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# **Framing Wartime Resistance: A case study of Ukrainian digital political communication**

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*Vladyslav Alforov, 16.08.2023*

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## **Abstract**

Apart from the daunting military quandary, the Russian invasion presented the Ukrainian government with complex socio-political challenges that call for resourcefulness and innovative solutions. Taking advantage of the ongoing digital transformation, novel political communication strategies were implemented throughout the governmental levels to consolidate public resistance to the existential threat. Thus, multiple factors warrant academic examination of the ensuing phenomenon: the dire context for the innovative communication in Ukraine, its seeming success, the understudied nature of discursive mechanisms facilitating social resistance and the swelling importance of digital and social media in world politics. Besides, earlier political communication literature focused predominantly on discourse pertaining to electoral campaigning or anti-government protests, with analysis of constructive governmental communication in times of national crises being virtually unprecedented. The following paper stimulates precisely such further research, offering a single-case study of resistance framing in the Telegram communication by Governor Vitaliy Kim of Mykolayiv Oblast during the first month of the full-scale invasion. The study develops an original taxonomy of collective-connective action framing, engaging the theoretical frameworks of collective and connective action logics and organisational hybridity. The research conducts qualitative data coding to identify and interpret relevant themes and frames that facilitate a robust resistance movement via social media networks and their technological affordances. Securing public trust, preventing panic and reinforcing identity thus appear as major tools of wartime political communication in the studied case. Effectively, this discursive toolkit aids the communicator in promoting social cohesion, unity and solidarity, all of which are integral for public resistance.

**Keywords:** political science, communication studies, discourse analysis, framing, social media, mobilisation, collective action, connective action, resistance, Ukraine, Russian invasion

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## Introduction

In the afternoon of the tenth day of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Vitaliy Kim, Governor of Mykolayiv Oblast (one of the southern Ukrainian regions under attack), published a 13-second selfie video on his official Telegram channel, all along visibly chewing on his snack of personal preference. His recorded address roughly translates as follows:

*“Do you remember the saying ‘War is war, but lunch is on schedule’? I advise you do the same... Look, an air raid alarm went off just now. Shelling is expected in Voznesensk, Yuzhnoukrainsk, Pervomaisk. We are raising the alarm.”* (From a video published by Governor Kim on March 5, 2022)

Kim’s striking though conflictual equanimity in communication, notwithstanding the understandable commotion felt across the Ukrainian nation, by then has already attracted hundreds of thousands of followers in Ukraine and beyond. The governor and concurrently head of the Mykolaiv Oblast Military Administration, who had been little heard of outside of the region before the invasion, was initially embraced by many as a possessor of extraordinary charisma and a naturally cold-blooded character. Before long he was titled a symbol of Ukrainian resistance by multiple respected Western outlets. In turn, such reports and social media reposts spread Kim’s reputation like wildfire, attracting even more attention to his Telegram channel — both from locals, seeking a coping mechanism, as well as eager foreign onlookers of the tragedy in development. In the weeks to come, as the Ukrainian army defended the Mykolayiv region from the invading Russian battalions, the governor’s remarkably cheerful and widely popular wartime announcements contributed to warning the panic off, arresting the fears and supplying reliable information for all those who sought the comfort of a credible source amid the uncertainty. Yet as the frontline was pushed back toward the regional border by late March, signalling the end of imminent danger for local residents, Kim’s discursive activity declined accordingly. But the accumulated body of governor’s Telegram messages supplies a vivid instance of effective wartime digital political communication, whether performed impromptu or carefully planned out. Taking advantage of the rare occasion, the following research intends to make sense of discursive qualities in Kim’s video and textual Telegram addresses, aiming to interpret their role in fostering Ukrainian social resistance during the Russian invasion.

The study of official mediated discourse directed at the public belongs to the subfield of political communication, by definition placing itself at the intersection of political science and communication studies. Generally, the main goal of political communication tends to concern itself with improving the understanding of how politicians and powerful non-state actors shape public opinion and thus turn the democratic process on its head — by imposing a political logic onto the public rather than executing public will (McNair, 2018). However, the role of the media usually remains in sharp focus of political communication research, with the following work being no exception, since the media effect on political discourse can hardly be overestimated. In fact, the emergence of the Internet and ensuing digital communication capabilities complicated the earlier political communication process exponentially and created an urgent need for scrupulous inquiry into the instrumentalisation of contemporary digital technology by political actors (Blumler, 2015, p. 433; Dahlgren, 2005, p.148). As such, the intended analysis aims to contribute to the developing academic research on digital media use in political communication.

The focus on Ukraine seems appropriate due to multiple contextual factors. Historically, the Internet plays an important role in politics and social development of democratising post-Soviet states, especially in times of political crises (Ryabinska, 2013). However, correlating the prominence of digital media in the political life of a country with chances of its successful democratisation has been proven erroneous (Vanderhill, 2015). Additionally, the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine is a momentous regional geopolitical development with far-reaching implications on the global scale. For this reason, academic investigation of its many political and social facets must commence without delay. Hence, the following work serves as a point of departure for subsequent academic examinations in the subfield of political communication. Particularly, it supports the nascent theories on the logic of connective action as well as collective-connective hybridity. Moreover, the current study applies this theoretical framework, laid out throughout the next chapter, in the context of wartime social mobilisation conducted via digital media outlets. Apart from promoting similar research, the analysis complements related studies from other social sciences and provides the general public with an illustrative lesson on the significance of media literacy, political transparency, collective action, social trust and other vital elements of healthy democracy.

While relevant literature on digital political communication suggests that collective action is organised institutionally, academic attention is paid predominantly to politicians' social media communication during electoral campaigns. Most such studies are devoted to political analyses of collective and to a lesser degree connective actions directed against a government or in pursuit of entering one, whereas informed examination on how incumbent state officials use their social media after taking office and to what ends is lacking. Another gap in the literature appears regarding unifying rather than divisive effects of institutionally organised collective and connective actions. Following the theoretical framework developed by Tilly and Tarrow, political communication research focuses primarily on contentious politics of protest, terrorism, civil disobedience and similar anti-governmental civil movements. However, if “[c]ollective action means coordinating efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs” (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, p. 8), a study of the governmental role in the growing employment of digital social media strategies for political communication purposes facilitates a more comprehensive analysis of collective and connective action processes in modern politics. In this context, the Russian invasion of Ukraine calls for a survey of Ukrainian authorities' public wartime resistance construction — a distinct example of collective-connective effort that is primarily directed toward “forging common identifications and relations of solidarity and trust” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 751).

Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions: What collective and connective action frames can be employed by political actors in wartime digital political communication? What themes and functions facilitate the framing of wartime public resistance on digital media? And — to advance the theory of connective action in light of the defined literature gaps — what characteristics of the connective action logic, if any, can be exhibited in state officials' digital political discourse? To answer these questions, the study conducts a qualitative interpretive coding and discourse analysis of the framing patterns in Governor Kim's communication via his official Telegram channel during the first month of the war. The analysis exposes framing mechanisms involved in top-down construction of social resistance by political actors, but the emphasis remains on the interpretation of discursive practices and application of the theoretical framework. Foucauldian criticism of power dynamics is eschewed, given the specifics of the case in focus: namely, an existential national threat due to a foreign invasion.

The study starts off with a review of relevant literature from the fields of political communication and social mobilisation. Based on the research gaps identified, the theoretical framework for analysis is suggested next, merging earlier conceptualisations of collective and connective action logics. An overview of the empirical case concludes the theoretical chapter, supplying additional references to the existing digital political communication research specifically in the Ukrainian context. Methodology is laid out in the second chapter, proposing a taxonomy of collective and connective action logics and corresponding frames. The data is described, discovered framing patterns are interpreted and practical implications are drawn within the following chapter. Lastly, a conclusion is drawn, suggesting that political actors, using Kims example, foster social resistance to a national crisis primarily through recurring collective and connective action framing of identity, trust, transparency and other strategic framing devices that promote national unity, solidarity and optimism to achieve higher rates of social cohesion.

# Toward a framework for wartime political communication analysis

The relevant literature from the fields of political communication and social mobilisation appears considerably developed but nevertheless fraught with theoretical blindspots, requiring an update due to the ever-changing technological environment and the entailing shift in communication dynamics. Accordingly, the study sets the scene for the following overview of the research methodology setup and actual analysis by firstly presenting pertinent previous research and defining literature gaps. Next, it elaborates a conceptual framework based on the most appropriate theory. An additional section within the chapter is devoted to the review of research particularly in the Ukrainian and post-Soviet contexts.

## Political communication

If politics is a process of choosing a course of action collectively and under the constraints of given power dynamics within the society (Alexander, 2014, p. 296), then studying the language used by those in power to address the public — political communication — allows for better understanding of how politicians prescribe and justify certain social measures. Not only is such communication purposeful, it is also extensively mediated through various modes of communication channels. Each of these media shapes the form of political communication according to its specific capabilities and limitations (McNair, 2018, p. 4). Given the contemporary ubiquity of digital technology and its influence on society, it is practical for political communication research to take into account politicians' instrumentalisation of as well as adaptation to digital communication forms. These emerging digital media outlets and social networks have become the main mode of individual information consumption as well as interpersonal communication (Zúñiga & Chen, 2019, p. 365), inducing state officials as well as other powerful actors to convey their political messages by means of digital media platforms that are popular with their constituencies.

The earliest literature on theories of political communication perceived a linear type of relation between media messages, produced by media practitioners, and media receivers. Such media

modelling did not scrutinise the agency of journalists in the political information cycle. Neither did it post many epistemological questions about the origins of professional knowledge and individual beliefs that could affect their reporting. These theoretical gaps can be associated with the general conviction of objectivity as characteristic of quality journalism, which is still widespread among traditional media theories (Donsbach & Klett, 1993; Cohen-Almagor, 2008). Before the arrival of postmodern trends, journalists could be assumed to possess an ability to break down the reality into pure facts to be packaged and conveyed to the audience. As a result, scientific examination of the media role in politics, often conducted by active or former media specialists themselves, was primarily concerned with questioning the impact of the media on the functioning of democracy. If citizens could be affected by the information received from TV, radio and newspapers, it was of utmost importance to establish the mechanisms, extent and outcomes of the media influence on society. As a result, the literature paid substantial attention to the media effect on voting behaviour and public opinion (Schmitt-Beck, 2003). Such research still proves popular with contemporary social, media and political scientists and constitutes the foundation for political communication studies.

The most robust of these pioneering visions of political communication, often referred to as the foundational legacy theories, include conceptualisations of *priming*, *agenda-setting* and *framing* (Blumler, 2015, p. 427). The *priming* theory posits that those news or opinions that receive the most media attention consequently influence individual decision-making, including electoral voting choices. The later *agenda-setting* theory refined the concept of priming to assert that repeated media coverage convinces the public of the importance of issues covered, effectively determining the subject for public dialogue and social negotiations. Thus, the literature bestowed the media with a theoretical function of dictating what is to be considered important individually and socially in addition to merely attracting attention to specific events and phenomena. Finally, the *framing* theory, perhaps the most practical and all-encompassing of the three, proposes that media angles, narratives and logics provide individual members of the public with mental frameworks that assist in comprehending the world: these frames supply opinions where none had been present beforehand. Moreover, they structure factual links to complex real-life issues, events and phenomena in a way that allows for conclusions embedded, intentionally or not, by the messenger into the discourse. This influential theoretical development continues to shape

methodology for contemporary political scientists and social science on the whole, not in the least within research of mobilisation (Gerhards, 1995, p. 227). In fact, in psychology, economics, finance as well as history, among other disciplines, and even outside of academia, the logic of framing is commonly employed in deconstructing the processes of politics, communication and individual understanding of reality. The current study contributes to the traditional academic application of the foundational framing theory in political discourse analysis too, as presented further in the methodology chapter.

However plausible or applicable these theories may be, there remain substantial limitations characteristic of foundational legacy theories of political communication. Firstly, as mentioned above, they provide no account of the forces and processes that guide media professionals' choices in crafting their messages. Media companies are dependent on their specific business models. They are also constrained by the owners' or editorial priorities and ethics. Besides, all media outlets are motivated to provide their audiences with the content that will likely prove popular, turning the mechanisms of priming and agenda-setting into two-way channels, or a positive feedback loop where the topicality of coverage is reinforced both by the messenger and the receiver. Thus, the media subjectivity and bias, as well as journalists' private interests and motivations, constitute substantial contextual factors defining the media logic. Additionally, the legacy theories on priming and agenda-setting ignore the media audience's agency, presenting a media consumer as a passive, indiscriminate receiver of fabricated narratives. This effectively oversimplifies the communication and information transfer model even under the conditions of the traditional mass media consumption design. The framing theory, however, acknowledges the difference between media and individual frames — mediated political discourse versus individual understanding of the reality — underscoring the importance of studying both frameworks and the link between them (Scheufele, 1999, p. 106). In this way foundational legacy theories, particularly the framing theory, compellingly illustrate the problem of uncritical reception of media messages that may create biased frames and thus influence individual behaviour and political environment. The growing emphasis on media literacy in modern education is aimed to account for precisely this framing impact of mediated communication.

Further building on the foundational legacy theories, the *mediatisation of politics* theory suggests that media do not merely mediate politics; they shape it (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014, p. 4). Mediation assumes a relatively straightforward, though neither objective nor unbiased, transfer of a message from the sender to the receiver. But the media effect has grown from a simple conveyance or amplification of information into a broader social function: it is simultaneously entertainment and education; it affects business and politics, defines science and history. It is “the medium and the message” — perhaps the most infamous characteristic of the social importance and role of the media, coined by Marshall McLuhan. The Canadian media theorist upheld that the media do not merely communicate a message but fundamentally shape and control “the scale and form of human association and action” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 9). His illustrations of the breadth of the media influence on human thinking and organisation allow us to conclude that communication theory experienced an existential challenge due to the rapid technological development and the emergence of new mass media, especially television, which substantially changed the ways information is communicated and comprehended. Consequently, the new media environment called for the construction of a new, updated understanding of the nature of the relationship between the media and politics. Evidently, close connection between various media forms and politics has always been present, as negotiation of power relations requires communication (Wodak, 2012). But contemporary media outlets, due to their dominant place in individual infospheres, acquired a high degree of influence over how political communication is conducted, when and even to what end. This capability of the media to dictate political fashion turned the power tables in such a way that the “coverage of politics is [now] increasingly guided by a media rather than a political logic” (Blumler, 2015, p. 429). In other words, journalists do not simply deliver politicians’ public addresses; it is rather politicians who now have to tailor their speeches to fit under the parameters of popular media forms and frames.

Nevertheless, both foundational legacy and mediatisation of politics theories of political communication can be fairly criticised for being overly media-centric. With the onset of the internet and the arrival of digital social media, it became progressively harder to envision communication as a one-way informational exchange, where media professionals transmit their messages to media receivers along a media channel or serve as gatekeepers (bestowed with a degree of power) between political actors and the public. Current communication patterns can be

better illustrated as a highly ramificated system of informational transfers where everyone acts as a messenger as well as receiver, and where multiple media forms are employed in a communicative action simultaneously. Consequently, politicians resort to popular media just as media practitioners are guided in their choice of reporting by popular topics, opinions and narratives that gain the most traction. But most crucially, contemporary digital media platforms are created by the informational technology and business professionals, not media practitioners. This means that conventional political communication theory offers no meaningful account for what logics —political, media and otherwise — are applicable in the information environment void of journalistic gatekeeping. Consequently, a more appropriate framework of political discourse analysis is necessary to evaluate the current engagement of political actors on social media. But first, let us review the pertinent research in the field of social mobilisation, which will prove useful to approach a case study of wartime political communication.

### Mobilisation and literature gaps

Generally, research focusing on digital political communication in times of nationwide crises endangering the existence of a state is rare. Hence, the current work can hardly be built upon specific theories or methods within the literature on similar topics. Partially, this may be explained by the fact that contemporary Western scientific inquiry has concerned itself with few, if any, full-scale war mobilisation efforts since the onset of the digital age. Moreover, this illustrates the unique nature of the challenge posed as well as facilities available to Ukraine: this is a major war taking place on the European continent, attracting immense international attention and support, televised in real time and comprising a mindblowing variety of conventional as well as digital technological measures of assault, defence and communication. It is difficult to pinpoint an existing context — present or past but unfolding in the new media age — of this scale and significance that would invite academic inquiry into digital political communication and social mobilisation. This posits the current case study as virtually unprecedented, especially considering a focus on wartime political communication conducted by the defending party's government in need of a robust national resistance movement. On one hand, this provides an opportunity to tailor a novel methodology and set a trend for further related research. Inversely, the scarcity of comparative material precludes the study from overgeneralisation and directs the research toward more narrow, qualitative in-depth analysis of the case and chosen data samples.

Those rare studies that do focus on wartime political communication tend to review discourse around developed nations' overseas war efforts or the backlash against them. Holbrook, for instance, surveyed the British multimedia propaganda campaign and mobilisation of the colonial population during the WWII Gold Coast war effort (1985). Kirton presented the mobilisation process during Canada's participation in the Gulf War, stressing the importance of governmental control over media communication as well as construction of comparative myths and frames (1993). Bennett et al. provided an account of social mobilisation for the U.S. protests against the Iraq war in 2003, concluding that digital communication networks played an integral role for the success of mobilisation and organisation of the protests (2008). Peculiarly, all three studies present conclusive findings on the significance of the respective contemporary emerging media forms for the surveyed mobilisation efforts: radio, information bureaux and mobile cinemas in the British case, TV news networks in the Canadian study and early digital technologies like e-mail and Web sites in the analysis of the U.S. protests. However, all three studies have preceded the arrival of the current digital social media capability and therefore cannot be used as models for the current paper. Nevertheless, based on the literature, it can be argued that an analysis of new media forms that are gaining traction with the contemporary public presents the most promising case for identifying effective political communication strategies in the context of wartime mobilisation.

