

Understanding Ukrainians: Realities, Disinformation and Allyship

1. Introduction.
2. Background and geopolitics of Russia-Ukraine relations: history, culture, international relations.
3. What is the Russo-Ukrainian war? How does it translate into media narratives?
4. Canada case study.
5. Voices of Ukrainians: lived experiences and what they signal us.
6. What international allies can do to support Ukrainians: a guide.

Appendix: a glossary of the most widespread stereotypes and their corrections.

1. Introduction

Ukraine has long been at the crossroads of empire, ideology, and identity, with its history manipulated by colonial narratives that continue to shape global perceptions. The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war is not just a military conflict but a battle for historical truth, national sovereignty, and the right to self-representation. It is a fight for every Ukrainian's bodily autonomy: for the right to stay on one's property, for the right not to have children stolen by the colonizer, for the right of self-determination, for freeing those illegally detained – living and dead. While the world voyeuristically watches the war unfold in real-time like some sort of sadistic reality show, misinformation, outdated academic frameworks, and lingering Soviet propaganda continue to cloud the discourse, reducing Ukraine's struggle to simplistic geopolitical binaries.

This white paper seeks to dismantle these misconceptions by comprehensively analyzing Ukraine's historical and cultural context, media representations, and people's lived experiences. It explores how narratives about Ukraine have been constructed, distorted, and weaponized over time, impacting international perceptions and policy decisions. By examining historical revisionism, propaganda tactics, and the evolution of Ukrainian self-representation, this document aims to equip allies with the knowledge needed to engage with Ukraine beyond surface-level news coverage.

In a world where digital information warfare is as pivotal as military strategy, understanding Ukraine requires more than passive media consumption. It demands

critical engagement, historical awareness, and a commitment to decolonizing outdated perspectives. This white paper is not an encyclopedia, nor does it answer all possible questions – if anything, it poses its own questions to which there is no correct solution. The authors aim to promote stronger media literacy education because government censorship alone is insufficient, as technological advancements make it easy to bypass content restrictions. We advocate for programs that teach individuals how to critically assess and interpret media content, which can undeniably save lives.

We call for activists and the affected nations to cease making ongoing wars and military conflicts a competition. Death does not judge by race, but people do. Comparative war narratives dehumanize and antagonize victims instead of promoting mutual understanding and help. Every death is its own tragedy, and we should respectfully mourn it while striving to restore peace and affected infrastructure as soon as possible.

War is not a trend to bolster one's social media following, or please one's egocentrism and virtue-signaling itch.

Finally, this white paper addresses Ukraine's past and present realities and provides practical guidance for those who seek to meaningfully support its sovereignty and cultural integrity.

2. Background and geopolitics of Russia-Ukraine relations: history, culture, international relations.

There is widespread speculation and disinformation surrounding Ukrainian history. Unkovski-Korica (2024) highlights that knowledge production on the Russo-Ukrainian war is shaped by outdated epistemological hierarchies, where Western and Russocentric perspectives dominate over alternative Eastern European viewpoints. Indeed, many pre-2014 books on Ukrainian and world history are saturated with Soviet propaganda—a legacy of Stalin's 1931 historical revisionism. According to Brandenberger (2023), Stalin reshaped Soviet history for academics and educators to emphasize a "usable past" that would reinforce state authority, legitimize his rule, and foster national unity by linking the pre-revolutionary era to the Stalinist present. This revisionism challenged Leninist rhetoric on nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism, effectively denying the extensive oppression of minorities. Since the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2014, Stalinist historical narratives were amplified and repurposed to form the foundation of Russia's justification against Ukrainian independence and its right to a distinct national identity.

Putin frequently invokes ethnic unity through Orthodox Christianity, a common language, and historical continuity, reinforcing this narrative of Russian supremacy (Brandenberger, 2023). Like Stalin, Putin's rhetoric emphasizes Russocentrism and etatism, portraying Russian statehood as the core of Soviet and Rus' identity. This perspective marginalizes non-Russian nationalities by minimizing their unique historical roles and contributions.

The scarcity of widely accessible, unbiased materials on Ukrainian history further complicates public perception—both internally and externally. Russian hegemony in historical narratives continues to impede the decolonization process for Ukrainian audiences, both active and passive. Meanwhile, Russia has heavily invested in saturating the internet with distorted narratives that amplify Putin's perspective. As a result, it is unsurprising that foreign audiences, unfamiliar with the complexities of Ukrainian history, often fall victim to the most readily available sources of disinformation—especially if these sources appear credible, such as articles published by renowned state universities. Furthermore, because Russian propaganda has historically influenced foreign scholarly works, Western academia has failed to securitize the Russian invasion of Ukraine properly—a consequence of deeply ingrained colonial perceptions that normalize Russian dominance (Kushnir, 2024).

Russocentrism is not just about media literacy; it is also about language usage and translation biases. Many academic works rely on Russian-language sources or are translated from Russian, often carrying linguistic and emotional nuances that subtly shape perceptions of historical events. Because of its lexical particularities, Russian can subliminally influence foreign audiences through seemingly neutral wording. Kushnir (2024) highlights the role of imperial terminology (e.g., "*Kievan Russia*" instead of "*Kyivan Rus'*," and "*the Ukraine*" instead of "*Ukraine*") in legitimizing Russian territorial claims, a practice long adopted by Western academia.

Given this context, addressing key historical eras frequently manipulated in doctored history and media is crucial.

2.1 Kyivan Rus and the establishment of Russo-Ukrainian rivalry

The modern Russo-Ukrainian tension dates back to the expansion of Kyivan Rus in 882-1054 and fragmented governing, complicated by the rivalry of princes for power. To stabilize the country and strengthen the colonial conquest of Finno-Ugric tribes, Vladimir the Great adopted the Byzantine governing principle of "One State, One Ruler,

One God." He introduced Orthodoxy to standardize the belief system, using churches to spread a common narrative. The orthodox church already represented a unified institution, governed by consolidated principles based on the commandments and teachings of Jesus Christ – unachievable discipline by the region and family-specific paganism or power-struggle controlled commonwealth at the time (Santos Marinas, 2011; Bournelis, 2019). Furthermore, orthodoxy cemented the Cyrillic alphabet in Kyivan Rus, strengthening pan-Orthodox Eastern European relations.

The grand ideological divide happened after Kyiv fell to the Mongols in 1240, dissolving Kyivan Rus: both Halych-Volhynia and Vladimir-Suzdal laid claim to the name Rus but developed along distinct paths.

Danylo Halytskyi, the ruler of the Halych-Volhynia principality, resisted Mongol expansion and sought Western allies, turning to Hungary, Poland, and Lithuania for support (Subtelny, 2009). Pope Innocent IV, whom Halytskyi sought as a military partner, was tempted to have the ecclesiastical authority of Rome established over the post-Schism Orthodox parish of former Kyivan Rus (Hatton et al., 1997). Nevertheless, the crusade against the Mongols and Halytskyi's land conversion to the Latin (Catholic) Church never occurred: Pope Innocent IV opted to send envoys to symbolically crown Danylo Halytskyi as the King of Rus (Dovhaniuk, 2019).

Like modern Western regions of Ukraine, Halych-Volhynia became deeply involved in European affairs. It was ultimately divided between Poland and the rising Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which captured Kyiv in 1362—more than a century after it fell to the Mongols (Subtelny, 2009).

On the other hand, Vladimir-Suzdal principality cooperated with Mongols and their successor, the Golden Horde, for nearly two centuries. The initial devastation, marked by the ransacking and extermination of the citizenry and governing institutions, including the church, soon switched into a version of a medieval protectorate (Shaikhutdinov, 2021; Maiorov, 2020). The Mongols adopted a relatively tolerant stance toward the Orthodox Church due to not yet converting to Islam and following a non-fanatical form of paganism (Langer, 2021). The leaders of the Golden Horde quickly realized that they could use the church to maintain control over the local population (Hackel, 2017). Orthodox teachings emphasized humility and submission (rabstvo – slavery) to authority, aligning with the biblical principle that "all power comes from God."

According to Hackel (2017), to reinforce their rule, the Mongols granted the Orthodox clergy significant privileges, including exemption from taxes and other obligations. Churches and monasteries retained all their land holdings, buildings, and movable property. Langer (2021) points out that in return for these privileges, the Mongol ruler Mengü-Timur required Russian priests to offer prayers for him, his family, and his heirs, similar to what has been done by Kyivan Rus princes. The Orthodox Church effectively leveraged these special rights, significantly expanding its land holdings and wealth during this period. The wealth accumulated by the Russian Church played a major role in the later liberation movement, which began with the unification of Russian principalities around Moscow (Minzhurenko, 2018; Minzhurenko, 2019). The rift between church and horde started in 1320 when the Mongols officially adopted Islam as their state religion. While Islam spread among the nomadic population was slow, the legal status of the Orthodox clergy started to decline. According to Minzhurenko (2018), by 1380, Russian priests increasingly aligned with the Moscow princes to free Rus from foreign domination to save Orthodoxy's position as the chief religious institution.

The described population mixing, social transformations, and political differences led to two separate Kyiv Rus' successor states with unique identities that continue to clash in modernity.

2.2 Imperial colonialism

Religion continued shaping the colonization of Ukrainians throughout different historical periods. Ukrainian lands were divided between various countries that were often hostile and competing centers of power in Europe – Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Golden Horde, Russia, Ottoman Empire, Poland, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Rzeczpospolita– aggravated independence struggle and formation of Ukrainian national identity. These conquests were marked by decolonization – erasing the defeated's culture and installing the victor's customs. Ukrainian serfs and peasants, as a controlled native population used for manual labor, mainly remained on the conquered land while their overlords often changed.

Colonialism may be divided into two approaches: aggressive domination and parenting. Aggressive domination is what we usually refer to when discussing the colonisation of America and Africa, where the colonialist is a swift usurper. Parenting, on the other side, is slower and does not antagonize the colonized, fostering a co-dependence between the two states where one is a “parent” or “older sibling” and the dominated state is a “child” or “younger sibling (Ashcroft, 2000; Millis and Lefrançois, 2018; Yatsenko, 2019).” The culture of the colonized cannot be on the same pedestal as the

colonizer's civilization in both cases; the difference is that usurpers destroy the culture, stripping the colonized of any identity while the parent allows some native elements to exist, appropriating and merging the customs.

During the 18th-19th century, the Russian empire refused to see Ukrainians (Malorossy or Little Russians at the time) as separate ethnos: not only were Ukrainians considered as part of its politically dominant ethnic group due to religious affiliation, but due to Imperial Russia claiming to be the rightful successor of Kyivan Rus and all its lands on both sides of the Dnipro River (Kulchytskyi, 2005). 19th-century Ukrainian intelligentsia actively developed the idea of national identity and independence using the Kyivan Rus toponym "Ukraine" as an ethnonym. Kulchytskyi (2005) stresses that Imperial officials opposed such self-identification that rejected the Russian ethnic identity, seeing Ukrainians as traitors and renegades. Therefore, by advocating for the Ukrainian people's right to their language, a distinct national history, and an independent cultural identity, the Ukrainian intelligentsia inherently challenged and clashed with the ruling imperial elite of the empire.

Ukrainians were allowed to somewhat self-identify under the Austro-Hungarian rule, yet were dominated by Poles, whom Austrians favored more than Ukrainians. After gaining rights, Austro-Hungarian Ukrainians crossed the ocean for Canada and the United States – almost 300 thousand people left Galicia and Bukovina in 1900–10, and over 40 thousand peasants left Transcarpathia in 1905–1914 (Kulchytskyi, 2005). Ukrainian peasants from the Russian Empire did not have such an opportunity in general – due to many still owing redemption and servitude to the former masters post-serfdom abolition. According to Didkiv's'ka (2019), transatlantic emigration from sub-Russian Ukraine amassed 1034 Ukrainians who arrived in the USA from 1899 to 1910. Immigration statistics from 1905 show that of the total % of Ukrainians who migrated to the USA, 97% originated from Austria-Hungary.

Discrimination against non-Russian empire Ukrainians was severely evident during World War I. When Russian troops occupied Galicia and Bukovyna in 1914, they quickly dismantled the cultural Ukrainian infrastructure. For example, German and Polish schools were allowed to continue operating, but Ukrainian schools were forcibly converted into Russian institutions, even though many local children did not speak Russian (Kulchytskyi, 2005; Khoma, 2022). Likewise, all Ukrainian-language periodicals were shut down. Intellectuals and Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests were deported into the Russian outback to prevent the further spread of inferior identity and culture (Kulchytskyi, 2005).

The former serf dissatisfaction after quasi abolition of slavery, economic stagnation, famine, and cultural tyranny led to the 1905-1907 revolution in the Russian Empire, which limited autocracy and marked the beginning of parliamentary development (Perrie, 1972). Another significant advancement was the emergence of political parties, which were used by proletariat organizations such as the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party as the means for legal operation. Democratic freedoms, including freedom of speech and religion, were introduced, and censorship was legally abolished (Perrie, 1972). Peasants were pardoned from redemption payments, introduced to expanded mobility, allowed to have trade unions, and had their workday reduced to 9-10 hours while salaries increased.

2.3 USSR period

The censorship was not entirely gone from the Russian empire, especially during WWI. The press was checked, fined, and shut down if necessary. Nevertheless, the proletariat movement was already too grand to stop it. According to the case study presented by Larkin (2024), proletariat-centric media broke the monarchist hegemony by putting peasants at the center of communication and art. Previously none different than animals to their masters and the monarchy, laborers suddenly got a voice and representation (Larkin, 2024). Figures like Lunacharsky readapt events in Christianity as early proletariat revolutions, changing the traditional appearances of the Christian pantheon to match how the contemporary peasantry looked (Lunacharsky, 1908). Distorted Christianity aided Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War that followed the fall of the Russian Empire until religion became a threat and had to be halted. Lenin announced indigenization to fill the void left after removing the monarchy and Russian Orthodoxy as the oldest governing institution.

While the UkSSR had different epochs, the ones important for the general foreign Ukrainian ally were indigenization, the new religion era (Stalinism), dissident resistance, and Perestroika.

The Soviet Ukraine lacked cultural and linguistic unity, as the region had historically been divided among various empires. 86.5% of Ukrainians were peasants, and three-quarters of the adult Russian Empire population could not read or write in 1917. Moreover, some marginalized groups were ignored by the education system: only 6% of Poltavan women were literate in 1897 (Avsheniuk et al., 2022). The empire's fear of literate peasantry and prohibition of education to avoid oppressed masses realizing the wrongdoing led to only 13% of the Ukrainian population being literate in 1897.

The 1920s indigenization and new economic policy (NEP) period was a Lenin combined tactic to promote national cultures and languages within the USSR. Following the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922, the Bolsheviks sought to integrate national minorities by supporting their cultural and linguistic identities. In Ukraine, this policy—known as Ukrainization—led to significant advancements in education, governance, and media, supported by NEP's revival of a small business model (Gumenyuk and Dramaretskyi, 2023). Ukrainian became the official language of administration, with a rapid increase in literacy rates and the proliferation of Ukrainian-language publications

and schools (Movchan, 2016). The policy also fostered national consciousness, attracting intellectuals and dissidents back to Ukraine.

However, by the late 1920s, Soviet authorities saw national movements as a threat. Moscow began reversing indigenization, targeting Ukrainian cultural figures and national communists as “deviationists.”

USSR ran another campaign alongside soft Ukrainized NEP: throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Bolshevik regime used artificially induced famines (1921–1923, 1925–1926, and 1928–1929) as a tool to control and suppress the Ukrainian peasantry (Ulyanych, 2004). After the failure of forced grain requisitioning and the rise of peasant resistance, the USSR imposed harsh grain quotas, price manipulation (“price scissors”), and heavy taxation to break rural opposition. Earlier famines had already weakened rural populations, but the Holodomor (1932–1933) deliberately targeted Ukrainian peasants, who were seen as a rebellious force. During this time, villages were sealed off, food aid was withheld, and forced resettlements of Russians and Belarusians were used to replace starving populations (Ulyanych, 2004). Resettling created a “sanitary border” between Russian and Ukrainian Soviet Republics that was resistant to an independent Ukrainian state. This resulted in a principal linguistic division and ensured key industrial regions like Donbas remained aligned with Russia (Larkin, 2024). The Holodomor remains the most devastating example of genocide through starvation, killing between 4.5 to 10.5 million Ukrainians while the Soviet state continued exporting grain. These famines were not just a consequence of poor policies but a strategic tool of repression—eliminating resistance, destroying national consciousness, and ensuring total Soviet control over Ukraine’s agricultural heartland.

With repressions, deportations, and famines die the majority of the Ukrainian cultural elite that drove the development of science, culture, and the most independent journalism in the UkSSR history (Larkin, 2024). Stalin pushed for the Russification of non-Russian republics, repeating the Russian Empire’s cultural hegemony under a different religion – Marxism-Leninism (Binns, 1979). Stalinism can be defined by a series of mystifications, and the establishment of civil religion manifested through Stakhanovite saints (Luke, 1987; Larkin, 2024). Stalin was desperate to accelerate previously failing industrialization and counter Nazi Germany’s ascension as the new superpower. Stalin and Hitler ended up mirroring each other and appropriating the USA’s popular culture (Shpotov, 2002). The Russification grip over Ukraine was maintained throughout WWII, with Stalin investing sufficient efforts to demonize any attempts at national liberation movement after OUN fights on Nazi Germany’s side

(Erlacher, 2013; Katchanovski, 2013). The failed bid to create Ukrainian autonomy under Nazi Germany and OUN's broad collaboration with Hitler will play a negative role for Ukrainian intelligentsia in the Russian-chauvinist Soviet narrative, portraying them as pathological traitors and Nazis.

Dissident resistance started shortly after Stalin's death and mass rehabilitation. Dissidents stood against human rights violations, producing media that promoted national values and liberal ethics, which the USSR lacked. Because of dissident literature popularization, the USSR began to actively capture and torture Ukrainian authors, killing many in the process (Martsinkiv, 2021). The brutality with which the USSR treated humanists attracted international attention, yet it was not enough to save prominent figures like Vasyl Stus (Rudnytsky, 1987). The general Ukrainian population becomes afraid to discuss taboo topics.

Perestroika was a transition period marked by relaxed censorship and a general understanding that the Party was trying to resuscitate the dying Soviet Union. Previously unseen articles squirmingly rehabilitating nationalist liberation movements like OUN are printed in journals and newspapers (Erlacher, 2013); dissidents who survived GULAGs draft transition period between the dissolution of the USSR and the creation of independent Ukraine, Western masses finally get a good glimpse of the previously closed off country, forming new but lasting opinions.

2.4 Modern Ukraine

New Ukrainian media remained on the same level of state control, best characterized by Kuchma's Temnyky (Larkin, 2024). What changed was who controlled the media – oligarchy, mob, and separate politicians. Artistically, Ukrainians were free to explore whatever they wanted, attracting religious sects and other swindlers who quickly took advantage of an emancipated nation. The Russian language still dominated every type of media product available. Journalism began to stabilize in the early 2000s under the Presidency of Victor Yushchenko, after the prolonged period of media anarchy and Russian influence. Although Yanukovych and his proxy government reinstated Russian influence in Ukraine, ultimately failed, resulting in the Revolution of Dignity.

