Kaptiurov A. A.,
PhD student
Research and Educational Center of Foreign Languages NAS of Ukraine

CIVIL SOCIETY CONCEPT IN TRIPARTITE MODEL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MEDIA DISCOURSE

Summary. The article aims to explore CIVIL SOCIETY concept by formulating the model of social reality as it is constructed by authors of mass media publications that cover events arranged by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activist movements. The research draws on the sample of texts by major British and American media companies such as BBC, The Guardian, Fox News and The New York Times uploaded online between 2014 and 2024. The study has revealed that mass media publications avoid using the abstract term civil society. Instead, they tend to refer to representatives of civil society and to operate with the lexemes activists, protesters, demonstrators or names of particular NGOs or activist movements such as Amnesty International or Just Stop Oil. For the sake of brevity, civil society organizations and their activists are referred to as protagonist. Mass media publications relate the protagonist's activity to the other two parties, namely to the state or business (antagonist) and to marginalized social groups (victim). Analysis of the vocabulary used to describe relations between the protagonist and the antagonism shows the overwhelming prevalence of nominations with the confrontation seme. In other words, mass media discourse presents events related to NGOs as a social conflict. The third party (victim) is embedded in the model as an object of oppression from the antagonist and a recipient of help from the protagonist. Thus, within the triangle, the relations between civil society and the state or business are bilateral, whereas their interactions with the marginalized groups are one-way, directed towards the disadvantaged. This observation allows for the comparison of this tripartite model with the Drama Triangle put forward by Karpman in an attempt to describe dysfunctional interpersonal relationships. Simultaneously, it sets several questions for further exploration, for example, the question concerning the stability of the roles within the model and verbalization of this feature in mass media as well as the possibility to approach mass media discourse of the sample as narratives.

Key words: civil society, concept, model, conflict, mass media discourse

Formulation of the research problem. CIVIL SOCIETY concept has a long history and at each stage of societal development the concept was marked with peculiar features, which arose from the specificity of a social structure, challenges societies faced at the stage as well as means that were available to resolve the problems.

The beginning of the 21st century has brought new social phenomena, the most conspicuous and remarkable among them are globalization and digitalization of all social processes. These two phenomena have resulted in unifying, though to a different degree, local economies, policies and cultures: nowadays, mass media are accessible all over the world, political and business patterns are similar in all countries regardless of their geography and ideology. On the other hand, globalization and digitalization have facilitated ordinary people's communication and engagement in national and international decision-making and have turned voluntarily formed groups, or civil society, into a powerful political leverage. The names of such non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as Amnesty International, Red Cross and Reporters without Borders and such movements as #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter and Just Stop Oil are well-known across the world for their activity and influence. The mediator between NGOs and communities is mass media: it is mass media that inform large audiences of social problems, political figures and, ultimately, construct people's social representations. The relevance of the current research arises from the insufficient linguistic research into the pillar of modern, especially modern Western society, CIVIL SOCIETY concept, as it is presented in English-language mass media publications.

Literature review. 'Civil society' has primarily been the subject-matter of Political Science, Sociology, Philosophy and History. Some scholars tend to focus primarily on its evolution throughout centuries and suggest tracing its formation back to Ancient Greece or even further to Confucius [1]. Other researchers look into the current developments in non-governmental spheres, paying special attention to emerging activist movements of today in countries that have undergone drastic ideological transformation such as Georgia, Ukraine, the EU or those of the Arab world [2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8]. There are studies that propose a meticulous analysis of relations between NGOs, state authorities and those social groups whom NGOs try to help [9; 10; 11]. Another promising field of research is explored by those scientists who focus on the structure of global and local civil society and point out the tendency to stratification and elitism in NGOs [12].

Though the phenomenon of civil society has appeared on the sidelines of several studies by Ukrainian linguists [13; 14], these researches have not been aimed at analysing CIVIL SOCIETY concept per se. Rather, they shed light on discursive and semiotic consequences of activities carried out by non-governmental organizations.

The current research aims to propose a model that would describe the place of modern civil society and its relations to other social actors as it emerges in English-language mass media discourse. The aim is achieved by carrying out **the following tasks:** (1) to distinguish the main social actors presented in mass media discourse that report on events related to CIVIL SOCIETY concept and (2) to analyse the language means used to verbalise relations between these actors.

