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Pro-Ukrainian Memes Against the 2022 Russian Invasion. A Cognitive Linguistics Perspective

ABSTRACT

In relation to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, memes and Internet jokes have a special status. They work as stress-relievers, information vessels, or Russian propaganda resistance. The effectiveness of a meme relies on mingling verbal and visual elements in such a way that seemingly unrelated scenarios become relatable and can be interpreted in a given context. The text aims at discussing the cognitive mechanisms employed in chosen pro-Ukrainian memes against the 2022 Russian invasion in terms of their bimodal construal. An analysis of a group of memes was conducted within the cognitive linguistics framework, with reference to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, conceptual integration theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), and construal (Langacker, 2008, 2019). The creation of memes triggers frameshifting and convergence of different mental spaces, which results in online meaning construction, where humorous incongruity derives directly from blending and shows how jokes (about tragedies) may become humorous, due to frame substitution.

Keywords: Internet meme, metaphor, metonymy, conceptual blending, Ukraine

1. Introduction: why memes?

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has sparked a number of reactions and comments from internet users, some of which were internet memes. Memes regarded as networked creativity and a mechanism of political participation are multimodal constructions which activate new frames and meanings. Their humorous and satirical form fulfils a referential function but is also aimed to be relatable. The impact of internet memes is rather significant mainly due to their visual humour and generative capacity. The way we interpret memes allows us to be part

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of the debate and create online communities based on our common values, ideas, and beliefs.

This paper examines chosen pro-Ukrainian memes against the 2022 Russian invasion that exhibit humour provoked by tragedy. Humour is a sort of defensive mechanism which assists in undermining the gravity of a situation, thus it can be helpful in facing “sinister subjects like death, disease, deformity, handicap or warfare with bitter amusement and present[ing] such tragic, distressing or morbid topics” (Willinger et al., 2017, p. 160). Humour “can help facilitate recovery from stressful situations, even prolonging people’s tolerance to physical pain” (Michel, 2017, p. 25). It thus has enormous power, even when it comes to facing a brutal, extremely serious authoritarian regime such as Russia.

Pro-Ukrainian memes against the 2022 Russian invasion play a number of significant roles. Apart from being comforting and relieving, they are informative as they help disseminate the current state of affairs in Ukraine and stand up to Russian propaganda. Memes become vessels of information or commentary on current events even on the official Twitter account of Ukraine (<https://twitter.com/Ukraine>). There are a number of pro-Ukrainian social media movements such as Saint Javelin, NAFO (North Atlantic Fellas Organisation) or Ukrainian Memes Forces that fight Russian disinformation in the form of memes and work as fundraisers for Ukraine. It is characteristic of NAFO that it bases memes on the image of the Shiba Inu dog, known on the internet as Doge (Figure 1). Their presence and activity have been recognised by Ukrainian government officials, i.e. Ukraine’s Minister of Defence, Oleksii Reznikov, who changed his profile picture to a NAFO meme (Hamill-Steward, 2022).



Figure 1: The picture presents the so-called NAFO ‘fella’¹

¹ The tweet was posted 28.8.2022 on the Defence of Ukraine Twitter account.

Referring to familiar and tangible situations, memes bring internet users conceptually closer to the events taking place in Ukraine and thus help them identify with Ukrainians. They also highlight the heroism of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians fighting on the front lines to boost the country's morale, and at the same time mock Russian troops for their ineptitude and disparage their president, Vladimir Putin. It should be disclaimed that the present analysis is by no means exhaustive (it was never meant to be) and cannot serve as an attempt at a systematic study. The cited examples, however, represent recurring observable trends.

This form of commentary may seem interesting for linguists since a meme carries a lot of meaning (content) packed typically into a small bimodal form. Its compactness triggers frames and scenarios that have to be recognised and related to an event/situation depicted. That is why memes can be interpreted as blends (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), the understanding of which rests on the invocation of extensive background information and the completion of complex inferential processes. This form of expression is not self-explanatory and requires extra-contextual knowledge, such as the recognition of the convention of a given meme and its intertextual references/allusions to people, places, occurrences, quotes, and cultural phenomena. These, in turn, are hidden in conceptual packets (input spaces) that need to be recognized by the observer and “unpacked” (cf. Majdzińska-Koczorowicz & Ostanina-Olszewska, 2021).

