

# UN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DISCOURSE: PECULARITIES AND APPLICATIONS IN DESCRIBING THE WORLD ORDER<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** This research paper is set in the context of growing interest in globalization and its effects on contemporary English-language discourse. The focus on discourse in the United Nations can be explained by the pivotal role of this organization in identifying, shaping and spreading global trends. The underlying assumption is that conceptual, cognitive and semantic analyses of the UN English-language discourse enable a deeper understanding of the western worldview, which expands into other types of discourse with a broad audience (the media, education, etc.). The application of the conceptual metaphor theory allowed us not only to identify a conceptual level of the concepts used, but also to more comprehensively explore the image and value levels of these concepts in order to identify the various cognitive-linguistic tools that are used to construct a model of the world order and assess modern reality. The study showed that language behaviour can be described through the dichotomy of “unification – segmentation.” On the one hand, reality is represented as a “family” field of life (based on the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD IS A FAMILY) with inherent family values and obligations. On the other hand, the world is subject to explicit categorization through the conceptual opposition of FRIEND vs. FOE and the conceptual and metaphorical model of “The fairy tale of the just war.” Mechanisms of linguistic hierarchization of participants’ relations are also revealed with the help of conceptual metaphors RELATIONS AMONG STATES ARE PARENT–CHILD RELATIONS and THE LEADER STATE IS A NURTURANT PARENT. The results of the study may be useful for further research on contemporary English-language discourse in a cognitive-pragmatic way, with the possibility of using the identified conceptual metaphors to detect speech tactics and strategies, as well as for comparative analysis of the constructed English-language world view with language models represented by other official UN languages: Russian, French, Spanish, Chinese and Arabic.

**Keywords:** English language, conceptual metaphor, UN discourse, discourse of international organizations, political discourse, cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, semantic analysis, metaphoric concept, concept

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In light of the special status of English in general (as a universal contact language), and in the United Nations in particular (as the language used in most internal documents and at meetings of the organization's various bodies), experts in various fields are increasingly turning their attention to the specific features of the functioning of the language in the modern information space. As for the English-language discourse of the United Nations itself, it should be noted that it focuses on the main lines of thinking of leading political and public figures. In turn, the fact that fragments of the surrounding reality are verbalized by communicants directly influences the construction of other types of discourse with the mass audience (the media, socio-political recipients, recipients in the field of education, etc.), since "desirable" global processes are promoted, and "undesirable" processes discouraged, within the framework of international organizations – at both the recommendatory and the directive levels. This is why studying the English-language discourse of international organizations will allow us to paint a clearer picture of the English-speaking personality, as well as to create a more complete image of what is happening in modern society, and make predictions about the prospects for the development of society in the future. Of particular note is the fact that an analysis of the English-language discourse of the United Nations also makes it possible to get an idea of the picture of the world order that is constructed by modern English: Who are the participants in this world order? What conditions do they coexist in? And what are the relationships in which they exist?

Previous studies of the discourse of international organizations have identified a number of metaphors that contribute to the creation of a more or less unambiguous picture of the only correct format of the future, while possible alternatives are denied and recognized as untenable (Novikov, Britsyna 2020). For example, the globalization phenomenon is represented, through the metaphor of a train, as an objective historical process that cannot be avoided and which cannot be stopped, and "arriving late" is associated with an undesirable, not to mention risky and dangerous, outcome<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, it would be advisable to take the subjectivity of the categorization of phenomena and objects in various linguo-cognitive pictures of the world into account. As I. K. Arkhipov has pointed out, "the same features of an object are organized into different groups according to their own laws of cognitive categorization into different configurations on the strength of the different levels of interest (attention) they attract, and therefore of the varying assessments of the significance of this or that grouping of features" (Arkhipov 2008: 159). Based on the above, we proceed from the hypothesis that participants in the modern English-language discourse of the United Nations create, through the use of various linguo-cognitive tools, a special model of the world order with a specific assessment of reality, and the goal is thus to discover and describe the conceptual and metaphorical foundations of this linguistic model.