The material of the research is a sample of 507 articles published online by British and US mass media, namely *BBC*, *The Guardian*, *Fox News* and *The New York Times* within the period of 2014–2024. The methods of the study include continuous sampling, descriptive analysis, conceptual and relational content analysis.

Main body. Within the framework of Political Science, 'civil society' is defined as a network of organizations embedded in a bipartite or tripartite model. Ancient philosophers were prone to support the dichotomy, whereas the 20th- and 21st-century thinkers put forward three-component models with abstract components: besides the 'third sector' (i. e., 'civil society'), they contain the 'public sector' (or 'state') and the 'private sector' (or 'business') (for more details, see [15]). The propensity of media discourse to mostly report on events with rather well-identifiable participants turns it different from academic discourse. This statement correlates with the idea expressed by Professor David Lewis (London School of Economics and Political Science) in 2001 BBC series titled *What is Civil Society?* [16]. Defining civil society as "*the collection of groups and organisations which are not part of government and not part of the business world*" [17], the scholar argues that "*... even if you don't find the words **civil society** in a newspaper, you'll find many examples of what we are talking about, whether or not it's the government encouraging non-governmental organisations or voluntary organisations to get involved in providing education or health services; or whether it's in the context of campaigning groups trying to protect the environment; or whether it's local people coming together in order to maybe oppose a new development, or a new road, or a new motorway*" [17]. In other words, lexemes referring to the organizations and their representatives that work towards eliminating social problems by providing free services to those in need, protecting the environment or resisting some governmental decisions fall into the scope of CIVIL SOCIETY concept. Thus, references to this concept in mass media presuppose a social situation that results from the state's malfunctioning or ineffectiveness and from people's dissatisfaction or disappointment.

Content analysis of the sample reveals that social reality depicted in mass media consists of three collective actors: (1) civil society, (2) the state or business and (3) the oppressed group(s). The civil society actor is verbalized by such lexemes as *activists, protesters, demonstrators*; the state or business actors are expressed by *state, government, police, corporations, the City* as well as names of state officials, countries and companies; the third participant appears as nominations of various social groups, e.g., *migrants, women, people of colour*, etc.

*Hundreds of **Extinction Rebellion activists** gathered on Waterloo, Blackfriars, Lambeth and Westminster bridges calling for an end to new fossil fuel investments* [18].

***Hungary**, for example, passed what it called the "Stop Soros" law, which criminalized helping **refugees** and **migrants** apply for asylum* [19].

*And **French demonstrators** gathered on the Clyde Arc to accuse **the French president** of supporting the **fossil fuel industry*** [20].

*Many protests have revolved around the push for **police** to be defunded, with **demonstrators** arguing that money meant for those departments should be reallocated to programs that benefit **communities of color*** [21].

Thus, there appears the "CIVIL SOCIETY – STATE/BUSINESS – THE OPPRESSED" triangle. Within this model, the term 'protagonist' (i.e., *a leader, proponent, or supporter of a cause* [22]) is applicable to the role played by NGOs, whereas 'antagonist' (*a person who is strongly opposed to something or someone* [23]) may be used for the STATE/BUSINESS component and 'victim' may be reserved for marginalized groups.

One may notice that this tripartite model resembles Karpman's Drama Triangle of dysfunctional interpersonal relations [24]. In the Drama Triangle, Victim is powerless, dependent and shuns decision-making, while Persecutor dominates the relationship, suppresses Victim and ignores Victim's interests. The third party in the triangle is Rescuer that steps in to shoulder Victim's burden. According to Karpman, these toxic relations form a vicious circle, where problems are not eliminated until Victim learns to cope with them without Rescuer's help.

Mass media discourse presents the relations of struggle between the protagonist (CIVIL SOCIETY) and the antagonist (STATE/BUSINESS) as the fundamental feature of social reality. Table 1 sums up the results of the quantitative analysis of lexemes with the 'confrontation' seme, the obvious leaders being *protest* and its derivatives:

Table 1
Frequency of lexemes with the 'confrontation' seme

	Lexeme and its derivatives	Frequency in sample
1	to protest, (a/the) protest, (a the) protester	2356
2	to demonstrate, (a/the) demonstration, (a/the) demonstrator	527
3	to fight, (a/the) fighter, (a/the) fist-fighter	188
4	to attack, (an/the) attacker	175
5	(a/the) riot, (a/the) rioter	135
6	to clash, (a/the) clash	90
7	to confront, (a/the) confrontation	83
8	to challenge, (a/the) challenge	61
9	to crack down, (a/the) crackdown	46
10	to stand off, (a/the) standoff	45
11	to struggle, (a/the) struggle	15
12	to conflict, (a/the) conflict	10
	Total	3685

