most dangerous hybrid is undoubtedly the so-called hybrid war/warfare which blends conventional warfare, irregular warfare and cyber warfare.

Globetalk studied at length by Maria Georgieva (2010, 2011), without doubt, features numerous examples of hybridity duly noted in her books.

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Indeed, we live in the age of hybrids and crossbreeds. Even though hybrids go back a long time our world of **post-truth** has seen their most prolific production and re-production in all spheres and domains – not only in biology and agriculture, but in chemistry, physics, lifestyle, politics, history – and the list goes on. Though the word *post-truth* has existed for decades it became especially popular after Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as President of the USA. It *was named the word of the year by the Oxford Dictionary and is* defined as 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. Post-truth is frequently associated with the instrumental use of disinformation or the 'weaponisation' of information.

According to *The Economist*, 'politicians have always lied. Does it matter if they leave the truth behind entirely?' (Sept 10th 2016). Trump's deals are frequently described as 'creativity with the truth'. (NYT, 17.07.2016) The response to these accusations, however, is fairly unorthodox. It seems that lies, indeed, no longer matter. See, for example this comment on: 'The House speaker cannot prove Trump's allegations of voter fraud, but he doesn't think the lies are a problem'. (Fang, 2016) According to *Huffington Post,* Nigel Farrage was also repeatedly accused of faking reality and lying to win the Brexit referendum. **The age of Internet makes faking reality and creating hybrids easy. And it applies to all social practices.**

Life-style hybrids

a) Some obvious examples would be reality shows on TV including numerous culinary ones: Big Brother, The Farm, Nightmares in the Kitchen, Bake-off, My Mom Cooks Better – to name but a few. Those mostly North American or British creations may be slightly adjusted locally, but are, *sui generis*, hybrid creations transplanted and re-contextualized on a new soil.

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b) food – croissant and jam for breakfast, or pizza together with *banitsa* are as likely as not to fill up the same breakfast space in Bulgaria creating excuses for purists to pull out their hair. Fusion cuisine illustrated by the use of soy sauce (oriental) and cream(western) in the same dish, buckwheat porridge (Russian, Polish, Ukrainian) with parmeggiano reggiano (Italian) are all cases in point. See also the following quote which describes, sushi (Japanese), and pelmeni (Russian) on the same table:

The men wore power suits and shiny shirts, the women sparkly dresses and stilettos, all fitting the image of success current when they arrived in the early 1990s. Cosmos was kitted out in the style from the same period: all chrome and dark blues and blacks….. The tables were laid out with piles of grilled fish, caviar, meat, vats of Russian salad. Sushi was on the menu too, but served in mountains like pelmeni. (Pomerantsev, 2012, p. 34).

c) holiday – and ritual mixes, such as the 14th February – St Valentine's with its hearts and flowers, instead of or together with the Trifon Zarezan the wine celebration spark off disputes in Bulgaria.

d) blurring gender lines, e.g. surrogate motherhood, or installing restrooms for transgender people which has incited a lot of controversy.

Indeed, gender is a very fraught issue. The new gender-neutral address for Oxford University students is "ze" instead of "he" or "she" on the advice of student union officers who hope that the move would prevent transgender students feeling offended by the use of incorrect pronouns, cut down on discrimination and make the union intersectional (Pells, 2016). Gender neutral pronouns such as "xe" and "ze" have already been brought into common use at the University of Tennessee, US, and this summer the Boarding Schools' Association issued guidance for teachers to address transgender pupils as "zie" to avoid offence.

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Hybrids in Education

Transdisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, interdiscursivity, hybrid approaches by definition, are quite the buzz words in science and education in the 21st century. A lot of new subjects, as well as interdisciplinary curricula in many universities, testify to a new hybridity and a search for intersections between different academic disciplines. English as a global language and a lingua franca with its inherent hybridity and nonstandard use is considered by many scholars as a new norm (Jenkins, 2006). A host of issues dedicated to global English as 'a fact of life, a key feature of the new socio-political and economic world order, both a medium and a maker of new forms of interdependence, a product and a driver of globalization' (Georgieva. 2011, p. 37; also section 1 and 4) were Maria Georgieva's abiding interest.

