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THE INFORMATION FRONT OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: THE CASE OF PRESIDENT V. ZELENSKYY'S DAILY VIDEO ADDRESSES

Master thesis

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance and level of investigation of the topic. Russia's hostile information campaigns against democracies in the second decade of the 21st century led to the resurgence of interest in the studies of propaganda and information warfare (Stanley, 2015; Giles, 2016; Patrikarakos, 2017; Woolley & Howard, 2019; Jankowicz, 2020; Seib, 2021; Johnson et al., 2021; Whyte et al., 2021; Chakars & Ekmanis, 2022). Special focus was placed on the case of Ukraine that became the testing ground for every technique in the Russian arsenal, from trolls and bots filling the internet with lies to election meddling to hybrid warfare (Snegovaya, 2015; Zhdanova & Orlova, 2016; Sanger, 2018; DeBenedictis, 2022). After the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, attention has been drawn to attempts of Ukraine to protect its information space and shape domestic and global public opinion about the conflict under the rhetorical leadership of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (Adams, 2022; Bajor, 2022; Berry, 2022; Breuer, 2022; Genauer, 2022; Søderberg, 2022; Perez & Nair, 2022; Segal, 2022; Handler, 2023; Patraeus & Roberts, 2023). Ukraine's actions on the communication front have been widely praised, though the increased state control of the media and at times unduly upbeat war reporting were met with criticism (Guz, 2023; Koshiw, 2023).

The growing instability in different parts of the world raises new questions about the effect of digital media on democracy, the distribution of power between elites and citizens, state and non-state actors, and the changing nature of warfare (Castells, 2013; Blumler, 2016; Cosentino, 2020; Persily & Tucker, 2020; Di Pietro et al., 2021; Giusti & Piras, 2021). Information war exploits openness of democracies, amplifies mistrust and polarization, and this assault on the very foundations of society is believed be an existential threat to democracy itself (Walker & Ludwig, 2017; Stengel, 2019; Tambini, 2021, p. 166). The research in these areas is increasingly practically oriented, seeking to reverse the global decline of democracy and to put up an effective defense against the influence of authoritarian powers (Paul & Matthews, 2016; Splidsboel Hansen, 2017; Stengel, 2019; Connable et. al, 2020; Clack & Johnson, 2021).

Novelty. The Russia-Ukraine war is the first large-scale military conflict in the age of social media (Ciuriak, 2022; Suciu, 2022; Economist, 2022), and its communication practices have become an invaluable source of information for scholars, policymakers, defense officials and general public worldwide. One of the prominent success stories of this conflict is Ukraine's ability to project a unified and compelling war narrative. Control of the narrative has always been a critical goal for all sides in conflict, and attaining this goal has become increasingly difficult in modern hyper-connected media environment (Patrikarakos, 2017; Tansini & Ben-Haim, 2021).

While some of this success may be due to the fact that the story of defending the country against an unprovoked aggression is easy to promote (Martin, 2023, p. 142), and it has not been

universally accepted (Ash et al., 2023), this has been an extraordinary achievement given the scale of the Russian information war. The domination of the Ukrainian war narrative was largely made possible by tireless efforts of President Zelenskyy, whose daily video addresses have become a staple of the wartime information environment.

These addresses to the nation by the head of state have been delivered with historically unprecedented regularity and often – in a historically unprecedented for this genre form of a hand-held smartphone video. While a lot of attention by scholars and journalists is directed to Volodymyr Zelenskyy's unique style and elements that make his communication highly effective, the narratives developed by him throughout the course of the conflict have not been systematically investigated. There is also a lack of research of audience response to his messages. These questions are addressed in our thesis.

Problem. Ukraine is effectively resisting the enemy who possesses one of the most formidable information warfare apparatuses in history and Ukrainian war narrative dominates in much of the world. What determines this success?

We believe that communication efforts by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy play crucial role in this regard, especially his daily video addresses, that constitute the **object** of our research.

The **purpose** of our study is to investigate how President Zelenskyy contributes to the construction of the Ukrainian war narrative through his daily video addresses.

To achieve this, the thesis fulfills the following **objectives**:

Analyzing the texts of the addresses,

1) to identify major narratives developed by President Zelenskyy;
2) to determine the structure and content of each of these narratives;
3) to reveal the functions these narratives perform in relation to different audiences.

Conducting a survey,

4) to analyze the experience of the Ukrainian youth with regard to President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses;
5) to determine the attitude of young Ukrainians to this form of presidential communication;
6) to learn what young people think of Volodymyr Zelenskyy as president and communicator.

The survey is to test the following **hypotheses**:

1) Young Ukrainians closely follow President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses;
2) The attitude of the Ukrainian youth to presidential daily addresses is highly positive;
3) Young people in Ukraine have a consistently positive attitude to Volodymyr Zelenskyy as president and communicator.

For the purpose of this thesis, a combination of qualitative and quantitative **methods** has been chosen, and the research is conducted in two stages following the exploratory sequential design. At

the first stage qualitative methods were applied to study the content of presidential addresses and reveal the structure of the narratives, relations between them and their functions. These findings informed the creation of the questionnaire for the survey conducted during second stage of the research, when quantitative methods were applied to learn about the audience experience and response to these messages and views of their author. Adding the perspective of the receivers helped generate a more comprehensive view of the communication process and improved understanding of the impact of presidential addresses.

Structure. The thesis consists of four parts, each dealing with a different aspect of research. The first part reviews the theoretical background of the research. It discusses the changes in political communication brought about by technological innovations that reshape relations between politicians, media and publics, and give rise to new forms of disinformation and propaganda. The second part describes research methodology, introduces presidential video addresses as a new form of communication and outlines the approach to narrative analysis used in our thesis. The third part provides a detailed analysis of the content, structure and functions of the narratives developed by President Zelenskyy is his daily video addresses. The fourth part discusses the results of the survey conducted to determine audience perspective on presidential video addresses. It is followed by general conclusions that sum up the results of the study, and recommendations for future research and practical application of the findings.

1. TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

1.1. The dynamics of change in technology and political communication

The words "information," "digital," "cyber," "network" and "interactive" have firmly entered our vocabulary as part of terms broadly used as an objective description of our time, society, events and trends that affect all aspects of our lives (McQuail & Deuze, 2020; Castells, 2010; Rogers, 1986). The magnitude of transformations brought about by ubiquitous digital media that integrate various forms of communication and enable instantaneous global multiple-way interactions can be compared to those caused by the invention of writing, alphabet or printing press (Castells, 2010; Singer & Brookings, 2018) and corroborate the assumption that revolutionary changes in means of communication have shaped humankind more than any other force or event in human history (Fang, 2016/1997).

Various timelines of communication evolution are built around similar turning points represented by major technological inventions (see, for example, Rogers, 1986; Fang, 2016/1997; Epstein, 2018; McQuail & Deuze, 2020). Yet, their authors stress the importance of avoiding technological determinism and look beyond single-factor explanations of social change, because the change always occurs is a wider context (McQuail & Deuze, 2020) with ultimate consequences of new media hard to predict when they first become available (Rogers, 1986). Adding to this complexity is the fact that each information revolution is based on the invention of more than one tool of communication (Fang, 2016/1997) whose combined effect should be considered to make sense of the resulting changes. For instance, the current information technology revolution started after the Second World War with major breakthroughs is fields of micro-electronics, computers, and telecommunications and culminated with the advent of smartphones and social media half a century later (Castells, 2010; Singer & Brookings, 2018). Moreover, new media rarely completely displace older media types that continue to exert influence and adjust to the new environment. This makes all media systems essentially hybrid and their analysis should integrate the roles played by various types of media and a complex web of relations among them (Chadwick, 2017). This persistence and relevance of older types of media makes it possible to claim that none of information revolutions has truly ended (Fang, 2016/1997).

Studies in the history of communication show that information revolutions share a long list of common features, and one of them is their constantly increasing pace that leaves people progressively less time to reflect on and adapt to changes (Roger, 1986; Fang, 2016/1997; Castells, 2010). In the period since the middle of the twentieth century, which is commonly associated with the ever-accelerating unfolding of the latest information revolution, political communication in many democracies has gone through four successive phases (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Blumler, 2016).

The first age spanned the first two decades after World War II with political communication dominated by relatively strong political parties and beliefs. Political messages tended to be substantive, got ready access to mass media, and citizens responded to them voting on group-based loyalties.

The second age started in 1960s with limited-channel national television which enlarged the audience of political communication while loosening partisan grip on voters. Citizens were now more influenced by current events and government's performance and exposed to more impartial and several-sided information. It affected multiple aspects of political communication: from scheduling political events to follow the news cycle and more intimate style of political language to crafting soundbites and personalized focus on top leaders. Political actors were pressured to learn how to get into the news and shape the media agenda.

The third age emerged at the turn of the century out of communication abundance created by 24-hour news services, multiple TV channels and radio stations and proliferation of communication equipment at people's homes. More complex than its precursors, it was marked by intensified professionalization of political advocacy, increased competitive pressures both for political actors and media, growing anti-elitist and short-term populism, diversification of political communication forms and voices and more fragmented audiences now able to "pick and choose" information sources and political messages that often blended with other materials (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999).

Many of these features have spilled over into the fourth age driven by the diffusion and innovative evolution of Internet technologies (Blumler, 2016). They have fundamentally transformed interpersonal political communication, opening new opportunities for connection between dispersed social actors, thus ruining the traditional pyramidal model of elite to mass communication. The resulting change can be described as the process of decentralization of political communication (Brants & Voltmer, 2011) or as a creation of the new two-level – institutionalized and grassroot – political communication ecology (Blumler, 2016).

The fourth age of political communication is characterized by very high degree of complexity and volatility. Davis (2019) sums up its defining features as following:

- A considerable weakening of the ability of state institutions to enact policy or operate accountably;
- The growth of large, complex policy areas and risks beyond comprehension of most leaders;
- A serious break-down of faith in political elites, experts and institutions;
- Ideological fragmentation of parties;
- Nationalist and cultural identity challenges to traditional politics;
- Fast growing unstable new social movements, parties and interest groups;
- Hollowed-out traditional news media operations;

- Untraceable and unaccountable flows of news and information across social media networks;
- Problems of information truth and overload;
- Unaligned and very unstable electorates;
- Audiences fragmented and polarized across numerous divides;
- A growing divide between the public and private politics.

As it happens with every technological innovation, the advent of digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) sparked off debates between techno-optimists and pessimists concerning their effect on the future of politics. The first camp welcomed ICTs for their promise to enhance existing democratic practices, making them "smarter" and continuously self-improving, or to recover the lost ideal of democracy by exposing and overcoming its "false" versions and bringing back more participatory forms of politics. Cheap, non-hierarchical and unrestricted, ICTs were just the8eaturte of traditional media and communication practices of established political institutions whose failings were often considered the major culprits of the current crisis of democracy (Davis, 2019). According to a more radical view, the new media had the potential to usher in revolutionary changes that would bring about entirely new, yet unthought of political future whose appeal would extend beyond an old-fashioned democratic ideal (Nothhaft, 2016).

Critics pointed out that cyber-optimists were often guided by technological determinism and idealistic assumptions about the public sphere, citizen participation and markets. They reminded that it is impossible to recreate the Athenian polis in modern society where communication takes place in multiple networks rather than one public sphere; that it is wrong to assume that most people want to participate in national-level politics; that weakly regulated market-driven expansion will lead to concentration of new ICTs similar to that of the old media (Davis, 2019). Being not mere technologies, but techno-social systems, media connect technological structures with human agency (Fuchs, 2014) and their new capabilities can experience rejection, delayed adoption or misuse (Davis, 2019). Even when early success of the protest movements like the Arab Spring seemed to prove that social media was an effective mobilizing and organizing instrument that could help advance democracy worldwide (Singer & Brooking, 2018), alternative voices cautioned against growing cyber-utopianism and pointed to the risks of dictators using new technologies to consolidate and project their power, thus making promotion of democracy a much harder task (Morozov, 2011). Later in the decade the world witnessed the return of the strong nation-state exercising control over citizens through new surveillance technologies and stepping up inter-state confrontation with cyber-attacks and online disinformation campaigns, with Chinese and Russian governments major trendsetters (Moore, 2018; Castells, 2023). These dynamics proved that "democratic activists had no special claim to the internet; they'd simply gotten there first" (Singer & Brooking, 2018, p. 87) and

that chances of ICTs to improve the quality of citizenship and democracy are "mixed and cloudy" (Blumler, 2016, p. 29).

These developments should not be treated simply as the restoration of established institutions and power structures after a period of disruption joined by a new cast of fringe hackers. Some scholars see this as the process of creative destruction of democracy and call for "complex realism" that recognizes that the influence of online digital media on democracy is neither fully benign nor disastrous, but "profound, complicated, varied, and contextual" (Nielsen & Fletcher, 2020, p. 157). We might also witness the beginning of a more fundamental process of stabilization of the new political communication order.

Epstein (2018) believes that every revolutionary change in political communication follows a repeating cyclical pattern shaped by the interplay among technical, political and behavioral factors, which comprises three distinct phases:

- the so-called "technological imperative" phase that starts with a major new ICT invention that gradually becomes more popular, less expensive and politically viable;
- the "political choice" phase spanning from the first attempts of political actors to employ the new ICT to widespread copying of successful strategies of its use;
- the "stabilization" phase when new political status quo emerges and new policies, norms and institutions are established.

Though we are experiencing a continuing flow of new ICTs, we have definitely entered the third phase of the current political communication cycle (Epstein, 2018). Along with speculations about the paths further stabilization might take (largely based on the assumptions about the most likely degree and form of regulation of the internet), this phase also encourages formulation of more mature theories of modern social and political communication that strike proper balance between continuity and change (see discussion in Davis, 2019; Castells, 2023). This can be seen in the evolution of media theories and theories of communicative behavior of political leaders and publics, whose relations are fundamentally altered, but interests, goals and important aspects of communicative practices remain largely unchanged.

1.2. The evolution of presidential communication: from rhetorical to ubiquitous presidency

Popular theories of presidential communication often originate from the studies of the rhetoric of the US presidents as one of the most advanced forms of political communication. Though they reflect certain elements of American cultural and historical context, such theories describe major trends that shape political communication in different parts of the world, and wide adoption of US

communication practices in other countries makes such studies even more relevant for international scholars.

Until recently modern presidential communication was viewed primarily through the prism of the theory of rhetorical presidency that originally described the radical change in the interaction of the US presidents with the public in the twentieth century (Tulis, 1987/2017). Before that popular speeches by the head of state were rare and ceremonial, and his policy rhetoric was mainly written and addressed to the legislative branch. This early presidential communication reflected the founders' concerns with such issues as demagoguery, republicanism, independence of the executive and separation of powers, that originally determined the structure of the national government and the place of the presidency within it (Tulis, 1987/2017).

The twenties century witnessed a dramatic increase in public speaking by presidents that resorted to it to lead public opinion and circumvent bargaining in Congress. This practice was legitimized by Woodrow Wilson with ambitious reinterpretation of the constitutional order, and soon popular rhetoric became a principal instrument and a duty of presidents, who were now expected to promote and defend their policy initiatives and to inspire citizens (Tulis, 1987/2017). The rise of the rhetorical presidency marked the transformation of the president into a popular leader, which was a major political, social and cultural development with far-reaching consequences, and this model of change was replicated in many countries. The theory gained broad popularity also because its focus on opportunistic populism and demagoguery aligned the concept of rhetorical presidency with other prominent critical concepts of modern-day presidency, such as "governance by spectacle" or "the president as interpreter-in-chief" (see, for example, Stuckey (1991)).

Social and technological changes at the turn of the millennium caused scholars to rethink and extend this concept (Medhurst, 1997; Friedman & Friedman, 2012). When President Trump discarded many norms and expectations of rhetorical leadership with his radically individual approach to communication, which left media and political elites unable to effectively hold the president accountable, commentators started to talk about the demise of rhetorical presidency as we knew it (Heith, 2021).

In the last few years, the theory of rhetorical presidency received two major updates, a forward-looking and a backward-looking one, both of which locate presidential rhetoric at the intersections of familiar goals and new contexts.

The theory of ubiquitous presidency (Scacco & Coe 2021) concentrates on the recent trend to use mass and targeted media for constant communicative presence of the president in political and non-political spheres. While this is done to achieve traditional goals of visibility, adaptation and control, the strategies employed for this are new and reflect the changes in the context described in terms of accessibility, personalization and pluralism. Today presidents are expected to actively seek

audiences and create interactive communicative experience, adopt increasingly personal and affective communication style and address fragmented audiences competing for recognition of their status. As a result, presidents try use every opportunity to reach the public with multitude of messages targeted at narrow audiences, often completely sidestepping the press.

The concept of opportunistic communication (Pluta, 2023) postulates that presidents have always sought relations with the public, driven by the desire to foster national identity, secure their own legitimacy through consent of the governed, and (particularly in the US) overcome strong constitutional limits on their power that often contrasted with high expectations of citizens. The changes in presidential rhetoric resulted not from the precedent set by an individual reinterpretation of constitutional norms that created a divide between modern and traditional communication practices, but were caused by external factors (innovations in communication and transportation, development of the political process and associated changes in media environment) that were exploited by presidents. Thus, instead of the division into modern and traditional practices, the evolution of presidential communication can be better understood as a sequence of audience eras (from elite to partisan to regional to (almost) national to targeted) that also reflect the changes in the mode, the frequency and the content of presidential rhetoric (Pluta, 2023). From this perspective, Donald Trump can be viewed as yet another successful opportunistic communicator who made the most of the new complex, volatile, fragmented and polarized media environment.

All the above theories can be applied to wartime communication of Volodymyr Zelenskyy to enhance understanding of his rhetorical efforts. Ukrainian president maintains ubiquitous presence in the information environment with his regular addresses to the nation and numerous other daily messages that often reach global audience. The intense communication activity can largely be explained by goals of visibility, adaptation and control.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy has always been seeking visibility – as a successful showman, presidential candidate, and the head of state. After Russia launched a full-scale war against his country, the importance of presidential visibility increased exponentially: it became a proof of his involvement is war effort, a symbol of country's active resistance, an inspiration for national mobilization, a means to reduce collective anxiety and uncertainty.

The constant media presence allows Volodymyr Zelenskyy to adapt to changing information environment and to most effectively exploit available opportunities for communication. For the president of the warring nation this often means the need to adapt to the extreme volatility of the situation and multiple restrictions on travel, personal contacts, choice of location and recording equipment.