Apart from war-related communication research, relevant literature on the role of contemporary digital media and particularly social media networks in social mobilisation, as a subarea of communication studies, predominantly focuses on the effect of social media on political participation during election cycles. For instance, Kligler-Vilenchik et al. explored both social media mobilisation and demobilisation patterns to understand electoral behaviour in Jerusalem (2021); Bimber surveyed the importance of personal political communication on digital media in Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 campaigns (2014); Karlsen and Enjolras scrutinised the dichotomy of individualised versus party-centred social media campaigning in Norwegian parliamentary elections of 2013 (2016); and Stier et al. compared the topics discussed by candidates and their audiences on Facebook and Twitter during the 2013 German federal election campaign, discovering that politicians engage different social media for different purposes according to their "sociotechnical affordances" (2018, p. 66). What these studies, comprising a

diverse analytical pool, have in common is their prevalent evidence of public office candidates switching their pre-election campaigning medium of choice: since nowadays bigger shares of voters receive their information on Facebook, Twitter and other digital social platforms, and due to the lower costs and higher targeting capacity of digital campaigning, politicians abandon traditional media as means of public communication in favour of new digital social media. However, with most studies of political communication focusing on voting behaviour, little attention has been devoted to how politicians in power engage with their constituency on social media not in the pursuit but in the wake of taking office. Filling in this omission seems integral to understand the whole scope of the media influence on politics: a shift from the foundational legacy theories of political communication to a new understanding of the individual–media–power nexus necessitates accounting for the new digital media environment where communication, hence the media effect, is multidirectional (Thackeray & Neiger, 2009, p. 172). Thus, an exclusive focus on how politicians instrumentalise the media to come to power does not provide a comprehensive picture of how they maintain their power while in office or conduct issue-specific social mobilisation. Nor does it explain how emerging media technology shapes politicians’ communication with citizens.

The second major research gap that needs to be addressed is the lack of analytical accounts for coalitional (unifying) rather than oppositional (divisive) effects of mobilisational political communication. Overall, mobilisation as a social phenomenon is often perceived as an anti-regime force. Though this clearly cannot account for all types of purposes for social mobilisation, evidenced by the particular ongoing instance of sociopolitical as well as resource mobilisation in Ukraine. The analysis of illiberal, undemocratic tools of propaganda is abundant, with a great number of these studies focusing on the actions of the Russian state (e.g., Geissler et al., 2023; Helmus, et al., 2018; Paul & Matthews, 2016; Tyushka, 2022). But little has been said about positive mobilisation efforts driven by state officials. Those rare papers that do focus on related topics seem to cover predominantly negative aspects of the instrumentalization of the media by the state. Thus, the 2015 “Cyber War in Perspective: Russian Aggression against Ukraine”, a 175-page publication by NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence, focuses primarily on the Russian and pro-Russian cyber warfare but includes Lange-Ionatamishvili and Svetoka’s chapter on “Strategic Communications and Social Media in

the Russia Ukraine Conflict”. Yet, no account of Ukrainian counter-narratives resisting the Russian propaganda is offered despite the authors’ conclusion that “[t]he development of the unifying strategic narrative – the story which entails the set of the values and beliefs of your country or organisation – is the best defence against propaganda which questions them.” (Lange-Ionatamishvili & Svetoka, 2015, p. 111). Furthermore, a subsequent project, “Framing of the Ukraine-Russia conflict in online and social media”, published in the following year by a different office of the same NATO-accredited think tank, and directed by Lange-Ionatamishvili herself, aimed “to describe and reconstruct the information campaign carried out by Russia and pro-Russian activists in the internet and to reconstruct representations and frames of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict emerging from internet commentary sections and social media posts.” (Szwed, 2016, p. 24) Notwithstanding the conclusions of their previous publication, the report pays no attention to the Ukrainian political communication confronting the Russian framing of the war. These are the main blind areas within the literature that the following research aims to address. Moreover, taking into account the new, full-scale stage of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, the current study fills in the research gap by taking on a case study of a Ukrainian state official’s efforts to build public resistance to the invasion rather than examining the impact of social media on election campaigning (Kligler-Vilenchik et al.; Bimber; Karlsen and Enjolras; Stier et al.), surveying public political expression on social media (Duvanova et al., 2015; Lange-Ionatamishvili & Svetoka, 2015; Szwed, 2016) or underscoring the role of activists and journalists in framing social mobilisation (Onuch, 2015).

### The framework of collective and connective actions

Considering the relevant theories as well as gaps within the literature presented above, an analytical study into the nature or effects of political communication conducted by means of digital media requires additional theoretical framing. To deliver valid findings, the updated framework shall provide theoretical background for the complexity of mediated and mediatised communication in the digital age. Besides, further theorising is necessary to explain how emerging digital political communication can facilitate and transform social mobilisation. Apart from the theories conceptualising how the media transmit messages, shaping individual opinions and state politics along the way, academic attention must consider other pathways of influence involving media communication: how politicians instrumentalise mediator-less media,

particularly in the digital sphere; what media logics and strategies they are guided by; how social media facilitates individuals in shaping each other's beliefs and attitudes, in turn defining dominant social narratives; how those in power amplify the narratives that fall in line with their political interest; and what new techniques of social mobilisation become available to political actors with the arrival of new media forms, among other related considerations.

To identify available and applicable frameworks within the literature, it is useful to consider Mancur Olson's *collective action* theory as the point of departure. Collective action, which can be interpreted as social cooperation toward a common goal or interest, was not in fact conceptualised by Olson to advance any ideas about a collaborative effort toward a common social good. In contrast, the American economist and political scientist proposed that collective action occurs when a certain individual interest coincides among a group of people. Importantly, the difference is drawn here between individual and collective interests. Compound individual actions, then, can promote either type (Oliver, 1993, p. 272-3). Advancing his argument, Olson held that collective action would not emerge on the societal level purely out of individual self-interest and rational decision-making (Olson, 1971, p. 48). Among other grounds for limited economic incentives to contribute to the common cause, Olson claimed that in bigger groups it is more reasonable for individuals to avoid action and instead enjoy the benefits of the efforts contributed by other members of the society. Otherwise, the cost of individual participation may exceed the benefit to the individual from a potential public good received as the result of their action (p. 43). However, despite his predominantly economic outlook, Olson acknowledged the existence of social incentives that may prove more efficient for collective action than economic motivation. Individuals, according to him, are often guided by social respect and prestige, and therefore can become involved in collective action despite its economic irrationality. But promotion of such social values requires organised effort, distributional resources and often even a degree of coercion. Accordingly, Olson concluded that an organisational structure with considerable economic capacity, akin a government or a labour union, is necessary to finance and coordinate mobilisation for the ensuing collective action (Lupia & Sin, 2003, p. 323). Evidently, this view from the standpoint of economic theory overlooks such factors of irrational behaviour as national identity, patriotism or altruism, and is generally grounded in the assumption that individuals act out of calculated self-interest. Even more understandably, the theory does not

account for crisis situations akin a foreign invasion, which requires urgent collective action and creates a superior common goal for all, or nearly all, members of the society under siege. Moreover, Olson's theoretical assumptions are widely critiqued for their oversimplification of private motifs for action and disregard for such aspects of social life as sympathy, commitment to social welfare and principled behaviour, among others (Mansbridge, 1990, p. 16). Nevertheless, putting aside the general speculation on the primacy of individual self-interest, Olson's thinking underscores the importance of organisational structures and their resources for collective action and social mobilisation. This premise is central to the case in focus, since the communicator, Vitaliy Kim, represents precisely such an institutional power — the government of Ukraine. Serving as governor of Mykolayiv Oblast, he is not only in possession of resources unmatched by other local political actors, but also garners public attention of a considerable scale. Hence, his role in wartime social mobilisation can be expected, according to Olson, to be essential for effective resistance building in the region and perhaps even beyond.

However, contemporary information and communication technologies, primarily digital media, have changed the logic of collective action formation envisioned by Olson. Even the economic premise outlined by the theorist underwent groundbreaking changes, not to mention numerous social variables factoring in calculation of individual benefits that challenge the prescribed logic. Since new digital media drastically reduce the cost of communication and coordination (Bimber et al., 2005; Bennett et al., 2008), state institutions and organisations lose their monopoly on resource provision, previously necessary to mobilise for collective action. Hence, Olson's collective action theory, while still applicable and widely cited within the literature, requires revision to match recent technological developments in political communication and the related social shifts in mobilisation patterns. In its current form, it provides little insight into the role of digital media in organising individual members of the public for collective action, as social media networks provide extensive functionality for unmediated public communication without recourse to institutional actors and their facilities. On the other hand, additional conceptualisation is needed to account for the impact of digital technology on the collectivising function of institutions with abundant resources, such as a state apparatus that traditionally conducts costly propaganda campaigns to secure collective action in accordance with its vision of common interests.

Despite the loss of communicative and organisational monopoly of such institutions, they are nevertheless still present on the political arena, and doubtlessly still active in their collectivising effort. Therefore, examining their role and involvement in the digital media sphere is pertinent to understand both politics and communication in the digital age. Hence, a synthesis, or at very least a cross-comparison, of organisational and non-organised collective action formations is lacking to complete a framework appropriate for the intended analysis. Crucially, an updated account of the media and their functionality shall be at the foundation of this theoretical framework. Social media networks do not only provide politicians with a cheap and effective platform for campaigning, as was described in the literature review. They enable a whole range of understudied discursive strategies for communication with the public, which calls for further academic exploration. For this purpose, Bennett and Segerberg's *connective action* theory appears most appropriate. In their seminal work on the logic of connective action and personalisation of politics, the authors identified a need for further research regarding the transformation of "collectivising" political communication strategies conducted by institutions such as states, NGOs or businesses. At the heart of their work lies the introduction of a concept of connective action that is complementary to the previously theorised collective action. The relation between the two, the authors propose, is that connective action is a communicative process that connects individuals with the aim of mobilising for collective action. According to this framework, digital social media networks operate as platforms for the coordination of collective action, thus serving as an organisational structure in lieu of resource-rich institutions that would otherwise be prerequisite for mobilisation of collective action. Besides, social media bestow action participants with emerging technological affordances that in turn facilitate more effective mobilisation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 760). Ultimately, Bennett and Segerberg assert, digital media conceptually transform collective action into digitally networked action (p. 743). This shift from institutional organisation of collective action to digital networking of connective action brought about a transformation of another kind: namely, a change of framing. Bennett and Segerberg cite evidence from the literature showing that digital networks weaken social ties and result in more individualistic societies where social media users form identities based on personal interests and priorities as opposed to general political convictions (Granovetter, 1973 in Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 744). As a result, organisations and institutions initiating collective action have to adapt to more inclusive and personalised political

communication, appealing to the variety of individual lifestyles of their audiences. Thus, political discourse intended to foster connective action can be expected to utilise personalised action frames that differ from conventional collective action framing, since the latter communicate social incentives to join the action for the public as a whole (Gehan & Pekarek, 2013). Specific personalised and collective action frames identified within the literature and accordingly applied in the current study will be presented in the methodology chapter.

Since its publication, Bennett and Segerberg's theory has become widely employed in political communication studies, as it presents an updated framework for political discourse analysis. In combination with earlier research on collective action, it enables inquiry into political communication on digital media that would otherwise be uninformed of the multidirectional influence of the media on politics and vice versa, with the public playing a progressively growing role in defining political agendas. For instance, Enli and Skogerbø (2013) underscore the importance of personalised and dialogical aspects of social media in election campaigning, which aligns with connective action logic's reliance on personalised communication channels (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 742). Thus, political discourse on social media can be regarded as a promising connective venture for mobilisation of collective action, such as voting. On the other hand, Bennett et al. affirm that large-scale collective action is "increasingly organized through fine-grained individual-level networks that relax conventional organizational barriers of identification, ideology, and communication costs" by means of digital social media platforms (2008, p. 271). Therefore, employing social media in personalised political communication will likely bear definitive features of both connective and collective action formations. Bennett and Segerberg refer to such compound collective-connective action as a hybrid type and characterise it as "organisationally enabled connective action" with "loose organisational coordination" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 755-7). As most collective action currently involves communication via digital media, and therefore possesses attributes of connective action as well, examining this hybrid form of action seems more practical than defining the boundaries of ideal types characterising connective and collective action logics.

Consequently, the main theoretical expectation and therefore the central argument for the intended analysis is that Kim's Telegram discourse will exhibit both collective and connective

action framings, which would prove the appropriateness of application of these theories not in interpreting mobilisational discourse during anti-government protests but equally so for political communication analysis of state officials' digital media communication. Accordingly, the case study is predicted to fall under the hybrid subtype of connective action, since it represents the discourse of a popular state official conducting mobilising political communication via a digital social media platform. Additionally, the study expects to uncover how political actors engage pre-existing social narratives and attitudes to generate public trust and therefore improve their ability to mobilise social resistance. Hence, the analysis aims to enrich the existing literature with an analytical precedent of a politician making use of the connective function of sharing socially generated digital media content, narratives and myths. In Bennett & Segerberg's language this translates to "personalised collective action formations in which digital media become integral organisational parts" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 760).

### Relevant research in the Ukrainian context

A full-scale war taking place not abroad but underfoot presents an appropriate and abundant material for a case study of political communication discourse conducted by state officials. Additional attention shall be paid to the media communication technology and framing involved in wartime social mobilisation processes. Ukraine presents a highly salient case study for the intended research purposes due to a broader overlap of multiple relevant contextual factors: historical, sociopolitical and, most recently, geopolitical. This Eastern European country, an independent state following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, currently attracts immense international attention, both academic and otherwise. Serving as the latest reason for this, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, launched on February 24, 2022, marked the beginning of a new stage of military escalation that involves both countries directly and countless others across the globe in one way or another. Although the Russian aggression in Ukraine had previously been, is and will continue to shape numerous global political shifts and developments, it falls at the periphery of the focus for this research paper: a comprehensive account of the war, let alone any attempts at its analysis, is well beyond the scope of this study. Besides, it seems too early to delve into any meaningful analytical endeavour summarising the political agency of the actors involved in the war, the nature of this far-reaching armed conflict itself or its outcomes.

However, some relevant patterns can be drawn for the benefit of the analysis from the ongoing invasion of Ukraine and the political environment that preceded the current invasion. These observations from academic research and the media reveal the adequacy of scientific expectations deriving from the theories on collective and connective action formations, social mobilisation and mediatisation of politics. Firstly, the political communication of the Russian invasion is conducted by the Ukrainian authorities predominantly by means of digital media, which is a base assumption to be made regarding contemporary political communication trends. In addition, the institutional use of digital media outlets by Ukrainian officials is not limited to conveying factual updates about the situation on the ground. This kind of breaking news can be individually sourced from media outlets not owned or controlled by the state. Instead, Ukrainian government officials tend to focus on building resistance efforts by means of their digital communication with the public. Historically, Ukrainian state officials had been actively involved in political communication on digital media before the war and at least as far back as 2014 (Nosova, 2017, p. 96). In fact, Nosova underscores the central position of digital media not only in governmental communication of the political and social turmoil but also for the evolution of Ukrainian identity and promotion of political pluralism (2017). Accordingly, wartime political discourse by Ukrainian officials presents a remarkable specimen for political communication studies: the governmental and public interests are aligned unquestionably in light of the foreign invasion; and both parties perceive digital media as the primary mode of communication. What this, in theory, shall produce is a showcase of effective discursive framing, which is the direct object of analysis for the current research.

Furthermore, the contemporary degree of state power decentralisation in Ukraine presents a peculiar factor for the research of wartime political communication. The 2014 political decentralisation reforms in Ukraine mainly aimed to redistribute tax revenues from the central government into local budgets and delegate more political and administrative power to newly established amalgamated territorial communities (Romanova and Umland, 2019, p. 2). But apart from a relative success at this main task, the reform also resulted in higher rates of political freedom of expression and looser rhetorical coordination between local and national state officials. In combination with various legislative and administrative responses to the demands of EU conditionality as well as general democratising trends, the post-2014 decentralisation in

Ukraine created a fairly democratic setting in the area of ideological discourse and expression of political dissent. For this reason, somewhat counterintuitively, the product of decentralisation in Ukraine is expected to be advantageous for guaranteeing social cohesion during a political challenge of power due to the Russian invasion (Lennon, 2021; Rabinovych, 2020). Ironically, it is the same process of legislative reforming and other decentralising governmental action that allowed the Russian government to promote institutional and everyday separatist sentiments in the regions of Ukraine with considerable shares of ethnic Russian or Russian-speaking population (Barbieri, 2020). However, this means that local officials like Kim, though not independent from central power, can be expected to have a degree of autonomy in conducting communication with the public and choosing form and content for their political discourse. Since the objective of wartime political communication seems apparent in this case — mobilising resistance, strengthening national identity and promoting social cohesion — the focus on collective and connective action frames contributing to the mobilisational effect appears appropriate. Due to the effects of decentralisation as well as regional identity variations and military situations, these strategies of political communication are unlikely to be imposed onto regional authorities by the central government in Kyiv.

The body of research on political communication and the media in Ukraine is extensive, but much of it collates the Ukrainian case with those of other post-Soviet states (Karatzogianni et al., 2017; Mussagulova, 2021). Additionally, a sizable portion of literature focuses on the study of the media and political communication in Russia as the dominant power in the region and beyond (Beumers et al., 2009; Bykov & Medvedeva, 2021; Oates, 2013; Sharafutdinova, 2012). The literature surveying social mobilisation, both in Ukraine and the broader post-Soviet region, typically studies anti-governmental action, of which post-electoral protest is among the most popular subjects for examination. A substantial share of it is devoted to Ukraine, mainly concerning the 2004 Orange Revolution and, more recently, the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution (Onuch, 2015). The latter, in combination with the following information warfare launched by Russia, stimulated abundant academic research into the capability of social networks to mobilise populations for a political cause such as widespread protests and full-fledged revolutions (Zakharchenko et al., 2019). However, sufficient evidence suggests that although digital media and social media networks fostered information sharing during the protests and helped define

public demands to a large extent, they did not act as a mobilising factor in themselves (Onuch, 2015, p. 233). Hence, public dissatisfaction and resolve to challenge the status quo is a prerequisite for successful mobilisation; social media merely facilitates it. At the same time, state officials or non-state political agents introducing anti-government agendas serve as the institutional element of collective action, while the media remains a tool of connective action formation in their hands.

