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AN INTEGRATIVE METHODOLOGY FOR DETECTING IMPLICIT PROPAGANDA IN POLITICAL MEDIA DISCOURSE

Summary. The article proposes an integrative methodology for detecting implicit propaganda in political media discourse. Although numerous theoretical approaches to propaganda analysis have been developed, including Critical Discourse Analysis, socio-cognitive theory, framing theory, narrative analysis, pragmatics, and multimodal discourse analysis, most of them examine only individual dimensions of propagandistic communication and do not provide their systematic integration into a unified methodological framework. The aim of the study is to develop and theoretically substantiate an integrative methodology that combines complementary analytical approaches to comprehensively detect implicit propaganda.

The proposed methodology is grounded in five conceptual principles: multidimensionality, contextuality, multimodality, cognitive mediation, and implicit meaning. Based on these principles, an eight-level analytical model has been developed, encompassing lexical, grammatical, discursive, narrative, framing, pragmatic, cognitive, and multimodal levels of analysis. These levels are integrated into a six-step analytical procedure that enables a systematic transition from describing the linguistic features of a text to reconstructing implicit ideological meanings and the cognitive mechanisms underlying their construction.

To demonstrate the practical applicability of the proposed methodology, the framework is applied to an official statement published on the website of the Embassy of the russian federation in Germany. The findings demonstrate that implicit propaganda is constructed through the cumulative interaction of linguistic, discursive, pragmatic, cognitive, and visual mechanisms rather than through explicit persuasive devices alone. The proposed methodology does not replace existing approaches to propaganda analysis but integrates and operationalises their principal theoretical contributions within a single transparent and reproducible analytical framework. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the development of a comprehensive methodology for the integrated analysis of implicit propaganda in contemporary political media discourse.

Key words: implicit propaganda, political media discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis, framing, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, analytical framework.

Statement of the problem. Despite extensive research on propaganda across linguistics, communication studies, political science, and media studies, the systematic identification of implicit propaganda remains a significant methodological challenge. Unlike explicit propaganda, which relies on overt ideological appeals, evaluative language, or direct persuasive strategies, implicit propaganda operates through subtle linguistic, cognitive, discursive, and semiotic mechanisms that gradually shape recipients' interpretations of political reality [1; 2]. These mechanisms are typically realised through lexical choices [3, pp. 54–75], grammatical constructions [3, pp. 104–122], framing strategies [4, pp. 52–55], narrative organisation [5, pp. 614–620], pragmatic inferences [6, pp. 167–225; 7, pp. 25–41], cognitive processes [8, pp. 85–107], and multimodal resources [9, pp. 17–42]. Consequently, implicit propaganda cannot be adequately understood as a set of isolated textual features but should be viewed as a multidimensional communicative phenomenon produced through the integration of multiple levels of meaning construction.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Although numerous theoretical approaches have contributed to the study of propaganda and ideological discourse, they have largely developed independently and remain methodologically fragmented. Critical Discourse Analysis has demonstrated how language reproduces ideology and power relations [3; 10]; socio-cognitive theory has explained the role of mental models and social cognition in ideological interpretation [8]; framing theory has examined the selective organisation of political reality [4]; narrative approaches have revealed the ideological functions of recurring storylines [5; 11]; pragmatic theories have investigated implicit meaning through presupposition, implicature, and inference [6; 7]; and social semiotics together with multimodal discourse analysis have expanded propaganda research beyond verbal language by examining the interaction of linguistic and visual semiotic resources [9; 12]. Collectively, these approaches provide a rich theoretical understanding of propagandistic communication. However, they primarily address individual dimensions of the phenomenon and offer comparatively limited guidance for integrating their analytical insights into a coherent methodology for identifying implicit propaganda.

The principal methodological challenge, therefore, lies not in the absence of theoretical explanations of propaganda but in the lack of an operational analytical framework that can systematically integrate complementary perspectives into a unified procedure. Existing studies have predominantly focused on separate linguistic, discursive, cognitive, pragmatic, narrative, framing, or multimodal mechanisms, whereas implicit propaganda is produced through their cumulative effect. Addressing this challenge requires a methodology that translates established theoretical insights into a systematic analytical procedure capable of revealing how these mechanisms jointly contribute to ideological influence.