The cognitive dissonance caused by the juxtaposition of incompatible elements invites readers first to recognize the different input spaces of the blend, then to search for connections between such elements, and, eventually, to identify the incongruity on which the humour is based (Marín-Arrese, 2008; Schilperoord & Maes, 2009). Incongruity is then a puzzle to be solved, which signals to the recipient that blending/incongruity resolution must be applied. Thus memes become extremely popular since they contain the element of gamification.

An application of a cognitively understood set of notions is meant to provide a framework facilitating the extraction and interpretation of particular levels of a bimodal message. Chosen dimensions of construal by Langacker (2008, 2019) will serve to clarify the relationship between verbal and visual signs. The theory of conceptual and visual metaphor (Forceville, 1996, 2002; Kövecses, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) will be useful for capturing the analogy between the situation depicted in a meme and the one referring to the war. This conceptual similarity and relevance will specifically be accounted for with reference to blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), which elucidates conceptual mappings between seemingly unrelated entities. Blending seems a perfect tool for the recognition of meme components since “memes, as multimodal constructions, trigger the retrieval of a schematic constructional meaning that is blended with more specific concepts evoked by various aspects of the text as well as concepts evoked by the image” (Coulson, 2022, p. 282). Those various components of a message can

be seen as input spaces providing the basis for an incomplete collection of their elements that finds reflection at the generic level and gets embodied in the blend.

2. Analysis: examples and discussion

The memes presented below have been divided into two groups: 1) those visually communicating the frame within which a meme should be interpreted (in particular, these are memes exhibiting Vladimir Putin by blending his face in a given scenario) and 2) those based on a visual template that is endowed with an interpretative frame via the verbal layer. Both groups are construed from the perspective of an observer who identifies themselves with Ukraine, hence the memes mostly mock Vladimir Putin and the Russian army, whilst at the same time glorifying Ukraine and emphasising the country's resistance and invincibility.

2.1 Memes featuring Vladimir Putin

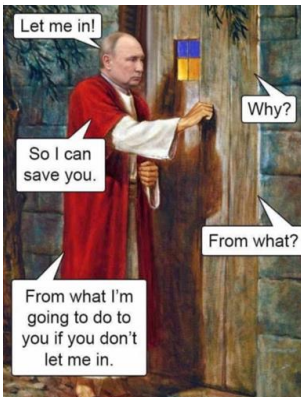


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

The first meme (Figure 2) was created on the basis of the original painting known as Jesus at the Door (Jesus Knocking at the Door) by Del Parson that refers to a scene from the Primary manual 6-36; Revelation 3:20. Here, Jesus's head has been replaced with Putin's. In tune with the FACE FOR PERSON metonymy, the provided picture seems sufficient to understand that the person knocking at the door is the president of Russia. Another significant element is the change of colour visible in the upper part of the door window: the yellow light (a warm glow from within that is probably a reflection of an indoor fireplace) is replaced with a blue shadow which together with the original lower part represents the blue and yellow flag of Ukraine. Thus, it can be said that the visual layer represents Vladimir Putin knocking at the door of Ukraine. The verbal layer completes the visual one, mak-

ing us re-conceptualise the initial interpretation. It involves a short dialogue, in which the entity representing the Russian president threatens that the host would face consequences for not letting him in; however, he is not precise about the type of consequences (“what I’m going to do to you”).

We can see the Putin-Jesus figure that is quite inconsistent: the traits of character ascribed to each of the persons sharply contrast, to say the least: Jesus, known in religion and culture as an inherently good character that saved mankind; Vladimir Putin, in the light of the present events seems a ruthless war criminal. The very act of knocking at the door amplifies the image of the figure being polite and humble. This clash seems to lead to the interpretation of the picture as ironic: Putin (and his intentions) in disguise, Putin as a hoax, a deception. This explanation correlates with an official explanation of the Russian invasion of Ukraine based on the ‘made up’ reasons (e.g., Russophobia, security demands of Ukraine, NATO, and non-NATO allies in the EU, cf. Kirby, 2022).

