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Ideological Field Model in the Ossetian Political Narrative

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Abstract. The study is devoted to the research of the Ossetian political narrative in the aspect of analyzing party ideologies, delimiting their structure and conceptual content in terms of interconceptual interactions at the verbal and cognitive levels, and based on the data posted on the official websites of the South Ossetian North Ossetian Parliaments and other Internet sources. When describing the content of ideologies, the methodological procedure of Max Frieden's conceptual (morphological in the author's terminology) analysis is used, as well as modeling of the cluster and adjacent conceptual connections. When analyzing the nominations of South Ossetian parties, the leading research techniques are cognitive, semantic and content analyses. The aim of the article is to build an algorithm for the conceptual interaction of nuclear ideological concepts and party systems at the implicit and verbal levels in the South Ossetian party narrative. It has been established that concepts in the South Ossetian party communication are characterized by institutionality, flexibility and ethnocultural affiliation. The varieties of concepts functioning in the South Ossetian political communication are revealed. The types of interaction between party concepts have been established — these are conceptual blends, adjacency, pairing or additivity. Variable models of political ergonyms and language codes that make them explicit are described. Among party onyms, synonymous elements of their verbal representations have been identified in Russian, in Ossetian or both. On the basis of the Ossetian value system, we have identified the conceptual structures that build the ideology family and the conceptual composite in the South Ossetian communication.

Keywords: political ergonym, ideological field structure, concept representation, concept interaction, concept cluster, cognitive composite, ideology family

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Модель идеологического поля в осетинском политическом нарративе

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Аннотация. Исследование посвящено изучению югоосетинского политического нарратива в аспекте анализа партийных идеологий, моделировании их структуры и концептуального содержания в плане интерконцептуальных взаимодействий на вербальном и когнитивном уровнях и опирается на данные, размещенные на официальных сайте Парламентов Республик Южная Осетия и Северная Осетия и другие интернет-источники. При описании содержания идеологий применяется методологическая процедура концептуального (морфологического в терминологии автора) анализа Макса Фридена, а также используется моделирование кластерного взаимодействия и смежных концептуальных интеракций. При анализе номинаций югоосетинских партий ведущим приемом становится когнитивно-семантический и контент-анализ. Целью статьи является построение алгоритма концептуального взаимодействия ядерных идеологических концепций и партийных систем на имплицитном и вербальном уровнях в югоосетинском партийном нарративе. Установлено, что характеристиками концептов в югоосетинской партийной коммуникации являются институциональность, универсальность и этнокультурная принадлежность. Выявлены разновидности функционирующих в югоосетинской политической коммуникации концептов. Установленные типы взаимодействия между партийными концептами — это концептуальные бленды, смежность, парность или аддитивность. Описаны вариативные модели политэргонимов и языковые коды их эксплицирующие. Среди партийных онимов установлены синонимичные элементы их вербальных репрезентаций — русский, осетинский или билингвальный. С учетом анализа осетинской системы ценностей нами были определены концептуальные структуры, формирующие семью идеологий и концептуальный композит в югоосетинской коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: политический эргоним, структура идеологического поля, концептуальная репрезентация, концептуальное взаимодействие, концептуальный кластер, когнитивный композит, семья идеологий

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Introduction

The political narrative in South Ossetia, as a new country, reflects the position of social power, supports moral and ethical norms, supports ethnic culture and the Ossetian language in the country, and demonstrates the idea of supporting Ossetian identity.

Russian narratives are built around the values enshrined in society, carry the idea of just peace and order, and form the worldview necessary to maintain identity [1. P. 11–12]. Russian mentality, manifested in ethnic meta-narratives, is based on the Orthodox tradition, where the concepts of sin and holiness, good and evil, etc. are of paramount importance [2. P. 184–185]. Therefore, Russian values were formed on the basis of dualistic ideas about the world, moral canon, denial of the middle way [3].

Ossetian values include a complex set of ideas, since among the Ossetians there are both Orthodox Christians and Muslims, however, adherents of all religious traditions preserve and support beliefs in the One God *Хуыцау*, the creator of the world, and perform the corresponding rites and rituals. Besides, Ossetians, like most peoples of the North Caucasus, adhere to traditional rules in everyday life and observe customs.