<sup>2</sup> Ghafele R. 2004. The Metaphors of Globalization and Trade. An Analysis of the Language Used in the World Trade Organization. Vienna University. URL: [mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/37736/](http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/37736/) (accessed 21.06.2022).

## Material and Methodology

This study was conducted based on a conceptual and cognitive-semantic analysis of modern UN English-language discourse using the theory of conceptual metaphor developed by George Lakoff (Lakoff, Johnson 1980). To confirm our hypothesis, conceptual components contained in the statements of UN members and their lexical-semantic variants were identified, and the lexical-semantic fields underlying their verbalization analysed. Several “slots” were discovered in the discourse that were used to model stereotypical situations. To ensure that the study was comprehensive, we carried out a conceptological analysis that involved identifying a conceptual component, a figurative component built on metaphorization, and a value component, which allowed us to identify the attitudes of the communicants to the linguistic reality they construct (Slyshkin 2000). In the course of analysing the metaphorization, we identified the main source domains (family, interpersonal relationships, war, medicine, etc.) of conceptual metaphors for target domains (international relations, international legal settlement of disputes, issues on the international agenda, etc.).

The study was based on an analysis of speeches by delegates in various bodies of the UN system (the General Assembly, the Security Council, etc.). A total of 55 speeches were analysed, with their average duration clocking in at 15 minutes. In addition to the speeches of state leaders at meetings of UN bodies, we also studied the organization’s fundamental documents, as well as articles published on the official UN website on pressing global issues (eight articles in total).

## Results

Based on our research, we can identify a number of basic conceptual and metaphorical schemes that are verbalized through modern English in the discourse of the United Nations:

1. The structure and configuration of the world order and its underlying principles and mechanisms are represented within the framework of the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD IS A FAMILY. This is achieved with the help of the frequent use of the phraseological units *The UN Family* (the UN system is called a “family” – this is a fixed expression in UN parlance; it is also a frozen metaphor). *International Community or Global Community* – the international order is conceptualized in terms of a “parent–child” relationship within the metaphorical family scheme of “nurturant parents” (Lakoff 1995) of the cognitive-linguistic model, which the American linguist George Lakoff attributed to a clear manifestation of liberalism in the English language. This representation of reality is based on the parent’s desire to ensure the happiness of each child (in the respect, it would be appropriate to mention such clichés of UN discourse as *for the common good*, *for the good/benefit of all*, etc.), providing constant help and support and protecting them from countless dangers (or *evils* in Lakoff’s

terminology). It is worth noting that in both cases – in a “nurturant” family in which the elders and the strongest help the younger and weaker and in the UN discourse – a picture is constructed whereby more mature and stronger states (from the political and socio-economic point of view) protect and support states that are in the lowest stage of their development. A more detailed description of the dangers that the children need to be “protected” from, as well as how the concept of “children” is actualized in UN discourse, is presented in point 2 below.

It should also be noted that this system of conceptualizing the UN system as a family implies a high degree of solidarity among the members of the international community guided by common rules and principles (as in a family). This allows us to better understand and interpret the popular lexical tools that have become a “structural element” of this discourse: *leave no one behind* (a promise made to the international community in the Agenda 2030 fundamental document<sup>3</sup>; *make a difference together*; *empowering women at all levels*; *wellbeing for all at all ages*; *quality education for all / all women and girls*. The name of one of the most recent landmark UN documents – *Our Common Agenda*<sup>4</sup> – also fits into this English-language system of metaphorizing the United Nations in terms of family values.

The construction of a “common,” “familial” space of reality in which the subjects face and solve problems together, under the unambiguous condition of the stronger supporting the weaker, can be demonstrated in the following statements made by UN delegates during meetings of the UN General Assembly (the elements of statements provided here and throughout this paper that are relevant to the study are italicized):

“But our *shared grief* is a poignant reminder that *our collective* future will hinge on our ability to recognize *our common humanity* and to *act together*” (remarks by President Biden Before the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly)<sup>5</sup>.