The novelty of the present study lies in the development of an integrative methodology for detecting implicit propaganda in political media discourse. Rather than proposing a new theory of propaganda, the study synthesises and operationalises complementary insights from existing theoretical traditions into a unified analytical framework. The proposed methodology establishes a set

of theoretically grounded methodological principles and a multi-level analytical procedure that integrates lexical, grammatical, discursive, narrative, framing, pragmatic, cognitive, and multimodal analysis within a single coherent framework.

The **purpose of this study** is to develop and theoretically substantiate an integrative methodology for detecting implicit propaganda in political media discourse by synthesising existing approaches into a unified analytical framework and demonstrating its applicability to the systematic analysis of political media texts.

The main findings. The proposed framework was developed through a comparative synthesis of established theories of propaganda, political discourse, cognition, pragmatics, and multimodal communication, including Critical Discourse Analysis [4; 10], socio-cognitive theory [8], framing theory [4], narrative theory [5], pragmatics [6], and social semiotics [9]. Rather than treating these approaches as competing paradigms, the framework identifies their complementary analytical contributions and integrates them into a unified methodology for detecting implicit propaganda. It systematises and operationalises existing theoretical insights on the premise that implicit propaganda is constructed through the convergence of lexical, grammatical, discursive, narrative, framing, pragmatic, cognitive, and multimodal mechanisms rather than from isolated linguistic features. The comparative synthesis of these theoretical approaches gives rise to five methodological principles. Each principle is theoretically grounded in one or more established approaches to propaganda and discourse analysis.

The first principle, *multidimensionality*, draws upon Critical Discourse Analysis [3; 10]. It conceptualises propaganda as a complex communicative phenomenon that operates simultaneously across several dimensions of discourse. Lexical choices, grammatical constructions, discourse organisation, narrative patterns, framing strategies, pragmatic meanings, cognitive representations, and visual elements jointly contribute to the construction of ideological messages. None of these dimensions is considered sufficient in isolation. Instead, the framework assumes that implicit propaganda arises from their cumulative, mutually reinforcing interactions. Accordingly, the proposed methodology incorporates eight complementary analytical levels, each corresponding to a particular dimension of propagandistic communication while contributing to an integrated analysis of implicit ideological influence.

The second principle, *contextuality*, is also derived from Critical Discourse Analysis, which emphasises that meaning can only be interpreted within its social, political, and communicative context [3; 10]. Accordingly, linguistic expressions cannot be analysed independently of the political, historical, cultural, and institutional circumstances in which they are produced and interpreted [3, pp. 54–75; 8, pp. 87–107]. The same lexical item, grammatical construction, or narrative pattern may function as a neutral description in one communicative situation but acquire propagandistic significance in another. Therefore, the proposed framework analyses textual features in relation to broader contextual variables, including the political situation, institutional affiliation of the media outlet, target audience, historical references, and intertextual connections with previous political narratives. This contextual orientation reduces the risk of identifying isolated linguistic forms as propagandistic without considering their communicative function.

The third principle, *multimodality*, is based on social semiotics and multimodal discourse analysis, which demonstrate that ideological meaning is constructed through the cumulative effect of multiple verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources [9; 12]. Accordingly, the proposed framework assumes that implicit propaganda is communicated not only through language but also through visual and other semiotic modes. Contemporary political communication increasingly relies on the integration of images, colour, typography, page layout, symbolic representations, and visual composition, all of which contribute to the construction of ideological meaning [9; 12]. Consequently, the framework treats multimodal resources as integral components of propagandistic discourse rather than as supplementary illustrations. Verbal and visual elements are therefore analysed as mutually reinforcing semiotic systems that jointly shape audience interpretation and ideological persuasion [9, pp. 17–34].