The relevance of the present study is due to the prospect of studying the family of ideologies and conceptual cluster of ideological paradigms parties interaction in South Ossetian political communication. The aim of this article is to demonstrate the interaction algorithm of nuclear ideological concepts of the South Ossetian political parties on examples of verbal and cognitive representations.

Methods and Material

The research uses materials from the official websites of South Ossetian presidential administration, Republic of North Ossetia-Alania and data from the official website of the South Ossetian Parliament. The etymology of Ossetian ethnic lexemes is taken from “Historical and etymological dictionary of the Ossetian language” by V.I. Abaev¹. Cognitive, semantic and conceptual analyses are implemented as leading research methods. Cognitive modeling is applied as a method of conceptual interactions in structuring the ideological field of the South Ossetian political narrative.

Ideology refers to fundamental cognitive structures, which are systems of basic knowledge that underlie all types of social cognition of groups. The ideology of a certain political group or society as a whole is constituted by the system of views, ideas and values, shaping their worldview paradigm [4]. The method of conceptual analysis of ideology allows us to interpret the interaction of concepts in political narratives. The methodological procedure is based on the fact that a political concept links central processes in political practices and creates variations of clusters of political phenomena [5].

Results

Ossetians living in South Ossetia speak Ossetian and Russian, as do Ossetians in North Ossetia [5]. The North Ossetian political narrative is fully incorporated into the Russian one, while the South Ossetian political discourse is in the course of formation. Official communication in both republics is in Russian, while semi-official and everyday communication is in Ossetian.

¹ Abaev, V.I. (1996). *Historical and etymological dictionary of the Ossetian language* in 4 vols. Leningrad: USSR Academy of Sciences. URL: <https://www.klex.ru/17ex> (accessed: 02.09.2024).

The related concepts *уудзинад* ‘unity’ and *адæм* ‘people’ reflect the main value of the ethnos, the idea of preserving the national identity of Ossetians, and the development of historically fraternal relations with the people of the Russian Federation [6]. The constitutions of both republics declare ethnic, national, historical, and territorial unity, socio-economic and cultural integration of the Ossetian people.^{2,3}

Let us consider the structure of South Ossetian ideologies on the example of political parties in the current parliament of the republic (2019 elections) and parties aspiring to participate in the new parliamentary elections in 2024.⁴

Since the residents of the two republics are bilingual, some parties preferred to name their organizations in Ossetian, some chose bilingual names, but the majority of parties are registered in Russian.

At the upcoming elections in 2024, as well as during the 2019 elections to the parliament of the Republic of South Ossetia, three political parties were registered, the names of which reflected the policy of maintaining the value of Ossetian society and the collective idea of preserving national identity [7]. These are the parties named *Иузинад* ‘Unity’, *Иугонд Ирыстон* ‘Unified Ossetia’, *Адæмы уудзинад* ‘Unity of the People’, whose nuclear ideologeme is unity.⁵

In South Ossetia, such parties as *Фыдыбæстæ* ‘Fatherland’, *Рæстæг Ир* ‘Fair Ossetia’, *Фидæн* ‘Future’ and *Ныхас* ‘gathering of men’ claimed to participate in the 2019 elections. In 2024, new parties appeared on the political arena that are *Ирон* ‘Ossetian’, *Ирыстони ног фæлтæр* ‘New generation of Ossetia, People’s Party of the Republic of South Ossetia, Development Party’.⁶

The names of South Ossetian parties represent the cognitive palette of the political space of the newly formed country. Concepts that manifest ideological theories, such as *communism*, *socialism*, and *democracy*, function in the party communication of the Republic of South Ossetia. The ideological component ‘socialist’ is included in the full name of the parties as *Адæмы уудзинад*, *Фыдыбæстæ* and *Ирон*. The component ‘communist’ is represented in the political ergonim *Хуссар Ирыстонæ Коммунистон парти* ‘Communist Party of the Republic of South Ossetia’. The nomination *People’s Party of the Republic of South Ossetia* personifies the idea of *democracy*, the power of the people.

² Constitution of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania. from 08.06.2022 № 5-RCL. URL: <https://alania.gov.ru/documents/4318> (accessed: 02.09.2024).

³ Constitution of the Republic of South Ossetia with amendments of April 11, 2019. Official website of the Administration of the President of the Republic of South Ossetia. URL: <https://parliamentroso.org/node/3567> (accessed: 02.09.2024).