“*As a global community*, we’re challenged by urgent and looming crises wherein lie enormous opportunities [...] Will *we work together* to save lives, *defeat COVID-19* everywhere...?” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>6</sup>.

“And in that *chorus of voices across* languages and continents, we hear a *common cry*: a cry for dignity – simple dignity” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. URL: [sdgs.un.org/2030agenda](https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda) (accessed 29.06.2022).

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Secretary-General’s Report “Our Common Agenda.” URL: [un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/](https://un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/) (accessed 29.06.2022).

<sup>5</sup> Remarks by President Biden Before the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. 2021. United Nations Headquarters, New York. 21.09.2021. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/21/remarks-by-president-biden-before-the-76th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly/> (accessed 10.12.2023).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

The world order is thus presented as a product of the activities of all countries, united by common values, norms and rules. These values are enshrined in the fundamental text of the UN that set the precedents for this discourse: the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and official agenda documents (in particular the 2030 Agenda), which the participants in the organization often refer to as a “source of authority” to defend their positions (Slyshkin 2000):

“Will we apply and strengthen *the core tenets* of the international system, including the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as we seek to shape the emergence of new technologies and deter new threats? Or *will we allow these universal principles to be trampled and twisted* in the pursuit of naked political power?” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>8</sup>.

We can conclude from this excerpt that the person talking assumes that all members of the global community – members of the “family” – are familiar with these texts and the values they expound (universal solidarity, equality, the desire to improve the quality of life of the population, the protection of human rights, assistance to those in need, etc.). There is no getting around mentioning the peculiarities of the use of the basic metaphorical concept of OBJECTIVIZATION (Ches 2017), through which the values and principles of the United Nations (themselves intangible phenomena) are presented as objects that are susceptible to manipulation in one form or another (“*principles to be trampled and twisted*”). At the same time, the unambiguously negative axiologization of these lexemes assumes the presupposition that such manipulations are harmful and that this object must be protected from them, which is expressed in the rhetorical question: “*Will we allow these universal principles to be trampled and twisted?*” A similar conceptualization of the common values of the UN “family” that invokes precedent texts can be seen in the following examples:

“Our approach is firmly grounded and fully consistent with the United Nations’ mission and the values we’ve agreed to when we drafted this Charter. These are commitments *we all made* and that *we’re all bound to uphold*” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>9</sup>.

“Finally, Building Back Better demands strengthening democratic governance, human rights protection and the rule of law, *in line with* the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”<sup>10</sup>.

Moreover, such a scheme for conceptualizing the relationships between actors as identical to those between members of the same family provides opportunities to analyse the current types of hierarchy and order their interactions. This is directly connected to point 2 presented below.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Rebirthing the Global Economy to deliver Sustainable Development. URL: [un.org/en/coronavirus/building-back-better-requires-transforming-development-model-latin-america-and-caribbean](https://un.org/en/coronavirus/building-back-better-requires-transforming-development-model-latin-america-and-caribbean) (accessed 22.06.2022).

“[...] the commitment of my new administration to help lead the world toward a more peaceful, prosperous future *for all people*” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>11</sup>.

“The United States will compete, and will compete vigorously, and *lead with our values and our strength*” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>12</sup>.

“[...] using the power of our development aid to invest in new ways of *lifting people up around the world*; of renewing and *defending democracy*” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>13</sup>.

“And as the United States seeks to *rally the world to action*, we will *lead* not just with the example of our power but, God willing, with the *power of our example*” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>14</sup>.

In the examples given above, special attention is drawn to the representation of the hierarchical system of relationships between international actors: who will *lead* (“to help lead the world toward...”); who will carry out what the speaker sees as good tasks (“*lifting people up around the world*; of renewing and *defending democracy*”); and who is expected to join them (“seeks to *rally the world to action*”).