The antagonist's actions antagonist towards CIVIL SOCIETY are characterized as repressive:

Table 2
Frequency of lexemes denoting antagonist's repressive actions towards CIVIL SOCIETY

	Lexeme and its derivatives	Frequency in sample
1	to arrest, (an/the) arrest	413
2	to prison, (in/to) prison, to imprison, imprisonment	105
3	to fine, (a/the) fine	82
4	to punish, (a/the) punishment, punishable	78
5	to crack down, (a/the) crackdown	46
6	to jail, (in) jail	45
7	to clamp down, (a/the) clampdown	20
8	to prosecute	19
	Total	808

The comparison of the Tables above reveals that, first, mass media pay much less attention to the antagonist's reaction as its verbalisers are five times less frequent. Besides, the vocabulary used in the sample, namely *arrest, prison, fine, jail, prosecute,* points out the institutional, formal and legal nature of the antagonist's actions. However, *clamp down, crack down* and their derivatives do not immediately denote but, rather, imply the repressive nature of the antagonist's actions as well as harmful, illegal activity of NGOs. In particular, the Collins Dictionary explains the meaning of the verb *crack down on smb* by suggesting the following

situation: "*If people in authority crack down on a group of people, they become stricter in making the group obey rules or laws*" [25], whereas *crack down* is interpreted as *to start dealing with bad or illegal behaviour in a more severe way* [26]. *Clamp down*, in its turn, presupposes terminating one's **detrimental** actions: *to take strong action to stop or limit a harmful or unwanted activity* [27].

Table 3 contains the frequency of lexemes that verbalize constructive ways of conflict resolution through negotiation and dialogue:

Table 3

Frequency of lexemes denoting a dialogue between CIVIL SOCIETY and antagonist

	Lexeme and its derivatives	Frequency in sample
1	to talk, (-/the) talks	193
2	to discuss, (a/the) discussion	126
3	to negotiate, (a/the) negotiation	30
	Total	349

The results above demonstrate that verbalizers of confrontational actions in media discourse exceed 13 times the frequency of the lexemes that mean resolving conflicts through negotiating.

It is noteworthy that the sample registers 27 occurrences of the verb *to ignore* used to characterize the antagonist's treatment of civil society organisations, e.g., *Thunberg voiced frustration, saying that the climate justice movement's message has been ignored for decades* [28] or *Columbia begins suspending pro-Palestine protesters after ultimatum ignored* [29]. Yet, the frequency of the lexeme is negligible compared to the verbalizers of the confrontation and negotiation modes.

The articles in the sample depict relations between the state and the victim (disadvantaged groups) by using the lexemes *to oppress* and *oppression*, yet their frequency is extremely low (32 occurrences for 373,000 words)*:*

"*As a climate justice movement, we have to listen to the voices of those who are being oppressed and those who are fighting for freedom and for justice,*" *Thunberg said.* [30]

Climate breakdown exacerbates the reasons people already have for needing to migrate, such as desperate socioeconomic conditions or political oppression [31].

The "CIVIL SOCIETY – THE OPPRESSED" relations are typical of those between a rescuer and a victim:

Table 4

Frequency of lexemes denoting relations between civil society organisations and marginalised groups

	Lexeme and its derivatives	Frequency in sample
1	to help, (the) help	344
2	to rescue, (the) rescue, (a/the) rescuer	289
3	to save	35
	Total	668

Remarkably, relations between the protagonist and the victim are covered in mass media discourse much less and these relations are presented as one-way assistance. The frequency of these verbalizers shows that this type of relations within the triangle is given considerably less attention in media content. It should also be noted that the relations between the antagonist and the victim are also uni-directional, which suggests that marginalized groups are presented as passive participants.