⁴ Parliament of the Republic of South Ossetia. Official site of the Administration of the President of the Republic of South Ossetia. URL: <https://www.parliament/rso.org> (accessed: 04.09.2024).

⁵ Party “Unity” supports the initiative of the President. Official site of South Ossetian presidential administration. URL: <https://south-ossetia.info/partiya-edinstvo-podderzhivaet-iniciativu-prezidenta/> (accessed: 05.09.2024).

⁶ Parties. South Ossetian presidential administration. URL: <https://south-ossetia.info/obshhestvo/politicheskie-partii/> (accessed: 07.09.2024).

On the material of South Ossetian parliamentary and electoral discourse we have identified the following varieties of ideological concepts. That are an ideological concept, whose name identifies a particular worldview platform of a party; a concept-slogan, which express ideological principles; and an ethnic concept.

The idea of *patriotism* in the consciousness of the South Ossetians has taken on a new meaning after the establishment of statehood. The concept *Ног Ирыстон* ‘New Ossetia’, realized in the name of the political party, is a layer of concepts *fatherland / homeland*, taking into consideration the marker of the recent history of the development of the Republic of South Ossetia as a state ‘new’.

Such concept-slogans as *Рæстдзинад Архайд Размæцъд* ‘Justice Labor Development’ (elections 2019) and *Хорздзинад æмæ Рæстдзинад* ‘Dignity and Justice’ and *For Justice* (elections 2024) transmit goals and objectives by their names.

The political ergonim *Алантæ* ‘Alans’ (2019 elections) is associated with the Ossetian culture concept. It marks the belonging of this party members to the Ossetian ethnos. The ethnonym *Alans* is associated with Greek and Byzantine sources, the nomination *osy* is given in Georgian texts, and the lexeme *iron* is considered a self-name of Ossetians. Modern Iranian-speaking Ossetians are considered to be direct descendants of Alans, nomadic Iranian-speaking tribes of Sarmatian origin. Thus, the political ergonim *Алантæ* ‘Alans’ is a synonym of the polytonym *Iron*.

Such synonymous concepts as *фыдыбæстæ* ‘fatherland’ *райгуырæн бæстæ* ‘homeland’ (literally: ‘place of birth’) and *Ирыстон* ‘Ossetia’, as well as *Ирон* and *Алантæ* manifest the features of cultural, ethnic and ideological concepts in the South Ossetian political communication.

The political ergonim *Иры Фарн* ‘well-being of Ossetians’ (elections 2024) represents the ethnic concept of *фарн* ‘peace, happiness, abundance, well-being, prosperity’. The lexeme *фарн* goes back to the theonym *Farn* in ancient Iranian mythology. This was deity of fire, light and warmth, glory and happiness, hence the well-wishing of *фарн* in the Ossetian tradition means happiness, abundance and prosperity. The main message of the organization *Иры Фарн* is to ensure the prosperity of the republic. The primary objective facing the *Development Party* in the upcoming elections is also to ensure *фарн* for the country citizens, achieving a high life quality through the development of all spheres of public life and the economy.

The party onim *Ныхас* is connected with the ethnic concept *Стыр Ныхас* ‘the supreme council of Ossetians’. This political ergonim suggests a commitment the rituality of political communication in accordance with tradition.

The ethnic concept *dignity* manifests mental and behavioral dominants of the South Ossetian political communication. The concept-slogan *Хорздзинад æмæ Рæстдзинад* represents values and norms that are enshrined in the country’s constitution.

The political ergonim *Фидæн* ‘Future’ indicates the vector of the party activity, its priorities in lawmaking, oriented to the future. The choice of this nomination emphasizes the crucial importance of development for the future of South Ossetia.

Ирыстоны Ног Фæлтæр ‘New Generation of Ossetia’ and *Development Party* are new political parties for the 2024 parliamentary elections. They connect the development of the young country, its future, with the youth who grew up after South Ossetia gained independence in 1991.

The political platform content of the parties *Фидæн* and *Ирыстоны Ног Фæлтæр* forms an area of coherence with the ideological fields of such political parties as *Иудзинад*, *Иугонд Ирыстон*, *Адæмы иудзинад* and *the People’s Party of the Republic of South Ossetia* (*Адæмон парту*).