Information control becomes one of the most important wartime tasks for the president, especially in the face of powerful enemy propaganda machine. To set the message, you need to be

the first to frame reality, and your words should be trusted. Messages of the head of state command maximum trust from both domestic and international audiences, and the daily updates make sure that the important information is delivered in a timely manner. Individual communication efforts also allow President Zelenskyy to avoid press filters and spokespeople, giving him full control of the content and style of the messages.

The goals specified in opportunistic presidential communication theory are also crucial for President Zelenskyy. Cultivation of national identity becomes a major imperative for preserving country's unity in the face of aggression. Legitimacy of the president increasingly depends on the ability to lead the country in war, and active communication efforts become an effective demonstration of his leadership. In times when legitimacy of the country's government and even the legitimacy of the country's existence are contested, the prominence of the figure of the president grows exponentially. During the war with a more powerful enemy, especially when it turns into the war of attrition, the need to overcome positional weaknesses comes to mean the need to support the nation's morale and to maintain a strong coalition of allies.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's effectiveness as communicator can be largely explained by his ability to masterfully adapt to such features of modern socio-technological environment as accessibility and personalization. He makes his messages accessible by delivering them with unprecedented regularity through all available channels in order to break through technical and emotional barriers.

V. Zelenskyy has always been known for very interpersonally oriented affective style of communication (Shuster, 2024) and has preserved these features in the presidential rhetoric. His individual delivery of messages is also a key factor in the personalization of wartime communication.

One element of context, essential for the concept of ubiquitous presidency, pluralism, is completely irrelevant for the case of President Zelenskyy's war rhetoric. Instead of shaping different messages for different audiences, effective war narrative requires very high degree of consistency (Martin, 2023) and even certain censorship. President Zelenskyy addresses not a fragmented but a largely homogeneous audience, and seeks even more unity, which is a feature of a more traditional notion of rhetorical presidency. Criticism of demagoguery, populism, and self-promotion, associated with this and other theories of presidential communication, can also to a certain extent apply to the rhetoric of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who avoids unpopular topics of mobilization and government corruption, and often refuses to comment his staffing decisions.

1.3. Mediatization of politics

One of the key concepts defining the modern age of political communication is the notion of mediatization. Unlike the neutral term "mediation" that refers to simple transmission of messages using media technologies or organizations, "mediatization" denotes problematic consequences of

growing media influence on political processes, institutions, organizations and actors (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Esser & Stromback, 2014). Thus, mediatized politics is defined as "politics that has lost its autonomy, has become dependent in its central functions on mass media, and is continuously shaped by interactions with mass media" (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, p. 249). Mediatization of politics is a four-dimensional concept whose components refer to the degree to which a) media are the most significant source of Information about politics and society; b) autonomous from other social and political institutions; c) guided by their own or political logic when covering politics and current affairs; and d) political institutions and actors are guided by political or media logic (Esser & Stromback, 2014). Linked together, these dimensions can be viewed as a four-stage process of media logic gradually taking over political logic. In recent years mediatization 2.0 logic of traditional media combines with the interactive modes of new media to subjugate the political system even further (Mazzoleni, 2014).

Yet, with the growing fragmentation of media and their audiences, self-selective exposure to political information and the creation of filter bubbles, the very idea of powerful media starts to be called into question. The skepticism is particularly acute in the field of media effects research which over the course of the century has reinvented itself several times moving from strong to limited and back to strong media effects paradigm (see the overview in McQuail & Deuze (2020)). While some scholars entertain the possibility of the return of minimal effects era (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008), other researchers suggest that it is premature to talk about the demise of the power of media (Davis, 2019). The latter view is based on the following set of arguments:

- those the center of power still heavily consume and relate to traditional media;
- for the public media are still the main source of information about politics, foreign affairs and various complex issues;
- there is high interdependence between various types of news media, especially with regard to topic areas;
- such effects as 'partisan reinforcement' of views of politically interested individuals along with further exclusion of the politically disinterested, enhanced by social media algorithms and micro-targeted messages, are playing increasingly important role in today's political life (Davis, 2019).

Though media effects research is entering the fourth stage with no consensus on the degree of media influence, the rethinking of its tradition is likely to follow the already familiar path that led to the formation of the previous "negotiated effects" paradigm: it will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the complex web of influences that interact with and determine the outcome of people's consumption and creation of media messages.

Discussion of modern media power necessarily considers its role in the rise of political populism and post-truth politics. This issue has been the topic of hot debates between liberal pluralists, on the one hand, and critical political economists and critics of populist media, on the other. The first group with a favorable view of traditional media as serving public interest consider aggressive politicians and fake news on social media existential threat to the professional journalism. In contrast, the second group regards mass media either as an elite-serving institution that creates essentially "fake" picture of reality (Davis, 2019; McQuale & Deuze, 2020) or as often the primary force that promotes populist agenda by carrying the favorable mix of stylistic and ideological elements (Mazzoleni, 2014).

The look at news organizations as a business and consideration of competitive forces they are facing reveals a more complex picture. Competition faced from new media and entertainment industry leads to the decline of news sales and advertising revenue leaving less resources to meet professional expectations. Cheap outside sources of news, often hastily republishing rival content, artificially aim to achieve balance and authority turning to opposing voices or "experts" hardly knowledgeable or representative of the story. In this situation the line between professional fakery required to produce news of the cheap and fake news became easy to cross (Davis, 2019). To recapture consumers, media sought to extend its appeal by drawing inspiration from the world of entertainment and tapping into the emotions of the audience through human interest stories focused on personalities, more extreme and negative news in politics (Davis, 2019; Mazzoleni, 2014). This increasingly infotainment style of news delivery developed in parallel with the growing attention to personality and use of populist appeals in politics, which eventually led to the substantial decline in trust in both professions (Brants & Voltmer, 2011; Davis, 2019).

1.4. Empowered and divided audiences

Growing influence of the public on the political communication process started in 1960s when national television created large audiences and more mobile electorate (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999) and instrumental dimension of politics started to give way to its symbolic dimension, gradually turning policy debates into drama and spectacle (Edelman, 1985). This change, conceptualized as transition from a more traditional "party democracy" to "audience democracy" (Manin, 1997), drew criticism for causing decline of politics since the public favored personalities, performance and authenticity above party, program and competence, enjoyed negatively and emotionally framed information about politics (Beus, 2011).

The advent of ICTs gave the public an even greater prominence in the process of political communication. It created a new form of interactive communication that enabled many-to-many messaging in real- or chosen-time using broadcasting, narrowcasting or point-to-point mode. Manuel

Castells famously called it "mass-self communication" for it can potentially reach a global audience, while "the production of the message is self-generated, the definition of the potential receiver(s) is self-directed, and the retrieval of specific messages or content from the World Wide Web and electronic communication networks is self-selected" (Castells, 2013, p. 55).

With political audience becoming a potential source of political communication able to produce and share messages on social media platforms with no barrier of entry, to form transnational networks and engage in co-creation of meaning (crowdsourcing), people started to challenge the power of the state previously largely based on its dominant control of information flow, so that the Internet started to be viewed as the most disruptive force for the nation-state since the founding of the concept in 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia (Patrikarakos, 2017).

People also started to take on the role and counter the influence of traditional media by practicing citizen and activist journalism – communicating and commenting political news and launching alternative media watchdog sites (Brants & Voltmer, 2011).

The rise of the hyperempowered globally connected individual (referred to by some commentators as "Homo Digitalis") (Patrikarakos, 2017) was widely greeted with enthusiasm and shifted the focus of cyber-optimists from more formal political e-governance 1.0 paradigm to social media democracy 2.0 paradigm associated with the development of civil society (Nothhaft, 2016). Yet, short-lived democratization effect of new media and the rise of surveillance states and post-truth dictatorships quickly revealed that the very technologies that empowered individuals became a major source of their weakness.

Many newly created forums of public debate were located on the fringes of mainstream political process and growing independence of citizens gave rise to political consumerism so that mobilization effect was often restricted to issue-specific political action with the focus on pragmatic solutions lacking ideological depth and coherence (Brants & Voltmer, 2011). Empowered individuals often turn ICTs into an instrument of self-actualization making divisive identity politics a new major driving force (Nothhaft, 2016; see also Giddens, 1994).

Social media inadvertently amplify divisions by facilitating direct online confrontation between the opponents or by setting their algorithms to select the content users prefer, thus making more money on their increased engagement and at the same time creating online bubbles where people interact with like-minded individuals, which reinforces their preexisting beliefs, isolates from opposing views and makes is difficult to seek compromise (Barbera, 2020; Patrikarakos, 2017).

These above factors contribute to radical decentralization of political communication, turning public sphere into an anarchic wild west (Brants & Voltmer, 2011; Davis, 2019).

Another factor that contributes to the doubt about the power of the public in the process of political communication is the problem of the digital divide. Originally the concept referred to social

inequality between those who have physical access to digital media and those who do not, and later was extended to focus on skills and usage of digital media and the effects of this practice (van Dijk, 2020). So, while growing acceptance of ICTs and their diffusion reaching near saturation point create the impression that the digital divide may be closing, scholars reveal lasting inequality challenges connected with access to and use of digital communication technologies (van Dijk, 2020; Helsper, 2021).

Within this divide a lot of attention was attracted to the contrast between a younger generation of "digital natives" (born into the world of computers and internet) and older "digital immigrants" (who adopted digital technologies later in their lives) (terms popularized by Prensky (2001)). Digital natives were not only viewed as more competent users of new technologies, but were believed to process information in a fundamentally different way and to most actively use digital tools to change politics (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

Later this distinction came to be regarded outmoded and unhelpful, with researchers pointing out to the fact that digital dualism – distinction between online and offline – can no longer be applicable and that current age differences in the use of technology should be attributed to natural life cycle and not to chronology of adoption (Young & Åkerström, 2016). This new thinking gave rise to the concept of the digital natives – "individuals who are comfortable in an online environment, being equipped through experience and exposure to both its cultural norms and the technological competencies required to operate effectively" (Young & Åkerström, 2016, p. 1).

At the same time, ongoing concern with the effect of new ICTs on the young generation, who are often found lacking critical thinking, easily distracted and more susceptible to manipulation (Wigley, 2022), adds a new dimension to the issue of the digital divide, proving that digital inclusion – not just digital disconnect – can be a source of disadvantage.

1.5. Communication in war: from propaganda to information warfare

Information has always been an important instrument of war that stimulated many innovations in communication technologies (Rid & Hecker, 2009) and whose cognitive dimension was emphasized throughout history by the most prominent military thinkers, including Sun Tzu and Clausewitz (Waltz, 1998; Johnson, 2021; Seib 2021; Whyte et al. 2021). Its role started to grow further in the twentieth century with the rise of mass media, that enabled governments to launch large-scale campaigns of influence and brought graphic war reporting to the general public. In the last years, digital gadgets, internet and social media has shrunk the distance between combatants, the public and information providers (Seib, 2021), turning everybody into a potential actor in war capable of influencing its outcome (Patrikarakos, 2017). These developments brought into common use the

terms "propaganda," "disinformation" and "information warfare," whose analysis helps understand the nature of communication during the war and the challenges it creates and faces.

The term "propaganda" originated in 1600s and quickly lost neutrality due to the aggressive activities the Scared Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, created by the Catholic Church (Bolsover, 2021). In the twentieth century it started to acquired more negative connotations after World War I as disillusioned ordinary citizens felt cheated by patriotic slogans and fabricated stories of enemy atrocities (Axelrod, 2009; Welch, 2021). Soon it developed sinister associations with Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia and Maoist China (Bolsover, 2021).

It is widely believed that being irrational and Intrinsically misleading, propaganda is irreconcilable with democratic governance and is morally reprehensible, a view that traces its origin to Plato's negative attitude to rhetoric as a form of domination (Brown, 2006). This position is also associated with the belief that propaganda can be a powerful and invisible tool of control (Brown, 2006), opinion formed early in the twentieth century as a result of popular awe at the persuasion potential of mass media (McQuail & Deuze, 2020).

Opposed to this moralist way of looking at propaganda is a neutralist position that regards propaganda as ethically neutral activity, necessarily taking place in situations when public opinion is important – in war, politics, social life or mass market economy. This view was shared by many prominent early practitioners and thinkers in the field (see, for example, Bernays, 1928/2005; Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950/2017; Lippmann, 1922/1998) and is common among dictatorships unincumbered by moral scruples who often legitimize their propaganda efforts as a defense against external and internal enemies (Welch, 2021). This position is associated with Aristotelian favorable attitude to rhetoric (Brown, 2006) and takes a limited view of propaganda effects, maintaining that it works only if it taps into underlying attitudes of the audience triggering confirmation bias (Stengel, 2019; Bolsover, 2021). From this perspective propaganda can be rational or emotional, overt or covert, truthful or misleading, black or white (Stengel, 2019; Welch, 2021; Stanley, 2015) and can be broadly defined simply as the dissemination of ideas intended to convince people to think and act in a particular way and for a particular persuasive purpose (Welch, 2021).

While many definitions emphasize deceptive, misleading character or propaganda and some people believe it can effectively promote big lie, many practitioners and scholars emphasize that to be successful, propaganda should be as close to the truth as possible (Welch, 2021). These positions are not mutually exclusive because what matters in such cases is the emotional truth, not empirical (Clack & Selisny, 2021). And while the information closest to the truth is initially compelling since it doesn't stretch cognitive limits of the target audience too far, repeated exposure can help human brain adapt to dishonesty and eventually lead to a "slippery slope" or "snowball" effect when bigger lie becomes easier to accept (Garrett et al., 2016).

The practice of propaganda has been evolving together with methods of communication, and in the era of digital technologies it developed a new form popularly called *online propaganda,* the name loosely referring to information of varying accuracy disseminated through the internet, usually intended to persuade people to support one political group over another and discourage opposing viewpoints (Guess & Lyons, 2020). The growing popularity of social media platforms and smartphones allowed propagandistic messages to be shared with unprecedented speed, accuracy and extensiveness, while making the source harder to expose (Bachis, 2021). Further advances in digital technologies introduced new machine-assisted and AI-enabled forms of propaganda creation and dissemination (Dear, 2021).

To add precision to this recent phenomenon and the new field of study, researchers coined the term "computational propaganda" defined as "the assemblage of social media platforms, autonomous agents, and big data tasked with the manipulation of public opinion" (Woolley & Howard, 2016; Woolley & Howard, 2019). Some experts note that this term is too focused on the technological aspect of propaganda at the expense of its informational component and advocate a more balanced term "digital propaganda" defined as "the use of digital technologies with the intention to deceive the public through the generation and dissemination of verifiably false or misleading information" (Bjola & Papadakis, 2021). As we shall discuss further in the chapter, this shift of accent may carry important implications for putting up effective defense against enemy propaganda efforts.

The term "propaganda" is often used interchangeably with the more recent terms "disinformation" and "misinformation" than have overlapping meanings (Guess & Lyons, 2020). The term "disinformation," whose origin is traced to Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia (Jackson, 2018; Stengel, 2019), is commonly defined as "false information deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization, or country" (Seib, 2021). It is sometimes viewed as a as a subset of misinformation – incorrect or inaccurate information regardless of any intention (Guess & Lyons, 2020; Di Pietro et al, 2021). Yet the two terms are also often contrasted, with the latter confined to cases of inadvertent or mistaken sharing of false information (Jackson, 2018; Seib, 2021; Stengel, 2019).

Recently the list of related terms has been expanded with the notions "fake news" and "post truth" whose rise to prominence was captured by world's leading dictionaries that named them the words of the year in 2016 and 2017 (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016; Collins Dictionary, 2017; Macquarie Dictionary, 2017), and later recognized "fake news" as the word of the decade (Macquarie Dictionary, 2021).

Fake news can sometimes be viewed as technologically advanced version of propaganda or disinformation, defined as "pieces of intentionally manipulated information with appear on the Internet and in social media especially" (Giusti & Piras, 2021). Yet, some scholars argue that the term

meets neither the definition of propaganda nor disinformation, since the practice is often financially and not politically motivated and is not connected with broader goals (Jackson, 2018). The term is also criticized for its analytical elusiveness (Bjola & Papadakis, 2021; Di Pietro et al., 2021) and for becoming an epithet applied to information people dislike or disagree with (Stengel, 2019). Thus, it is often dropped in 19eature19icc literature and official documents in favour of such words as "disinformation," "hoax," "rumours" or "junk news" (Bjola & Papadakis, 2021; Di Pietro et al., 2021; Stengel, 2019). Commenting on the public obsession with the fake news, scholars also warn against treating them as a scapegoat for events caused by other factors, which oversimplifies understanding of political and social dynamics, and point to the lack of conclusive evidence about the degree of their impact (Giusti & Piras, 2021).

Despite the widespread criticism of the term, political effect of fake news should not be underestimated. It is obvious that fake news can be used in the manner very similar to political propaganda (Loveless, 2021). Their continuous circulation can create a snowball effect, dissemination through social media amplifies them, helps achieve subliminal impact on the audience and reach its deepest emotional layers, and since they can be spread through one or multiple channels at the same time or in sequence, they allow different degrees of information manipulation (Giusti & Piras, 2021). Additionally, internet and social media platforms makes it possible for fake news to be disseminated by external actors and to micro-target the most susceptible segments of population (Giusti & Piras, 2021; Loveless, 2021).

Fake news also take heavy cognitive and emotional toll, making the public question every story and even abandon attempts to differentiate between reality and fiction (Loveless, 2021). This not only blurs the boundaries between truth and falsehood, but subverts the very idea of truth, making it seem no longer essential, which leaves the public more reliant on emotions and superficial impressions than facts (Giusti & Piras, 2021) and leads to sharply polarized debates (Morini, 2021). These developments contribute to the broad pattern of truth decay in modern societies characterized by four related trends:
- increasing disagreement about facts and analytical interpretations of facts and data;
- a blurring of the line between opinion and fact;
- the increasing relative volume, and resulting influence, of opinion and personal experience over fact;
- declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018).

Convergence and strategic deployment of these factors makes it increasingly difficult to contain these challenges to democracies and stop their drift to post-truth political culture (Loveless, 2021). While some researcher emphasize that these tendencies may be symptoms of more fundamental problems of liberal democracies – hyper-individualism and radical subjectivism (Merenda, 2021), others note

that they are not exclusively western phenomena but affect various parts of the world, which makes it possible to speculate about the rise of the new post-truth world order (Cosentino, 2020).