In another Euromaidan-inspired analysis of the capability of online social networks to foster social ties for political purposes in Ukraine, Duvanova et al. conclude that, “somewhat contrary to conventional wisdom, electronic communication does not bridge political divides” (2015, p. 224). However, this study focuses specifically on individual voters’ online participation and interregional communication during the 2012 parliamentary elections in Ukraine, unsurprisingly arriving at the conclusion that already existing political cleavages result in polarised parliamentary election outcomes. Once again, as described in the section overviewing the literature gap, voting behaviour is prioritised in the research of mobilising political communication over the action of political institutions affecting public opinion. More recently, Zakharchenko et al. conducted a methodologically similar study examining Ukrainian social network users’ behaviour during the 2019 presidential election. Their conclusion, in agreement with the general trend within the literature, is that the social media expressions and discussions between the candidates and their supporters were not proportionate to the election outcome (Zakharchenko et al., 2019). Such studies demonstrate that it is indeed people and their ideas, not communication technologies, that give rise to political and social changes. Hence, examining the discursive role of state actors — individuals imbued with substantial social power — in digital political communication appears vital and promising for contemporary political science research. And the growing impact of social media networks on politics and society in the turbulent, democratising post-Soviet space can serve as a vivid example of the crucial role of the media in modern politics. In response to the above-presented general gaps within this field of research, the current study examines governmental adaptation to political communication on social media instead of conducting another inquiry into post-electoral protests or other forms of anti-governmental mobilisation. Additionally, this paper focuses on political actors’ communication as opposed to social media users’ behaviour, since collective action assumes a

crucial role of political institutions in agenda setting. Alberti and De Serio's comparison of Zelensky's and Poroshenko's strategic uses of social media during the 2019 presidential elections represents a more analogous subject of study (2020). However, guided by the current geopolitical developments in Ukraine, the present research analyses social mobilisation patterns at times of war instead of the traditional political communication focus on vote-seeking during election cycles.

In fact, the theory of connective action logic has already been employed to analyse the impact of social media platforms in the Ukrainian context. Doroshenko, et al. (2019) applied the connective action framework to test its applicability in the digital media discourse by right-wing parties during the 2014 parliamentary elections in Ukraine. Previously, according to the authors, the literature focused primarily on the usage of the new media by progressive parties (p. 1377). Acknowledging abundant academic attention to the digital media effect on anti-government protests, Doroshenko et al. supplemented the literature with a study of the social media impact on post-revolutionary elections. Additionally, they aimed to test how connective action theory can be instrumentalised by political actors apart from organisers of anti-government protests. Their findings indicate that political parties relying on far-right sentiments in the polarised and democratising environment can adopt connective action logic in their campaigning (p.1390). Hence, it was shown that connective action can be employed not only by the political forces opposing the ruling regime but also those that seek to become one. However, the authors' chosen methodology precludes the current study from building on their findings: Doroshenko et al. measured utilisation of the connective action logic via political program inclusivity and social media interactions, not the actual action frames and themes embedded into the political communication discourse of the candidates. Additionally, the literature's recurring focus on voter participation as the expression of social mobilisation is replicated by the authors of the study. A wider application of the connective action logic to neither election campaigning nor anti-governmental political action is yet to be explored in scholarship.

Besides, previous research regarding the nature and effects of Ukrainian political communication on social media requires an update in the context of the fundamental shifts in political affiliation undergone across Ukrainian society in regard to the Russian invasion. Traditional for Ukraine

polarisation, commented upon by Duvanova et al., was previously characterised by a split between Western- and Russia-oriented political identifications (Kubicek, 2000). However, whether permanently or temporarily, the polarisation rates in Ukraine can currently be expected to decrease substantially due to the existential external threat that eliminates political polarisation. Political identification with the aggressor state, accordingly, is expected to decrease if not disappear entirely. In fact, such unifying shifts in identity have already been documented by national polls in July 2022. Back then, 81% of respondents declared their support for Ukraine joining the EU, and 71% supported joining NATO — a 29% and 23% increase respectively since the June 2021 polling (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 2022). After another year of the full-scale Russian invasion, this pattern of political reorientation and the subsequent decrease in political polarisation is unlikely to disappear. It is unclear, however, how political depolarisation interacts with political decentralisation of power and what discursive frames and narratives may result from these two inverse phenomena acting simultaneously. Hence, conducting a case study of political communication at a time of heightened demand for national social cohesion showcases to what degree the governor's discourse follows cohesive national identity argumentation as opposed to exhibiting region-specific framing and narratives, as would be expected due to high rates of decentralisation. Since the rally 'round the flag effect is expected to foster the effectiveness of political messages and narratives spread via social networks, the current state of affairs in Ukraine presents fertile ground for research into discursive techniques and devices that find traction with citizenry online. Thus, if Doroshenko et al. identified the need to explore the media effect upon the resolution of anti-government protests, the current study will extend the academic focus from post-revolutionary elections to governmental functioning in times of crisis.

So far, the research on the role of social media during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine<sup>1</sup> has been guided predominantly by the task of building comprehensive datasets of war-related content on social networks, with the majority of attention paid to Twitter (Caprolu et al., 2022, p. 3). Although this presents an unavoidable and logical initial stage for academic research into a complex emerging phenomenon, its drawbacks derive from the prevailing quantitative focus that

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<sup>1</sup> A lot of such recent literature is yet to be peer-reviewed and published in academic journals. Hence, nearly all works cited in this paragraph are hosted by the *arXiv* and *Social Science Research Network* open-access electronic repositories of moderated preprints.

ignores interpretative qualitative study and in-depth exploration of discourse. Thus, numerous papers on the topic apply intricate computer-assisted technologies that aggregate millions of individual tweets and other social media posts. However, such strategies reduce the study of discursive effects to measuring audience reactions and keyword frequencies or making generalisations on the prominence of state propaganda or public support for one side of the war or the other (Caprolu et al., 2022; Chen & Ferrara, 2023; Geissler et al., 2023; Haq et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022; Pohl et al., 2022). For instance, Park et al. attempt to interpret wartime agenda-setting, framing and priming based on their impressive and extensive datasets of war-related posts on Twitter and Vkontakte. However, their natural language processing interpretations are limited to uncovering binary “variations in agenda setting and framing strategies across time (pre-war or wartime), social media platforms (VKontakte or Twitter), and media control (state-affiliated or independent)” as well as gauging audience engagement quantitatively (Park et al., 2022, p. 5244-5245). Yet, specific discursive and framing strategies employed by either warring side’s political actors remain unexplored, calling for more qualitative approaches.

Lastly, the functionality of social media evolves at unprecedented rates, demanding further research into emerging, understudied political communication opportunities. Among recent academic examinations of digital media influence on the progression of political communication, Makhortykh and Sydorova conducted a study of visual framing of the Donbass conflict on the Russian-made Vkontakte social media network, banned in Ukraine in the same year the study was published (2017). Their findings emphasise the importance of social media framing and overall communication in the construction of often mutually exclusive visions of the conflict in Ukraine and Russia (p. 377). Notably, the authors acknowledged that online “community administrators” cannot be fully responsible for deliberate and intentional framing production and dissemination due to the connective function of sharing that defines community and individual choices of frame setting (Ibid.) In a similar vein, the following analysis will consider the multimodal functionality of Telegram, a new digital social platform of choice in Ukraine, Russia and beyond, and the venues it opens for state officials to utilise connective action by selectively sharing appropriate discourse and framing with the aim of conducting mobilisational collective action.

# Developing a positive qualitative methodology for discourse analysis

Without bogging down too deep into meticulous categorisation of various existing subforms of discourse analysis, a point has to be made at this stage on the relation of the intended approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and critical theory in general. In essence, this research examines a case study of positive social mobilisation in digital political discourse during a national crisis, applying the framework of collective and connective action framing. As such, the research is not guided by the general aim of CDA: identifying discriminatory practices of language that allow for abuse of power (Blackledge, 2012, p. 617). Moreover, Abbamonte suggests that CDA is traditionally motivated by its “ambitious aims to expose and ultimately resist social injustice” (2022, p. 56). But how can injustice-oriented discourse deconstruction account for cases where an incumbent power conducts political communication with the aim of resisting a social injustice administered by an external power? In the selected case study, the agenda — social resistance to a foreign invasion — is evidently imposed by foreign political actors: the invading army and its political leadership. Accordingly, the analysis explores the understudied aspects of wielding power and public attention toward a predetermined collective good rather than tackling normative questions on discrimination or abuse. The utility of such positive discourse analysis stems from CDA’s weakness in actually producing change as a result of analysis, as opposed to merely deconstructing discourse and criticising power abuse (Abbamonte, 2022, p. 61).

Albeit not explicitly critical of the status-quo power in focus, the general approach and methodology for the current research is decidedly postmodern. As van Dijk proposes, the study of political discourse is nevertheless a critical venture, and any instance of discourse analysis necessarily assumes the performative nature of language (van Dijk, 1997, p. 11). That is, discourse shapes understanding of reality and therefore contributes to the re-shaping or preservation of this reality in the future (Lindquist, 2019, p. 19). Accordingly, adequate discourse analysis must acknowledge that discourse is a socially constructed body of statements. And since meanings of social phenomena can only be understood or explained in discourse, an analysis of communicative instances will inevitably constitute an interpretative endeavour (Marsh et al.,

2018, p. 190). Hence, the following analysis will engage an interpretative framework but without the traditional Foucauldian critical edge that places an exclusive focus on negative expressions of power (Johnson & McLean, 2020). Besides, interpretative research is never merely a descriptive process, as any attempt at scientific interpretation requires both descriptive as well as explanatory methods of reasoning (Toshkov, 2018, p. 225). The study, however, aims to apply analytical techniques used in critical discourse analysis and demonstrate how they are capable of identifying positive effects of speaking from the position of power in cases of crisis, where social mobilisation is vital to mitigate a grave social predicament such as a full-scale war. Thus, the exact subfield adopted in the following research may be best designated as Positive Political Discourse Analysis. This approach will ensure that the study accounts for political implications of discourse through a qualitative analysis linking two separate objects of interpretation: a) frames, themes and narratives used by Governor of Mykolayiv Oblast Vitaliy Kim in his digital political communication on Telegram; b) the corresponding functional mechanisms and other collective and connective strategies that foster local and national wartime resistance to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In this way, the research will supplement the existing political communication literature with informed accounts of governmental instrumentalisation of digital social media outside of election cycles. Likewise, it will shed light on the official organisation of collectivising and connective discourse for non-contentious purposes. To fill in both literature gaps, the study will answer the following research questions: What collective and connective action frames can be employed by political actors in wartime digital political communication? What themes and functions facilitate the framing of wartime public resistance on digital media? And — advancing the theory of connective action — what characteristics of the connective action logic, if any, can be exhibited in state officials' digital political discourse?

## Case selection

As mentioned in the review of relevant research in the Ukrainian context, a study of political communication devices in contemporary Ukraine presents an opportunity to gauge how digital media can be utilised by state officials and other political actors to mitigate social tensions during a severe national crisis. Considering the international resonance of the invasion of Ukraine and the degree of foreign involvement in the current events in the country, Ukrainian politicians' and their political technologists' mastery of digital communication tools calls for a scholarly

investigation of their undertakings. Famously, the international facet of the Ukrainian crisis management is reified in the persona of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whose personal visits as well as creative and far-reaching digital appeals for support gain high visibility and therefore are readily available for analysis. The domestic aspect of social mobilisation construction in Ukraine is less obvious, however. Zelensky is only one of many state officials contributing to the comprehensive resistance-building effort across Ukraine. Thus, examining other politicians' mobilising rhetoric will improve a general understanding of what frames and narratives promote continuous Ukrainian opposition to the full-scale attack on sovereignty and livelihood. Besides, this widely influential geopolitical development requires significant academic attention, not in the least from the perspective of communication studies and political discourse analysis. Certainly, the outcomes of the invasion are yet to be defined on the battlefields as well as the political arena. But recognising fundamental lessons about the change that digital technology brings into world politics, as much as into private lives of citizens, presents an urgent task, fulfilling which may facilitate resolution of this very humanitarian tragedy and prevent numerous others.

Governor Vitaliy Kim of Mykolayiv Oblast is one of such understudied political actors involved in the virtually unprecedented 21st-century hybrid war, characterised by widespread use of digital technology in all aspects of the confrontation. He is among the most active and innovative Ukrainian state officials who took digital centre stage with the onset of the invasion. Although before the war Kim had not been widely known outside the Mykolayiv region, his digital political communication attracted substantial domestic and international attention since late February 2022. Many renowned English-speaking publications titled him as the symbol of Ukrainian resistance within a few months after the beginning of the war (Cohen, 2022; Tondo, 2022; Trofimov, 2022). The governor gained such a reputation primarily due to his charismatic, humorous selfie video updates published on the Telegram social media network, which quickly attracted the attention of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians in the Mykolayiv region and beyond, as well as a broader Russian-speaking audience and foreign onlookers. Kim's informal approach to political communication — imbued with sarcasm and startling composure under dire circumstance — contrasted the general public's sense of anxiety, and in fact managed to neutralise the latter to a considerable degree. Nevertheless, his groundbreaking, and perhaps

trend-setting, political communication style shall not be regarded as a completely intuitive or unconscious endeavour. As with any political communication discourse, it was achieved by means of strategically constructed narratives, as admitted by Governor Kim himself in the interviews with *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* (Cohen, 2022; Tondo, 2022). Hence, a close study of resistance framing in Kim's discourse contributes to a better understanding of the role of digital media, using the example of Telegram, in framing contemporary digital mobilisation efforts.

Furthermore, regional political communication in Ukraine is as crucial for social resistance as the central government's effort, not in the least due to the decentralisation reform discussed above. Michalun et al. assert that regional and local governments became vital actors in coping with war needs since the beginning of the fighting, particularly in the areas of humanitarian relief, refugee management and organisation of reconstruction (2022). Thus, testing the regional authorities' part in fostering national resistance may prove a fruitful academic venture too. Lastly, few wartime regional leaders in Ukraine, if any, have had a comparable presence on digital media to that of Governor Vitaliy Kim. In fact, only one other regional official, former governor Serhiy Haidai of the Luhansk Regional Military-Civil Administration, generated similar kind and quantity of online content, though with much less followership and using a more conventional style of political communication. Besides, Haidai's activity peaked later in the war, prompting an assumption that his strategies may have been inspired by Kim's earlier success. On the other hand, Kim, despite serving as a regional state officer and primarily targeting his local constituency, succeeded in attracting a wide audience within a short time period, effectively becoming an innovator in the field of digital political communication.

### Analytical framework

To ensure systematic qualitative analysis of the selected data sample, the study will conduct interpretative research coding. This will help to identify framing patterns — repeated use of specific themes that relate to issues, events and actors (Azpíroz, 2014, p. 75) — within the discourse and further link them contextually to collective and connective action logics. Informed by the identified patterns and the relevant theoretical framework, interpretations will be made suggesting how frames within the discourse facilitate corresponding collective and/or connective

actions. Any additional pertinent observations on the nature, effects or context of discourse will be presented, with the emphasis paid to relevant discursive patterns. This will enable closer examination of themes and frames employed by the research subject to build public resistance to the ongoing Russian invasion by means of political communication conducted on the Telegram social network. Since collective and connective action logics have been theorised extensively, frames to be identified within the discourse are drawn deductively from relevant literature.

To identify the widest possible range of collective and connective framing within the discourse, collective action frames are differentiated into three subtypes based on Benford and Snow's core framing tasks. The *diagnostic* collective action type includes frames that pinpoint the source of social injustice: **identification of injustice** and **promotion of values**. *Prognostic* frames seek to resolve the unjust issue: they propose a **solution**, call for **resource mobilisation**, underscore the importance of **agency**, **common cause** and **collaborative effort**. And *motivational* frames justify or stimulate a prescribed collective action: they offer a rationale for **participation** in the action or an appeal to national and/or regional **identity** (Benford & Snow, 2000; Gehan & Pekarek, 2013; Vicari, 2010). Thus, apart from identifying discursive frames, the analysis will be able to indicate recurring patterns pointing at the prevalent aims for Kim's engagement with collective action frames: Is he focused on describing the problem? Suggesting a solution? Motivating for action? All three?

Personalised action frames, on the other hand, are treated as connective action logic's equivalent of collective action frames. According to Bennett and Segerberg, these instances of more subtly packaged political discourse are better suited for connective purposes and "require little in the way of persuasion, reason or reframing to bridge differences with how others may feel about a common problem" (2012, p. 744). By definition, the overarching purpose of all connective action is to interconnect individual readers or listeners and thus facilitate the associated collective action. Therefore, no subtypes of connective action frames are specified based on different tasks. Personalised action frames are usually more inclusive, diverse and individualised than their collective counterparts, with an emphasis falling on personal lifestyle rather than political affiliation; they almost necessarily rely on personal communication technologies that enable sharing (Ibid.) The theme of inclusivity, however, is withdrawn from the coding list, as it

tends to be employed in both collective and connective types of action promotion. Likewise, only explicit arguments calling for action justified by means of common belonging, regional or national, are included under the motivational subtype of collective action frames, since the theme of identity is likely to be encountered in any kind of political discourse.

Specifically, examination of Bennett and Segerberg's work on connective action identified three pertinent personalised action frames. **Sharing**, the fundamental connective action, is a broad framing category that accounts for second-hand dissemination of information, opinion and multimedia content by digital means. This can include links, reposts, references and other instances of intertextuality. Next, **personal expression** is understandably described as highly characteristic of personalised action frames — the audience tends to relate and trust the discourse that appears sincere and personal rather than presentational and conventionally political. **Emotional commentary**, the third kind of connective or personalised action frames originally outlined by Bennett and Segerberg, is similar to personal expression but relies on rhetorical pathos rather than the communicator's seeming sincerity.

In addition to these personal action frames singled out by Bennett and Segerberg, the analysis will consider three other frames borrowed from Chadwick's categorisation of digital network "repertoires", typical for hybrid organisations mobilising collective action (2007). The first repertoire, **creation of convergent forms of online citizen action**, resembles the prognostic collective action frame of resource mobilisation but is limited to the digital communicative aspect of collective action. **Fostering distributed trust across horizontally linked citizen groups** establishes a separate connective framing type due to its focus on those discursive actions that seek to establish public trust in the institution conducting the communication as well as among individual members of the public. Lastly, **fusion of subcultural and political discourses** presents a fitting digital connective action frame since contemporary cultural constructions occupy a progressively larger role in the political process. When these cultural items emerge from public digital communication, they are often referred to as Internet memes. Chadwick's last proposed repertoire — creation of as well as building upon sedimentary networks — is not taken into account due to the urgency of resistance mobilisation in the studied case as well as the limited timeframe since the discourse production. Both of these factors

disable a possibility to observe long-lasting effects of the discourse on the network formation. Importantly, although Chadwick’s analysis attributes digital network repertoires to the collective action logic, they are hereby classified under Bennett and Segerberg’s hybrid category of organisationally enabled connective action formation. Chadwick himself devotes a central position in organisational hybridity to the “differences the Internet is making to the evolution of political mobilization” (2007, p. 284). Besides, the main function (or core task) of these digital network repertoires seems to coincide with personalised interconnection of individuals for a common cause by means of digital social media, which once again posits Chadwick’s repertoires closer to the hybrid subtype of connective action rather than traditional collective action. Since the subject of the studied communication is a regional state official bestowed with a degree of political autonomy from the central power, personalised action frames utilised in his discourse effectively fall under the definition of hybrid connective action logic with loose organisational coordination.

