



STRATEGIC NARRATIVES DURING ARMED CONFLICT

The Case of Ukraine post-2022 Russian Invasion

Linh Pham

International Relations

Department of Global Political Studies Bachelor programme – IR103L

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Supervisor: Scott McIver

Abstract

This thesis contributes to the digital and narrative turn in International Relations, supplying a response to the inquiry ‘*Which strategic narratives have emerged in Ukraine’s digital diplomacy following the February 2022 Russian invasion?*’

The paper observed how the field of politics is revitalised by the interplay between political communication during times of uncertainty, digital diplomacy and the trend of personalisation. The thesis evaluated different approaches taken by prior theorists of these spheres and leveraged their knowledge in order to respond to the research question.

The treatise employed a qualitative content analysis upon 12 presidential speeches, 4 parliament addresses and 10 social media posts. This content was published by Ukrainian elite political figures during the initial phase of the war, between February 24th and March 29th, 2022. This methodology generated three national identity archetypes (NIAs): the ‘hero’, the ‘partner’ and the ‘victim’. The treatise further conceived Ukrainian’s strategic narratives mechanism composed of distinct values, objectives, demands, target recipients, channels and ensuing initiatives, adjacent to these three NIAs, pillars of Kyiv’s political communication. The paper concludes with future directions for strategic narrative research deriving from the experiences of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

Keywords: strategic narratives, digital diplomacy, national identity archetypes, political communication

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1. Introduction

Tell me and I will forget.

Show me and I will remember.

But involve me, and I will understand.

The last 15 months have seen the most digitised military assault - the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the midst of the strife, we have witnessed a metamorphosis in the architecture of warfare discourse. The hybrid war of the 21st century has disrupted conventional statecraft (Mumford & Carlucci, 2023), with digital strategic narratives becoming an increasingly important tool for political leaders to not only propagate their message, but win the hearts¹ and minds of the populace (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2010; Colley, 2020; Cull 2021; Butler, 2022).

Navigating this major event within the field of IR, this thesis drew insights from political communication and digital diplomacy theorists to examine the primary data gathered from Kyiv’s political elite websites and social media platforms to answer the research question ‘**Which strategic narratives have emerged in Ukraine’s digital diplomacy following the February 2022 Russian invasion?**’.

1.1. Contextualising the Puzzle

The overarching puzzle this thesis investigates is the issue of contemporary political communication within the changing technological infrastructures. The Russo-Ukrainian war is an empirical representation of this transformation in the management of sovereignty. The rhetorical devices emerging from the online dialogue of political actors during war tell the story of a new era of politics and power (Brown, 2017). The primordial means of counteracting adversaries in times of armed conflict underwent drastic change as Web 2.0 came into play. The circumstances of this event catalysed the creation of strategic narratives which the political leaders embodied throughout their online communication. Therefore, the

¹ in *The Quest for Reputational Security: The Soft Power Agenda of Kazakhstan* (2018), Nicholas J. Cull underlines this idea with an abbreviated remark: “When a state means something to the world, it is harder for a rapacious neighbour to compromise its sovereignty”.

research puzzle revolves around the digital and narrative turn in IR (Roberts, 2006). The guiding hypothesis is that digital diplomacy has transformed into the doctrine of the national identity archetype, with high-elite figures having to cultivate endogenous branding, infusing transparency (Manor, 2022) and intimacy to boost their nation's credibility (Van Aelst et al., 2011), induce support of the people without or with little connection to the respective country, and ensure national security (Cull, 2022).

1.2. Relevance and Purpose

The relevance of this topic stems from the inquiry upon how emotion-laden digitised narratives affect foreign affairs as opposed to the traditional conduct of politics (Hoskins & Shchelin, 2023:449; Wheeler & Holmes 2021:730). While historically, leaders had a formal etiquette, restraining from authenticity and subjectivity in order to advance national interests, they are now obliged to participate in social networks (Miskimmon et al., 2013:21). Media and its channels of transmission have an increasingly important function in international relations, and as such, the treatise explores this renewed interest in political communication in the digital-first era (Manor & Crilley, 2019:67).

1.3. Structuring the Investigation

To respond to the research question, the thesis is structured into 4 sections.

Section one explores existing literature from scholars of political communication such as Brian McNair and Gary Blumler, academics of digital diplomacy such as Corneliu Bjola, Jennifer Cassidy, Ilan Manor and Andrew Hoskins, and borrowed from Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin and Laura Roselle for the theorisation of the Ukrainian strategic narrative mechanism. The thesis approached the theoretical section from a constructivist school of thought, investigating research on strategic narratives - how this tool of soft power (Nye, 1990; Cull, 2022) impacts the domain of digital diplomacy per se, and the practice of national sovereignty, in genere (Brown, 2017; Bjola, Cassidy & Manor, 2020).

Then, section two outlines the basis of the research method used to explain the design and development of Ukrainian rhetoric. The methodological apparatus engaged in analysing data is a qualitative content analysis. This part of the thesis emphasised the rationale behind the

methodological approach, in contrast with previous academics, stressessing the limitations of antecedent research in the field of digital diplomacy.

The data scrutinised in the third part was comprised of 12 speeches, 4 addresses to foreign governments and 10 social media posts extracted from influential Ukrainian political figures' social media platforms and the official website of Ukraine's president. Following the application of qualitative content analysis, the paper extracted 3 coding elements which characterise Kyiv's strategic narratives mechanism projected to the global community. These codings are delineated as *national identity archetypes* (NIAs) embodied by Ukraine, conducive to gaining attention from national audiences and international governments. These archetypes have been traced in terms of the three phases of the online discourse: formation, projection and reception. The phases follow the journey of strategic narratives - from their design to their dissemination. The thesis assigned the '*hero*', '*partner*' and '*victim*' nomenclature to the main recurrent narratives in elite political speeches and posts. Each NIA displayed a distinct set of values, objectives, demands, was projected through different channels, animated particular target recipients and a specific assemblage of initiatives resulted from the codification of these archetypes.

Finally, the thesis warranted conclusions about the conception of this strategic narratives mechanism operated by Ukraine. The section looked at the outcomes of the theoretical and methodological frameworks, and how they succeeded in responding to the research question. Supplementarily, the paper discussed limitations of the account and explained what the findings mean for further digital diplomacy and strategic narrative research in the discipline of IR.

2. Theoretical Considerations

The purpose of this chapter is to take stock of preceding scholarship that informed the response to the research question *‘Which strategic narratives have emerged in Ukraine’s digital diplomacy following the February 2022 Russian invasion?’*.

The theoretical framework utilised by this thesis leveraged the constructivist mindframe and followed the literature on political communication, digital diplomacy and strategic narratives in international relations to understand the composition and rationale of Ukrainian strategic narratives post-2022 Russian invasion.

The first main theme inspected the topic of political communication, with a focus on its unfoldings during times of instability. The paper employed the ontological studies of theorists Brian McNair and Jay Blumer to delimit the boundaries of the political communication domain.

The second theme analysed how political discourses are propagated through new media ecologies. To do so, the thesis delved into digital diplomacy literature from Corneliu Bjola and Robin Brown, alongside research papers that investigated Ukrainian social media outreach in 2022. This subsection also supplied a statistical analysis of the rise of digital platforms, gathered by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. The second theme additionally examined the personalisation trend within the field of digital diplomacy which accentuates the agency of elite actors in political communication.

The latter theme concerned strategic narratives in the new political environment, extensively documented and analysed by Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin and Laura Roselle.

An auxiliary attention is dedicated to audiences and the reception of strategic narratives. The thesis identified this peripheral area as imperative for conceiving a complete picture of the process of strategic narrative dissemination.

2.1. Political Communication in Times of Crisis

Political communication is the communicative transaction between social actors on the topic of political matters, whether interpersonal or mediated (Negrine & Stanyer, 2023). The confines of the political communication playground have been narrowly demarcated.

Traditionally, scholarly research on this theme has been preoccupied with the process of production and distribution of political messages in national mass media, alongside its impact on mass citizenry (Jamieson & Kenski, 2017; Negrine & Stanyer, 2023). However, the socio-economic predicaments and technological shifts of the last decade have extended the boundaries of this field.

This thesis followed scholar Brian McNair's delineation of political communication. The scholar pointed to an understanding of political communication as encompassing all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives. This communication incorporates verbal and written statements, and extends to visual means of signification – dress, make-up, logo design, which constitute a political image or identity (McNair, 2017). McNair postulates that modern wars and liberation struggles increasingly enlist global public opinion, rendering political communicators more relevant in moulding domestic and exogenous consciousness (McNair, 2017; Davis, 2019).

Theorist Jay G. Blumler has abundantly documented the development of political communication since the 1970s. The theorist formulated the concept of a 'political communication system' featuring 2 sets of institutions: political and media organisations. These entities are involved in the production of messages in a horizontal interaction with one another. On a vertical axis, they are engaged in packaging and projecting the message towards the mass public (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1977; Blumler, 2017). The academic conceptualised political communication in the 'system' logic to underline the interplay between the components of the system. One component is the politically managed publicity, which is elaborate, highly-manicured, power-oriented, and competitively striving to exert control over audiences' perceptions on issues. Another component of this system is major mass media, which is not only an outlet, but also a partisan in the curation and promulgation of this power. The latter component is the interest, predilection and opinion of the public, which also informs and broadcasts the message further (Blumler, 2017:4).

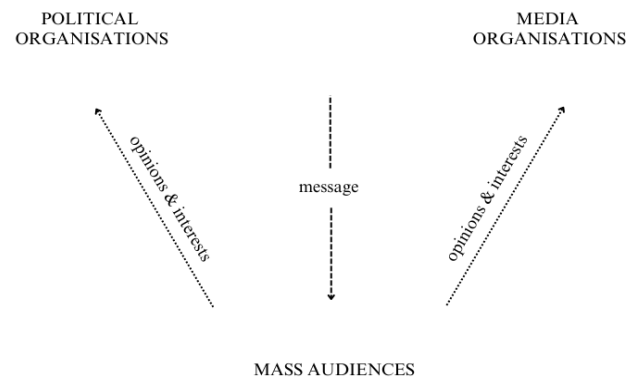


Figure 1. Blumler's Political Communication System

The Representatives of the Security Service of Ukraine postulated that for their political communication to be successful, there ought to be a coordinated collaboration between scientists, educators and practitioners from the civil and military sectors (SBU National Academy, 2021). The political communication system is able to function and be stable only if the fundamental values and orientations of the emittent actors are unitary and compatible with their socio-cultural structure (Pfetsch, 2013).

