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**СПЕЦОПЕРАЦИЯ И ДИСКУРС ИТАЛЬЯНСКИХ СМИ:  
КОРПУСНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ДИСКУРСА CORRIERE DELLA  
SERA ОБ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИХ САНКЦИЯХ В  
ОТНОШЕНИИ РОССИИ В МАРТЕ-ИЮНЕ 2022 г.**

*Начало специальной военной операции на Украине привело к кризису в отношениях между Россией и странами Запада, который достиг критической точки. Массированные санкции по отношению к России были применены США, Европейским союзом и некоторыми другими странами в ответ. В таких условиях нельзя недооценивать роль СМИ в формировании общественного мнения. В соответствии с этим целью данной статьи является анализ дискурса ведущих итальянских СМИ об антироссийских экономических санкциях. Данная статья анализирует, как применение масштабных экономических санкций, введенных западными странами, лингвистически оформлено одним из крупнейших итальянских СМИ Corriere della Sera. Corriere della Sera — ежедневная итальянская газета, издаваемая в Милане. Содержание газеты можно охарактеризовать как либерально-консервативную политическую направленность; однако, учитывая в целом сбалансированный дискурс Corriere della Sera, автор остановился на этом СМИ. Особое внимание уделяется понятию когнитивной войны, которую можно определить как использование общественного мнения в качестве оружия. Корпус состоит из 45 статей, посвященные в основном экономическому аспекту принятых санкций; статьи, касающиеся политических или иных аспектов, не принимались во внимание. Методология данного исследования представлена использованием количественного подхода и качественного подхода. Для выделения единиц для дальнейшего анализа используется количественный подход (инструменты корпусной лингвистики). Качественный подход (критический анализ дискурса) используется с целью интерпретации данных. Отмечено, что количество материалов об*

*антироссийских экономических санкциях было больше в начале анализируемого периода. Анализ корпуса показывает тенденции инакомыслия России в дискурсе Corriere della Sera. Острый этап противостояния Запада и России, начавшийся в 2022 г., характеризуется дихотомией белого и черного между коллективным Западом и Россией, особенно в начале периода.*

*Ключевые слова: санкции, Россия, специальная военная операция, анализ дискурса, когнитивная война, общественное мнение*

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**SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATION AND ITALIAN  
MAINSTREAM MEDIA DISCOURSE: CORPUS-BASED  
ANALYSIS OF CORRIERE DELLA SERA DISCOURSE ON  
ANTI-RUSSIAN ECONOMIC SANCTIONS IN MARCH-JUNE  
2022**

*After the beginning of Russian Special Military Operation in Ukraine crisis in the relationships between Russia and the Western countries reached a tipping point. Massive severe sanctions were applied by the US, European Union and some other countries as a response to the Military Operation. The role of media in framing the public opinion in this crisis cannot be underestimated. This paper aims to analyse Italian mainstream media discourse on anti-Russian economic sanctions. This article analyzes the way the economic sanctions imposed by Western countries is linguistically framed by Corriere della Sera, one of the largest Italian media. Corriere della Sera is an Italian daily newspaper published in Milan. The content of the newspaper can be described as a liberal-conservative political focus; however, given the generally balanced discourse of the Corriere della Sera, the author settled on this media. Particular attention is paid to the concept of cognitive warfare, which can be defined as the use of public opinion as a weapon. The corpus consists of 45 articles devoted mainly to the economic aspect of the sanctions; articles related to political or other aspects were not taken*

*into account. The methodology of this study is presented using a quantitative approach and a qualitative approach. To select units for further analysis, a quantitative approach is used (tools of corpus linguistics). A qualitative approach (critical discourse analysis) is used to interpret the data. It is noted that the number of materials about anti-Russian economic sanctions was greater at the beginning of the analyzed period. The analysis of the corpus shows the tendencies of othering of Russia in Corriere della Sera discourse. The acute stage of the confrontation between the West and Russia, which began in 2022, is described by a white and black dichotomy between the collective West and Russia, especially at the beginning of the period.*

*Key words: sanctions, Russia, Special Military Operation, Critical Discourse analysis, Corriere della Sera, cognitive warfare, public opinion*

### **Introduction**

This article aims to analyse the Italian mainstream media discourse on anti-Russian economic sanctions introduced by the US, European Union and some other countries after the beginning of Russian Special Military operation in Ukraine. The discourses serve to create and maintain a certain paradigm, *framing* the perception of an event in a certain way. Carrying out a discourse analysis enables the researcher to reveal an eventual bias within the discourse.