The only exception to the deductive sourcing of frames stems from the addition of “fighting disinformation” under the list of connective action frames. This decision was made inductively upon a preliminary review of the data and is commented upon extensively in the data analysis chapter. In sum, seeking to discern any evident patterns that would prove helpful to answer the posed research questions, the study is guided by the following taxonomy of action logics and corresponding frames, with each frame interpreted (based on contextual knowledge) from the subject’s discursive use of various relevant keywords, themes and narratives:

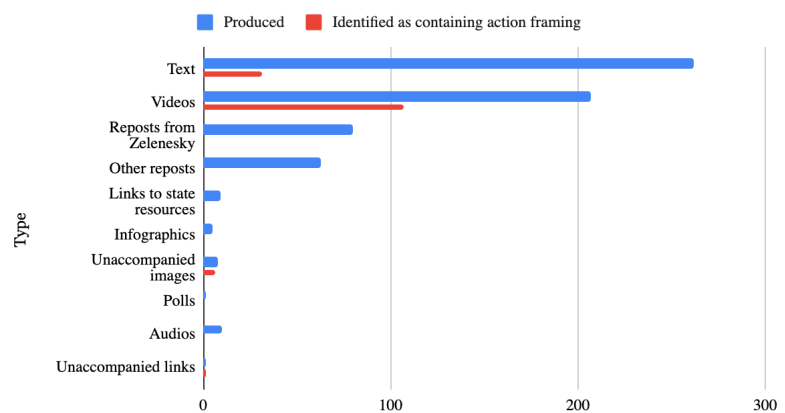
**Table 1:** Taxonomy of action logics and corresponding frames

Action type	Collective			Connective	
Task	<i>diagnostic</i>	<i>prognostic</i>	<i>motivational</i>	sharing, personal expression, emotional commentary,	promotion of online citizen action, building social trust, fusion of subcultural and political discourses, fighting disinformation
Frames	injustice, values	agency, solution, common cause, collaboration, resource mobilisation	participation, identity		

## Data selection

The research data sample comprises all original content and relevant reposts published on the official Telegram channel<sup>2</sup> of Governor Vitalyi Kim of Mykolayiv Oblast (currently restructured into the Mykolayiv Regional Military Administration, with Kim as its head) during the first month of the war: February 24, 2022–March 24, 2022. The content includes over 60 short selfie video addresses, typically under 2 minutes in duration, textual breaking news/updates messages, reposted textual, audio, photo, video and other multimedia material pertaining to the war. In fact, during the first month of the invasion, Kim produced a wide variety of digital posts on his official Telegram channel. Although classification of some of them is problematic due to multimodality (audio, video, text, etc.), overall the Telegram content for the period of 24.02.2022-24.03.2022 can be approximately categorised as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Governor Kim's Telegram content (24.02.21-24.03.23)



However, the majority of governor's video addresses had to be disregarded from investigation upon preliminary data analysis due to repetitiveness or prevalent focus on organisational and logistical matters rather than political framing of events. Reposts of other politicians' speeches, including Zelensky's, were also not considered toward coding to avoid correlating collegial sharing with Kim's own political communication devices. However, the connective function of the governor's Telegram communication is further amplified by such verbatim sharing, which constitutes a considerable portion of the content. In addition, the posted audios, polls and infographics did not exhibit sufficient interpretable political messaging, while some purely visual posts were included into coding, as they often contained social memes and other digital humour. Although such judgments of relevance constitute another subjective research strategy, careful selection of theoretical frameworks and methodology informed the operationalisation of

<sup>2</sup> Link to the channel: <https://t.me/mykolaiivskaODA>

applicable data and its examination for instances of collective and connective framing. After politically insignificant messages had been filtered out, the analysed data comprised 109 videos and textual messages (transcribed and translated into English from Ukrainian and Russian) and 6 additional visual posts, as can be seen on Figure 1. Thematic labels were attributed to each message based on the content of discourse. Accordingly, interpretations were drawn linking the discourse within a message with specific collective or connective action frames as defined in the theoretical framework chapter. A code was assigned to every entry, differentiating between connective action and the three subtypes of collective action in relation to their core tasks: diagnostic, prognostic or motivational. Attribution of more than one theme and frame was permitted per each entry coded.

Exclusively textual messages (without multimedia components) contain predominantly logistical or ground situation updates, air raid alarm announcements and direct safety instructions. As illustrated in Figure 1 above, the analysis identified themes that could be associated with collective or connective action frames only in 31 (approx. 11%) of all textual posts from the studied period. Among these, more than half were characterised by connective action logic, with an emphasis on dismantling mis- and disinformation. Most of the remaining textual discourse contained direct calls for resource mobilisation (prognostic collective action) to meet the needs of the local administration, territorial defence squads and volunteers. Therefore, videos present substantially more interpretative data for an identification of collective and connective action frames.

The timeframe was limited to the first month of the war for multiple reasons. First, it keeps the study focus in line with the demands of single-case design, which requires close textual reading of discursive data. But perhaps even more importantly it limits the scope of analysis to the initial stage of warring in the analysed region — the timeframe roughly coincides with the beginning and end of active hostilities on the territory of Mykolayiv Oblast. The lack of previous research into mobilisational communication of a state under military attack precludes the current study from the benefit of theoretical assumptions about the crucial role of the initial stage of an invasion for resistance-building actions and the associated discourse. However, recent findings suggest that the beginning of Russia's attack on Ukraine led to considerable social mobilisation

and organisation, effectively strengthening social cohesion on local and national levels (Daza, 2022; Deineko & Aasland, 2022). Peculiarly, Daza's research asserts that trust, integral for successful social cohesion, was "established among ordinary people, not with administrations" (2022, p. 15). However, the same time period would be crucial for government-sponsored social cohesion and mobilisation of resistance as well. Therefore, the corresponding political communication can be expected to be most active in the initial stage of the war too.

## Research design

The study adopts a single-case design to account for one politician's body of public addresses on a specific digital media platform. This form of case-oriented research offers a chance to delve more in depth into framing mechanisms and characteristics of political communication conducted on digital media. The lack of equivalent study material, due to both Kim's innovative digital political communication style and the unprecedented discursive context, precludes the adoption of comparative or large-N quantitative research designs. Using case studies as an interpretivist research design has become a standard practice that allows for exploratory, descriptive or explanatory extensive analysis of "complex and relatively unstructured and infrequent phenomena", which conveniently describes political instrumentalisation of social media networks for war resistance (Bennett and Elman, 2007, p. 171 in Willis, 2014). Moreover, case studies are of great help when emerging phenomena, like digital resistance mobilisation, are still difficult to distinguish and separate from its context, such as war (Yin, 2009, p. 14 in Willis, 2014). Case study analysis encourages attention to detail, facilitates comprehensive understanding of the issue in context, provides extensive description of the case as well as background, and, finally, generates a thorough analysis necessary for enriching the literature with detailed accounts of emerging phenomena and in regard to understudied research areas of world regions.

In order to avoid overrepresentation of a marginal or extrapolated aspect of the studied type of discourse, the data is analysed consistently and systematically according to the selected theoretical frameworks and research design. Governor Kim's body of public addresses is representative inasmuch as it is the most popular, though still virtually unstudied, expression of political communication in Ukraine during the war, which was later mimicked and replicated by

other tech-savvy Ukrainian state officials and turned into a cultural phenomenon shared and oftentimes admired worldwide. Political communication on digital media clearly falls within the category of emerging and novel phenomena that are shaping the social world anew and are yet to be not only analysed systematically but also merely described contextually. What's more, social science inquiry characterising and attempting to explain the ongoing Russian aggression and the Ukrainian reaction to it is at a very early stage. Therefore, it requires a more in-depth introduction to the academic society by those who possess the linguistic and cultural expertise to assess the underlying processes that arguably reflect political communication in the digital age. Likewise, these understudied processes are in turn shaping social conditions in Eastern Europe and globally, calling for a closer examination of the emerging digital political discourse by state officials. A single-case study, thus, serves as a fitting departure for the nascent phenomenon and the associated academic subfield.

### Research limitations

Interpretivist research is fundamentally incompatible with the positivist emphasis on reaching objectivity, if such an endeavour is desirable altogether. As described above, discourse analysis, and any social science analysis in general, constructs a body of knowledge based on informed, scientific interpretations of research subjects' interpretations, constructing what is known in social science as the *double hermeneutic* (Lynch, 1993). Therefore, reliability is inapplicable and irrelevant for the purposes of this study, and subjectivity of the findings must be acknowledged as unavoidable. Besides, any scientific findings are only true until proven otherwise. But since scientific research is among the best methods at our disposal to carefully examine the natural and social aspects of reality, we ought to implement the most up-to-date *modus operandi* in order to secure accurate findings.

Since a researcher is a social actor too, there is no need to stage objectivity or seeming neutrality as long as the vital scientific practices of transparency, integrity and verification are applied consistently and faithfully. For instance, the current research adopts a non-critical discourse analysis approach but acknowledges that any judgement regarding what specific uses of power constitute a positive social action is highly subjective and depends on individual ideologies and political leanings. But so is defining social injustice, which is, reportedly, the aim of CDA.

Hence, any interpretative analysis, labelled as critical or otherwise, will always derive its aims and frameworks from a biased standpoint. Under such conditions, maintaining transparent methodology and declaring contextual grounds for research is the best way to ensure the highest accuracy of findings. For this purpose, frames to be identified within the discourse were selected based on the available and relevant literature where possible, in line with the deductive framing approach, as described above. This choice is meant to neutralise the researcher's subjectivity by sticking to predetermined peer-reviewed objects for identification and analysis. Although adopting hermeneutic or manual holistic methodological approaches to framing and political discourse analysis would provide more freedom for interpretation, these approaches were discounted due to their common criticisms for the lack of transparency in regard to frame extraction (Azpíroz, 2014, p. 78). Additionally, what differentiates discourse analysis from CDA is its abstention from normative social critique and political commitment, thus avoiding evaluation of the validity of analysed arguments (Amossy, 2018, p. 266). This is the study's chosen pathway to ensure maximal neutrality and focus on the functional side of discourse.

Likewise, the positivist standard of validity is equally inapplicable in single-case research design, as its results are generalisable only to a degree. The goal of single-case studies particularly, and of a great share of interpretative research as such, is to describe and explain a specific example of a phenomenon or event, often a newly emerging one. It serves as a foundation for further research rather than an attempt to predict how similar or related phenomena will behave. The researcher's awareness of relevant context is the key in interpretive analysis, but the study can and should be transferable and useful for further research nevertheless. In fact, an interpretative research is "validated" in this process of being reviewed, criticised, utilised and refined by others. This quality of being peer-reviewed is what passes the judgement on the soundness and practicality of interpretative methodologies and analyses. The aggregate, collective findings, built on existing research and theoretical literature, are achieved due to each previous researcher's contribution. The following analysis presents a pioneering application of collective and connective action logics to wartime digital political communication in Ukraine, focusing on Governor Kim of Mykolayiv Oblast and his official Telegram channel — this is the sole aim of the project. But the hope is that it will stimulate similar inquiries, eventually allowing for a more

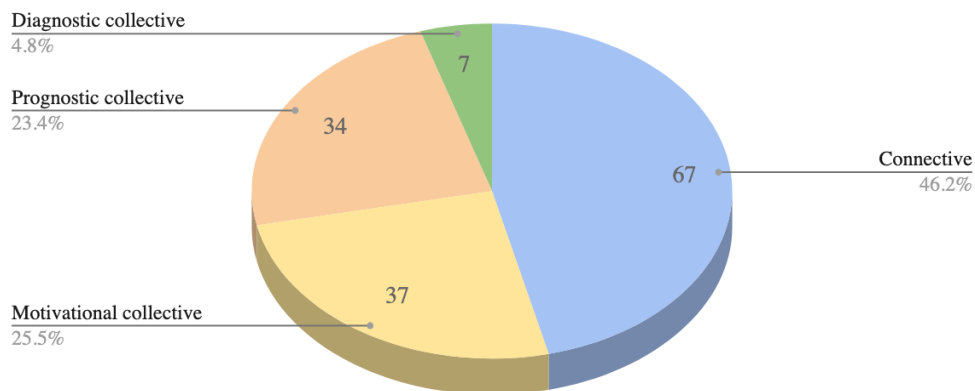
general understanding of how digital media affect social mobilisation, both in times of crisis and stability.

# Discursive framing of collective-connective action: mobilising resistance, identity and trust

The chapter commences with quantitative comparisons and a qualitative description of the discovered collective and connective framing patterns, supplying general findings with illustrations and a broad characterisation of the analysed discourse. Next, contextual interpretations are drawn separately for both types of action logics based on the regularities and variations in Governor Kim's use of themes and frames. Additionally, both contextual interpretation subsections touch upon the most serious challenges encountered during the analysis as well as what these obstacles mean for collective and connective action framing studies. Lastly, the paper discusses the main interpretations and discovered trends in light of the stated theoretical expectations, offers probable answers to the posted research questions and presents likely implications of the findings for political communication research as well as practice.

## Data at a glance

Figure 2: Identified framing entries count and proportion per type and subtype of action

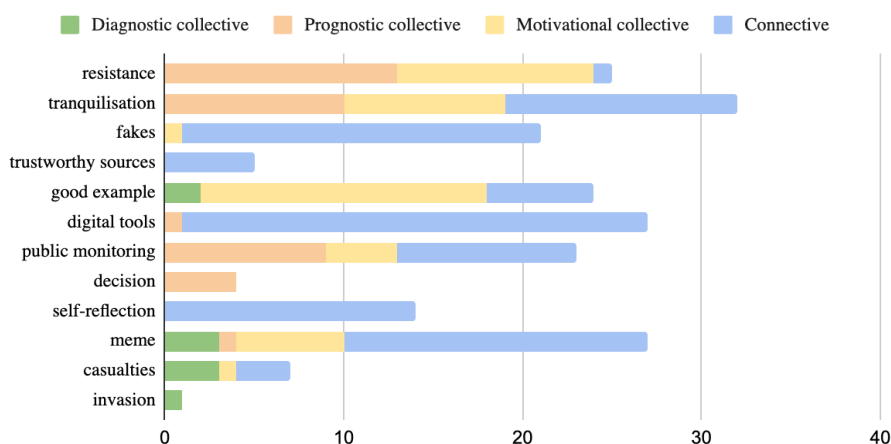


Among 109 relevant video, textual, visual and multimodal addresses by Kim, the analysis

identified a total of 145 instances of collective and connective action framing<sup>3</sup>. The breakdown of framing entries per action type and subtype is displayed in Figure 2 above. Majorly, the chart portrays that both types of action logics are evident within the analysed discourse. Besides, the two types appear in a fairly equal proportion. As for the subtypes of collective action, all three are singled out among Kim’s Telegram messages from the first month of the war, though diagnostic collective action framing features visibly less often than the prognostic or motivational subtypes.

Furthermore, the findings show that the discursive content largely operates on the basis of a fairly limited set of themes: resistance, tranquilisation, fakes, trustworthy sources, good example, digital tools, public monitoring, decision, self-reflection, meme, casualty and invasion. Paying attention to the distribution of the themes across the types and subtypes of action framing helps with characterising Governor Kim’s political communication. Thus, some themes appear only in reference to a specific frame (self-reflection is discussed exclusively within the connective framing of personal expression), while some correspond to one type of action but different kinds of frames (the theme of decision is engaged in prognostic framing of agency, solution and responsibility). Nevertheless, other themes appear in relation to different subtypes of collective action or even with both collective and connective action framings, with meme serving as a subject in all four analysed categories:

Figure 3: Thematic belonging of framing entries per type and subtype of action

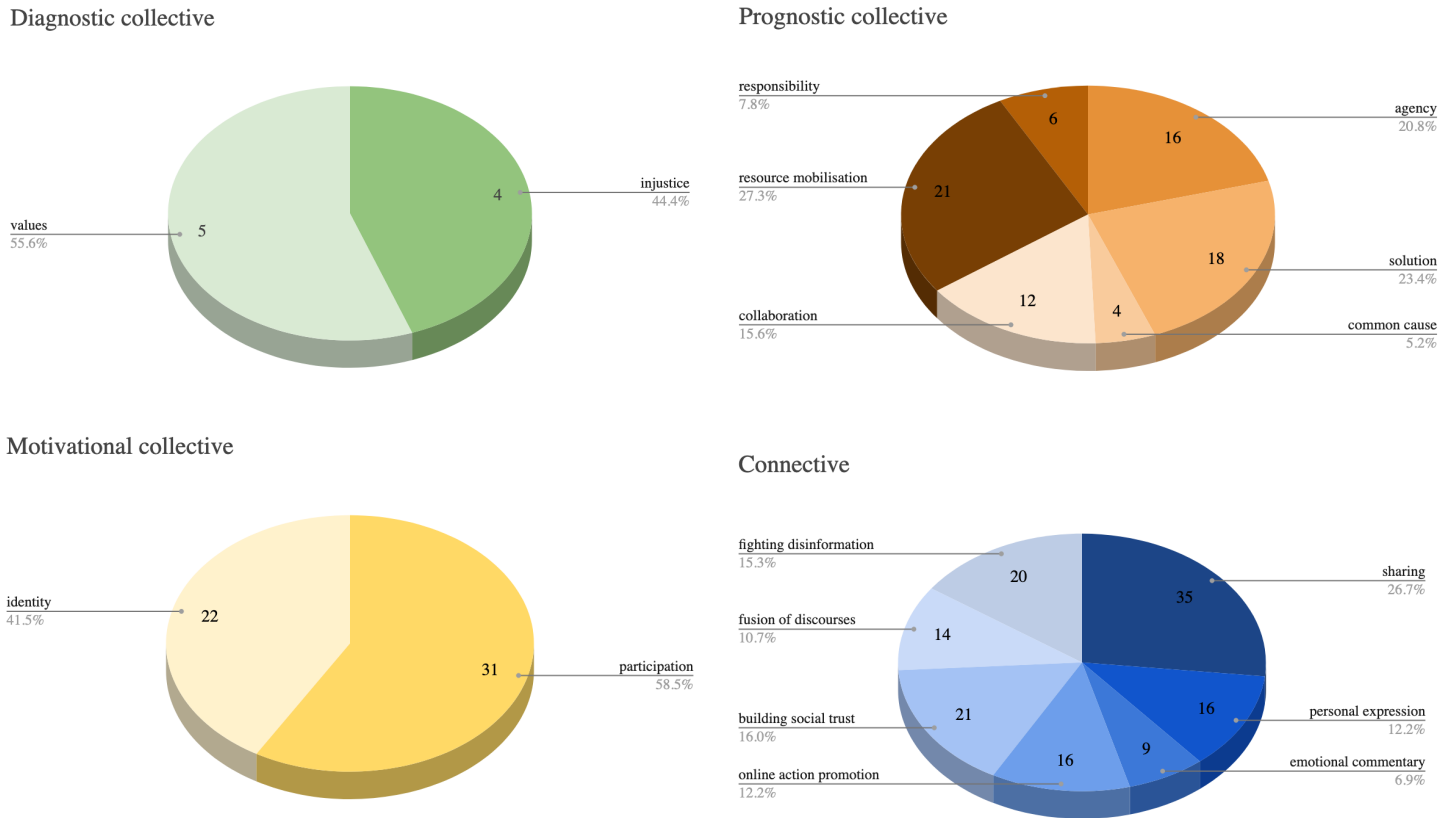


Finally, the data analysis confirmed the relevance of the deductively pre-determined frames, as

<sup>3</sup> The thesis coding matrix is included as an appendix to this paper. The transcription and translation of 109 mostly video and some textual messages for analysis are available on request.

the presence of all of them without exception was identified within the discourse. In fact, there seems to be no prominent preference or reliance on a specific frame in either of the types of action logics or any of the three subtypes of collective action, although some frames are clearly employed more often than others:

**Figure 4:** Distribution of frames per type and subtype of action



These observations and patterns not only help with describing the data but also provide a foundation for the following analysis and interpretations, since some themes as well as frames can be assessed as heavily relied on throughout the discourse, while others — as task-specific. Thus, the analysis of collective action framing compares variations in the employment of the three subtypes/tasks of action. Since connective action logic is neither divided into functional subtypes nor pursues goals separate from the associated collective action framing, the emphasis in this section falls on descriptions and explanations of innovative digital connective framing. Yet, the analysis of both types of action framing establishes the most prominent themes and

functions that guide the construction of political discourse. Building on the described data, the following sections thus focus on the governor's framing of mobilisation resistance contextually before moving on to a discussion of theoretical interpretations that arise from the application of the framework of collective and connective action logics to the data.