Russian gradual propaganda build-up, hybrid war, and aggression in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea will begin the current war (2014–2025). After annexing and establishing two quasi-republics, Russia accelerated propaganda to normalize its support of terrorists and unlawful occupation of a foreign territory. The current Russian anti-Ukrainian and anti-West narrative mimics Stalinist Russification, with active efforts to recolonize Ukraine.

3. What is the Russo-Ukrainian war? How does it translate into media narratives?

The Russo-Ukrainian war is not just a military confrontation but a prolonged struggle against Russian imperialism, deeply intertwined with Ukraine's historical, cultural, and linguistic identity. The conflict escalated in 2014 after the Euromaidan Revolution, which overthrew a pro-Russian government, leading to Russia's annexation of Crimea and the occupation of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk under the guise of separatist movements. For nearly eight years, the Ukrainian government framed the war as an Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) rather than a direct war with Russia, delaying full mobilization and public recognition of Russian aggression. The full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, shattered any illusions, forcing Ukraine to engage in total defense while also confronting internal challenges such as media manipulation, historical Russian cultural dominance, and political indecision. Cultural erasure has been a key component of Russia's aggression, with efforts to suppress the Ukrainian language, rewrite history, and appropriate Ukrainian cultural heritage. In response, Ukraine has strengthened its cultural identity through literature, music, cinema, and grassroots initiatives reinforcing national consciousness and challenging centuries of Russian influence.

3.1 Russo-Ukrainian war in 2014-2022 as ATO and JFO

The Revolution of Dignity overthrew the Russian proxy government when the Ukrainian president, Victor Yanukovich, refused to proceed with the EU association agreement in 2014. Much speculation exists about what Euromaidan was, depending on which perspective one chooses to belong to. The Russian narrative presents Euromaidan as a US-sponsored coup or a protest blown out of proportion by online hysteria. At the same time, Ukrainians refer to it as an earnest revolution. Euromaidan is a remarkable example of active civic participation augmented by new media that mobilized diverse strata, especially the less active young generation. Low youth civic participation may sound shocking to the new electorate from Canada and the USA in 2025, but there is an enormous societal and technological gap between media usage in 2014 and 2025, not only in Ukraine. Twenty-three years after the USSR ceased to exist physically, it still existed mentally in the majority of Ukrainians, aggravated by the fact that Ukrainian politicians were mainly Russian-speaking Soviet cadres. Therefore, Ukrainian Millennials and Gen Z exhibited a fatalist lack of trust in government institutions due to limited opportunities, low income, and persisting didivschina. In 2011, Gorshenin Institute reported that the problem of employment is the most urgent among 64.5% of Ukrainian youth. 41% of correspondents aged 18 to 29 admitted they were ready to leave Ukraine for a well-paid job (Zanuda, 2011).

However, a couple of hundred pro-European integration Kyiv ralliers on November 21 evolved into millions protesting for and against the exact cause countrywide in a month (Shapovalova, 2017). Despite that, Ukraine did not pioneer social media for civic mobilization. The Arab Spring (2010-2012) established the online as a dynamic campaigning tool for protesters. Nevertheless, Ukraine was the first country to experience a hybrid war as we know it today.

Firstly, 2014 signalized the Vkontakte exodus and subsequent integration of Ukrainians into the Western narrative and online infrastructure. Vkontakte used to unite Russian-speaking post-Soviet nations, but most importantly, it confederated Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine – the Rus trinity Putin will refer to throughout his speeches. Ukrainians and their native culture represented a minority compared to the consolidated Russo-Belarusian users that spread mainstream, government-approved Russocentric culture. Therefore, when Euromaidan began, many Ukrainians turned to VK, their habitual

platform, to mobilize support for the uprising against Russian colonial oppression, effectively marking the start of a hybrid war. According to Bilal (2021), hybrid warfare combines conventional military force with unconventional tactics to exploit an opponent's vulnerabilities.

– illustration –

The hybrid war tactics include: a surge of doctored news, provocations, malicious memes, AI and human-made deepfakes, stalking, harassment, user gaslighting, undercover foreign lobbying of traditional and digital media channels, troll factories, and mass data scraping with consequent profiling of opposing actors.

A defining feature of hybrid warfare is the deliberate ambiguity surrounding the aggressor's identity and intentions, making it challenging to attribute actions and formulate effective responses. This ambiguity allows the aggressor to operate below the threshold of formal war, complicating traditional defense mechanisms (Bilal, 2021). The semi-anonymous clash between two opposing Ukrainian factions, international pro-Russian internet sofa divisions, and Russian special forces on VK further solidified anti-CIS views and necessitated a new, more lenient platform to the Ukrainian neoliberalism movement. On the contrary, US-based Facebook protected the identities of Ukrainians from Russian intelligence services, had significantly fewer Russians (14% FB opposed to 58% VK), and had a large international audience of 1.23bn monthly users. Unlike VK, Facebook did not censor Ukrainian voices: FB algorithms amplified the plea of Euromaidaners and allies that covered corruption, attacks of unidentified people, and murders conducted by Berkut riot police (Fornusek, 2024). Facebook was established as the largest foreign-accessible Ukrainian news network that covered the country's Maidans (squares), whereas the official media either censored, spun, or refused to report the events altogether. Galushko and Zorba (2014) report that by January 2014, Ukrainian Facebook users reached 32% – doubling the 16% recorded at the end of 2013.

- illustration -

Russia had 143.8 million population in 2013

Russian internet users totaled 60.8% in 2013

Russian Facebook usage totaled 14% in 2013

Russian VK usage totaled 58% in 2013

Ukraine had 46.3 million population in 2013

Ukrainian internet users totaled 41% in 2013

Ukrainian Facebook users totaled 16% at the end of 2013 (Ronzhyn, 2014)

Ukrainian Vkontakte users totaled 61% of internet users at the end of 2013

For some, 36% of total Ukrainian internet users may sound minuscule. However, the fact that Facebook usage doubled in a couple of months proves the immense urgency that forced Ukrainians out of their comfort zone. For many Ukrainians, Vkontakte meant “home,” uniting family members and friends, giving them a unique voice, and supporting a wide array of interests, although it was prevalently Russian-speaking. Furthermore, Kyiv Post’s research indicates that Ukrainian users generally prefer VKontakte’s interface that featured games, pirated media, and UGC over Facebook’s perplexing posting mechanism and absence of illegal content (Ostryzniuk, 2014). For many users across CIS, VK acted as an economic bridge where anyone could buy or sell products, often for cheaper than in brick-and-mortar or non-VK online marketplaces. Moreover, due to its older, more educated, and wealthier audience, Facebook will stay as a platform for solely professional and informational purposes until Poroshenko’s 2017 Vkontakte ban that forced 78% of the Ukrainian total population to seek a Western alternative at last (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

As described in Section 2, alphabet and linguistic similarities connect Slavic countries through a shared heritage, reinforcing their historical, cultural, and religious roots. However, the languages of each Slavic nation differ significantly; for example, Belarusian and Polish are linguistically closer to Ukrainian than to Russian (Łesiów, Robert, & Koropecyk, 1998). Thus, Russia has historically imposed its language and version of Christianity on colonized nations, and introduced its tongue as a unifying element when the USSR launched Likbez (the campaign to eradicate illiteracy). After Lenin’s death, Russian eventually displaced native languages. This linguistic hegemony in media, government, workplaces, and even family life disrupted the organic development of national languages within Soviet republics. As a result, many older generations, such as Boomers and Gen Xers, did not speak their national languages fluently. In contrast, just one or two generations earlier, their ancestors may have spoken only their native language, particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, Ukrainian Gen Xers born between 1974 and 1976 experienced a sudden shift in the school curriculum, where they were required to pass a national history exam—despite never having studied the subject—to graduate and enter tertiary education.

Despite national languages being legally required and integrated after the dissolution of the USSR, Russian remained dominant in Ukraine until Yushchenko’s Ukrainization efforts. For example, in 2006, parliament passed a law requiring that 75% of all broadcasts be in Ukrainian, with non-Ukrainian programs mandated to include

dubbing. This reform faced significant opposition, with pro-Russian lobbyists and local councils in Eastern and Southern Ukraine attempting to declare Russian a regional language to stall its implementation.

After nearly a year of legal battles, the Constitutional Court ruled that local government decisions granting official status to Russian or other languages were unconstitutional, reaffirming Ukrainian as the sole state language. However, in 2012, President Yanukovych signed the highly controversial *On the Principles of State Language Policy* bill, which undermined the use of Ukrainian in favor of Russian. The law allowed regions where at least 10% of the population belonged to a national minority to adopt their language for official use, effectively granting Russian legal status in many areas and once again challenging Ukrainian's constitutional primacy.

The Russo-Ukrainian war deepened linguistic divisions, with Ukrainians split over language policy. Only after the full-scale invasion did Ukrainian definitively become the majority language (Gradus Research, 2023).

Therefore, the Russo-Ukrainian war is bigger than physical confrontation. 2013-2014 were a precedent that made many Ukrainian citizens reconsider their casual Russianess, however, it took eight more years for many to embrace decolonization: Crimean annexation and separatism in Eastern Ukraine that morphed into quasi-states LNR and DNR did not discourage many artists, scientific elite, work immigrants and the general population from depending on Russian culture and the Moscow Patriarchate. Moreover, the constant presence of the Russian military and financing of Donetsk and Luhansk rebels did not pressure Ukrainian officials and media to call war a war, instead indicating the expanding Russian offense as an ATO – Anti Terroristic Operation, much like Putin's 2022-2025 SVO, Special Military Operation. Despite calls for immediate mobilization to maintain the Russian Spring regions and protect strategic infrastructure, the temporary Ukrainian administration refused to take decisive action, even avoiding naming Russia as the aggressor in the state and court documents (Romanchuk, 2017).

The Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and later the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) lasted nearly eight years, from 2014 to 2022. Poroshenko, elected 42 days after acting President Turchynov initiated the ATO, initially promised to end the military invasion within "a couple of weeks" (BBC, 2017). However, political delays continuously postponed resolution efforts, frustrating conscious Ukrainians.

Ukraine has long struggled with bureaucracy and corruption, and journalistic investigations, such as those by Depo.ua (2015), highlighted that for many, the war

became a lucrative business, with ending it meaning cutting off a significant source of income. The devastating impact of the ATO was reflected in a 2017 study by the New Europe Center, GfK Ukraine, and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, which found that one in five young Ukrainians (25%) wanted to emigrate. The younger the age group, the greater their desire to leave Ukraine, indicating a significant generational shift in attitudes toward the country's future.

- Illustration –

Timeline of Ukrainian Presidents' reign from Yushchenko to Zelenskyy (Kravchuk and Kuchma do not matter in this case since it was reasonably quiet during their time in the office).

Yushchenko: survives the political assassination, Orange revolution, resists Russian cultural hegemony, Ukrainian language is the only national tongue, boosts Ukrainian national traditions;

Yanukovich: Russian proxy government, giving Russian regional status, the majority of his cabinet does not speak Ukrainian or makes fun of it by crippling it during speeches, halting EU integration, no freedom of speech, civilian murders;

Poroshenko: oligarchy with lots of loud promises and good marketing, did not end ATO in 2 weeks, Russian media, business and software ban, high corruption, maintained personal business with Russia, treason charges.

Zelenskyy: an ex-super star with a strong presence in Russia, bans Ukrainian pro-Russian media, strong Ukrainization and digitization, led Ukraine through COVID and maintains its independence through Russo-Ukrainian war, questionable media freedom.

Zelenskyy assumed office on May 20, 2019, five years after the start of the ATO and Russia's annexation of Crimea. By that time, significant time had been lost: Crimea was fully integrated into Russia, the conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk had become chronic, economic devastation, mounting debt affected civilians, and Russian politics had become increasingly radicalized. Most Ukrainians had grown accustomed to life under the ATO, especially as the government and state-controlled media avoided using the alarming word "war." As Ukraine's Minister of Defense Reznikov put it: "...most Ukrainians are used to living in a paradigm in which they don't have war. Like, someone is fighting in Eastern Ukraine, and I live in peacetime, beaches, vacations, and so on."

However, Poroshenko's policies—including the ban on Russian social media, software, search engines, businesses, and state media, along with his decommunization efforts—played a significant role in the gradual decolonization of Ukrainians, even after his failed bid for reelection. By the time Zelenskyy was inaugurated, Ukrainians had already been living in a Ukrainian-centric, pro-Western media environment for two years. Russian propaganda still managed to reach some audiences, but the average, non-pro-Russian Ukrainian was far less susceptible to it. Pro-Russian Ukrainians, however, actively sought out outlawed media, bypassing bans with VPNs and establishing underground networks on messaging platforms like Telegram and WhatsApp.

Despite strict media restrictions, Medvedchuk's pro-Russian OPZH (Opposition Platform – For Life) party continued to operate three television channels—112, NewsOne, and ZIK—which were later penalized by Zelenskyy in 2021 for spreading disinformation and posing national security risks. Poroshenko's and Zelenskyy's policies against Russian media influence were met with international criticism and accusations of infringing on media freedom.

3.2 The full-scale Russo–Ukrainian war (February 24, 2022 – present)

The full-scale war came as a shock to many Ukrainians, as there was widespread denial of a major invasion possibility. Most people expected another localized escalation in the East rather than a nationwide war.

In 2021, migration data showed that Russia was the fifth most visited country by Ukrainians, with 918,000 border crossings recorded—excluding entries from occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea or those made via international transit. However, due to rising tensions and COVID-19 travel restrictions, the number of direct trips to Russia actually declined by 12%.

Brovchuk (2022) describes how Ukrainian television casually aired a report about a northeastern border town where most residents openly preferred Russian TV and worked in Russia. Despite ongoing hostilities, many Ukrainians still had family and friends in Russia and Belarus, making complete cross-border disengagement feel like either a radical act or a consequence of growing misunderstandings. Additionally, regions with more substantial imperial histories and large Russian settler populations—such as Odesa and Kharkiv—continued actively using Russian in the service industry despite language laws prohibiting it. The reality of life in Ukraine and the version of Ukraine portrayed in local media often felt like two entirely different countries.

Ukrainian media has adopted an aspirational approach to inspire citizens to align reality with the idealized framing—a classic "fake it until you make it" strategy. This "measuring up" technique was previously employed in the Soviet Union, where model citizens, collectives, and cities were used to instill select ideals in the average proletariat.

Historically, Ukraine has ranked between 90th and 110th out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index (WPF), highlighting state-aligned agendas and biased media ownership. While Ukraine's current ranking has improved to 61st, public distrust in news media remains unchanged. Detector Media found that only 27% of Ukrainians trusted the press in 2024 (Kraynya, 2025). In November 2021, the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting issued 43 regional digital broadcasting licenses across 17 regions, with 15 of them going to "Avers"—a Volyn-based media company strongly linked to Ihor Palytsia, a close associate of oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky and a member of the "For the Future" party, which frequently aligns its parliamentary votes with Zelenskyy's "Servant of the People." This uneven license distribution raises concerns that regulatory decisions were influenced by political affiliations rather than merit (Malyshko, 2021).

Following the full-scale invasion, Ukrainians grew increasingly dissatisfied with Zelenskyy's and the national media's lack of transparency. Mykhailo Podoliak, advisor to the Head of the President's Office, stated that Ukrainian authorities received intelligence from multiple agencies simultaneously, with none predicting the full scale of the attack (TCH, 2022b). Zelenskyy later explained that if officials had warned residents as early as October 2021, it would have triggered mass panic and economic collapse, resulting in the loss of essential workforce for territorial defense forces, emergency responders, and volunteers (TCH, 2022a). Thus, Zelenskyy's monopolization of state media may have been an attempt to control the narrative that the aggressor was undoubtedly monitoring.

However, constant secrecy, overstatements, and limited transparency drove 72% of Ukrainians to rely on Telegram's unofficial news channels in 2023, compared to just 20% in 2021 (Doran, 2023). Unlike state-controlled television, Telegram is significantly harder to regulate, raising concerns over how Ukrainians engage with Russian disinformation, especially when disguised as "Ukrainian insider news." Research by UNDP (2024) revealed that most Ukrainians have only beginner-level media literacy, with just a quarter of the population fact-checking information (Detector Media, 2024; Larkin, 2024). In response, Zelenskyy expanded the regulatory powers of the National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting (NCTR) in 2023 to cover online media and bloggers,

aiming to counter sensationalism, disinformation, and foreign influence. The law also bans Russian-affiliated media ownership and grants the NCTR authority to revoke licenses from sanctioned outlets without a court order, streamlining media compliance control. While international allies have called for further democratization of Ukraine's media, doing so amid an ongoing full-scale war would be reckless, as Ukrainian society has yet to develop sufficient media literacy. Exposing vulnerable audiences to unrestricted propaganda poses a severe national security risk, making strict media regulation a wartime necessity rather than an authoritarian overreach. As argued by Larkin (2024), winning the media war can help Russia avoid civil and partisan war on Ukrainian territories in case of continued partial occupation of Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions or the total occupation of the country post-formal conclusion of the war. Nevertheless, allowing Telegram to operate unrestricted in Ukraine is highly risky, given its use by Ukrainian separatists, Russian propagandists, intelligence agencies, and government, as well as its CEO Pavel Durov's growing ties to the Kremlin in the years leading up to the full-scale war (Larkin, 2024)

Finally, there is a self-censoring and social constructivism issue in audience perception and viewer-media relationship. Conscious Ukrainian youth have been at the forefront of social change during wartime, exercising civic participation online by refuting disinformation, promoting the Ukrainian language, culture, and history, documenting and disseminating Russian war crimes, and reporting malicious groups. Ukrainian youth understand that they co-author history instead of passively reading school textbooks about national heroes who withstood monarchist oppression (Pavliuk, 2025). Youth efforts online have popularized being politically active among older generations conditioned to not engage in protests by the Soviet norms. This social shift translates into statistics: 87% of Ukrainians trust volunteers compared to 50% local government, 48% national telemarathon, 39% administration, and 21% parliament trust (Tanger, 2023). However, an important question will be, "is it appropriate to criticize government during the war?" Many Ukrainians in comment sections are rather protective of the government despite general distrust, with the logic that internal issues should not be voiced on the broad stage because it may give space for Russians to chime in or create a wrong impression among foreigners. That, however, does not entirely apply to Telegram, where bots and sofa warriors create rather an intense atmosphere in comment sections.