Given the importance of dominating the informational space, the crucial role of the discourses in any major event cannot be underestimated. This paper focuses on the notion of *cognitive warfare*, which can be defined as *weaponization* of public opinion. The newly introduced warfare domain represents a particular interest for the researches studying the interconnection between the political processes and the language.

This paper aims to analyse how the appliance of massive economic sanctions introduced by the Western countries is linguistically framed by one of the biggest Italian media outlets Corriere della Sera. This article is composed of three parts. First part provides a theoretical background; second part introduces the applied methodology. The third discussion and results part represents an analysis of the corpus of 45 articles of *Corriere della Sera* on anti-Russian economic sanctions by means of Corpus Linguistics and the Critical Discourse Analysis.

### **Theoretical background**

This section provides a theoretical background for the present article. First, it covers *sanctions* as an instrument of foreign policy, highlighting the eventual risks and effects of adopted restrictive measures. Second, it justifies the choice of *Corriere della Sera* as of the source of the materials for analysis. Military actions often become the reason for the imposition of economic sanctions (Asmyatullin & Gertsev, 2015). Third, it covers the concept of *Self* and *Other* confrontation in media discourse. The following section is devoted to the concept of *cognitive warfare*, which nowadays represents an additional fundamental warfare domain; the final part of this section covers the *discourse theory*.

#### **Sanctions as a restrictive instrument of the foreign policy**

Economic sanctions represent a common punitive instrument of foreign policy widely used in international politics. Sanctions can be applied by a distinct national government as well as by international entities such as the United Nations. Sanctions aim to coerce, deter or punish the *target* states or other entities (e.g. terrorist organisations) that violate common international norms of behaviour (Masters 2019). Masters (2019) also claims that sanctions are viewed by the policymakers as a lower-cost, lower-risk response to a foreign crisis which is not able to bring crucial consequences the interests of this particular national government (*the sender*). There are various types of sanctions: political sanctions, economic sanctions etc. This article is mainly focused on the discourse on economic sanctions. *Economic sanctions* (Hufbauer et al. 1990) are financial or trade restrictions used by a state in order to change another nation's policies in some pre-specified manner.

Sanctions are often applied with a view to send an explicit signal of disapproval to the target nation; sanctions, however, represent a more moderate measure than an embargo (Bloj 2021) and, as Drury (1998, 497) states, allow international actors to act forcefully without referring to the use of military force.

#### *Sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy: risks and effects.*

Sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy may cause different effects for both *the sender* and *the target* countries. For instance, intuitively, given that nations are becoming more interdependent, the application of sanctions is expected to cause significant damage both to

the sender and the target country. However, in this case greater interdependence may become an advantage for both sides; in case of economic sanctions adoption, the sender(s) and the target(s) may access more markets, which makes the effect of sanctions less significant (Drury, 1998 503).

#### *Effectiveness of the sanctions*

The effectiveness of sanctions is difficult to measure. As Bloj (2021) states, the appliance of sanctions by *the sender* is based on the presupposition that the eventual economic hardship will transform into political tensions in the *target* country and will force the target government to reconsider its actions.

The impact (Weiss 1999, 500) sanctions have on a target country varies depending on economic, geographic and political factors; certain countries have a risk to be more affected by the sanctions than other countries. Therefore, (Drury 1998, 500) weak target countries that are less able to resist the sanctions and to find an alternative for the former suppliers. As Weiss (1999, 502) claims, each set of sanctions and their adoption as well as each target country/entity is unique; however, the impact of sanctions can be measured by observing the main economic, socio-demographic and health data in the target country.

Whether the sanctions can be considered *effective* depends on the goals the sender was attempting to achieve by implementing the restrictions. As Weiss (1999, 503) states, beyond officially declared purposes of sanctions adoption, an additional objective may be also to deter potential violators, raise the costs of non-compliance, isolate the target country, demonstrate resolve to allies or domestic constituents, send a symbolic message, and enhance general respect for international norms.