Ideological theories are usually distributed according to the “left — center — right” gradation based on the election program, slogans and statements. This approach is based on the key characteristics of each ideological paradigm and their conceptual connections with similar parameters of the ideological spectrum poles in their classical interpretation, when the left is considered to represent the interests of the people, the right — entrepreneurs, and the center — represents an intermediate position. This approach takes into account the key features of each of the ideological paradigms, inter-paradigm links and their classical interpretation, when the “left” is considered to express the interests of the people, the “right” — of entrepreneurs, the “center” represents an intermediate position.

Party ideologies in the South Ossetian discourse correlate in dominant directions. Program documents of all political parties are oriented towards implementation of public and state administration, openness of power and involvement of citizens in governance. Political concepts in the proposed model are not graded along an ideological spectrum, but make up a family of ideological theories, which represents non-conflicting ideas in the dynamics of historical interaction in the political space of South Ossetia.

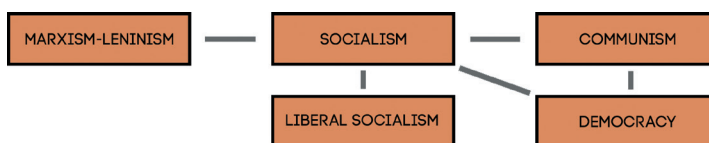


Fig. 1. Family of ideological paradigms in the South Ossetian political narrative
Source: compiled by Tatyana Yu. Tameryan, Viacheslav I. Terkulov.

The program platforms of the South Ossetian parties present such ideological theories as: *Marxism-Leninism* as the communist ideology prevailing in the USSR, *socialism* as a stage in the communism building on the basis of Marxism, aimed at the achieving social equality and justice, and *communism*, which proclaims the distribution of property according to the needs of the people. The appearance of *social liberalism* (*socialism* + *liberalism*) as a new theory combining liberal principles with socialist ideas is the sign to denote the assumption of state interference in economics. And finally, the idea of democracy, which proclaims equality of rights and duties, striving for compromise, was a natural result of the development of three basic theories (See Fig. 1).

The ideological field of South Ossetian communication is shaped up by nuclear clusters of leading political parties concepts represented in the current parliament,

concepts political parties and of those officially registered to participate in the upcoming elections in 2024.

The configurations of each party's ideological positions differ largely not so much in the concepts themselves as in the patterns by which they are build up. The cluster of political concepts on the macro-level axis is formed by the ideologically related concepts of *nationalism*, *patriotism*, *unity*, and *future*.

The micro-level axis reflects the semantic adjacency of the concepts called *conservatism*, *Soviet patriotism*, *militarism*, *development*, *welfare* (фарн), *Russophilia*, *statehood* and *integration* with macro-concepts (See Fig. 2).

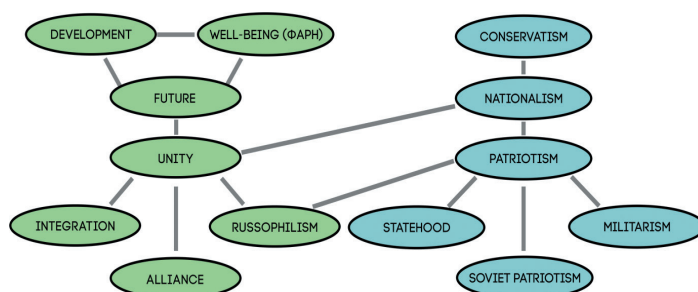


Fig. 2. Ideological concepts cluster in the South Ossetian political field
Source: compiled by Tatyana Yu. Tameryan, Viacheslav I. Terkulov.

The macro-concepts *nationalism*, *patriotism*, *unity*, *future* create composite ideology, which has interrelated cognitive features. *Nationalism* is the core idea for such political parties as *Иугонд Ирыстон*, *Ирыстонны ног фæлтæр*, *Ныхас*, which proclaim the Ossetian nation as the highest value. The adjacent concept *conservatism* conveys the idea of Ossets' traditions and customs promotion. This strategy is presented in the program of *Иугонд Ирыстон* party.