Post-truth political environment, characterized by the erosion of trust between citizens and leaders, as well as between different segments of society, makes publics more susceptible to enemy information campaigns and immune to countermeasures attempted by their government.

The term "information warfare" is also relatively new and appeared in 1980s (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). It refers to the use of information to create a competitive advantage over the enemy by affecting perception and behavior of people (Johnson & Clack, 2021; Tambini, 2021). Information war can be viewed as one of the key elements of hybrid warfare – a blend of conventional, irregular, political and cyber warfare that is believed to become the dominant form of modern conflict (Hoffman, 2007; Welch, 2021). Moreover, when commentators talk about the emergence of a radically new type of total warfare characterized by blurring distinctions between war and peace, combatants and civilians, with emotions and cognition of the adversary's public becoming the primary targets (often referred to as the fourth-generation warfare or 4GW) (Hoffman 2007; Johnson, 2021), there is no doubt that it was created by the new information environment which turned into the chief global battlefield (Johnson & Clack, 2021; Patraeus & Roberts, 2023).

In military terminology, activities associated with information war are called psychological operations, information operations, perception management, reflexive control, public diplomacy and public policy, and these names are sometimes used interchangeably (Rid & Hecker, 2009; Libicki, 2021). Information war is distinct from cyberwarfare, which aims at disabling or gaining control of enemy infrastructure and aids espionage, but can be enabled by computer technologies and social networks (Waltz, 1998; Prier, 2016). It should be noted that while the term refers to modern practices, the goals of the information warfare and the basic mechanisms of influence have remained unchanged throughout history (Whyte et. al, 2021).

As is the case with the word "propaganda," the application of the term "information warfare" can be limited to information manipulation directed at the enemy (Di Pietro et. al, 2021; Johnson, 2021; Whyte et. al, 2021). According to the broader view, it can refer to various information operations that target not only the enemy population and leadership, but alto home population and the world audience (neutrals and supports of each side) (Rid & Hecker, 2009; Martin, 2023). Again, much like the word "propaganda," this term starts to be increasingly associated with enemy practices, particularly with Russian attempts to subvert democratic political systems.

1.6. Russia's information war on democracy

The topic of Russian cyber and information warfare started to receive close attention after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and became a real public obsession after the election of Donald Trump

and the Brexit referendum (Giles, 2016; Giles et. al, 2018; Comai, 2021; Giusti & Piras, 2021). Yet, Russia's confrontation with the west renewed much earlier, immediately after Putin became president in 2000, and the list of the notable targets of its information campaigns, topped by Ukraine, the United States and the United Kingdom, includes Georgia, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Baltic states, Finland, Germany, Sweden, Turkey and Libya (Chakars & Ekmanis, 2022; Jankowicz, 2020; Seib, 2021; Stengel, 2019). Russia itself regards these activities as defensive response to Western interference in domestic politics in Russian and its 'near abroad' (Comai, 2021), and after the Euromaidan uprising in Ukraine it considered itself involved in full-scale information war with the West (Johnson, 2021).

Russia's choice of information as the primary weapon against its enemies many be dictated by multiple reasons: its considerable conventional inferiority to NATO that makes it turn to asymmetric response exploiting vulnerabilities of western democracies (Giles, 2021), country's long and rich tradition of using information manipulation in the tsarist and soviet times (Bechis, 2021; Brantly, 2021), and Putin's KGB past that acquainted him firsthand with disinformation practices and led to his subsequent transformation into a new breed of dictator who holds on to power using information manipulation and subtle coercion (Dobson, 2012; Guriev & Treisman, 2022).

The move of information warfare from the supporting to the leading role in Russian military doctrine was publicly announced in the article by General Valeriy Gerasimov in 2013 and followed by the creation of the new branch of military – information warfare troops in 2017 (Seib, 2021; Jones, 2023). These steps were accelerated after the 2008 war with Georgia, when the Russian army performance in the information domain drew broad criticism (Giles, 2021).

These actions can be seen as attempts to revive well-established Soviet techniques of destabilization and subversion and update them for the digital age (Snegovaya, 2015; Giles, 2021; Seib, 2021). Yet, unlike Soviet propaganda, which was promoting a communist-centric worldview and a vision of Russia as paradise lost, the Kremlin is now seeking to destroy Western democracy (Jankowicz, 2020; Seib, 2021). Its efforts are concentrated not on making people in other countries support certain policies, but on shattering their trust in their own governments and institutions, undermining their ability to hold on to their traditional system of beliefs, to make sense of and shape social reality, (Stengel, 2019; Bjola & Papadakis, 2021).

In many aspects the Russian efforts have been successful, which can be explained by a number of factors. Russian manipulation attempts are unprecedentedly massive and shameless. They inundate information environment with multiple falsehoods that show utter disregard for the truth, which, according to the observers, creates an impression of a complete "reinvention of reality" (Patrikarakos, 2017). Such well-coordinated large-scale action are effectively orchestrated through the "disinformation chain" that runs from the Russian government to formally independent media

outlets and troll farms (Bechis, 2021). Russian propaganda targets not only foreign audience, but also its home audience in order to suppress dissent (Tambini, 2021), which consolidates its efforts and messages. Moreover, undermining people's senses of normality through complete subversion of truth and objective reality has been a long practice in the country (Pomerantsev, 2017; Pomerantsev, 2020; Zafesova, 2021), turning it into a testing ground for multiple tactics of information warfare.

Russia's has adopted a more comprehensive and approach to information warfare than its opponents, which is reflected in terminology (Giles, 2021; Wanless & Berk, 2021). While western countries lack a widely accepted definition of information warfare and sometimes even omit it from their official dictionaries (Wanless & Berk, 2021), in Russia this term is understood very broadly as encompassing a wide range of activities from psychological operations to intelligence to electronic warfare (Giles, 2021). The Russian side treats information war as an ongoing activity not limited to wartime or buildup to war and independent of the nature of relations with the opponent, focuses on information itself rather than the channels through which it is transmitted, and extends it both to human and computer information processing, thus crossing into the realm of cyber warfare (Giles, 2021). This approach allows Russia to pursue a wide range of offensive and defensive objectives, so while the West may be better prepared to deal with cyber threats, it fails to adequately respond to the multifaceted challenges of the Russian information war (Giles, 2021).

Russian propaganda also effectively used multiple vulnerabilities of Western democracies, such as aversion to conflict and war which led to the decay of strategic thinking (Osinga, 2021), climate of mistrust and the lack of understanding of the quality of information environment (Clack & Selisny, 2021). Another barrier to western resilience is underappreciation of malicious intentions of authoritarian states whose actions on the international arena were largely interpreted in terms of the concept of soft power (Walker & Ludwig, 2017).

Most importantly, open liberal societies are inherently vulnerable to information attacks, which means that information warfare always favours closed authoritarian states against democracies (Stengel, 2019; Tambini, 2021). This vulnerability is not new, but has been known and often exploited throughout history, famously captured in the following quote by Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels: "This will always remain one of the best jokes of democracy, that it gave its deadly enemies the means by which it was destroyed" (Stanley, 2015, p. i.). The prediction never materialized, though.

The growing concern about the future of democracy launched a search for effective defence mechanisms against information attacks. The suggestions range from demands for preemptive measures and a proactive approach to information warfare (Jankowicz, 2020) to calls to "to stop acting and start understanding" in order to alter a chaotic and ill-conceived early response to information attacks (Wanless & Berk, 2021, p. 76). Experts also pressure for increased transparency

of algorithms and regulation of media companies and make pleas for the healing of divisions which propaganda does not create but only exploits (Stengel, 2019).

A comprehensive approach suggested by Bjola and Papadakis (2021) calls for building a combined cognitive, physical and digital resilience in countries through:

- improvement of media literacy and strategic communication that will prevent disinformation from being internalized by the public;
- cooperation with social media companies to block malicious content out of the information space;
- prevention of radicalization and promotion of the notion of the public good to protect the public sphere from radicalized and unruly counter-publics.

There are continuing efforts to develop new conceptual apparatus that can help to make better sense of the dangers and vulnerabilities democracies face. One such attempt is the introduction of the concept of "sharp power" that denotes the growing influence efforts of authoritarian states on the international arena that are based neither on coercion nor on attraction, but on manipulation and distraction (Walker & Ludwig, 2017).

The Russia's war with Ukraine has proved the effectiveness of presidential rhetorical leadership in fighting enemy propaganda, mobilizing the country and promoting its war narrative globally. The study of this success story can inform further actions that will help the free world to prevail against the forces of tyranny.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENT ZELENSKYY'S DAILY VIDEO ADDRESSES

2.1. Research design and method selection

Research design. Our research on the wartime communication in Ukraine follows a case study design: we concentrate on its one particular form – President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses to the nation. The primary consideration behind the selection of this case is its *uniqueness* for Ukraine and the rest of the world, since the frequency and style of these addresses by the head of state to the nation at war has no historical precedent. Moreover, the power of the president to control the national narrative makes his addresses one of the *critical* elements of wartime discourse and their content is *representative* of many other forms of communication in Ukraine. This case also allows us to include a *longitudinal* element in our research with over 700 addresses delivered during the investigated period of two years. (We follow the typology of cases and ways of their combination discussed in Yin (2018, p. 49) and Clark et al. (2016, pp. 60-61)). Focus on a single form of communication also allows us to conduct a more in-depth and consistent analysis, eliminating the need to consider the effect of multiple variables across different types of messages.

Research methodology. For the purpose of this thesis, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods has been chosen to provide a more complete answer to the research questions. First, qualitative methods are applied to analyze the content of presidential addresses and gain understanding of the structure and functions of the narratives developed by the Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Quantitative methods are applied at the second stage of the research when we conduct a survey to learn about the audience experience with and attitude to these messages. In this way we analyze communication from the perspectives of the sender and the receivers, which creates a more comprehensive view of the process and deepens understanding of the impact of presidential addresses. The research follows the exploratory sequential design, since the findings obtained from the first stage of the study help develop questions for the questionnaire used in the second stage (Clark et al., 2023, p. 569).

Research questions. The thesis raises the following questions: What are the narratives developed in President Zelenskyy's video addresses? How is their content structured? Which functions do they perform? How do young Ukrainians experience presidential video addresses? What is their attitude towards them? What do they think about Volodymyr Zelenskyy as president and communicator?

With the help of the survey, we test three broad **hypotheses**:

1) Young Ukrainians closely follow President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses;
2) The attitude of the Ukrainian youth to presidential daily addresses is highly positive;
3) Young people in Ukraine have a consistently positive attitude to Volodymyr Zelenskyy as president and communicator.

The survey questions focus of multiple aspects of audience behaviour and attitudes and test the relevance and effectiveness of the narratives developed in presidential video addresses.

Data collection methods. Data for the research was collected by two methods: document analysis and a survey. We obtained text versions of presidential addresses that allow a more efficient analysis of the content than video recordings. We also conducted an online survey using a self-completion questionnaire to streamline the process, facilitate the collection of data and assure anonymity of the respondents.

Data collection instruments. In qualitative research the researcher acts as the primary instrument for gathering and interpreting information (Creswell, 2023, p. 193). To conduct an online survey, we created a 34-point questionnaire that contained closed-ended questions, the type often favored in survey research because fixed answers make it quicker to complete the survey and to process the results, and also help clarify the meaning of questions for respondents (see Clark et al., 2021, p. 235-238). All 34 questions are of multiple-choice type, 30 of them – single select questions, and 4 – multi select questions. Online survey form was created using Google Forms tool. Preparing the survey, we tried to overcome a common drawback of closed-ended questionnaires associated with the difficulty of providing the exhaustive list of answer options. We built on the results of the first stage of our research, and the survey received positive feedback from the participants in this regard.

Data collection process. The texts of Volodymyr Zelenskyy addresses were collected throughout the research process, with new texts added regularly once they became available on the official website of the president. They span over two full years of war from its outbreak on February 24, 2022 to February 24, 2024. In total 709 addresses were analyzed. We collected and analyzed the texts in Ukrainian, the original language of the addresses, and used official English translations published alongside them on the president's website to provide quotes in the text of the thesis. Collecting addresses of President Zelenskyy, we focused exclusively on his daily addresses to the nation and excluded his addresses to foreign audiences or specific social groups within ukraine, as well as his addresses on holiday occasions.

The survey was conducted in the first week of November 2023. It was administered to four-year students of the Department of Germanic Philology and Translation at Kyiv National Linguistic University. In total, 104 students were invited to participate in the survey, and 100 of them completed the questionnaire, which is a response rate of 96%. All the participants belong to the same age group, whose members are considered both very active and vulnerable users of social media (Wigley, 2022; Seib, 2021) and consistently demonstrate the most favorable attitude to Volodymyr Zelenskyy (Фонд Демократичні ініціативи, 2019; Український інститут майбутнього, 2021). While it is impossible to generalize from this sample to the whole population of the country, the above features this demographic shares make it an interesting and valuable survey subject. These students were also in direct communication with the researcher who could brief them about the goals of the survey and get detailed feedback after the survey was completed. The survey was conducted in English since all the participating students were English majors.

Data analysis strategy and methods. Studying the texts of President Zelenskyy's addresses, we apply the method of qualitative content analysis and follow the inductive approach, organizing the data into more and more abstract units – narrative structures and their components. The emerging theory informs the development of the instrument for the second stage of our research, the population segment survey, which thus follows the inductive route. The obtained data is automatically summarized by Google Forms and displayed through pie-charts (for single select questions) or bar-charts (for multi select questions), representing percentages of respondents who selected a certain answer option. This quantitative information allows us to support or refute the hypotheses about the respondents' experience with and attitude to President Zelenskyy's addresses.

Ethical considerations were taken into account, especially during the survey stage. Participation in survey was voluntary and based on informed consent. Participants were briefed orally and in writing about the purpose of the study. The neutrality of the researcher and the need for objectivity were emphasized. Anonymity of the participants was protected and only aggregate quantitative data was collected.

Limitations of the research arise from its case study design and the chosen sample. The results of the survey conducted on university students cannot be directly extrapolated to the broader population and the war narrative created by the president through his daily addresses may in important aspects diverge from other widely shared versions.

2.2. President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses as a new form of political communication

Daily video addresses of Volodymyr Zelenskyy famously lack camera crews, teleprompters, well-rehearsed delivery, carefully chosen elements of setting and other attributes commonly associated with presidential public speaking. They are short (up to 7 minutes) videos recorded mostly in one take in Zelenskyy's office or some unidentifiable location, featuring only him clad in the black or army green t-shirt or sweatshirt with a minimalist Ukrainian coat of arms or the words "I'm Ukrainian" on the chest. Many of these recordings are selfie videos made with smartphone by the president himself.

The first of these addresses appeared in the early morning of the first day of the war, tw" hours after the President of Russia announced the beginning of a "special military operation" against Ukraine. That was the last time the public saw Volodymyr Zelenskyy wearing a suit (with the top button of the shirt undone). In a one-minute smartphone-recorded video he announced martial law across the country, assured citizens of strong international support and that the country's leadership was staying to fight, and promised to keep in touch with the people and inform them about the ongoing situation.

On most days during the first month of the war the president made two video addresses to the nation (at midday and at midnight). After that his usual practice has been to make one evening address to summarize the events of the passing day. President Zelenskyy often follows this pattern during his trips, recording the addresses on board a plane or at various foreign or domestic locations. On rare occasions of major emergency, big news or announcements the president can shift the time of the address or deliver several addresses a day.

The27eatusses of Volodymyr Zelenskyy are available online on the following official and unofficial channels and pages of the President of Ukraine and the Office of the President:

- at the official website of the president https://www.president.gov.ua/;
- in YouTube on the official channel of the Office of the President of Ukraine https://www.youtube.com/@PresidentGovUa and the unofficial channel of Zelenskyy's team https://www.youtube.com/@Zelenskyy_President (which of December 2023 have 317 thousand and 1,09 million subscribers, respectively);
- in the messenger Telegram on the official channel of the president https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official and the official channel of the Office of the President https://t.me/OP_UA (with over 840 thousand and almost 123 thousand subscribers as of December 2023);

- on the official Facebook page of the Office of the President of Ukraine https://www.facebook.com/president.gov.ua

They are also posted online by many media outlets and are broadcast on TV during the joint information telethon "United News" launched on February 24, 2022.

The video recordings of the addresses are usually accompanied by the official text version in Ukrainian and English. Official translations into sign language are also released for television and can be accessed online. For the global audience, AI-generated English versions of the addresses are available through audio streaming services such as Spotify, Deezer, Amazon Music and Apple Podcasts.

As often the case with public communication by politicians, daily video addresses by President Zelenskyy raise the questions of scriptedness, authenticity and authorship. Addressing the issue, his press secretary in the interview to the Ukrainian television channel told that the president formulates the main messages of the addresses himself, and the final text is produced by the editors (Бережанський, 2022). So, following E. Goffman's (1981) differentiation of the three roles for the speaker (*the principal* who takes responsibility for the message, *the author* who creates its content and form, and *the animator* who actually produces an utterance), we can say that though the president doesn't fulfill all the three roles singlehandedly and simultaneously, the attribution of the addresses to Volodymyr Zelenskyy and their authenticity are not questioned.

2.3. Introduction to narrative analysis of President Zelenskyy's addresses

Our content analysis of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's addresses focuses on the structure and functions of narratives developed by the Ukrainian president. Narrative can be defined as "a way of presenting or understanding a situation or series of events that reflects and promotes a particular point of view or set of values" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The concept of narrative has long been central for research in political communication, propaganda, information warfare and crisis communication (see, for example, Neüff, 2018; Stanley, 2015; Jankowicz, 2020; Lewis & DeFaria, 2021; Seeger & Sellnow, 2016; O'Hair & O'Hair, 2023). Shaping messages so that they follow the structure of the narrative is viewed as an essential tool of effective communication (Seeger & Sellnow, 2016, pp. 154–161). Narratives are increasingly viewed as a fundamental way of organization of information, and are believed to play crucial role in shaping human understanding and action (Fludernik, 2006; Lakoff, 2008; Seeger & Sellnow, 2016).

Narratives are usually viewed as complex structures that consist of smaller frames or scripts made up of roles, relations between them and scenarios carried out by the performers of the roles (Lakoff, 2008, p. 22). Even the simplest narratives share similar time structure that includes such

stages as Buildup, the Main Event, the Purpose, the Wind-Down, the Result and the Later Consequences (see Lakoff 2008, p. 26; Fludernik, 2006, p. 1). Similar to stories that can combine several plots and make links to other texts, narratives of complex events consist of multiple parts and tap into other established narratives to produce a fuller account of the situation (Fludernik, 2006).