3.3 How does the Russo-Ukrainian War translate into media representations?

Ensuring accurate media representation is primarily the responsibility of the group seeking to be represented. Consequently, Ukrainian representations in media can be categorized into the following perspectives:

- The Russian/Soviet viewpoint
- The pro-Russian Ukrainian viewpoint
- Ukraine's self-representation during the national struggle under the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires
- Ukraine's current self-representation

The Russian/Soviet Viewpoint

The Russian imperial perspective denied Ukrainians a distinct identity, instead labeling them as "Little Russians." Under Stalin, Lenin's Ukrainization policy was deemed a threat to Soviet national interests, as it risked fueling internal separatism and external nationalist movements. Consequently, Soviet portrayals of Ukrainians were oversimplified, reducing them to a mere subset of the Russian ethnos.

Sokolova (2022) identifies three Soviet-constructed Ukrainian archetypes:

- The "positive" hero – a loyal Soviet citizen of Ukrainian origin who has abandoned their national identity and identifies solely as a member of the USSR.
- The "reformable" negative hero – a marginalized Ukrainian, portrayed as greedy, dishonest, cowardly, and traitorous. This character evokes disgust but is still seen as redeemable through Soviet re-education.
- The "irredeemable" negative hero – a Ukrainian nationalist, depicted as so dangerous that their total destruction is justified.

According to Dzyuba (2024), Ukrainian women in early Soviet cinema were portrayed in subordinate roles, typically as wives, mothers, and homemakers, embodying the traditional archetype of women as guardians of family warmth.

After the Holodomor, rural Ukrainians were often depicted as "chuby" – a stereotypical, almost caricatured version of Ukrainian peasants. Women were given fuller faces, their feminine curves accentuated by eroticized, Soviet-modified national costumes. They were often portrayed as flirtatious yet cunning, seducing any man within sight.

The representation of Ukrainian men varied by age:

- Young Ukrainian men were romanticized and orientalized, depicted as Cossack-like figures—tall, muscular, broad-shouldered, with dark hair and sharp eyes. This was especially common in historical and rural settings.
- Middle-aged and older Ukrainian men were portrayed with stereotypical mustaches, exaggerated “chub” hairstyles, bulbous noses, large bellies, and a strong dependence on alcohol, lust, and overbearing wives.

Soviet cinema and literature overwhelmingly promoted the idea that Ukrainians were primitive, uneducated peasants dressed in red harem pants, living in the rural countryside (“kurkul”). The exaggerated chubbiness and ornamental clothing served two key purposes:

1. To mask the extreme poverty and famine imposed by Russian colonial policies.
2. To discredit and undermine the Ukrainian intelligentsia, reinforcing the idea that Ukrainians were incapable of autonomous cultural and intellectual development.

Independent Russia continued to perpetuate Soviet-era stereotypes in its media portrayals of Ukrainians. Ukrainian women were often depicted as desperate to marry Russian men, obtain citizenship, and move to majestic, clean Russian megacities. They were characterized as ill-mannered, speaking broken Russian, and behaving in a naïve, ridiculous manner—as seen in Russian adaptations of *The Nanny* and *Father’s Daughters* (Melnyk, 2024). Ukrainian men fared no better, typically portrayed as dim-witted, cowardly bandits or helpless fools who constantly found themselves in trouble.

Meanwhile, Russian narratives glorified their own characters, reinforcing myths such as “the honor of a Russian officer” and “Russians never abandon their own.” These themes shaped an entire generation in Russia, solidifying the idea of Russian moral superiority. As noted by Gordienko (2022), Ukraine itself often failed to challenge negative portrayals, approving works such as the 2009 film *Taras Bulba*, where the legendary Ukrainian Cossack declares himself Russian, or airing the 2012 series *The White Guard*, where a character brutally beheads a chicken screaming “Petlyura” and then engages in a disturbing dialogue:

“And why did her master teach her the word ‘Petlyura’? We need to chop up both the master and the chicken.”

"Well, we could chop down half of Ukraine like that."

"If we need to – we will chop it down." (Kotubey-Heruts'ka, 2022)

Beyond such overt hostility, there are also subtle, subliminal negative portrayals. *Three Bogatyrs*, a cult-classic animated franchise by Melnitsa Studio, was widely aired in Ukrainian cinemas and on Ukrainian television. However, it completely erased Ukraine from its narrative—despite a significant portion of the story being set in Kyiv.

For instance, in the first film, *Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin Zmey*, the story begins in Rostov, depicted as a small, virtuous Russian village with strong family values. The town suffers under the Tatar-Mongol yoke and loses gold due to Popovich's foolish heroism. Throughout the film, distinctly Russian cultural symbols dominate the visuals despite the Kyivan Rus setting. Upon arriving in Kyiv, the audience is introduced to boyars and Prince Volodymyr the Great (who Christianized Rus; see Section 2.1), depicted as corrupt and cowardly.

This type of propaganda is hazardous, as it targets children, subtly reinforcing Russian narratives about Ukraine's inferiority. Melnitsa's approach is not new; similar tactics were used during the Soviet era to reshape perceptions of foreign cultures:

- *Winnie-the-Pooh* → *Vinni-Pukh*: The Soviet adaptation replaced Christopher Robin with Piglet (Pyatachok), turning Pooh into a melancholic, trapped intellectual, frequently breaking the fourth wall by addressing the viewer or staring directly into the camera (Iten, 2018).
- *Beauty and the Beast* → *Аленький цветочек*: In the original French story, the father willingly takes responsibility for his fate, unknowingly setting up his daughter's self-sacrifice. However, in the Soviet version, the father's acceptance of his daughter's fate is immediate and unquestioned, symbolizing unconditional Russian love as a form of sacrifice for the homeland (Nefyodova, 2020).

We can observe a more antagonistic militant accent in pre-2014 computer games that depicted Ukrainians as traitors collaborating with NATO against Russia. In *Confrontation: Enforcement of Peace* (2008), Ukraine is portrayed as betraying the "ancestral friendship" and "strategic partnership" with Russia by siding with the West. Flash games on VK also reflected this shift, reducing Ukrainians to either farmers, criminals, or political pawns. For instance, the simulator *Ukraine's Choice* predetermined a "bad ending" if the player chose EU integration, while a "peaceful future" was only possible by remaining with Russia.

Unlike the Soviet approach of forced assimilation, post-2014 Russian media seeks to demonize Ukrainians altogether. In their narrative, the Soviet-era "Ukrainian nationalist villains" have now fully taken over Ukraine, leaving the other two Soviet Ukrainian archetypes (the assimilated Soviet Ukrainian and the reformable "Little Russian") in the minority.

The brutalization of Ukrainians in Russian creative media serves to reinforce Russian state propaganda, dehumanizing them in news coverage. The frequency of "Ukrainian nationalist" villains in Russian media has skyrocketed:

- In films about occupied Crimea, Ukrainians are portrayed as constant schemers.
- In mass-produced WWII blockbusters, Ukrainians betray Soviet soldiers.
- In contemporary political thrillers, Ukrainians are terrorists targeting Russia.
- In movies about "DNR/LNR," Ukrainians are heartless butcherers and Banderites.

For example, *Russian Character* (2014) justifies the annexation of Crimea by using historical and ethnocultural arguments, falsely claiming that Crimea "has always been an integral part of Russia" while completely erasing Greek, Tatar, and Ukrainian legacies. The film follows a Russian naval officer who visits Crimea only to discover that his grandfather was killed by Ukrainian "Bandera members." The local police cover up for the guilty Nazis, who are backed by American oligarchs funding the Ukrainian government (Slyvenko, 2023).

While Ukraine has far-right and neo-Nazi groups, their influence on politics and society remains minimal. According to a 2018 Freedom House report, extremist parties such as Svoboda, National Corps, and Right Sector exist but lack parliamentary representation due to low public support. Their role in Ukrainian society is marginal, and they do not dictate national policies or political direction. The presence of these groups does not justify labeling Ukraine a "Nazi state." While some far-right organizations, like the Azov Battalion, were integrated into Ukraine's armed forces, they remain a small fraction of the military and do not reflect the ideology of the broader population. Their inclusion was a strategic decision during conflict escalation, not an endorsement of extremist beliefs.

Alternatively, some media erase Ukraine altogether, presenting its lands as either culturally odorless or fully Russified through "toxic nostalgia," promoting two central ideas:

1. The "good Soviet Union."
2. The "Holy Great Patriotic War"

This NPC-nization reinforces the "single nation" thesis, mentally merging Russians and Ukrainians.

Examples include:

- *The Viking* (2016): A film about the Christianization of Kyivan Rus that completely omits Ukrainians, instead centering on Russian mystifications despite the Kyiv setting.
- *Gogol. The Beginning*: A fantasy film about Nikolai Gogol that steals the Ukrainian writer and his works, portraying Poltava as a wild, superstitious village while omitting all other Ukrainian cultural elements.
- *Chernobyl* (Russian version): A response to HBO's *Chornobyl*, the film presents a revisionist history, where the Soviet Union is absolved of wrongdoing, and no attempt to cover up the disaster is acknowledged. Ukraine is completely erased, and most characters are fictionalized (Posunko, 2016).

Through these distortions, agitprop constructs an alternate reality, shaping Russian audiences' perceptions and solidifying the state's narrative control over Ukraine's past and present.

Due to funding, production, and marketing limitations, the pro-Russian Ukrainian viewpoint is rarely depicted in commercial films. However, it is more prevalent in literature, computer games, music, and theater. Many Ukrainian bloggers, actors, and singers sought careers on the Russian stage, viewing Russia as culturally superior. Ukraine was perceived as a provincial, unsophisticated, and financially struggling audience.

Some of Russia's most prominent propagandists are, in fact, Ukrainians, with a clear gender-based division in their roles:

- Women primarily dominate creative industries (music, television, and entertainment).
- Men are more active as bloggers and online influencers.

Notable pro-Russian creative figures include:

- Oksana Marchenko (TV presenter and producer, formerly the face of STB channel)
- Lolita Milyavska (singer, TV presenter)
- Regina Todorenko (singer, TV presenter)
- Taisiya Povaliy (singer)
- Ani Lorak (singer)
- Anna Asti (singer)
- Larisa Dolina (singer of Odesan descent)
- Diana Panchenko (news presenter)

Notable pro-Russian bloggers include:

- Osker Oleksiy
- Chava Mar'yan
- Myslyvets' Egor
- Nezalezhko Taras
- Cheprazov Vasyl
- Anatoly Shariy

It is essential to recognize that not all pro-Russian Ukrainians are fully aware that Russian narratives may have shaped their perspectives. The individuals listed above, however, have made a deliberate choice to support Russia's invasion post-2014 and post-2022. Even neutral or pro-Ukrainian artists can unintentionally reinforce a Russified image of Ukraine in their work. For example, many have observed pro-Russian bias in the popular S.T.A.L.K.E.R. game series by Ukrainian developer GSC Game World:

- The original release was in Russian, with a Ukrainian patch added only a year later.
- The game popularized Russian criminal culture, with the "cheeki breeki" taunt and bandit radio playing Russian chanson, including the song "Хоп, mycopok" glorified by gopnik subculture.
- The early NPC chatter was predominantly in Russian, with only minor Ukrainian phrases pronounced with a thick Russian accent.
- Even when NPCs were later re-voiced in Ukrainian, the dialogue contained numerous Russianisms, surzhyk, and outright Russian speech.

Due to this linguistic and cultural framing, foreign players frequently misidentified the game's setting and developers as Russian.

One of the most controversial issues was the cover design of S.T.A.L.K.E.R. 2, which used the Russian transliteration “Chernobyl” instead of the Ukrainian transliteration “Chornobyl.” The official trailer, released on June 13, 2021, was presented internationally in Russian, with only minor Ukrainian elements.

The self-representation of Ukraine’s national struggle during the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires laid the foundation for modern Ukrainian identity. However, due to Soviet efforts to distort and parody authentic Ukrainian culture, some of these historical representations are now criticized as *sharovarshchyna*—a term describing the intentional primitivization of Ukrainian identity. *Sharovarshchyna* relies on superficial folk imagery, replacing rich cultural context with exaggerated peasant and Cossack stereotypes. For instance, the martial dance *hopak* was transformed into a festival performance, stripping it of its original significance.

Even Nikolai Gogol, despite his significant contributions to Ukrainian literature, is often seen as a collaborator in Russian imperialism. Ukraine is depicted as an idyllic Potemkin village with fantastic adventures, cheeky demons, jokes, and romance in Gogol’s “Malorussian” stories, catering to St. Petersburg audiences. This exoticized image remains popular in modern Russian propaganda, which continues to claim Gogol as its own. In fact, Dmitry Peskov’s Ukrainian wife, Olympic skater Tatyana Navka, choreographed a Russian ice show based on Gogol’s works, further appropriating his legacy.

Gogol’s “demonic” Ukraine is especially apparent in *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*, where simple-minded Cossacks grovel before the Russian Empress Catherine II, their honor lost. Gogol does not forget to mention that the Cossacks sit on silk sofas, with their boots smeared with tar and smoke ‘the strongest tobacco’—more exotic than even the most lavish imports of the Empire. Another key element of colonial masquerade is crippled language, as seen in Gogol’s writing:

“Что ж, земляк, – сказал, приосанясь, запорожець, и желая показать, что он может говорить и по-русски, – што балшой город?”

“Well, fellow countryman,” said the Zaporozhian, leaning forward and wanting to show that he could speak Russian, “how is the big city?”

This broken Russian dialect reinforces Ukrainians as uncultured buffoons incapable of mastering the language of the empire.

At the turn of the 18th century, two major cultural shifts shaped Ukrainian national identity:

1. The rise of vernacular literature as a tool for national and cultural self-affirmation, best exemplified by I. Kotlyarevsky's *Eneida*.
2. The emergence of "Little Russian" provincialism, which evolved into a burlesque subculture (Gundorova, 2009).

Burlesque turned out to be surprisingly suitable for reproduction and gave rise to a phenomenon known as "kotlyarevskyism (Gundorova, 2009; Grabovych, 1997)." During the 19th century, the burlesque spread into the metropolis and became an entire "Malorussian" style (Gundorova, 2009). Grabovych (1997) posits that *Eneida* uses surzhyk throughout the epic as a demarcation between the Ukrainian literature and the general all-Russian reader, privileging the Ukrainian reader. The first unauthorized edition even included a small "Malorussian" dictionary, reflecting confusion over whether *Eneida* was meant to be "ours" (Russian) or foreign (Ukrainian) (Grabovych, 1997).

Soviet literary studies forbade discussing how burlesque is a subversion of Russian cultural hegemony. Instead, generations of Ukrainians were raised to see it as provincial humor, aligning with the Russian imperial perception of Ukraine. However, the ridicule of the arrogant, smug, artificial, cold, and ultimately "inhuman" world of normative, imperial society and canonical literature was the primary function of Kotlyarevsky's art. Such a function is inherent in all Kotlyarevshchyna, but the essential difference is that it is implicit and unconscious in the early movement. At the same time, later writers like Shevchenko and Kulish used it consciously, ideologizing the "farm philosophy (Grabovych, 1997)."

Another victim of sharovarshchyna misconceptions is Taras Shevchenko, who is often misrepresented as a rural sentimentalist. Many indoctrinated readers cite *Sadok Vyshnevyyi Kolo Khaty* as an example of idyllic Ukrainian simplicity without the "velikorussian mastery," ignoring the poem's deep anti-imperialist context. Written in exile for his revolutionary views, it expresses longing for home, with feminine imagery symbolizing safety and sanctity. Shevchenko was prohibited from writing at the time; therefore, the simplistic form was an attempt to demonstrate how colonialists would persecute him regardless of sanitized, almost child-like contents.

Shevchenko's earlier work *Kateryna*, on the other hand, frowns upon the orientalism of Ukrainian women, describing how Russian men exploit them:

“O lovely maidens, fall in love,
But not with Muscovites,
For Muscovites are foreign folk,
They do not treat you right.
A Muscovite will love for sport,
And laughing go away;
He'll go back to his Moscow land
And leave the maid a prey
To grief and shame...” (Translated by John Weir)

Despite its anti-colonial themes, *Kateryna* was removed from school curricula or heavily censored in Soviet Ukraine. Initially, the Bolsheviks saw Shevchenko as a threat, executing Ukrainians for simply owning a copy of *Kobzar* or displaying his portrait. However, just as they co-opted Christianity, the Soviets later appropriated Shevchenko, presenting him as an "anti-serfdom," "atheist," and "proletarian" poet (Poznyak-Homenko, 2021).

Unlike Shevchenko's revolutionary works, the USSR and modern Russian school curricula embraced Alexander Kuprin's short story, *Olesya*, reinforcing Russian colonial narratives. Set in a remote Ukrainian village, the story follows a "great Russian" man who visits Polissya only to be horrified by the locals' backwardness, ignorance, and savagery. The villagers are depicted as gloomy, dirty, and drunk, reinforcing the Russian stereotype of Ukrainians as uncivilized peasants. The only exception is Olesya, a manic pixie dream girl and damsel in distress, being notably not Ukrainian but ethnically Russian. She is so different from the other villagers that she lives in the forest, isolated from their barbaric world. The “wild” Ukrainians are to blame for wonderful Olesya's death and the broken love of two Adam and Eve-esque Russians. Such literature is designed to once again emphasize the femininity (in the patriarchal sense), weakness, and dependence of the colony, as well as the extraordinary masculine power and potency of the metropolis.

Ukraine's current self-representation centers on decolonization, reclaiming historical identity, and shaping the modern Ukrainian identity. Decolonization is a profoundly personal and gradual process that is never permanent, creating tension between those who have already decolonized their minds and those still undergoing this transformation.

Modern Ukrainian media plays a crucial role in this shift by:

- Uncovering lesser-known cultural heritage, such as Ukrainian Funk music.
- Reinterpreting previously demonized Ukrainian writers.
- Producing films reflecting a forward-looking Ukraine, in contrast to modern Russian cinema, which remains fixated on WWII (1939–1945).
- Rediscovering national motifs in contemporary genres, integrating Ukrainian themes into popular culture.

Ukrainian modern cinema challenges colonial narratives, particularly in its portrayal of women. Unlike past representations that sexualized Ukrainian women or placed them in subservient roles, contemporary films depict them as strong, independent, and self-sufficient. The "colonizer lover" trope—which romanticized submission to a dominant foreign force—is actively being dismantled. Ukraine production houses have been valued abroad for their professionalism and great visuals. Many global artists made video clips in Ukraine, also opting to feature Ukrainian designers – Bring Me The Horizon, Stromae, Harry Styles, Miley Cyrus, and Florence + The Machine. Likewise, Ukrainian cinema has been widely appraised for its dramatic depth and soundtracks – *The Tribe* (Myroslav Slaboshpytskyi, 2014), *Atlantis* (Valentyn Vasiianovych, 2019), *Volcano* (Roman Bondarchuk, 2018). Ukrainian documentaries such as Oscar-winning *20 Days in Mariupol* (Mstyslav Chernov, 2023), *The Earth Is Blue as an Orange* (Iryna Tsilyk, 2020), and *Maidan* (Sergei Loznitsa, 2014) not only document what was around, they transfer the viewer into the center of revolution's glory and turmoil, incredible love and petty hate, resistance, and transformation through fire and death.