Political and social hybrids

Perhaps the best known case of hybridization is politics. Undoubtedly, many people wonder about the new meaning of 'right' and 'left', especially in case of seemingly unlikely coalitions, for example, between the so-called patriots, socialists and ethnic parties. Often, as is the case in Bulgaria, it is difficult to find a common denominator between these parties but it is alleged by many to be love of certain foreign governments. 'Is Poland's government right-wing or left-wing? Its leaders revere the Catholic church, vow to protect Poles from terrorism by not accepting any Muslim refugees and fulminate against 'gender ideology'. (Economist, 30th July 2016)

By the same token, it is anybody's guess whether the current Russian Government is right or left. In 2014 Putin accused the West of backing an armed seizure of power in Ukraine by 'extremists, nationalists, and right-wingers' – a description the Ukrainians vigorously deny. It also seems to imply that in Putin's view, the Russian government is not right-wing. Why then the sympathy for different **right wing** politicians in the west on the part of the Russian government?

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There was an interesting response to Trump's election as President of the USA. Who welcomed the election of the proclaimed right-wing conservative Republican? The right or the left? The answer is – a mixed bunch. Amongst others, Ku-Klux-Klan and white supremacists in America, the National Front in France, East European socialists, former communists who are generally regarded as the left. Georgi Parvanov, leader of Alternative for Bulgarian Revival (ABV) party and former President of Bulgaria commented for BNT in early December 2016 that he hoped that Roumen Radev (the then Bulgarian President Elect) would be more active, more like Donald Trump who, as he alleged, had been sparing no effort to implement his policies after the election as head of the US government (clubz.bg, 2016). Trump became a very popular figure in Russia, so much so that the Russian Duma gave a tumultuous welcome when his election became a fact! Without doubt, from a different time perspective such politicians as V. Putin and Donald Trump, V. Putin and Victor Orban, V. Putin and Nigel Farrage, Putin and Marine Le Pen could only be described as strange bed fellows. Yet their names often collocate: indeed, just moments after the exit polls had established in Italy that Renzi was heading to an embarrassing loss, Salvini (the leader of one of the country's main parties– IP) took to Twitter to heap praise on Marine Le Pen, Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, and "La Lega", as the Northern League is known. (Guardian, 5th Dec.2016)

Though I do not aim to discuss who is 'right' and who is 'left' or who is right or wrong in this world, with Ulrich Beck (1992) I believe that obsolete distinctions between left and right have become fragile and the boundaries between political and non-political have shifted with the emergence of green parties and corresponding programmatic changes in other political forces.

Another hybrid use is that of *East* and *West* as labels standing for certain platforms and ideas. For any meaningful dialogue these words need clarification because they represent somewhat of a paradox: West (Occident) often includes Japan, and East (Orient) – certain European countries which in geographical terms are located

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west of Japan. Why is Japan considered Western and China not? There is no map of the West. Guy Sorman (2006), a French philosopher, author and economist questioning Huntington's concept of the clash of civilization asserts that the West is not a geographic entity but a mindset.

Linguistic Hybrids

The two main functions of language are cognition and communication. Language ripped from its context has no meaning. (Firth, 1957). And, as other linguistic entities, hybrids are instrumental in communicating different pictures of the world depending on the objective of the communicator:

> The role of language is not the same in all societies, but it often includes the identification or marking of social categories, the maintenance and manipulation of individual social relationships and networks, and various means of effecting social control. The relationship is not a static one but varying and constitutive in nature. (Saville Troike, 2008, p. 30)

Maria Georgieva points out several types of 'globetalk mixes', amongst them script crossing, lexico-semantic mixes and lexico-grammatical mixes. (2010, p. 139) She gives numerous examples of script-crossing: *ела ме kiss-ни, let те да те love you, такъв situation, yeah направо загубих терпейшън*. These code – mix hybrids are made up of Latin and Cyrillic script. Other hybrids of this type may include format – and letter size mixes for the sake of emphasis, e.g. BEWARE of hybrids vs. beware of HYBRIDS.