The macro-concept *patriotism* explicating conscious attachment to homeland, love for your people, their traditions, leads in the ideological paradigms of the *People's Party*, the parties *Ныхас* and *Ирыстонны ног фæлтæр*. The adjacent concept is *Soviet patriotism*. It expresses love for one's people and homeland, originated in Marxist theory. This concept is preserved as a moral category in the ideology of the *Communist Party of the Republic of South Ossetia*.

Militarism in the program *People's Party of the Republic of South Ossetia* is interpreted as one of *patriotism* essentials, and an adjacent concept that explicates the possibility and ability to defend one's fatherland. The declaration of militarism as an ideological position of the political party is conditioned by the desire to strengthen the military power of the republic in order to defend and protect its independence. The policy of militarism serves as a protective measure, the relevance of which became apparent in connection with the armed confrontation during the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict of 1991–1992 and its escalation in August 2008. Thus, it is logical to state *statehood* as a special sign of *patriotism* manifestation (the political party *Ныхас*).

The micro-concept *Russophilia* (the party *Иугонд Ирыстон*) is associated with the macro-concept *patriotism* in the aspect of considering Russia as the successor of the USSR, the “former homeland”. At the same time, it is included in the macro-concept *unity*, thereby expressing the desire of the citizens of South Ossetia, confirmed by the results of the referendum-2017, to become part of the Russian Federation, to return de jure to historical roots. The micro-concept *Russophilia* marks, as well as dual ethnic identity of the South Ossetians [8].

The macro-concept *цудзинад*, described above, is the ideological dominant of the parties *Иудзинад*, *Иугонд Ирыстон*, *Адæмы цудзинад* and *Ирыстонны ног фæлтæр*. These parties aim at unifying the Ossetian people within South Ossetia and North Ossetians. The agreement between Russia and South Ossetia is the most important legal instrument for the country strengthening, which is possible within the framework of further integration and alliance. This alliance also presupposes international cooperation within the framework of the legal status of partial recognition of the republic.

The conceptual blend “*future + well-being + development*” is recorded in the strategic plans of such political actors as *Иры Фарн*, *Ног Ирыстон*, *Ирыстонны ног фæлтæр* and the *Development Party*. All the mentioned party groups strive for a common goal — the prosperity of the fatherland, improving living conditions, cultural values transfer and extension in future generations, the Ossetian language preservation, and achieving well-being.

Conclusions

Summing up the results of the conducted research, we formulate its main results. First of all, we note that political communication, and party communication in particular, in South Ossetia is bilingual. Moreover, the Kudar vernacular of the Iron dialect of the Ossetian language is in use in the republic. All the values of the South Ossetian people are fixed in basic concepts, which reflect in their content not only ideological views, but also are permeated with cultural meanings.

The study showed that most politonyms do not represent separate concepts: they are linked by the common cognitive cluster representing ideas and values significant for building a new state. This allowed us to find out the linguistic and cognitive basis of interconceptual net. The dominant bilingual or monolingual models of political party names in the Republic of South Ossetia were established.

The following types of concepts were identified in party communication of South Ossetia: ideological concept, cultural concept, concept-slogan, synonymous concept, adjacent concept and conceptual blend.

Taking into account the ontological significance of the ideologies content from the point of view of the interaction of ideological trends in the republican political space and variable concept sets in each party program, we tried to identify nuclear cognitive unities manifesting the essence of the value system in the Republic of South Ossetian.

Based on the diversity of historical and national forms of ideologies, we have identified the conceptual structures that form the ideological basis and family

of ideologies in the South Ossetian communication. Thus, we have modeled an ideological family consisting of the paradigms of the political systems promoted by South Ossetian parties, represented by concepts *Marxism-Leninism*, *socialism*, *communism* and *social liberalism*. It has been established that the blend ideologies reflects the dynamics of development of political concepts both in historical perspective and in terms of their representation in the party space of South Ossetia.

Having analyzed the cognitive links between ideological concepts, we have modeled the cluster of the multi-party conceptsphere in the Republic of South Ossetia. The configuration of ideologies' interactions in the conceptual field is built along a horizontal axis by macro-concepts (*nationalism*, *patriotism*, *unity*, *future*), and along a vertical axis, by micro-concepts (*conservatism*, *Soviet patriotism*, *militarism*, *development*, *welfare* (*фарт*), *Russophilia*, *statehood*, *integration*).

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