The meme is multidimensional as it draws on a number of inputs blended into the form of a bimodal structure and as such can be discussed as an instance of conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). The emergent structure presented above in the form of a verbo-visual scenario composes elements from various input spaces (a painting by Del Parson, a tale from the Primary manual 6-36; Revelation 3:20, a photo of Vladimir Putin’s face, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the convention of a meme, a comic picture) that need to be completed by background knowledge and accurately interpreted in order to strike a meaning. The first input space (IS 1) involved in the scenario is a painting by Del Parson known as *Jesus at the Door*, which refers to a passage from Revelation 3:20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me.” One of the most popular interpretations of this passage is that people decide whether to open their hearts to Jesus or not (the guest cannot open the door as the handle is on the other side of it). The relationship between the guest and the host is not symmetrical, the host is in power, and the guest’s position is inferior as his action depends on the owner’s decision. Another input space (IS 2) involves the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, whose face has replaced the face of Jesus, entailing that it is Putin who knocks at the door (the FACE FOR PERSON metonymy). His face also stands for the country and its decision to invade Ukraine (CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED). The next space that is activated (IS 3) is Ukraine: the yellowish glow of light combined with a blue shade placed on the glazing stands for the flag/colours of Ukraine that metonymically symbolise the country. Another input space (IS 4) is the convention of a meme/ comic strip. The blend requires some background knowledge in order to complete the missing elements triggered by familiar frames (e.g., the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russia’s reasoning behind it). In the process of completion, the missing blanks are filled in and the existing ones are elaborated. The meme can also be seen as analogous to

the scene from the fairy tale “The Wolf and the Seven Young Goats” when the wolf pretended to be the young goats’ mother and tried to convince the kids to open the door, while their mother was away, so he could get in and gobble them up. We arrive at the notion of deception, fraud and hypocrisy which is highlighted as a characteristic feature of the subject. Thus we complete our understanding of the meme by unveiling the main feature of the subject (Putin), prompted by the juxtaposition of elements from the inputs.

However serious the topic it deals with, the picture seems humorous in its nature (joking works as a stress-reliever since it can reframe a negative experience and divert it into positive emotions; cf. Dynel, 2020, as cited in Kuiper, Martin, & Olinger, 1993 and Martin, 2007). Its humorousness can be explained in reference to Koestler’s (1964) bisociation (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), a concept explained by Dynel (2011, p. 63) as an approach “according to which humour perception is an act of oscillation between two unrelated matrices of thought and the discovery of various similarities or analogies implicit in concepts seen as remote from one another”. Here, Putin’s face replaces Jesus’s face, which seems ridiculous and triggers a humorous incongruity. This metaphorical substitution of one element from the structuring input space (Jesus) for another (the Russian president) creates a hybrid that acquires an entirely new meaning and makes us find parallelism between Jesus and Putin: since both characters do not have much in common, we realise that the Russian president should be interpreted as a hoax. This resolvable incongruity is amplified at the verbal level, in which it becomes apparent that the president’s intentions are rather evil.

The next meme (Figure 3) presents the president of Russia carrying away a lectern tagged as “Ukraine”. In fact, it is a photoshopped image of Adam Johnson, who was punished for his role in the US Capitol riot in February 2021. The lectern was a podium for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the situation led to a court appearance with Johnson being “charged with trespassing, disorderly conduct and theft of government property” (US Capitol riot, 2022).

The scene presented in the picture can be seen as a blend comprising various input spaces, one of which is the above-mentioned riot case with the lectern becoming the object of the theft. Another one is the face of the Russian president, representing the country’s recent decisions about the attack on Ukraine (the **CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED** metonymy). The substitution of the faces is metaphorical and triggers conceptual mapping culminating in perceiving similarities between the situation of stealing a lectern and taking away the territory of Ukraine. The caption “Ukraine” placed on the lectern works as an important element contributing to the resolution of the blend: it makes the interpreter merge the visible elements from two mental spaces in order to place them in a given scenario: Russia illegally seizing Ukraine. It is ridiculous that someone could decide that invading another country would be as easy as snatching the lectern, therefore the clash/incongruity between these two events, a petty crime and the war, ac-

accompanied by the common element – the attitude of the actor – is perceivable and creates humour. In this way, in our mind, the construct LECTERN IS UKRAINE is created, which highlights the Russian attitude towards Ukraine in having the upper hand in this relationship and treating the other country instrumentally.