Lexico-Semantic mixes may be divided into several groups – those using reinterpretation of meaning leading to uncommon collocations, i.e. meaning crossover, a transfer of an image or concept from one domain into another owing to a perceived similarity between the two; new meanings of borrowed words resulting from "recontextualization", i.e. the appropriated external entity is imbued with new values, and meanings emerging as a result of intertextuality (Georgieva, 2010, pp. 144–146). In fact, recontextualization and intertextuality are of utmost im-

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portance when we describe the parameters of hybrids. Ac-
cording to Fairclough,

> When processes of globalization affect a particular social
> entity such as a nation-state, a relationship is set up be-
> tween the 'outside' and the 'inside' of that entity. This in-
> cludes practices, networks of practices, orders of discourse,
> discourses, genres and/or styles which already exist 'out-
> side the entity (e.g. in other states or regions) coming into
> contact with the 'inside'. The relationship between *outside*
> and *inside* can be seen as a relationship of recontextuali-
> zation – external entities are recontextualized, relocated
> within a new context. (Fairclough, 2006, p. 34)

The phenomenon is very productive. Thus, numer-
ous political labels originated due to hybridity in the wake
of the Russian – Ukrainian conflict. See, for example,
blends, such as Путлер (Hitler and Putin), даунбас (Don-
bas, the name of the region and Down Syndrome).[1]

Lexico-grammatical mixes are made up of 2 groups
which represent appropriation code-mixing on the level
of grammar.

Group a) includes **imported word-formation pat-
terns**, such as блокбастър, хипхопър; хитпарче. (Ge-
orgieva, 2010, p. 146) Once again, it is a truly global
phenomenon. Such mixes are refashioned, reshaped
and remoulded on the new soil. The words *Рашизъм и
рашист,* traceable to the English word *Russia,* for exam-
ple, turned into a negative label. During a meeting of the
intergovernmental Eurasian Council the Prime Minister
of Russia Dmitri Medvedev proposed that coffee Ameri-
cano (кофе американо) be renamed as *'русиано'* coffee.
Americano, according to Medvedev, is not 'a politically
correct expression'. (РИА Новости. 16th Nov. 2016) The
meaning of this unusual word-formation patterned after
acclimated *Americano* is described as "un-pc" (contrary
to the rules of political correctness) because of the tension
between Russia and America.

Group b) comprises lexico-syntactic and syntac-
tic hybrids. In September 2014 Mikhail Zhvanetsky
(Михаил Жванецкий), a premier Russian stand-up co-
median and writer, born in Odessa in Ukraine, started his
concert in Kiev with the oxymoron: 'Good evening, *dear*

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[1] There are numerous examples
of similar hybrids in Zhabotin-
ska, 2014 and Perianova, 2014.

enemy country!' (Здравствуй, родная вражеская земля!) Undoubtedly, this hybrid collocation is a reflection of his attitude to the conflict. See also such compounds and collocations as *национал-популисти, либерало-фашист, соросоид-толераст, путиноид-патриот; liberal totalitarianism, liberal fascism, liberal progressives.*

Most of these combinations are negative. According to Russian media, after the UN resolution on Russian propagandap Europe has turned into the land of *liberal totalitarianism*. (Yahoo news, April, 2016). In April 1990, Roger Kimball, an editor at the conservative journal, The New Criterion, published *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted our Higher Education* attacking what he called '*liberal fascism*'. (Weigel, 2016)

Equalizing different concepts and referents and hence attributing negative connotations is typical of most syntactic hybrids. Anything may be made identical to or the same as anything else in the age of hybridization through the use of rhetorical devices, such as hyphens, comas, conjunctions, and repetitive concatenates. E.g. *Russophobe = liberast = sorosoid, Banderovtsi = ukraintsi = fascists,* used in media and online forums. The new president of Bulgaria is described as 'Russophile and patriot', and his election as a failure of the West: 'Русофил и патриот стал президентом в Болгарии'. (tsargrad.tv/.../ rusofil**i**ja-v-bolgarii-na-podhode-vopros-o-vyho.) In his speech on the eve of Hungary's national day Victor Orban (2016) describes Europe as *free, independent, Christian* equalizing these adjectives. *Russophobe-liberal* and *Russophile-patriot* are on the verge of turning into compounds, just as *putinoid-patriot*. Both are concatenates repeatedly used by the opposing sides. *Patriots*, of course, refers to members of nationalist parties, rather than those who love their country.

Syntactic mixes are especially typical of totalitarian speech whose key element, according to Victor Klemperer (1957), is the inversion of subject and predicate: the victim is actually the torturer, or the Nazis are defending themselves against aggression. Moreover, totalitarian speech usually includes 'new' terms whose definition has

only been partially understood, imbuing them with the exact opposite meaning.