Aiming at a comprehensive analysis of the narrative structure of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's addresses, we perform the following tasks:

- identify and show relations between major strands of the war narrative that focus on key aspects of country's wartime experience, and main supporting narratives that provide additional context to enhance understanding of the war narrative;

- within each narrative, identify the cast of main characters, their features, relations and actions;

- analyse the progression of the narrative, studying how it reflects the development of the current situation, describes its past history and makes future projections.

To adds explanatory value to the analysis, we also determine functions performed by each of the narratives developed in presidential addresses. The functions reflect the goals the president wants to achieve with his audience and can vary for its different segments.

3. THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF NARRATIVES DEVELOPED IN PRESIDENT ZELENSKYY'S DAILY VIDEO ADDRESSES

3.1. An overview of the narrative structure, audiences and functions

The overarching war narrative created by President Zelenskyy in his daily video addresses is that of self-defence: the nation defending its homeland against an unprovoked aggressor that seeks to annex its territory. It is not only factually correct but also strategically effective, since this type of war narrative is most likely to find broad worldwide acceptance (Martin 2023, p. 142). The protagonist of this narrative, Ukraine, is portrayed both as a hero and a victim, its antagonist, Russia, is cast as a villain, and most of the global community – as a helper to Ukraine. The dual role of Ukraine creates two parallel strands of the war narrative: the narratives of Ukrainian resistance and suffering. Connected with them is a third narrative of Ukraine's resilience that focuses on the ability of the country to recover from attacks and continue functioning in the face of aggression. The war narrative in President Zelenskyy's addresses to the nation is enhanced by several supporting narratives: national identity narrative, World War II memory narrative, and narrative of reform and development. The first two narratives provide a wider context for understanding the reasons and the scale of the war, while the last one focuses on the ongoing work to achieve country's long-term development goals.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's daily video addresses target three broad audiences: the Ukrainian population, the global audience and the people of the enemy state. The primacy of the domestic public is immediately signaled by multiple formal markers: the president addresses the audience "fellow Ukrainians" or "dear Ukrainians", invariably ends with the national salute "Glory to Ukraine", almost exclusively speaks Ukrainian and solidarizes with the people of the country using first person plural pronouns. Yet, it is noteworthy that only three addresses delivered in the first four days of war are titled as "Address to the citizens" or "Address to Ukrainians." Dropping the mention of the audience may help avoid redundancy, but can also be regarded as a sign that with growing awareness that muscle flexing has turned into a full-fledge war, the president starts shaping his communication with multiple audience in mind.

President Zelenskyy's messages to the Russian people are at times delivered in their native language. For the first time he briefly switches to Russian in the afternoon address on the day the war broke out. This practice is most frequent in the earliest stage of the conflict, with 22 of 69 addresses posted during the first fifty days of hostilities containing passages in Russian.

President Zelenskyy's addresses on the end of the first month of the war (titled "Address to Ukrainians and the nations of the world") is the only time when he switches to English. On some

occasions when President Zelenskyy addresses global leaders and publics, such messages can appear to be mere rhetorical devices, outlets for emotions and unnecessary follow-ups to his direct communication with them. Yet, wide availability of English language versions of the addresses and their extensive coverage in world media ensure that these messages can reach their intended audience. It is important to note that while the usage of direct addresses or code switching can indicate the main intended addressee of the message, all parts of presidential addresses can provide meaningful information to all audiences. Thus, entire texts of the addresses are created with different audiences in mind, and their functional analysis may require multiple parallel interpretations.

Relative to these three audiences, functions of the narratives developed in presidential daily addresses can broadly outlined as follows:

- to inform domestic and global audiences about the ongoing situation, dispelling fakes of enemy propaganda and providing favourable framing of the war;
- to maintain home morale and encourage domestic and international contribution to the country's war efforts and sustainability;
- to drive a wedge between the people and leadership of the enemy state and discourage aggression.

The following subchapters provide a detailed analysis of the structure and functions of each major narrative in the presidential addresses.

3.2. Narrative of resistance

The main characters the narrative of resistance are the Armed Forces of Ukraine as well as other security agencies often collectively referred to as Defence Forces or just as "defenders." In the first days of the war President Zelenskyy calls on the military to stand firm fighting off Russian attacks and appeals to its sense of responsibility by calling it the last line of defence against the aggressor and the only guarantee of national survival. He also announces social guarantees for the territorial defence warriors, promising that "all volunteers will be recognized as combat veterans."

Every account of Ukrainian military actions by the president is a combination of gratitude and praise. Volodymyr Zelenskyy honours bravery, sacrifice, wisdom, creativity and motivation of the Ukrainian forces who protect independence of their country, the lives, freedom and dignity of all its citizens. Noting high professional and moral standards demonstrated by the army during the effective resistance to the invaders, the president repeatedly calls it one of the strongest militaries in the world.

Commenting the situation on the frontlines, the president acknowledges difficulties and mourns combat losses, but never mentions setbacks or retreats, maintaining a thoroughly positive image of the armed forces. In the early days of the Russian onslaught, he tirelessly assured the nation

that the Ukrainian defenders "do not retreat, do not give up, do not stop the resistance," that they were "holding their positions" and "repelling onslaughts." When Russian troops started to pull back after the failed blitzkrieg and the Ukrainian forces went on the 32eatureve, Volodymyr Zelenskyy regularly celebrated their advancements and the liberation of the occupied cities and villages. In late 2023, after the Ukrainian counteroffensive failed to produce any breakthroughs and the Russian forces recaptured the initiative, the president retains the positive mood by focusing on the continued maximum efforts to protect the country, saving soldiers' lives and near-global solidarity with the Ukrainian cause. Similarly to the Russian side, he never gives his army loss figures to maintain high morale of the troops and the nation. The only time he did it was at a press conference marking the end of the second year of the war, though the information was met with broad scepticism because the tally differed greatly from that of many experts (Gall, Meheut, 2024).

In all addresses throughout the whole two-year period of war, analysed for this research, the president also maintains a positive image of the Ukrainian military leadership, presenting major shake-ups as a search for new opportunities, even though the dismissals of the Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov and the Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi occurred in the wake of corruption scandals and military failures. The only exception to this pattern is the unsympathetic treatment of top military commissars, dismissed en masse amid corruption scandals.

Alongside glorification of collective heroism of the defenders of Ukraine, President Zelenskyy recognizes accomplishments of particular military units and individuals. In the first seven months of the war almost every presidential daily address includes the announcement of military awards, which on occasions accounts for about a half of his speech. Since then, the practice has become rarer, yet the president invariably turns to it at least on a weekly basis.

From the first day of the war the president repeatedly reminds the nation that effective defense against the enemy requires collective efforts of all citizens. "We are all at war. We all contribute to our victory," "Each of us is a warrior. The warrior in his or her own place," memorably proclaims Volodymyr Zelenskyy and issues an emotional call to build a "fortress of national unity" on the foundation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Thus, the narrative of resistance in his addresses extends to include a broad range of issues from the military draft to volunteer work and diplomatic initiatives, and casts every citizen of the country as a welcome and essential actor.

On February 24, 2022 President Zelenskyy urges Ukrainians to join the military and territorial defense forces, a call he does not have to repeat because thousands of volunteers line up all over the country to enlist in the army. Next time the topic of mobilization comes up in presidential addresses in late November 2023, when it becomes obvious that the protracted war requires mass rotation of forces and plans of draft expansion become increasingly unpopular with Ukrainians disheartened by

military setbacks and aid delays. In an act of political maneuvering, the president gives the issue only a cursory attention, shifting the responsibility to military leaders and country's Parliament.

Alongside armed defense, President Zelenskyy extensively praises various forms of unarmed resistance of Ukrainians to the invasion. He talks about the mass protests on the occupied territories as the end of the myth of the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians and a as sing of inevitable Ukrainian victory. The president repeatedly expresses solidarity with the resistance movement, calls for its intensification and urges people from the all over the country to contact and support those under occupation, piercing propaganda bubble, assuring they are not forgotten and will be liberated soon. Noting that most Ukrainians refuse to cooperate with the occupiers, who managed to attract only "some outcasts" to their side, the president still warns citizens against direct or indirect collaboration with Russians, promising inevitable and swift punishment.

Other important actors of the Ukrainian resistance who get special mention in presidential addresses (and whose contribution Volodymyr Zelenskyy also honours with awards) are volunteers, civil servants, doctors, journalists, rescue workers, members of central and local government, community leaders, diplomats and entrepreneurs.

Recognizing the key role of country's leadership in the defence of the nation, in the address at the end of the first day of the war President Zelenskyy refutes fakes that he and his family fled Ukraine (see discussion in Patraeus & Roberts (2023). During the initial two weeks of the war, he repeatedly assures the people that he stays with his team in Kyiv and they shoot a group video in front of his office building. Daily accounts of the president detailing his internal and international efforts to strengthen country's defense, and especially his actions as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief (holding meetings of the Staff, signing orders, visiting the frontlines and the liberated territories, meeting wounded soldiers, released captives, war heroes and their families) make him a major actor of the narrative of Ukrainian resistance.

While calls for national mobilization has always been an important part of presidential video addresses, Volodymyr Zelenskyy steps up the demands in the second half of 2023, when the stalled counteroffensive turns fears of a protracted war of attrition into reality. "Now there are only two personal lines of behavior: either you fight for Ukraine, or you help fight and save lives," he claims forcefully on 13 September. This change of rhetoric is most evident in his treatment of the Ukrainian refugees in foreign counties. After the breakout of the war, Volodymyr Zelenskyy appeals to the Ukrainians abroad, urging them to come back and defend the country in the army ranks or to promote its cause internationally by means of people's diplomacy. Commenting his foreign visits, the president recounts meetings with members of local Ukrainian communities and praises activists for their contribution. As the second year of war comes to the close, in the face of mounting military and economic challenges the rhetoric of the president becomes more insistent and divisive. His calls for

citizens to return home culminate with the passage in the 2024 New Year address that forces people into a set of (falsely) dichotomous choices: "One day I will have to ask myself: who am I? To make a choice about who I want to be. A victim or a winner? A refugee or a citizen?" Thus, the group is pushed to the margins of the narrative of suffering as their role of choice. Yet, no matter how intense the demands get, the president always remembers to offset them with praise, calling every citizen who joined the war effort a hero and proudly noting that Ukraine has become an inspiration and admiration for the whole world.

A distinctive feature of this narrative is strategic incompleteness of information, openly acknowledged by the president and demanded from other commentators in order to hold back military secrets from the enemy.

The antagonist of the narrative of Ukraine's resistance, the Russian armed forces are portrayed as an aggressor and executor of the crooked will of their country's leader. The president consistently contrasts their features and behavior with the virtues of the defenders of Ukraine. While he makes repeated warnings not to underestimate the enemy, Volodymyr Zelenskyy frames the messages so that they highlight limits of its strength and the fundamental weaknesses. On many occasions he resorts to outright mockery of the invaders, giving the Ukrainians the feeling of superiority.

The president acknowledges the strength of the Russian military, reminding that it is "one of the world's largest armies" with "bottomless stocks" of mostly soviet-era weapons, equipment and reserves. He balances this information with reports of mass desertion and surrender and enormous Russian losses of men and material, regularly updating the numbers and calling Putin's decision on mobilization "a frank admission that their regular army did not withstand and crumbled."

President Zelenskyy notes that the advantages of the Russian armed forces are undermined by the incompetence of its commanders, their disregard for the lives of their own soldiers, as well as bravery and intellect of the Ukrainian fighters. Among examples he uses to illustrate this point is the famous case of Chornobaivka airbase in southern Ukraine, whose name became a popular meme after numerous attempts of the Russian troops to fly there ended in ever-increasing losses but failed to produce a change in their tactic:

> *We respond with wisdom and courage to the huge number of their equipment and soldiers sent to Ukraine. That is why, for example, the Ukrainian Chornobaivka will go down in war history. This is a place where the Russian military and their commanders have shown themselves completely as they are: incompetent, capable of simply driving their people to slaughter. Six times our military destroyed the occupiers near Chornobaivka. Six times! And they still come there* (March 20, 2022).

Regular reports of the scale of enemy losses (information the other side keeps secret) and its "meat wave" strategy are aimed at provoking frustration among people in Russia and Russian soldiers and

creating distrust to their leaders, thwarting their war effort. Volodymyr Zelenskyy also states that the invading forces are demoralized because they feel unwelcome on the occupied territories and understand they are going to lose the war, and calls them "cowards" who retreat even in the face of Ukrainian civil resistance and are unable to concede defeat.

The president often mocks falsehoods and propagandistic delusions that brought Russian soldiers to Ukraine, where they "lost their way" attempting to complete their mission and "take Kyiv and Ukraine in three days." This tone is set by the opening passage of his address in March 2022:

The 25th day has come to an end since the Russian military has gone to the exercise and found themselves on our land. They all say so when taken captive. It is already the 25th day since the Russian military has been vainly trying to find imaginary "Nazis" from whom they allegedly wanted to defend our people. Just as they are vainly trying to find Ukrainians who would meet them with flowers. At least in one city of our state. At least in one village. And most importantly – the Russian military cannot find a way home. That is why our soldiers help them with the path to God's judgment (March 21, 2022).

Volodymyr Zelenskyy also underscore utter universal contempt for the aggressor invoking phrases that became war memes, such as "Russian warship, go f* yourself," immortalized by the sailors who defended Snake Island in the Black Sea, and "tractor troops," a nickname for the farmers who used their tractors to pull Russian tanks and other weaponry from the battlefield.

On many occasions the president ridicules the status of the Russian military as the second best in the world. In the speech marking 100 days of the war, he discusses the trajectory of attitude change over a brief period of time – from fear to sad scorn:

And one more phrase is worth mentioning: "the second army of the world". At first it looked threatening. Then it was dangerous. After Bucha – It caused disgust. And now – only a bitter smile. Because what's left of it? Of the army, which was called the second army in the world... War crimes, disgrace and hatred (3 June 2022).

During the course of the war Volodymyr Zelenskyy calls the enemy many names (non-humans, weirdoes, people without humanity) whose connotations range from fear to hatred to contempt depending on the context of the speech and war dynamics.

While President Zelenskyy harshly condemns numerous war crimes committed by the invading forces, he repeatedly stresses that Ukraine honours international humanitarian law and calls on the Russian soldiers to surrender.

With the armed conflict nearing the end of second year, the president's messages to the people are filled with the warnings of enemy's strength and evil intentions: "The enemy is insane. And it is powerful. And it wants to destroy Ukraine, just as it has always wanted to (November 6, 2023).

An essential group of characters in the narrative of resistance are Ukraine's international partners – countries, organizations and individuals who provide it with military aid and impose economic sanctions on Russia to stifle its war machine. President Zelenskyy regards assistance of partners as indispensable for Ukraine's survival and regularly briefs the audience about his contacts with the world leaders and their support of the Ukrainian cause. He adopts this approach from the first one-minute address to the nation hours after the breakout of the war, in which he mentions the recent telephone conversation with President Biden and the US efforts to form a coalition to support Ukraine. Later that day he assures the people that Russia is facing "complete isolation" in the international arena and the sanctions against it are "the most powerful in world history."

In the early period of the war, before the formation of stable wartime partnerships, Volodymyr Zelenskyy emphasizes the multitude of foreign contacts and forms of international assistance to Ukraine: "Every day and every night I talk to the leaders of many countries, to the leaders of the business community. During all the days of the war, there is almost no hour when Ukraine does not hear what help it will receive" (6 March 2022). He also celebrates first diplomatic victories of the country, such as the UN General Assembly demand that Russia withdraw its military from Ukraine. Gradually the focus of the addresses broadens to include deepening relations with major global powers and international organizations, as well as to cooperation with partners in the newly formed Rammstein Group. The president also incessantly stresses that in the standoff with Russia, Ukraine enjoys historically unprecedented level of global support which guarantees victory over the invader.

Alongside expressing gratitude to international partners, President Zelenskyy repeatedly pleads for quicker and more substantial assistance, with missile defense systems, fighter aircraft and long-range missiles on top of the list. At the saddest moments of the war, he does not try to hide his bitter irritation with the indecision of the allies who "have intimidated themselves" into inaction and thus only embolden Putin's aggression. Appealing to international community for help, Volodymyr Zelenskyy uses a mix of pragmatic and idealistic arguments. He portrays Russian invasion of Ukraine as the first act of their war against Europe and assault on global security, which makes contribution to Ukraine's resistance an investment in the collective European security and world peace. He also emphasized that Ukrainians are fighting not just for their land, but for freedom and democracy, whose defense requires consolidated efforts of the free world against tyranny. These two lines of argument often converge in claims that the war in Ukraine is a test of European solidarity, that "it is in Ukraine that the world will see what Europe is capable of."

Several times the president alludes to the legal argument for the collective assistance to Ukraine's defense – the 1994 Budapest Memorandum that provided the country with security assurances from the USA, the UK and Russia. These comments are invariably filled with sarcasm

and condemnation of the partners' procrastination, as exemplified by the following remark on the nineth day of the war:

> *All the Alliance has managed to do so far is to carry fifty tons of diesel fuel for Ukraine through its procurement system. Probably so that we can burn the Budapest Memorandum. To make it burn better. But it is already burnt for us. In the fire of Russian troops* (March 4, 2022).

The discussion of relations with allies often sounds like an emotional rollercoaster, with phrases like "we are left alone in defense of our state" and "we do not feel alone" occurring in addresses delivered several days apart.

Although the president admits that support of the Ukrainian cause is not universal, he consistently portrays Putin's Russia as extremely marginalized country with no meaningful allies. He illustrates this mentioning that in the UN only a handful of outcasts like Syria, Belarus and North Korea openly side with Russia, with over 140 countries vote for resolutions. Volodymyr Zelenskyy avoids discussions of assistance from such powerful economies as India and China, as well as sympathy to Russia among countries of Global South. Instead, he talks optimistic about Kyiv's active diplomacy towards these states in the hope to win their support.

Ukraine's President also remains silent on North Korea's military cooperation with Russia, but condemns Iran for sending weapons and supplies to the Russian army. He presents this not as much as a serious threat to Ukraine, but more as a sign of Russia's weakness, noting that "the very fact of Russia's appeal to Iran for such assistance is the Kremlin's recognition of its military and political bankruptcy" (18 October 2022).