However, there is no common answer whether the sanctions represent an effective instrument of putting pressure on a target country. As Bloj (2021) claims, often sanctions lead to even more political integration within a target country; it may even result in a further unification of the target nation around the leader. However, (Bloj 2021) the fact that abolition of the sanctions as such often represents the main aim of the target countries (e.g. North Korea) diplomacy efforts may serve as a testimony of the effectiveness of sanctions.

#### *Risks of the sanctions*

The impact sanctions would have on the population of the target country is among the risks to consider. The adoption of sanctions is becoming less acceptable because of the unwillingness of the policymakers to cause civilian pain for a non-guaranteed political gain (Weiss 1999, 501). Causing suffering of vulnerable groups of a target country's population in order to mobilize them to rise up and overthrow a regime or its policies, which often are desirable outcomes for the sender, represents a serious concern for the policymakers (Weiss 1999, 501). Regarding this concern, Weiss (1999, 500) cites the former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali who highlighted that usage of this '*blunt instrument*' of influence affects vulnerable groups, complicates the work of agencies operating in the humanitarian field, causes serious damage to the productive capacity of target nations and may also affect the neighbouring nations.

In theory, sanctions may be crafted in order to punish or pressure wrongdoers, avoiding to cause damage for populations (Weiss, 1999, 503). The so-called *smart sanctions* aim to target the wealthy and powerful while sparing vulnerable populations. Application of such selective smart sanctions leads to a greater political gain with less civilian pain, which would evidently enhance multilateral moral credibility (Weiss, 1999, 503)

*European Union: sanctions as a part of integrated action.*

In case of the EU, adoption of the sanctions is meant to have an additional goal: implementing the sanctions, Member States demonstrate an ability to elaborate a common ground for foreign policies (Bloj, 2021), to follow a common strategic interest; adoption of the economic sanctions demonstrates the capacity of the Union to use its economic and commercial weight and its institutional power to respond effectively to political (respect for human rights, democracy) and security (non-proliferation, territorial aggression, terrorism) challenges and to exert real political influence (Bloj, 2021).

Before the *Maastricht Treaty* (Treaty on European Union, 1992), sanctions used to be adopted under the *European Political Cooperation* (EPC), which gave a rather limited space for the development of intergovernmental cooperation in the field of foreign policy (Bloj, 2021). However, with the establishment of the *Common Foreign and Security Policy* (CFSP) set out in the second pillar of the Maastricht Treaty, the

EU acquired the capacity to adopt common international restrictive measures.

The Council's communication of 7 June 2004 serves as a source of the main principles for the Member States regarding the sanctions; according to the communication, Member States "committed to the effective use of sanctions as an important way to maintain and restore international peace and security in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter and of our common foreign and security policy". It also highlights that "sanctions should be targeted in a way that has maximum impact on those whose behaviour we want to influence. Targeting should reduce to the maximum extent possible any adverse humanitarian effects or unintended consequences for persons not targeted or neighbouring countries". It continues: "measures, such as arms embargoes, visa bans and the freezing of funds are a way of achieving this."

As Bloj (2021) states, the economic sanctions represent the restrictive measures applied by the Union together with other actions. These actions may include political dialog or other complementary measures.

#### *Anti-Russian sanctions adopted by the EU*

Major part of the EU's actions on a more abstract level are justified by the fact that the Union is by nature a specific kind of international actor (Kratochvil, Tichy 394), the "normative power" serving as a *role model* for other international actors and entities. Therefore, it gives the Union *privileges* and *responsibilities*. Sanctions represent one of the *instruments* the Union may use in order to re-create the balance violated by the target country/entity.

The Union and its allies first adopted a set of anti-Russian sanctions in 2014 after the referendum in Crimea. However, the most influential sets of sanctions were imposed by the Union after the beginning of a Special Military Operation on February 24, 2022. Since February the EU has imposed a number of packages of sanctions against Russia, including targeted restrictive measures (individual sanctions), economic sanctions and diplomatic sanctions.

#### **Corriere della Sera.**

This article aims to analyse the Italian mainstream media discourse on anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the EU in March-June 2022. In order to illustrate the Italian mainstream media discourse on European anti-Russian sanctions one of the most read Italian newspapers, *Corriere della sera* was chosen as a source of the articles for the analysis.

Corriere della Sera is an Italian daily newspaper published in Milan. The newspaper's contents can be described as of liberal-conservative political orientation; however, given a generally balanced discourse of Corriere della Sera the author opted for this media outlet. Apart from the liberal readers, the newspaper partly mirrors the views of the progressively-oriented readers.

