Abstract

Social media, such as Telegram, have been playing an increasingly important role in shaping the public discourse in Slovakia and abroad, including the issue of the perception of the main actors and practice of International Relations. This thesis explores the process of construction of identities of such actors in the most popular Telegram channels in Slovakia, which have been labelled as spreading disinformation or misinformation narratives, in the light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Theoretical approaches entailing post-structuralist perception of IR, Mental Models, Social Identity Theory, and Symbolic Interactionism are employed to understand the role of the examined narratives in shaping the foreign policy perception in Slovak society. When it comes to methodology, Qualitative Content Analysis is employed to identify the narratives portraying individual actors and their occurrence. Secondly, features of the Discourse-Historical Approach, complemented by van Dijk's classification of analytical categories of discourse structures, are used to examine the discursive strategies the posts used to convey the message to the audience. The outcomes of the analysis show a rather high degree of occurrence of the war in Ukraine as a topic and pinpoint Russia and Ukraine as the most frequently occurring actors. The portrayal of Russia presents the country as a positively powerful actor which is, however, in danger from the West. On the other hand, the narratives about Ukraine and western countries predominantly include predications of misuse of power, hypocrisy, but also weakness. Narratives connected to Slovakia advocate against helping Ukraine, criticise the governments before September 2023, and often search for an internal enemy. In the end, the summary is accompanied by proposals for further possible research.