Additionally, Ukrainian media is becoming more inclusive, featuring complex LGBTQI+ characters (*Early Swallows*) and providing solid representation for previously marginalized groups. While Ukraine's media landscape is not without flaws—no country's is—Ukraine stands out as a nation deeply connected to its identity, which some may even perceive as hegemonic.

A defining feature of modern Ukrainian media representation is the rise of User-Generated Content (UGC). Once an elitist space, media in Ukraine has been democratized—if not outright communized—in recent years. Ukrainians once again united to document the attacks and devastation online, turning the entire internet into a 24/7 broadcast so the world does not forget what Russia is committing on Ukrainian soil. The full-scale war has driven a surge in grassroots digital activism. Ukrainians are using social media as a tool for national preservation and decolonization. Many have started blogs to capture their journeys, inspiring others to engage in the movement.

This cultural renaissance manifests in various digital formats, including:

- Short-form reels filled with cultural references.
- Archiving family traditions and reviving forgotten crafts like pottery, jewelry-making, and painting.
- Homemade music tracks using trending Ukrainian aphorisms.
- Social commentary and civic journalism addressing both wartime resilience and national identity.
- Mini-games about the war reinforce historical awareness.
- Repurposing and Ukrainizing wardrobes, blending traditional elements into modern fashion.

Ukrainians actively integrate their heritage into daily life, preventing the cultural erasure that Russia has long sought. This grassroots movement fortifies Ukraine's national consciousness and ensures that decolonization remains an ongoing, living process—not just theoretical.

4. Canada case study

Canada and the United States feature proactive, diverse, and well-established Ukrainian diasporas, formed between 1861–1914, 1920–1939, 1947–1953 (one of the last to leave before heavy Soviet Russification), 1980–2000, and 2014–Now. The 2021 census recorded 1,258,635 Ukrainian Canadians, making up 3.5% of Canada's population. Most belong to the third generation or beyond and are Canadian-born citizens. Since the beginning of the full-scale war, Canada has welcomed 298,128 Ukrainians from March 2022 to April 2024 and approved 962,612 applications (Hagigi, 2024). Canada's swift decision-making, open-door policy, and generous external and internal humanitarian aid make the country a leader in Ukrainian matters. What many critics do not know is the complex relationship that bonds Canadian promise with the Ukrainian dream.

Post-abolition (1861–1914) attracted mainly peasants with strong faith and national conscience. In 1897, Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton solidified Canadian popularity by promoting immigration from Western Ukraine to settle the Canadian prairies by offering free land (Ukrainian World Congress, 2022; International Humanitarian Association "We are Ukrainians," 2023).

Interwar immigration (1920–1939): relatively young and politically active intellectuals, workers, and veterans of the Ukrainian People's Republic, who escaped Soviet occupation, settling not only in rural areas but in industrial cities. 200,000–250,000 Ukrainians temporarily settled in West Germany before their next leg to the United

States, Canada, South America, and Australia, absorbing German culture. Ukrainian Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches played a crucial role in uniting the diaspora, establishing metropolitanate, dioceses, seminaries, and religious leadership that strengthened cultural identity abroad (Ukrainian World Congress, 2022; International Humanitarian Association "We Ukrainians," 2023).

Political Immigration and Community Consolidation (1947–1953): Post-World War II, many Ukrainians became refugees or prisoners of war. Fearing persecution upon returning to the Soviet Union, they sought asylum in countries like Canada (37,000) and the United States (180,000). This wave was rich for intellectuals and scientists devoted to the idea of Ukrainian independence and the restoration of a sovereign Ukrainian state (Ukrainian World Congress, 2022; International Humanitarian Association "We Ukrainians," 2023).

Economic Immigration and New Community Dynamics (1980–2000): Initially, almost 10,000 Ukrainians arrived from Poland in the early 1980s. Soviet Ukrainians took the opportunity to visit relatives in Canada during the Gorbachev thaw, declaring themselves refugees and remaining overseas. Following Ukraine's independence in 1991, economic challenges accelerated Ukrainian immigration to Canada, shifting the diaspora's dynamic: the new wave has a Soviet worldview, and their primary spoken language is Russian.

Russo-Ukrainian war refugees (2014–Now): While for some, it was a genuine necessity, some Ukrainian migrants prudently seized the opportunity to move to another, more developed country. Similar to the previous migration wave, some Ukrainians had yet to decolonize their minds and assimilate with the diaspora. As the war progressed, more newcomers had already abandoned or were in the process of abandoning Soviet culture.

Despite Ukrainian migration waves, outnumbering Russians in Canada and the robust physical representation of the diaspora, the Cold War legacy continues to shape Western media portrayals. Ukrainians are still commonly represented as the monolithic "Slav" archetype with a pronounced Russian identity. The former imperial generalization of Ukrainians conditioned this oversimplification as part of the greater Russian ethnos.

4.1 The first wave

Library and Archives Canada (2015) describe that the post-abolition wave of Ukrainian immigrants were identified as Poles, Russians, Austrians, Bukovinians, Galicians, and Ruthenians, with the Austro-Hungarian Empire as their country of origin. Ukrainians did not receive financial aid upon arriving like Mennonites or Icelanders; their new life

started with being dumped into prairies to survive in the unknown vast land (Taras Shevchenko Museum, 2024). Life was harsh for the first settlers: according to the Taras Shevchenko Museum (2024), 40% of infants in the Northwest Territories of Canada died. The food culture that Western Ukrainians brought with them served as a bridge between them and other people, while it took time to establish a literary culture that the foreigners could understand. Because the first wave consisted mainly of ex-serfs and poor landless peasants, there were not enough literate people to represent the literature on the same level as at home. The first Ukrainian-Canadian art was of a folk nature (Taras Shevchenko Museum, 2024).

Perhaps one of the most prominent literary pieces exploring the national tragedy of mass migration to Canada was Vasyl Stefannyk's *The Stone Cross*. The main character, Ivan Didukh, sacrifices his whole life – land, house, and the barren mound that his back became arched for – to move to Canada in order to provide a better future for his sons. As if before death, he says goodbye to his wife, children, and village, repenting for his sins. It turns out that he has already "put a stone cross on his hill," as if to a deceased person. Distant and unknown Canada is associated in him with a grave. *The Stone Cross* is built on the psychological horror that many Ukrainians experienced while leaving their lands – if younglings had a promise to look for, the seniors like Didukh indeed died the moment they abandoned their blood-fertilized land. There is not much writing on mass emigration, however, and for a long time, the Ukrainians who stayed would not know how the first pioneers had it; Ukrainian-Canadian literature, in its majority, would not get past censorship until the fall of the USSR.

Some, like Domka Zahara, moved to Canada with their entire families – 12 children and two adults. They arrived in Quebec in 1900, where a fellow Ukrainian colonist met them and gave lectures on Canada. The Ukrainians who established themselves and decided to self-organize to lead communities abroad have played the definitive role in well-being and assimilation. Nevertheless, according to Dennis Moysiuk, who arrived solo in Canada in 1907, there was a lot of mystification about how working in Canada could make one rich, with the elder settlers writing agitating and persuading letters to their relatives in Bukovyna and Galicia. Even Ivan Pylypiw, the Ukrainian colonist widely credited for popularizing Canada among Bukovians in 1892, partook in such mystification after exploring Canada from September to December 1891. The reality, though, was different: the majority of Ukrainian colonists described by Moysiuk were not affluent, even doing worse than he, who spent his 20\$ on sea fare and work clothing, earning 28\$ a month as an agricultural laborer. Domka Zahara and Dennis agree that the good plots were already taken by earlier Ukrainians or British who had more wealth and

education to buy out better lands in more expensive regions. Ukrainian homesteads are described as tiny, cramped, often single-room spaces that sometimes house three families and more, taking shelter from extreme weather. Earning as a farmer was hard – Domka Zahara recalls how their livestock froze to death while they lived in a house without a door, shutters, basic furniture, or floor, sharing it with those homeless. Later, colonists of the first wave agreed that they did not have it as hard as the pioneers, yet their own fate was far from the alleged “milk and honey (Taras Shevchenko Museum, 2024).”

Nevertheless, Ukrainians united, visited a church, helped each other and celebrated together by gathering for dances despite all the hardship. They were free from their oppressors, practicing the culture however it flowed into their liberated minds. Thus, Dennis Moysiuk vividly remembers home away from home – Ukrainian toponyms, proudly welcoming passersby into Ukraine, Dnipro, Sech, Kiev, etc., doubled by their Latinized version. Community-run cultural and educational associations, modeled after those in Galicia and Bukovina, kept immigrants connected to their homeland while helping them adapt to life in Canada. Not everyone had the time to invest in studies, but by 1897, Ukrainian immigrants in Manitoba could access bilingual education in English and Ukrainian, taught by specially trained Ukrainian teachers. Faith also played a big role in creating a community and later in educating colonists. Moreover, the creation of the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada involved Orthodox and Catholic parishes from Austro-Hungary uniting to uphold their faith in Ukrainian as opposed to Russian Orthodox or Roman Catholic worship. Domka Zahara and Oksana Skoropad walked to church barefoot through wet rocky terrain, carrying their shoes in their hands to put them on somewhere nearby. Ukrainians who left their homes and families to settle on their own lands became nomadic in Canada, yet tended to walk long miles to pray and practice rituals such as christenings, marriages, funerals, and Christmas and Easter celebrations.

What stands out about Ukrainian settlers is their close relationship with the First Nations. Canadian First Nation representative Cheryl Whiskeyjack describes the early alliance between Ukrainian immigrants and Indigenous Peoples, noting that both groups were placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy. She explains that Ukrainians faced severe discrimination, were seen as outsiders, and were expected to assimilate quickly into Canadian society. Like Indigenous Peoples, they were discouraged from preserving their culture and were punished for speaking their language or practicing their traditions in schools. Another deep connection between First Nations and Ukrainians is kohkum scarves: Ukrainian women gifted them to native women to show

their respect and support, befriending each other. Ukrainians understood what it meant to be disregarded and oppressed on their own land; therefore, the two cultures weaved together through hardships, acknowledging each other and sharing food, mastery, and cultural resources. Kohkum signifies more than a century of friendship and is an important part of the powwow.

During World War I, thousands of Ukrainian Canadians were imprisoned as enemy aliens due to their origins in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Approximately 80,000 Ukrainian Canadians were forced to register as enemy aliens, regularly report to the police, and carry government-issued identification at all times. Those naturalized for less than 15 years lost their voting rights. Additionally, around 5,000 Ukrainian men were sent to internment camps, where they endured forced labor, hunger, and harsh conditions, leading to permanent injuries, illness, or death. Bilingual education also ceased with the start of WW1 because critics claimed it hindered assimilation: Canada needed a strong statehood instead of having different states form within a state. Ukrainian vernacular schools bloomed throughout Canada post WW1 as the interwar wave brought politically active intellectuals who would expand and structure the existing communities, establishing a fair amount of parties, including the earliest Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) that was pushing communist ideas. Communist ULFTA was the only institution that defended Holodomor and Stalin's criminal actions, while the other organizations united in their anti-Stalinist dissent.

4.2 Red Scare

In the 1920s, due to the growing presence of non-British immigrant groups, the Ukrainian diaspora became a "non-preferred" group. Yet another calamity hit the diaspora: the Great Depression. Meanwhile, Communist ULFTA gained considerable popularity among the unemployed proletariat. Workers are curious about the socialist idea that brought prosperity and equality to the nations ravaged by Imperialism.

The 1930s were baptized as Red Decade by Eugene Lyons in 1940. The Red Decade, during which Stalin's totalitarianism profoundly influenced domestic political discourse, coincided with the Great Depression. Despite its threatening nature, many of Lyons' contemporaries in the press eagerly embraced Communist ideals, participating in what scholar Michael Denning later called a "Second American Renaissance." Denning highlights that Clifford Odets's play *Waiting for Lefty* was the most performed banned play of 1935, reflecting the era's charged political atmosphere. Writers such as Meridel Le Sueur and Carlos Bulosan found artistic inspiration in labor strikes, which fueled

their creative and ideological commitments. The cultural front was characterized by opposition to war, fascism, and racism, with artists—including filmmakers, musicians, playwrights, and novelists—using their work to shed light on the struggles of the working class during the Great Depression.

One of Denning's most significant insights is the "decline and fall of the Lincoln Republic," the collapse of America's myth of rugged individualism in the face of industrial capitalism, urbanization, racial and ethnic discrimination, imperialism, and the excesses of the Roaring Twenties. He argues that the cultural front emerged as a response to these sweeping societal changes. As large cultural organizations expanded in the early 20th century, they opened opportunities for those previously marginalized in artistic production, forming what Denning calls a "new class." Unlike traditional workers, this group neither owned the means of production nor fit neatly into the category of wage earners. It included immigrants, working-class children, and people of color, who offered an outsider's perspective on North American culture. Rather than upholding 19th-century cultural norms, they brought fresh energy, commitment, and innovation to American life, challenging capitalism's established structures and redefining cultural expression.

Preceding the Great Depression and American political plates' tectonic stress, a Russian immigrant, Lyons got involved with socialist organizations appearing throughout the USA and Canada before the October Revolution itself. The initial proletariat bewitchment dissolved the deeper Lyons interacted with the USSR, becoming a staunch anti-Communist starting in 1937. Lyons served in the USSR as a correspondent, advocating for the Soviet Union in front of starved North American masses. His ironic *pyatiletka* (five-year) transformation started when Stalin began starving "minorities," including Ukrainians, in 1932. Seeing the reality and how other lobbied Western journalists participated in journalistic dishonesty, vindicating the murderer of the nations, Lyons began to slowly grow apart while still participating in the crime. Lyons' subsequent anti-communist campaigning birthed McCarthyism that, while built on solid pieces of evidence of the USSR meddling with North American politics, grew into a blind witch hunt in both the USA and Canada. However, the loud words of Eugene Lyons warned that the communist-socialist ideology was "a gun pointed at the heart and mind of America," mobilizing North Americans against the USSR that had so much in common with Nazi Germany. Soviet-era indoctrination in which Lyons and many other Soviet fellow traveler journalists partook shaped generations of Western academics and media consumers, who still default to Russian narratives when discussing Ukraine's history. The USSR's information monopoly ensured that Western

audiences received Soviet-approved versions of events, which still influence media framing today.

The American intelligentsia's complex relationship with Stalinist Russia during the Great Depression remains as controversial today as it was when Lyons condemned the taboo against criticizing Stalin's so-called "Great Experiment" following his own sobering up. To understand why this taboo existed and why journalists like Lyons felt compelled to challenge it—particularly in light of atrocities such as the Holodomor—one must examine how American media framed the Soviet Union. For instance, Communist influence within the New Deal government was more widespread and insidious than previously realized. Later investigations by Dr. J. B. Matthews and others also revealed the extent of Soviet infiltration in American and Canadian churches. One major aspect of the Red Decade that was largely overlooked at the time was the significant Soviet espionage conducted by American and Canadian citizens. While the intensity of Communist organization and influence peaked in the 1930s, it did not disappear with the arrival of the 1940s. Canada's most prominent Red Shock was caused by the Gouzenko Affair in 1945-1946, when a former GRU cipher clerk defected and exposed a spy ring that instigated a fifth column.

Though the Soviets never regained the same level of influence, elements of Communist ideology and Soviet-aligned activism persisted to varying degrees for decades.

Stalin's common history politics revived the imperialist narrative that denied national identities to Soviet Republics by using mass-distribution media such as film, art, and books. Since the USSR was actively campaigning for worldwide socialism in 1920-1938, media depicting its culture was one of the biggest international relations tactics, along with tourism. Therefore, Soviet-era propaganda shaped the West's historical equation of the USSR to Russia, largely failing to distinguish Ukrainians, Belarusians, and other Soviet republics, which is now reflected in simplified narratives about the Russo-Ukrainian war, reducing it to "Russia vs. Ukraine" instead of Russia's imperial ambitions vs. Ukrainian sovereignty.

In 1930s North America, the prevailing sentiment was a mix of despair, guilt, and cautious hope for a better future. The politically isolated Soviet Union saw this, along with the West's growing openness to socialist ideas, as an opportunity to influence public opinion and attract foreign investment. Soviet advertisements portrayed the USSR as an exotic yet affordable destination, promising world-class accommodations and the chance to witness unmatched social and economic progress. For Canada, the Soviet state travel agency Intourist focused on photography depicting "the new

Ukraine" under the USSR leadership: happy, well-fed, practicing a new culture, and parading with a bright future ahead. The outbreak of World War II forced Intourist to scale back operations, but it resumed tours in 1947 under the oversight of the foreign trade ministry, continuing until the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

During the Red Scare in Canada, the government actively pursued individuals suspected of communist affiliations, often mirroring the anti-communist hysteria of the United States but with a more discreet approach. Communism was viewed as a direct threat to democracy, leading to sweeping security investigations. In Quebec, Premier Maurice Duplessis took an aggressive stance with the Padlock Law, which allowed police to shut down properties suspected of housing communist activities or literature. Individuals like Danielle Dionne became direct targets of Red Squad police raids, forcing frequent relocations due to intense surveillance and searches. Across the country, civil servants, scientists, professors, and trade unionists were scrutinized for political or even personal nonconformity, with the RCMP conducting 70,000 security checks in a single year. The fear of communist infiltration extended beyond government oversight, affecting private institutions. For instance, a World War II veteran and law graduate, Gordon Martin, was denied admission to the B.C. Law Society due to his past Communist Party membership, rendering him unable to practice law. Even corporations played a role in spreading anti-communist sentiment, as seen in Canadair's advertisements, which described communism as a "cancerous movement" requiring "eternal vigilance." While Canada's efforts were forceful, Minister of External Affairs Lester B. Pearson urged restraint, warning against the "black madness of the witch hunt." By the mid-1950s, the anti-communist fervor began to fade, particularly after McCarthyism collapsed in the U.S. and Stalin's death led to policy shifts in the Soviet Union.

The Red Scare also influenced troop training. In the past, the Canadian Armed Forces used drawings of USSR soldiers with fur hats and communist-star cap badges on firing range targets (Armstrong 2019). According to an insider in the Canadian Army, the current firing ranges also depict "Russians" because the person is shown with a Soviet helmet. Shooting at the drawings that apparently represented themselves in Western opinion undeniably influenced Ukrainians who served.

Maintaining a low profile and assimilation was the Ukrainian diaspora's means of survival because Canadian authorities saw them as communists, especially those who came in interwar and post-WW2 waves. The West demonized the USSR, portraying it as a singular enemy, reinforcing the idea that "Soviet" meant "Russian." At the same time, the newly arriving immigrants were starved for information and Western perspectives,

therefore getting trapped in an echo chamber that did not aid decolonization. Moreover, some post-WW2 Ukrainians did not speak their native language well due to Stalin's language suppression, resulting in Russian as their mother tongue.