#### ***Self and other in the discourse***

The categories of *self* and *other* are broadly exploited in media discourse. The identity of *self* is often largely based upon confrontation with the *other*. Shapiro (in Neumann 1999, 23) claims that the relationships between *self* and *other* have to be understood through the historical framework of these relationships since the evolution of these relationships may contain the elements of historically contingent beliefs and ideas of self. The positive *self*-representation is often complimented by the negative *other*-representation (Hanukaev, 2022).

Building a discourse means creating the identities both for the *Other* and for *Self* in certain conditions. Identities, however, can change and evolve over time (Malyuga & McCarthy, 2018, Pavlovskaya, 2021). Different representations may confront, be reiterated, modified, challenged, (Neumann 1999, 2); the same things may have different meanings not only in different periods but also in different contests during the same time (Neumann 1999, 3).

Nevertheless, the two countries have so much in common and such a rich and long history of interaction that this is reflected in the mutual enrichment of the vocabulary of the Italian and Russian languages (Yashina & Asmyatullin, 2016).

#### **Cognitive warfare**

Together with the four military domains defined by their environment (land, maritime, air and space), cognitive warfare is becoming its own domain in modern warfare; the cyber domain connects them all (Claverie, du Cluzel, 2022). *Cognitive warfare* represents an art of using technological instruments to influence the cognition of human targets on a global stage; the target, i.e. our individual intelligence considered both individually and as a group, mainly remains unaware of it (Claverie, du Cluzel, 2022).

Therefore, (Pradhan, 2022) in the *cognitive warfare*, human minds become the battlefield. Manipulated information is presented in such a manner that it creates a certain paradigm, resulting in creating pre-

determined perceptions and predetermined actions among the target audience (Malyuga, 2019, McGee, 2019). Cognitive warfare can be defined as *weaponization* of public opinion (Pradhan, 2022).

The cognitive warfare (Pradhan, 2022) “integrates all the elements available in the information, cyber and psychological domains” and pushes them to the next level; it not only manipulates the perception of the target, another goal is to ensure that the desired reaction within the target population is actually achieved (Radina & Kozlova, 2022). Therefore, there are three dimensions of cognitive warfare: psychological operations; engaging neurosciences, or the *weaponization* of brain sciences; implementing social engineering.

As Pradhan (2022) suggests, on the battle-field of cognitive warfare a weaker opponent, fighting effectively, has an opportunity to achieve strategic victory bypassing the traditional battle-field.

#### **Discourse theory**

The notion of *discourse* can be defined in different ways; the way a researcher defines what discourse is, determines the approach he employs to analyse the content. Baker (2010, 121), defines discourse as something viewed as the language which occurs above the level of the sentence, highlighting how the discourse creates frames and narratives which keep existing beyond the text. Fairclough (1995, 72) claims that discourse is a complex of three elements: social practice, discursive practice (text production, distribution and consumption) and the text; consequently, since the discourse is a social practice, context is fundamental for studying discourse. Foucault defines the discourse as a regime of truth, as well as the groups of statements that belong to a single system of formation (Neumann 2008, 4) emphasising the power of the discourse to shape the framework of the values which rule a certain society.

Certain discourses dominate certain informational spaces; the discourse may evolve and shift when the political, economic or social conjuncture changes (Baranova & Kriakina, 2020). Under certain circumstances, the discourses can remain unchallenged for years and decades, building the so-called *regimes of truth*, which are, according to Foucault (Neumann, 1999, 4) the discourses that hold certain things to be "truths". Discourses emerge as ideological frameworks which become points of reference for a given audience.

Wodak (2001, 14) argues that even the dominating discourses can

be criticized and problematized, this is done by analysing them, by revealing their contradictions and non-expressions and/or the spectrum of what can be said and what can be covered by them. Therefore, discourse analysis serves to view the discursive constructions critically. It disposes of a number of approaches that allow to reveal biased representations and exaggerations in a given discourse.

Discourse analysis is not a neutral approach. A researcher must acquire and state his position towards the problem he is analysing. The very nature of the approach implies the revelation of hidden inequalities and biases inside the discourse, and therefore researcher is supposed to be critical. The discourse *per se* is not manipulative; it can acquire manipulative connotations only produced within a specific context. For instance, as stipulated, manipulation is a social practice of power abuse, involving dominant and dominated groups, or institutions and their clients (Van Dijk 2006, 359), which means that the same narrative can be perceived as manipulative in one context and neutral in another context.