Socio-pragmatic perspective on hybrids

The term socio-pragmatics was suggested by Leech (1983, p. 10). According to M. Georgieva, (2010, p. 148) "Amongst the key roles of language as a mediating tool in constructing social practices are the "framing" of events and activities, identity building, the regulation of interpersonal relations and the diffusion of ideas and values through communities of practice". The above definition emphasizes the importance of social situation and its interaction with language and discourse in general. Discourse is interdependent with social life – its analysis intersects with meanings, activities and systems outside of itself. The two groups described below, **socio-semantic** and **pragma-semantic** hybrids, are very common in political discourse although they often intersect and overlap.

To quote M.Saville-Troike (2008, p. 104): 'Meaning is negotiated during the process of interaction and is dependent on intent and interpretation of previous utterances.' In other words, because of the ideological and/or cultural base the emerging meaning often turns out to be different for different members of discourse communities. Our age has witnessed an abundance of semantic hybrids and their number is constantly on the rise.

Socio-semantic hybrids include the so-called **contentious words**, *democracy, freedom, patriotism, national identity* and lately *populism*. The label is the same but the referent and/or concept behind the same phonetic form differ. Contentious words are a good illustration of Wittgenstein's postulate that the meaning of the word is its use. Let us move on to an illustration of the use of some of these words and start with the much abused term *democracy.* The dictionaries define its most common meaning as *government by the people* (Merriam Webster online). This meaning may be illustrated by the slogan: 'Invest in **democracy**, not in corporate welfare'. Amongst other meanings, see also: a political unit that has a democratic government; the common people especially

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when constituting the source of political authority; the absence of hereditary or arbitrary class distinctions or privileges.

Compare, however, the use of the word by politicians and the media:

> We must *promote democracy* and ensure that the people are the masters. To have the Chinese Communist Party in power is to lead, to support and to ensure that the people become the masters, … [to ensure this] we must strengthen the party's governing ability. (Hu Jintao, former PRC president, 15 Sept 2004, quoted by Mey and Ladeguard)

To distinguish between the way 'we' and 'the others' use this word different collocations are used: *Real and genuine democracy* (in our country), *façade democracy* (in the West), *sovereign democracy* (in Russia, according to V. Putin). In V. Putin's interview to *Bild* in January 2016, he defines democracy as power of the people and the influence of people on power, but asserts that there can be no identical clichés for democracy in different countries. The Western democracy is described by the Russian President *as weak and easy to manipulate liberal democracy* which *is corrupt, inefficient, chaotic and, ultimately, not democratic*. (Bild, 11.01.2016) Consequently, democracy, according to Putin is no longer democracy. A different view of democracy is espoused by the EU. According to the Nov.2016 EU parliament resolution, since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 the Kremlin had stepped up efforts to "challenge *democratic values*, divide Europe, gather domestic support and create the perception of failed states in the EU's eastern neighbourhood" (AFP, 2016). Not surprisingly, Putin lashes out at the European Parliament for "trying to teach us democracy" while at the same time there is a "clear degradation... of the concept of democracy in Western society" (Yahoo. News, Oct. 2016).

The Turkish President Erdogan also advocated 'democracy' as he urged everybody who is *pro-democracy* to go out into the streets after the recent failed coup, thus defining his own power as democracy – a claim denied by his opponents. Sometimes, the same politician may use this word as something good in one context and as some-

thing bad in another. Valeri Simeonov (MP and Head of the Patriotic Front Party) used the word positively, when in July 2016 he described Turkey as an Islamic state without any democracy, *(*kanal3.bg/... and negatively when he called upon Bulgarians living abroad to stop talking about stupid democracy (Dnevnik, 3.05.2016). According to Paul Lendvai (2012) *illiberal democracy* in Hungary is gradually turning into a *fuehrer democracy.* Thus, the word 'democracy' is used as a hybrid reminiscent of what Humpty Dumpty said: when I use a word it means just what I want it to mean.

Let us move on to the use of *freedom*: First, a dictionary definition:

> the quality or state of being free: as in the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action**;** liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another; independence – the quality or state of being exempt or released usually from something onerous; a political right. (Merriam Webster online)

Victor Orban's use of the word in his address on Hungary's National day in March 2016 has a different meaning:

1. Europe is not **free**. Because freedom begins with speaking the truth.
2. Europe is the community of Christian, **free**, and independent nations. (Orban, V. 2016)

The rhetoric reflects Orban's anti-immigration stance, whereas comas illustrate his belief in close proximity between the concepts of free, independent and Christian.