4.3 Multiculturalism

Western media kept stamping out content that demonized and stereotyped different immigrant diasporas. While Germans and Italians were a genre of their own, East Asians (with the exception of Mongolians) and Eastern Europeans kept getting mixed into two large cauldrons: "Asians" and "Russians." Ukrainians, nevertheless, invested a great effort into their identity in Canada, advocating for equal rights, strengthening their belonging by forming different organizations and clubs, and continuing to grow the Ukrainian Canadian Congress – the central institution that represented Ukrainians politically. To break the Iron Curtain, Ukrainian American and Canadian organizations contributed to creating Voice of America and Radio Canada. Radio Canada broadcasts in Ukrainian, which some Ukrainians credit as a crucial source for learning the language.

Paul Yuzyk played a critical role in shaping Canada's multicultural policy, advocating for the recognition of Canada as a multicultural nation rather than a bicultural one limited to English and French identities. Appointed to the Senate in 1963, Yuzyk used his maiden speech in 1964 to challenge the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, arguing that Canada had always been multicultural due to its diverse immigrant populations, including Ukrainians. He was the first to introduce the term "multicultural society" in the Canadian Parliament and actively worked to embed this concept into national consciousness, leading to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's formal adoption of multiculturalism as an official policy in 1971.

As a historian and senator, Yuzyk focused on the contributions of Ukrainian Canadians and other ethnic groups in Canada's development. His advocacy extended beyond Parliament to grassroots efforts, organizing conferences and engaging with provincial leaders to push for recognition of cultural rights. He was instrumental in mobilizing Ukrainian Canadians and other ethnic communities to demand equal representation, cultural preservation, and official recognition of their heritage. His influence helped secure multicultural policies, ensuring Canada embraced its diverse identities rather than assimilating them into an Anglo-French framework.

Yuzyk's efforts were particularly significant for Ukrainian Canadians, who had historically faced discrimination and assimilation pressures. By promoting multiculturalism, he helped preserve Ukrainian culture in Canada through language education, media representation, and heritage preservation initiatives. His vision of a Canada that embraced "unity in diversity" laid the groundwork for policies that continue to shape the country's inclusive cultural identity today.

The 1970s underlined the need for formal Ukrainian education, such as kindergartens, schools, and tertiary education. With multiculturalism signed as Canada's policy in 1971, the Ukrainian diaspora began to develop bilingual curriculums. The 1970s can be called a renaissance of the Ukrainian language in Canada. Ukrainian scholarship analyzes the changes in the Ukrainian language that occurred under the influence of the English-speaking and French-speaking environment, strengthens its culture, and plays a significant role in its preservation, nurturing the diaspora's connection to the Ukrainian nation and contributing to the unity of the community beyond Canada. Studying Ukraine reignites the campaign for its liberation – now involving second- and third-generation Ukrainian-Canadians in the conversation and action.

Multiculturalism policy saw Ukrainians in Canada successfully integrate into the country's cultural mosaic, adapting to the Anglo-Saxon way of life while maintaining elements of their heritage. Aware that Canada is officially bilingual in English and French, they have not contested the dominance of these languages but instead embraced their role as a recognized minority group, understanding the need to adopt certain cultural norms of the majority while preserving their traditions.

Although Ukrainian influence on Canadian culture has been limited, Ukrainians have assimilated into mainstream society while retaining key heritage aspects. Their contributions are most visible in music, dance, and singing, which have helped sustain Ukrainian cultural identity within Canada. This balance has allowed them to participate fully in Canadian life while ensuring their traditions remain part of the country's multicultural fabric.

Nevertheless, producing enough film and TV representation remains a problem. Despite producing documentaries, especially *The Harvest of Despair* (Slavko Nowytski, 1983), a documentary that brought international attention to Holodomor and played a key role in facilitating international dialogue that led to recognizing it as a human-made genocide, there is a lack of Canadian Ukrainian characters or films. Therefore, surrounding diasporas are still affected by Razvesistaya Kluykva – USSR stereotypes about the mob, alcohol, balalaika, Kalashnikovs, etc. *The Red Heat* (1987) movie is a

prime example of klyukva. It is also cultural appropriation because it has Arnold Schwarzenegger play a Muscovite with a fake Russian accent. Nevertheless, the surname of Schwarzenegger's character should trouble the reader: Danko. Danko is a Ukrainian surname, meaning the main character is indeed an ethnic Ukrainian who, at some point, was indoctrinated by the USSR and adopted the "Russian" self-identification. Even now, the West frames Eastern Europeans as villains in popular culture – James Bond and the Mission Impossible franchises are examples.

4.4 Modernity

The modernity period should start with the independence of Ukraine. The small pre-independence wave in the late 1980s shocked the Ukrainian Canadian diaspora: the Soviet Ukrainians had different beliefs, were indoctrinated, and their mother tongue was Russian. Since the end of WW2, the Soviet government has been instilling an idea that Canadian Ukrainians are traitors and Nazis. Therefore, when Ukrainian Canadians refused to entertain the Soviet worldview, traditions, and Russian language – the newcomer Ukrainians had the worst fearmongering confirmed. It took time and patience for those wishing to adapt to become a part of the Ukrainian Canadian diaspora. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the Ukrainians who identified as "Russians" mixed in with the Russian diaspora.

Not every person from the Russian diaspora is bad – this is a radical misconception. The "white-blue-white" anti-Putin Russians have been vocally supporting Ukraine, standing shoulder to shoulder with other allies and donating to Ukrainian humanitarian organizations. While hearing the language of colonizer and war crime may be painful to many refugees, the pro-Ukrainian Russian diaspora should be regarded as an ally. Ukrainians should seek to communicate their view, including educating those in the decolonization process. We believe that the anti-Putin Russian diaspora can be helpful in the future: abroad as it is and when Russia gains a new democratic government.

However, certain ultranationalistic groups brought the best of Soviet propaganda, later adopting Putin's narratives. Joseph Brodsky is one of the most notable examples of Russian immigrants negatively reacting to Ukrainian independence. A Nobel laureate, celebrated dissident, and anti-imperialist, Brodsky produced a Ukrainophobic poem titled "On the Independence of Ukraine." In the poem, which he never formally published, Brodsky uses profound hate speech, retranslating the ideas that the Russian Federation will widely adopt after the 1990s cooldown.

“It is not the green-and-‘floral’ one, scorched by the isotope,

- the yellow-blue one flutters over Konotop,

cut from canvas: it seems that Canada has it in store -

even though there is no cross: but Khohly don’t need it.” (self-translated)

The “green in floral one” in the original language sounds like “зелено-квитный,” – a subject of many disputes about what Brodsky meant by that. The poem has immense popularity in modern Russia and is interpreted in lengthy analyses. One of such analyses is published by a Russian propagandist website Украина.ру which explains that Brodsky had an aversion to nazis that lived in Canada: “..namely, about one of the richest and most numerous diasporas of Ukrainians, which was formed from Banderites and other collaborators who fled to the West after World War II. This diaspora mainly sent nationalist literature and specialists in Russophobia to Ukraine.” Traditionally, Russian propaganda will spin anything to fit its narrative, ignoring journalistic accuracy, open databases, and common sense, however, many foreigners seeking information would not know that the seemingly legitimate Ukrainian media outlet, Украина.ру, belongs to Russia Today.

With the advent of technological progress, Russian propaganda floods Western news outlets again. The world was unprepared for the modern internet and informational surplus: media literacy could not have been adequately developed under the constantly curated and dosed traditional media. Therefore, users failed themselves when the times necessitated exercising their judgment of what is doctored and what is not.

Nevertheless, the Ukrainian Canadian diaspora has upscaled expensive media production, including TV and film. Unfortunately, there is a certain lack of connection between the Canadian diaspora and Ukrainians in Ukraine. While those in Canada are very involved with their mother country, the “mainland” ones hardly know about the historical liberation efforts and partnerships (including the friendship with Canadian First Nations) their overseas family has established. Likewise, there is a blind misconception about the “easy life of rich Ukrainian Canadians.”

Russia invested a lot of money into media that reached Western audiences. Independent Ukraine did not have such large budgets, therefore, the Russian version of Ukrainians began dominating the Canadian and American media landscapes. Canadian and American diasporas countered to refute the disinformation; however, Russian pop culture was often stronger and faster and had a larger audience. Likewise, the expansion of the blogosphere and decreased trust in accredited media with established newsroom

practices and responsibility. The personality cult of populist manosphere bloggers like Andrew Tate, Jordan Peterson, Joe Rogan, Ben Shapiro, Candace Owens, Lauren Chen, and the Tenet Media roster grew popular among Gen Z and millennials. Infamously, Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson (957,5 million views on YouTube alone) has been airing explicitly unresearched views: “Vladimir Putin was forced into the war with Ukraine in order to prevent ‘degenerate’ US culture from breaching the borders of Russia,” “USSR’s fall was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century,” “Ukraine is Russia’s sphere of influence,” etc. One can’t help but question Peterson’s authority – is he a Ukrainian historian, politologist, or maybe a media scholar focusing on Russia-Ukraine relations? What kind of literature did he compile and analyze before airing such a Pro-Russian, poorly-backed perspective? These questions can obviously be addressed to any “online expert on everything and nothing.”

The bloggers speculatively referred to as the “Intellectual Dark Web” like to be in opposition to the mainstream. Dark Web has been romanticized and mystified by YouTube and other hype sellers as the new Shambala and World Order combined. Therefore, it feels grand for an everyday internet lurker to be a part of this secrecy, similar to what Lyons felt while favorably covering the USSR. Being on the dark side of the moon brings the Dark Web cohort both money and recognition – Tunney (2024) covers an investigation involving Canada and the US in which Tenet was reportedly paid 10 million \$ to spread disinformation amid the US elections.

It is uncertain whether companies like Tenet will be held accountable in the coming three years, given the new North American dynamics and a series of amnesties after President Trump took over the Oval Office. What is evident is that the so-called unschooling movement poses a significant danger not only to Ukraine but to its Western allies too, unless bloggers who like to flirt with sensationalism, low literacy, and foreign lobbyist’s money are held accountable for the sacrifice the peacemakers pay across the world for their illusive “freedom of speech.”

Being in opposition is not about participating in the murders of innocent Ukrainians by taking bloody money or enjoying the fame that taking the aggressor’s side promises. One can still remain critical of one’s government, Ukraine’s issues and condemn the war, Russia’s outward denial of Ukrainian sovereignty, annexation of foreign land, and cowardly night drone attacks.

There is no weapon deadlier than the human word.

5. Voices of Ukrainians: lived experiences and what they signal us.

After we have explored the historical and media aspects of the Russo-Ukrainian war, it is only logical to hear what Ukrainians themselves have to say about the matter. Willing Ukrainians (20) who were offering services under the search words “Ukrainian,” “Ukraine,” “Russian,” and “Russia” on Fiverr, Epal.gg, and Ukrainian Facebook groups were interviewed online on the war and media representation for half a year between June 2024 and January 2025, covering their perception of the overall war and specific points of the Russian aggression that stood out to them the most. Many interviews are highly emotional and personal, meaning there is no specific structure to which to group them. Nevertheless, to avoid blowing the paper out of proportion, we have structured this section to provide insights and statistics rather than publish the entirety of the interviews.

All interview excerpts have the original grammar preserved.

Views on the Russo-Ukrainian War

“Until February 24, I didn’t even realize how woven into my life imperialism was. I didn’t even think about it – the concept of “imperialism” remained only in history books. Until it came to my house and started asking what language I speak, what nation I belong to or why my nation has the right to exist at all.”

65% of Ukrainians see the Russo-Ukrainian war as a wake-up call, not previously realizing in which ways Russian imperialism crawled into their subconscious and everyday practices.

The large percentage correlates with Reznikov’s and Zelenskyy’s statements on how Ukrainians were used physically and morally to the Russian presence.

Ukrainians overwhelmingly view the war as a brutal and unjustified invasion by Russia – 85%. One testimonial states, *“Russia is shelling the homes of civilians every day. Killing people and children. There are many fatalities among my acquaintances.”*

85% of Ukrainians, particularly those living in occupied or frontline areas, express deep trauma and anger towards Russia, seeing its population as complicit in the war due to their passive acceptance of state propaganda. Another individual remarks, *“The Russians are doing nothing to stop this war. They continue to live their peaceful lives and sleep in their homes. Their children are not afraid of warplanes flying overhead.”*

90% note the psychological trauma that the war has inflicted on them:

"The psychological impact of the war has left deep scars on the collective and individual spirit of the Ukrainian people. The constant exposure to violence, the heartbreaking loss of loved ones, and the trauma of being displaced have all contributed to a pervasive mental health crisis. Anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have become all too common. Yet, the mental health services available are overwhelmed, stretched thin by the sheer scale of need. Many people are left to cope with their trauma in isolation, without the support they so desperately require."

"This is truly the biggest insult for me – being called Russian. But I think you won't confuse me with them, no matter what language I speak to you – I'm afraid of airplanes, passing cars and any other sounds, because they can be confused with rocket explosions more easily than you think. This is what it costs to be Ukrainian. And I would never give it up."

50% of respondents want complete isolation from Russia after the war, while 15% mention global isolation from Russia until the conflict's full resolution.

"Russians themselves will not tell you how it actually was, because they are blinded by their own propaganda and crooked vision of history. Ask the enslaved peoples for the truth, not the representatives of the aggressor country. There are no semitones in this story. Russia has been an imperialistic aggressor for hundreds of years, and it should be ignored. Just check what they did today in Ukraine (Kyiv, Kryvyi Rih, and Dnipro), and judge for yourself if they have the right to be mentioned in the international civilized agenda."

"I see in the future that Ukraine and Russia, the peoples of these countries will no longer maintain contacts as before. I will definitely never want to move and even come to Russia as an ordinary tourist to maintain contact with people and natives of Russia."

75% ceased any contact with Russians, including friends and family members:

"That's why I consider Russia a country of terrorists and consider everyone who lives in this country murderers. We all want peace. But the Ukrainians who now live in Ukraine and who have lost their homes and loved ones in this war will never be able to wish happiness to the Russians. They have brought us a lot of pain."

"I can say with confidence that the attitude towards Russia that existed before will never be the same again. I also do not plan and do not want to work with Russia."

"So, let me get to the main point: before the war, I even had a positive attitude towards Russia and the Russian people, I even have relatives who live in Russia. But now I don't know how long it will take, I think years, decades, for my people, the people of Ukraine, to perceive Russia

positively. My relatives have even stopped communicating with their relatives in Russia, we have completely severed ties with them."

60% of interviews have minor Russian bias, 40% of interviewed Ukrainians demonstrate strong pro-Russian bias, and 15% are openly pro-Russian.

"But it is important to say the following: you can't teach or torture Russia with advice; let it live by its ancient precepts. Just as you cannot command the sun not to shine or warm, you cannot command Russia to take and die! Sincerely hope that all this pressure will end soon, and Russia, as always, will survive this difficult time, though when has it ever been easy for her? The Russian people will endure any challenges."

"Even schooling [in Ukraine], I think, until 2003-2004 was in Russian (textbooks, notebooks, language)."

"Yushchenko-Yanukovych. Our schools were only in Russian. In all cities from Kyiv to Kherson, Donbass, etc. There were very few schools in Ukrainian. All music in the southern, eastern, and central parts was in Russian. Only in 2017 they began to switch to Ukrainian."

Despite cutting their relationships, 40% of Ukrainians feel sympathetic to the white-blue-white Russians who support Ukraine and have sacrificed their peace, friendships, and professional connections to resist the imperial offense.

"As a Ukrainian who has previously kept in touch with some Russians, I would like to point out that the Russian government is to blame for this war and is acting on its imperial ambitions to recreate the Soviet Union. However, the people who are against this and are doing something to counteract what is happening are not to blame for the actions of their government."

"How intolerant people are towards each other. This is very sad. I do not support the supremacy of nations. We are all equal. Why? Because they came from the same people - Adam and Eve. The question arises: why do people behave this way? World leaders and international organizations have not been able to bring peace."

Most importantly, several Ukrainians have demonstrated a high level of decolonization by not only calling the Russo-Ukrainian war a Ukrainian genocide but also by explaining the moral, cultural, and physical aspects of this erasure.

International Support

While Ukraine initially received substantial international aid, many Ukrainians now feel abandoned as support has dwindled. *"At the beginning of the war, there was a lot of help*

from international organizations for the displaced. There is no help now, although the front is getting closer and the fighting is heavier. It's very hard on people". Another perspective highlights the reliance on Western aid, with one individual stating, "If it weren't for the help of our European partners, the help of the USA and Canada, I think Ukraine would definitely not have survived." Despite this, some express frustration over aid's slow response and conditional nature.

40% underline their gratitude for the foreign help and how this help played a crucial part in Ukraine's survival:

"Amidst this chaos, a massive humanitarian crisis has emerged. Millions of Ukrainians are in desperate need of food, shelter, healthcare, and other basic necessities. International organizations and local volunteers have mobilized to provide assistance, but the scale of the crisis is almost beyond comprehension. Yet, in the face of such overwhelming challenges, there is an undeniable spirit of solidarity that has risen among Ukrainians. Communities have come together in extraordinary ways, offering shelter, food, and other forms of assistance to those in need. This sense of unity, this resilience, is perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of the Ukrainian response to the invasion. It's a testament to the strength of the human spirit, to our ability to come together in times of need and support one another through the darkest of times."

"If it weren't for the help of our European partners, the help of the USA and Canada, I think Ukraine would definitely not have survived."

"I really want to believe that truly humane people will win in my long-suffering country. And the same people in the West will help us do this. After all, I know that without Western help, Ukraine would have long ago ceased to exist in the form in which I always liked it and still cherish it. For which I am immensely grateful, including to every non-Ukrainian who is not at all obligated to help, but who still helps Ukraine! It is thanks to such people that faith in goodness is still alive in me."

25% explicitly discuss that the war enriches elites, which slows down the resolution

"Some organized fundraisers for the Ukrainian army, and then disappeared along with this money or did not send all the funds collected to the army. This undermined the people's trust in fundraising in general. Others stole and resold Western humanitarian aid. What discouraged the West itself from helping Ukraine. Still others sold fake documents. Thus, introducing even greater discord into the ranks of ordinary citizens. And the fourth, as before, diluted gasoline."

"I am already silent about those who are now fighting and protecting us. I don't understand why this war started in the first place. Well, I understand what kind of money it is, but it seems to me

that Russia is not the poorest country in the world to invade another country and take its territories."

10% are concerned with the halt of international aid. Given that USAID was postponed indefinitely and that pro-Russian Hungarian PM Orbán has been dragging EU aid – the despair sentiment pertaining to foreign assistance would be much higher in March 2025:

"And it hurts a lot. Unbearably painful. Ukrainians are trying to live a normal life. But the mental state of our people is very difficult. We're losing our homes, we're losing our loved ones. And we don't know how long we have to put up with it. At the beginning of the war, there was a lot of help from international organizations for the displaced. There is no help now, although the front is getting closer and the fighting is heavier."

Trust in the Ukrainian Government and Army

Ukrainians generally strongly support their military, viewing them as national heroes. One testimonial describes a paramedic unit that has saved over 1,000 lives in Donbas and completed 2,000 combat missions. However, opinions on the government are mixed. While many acknowledge the necessity of unity during wartime, some criticize the authorities for their lack of transparency and inefficiencies. A common sentiment is that Ukrainian leadership must do more to ensure long-term stability and security.