Blumler noted the progress of political advocacy, and acknowledged how politicians have to adapt to the increasing electors and channels they currently dispose of 'with a medley of objectives in mind, and often more interactively than before' (Blumler, 2017:7). The scholar deemed political communication responsible for helping citizens understand the choices their society faces at the respective time, cultivate confidence in the transparency and accuracy of the messages transmitted and incentivise the audience to play some part in what is happening (Blumler, 2017:6).

Blumler argues that due to circumstances of turmoil and change, political communication is subject to reconfiguration, with political communicators distancing themselves from the entrenched routines which formerly provided national stability vis-à-vis other international actors and events. Instead, politicians use the opportunity of volatility to produce and disseminate novel messages, sometimes with the intention of reshaping global relations and the status quo of their state within the international system (Blumler, 2017:3).

Both authors have not remained to grapple with the unfoldings of the Russo-Ukrainian 2022 conflict. As such, their theorisation presents gaps and weaknesses in the evolution of political communication. Nevertheless, the paper drew from their prior assessments and interpretations on what political communication implies. McNair's enlargement of the definition of political communication assisted the thesis in discerning the importance of a political actor's 'identity' in the process of message propagation. Blumler's political communication system underscored the significance of similar values among actors which brings about foundational stability in the state. Blumler also distinguishes the high level of interactivity between players involved in political communication, and how the political discourse is subject to change due to this interaction. The scholars' contribution to IR was to marry the field of communication with the empirical sphere of politics. Their modest foreshadowing of the impact technology has on the course of political communication in times of crisis helped this thesis navigate the following part of the chapter.

2.2. Digital Diplomacy Transforming The Conduct of Politics

Processes of communication on political matters du jour involve more elements than previously imagined by Blumler and McNair. The growing visibility of political elites and the polycentric distribution of information in the 'multichannel democracies' (Negrine & Stanyer, 2023) symbolise an alteration of the conventional conduct of politics.

As television has been losing its traction, social networks such as Telegram, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube become increasingly relevant in the diffusion and consumption of political communication. To put this into perspective, the thesis inspected survey results from Kyiv's International Institute of Sociology, financed by USAID. The survey was an investigation of 2009 interviewees on how people in different age groups engage with the online forum, which are their preferred platforms to receive news updates and which are the sources they deem most credible (OPORA, 2022).

Social media has been the main source of information for 77.9% of male respondents and 75.5% of women respondents. 92% of the 18 to 39 age group consumes content on social

media, mainly Telegram and Youtube. Twitter, as a news source, is used by 10.7% of the 18-39 year old segment, while TikTok is used by a niche group of 18-29 year olds as a news media outlet (OPORA 2022). The new media ecologies (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2012; Manor and Crilley, 2019) such as Telegram, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are a gateway to interacting with larger audiences in a more accessible, real-time manner.

The significance of a political event is now seized by the amount of traction it manages to harness in the online fora. Public diplomacy counts on the vehement and tactful capability of elite rhetoric, coupled with a strategic technical leveraging of the media ecology the transmitter elects (Seib, 2009. Miskimmon et al., 2013; Bjola & Pamment 2019).

Governmentality is in an intricate relationship with social media platforms, a context in which leaders have to learn to become citizens of the online mediums to conduct a comprehensive public engagement (Kampf, Manor & Segev 2015:332).

Digital diplomacy pertains to the political communication machinery of a nation. Through the conduct of online foreign affairs, states aspire to influence foreign audiences (Cull, 2008).

Scholars Corneliu Bjola, Jennifer Cassidy and Ilan Manor professed this digital turn in sovereignty, with the practice of public diplomacy being revolutionised, generating the ability for ministries of foreign affairs and embassies to engage with audiences directly, 'in large numbers, in real time, and with greater impact' (Bjola, Cassidy & Manor, 2020:405).

This thesis understands digital diplomacy as diplomatic activities facilitated with or via digital technologies - screens, computers, phones, and implicitly Internet platforms such as social media channels, communications apps, websites, and livestreams (Bjola and Holmes, 2015; Adler-Nissen and Eggeling, 2022:641).

The enterprise of digital diplomacy is composed of the same activities as public diplomacy would, with the exception of the transmission methods it engages with. These practices are aimed at foreign publics and designate the provision of information, educational and cultural activities, and international broadcasting (Brown, 2017). A scholar absorbed in the research of public diplomacy and the sociology of statecraft is Robin Brown. He observed that the increasing impact audiences have on foreign policy determine actors to reflect upon the benefits of cultivating favourable perceptions of their states (Brown, 2017:166). The advancement of communications technologies have weaved interdependencies between

distinct sectors of the globe, and inadvertently, auspicious new circumstances for political elites to exert influence (Brown, 2017:167).

In the Russo-Ukraine war, social platforms have converted into battlefields (Donofrio et al., 2023:22). To elaborate on this statement, Andrea Donofrio, Ángel Moraga and Carolina Guzmán, conducted a comparative research on the ‘first war over social networks’ (Donofrio et al., 2023). The authors claimed that social networks such as Twitter are a protagonist player in the current political communication, reiterating the power of dissemination and the immediacy with which the political message reaches audiences (Donofrio et al., 2023).

Bohdan Yuskiv, Natalia Karpchuk and Oksana Pelekh used reflexive thematic analysis to identify statistical indicators in Ukraine’s communication. They hypothesised that on one hand, media is an instrument for diplomacy and on the other hand, modern diplomacy transforms and reflects in media. Data used in their research are reports from the ‘Insider Ukraine’ Telegram channel. Their methodology identified 5 defining features of the empirical material: interactive communications involving key leaders in demand of international support, operational communications (referring to Ukraine) delineating psychological afflictions and military actions operational communications (which refer to the RF) to detail information and military operations, extraoperational communications portraying military-civilian cooperation and security operations, and extraoperational communications denoting consequences of military operations and negotiation processes (Yuskiv et al., 2022). Their thematic analysis and the resulting emphasis on key leaders’ interactive communication informed this paper’s selection of data. The defining features identified by Yuskiv et al. in Ukrainian digital diplomacy have been outlined in the analysis section of this paper.

The merits of Bjola et al., and Brown’s research were seized in this part of the theory section. Their work, along with Donofrio et al. and Yuskiv et al.’s research appear to be in agreement, which, consequently, confirms the view this thesis adopted about the rise in influence of digital diplomacy, to the degree of catalysing a new path for political activities.

2.3. The Personalisation Trend in Digital Diplomacy

This paper found the notion of personalisation as a significant factor in how modern diplomatic work is conducted. Peter Van Aelst, Tamir Sheafer and James Stanyer consider the rise of ‘candidate-centred politics’ as the outcome of changing media environments and intentional strategies of political actors (Van Aelst et al., 2011:204-205). In spite of their research being focused on voters, political actors and media, the knowledge produced on personalisation was extrapolated and applied in this thesis (Van Aelst et al., 2011:205). Current political communication gravitates more towards individual actors, with officials becoming more central in media coverage and their personal social media channels providing more ‘intimate’ accounts on the state of events. Their personalisation schema presenting the dimensions of this trend cemented this paper’s comprehension of the role of political figures in political communication.

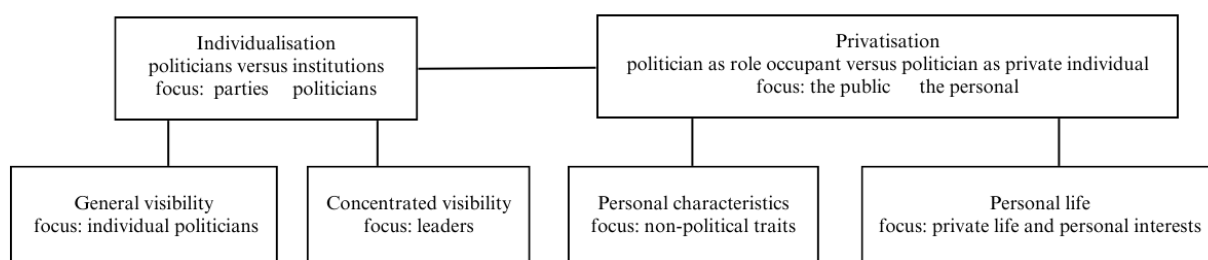


Figure 2. Van Aelst et al. Dimensions of Personalisation

By virtue of this newfound closeness and approachability afforded by the new media ecologies (Miskimmon et al., 2013), officials have been proactive in their online engagement with the public. This unhindered and authentic method to put information forward enables the recipient to be engrossed in and connect with the political message (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2010; Miskimmon, A., O’Loughlin, B. & Roselle, 2013). It is from this interaction that national and more precisely, national identity branding emerges to create traction around interstate socio-political issues.

Personalised online rhetoric promised horizontal interaction and engagement, permeating beyond national borders (Miskimmon et al., 2013:163). The internet made way for users to access peer-to-peer communication, allowing for the consumption of content from creators that individuals could resonate with, instead of the ones who monopolise traditional media (Turner 2007). The constant dialogue and ease of transmission facilitated by new media ecologies such as livestreams, podcasts, spaces, and live translations, confer political leaders a means to directly interact with their audiences. The conversation becomes global and undergoes new processes and patterns which transform the initial strategic narrative into a product of the virtual community (Davis 2010).

Despite the appearance of a more transparent form of engagement with the publics, professor of Global Security, Andrew Hoskins notes that the ‘open source’ trait of the new media ecologies is often a misnomer. Technology opened up the international system to crowdsourcing, where a multiplicity of perspectives and opinions form the war feed - a splintering of different digital realities as posted by anyone who has access to a means of communication (Hoskins & Shchelin, 2023:449). Political communication is not reserved to high-elite political officials, but has widened to contain a plethora of non-state actors who weave adjacent perspectives, forming new meanings and understandings.

IR researchers Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Kristin Anabel Eggeling investigated the digitalisation of diplomacy by conducting an ethnographic research of political officials in their everyday diplomatic work practices in Brussels. Their study aimed to shine a spotlight on the entanglement between individuals’ traditional diplomatic work and the virtual one. Adler-Nissen and Eggeling observed how diplomacy gained a ‘blended’ character, which underlined how actors separate their customary duties from the ‘distractions’ which the technological territory presents (Adler-Nissen and Eggeling, 2022). Instead of deeming their profession as directly tied to the digital space, the European diplomats treated Web 2.0. as a collateral implication, an extracurricular preoccupation.

Contrastingly, Corneliu Bjola, Jennifer Cassidy and Ilan Manor proliferated a crucial evolution in the work context of political officials due to the constraints and enablements forged by digital technologies. For the scholars, digital diplomacy does not only presuppose a general development of new mediums of communication, but further imply the blurring

between the foreign and domestic, private and public (Bjola, Cassidy & Manor, 2019). For Bjola et al., new media ecologies are rewriting the role political elites have in the international arena.