### Collective action framing analysis

In comparison with the other two subtypes of collective action, the range of Kim's motivational framing is broad and inclusive. Apart from inspirational examples of civic engagement and military performance, his typical motivational excerpts feature appeals to strength, diminishing characterisation of the invaders and their military, reposts of digital humour (memes) from social media networks and various identity-based discourse. While some motivational messages expose Russian losses and failures, thus encouraging further Ukrainian resistance, Kim occasionally mentions Ukrainian casualties too. Hence, instilling both indignation and optimism are evaluated by the governor as appropriate motivational tools.

In another expression of his motivational discourse, Kim repeatedly promotes a strong sense of identity on multiple levels: national, regional and citywide. Some of his addresses target specifically residents of neighbouring southern regions, mostly Kherson and Odesa. On one occasion, Kim also appeals to the religious identity of Ukrainians as well: "We are defending our city, [...] therefore, any help is needed now. With God's blessing!" Further, Kim's discourse oscillates between using Ukrainian and Russian languages, and video translation of his addresses into Ukrainian sign language was also provided at the beginning of the invasion. Such linguistic inclusivity not only promotes unity but also actively counteracts the Russian propagandistic claim that the Russian language is suppressed and persecuted in Ukraine.

In combination with this linguistic flexibility, Kim's diverse scope of motivational appeals to identity reflect the fundamental shifts undergone across the previously polarised Ukrainian society. Although earlier decentralisation reforms could be expected to produce exclusively regional frames and narratives in wartime political communication, the analysis shows that the governor's discourse consists of cohesive national identity argumentation for social mobilisation. At the same time, it contains a proportionate amount of motivational collective action framing

directed particularly at the local identity of residents of the Mykolayiv region. Crucially, the two identity dimensions do not appear in contradiction to each other: regional residents are simultaneously presented as citizens of the nation under attack. In the face of the common threat, they are discursively mobilised to act for the common benefit, though without compromising their identity or sacrificing either individual or regional interests. Thus, decentralisation of power, coupled with the currently developing depolarisation resulting from the Russian invasion, seems to contribute to the alignment of local and national identity constructions, which in turn facilitates nationwide but region-specific wartime resistance.

Other examples of motivational framing exhibit a robust emphasis on humour and personal charisma of the communicator:

*“People from Odesa suggest: a country with a chicken on its coat of arms will never defeat a country with a fork for a coat of arms.”* (From a video published by Governor Kim on March 9, 2022)

Most of such cheerful, humorous videos do not contain explicit collective action framing, making it hard to code and categorise them without resorting to arbitrary attribution of themes and frames. In large, however, they serve an important motivational collective function. Such multifaceted inclusivity of narratives and themes can be explained by an intentional design to target the widest possible audience. But it equally promotes the goals of social cohesion, unity and avoidance of divisive social cleavages that are rooted in language, religious or regional residence and other sources of contentious identity, since such divisions have high potential in precluding widespread wartime resistance.

In contrast to the substantial amount and variety of the motivational subtype, the analysis identified very few instances of diagnostic collective action framing. In fact, Kim explicitly states the very fact that the invasion is taking place only once in the first month of the full-scale war. Thus, recurring diagnosis of the national emergency is deemed unnecessary, while its source — apparent, which waives the need to actively construct identity in a top-down manner or place the blame explicitly. Prognostic and motivational aspects of discourse are therefore prioritised. Those rare occasions where Kim does refer to the reason for social mobilisation are mostly used

to juxtapose “us” versus “they”. Thus, the governor mostly refers to the opposing warring party indirectly and without identity markers, sometimes using the “enemy” synecdoche or plural third-person pronouns; very rarely he identifies the invaders as Russians. This framing device effectively performs the fundamental discursive function of identity construction and maintenance. Relatedly, Yuval-Davis underscores that the dichotomous division between the in-group and “the other” is “characteristic of extreme conflict and war, when the individual’s fate is perceived, at least by hegemonic discourses of identity, to be closely bound with their membership of a particular collectivity” (2010, p. 276). Kim’s political communication also contains diverging, and often contrasting, value characterisation of Ukrainians and the Russian invaders. Although this may have been a centrally coordinated political communication directive, in Kim’s own first-hand account, diagnosing the social challenge was not a priority task: “It wasn’t hard to reunite Ukrainians when the war started,” the governor stated in an interview with Lorenzo Tondo of *The Guardian* in July 2022. “They did it in one day. It was that easy. Because to their eyes, Russia is not just an army, it’s a true evil that is destroying everything in its path. They rape, kill and kidnap people. It was that easy to reunite in order to fight them back” (Tondo, 2022).

As for the last subtype (or core task) of collective action, most of the prognostic framing in Kim’s addresses was directed toward resource mobilisation, both in textual messages and videos. Yet, the scope of resources commonly solicited by the governor from his audience is rather wide: tires to be placed on street corners in case of an enemy attack on the city, abandoned Russian ammunition to be returned to the Ukrainian army, minibuses for the needs of local volunteers, a plea to entrepreneurs to reopen their businesses in order to sustain the local economy, and recruitment of civilian spotters to report anything suspicious to the authorities — these are just some of the many direct requests made by Kim via his Telegram communication. Although these matters can be assessed as mere organisational coordination, such discourse prescribes the course of collective action and, as seen from the follow-up communication, shapes the public response to the invasion. The style of Kim’s calls for action is overt and unapologetic; it presumes every individual’s collective duty as well as interest in joining the resistance movement.

Another fundamental prognostic strategy employed by the governor is communication of

tranquilising messages. The theme of tranquilisation is interwoven throughout the analysed body of speeches, as avoiding panic among the public constitutes one of the main aims of wartime political communication. Consider the following excerpt from Kim's Telegram video message:

*“Do not panic. Vehicles with “Z” signage are moving from Kulbakino right now. These are Kamaz trucks captured by us. Do not shoot!”* (From a video published by Governor Kim on March 5, 2022)

It is difficult to overestimate how integral a part is played by this and similar clarifying as much as pacifying messages during the resistance-building process. Amid the chaos and constant existential threat to the nation and its individual members, a public leader like Kim assumes a trustworthy position and garners considerable attention. In the crisis context, officials function as symbols of desired stability, and their power, which in peaceful times is commonly disputed, transforms into a source of hopefulness and a foundation for national resistance. Despite fair criticism, thus, a Habermasian proposition of communication as a “pacifying and unifying force” proves applicable in situations of a direct armed conflict, though not necessarily uniting the two warring parties but rather facilitating transmittance of accurate information within the two separate sides of a conflict (Sonderling, 2012, p. 92). Given the credibility and public approval of a political actor, their communication can present an effective tranquilising tool fostering collective action formation. Kim's traditional closing line for his video addresses exemplifies precisely this tranquilising effect: he typically starts his selfie videos with “Good morning/day/evening, we are from Ukraine!” (a phrase that has since gone viral in Ukraine and internationally) and ends them with “We are at work.” While the former primarily bears an emphasis on identity, the latter succinctly declares the government's capability to curb the crisis. But the same phrase also aims to put the public at ease and provide it with a role model of calm and composed behaviour that is a prerequisite for successful public resistance.

Another recurring theme that figures within Kim's Telegram communication in the tranquilising context is the decision-oriented framing. Yet, this topic was actively engaged only at the onset of the war, namely during the first five days of the invasion. Peculiarly, Kim's official Telegram channel was created in the morning hours following the beginning of the full-scale Russian

assault. The first post to be published included an imperative “No panic! Remain calm when making any decisions!” With this initial stress on individual decision-making, Kim framed his role as a more informative communicator rather than a commanding authority. Not only this works toward reinforcing the public trust granted to the governor but also underscores the audience’s personal responsibility for the choices of individual action during the ongoing attack on the country. The discursive accent on personal decision-making simultaneously enables warning panic off, imbuing the audience with a sense of agency and positioning oneself as a trustworthy adviser rather than a state official bestowed with substantial power. The technique presents a logical opener for the demands of wartime communication. Further, nearly identical messages were repeated twice again the following day in two separate video addresses. However, as sizable panic was successfully avoided, the need for explicit reiterations of public decision-making power gave way to other imminent concerns that required more accentuation of collective duties over individual freedoms. This indicates that not only certain choices of action framing were prioritised over others, but also that the discursive functions and corresponding framing of thematic content shifted according to the changing course of events.

Similarly to framing resource mobilisation and engaging tranquilising rhetoric, Kim’s maintenance of a high degree of transparency in fulfilling his official function is a major discursive pattern. The governor often posted insider videos and images from administrative meetings, summed up and justified structural and legal changes within the regional governance, announced future plans for executive action and other bureaucratic procedures:

*“Good afternoon. Look, we held a large, extended meeting, worked out the entire logistical structure, the city security plan, coverage areas, the [allowed] number of people per each car, codes, passwords, roadblocks, repair stations, diesel fuel, equipment, logistics, identification signs, what is permitted for residents, how to respond to those who ask for water — everything was worked out.”* (From a video published by Governor Kim on February 26, 2022)

A high degree of accountability can be treated as a subform of pacifying messages as well, though in these cases serving a motivational function rather than prognostic. But the level of detail and amount of time spent on recounting the technicalities of wartime administrative work

attest to the special role devoted to the creation of the sense of transparency in political wartime communication. Sometimes Kim released such logistical updates perhaps despite the danger of giving away too much information to the enemy, which is evident from numerous occasions where he stops himself from revealing additional sensitive intel. On multiple counts his messages include interjections akin the following: “What else? Not this... This I cannot share.” Such selectivity emphasises the perceived importance, from the governor’s perspective, of providing transparency and detail in order to establish public trust in the government and himself personally. A considerable number of his published videos and majority of textual messages are such organisational updates that do not fall strictly under any subcategory of collective or connective actions but clearly foster the motivational task of facilitating resistance.

Although coding for themes like transparency or humour is problematic, interpreting these topics is essential for the research due to their prominence in discourse. Besides, prognostic and motivational collective action frames at times proved surprisingly hard to tell apart: many of Kim’s messages simultaneously prescribe the need for mobilisation and contain explicit calls for participation in the collective action, as in the case with tranquilising narratives. Therefore, within one textual or video message, or even on the level of a single sentence, the analysis occasionally revealed instances of multi-purpose collective action framing. Effectively, this points to the discursive capacity to prescribe a solution and appeal for its implementation at the same time. However, more often than not, Kim’s messages are restricted to a single collective action frame, communicating one function at a time. This was likely carried out for the sake of clarity and simplicity, since the style of the governor’s discourse is constantly casual, non-presentational and straightforward. Another considerable analytical difficulty was encountered when interpreting whether Kim’s calls for mobilisation actually intended to motivate collective action or came in response to an already declared public readiness to support the administration and join resistance. In his discourse, the governor often announces growing public interest and presents evidence of public involvement in various resistance measures. Thus, the following appeals to action can be regarded either as communication with motivational framing or merely as organisational remarks. The governor also regularly follows up with descriptions of the results of positive response to previous motivational calls to join action, which further consolidates the motivational effect:

*“I was very glad that people rose up, blocked the equipment, and stopped them with their bare hands. In Bashtanka and Snegirevka, civilians disarmed and took Russian military hostages.”*

(From a video published by Governor Kim on March 1, 2022)

Although establishing a causal relationship between motivational calls and instances of resistance is beyond the scope of this work, the literature informs a prediction that this two-way mechanism amplified by the digital media may constitute a positive feedback loop: residents express their willingness to resist, and officials, in turn, use these instances as motivational precedents and foundations to garner further resistance. Additional examples of how digital technology facilitates connection between the public and officials, effectively framing social resistance to the national crisis, will be presented next.

### Connective action framing analysis

In combination, the frames of fighting disinformation and building social trust constitute the largest portion of connective action framing. Thus, Figure 4 shows that refuting fakes and sharing credible information represent main, though by no means only, connective action framing practices employed by Kim. Consequently, exposure of Russian state-sponsored disinformation that counters the Ukrainian digital resistance to the invasion emerges as a major pattern within the discourse. Notably, the governor tackles informational attacks on the Ukrainian public using the same digital platform, Telegram, where Russian disinformation web brigades carry out a considerable portion of their attacks (Solopova, 2023). This showcases the efficacy of Telegram for political communication purposes and the popularity of the network among political actors as well as regular users. But the findings also allude to the appeal of unmoderated social media platforms for those who seek to disinform, disorient and distract (Vavryk, 2022). The following prolonged excerpt from Kim’s Telegram channel provides an outstanding example of a local political leader communicating to his audience a clear yet extensive lesson on disinformation and how to avoid it:

*“Good morning, we are from Ukraine! Look, guys, we are dealing with an enemy who has a whole army of disinformers at work. They occupy us with something so that we don’t get bored,*

*instead of doing something useful. And we are letting them do it. Not all of us, of course, but many. At first we searched for some markers all over the city. Then we looked for some kind of flashlights that highlighted some targets. Then something else. We found some kind of betrayal and began spreading it around. That is, we want to believe in nonsense and begin looking around for it, sharing it. And they are happy to help us spread all this. Look, there was not a single bombing based on these markers, nowhere at all. This is bullshit. The same story about the smoke. Why am I telling you this? Now they threw our way a new quest: the movement of troops. Well, damn it! Everyone wants to participate, to be useful, to spread the word... They go so far as to take some kind of true story and stretch it. It usually ends up with nothing. I don't get fooled myself, but it tires me that you are wasting your time. A brother of some combat officer or mother of a deputy commander of some unit shared something... How does this even happen? But it really does. A regiment is on the march; a woman runs up to them: 'Oh, oh, I ran away from over there, they have so much equipment on the move...' The news spreads around the village that the enemy is approaching. Then they start figuring out who this woman was — nobody knows her. And she goes back to the Russian unit and continues her work for them. Come on, you're adults, don't share nonsense. I'll explain this to you: information is accepted only from direct witnesses, and only if you know them, whose identity you can confirm. Or, quite understandably, with video confirmation. Or your own eyes. Everything else is nonsense. We will not use this information. Don't try to help us. You are only confusing us. Sharing and forwarding everything that comes your way — forget about it. If you call us, explaining that this is your godfather, brother-in-law, cousin, and you have known him for 300 years — and he swears that he himself witnessed something with his own eyes, with certainty and readiness to confirm this under later investigation — then maybe we'll think about it. Once again, forget the "share" button. Any information from the Internet, we will not use it. And you are only interrupting our work with it. Understood? The "send" button is no longer in use. Only your own information." (From a video published by Governor Kim on March 5, 2022)*

This quote vividly illustrates the wide scope of disinformation the governor of Mykolayiv region had to withstand while building the resistance effort in the early days of the Russian invasion. Besides, it presents simple solutions to avoid public delusion that impedes resistance — namely, careful placement of trust only in reliable sources and personal experience. While such dogmas

may not be epistemologically practical in everyday use, in times of severe crisis, of which the war is an extreme example, a media literacy lesson as the one presented above constitutes a fundamental connective action that facilitates social cohesion. In addition, it fosters more effective formation of collective action directed toward resistance. The discourse targets digital aspects of disinformation as much as verbal, word-of-mouth dissemination of wartime fake news, as provided in Kim's example. The quoted passage assumes an emotional tone, which is extremely rare for the governor's discourse and therefore remarkable: relative expletives like "bullshit", "damn it" and "nonsense" (approximate figurative translations) attest to the importance of the topic in the communicator's mind. Besides, they allow for more personalised reception of the connective framing construction.