On several occasions President Zelenskyy makes appeals to the people of Iran, Belarus and other Russia-allied countries, asking them not to get entangled in the war and pressure their governments out of cooperation with Putin's regime. He also directly questions Hungarian President Orban about the reasons for his support of Putin, noting that it puts him at odds not only with other European leaders, but also with his own pro-Ukrainian population. Zelenskyy regularly calls on the global business community to cut all ties with that country and stop financing its war efforts, and applauds companies that pull back from Russia. These rhetorical moves are intended to further weaken Russia's global standing.

Shifting the focus of the narrative into the past to discuss developments that led to the war, President Zelenskyy notes that Russia has been preparing for the destruction of Ukraine and Europe for decades. He reminds that the Russo-Ukrainian war started way back in 2014, and that the weakness of Ukraine and muted response of the international community to those events emboldened Russia to launch a full-blown invasion eight years later. He also expresses regret that at that time the world leaders did not heed the Ukrainian warning of dire consequences of the collapse of the global

security architecture that eventually created multiple regions of instability around the globe. Yet, he always optimistically contrasts those days with the current situation, noting that now Ukrainians are strong, united, and enjoy a very broad support.

The president also laments the lost chance to get Ukraine out of the "gray zone" in Eastern Europe at the 2008 Bucharest NATO Summit and condemns indecision and "absurd fear of some politicians towards Russia" that left the country unprotected against the invasion. Reflecting on the situation immediately predating the war, Volodymyr Zelenskyy reminds that NATO leaders neglected his requests of tough preventive sanctions against Russia and did not share his view of the dangers associated with the construction of the Nord Stream pipeline.

These comments are less intended as a blame for the failure to avert the war, and more as a plea to get serious about his new warning that the fall of Ukraine will inevitably lead to a direct clash between the Alliance and Russia, which should energize support for the Ukrainian defense.

On the whole, the lead-up to the war receives relatively little attention in presidential addresses, which is explained by Volodymyr Zelenskyy's past. Although he publicly condemned the annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Shuster 2024, p. 69), he won the 2019 election on the platform of peace promising to end the "senseless war" with Russia (Harding 2020; Shuster 2024; Dickinson 2020). In his first years as President, he tried to reach a peace deal with Moscow and until the last days before the war broke out dismissed all warnings of Russian invasion as panic-mongering (Harding 2022; Shuster 2024). His earlier political stance also explains why he never discusses the state of Ukraine's readiness for the large-scale conflict and only notes that his country "never wanted this war," "did not choose the path of war," and was forced to act in its defense.

The discussion of the future outcome of the war in presidential addresses is strongly optimistic and filled with great confidence in Ukraine's victory. Volodymyr Zelenskyy bases his predictions on the strength of the Ukrainian defense forces, unity of the nation, the existential character of the war that leaves Ukrainians with no other good alternative except driving out the invaders, and the justice of the Ukrainian cause that galvanizes the country's war effort, attracts broad international support and sets in motion the moral law of history that in the long run, evil always loses. "History is written by people, never by savages," claims president Zelenskyy on 15 September 2022 after the visit to the de-occupied Kharkiv region, badly devastated by the invading army.

He makes the first promise of the victory over RussIa on the third day of the invasion, and two weeks later talks about reaching "a strategic turning point" and "moving towards our victory." By the end of 2023 the modality of his statements changes from "we will definitely win" to "we can win this war," and warnings of a difficult year ahead start to creep in. Yet, no matter the circumstances, the president invariably ends his addresses to the nation with a vow of victory and underscores that "the war will end on our terms."

It is important to note that even in the early days of the war Volodymyr Zelenskyy never promises a quick and easy victory over the enemy and never makes definite predictions about the possible duration of the conflict. He repeatedly states that the end of the war depends on the scale of military and economic losses of Russia, and that every new day and every new effort of the Ukrainian people bring them closer to peace. Characteristically, his address marking two years of Russia's invasion is titled "We are 730 days closer to victory." Thus, throughout all the stages of the war President Zelenskyy intends the words of future victory not only to console the nation, but also to maximally mobilize its resistance to the enemy.

3.3. Narrative of suffering

The narrative of suffering is the strand of the war narrative that discusses the devastating toll of the conflict for Ukraine. The President primarily focuses on deadly attacks against civilian targets, mourning the killed, often mentioning the children whose lives were lost. The early culmination in this narrative is the story of the siege of Mariupol, which left thousands of its residents dead and injured, followed by the stories of mass torture, rape and execution of civilians that broke out after Russian retreat in many parts of the country. Volodymyr Zelenskyy personally goes to sites of mass massacre and repeatedly condemns the brutality of the invading army.

Information about the atrocities of the occupiers is invariably followed by promises to identify and punish all involved in the crimes. Expressing firm belief in the restoration of justice, the president seeks to soothe the pain of the Ukrainian people and demoralize enemy soldiers. Zelenskyy shames the citizens of Russia into protesting against the war and sometimes extends the blame for the lost lives of the Ukrainians to his country's allies, making emotional pleas for strong and decisive actions to contain the aggressor. Their brutality pushes President Zelenskyy to call the invading forces "pure and concentrated evil" and paint the war in stark moral terms. Ukraine's president also turns the town of Bucha, the site of the civilian massacre near Kyiv, into a symbol of complete failure of the long western policy of appeasement of Russia, inviting former French President Sarkozy and German Chancellor Merkel to pay a visit there and see the results for themselves.

These events also put an end to early attempts to end the war through peace talks. In the address on the second day of the war, after failed attempts to contact the Russian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy publicly invited him to negotiating table. With talks between delegations under way, the Ukrainian president cautiously discussed their progress, but after heinous war crimes on the liberated territories were revealed, he announced that Ukraine is ready for negotiations with the Russian Federation "but with another President of Russia who will understand what is happening" (30 September 2022).

Evidence of glaring violations of the rules of war is used by the president to support Ukraine's demands for legally binding actions against Russia. As early as on the fourth day of the war, he calls for the international tribunal on Russia for indiscriminate shelling of Ukrainian cities and, pointing to the genocidal character of the war, makes an appeal to deprive the aggressor of the right to vote in the Security Council.

Addressing the nation after a particularly deadly strike on Kharkiv on the next day, the president launches the campaign to declare Russia a state sponsor of terrorism, and calls for a complete ban on transport connection and export from the country-aggressor, stating that "buying Russian goods now is to pay money for murdering people" (28 February 2022). Later, joining the push for banning Russian athletes from competing internationally, he also appeals to the evidence of their country's incompatibility with the principles of sport. As the war progresses, incessant brutality of Russian troops allows President Zelenskyy to expands these claims and makes some of them successful with the international community.

The president regularly draws attention to the plight of millions of internally displaced persons and those who had to flee the country, and especially – to the tragedy of the residents of occupied territories, held hostages or kidnapped by the invaders that hinder their evacuation or forcibly transfer them to the territory of Russia. The president talks about thousands of recorded cases of forced deportation of Ukrainian children and applauds the issuance of an arrest warrant for Putin by the International Criminal Court, calling it "the historic decision, from which historical responsibility will begin."

President Zelenskyy also highlights ill-treatment and killing of Ukrainian prisoners of war. He confers the title of Hero of Ukraine upon Oleksandr Matsiyevsky, a captive soldier shot on camera by Russians after the words "Glory to Ukraine," and strongly demands international investigation of Olenivka prison massacre, where over 50 Ukrainian defenders were killed despite the fact that the UN and the Red Cross acted as guarantors of their life and health. At the same time, Zelenskyy emphasizes that his country firmly adheres to Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War and repeatedly calls on Russian soldiers to surrender.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy gratefully acknowledges those who contribute to alleviation of suffering of the Ukrainian people. He thanks rescues and doctors who save lives after enemy strikes; acknowledges assistance of many volunteers, celebrities and common people, businesses, international organizations and foreign governments that provide humanitarian aid; appreciates Ukrainian citizens and international intermediaries who organize POW exchanges. The president also announces awards of the honorary title of "City Savior" to four Polish cities, along with capitals of Lithuania, France and the Czech Republic "for the extremely significant contribution of the city authorities, volunteers and residents to help our people and our defense."

Volodymyr Zelenskyy contributes to life-saving efforts by repeatedly warning people against ignoring air raid alerts and returning prematurely to the liberated areas, and assures Ukrainian prisoners of war and citizens under occupation or deported to Russia that they are not forgotten and the country is doing its utmost to end their suffering.

Alongside human suffering, the president extensively comments catastrophic damage to the Ukrainian civilian infrastructure. He emphasizes massive and inhumane nature of destruction, noting that the invaders are destroying whole regions "to the scorched ground" and turning once vibrant cities into "burnt ruins," focusing on the ruin of schools, hospitals and energy infrastructure in a despicable attempt to "use the cold against people" and leave them without the most basic necessities of life.

A lot of attention is directed to the risk of technogenic catastrophes, primarily at Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. President Zelenskyy raises alarm after its first shelling, calling it "the night that could have stopped the history of Ukraine and Europe," and repeatedly demands urgent international actions to guarantee security of the nuclear site. He also issues a strong warning about the enemy plans to destroy the Kakhovka Dam, asking the world leaders to "make Russia understand that the terrorist attack on the Kakhovka HPP will be equated to the use of weapons of mass destruction." When seven months later the dam is blown up, he calls it an act of ecocide and steps up attention to environmental damage to Ukraine and the Black Sea region, especially to contamination of land with mines.

Discussion of infrastructural and ecological damage is commonly accompanied by optimistic promises to rebuild the country and extract compensation from the aggressor, with the words "reparations" and "contributions" becoming part of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's vocabulary as early as one week into the war: "We will restore every house, every street, every city. And we say to Russia: learn the words "reparations" and "contributions." You will repay everything you did against Ukraine. In full" (March 3, 2022). He also projects a reversal of the role of victim after the war, with Russia facing economic ruin and stifling broad contempt, and Ukraine enjoying ever growing prosperity and admiring respect of the world.

On many occasions Zelenskyy notes that Russia refuses to acknowledge multiple war crimes committed on the Ukrainian territory, calling them "staged" or ascribing to the Ukrainian troops. Thus, the president's attention to this strand of the war narrative is, in part, an attempt to publicize this information to more skeptical audiences. He calls Russia's attempts to cover up the truth a proof of cowardice and escalates the charges of the breach of moral and legal conventions claiming, with reference to the testimonies and documents of captured Russian servicemen, that the atrocities were not improvised but conceived in advance as part of the cruel war tactics.

3.4. Narrative of resilience

The narrative of resilience is concerned with the capacity of the nation to continue functioning in the face of aggression. It proves strength and efficiency of the country's leadership, institutions and citizens, and raises likelihood of victory in the eyes of the audience. There is a degree of overlap between this and other strands of the war narrative: keeping the state operational is essential for the support of the armed struggle and requires efforts to repair the damage done by the attacks. Yet, unlike the narratives of resistance and suffering, the narrative of resilience focuses on the effective support of civilian life, not on the engagement with the enemy or sustained losses.

On the first day of the war President Zelenskyy calls on politicians and community leaders to "ensure normal life on the ground as much as possible" and in the following weeks assures citizens that government agencies and institutions continue to function ("We are all on the ground, we are all working; everyone is where they should be" (7 March 2022)). He also warns officials who are "working for a split" or "looking for threads to Russia" to stay united and focused.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy continuously praises professionals – from teacher and doctors to entrepreneurs and police officers – who continue in their jobs and calls on all citizens to contribute to everyday life of their communities. He discusses multiple initiatives to rebuild the country, focusing on the ongoing efforts to restore the battered energy infrastructure and bolster it ahead of winter, and the launch of the programme of compensation for damaged housing. He celebrates "the return of normal life" to the liberated territories, extensive demining efforts and restoration of transport network. The president also welcomes signs of life going back to the pre-war rhythm, like the return of foreign embassies to Kyiv, which the president calls "one of the important indicators of the strength of our state, the Ukrainian ability to fight and win" (17 August 2022).

The narrative of resilience focuses major attention on the maintenance of the country's economy. In the first month of the war the president announces sweeping tax breaks and suspension of business inspections to help businesses weather the war. He also discusses efforts to resume and boost country's export, celebrating the EU decision to liberalize trade relations with Ukraine and increase the potential of transport corridors on its western border. When Polish farmers, in protest against EU farm imports, start Ukrainian border blockade in late 2023, Volodymyr Zelenskyy calls it "the erosion of solidarity on a daily basis" (February 19, 2024), reminds about truly heroic work of Ukrainian famers and shifts focus to the need to tighten restrictions on Russian agricultural export to Europe. The president often mentions that Ukraine managed to resume grain export shipments through Black Sea ports and did not stop them even after Russia pulled out of the grain deal. Thus he underscores the country's ability to meet its commitments as a key provider of the global food security even in the face of Russia's incessant attempts to provoke the world food price crisis.

President Zelenskyy acknowledges that among key factors that ensure Ukraine's resilience, in addition to his country's potential, are foreign macro-financial aid that helps keep the economy afloat, international assistance in rebuilding, strengthening, and maintaining Ukraine's energy systems, and various forms of contribution from global business whose often creative solutions help the country through difficult times.

With the conflict gradually evolving into the war of attrition, the narrative of resilience comes to play a more prominent role in presidential addresses. The president begins to emphasize the long-term commitment of allies to helping Ukraine, which guarantees economic and social stability for year to come, and talks about increased urgency for all citizens to contribute to sustainability of the country.

Rhetoric of Volodymyr Zelenskyy can also be regarded as a factor contributing to nation's resilience, boosting its morale through projection of optimism for the future and demonstration of genuine care for the people. His addresses also aim at undermining the resilience of Russia's with repeated calls for tough economic sanctions against its energy, transport and banking sectors and export-import operations, with naming and shaming companies that continue to do business in Russia, and warning the population of the enemy state of the looming economic collapse.

3.5. Narrative of reform and development

The narrative of reform and development focuses on the ongoing work by the government aimed at improving life in the country and attaining its long-standing goals. It is associated with the narrative of resilience since it demonstrates that the armed conflict does not halt the progress the country. Yet, unlike the narrative of resilience, it focuses on strategical, not tactical goals or day-to-day tasks of state management.

The two major long-term goals for Ukraine discussed by the president are joining the EU and NATO. While both organizations are also featured heavily in the discussion of Ukraine's resistance as essential in helping the country to counter Russian aggression, the narrative of reform and development focuses on the Ukraine's efforts to meet the membership criteria and the response they receive. Of course, the war remains the key factor in the process of reform and development, forcing Ukraine to redouble its energy towards the goals and making the international bodies and their member states recalibrate their attitude to the applicant. More importantly, guarantees of military and economic security associated with the accession to these organizations provide a satisfying answer to the aspirations of long-term peace for the warring nation, which allows for an effective blend between the war and reform narratives.

The topic of the Ukraine's accession to the European Union first comes up on the third day of the Russian invasion when the president claims that "the people of Ukraine have already earned the right" to become a member of the EU and that this decision will be "the key evidence of our country's support." Two days later the president announces filing Ukraine's application for the EU membership under a new special accelerated procedure. Since then, this topic has become one of the country's biggest success stories, and Volodymyr Zelenskyy regularly turns to it as a major source of national pride, inspiration and optimism, elaborating on all significant steps in the diplomatic and legal process. He casts it as a culmination of 30 years of Ukraine's longing to be with Europeans as equals, and often points to an unprecedented speed of the negotiations (noting, for example, that it took Ukraine only weeks to complete the procedure with the questionnaire, while other countries spent years working on it).

The highest point of the narrative so far has come in June 2022, when the president builds up expectations of the positive decision by the European Union and celebrates the status of a candidate for accession given to Ukraine on June 23, 2022. He marks is as a well-deserved achievement of all citizens and proposes to talk about the status as not "granted to", but "gained by" Ukraine. He also calls on the people not to devalue the current success by fixating on seven reform demands that accompanied the EU decision and compares Ukraine's progress towards membership with covering 7000 meters on the way to the top of Mount Everest.

While the president often talks about this achievement as a result of collective efforts of all Ukrainians, he never publicly acknowledges the role of the previous governments in bringing the country closer to European standards. Of the long list of reforms he discusses, only two (decentralization and creation of administrative service centers) can be attributed to his predecessor, and a major success of getting a visa-free regime with the EU in 2017 receives only a cursory mention. Instead, the president focuses on achievements of his administration, such as land reform, deoligarchization, open-list voting, creation of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention, Anticorruption Court, the passage of the "Split Law" improving regulation of the financial market, unbundling of the gas transmission system, common aviation space agreement with the EU. Acknowledging the need to take further steps towards the reform of the judicial system, eradication of corruption and improvement of business climate, the president reports on the actions of the government in this regard, usually mentioning positive recognition of these efforts from European leaders.

Discussing the steps towards Ukraine's membership in NATO, President Zelenskyy focuses on the high readiness of the Ukrainian military and diplomatic efforts to overcome the resistance of some countries. The first achievement he celebrates in this regard is Ukraine's becoming an associate member of NATO's special multilateral program on technological interoperability in July 2022. He

notes that this seemingly technical decision indicates a very high esteem for the Armed Forces of Ukraine that henceforth are not only required to implement NATO military standards (which had always been a matter of principal concern), but can contribute to the development of new standards.

In a special address on September 30, 2022, he breaks the news about filing the request for an accelerated accession to NATO. Explaining this move, the president says that "we must de jure record everything we have already achieved de facto" and points to the unprecedented degree of mutual trust, help and protection between his country and the Alliance.

In the first half of 2023 Volodymyr Zelenskyy's attention is focused on the July Vilnius NATO summit. For months he projects optimism expecting that Ukraine will be invited to join the Alliance and discusses support this initiative receives from a number of member states. These upbeat predictions also put pressure on NATO leaders who don't want to accept the warring country into the organization. The president intensifies the pressure with the remarks that the Ukrainian army is making an unmatched contribution to European and Euro-Atlantic security, claims that the majority of people in Ukraine and NATO countries will not understand the leaders of the Alliance if the invitation is not sounded at the summit, and warns that peace and security of Europe are impossible without peaceful and secure Ukraine.

Though Ukraine's expectations of the summit were not fulfilled, Volodymyr Zelenskyy casts its results in a positive light, noting that the level of support and respect for the country was without precedent in the years of its independence and that the summit removed all doubts about Ukraine's future in NATO. On the next day after the Vilnius summit, he announces that the government started preparing for the 2024 NATO summit in Washington, expecting to make further progress there.