Ukraine being represented visually with a lectern may also be interpreted symbolically. A lectern/podium can be associated with giving a talk, proclaiming views, having freedom of speech, and also a symbol of power, thus taking it away would mean depriving someone of their voice, agency, independence, and power. By its shape, the lectern may also be associated with a cup, which is why the figure of Putin seizing it in one hand and having the other hand triumphantly waving can be identified with a champion getting a trophy. This interpretation would also highlight the pride Russia takes in its violent invasion.

The third meme (Figure 4) presents the Russian president trying to pop a balloon, where the balloon metonymically stands for Ukraine due to its colours (yellow and blue). The action in itself may not be very original; however, our attention is drawn to the unusual result, which is caused by reversed Force Dynamics (Talmy, 1988). In the meme, the Russian president is depicted again as the aggressor, though one whose attack was a failure. The surprising result could be interpreted as depicting that against all odds Ukraine is strong enough to fight back and even win. The meme may function as a sort of warning, that an attempt at popping the balloon (read: attacking Ukraine) could be lethal.

In the context of the meme, a number of verbal references may be evoked, for example, the one familiar to the Russian people «Кто с мечом к нам придёт, от меча и погибнет!», which could be an allusion to the following passage from the New Testament: “Put away your sword,” Jesus told him. “Those who use the sword will die by the sword” (Matthew 26:52) or a similar expression that was known even in pre-evangelical times; in ancient Rome, it existed as the Latin saying: “Qui gladio ferit, gladio perit”.

In the meme, this saying is not presented verbally, but it can be evoked in our minds and could have been uttered by Ukraine in the presented situation. The message appears to be ironic since it is assumed that originally these words are said to be uttered by Alexander Nevsky (a Russian ruler and a military leader, who defended the northern borders of Rus against the Swedish invasion and defeated the Teutonic knights at Lake Chud in 1242). In the meme, the incongruity which produces a humorous effect due to the reversed force dynamics makes us see the balloon, an inanimate object, as an actor/active element. Hence, in the blend Putin metonymically representing Russia is no longer associated with the role of a victim, but rather with an attacker, whose weapons are used against him.

Although the visual elements of the meme might be surprising and seem to work against the laws of physics, it is an accurate reflection of the words in which

the message is presented in a clear and straightforward manner. Such unusual actions are possible also due to the unusual situation in the new reality, where the impossible becomes possible and the Ukrainian army and ordinary people make extraordinary actions happen.

Incongruity Resolution based on the reversed forced dynamics depicts the action of pricking the balloon, which in turn causes the attacker to burst into pieces. It is not an absurd scenario, considering the balloon and its action represents the Ukrainian resistance and combat, therefore, it is rather natural that it actively ‘fights back’. In fact, the meme contains two actors: a person who is aggressive but ineffective and the balloon, which is capable of reversing the evil forces and popping the attacker. The roles of the actors are presented below in Table 1.

Table 1. “Popping” the balloon mappings

Input space 1	Input space 2	Blended Space
Attacker/aggressor/forceful entity	Russian leader	Identity – Russian leader Role – aggressor
Balloon	The country (Ukraine)	Identity – balloon Role – counterattacking country
Needle	Military weapons	Identity – needle Role – military arms, weapons, equipment
Pricking the balloon	Attacking/invading another country	Action/goals – pricking the balloon Means: invading Ukraine
Force Dynamics (we expect the balloon to pop)	Reversed Force Dynamics (the attacker bursts into pieces)	Incongruity Based on the reversed forced dynamics – the attacker bursts into pieces

2.2 Memes foregrounding the Russian army failures

The following group of memes are based on already existing templates unrelated to the current war. This specific recycling of pictures is a common procedure since successful memes are often modified and repackaged into new creative scenarios.

The first meme (Figure 5) is a two-panel story meant to expose the Russian defence deficiency. The top picture shows the upper body of a mediaeval knight wearing full armour (a breastplate, pauldrons, a helmet) and holding a sword. An upright body posture together with the gesture of lifting the sword up and resting part of its blade on the knight’s shoulder may conventionally (via the metaphor GOOD IS UP) be interpreted as representing self-reassurance and confidence. The picture is labelled as “RUSSIAN MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE”. The lower part of the meme shows the same knight being struck by an arrow that was shot



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

into a slit in the visor, a vulnerable point in a fully armoured knight. This time, however, the perspective is focused on the knight's head and the arrow, which can be seen as an instance of zooming in (Langacker, 2019) that relies on specifying location within a viewing arrangement. This change is meant to shift our focus onto the arrow, which gets centralised and is given focal prominence (Langacker, 2008). The arrow is labelled as "HIMARS", which is an acronym for M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, a rocket launcher designed for the US army that is now used by the Ukrainians during the war. HIMARS are incredibly effective for attacking stationary targets and have played a pivotal role in liberating Ukrainian territories (Mansoor, 2023). The meme can be interpreted as exposing Russian failures in military infrastructure and glorifying Ukrainian effectiveness and precision in using the advanced launcher. It also foregrounds the role of allies in the Ukrainian defence: HIMARS launchers were provided by the US army.