Furthermore, memefication or, in Chadwick's terminology, fusion of subcultural and political discourses presents another recurring pattern within Kim's framing of connective action. It constitutes a connective side of the governor's engagement with digital humour, touched upon in the collective action framing analysis section above. Breaking down complex ideological or political constructs and perspectives into humorous, personalised and easily reproducible cultural information packages represents an integral part of digital political communication, with Kim's Telegram messages serving as a suitable example. For instance, the governor picked up on a social trend referring to invading Russians as "orcs":

*"Soulless Orcs — take your corpses from our land. What kind of assholes do you have to be? Instead of evacuating the bodies — some lie around for 2-3 days — they come, deploy nearby and start shooting... Inhuman."* (From a text published by Governor Kim on March 6, 2022)

This stark example of a politically recycled social meme with no apparent origin also employs the above-mentioned "us" versus "them" value-based identity construction. What is more, it dehumanises the perceived enemies while representing them as inhuman. Once again, the need to identify invaders based on national or ethnic belonging is deemed unnecessary. Kim's direct addresses to the invaders also performs a connective function on top of the motivational collective one, though broadening the target audience beyond the boundaries of the national identity. Multiple other videos where Kim prompts Russian soldiers to drop arms, turn back or

cease resistance, often including contact information for surrender negotiations, depict the vast scope of connective functionality available for contemporary digital political communication. Moreover, the quote represents an effective connective device, since apart from containing a meme and a reference to identity it also appeals to a personal ethical concern for burying the dead — a tradition that semiotically has been placed at the foundation of culture, and therefore national identity as well (Runia, 2007, p. 324). Other social memes picked up and amplified by Kim include the recurring shelling of the Russian-occupied Chornobayivka airfield in the Kherson region and the ridicule concerning the sinking of the Moskva missile cruiser.

Additional creative instances of connective action within the discourse include: a recommendation for residents of the Mykolayiv region to verify passing-by troops as friendly by asking them to present the governmental “Diya” application, available only to Ukrainian citizens; an advice to download Zello, a mobile application for radio communication with other residents of the same apartment complex in case of an imminent attack on the city; encouragement of jamming pro-Russian Telegram channels disseminating user-generated intelligence; promotion of both sharing information that can be useful for the Ukrainian military and abstaining from sharing sensitive information that may prove detrimental to it; as well as numerous reposts of patriotic video compilations and music videos, Tik-Toks and visual evidence of Russian military equipment losses and personnel casualties. This impressive repository of digital tools available for and engaged in the governor’s connective action framing illustrates the immensity of the framework available for effective conduct of contemporary political communication and crisis management. In another example of the same trend, Kim often reposted footage and audio commentaries from the Ukrainian frontlines, which were often likely shared with him by governmental informers confidentially. For instance, on March 2, a day after the massive Russian attack on the region, the majority of Kim’s Telegram posts contained photo, video and audio evidence of Russian losses, mostly soldiers taken hostage and abandoned equipment, accompanied by personal commentary overviewing the outcome of the failed attack. This kind of evidence-based political communication became commonplace in Ukraine after the Russian invasion. It pacifies the public, motivates resistance and reinforces the communicator’s credibility at the same time.

*I don't want to share videos and photos of occupationees' corpses... But, trust me, there are so many of them.* (From a text published by Governor Kim on March 2, 2022)

In the passage above, Kim implicitly reflects on his own moderational connective role. Here, once again, value-based identity seems to be playing a substantial part in shaping the form of his connective framing: sharing images of deceased enemies is deemed inappropriate, presumably on moral grounds. In fact, this and other self-reflective, or introspective, discourse by Kim in itself presents another notable connective action pattern. As a variety of personal expression, self-reflectivity can be analysed not only as a typical connective action frame but also as a definitive feature of all personalised communication on digital media. It should not come as a complete surprise that an individual political actor's communication with the public may contain a personal note that makes the overall discourse sound more sincere and therefore trustworthy. Importantly, Kim's communication is likely unscripted. Doubtlessly, some points or themes to be mentioned were pre-arranged and even could have been imposed by the central authorities. But many of the governor's messages come across as spontaneous reactions to the ongoing crisis and a genuine effort to mitigate it. This falls in line with Blumler's proposition that "politicians' approaches to the media and the public may not always be single-mindedly calculative and manipulative" (Blumler, 2015, p. 433). As seen in the following excerpt, such honest self-reflective messages may provide a valuable insight into Kim's individual motivation and its roots in the governor's understanding of his own personal and vocational tasks:

*Good evening, we are from Ukraine! About today. Not a lot of news, I know. Not a lot at all. I was told that a sort of tradition is shaping up — that I need to sum up the day and set myself up with new goals for the morning. It motivates me a lot, first of all, because every time, before I record a video, I have to analyse what I have done that day and how we are doing in general. Look, the response to the fact that I publicly run this Telegram channel is that many kind people from abroad, from our country, are now sending humanitarian aid, which is so necessary for our city in case we are cut off. We will try to prevent them from doing so. In addition, there are a lot of weapons being sent that will help to quickly drive the orcs out of our land.* (From a video published by Governor Kim on March 2, 2022)

Hereby, a week into the invasion, Kim admits that his Telegram communication became his own motivational mechanism to continue resistance. Moreover, he acknowledges that not only it motivates the Ukrainian public to keep their spirits high and join collective action but also successfully attracts international support, not in the least in terms of resource mobilisation. Besides, such self-reflection is likewise a tool of transparency and accountability. Thus, the mobilisational hybridity of digital political communication in this case is reflected in trust-generating connective personal expression complementing collective motivational framing. Yet, Kim's self-reflectivity also serves as indirect evidence of his innovative communication methodology evolving spontaneously and likely not by design:

*“You know, today I came across such an idea that there's already a lot of ongoing civilian, ordinary work, but the videos still have to be recorded. I have to go on air, talk about the situation today, and what awaits us next.”* (From a video published by Governor Kim on March 24, 2022)

This latter excerpt comes from the last day of the analysed time period, and therefore can be treated as the governor's conclusion on the role and importance of his own digital political communication. The discovery of his own popularity and public expectation of further content creation seems to come as a surprise to the governor. Thus, Kim's political communication choices were likely dictated by the resources available to him and assessed as most efficient for mobilising resistance, which in turn attracted considerable attention at least partially due to the relatable and trust-gaining sincerity of his connective sharing. But interpreting individual intentions is an intricate and epistemologically unverifiable endeavour. Accordingly, hereby lies the main challenge for the analysis of connective action framing — its effects are not measurable by means of discourse analysis. At the same time, its intentions can only be interpreted from what is communicated explicitly. What remains for inquiry, then, is description and contextualisation of the form and patterns communicated. Thus, the analysis will stay away from speculations, merely pointing to the seemingly genuine, transparent and honest quality of Kim's addresses, which certainly fosters the connective framing of resistance in discourse.

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By March 16, an imminent danger of the occupation of Mykolayiv and significant presence of

Russian troops in the region was repelled by the Ukrainian armed forces, prompting Kim to decrease his digital communication activity. In the governor's own words, administrative affairs had to take precedence:

*"[...] I will now have more time to deal with the region's economy. And I will do exactly that. Now I'm getting to remote communities that got out of control. Now my hands will reach everyone."* (From a video published by Governor Kim on March 16, 2022)

Since then and until today, Kim's Telegram channel has been palpably losing the governor's personal touch, with published content consisting mostly of reposted Zelensky's public addresses and occasional generic ground situation updates. This visible reduction in discursive relevance of digital political communication evidently justifies the selected timeframe for analysis.

Shortly after the analysed period, on March 29, the Russian armed forces struck the Mykolaiv Regional State Administration building with a cruise missile. While Kim himself was not in the building at the moment<sup>4</sup>, 37 regional administration workers, members of the military and local entrepreneurs perished in the attack, including Kim's personal assistant. Whether it came as an intentional payback or a coincidental retribution, this resolution to the governor's popular and effective digital political communication during the first month of the full-scale invasion serves as a grim testament to the symbolic and often tangible link between discourse and reality.

## Discussion and implications

The contextualised analysis of collective and connective action framing, combined with the data description, provides an extensive account of the prominent themes and frames that reflect the goals and characterise the content of Vitaliy Kim's political discourse during the first month following the onset of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. According to the analysis, the governor's Telegram communication heavily relies on recurring references to resistance, identity, digital tools and humour in relation to both types of action logics and all three subtypes of collective action. Hence these can be regarded as the most characteristic discursive themes that define collective and connective action framing within Kim's Telegram content. These themes in turn

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<sup>4</sup> According to the governor, he slept through his alarm that morning: (Source: <https://t.me/mykolaivskaODA/886>)

promote specific frames that convey the main discursive messages, thus revealing functions and aims of Kim's political communication. Therefore, tranquilisation, transparency and resource mobilisation emerge as major collective action frames within the discourse. Among the devices falling under the connective action logic, fighting disinformation, memefication of political content and self-reflectivity are revealed as the main trends. Consequently, the following theoretical interpretations are based, to a large extent, on the regularities in the appearance of these framing patterns, their discovered functions and thematic belonging.

Certainly, allusions to identity and resistance as well as a degree of humorous or cheerful discourse could be expected to have a substantial presence in any instance of wartime discourse. But careful examination of these and other themes in wartime social mobilisation presents a valuable insight into the governor's digital political communication strategies. This kind of observation provides a rare perspective on the most notorious problems, issues and questions that dominated the public agenda at the beginning of the invasion. Securing public trust, avoiding panic and reinforcing national identity thus emerge as major functions of wartime digital political communication. All of them contribute to the process of social resistance consolidation during the invasion — the ultimate goal of wartime political discourse. And the key to successful social mobilisation, it appears from the framing in the analysed case, is in ensuring social cohesion, unity and solidarity. However, the overall discourse can be characterised as flexible and provisional rather than dependent on pre-assigned goals or narratives. Kim's Telegram communication during the first several days of the full-scale war placed substantial emphasis on the importance of individual decision-making. In contrast, when the frontline was moved away from Mykolayiv in resolution of the first month of fighting, the intensity of resistance-oriented political communication decreased, while self-reflective discourse began to emerge.

The analytical interpretations of the main trends within the findings offer salient answers to the assigned research questions: What collective and connective action frames can be employed by political actors in wartime digital political communication? What themes and functions facilitate the framing of wartime public resistance on digital media? Firstly, as suggested above, discursive mobilisation of resistance is conducted by recurring collective and connective action framing that fosters social cohesion and national unity, with establishment of public trust, avoidance of panic

and reinforcement of national identity serving as prime functions of the discursive framing. Most prominent collective action frames include tranquillising discourse, resource mobilisation, transparency maintenance and motivational calls for action. The governor's most commonly employed connective framing, on the other hand, consists of reliable content sharing, counteraction to disinformation, engagement of social memes, personal expression and self-reflection.

The latter set of patterns additionally proposes a definitive answer to the last research question, which probes the applicability of connective action logic to institutional, or institutionally endorsed, discourse: What characteristics of the connective action logic, if any, can be exhibited in digital political discourse by state officials? Taking Kim's case into consideration, there remains no doubt that connective action framing can be highly characteristic and perhaps unavoidable in digital political communication of state officials. The governor's utilisation of the technological affordances of Telegram displays all three deductively prescribed connective action frames that were previously attributed by Bennett and Segerberg exclusively to self-organising and loosely coordinated connective actors: sharing, personal expression and emotional commentary (2012, p. 756). Besides, an additional connective frame, "fighting disinformation", was inductively added to the connective action framing list in addition to connective action functions described by Bennett and Segerberg as well as digital repertoires of hybrid organisational action elaborated by Chadwick (promotion of online citizen action, building social trust and fusion of subcultural and political discourses). This allowed to account for an even broader spectrum of connective functionality exercised by an institutional actor like Kim in a situation of a national crisis, as fighting disinformation continuously appears as one of the most visible patterns within his conduct of connective action during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This connective framing device was not expected based on the literature, and therefore was not deductively included in the taxonomy. Evidently, the omission occurred due to the now apparent lack of theoretical regard for the crucial connective role of combatting mis- and disinformation in the digital context. Such academic disregard can be explained by a relative lack of analytical endeavours examining any kind of discursive digital resistance to the Russian hybrid warfare — a digital, more nuanced, offspring of the Soviet disinformation machine and currently one of the main disinformation threats globally (Bjola & Pamment, 2016, p. 132;

Bradshaw & Howard, 2019; Yablokov, 2022, p. 766). Thus, the analysis shows that most connective as well as collective functions that are typical of anti-government protests and civil society movements — mobilisational instances that stole the majority of academic spotlight in earlier literature — are still applicable in resistance-generating wartime political communication.

As such, the findings confirm several theoretical expectations deriving from relevant literature and outlined in the theoretical chapter above. Firstly, a crucial role of digital media in mobilising contemporary political communication is reaffirmed in Kim's choice of Telegram as the main platform for public outreach. The amount of reposts or intertextual references and links to other Telegram channels, multimedia information packages and websites serves as a fitting representation of the technological shift from legacy media to the digital realm currently reshaping the field of political communication. The main theoretical confirmation stemming from the analysis, however, concerns the evident hybridity of Kim's Telegram communication. As mentioned within the data description, collective and connective action framing instances are reflected within the discourse with nearly equal distribution. Consequently, political communication by incumbent state officials can certainly employ collective as well as connective discursive framing, at least under the conditions of a national crisis. Coalitional-unifying goals, then, can be pursued by such discourse too, despite previous literature's limits of collective and connective action application exclusively to cases of anti-government protests. Potentially, hybridity of discursive framing of social action types, as anticipated by Bennett and Segerberg as well as Chadwick, is inevitable when mobilisational discourse is conducted by means of digital media. The latter impose their connective features onto the intended communication and expose it to the available technological affordances. Consequently, both the communicator and the audience are prompted to organise their collective action according to the connective action logic at their disposal.

This manifested hybridity of mobilisational action framing in the analysed case in turn provides further confirmation of Bennett and Segerberg's conceptualisation of the nature of connective action. Due to the numerous overlaps between collective and connective framing patterns in the governor's discourse, connective action formation can be rightfully theorised as a complementary action to the collective type rather than a counterpart that pursues varying goals

and follows an independent logic. Sharing was revealed as the basis for connective action and the underlying motif within Kim's connective action framing, as previously theorised by Bennett and Segerberg. The authors suggest that this game-changing quality of digital internet-based communication has potential in transforming the logic of collective action as such: resource-rich organisations lose their centrality, since contemporary digital technologies crucially reduce the cost of communication directed at resource mobilisation by enabling precise, targeted and instant information sharing (2012, p. 760). But these organisations do not necessarily cease participation in communal sharing. In fact, due to their credible and attention-grabbing role, politically and economically powerful institutions can assume a moderational role during crisis management, conveying relevant information from on-site officials and ordinary witnesses to the wider public. Therefore, sharing, the main function of connective action, is subordinated to the overall end goal of the associated collective action — in Kim's case, this goal is framing wartime resistance to foster social mobilisation. Accordingly, the governor's resource mobilisation narratives are often combined with motivational framing and even connective action, which confirms a theoretical proposition suggesting that the main function of discourse is “critical mediating action by which activists create legitimacy and collective identities to garner resources for collective action” (Steinberg, 1998, p. 862). Although Steinberg theorises discourse specifically in reference to activists, evidently the same logic is applicable to governmental or otherwise institutional actors as well.

On the other hand, the governor's recycling of “the orc” meme confirms the second theoretical assumption proposed within the theoretical framework — that politicians engage pre-existing social narratives and attitudes to construct social mobilisation, including in times of national crises. Fusion of subcultural and political discourses is displayed as conducive to establishing public trust in state actors that implement this framing device in their political communication. Hence, the importance of building trust in the authorities is deemed by Kim as a necessary step to ensure successful resource and social mobilisation. Furthermore, presence of non-mutually exclusively regional and national identity framings in Kim's Telegram discourse proves the fairness of informed predictions that the Ukrainian political decentralisation may facilitate social cohesion. Simultaneous appeals to the audience's regional and national senses of belonging are

therefore possible, with lower rates of polarisation as a result of the Russian invasion increasing efficacy of the varied framings of multiple identities.

However, the analysed data also reveals previously unstudied aspects of the connective action logic. Namely, counteraction of disinformation is portrayed as a substantial element within Kim's connective discourse. While the use of disinformation as a geopolitical tool receives substantial academic attention, an account of discursive political resistance to information warfare and its connective effects is lacking due to the relative shortage of appropriate case study material. This suggested addition to the connective framing list can be expected to stimulate and inform future research and gain even more academic significance with time, as fighting disinformation is undoubtedly an emerging global challenge and therefore one of the major connective action goals worldwide. It will likely not disappear from the political communication priority list any time soon. Additionally, the analysis suggests that collective and connective action framings can rely on the same themes. For instance, tranquillisation of the public can be approached both through prognostic or motivational collective action frames as well as by means of connective personal expression or emotional commentary framing. This, once again, confirms the subordination of connective functions of political discourse to its collective goals such as resistance. But it equally underscores the flexibility of connective framing, which seems to rely on various themes not only depending on a digital media platform of choice but also based on the discursive context.

Besides theoretical confirmations and developments, the foregoing findings and interpretations also have practical implications for future social mobilisation and prevention of disinformation efforts as well as the evolution of political communication strategies. Generally, the demonstrated multifunctionality of digital media for collectivising and connective endeavours makes them an attractive tool of communication. As evidenced through former governor Haidai's example, other Ukrainian public officials began a transition to digital media for political purposes too, inspired by the public traction gained by Kim's Telegram communication. Clearly, this is a global trend that can benefit from research into digital discursive strategies that prove to be successful with the audience. Moreover, the relevance of identity-based discourse for both collective and connective actions at times of national crisis remains high despite political

polarisation, decentralisation of power and globalising trends that are shown to diminish the sense of national belonging under certain conditions (Saunders, 2006). Additionally, the research illustrates that unintentionally personal (or personalised) communication has potential at mobilising wide audiences. It shows an unsurprising yet understudied connective quality of humour, emotion and self-reflection. But alongside highlighting the connective mechanisms behind the sensational robustness of the Ukrainian resistance to the Russian attack, the analysis also helps shed light on collective processes that allowed for a sustained nationwide pushback against the superior adversary. Such insight facilitates apprehension of lessons in successful resistance construction, informing preventive political communication measures aimed at avoiding similar ideological confrontations in the future.

It is important to reiterate that the analysis and interpretation did not assess the validity of Kim's logistical or military updates. Neither was his personal interest in preserving and maintaining power taken into account. The study examined the context and framing of wartime political communication and its collective and connective framing functions, focusing on the governor's imminent task of building social resistance to the invasion as a primary concern. This focus on framing dynamics within political discourse of neither electoral campaigning nor any other expression of contentious politics is what, hopefully, constitutes the contribution of the present research to the growing literature on political communication. Other major research limitations are understandably associated with how the discourse may affect the audience. While an extensive overview of the discursive devices, patterns and interpretations based on relevant literature was provided, the chosen methodology cannot account for public reception of Kim's communication. Hence, judgments of success or effectiveness of the studied framing are limited to the contextual awareness of the governor's media popularity and documented instances of subsequent resistance measures. Now that the presence of connective as well as collective action features in digital political communication is described and explained based on theoretical grounds, further study of the effects of such discourse on the audience can advance research in the academic field. In other words, "[u]nderstanding how connective action engages or fails to engage diverse populations constitutes part of the analytical challenge ahead" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 759). Focus groups, surveys and interviews may prove useful to gain additional insight. For instance, the assumption regarding the feedback loop of individual public

declarations of the willingness to join resistance and the ensuing political instrumentalisation of such precedents can be tested via interviews that establish individual motivation for resistance: were they inspired by digital political communication, other members of the public or the very fact of invasion? Additionally, a comprehensive account of wartime volunteering effort would be a valuable contribution to the literature on social mobilisation.