Discourses have the power of shaping *certain perception of reality*. The elites in power are able to create the dominant (or official) discourses and select which information to create the discourses facilitate the process by which certain information comes to be accepted as indisputable truth. The strength of dominant discourse is in transmitting the dominant narrative making the other narratives marginal and non-important. Official discourses make the opinions that lie outside the realms set by the discourse seen as irrational.

### **Methodology**

This section outlines the methodological approach applied for the present paper. First, this section provides an outlook on the research design including the data gathering process, corpus creation and justification of temporal range. Second, it introduces *Critical Discourse Analysis* which was used for qualitative interpretation of the data. Third, it describes the methodological tools of *Corpus Linguistics*, corpus based-approach applied in this paper; also it shortly covers the *AntConc 2*, software which was utilized to conduct qualitative analysis.

### **Research design**

Materials selected for the analysis were published by *Corriere della Sera* in March - first two weeks of June. The first article of the corpus is dated 08.03.2022 and the last article is dated 15.06.2022. Therefore, the

data consists of the articles published in the above-mentioned temporal range where anti-Russian economic sanctions were the primary topic. The author was taking into consideration the articles devoted mainly to the economic aspect of the adopted sanctions; the articles regarding political or other aspects were not taken into consideration. The materials were selected by the author manually. The corpus is composed of 45 articles. A total of 45 articles constitute 29229 tokens, strings bounded by separator characters (Conoscenti 2004, 36) and 5438 types, or *unique word forms* (Conoscenti 2004, 36). The following information contains data on the corpus:

Source – Corriere della sera  
Number of articles – 45  
Types – 5436  
Tokens - 29229

It was observed that the number of materials on anti-Russian economic sanctions was higher at the beginning of the period. Data are stored by the date of publication from the oldest to the newest in the form of one file in txt. format. After the corpus was created, collected materials were read in order to grasp the sentiment of the articles of the corpus and to identify the recurring themes (Conoscenti, 2004, 24).

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

#### *Interdisciplinary approach*

Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach; it crosses the staid and rigid disciplinary boundaries of linguistics and other disciplines (Unger, 2016, 2). Wodak (2001, 19) argues that interdisciplinarity can be implemented through adoption of a certain theoretical framework or through the approach to data collection and analysis as well as because of the context discourse analysis is applied. This paper adopts the approaches from different disciplines such as discourse analysis, media studies and political studies, regarding the issue out of traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Methodology for this study is represented by the usage of quantitative approach and qualitative approach. Quantitative approach (tools of Corpus Linguistics) is used in order to extract the units for further analysis. Qualitative approach (Critical Discourse Analysis) is used with the view to interpret the data.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

*Critical Discourse Analysis* (Fairclough 2002, 25) is the name given to a diverse group of approaches to studying the language. However, (Fairclough 2002, 26) these approaches share a common concern with how language and semiosis interconnect with different elements of the social sphere; especially it concerns the unequal relations of power or exploitation present in a given society. CDA represents an interdisciplinary, or as Fairclough (2002, 26) defines it *trans-disciplinary*, an approach which merges linguistics with a set of other disciplines and theories (Fairclough 2002, 25). The sphere of interest of CDA is broad, ranging from racism, gender inequality and education to political discourses.

Critical Discourse Analysis addresses the discourse as the broader ideas communicated by the text (Van Dijk, 1993, Fairclough 2000, Wodak, 2001 cited in Machin, Mayr 2014, 20); the analyst carrying out the CDA has to pay attention to the particular choices of grammar and words in the texts with the view to reveal the discourses and ideologies (Machin, Mayr 2014, 20).

For Fairclough (2002, 26) central in understanding the CDA remains the assumption of the discourse being a *social practice*. By *social practice* Fairclough (2002, 26) implies a relatively stabilized form of social activity (media new production included). Therefore, for Fairclough (2002, 26) language is “a socially conditioned process” which constitutes a part of society.