2. According to our findings, four main slots can be identified for studying the conceptualization of the relationship between state and non-state actors on the international stage in UN English-language discourse that are connected within the framework of “specific unified frameworks of knowledge, or coherent schematizations of experience” (Fillmore 1985): conceptualizing the participants in the experience and their relationships, as well as the environment in which their relationships unfold (Karasik 2002; Kovalev 2020) (one slot relates to the conditions of reality, while the remaining three slots relate to the types of participants):

- **Slot one.** These are the conditions of the reality of interactions between state and non-state associations, that is, the problems, challenges and threats that were the reason for the UN’s creation in the first place, and which the organization continues to fight today (*Main Challenges and Threats*). Conceptualization is carried out through lexemes with a pronounced negative axiological component, the lexical composition of which includes semes of anxiety, fear, hostility and intransigence (in the fight against them). The most prominent among them include climate change, which in UN English-language discourse is more often referred to not simply as “*climate change*,” but rather as the “*climate crisis*,” “*the climate emergency*,” or even “*climate chaos*”; pandemics (in modern English-language discourse, most talk of pandemics relates to the COVID-19 virus), which is represented in an anthropomorphic representation of an

<sup>11</sup> Remarks by President Biden Before the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. 2021. United Nations Headquarters, New York. 21.09.2021. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/21/remarks-by-president-biden-before-the-76th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly/> (accessed 10.12.2023).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



“enemy” that must be *defeated*; pollution and the destruction of the environment; armed conflicts; infringement of the rights of vulnerable groups of the population; and socio-economic inequality.

Below are statements by the UN Secretary-General and representatives of countries in which the speakers characterize the main challenges of the modern world order and construct a semantic field with a pronounced negative evaluative component. To further develop Lakoff’s conceptual metaphor about “nurturant parents,” we can say that, in this specific discourse, RELATIONS AMONG STATES ARE PARENT–CHILD RELATIONS, and THE LEADER STATE IS A NURTURANT PARENT. The statements verbalize the reality of “dangers,” problems and challenges (*evils* (Lakoff 1995), from which “parents” need to protect their “children”:

“The meeting is taking place at *an extremely challenging moment* for multilateralism and global governance, with the international order *at risk of coming apart at the seams*, with challenges that include *the climate emergency*, the COVID-19 pandemic...”<sup>15</sup>.

“Bombs and bullets cannot *defend against* COVID-19 or its future variants. To fight this pandemic, we need a collective act of science and political will” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>16</sup>.

It is also important to note that, in modern UN English-language discourse, the “family” shares not only the benefits of the organization (which is demonstrated in the statements in the previous paragraph), but also the tragic, negative and destructive experience that is verbalized by communicants through the use of hyperbole (in this case, hyperbole of the universality of a negative phenomenon):

“We’ve lost so much to this *devastating pandemic* that continues to *claim lives around the world* and impact so much on our existence. We’re mourning more than 4.5 million people – *people of every nation from every background*” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>17</sup>.

“[...] the challenging climate we’re *all* feeling already *ravaging every part of our world* with extreme weather...” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>18</sup>.

“It is the only way to avoid widespread food shortages, deepening *climate chaos*, and a wave of poverty and destitution that will *leave no country untouched*”<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Strengthening Multilateralism “Only Way” to Peaceful World for All: Guterres. URL: [news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1122212](https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1122212) (accessed 22.06.2022).

<sup>16</sup> Remarks by President Biden Before the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. 2021. United Nations Headquarters, New York. 21.09.2021. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/21/remarks-by-president-biden-before-the-76th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly/> (accessed 10.12.2023).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Strengthening Multilateralism “Only Way” to Peaceful World for All: Guterres. URL: [news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1122212](https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1122212) (accessed 22.06.2022).

“The extreme weather events that we have seen *in every part of the world* – and *you all know* it and feel it – represent what the Secretary-General has rightly called ‘*code red for humanity*’” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>20</sup>.

“Describing this as ‘*collective suicide*,’ the UN chief called for a ‘renewable energy revolution,’ with ending the *global addiction* to fossil fuels as the top priority”<sup>21</sup>.