## Conclusion

Digital political discourse currently attracts tremendous academic attention from scholars tasked with exploring the ongoing shift in political communication. Constantly changing political environments, not in the least the democratising post-Soviet states like Ukraine, have been particularly affected by the arrival of digital technology and its gradual acquisition of the dominant role in modern politics and the infosphere as a whole. Corresponding research describes contemporary digital media as the latest tool of social power at our disposal rather than an independent factor of influence. Various means of mediated communication, it appears, can be wielded as a weapon to advance individual or national interests. If there is any soundness in the old adage prompting one to fight fire with fire, then there shall be a potential to use digital communication for defensive purposes as well. The present study aimed to describe and deconstruct precisely the latter — a felicitous crisis moderation effort that brings the nation closer together in the face of common danger. Yet, an in-depth analysis of how elected and appointed leaders employ the emerging communication technologies in times of national crises has so far been missing. To eliminate the research gap, the study offers an unconventional approach to political communication inquiry and a valuable insight into cohesive rather than contentious discursive practices outside of electoral campaigning or anti-government protests. At the same time, the focus on official communication helps to consider the governmental role in collective action construction and the connective social role of public officers. Besides, the study advances an academic effort to make sense of the complex political processes involved in the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, particularly the formation of nationwide Ukrainian resistance to the Russian attack.

In a nutshell, this case study of Governor Kim's Telegram content from the first month of the Russian invasion of Ukraine showcases what frames, themes and discursive functions can be revealed by means of a framing analysis of digital political communication. As the findings suggest, contemporary digital communication is capable of mobilising a robust resistance movement on the national scale. The research adopted the innovative theoretical framework of digital collective-connective action framing and conducted qualitative data coding to identify themes and frames within the discourse that correspond to the collective and connective action

logics. To enable accurate interpretation of the mentioned data, an original taxonomy of collective-connective framing was developed, which will hopefully be perused and further refined in future research. The ensuing analysis underscored and interpreted the meaning and significance of communicating identity, trust, transparency and composure, among other factors, in mobilising wartime resistance on the societal level. The utility of humour and candour were presented in a similar vein. The connective quality of the studied discourse deserves a special note, however. Chiefly, fighting disinformation, fusing subcultural narratives with political discourse and expressing personal reflections emerged as integral parts in the analysed discursive quest for public credibility. But the hybridity of action-oriented discourse advances the argument that connective action pursues the goals of the related collective action logic. Indeed, the same themes, frames and functions appear in regards to both types of action: tranquilisation, trust, humour, transparency and self-reflection. This, once again, demonstrates how the entire discourse is tailored toward a single end — fostering social resistance to the national crisis.

To accomplish the task of securing public trust, contemporary communicators must keep up to date with the digital transformation of the media industry as well as the new media forms that emerge in the process. Thus, a skillful political actor, it appears, nowadays must account for the technological affordances of a digital platform they choose to employ for political communication. Although no specific media can be considered superior to others, effective discourse requires tailoring narratives, frames and themes to the connective characteristics of each digital outlet. However, not all political manipulation with new technology is acceptable. Digital media and social networks in particular should be regarded as mere tools conditioned by human spite as much as benevolence, idiosyncrasy as well as resourcefulness. Though such instruments are rarely designed as neutral, it is up to the communicator to define their use and function. Therefore, careful examination and advocacy are necessary to promote ethical, efficient and, perhaps most importantly, peaceful exploitation of ever-evolving media technologies.

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# Appendix: Thesis coding matrix

#	Date & Time	Type	Textual context	Theme	Frame	Code	Notes
1	24.02 07:23	Text	“No panic! Remain calm when making any decisions!”	decision, tranquilisation	agency, solution	CL2	Promotion of calm decision-making as opposed to emotional behaviour.
2	24.02 07:52	Text	“Lots of fake information and old videos. Use only verified sources of information.”	fakes, trustworthy sources	fighting disinformation, building social trust	CN	Warning to rely on trustworthy sources of information and to avoid fakes.
3	24.02 09:08	Video	“Please let me know if you see anything unusual”	public monitoring	resource mobilisation, collaboration	CL2	Promotion of civil monitoring & communication with the authorities.
4	24.02 16:57	Video	“We are not doing well, because our country is being attacked.”	invasion	injustice	CL1	Diagnosis of the national emergency.
5	24.02 22:43	Text + image	“If you saw an announcement regarding the need to turn off the light, it’s a fake.”	fakes	building social trust, fighting disinformation	CN	Dismantling fakes.
6	24.02 22:59	Text	“Information regarding Mykolayiv on the Telegram channel “Legitimate” - !!! Fake. Unfollow Russian propaganda channels. Use only verified information from official sources.”	fakes, trustworthy sources	building social trust, fighting disinformation	CN	
7	24.02 23:19	Text	“You shouldn’t record our military’s movement and especially publish it online. This is how you help the enemy. No online hype is worth the single life of our army men!”	digital tools, casualties	promotion of online citizen action	CN	Stressing the superiority of national interest over personal benefit; equally a collective action since it stresses responsibility (prognostic).
8	25.02 06:32	Text + image	“[P]ay attention to missile guidance beacons and disable them. [...] If you see it, break it and call the police.”	public monitoring	agency, resource mobilisation, solution	CL2	Promotion of public action and informing the authorities.
9	25.02 09:27	Video	“Those who expressed interest in offering help, write to me personally, big business. [...] I invite everyone to join us and strengthen our army.”	resistance	participation	CL3	Explicit call for participation in resistance.
10	25.02 11:00	Video	“I offer everyone who wants, who can and who knows how to, join us.”	resistance	participation	CL3	Explicit call for participation in resistance.
11	25.02 11:00	Video	“[W]e have decent citizens who love Ukraine and do not waver.”	tranquilisation	identity	CL3	Appealing to national identity to motivate joining the resistance effort.
12	25.02 11:00	Video	“I ask everyone to be responsible. [...] Because we all have to protect our city and region.”	resistance	responsibility, common cause	CL2	Resistance on a city/regional level.
13	25.02 14:30	Video	“Watch for official news. If there is confirmed information from the military, I will let you know”	trustworthy sources	sharing, building social trust	CN	Promotion of reliance on official sources of information.
14	25.02 15:20	Video	“Do not panic, go calmly about your business — help the military.”	tranquilisation, decision	agency	CL2	Promotion of calm decision-making as opposed to emotional behaviour.
15	25.02 16:20	Video	“Anyone who does not want to live... not in Ukraine, let’s say, I ask you to join, because this is a real way to save our city.”	resistance	participation, identity	CL3	Appealing to national identity to motivate joining the resistance effort.
16	25.02 22:25	Video	“Make your own decision”	decision	agency, responsibility	CL2	Promotion of own decision-making and individual responsibility as opposed to following state orders.
17	26.02 09:40	Video	I invite all volunteers to join us. The city and the region were very actively involved. Everyone offers to help.	good example	participation	CL3	Call to participate in resistance by good example.

18	26.02 09:40	Video	I'm even getting used to this state myself, although I don't want to.	tranquillisation, self-reflection	personal expression	CN	Calming the population down by personal example.
19	26.02 13:00	Video	"I ask those who are not indifferent, who have the strength and desire, to go out, get in touch with the territorial defence[...] to unite."	resistance	identity, participation	CL3	Calls to join action and participation in resistance by appeals to agency — "those who are not indifferent".
20	26.02 13:00	Video	"We are defending our city[.] Therefore, any help is needed now. With God's blessing!"	resistance	identity, participation	CL3	Another example of the variety of motivational devices: religious rhetoric and also introduction of local identity in addition to national.
21	26.02 13:00	Video	"You need to organise yourselves. Unite with your acquaintances, you know other deputies of mine, local politicians, those who are ready to work — join them, look for work, ask, choose where you can be useful, get involved."	resistance	agency, solution, collaboration	CL2	Prognostic rather than motivational because Kim here responds to expressed readiness to provide help but recommends self-organisation, as he does not have time to coordinate all resistance efforts.
22	26.02 13:11	Text	"Urgent need for minibuses in addition to those we have."	resistance	resource mobilisation	CL2	
23	26.02 15:14	Text +images	"Share around!"	digital tools	sharing, promotion of online citizen action	CN	Quintessential digital connective action.
24	26.02 15:14	Text +images	"To be searched for in the vicinity of military bases and locations of critical infrastructure" [Photos of missile guiding markers attached.]	public monitoring	resource mobilisation, collaboration	CL2	Connective-collective hybrid action: connective component (entry above) accompanied by collective prescription.
25	26.02 16:00	Text	"About Russian troops in New Odesa — it's a fake"	fakes	fighting disinformation	CN	
26	26.02 21:00	Video	"I will be going online to refute the words spread by a voice similar to mine."	fakes, trustworthy sources	fighting disinformation, building social trust	CN	Fighting digital fakes with digital action.
27	26.02 21:00	Video	Whoever is looking into it, please look for files with a voice similar to mine, determine how many of them are out there. [...] Search. Help me.	fakes, public monitoring	participation	CL3	Direct plea for help with collective-connective action.
28	26.02 23:14	Image	Image of a screenshot from a private local chat in one of the region's localities; depicts rumours of Romas stealing a tank from Russians.	meme, digital tools	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	Sharing wartime social memes with the aim of lifting the social spirits and avoiding panic.
29	27.02 06:20	Video	"We are wasting time, you are wasting our time filling the infosphere with unnecessary information."	fakes, public monitoring	fighting disinformation	CN	
30	27.02 06:20	Video	"In Kharkiv locals chased a tank and burned it down with Molotov's cocktails. Here is a useful thing. A useful thing is to go outside with a cocktail."	good example	participation	CL3	Providing a good example as a call to participate in resistance.
31	27.02 12:40	Video	"Do not believe them. [...] And now I will try to push this story to journalists, provide them with some data."	fakes, trustworthy sources	sharing, building social trust, fighting disinformation	CN	
32	27.02 14:19	Video	"I need help with Molotov cocktails and those who are ready to throw them, not just make them."	resistance	resource mobilisation, collaboration	CL2	
33	27.02 14:40	Video	"The [governmental] "Diya" application, where our licences [and IDs] are, not a single Russian or DPR fighter has them. That is, if a person shows you a valid "Diya" app, then you can be calm — these are ours.	digital tools, tranquillisation, public monitoring	building social trust	CN	Innovative wartime connective action.
34	27.02 20:15	Text	"Drones are needed, preferably with a thermal camera and night vision. The fancier, the better. Who can help???"	digital tools	resource mobilisation	CL2	

35	28.02 13:40	Video	"No police cars were stolen from us. This is a fake. And these fakes are very costly. [...] Don't spread these fakes. They are harmful."	fakes, casualties	fighting disinformation, building social trust	CN	
36	28.02 13:40	Video	"At checkpoints: please talk. Approach calmly. When you are not nervous, the inspector is not nervous either."	decision, tranquilisation	solution	CL2	
37	28.02 13:50	Video	"No need to share photos from social networks. Only if you filmed it yourself, then you should publish and comment."	fakes, digital tools	sharing, promotion of online citizen action, fighting disinformation	CN	
38	28.02 13:50	Video	"Please: pay attention to your [reception] towers, take turns guarding them. [...] Work on this issue. And then you will really be of help."	public monitoring	resource mobilisation, solution	CL2	Directing public willingness to contribute to the resistance from harmful to useful expressions of public action.
39	28.02 14:45	Text + image	"Officially announcing that new navigational directives were introduced in the Mykolayiv region. [Accompanied by images of a billboard with a viral internet meme depicting a sunken Russian ship]"	meme	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	Sharing wartime social memes with the aim of lifting the social spirits and avoiding panic.
40	28.02 16:55	Video	Who has anything, or knows where to get or buy some. We need a lot of them. [...] Please, help however you can."	resistance	resource mobilisation	CL2	
41	28.02 17:30	Video	"Our people are the best. They simply destroyed the phone. Ten minutes in a row we can't even take a call."	good example	participation	CL3	
42	28.02 17:34	Text + images	"Did you notice something suspicious? Inform the 24/7 call centre."	public monitoring	resource mobilisation	CL2	
43	28.02 19:05	Video	"Good evening, we are from Ukraine. [G]et ready. Orcs are coming today, attacking."	meme	participation, identity	CL3	First time the future staple introduction is used to appeal to identity. Also, the use of the meme to define "the other" shows the connective-collective nature (fusing subcultural and political for collective action).
44	01.03 11:30	Video	"[A] cry has been thrown in the local chats that a local oligarch pays \$1,000 for burned equipment. I will even support him. People are already running around, looking for equipment, burning it, because they were promised \$1,000 for destroyed Russian equipment."	good example, public monitoring	participation	CL3	
45	01.03 16:10	Video	"Please do not send us anything that you have not [photographed] yourself."	fakes, public monitoring	sharing, fighting disinformation, building social trust	CN	Perhaps the angriest of Kim's recordings in the first month of the war.
46	01.03 16:15	Video	"It would, in fact, be very helpful if you shared videos with burning and damaged equipment."	public monitoring	resource mobilisation	CL2	
47	01.03 21:10	Video	"I was very glad that people rose up, blocked the equipment, and stopped them with their bare hands. In Bashtanka and Snegirevka, civilians disarmed and took Russian military hostages."	good example	participation	CL3	
48	01.03 22:19	Video	"So, from tomorrow morning, I give permission to the patrolmen: if you are drunk at the wheel, the car is confiscated for the needs of the army, irrevocably."	public monitoring	resource mobilisation, responsibility	CL2	Creative wartime resource mobilisation as well as digital announcements regarding such collective action.
49	02.03 14:31	Text	"I don't want to share videos and photos of occupationees' corpses. ... But, trust me, there are so many of them."	tranquilisation, good example	participation	CL3	Good example in the form of the evidence of the enemy's losses. Perhaps the most effective tranquiliser.
50	02.03 14:30	Video	"I urge everyone to take up arms."	resistance	participation	CL3	
51	02.03 19:15	Image	An image of a graphic painting depicting territorial defence troops with Molotov's cocktails and a rhymed caption reading "There is no entrance into	meme	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political	CN	Sharing wartime social memes with the aim of lifting the social spirits and avoiding panic.

			Mykolayiv, only a fire greeting!		discourses		
52	02.03 22:50	Video	"I was told a sort of tradition is shaping, that I need to sum up the day and set myself up with new goals for the morning. It motivates me a lot, first of all, because every time, before I record a video, I have to analyse what I have done that day and how we are doing in general."	self-reflection	personal expression	CN	Acknowledging the importance and success of conducting political communication via Telegram.
53	03.03 07:30	Video	"The most important thing is that you should know each other and communicate. Get to know each other, understand what needs to be done [...] So that everyone does not think separately for himself."	resistance	agency, solution, common cause, collaboration, resource mobilisation	CL2	Highly connective-collective action: building social trust, connecting residents to organise effective resistance.
54	03.03 07:36	Video	"The only thing they can do when they come in is go looking for vodka at a shop. These are ordinary children, ordinary people, simply dressed in weapons."	meme	identity	CL3	Defining the enemy's identity in negative terms.
55	03.03 07:36	Video	"When you get together, pay attention to where the stores are in your area. This is the first place they go. And I think the first thing to do, for those whose windows are next to the store, throw out a couple of bottles so that they do not turn there."	resistance	agency, solution, common cause, collaboration, resource mobilisation	CL2	
56	03.03 07:37	Video	"Download Zello, add the social circle with which you want to be in touch. A very useful thing."	digital tools	sharing, promotion of online citizen action	CN	Digital tool recommendation as connective action.
57	03.03 15:30	Video	"I am asking you to look for instructions, whoever is there in the fields, hunting, also find people who can drive them. And when I find the manuals, I'll also share them online."	digital tools, public monitoring	sharing, promotion of online citizen action	CN	Combined with collective motivational action.
58	03.03 18:40	Video	"Understand that the occupiers are now using the phones of people [in power] in Voznesensk."	fakes	building social trust, fighting disinformation	CN	
59	03.03 20:00	Video	"Let's resist, otherwise it will be too late. Then they will dictate the rules to us."	resistance	participation, identity	CL3	
60	04.03 10:20	Video	"Everything is fine. Mykolaiv is in the top three of cities that defend well."	tranquilisation, good example	identity	CL3	
61	04.03 10:40	Video	"Therefore, territorial defence squads, arm yourself, guys. We shall protect the city, there are not many of them."	resistance	participation, identity	CL3	
62	04.03 11:30	Video	"No need to be nervous. You need to eat and not be nervous. [...] Therefore, we shall relax, exhale, and keep burning their equipment."	tranquilisation	participation	CL3	
63	04.03 12:00	Video	"While the fighting is going on, please do not post any movements of our equipment."	digital tools, public monitoring	sharing, promotion of online citizen action	CN	Requests to create or avoid digital evidence, depending on the situation and belonging of the recorded equipment.
64	04.03 18:50	Video	"Lead [the pro-Russian Telegram channel] on the wrong track, think how to do it better. This is where you can really help. Jam them. Find your own photos of our positions that you posted on social networks, which they now use against us."	fakes, digital tools	promotion of online citizen action, fighting disinformation	CN	Digital warfare at its best.
65	05.03 09:00	Video	"Come on, you're adults, don't share nonsense. I'll explain this to you: information is accepted only from direct witnesses, and only if you know them, whose identity you can confirm. [...] Don't try to help us. You are only confusing us. [...] Once again, forget the 'share' button."	fakes, public monitoring	sharing, promotion of online citizen action, fighting disinformation	CN	Great example of connective action with the aim of fighting mis- and disinformation.
66	05.03 13:55	Video	"Do not panic. Vehicles with 'Z' are moving from Kulbakino right now. These are Kamaz trucks captured by us. Do not shoot!"	tranquilisation	agency, solution	CL2	
67	05.03 14:20	Video	"Remember the saying 'war is war, but lunch is on schedule'? I advise you to do the same."	tranquilisation	agency, solution	CL2	Emblematic use of tranquilisation.