The fourth principle, *cognitive mediation*, is rooted in socio-cognitive theory and cognitive linguistics, which explain persuasion through the activation of mental models, conceptual structures, and shared social knowledge [8; 14]. Accordingly, the proposed framework assumes that implicit propaganda primarily influences political interpretation by activating existing cognitive representations rather than directly imposing ideological beliefs [8, pp. 87–97]. Mental models, stereotypes, social identities, and culturally shared knowledge guide how recipients interpret political events and evaluate social actors [8, pp. 118–127]. Consequently, the analytical procedure extends beyond the identification of textual features to reconstruct the cognitive mechanisms through which discourse shapes ideological interpretation.

The fifth principle, *implicit meaning*, is grounded in pragmatic theories of communication, particularly the concepts of presupposition, conversational implicature, and inferential meaning [6; 15]. Since implicit propaganda rarely communicates ideological positions explicitly, it relies instead on indirect communicative mechanisms, including presuppositions, conversational implicatures, strategic ambiguity, selective framing, and narrative organisation [6; 7]. These mechanisms enable ideological meanings to remain largely unquestioned because they are inferred rather than directly asserted [15, pp. 43–46]. Accordingly, the proposed framework prioritises the identification of implicit assumptions and inferential processes through which political discourse constructs and normalises particular interpretations of reality, rather than focusing solely on overt persuasive language.

Taken together, these five methodological principles constitute the theoretical foundation of the proposed framework and justify its multidimensional analytical architecture. They establish the analytical assumptions that guide the systematic examination of implicit propaganda across lexical, grammatical, discursive, narrative, framing, pragmatic, cognitive, and multimodal dimensions. Rather than treating propaganda as a collection of isolated linguistic markers, the framework conceptualises it as an integrated communicative process in which ideological meaning results from the interaction of multiple communicative mechanisms.

Building upon these methodological principles, the proposed framework identifies eight interconnected analytical levels that together provide a systematic procedure for detecting implicit propaganda in political media discourse. The levels progress from observable linguistic features to more abstract discursive, cognitive, and multimodal mechanisms, reflecting the multidimensional nature of implicit ideological communication. Each level comprises a set of analytical markers that contribute to the identification of propagandistic meaning. Although each level captures a distinct dimension of communication, they are analytically interdependent and should

be interpreted as an integrated system rather than in isolation. The eight analytical levels include lexical, grammatical, discursive, narrative, framing, pragmatic, cognitive, and multimodal markers.

The first analytical level examines *lexical markers* that shape the evaluative representation of political actors, events, and processes. It includes the analysis of emotionally charged vocabulary, evaluative expressions, euphemisms, dysphemisms, metaphorical nominations, and ideologically motivated naming strategies [3, pp. 97–102; 1, pp. 734–736; 16, pp. 7–15]. Although lexical markers often provide the most immediately observable indicators of persuasive discourse [17, pp. 293–296], their propagandistic significance becomes evident only when interpreted together with the other analytical levels of the framework. Therefore, in the proposed framework, lexical analysis is conceptualised not as an isolated procedure but as the initial level of a multidimensional analysis integrating linguistic, discursive, cognitive, pragmatic, and multimodal dimensions.

The second analytical level examines *grammatical markers* that shape the representation of political actors, events, and causal relations. The analysis focuses on passive constructions, nominalisation, modality, impersonal constructions, and other grammatical devices that redistribute or obscure agency and responsibility [3, pp. 101–132; 13, pp. 31–42]. These grammatical choices influence how political events are interpreted by foregrounding certain participants while backgrounding or omitting others [3, pp. 103–104]. Although grammatical markers may appear ideologically neutral in isolation, their propagandistic function becomes apparent when analysed in relation to the broader discursive, pragmatic, cognitive, and multimodal context [10, pp. 14–21].

The third analytical level examines *discursive markers* that organise ideological meaning beyond individual linguistic forms. The analysis focuses on actor representation, agency attribution, legitimisation strategies, polarisation, intertextuality, and the construction of social relations between political actors [18, pp. 33–54; 19, pp. 63–94]. These discursive mechanisms shape how political events, participants, and power relations are represented, thereby influencing the audience's interpretation of political reality [8, pp. 117–127]. Since ideological positioning emerges from the organisation of discourse as a whole, discursive markers are analysed alongside the other analytical levels of the framework.