Reach and authority in the digital space have been the focus of many researchers. The Russian invasion prompted significant analysis of the virtual techniques used by the Government of the Russian Federation versus the Office of the President of Ukraine. The invader-invaded rapport motivated increasing national story-building through Twitter in the February-April 2022 period, yet world leader communication instituting power through social media has quite an extensive history in IR academia (Manor, 2021; Barberá et al., 2022; Donofrio et al., 2022; Yehorova et al., 2022).

The recent decade brought about newly manufactured, indirect and non-conventional ways to engage in interstate conflict, with the accumulation of innovative war methods entitled ‘hybrid warfare’ (Mumford & Carlucci, 2022). Even though digital diplomacy is not expressly featured in the definition Andrew Mumford and Pascal Carlucci designated for hybrid warfare, the ambiguity of the concept stretches to embrace this technological incarnation of diplomacy. Personalisation in digital diplomacy is a forefront concept influencing the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian hybrid war. It is through this personalisation trend in digital diplomacy, and the power of new media ecologies (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2012) that Ukrainian political actors furnished the world with their own version on the state of affairs and impacted the 2022 armed conflict.

2.4. Strategic Narratives in the New Political Environment

Reaffirming the ambition to answer the research question ‘*Which strategic narratives have emerged in Ukraine’s digital diplomacy following the February 2022 Russian invasion?*’, it is elementary to espouse an explicit definition of narratives, and strictly *strategic narratives*. Academics have conducted extensive research on the topic of narratives and how they seek to establish and reform the global political landscape.

Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin and Laura Roselle have profound dives into the realm of strategic narratives, creating comprehensive repertoires on the subject. In order to navigate the inquiry of this thesis, this section of the theory attends to their diagnosis and categorisation of strategic narratives. The authors deem narratives as shapeshifting social products which derive from interactions between the state and its society, and the state and other governmental or non-governmental actors (Miskimmon et al. 2013:8). These narratives include specific actors, a preconceived international order and require an infrastructure to exist in. The infrastructure is the communication environment where the narrative is formed, projected and received (Miskimmon et al., 2013:18). In the case of our research, the communication environment is Web 2.0., where recent Ukraine-Russia political discourse has been taking place.

Agency is a prerequisite in strategic narratives - an intervention into the existing state of events, to formulate a disparate version of the political reality du jour. The corpus of strategic narrative study features three levels: system, identity and issue narrative. System narratives explore how narratives explain the structure of international relations, the manner in which they emerge and the conditions through which they evolve over time (Roberts, 2006). Identity narratives are the representation of actors in international affairs, succumbing to a perpetual process of negotiation and contestation (Miskimmon et al., 2013). Issue narratives are the devices that mould the milieu where policy discussions unfold (Bially-Mattern, 2005; Epstein, 2008; Schimmelfennig, 2003).

Identity indicates how states interpret the role of the international society, the purpose states serve in the global system and the types of interests which are worth pursuing (Lynch, 1999:22). What has the potential to affect the identity of a state is ‘rhetorical practice’, by means of consciousness raising, dialogue, education, ideology, symbolic action (Wendt, 1996:57). Actors use narratives to achieve goals, and in the case of Ukraine the aspiration is to win the war and reclaim its sovereignty against their hegemon. In the context of this thesis’ investigation, identity narratives are the primary approach of the Ukrainian political elite. With each public address and social media post, they tread the path towards the construction of a more solid national identity vis-à-vis their Russian counterpart, in relation to the EU and in the paradigm of the larger society of states.

The power of systematic communication plans (Yuskiv et al., 2022:91) has transformed the domain of international relations, with technologies and networks expansively reshaping national discourses. Digital strategic narratives are now an extension of a state's influence, conferring the political corpus a means to individually engage with foreign audiences and convey specific messages in their country's interests (Pamment, 2012:38).

In times of tumult, nations employ strategic narratives to further their country's needs and interests. When it comes to making sense of the infrastructure of the new political environment, this treatise inspected literature from pioneer educator in the field of public diplomacy, Nicholas J. Cull. The scholar studied how soft power converted to reputational security and identified four rhetorical strategies which he correlated to states' objectives to enhance national security: (a) praising the self (b) downplaying or criticising competitors (c) gift-giving, and (d) multilateral cooperation (Cull, 2022:18).

Strategic political communication has constitutive and behavioural powers. On one hand, the power to constitute identities, which makes nations identify with a particular side of the war by classifying themselves as states who are part of the solution or the opposing party of the conflict. As such, their enacted initiatives derive from this identity. On the other hand, the capacity to shape behaviour, which entails convincing actors of the international society to commit resources, attend to the resolve of a common issue or proliferate foreign policies in a nation's favour (Cull, 2022). The thesis enunciates the notion of strategic narratives as a domain enveloping digital diplomacy. Cull's classification of reputational security is reflected throughout the analysis section as the paper outlined Ukraine's dialectic mechanism with the help of the rhetorical strategies indicated by Cull.

The constructivist school investigates the linkage between human consciousness and its capacity to influence international life (Ruggie, 1998:856). For constructivists, the spotlight is aimed at ideas, norms, knowledge, culture, and argument, emphasising the importance of collectively held or 'intersubjective' ideas and understandings of social life (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001:391-395).

For the critically inclined, discourses and power have a central role in the territory of strategic narratives as they redesign the international order. Discourses in the Foucauldian school of

thought are linguistic social systems that reproduce knowledge and truth, which then construct how we experience the world (Foucault, 1969). Political discourses opining for value transmission and world-building narratives are made easily accessible through social media platforms. The beliefs, attitudes, and courses of action stemming from this accessibility to information are redressed and mediated by both the authors, who intentionally curate the narrative, but also by the online community that openly reacts to these virtual statements (Hoskins & Shchelin, 2023:449).

In the process of online discourse legitimation, there is an open space for other members of the platform to actively and instantly agree or disprove the content, erecting their own understandings vis-à-vis the information (Hoskins & Shchelin, 2023). Discourses in contrast with narratives, do not feature a casual transformation, taking actors from one status quo to another (Miskimmon et al., 2013:7). Actors work with discourse, which are in a form of stasis, to construct narratives aimed at influencing behaviours and opinions of audiences. Therefore, components of discourses - history, analogies, metaphors, symbols and visual items shape narratives (Miskimmon et al., 2013:7).

Strategic narratives are a dynamic product with temporal and causal features which succumb to a non-linear process of *formation*, *projection* and *reception* (Miskimmon et al., 2013:7-8). This process is integrated in the analysis section of this treatise to define the journey of strategic narratives, as well as pinpoint the components which inform their creation and their impact.

Formation is the internal design stage, where the authors set the agenda, go through a procedure of legitimation, establish the mission, vision and values they aspire to promote. The formation stage also entails the choice of different structures of communications to generate a fitting construction of the strategic narrative. Through persuasion and representational force, actors involved in strategic narrative formation cultivate positive perceptions of themselves in the international realm (Miskimmon et al., 2013:9).

In the projection stage, dissemination of the curated and crafted strategic narrative unravels. The media ecology where the communication takes place presents significant opportunities and challenges for the communicator. Media platforms differ in their characteristics and implicitly, how political narratives can be constructed on the respective platform and the impact on their audiences (McLuhan, 1994; Brown, 2005).

Strategic narratives reach the public through these new media ecologies, producing meaning and reaction. The online space facilitates an easily accessible connectivity and produces a visible effect on certain audiences who choose to interact with the content generated. In the reception stage, narratives become participatory and aggregate international positions (Hoskins & O'Loughlin 2010; Miskimmon et al., 2013). Virtual communities form into cohesive groupings setting out to tackle ardent societal matters (Steele, 2010). New media ecologies help rapidly disseminate information and this increased reach prompts audiences to assemble and voice their opinions (Miskimmon et al., 2013:10).

Vivian Walker, researcher and member of the US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy contrasted Russian and Ukrainian strategic communication methods. In her investigation, the scholar observed how Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, leveraging complex media environments, presented a comprehensive narrative of victimisation, endangered by Russian aggression, and another external narrative of Ukraine being a viable strategic partner with the ambition to become a European member (Walker, 2015).

Miskimmon et al., Cull and Walker reflected a united front in regards to the aims of narratives manifested in the digital political milieu. The principal categories of narratives can be succinctly outlined as inward or outward-looking value and identity transmission and include: domestic praise, foreign critique and desire for cooperation. The narratives have a process involving three phases: formation, projection and reception. These concepts and the authors' discussions informed the models used to respond to the inquiry of this research.

2.5. On the Reception of Strategic Narratives

Asserting a national identity and establishing domestic socio-political positions vis-a-vis global events (Brand, 2010: 78) are but complementary to the grander scope of winning wars. Ukraine, faced with the Russian invasion in February 2022, did not solely address the online public about the hardship it was facing. The nation had a virtual outcry, demanding political and military aid. This thesis also examined the reception of the political message, noting the predicament of measuring the impact of strategic narratives on domestic and foreign audiences. The effectiveness of the political message can only be measured by the activity it

galvanises in different strata of society. Motivated by the political discourse, formal and informal coagulations of actors would arise to fulfil the objectives set out by the political elite. This would ultimately translate to a successful political communication mechanism (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2012; Colley, 2022). Narratives are powerful instruments wielded to mobilise communities to engage in collective action (Dixon & Gellman, 2020:9-25).

New media ecologies are both affected by strategic narratives, and in turn, impact the reception of such narratives (Miskimmon et al., 2013:177). Despite this, examining through a historical relational sociology lens, narratives must be assessed in conjunction with the online platforms where they unfold in order to determine whether or not they are actually successful (Brown, 2017). Robin Brown also presents his agnostic arguments towards the capability of narratives, positing that successful narrative projects are difficult to achieve and that innovation in communication technology is unlikely to shift the success rate. Additionally, the academic specifies that even if narratives incentivise online supporters, the outcome is reliant on the influence of the networks themselves rather than the intrinsic nature of the narrative (Brown, 2017).

Social anthropologists J. Clyde Mitchell and Jeremy Boissevain pursued network analysis to study the interrelationships between members of social networks. The authors contemplated about how society functions and is reshaped by political interactions (Mitchell, 1973). In their edited volume on human interactions, they highlight how networks, as units of social organisation, through the interdependency and interaction of their components, harness social action (Mitchell, 1973).

This thesis looked at some empirical examples of networks in Ukraine to better surveil the reception of strategic narratives post-Russian invasion. Ukraine's 'other army' (Applebaum, 2022) is made up of such networks whose work, purportedly animated by political strategic narratives, spanned beyond humanitarian and advocacy support, supplying aid on military dimensions. In the case of Kyiv, these networks include Ukrainian civil society and the international public (Applebaum, 2022). Volunteering, crowdfunding and civilian-military cooperation are the forms in which these units of social organisations mobilised resistance against the Russian Federation (Leonchuk et al., 2023).