In addition to the terrifying image of “*collective suicide*,” the last excerpt is also interesting in its use of the phrase “*global addiction to fossil fuels*,” in which the speaker conceptualizes what he perceives to be a negative phenomenon, namely, the widespread use of fossil fuels), by likening it to a disease, which serves as the source of the metaphor and establishes a connection between this phenomenon and the painful dependence on it. The result is the creation of a certain semantic field of the conceptual metaphor USING FOSSIL FUELS IS A COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOUR: 1) fossil fuels are harmful; 2) relying on fossil fuels is a compulsive behaviour (addiction); 3) (almost) everyone suffers from the behaviour.

We can thus state that the first slot defines a negative background of interactions between subjects, one that is full of threats and dangers. This serves to strengthen the linguistic model of a “family of nurturant parents” in terms of representing the urgent need to provide support and assistance to those who are weaker (or, in this case, for more developed countries to provide support and assistance to less developed countries).

The remaining slots (slots two, three and four) refer directly to the participants, the subjects of communication, which are divided heterogeneously, but nevertheless within three main categories.

- **The first category** – states that are represented as being capable of acting as leaders when it comes to countering threats (that is, the “parents” in accordance with the conceptual model of the liberal family with nurturant parents discussed above). The main criteria for inclusion in this group are most often material indicators: the state of the economy; the level of prosperity and standard of living of the population; the level of technological and infrastructural development. However, the democratic political system of the state is also taken into consideration. This encompasses *developed countries/the developed world, major democracies, major economies, advanced nations, and rich countries*. It is this category of states that carries the “parental” burden of responsibility for overcoming problems in the world, and which have the moral duty to allocate funds to the relevant sectors of the economy and earmarked funds, invest in countries that appeal for assistance, and provide other types of support (which may not be specified or elaborated upon in the speeches of delegates):

<sup>20</sup> Remarks by President Biden Before the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. 2021. United Nations Headquarters, New York. 21.09.2021. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/21/remarks-by-president-biden-before-the-76th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly/> (accessed 10.12.2023).

<sup>21</sup> Strengthening Multilateralism “Only Way” to Peaceful World for All: Guterres. URL: [news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1122212](https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1122212) (accessed 22.06.2022).



“And *we in the developed world* must recognise our *obligation to help*” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Boris Johnson)<sup>22</sup>.

“I committed that the UK would provide £11.6 billion to help the rest of the world to tackle climate change” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Boris Johnson)<sup>23</sup>.

“President Biden and G7 partners agreed to launch the bold new global infrastructure initiative Build Back Better World (B3W), a values-driven, high-standard, and transparent infrastructure partnership led by *major democracies to help narrow the \$40+ trillion infrastructure need in the developing world*”<sup>24</sup>.

Note that the communicants associate support for small states not only with the moral obligation on the part of the “parents” of this large family, but also with the positive outcomes that such support will bring for the entire planet:

“And these investments will not only help the countries of the world to tackle climate change: they will produce *millions and millions* of high wage, high skill jobs, and today’s workforce and *the next generation* will have the *extra satisfaction* of knowing that they are not only doing something useful – such as providing clean energy – but helping to *save the planet* at the same time” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Boris Johnson)<sup>25</sup>.

- **The second category** is the most populous. It includes states of groups of states that are characterized as “victims” of various modern challenges and threats (Novikov, Britsyna 2020). This group can be classified as the “children” (according to the conceptual model of the family we have been using), that is, those states or communities that suffer from numerous problems and are unable to solve them on their own. There are many nomination options for this category in modern UN English-language discourse, depending on the context, as well as on one’s perspective on the issue. These countries are thus grouped based on their inadequate economic, technological, and political development (the perceived deficiency of democracy), as well as the lack of the capacity to counteract natural disasters, all of which place them in a “vulnerable” or weak position. This notion is expressed in the UN English-language discourse, for example, in phrases such as: [those who] *face unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities*<sup>26</sup>. This category is verbalized by such lexemes and phraseological units as *developing countries/the developing world, the least developed countries, emerg-*