For Fairclough (2002, 26) discourse is directly connected to ideology and hegemony. He argues that the *elites* i.e. the groups in power maintain their hegemony (the notion of *hegemony* was adopted from Gramsci's theory of *cultural hegemony*, which outlines that the ruling class uses cultural institutions to maintain power over the society) by having control over the ideologies, which become naturalized within a certain society and therefore represent a resilient framework of the *ideas, beliefs, values*, creating a hegemonic discourse.

### **The Corpus Analytical Framework**

#### Corpus-based approach

Corpus Linguistics is a branch of linguistics that involves computer-based analysis of the corpora, i.e. a large collection of naturally occurring spoken and written computer-readable texts, selected according to the particular criteria. The target corpus (Baker, 2006, 26) is ought to be selected in order to enable the researcher to conduct the analysis of a

specific topic or an issue; the *representativeness* of the corpus is more important than its size. According to Leech (2014, 27) the corpus is considered representative if the findings based on contents of this particular corpus can be generalized to a larger hypothetical corpus.

*Corpus-based methodology* represents an approach adopted by the researcher in order to validate, or, on the contrary, refute a hypothesis (deductive approach). Therefore, the corpus-based approach has a basic objective to describe and explain linguistic patterns of variation and use (Malyuga & McCarthy, 2020, McCarthy, 2017). According to Biber (2015), the results of the corpus-based research generally can not be applied to the language as whole; therefore, the patterns typical for one register are not valid for another register. For this paper a corpus-based approach was adopted; therefore, the materials for further investigation were determined by the researcher at the beginning of the process.

#### AntConc 2 software

There are various software programs that enable the researcher to conduct a quantitative linguistic analysis of the corpora. For this paper AntConc 2 software package was used. AntConc is a freeware corpus analysis toolkit for concordancing and text analysis available for different operating systems. It has the set of text analysis tools such as concordance, word and keyword frequency generators, tools for cluster and lexical bundle analysis.

#### Instruments of Corpus Linguistics

##### Frequency word list

Word frequency list (Scott, Tribble 2006, 12) is a list of word-types; the software for linguistic analysis reduces all the present word tokens to word-types. The wordlist function in *AntConc 2* allows to generate the list of all the words in a corpus ranging by their raw frequency or in alphabetical order and save the list for later use. A frequency list contains all the words in a corpus with the number of occurrences displayed next to each word (Malyuga & Rimmer, 2021).

In corpus analysis the frequency list serves as the basic quantitative technique in order to find out how frequently a word occurs in the corpus; it helps to trace typical patterns in the corpus. Scott and Tribble (11, 2006) state that word frequency lists could provide a starting point for the understanding of a text in terms of its lexis. According to Baker (2006, 2010) the most frequent words in the corpus can reveal an ideological stance and attitude of the language users and provide an indicator of a

particular bias (Baker 2006, 2010). He argues that the ideological stance can result because of the preferred use of one lexical item over another. In most cases, grammatical words (such as articles and prepositions) result at the top of the list because of their general frequency in the language.

#### Concordances

*Concordance* is a line of text extracted from the corpus. The concordance line allows the researcher to see a *search word* (known as *node word*) or a string of words in the context. In the software package *AntConc 2* the concord function is the feature that provides the total list of occurrences of a word in its context. In *Corpus Linguistics* the concord function enables the analyst to carry out qualitative analysis by presenting the search word in the middle of its context on the left and right side in each of the concordance lines.

Observation of frequently occurring words at the left or right side of the node word enables the researcher to trace the patterns surrounding the word. In this paper the concordance tool is utilized in order to trace the patterns surrounding the words under examination; these patterns can be extracted through the observation of the concordance lines organized in alphabetical order.

#### Case study

This section presents the case study. The section is divided into several analytical categories. The method used for data analysis and interpretation is based on combination of the tools of *Corpus Linguistics* such as frequency list and concordances which were integrated with the tools of qualitative *Critical Discourse Analysis*.

#### *Frequency word list*

As the first step, the frequency word list was created. Grammatical words such as prepositions, articles, etc., given their generally high frequency, result the most frequent items in the corpus. However, they were eliminated and the word list with the most frequent content items (nouns, adjectives etc.) was created. The table below contains the most frequent content words in the corpus with their ranking in the initial frequency list and calculated total frequency; some of them (*sanzioni*, *petrolio*) were taken for further analysis.