After Vilnius, the focus of long-term security discussions shifts to bilateral agreements between Ukraine and its allies that formalize their commitments to future peace and stability in the country. The constantly growing number of countries who support the G7 Declaration on Security Assurances and celebrates signing of the agreements, with Great Britain becoming the first country to sign such an agreement on January 12, 2024.

President Zelenskyy develops the narrative of reform and development largely in a manner typical of the political incumbent, painting a maximally positive picture of the situation, focusing on his record of accomplishments and ongoing reforms implemented by the government, while minimizing attention to intractable problems facing the country and public scandals entangling top officials. This is particularly evident in his cursory treatment of the issue of corruption, which remains the primary concern of the Ukrainian population (SOCIS, 2024). In his addresses, Volodymyr Zelenskyy mainly talks about the importance of reducing shadow economy for the future stability and security of the country.

The narrative of reform and development has multiple connections with all the strands of the war narrative discussed above. The focus on long-term security and prosperity allows this narrative to merge with future projections in the narratives of resistance, resilience and suffering. The ongoing war is also treated as the key factor in the process reform and development, forcing Ukraine to redouble its energy towards the goals and making the international bodies and their member states reconsider their attitude to the applicant state. Current help from business community that contributes to resilience and resistance of the nation and helps to alleviate suffering, is also viewed as the basis for country's future development. President Zelenskyy eloquently underscores this point in the address delivered ten days after the start of the war:

> *Support for Ukraine from global business, from the leaders of the most advanced companies is no less important than support from leading countries. When the corporate world stands by you and is not afraid, you have double protection. Triple weaponry. You have a future* (March 6, 2022).

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's contrasts sharply his reform and development projections for Ukraine with his vision of Russia's future. From the first days of the war, he warns the people of the enemy state that they will squander the gains made over the last decades, and with no creative class left to turn the situation around, will go back to the turbulence they experienced after the collapse of the soviet empire:

> *I am confident that by attacking us, they will destroy everything that Russian society has achieved over the past 25 years. And they will return to where they once began to rise from, as they say, to the "the wicked 90's". But without freedom, without the creative desire of millions of people to work for the development of their state* (March 18, 2022).

3.6. National identity narrative

Symbolic nature of presidency makes the personality of the heads of state and their behavior important factors in shaping national identity (Edelman, 1985). Presidents often consciously use their rhetorical power to foster or manipulate national self-awareness, regarding it as part of their leadership duties or as an opportunity to achieve specific political goals. The national identity narrative in President Zelensky's video addresses serves to mobilize the country and promote the favorable war narrative globally (it is known that the main character is more central to the appeal of the story than the plot (Lewis, DeFaria 2021)). During the clash with the neighboring country, it also becomes an important instrument of differentiation between the warring sides called to prove that it is an interstate, not civil, war and to counter Russian imperial propaganda claiming that Russians and

Ukrainians are "one people." This explains why extolling national virtues of the Ukrainians, the president regularly contrasts them with the invaders.

The47eaturee of the Ukrainian national character most emphasized by the president is love for freedom. He often capitalizes on this trait to claim that Ukraine belongs to the family of democratic nations and its fight is a common cause of the free world, as in the following passage of the address after the first month of the war:

> *We are all Ukrainians. We are all Europeans. We are all free people of the free world. In unity! On the battlefield and in political positions, at rallies and summits, at work and in communication with people. By all our actions, we must force Russia to seek peace. By all our actions, we must bring the victory of freedom closer"* (March 24, 2022).

On multiple occasions Volodymyr Zelenskyy draws a sharp distinction between the freedom-loving nature of the Ukrainians and slavish obedience of the Russians to their imperial propaganda and the whims of their rulers, and desire to turn Ukrainians into their slaves, as they did in the Luhansk and Donetsk Peoples Republics, where, according to the president, "normal life is simply impossible. Only slavery. Only on the knees" (March 5, 2022).

Another key Ukrainian national trait the president focuses on is a deep sense of value of human life and the resulting feelings of compassion and dignity. These features are strongly contrasted with the Russians' contempt of human life and their lack of sense of self-worth. In the following excerpt from 2022 Children's Day address Volodymyr Zelenskyy condemns Russia's spreading its culture of disdain that reduces even its own people to "dust" and draws a sharp dividing line between it and the humanness of the Ukrainian nation:

> *Everyone sees what Russia brings to Ukraine and what it wants to bring to other European countries. Total contempt for individuals, for entire nations. The Russian state despises even its own citizens so much that they do not understand the value of human life at all. Russian soldiers kill and die themselves as if they were not people, but just dust. Dust under the feet of the owners of Russia. The principles of our life are completely different. And although life has changed with the onset of wartime, our principles remain the same. Every person matters. This is the main thing that distinguishes us from the occupiers* (2 June 2022).

The president often conflates a high regard for people and liberty among Ukrainians with their love of native land, which they consider a national treasure, a symbol and a guarantee of national freedom:

> *We do not have a huge territory – from ocean to ocean, we do not have nuclear weapons, we do not fill the world market with oil and gas. But we have our people and our land.*

And for us – it's gold. That is what we are fighting for. We have nothing to lose but our own freedom and dignity. For us, this is the greatest treasure (March 2, 2022).

Importantly, the president emphasizes historically high readiness of Ukrainians to protect and defend their values – life, land and freedom – with great courage and bravery, calling resistance "a feature of the soul" of the nation. This characteristic is offered as the primary explanation of the unexpectedly strong and united response of the nation to the invasion. Recalling multiple tragedies his country has gone through, the president proves its strength and resilience, supports optimism for the future and reminds of the long history of oppression at the hands of Russians:

We have survived in our history and on our land two world wars, three Holodomors, the Holocaust, Babyn Yar, the Great Terror, the Chornobyl explosion, the occupation of Crimea and the war in the east… They wanted to destroy us so many times. They failed. They wanted to wipe us off the face of the earth. They failed. They backstabbed us. And we are on our feet. They wanted us to be silent. But the whole world heard us. We've been through so much! And if someone thinks that, having overcome all this, Ukrainians – all of us – are scared, broken or will surrender, he knows nothing about Ukraine (March 3, 2022).

Alongside bravery and strength, the president points to the peaceful nature of the Ukrainian people who have never posed a threat to others, thus emphasizing the unprovoked character of the invasion. The first extended passage dedicated to this issue evokes the image of the national flag as a symbol of peace:

We defend our flag because it is our worldview… What we have never done under this flag is attacking other countries, seizing foreign lands, killing people, peaceful people of other nations. We and terror are different universes. That is why there is no blood on our flag. There are no and will never be black spots on it. There are no and will never be any swastikas on it. The Ukrainian flag is the land. Peaceful, fertile, golden and without tanks. This is the sky. Peaceful, clear, blue and without missiles (March 7, 2022).

The president also emphasizes Ukrainians' love for peace contrasting it sharply with their ongoing experience of full-scale invasion, as when he uses the word "peaceful" referring to war-torn Ukrainian cities and population, sometimes with the oxymoronic effect (e.g., "Peaceful, proud, strong Kharkiv!", "Peaceful people of a belligerent state!").

An important part of the president's national identity narrative is emphasis on the unity demonstrated by the people of the country in the face of the full-scale Russian invasion. For the first

time he celebrates country's unity one week into the war, after the country withstood an early wave of attacks, and talks at length about how the shared experience of the tragedy brought people closer to each other:

Good health to you, united country! I did not accidentally say "united." The seventh day of this terrible war began. A war we feel the same way. During this time we have had more unity than for over thirty years before. At first we were equally scared, then we felt equally painful… During this time, we have truly become one. We forgave each other a lot. We started loving each other. We help each other. We are worried for each other. Yesterday morning on Freedom Square we were all Kharkiv residents. Then the enemy destroyed us all by striking at residential buildings in Borodyanka. We were all bombed in Kyiv last night. And we all died again in Babyn Yar – from a missile strike (March 2, 2022).

When it became clear that the country would not fall to the invaders, the president casts successful united resistance an irrefutable proof of the national existence of Ukraine, the fact that flew in the face of enemy's (and much of the world's) convictions:

A month has passed. We withstood six times longer than the enemy had planned, than the Russian command had reported to the Russian president. They were convinced that Ukraine is not a state. They were convinced that Ukrainians are not a nation. They deceived themselves (March 24, 2022).

While the discussion of national character traits is most active in the first year of the war, the call to preserve national unity as an essential precondition of victory is repeated by President Zelenskyy throughout all stages of the conflict.

The examples above demonstrate that in presidential addresses the Ukrainian national identity comes across as a complex and dynamic phenomenon whose features are often rediscovered and shaped during the war. Moreover, rhetoric of Volodymyr Zelenskyy – filled with compassion, energy and indomitable will – is itself a manifestation of those very features of the Ukrainian national character he praises in his addresses. This explains why for so many people all over the world President Zelenskyy became a symbol of his country's resistance of Russia's invasion.

This narrative marks personal evolution of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who util the start of the full-scale war used to speak about Ukraine and Russia as brotherly nations who understand each other (Shuster, 2024). The storyline of the nation rediscovering its soul and strength also helps the president shield himself from accusations of leaving the country unprepared for war, which Ukrainians consider one of the biggest mistakes of their government (SOCIS, 2024).

3.7. World War II memory narrative

President Zelenskyy often draws parallels between the Russian invasion of Ukraine and World War II, the most recent large-scale military conflict in Europe that brought terrible suffering to millions of Ukrainians in the middle of the twentieth century. Waving elements of that historical memory narrative into the addresses enhances all strands of the Russo-Ukrainian war narrative as well the national identity narrative developed by the president.

President Zelenskyy makes the first references to the events of World War II on the second day of the Russian invasion: in his morning address he compares the strike of Kyiv with the first bombing of the city in 1941 and later in the afternoon address he comments the words of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz that the events in Ukraine are something Europe has not seen for 75 years. The president regularly evokes the narrative on the memorable dates of World War II, as well as in the wake of the reports about war crimes by the Russian army.

He compares the practices of filtration camps, torture chambers, summary executions, city blockades and destruction by the Russian and Nazi invaders in order to emphasize the degree of cruelty and suffering often masked by the local character of the war whose violence is lacking the industrial scale of the Nazi death conveyors. One of the most eloquent passages is delivered after the successful Kharkiv counteroffensive that exposed mass tortures and executions of civilians, as well as almost complete devastation of infrastructure and residences on the liberated territories:

> They don't make soap out of people, they don't make lampshades out of leather... The scale is not the whole of Europe... But the principle is the same. Camps where people are gathered to kill. Deportations. Burnt cities and villages, completely destroyed – nothing remains alive after ruscism. Missile terror. Mass burials. Executioners. The cruelest torture of people still alive. And the boundless, undisguised hatred with which they justify this war that they started (September 11, 2022).

To further enhance the comparison, Volodymyr Zelenskyy notes that in parts of the country brutality of Russian troops surpasses the deeds of the Nazis. In the similar fashion he condemns Russian propagandists as overshadowing the cynicism of their Nazi precursors when they accuse the Ukrainian troops of shelling and bombing their own civilian population.

The president also likens ideological roots of violence in modern Russia and Nazi Germany, calling Russia "the ideological successors of the Nazis" and referring to Russian chauvinism and imperialism as "ruscism" and to its adherents – as "ruscists." Thus he points to the level of threat posed by Russian expansionism and the moral obligation to resist it. The concluding words of the address on Victory in Europe Day in 2023 are the succinct and emphatic expression of this message: "May the victory over the current evil of ruscism be the best honor to the memory of those who fought

and defeated Nazism!" (May 8, 2023). Exposing the aggressive nature of Russian ideology, honouring people who fought against Nazism alongside present-day defenders of the country, the president refutes false accusations by Russian propaganda that Ukraine is ruled by the fascist regime and must be "denazified." For the same reason the President evokes memories of Holocaust, remembering Nazi death camps survivors killed during Russian attacks on the Ukrainian cities and accusing the Russian military of "killing Holocaust victims for the second time" after strikes hit the memorial sites of the mass executions of Jews in Kyiv and near Kharkiv.

While the central focus of this narrative in President Zelenskyy's addresses is on the aggressor, at times he turns to it to glorify heroism of Ukrainian soldiers and collective war effort of the nation. For instance, in March 2022, in an important symbolic move, he renewed Soviet tradition of honouring heroism of residents of some cities in the Great Patriotic War, and awarded the honorary title "Hero City" to ten Ukrainian cities for outstanding courage and resolve in the face of Russian invasion. His announcement of this decision draws clear parallels between the two periods in the Ukrainian history: "I decided to mark our Hero Cities with a special title that already existed. When another invasion was defeated. But a similar invasion. Another invasion. But no less cruel invasion" (March 6, 2022).

President Zelenskyy also evokes memories of World War II discussing international aid to Ukraine. He compares partnership between Ukraine and its allies with Anti-Hitler coalition, stressing that collective effort is essential for victory, and celebrates the American Lend-Lease Act of 2022 as "the revival of the historic Lend-Lease program, which once helped protect freedom in Europe and can certainly do so a second time" (May 1, 2022). Critical of Europeans who failed to preserve peace on the continent and urging for more determination in helping Ukraine, the president recalls the slogan "Never again" which expresses anti-fascist sentiment and is associated with the lessons of World War II. On such occasions he notes that Ukrainians are putting these words into practice and contrasts their stance with the passive act of remembering the past tragedies and valuing life, issuing a reproach to toothless pacifism.

World War II memory narrative helps the president express confidence in victory in the war with Russia and punishment of the aggressor. These ideas are always forcefully articulated on historical liberation dates. Discussing setting up a tribunal dedicated to prosecuting Russian aggression against Ukraine, Zelenskyy compares it with the Nuremberg trials held against representatives of the defeated Nazi Germany, and reminds the audience that the hunt against Nazi criminals eventually brought many of them to justice. Adding optimism to these historical analogies, he promises that the victory in and retribution after Russo-Ukrainian war will come much faster than it happened in the past. To reinforce his upbeat projections, the president mocks enemy's attempts to achieve superiority in technological warfare, comparing them with the empty promises of Nazi

propaganda to create "wunderwaffe" (wonder weapon) that indicate the complete failure of the invasion.

President Zelenskyy makes the most effective use of World War II memory narrative when he simultaneously draws multiple parallels between the two wars, with tragedies, heroism and sacrifice acquiring meaning in the light of complete future victory. In some cases, such comparisons remain largely implicit, as in the following example from the address on one of the first days of the full-scale armed conflict, which the president calls "a patriotic war" with a typical beginning and a certain outcome: "For us it is a patriotic war. We remember how patriotic wars begin. And we know how they end. For the invaders" (March 3, 2022).

In the most explicit form, the comparison is drawn in the address on the Day of Liberation of Ukraine from Nazi Invaders, where President Zelenskyy masterfully waves multiple historical analogies into a compelling vision of Ukraine's victory. The optimistic tone of the address is established by the quote used for the title: "Today we remember the expulsion of the Nazis, approaching the expulsion of the Rashists." The president is speaking from the dark city square standing over the downed enemy drone, further enhancing his message of sure victory. The climax of the address, where the arcs of two war narratives become perfectly aligned repeating the usual trajectory of evil, merits an extended quote:

The form of evil has changed, but the essence has remained unchanged. Evil always begins in the same way. The invaders call themselves liberators. The invasion of one's army is called self-defense. As 80 years ago, the Ukrainian people stand up for the defense of their native land. And the enemy's blitzkrieg plan becomes a failure.

Evil always acts in the same way. Kills civilians, assuring that it hits military targets only. Arranges blockades and filtration camps. And Syrets becomes Olenivka. Destroys cities and villages. And Koryukivka becomes Bucha. But sooner or later war crimes become known. The reaction of the world becomes painful. The policy of appeasement becomes a tough countermeasure. The evil finds itself in a zugzwang.

So evil always ends the same way. The occupier becomes a capitulator. The invader becomes a fugitive. War criminals become defendants, aggression becomes a sentence. Destruction becomes reparations. Enemy equipment becomes museum exhibits. The feats of grandfathers become the victories of grandchildren… We know that all invaders flee our land in the same way. Gauleiters and self-appointed "governors" end up the same. Reichskommissariats and quasi-republics die equally. And all our cities will definitely have our flags. Both Junkers and kamikaze drones fall equally. And in our sky there will definitely be our birds, our blue sky, our "Mriya"! (October 28, 2022).

Apart from references to Nazi invasion, President Zelenskyy's World War II memory narrative mentions the 1944 genocide of Crimean Tatars committed by the Soviet authorities. He does this discussing the Crimea Platform, a consultation and coordination format initiated to increase the effectiveness of international response to the occupation of Crimea and to facilitate its return to Ukraine, and on the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Deportation of the Crimean Tatar People. He connects the World War II genocide with the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, calling it "the second wave of destruction of everything free on the peninsula," and promises "not to leave anyone behind and return what belongs to Ukraine by right" (May 18, 2023). Projecting the situation into the distant and recent past, as well as into the future creates a powerful strand of narrative for the topic that is highly important for a large number of Ukrainians.

President Zelenskyy adopts a similar approach discussing the future of Mariupol. The city that in 2022 has become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance and Russian disregard for human lives, was under Nazi occupation in 1941–1943 and in 2014 was briefly captured by Russia-backed separatists. Ukraine's president makes a promise to "liberate the city for the third time" (June 13, 2022), using the double historical reference to underscore the plight of the city and raise high hopes for its return under Ukrainian control.

The conducted analysis shows that President Zelenskyy uses World War II memory narrative primarily to enhance the narratives of suffering and resistance, and additionally creates important connections between it and the narrative of resistance and the national identity narrative.

4. AUDIENCE PERSPECTIVE ON PRESIDENTIAL DAILY ADDRESSES

In order to better understand the impact of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's daily video addresses, a survey of four-year students of Kyiv National Linguistic University was conducted in November 2023. Its questions dealt with students' experience of and reaction to this form of communication, as well as their views on President Zelenskyy leadership. The survey tested several hypotheses formulated on the basis of earlier sociological data about political views dominant in this age group and the level of internet activity of its members. The collected information also provided essential details about the audience views and behaviour patterns and allowed to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of the narratives developed by the president.