<sup>22</sup> PM speech at the UN General Assembly: 22 September 2021. GOV.UK. 23.09.2021. URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-the-un-general-assembly-22-september-2021> (accessed 10.12.2023).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Fact Sheet: President Biden and G7 Leaders Launch Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership. URL: [www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/12/fact-sheet-president-biden-and-g7-leaders-launch-build-back-better-world-b3wpartnership/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/12/fact-sheet-president-biden-and-g7-leaders-launch-build-back-better-world-b3wpartnership/) (accessed 23.06.2022).

<sup>25</sup> PM speech at the UN General Assembly: 22 September 2021. GOV.UK. 23.09.2021. URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-the-un-general-assembly-22-september-2021> (accessed 10.12.2023).

<sup>26</sup> Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States (at the ambassadorial level). URL: [media.un.org/en/asset/k1y/k1yu3lmsgo](https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1y/k1yu3lmsgo) (accessed 23.06.2022).

ing economies, SIDS (Small Island Developing States), landlocked states, low lying islands/countries, and low/middle-income countries. Another criterion for representing “victims” that we should mention is vulnerability – the weakness of a particular social community, its “social alienation,” its lack of the necessary means of subsistence or access to necessary products and services, and infringements on its rights. This category is described using the lexemes *vulnerable*, *marginalized*, *underprivileged*, *poor(er)*, *disadvantaged*, *those in need*, etc. Often, entire segments of the population are defined here: women, children (sometimes girls are placed in a separate category), refugees, people with disabilities, elderly people, and minorities (sexual, national, linguistic, and so on):

“[...] the most *vulnerable populations* and individuals are once again being hit the hardest”<sup>27</sup>.

“*Women*, who make up the majority of the workforce in economic sectors being most affected, now must also bear the brunt of additional caregiving”<sup>28</sup>.

“*Older persons and persons with disabilities* are at much higher risk of death from the virus. *Indigenous peoples* and people of African descent, as well as *migrants and refugees*, are also suffering disproportionately, as vulnerability multiplies”<sup>29</sup>.

- **The third category** is the category of state and non-state entities that do not fall into either of the above groups, since, from the point of view of the picture of the world constructed in UN English-language discourse, they are situated outside the boundaries of the “family” and do not share its “common” values and commitments. Nomination in this case is typically carried out either directly (the states in question are clear in the examples provided below), or with the help of non-specific descriptive phrases such as “they” and “those who...” without reference to certain classes of subjects (unlike the previous two categories, whose nomination is determined precisely by their class).

It is important to note here that this category of the linguistic model of the world includes both those who are represented as having directly committed a specific crime (for example, states that have violated specific clauses of an international legal document), as well as those who do not follow the recommended rules and norms that are considered “common” for everyone – for example, those actors who oppose liberal political and socio-economic values:

“Only global cooperation [...] can ensure competition is fair and does not *succumb to protectionism*, with its *certain path to lost jobs and international confrontation*” (73rd Session of the UN General Assembly, Theresa May)<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Rebirthing the Global Economy to deliver Sustainable Development. URL: [un.org/en/coronavirus/building-back-better-requires-transforming-development-model-latin-america-and-caribbean](https://un.org/en/coronavirus/building-back-better-requires-transforming-development-model-latin-america-and-caribbean) (accessed 22.06.2022)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> PM speech to the UN General Assembly: 26 September 2018. GOV.UK. 26.09.2018. URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-to-the-un-general-assembly-26-september-2018> (accessed 10.12.2023).

Of particular interest in this statement by former British Prime Minister Theresa May is the expression “*succumb to protectionism*.” The policy of protectionism is verbalized here as a destructive, pernicious force – a temptation to which one might succumb (a reference to the fixed phrase *succumb to temptations*<sup>31</sup>), or from which one could die, like a disease (a reference to the fixed phrase *succumb to a disease*<sup>32</sup>). It is also important to establish a logical connection between protectionism and “*its certain path to lost jobs*”).