10% are concerned about the blind witch hunt, from hating those Ukrainians who speak Russian while dedicating themselves to the country by serving in the military and volunteering to cancel culture based on former citizenship of dissident artists.

"I think it's really great that Ukrainian-language music is thriving in Ukraine at the moment. But all Russian-language music in Ukraine is currently condemned, including at the state level, with all the ensuing consequences. Which certainly makes sense. It's really not worth it, even if indirectly in most cases, to additionally sponsor the Russian military machine by listening to the music of Russian performers. On the other hand, Russian-language music does not always mean sponsorship of Russia. Vivid examples are such performers as Ivan Alekseev, better known as Noize MC. Who does not currently live in Russia and has been openly and for a very long time opposed to Russian aggression towards Ukraine. But he is still no exception for the state apparatus of Ukraine. Despite the fact that it contributes to the well-being of Ukraine."

40% voice concerns of varying degrees about whether we should continue fighting or surrender to save lives. Support for the format and timing of peace negotiations also varies. Some respondents believe that peace talks should start to prevent further casualties, while others remain firm that Ukraine must continue fighting.

"Politicians must somehow come to an agreement, at least start moving towards peace. I understand that we will not emerge victorious in this conflict, in this war, but at least there will be no more victims."

"The war destroys the psyche to a great extent. The person who was before the war has become completely different. Looking at the people around me, my social circle and myself, I can say that everyone is tired of this war."

"But there is no point in continuing this war. This is simply the genocide of two peoples for the sake of someone's money and ambition to remain in history."

The military is highly respected based on general feedback. The armed forces are widely seen as heroes, with civilians acknowledging their sacrifices and resilience. However, there are sufficient concerns about post-war social issues. Given how veterans were mistreated during the ATO, there is anxiety about how returning "big war" soldiers will reintegrate into society, with fears of increased psychological trauma and social unrest caused by free-circulating arms and quarrels, especially concerning the language issue.

Representation in Media

Ukrainians feel misrepresented or underrepresented in global media. Many complain that before the war, the West historically failed to recognize Ukraine as distinct from Russia. One individual states, *"Until February 24, none of my European friends even cared about separating me from other Slavic countries – from Russia, more precisely. Everyone knew Ukraine as a small, unimportant Russian-like country where Chornobyl blew out once."*

Despite dissatisfaction with how non-Eastern Europeans see Ukraine through the Russian lens, the international perception of Ukraine has changed. Before the war, generalizing and overlooking Ukraine as part of Russia was a usual media bias, but now there is a greater understanding of Ukraine as a distinct nation.

"Some people continue to maintain their prejudices against Russians and other Eastern European nationalities in general, ignoring facts and refusing to educate themselves, even when information is available on the internet. This would have been forgivable in the past when people only got their news from the state media, which continues to influence opinion even now."

"After February 24, 2022, I started watching interviews with Russian prisoners of war (Youtube channel Zolkin) to understand what motivates them. And finally I understood. This is "Higher Television Education" (joke). On TV, Russians learned that everything was bad in Ukraine and that Bandera was already coming after them. By the way, I also learned about Bandera from the

Russians! We didn't study Bandera at school. Before propaganda about Bandera appeared in the Russian media space, I had not heard of this man."

"The conflict has prompted a reevaluation of historical narratives as well. There is a renewed focus on Ukrainian independence and resistance to foreign domination."

The war, however, has forced international media to acknowledge Ukraine's sovereignty, though stereotypes about Ukrainians persist. Russian propaganda remains a concern, particularly in BRICS, CIS, and Western countries with growing far-right audiences. Many respondents believe that Russian narratives still influence global perceptions and stress the need for Ukraine to control its narrative.

6. What international allies can do to support Ukrainians: a guide.

The lived experiences collected in this research illustrate the immense challenges Ukrainians face amid the war, their evolving national consciousness, and their resilience in the face of adversity. Given the previously discussed historical context, we propose a guide outlining both significant contributions and everyday actions that international allies can adopt based on their capacities.

Conversations with Ukrainians

Be mindful of the trauma war has inflicted on every Ukrainian. Regardless of how easygoing someone may seem in casual conversation, discussing the war may trigger an unexpected reaction—silence, a panic attack, heightened emotions, or a complete shift in topic. Such reactions are unpredictable, so respecting personal boundaries and avoiding pushing the conversation is crucial. These responses are not signs of weakness or insecurity but rather a Freudian id-driven defense mechanism against the horrors of both physical and digital warfare.

If a Ukrainian is open to discussing the war, let them lead the conversation. While personal stories may broaden one's understanding, it is up to Ukrainians to decide whether to share such experiences. Should they become uncomfortable, help shift the topic or conclude the conversation amicably.

When offering support, do so genuinely and without hidden motives. Donating to the Ukrainian cause is commendable, but it does not make one a hero or entitle them to exploit Ukraine's suffering for personal gain. True heroes are those on the frontlines—

soldiers, first responders, volunteers, and diplomats. Using monetary contributions to make a Ukrainian feel indebted is not just impolite—it is a form of financial domination.

Ukrainian women have been subjected to harassment from individuals with a white savior complex, particularly cisgender men. War is not an opportunity to seek a "free lover" by privately messaging female refugees from Telegram groups and offering them housing in exchange for sexual dependence. Such behavior tarnishes the efforts of genuine volunteers. Ukrainian women are not for sale, nor are they seeking a "fat wallet"; their priority is fair treatment, respect, career opportunities, and access to education in a safe environment. Fetishizing Ukrainian refugee women is morally reprehensible—if one desires a transactional relationship, there are designated platforms for that.

Being Ukrainian does not mean possessing an omniscient awareness of all national affairs. Ukrainians are not walking search engines. Google is free to use for questions about military operations, laws, statistics, air raids, or history. Many Ukrainians practice media hygiene, checking the news once daily or less frequently to avoid burnout. They have adapted to working full-time under full-scale war, sustaining the economy despite the ongoing war.

Similarly, do not bombard Ukrainians with news, especially from unofficial sources. Unless they live in absolute isolation, they will receive relevant updates—on their terms.

Finally, comparing modern war, genocides, and military conflicts is incorrect. There is a growing global narrative that the Ukrainian crisis is merely a "whitewashed European media drama," while conflicts in the Middle East—such as those in Israel-Palestine, Iran, Iraq, and Syria—receive little attention. This perspective not only overlooks the complexities of international media coverage but also disregards other crises outside the Arab world, such as those in Venezuela, Zimbabwe, or Sierra Leone, which have also suffered from modern-day genocides.

It is neither constructive nor justifiable to claim that one tragedy invalidates another. While systemic bias undeniably exists in refugee policies and global responses, Ukraine's suffering is no less significant than that of Syria or any other war-torn nation. No war is more deserving of attention than another. No population deserves to be invaded, displaced, or have its culture and heritage erased by missiles. If the goal is to raise awareness about other conflicts, it should be done by advocating for all victims rather than diminishing the struggle of others.

Additionally, the tendency to compare the duration of Ukraine's current war with other conflicts reflects a superficial understanding of history. The present invasion is not an isolated event—it is the continuation of a 400+ year-long struggle against colonial oppression, forced assimilation, and genocide. Ukraine has suffered multiple waves of Russification, foreign domination, and systematic erasure of its national identity. The Holodomor of 1932-1933, an artificial famine that killed approximately 5-10 million Ukrainians, remains one of history's most devastating acts of genocide. Yet, it is often overlooked in global discussions on historical injustices.

Ukraine has been treated no better than other historically oppressed nations. Ukrainian language, literature, and identity were criminalized for centuries. Writers who defied these restrictions were executed. Ukrainians were enslaved, displaced, and brutalized under Russian, Polish, and Ottoman rule. And yet, despite this, no global movement honors Ukraine's resilience. There are no mainstream films about Ukraine's centuries-long struggle for independence, no worldwide recognition of its persecuted poets, and no viral appreciation for its rich folk traditions, which are deeply intertwined with nature, pride, and defiance.

The selective engagement with global crises is precisely the problem. If the goal is to change the way the world responds to suffering, it must start with acknowledging all struggles equally rather than using one tragedy to diminish another. Every crisis is real. Every genocide matters. No one has the right to invalidate another nation's suffering in an attempt to amplify their own. Respect should be universal, and that applies to Ukrainians, too – many should learn to support other nations going through wars.

Self-Education

Developing media literacy is essential for those wishing to understand Ukraine. This involves analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing, and abstracting media messages. Individuals with low media literacy are more likely to believe in conspiracy theories—from fentanyl-laced Halloween candy to 5G-induced COVID mutations. Those with high media literacy can contextualize media content, assess accuracy, and identify bias.

To evaluate media critically:

- Ownership Bias: Who owns the outlet? Who funds it? What are their political interests?
- Political Leaning: Is the publication left- or right-leaning? What are its editorial policies?

- Legitimacy: Is it a licensed news source? Is it a tabloid or a broadsheet?
- Author Credibility: Are they reputable? Have they previously spread false information?
- Emotional vs. Factual Reporting: Does the article evoke strong emotions or present neutral facts? Is the headline sensationalized?
- Website Domain: Suspicious domains include “.ru,” “.net,” and “.su.” No credible Ukrainian news source operates under these domains. Check the URL carefully—for example, “edition.cnn.com” is real, but “edition.cnn.com.co” is an imposter site (Middlesex, n.d.).

Wikipedia is not a reliable source. Hybrid war efforts have infiltrated the platform. Borak (2022) identified 86 Wikipedia editors banned for manipulating narratives about the Russo-Ukrainian war, subtly questioning pro-Western sources, altering historical context, and adding links to Russian state-controlled media.

Strengthening personal locus—a key element of media literacy—is essential for independent thinking. Kit and Nie (2022) emphasize that those with a strong personal locus actively analyze media, while those with a weak one passively consume information. Always cross-check sources and rely on peer-reviewed academic research over news commentary or opinion pieces. Platforms such as Academia, ResearchGate, JSTOR, OpenEdition Books, and the Internet Archive provide credible insights.

Monetary Support

Donations to verified funds are crucial but require caution.

Dalets’ka (2024) reports that 115,000 Ukrainians opened volunteer donation accounts monthly in 2024, up from 85,000 in 2023. Personal fundraising banks now surpass large charities in contributions.

For comparison:

- Three major Ukrainian funds—Prytula Foundation, Come Back Alive, and United24—raised 19 billion UAH (~ \$458.3 million) in 2023.
- Monobank users donated 27.4 billion UAH (~ \$660.9 million), three times more than in 2022.
- In 2024, large volunteer organizations report declining donations, reflecting growing donor fatigue.

Avoid unverified PayPal accounts unless transparency measures ensure proper fund allocation. If you or your organization prefer non-military humanitarian aid, consider:

- [World Central Kitchen](#) (global relief organization, provided food against all odds and risks)
- [Nova Ukraine](#)
- [Razom](#)
- [Help Ukraine Center](#)
- [Ukrainian Red Cross](#)
- [Canada-Ukraine Foundation](#)
- [Paramanov Fund](#)
- [Ohmatdyt \(Ukraine's largest pediatric hospital\)](#)

Education is vital to Ukraine's future. You can:

- Support scholarships for Ukrainian students.
- Fund Ukrainian researchers on platforms like GoFundMe.
- Donate to books on Ukraine, including our upcoming project – [a book expanding on the issues discussed in this white paper](#).
- Buy Ukrainian products and support international companies that have ceased operations in Russia.

What About Russians?

First and foremost, Ukrainians and Russians are not "brotherly nations"—nor have they ever been. The war has made reconciliation impossible. That, however, does not give anyone the right to harass a person solely based on their nationality or spoken language.

Do not expect Ukrainians to be friendly towards white-blue-white Russians (anti-Putin Russians) or white-red-white Belarusians (anti-Lukashenko Belarusians). Many actively choose not to engage with any Russians or Belarusians, and that is their right.

Your Russian friend may be a wonderful person, but you should never pressure a Ukrainian to interact with them. For many Ukrainians, any association with Russians—even opposition figures—is unacceptable. The same goes for inviting a Ukrainian to a cultural Russian event, such as listening to a Tchaikovsky concert, reading of Pushkin, or a Soviet film screening – many would feel uncomfortable because Russia has always weaponized its art.

Not every Russian is bad or a war criminal. Some have genuinely decolonized their mindset. White-blue-white Russians can be allies, but imperialistic tendencies may still linger, even among those who have left Russia. If you hear an objective falsehood, correct it. Helping others decolonize their worldview is a valuable, non-monetary contribution.

Signs of pro-imperial Russians:

- Wearing the Saint George ribbon.
- Identifying as Soviet.
- Expressing badly founded hatred toward Germany, Poland, and the U.S..
- Justifying Soviet and Russian aggression against Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova.

Paying taxes to an aggressor country, however, does make one complicit in the war. Taxes paid to Russia directly finance the murders of innocent civilians and the destruction of infrastructure. Make wise decisions about with whom to work, research the companies, and boycott the ones who chose to sponsor Putin's atrocities. To check the relevant list of companies-colaborators, please follow the [link](#) or search for "Leave Russia Org."

Language matters. Ukrainian and Russian are distinct languages. Ukraine is not obligated to use Russian, which is the language of the oppressor. Do not expect Ukrainians to speak Russian unless they choose to.

Do not engage in Russian provocations online—it is a waste of time. There may not even be a real person on the other side of the internet. Report the suspected bot and move on.

Appendix: A glossary of the most widespread stereotypes and disinformation with their corrections.

A

- “Alcohol consumption is commonplace” – Despite the affordability of alcohol in Ukraine, the World Health Organization reports that alcohol consumption levels are comparable to countries like Italy. Excessive drinking is not a cultural norm and affects those unemployed or retired.
- “All of Europe supported Nazi Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union, just like Europe now supports ‘Nazi Ukraine’” – Russia falsely claims it is continuing the fight against Nazism in Ukraine, using this narrative to dehumanize Ukrainians and justify its aggression. In reality, by 1942, the anti-Hitler coalition included 26 states, proving that Europe did not universally support Nazi Germany. This propaganda tactic distorts history while ignoring the Kremlin’s own shift toward anti-Semitic rhetoric.
- “All Ukrainian women are witches” – Paranormal has not been proven by science nor by those who claim to have superpowers. Do not trust grifters in any country. Calling Ukrainian women witches demonizes them and legalizes a 21st-century witch hunt.
- “All Ukrainian women want to marry foreigners” – While some seek opportunities abroad, most Ukrainian women prioritize love and respect over nationality. Many are independent and focus on careers and self-development.

C

- “Crimea is historically Russian” – Crimea has historically been home to diverse cultures and various sovereignties. It was part of the Ottoman Empire before

being annexed by the Russian Empire in 1783. In 1954, the Soviet Union transferred Crimea from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. Therefore, asserting that Crimea has always been Russian overlooks its complex and varied history. According to Lutsevych (2021), only 6% of the Crimea peninsula's history was spent under Russia.

E

- “Education is corrupt” – While corruption exists in various sectors, it's inaccurate to label the entire Ukrainian education system as corrupt. Many students attend universities on a contractual (paid) basis, which is legal and standard.
- “EU sanctions caused a food and energy crisis” – EU sanctions do not target food or fertilizer exports, and Russia blocked grain shipments from Ukraine, causing shortages. Russia's cutting gas supplies to Europe, not sanctions, primarily caused the energy crisis. Europe successfully diversified its energy sources in response, proving Russia's energy blackmail failed.
- Everyone is an IT genius – while there are plenty of talented Ukrainians in this industry, Ukrainians are not born from the Matrix and start coding in 10 different languages at the age of 1.

K

- “Khohly is a fun way to call Ukrainians” – Khohly is a derogatory name Russians use to deny Ukrainian nationality.

M

- “MH17 was a false flag operation” – Russian propaganda falsely claims that Ukraine or the West staged the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 to frame Russia. However, an international investigation led by the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) concluded that a Russian-made Buk missile, transported from Russia and returned afterward, was responsible. These findings are backed by extensive evidence and widely recognized by the global community.

R

- “Russians and Ukrainians are brotherly nations” – Russia is the oppressor and aggressor responsible for genocides, wars, famines, and ecocides on the territory of Ukraine.
- “Russian speakers in Ukraine are pro-Putin” – many Russian-speaking soldiers are defending Ukraine at the moment. While there definitely are Russian-speaking separatists, spoken language does not define every person who uses it.

However, generalizing people by language is one of the tactics the Putin government uses.

- “Russia allows Ukrainians in occupied territories to freely choose their children’s education” – In reality, Russia forces a pro-Kremlin curriculum, erasing Ukrainian identity and justifying its invasion. Ukrainian-speaking students and educators face threats, fines, detention, and torture for resisting. Schools are even ordered to report 18-year-olds for forced military conscription into the Russian army.
- “Russia as the innocent victim” – The Kremlin distorts reality to shift blame away from itself, flooding the information space with conflicting narratives. Russian officials deliberately create confusion to obscure inconvenient truths and portray Russia as unfairly targeted. This tactic is used to justify aggression while dismissing international criticism.
- “Russia does not target civilian infrastructure, only if the Ukrainian army is there” – One day post full-scale invasion, Amnesty International registered at least three completed attacks on civilian areas. UNDP estimates that Russia destroyed 1.5 million Ukrainian homes, amounting to \$135 billion in damages as of June 19, 2023.
- “Russia is fighting a ‘holy war’ to protect traditional values” – Russia falsely claims it is fighting a spiritual war against a “godless” Ukraine, but Ukraine has its thriving religious communities. The Kremlin uses religion as a propaganda tool, ignoring the fact that many Orthodox leaders inside Ukraine have condemned Russia’s invasion.
- “Russia is fighting Western imperialism and neo-colonialism in Ukraine to build a fairer world order” – Russia portrays itself as anti-imperialist, yet its invasion of Ukraine, illegal annexations, and continued military aggression expose its colonial ambitions. The United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly condemned Russia’s war, calling for an immediate withdrawal of its forces.
- “Russia’s victory is inevitable, and Ukraine should surrender” – Ukraine has already regained half of the territory Russia initially occupied and continues to defend itself effectively. Calls for Ukraine’s surrender ignore the fact that peace can only come when Russia withdraws and respects international law.