Rank in the corpus	Word	Freq.
24	SANZIONI	165
25	UE	164
28	RUSSIA	156
31	GAS	141
35	MOSCA	104
37	PETROLIO	91
38	RUSSO	90

*Table 1: the list of words edited and truncated*

During the analysis several analytical categories were distinguished. The following discussion and results section provides the results of the analysis. Direct quotes of Corriere della Sera articles are followed by translations into English.

#### **Discussion and results**

##### *Self VS Other: demonization of Russia in Western discourse*

The analysis of the corpus shows the tendencies of *othering* of Russia in Corriere della Sera discourse. The acute stage of confrontation between the West and Russia which started after the beginning of the Russian Special Military Operation is described in a white and black dichotomy between the collective West and Russia, especially at the beginning of the period. The confrontation between the Self (collective West) and Other (Russia) is framed linguistically with the usage of such strong epithets like *stato-canaglia* regarding Russia and a generally hostile narrative.

1. **Le banche europee voltano le spalle alla Russia,** strette tra le sanzioni imposte a Mosca dall'Occidente e la grave crisi economica che sta esplodendo nel Paese. (2022.03.06)

**The European banks have turned away from Russia** squeezed between the sanctions imposed by the West and the deep economic crisis which is taking place in the country

*Sanctions as an instrument of punishment*

As the consequence of this confrontation, the sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy are framed as an act of a fair *punishment* of the *other*.

2. Se l'Occidente oggi fa **la guerra con le sanzioni**, in parte è proprio perché il nostro è un mondo più globalizzato di quello di ieri. (2022.03.18)

If today the West **is combating with the sanctions**, partly this is because our world is more globalized than it was yesterday.

3. Gli investitori stanno infatti aspettando di ricevere il pagamento di 117 milioni di dollari di cedole su due obbligazioni russe, i primi pagamenti di questo tipo da quando i Paesi occidentali hanno risposto all'invasione dell'Ucraina con **sanzioni finanziarie senza precedenti**. (2022.03.17)

The investors are actually waiting to receive the payment of 117 millions of dollars of coupons for two Russian obligations, the first payments of this type since the western countries have replied to invasion to Ukraine with **unprecedented financial sanctions**.

As it was outlined in the first section, the European Union sees itself as a moral power in international relations; it is also manifested in application of sanctions upon an actor which according to the existing paradigm are violating the order. Therefore, the application of sanctions is justified by the means of language as a measure of re-stabilization of the order.

With the usage of the concordance function, the *patterns* appearing at the right side of the word *sanzioni* (sanctions) were analysed. The table below contains the patterns with their total number in the corpus.

Word	Patterns at the right side of the word
Sanzioni (156)	contro Mosca (7), europee (6), occidentali (6), contro la Russia (5), economiche (4), dell'UE (4), finanziarie (3), alla Russia (3), sulla Russia (2), di ritorsione (2), a Mosca (1), ai russi (1), all'energia russa (1), americane (1), attuali (1), bloccano (1), contro le istituzioni finanziarie e le imprese (1), creano difficoltà (1), degli Stati Uniti e dell'Unione Europea (1), dell'Europa (1), dell'Occidente (1), esistenti (1), faranno male (1), impediscono gli scambi(1), imposte a Mosca (1), includano anche gli idrocarburi (1), legate al gas (1), messe finora (1), pallide (1), più dure (1), riportano Mosca ai tempi dell'Urss (1), statunitensi ed europee (1), su petrolio e gas (1), sul gas (1), sul nostro Paese (1), sul nostro Sistema (1), sulla nostra economia (1), vanno approvate all'unanimità (1), verso Mosca (1)

Table 2: collocates at the right side of the word *sanzioni*

The analysis of the patterns at the right side of the word *sanzioni* shows that it mainly concerns the object of the sanctions (Russia) and the subject (Europe, the West). However, some patterns (*creano difficoltà, faranno male, più dure, riportano Mosca ai tempi dell'Urss*) have some emotional connotation.

4. O meglio i soldi in cassa ci sarebbero ma **le sanzioni occidentali** e l'impossibilità di accedere al circuito internazionale dei capitali di fatto impedisce il servizio del debito pubblico in valuta forte. (2022.03.17)

Or better, there is money in the box, but **the western sanctions** and impossibility to access to international circuit of the capitals in fact prevent public debt service in a strong currency.