“Externally, *malign actors* seek to *weaponize instability* against other states. *Iran, for example*, undermines the stability of its neighbors by using fragile states or non-state actors as proxies, contributing to protracted conflicts and complex humanitarian crises” (remarks at a UN Security Council Open Debate on Fragile States, January 6, 2021)<sup>33</sup>.

This statement demonstrates that in UN English-language discourse this category of subjects can be nominated from the point of view of a certain class of subjects – in this case, the communicant calls the state of Iran a “*malign actor*.”

“We must stick by our principles and act quickly when states *fail to comply with their obligations* [...] We urge Syria to meet its obligations” (UK statement: General Debate of the UN General Assembly First Committee)<sup>34</sup>.

“We have deep concerns about Iran’s *destabilising activity* and its ballistic missile activities are *inconsistent with UNSCR 2231* [...]; Iran’s escalatory nuclear *activity undermines* the counter-proliferation value of the JCPoA and *threatens its preservation*” (UK statement: General Debate of the UN General Assembly First Committee)<sup>35</sup>.

What is interesting in this example, again, is the author’s reference to precedent texts – international legal documents, specifically the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 (UNSCR 2231) and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) on Iran’s nuclear programme, which, along with the UN documents discussed in the previous point, act as a guarantor of the common values of the organization. It is precisely the deviation from these values that is represented as a dangerous violation of common foundations, fraught with disastrous consequences. Through the basic metaphorical concept of OBJECTIVIZATION, values and mechanisms enshrined in documents are modelled as material objects that need to be protected from harmful actions and whose integrity may be violated (“*undermines* the counter-proliferation value of the JCPoA and *threatens its preservation*”).

<sup>31</sup> Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries. 2022. URL: [oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) (accessed 23.06.2022).

<sup>32</sup> Merriam Webster. 2022. URL: [merriam-webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com/) (accessed 23.06.2022).

<sup>33</sup> Remarks at a UN Security Council Open Debate on Fragile States. 2021. The US Mission to the UN. 06.01.2021. URL: <https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-open-debate-on-fragile-states-via-vtc/> (accessed 10.12.2023).

<sup>34</sup> UK statement: General Debate of the UN General Assembly First Committee. 2021. GOV.UK. 06.10.2021. URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uk-statement-general-debate-of-the-un-general-assembly-first-committee> (accessed 12.12.2023).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

3. Our analysis of the slots above allows us to attribute this type of linguistic representation of reality to the well-known conceptual and metaphorical model of a “just war,” or the “fairy tale of the just war” in the English version put forward by the American linguist George Lakoff (Lakoff 1991). According to this model, communicants divide the reality around them conceptually into the categories of villains, victims and heroes (“Cast of characters: a villain, a victim, and a hero” (Ibid.)), and there is an inherent asymmetry within such relationships: the villains oppose the heroes and automatically adopt a position of immorality and baselessness. In the type of discourse considered here, “villains” are represented by countries or other entities that violate the principles of international law and/or states that adhere to policies of isolationism, autarky, and other anti-globalist strategies. Meanwhile, the “victims” are the various categories of developing countries discussed above, as well as a number of “vulnerable” segments of the population. Finally, the “heroes/saviours” are developed, high-income, democratic countries.

At the same time, as Lakoff emphasizes, heroes often do not have any reason to converse with villains in order to ascertain who is right in the dispute, since the villain is illogical and irrational, and the only answer is to fight them: “The hero is rational, but though the villain may be cunning and calculating, he cannot be reasoned with. Heroes thus cannot negotiate with villains; they must defeat them” (Ibid.).

A similar conceptualization of the righteous and decisive fight against “evil” is particularly evident in the rhetoric of U.S. President Joe Biden during his speech at the 76<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly:

*“Those who commit acts of terrorism against us will continue to find a determined enemy in the United States”* (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>36</sup>.