Civil society players emerged before the Russian invasion in February 2022. The volunteer movement stems from the 2004 Orange Revolution, when citizens concerned with their governance bodies, started protesting against rigged elections and for democracy. The status of volunteer since then has been deemed an effective role - as civil society groups assisted veterans, the military and the ones affected by Russian invasion (Leonchuk et al., 2023).

Olena Leonchuk, Alexander Nisetich, Rosanna Beale and Johnson have purveyed an extensive investigation of civil society scale-up since the invasion, claiming that the health of a society is dependent on the availability of a vibrant civil society (Leonchuk et al., 2023). Ukraine's civil society is highly networked and has been involved in various national civil resistance movements since 2014. Philanthropy, civilian-protection operations, psycho-social support for veterans make up the social volunteerism which Ukrainian civil society subscribed to in the first phases of the war (Van Metre, 2023).

In the investigation of the research question, this treatise sought to understand the tangible impact of strategic narratives. To scrutinise what makes up impactful strategic narratives, this subsection supplied examples of initiatives that materialised post-strategic narrative dissemination. The probability to derive a direct causal relationship between Ukrainian digital diplomacy and the mobilisation of non-state actors is meagre. Nonetheless, it was crucial for the paper to pay attention to the consumers of strategic narratives in the attempt to recognize the interactivity between political organisations, their strategic narratives and mass audiences.

The main themes of this section have been broadly scrutinised in different oeuvres of IR. The principal takeaways from this literature review could be summarised as follows.

Political communication is the interaction between social actors concerning political issues.

In the context of crisis, political communication can be used to undertake novel national political objectives to reform the position of the state within the international system.

Digital diplomacy pertains to the general political communication field, but punctuates the significance of new media ecologies in the projection and reception of political discourse.

The personalisation trend in digital diplomacy highlights the importance of key actors in the transmission of a message. This trend derives from the construction of Internet platforms

which feature personal accounts and entail more closeness between communicators and audiences.

Strategic narratives regard intentional storytelling as a fundamental exercise of a state to institute itself as an entity in the global political system, as well as in relation to international issues. Values and beliefs are the core of strategic narratives and aim to achieve specific objectives designed by their emitters.

Audiences are a crucial piece of the puzzle of strategic narratives, as they are the targets of political communication. Their reactions to the narratives are the indicators of strategic narrative effectiveness.

The following chapter of this dissertation concentrated the knowledge from aforementioned literature, leveraging their main concepts and results from their research and puts forward the methodology appropriate to scrutinise Ukrainian strategic narratives post-2022 Russian invasion.

3. Methodology

This section of the thesis links the theoretical framework back to the research question ‘*Which strategic narratives have emerged in Ukraine’s digital diplomacy following the February 2022 Russian invasion?*’ and charts the methodology used to respond to this inquiry. The methodology chapter initially makes prominent antecedent research that inspired this treatise in the process of data selection and, sequentially, in the analysis chapter.

3.1. Existent Research Methods and Their Insights

The scholars presented in the theory section have approached the topic of digitised narratives and their influence on the course of war by various methodological techniques. Bohdan Yuskiv, Natalia Karpchuk and Oksana Pelekh, applied reflexive thematic analysis to identify statistical indicators in Ukraine’s digital diplomacy. Their research used the ‘Insider Ukraine’ Telegram channel as a site for primary data, analysing content from the first 100 days of the war. The results of their research yielded a comprehension of Ukrainian strategic communications as consisting of two directions: communication referring to Russia and communication referring to Ukraine. Subsequently, these are organised as interactive, operational and extraoperational communications (Yuskiv et al., 2022). Their results instructed this thesis in forming a Ukrainian strategic narrative mechanism, inspired by the subcomponents Yuskiv et al. traced in their categorisation of Kyiv’s political communication. More specifically, the phase of projection in the strategic narrative mechanism of this paper has been developed as a consequence of their insights, looking at communication as oriented towards specific recipients.

Andrea Donofrio, Ángel Moraga and Carolina Guzmán leveraged a comparative analysis to contrast the Twitter profiles of the Government of the Russian Federation (@GouvernementRF) and the Office of the President of Ukraine (@APUkraine) during the period of February 24th and April 24th. The authors examined domestic and foreign social audiences following these media accounts in terms of their sociodemographic characteristics. Their assessment does not focus on the Russo-Ukrainian war elite communication. However,

this thesis employed an analogous rationale in the data selection process to conversely understand the narrative of political officials on social media channels, as opposed to focusing on the recipients of the political message and their personal inclinations which influence their affinity for either Russia or Ukraine (Donofrio et al., 2023).

Felipe Polo, Stuti Saxena and Charalampos Alexopoulos used presidential speeches during war extracted from the Ukrainian President's official website and the Violent Incident Information from News Articles (VIINA) repository, from February to July 2022. The authors extracted average daily sentiments embedded in the materials to analyse the emotional connotations of presidential speeches. Their quantitative methodology shows how the 'positive' speeches relate to Ukrainian international relations and support from allies, while the 'negative' speeches enunciate Russian attacks and Nazi analogies when presenting the calamities of the war. Their methodology helped this thesis build a more comprehensive strategic narrative mechanism by observing the emotionality and affect espoused by the political actors in their communication (Polo et al., 2023). The analysis section used their scholarship to classify content, values, objectives and demands of the Ukrainian elite in the process of strategic narrative formation.

3.2. A Qualitative Content Analysis of Ukrainian Communication

The research aimed to comprehend the Ukrainian strategic narratives in the February-March 2022 period, the starting phase of the invasion. In the Russo-Ukraine war, social platforms have converted into battlefields (Donofrio et al., 2023:22). The thesis set out to assess the influence of digital diplomacy by applying qualitative content analysis on the social media institutional and personal accounts of Ukrainian political elite over the span of 2 months since their launch into armed conflict.

Qualitative content analysis helps explore meaning, motives and purposes of political entities embedded in their posts and statements (Halperin & Heath, 2020:384). Consequently, the object of observation in this research is latent content - meanings, purposes and motives. These elements are discerned through the inspection of whole texts and speeches (Halperin & Heath 2020: 384).

The procedures undertaken are theming and tagging, which entail a system of tying together different values, objectives and demands within key speeches and social media posts during the initial stages of the 2022 Russia-Ukraine conflict.

3.3. The Data

The data selection process was informed by Yuskiv et al.'s, Donofrio et al.'s and Polo et al.'s research, which studied communication on Telegram and Twitter in the first months of the Russian invasion. Their approaches, although differing in scope in comparison to this dissertation, collected primary data exactly where present-day political communication unfolds most dynamically, and their technique of thematisation and tagging of discourses generated revelatory categories for understanding strategic narratives and their reception (Yuskhiv et al., 2022; Donofrio et al., 2023; Polo et al., 2023).

This treatise evaluated Ukrainian strategic narrative by extracting 12 speeches, 4 parliament addresses and 10 social media posts from influential political figures of Ukraine. The data collected was by researching the official website of the President of Ukraine where a database of all speeches can be retrieved. Moreover, this method required an inspection of social media platforms from important Ukrainian political actors - president and ministers, in the timeframe of February-March 2022.

Deriving from the research question, the qualitative content analysis intended to showcase the process of a strategic narrative applied in the digital medium and the outcome yielded on a grassroots level of society. The research explores digital diplomacy and strategic narrative application by analysing visual and vocal statements and posts from the members of the Ukrainian government. The reasoning behind the method of data collection is that online platforms have progressively developed into the primordial outlet elected to voice national directions, concerns and intentions. Furthermore, existing research has also drawn from and conducted research on these social media platforms, stressing its capacity to enrol public support and sway cross-continental opinion.

By applying the qualitative content analysis method on the primary data, the thesis pinpointed 3 coding elements constituting Kyiv's strategic narratives. The term *national identity archetype* is herein coined as strategically designed character roles, representative of Ukraine's branding as a means to interact with online audiences. These archetypes reflect the intended psychological imprint that engages foreign audiences and triggers them. National identity archetypes derive from the marketing realm, where companies establish specific brand personas so that consumers resonate and identify with the product they purchase.

The three national identity archetypes (NIAs) arose from the inspection of the data selected. These personifications of Ukraine's strategic narratives are derived from Blumler's archaic political communication system (Figure 1, page 6), Van Aelst et al. 's investigation of personalisation dimensions (Figure 2, page 10), Cull's delineation of a state's universal objectives, Walker's classification matrix of Ukrainian strategic communication methods and Miskimmon et al's process of formation, projection and reception of strategic narratives. These authors and their academic realisations, presented in the theoretical section, informed both the data curation and the data analysis stages of this thesis.

4. Analysis

The analysis section examines how Ukrainian political leaders harnessed new media ecologies to engage the international public. The audiences became partisans of the strategic narratives due to the participatory nature of the virtual forum (Miskimmon et al., 2013:11). This communication power transformed civil society into a relevant actor of the international relations stage, 'an actor to be courted' (Miskimmon, A., O'Loughlin, B. & Roselle, 2013:179), whose opinion and agency is to be taken into account. Thus, this segment of the treatise investigated strategic narratives at play and identified the main aspects of Ukrainian digital political communication.

The thesis analysed speeches of the Ukrainian president retrieved from his social media platforms and the official website of the President of Ukraine from the period between February 24th- March 29th, 2022. Supplementary presidential addresses to foreign governments have been scrutinised to better understand the structure of Ukrainian political communication. Alongside these digital speeches, social media posts from other Ukrainian political officials have been selected as data for the analysis of Kyiv's strategic narratives in order to respond to this thesis' research question '*Which strategic narratives have emerged in Ukraine's digital diplomacy following the February 2022 Russian invasion?*'.

The documents analysed have been compiled in Table 1. Materials for Content Analysis. The table presents the speeches' names as found on the official website of the President of Ukraine, and the social media posts have been labelled after their key sentences. The table organised the materials by the date of publication and their author. Each text has an in-thesis denomination, numbered from 1 to 26.

Texts (1) to (12) are President Zelenskyy's speeches to the general populace, (13) to (16) are parliament addresses which the President has delivered via livestream before the US Congress, the Canadian Parliament, the German Parliament and the Israeli Knesset, and the texts from (17) to (26) are social media posts published by a variety of Ukrainian ministers.