The humorous potential of the meme is realised through similarity cued between 1) the mediaeval knight and the Russian military infrastructure and 2) the arrow and the launcher HIMARS used by the Ukrainian army; thus, the meme can be analysed as an instance of conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). The elements from the original picture (the visual layer) and those from its re-interpretation (the verbal layer) constitute two input spaces triggering associations. The visual introduces a mediaeval knight wearing full armour that is meant to make him invincible: the plates were designed to be thick enough to withstand mediaeval weapon attacks; however, he gets hit by an arrow right in the visor. The presence of an arrow implies also that there must be an archer who targeted the knight from a distance. Attacking unprotected slits such as those for eyes or around armpits was one of the easiest ways to defeat a knight back in the Middle Ages. Taking into consideration that an eye slit measured less than 1 cm, it required a rather skilful and precise attacker. Thus, input space 1 comprises such elements as the Middle Ages, war, a knight, armour, a sword, an arrow, defeat of the knight, and victory of the archer. The verbal level makes us reconceptualise the picture by introducing such elements as the 2022 war, Russian military infrastructure, HIMARS, and the Ukrainian defence.

The elements from one input space trigger associations with the elements from the other input space, so we can perceive the relation between them according to the created metaphors *RUSSIAN ARMY IS A MEDIAEVAL KNIGHT* and *HIMARS IS A PRECISE ARROW/BLOW*. At the generic level, certain similarities can be noticed: war, battle, weapon, defence, offence, defeat, and victory. The emergent structure, the meme, arises on the basis of three steps: selective projection from both inputs (in the process of composition), putting the elements into a wider context understood here as the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine (completion) and finally running the blend (elaboration) (cf. Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). In this case, the blend is run for the amusement effect, praising the rocket launcher and its operators, and boosting Ukrainian morale. Thanks to the metaphors employed, we can extend the interpretation of the meme into describing the Russian military infrastructure as being solid only at first glance and having weak spots. Similarly, the rocket launcher HIMARS can be seen as an exceptionally precise weapon.

In a similar vein, the meme presented in Figure 6 also highlights the advantage of the Ukrainian army in terms of armament. We can see a snapshot showing a cat seemingly hiding behind a corner from two Doberman dogs. The cat is dubbed with a caption stating, “*RUSSIAN AMMO DEPOT*”, while the dogs with “*UKRAINIAN HIMARS*”. We can assume that the meme refers to multiple attacks on Russian ammunition depots with HIMARS rocket systems, which are highly effective in precise targeting. In July 2022 Ukraine is reported to have destroyed 50 such depots (Zinets, 2022).

The bimodal semiosis of this meme is similar to that of the previous meme: it involves two levels of description that intertwine and define one another. In order to interpret it, we need extra-contextual knowledge that cats are afraid of dogs and to avoid being captured, cats hide in places unreachable by dogs, e.g., tree branches or the top of fences. The meme integrates two input spaces, the verbal and the visual, each space introducing different elements. Input space 1 (the visual) comprises Doberman dogs (big in size, having stamina, loyal, trainable, intimidating), a cat (smaller in size, believed to be afraid of dogs), antagonism/hostility between the species, the scenario of dogs chasing the cat and the cat hiding from the dogs, the cat being afraid of the dogs. Input space 2 includes the 2022 war, Russian ammunition depots (that may metonymically represent the Russian army, Russia), Ukrainian HIMARS (metonymically standing for Ukrainian army/offence, Ukraine), HIMARS (representing Ukrainian allies, in particular, the USA). The verbal elements have to be filled out by the extra-memetic context: “Russian ammunition depot” and “Ukrainian HIMARS” trigger the frame of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and require the recipient to acknowledge the effectiveness of HIMARS in destroying Russian ammunition depot targets; we also have to know what HIMARS itself is and know some of its characteristics. Hence, the verbal elements can be seen as metonymies triggered by the relation of association, *THE CONTROLLED*

FOR THE CONTROLLER. The inputs seem to share certain similarities between the depicted situation and the one introduced verbally, which finds its way into the generic space: conflict, hostility, advantage/superiority of one part in the given situation. In the process of conceptual integration, the relation of conflict in which one part is superior to the other in given terms gets instantiated within the frame of the 2022 war and focuses on the effective power of HIMARS rocket launchers, their technological advancement, and Ukraine's superiority in this respect.