5. Più **le sanzioni faranno male**, più sarà complicato avere unità tra gli Stati membri. (2022.04.07)

The more **sanctions bring damage**, the more difficult it will be to reach unity between the Member States.

Corriere della Sera

### *Energy issues*

The energy issues resulted to be one of the most crucial elements of the discourse. With the usage of the concordance function, the *patterns* appearing at the left of the word *petrolio* (oil) in the corpus were manually selected and analysed. The table below contains the patterns at the left side of the word *petrolio*.

Collocates at the left side of the word	Word
embargo del (al) (sul) (verso) (12), gas e (7), importazioni di (5), carbone e (4), misure sul (3), fornitura (2), proventi del (2), abbandonare (1), il padrone assoluto del (1), un milione di barili di (1), bloccare il (1), blocco al (1) colpire il (1), dipendenti dal (1), dipendenza dal (1), eliminazione del (1), esportazioni (1), sanzioni europee (1), paesi-produttori di (1), produzione di (1), prodotti raffinati del (1), sanzionare il (1), sanzioni su (1), stop al (1), trattano il (1), usare più (1), vendita di (1)	petrolio (91)

*Table 3: collocations at the left side of the word petrolio*

Such words as *embargo*, *ban*, *measures* regarding the oil hit the most in the corpus; the restrictive measures on the energy remain the central part of the discourse on sanctions.

6. Il sesto pacchetto, che comprende **l'embargo sul petrolio** russo, continua a essere ostaggio del veto dell'Ungheria.(2022.05.18)

The sixth package which includes the **embargo on Russian oil** keeps being blocked by the veto of Hungary.

Corriere della Sera

### *Historical connotation: Cold War narrative*

The historical narrative associated with the Cold War age characterized by the confrontation between the West and the Soviet Union is present in the corpus. The Cold War narrative is less present than the three two analytical categories, however, it is manifested in colourful metaphors.

7. Finiti bottoni e jeans: le sanzioni riportano Mosca **ai tempi dell'Urss** (2022. 05.25)

No more jeans: the sanctions have thrown Moscow **to USSR age.**

8. Le élite e i ceti medi di Mosca o San Pietroburgo non avevano libertà politiche, ma fino a due settimane fa vivevano il resto della vita come i loro simili di Milano o Parigi. Ora sono tornati di colpo in **Unione Sovietica.** (2022.03.10)

The elites and the middle class in Moscow and Saint Petersburg had never had political freedom, before two weeks ago they had had a lifestyle very similar to the one in Milan or Paris. Today they have suddenly turned back to the **Soviet Union.**

9. Ma i cambiamenti di queste 15 settimane hanno portato il Paese in una situazione che molti paragonano a quella degli **anni più bui della Guerra Fredda.** (2022. 05.25)

The transformations of the last 15 weeks have brought the country to a situation which can be compared to **the darkest times of the Cold War.**

Corriere della Sera

The examples reported above contain the elements of historical narrative present in the discourse.

#### *Sarcasm*

Sarcastic comments and ambiguous irony are present in the discourse. Usage of the mocking comments, especially on the opponents, serves to enhance *the other's* negative representation. As Konyaeva (75, 2021) argues, in the discourse humour can have a manipulative purpose to demonstrate the absurdity of the social way to solve a particular problem and in order to discredit certain actors in front of the mass audience. Often the opposition *us VS them* is revealed in the use of sarcastic evaluation (Konyaeva 75, 2021), which may take the form of mocking an event, situation or person, and become an instrument of discrediting.

10. Sono passati solo tre mesi ma **la Russia sembra essere piombata in un'altra era geologica.** (2022. 05.25)

Only three months have passed, but **Russia already seems to be stuck in another geological era.**

Corriere della Sera

For instance, in the sentence reported above comparison between the effect of sanctions and **another geological era** is an example of sarcasm.

### **Conclusion**

This paper aims to analyse the discourse of one of the biggest Italian media outlets Corriere della Sera on anti-Russian economic sanctions. The methodology applied for this study is represented by qualitative corpus-based analysis integrated with the tools of qualitative Critical Discourse analysis. During the analysis, several analytical categories were distinguished.

The analysis of the language of the articles proved that the Corriere della Sera discourse on anti-Russian economic sanctions contains a certain *bias*. Negative linguistic representation of Russia and further justification of the severe economic sanctions led to creation of a strong enemy-image.

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