Following Miskimmon et al.'s process delineated in the theoretical section of this paper, the thesis observed the three phases of the Ukrainian strategic narrative mechanism: formation, projection and reception. This process is charted in Table 2. The Ukrainian Strategic

Narratives Mechanism, and highlights the connection between the design of Ukraine's strategic narrative, how it evolved through the transmission phase when coupled with the new media ecology capabilities and how it was later received and acted upon by audiences (Miskimmon et al., 2013).

Applying a qualitative content analysis methodology and learning from the research methodology of theming and tagging from Yuskiv et al. and Donofrio et al., the treatise found the 3 principal coding elements emerging from the high-elite digital communications of Ukraine. They have been grouped as national identity archetypes (NIA), a categorisation highlighting the online narratives that have materialised into more vehement branding roles taken on by the political corpus.

This part of the thesis continues by presenting an evaluation of the materials selected, anatomising the meanings and implications of each speech, parliament and social media post generated by Ukrainian political officials from February to March 2022.

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES DURING ARMED CONFLICT

The Case of Ukraine post-2022 Russian Invasion

Material	In-thesis denomination	Name	Author	Date
SPEECHES	1	"Address by the President of Ukraine"	President of Ukraine	24/02/2022
	2	"Address by the President to Ukrainians at the end of the first day of Russia's attacks"	President of Ukraine	25/02/2022
	3	"The missile at the central square of Kharkiv is terrorism, and Russia must be held accountable for this in international courts"	President of Ukraine	01/03/2022
	4	"Ukrainians are a symbol of invincibility"	President of Ukraine	02/03/2022
	5	"For us, this is a patriotic war, and we know how such wars end for the invaders"	President of Ukraine	03/03/2022
	6	"I am sure that soon we will be able to tell our people: come back, because there is no more threat"	President of Ukraine	05/03/2022
	7	"Ukrainians do not retreat, do not give up, do not stop the resistance"	President of Ukraine	07/03/2022
	8	"Today, volunteers are all those who feel a free call to defend Ukraine"	President of Ukraine	14/03/2022
	9	"Resistance, resilience and courage of our defenders make it possible to save our people and our land"	President of Ukraine	16/03/2022
	10	"Our tactics is when the enemy does not know what to expect from us"	President of Ukraine	18/03/2022
	11	"If Russia had known what it would face in Ukraine, it would have definitely been afraid to come here"	President of Ukraine	25/03/2022
	12	"Signals from the negotiations can be called positive, but they do not silence the explosion of Russian shells"	President of Ukraine	29/03/2022
PARLIAMENT ADDRESSES	13	US Congress "I Call for You to Do More,"	President of Ukraine	15/03/2022
	14	Canada Address	President of Ukraine	16/03/2022
	15	German Parliament Address	President of Ukraine	17/03/2022
	16	Israeli Knesset Address	President of Ukraine	20/03/2022
SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS	17	"We are strong! The victory is ours"	Ministry of Defence of Ukraine	24/02/2022
	18	"We are creating an IT army"	Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine	26/02/2022
	19	"Send Putin to Jupiter"	Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine	01/03/2022
	20	"The Russian occupier, as you understand, you are not welcome here."	Defence Intelligence of Ukraine	02/03/2022
	21	"Special Forces of the Defense Intelligence of Ukraine destroyed 10 more enemy infantry fighting vehicles in Hostomel!"	Defence Intelligence of Ukraine	03/03/2022
	22	"The enemy is awake"	Deputy Defense Minister of Ukraine	11/03/2022
	23	"Ukraine is the future!"	Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine	15/03/2022
	24	"We protect the entire civilized world"	Ministry of Defence of Ukraine	17/03/2022
	25	"I urge you - do not break the country"	CinC AF of Ukraine	19/03/2022
	26	"Keep it up, gentlemen!"	Ministry of Defence of Ukraine	24/03/2022

Table 1. Materials for Content Analysis

4.1. Reviewing Ukrainian Speeches and Parliament Addresses

The following part of the analysis section advances a review of the speeches of the Ukrainian president, so as to determine the national strategic narratives and the specific components which delineate them.

The first statement examined by this thesis is one published at the onset of the invasion ‘Address by the President of Ukraine’ on February 24th, 2022 (in-thesis denomination: 1). Phrasings such as *‘Our Armed Forces are doing great, the forces for the defense of the city are working, they are reliable, they are our men.’*, *‘Our troops are fighting fierce’*, *‘The troops are ordered to destroy them.’* convey resilience and resistance in the face of the perpetrator. The Ukrainian army details the capturing of Russian soldiers, but offering them medical assistance *‘Yes, we have captured Russian soldiers. Our doctors are helping some of them - those who have surrendered.’* Conceptions of nationhood and liberal values resurface in many of the statements with formulations such as *‘No one will be able to convince or force us, Ukrainians, to give up our freedom, our independence, our sovereignty.’*, *‘an important duty is to defend democracy and freedom in Ukraine’*. This text is an effort to represent the Ukrainian state as heroic, capable of opposing challenges and resolute in their decision to not capitulate.

President Zelenskyy invokes peace and solidarity, emphasising that Ukraine did not choose the war, but will nevertheless conquer it. To mobilise Ukrainians at home and from the diaspora, the political figure calls upon his co-nationals to enrol in the Armed Forces, help the volunteer community and the medical system by donating blood. These snippets of text where the actor directly solicits actions indicates a propensity for proactivity, a logistical confrontation instead of succumbing to emotional inertia. This sentiment is also disclosed in remarks such as *‘What can Ukrainians do? Help the national defence. Join the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and territorial defence units. Any citizen with combat experience will now be useful.’*

On February 25th, 2022, at the end of the first day of Russian attacks, the President took to social media to interact with Ukrainian citizens again. This speech is named ‘Address by the President to Ukrainians at the end of the first day of Russia’s attacks’ (in-thesis

denomination: 2). In this speech, the rhetoric conjures the values of authenticity and transparency about the state of despair that the state might fall prey to. *'But there is another - we are left alone in defence of our state. Who is ready to fight with us? Honestly - I do not see such. Who is ready to guarantee Ukraine's accession to NATO? Honestly, everyone is afraid.'* To be left in these circumstances requires to oppose the RF in a solitary stance. However, this becomes a motivational beckoning for the citizens, as their President claims *'I stay in the capital, I stay with my people.'* This text enacts a call-to-action for Ukrainians to mobilise and engage in war. The metaphorical abandonment of the rest of the international community is used to incentivise national inhabitants to persist as the president himself, disregarding the adversity.

The speech 'Ukrainians are a symbol of invincibility' (in-thesis denomination: 4) underlines attributes such as: invincibility, truth, victory, peace. These keywords express the symbolism Ukraine aims to convey to galvanise its citizens *'I admire you! The whole world admires you. From Hollywood stars to politicians. Today you, Ukrainians, are a symbol of invincibility. A symbol that people in any country can become the best people on earth at any moment.'* The communicator expresses gratitude towards civil society who got involved in the war by providing food, energy, medicine and physically fighting. *'And I thank the ordinary people of Ukraine, who stop tanks with their bare hands, expel the invaders from administrative buildings by force of spirit and make their stay in Ukraine shameful.'*

The speech 'For us, this is a patriotic war, and we know how such wars end for the invaders' on March 3rd (in-thesis denomination: 5) further advertises civilian victory and heroic actions. *'We are a nation that broke the enemy's plans in a week. Plans that have been built for years.'* *'But we stopped them. We beat them. Our military, border guards, territorial defence. Even ordinary farmers capture the Russian military on a daily basis.'* The speech continues with praise for civilians in zones that underwent Russian invasion and confronted them without military assistance. This paints the image of the common citizen willing to engage in the conflict at the cost of sacrificing their livelihood. It is an important demarcation due to the national branding it forges. The Ukrainian citizen is now a national hero, coming out in front of enemy vehicles, fighting without weapons and blocking the roads.

In statement (7), the president proclaims his certainty of overcoming Russia and successfully emerging from the perils of warfare. *'I am sure that soon we will be able to tell our people: come back! Come back from Poland, Romania, Slovakia and all other countries. Come back, because there is no more threat.'* *'That is why the occupation is temporary! It is artificial.'*, *'Our people, our Ukrainians do not retreat. Do not give up. Do not stop the resistance. They shout to the occupiers - go home.'*

The March 14th address is especially significant as it announced the Ukrainian Volunteer Day (in-thesis denomination: 8). This speech is noteworthy in terms of civil society involvement as the political figure stresses the necessity of these actors in the armed conflict *'Ukrainians do not need to be persuaded to become volunteers. Ukrainians do not need to be encouraged to start helping each other.'* *'Strong support for the Armed Forces by all the people of Ukraine, sincere volunteer movement, mass joining the territorial defence, solidarity of all our people - these are the prerequisites for victory. Prerequisites for the liberation of our entire country... The only and the best.'* Not only is civil society implored to partake in war, but awarded for its benefaction *'The new law also provides the necessary guarantees for the territorial defence warriors - all volunteers will be recognized as combat veterans.'*

The president maintains bravery and heroism in texts (10) and (11), claiming *'The 30th day. It's been a month! If Russia had known it would face that, I'm sure they would have definitely been afraid to come here'*, *'The occupiers thought they were going to Ukraine, which they had seen before, in 2014-2015. Which they constantly corrupted and which they were not afraid of. But we are different'*.

Texts (1), (2), (4), (5), (7), (8), (10) and (11) are made up of nationalist sentiment, enunciating values such as resistance, resilience, urgency and transparency. The objectives that transpire from these materials is the desire for sovereignty and victory, motivating Ukrainians to fight against Russia by endorsing the heroic acts of civilians.

The March 2nd speech (4) additionally features a series of politico-cultural analogies to elicit affect *'You are killing Holocaust victims for the second time. During the Soviet era, a TV centre was built on the bones there. And also a sports complex. Outbuildings. They built a*

park there. To erase the true history of Babyn Yar. But why was it bombed? This is beyond humanity.’ ‘That is why it is very important that millions of Jews around the world do not remain silent right now. Nazism is born in silence. So shout about the killings of civilians. Shout about the killings of Ukrainians.’ Linking the events of the Ukrainian war to the Holocaust and nazism, the politician uses historical relatability to engage with foreign audiences. The desired outcome is to elicit international cooperation by appealing to tragic happenings of the past which they might resonate with.

Speech (6) substantiates the notion of an international common front by saying *‘We saw the opinion of ordinary people in America who support ordinary people in Ukraine. Who demand tougher sanctions against Russia for aggression already now. Who support closing the sky now to save the lives of our people. 74 percent of Americans stand for the no-fly zone. 74! The vast majority. What else is needed to make a decision? We are sure that the result is similar in other democratic countries.’* The author bridges the request for support with the ideas of freedom and peace. The US carries the symbolism of democratic communities which would not permit for the infringement upon a nation’s sovereignty. These formulations strive to encourage other countries to get involved and support Ukraine.