68	05.03 14:55	Text	"One of our fighters shot down four helicopters with an anti-aircraft gun... Hero"	tranquilisation, good example	participation	CL3	
69	05.03 15:25	Video	"I repeat: In Kulbakino you are shooting at the equipment that we stole. Do not shoot. This is ours, there is a Ukrainian flag. We are just dragging it."	tranquilisation	agency, responsibility	CL2	
70	05.03 16:35	Video	We destroyed a bunch of equipment. The guy with an anti-aircraft system shot down four helicopters, probably got angry.[...] The bastards, however, killed the gamekeeper and his son while retreating."	good example, tranquilisation, casualties	participation	CL3	Merging good news with bad news to lift the spirits while keeping transparency, staying realistic about own casualties, and instilling anger as well as hope and fighting mood.
71	05.03 16:35	Video	"Young orc boys are now walking around courtyards, asking for food. Honestly, they just walk around in search of food. Hand them over [to the police]. Feed and arrest. Civil detention."	meme	identity, participation	CL3	Defining the enemy's identity in negative terms.
72	05.03 16:41	Text	"Hello from Odesa!!! Odesa gypsies are interested: how much does a Russian ship weigh?"	meme	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	
73	05.03 20:30	Video	"The data on the movement of troops has gone down a lot, both correct and incorrect, due to the fact that the whole city is now looking for flashlights. They are sending each other pictures with flashlights."	fakes, public monitoring	sharing, promotion of online citizen action, fighting disinformation	CN	
74	05.03 20:30	Video	"[P]lease do not overestimate the strength and skills of orcs. You know, orcs, they are also orcs in Africa. Look at what Kherson is doing. Good job! They went to a rally, raised the flags, as if saying, "We don't know anything, we don't want you, go home."	good example, meme	participation, identity	CL3	Employing both positive self-identification and negative identification of the enemy.
75	05.03 20:30	Image	Russian war machines equipped with wooden "armour".	meme	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	
76	05.03 22:30	Video	"I know that many are waiting for the evening for me to say that everything is in order, to draw conclusions of the day. That's why I'm here."	self-reflection	personal expression	CN	Acknowledging the importance and success of conducting political communication via Telegram.
77	05.03 22:30	Video	"Nobody is going to live by Russian rules.[...] The war united us against Russia."	resistance	identity, participation	CL3	Juxtaposing "us" vs. "them".
78	05.03 22:30	Video	"Yes, there is their presence, but the town is run by Ukraine. And it cheers me up. Now I understand what they can and can't achieve. And it adds strength."	self-reflection	personal expression, emotional commentary	CN	Connective-collective (motivational).
79	06.03 10:30	Video	"Now is the time to drive them further away[...] Drive away the running orcs. [...] Don't give them fuel. Pour it out, burn it, but don't give anything useful to the enemy."	meme	resource mobilisation, solution, collaboration	CL2	
80	06.30 19:15	Text	"I am told that I publish too little destroyed and captured equipment. I don't do it not because I don't want to. There are also loads of ugly photos and videos of orc corpses littering the land... plenty and bloody. I don't want to post the bodies."	self-reflection, meme	personal expression, emotional commentary	CN	
81	06.30 19:15	Text	"Soulless Orcs — take your corpses from our land. What kind of assholes do you have to be? Instead of evacuating the bodies — some lie for 2-3 days — they come, deploy nearby and start shooting... inhuman."	meme	values	CL1	Underlying enemy's negative values.
82	06.03 22:10	Video	"I can't tell you a lot of things, but, believe me, we are working, and my mood is improving every day because we have prospects."	good example, self-reflection, tranquilisation	personal expression, emotional commentary	CN	
83	07.03 00:25	Text	"This award belongs to the Mykolayiv region! Everyone who is on the defensive and who is not ready to give up their land... it just so happens that I am in charge of the region. I am proud that I was born in Mykolayiv."	good example	identity	CL3	

84	07.03 01:01	Link	Tik-Tok meme	self-reflection, meme	sharing, personal expression, fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	
85	07.03 09:30	Video	"Civilians, keep hiding in basements. The military is working. Clearly, beautifully and calmly. Don't worry, we're here, working."	tranquilisation	solution, responsibility, agency	CL2	
86	07.03 10:55	Image	Picture of Kim at his workplace	tranquilisation, self-reflection, good example	personal expression	CN	Became a meme.
87	07.03 11:49	Video	Reposted music video compilation making fun of the Russian army.	meme	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	Sharing digital social memes.
88	07.03 16:00	Video	"Bashtanka territorial defence squad sets records. The third Pantsir missile system in 10 days. I'll drop the video now. Good job!"	good example, tranquilisation	participation	CL3	
89	07.03 16:16	Text + image	"This is a fake. Please report it."	fakes, digital tools	building social trust, fighting disinformation	CN	
90	07.03 19:35	Video	"Rare assholes, incredibly evil. But we will pay them back for everything."	casualties	emotional commentary	CN	
91	07.03 19:35	Video	"[T]he human casualties are terrible."	casualties	injustice	CL1	
92	07.03 19:35	Video	"They understand that fakes do not affect me much but keep spreading them. People decry that everything is going badly."	fakes	building social trust, fighting disinformation	CN	
93	07.03 19:35	Video	"We definitely don't shoot at our own people, in any way. But they are doing it indiscriminately."	good example	values	CL1	Juxtaposing "us" vs. "them".
94	08.03 10:50	Video	"On March 8, 1943, on today's date, the liberation of the Mykolayiv region began. [L]et's justify history. Accidents are not accidental. [W]e will be liberating the Mykolayiv region starting from this date, from March 8."	resistance	identity, participation	CL3	Involving history to construct regional identity to foster resistance.
95	08.03 16:30	Video	"I need tires at every intersection in the city. If war machines break through in some direction, the task will be to set fire to these tires, so that there is smoke in order to limit visibility."	resistance	resource mobilisation, collaboration, solution	CL2	
96	08.03 16:28	Video	"I'll drop the link at the end. There is a chat room, where I will be added as well. I can write, correct something."	digital tools	sharing, promotion of online citizen action	CN	
97	08.03 16:30	Text	"Tires are also needed / please bring everyone who does not mind!"	resistance	resource mobilisation	CL2	
98	08.03 16:50	Video	"The chat got spammed. I removed the link. A channel will be created where we can share instructions with people who are [registered and validated.]"	digital tools	sharing, promotion of online citizen action, building social trust	CN	
99	08.03 16:50	Video	"As for the tires, there is no specific location for them. I ask to lay them out along the road, for anyone who has some."	resistance	resource mobilisation, solution, collaboration	CL2	
100	08.03 17:21	Text	<p>☞ Where to take the tires? every intersection from roadblocks to the centre</p> <p>☞ How many? 5-10-15 tires at each intersection</p> <p>☞ Where to lay down? - at the edge of the intersection.</p> <p>! Do not block the road!</p> <p>☞ Near each pile of tires - 5-10 bottles of Molotov cocktails.)"</p>	resistance	resource mobilisation, solution, collaboration	CL2	

101	08.03 19:35	Video	"Mykolayivites, you are incredible. In a couple of hours, all the intersections in the city are covered with tires. Everyone is waiting for the command, everyone knows what to do."	good example	participation	CL3	
102	08.03 19:35	Video	"First, we don't burn anything without my command. [...] Second: if this needs to be done, then I will give details - from where and what to do."	resistance	resource mobilisation, agency, solution, responsibility, collaboration	CL2	
103	08.03 23:20	Video	Reposted Tik-Tok video promising a reward to Russian soldiers who are ready to surrender with equipment, accompanied by an audiotrack with music put over Kim's "Good evening, we are from Ukraine" usual introduction.	self-reflection, meme, digital tools	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	Addressing Russian soldiers, using audio memes, reposting others' political messages.
104	09.03 08:32	Video	"People from Odesa suggest: a country with a chicken on its coat of arms will never defeat a country with a fork on its coat of arms."	meme	identity	CL3	Humour often appears in Kim's videos, but rarely it is possible to codify it as collective action. Though it always serves a motivational function.
105	09.03 16:00	Video	"For your peace of mind: I can't imagine what an idiot you have to be to strike now at a city in which there are a lot of foreign journalists."	tranquilisation	sharing	CN	Underscoring media attention to the city and simultaneously using it to tranquilise the residents.
106	11.03 08:25	Video	"You must set it up in such a way that, albeit minimal, there is income. We must continue to work."	resistance	resource mobilisation, solution	CL2	
107	11.03 19:00	Video	"[P]lease do not photograph the movement of our military equipment."	public monitoring, tranquilisation	sharing, promotion of online citizen action	CN	
108	11.03 22:55	Video	"I've been scolded for being too optimistic when we're under fire. I agree, but that's how I react to everything. It doesn't mean that I don't take things seriously and have fun inside."	self-reflection, tranquilisation	personal expression, emotional commentary, building social trust,	CN	Apologises for being optimistic but does not change his attitude, since he is intentionally serving as a role model.
109	12.03 15:35	Video	"They use a bot farm to send out messages from Ukrainian phone numbers. [...] In fact, this is just movement for the sake of diverting our attention. [...] They can't deceive us."	fakes, digital tools	fighting disinformation, promotion of online citizen action	CN	
110	12.03 15:35	Video	"Maybe I'll tell bad jokes about these assholes. I'll think about it. Under shelling, you don't really want to be cheerful. My mood is fine. All is well with the fighting spirit."	self-reflection, tranquilisation	personal expression, emotional commentary	CN	
111	13.03 08:05	Video	"A huge part of them are trying to become citizens of Ukraine. [...] Probably, they want this because they understand that we are better, we have freedom, we are fighting for it. And they have slavery."	good example	values	CL1	Juxtaposition of identities.
112	13.03 13:12	Video	Video compilation with the history of Mykolayiv and information on current damage to the city resulting from the war, ending with a plea to NATO to close the sky over Ukraine; caption reads "Close the sky! #NOflyZoneUA"	digital tools	sharing, promotion of online citizen action,	CN	Digital tools of connective action on global scale.
113	13.03 15:29	Text	"We restored the mobile reception in some places :)"	digital tools	building social trust	CN	Fundamental connective action.
114	13.03 16:46	Text + images + video	"Orc airstrike the school!!!! What kind of moral freak do you have to be to give and carry out such commands!"	casualties, meme	injustice, values	CL1	
115	13.03 19:54	Video	"As for the shelling, they are doing it on purpose to intimidate us."	tranquilisation	agency, solution	CL2	
116	14.03 08:40	Video	"I remind you that it is now possible to switch mobile operators. If Life does not work, switch to Kyivstar. Turn off automatic network selection and switch to another operator - everything will work for you, since now the merged system works via cellular communication."	digital tools	building social trust	CN	Fundamental connective action.
117	14.03	Video	"It's shared in the chats that there will be a tank"	fakes, public	fighting	CN	

	11:55		attack on Mykolayiv at 2:00 p.m. There won't be any. [...] Those who see [this message], look for those who spread it, ban them, complain. Analyse."	monitoring, digital tools	disinformation, building social trust		
118	15.03 08:40	Video	"The people of Mykolayiv are so stern... Tonight we were shelled. In the morning, I call the Ministry of Emergency Situations, and they tell me, "But we have not received any calls. Everything is working. Small things about old bombs, but no one calls about shelling."	good example, tranquilisation	identity, participation	CL3	
119	15.03 08:40	Video	"I feel that Mykolayiv is getting used to shelling and ignores the perceived danger. At the moment, everything is calm."	good example, tranquilisation	identity, participation	CL3	
120	15.03 15:30	Video	"I got the information that they are spreading around Kherson, that everyone should stay at home, because today there may be a massive shelling. I assure you that the Ukrainian Armed Forces are not planning and will never shell Kherson."	fakes	fighting, disinformation, building social trust	CN	
121	15.03 20:15	Video	"I just happened to hear that the orc spokesman found it offensive that the Russian army was being compared to orcs and urged us not to do that again. Well, what can I tell you? [...]"	meme	identity	CL3	
122	15.03 20:20	Video	"I ask the residents, who are nearby, if you see these creatures that walk around with loot, with guns on a rope instead of a belt — these are the bastards who were terrifying the village. Do not let them go anywhere and, even better, shoot them right away."	public monitoring	resource mobilisation, solution, agency, collaboration	CL2	
123	16.03 08:05	Text	"Adequate Russians sent me this. They say this will be their military march in their shameful war: [Link to a Youtube video, not available at the time of analysis]. Video footage is missing."	digital tools, meme	sharing	CN	
124	16.03 18:35	Video	"I do not advise anyone to ponder around. It's not going to end well, considering the courts aren't working regularly right now."	tranquilisation, public monitoring	common cause	CL2	
125	16.03 21:38	Video	Video with an audio intercept evidencing Russian casualties, losses and chaos within the ranks.	digital tools, tranquilisation	sharing	CN	
126	16.03 23:25	Video	"I hope you have a boring, quiet night[.] Thanks to the work of the military, we still do not hear any shelling. It seems to be calm."	tranquilisation	agency	CL2	
127	17.03 21:45	Text	"Just appeared on air in "Navalny LIVE". Was telling the Russian audience my opinion about propaganda, and how it should be resisted."	fakes, digital tools	sharing, fighting, disinformation, building social trust	CN	Connective action directed at "the enemy audience" as well as the home audience. Followed by a recording of the interview itself.
128	17.03 23:18	Video	Reposted video compilation of Russian casualties and destroyed equipment; the background music is a song cynically making fun of Russian losses and failed heroism; caption (in Russian) reads "#shamefulwar"	digital tools, meme	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political discourses, personal expression	CN	
129	19.03 12:56	Image	Image of a pair of gift socks with an inscription "Russian warship, screw yourself" in Kim's office.	meme	sharing, personal expression, emotional commentary, fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	
130	19.03 18:20	Video	"[A] request to those who notice [Russian corpses]: a) report where they are in the fields, there are a lot of them out there; b) if possible, collect them in bags — we are not animals, this will be our problem. [...] They have mother too"	public monitoring	participation, identity	CL3	Rare case of approximation of warring parties' identities as opposed to juxtaposition: "They have mothers too."
131	19.03 18:20	Video	"I ask of you, call the military, tell them where [you saw abandoned military equipment], help them transport it. If you can fix it, fix it. But you shouldn't drag it into your basements. You won't need it. [...] Please, please, we must now all work together for the army. So please help."	public monitoring	participation, identity	CL3	Also very explicit resource mobilisation, so falls under CL2 as well. Visible shift from war support effort to law enforcement and prevention of collective effort that impedes the war effort.
132	19.03	Video	"Today I had a joyful event: I had borscht and roast."	self-reflection, good	personal expression,	CN	

	21:50		Therefore, I will sleep happy and full.”	example	emotional commentary		
133	19.03 21:55	Text	“Tomorrow is my first day off. I will be frying barbecues;) Orcs, I laid on you.”	self-reflection, meme	personal expression, emotional commentary	CN	
134	21.03 13:10	Text	“Our people cannot be defeated :) in 10 seconds 100 photos and videos ... no need to upload to the network.”	good example	sharing, promotion of online citizen action, identity	CN	
135	21.03 13:15	Video	“Just a nightmare with this Orkoston... rare bastards. I don't know how they can bomb residential areas during the day... Idiots.”	casualties, meme	injustice, values	CL1	
136	21.03 13:15	Video	“I ask you, don't post videos. There are a lot of our locals filming falling bricks. You are not helping anyone. Everyone will learn about it anyway.”	tranquilisation, public monitoring	sharing, promotion of online citizen action	CN	
137	21.03 14:51	Text + images	“This is what orcs have planned [accompanied by images of allegedly pre-produced Russian medals for capturing Ukrainian cities]. And this is what they get in reward: [accompanied by an image of what seems to be charred, amputated private parts lying on the ground].	meme, digital tools	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political discourses, personal expression	CN	
138	21.03 21:50	Video	“Once again, I have a request: please, we need shells. No need to store them in the basement. Rockets, whatever. [T]he military at the frontline is in great need of resources in order to drive the orcs away. There are guys who repair [equipment] and transfer it to us. And there are those who, while we were distracted, are twisting wheels off the equipment...”	good example	participation, identity	CL3	
139	22.03 23:33	Video	Reposted video compilation with a narration on Ukrainian identity and history, promoting unity, hope for the future and resistance.	digital tools, tranquilisation	sharing, building social trust	CN	
140	23.03 13:01	Text	“I appeal to all entrepreneurs of our region - begin to resume work where there is such an opportunity. Small and medium-sized businesses, get back to work too. I also ask everyone to actively use the services of the business. With this, you will make an important contribution to the recovery of the country's economy.”	resistance	participation, identity	CL3	Connective-collective action, since the message is a cross-media publication with a link to the original longer-form post.
141	23.03 20:20	Text	“Entrepreneurs, representatives of institutions and organisations can contact the indicated numbers 24 hours a day regarding problems that create obstacles to work.” [Hotline phone numbers included]	resistance	sharing, building social trust	CN	
142	24.03 13:29	Image	Image of a destroyed Russian missile with superimposed calculations equating the cost of the missile to 40,760 average Russian retiree pensions.	digital tools, meme	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	Reposting a common pro-Ukrainian narrative on the illogical use of Russian public funds.
143	24.03 23:02	Video	Footage of shelling in the Kherson outskirts of Chornobayivka, where a military airbase, occupied at the time, is located; the post includes a caption with the name of the location and emojis depicting three laughing faces and a facepalm.	meme, good example, tranquilisation	sharing, fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	Constant Ukrainian shelling of the airbase of Chornobayivka became a social meme, and Kim, among other political leaders, did not miss an opportunity to employ it in his digital political communication.
144	24.03 23:55	Video	“You know, today I came across such an idea that there's already a lot of ongoing civil, ordinary work, but the videos have to be recorded. I have to go on air, talk about the situation today, and what awaits us next.”	self-reflection, digital tools	personal expression	CN	Indirect proof that all this innovative communication method evolved spontaneously and unconsciously. Kim just employed the resources he possessed and deemed efficient, and seems to have worked out well.
145	24.03 23:55	Video	“What's good? We sank the Orc ship. I say now they also have an Orc submarine, which now lies at the bottom of the sea somewhere. As I understand it, a couple more new, expensive submarines are underway.”	good example, meme, tranquilisation	fusion of subcultural and political discourses	CN	