- “The collapse of Western civilization: – Russian propaganda insists that the West is in irreversible decline, plagued by corruption, political failures, and societal crises. This narrative seeks to erode trust in democratic institutions and present Russia’s authoritarian model as a more stable alternative. By depicting the West as weak, Moscow aims to discredit Western influence globally.
- “The evacuation of Ukrainian children to Russia was necessary to secure them” – The Yale report proves Russia’s systemic deportation of children from Ukraine, concealing their identities and issuing different birth certificates to prevent reunification with their families and repatriation. Thousands of children have been stolen, yet fewer than 400 individuals have been found and reunited with their families. Putin and the Russian government are the very reasons why children are endangered.
- “The Russian Orthodox Church is the rightful spiritual authority over Ukraine” – In Orthodox tradition, each country should have its own independent Church, which Ukraine had until Moscow forcibly abolished it in the 17th century (Soltys, 2022). Today, the restored Orthodox Church of Ukraine is larger than the now-discredited Ukrainian branch of the Russian Orthodox Church, alongside other religious groups that reject Moscow’s dominance.
- “The US has secret biological weapons labs in Ukraine” – There is no evidence that Ukraine hosts US-run biological weapons labs. The United Nations and international watchdogs have debunked this claim, which is part of a long-running Russian disinformation campaign to discredit Ukraine and the West. This conspiracy theory originated from Soviet propaganda and has been repurposed to justify Russia’s invasion. Popular Western PC games that popularize and earn money on this idea are Syphon Filter, Counter-Strike, Tom Clancy’s Rainbow Six, Conflict: Global Terror, etc.
- “The West is encircling Russia” – The Kremlin claims that NATO and the EU are aggressively expanding toward Russia’s borders, threatening its security. This myth is used to justify Russian military aggression in Ukraine and other neighboring states. In reality, NATO expansion has been voluntary, with countries joining to protect themselves from Russian aggression.
- “The West is using Ukraine to destroy Russia” – The US, EU, and NATO do not seek to “destroy” Russia—they support Ukraine’s right to self-defense against an illegal invasion. Russia promotes this myth to justify its own aggressive policies and repression at home. In reality, many countries—including neutral states like

Switzerland and Sweden—support Ukraine, proving it is not just an "Anglo-Saxon conspiracy."

- "The West started the war, and Russia is defending itself" – The full-scale war began when Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, not because of any Western provocation. Russia's claim that it is "defending itself" is false, as Ukraine did not attack Russia, nor did NATO forces. Western military aid helps Ukraine defend itself, but no NATO troops are engaged in the conflict.
- "The West supports terrorism" – Moscow accuses Western countries of backing terrorist groups to destabilize global regions, particularly in the Middle East. This narrative deflects attention from Russia's own military interventions in Syria and beyond. Russia attempts to justify its foreign policies and suppress dissent by painting itself as a stabilizing force.
- "The world supports Russia more than Ukraine" – Despite the US aid pause, Ukraine has broad international support, with over 40 countries providing military, financial, and humanitarian aid. In contrast, Russia's main allies are Belarus, North Korea, and Iran, which shows its isolation. The United Nations overwhelmingly condemned Russia's invasion, proving that most of the world stands with Ukraine.

U

- "Ukraine has committed genocide against Russian speakers in Donbas" – There is no evidence that Ukraine has ever targeted Russian speakers in Donbas or elsewhere for persecution, let alone genocide. The Kremlin uses this false claim to justify its invasion despite independent investigations and reports confirming that ethnic Russians in Ukraine are not at risk.
- "Ukraine is attacking its own nuclear power plants" – There is no proof that Ukraine has ever targeted its nuclear infrastructure, including the Zaporizhzhia plant. In reality, Russia has turned the plant into a military base, cut its power lines, and stationed troops there, creating an international nuclear safety crisis. The IAEA has confirmed Russian responsibility for the dangerous situation.
- "Ukraine is a poor and underdeveloped country" – Despite economic challenges, Ukraine has a strong IT sector, scientific achievements, and cultural contributions. The country is modernizing rapidly and has excellent growth potential.

- “Ukraine is developing nuclear weapons and ‘dirty bombs’” – Ukraine has been a nuclear-weapon-free country since 1994 when it signed the Budapest Memorandum, giving up its inherited Soviet arsenal. In exchange, the U.S., the U.K., and Russia promised to guarantee Ukraine's security. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has found no evidence of Ukraine developing nuclear weapons or engaging in any nuclear provocation. In contrast, Russia regularly engages in nuclear blackmail, has disturbed the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant, and has occupied the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, putting Europe at risk.
- “Ukraine is entirely a Chornobyl zone” – The 1986 Chornobyl disaster impacted Ukraine, but it doesn't mean the entire country is an exclusion zone full of mutants. Environmentally, Ukraine holds a respectable position globally.
- “Ukraine is losing, and its military is collapsing” – Despite challenges, Ukraine has successfully reclaimed half of the territory Russia initially occupied in 2022 and continues to achieve victories, particularly in the Black Sea. The claim that Ukraine is on the verge of collapse is a psychological tactic used by the Kremlin to demoralize both Ukrainians and international supporters.
- “Ukraine is run by Nazis” – The Kremlin’s “Nazi” accusations are baseless and serve as a pretext for war, despite Ukraine having far-right political influence lower than many European nations, including Russia itself. Russia uses this false narrative to justify its aggression while ignoring own links to extremist ideologies.
- “Ukraine is using children, women, and elderly civilians in combat” – There is no evidence that Ukraine is mobilizing children or seniors for frontline combat. Men over 50 will only be mobilized if they possess critical military qualifications. On the contrary, reports indicate that Russia recruits prisoners and sends poorly trained soldiers into high-casualty “meat assaults.”
- “Ukraine stages atrocities to blame Russia” – Russian officials frequently claim that Ukraine fabricates war crimes, during 2014-2022 and 2022-now. However, multiple independent fact-checkers, journalists, and the United Nations have confirmed that Russian troops were responsible for mass killings, torture, and deportations. These claims are a common tactic of Kremlin propaganda, shifting blame for its crimes onto its victims.

- “Ukrainian government persecutes Christians” – The Russian Orthodox Church did not condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. On the contrary, it fully supports and blesses the occupation and the murders of innocent people. The ROC participated in the annexation of Crimea and promoted pro-Russian views during prayers in Ukraine. Many ROC priests have been detained with extremist materials by Ukrainian intelligence. The ROC is now officially banned in Ukraine—Orthodox parishes are free to practice their religion with any other represented Orthodox Church.
- “Ukrainian is Russian slang” – Although the Ukrainian language faced significant obstacles to its development until the 18th century, its roots date back much further. The East Slavic language group emerged in the 13th century following the collapse of Kyivan Rus, leading to the gradual differentiation of Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian, all of which developed around the same time.
- “Ukrainian migrants and refugees are criminals” – These are rare cases, as with most migrants from developed countries. Nevertheless, very often, Russian propaganda and its "partners" use these stories against Ukrainian immigrants and refugees, inciting hostility and trying to turn local society against them.
- “Ukrainian was imported by Poles” – Polish belongs to the West Slavic language group, meaning Ukrainian did not originate from it.
- “Ukrainian women are exclusively homemakers” – Many women pursue higher education and careers. In some families, if the woman earns more, the man may take on the primary caregiving role for children. Ukrainian women are not passive.
- “Ukrainians and Russians are the same people” – Ukrainians and Russians share some historical and cultural connections but are distinct nations with different languages, traditions, and political identities. The orientalist idea that Ukraine is just a “younger sibling” of Russia is a Kremlin myth designed to justify imperial ambitions.
- “Ukrainians are only migrant workers” – While many work abroad, they also excel in business, science, and the arts. Ukraine has a highly educated workforce, and many professionals contribute significantly to various industries worldwide.

- “Ukrainians are overly emotional” – Ukrainians are expressive, but this is part of their cultural warmth and sincerity. They value strong emotions in communication, which does not equate to excessive dramatization.
- “Ukrainians chose to reunite with Russia through referendums” – The so-called “referendums” in Russian-occupied territories were staged under military occupation, with reports of coercion, vote-rigging, and illegitimate processes. No credible international body has recognized these referendums as legal or free. Ukraine’s internationally recognized borders remain unchanged despite Russia’s illegal claims.
- “Ukrainians eat a lot” – Only about 20% of Ukrainians are affected by obesity. The traditional Ukrainian diet is generally healthy and balanced.
- “Ukrainians eat only borscht and salo” – These dishes are staples of Ukrainian cuisine but do not define their entire diet. Ukrainian gastronomy is diverse, influenced by various regional and international flavors.
- “Ukrainians in occupied territories can freely choose their citizenship” – Russia coerces residents into taking Russian passports by threatening parental rights, cutting off social benefits, and restricting healthcare and education. Children as young as 13 are detained for refusing Russian citizenship and may be transferred to adult prisons at 18. Proposed immigration laws will further trap Ukrainians in occupied areas, forcing them to accept Russian passports.

V

- “Vyshyvankas are everyday attire” – The traditional embroidered shirt, or vyshyvanka, is significant in Ukrainian culture, but most people reserve it for special occasions rather than daily wear.

W

- “Western sanctions against Russia are illegal and ineffective” – All EU and US sanctions against Russia comply with international law and are targeted at weakening Russia’s war machine. While Russia claims sanctions do not work, its economy has suffered from high inflation, a collapsing ruble, and mass business departures.

Acknowledgments

This paper was jointly authored by M. Larkin and S. Markova.

S. Markova started drafting their manuscript on the issue of Eastern European identity amid the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2022. The manuscript was S. Markova's personal immigrant journey, which invited fellow Eastern Europeans to share their lived experiences and discuss the stereotypes they face in North America. The project had evolved into a Ukrainian lived experience centering Canada during the summer of 2024 when S. Markova began formalizing the manuscript and focused on interviewing Ukrainians online. S. Markova's leadership, detailed exploration of stereotypes and misinformation won the grant from GLocal Foundation of Canada.

As the ideological and interview lead, S. Markova can be contacted concerning the white paper at markovaresearcher@gmail.com

M. Larkin joined the project in the role of academic co-author at a later stage, taking S. Markova's manuscript as the basis for the white paper. As a part of their doctoral work, M. Larkin has been studying media's role in the decolonization and recolonization of Ukrainians amid the Russo-Ukrainian war. In the white paper, M. Larkin focused on explaining S. Markova's findings from historical and theoretic perspectives, conducting in-depth research to provide the North American audience with the fundamentals necessary for understanding the complex conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The white paper integrates M. Larkin's former doctoral research on Ukraine with the North American locale.

As the lead writer and theoretic researcher, M. Larkin is willing to respond to any inquiries concerning the white paper at larkinresearcher@gmail.com

The authors wholeheartedly thank the interviewees for their bravery and openness to being vulnerable.

This paper would not have been possible without a grant and guidance from GLOCAL and the Canada Service Corps (CSC) at Employment and Social Development of Canada.

Reference and bibliography list

Human Rights Watch (2017). *Ukraine: Revoke Ban on Dozens of Russian Web Companies*. [online] UNHCR Web Archive. Available at:

<https://webarchive.archive.unhcr.org/20230603012309/https://www.refworld.org/docid/591bf7314.html>

[Accessed 15 Mar. 2024].

Ashcroft, B. (2000). Primitive and Wingless: the Colonial Subject as Child. In: W.S. Jacobson, ed., *Dickens and the Children of Empire*. [online] Palgrave Macmillan, pp.184–202.

doi:https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230294172_14.

Avsheniuk, N., Anishchenko, O., Hodlevska, K. and Seminikhyna, N. (2022). Training to professional fulfillment: the history of women's education in Ukraine (at the end 19th – early 20th centuries). *SHS Web of Conferences*, 142, p.01001. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202214201001>.

Balan, J. (1984). *Salt and Braided Bread*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

BBC (2017). 'Calling a War a war': Is There a Way out of the Impasse in Donbas? | 'Назвати Війну - війною': Чи Є Вихід З Глухого Кута На Донбасі? [online] BBC News Україна. Available at:

<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-41157932> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2026].

Bilal, A. (2021). Hybrid Warfare – New Threats, Complexity, and 'Trust' as the Antidote. *NATO Review*. [online] 30 Nov. Available at: <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2021/11/30/hybrid-warfare-new-threats-complexity-and-trust-as-the-antidote/index.html> [Accessed 17 Feb. 2025].

Binns, C.A.P. (1979). The Changing Face of Power: Revolution and Accommodation in the Development of the Soviet Ceremonial System: Part I. *Man*, 14(4), p.585. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/2802149>.

Borak, M. (2022). *The Hunt for Wikipedia's Disinformation Moles*. [online] Wired. Available at:

<https://www.wired.com/story/wikipedia-state-sponsored-disinformation/> [Accessed 15 Mar. 2025].

Bournelis, S. (2019). *The Conversion of Kievan Rus' to Eastern Orthodox Christianity*.

Brand Analytics (2013). *Социальные сети в России лето-2013: цифры, тренды, прогнозы*. [online] Brand Analytics. Available at: <https://brandanalytics.ru/blog/socialnye-seti-v-rossii-leto-2013-cifry-t> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Brandenberger, D. (2023). 'Basically, it's a History of the Russian State': Russocentrism, Etatism, and the Ukrainian Question in Stalin's Editing of the 1937 *Short History of the USSR*. *Nationalities papers*, [online] 5(2), pp.1–20. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2023.89>.

Brandenberger, D. (2024). *Stalin's Usable Past*. Stanford University Press.

Brovchuk, R. (2022). *War does not frighten? Do labor migrants from Ukraine still want to work in the Russian Federation?* | *Війна не лякає? Чи досі трудові мігранти з України прагнуть працювати у РФ*. [online] Unian.ua. Available at: <https://www.unian.ua/society/viyna-ne-lyakaye-chi-dosi-trudovi-migranti-z-ukrajini-pragnut-pracyuvati-u-rf-novini-ukrajini-11692693.html> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2025].

CBC (2001). *The Red Scare*. [online] [Www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca). Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP15CH1PA2LE.html> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2025].

Chausov, A. (2022). 'Farewell, khokhols!' What Brodsky spoke about in the poem 'On the independence of Ukraine' | 'Прощайте, хохлы!' О чем Бродский говорил в стихотворении 'На независимость Украины'. *Украина.ру*. [online] doi:<https://doi.org/1040020641.jpg?10400214781666395907>.

Curtis, S. (2022). *Democracy as Struggle and Commitment: Revisiting Michael Denning's The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. [online] North Meridian Press. Available at: <https://thenorthmeridianreview.org/blog/democracy-as-struggle-and-commitmentnbsp-revisiting-michael-dennings-the-cultural-frontnbsp-the-laboring-of-american-culture-in-the-twentieth-century> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2025].

Dalets'ka, Y. (2024). *Українці Все Частіше Донатають на 'Банки'. Із Початку Року на Армію Перерахували 40 Мільярдів*. [online] [Censor.net](http://biz.censor.net). Available at: <https://biz.censor.net/news/3523548/ukrayintsi-vse-chastishe-donatyat-na-banky-iz-pochatku-roku-pererahuvaly-40-milyardiv> [Accessed 15 Mar. 2025].

Data Commons (2014). *Russia - Place Explorer*. [online] datacommons.org. Available at: https://datacommons.org/place/country/RUS?utm_medium=explore&mprop=count&popt=Person&hl=en [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Depo.ua (2015). *Who Profited From the War? | Хто Заробив На Війні*. [online] www.depo.ua. Available at: <https://www.depo.ua/ukr/money/hto-zarobiv-na-viyni-05102015074500> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Detector Media (2024). *Media literacy index of Ukrainians: 2020–2023 Fourth Wave*. [online] Detector Media. Available at: <https://en.detector.media/post/media-literacy-index-of-ukrainians-2020-2023-fourth-wave> [Accessed 29 Jul. 2024].

Didkivs'ka, L.V. (2019). Migration of Ukrainians at the Pre-Industrial Stage of Social Development . *Історія Економіки* . doi:<https://doi.org/10.15407/ingedu2019.52.138>.

Doran, J. (2023). *Ukrainians Increasingly Rely on Telegram Channels for News and Information during Wartime*. [online] Information Saves Lives | Internews. Available at: <https://internews.org/ukrainians-increasingly-rely-on-telegram-channels-for-news-and-information-during-wartime/#:~:text=In%202021%20only%20%25%20of> [Accessed 15 Mar. 2024].

Dovhaniuk, I. (2019). FORMATION OF GALICIA-VOLYN STATE AND ITS HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE. *Wunu.edu.ua*. [online] doi:<http://dspace.tneu.edu.ua/handle/316497/34009>.

Dzyuba, M. (2024). *Woman in Ukrainian cinema: from Classic Beregyny to Modern War Heroines*. [online] Vikna. Available at: <https://vikna.tv/styl-zhyttya/podorozhi/evolyucziya-zhinochyh-obraziv-v-ukrayinskomu-kino-vid-tradycij-do-voyennyh-geroyin/> [Accessed 7 Mar. 2025].

Erlacher, T. (2013). Denationalizing Treachery: The Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in Late Soviet Discourse. *Region*, [online] 2(2), pp.289–316. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/43737626>.

Foley, J. and Unkovski-Korica, V. (2024). Decentring the West? Civilizational solidarity and (de)colonization in theories of the Russia-Ukraine War. *Globalizations*, pp.1–21. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2024.2399475>.

Fornusek, M. (2024). *Prosecutors: EuroMaidan Violence Perpetrated by Ukrainian Officers under Russia's Guidance*. [online] The Kyiv Independent. Available at: <https://kyivindependent.com/prosecutors-ukrainian-law-enforcement-responsible-for-all-violence-against-protesters-at-euromaidan/> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2025].

Galushko, K. and Zorba, N. (2014). 'Українська Facebook-Революція?' | *Ukrainian Facebook-Revolution?* [online] Forum for Ukrainian Studies. Available at: <https://ukrainian-studies.ca/2014/10/03/ukrainian-facebook-revolution/> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Gordienko, V. (2022). *Україна В Російських Фільмах! Історія Промивання Мізків Народу*. [online] YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evkr6wG3BY0> [Accessed 8 Mar. 2025].

Grabovych, G. (1997). *До історії української літератури: Дослідження, есе, полеміка*. [online] *Litopys.org.ua*. Kyiv: Основи. Available at: <http://litopys.org.ua/hrabo/hr.htm> [Accessed 9 Mar. 2025].

Gradus Research (2023). *Socio-Political Attitudes During the Full-Scale Invasion of the Russian Federation Troops into the Territory of Ukraine - Eighth Wave Research* | Суспільно-Політичні Насстрої Під Час

Повномасштабного Вторгнення Військ Російської Федерації На Територію України -Восьма Хвиля Дослідження. Ukraine: Gradus.

Gumenyuk, T. and Dramaretskyi, B. (2023). Cultural Policy in the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic in the 1920s. *East European Historical Bulletin*, [online] (27), pp.128–139. doi:<https://doi.org/10.24919/2519-058X.27.281523>.

Gundorova, T. (2009). Nikolai Gogol and Colonial Kitsch | Микола Гоголь і Колоніальний Кітч. *Гоголезнавчі студії*, (18), pp.17–40.

Hackel, S. (2017). *Under Pressure from the Pagans? – The Mongols and the Russian Church*. 1st ed. [online] Routledge eBooks, Informa, pp.437–446. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315239774-20>.

Hagigi, N. (2024). *Refugees welcome? Comparing Canadian policy on Palestinian and Ukrainian refugees - CCPA*. [online] CCPA -. Available at: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/refugees-welcome-comparing-canadian-policy-on-palestinian-and-ukrainian-refugees/> [Accessed 11 Mar. 2025].