V. Putin goes further than that and declares the word as 'empty and manipulative': 'Concerning democracy in Russia, I think: the powers like to talk about "freedom" in order to wash the population's brains'. (Bild, 2016)

The word *freedom in* the meaning of 'political right' becomes conspicuous by its absence in the new version of the Guidelines of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation released on Dec. 1 2016 where there is no mention at all of people's rights and freedoms. (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2016)

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Now to *populism*, which is a new truly global favourite in America and in Europe – from the prosperous Sweden to crisis-ridden Greece. The most common dictionary meanings are:

> any of various, often anti-establishment or anti-intellectual political movements or philosophies that offer unorthodox solutions or policies and appeal to the common person rather than according with traditional party or partisan ideologies; as grass-roots democracy; working-class activism; egalitarianism, representation or extolling of the common person, the working class, the underdog, etc.: (Dictionary.com)

The political term *populism* is often used as an explanation for any actions that are not in people's favour. It suggests suspicion and hostility towards elites and towards the main political forces and the establishment. And it often positions itself as the voice of genuine 'patriotism' – another contentious word. According to Trump *(Wall Street Journal,* April 2016) people's will is the only antidote to decades of the rule of a handful of elites. People are always right and the elites are wrong. Norbert Hofer, the Austrian presidential contender, whose 2016 campaign slogan was *Österreich über alles* asserted that his opponent was backed by the cream of the society while he himself was backed by the people, and that Trump's victory meant that people had enough of elites (RT, Dec. 2016). However, 'populism hit a snag in Austria's presidential elections'. (Economist, Dec.4, 2016) According to Martin Schultz, president of the European Parliament, Mr Van der Bellen's victory is "a heavy defeat of nationalist and anti-European, backward-looking populism" (FT, Dec. 19, 2016).

In line with what was pointed out above, *far right populism* and *far left populism* often overlap. First the case of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian PM Boiko Borisov loves the word. He repeatedly asserted that there is an excess of *populism* in Bulgaria and that populism in Bulgaria is apt to result in wheeler-dealing behind the scenes. To avoid what he calls 'a populist approach' he opposed pension hikes and salary rises on the eve of the elections. (Blitz. bg. 2016)

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In USA some Trump critics reject his elections as *populism*. By the same token, Marine Le Pen is referred to as Europe's biggest *populist* danger (Economist, Nov. 17, 2016). In Italy the 20-point margin in the referendum was regarded as a major victory for the *populist* Five Star Movement, which led opposition to the reform, and the xenophobic Northern League. (Guardian 5th Dec), whereas Prime Minister Mateo Renzi announced his resignation and handed *populists* a victory in the heartland of Europe. (*Wall Street Journal*, 4th December 2016)

The words *populism* and *democracy* may be traced back to similar historical meaning but different etymology: populous (people – Latin), demokratia (popular power – Greek). Yet, they are often used as opposites. 'Let's make America great again' (Trump); 'Austria above all' (Hofer), 'Let's return a spirit of greatness to France' (Marine Le Pen) are the most common *populist* slogans but they can hardly be considered 'democratic'.

Overall, the meaning of contentious words matches Victor Klemperer's {REF} description of such characteristics of totalitarian speech as the separation of the signifier and the signified, extreme oversimplification of concepts, their loss of any clear meaning, and the foregrounding of a vague image imbued with some kind of emotional overtones.

Pragma-semantic hybrids

The main feature of these hybrids is that they have the same referent (signified) but a different form (signifier). Often, the hallmarks of these hybrids are shifts and switches of codes, and consequently incompatible historical narratives. They are exemplified by toponyms legitimating a certain historical narrative. Thus, if Askeran is an Azeri word, it means that the Askeran fortress and the surrounding territory cannot be but Azerbaijan. Conversely if the Tigranakert ruins attest that it was founded in the first century BC by the Armenian King Tigran the Great, but now is in Nakhchivan (Azerbaijan's territory separated from the country by Armenia), Armenia has the right to territorial claims on Nakhchivan, because what used to

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be Armenia cannot be but Armenian. (Nagorny Karabach Speech Factor) Such toponyms represent what Ancient Greek rhetoricians would have called 'exonyms' – a term for another group, which signals that the speaker does not belong to it.