The fourth analytical level examines *narrative markers* that organise political discourse into coherent ideological storylines. The analysis identifies recurring narrative roles, such as hero, villain, victim, saviour, liberator, and historical mission, together with representations of threat, conflict, moral struggle, and resolution [5, pp. 614–620; 11, pp. 109–114]. These narrative structures shape the interpretation of political events by assigning moral significance to social actors and their actions [11, pp. 115–120]. Since narratives provide coherence across individual texts and facilitate the emotional and cognitive internalisation of ideological messages, they are analysed as an essential component of implicit propaganda [5, pp. 625–630].

The fifth analytical level examines *framing markers* that shape the interpretation of political events and social actors. The analysis identifies dominant framing patterns, including problem, conflict, security, humanitarian, responsibility, and victim frames [4, pp. 52–53; 20, pp. 95–110]. These framing strategies selectively foreground certain aspects of reality while omitting or downplaying others, thereby guiding the audience towards a preferred interpretation of political events [4, pp. 52–54]. Since framing influences how information is organised and evaluated rather than what information is explicitly communicated, framing markers constitute an important mechanism through which implicit ideological meanings are constructed [4, pp. 55–57].

The sixth analytical level examines *pragmatic markers* that convey ideological meaning indirectly. The analysis focuses on presuppositions, conversational implicatures, speech acts, strategic ambiguity, indirect evaluation, and other pragmatic mechanisms through which ideological assumptions remain implicit rather than explicitly stated [15, pp. 41–58; 6, pp. 167–225]. These mechanisms encourage audiences to infer particular interpretations without presenting them as direct assertions [6, pp. 102–104]. Consequently, pragmatic markers play a central role in identifying the hidden communicative strategies characteristic of implicit propaganda [21, pp. 33–55].

The seventh analytical level examines *cognitive markers* that reveal how political discourse shapes the audience's interpretation of reality. The analysis identifies the activation of mental models, stereotypes, in-group/out-group categorisation, conceptual structures, and ideological schemas that guide the processing and evaluation of political information [8, pp. 61–87; 22, pp. 3–20]. By reconstructing the cognitive representations underlying discourse, this level explains how linguistic and discursive choices influence ideological interpretation and contribute to the formation or reinforcement of political beliefs [8, pp. 118–127].

The final analytical level incorporates *visual and multimodal resources*. It examines multimodal markers such as photographs, colour symbolism, visual composition, layout, typography, iconography, and other semiotic elements that interact with verbal discourse [9; 12]. The inclusion of multimodal analysis reflects the growing importance of visual communication in contemporary political media and acknowledges that ideological meanings are often reproduced through the coordination of verbal and visual modes [9, pp. 17–34].

Collectively, these eight analytical levels provide a comprehensive model for investigating implicit propaganda as a multidimensional communicative phenomenon. Rather than functioning as independent analytical modules, the levels operate sequentially and cumulatively, enabling researchers to move from observable textual features toward increasingly abstract ideological and cognitive interpretations. This integrative organisation of analytical levels represents the methodological contribution of the proposed framework.

The proposed framework is operationalised through a six-step *analytical procedure* that systematically identifies implicit propaganda. The procedure progresses from descriptive linguistic analysis to interpretative reconstruction of ideological meaning, ensuring methodological transparency and analytical consistency.

The analysis begins with the identification of lexical and grammatical features that may signal evaluative or ideologically motivated representation. This stage includes emotionally loaded vocabulary, naming strategies, euphemisms, modality, passive constructions, nominalisation, and agency manipulation [3; 1, pp. 734–736].

The second step investigates how discourse organises social actors, distributes responsibility, legitimises political actions, constructs polarisation, and establishes intertextual connections. The objective is to determine the communicative strategies through which political reality is represented [18; 19].

The third step identifies the dominant narratives and interpretative frames that organise the discourse. Particular attention is paid to recurring roles (hero, enemy, victim, liberator), representations of threat, and the framing of political events through conflict, security, humanitarian, or victim perspectives [4, pp. 52–55; 5, pp. 614–620; 11, pp. 109–120].