Hatton, R.M., Oresko, R., Gibbs, G.C. and Scott, H.M. (1997). *Royal and republican sovereignty in early modern Europe : essays in memory of Ragnhild Hatton*. Cambridge England ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press.

International Humanitarian Association "We Ukrainians" (2023). *The Four Waves of Ukrainian Emigration | Чотири Хвилі Української Еміграції*. [online] Weareukrainians.com. Available at: <http://weareukrainians.com/ukraine-and-the-world/chotiri-hvili-ukrayinskoyi-emigratsiyi> [Accessed 7 Mar. 2025].

Iten, O. (2018). *Pooh vs. Pukh, a character analysis*. [online] Blogspot.com. Available at: <https://colorfulanimationexpressions.blogspot.com/2011/08/pooh-vs-pukh-character-analysis.html> [Accessed 8 Mar. 2025].

Katchanovski, I. (2013). The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, and the Nazi Genocide in Ukraine. In: *Collaboration in Eastern Europe during World War II and the Holocaust” Conference, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum & Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies*. [online] Collaboration in Eastern Europe during World War II and the Holocaust. Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum & Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262727967_The_Organization_of_Ukrainian_Nationalists_the_Ukrainian_Insurgent_Army_and_the_Nazi_Genocide_in_Ukraine [Accessed 3 Mar. 2025].

Khoma, V. (2022). Influence of the negative phenomena of the russian occupation government on the population of Galicia and Bukovyna during World War I. *History Journal of Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University*, (56), pp.71–77. doi:<https://doi.org/10.31861/hj2022.56.71-77>.

Kit, L.W. and Nie, K.S. (2022). the Effect of Personal Locus in Media Literacy on youth's Interpretation of Violent Media Messages. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, [online] 14(3), pp.91–103. Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcapjpcglclefindmkaj/<https://fslmjournals.taylors.edu.my/wp-content/uploads/SEARCH/SEARCH-2022-14-3/SEARCH-2022-P6-14-3.pdf> [Accessed 14 Mar. 2025].

Kotubey-Heruts'ka, O. (2022). Ніби в Суді Збираю Докази: Блогер Гордієнко Про Пропаганду в Російському Кіно | Ніби В Суді Збираю докази: Блогер Гордієнко Про Пропаганду В Російському Кіно. [online] Суспільне | Новини. Available at: <https://suspilne.media/culture/229954-nibi-v-sudi-zbirau-dokazi-blogger-vitalij-gordienko-pro-svoi-doslidzenna-propagandi-v-rosijskomu-kino/> [Accessed 8 Mar. 2024].

Kravchenko, V. (2016). Fighting Soviet Myths: The Ukrainian Experience. *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, [online] 34(1-4), pp.447–484. Available at: <https://www.husj.harvard.edu/articles/fighting-soviet-myths-the-ukrainian-experience> [Accessed 7 Mar. 2025].

Kraynua, V. (2025). КМІС: Українським медіа довіряють 27% респондентів, не довіряють 42%. [online] detector.media. Available at: <https://detector.media/infospace/article/236875/2025-01-09-kmis-ukrainskym-media-doviryayut-27-responentiv-ne-doviryayut-42/> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2025].

Kulchytskyi, S.V. (2005). Empire | Імперія. In: V.A. Smoliy, ed., *Encyclopedia of Ukrainian History: E - Ї* | Енциклопедія історії України: Е - Ї. [online] Kyiv: Наукова Думка. Available at: <http://resource.history.org.ua/item/0002334> [Accessed 3 Mar. 2025].

Kushnir, O. (2024). Decolonising Knowledge Production about Ukraine: A Security Aspect. *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, 01(2), pp.139–153. doi:<https://doi.org/10.15804/ppsy202434>.

Langer, L.N. (2021). Between the politics of accommodation and independence. In: *Routledge eBooks*. [online] Informa, pp.487–500. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367809959-32>.

Larkin, M. (2024). *Decolonization, Recolonization, and Disinformation: Audience Perceptions of Telegram Channels Sourcing Practices during the Russo-Ukrainian War*.

Łesiów, M., Robert, D.L. and Koropeczyj, R. (1998). The Polish and Ukrainian Languages: A Mutually Beneficial Relationship. *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, [online] 22, pp.393–406. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/41036749>.

Library and Archives Canada (2015). *Ukrainian Immigrants, 1891-1930*. [online] www.bac-lac.gc.ca. Available at: <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/immigration-records/immigrants-ukraine-1891-1930/Pages/introduction.aspx> [Accessed 10 Mar. 2025].

Lokot, T. (2014). *Russian Social Networks Dominate in Ukraine Despite Information War*. [online] Global Voices. Available at: <https://globalvoices.org/2014/09/01/ukraine-russia-social-networks-information-war/> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Longworth, P. (2006). *Russia: The Once and Future Empire from Pre-History to Putin*. St. Martin's Press.

Luke, T.W. (1987). Civil Religion and Secularization: Ideological Revitalization in PostRevolutionary Communist Systems. *Sociological Forum*, [online] 2(1), pp.108–134. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/684530>.

Lutsevych, O. (2021). *Myth 12: 'Crimea was always Russian'*. [online] Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank. Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/myths-and-misconceptions-debate-russia/myth-12-crimea-was-always-russian>.

Maierov, A.V. (2020). The Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe in 1223, 1237-1240. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. [online] doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.468>.

Malyshko, D. (2021). *Licenses Only for Russian Radio and Friends of Bankova | Ліцензії Лише Русському Радіо Та Друзям Банкової*. [online] Апостроф. Available at: <https://apostrophe.ua/ua/article/society/media/2021-11-26/litsenzii-lish-russkomu-radio-i-druzyam-bankovoy/43110> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2025].

Martsinkiv, N. (2021). *Unlikely Dissenters: Origins and Development of the Ukrainian Human Rights Movement from Khrushchev to Gorbachev*. [online] Proquest.com. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/openview/5824a32ccf7ce67d1992260481b19fb6/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y> [Accessed 3 Mar. 2025].

Melnyk, M. (2024). *Пропаганда в Кіно: Як Росіяни Формують Українофобію Та Стереотипи Про Українців*. [online] Intent.press. Available at: <https://intent.press/blog/2024/propaganda-v-kino-yak-rosiyani-formuyut-ukrayinofobiya-ta-stereotipi-pro-ukrayinciv/> [Accessed 7 Mar. 2025].

Millis, C. and Lefrançois, B.A. (2018). Child As Metaphor: Colonialism, Psy-Governance, and Epistemicide. *World Futures*, [online] 74(7-8), pp.503–524. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/02604027.2018.1485438>.

Minzhurenko, A. (2018). *Under the Yoke: The Rights of the Russian Clergy during the Golden Horde | Под игом: права русского духовенства во времена Золотой Орды*. [online] РАПСИ. Available at: https://rapsinews.ru/incident_publication/20181225/292960727.html [Accessed 3 Mar. 2025].

Minzhurenko, A. (2019). *Gathering the Lands: The Rights of the Clergy to Do Good* | *Собираніє земель: права духовенства на благое дело*. [online] РАПСИ. Available at: https://rapsinews.ru/incident_publication/20190115/293607906.html [Accessed 3 Mar. 2025].

Morin, B. (2022). *Remembering Good Relations: First Nations in Canada Show their Solidarity with Ukrainians* | *Cultural Survival*. [online] www.culturalsurvival.org. Available at: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/remembering-good-relations-first-nations-canada-show-their-solidarity-ukrainians> [Accessed 11 Mar. 2025].

Movchan, O.M. (2016). *Elimination of Illiteracy (Liknep)* | *Ліквідація Неписемності (Лікнен)*. [online] Енциклопедія Сучасної України. Available at: <https://esu.com.ua/article-55470> [Accessed 3 Mar. 2025].

Nefyodova, T. (2020). *'The Scarlet Flower' vs 'Beauty and the Beast'* | *'Аленький цветочек' vs 'Красавица и Чудовище'*. [online] Nefedovabooks.ru. Available at: <https://nefedovabooks.ru/alyenkiy-tsvetochek-vs-beauty-and-the-beast> [Accessed 8 Mar. 2025].

New Europe Center, GfK Ukraine and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2017). *Ukrainian Gen Z: values and aspirations* | *Українське покоління Z: цінності та орієнтири*. [online] Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://neweurope.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Ukr_Generation_ukr_inet-2.pdf [Accessed 3 Mar. 2025].

Noble, B. and Schulmann, E. (2021). *Myth 15: 'It's all about Putin – Russia is a manually run, centralized autocracy'*. [online] Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank. Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/myths-and-misconceptions-debate-russia/myth-15-its-all-about-putin-russia-manually-run> [Accessed 16 Mar. 2025].

Ostryzniuk, E. (2014). *More Ukrainians press 'like' for VKontakte, not Facebook*. [online] Kyivpost.com. Available at: <https://archive.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/more-ukrainians-press-like-for-vkontakte-not-facebook-354474.html> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Pavliuk, A. (2025). *'History is Written in the Trenches': How Ukrainians on Social Networks React to the Third Anniversary of the Full-Scale War* | *'Історія Пишеться В траншеях': Як Українці У Соцмережах Реагують На Третю Річницю Повномасштабної Війни*. [online] Українська правда. Життя. Available at: <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/yak-ukrajinci-reaguyut-na-tretyu-richnicyu-povnomasshtabnoji-viyni-306598/> [Accessed 6 Mar. 2024].

Perrie, M. (1972). The Russian Peasant Movement of 1905-1907: Its Social Composition and Revolutionary Significance. *Past & Present*, [online] (57), pp.123–155. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/650419>.

Pope, A. (2016). *Photos: Selling Soviet tourism to Canadians in the Great Depression*. [online] Canadiangeographic.ca. Available at: <https://canadiangeographic.ca/articles/photos-selling-soviet-tourism-to-canadians-in-the-great-depression/> [Accessed 7 Mar. 2025].

Posunko, V. (2016). *Ukraine in Russian Cinema: Hatred and Mockery* | Україна в Російському Кіно: Ненависть та Насмішки^[66]. [online] Universe.zp.ua. Available at: <https://universe.zp.ua/ukraina-v-rosijskomu-kino-nenavist-ta-nasmishki/> [Accessed 8 Mar. 2025].

Poznyak–Homenko, N. (2021). *Shevchenko and Censorship: How the Poet Was ‘Edited’ in the Russian Empire and the USSR* | Шевченко і цензура: як ‘редагували’ поета в Російській імперії та СРСР. [online] Український тиждень. Available at: <https://tyzhden.ua/shevchenko-i-tsenzura-iak-redahuvaly-poeta-v-rosijski-imperii-ta-srsr/> [Accessed 10 Mar. 2025].

Reference Middlesex (n.d.). *LibGuides: Fake News, Real News: Checking the URLs*. [online] libguides.middlesex.mass.edu. Available at: <https://libguides.middlesex.mass.edu/fakenews/checkingurls> [Accessed 15 Mar. 2025].

Romanchuk, O. (2017). *Russia’s War against Ukraine. Why Not Call Spades by Their Proper names?* | Війна Росії Проти України. Чому Речі Не Називають Своїми іменами? [online] Радіо Свобода. Available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28211790.html> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Ronzhyn, A. (2014). *The Use of Facebook and Twitter During the 2013-2014 Protests in Ukraine The use of Facebook and Twitter During the 2013-2014 Protests in Ukraine*. [online] Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268979057_The_Use_of_Facebook_and_Twitter_During_the_2013-2014_Protests_in_Ukraine [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Rovenchak, O. and Volodko, V. (2018). Comparative Analysis of the Identity and Practices of Post-war Representatives and the Contemporary Wave of Ukrainian Immigrants in the United States. *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio I – Philosophia-Sociologia*, 43(1), p.33. doi:<https://doi.org/10.17951/i.2018.43.1.33-53>.

Rudnytsky, I.L. (1987). *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute.

Santos Marinas, E. (2011). Christian Myths of Origin among the East Slavs: The alleged Apostolic Roots of Christianity in the Kievan Rus. In: *Europe of Nations. Myths of Origin: Modern and Postmodern Discourses*. [online] Aveiro. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/4873259/_Christian_Myths_of_Origin_among_the_East_Slavs_The_alleged_Apostolic_Roots_of_Christianity_in_the_Kievan_Rus_ [Accessed 1 Mar. 2025].

Sedghi, A. (2014). *Facebook: 10 years of social networking, in numbers*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/feb/04/facebook-in-numbers-statistics> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Shaikhutdinov, M. (2021). *Between East and West*. Brookline MA: Academic Studies Press.

Shapovalova, N. (2017). Civic Volunteerism and the Legacy of Euromaidan. In: R. Youngs, ed., *Global Civic Activism in Flux*. [online] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, pp.47–52. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/resrep26909.14>.

Shpotov, B.M. (2002). Russia and the Americanisation process (1900-1930s). *L'américanisation en Europe au xxe siècle : économie, culture, politique. Volume 1*, [online] pp.303–314. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4000/books.irhis.1916>.

Shumilo, O., Kerikmäe, T. and Chochia, A. (2019). Restrictions of Russian Internet Resources in Ukraine: National Security, Censorship or Both? *Baltic Journal of European Studies*, 9(3), pp.82–95. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1515/bjes-2019-0023>.

Slyvenko, O. (2023). *How Does Russian Propaganda Work in Film? | Як Працює Російська Пропаганда в Кіно*. [online] ГЛАВКОМ. Available at: <https://glavcom.ua/digest/jak-pratsjuje-rosijska-propahanda-v-kino-967553.html> [Accessed 8 Mar. 2025].

Sokolova, S. (2022). Reflection of Soviet anti-Ukrainian Stereotypes in Modern Russian Public Opinion. *Journal of Modern Science*, 49(2), pp.638–645. doi:<https://doi.org/10.13166/jms/156853>.

Soltys, D. (2022). *Misconceptions about Ukraine Cloud Western Policies in the Russo-Ukraine War | Columbia | Journal of International Affairs*. [online] Columbia.edu. Available at: <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/content/misconceptions-about-ukraine-cloud-western-policies-russo-ukraine-war> [Accessed 16 Mar. 2025].

Sturm, S. (2022). *Jordan Peterson's Dangerous Projections on Ukraine and the Perils of Campism - PESA Agora*. [online] PESA Agora. Available at: <https://pesaagora.com/columns/jordan-petersons-dangerous-projections-on-ukraine-and-the-perils-of-campism/> [Accessed 13 Mar. 2025].

Subtelny, O. (2009). *Ukraine*. University of Toronto Press.

Swyripa, F.A. (2012). *Ukrainian Canadians*. [online] Thecanadianencyclopedia.ca. Available at: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/ukrainian-canadians> [Accessed 10 Mar. 2025].

Tanger, M. (2023). *Invasion That Changed Ukrainians | Вторгнення, Що Змінило Українців*. [online] DeepState UA. Available at: <https://deepstateua.com/iak-viina-zminila-ukrayintsiv/> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2025].

Taras Shevchenko Museum (2024). *First Wave of Ukrainian Immigration to Canada, 1891-1914*. [online] Communitystories.ca. Available at: https://www.communitystories.ca/v1/pm_v2.php?id=story_line&lg=English&fl=0&ex=00000464&sl=5520&pos=1 [Accessed 10 Mar. 2025].

The Kyiv Independent (2022). *Zelensky Signs Media Law Criticized by Journalist Groups as Authoritarian*. [online] The Kyiv Independent. Available at: <https://kyivindependent.com/zelensky-signs-media-law-criticized-by-journalist-groups-as-authoritarian/> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

TCH (2022a). *'They Would Have Captured Us in Three Days': Zelensky Explained Why Ukrainians Were Not Warned About Russia's Invasion* | 'Вони Б Нас Захопили За Три дні': Зеленський пояснив, Чому Українців Не Попередили Про Вторгнення Росії. [online] TCH.ua. Available at: <https://tsn.ua/ato/voni-b-nas-zahopili-za-tri-dni-zelenskiy-poyasniv-chomu-ukrayinciv-ne-poperedili-pro-vtorgnennya-rosiyi-2135833.html> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2025].

TCH (2022b). *'We didn't expect such a scale of invasion': Zelensky spoke about preparations for war* | 'Не очікували на такий масштаб вторгнення': у Зеленського розповіли про підготування до війни. [online] TCH.ua. Available at: <https://tsn.ua/ato/ne-ochikuvali-na-takiy-masshtab-vtorgnennya-u-zelenskogo-rozpovili-pro-pidgotuvannya-do-viyni-2137945.html> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2025].

Tunney, C. (2024). *Canadian linked to Russian influence campaign refuses to answer MPs' questions*. [online] CBC. Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/tenent-lauren-chen-committee-1.7373893> [Accessed 13 Mar. 2025].

Ukrainian World Congress (2022). *Ukrainians in Canada: From the First Wave of Immigration to Now*. [online] www.ukrainianworldcongress.org. Available at: <https://www.ukrainianworldcongress.org/ukrainians-in-canada-from-the-first-wave-of-immigration-to-now/> [Accessed 7 Mar. 2025].

Ukrinform (2023). *Резніков пояснив, чому не коментує багатьох питань: Війна не закінчилася*. [online] Ukrinform.ua. Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/3756530-reznikov-poasniv-comu-ne-komentue-bagatoh-pitan-vijna-ne-zakincilasa.html> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Ulyanych, V. (2004). *Терор Голодом І Повстанська Боротьба Проти Геноциду Українців У 1921-1933 Роках* | *Famine terror and the rebel struggle against the genocide of Ukrainians in 1921-1933*. Kyiv: MAUP.

UNDP (2023). *Breaking barriers, building hope in Ukraine*. [online] UNDP. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/eurasia/stories/breaking-barriers-building-hope-ukraine> [Accessed 16 Mar. 2025].

UNDP (2024). *76,000 Ukrainians take national media literacy test — 5.5 times more than last year*. [online] UNDP Ukraine. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/press-releases/76000-ukrainians-take-national-media-literacy-test-55-times-more-last-year> [Accessed 19 Nov. 2024].

University of Alberta (2023). *'Red Decade': Stalinism in the American Media*. [online] Ualberta.ca. Available at: <https://www.ualberta.ca/en/canadian-institute-of-ukrainian-studies/news-and-events/events/2023/red-decade.html> [Accessed 7 Mar. 2025].

V. I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine (2018). *Ukrainian prose of Canada (cycle 'Ukrainian artistic literature of Canada from the funds of the Higher Education Institution ІК НБУВ') | Україномовна проза Канади (цикл 'Українська художня література Канади із фондів ВЗУ ІК НБУВ')*. [online] Nbu.gov.ua. Available at: <http://www.nbu.gov.ua/node/5749> [Accessed 11 Mar. 2025].

Virchenko, N. (2008). *Documents on the Ban of the Ukrainian Language (17th - 20th Centuries) | Документи про заборону української мови (XVII – XX ст.)*. [online] Archive.org. Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20090214183744/http://anvsu.org.ua/index.files/Articles/Virchenko1.htm> [Accessed 10 Mar. 2025].