The next excerpt is noteworthy for the clear categorization constructed by the author through the technique of opposition, in which he draws a line between those who are open to future prospects within the framework of the general experience of the UN family, and those who are not (and who thus find themselves outside of this “universal” experience).

*“The future will belong to those who embrace human dignity, not trample it. The future will belong to those who unleash the potential of their people, not those who stifle it. The future will belong to those who give their people the ability to breathe free, not those who seek to suffocate their people with an iron hand”* (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Remarks by President Biden Before the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. 2021. United Nations Headquarters, New York. 21.09.2021. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/21/remarks-by-president-biden-before-the-76th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly/> (accessed 10.12.2023).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

In this example, the abundance of abstract phenomena – human dignity, potential, ability – is also noteworthy. And while these phenomena are “materialized” through cognitive-linguistic tools (see the basic concept of OBJECTIVIZATION mentioned above; in this case, manipulations are carried out with the help of the conceptualized objects *trample*, *stifle*, and *suffocate with an iron hand*), it is up to the recipient to interpret the communicative message because the individuals responsible for “trampling human dignity,” “stifling the potential of their people,” and “suffocating their people with an iron hand” are not actually named.

This next statement clearly fits into the context of a “just war”:

“The authoritarianism of the world may seek to proclaim the end of the age of democracy, but *they’re wrong*. The *truth is: the democratic world is everywhere*. It lives in the anti-corruption activists, the human rights defenders, the journalists, the peace protestors on the frontlines of this struggle in Belarus, Burma, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, and everywhere in between” (the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, Joe Biden)<sup>38</sup>.

The lexeme “*struggle*,” combined in the semantic field of the statement with the lexeme “*truth*,” forms an unambiguous segmentation of the subjects of reality in accordance with the model of conceptual opposition *FRIEND* vs. *FOE* (Ches 2017): groups of democratic forces are associated with the first category (a positive assessment); meanwhile, authoritarian countries, whose “otherness” is constructed using the pronoun *they*, are associated with the second group.

## Conclusion

Our analysis of modern UN English-language discourse allows us to trace the conceptual foundations of the construction of the modern world order. Of particular note the dichotomy of the communication techniques “unification versus segmentation.” On the one hand, we see a profiling of the sign of commonality: the universality of values as seen in the appeal to the source domain of the “family,” as well as the universality of positive and negative phenomena that occur in the world, which extend to all “members of the family,” compelling them to help the “vulnerable,” and developed countries to carry out their moral duty to support others. On the other hand, we see a division of the world space into various categories, and a clear drawing of boundaries between these categories, indicating a hierarchy of their relations, and of their roles in society. The latter is accomplished through the use of the conceptual opposition of *FRIEND* vs. *FOE* and the special conceptual-metaphorical model of *The fairy tale of the just war*, as well as the conceptual metaphors: 1) THE WORLD IS A FAMILY (subjects that do not accept the values of the “family” are excluded as “others”); 2) RELATIONS AMONG STATES ARE PARENT–CHILD RELATIONS, AND THE LEADER STATE

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

IS A NURTURANT PARENT (“us” in this case refers to a group of “parent” states, represented in English as developed democracies and advanced economies: *developed countries, major democracies/economies, advanced nations*, as well as the heavily populated group of “children” who receive the support they need, with a variety of nomination options: *countries with special needs, the developing world, landlocked states, vulnerable, marginalized*, etc.).

Understanding the conceptual and metaphorical foundations of modern UN English-language discourse allows us to identify the fundamental principles of the linguistic construction of reality, which can be used both in the teaching of English and translation studies (thanks to the adoption of concepts of frequency and supporting cognitive-linguistic tools), and in further research on the modern social political discourse of the English language, which could then enter the mainstream of a pragmatic approach to determining specific speech strategies and tactics. The results of this study would be useful in a comparative analysis aimed at identifying similarities and differences in the conceptualization of the modern world order in English-language discourse and the discourses of other official UN languages in terms of their unique linguistic pictures of the world (for example, French, Russian and others).

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The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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