On March 16th (in-thesis denomination: 9), the president took to Instagram to disclose Ukrainian collaboration with international governmental bodies such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia. In speech (9), Zelenskyy also urges other political entities to get involved in facing a common enemy *‘Help Ukraine. Not in words, but in deeds: weapons, new sanctions against Russia. As well as an active moral position. A position as regards all international businesses that still stay in Russia, that do not leave. Although they fully understand that they are sponsoring the war, sponsoring terror.’* and *‘If you, dear European leaders, dear world leaders, leaders of the free world, do not help us today, then tomorrow the war will knock on your door.’*

By underlining politico-cultural similarities and the common desire for freedom in texts (4), (6) and (9), the official garners political assistance and requests partnership with foreign governments who abide by congruent liberal mindframes.

In the March 1st, 2022 livestream (in-thesis denomination: 3) the President announces that *'The missile at the central square of Kharkiv is terrorism', 'We call on all countries of the world to respond immediately and effectively to this criminal tactic of the aggressor and to declare that Russia is committing state terrorism. We demand full responsibility for terrorists in international courts'*. In asking for collaboration and accountability, the Ukrainian president leverages terms such as war crime and anti-terrorism.

'Liars on Russian TV talk about it every day. Liars. It's their job to lie every day (..) They were killing us. They were killing children. Look at Borodyanka. Look at the destroyed schools. At the blown up kindergartens. At the damaged Kharkiv Assumption Cathedral. Look what Russia has done.' These are some direct assertions contra the RF which arise in speech (7). The aim of this enunciation is to enlist sentimentality towards the destruction of national heritage and significant sensitive segments of society. The anti-Moscow rhetoric here is conjoined with images of crime and devastation.

The March 29th speech (in-thesis denomination: 12), also enacts a similar line of thought *'This one more act of the Russian so-called denazification of Mykolaiv took place in the morning after the anniversary of liberation of the city from Nazi invaders. Mykolaiv residents remember the day of March 28, 1944. And they see who the Russian troops trying to capture their city now look like.'* Text (12) points out that the Russian army is still attacking Ukraine, having *'enough equipment and people completely deprived of rights whom they can send to the cauldron of war'*. The psychological triggers are interwoven with requests for international aid *'Sanctions must be strengthened. Intensified weekly. And they must be effective. Not just for headlines in the media that sanctions have been imposed, but for real peace. Real.'*, *'Signals from the negotiations can be called positive, but they do not silence the explosion of Russian shells'*.

In texts (3), (7) and (12), the politician articulates negative emotionality with notions such as: terror-terrorism, morality (or lack thereof), criminal tactic, aggressor-aggression, nazification. These elements pronounce a vehement anti-Russian sentiment and an outcry for help. The President follows this victimisation paradigm with a solicitation of action beyond digital support, noting that the aggravation of war demands that foreign political bodies take legislative measures to aid Ukraine.

The President of Ukraine also addressed foreign parliaments, 4 of which the thesis dissected more in-depth.

In the US Congress “I Call for You to Do More,” livestream on March 16, 2022 (in-thesis denomination: 13), the president underlined the calamity that is the Russian invasion - ‘the worst disaster that a European country has faced since its independence’. Daily attacks from the Russian hegemon, 8 years of aggressions, 1000 missiles over Ukrainian skies - the RF is noted as a constant undefeatable opponent. The analogies with Pearl Harbour, the Rushmore memorial and 9/11 are discursive devices which prompt historico-cultural ties. Even if the conflict might seem foreign to audiences, the president paves the road to a comprehension of the war through empathy. The statement before the US Congress (13) denounces the US’s lack of interference as the herald of democracy on the international stage. Values such as freedom, ‘right to live freely in our own country, choosing our own future’, happiness, peace and dreams are the means through which Ukraine aimed to engage with the American audiences. These elements highlight the president’s intention to enlist kinship between the 2 nations and amass international support.

When addressing the Canadian President on March 15th, 2022 (in-thesis denomination: 14), the politician ties in the experience of the Russian attacks with a personal interaction ‘*Justin, can you imagine you and your children hearing all these explosions, the bombing of the airport, the bombing of the Ottawa airport?*’, ‘*Cruise missiles are falling down and your children are asking you <What happened?>*’. Throughout the speech, the correlations are emotion-laden and bring up women, children, and well-known emblems of the city to bridge the experience of suffering Ukrainians and the international spectators.

In his speech before the German Parliament on March 17th, 2022 (in-thesis denomination: 15), the Ukrainian president addressed the German state as failing to appease Russia in the period following 2010 and as such failing to deliver on its post-Holocaust historical responsibility. Invocations of the Berlin Wall and notions of freedom reiterate the president’s attempt at creating relatability and contriving cultural associations between the Ukrainian situation and Germany’s past portfolio.

On March 20th, the president of Ukraine spoke to the Israeli Knesset (in-thesis denomination: 16), with a stern insistence on Israeli and Ukrainian historiographies. *‘We are in different countries and in completely different conditions. But the threat is the same: for both us and you - the total destruction of the people, state, culture.’* These persistent parallels between nations and their struggles is a focal item in the Ukrainian discourse. Part of Kyiv’s objectives extracted from their strategic narrative is to obtain legal, financial, military and political assistance from foreign political elites and international governments.

Speeches (12) to (15) addressing foreign governments underlines bonding language through cultural allusions and historical parallels in order to evoke resemblance between Ukraine and the respective nation. These correlations aspire to instigate rapport and sympathy, with a tangible outcome of establishing partnerships and support between the foreign political elites.

Speech (15) moreover prompts a culpability for political inactivity, as the Ukrainian president claims that Germany fell short in its post-Holocaust obligation to protect freedom *‘The world may not have seen so clearly yet, but you are separated from us by a kind of wall. Not a Berlin Wall, but a wall in the middle of Europe between freedom and a lack thereof. And this wall is getting taller with every bomb that falls on Ukraine. With every decision that is not made for peace’*. Criticism against the German entities continues with the politician saying *“After 80 years, something like this happens and I am telling you: every year politicians repeat the words ‘never again’ and now we see that these words are simply worth nothing. In Europe a people is being destroyed. There is an attempt to destroy everything that is dear to us”*. These phrasings attend to the powerlessness and tragedy that has befallen upon Ukraine, stressing the accountability that other European countries should undertake to help Ukraine.

The preceding speeches and the parliament addresses were relevant materials helping the thesis scrutinise the design, projection and reception of the Ukrainian strategic narratives during February and March 2022. This section advances by presenting additional materials from Ukrainian officials to ascertain a more extensive compilation of political communication. The section concludes by providing a summary of the findings derived from these materials which coin the strategic narrative mechanism of Ukraine.

4.2. A Deep-Dive into Ukrainian Social Media

To forge a more comprehensive understanding of the Ukrainian discourse post-2022 Russian invasion, the thesis, inter alia, investigated the expression of Ukraine's strategic narratives mechanism through the social media posts of other Ukrainian political entities from Twitter and Facebook.

The Ministry of Defence of Ukraine took to Twitter on the first day of the Russian invasion to confidently claim that *'We are strong. The victory is ours.'* The post (in-thesis denomination: 17) gives a timeline of the Russian troops invading the country and briefly presents the military defence of Ukraine, which is equipped with tanks, armoured vehicles and aircrafts.

Post (17) corroborates Kyiv's heroic nature, summarising the military capacity of Ukraine in the face of Russian attacks.

On February 26th, Mykhailo Feodorov, the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, pushed for digital volunteers to actively partake in the war by contributing to the technological information side of the conflict. The post (in-thesis denomination: 18) incentivises the online audience to combat Russia with cybersecurity offensive techniques. Post (18) activates both national and international publics to immerse in the battle by enrolling in the Telegram 'IT army' of Ukraine.

The March 3rd post (in-thesis denomination: 21) from the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine evidenced the continuous success against the RF *'Special Forces of the Defense Intelligence of Ukraine destroyed 10 more enemy infantry fighting vehicles in Hostomel'*. This Twitter post continues with a reiteration of the victorious Ukrainian defence, aided by local resistance groups, fighting 20 more enemy combat vehicles.

Post (23) presupposes a proliferation of Ukraine's success and ability to impede the Russian Federation, with the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine claiming that *'Ukraine is the future!'*. The main motifs conveyed in post (25) from the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine are resistance, resilience and the aptness to confront the enemy *'Defense forces heroically confront the enemy, which is called the second army in the world. We have stopped the enemy in all directions. We have inflicted on them losses they have never seen or*

imagined.' It also presents a request for volunteers to join the Armed Forces '*In invite those who want to defend the country to the ranks of the Armed Forces*'.

In her online political communication, The Deputy Defense Minister of Ukraine, Hanna Maliar, underlined the importance of international volunteers who fought '*side by side with Ukrainians, will defend our land, Europe and the world from Russian Nazis*'. The Facebook post (in-thesis denomination: 22) praises the International Legion of Defense of Ukraine and expresses gratitude towards the volunteers from 52 countries for participating in the conflict. Tweet (26) published by the Defence of Ukraine on March 23rd compounds the effect of local and transnational heroism demonstrated by volunteers and incentivised more actors to participate in the armed conflict. The phrase '*Keep it up, gentlemen*' is a formulation which both motivates the population and announces the reinforcement of the idea of resistance. The nationalist sentiment prevails in March 2022 posts (17), (18), (21), (22), (23), (25) and (26), re-establishing that Ukraine is a promoter of resilience and that Ukraine's intent is to preserve its sovereignty.

In their demand for international actors to get involved, Ukrainian political elites gathered resources from relevant actors, who contributed to the military operations by supplying warfare technology. In his tweets from the first phase of the Russian invasion (23) Mykhailo Feodorov has consistently voiced partnerships with corporations, individuals and governments, postulating about a triumphant Ukraine. The Ministry of Defence of Ukraine discerns the role that Ukraine has on the global level, claiming that '*We protect the entire civilized world*'. Post (24) reaffirms the values of freedom, justice, peace and future as a method to tie the Ukrainian conflict to liberal values, and in doing so, to the rest of the European locale. Posts (23) and (24) echo Ukraine's need for partnerships and international support as the country stands by common values of the continent, with an eagerness for the cessation of the dispute.