4.1. Level of exposure and viewing habits

The opening set of questions concerned the respondents' exposure to presidential messages and tested **Hypothesis 1**: Young Ukrainians share considerable exposure to President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses. The results of the survey fully corroborated this hypothesis. Over three quatres of survey participants (76%) said they followed President Zelenskyy on social media, and almost a half (49%) indicated that they attended to presidential addresses several times a month or more. Around half of these people were very active followers of presidential messages: when asked how often they paid attention to various messages from Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 6% of respondents answered "always" and 34% – "often," while 35% answered "sometimes." Similarly, to the question of how often they followed President Zelenskyy's daily video address, the same answers were given by 2%, 20% and 27% of respondents. Additionally, almost three quarters of respondents indicated that the daily addresses were "very important" or "rather important" for them (11% and 53% respectively). This figure was almost three times higher than the number of very active followers of the addresses (64% vs. 22%), and was also considerably higher than the 49% of the respondents who reported attending to presidential addresses at least sometimes. These findings show that daily video addresses of Volodymyr Zelenskyy are a popular form of communication whose influence can extend beyond the immediate audience.

We also expected that the interest to President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses had a tendency to decrease with time. The survey results proved this assumption, with 50% of respondents stating that their following had decreased since the early days of the war. Only 13% of the participants reported an increase in following, while the rest said it remained unchanged (16%) or lacked any particular pattern (21%). The pronounced tendency towards the decrease of the attention can be explained by the fact that the great majority of respondents (83%) turn to presidential addresses to

learn about the most recent events, and do this more often when the situation seems uncertain (47%). Although the survey was conducted after the failure of the much-anticipated Ukraine's counteroffensive, the new worries did not match the agony of the initial phase of the war, when the future of the country seemed absolutely unclear. The decreased following could have also resulted from the fact that the presidential video addresses lost the appeal of novelty, and some people could have developed fatigue from their inevitable repetitiveness.

Next, we asked a series of questions to learn how the youth access and process daily messages from the president. Specifically, we wanted to know which channels the respondents use to access them, which form (video, audio or textual) they prefer, whether they get acquainted with the addresses in their entirety, and if they actively share their experience with others.

The responses demonstrated heavy reliance of the survey participants on official channels of communication, with 50% accessing presidential daily addresses through them. Still, sizeable numbers of respondents (23% and 27%) reported accessing them through news media and links posted by people they follow on social media. The fact that young people didn't always prioritize official communication channels is in line with the earlier observation that only half of respondents who followed Zelenskyy on social media can be considered his active followers.

The survey results also showed that less than a quarter of the respondents (23%) usually got familiar with the full version of the address, while others stopped before reaching the end or quickly skipped through the address (32%), or learned key ideas through quotes or comments in news media or from other people (45%). When asked about how they get acquainted with the addresses, only a quarter of respondents said they usually watched or listened to the president (17% and 7% respectively), a quarter said they usually read the text version, and half of respondents indicated they did it differently depending on the situation. The facts that most survey participants did not follow the complete version of the addresses and often preferred the text to the video version are in line with the previously discussed tendency towards the decrease of interest to this form of communication and can be additionally explained by the shrinking attention span characteristic of this age group (Wigley 2021).

The survey produced somewhat counterintuitive findings with respect to the degree of sharing involved in the audience experience of presidential daily addresses. Almost 70% of respondents said they rarely or never followed the addresses together with other people (45% and 24% respectively), 22% or respondents said they did it sometimes, and less than 10% reported doing it always or often (1% and 8% respectively). A similar pattern of answer distribution can be seen regarding the question about sharing or repost links to the addresses: 66% of respondents answered they did it rarely or never (34% and 32%), 29% did it sometimes, and only 5% said they did it often.

The survey participants reported being more active when it came to discussing the addresses and registering their reactions on the websites. To the question about how often they discuss the addresses with other people, the answers "rarely" or "never" were given by 35% of respondents (27% and 8%), 42% answered "sometimes," and 23% – "always" or "often" (2% and 21%). As far as giving likes or otherwise reacting to the addresses, 33% responded they never or rarely did it, 30% did it sometimes, and 37% often or always.

With two-thirds or more respondents never or rarely reposting links or following the addresses with other people, and only about a quarter of respondents regularly discussing the addresses, and a third regularly reacting to them, the young people's experience of President Zelenskyy's video addresses lacks a pronounced public and shared character. This low degree of sharing can be explained by a variety of factors. Official character of communication, ubiquitous online presence of President Zelenskyy, often cursory attention of the audience and private use of gadgets may discourage people from reacting to the messages, reposting them or involving others in the viewing process.

4.2. Attitude to the new form of presidential communication

In order to learn about the attitude of the respondents to daily video addresses, we asked a series of questions regarding their views of effectiveness of this form of communication and Volodymyr Zelenskyy's performance as a speaker. The findings strongly confirmed **Hypothesis 2** of our research project that the attitude of the Ukrainian youth to presidential daily addresses is highly positive.

Around 90% of participants believed that the daily video addresses were an effective way of communication (35% found them "very effective" and 57% – "rather effective") and improved the image of the president "considerably" (49%) or "slightly" (39%). When asked about how important these addresses were to them, two thirds replied positively, with 11% calling them "very important" and 53% – "rather important." This somewhat lower figure can be explained by the third-party effect when people think that others are more affected by media messages than they themselves (McQuail, Deuze 2020, p. 541).

Similarly high numbers of respondents showed approval of President Zelenskyy's performance as a speaker. Almost 90% said they found him authentic and approved of his display of emotions, and 70% believed in his objectivity. Although only 15% of the participants called addresses "very objective" (with 55% more cautiously treating them as "rather objective") and 28% called them "too optimistic", these figures show that on the whole the group doesn't share sharp criticism of

presidential communication as "boosterism" and "rose-coloured-glasses approach," which is often reported in media (see, for example, Harris 2023).

Most of the respondents also shared favourable view of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's motives behind the addresses. Only 11% believed he cared about his image more than about the country, and mere 1% critically stated he cared only about his image. On the contrary, nearly half of the respondents said the president was motivated primarily (36%) or exclusively (10%) by the interests of the country, and 42% believed the president cared equally about the country and his political image. Collectively, these findings show that the survey participants have a highly positive attitude to the presidential video addresses and strongly support Hypothesis 2.

4.3. Attitude to Volodymyr Zelenskyy as president and communicator

The last hypothesis we formulated for the research, **Hypothesis 3**, stated that young people in Ukraine have a consistently positive attitude to Volodymyr Zelenskyy as president and communicator. We tested it with a series of questions measuring the respondents' approval of the performance of the president and the dynamics of their attitude over different stages of his presidency.

The general approval rating of President Zelenskyy among the survey participants was 91%, with 43% completely approving of his actions. Similar number of respondents demonstrated approval of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's performance as a leader and a symbol of the Ukrainian nation (90% total, 46% of complete approval). Even higher level of support (95%) was expressed for the president handling of foreign policy, again with almost equal number of respondents saying they "completely" or "rather" approve of his actions in this sphere. President Zelenskyy's performance as commander-in-chief enjoyed similarly high level of approval at 88%, yet only a third of all the respondents (33%) expressed complete approval. This slightly less enthusiastic support for the president can be partly explained by the failure of the 2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive, which became completely evident by the time of the survey.

The only sphere where the support of the president was noticeably lower, was domestic policy. Here his approval rating was 70%, with only 19% of the respondents expressing complete approval. This might be explained by a variety of factors, from loud corruption scandals to intractability of many societal problems and the fact that during the war domestic policy issues receive less government attention.

The survey participants almost unanimously approved of how President Zelenskyy handled his role as a communicator (55% considered him "very effective" and 41% – "rather effective") and believed that communication skills were important for his performance as president (82% called them "very important" and 15% – "rather important). This universal recognition of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's

exceptional performance as a "rhetorical president" might explain why his actions on the international arena are treated more favourably than his handling of military issues.

The survey participants also reported very high level of their support of Volodymyr Zelenskyy throughout his presidency. His election in 2019 was met with enthusiasm by 82% of the respondents (with 45% recalling being "very enthusiastic"). With the start of the war, 75% of the participants reported that their attitude to the president improved (43% indicated "significant improvement" and 32% – "slight improvement"), while 11% said their attitude remained unchanged. During the course of the war, over half of the respondents reported improved or unchanged attitude to the president (30% and 23% respectively), while 40% said their attitude showed mixed tendencies. This last figure shows there is a considerable potential for further attitude change and we can expect that military setbacks or domestic problems can reduce the level of support for the president. Yet, as of November 2023, the positive attitude of young Ukrainians to their president remained unshakeable, which fully corroborates Hypothesis 3 of our research project.

4.4. Critical perspectives on content

In our survey we also asked participants to critically evaluate the appeal and perceived quality of different narratives developed by President Zelenskyy. First, we enquired about the role of emotions in provoking interest to presidential addresses. Almost half of the respondents (47%) said they followed addresses more often when the situation is uncertain and they feel worried or curious about the future, 18% did it more when they felt pessimistic, 9% turned to the addresses more often when they were filled with optimism, and for 26% the interest was unaffected by their emotional state.

Answering a multi select question about the reasons for watching the addresses, the survey participants most often mentioned informational needs: 83% did it to learn about the most recent events and 55% wanted to know future plans of the Ukrainian leadership and international partners. Still, a sizeable 33% of respondents reported doing it to find emotional comfort in listening to the person in control of the situation and the same number of participants turned to the addresses to increase the sense of the Ukrainian identity and belonging to the community. High numbers of people whose interest to presidential addresses is driven by uncertainty and the need for information proved that detailed accounts of daily events and actions of the Ukrainian government were a very welcome feature of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's messages. Pessimism and desire to regain sense of control reported by many eager viewers pointed to the importance of president's upbeat rhetoric and the demand for the healing effect of the narrative of suffering that allowed to relive losses and gave hope for the restoration of justice. The answers also proved the importance of the national identity narrative developed by the president that helped enhance a much-needed sense of belonging and connection.

Another multi select question asked survey participants to identify topics of greatest interest to them. The distribution of answers was as follows:

Situation on the frontlines – 75%;

International support – 71%;

Integration into the EU and NATO – 54%;

Civilian resistance and resilience – 49%;

Anti-corruption efforts – 46%;

Economy – 37%;

Relations with Russia – 34%;

Domestic reforms – 24%.

Though the narrative of armed resistance expectedly attracted most attention, the answers demonstrate that the narrative of resilience, as well as the narrative of reform and development, were also very popular with the audience.

Measuring satisfaction of survey participants with the amount of attention the president paid to their topics of their interest, we learnt that alongside 39% of satisfied respondents, many were lacking details about anti-corruption efforts (41%), situation on the frontlines (36%), economy (28%), international support (23%), as well as EU and NATO integration efforts (22%). The lack of certain information in presidential addresses may be explained by objective limitations, such as the need for secrecy or brevity that calls for the text unincumbered with statistics and financial data. Yet, the above figures are also a marker of dissatisfaction of many respondents with excessive optimism of the president and the avoidance of uneasy topics that can undermine his popularity.

Finally, we asked for participants' opinion on which audiences are effectively targeted by President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses. This question invited respondents to reflect on the fact that this form of communication can also be intended for people beyond Ukraine, to recall the instances when the president was speaking directly to non-Ukrainians and to look at the messages from the perspective of multiple publics. A large majority of the respondents believed that presidential messages can effectively target foreign publics and foreign leaders (80% and 64% respectively), while Russian public, leaders, and military were named effective targets by 23%, 17% and 9% of the surveyed students. The large disparity in figures reflects the respondents' views on the receptivity of different audiences to messages from Ukraine's president. Importantly for our research, the answers show that Volodymyr Zelenskyy's attempts to connect with various publics are clearly identifiable and considered potentially successful even with the enemy audience, and thus can be regarded as an essential feature of his rhetoric.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate how President Zelenskyy contributes to the creation of the Ukrainian war narrative through his daily video addresses to the nation. The conclusions of our case study are as following:

1. Understanding the impact of new technologies on the process of political communication that results in altered relations between politicians, media and publics, and the rise of new forms of propaganda and disinformation, is essential for the analysis of Ukrainian wartime communication.

2. Combination of qualitative methods of content analysis with quantitative audience survey allows to generate a more complete view of the communication process and deepen understanding of its effectiveness.

3. A comprehensive narrative analysis of presidential addresses aims at identifying main and supporting strands of narrative, describing relations between them, and determining the structure and functions of each narrative.

   3.1. The overarching narrative developed in President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses is the narrative of war of self-defence. The protagonist of this narrative, Ukraine, is cast both as a hero and a victim, its antagonist, Russia, is portrayed as a villain, and most of the global community – as a helper to Ukraine. The war narrative consists of three parallel strands: the narratives of Ukrainian resistance, suffering, and resilience. It is enhanced by three supporting narratives that provide a broader context for understanding the current situation: national identity narrative, World War II memory narrative, and narrative of reform and development. The addresses target three broad audiences: the Ukrainian population, the international community and the people of the enemy state. Relative to these audiences, the narratives perform the following main functions:

   - to inform domestic and global audiences about the ongoing situation, dispelling fakes of enemy propaganda and providing favourable framing of the war;
   - to maintain home morale and encourage domestic and international contribution to the country's war efforts and sustainability;
   - to drive a wedge between the people and leadership of the enemy state and discourage aggression.

3.2. The narrative of resistance describes armed and unarmed struggle of Ukrainians against the enemy. It maintains positive image of the military even in the face of setbacks, praises strong opposition to the invaders on the occupied territories, and calls on the nation to unite behind the war efforts. V. Zelenskyy carefully avoids unpopular topics, such as shakeups in the military leadership or new mobilization initiatives. He acknowledges strength of the Russian military, but always balances such comments with updates of its staggering losses, stories of incompetence of its commanders and their complete disregard for the lives of soldiers. He mocks Russian troops for being disoriented by propaganda, impotent on the battlefield and greeted with universal contempt. This information is aimed at undermining the morale of the enemy and strengthening opposition to war in Russia. Expressing gratitude to international partners, Zelenskyy repeatedly pleads for quicker and more substantial assistance, resorting to a mix of pragmatic and idealistic arguments that portray it as an investment in the collective European security and democracy. He presents Putin's Russia as a completely marginalized country with no meaningful allies, remaining silent on its cooperation with India, China and North Korea, and treating its ties with Iran as a sign of weakness. The lead-up to the war receives little attention, which is explained by V. Zelenskyy's earlier pacifist stance. By contrast, the invariably optimistic discussion of the war outcomes has been an essential part of his addresses from the first days of the invasion. Yet, the president never promises a quick and easy victory and never makes definite predictions about the duration of the war.

3.3. The narrative of suffering discusses the devastating war toll for Ukraine. The President keeps primary focus on Russian attacks against civilians and promises to identify and punish all involved in war crimes. Zelenskyy shames Russians into protesting against the war and sometimes extends the blame for the lost lives to Ukraine's allies, making emotional pleas for strong and decisive actions to contain the aggressor. Evidence of glaring violations of the rules of war is used to support demands for legally binding actions against Russia. The president draws attention to the plight of millions of internally displaced persons and those who had to flee the country, highlights ill-treatment and killing of Ukrainian prisoners of war. Alongside human suffering, the president extensively comments catastrophic damage to the Ukrainian civilian infrastructure and environment, risks of technogenic catastrophes, accompanying them with promises to rebuild the country and extract compensation from the aggressor. Since Russia refuses to acknowledge multiple war crimes committed on the Ukrainian territory, calling them "staged" or ascribing to the Ukrainian troops. The president attempts to publicize this information to more skeptical audiences and prove that the atrocities were not improvised but conceived as part of the cruel war tactics.

3.4. The narrative of resilience focuses on the ability of the country to continue functioning in the face of aggression. It proves strength and efficiency of the leadership, institutions and citizens, and improves perception of the prospects of victory. V. Zelenskyy continuously praises professionals who continue in their jobs, calls on all citizens to contribute to everyday life of their communities, discusses multiple initiatives to rebuild the country and celebrates the return of liberated territories to normal life. The narrative gives major attention to the maintenance of the country's economy: government initiatives to help businesses, efforts to resume and boost country's export, the EU decision to liberalize trade relations with Ukraine, foreign macro-financial aid and various other forms of economic and technological assistance. With the conflict turning into the war of attrition, this narrative starts to play a more important role. Zelenskyy also aims at undermining Russia's resilience with repeated calls for strong economic sanctions and complete withdrawal of business, and warnings of its soon economic collapse.

3.5. The narrative of reform and development deals with ongoing efforts to improve life in the country and attain its long-term goals. The two major goals discussed in the addresses are joining the EU and NATO. The topic of the EU accession comes up immediately after the start of the invasion. One of the country's biggest success stories, it culminates in June 2022 when Ukraine receives the status of a candidate for accession. While the president calls it a collective achievement of the nation, he does not acknowledge the role of the previous government in aligning the country with European norms. Discussion of Ukraine's prospects to joint NATO is less optimistic, though no less considerable. After filing the request for an accelerated accession to the Alliance, the president focuses attention on the Vilnius summit, pressuring leaders of NATO member states to support Ukraine's aspirations. Though these expectations were not met, Zelenskyy casts the summit results in a positive light, noting broad consensus on Ukraine's future in NATO, and shifts attention to the work on long-term bilateral security agreements. The president develops this narrative as a typical political incumbent, optimistically focusing on his record, with minimal or no attention to deep-seated problems and scandals involving his allies. Zelenskyy's reform and development projections for Ukraine are sharply contrasted with his vision of Russia's bleak future.

3.6. The national identity narrative serves to mobilize the country and promote the favorable war narrative globally, countering imperial propaganda claiming that Russians and Ukrainians

are one people. The president emphasizes the contrast between freedom-loving Ukrainians and slavish obedience of Russians to their rulers, their desire to turn other nations into slaves; between deep sense of value of human life and dignity of Ukrainians and Russians' contempt of life and lack of sense of self-worth. V. Zelenskyy talks about historically high readiness of Ukrainians to defend their land and values, offering it as the primary explanation of the unexpectedly strong response to the invasion. He also points to the peaceful nature of the nation that has never posed a threat to others, insisting on the unprovoked character of the invasion. From the first days of the war V. Zelenskyy extols the unity of the country, calling it an irrefutable proof of the existence of the Ukrainian nation and an essential precondition of victory. In presidential addresses Ukrainian national identity comes across as a complex dynamic phenomenon whose features are often rediscovered and shaped during the war. The narrative marks personal evolution of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who prior to the war spoke about Ukraine and Russia as brotherly nations. His powerful, compassionate and courageous rhetoric becomes a manifestation of the national character features he praises in the addresses, which explains why for so many people Ukraine's president became a symbol of the country.