Proper names may also fit this group. The renaming of ethnic Bulgarian Turks during the so-called Revival Process which aimed to legitimate a version of their cultural identity affirmed by the state is a case in point. Many words included in this group may be described as hate catalysts, cf., for example, the use of *historical heritage, genocide, aggression, occupation, propaganda* in Armenian-Azeri mutual hate speech illustrated in an excellent study conducted by the Yerevan Press Club with the 'Yeni Nesil' Journalists' Union of Azerbaijan within the framework of the project 'Armenia-Azerbaijan Media Bias Reduction' of Eurasia Partnership Foundation. What emerges is a mutual hate glossary divided by clichés, stereotypes, and the dissemination of false or distorted information. Such hybrids serve as permanent reminder of a people's grievances and of the enemy's inhumanity. They were originated by concrete or perceived facts, but have evolved with the deterioration of relations between the two peoples, and they themselves have contributed to the worsening of relations. The key words and the facts they refer to become un-paraphraseable, non-negotiable, and not even alternatively thinkable. (Nagorny Karabach speech factor) Other illustrations: *fascist Russi*a (as labelled by Ukraine), or *fascist Ukraine* (as referred to by Russia).

A distinct subgroup of pragma-semantic mixes is represented by the much disputed political correctness which Thomas Trenton describes as secular liberal-puritan hybrid. According to the *Guardian* pc was a useful invention for the Republican right because it helped the movement to drive a wedge between working-class people and the Democrats who claimed to speak for them:

> Political correctness' became a term used to drum into the public imagination the idea that there was a deep divide between the 'ordinary people' and the 'liberal elite', who sought to control the speech and thoughts of regular folk.

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Opposition to political correctness also became a way to rebrand racism in ways that were politically acceptable in the post-civil-rights era. (Weigel, 2016)

Weigel (2016) also asserts that pc denunciations abound in British rightwing tabloids whereas Trump inaugurated a new phase of anti-political-correctness. The phenomenon is ranted against by German and French nationalists and is alleged to blame for the drop in academic standards, academic inequality and problems in education in general. (Weigel, 2016) Noteworthily, pc is a global phenomenon. Though fairly recent, it has been much disputed in post-socialist countries. Consequently, **socio-semantic and socio-pragmatic hybrids are a clear-cut case of the weaponization of language.**

The spread of hybrids has changed people's perception of key values and statements. Since lies do not matter, the 'true: false' opposition gives way to 'correct: incorrect' opposition – e.g. *correct thinking, voting correctly*. The social picture currently reflects another new opposition – 'closed: open' rather than 'right : left':

> We are either "drawbridge up" or "drawbridge down". Are you someone who feels your life is being encroached upon by criminals, gypsies, spongers, asylum-seekers, Brussels bureaucrats? Do you thing the bad things will all go away if we lock the doors? Or do you think it's a big beautiful world out there…? (Stephen Shakespeare, the British head of YouGov poll, 2005 quoted in *Economist*, 30.07. 2015*)*

In lieu of conclusion

Cultures targeting messages produce a tendency to mental consumption. They tend to breed texts and result in a backlash of social division, into ones that transmit texts and ones that receive them. This brings about an increase of social passivity on the part of the receivers because of a psychological dependency on the ready-made "truth" of the messages arising from other people's mental effort. (Lotman, 2014, pp. 22–24 – my translation)

The lines between different entities are blurred and it becomes easy to glue together disparate entities. These entities are often linked by pathos which in the post-truth world displaces logos as emotional overtones turn out to

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matter much more than the actual message because trust rather than check-up on facts has become de-rigeur:

The fragmentation of news sources has created an atomised world in which lies, rumour and gossip spread with alarming speed. Lies that are widely shared online within a network, whose members trust each other more than they trust any mainstream-media source, can quickly take on the appearance of truth'. (*Economist,* Sept. 20, 2016)

Passion has brought forth the upside down world of hybrids where jumping is equal to protesting against the powers that be, e.g. "кто не скачет, тот москаль!" (Ukraine) кой не скача е червен (България). Yet, it is good to remember that many biological cross-breeds turn out to be infertile. Pro-truthers! stand and be counted.

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