The Deputy Minister of Ukraine employed humour and anti-Russian sentiment to appeal to the virtual community of Twitter with the March 1st post (in-thesis denomination: 19). The post capitalises on the non-formal approach, attaching a visual material of a rocket to '*Send Putin to Jupiter*'. The post reads '*Help us send a bloody dictator far far away*' and claims that '*Everyone wants Putin to die*'. Post (19) leverages a comedic call-to-action, prompting

Ukrainians and the rest of the foreign audience to take on ‘*a unique opportunity*’ to send Putin away by donating \$2.99 for a rocket and the rest of the funds to be directed to the restoration of the destroyed infrastructure. (19) is a method of opposing the enemy by comedically engaging with the online fora. This post, instead of discussing military capability, taps into the type of audience Twitter entails. The essence of the post circumnavigates the tragedy of the events, and offers the spectators a moment of respite from the war feed whilst calling on the anti-Russian sentiment.

Directly addressing the perpetrators, the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine posted ‘*The Russian occupier, as you understand, you are not welcome here*’, ‘*Sit at home, and never find out what a real war is and what is happening in it.*’ Post (20) alludes to the propaganda that the RF had instigated, in the scope of conveying criticism towards the enemy’s lack of transparency.

As Russian forces prevail, posts (19) and (20) seek help from international supranational structures to interfere in asserting national security by condemning Moscow’s actions. The texts also accentuate the emotional entailings of the conflict. The content of these social media posts anchor themselves in psychological triggers and negative feelings toward Russia in order to stimulate national governmental bodies to provide military and political assistance.

4.3. Towards a Ukrainian Strategic Narratives Mechanism

The thesis took the presidential speeches, parliament addresses and social media posts into account, codifying their components. Through this qualitative content analysis, a mechanism took shape, categorising the elements which surfaced in Kyiv’s strategic narratives throughout the phases of formation, projection and reception inspired by the work of Miskimmon et al. (2013). These elements are charted in Table 2. Ukrainian Strategic Narratives Mechanism.

Upon administering the analysis procedure, the thesis observed that presidential statements (1) to (16) and online publications (17) to (26) had at their core an embodiment of one of the three national identity archetypes (NIA): hero, partner and victim. These archetypes ensued from the characteristics identified in each speech and post, and taxonomised in consonance

with the content, values, objectives, demands, channels, audiences and initiatives the Ukrainian political elite contrived.

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES DURING ARMED CONFLICT
The Case of Ukraine post-2022 Russian Invasion

Composition	National Identity Archetypes		
	Hero	Partner	Victim
content	nationalist sentiment brand mission vision	politico-cultural analogies bonding language cultural allusions comparisons	military psychology
values	transparency urgency resilience resistance	historical relatability freedom democracy peace	anti-Russian pessimism negativism crisis
objectives	desire for victory sovereignty motivating people	partnerships international support	liberalism protectionism
demands	engagement in war	legal, financial and political cooperation	military political
target recipients	refugees diaspora civil society international donors	foreign political elites governments international corporations and businesses	government
channels	social media (Twitter, Facebook, Youtube) communications (Telegram, Viber)	social media (Twitter, Facebook) statements communiqués livestreams	social media (Twitter, Facebook) statements live communications physical
initiatives	crowdfunding volunteering civilian military cooperation	financial donations military equipment and army assistance foreign policy creation	international supranational investment

Table 2. Ukrainian strategic narratives mechanism

The 'hero' national identity archetype is formulated to coin a triumphant appearance of the Ukrainian nation. This archetype primarily emanates from texts (1), (2), (4), (5), (7), (8), (10) (11) and social media posts (17), (18), (21), (23), (25) and (26). The content of the hero NIA is nationalist sentiment, Kyiv's brand, vision and mission. The hero exhibits values such as transparency, urgency, resilience and resistance. The hero NIA also entails a portrayal of the Ukrainian state as a courageous protector and fighter, with detailings of heroic acts of citizens and the stamina of opposing the adversary. This archetype suggests the objectives of uplifting morale, instigating national pride, desire for victory and sovereignty. The hero NIA does not seek salvation from external sources, but looks at existent members of the community, attempts to garner diasporic involvement and reassures the foresight of winning. The intent of this NIA was to mobilise internal civil society groups to aggregate and volunteer to fight or donate. The platforms employed to deliver this NIA are social media and communication channels (Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Telegram and Viber), where the speeches were published, later being aggregated onto the president's official website.

The 'partner' national identity archetype was seized in materials (4), (6), (9), (13), (14), (15), (16), (23) and (24). This NIA confers prominence to politico-cultural analogies, bonding language, cultural allusions, metaphors, symbolic associations and comparisons. These elements are designed to stimulate historical relatability and empathy. Values such as freedom, democracy and peace are emphasised throughout the texts as Ukraine's yearnings and purpose, which connect them to societies with coinciding liberal virtues. The partner archetype is catered to the international audiences, specifically foreign political elites, international donors and other governmental bodies. The scope was to instigate legal, financial and political assistance. The archetype operated through social mediums and livestreams, catalysing political, financial and military support.

The victim national identity archetype predominantly emerged in speeches (3), (7), (12) and (15), (19) and (20), where the circumstances of armed conflict intensified and the Ukrainian political elite wielded subjugation, helplessness and negative feelings to call forth the military and political support of the international governments. The concern was that the Russian forces became overbearing, liberation more strenuous to achieve and to that end, political authorities reached out to external supranational help. Subsequently, criticism towards Russia

and passive countries is evidentiated. The values underlined are negative: anti-Russian rhetoric, nazism, occupation, aggressor, terrorism. Aiming for liberation and the protection of Ukrainian heritage sites and population, the actor demands that governments contribute with military aid and political assistance to impede warfare. In order to accomplish this task, Ukrainian political elite extensively participated in international events and persisted with their social media communication.

The analysis section inspected Ukrainian political communication in the digital space and catalogued the idiosyncrasies of the political elite discourse post-2022 Russian invasion. The data yielded three national identity archetypes - the hero, partner and victim NIA, embedded in the speeches and social media posts, which constitute the presumed cohesive Ukrainian strategic narrative.

5. Conclusions: Strategic Narratives and Beyond

Strategic narratives coupled with the new media ecologies (Manor & Crilley, 2019), as the thesis observed, are a quintessential element of modern international relations (Miskimmon et al., 2013). The discourse of Ukrainian officials moved the international spectator seated in the comfort of their home. The treatise inquired about which elements of the Ukrainian digital diplomacy triggered global audiences to be engaged in the war dialectic (Keck & Sikkink, 1998:1). To more comprehensively seize the research problem, the paper invited the reader to delve into the prosaic devotions and despairs of warfare. To discern them through the novel lens of digital mechanics, and to finally grasp how strategic narratives are Anthropocentric veterans of conflict swaying, revived in this virtual landscape.

This thesis has successfully answered the research question ‘*Which strategic narratives have emerged in Ukraine’s digital diplomacy following the February 2022 Russian invasion?*’ by undergoing a qualitative content analysis. It inspected political elite communication at the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict and curated distinct *national identity archetypes* projected through the new media ecologies, which formulated a storyline for foreign governments and mass audiences to engage with, be affected by and triggered to act. The three NIAs helped amass domestic involvement and international attention. Each NIAs identified presented specific values, mission and vision which they follow. The speeches and posts analysed underline the distinct roles and objectives Ukraine embodied in different instances of the war timeline. The paper found the hero, the partner and the victim archetypes as main themes in the digital political communication of Kyiv’s elite actors.

The theoretical investigation highlighted how political communication is now not restricted to a one-way rhetoric, with audience members transforming into active players - commenting, reposting or liking components of the strategic meta-narrative. Furthermore, each new media ecology engages audiences in discrepant ways and to different degrees, hence it is detrimental to craft accordingly in order to portray credibility, convey meaning and symbolism. The main issue in theorising political communication in the Web 2.0. era is whether public diplomacy is reshaped to adapt to and integrate the changes posed by the digital forum, and in doing so undergoes a continual process of transformation, or if it remains consistent with its analog

traditions and solely uses the virtual space as a method of transmission. Another challenge is quantifying mobilisation, meaning how exactly do strategic narratives of a state influence audiences to physically engage in war, donate or persuade them to opine in favour of specific foreign policy. These challenges are intricate to empirically determine and scholars validly contest the power of state digital strategic narratives shaping substantive effect on the outcomes of warfare and statecraft. Despite the difficulty of determining an immediate link of causality between Ukrainian strategic narratives and audience incentivisation, the thesis posited a study of how their relationship is intertwined.

Possible directions that stem from this investigation are how actors in the future will navigate the opportunities and challenges posed by these new media ecologies in order to communicate their own narratives, the manner in which foreign policy may be affected by the participatory nature of digital diplomacy and which are the consequences of the birth of this new playground where media corporations, regional alliances and novel geopolitical actors redesign the information space. This thesis opened the path for forthcoming research into the paradigm of sovereignty and power in the online-first 21st century.

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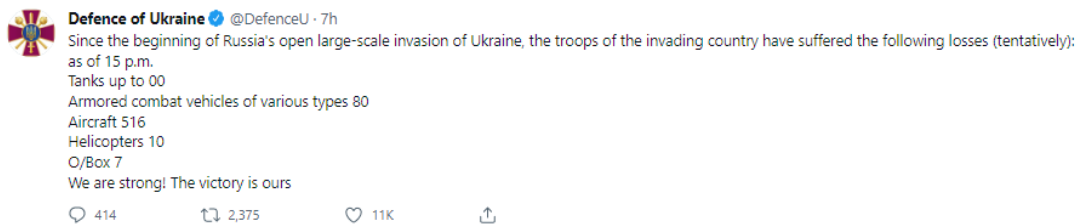
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7. Appendix

Online communications from the Ukrainian political bodies and elite have been used as primary data for the analysis section of this thesis. The materials which are still available online, in the form of videos and transcripts, have been linked in the bibliography above. The remaining materials consisting of posts from various social media channels have been saved in the form of screenshots and web captures due to their retrieval from the WayBack Machine. The WayBack Machine is a platform which allows for viewing old, archived and deleted materials from different users and websites on the internet. The materials have been sorted according to their in-thesis denomination, name of the author and the date of publication.