The fourth step analyses implicit communicative meanings by identifying presuppositions, conversational implicatures, speech acts, strategic ambiguity, and other inferential mechanisms through which ideological assumptions are conveyed indirectly [15; 6]. This stage is based on the assumption that political discourse frequently communicates meanings that are not explicitly stated but are reconstructed by recipients through pragmatic inference [21].

The fifth step interprets how the identified linguistic and pragmatic mechanisms activate mental models, stereotypes, ideological schemas, and in-group/out-group categorizations. This stage explains how discourse influences audience cognition rather than merely describing textual features [8; 23].

The final step synthesises evidence from all analytical levels to determine whether the discourse performs a propagandistic function. Rather than relying on isolated markers, the assessment considers the cumulative interaction of lexical, grammatical, discursive, narrative, framing, pragmatic, cognitive, and multimodal indicators. Propaganda is thus understood as an emergent property of the integrated communicative system rather than the presence of any single linguistic feature [17, pp. 293–296; 8; 9].

To illustrate *the applicability of the proposed analytical framework*, an official statement published on the website of the russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Embassy of the russian federation in Germany) was selected as a case study. The analysed text, *Press Release on the Foreign Ministry Report on the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Situation in Certain Countries*, is available at: https://germany.mid.ru/de/aktuelles/pressemitteilungen/press_release_on_the_foreign_ministry_report_indigenous_peoples_rights_situation_in_certain_countrie/. The statement addresses the issue of indigenous peoples' rights and provides a suitable example for demonstrating how the proposed framework identifies implicit propagandistic mechanisms operating across multiple analytical levels.

The proposed framework reveals that the text constructs its ideological message by coordinating multiple communicative mechanisms rather than through overt propagandistic language. At *the lexical level*, evaluative expressions such as *systematic discrimination*, *violations*, *colonial legacy*, and *double standards* portray Western governments as persistent violators of human rights. *Grammatical choices*, including passive constructions and nominalisations, foreground alleged violations while obscuring agency and evidential responsibility. *Discursively*, Western states are consistently represented as perpetrators, indigenous peoples as victims, and Russia as an impartial observer defending international justice. This representation is reinforced by a *narrative structure* centred on the victim–villain–hero opposition and by a humanitarian *frame* combined with the frame of Western double standards. Pragmatic analysis identifies presuppositions and strategic omissions that present ideological assumptions as uncontested facts, while the cognitive level demonstrates the activation of familiar mental models of Western hypocrisy. Finally, the institutional visual design and official governmental symbols enhance the credibility of the message by reinforcing its appearance of factual authority.

Taken together, these interacting mechanisms generate an implicit ideological message that is not expressed directly but emerges from the cumulative effect of multiple analytical levels. Rather than explicitly defending Russia, the text encourages readers to infer that Western states lack the moral authority to criticise Russia because they themselves systematically violate the human rights principles they publicly promote. This example demonstrates that implicit propaganda is most effectively identified through the integrated analysis of lexical, grammatical, discursive, narrative, framing, pragmatic, cognitive, and multimodal resources rather than through isolated linguistic indicators.

Conclusions. The proposed framework does not aim to replace existing approaches to propaganda analysis but to integrate their key theoretical and methodological insights into a comprehensive model for detecting implicit propaganda in political media discourse. Although previous research has developed valuable tools for examining particular aspects of propaganda, such as linguistic patterns, cognitive processes, discourse structures, pragmatic strategies, and multimodal resources, these approaches often address individual dimensions in isolation and provide limited explanation of how these mechanisms interact in the construction of ideological meaning. The proposed framework overcomes this limitation by bringing together complementary analytical perspectives within a unified methodological architecture.

Its principal contribution lies in reconceptualising propaganda as a multidimensional phenomenon whose meaning results from the convergence of linguistic, discursive, cognitive, pragmatic, narrative, and visual mechanisms rather than from isolated markers. By integrating these dimensions into a single analytical model, the framework enables a more systematic investigation of how implicit propagandistic meanings are constructed, reinforced, and interpreted in contemporary political media discourse.