The same picture served as a visual template for the last meme (Figure 7) referring to multiple cases of Ukrainian farmers capturing Russian tanks in the spring of 2022 (Suciu, 2022). Again, the meme can be seen as an example of conceptual integration, which arises in a network of mental spaces: the visual input space stays the same as in the previous example, while the verbal input space comprises such elements as a Russian tank (metonymically, CONTROLLED FOR CONTROLLER, representing Russian soldiers), Ukrainian farmers, towing tanks away by farmers using tractors, the opposition farmer vs soldier, and the humorous potential of the situation. At the generic level there is also the idea of conflict, opposition, and dominance of one part. The blended space contains the structure encapsulated in the generic spaces plus it fuses chosen elements from input spaces. The meme is obviously meant to be amusing as the very situation topicalised in it is humorous in nature, since there is a perceivable discrepancy between farmers and soldiers as well as between a military tank and a tractor.

The capturing of Russian tanks went viral, which galvanised Ukrainians and their supporters, spurring a number of memes that employed creative means of expression. For example, a cartoon-like picture (Figure 8) shows a tractor pulling a tank against a yellow-blue background representing figuratively this situation or a picture (Figure 9) featuring a tractor towing away a submarine, which visually employs hyperbolisation for an amusing effect.



3. Conclusion

The presented memes fall into two groups based on the medium of the depiction of the 2022 war. Memes referring visually to the subject matter could be decoded instantly since visual metaphor and metonymy (PUTIN IS RUSSIA, YELLOW/BLUE COLOUR IS UKRAINE) features “perceptual immediacy”, which means that the similarity between domains is instantly perceived (Forceville, 2008, p. 463). It could be observed that in the presentation of Vladimir Putin metonymies FACE FOR PERSON and CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED dominated. The memes also fostered a stronger emotional load in comparison to the group with verbal topical reference. The memes from the second group required more mental effort and contextual knowledge for conceptualization since the reader needs to work out the relationship of similarity between what is depicted and what is written. This non-obvious mapping (taking place at the generic level) could be captured with a reference to conceptual blending theory.

Mememes are powerful tools of communication; they can help the reader gain a new perspective on reality and see the connection between apparently unrelated domains. For the purpose of concept elucidation, the analysed memes generated novel metaphors (farmers are superheroes, balloons are effective destroyers, etc.) and new ideas through the process of conceptual blending which in turn endowed the memes with their generation capacity. In this respect, memes can be seen as small puzzles which our minds love to solve, and which gain much appreciation when the effort is rewarded by the pleasure of understanding the humour of the riddle.

Whereas humorous examples often involved very non-obvious mappings (a cat hiding from the dogs was mapped to a tank ‘hiding’ from the farmers), the reader could understand the obvious connection between the literal terror that the cat was feeling when seeing the Doberman dogs which was mapped to the dread that the tanks (which metonymically stood for the soldiers in the tanks) must have “felt” when seeing the Ukrainian farmers. Snatching the lectern and invading another country at first seemed like two disparate domains that were superficially unrelated until the reader saw the connection in the blended cognitive models and resolved the incongruity. The smug face of the lectern snatcher and the satisfaction or even pride he feels from his action is mapped to the satisfaction he takes from the act of ruthlessly seizing another country.

Understanding a meme is both an individual mental act which requires extensive background knowledge and a collaborative social achievement including complex inferential processes. Internet users strategically blend culturally meaningful objects in a way that both promotes their own target domain construals and reinforces associated generic models.

Memes cannot effectively combat what is happening on the ground, but humour can grab people's attention, spread information, and communicate Ukraine's need for help from the rest of the world. However, it is worth pointing out that overuse of memes in the context of serious matters can lead to desensitisation and trivialisation of events.

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