- In-thesis denomination: 17 | Title: "We are strong! The victory is ours" | Author: Ministry of Defence of Ukraine | 24/02/2022



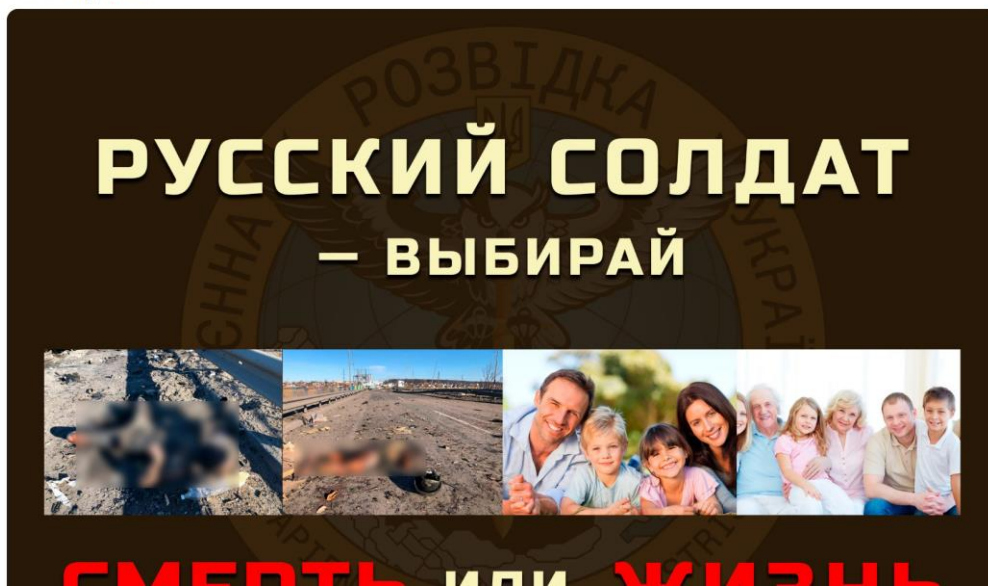
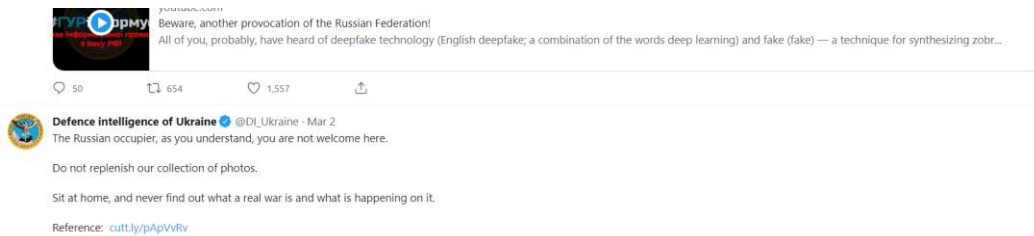
- In-thesis denomination: 18 | Title: "We are creating an IT army" | Author: Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine | 26/02/2022



- In-thesis denomination: 19 | Title: "Send Putin to Jupiter" | Author: Ministry of Defence of Ukraine | 01/03/2022



- In-thesis denomination: 20 | Title: "The Russian occupier, as you understand, you are not welcome here." | Author: Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine | 02/03/2022



- In-thesis denomination: 21 | Title: "Special Forces of the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine destroyed 10 more enemy infantry fighting vehicles in Hostomel" | Author: Defence Intelligence of Ukraine | 03/03/2022



- In-thesis denomination: 22 | Title: "The enemy is awake" | Author: Deputy Defense Minister of Ukraine | 11/03/2022

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES DURING ARMED CONFLICT

The Case of Ukraine post-2022 Russian Invasion



Hanna Maliar ✓
11 March 2022 . 🌐



International Legion of Defense of Ukraine

Everyone wonders what is there and how.

But information about the Legion is very sensitive, because it is about security. The enemy is awake. Therefore, excuse me, but in wartime conditions information about the place of deployment, tasks, composition of units, etc. will be limited.

The Legion has already launched a press service. So, you will be regularly updated on the news of the Legion.

Here is a video and text from the press service of the Legion [Anton Myronovych](#)

Volunteers from all over the world come to our country to help our soldiers throw the invaders from the Ukrainian land. Volunteers join the ranks of the International Legion of Defense of Ukraine. First, they coordinate all legal issues of service in the legion, then receive all the necessary equipment and weapons. After that, special training and coordination of units begins. One of the volunteers, a Norwegian named Damien, told about the motives of serving in the legion, about people who, side by side with Ukrainians, will defend our land, Europe and the world from Russian Nazis.

– When you see how bombs and missiles fall on Ukrainian cities every day, destroying hospitals, schools, houses – it's hard to perceive, it looks like madness. You see what's happening and there's nothing you can seem to do. When the creation of the International Legion began, I immediately knew that I had to join it. Here my friends and I will be useful for the Ukrainian military resistance. I am glad that I was in the right place at the right time and was among the first to join the ranks of this unit.

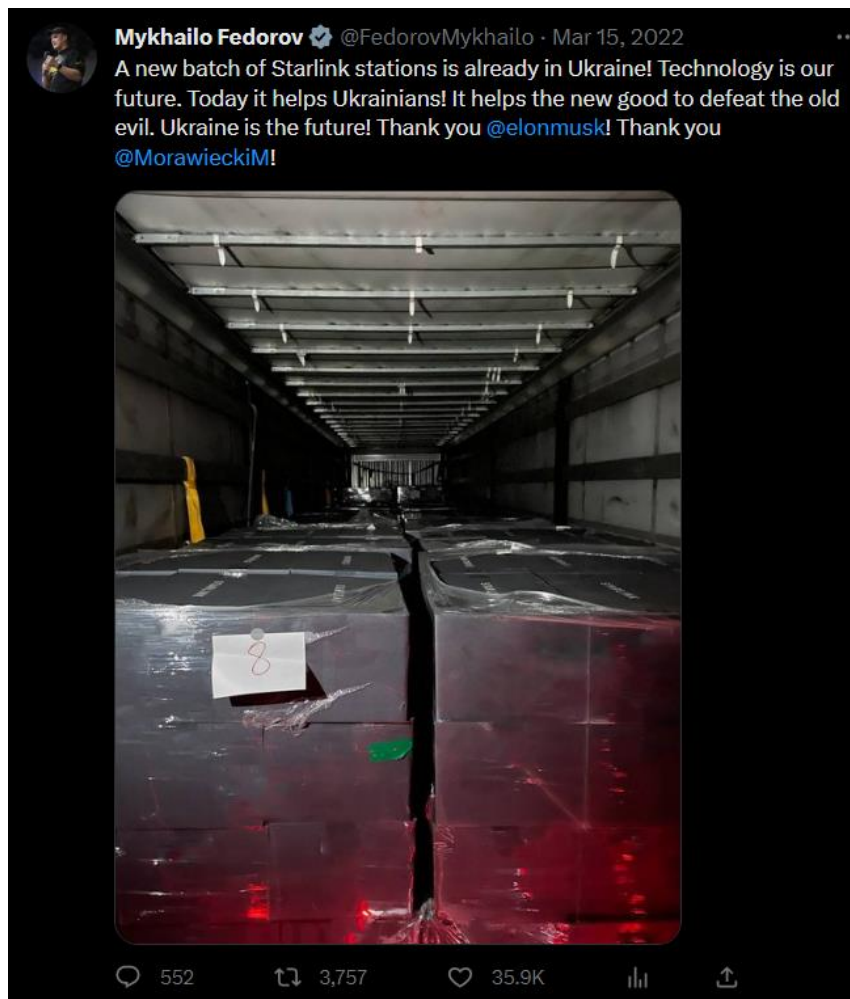
– There are volunteers from many countries in the legion, as of yesterday we have representatives from 52 countries. People come from Ukraine's neighbouring countries, from Poland, from the Baltic states, from distant lands, from Scandinavia, many people from Great Britain, as well as many Americans.

– Every volunteer from abroad comes for the sole purpose: to help Ukraine in the armed struggle. They all have a desire to fight, to help the Ukrainian military as best they can, they want to be useful as soon as possible. They are doing everything to be at the forefront as soon as possible.

- I wish Ukrainians victory. There are no other alternatives. We cannot lay down our arms until the invaders are thrown out of Ukrainian land. We will continue to fight until Victory.

- In-thesis denomination: 23 | Title: "Ukraine is the future!" | Author: Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine | 15/03/2022

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES DURING ARMED CONFLICT
The Case of Ukraine post-2022 Russian Invasion



- In-thesis denomination: 24 | Title: "We protect the entire civilized world" | Author: Ministry of Defence of Ukraine | 17/03/2022



- In-thesis denomination: 25 | Title: "I urge you - do not break the country" | Author: CinC AF of Ukraine | 19/03/2022

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES DURING ARMED CONFLICT

The Case of Ukraine post-2022 Russian Invasion



Головнокомандувач ЗС України / CinC AF of Ukraine
19 March 2022



Хочу звернутися до політиків, які, перебуваючи в тилкових містах, розповідають про «зраду» і роблять «оцінки» оперативної обстановки.

Своїми безвідповідальними заявами, на зразок, противник щось нібито без проблем взяв або що нібито готується здача країни, ви ображаєте наших воїнів.

Сили оборони героїчно протистоять ворогу, якого називали другою армією у світі.

Ми зупинили противника на всіх напрямках. Ми завдали їм таких втрат, яких вони ніколи не бачили і не могли уявити.

Про це знають всі українці. Про це знає світ.

Триває 24-та доба нашого спротиву повномасштабній агресії. Спротиву, який став можливий завдяки національній єдності, нашій підготовці та мотивації.

Тож, я звертаюся до вас: не принижуйте наших захисників своїми «експертними оцінками». Це ж не ви зараз на першій лінії оборони. І не ваші діти.

Кожен повинен займатися своєю справою. Ми захищаємо Україну. Ви дбаєте про її розвиток і не заважаєте нам.

Охочих боронити країну запрошую до лав Збройних Сил.

Закликаю - не розколюйте державу!

Слава Україні!

I want to address the politicians who, while in the back towns, talk about "betrayal" and make "assessments" of the operational environment.

With your irresponsible statements, like the enemy took something without a problem or preparing to surrender the country, you are insulting our soldiers.

Defense forces heroically confront the enemy, which was called the second army in the world.

We have stopped the enemy in all directions. We have inflicted on them losses they have never seen or imagined.

All Ukrainians know about this. The world knows about this.

Our 24th age of resistance to full-scale aggression continues. Resistance made possible by national unity, our preparation and motivation.

So, I'm asking you: don't humiliate our defenders with your "expert grades". You're not on the front line of defense now. And not your children.

Everyone needs to mind their business. We are protecting Ukraine. You care about her development and do not interfere with us.

I invite those who want to defend the country to the ranks of the Armed Forces.

I urge you - do not break the country!

Glory to Ukraine!

- In-thesis denomination: 26 | Title: "Keep it up, gentlemen!" | Author: Ministry of Defence of Ukraine | 24/03/2022



Defence of Ukraine @DefenceU · 3h
Ukraine government organization

The largest military exercise of russian army in history continues. During the first month 100 soldiers successfully learnt how to desert, surrender and die. Soldiers and generals peacefully lie shoulder to shoulder in ua fields. Keep it up, gentlemen!

211

1,864

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