Compared with existing approaches, the framework offers several methodological advantages.

First, it provides a multi-level analytical architecture that captures propagandistic mechanisms operating simultaneously at linguistic, discursive, narrative, pragmatic, cognitive, and multimodal levels. This allows researchers to identify subtle forms of ideological influence that may remain invisible when only a single analytical perspective is adopted.

Second, the framework offers a systematic and replicable analytical procedure. Unlike many qualitative approaches that rely heavily on researcher interpretation, the proposed model organises analysis into clearly defined stages, thereby increasing methodological transparency and facilitating comparative studies across different datasets.

Third, it explicitly incorporates implicit meaning as the central object of analysis. Existing approaches frequently prioritise explicit evaluative language or ideological statements, whereas the proposed framework systematically investigates presuppositions, implicatures, strategic ambiguity, indirect evaluation, and inferential processes through which propaganda operates covertly.

Fourth, the framework integrates cognitive reconstruction with textual analysis. Rather than describing discourse solely at the linguistic level, it explains how discourse activates mental models, stereotypes, ideological schemas, and in-group/out-group categorisations that influence audience interpretation. This integration strengthens the explanatory power of discourse analysis by connecting textual evidence with cognitive processing.

Finally, the framework recognises the inherently multimodal nature of contemporary political communication. Verbal language is analysed alongside visual imagery, colour, composition, symbolism, and layout, acknowledging that ideological meanings increasingly emerge through the cumulative effect of multiple semiotic resources.

Taken together, these characteristics distinguish the proposed framework from existing analytical approaches. Its novelty does not reside in introducing entirely new categories but in integrating established theoretical insights into a coherent, operational, and replicable methodology specifically designed for the systematic detection of implicit propaganda in political media discourse.

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Гусар М. Інтегративна методологія виявлення імпліцитної пропаганди в політичному медіадискурсі

Анотація. У статті запропоновано інтегративну методологію виявлення імпліцитної пропаганди в політичному медіадискурсі. Незважаючи на значну кількість теоретичних підходів до аналізу пропаганди, зокрема критичного дискурс-аналізу, соціокогнітивної теорії, теорії фреймінгу, наративного аналізу, прагматики та мультимодального дискурс-аналізу, більшість із них досліджують окремі аспекти пропагандистської комунікації та не забезпечують їх системної інтеграції в єдину методологічну модель. Метою дослідження є розроблення й теоретичне обґрунтування інтегративної методології, що поєднує комплементарні аналітичні підходи для комплексного виявлення імпліцитної пропаганди.

Запропонована методологія ґрунтується на п'яти концептуальних принципах: багатовимірності, контекстуальності, мультимодальності, когнітивної медіації та імпліцитності значення. На їх основі сформовано восьмирівневу модель аналізу, яка охоплює лексичний, граматичний, дискурсивний, наративний, фреймовий, прагматичний, когнітивний і мультимодальний рівні. Зазначені рівні інтегровано у шестикрокову процедуру аналізу, що забезпечує послідовний перехід від опису мовних особливостей тексту до реконструкції прихованих ідеологічних смислів і когнітивних механізмів їх формування.

Для демонстрації практичної застосовності методології здійснено аналіз офіційного повідомлення, опублікованого на сайті Посольства російської федерації в Німеччині. Результати аналізу засвідчують, що імпліцитна пропаганда формується завдяки сукупній дії лінгвістичних, дискурсивних, прагматичних, когнітивних і візуальних механізмів, а не лише за рахунок експліцитних засобів переконання. Запропонована методологія не замінює наявних підходів до аналізу пропаганди, а інтегрує й операціоналізує їхні основні теоретичні положення в єдину прозору та відтворювану аналітичну модель. Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у створенні цілісної методології комплексного аналізу імпліцитної пропаганди в сучасному політичному медіадискурсі.

Ключові слова: імпліцитна пропаганда, політичний медіадискурс, критичний дискурс-аналіз, фреймінг, прагматика, когнітивна лінгвістика, аналітична модель.

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