3.7. President Zelenskyy often turns to World War II memory narrative to draw similarities between the two conflicts, enhancing all strands of the current war narrative and the national identity narrative. Historical analogies emphasize brutality of Russian troops, great heroism and suffering of the Ukrainian people, cynicism of Russian propaganda, and ideological roots of violence in modern Russia. Exposing imperial ideology of the ivaders, honouring people who fought against Nazism and mourning Holocaust victims, the president refutes Russia's accusations that Ukraine is ruled by the fascist regime and must be "denazified." The president evokes memories of World War II discussing international aid to Ukraine, comparing the partnership with Anti-Hitler coalition and stressing that collective effort is essential for victory. Critical of the failed past policies toward Russia and lack of determination in helping Ukraine, the president repeats the slogan "Never again" as a reproach to toothless pacifism of many Europeans. World War II memory narrative helps the president express confidence in victory in the war with Russia and punishment of the aggressor. Discussing the future tribunal for Russia's crime of aggression, he invokes memories of the Nuremberg trials and the long hunt that eventually brought many Nazis to justice. The most effective use of World War II memory narrative comes when V. Zelenskyy draws multiple parallels between the two wars, with tragedies, heroism and sacrifice acquiring meaning in the light of decisive future victory. Apart from references to Nazi

invasion, Zelenskyy's World War II memory narrative mentions the 1944 genocide of Crimean Tatars committed by the Soviet authorities, connecting it with the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, and promising eventual restoration of justice.

4. A survey of Ukrainian university students was conducted in November 2023 to learn about their experience with the new form of presidential communication, as well as their views on President Zelenskyy leadership. The survey tested several hypotheses formulated on the basis of earlier sociological data about prevailing political views in this age group and the level of internet activity of its members, and allowed to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of the narratives developed in presidential addresses.

4.1. The results of the survey corroborated the hypothesis that young Ukrainians share considerable exposure to President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses. Over three quatres of survey participants said they followed him on social media, and almost a half indicated that they attended to presidential addresses several times a month or more. Expectedly, interest to the addresses showed a tendency to decrease with time, with 50% of respondents confirming the trend. In part, this is explained by the fact that the great majority of respondents turned to them to learn about the recent events, and do this more often in situation of uncertainty, which was most intense during the early stage of the war. The survey results revealed that the addresses often got only cursory attention, with less than a quarter of the respondents saying they usually got familiar with their full version, which can be a result of the diminished interest and the shrinking attention span characteristic of this age group. The survey produced somewhat counterintuitive findings with respect to the degree of sharing involved in the audience experience: almost 70% of respondents said they rarely or never followed the addresses together with other people, and 66% indicated they rarely or never shared or reposted the links. The participants reported being more active when it came to discussing the addresses and registering their reactions on the websites. The relatively low degree of sharing may be explained by the official character of communication, ubiquitous online presence of the president, often superficial attention and private use of gadgets.

4.2. The findings strongly confirmed the hypothesis about the highly positive attitude of Ukrainian youth to presidential daily addresses. Around 90% of participants believed that the daily video addresses were an effective way of communication and improved the image of the president. Two thirds of respondents indicated that the addresses were important to them,

and this lower figure can be explained as the third-party effect. Similarly high numbers of respondents showed approval of President Zelenskyy's performance as a speaker. Almost 90% said they found him authentic and approved of his display of emotions, and 70% believed in his objectivity. Although only 15% called addresses "very objective" and 28% called them "too optimistic", these figures show that on the whole the group doesn't share broad harsh criticism of president for wearing rose-coloured glasses. Most of the survey participants also reported favourable view of V. Zelenskyy's motives behind the addresses, with 46% saying the president was motivated primarily or exclusively by the interests of the country, and 42% believing he cared equally about the country and his political image.

4.3. The hypothesis that young people have a consistently positive attitude to V. Zelenskyy as president was also supported. His general approval rating was 91%, and similar number of respondents approved of him as a leader, commander-in-chief, and of his handling of foreign policy. The support was lower on domestic policy issues, where the approval rating was 70%, with only 19% expressing complete approval. This might be explained by a variety of factors, from intractability of many societal problems to loud corruption scandals and the fact that during the war these issues receive less attention from government. The participants reported very high level of support of Zelenskyy throughout his presidency. His election in 2019 was met with enthusiasm by 82% of the respondents. With the start of the war, 75% of the participants reported their attitude to the president improved, and 11% said it remained unchanged. During the course of the war, over half of the respondents reported improved or unchanged attitude to the president, while 40% said their attitude showed mixed tendencies. The last figure shows there is a considerable potential for further attitude change, and mounting domestic problems and military setbacks can be expected to weaken the support.

4.4. Discussing the appeal and perceived quality of different aspects of the addresses, most participants mentioned informational needs as the primary reason for turning to this form of communication. Yet, sizeable 33% reported doing it to find emotional comfort and the same number of participants turned to it to increase the sense of their identity and belonging to the community. This proves that detailed accounts of daily events, upbeat rhetoric, the national identity narrative and the healing effect of the narrative of suffering were welcome features of presidential rhetoric. The rating of topics of greatest interest to participants showed that while the narrative of armed resistance attracted most attention, the narratives of resilience

and reform and development were also very popular with the audience. Dissatisfaction of over 60% of respondents with the amount of attention paid to their topics of their interest can signal disapproval of the attempts to avoid discussion of difficult issues. On the whole, the audience perspective on the content of the addresses proved the effectiveness of rhetorical choices made by Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the results of our analysis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The continuing war between Russia and Ukraine leaves our case study project open to further research. The study of narratives developed by the president can be extended to new video addresses Volodymyr Zelenskyy keeps delivering on a daily basis and show whether and how the changing circumstances affect his rhetoric. Similar analysis can be conducted on different sets of texts to provide a more comprehensive view of the Ukrainian war narratives. The survey can be replicated with similar or different groups of respondents to measure variations or changes in audience attitudes over time.

Since the war in Ukraine commands a lot of attention all over the world, it can be interesting to compare war narratives in Ukraine and other countries and to survey foreign publics and learn about their experience of and attitude to Volodymyr Zelenskyy's rhetoric. Such studies can provide an important measure of effectiveness of communication efforts of the Ukrainian president and offer important insights into interaction of public discourses of different countries.

The results of our case study deepen understanding of the role of new media in political and crisis communication and the importance of presidential rhetorical leadership. They contribute to the development of the concept of ubiquitous presidency and can help democracies build better defense against information attacks from enemy states.

Following the findings of our research, we can recommend that those who shape current Ukrainian narrative more often turn to less politically advantageous topics and present a more balanced portrayal of the situation on the frontlines and in the country in general.

SUMMARY IN ENGLISH

The information front of the Russia-Ukraine war commands a lot of global attention. This war is the first large-scale armed conflict of the social media era, and despite facing an enemy with enormous information warfare capabilities, Ukraine managed to make its version of the war narrative widely shared in many parts of the world. This study aims at investigating the contribution of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the construction of the Ukrainian narrative of war. The research follows a case study design, focusing on daily video addresses of the president. This form of communication has many unique features, is widely disseminated through social media channels and reaches a large international audience through extensive media coverage and availability of translation into English.

The theoretical part of the research discusses the effect of recent technological innovations on political communication process, the changing relations between political actors, media and publics, and new forms of information manipulation that pose a growing threat to democratic systems.

The first part of the empirical research applies qualitative methods to analyze the content of presidential addresses and reveal the structure and functions of the narratives developed by Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Three strands of the war narrative and three supporting narratives are identified and analyzed, with their functions determined in relation to domestic, international and enemy audiences.

The second part of the empirical research analyzes the results of the quantitative survey of Ukrainian university students carried out to learn about their experience with and attitude to presidential messages, as well as their views of Volodymyr Zelenskyy as president and communicator. The findings demonstrate that young Ukrainians closely follow presidential daily addresses and share highly positive views of them and of Volodymyr Zelenskyy as leader and communicator, thus confirming all research hypotheses. The respondents' answers also showed that interest to presidential addresses declines with time, attention is often cursory, and many people are critical of excessive optimism of the president and his avoidance of politically disadvantageous topics.

Combining different methods of analysis, the perspectives of the author and the audience, the research generates a comprehensive understanding of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's daily addresses as a unique and effective form of wartime communication.

Key words: presidential address, rhetorical leadership, war narrative, social media, information war, propaganda, audience survey.

SUMMARY IN LITHUANIAN

Rusijos ir Ukrainos karo informacinis frontas sulaukia daug dėmesio visame pasaulyje. Šis karas yra pirmasis didelio masto ginkluotas konfliktas socialinės žiniasklaidos epochoje ir, nepaisant to, kad susidūrė su priešininku, turinčiu didžiulius informacinio karo pajėgumus, Ukrainai pavyko paskleisti savo karo naratyvo versiją daugelyje pasaulio šalių. Šiame straipsnyje siekiama išnagrinėti prezidento Volodymyro Zelenskio indėlį į Ukrainos karo naratyvo kūrimą. Tyrimas grindžiamas atvejo analizės(case study) principu, daugiausia dėmesio skiriama kasdieniniams prezidento vaizdo kreipimams. Ši komunikacijos forma turi daug unikalių bruožų, yra plačiai skleidžiama socialinės žiniasklaidos kanalais ir pasiekia didelę tarptautinę auditoriją dėl plataus žiniasklaidos nušvietimo ir galimybės versti į anglų kalbą.

Teorinėje dalyje nagrinėjamas technologinių naujovių poveikis politinės komunikacijos procesui, politikų, žiniasklaidos ir visuomenės santykių pokyčiai, taip pat naujos manipuliavimo informacija formos, keliančios vis didesnę grėsmę demokratinėms sistemoms.

Pirmoje empirinio tyrimo dalyje kokybinės analizės metodais buvo tiriamas prezidento kreipimųsi turinys ir nustatoma Volodymyro Zelenskio sukurtų naratyvų struktūra bei funkcijos. Išskirtos ir išanalizuotos trys karo naratyvo kryptys ir trys pagalbiniai naratyvai, išnagrinėtos jų funkcijos vidaus, tarptautinės ir priešiškos auditorijos atžvilgiu.

Antroje empirinio tyrimo dalyje analizuojami kiekybinės Ukrainos universitetų studentų apklausos, atliktos siekiant išsiaiškinti jų patirtį ir požiūrį į prezidento kalbą, taip pat jų nuomonę apie Volodymyrą Zelenskį kaip prezidentą ir komunikacijos specialistą, rezultatai. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad Ukrainos jaunimas atidžiai seka kasdienius prezidento kreipinius ir labai teigiamai vertina juos bei Volodymyrą Zelenskį kaip vadovą ir komunikacijos specialistą, o tai patvirtina visas tyrimo hipotezes. Respondentų atsakymai taip pat parodė, kad susidomėjimas prezidento kreipimaisi laikui bėgant mažėja, dėmesys dažnai būna paviršutiniškas, o daugelis kritikuoja prezidentą už tai, kad jis yra pernelyg optimistiškas ir vengia politiškai nepatogių temų.

Derinant skirtingus analizės metodus, autoriaus ir auditorijos požiūrius, tyrime formuojamas išsamus Volodymyro Zelenskio kasdienių kreipinių, kaip unikalios ir veiksmingos karo laikų komunikacijos formos, supratimas.

Raktiniai žodžiai: prezidento kreipimasis, retorinis vadovavimas, karinis naratyvas, socialinė žiniasklaida, informacinis karas, propaganda, auditorijos tyrimai.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. The Audience Survey Questionnaire

Note to participants

The following questionnaire is part of the scientific research of President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses as a unique form of communication during Russia's war on Ukraine. Your answers are very important to better understand the viewers' experience and attitude to this form of communication. There are 34 close-ended questions with sets of answer options. Please, answer all of them. Read each question attentively and choose the answer that best suits you. Remember: there are no right and wrong answers! Note that four questions (#13, 15, 17 and 18) allow for more than one answer option to be selected (which is mentioned after each of these questions). The questionnaire is completely anonymous and will generate only quantitative data (calculated as percentages). Please, think carefully and be as honest and objective as possible.

1. Do you follow President Zelenskyy on social media?
Yes
No

2. How often do you pay attention to various messages from President Zelenskyy?
Always
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Almost never
Never

3. How often do you follow President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses?
Always (almost every day)
Often (several times a week)
Sometimes (several times a month)
Rarely (once or twice a month)
Almost never (several times after the start of the war)
Never (not a single time)

4. Has the frequency of your following President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses changed during the course of the war?
My following has decreased (I followed them more often at the beginning of the war than now)
My following has increased
My following has remained unchanged
I follow them without any particular pattern (sometimes more often, sometimes less often)

5. Is the level of your interest in President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses affected by the current state of affairs and your emotions?

Yes, I follow them more often when something good happens and I feel more optimistic

Yes, I follow them more often when something bad happens and I feel more pessimistic

Yes, I follow them more often when the situation seems uncertain and I am curious or worried about the future

No, the level of my interest is not affected by these factors

6. How do you access President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses?

Through official president's channels of communication

Through news media (TV broadcasts, links on news websites, etc.)

Through links posted by people I follow on social media

7. In what manner do you usually follow President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses?

I watch the video of the address

I listen to the address on the background

I read the text version of the address

All of the above, depending on the situation

8. Do you usually get acquainted with a full version or only with some parts of the address?

I usually get acquainted with a full version of the address

I usually stop before getting to the very end or quickly skip through the address

I usually learn some key ideas through quotes or comments in news media or from other people

9. How often do you watch these addresses together with other people (your family, friends, colleagues, etc.)?

Always

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

10. How often do you give likes or otherwise react to these addresses?

Always

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

11. How often do you share / repost the links to these addresses?

Always

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

12. How often do you discuss these addresses with other people?
Always
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Never

13. In your opinion, which audiences are effectively targeted by President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses? (you can choose more than one answer)
Ukrainian citizens
Russian leaders
Russian military
Russian citizens
Foreign leaders
Foreign citizens

14. How important are President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses for you?
Very important
Rather important
Rather unimportant
Absolutely unimportant

15. Why do you watch President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses? (you can choose more than one answer)
To learn about the most recent events
To learn about future plans of the Ukrainian leadership and our international partners
To find emotional comfort listening to the person who is in control of the situation
To increase the sense of the Ukrainian identity and belonging to the community

16. When following President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses, what do you focus more on?
Losses and damage caused by the Russian aggression
Ukraine's military and civilian resistance
Ongoing and future rebuilding and renewal of Ukraine
Prospects to end the war

17. Which topics in President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses are of the greatest interest for you? (you can choose more than one answer)
The situation on the frontlines
Ukraine's civilian resilience and resistance
Ukraine's economy
Ukraine's domestic reforms
Ukraine's anti-corruption efforts
Ukraine's EU and NATO integration efforts
International support for Ukraine
Ukraine's relations with Russia (prospects for peace talks, prisoner exchange, etc.)

18. Do you think President Zelenskyy pays enough attention to the topic(s) of your interest in his daily video addresses or would you like to hear more details from him? (you can choose more than one answer)

I think he pays enough attention to the topic(s) of my interest
I would like more details about the situation on the frontlines
I would like more details about Ukraine's civilian resilience and resistance
I would like more details about Ukraine's economy
I would like more details about Ukraine's domestic reforms
I would like more details about Ukraine's anti-corruption efforts
I would like more details about Ukraine's EU and NATO integration efforts
I would like more details about international support for Ukraine
I would like more details about Ukraine's relations with Russia

19. In your opinion, how authentic is President Zelenskyy in his daily video addresses?
Absolutely authentic
Rather authentic
Rather inauthentic
Absolutely inauthentic

20. In your opinion, how objective (true to real facts) is the picture of reality created by President Zelenskyy in his daily video addresses?
Very objective
Rather objective
Too optimistic
Too pessimistic

21. In your opinion, how appropriate is President Zelenskyy's display of emotions during his daily video addresses?
Absolutely appropriate
Rather appropriate
He should display stronger emotions
He should display weaker emotions
He should not display emotions at all

22. Do you think President Zelenskyy's daily video addresses are an effective way of communication?
Very effective
Rather effective
Rather ineffective
Absolutely ineffective

23. In your opinion, how effective is President Zelenskyy as a communicator overall (taking into account all his communication efforts, not just daily video addresses)?
Very effective
Rather effective
Rather ineffective
Absolutely ineffective

24. In your opinion, how important are communication skills for President Zelenskyy's performance as president?
Very important
Rather important
Rather unimportant
Absolutely unimportant

25. In your opinion, how do daily video addresses influence President Zelenskyy's political image (his popularity with the people)?
They improve his image a lot
They improve his image a little
They don't influence his image
They worsen his image a little
They worsen his image a lot

26. In your opinion, recording daily video addresses, is President Zelenskyy more motivated by his care for the country or by his care for his own political image (his popularity)?
He only cares about the country
He cares about the country more than about his image
He equally cares about the country and his image
He cares about his image more than about the country
He only cares about his image

27. Do you generally approve of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's performance as the President of Ukraine?
Completely approve
Rather approve
Rather disapprove
Completely disapprove

28. In particular, do you approve of President Zelenskyy's performance as the commander-in-chief?
Completely approve
Rather approve
Rather disapprove
Completely disapprove

29. Do you approve of President Zelenskyy's handling of foreign policy issues (representing Ukraine on the global arena and promoting relations with other countries)?
Completely approve
Rather approve
Rather disapprove
Completely disapprove

30. Do you approve of President Zelenskyy's handling of domestic policy issues (such as Ukraine's economy, reforms, dealing with corruption)?
Completely approve
Rather approve
Rather disapprove
Completely disapprove

31. In particular, do you approve of President Zelenskyy's performance as the leader – and symbol – of the Ukrainian nation?
Completely approve
Rather approve
Rather disapprove
Completely disapprove

32. How enthusiastic were you about Volodymyr Zelenskyy's victory in 2019 presidential elections?
Very enthusiastic
Rather enthusiastic
Rather unenthusiastic
Very unenthusiastic

33. How did your attitude to President Zelenskyy change with the start of the war?
Improved significantly
Improved slightly
Worsened slightly
Worsened significantly
Remained unchanged

34. How has your attitude to President Zelenskyy been changing during the course of the war?
Progressively improving
Progressively worsening
Remaining unchanged
Showing mixed tendencies (improving on some issues, worsening on others).