The schematic representation of the tripartite model and relations between its components as it is depicted in mass media discourse is given in Figure 1 below:
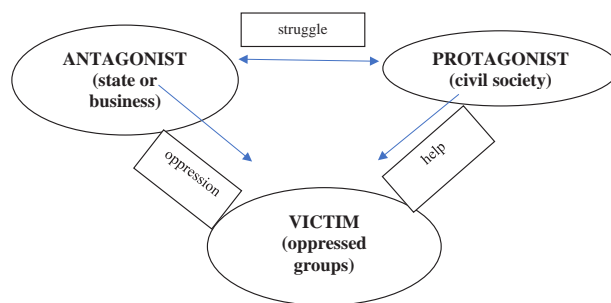

Fig. 1. Configuration of participants and their relations

Thus, the situation when CIVIL SOCIETY appears in mass media discourse is the situation of social conflict as social conflict is defined as "a form of social interaction aimed at resolving contradictions" [32, c. 78], a clash between two or more parties trying to pursue their goals in open social confrontation when one party attempts to satisfy its subjective interests at the expense of the other party's interests [32, c. 79].

Conclusion and further research. The study reveals that mass media discourse covering events organized by CIVIL SOCIETY groups pictures the social situation as a tripartite conflict model where relations between participants are fixed. Within the model, the antagonist is the state or business structures that oppresses certain social groups (victim), while the protagonist (CIVIL SOCIETY organisations) struggles to defend the victim and to counteract the antagonist. The analysis of vocabulary used to verbalize relations between the participants shows that media discourse focuses primarily on the 'antagonist – protagonist' confrontation. The victim is depicted as a passive participant, being an object of the antagonist's oppression and a recipient of the protagonist's help. The model has much in common with Karpman's Drama Triangle, a schematic representation of dysfunctional relations.

The study opens up prospects for further research in terms of specifying whether the Drama Triangle pattern is applicable to mass media discourse on civil society organizations and their activity. Namely, according to Karpman's theory, Drama Triangle participants tend to swap roles. It is yet not clear whether this is valid in the tripartite model suggested in the article. Another approach to media discourse may draw on the notion of narrative, since any conflict situation undergoes three stages – beginning, development and resolution. Hence, the prospective study may focus on structural, axiological, etc. aspects of story-telling in publications covering activities of NGOs and their leaders.

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Каптюров А. Концепт CIVIL SOCIETY у трикомпонентній моделі соціальних відносин в англомовному медіадискурсі

Анотація. Метою статті є дослідження концепту CIVIL SOCIETY шляхом формування моделі соціальної реальності у тому вигляді, як вона конструюється авторами публікацій у засобах масової інформації, присвячених подіям, влаштованим неурядовими організаціями (НУО) та активістськими рухами. Розвідка спирається на вибірку з текстів провідних британських та американських медійних компаній, таких як *BBC, The Guardian, Fox News* та *The New York Times,* виданих онлайн у період між 2014 та 2024 роками. Дослідження виявило, що публікації у ЗМІ уникають вживання терміну *civil society.* Замість його вони зазвичай згадують представників громадянського суспільства та застосовують лексеми *activists, protesters, demonstrators* або назви певних НУО або громадських рухів, наприклад, *Amnesty International* або *Just Stop Oil.* У дослідженні пропонується вживати термін 'протагоніст' для позначення НУО та їх активістів. Масмедійні публікації пов'язують діяльність протагоніста з двома іншими сторонами, а саме з державою чи бізнесом ('антагоністом') та маргіналізованими соціальними групами ('жертвою'). Аналіз лексики, що вербалізує відносини між протагоністом та антагоністом, виявляє приголомшливу перевагу номінацій з семою 'конфронтація'. Іншими словами, дискурс ЗМІ представляє події, пов'язані з НУО, як соціальний конфлікт. Третя сторона (жертва) вписана у модель як об'єкт угнетіння з боку антагоніста та як одержувач допомоги з боку протагоніста. Таким чином, у межах цього трикутника, відносини між громадянським суспільством та державою чи бізнесом є двосторонніми, в той час як їх взаємодія з маргіналізованими групами виявляється односторонньою, спрямованою в напрямі жертви утисків. Це спостереження дозволяє порівняти сформульовану трикомпонентну модель з драматичним трикутником, запропонованим С. Карпманом для опису дисфункційних міжособистісних стосунків. Одночасно з цим, це ставить питання для подальших досліджень, наприклад, питання стабільності ролей у моделі та вербалізація цієї риси в медіадискурсі, а також можливість вивчати тексти вибірки як наратив.

Ключові слова: громадянське суспільство, концепт, модель, конфлікт, дискурс ЗМІ.